
PANHANDLE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD PLAN

Program Years 2025-2028

Prepared on behalf of:



A proud partner of the **americanjobcenter** network

and



An Equal Opportunity Employer/Program

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Panhandle Workforce Development Board Plan

Program Years 2025–2028

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Introduction

For the region's economy to grow and prosper, employers must convey to job seekers the skills their businesses need. Conversely, job seekers must recognize and promote the skills they possess or obtain new or upgraded skills to meet businesses' needs. The State of Texas' market-driven workforce development system plays a vital role in this process, acting as a hub for sharing information relating to jobs and skills, facilitating connections between businesses and job seekers, and aiding with job search and training needs. The Panhandle Workforce Development Board (PWDB) and its Contractor, Workforce Solutions Panhandle (WSP) work collaboratively to ensure that these services and assistance are available to employers and job seekers, including veterans, individuals with disabilities, and older adults. The PWDB and its workforce development partners continue to collaborate with community and industry partners to expand these opportunities and find new ways to achieve positive results. The development of innovative workforce services to meet the needs of employers and workers is vital to the success of the workforce system.

Under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) §108 [20 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) §679.500–580], the PWDB is required to develop, in partnership with its chief elected officials, and submit, to the State, a comprehensive four-year Board Plan. This Plan promotes communication, coordination, and collaboration among grantees, employers, economic development organizations, community-based partners, and other service providers that support the economic growth of the local workforce development area while meeting the needs of employers and job seekers, and identifies and describes policies and procedures, as well as local activities, which align with the following:

- [Accelerating Alignment: Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan Fiscal Years 2024–2031](#), which sets the overarching direction for the Texas workforce system. Boards must demonstrate how their strategies and initiatives contribute to the plan's vision of creating a world-class workforce system that positions Texas as a global economic leader.
- [Texas Workforce Commission \(TWC\) 2023–2027 Strategic Plan](#), which outlines TWC's specific goals and strategies from now until 2027. Boards must demonstrate how their plans support TWC's objectives, such as fostering economic growth, providing exceptional customer service, and maximizing efficiency and effectiveness.
- [WIOA Combined State Plan Program Years 2024–2027](#), which details how Texas will implement WIOA to achieve its workforce development goals. Boards must demonstrate how their plan supports the strategies identified in the WIOA Combined State Plan.
- [Adult Education and Literacy Strategic Plan Fiscal Years 2021 to 2026](#), which outlines Texas' strategies for improving adult education and literacy services. Boards must describe how they will coordinate with adult education providers and integrate these services into their workforce development efforts.
- [Child Care Workforce Strategic Plan 2023–2025](#), which focuses on strengthening the child care workforce in Texas. Boards must demonstrate how they will support the recruitment, training, and retention of high-quality child care professionals in their regions.

The PWDB is a business-led group, the majority of which is comprised of employers from the private sector, as well as representatives from community-based organizations, labor, child care workforce, economic development, secondary and post-secondary education, adult and continuing education, literacy, vocational rehabilitation, public employment services, and the State department

of human services. The PWDB is appointed by local elected officials, and oversees workforce program services provided in the 26-county region of the Texas Panhandle. The PWDB and its partners together implement the Board Plan, which directs local entities in their efforts to build a labor force that sustains local communities and supports a positive economic climate.

In March of 2021, the PWDB's WSP operations, after delivering workforce development services in downtown Amarillo for decades, were fully integrated with TWC's Texas Workforce Solutions Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services staff, and relocated to the current Certified Full-Service facility located at 3120 Eddy Street in Amarillo.

In April of 2022, WSP operations in Borger also relocated to the current Full-Service facility located at 1028-B Megert Center.

Services in Hereford continue to be available from the WSP office located on the Amarillo College Hereford campus at 1115 W. 15th Street.

WSP provides services to employers and job seekers in Dallam, Sherman, Hanford, Ochiltree, Lipscomb, Hartley, Moore, Hutchinson, Roberts, Hemphill, Oldham, Potter, Carson, Gray, Wheeler, Deaf Smith, Randall, Armstrong, Donley, Collingsworth, Parmer, Castro, Swisher, Briscoe, Hall, and Childress counties. Services are made available to customers virtually and also through the WSP Mobile Workforce Development Services Unit, scheduled for at least two days per week in communities throughout these counties, including Canyon, Childress, Clarendon, Claude, Dimmitt, Dumas, Fritch, Memphis, Pampa, Perryton, Stinnett, Tulia, and White Deer.

Part 1: Board Vision and Strategies

A. Vision and Goals

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

- **Strategic Vision** - The strategic vision of the PWDB to support regional economic growth and economic self-sufficiency guides the development and provision of services, while striving to establish and enhance a workforce delivery system that serves the needs of area employers, job seekers, and constituents with efficient and effective services by promoting collaboration among stakeholders, creating partnerships with other community organizations, and focusing on workforce issues.

The Texas Panhandle is experiencing growth across a diverse range of industries, with Transportation and Warehousing, Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services, Agriculture, and Utilities leading the way. These growth trends highlight our region's evolving economy and the increasing demand for both traditional and specialized skills. Understanding these growth areas is essential for aligning workforce development programs, attracting new businesses, and ensuring the Panhandle's continued economic vitality. By focusing on these expanding sectors, as well as forecasting other emerging industries, the region can capitalize on emerging opportunities and build a strong foundation for future prosperity.

The population of the Panhandle Workforce Development Area (PWDA) stands at approximately 437,281 residents, spread across the 26 counties that make up the region. While characterized by its expansive rural landscapes, the Panhandle also includes vibrant communities—from the metropolitan hub of Amarillo to smaller towns and rural centers—that play a critical role in driving the region's economy and culture.

The region has experienced steady population growth in recent years, reflecting its economic diversity and opportunities. Between 2020 and 2024, the Panhandle's population increased by

1.75%, adding nearly 6,848 new residents. Looking ahead, projections show that growth will continue, with an estimated 2.6% increase between 2024 and 2028. This would bring approximately 11,483 additional residents to the area, further strengthening the workforce and expanding local communities.

Population changes, however, vary across the 26 counties in the Panhandle. Amarillo, the largest city in the region and an anchor for employment, education, and healthcare, is expected to see the most significant growth. Smaller towns and rural areas, which are integral to the Panhandle's agricultural and energy sectors, may experience slower growth or population stabilization as they remain tied to industries that are more consistent in size and scope.

While the Panhandle's population growth is modest compared to larger metropolitan areas in Texas, it reflects the region's ability to remain a stable and attractive place to live. Affordable housing, a strong job market, and accessible amenities make the area well-suited for families, professionals, and retirees alike. These factors continue to support the Panhandle as a desirable location for both current residents and those seeking new opportunities.

As the population in the region grows, it will be important to ensure that workforce development initiatives, infrastructure, and public services evolve to meet the changing needs of residents. The PWDB, through WSP, is committed to working with employers, educators, and community leaders to prepare for this continued growth. Investing in the skills and potential of the workforce can help the region remain competitive, resilient, and ready for the future.

- **The PWDB's Goals for Preparing an Educated and Skilled Workforce:**

- (1) Meeting local employers' demand for skilled workers with an educated, highly skilled, and well-qualified labor force;
- (2) Creating new employment opportunities by motivating skilled workers to remain in or return to the Panhandle Region;
- (3) Supporting a regional workforce system where individuals are empowered to embark on career pathways leading to increased educational, occupational, and adult literacy skill levels, attainment of recognized credentials, employment with self-sufficiency earnings, and employment security, while meeting the immediate and future skills needs of employers;
- (4) Increasing the number of customers engaged in career services and short-term training that leads to employment in high-wage, in-demand occupations;
- (5) Improving, sustaining, and supporting the child care workforce by increasing compensation for and reducing turnover of child care workers through paid opportunities for professional development and education; and
- (6) Providing services for individuals with barriers to employment as defined by WIOA §3(24) which include:
 - ✓ Displaced homemakers;
 - ✓ Low-income individuals;
 - ✓ Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians;
 - ✓ Individuals with disabilities, including youth who are individuals with disabilities;
 - ✓ Older individuals;
 - ✓ Ex-offenders;
 - ✓ Homeless individuals, or homeless children and youths;
 - ✓ Youth who are in or have aged out of the foster care system;

- ✓ Individuals who are English language learners, individuals who have low levels of literacy, and individuals facing substantial cultural barriers;
- ✓ Farmworkers (as defined at section 167(i) of WIOA and Training and Employment Guidance Letter No. 35-14);
- ✓ Individuals within 2 years of exhausting lifetime eligibility under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program;
- ✓ Single parents (including single pregnant women);
- ✓ Long-term unemployed individuals; and
- ✓ Additional populations include veterans, unemployed workers, and youth, and others that the State may identify.

□ The PWDB's goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce align with TWC in three important areas including, but not limited to, the provision of:

- Early education services in supporting early education services, through Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Quality Improvement Activities Grants to the PWDB from TWC, such as providing professional development opportunities in the form of scholarships, and incentives for child care teachers enrolled in college courses to complete their degree or to obtain or renew their Child Development Associate (CDA) credential;
- Services for youth by directing services for students to available training and career path options, such as with onsite support at public middle and high schools, through WSP's Education Outreach Specialist (EOS). Services provided include career guidance, career preparation, and workforce information to students through interactive presentations/workshops.

Providing youth with education, training, career exploration, and work experience are essential to the region's future growth and success. To ensure that young people have the skills necessary to meet future workforce needs, the PWDB supports youth by promoting in-demand careers and identifies educational and career pathways for students, including vocational and technical training, as well as those that require two-year, four-year, and higher education levels. This supports and strengthens academic and future workplace outcomes for youth who are facing challenges and barriers to success.; and

- Services for individuals with barriers to employment by continuing to develop and implement effective strategies for employment placement and retention of veterans, such as targeted Job Fairs; individuals with disabilities, through WSP's Student Hireability Navigator and other collaboration with TWC Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) staff collocated with WSP; individuals who have exhausted unemployment insurance (UI) benefits, through access to an array of WSP resources and services, such as intensive reemployment assistance delivered through the Reemployment Services Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) federal grant program; dislocated workers, the underemployed, and high-risk population groups, who have the opportunity for enrollment in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) or other programs; as well as disconnected youth and adults who have barriers to employment, including Foster Youth through the Amarillo Foster Youth Transition Center at Buckner Children and Family Services; and those individuals who are basic skills deficient, who may be referred to literacy programs, adult basic education, GED, and adult educational cooperatives, as appropriate.

By eliminating barriers to employment for populations at risk of leaving the workforce, the PWDB is working to connect customers with appropriate resources to support career

growth. This includes a strategy that promotes skill and credential attainment, employment, job retention, and an increase in the earnings of program participants, including those with barriers to employment, that results in a higher quality workforce, a reduced dependency on public assistance, and increased productivity and competitiveness for the region.

- **The PWDB's Goals Relating to the Performance Accountability Measures Based on Performance Indicators Described in WIOA §116(b)(2)(A),** and monitored to assess the effectiveness in achieving positive outcomes for individuals served by the workforce system's core programs (Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, Adult Education and Literacy, Employment Services, and Vocational Rehabilitation) include collaboration with workforce system partners to align, leverage, and combine local communities' workforce resources by:
 - ✓ Supporting a workforce system that meets job seekers' employment needs for placement, retention, and earnings;
 - ✓ Enhancing resources to help job seekers access information about in-demand occupations in the region, with comprehensive and integrated approaches, such as career pathways;
 - ✓ Preparing individuals for employment by supporting education and training that equips individuals with in-demand skills as identified by employers;
 - ✓ Increasing short-term occupational training opportunities leading to attaining recognized credentials;
 - ✓ Assisting students to successfully complete training which results in measurable skills gains, recognized credentials, entered employment, retention, and earnings;
 - ✓ Outreaching and re-engaging Out-of-School Youth and Older Youth in work-based training;
 - ✓ Providing an accelerated pathway and demonstrate new approaches for transitioning military service members to gain acknowledgement of their military training and quickly transition to employment;
 - ✓ Leveraging resources with education partners to address skill gaps including adult literacy skills deficiencies;
 - ✓ Identifying and effectively serving local employers' skill needs and hiring expectations; and
 - ✓ Promoting employers' access to the talents and abilities of individuals with disabilities, and accommodate such workers in the workplace and assist with maintaining and advancing their careers successfully.

B. Board Strategies

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

- **Working with Partners that Carry Out Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) and Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Activities.** The PWDB's strategy to align the resources available to the PWDA to achieve its vision and goals, includes developing and actively supporting dynamic partnerships to work with partners that carry out AEL activities and VR services. At a federal level, WIOA requires system integration among these core programs, and in Texas, TWC provides the statewide mechanism for ensuring seamless customer delivery to carry out a "One Workforce" system, a vision promoted by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) for all workforce systems. This One Workforce vision, reflected in the Texas Workforce Consolidated 2021–2025 Strategic Plan, calls for increased integration of services, statewide partnerships and collaboration, and use of accurate data to improve workforce services for customers. The PWDB continues to develop, facilitate, and expand innovative partnerships between the Board and employers, community

colleges, AEL provider(s), VR services, WSP and other stakeholders, to leverage resources for the provision and integration of an array of workforce, AEL, and VR services.

- **AEL Activities** - The AEL Program delivers the basic foundational skills, workforce preparation, workforce training, and other career advancement services that are necessary to prepare individuals to support their families, careers, and communities. AEL supports growth by offering programs for individuals with barriers to employment, by identifying transferable skills valued by employers, and by delivering education and training to individuals who want to complete postsecondary education and training and find employment in in-demand industry sectors and occupations.

Amarillo College (AC) is the PWDA's AEL Service Provider, which helps adult students gain the basic skills needed to succeed in the workforce, earn a high school equivalency, or enter college or career training. AC collaborates with the PWDB and WSP in performing intake, determining program eligibility, assisting with enrollment in classes, coordinating supportive services as needed, and facilitating the process of connecting customers in order to provide English language, math, reading, and writing instruction to help students acquire the skills needed to be successful.

The staff of the PWDB and WSP coordinate with AC to increase workforce, secondary, and postsecondary education and training outcomes to support increases in education and work-related outcomes through enhanced delivery and service integration. The objective of this coordination is to expand capacity to reach new customers with barriers to employment through enhanced outreach and recruitment, and to implement outreach and follow-up services for populations that require additional supports, such as, but not limited to, justice-involved individuals, and adult learners with disabilities. This coordination also promotes AEL as an educational resource for individuals seeking to obtain enhanced literacy and basic education skills.

The PWDB has fostered an excellent ongoing relationship with AC in collaborating on skills development initiatives, incumbent worker training, and achievement of industry recognized credentials, as well as traditional classroom based occupational training programs. Building on this relationship, AEL staff from AC regularly meet with PWDB and WSP staff to exchange information, improve processes and methods to assist AEL students with arriving at appropriate and effective career pathways and subsequent enrollment including co-enrollment whenever determined beneficial, or necessary, to completion. Important strategies include:

- ✓ Improving data collection methods which streamline customer intake and assessment processes, and which efficiently and accurately pinpoint intrinsic needs of eligible adult customers;
- ✓ Identifying and developing career pathways and integrated employment plans that create data driven career choices that are aligned with demand, and deliver appropriate and necessary services under WIOA;
- ✓ Enhancing AEL customers' educational and career advancement through the organization of appropriate AEL activities, work readiness and job preparation activities, occupational training, and other services specifically designed to meet the identified needs of adult individuals;
- ✓ Strengthening coordination and collaboration on partnerships which increase access to essential services for adults who are basic skills deficient, low income, have other barriers to employment, or are otherwise unprepared or ill equipped to enter or retain employment;

- ✓ Increasing the number of low-income customers and individuals with barriers to employment who engage in short-term training leading to employment, and increase the number and quality of work-based training opportunities including work experience and customized On-the-Job-Training (OJT);
 - ✓ Closing the information gap and promote where the jobs are by focusing primarily on industries that are net exporters of goods and services, and include occupations that provide a broad range of high-demand career opportunities for eligible adults;
 - ✓ Increasing potential for customer success by ensuring AEL activities are integrated with and relevant to workforce training, are aligned with common learning objectives and activities identified, and will enhance successful personal outcomes and program completion rates for work based and occupational training;
 - ✓ Concentrating focus on completion of a recognized postsecondary credential in an In-Demand or Target Occupation, to assist an individual in entering or advancing within a specific In-Demand or Target Occupation, or In-Demand Industry, as determined by the PWDB, and aligned with local and regional economic and labor market analysis;
 - ✓ Utilizing co-enrollment and simultaneous participation in basic skills education and occupational training to accelerate customer progress on a pathway to successfully entering a high demand occupation and ultimately achieving self- sufficiency;
 - ✓ Developing innovative methods for using current technology to increase customer access to AEL services, including virtual learning and online classes; and
 - ✓ Designing and delivering educational services that meet the particular needs of individual adults, such as accommodating schedules with multiple entry and exit points, flexible non-semester based scheduling, and alternative class times and locations.
- **VR Services** - The PWDB and WSP have the opportunity to better serve the workforce needs of individuals with disabilities, and ensure compliance with WIOA §188 and the Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act (ADAAA), through the ongoing collaboration of Texas Workforce Solutions VR Services programs and staff in the WSP office in Amarillo and regularly scheduled visits to many rural locations by the mobile units. Through continued collaboration and joint planning with VR Services, an effective transition plan reflecting the shared goals of providing a seamless approach for access to integrated workforce services, literacy education, vocational rehabilitation, and in-demand workplace skills that lead to self-sufficient employment and advancement for individuals with disabilities, and promoting partnerships with employers and system stakeholders which overcome barriers to meeting workforce needs through creative use of technology and innovation, is achieved. Strategies and methods continue to be developed and implemented based on examination of the successes and lingering challenges observed, to increase the quality and effectiveness of workforce services provided to this priority population.

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

VR Services staff provide:

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

The PWDB and WSP:

- ✓ Advertise, promote and integrate VR Services as part of the entire array of services offered;
- ✓ Refer individuals with disabilities to VR staff, as appropriate, and actively identify and promote opportunities for co-enrollment to maximize funds and create shorter pathways to achieving training and employment goals;
- ✓ Provide intensive and training services under WIOA as appropriate and applicable, and jointly manage common case files and staffing customers;
- ✓ Support employers who participate in TWC's "We Hire Ability" program. This program recognizes employers who are committed to hiring people with disabilities. It also awards them for their efforts to create an inclusive workforce, and make it a priority to hire, retain, and help develop skills of individuals with disabilities.

C. High-Performing Board

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

The PWDB continues refining ongoing "Best Practices" to remain a high-performing Board, consistent with the factors developed by the Texas Workforce Investment Council (TWIC). Established under Texas Government Code, Chapter 2308, the Council assists the Governor and the Legislature with strategic planning for and evaluation of the Texas workforce system. TWIC is statutorily responsible for promoting the development of a well-educated, highly skilled workforce for Texas and advocating for an integrated workforce system that provides quality, relevant services that address the needs of Texas businesses and its workers. TWIC employs a systems perspective in order to fulfill its unique role in the system and achieve its mandated priorities. Having this perspective means that the Council considers and focuses on the impact of one program on another program; the intersections or "transitions" between the various parts of the system; and the outcome(s) of one program or group of programs and how they affect the entire system.

An effective workforce board manages partnerships and alignment between education, workforce system agencies and industry, creating environments conducive to forming new partnerships and supporting existing partnerships. The board can coordinate activities to ensure that the time of employers is spent wisely, avoiding scenarios where multiple agencies or programs approach the same set of employers with similar requests.

- ☐ PWDB staff work closely with the WSP Contractor on a proactive basis to pinpoint performance shortfalls and develop effective strategies to improve performance in targeted measures. These efforts including implementing strategies to increase program spending by appropriate and allowable methods, including:

- ✓ Proactive analysis and implementation of State and federal rules and regulations;
- ✓ Complete review/update of current PWDB policies compliant with WIOA requirements;
- ✓ Development and implementation of clear, concise, and substantive new local policies;
- ✓ Provision of guidance for achieving State-mandated program performance standards;
- ✓ Development of media-directed opportunities for job seekers to access workforce services;
- ✓ Enhancement of the WSP website and development of more effective user interfaces;
- ✓ Development and implementation of innovative and productive ways to utilize the mobile workforce unit and expand workforce services to rural customers;
- ✓ Maximization of opportunities through VR Services integration to provide the complete package to job seekers who have disabilities, and eliminate barriers to employment;
- ✓ Development and implementation of creative plans to engage disconnected youth, remove barriers to employment, and produce successful career pathways;
- ✓ Increase in short term work-based training opportunities leading to employment;
- ✓ Continuation of improvement of business services team capabilities to assess employers' skill needs and match capable workers with job openings;
- ✓ Engagement with local business leaders on a personal level to pinpoint employment needs;
- ✓ Reinvigoration of alliances with educators, economic developers and community partners to further mutual goals including developing apprenticeship initiatives;
- ✓ Further cultivation of partnerships and collaborations with local colleges and universities, and pool resources for occupational skills training opportunities;
- ✓ Collaboration with existing programs and funds to provide increased Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) skills;
- ✓ Encouragement, creation, and support of labor market driven decisions for developing skills training and addressing labor force challenges;
- ✓ Strengthening of PWDB monitoring oversight focus to identify and address high risk areas;
- ✓ Sustainment of efforts to effectively place veterans, individuals with disabilities, and high-risk population groups in employment and to retain employment;
- ✓ Identification of emerging In-Demand Industries and Occupations, and Target Occupations in local job markets;
- ✓ Continuation of maintaining and improving two-way open lines of communication with WSP management and staff;
- ✓ Provision of active support to WSP management and staff including technical assistance, training, and guidance and clarification for PWDB policies;
- ✓ Communication to foster creative approaches to existing challenges and encourage inventive, unique ideas;
- ✓ Deliverance of WSP staff training that is timely, current, and relevant; and
- ✓ Obtainment of training for PWDB staff to fill in program management and knowledge gaps.

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

The PWDB continues to ensure that the TWC Subrecipient Monitoring Division of Fraud Deterrence and Compliance Monitoring is able to place reliance in the Panhandle's Fiscal and Program [Child Care Services, Choices, Noncustodial Parent (NCP) Choices, Reemployment Services Eligibility Assessment (RESEA), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Employment & Training (E&T), and Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)] functions through a subcontracted external Fiscal Monitor and an internal Program Monitor, and has re-certified the monitoring functions for the PWDB.

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

Part 2. Economic and Workforce Analysis

A. Regional Economic and Employment Needs Analysis

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

*Sources: Population, Demographics, & Economy Overview - SitesOnTexas
https://analyst.lightcast.io/tmp/ark/Economy_Overview_Panhandle_WDA_6523.pdf*

*Current Population - SitesOnTexas
<https://analyst.lightcast.io/analyst/exportloading.php?export=EXCEL&t=4p8D1>*

*Projected Population - TxDOT One-Stop Demographic Data Analysis Tool
<https://portal.idser.utsa.edu/TxDoT/OneStop/>*

- **Economic Conditions** - The Texas Panhandle economy is a dynamic and diverse system, contributing significantly to the overall economic strength of the state. With a Gross Regional Product (GRP) of \$34.3 billion, the region represents a vital part of Texas's \$2.6 trillion Gross Domestic Product (GDP), accounting for approximately 1.33% of the state's economic output. This contribution is particularly significant given the area's population of 437,281 residents, representing about 1.4% of the state's population and a labor force of 216,778. The Panhandle's economy is supported by 225,797 jobs, showcasing the region's strong employment base and economic activity. The cost-of-living index stands at 101.1, slightly above the national average, reflecting the balance between affordability and quality of life that the region offers. Furthermore, the Panhandle engages in robust international trade, with \$40.4 billion in imports and \$48.1 billion in exports, demonstrating the connectivity to global markets and the competitiveness of the industries.
- The Panhandle's GRP is underpinned by several key industries, each playing a crucial role in shaping the economic landscape. Agriculture remains a cornerstone of the region's economy. The area is a national leader in cattle feedlots and beef production, supplying a substantial portion of the nation's fed beef. Beyond livestock, the Texas Panhandle is also a top producer of cotton, sorghum, dairy, and various other crops, solidifying its importance to both state and national agricultural markets. The economic impact of agriculture extends beyond the farm gate, with significant activity in food and agricultural processing, which adds value to raw commodities and creates additional employment opportunities.
- Energy is another major driver of the Panhandle economy. While the region has a long history of oil and gas production, it has also become a leader in renewable energy. With over 2,400 wind

turbines in operation and increasing investments in solar power, the Panhandle is at the forefront of Texas's transition to a more diversified and sustainable energy portfolio. This dual strength in traditional and renewable energy sources makes the region a key player in meeting the state's and nation's energy demands.

- Manufacturing and defense are also critical components of the Panhandle's economic profile. The Pantex Plant, a major national security facility, and Bell Helicopter's assembly plant in Amarillo are significant employers and contributors to high-value manufacturing. These industries bring advanced technology and skilled jobs to the region, enhancing the economic competitiveness and strategic importance within the national economy.
- A multitude of healthcare providers, facilities, and agencies offer broad range of medical services and continue to serve as a major source of employment in the region. Continuing efforts to identify and collaborate with these entities on innovative and successful skills development initiatives, such as a Skills Development Fund Grant Partnership with TWC and two Amarillo hospitals, which increased training for incumbent worker skills, are producing a highly qualified and well-compensated workforce to administer care to patients throughout a multi-state region.

Consistently low unemployment in the PWDB compared to other regions in Texas and declining rural populations affect much of the 26 counties in the Texas Panhandle, and require significant efforts in business practices to ensure that employers, job seekers and students in rural communities have access to needed workforce services, despite the lack of, or a limited physical presence.

Increased food production, processing, and meat packing facilities offer opportunities for jobs involving industrial mechanical repair. A large immigrant population primarily employed in the meat processing sector of this industry presents unique challenges to provide basic literacy services, including English as a Second Language (ESL), that offer opportunities for increased wage-earning potential.

PWDB In-Demand Industries

The PWDA's In-Demand Industries align with the Texas Target Industry Clusters developed for the Governor's Texas Industry Cluster Initiative. The objective of this Initiative is to focus the allocation of resources on key industry clusters identified to be engines of job creation and economic development. "Industry cluster" means a concentration of businesses and industries in a geographic region that are interconnected by the markets they serve, the products they produce, their suppliers, the trade associations to which their employees belong, and the educational institutions from which their employees or prospective employees receive training. The Texas Target Industry Clusters are:

- 1) Advanced Manufacturing
- 2) Aerospace, Aviation and Defense
- 3) Biotechnology and Life Sciences
- 4) Energy
- 5) Information Technology
- 6) Petroleum Refining and Chemical Products
- 7) Corporate Services
- 8) Creative Industry

The PWDB's In-Demand Industries are expected to have sustained growth in the next three to five years. Employers in these industries need workers with skills that support that continued growth.

WSP will provide services to employers by taking into consideration the occupations offering high wages and/or substantial career opportunities, industries losing workers (declining), economic development efforts, size, and those businesses without sufficient human resources staff. Employers in industries with declining employment may need services, including, but not limited to, the provision of information that could help employers with reducing staff hours but retaining workers; retooling and retraining assistance through coordination with economic development and training entities; and consultation in advance of layoffs, to promote the transition of workers into other employment.

The following list of the PWDB's In-Demand Industries has been derived from TWC's Texas Labor Market Data Tool at <https://texaslmi.com> of PWDA industries that:

- ✓ Have a substantial current or potential impact (including jobs that lead to employment opportunities that provide both economic self-sufficiency and opportunities for advancement) on the state, regional, or local economy and that contribute to the growth or stability of other supporting businesses or to the growth of other industry sectors; or
- ✓ Currently have or are projected to have a substantial number of open positions (including positions that lead to economic self-sufficiency and opportunities for advancement) great enough to have a significant impact on the state, regional, or local economy.

Industry Code	In-Demand Industry	Average Employment	Average Weekly Wage	Associated PWDA Target Occupation(s)	Governor's Industry Cluster
6111	Elementary and Secondary Schools	14,353	\$ 883	(1) Elementary, (2) Middle, and (3) Secondary School, and (4) Special Ed Teachers	
3116	Animal Slaughtering and Processing	12,589	\$ 1,116	Production Workers	Biotechnology and Life Sciences
1121	Cattle Ranching and Farming	8,721	\$ 916	Business Operations Specialists	Biotechnology and Life Sciences
6221	General Medical and Surgical Hospitals	8,217	\$ 1,233	(1) Registered Nurses, and (2) Clinical Laboratory Technologists and Technicians	Biotechnology and Life Sciences
9221	Justice, Public Order, and Safety Activities	4,148	\$ 1,298	(1) Firefighting and Prevention Workers, (2) Police and Sheriff's Patrol Officers	
6211	Offices of Physicians	3,649	\$ 1,801	(1) Medical Records Specialists, and (2) Phlebotomists	Biotechnology and Life Sciences
2371	Utility System Construction	2,142	\$ 1,570	Electrical and Electronic Engineering Technologists and Technicians	Energy
8111	Automotive Repair and Maintenance	2,140	\$ 889	Automotive (1) Body, and (2) Service Technicians and Mechanics	
6231	Nursing Care Facilities (Skilled Nursing Facilities)	2,127	\$ 803	(1) Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses, and (2) Nursing Assistants	Biotechnology and Life Sciences
4841	General Freight Trucking	2,101	\$ 1,403	Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	
5617	Services to Buildings and Dwellings	1,955	\$ 688	(1) Carpenters, (2) Electricians, and (3) Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters	

Industry Code	In-Demand Industry	Average Employment	Average Weekly Wage	Associated PWDA Target Occupation(s)	Governor's Industry Cluster
5412	Accounting, Tax Preparation, Bookkeeping, and Payroll Services	1,867	\$ 1,280	(1) Accountants, Auditors and (2) Bookkeeping Clerks	Corporate Services
4842	Specialized Freight Trucking	1,792	\$ 1,303	Bus and Truck Mechanics and Diesel Engine Specialists	
6216	Home Health Care Services	1,788	\$ 998	(1) Medical Assistants, and (2) Respiratory Therapists	Biotechnology and Life Sciences
2111	Oil and Gas Extraction	1,674	\$ 2,083	Petroleum Pump System Operators, Refinery Operators, and Gaugers	Petroleum Refining and Chemical Products
2131	Support Activities for Mining	1,618	\$ 1,396	Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers	Advanced Technologies and Manufacturing
2211	Electric Power Generation, Transmission and Distribution	1,457	\$ 2,127	(1) Electro-Mechanical, Mechatronics and (2) Wind Turbine Service Technologists, Technicians	Energy
3251	Basic Chemical Manufacturing	1,089	\$ 2,065	Industrial Engineering Technologists and Technicians	Advanced Technologies and Manufacturing
6213	Offices of Other Health Practitioners	1,065	\$ 974	Health Technologists and Technicians	Biotechnology and Life Sciences
3331	Agriculture, Construction, and Mining Machinery Manufacturing	993	\$ 1,266	Control and Valve Installers and Repairers	Advanced Technologies and Manufacturing
6244	Child Care Services	977	\$ 459	Childcare Workers	
5416	Management, Scientific, and Technical Consulting Services	973	\$ 1,289	Information Security Analysts	Information and Computer Technology
5419	Other Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	936	\$ 1,146	(1) Project Management Specialists, and (2) Computer User Support Specialists	Advanced Technologies and Manufacturing
3241	Petroleum and Coal Products Manufacturing	888	\$ 1,925	Industrial Machinery Mechanics	Petroleum Refining and Chemical Products
5413	Architectural, Engineering, and Related Services	879	\$ 2,002	Drafters, Engineering Technicians, and Mapping Technicians	Advanced Technologies and Manufacturing
5411	Legal Services	837	\$ 1,535	Paralegals and Legal Assistants	Corporate Services
8113	Commercial and Industrial Machinery and Equipment	831	\$ 1,333	(1) Aircraft Mechanics and Service Technicians, and (2) Machinists	Aerospace and Defense
6214	Outpatient Care Centers	785	\$ 1,169	(1) Pharmacy Technicians, and (2) Radiologic Technologists and Technicians	Biotechnology and Life Sciences
2383	Building Finishing Contractors	703	\$ 1,096	Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers	

Industry Code	In-Demand Industry	Average Employment	Average Weekly Wage	Associated PWDA Target Occupation(s)	Governor's Industry Cluster
2361	Residential Building Construction	685	\$ 1,044	(1) Carpenters, (2) Electricians, and (3) Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters	
3111	Animal Food Manufacturing	679	\$ 963	Production Workers	Biotechnology and Life Sciences
6219	Other Ambulatory Health Care Services	616	\$ 1,337	(1) Emergency Medical Technicians, and (2) Paramedics	Biotechnology and Life Sciences
6233	Continuing Care Retirement Communities and Assisted Living Facilities for the Elderly	590	\$ 731	Physical Therapist Assistants	Biotechnology and Life Sciences
5415	Computer Systems Design and Related Services	547	\$ 1,761	Network and Computer Systems Administrators	Information and Computer Technology
6232	Residential Intellectual, Developmental Disability, Mental Health, and Substance Abuse Facilities	547	\$ 520	Psychiatric Technicians	Biotechnology and Life Sciences

Source: Texas Workforce Commission Labor Market and Career Information - TexasLMI.com

PWDB In-Demand Occupations

The PWDB's In-Demand Occupations are occupations that currently have or are projected to have a substantial number of open positions (including positions that lead to economic self-sufficiency and opportunities for advancement) great enough to have a significant impact on the state, regional, or local economy. The PWDB's list of In-Demand Occupations show those occupations which meet the following criteria: TWC projects 10 or more annual openings.

Occupational Code	Occupation Title	Annual Openings	Estimated Employment (2022)	Projected Employment (2032)
45-2093	Farmworkers, Farm, Ranch, and Aquacultural Animals	1,471	9,866	9,974
53-7065	Stockers and Order Fillers	735	4,088	4,541
53-7062	Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	669	4,826	5,108
53-3032	Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers *	530	4,776	5,007
43-9061	Office Clerks, General	414	3,591	3,504
43-4051	Customer Service Representatives	381	2,830	2,837
51-3022	Meat, Poultry, and Fish Cutters and Trimmers	373	2,749	3,056
31-1120	Home Health and Personal Care Aides	336	1,985	2,243
35-2014	Cooks, Restaurant	312	1,639	2,016
51-3023	Slaughterers and Meat Packers	293	2,158	2,399
35-1012	First-Line Supervisors of Food Preparation and Serving Workers	286	1,717	1,918
49-9071	Maintenance and Repair Workers, General	270	2,714	2,898

Occupational Code	Occupation Title	Annual Openings	Estimated Employment (2022)	Projected Employment (2032)
43-6014	Secretaries & Administrative Assistants, Except Legal, Medical, & Executive	269	2,755	2,519
43-3031	Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks *	262	2,295	2,270
41-1011	First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers	245	2,290	2,431
25-9045	Teaching Assistants, Except Postsecondary	238	2,029	2,047
47-2061	Construction Laborers	226	2,346	2,537
29-1141	Registered Nurses *	221	3,412	3,711
31-1131	Nursing Assistants *	211	1,429	1,480
43-4171	Receptionists and Information Clerks	193	1,339	1,427
25-2021	Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education *	179	2,578	2,632
39-9011	Childcare Workers *	165	984	996
37-3011	Landscaping and Groundskeeping Workers	161	1,147	1,239
49-3023	Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics *	141	1,539	1,620
25-3031	Substitute Teachers, Short-Term	139	1,147	1,160
51-1011	First-Line Supervisors of Production and Operating Workers	138	1,383	1,456
13-2011	Accountants and Auditors *	124	1,418	1,528
47-1011	First-Line Supervisors of Construction Trades and Extraction Workers	124	1,365	1,480
35-2012	Cooks, Institution and Cafeteria	119	794	795
51-4121	Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers *	115	89	83
25-2031	Secondary School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education *	114	1,772	1,813
53-7051	Industrial Truck and Tractor Operators	110	1,004	1,094
31-9092	Medical Assistants *	107	667	803
47-2111	Electricians *	104	931	1,092
41-3091	Sales Reps of Services, Ex Advertising, Insurance, Financial Services & Travel	103	976	1,061
29-2061	Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses *	98	1,238	1,271
43-5071	Shipping, Receiving, and Inventory Clerks	98	917	952
49-1011	First-Line Supervisors of Mechanics, Installers, and Repairers	97	1,050	1,131
25-2022	Middle School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education *	90	1,307	1,336
33-3012	Correctional Officers and Jailers	88	984	1,006
33-3051	Police and Sheriff's Patrol Officers *	86	1,063	1,099
43-6013	Medical Secretaries and Administrative Assistants	80	642	732
43-4081	Hotel, Motel, and Resort Desk Clerks	72	463	449
47-2152	Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters *	69	609	727
17-3019	Drafters, All Others *	68	616	682
47-2073	Operating Engineers and Other Construction Equipment Operators	68	720	771
43-5061	Production, Planning, and Expediting Clerks	67	581	632
49-9041	Industrial Machinery Mechanics *	66	747	812

Occupational Code	Occupation Title	Annual Openings	Estimated Employment (2022)	Projected Employment (2032)
51-9061	Inspectors, Testers, Sorters, Samplers, and Weighers	66	680	608
41-3021	Insurance Sales Agents	65	645	743
31-9091	Dental Assistants	64	385	451
41-2022	Parts Salespersons	64	480	533
13-1071	Human Resources Specialists	57	605	656
51-9111	Packaging and Filling Machine Operators and Tenders	57	496	529
29-2052	Pharmacy Technicians *	57	542	607
13-1082	Project Management Specialists *	55	690	748
43-3021	Billing and Posting Clerks	54	469	509
43-3071	Tellers	54	626	560
43-9021	Data Entry Keyers	52	598	485
49-3031	Bus and Truck Mechanics and Diesel Engine Specialists *	51	569	595
11-2022	Sales Managers	51	650	680
45-1011	First-Line Supervisors of Farming, Fishing, and Forestry Workers	50	353	376
13-1139	Business Operations Specialists, All Others *	49	532	566
11-3031	Financial Managers	48	522	617
49-9021	Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers *	46	401	487
51-6011	Laundry and Dry-Cleaning Workers	46	326	336
49-3093	Tire Repairers and Changers	46	345	399
37-1011	First-Line Supervisors of Housekeeping and Janitorial Workers	42	331	356
47-5071	Roustabouts, Oil and Gas	42	340	393
45-2091	Agricultural Equipment Operators	41	256	281
21-1093	Social and Human Service Assistants	41	372	396
15-1232	Computer User Support Specialists *	39	512	556
47-2031	Carpenters *	38	434	452
19-5011	Occupational Health and Safety Specialists	37	340	349
53-7081	Refuse and Recyclable Material Collectors	37	276	291
29-2056	Veterinary Technologists and Technicians	37	238	352
13-1020	Buyers and Purchasing Agents	36	420	408
49-9098	Helpers--Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Workers	36	282	314
25-2011	Preschool Teachers, Except Special Education	36	345	350
43-5032	Dispatchers, Except Police, Fire, and Ambulance	35	367	371
43-5052	Postal Service Mail Carriers	35	443	462
13-1161	Market Research Analysts and Marketing Specialists	34	299	348
51-4041	Machinists *	33	313	328
21-1021	Child, Family, and School Social Workers	32	340	379
51-9124	Coating, Painting, and Spraying Machine Setters, Operators, and Tenders	31	336	345
41-9022	Real Estate Sales Agents	31	338	360

Occupational Code	Occupation Title	Annual Openings	Estimated Employment (2022)	Projected Employment (2032)
47-2051	Cement Masons and Concrete Finishers	30	355	381
35-1011	Chefs and Head Cooks	30	230	253
49-9051	Electrical Power-Line Installers and Repairers	30	334	362
23-2011	Paralegals and Legal Assistants *	30	256	289
43-4031	Court, Municipal, and License Clerks	28	271	284
21-1012	Educational, Guidance, and Career Counselors and Advisors	28	369	387
29-2042	Emergency Medical Technicians *	28	324	362
13-2072	Loan Officers	28	347	373
49-3041	Farm Equipment Mechanics and Service Technicians	27	286	302
29-1171	Nurse Practitioners	27	350	441
47-2141	Painters, Construction and Maintenance	27	321	346
31-2021	Physical Therapist Assistants *	27	170	192
37-1012	Supervisors of Landscaping, Lawn Service & Groundskeeping Workers	27	229	249
33-2011	Firefighters *	26	339	346
51-8093	Petroleum Pump System Operators, Refinery Operators, and Gaugers *	24	242	258
49-3021	Automotive Body and Related Repairers *	23	248	258
13-1041	Compliance Officers	23	264	287
43-6011	Executive Secretaries and Executive Administrative Assistants	23	316	255
43-4199	Information and Record Clerks, All Other	23	186	192
43-9041	Insurance Claims and Policy Processing Clerks	23	204	231
53-7063	Machine Feeders and Offbearers	23	140	149
31-9097	Phlebotomists *	23	141	168
41-3031	Securities, Commodities, and Financial Services Sales Agents	23	287	302
47-5013	Service Unit Operators, Oil and Gas	23	178	208
49-9052	Telecommunications Line Installers and Repairers	23	218	249
31-9099	Healthcare Support Workers, All Other	22	147	159
53-4011	Locomotive Engineers	22	277	281
13-1111	Management Analysts	22	224	250
49-3042	Mobile Heavy Equipment Mechanics, Except Engines	22	253	267
51-9199	Production Workers, All Other *	22	196	210
29-2010	Clinical Laboratory Technologists and Technicians *	21	298	314
11-3051	Industrial Production Managers	21	289	302
49-9099	Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Workers, All Other	21	189	212
25-9044	Teaching Assistants, Postsecondary	21	164	171
13-1031	Claims Adjusters, Examiners, and Investigators	20	260	275
11-3021	Computer and Information Systems Managers	20	251	285
51-9161	Computer Numerically Controlled Tool Operators	20	251	235

Occupational Code	Occupation Title	Annual Openings	Estimated Employment (2022)	Projected Employment (2032)
51-4031	Cutting, Punching & Press Machine Setters, Operators & Tenders, Metal & Plastic	20	266	228
47-3013	Helpers--Electricians	20	153	175
49-9043	Maintenance Workers, Machinery	20	194	207
29-2034	Radiologic Technologists and Technicians *	20	318	344
43-5111	Weighers, Measurers, Checkers, and Samplers, Recordkeeping	20	135	156
49-9012	Control and Valve Installers and Repairers, Except Mechanical Door *	19	218	243
13-1051	Cost Estimators	19	199	216
51-3092	Food Batchmakers	19	115	127
47-3015	Helpers--Pipelayers, Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters	19	132	162
27-3031	Public Relations Specialists	19	219	234
31-9096	Veterinary Assistants and Laboratory Animal Caretakers	19	69	100
51-9011	Chemical Equipment Operators and Tenders	18	244	218
17-2051	Civil Engineers	18	221	258
23-1011	Lawyers	18	408	432
29-2072	Medical Records Specialists *	18	240	258
25-2052	Special Education Teachers, Kindergarten and Elementary School *	18	258	261
11-3071	Transportation, Storage, and Distribution Managers	18	222	233
51-8031	Water and Wastewater Treatment Plant and System Operators	18	228	213
33-1011	First-Line Supervisors of Correctional Officers	17	198	207
47-4051	Highway Maintenance Workers	17	191	193
29-1071	Physician Assistants	17	187	246
29-1127	Speech-Language Pathologists	17	218	265
49-9081	Wind Turbine Service Technicians *	17	80	154
15-1244	Network and Computer Systems Administrators *	16	252	271
29-1051	Pharmacists	16	338	366
25-2032	Career/Technical Education Teachers, Secondary School	15	240	243
47-4011	Construction and Building Inspectors	15	116	125
29-1292	Dental Hygienists	15	167	194
43-4061	Eligibility Interviewers, Government Programs	15	139	157
47-5022	Excavating and Loading Machine and Dragline Operators, Surface Mining	15	144	149
21-1022	Healthcare Social Workers	15	157	166
25-4022	Librarians and Media Collections Specialists	15	165	170
15-1211	Computer Systems Analysts	14	195	216
29-2043	Paramedics *	13	220	243
29-1126	Respiratory Therapists *	13	181	215
49-3011	Aircraft Mechanics and Service Technicians *	11	127	135
29-2099	Health Technologists and Technicians, All Other *	11	128	146

Occupational Code	Occupation Title	Annual Openings	Estimated Employment (2022)	Projected Employment (2032)
17-3023	Electrical and Electronic Engineering Technologists and Technicians *	10	71	72
17-3024	Electro-Mechanical and Mechatronics Technologists and Technicians (Robotics) *	10	N/A	N/A
17-3026	Industrial Engineering Technologists and Technicians (Nanotechnology) *	10	N/A	N/A
15-1212	Information Security Analysts *	10	75	80
29-2053	Psychiatric Technicians *	10	63	68

* Also designated as a PWDA Target Occupation.

Source: Texas Workforce Commission Labor Market and Career Information - TexasLMI.com

PWDB Target Occupations

The PWDB's Target Occupations must be occupations that:

- ✓ Have or are projected to have a substantial number of openings (due to job growth rather than job turnover) to have a significant impact on the state, regional, or local economy; and
- ✓ Result in wages that meet a Board's self-sufficiency requirements or have been identified by the Board as a career pathway to an occupation that leads to self-sufficient wages.

Occupations designated as "Target" must meet specific criteria established by the PWDB including:

- 1) Requires additional education beyond High School and offer training completion within a two to three-year timeframe;
- 2) Provides an average entry level hourly wage of \$15 or more, unless designated as an occupation in a career pathway; and
- 3) TWC projects 10 or more total annual job openings.

Occupational Code	Target Occupation	Annual Openings	Hourly Entry Wage	Annual Average Employment 2022	Annual Average Employment 2032
13-2011	Accountants and Auditors	124	\$23.34	1418	1528
49-3011	Aircraft Mechanics and Service Technicians	11	\$18.00	127	135
49-3021	Automotive Body and Related Repairers	23	\$15.73	248	258
49-3023	Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics **	141	\$14.65	1539	1620
43-3031	Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks **	262	\$14.64	2295	2270
49-3031	Bus and Truck Mechanics and Diesel Engine Specialists	51	\$17.91	569	595
13-1199	Business Operations Specialists, All Others	49	\$21.35	532	566
47-2031	Carpenters	38	\$17.41	434	452
39-9011	Childcare Workers **	165	\$9.54	981	996

Occupational Code	Target Occupation	Annual Openings	Hourly Entry Wage	Annual Average Employment 2022	Annual Average Employment 2032
29-2010	Clinical Laboratory Technologists and Technicians	21	\$17.99	298	314
15-1232	Computer User Support Specialists	39	\$16.37	512	556
49-9012	Control and Valve Installers and Repairers, Except Mechanical Door	19	\$15.88	218	243
17-3019	Drafters, All Others	68	\$17.77	616	682
17-3023	Electrical and Electronic Engineering Technologists and Technicians	10	\$25.00	71	72
47-2111	Electricians	104	\$17.29	931	1092
17-3024	Electro-Mechanical and Mechatronics Technologists and Technicians (Robotics)	Emerging	\$19.00	N/A	N/A
25-2021	Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education	179	N/A	2578	2632
29-2042	Emergency Medical Technicians **	28	\$13.43	324	362
33-2011	Firefighters	26	\$19.20	339	346
29-2099	Health Technologists and Technicians, All Others	11	\$17.37	128	146
49-9021	Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers	46	\$16.33	401	487
53-3032	Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	530	\$17.58	4776	5007
17-3026	Industrial Engineering Technologists and Technicians (Nanotechnology)	Emerging	\$19.00	N/A	N/A
49-9041	Industrial Machinery Mechanics	66	\$19.63	747	812
15-1212	Information Security Analysts	10	\$31.83	75	80
29-2061	Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	98	\$20.84	1238	1271
51-4041	Machinists	33	\$19.31	313	328
31-9092	Medical Assistants **	107	\$13.91	667	803
29-2072	Medical Records Specialists	18	\$15.88	240	258
25-2022	Middle School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education	90	N/A	1307	1336
15-1244	Network and Computer Systems Administrators	16	\$28.93	252	271
31-1131	Nursing Assistants **	211	\$13.04	1429	1480
23-2011	Paralegals and Legal Assistants	30	\$18.52	256	289
29-2043	Paramedics	13	\$19.96	220	243
51-8093	Petroleum Pump System Operators, Refinery Operators, and Gaugers	24	N/A	242	258
29-2052	Pharmacy Technicians	57	\$15.71	542	607
31-9097	Phlebotomists **	23	\$14.42	141	168
31-2021	Physical Therapist Assistants	27	\$24.17	170	192
47-2152	Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters	69	\$16.50	609	727
33-3051	Police and Sheriff's Patrol Officers	86	\$23.65	1063	1099
51-9199	Production Workers, All Other **	22	\$12.66	196	210

Occupational Code	Target Occupation	Annual Openings	Hourly Entry Wage	Annual Average Employment 2022	Annual Average Employment 2032
13-1082	Project Management Specialists	55	\$23.68	690	748
29-2053	Psychiatric Technicians **	10	\$14.84	63	68
29-2034	Radiologic Technologists and Technicians	20	\$23.87	318	344
29-1141	Registered Nurses	221	\$30.09	3412	3711
29-1126	Respiratory Therapists	13	\$26.90	181	215
25-2031	Secondary School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education	114	N/A	1772	1813
25-2052	Special Education Teachers, Kindergarten and Elementary School	18	N/A	258	261
51-4121	Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers	115	\$17.20	1190	1186
49-9081	Wind Turbine Service Technicians	17	\$23.47	80	154

** Occupation identified as a Career Pathway.

Sources: Texas Workforce Commission Labor Market and Career Information - TexasLMI.com; and O*NETOnline.org

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

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

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

The employment needs of employers in the Panhandle region are subject to the so-called "brain drain" that many other regions experience, with the added challenge of the varying pay scales customary in other states and other parts of Texas. Regional unemployment levels have consistently remained among the lowest in the State, presenting unique challenges to companies in recruiting and hiring qualified workers. The PWDB is committed to and is actively engaged in creating greater employer engagement first through accurately identifying and pinpointing local employers' specific

workforce needs. By soliciting and compiling results from employer surveys and input from community partners, combined with TWC Labor Market and Career Information (LMCI) data resources, critical elements are brought together to obtain an accurate picture. Secondly, using this information to educate and train a “right-skilled” workforce, including incumbent workers, includes funding employer-specific training to bring worker skills up to the level needed by area employers.

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

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

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

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

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

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

The WSP Business Services team continues to develop solutions that successfully address local labor force challenges such as assessment of employers’ skill needs, implementation of low-cost, effective and timely methods that match capable workers with job openings, and collaboration with educators, economic developers and community partners.

- Monitoring local and regional job openings in the Panhandle using such tools as TWC’s Job Matching Platform, WorkInTexas.com, AmarilloHelpWanted.com, and the Amarillo Globe-News classified listings, confirms that a majority of Panhandle employers continue to seek qualified individuals in the Specialized Freight Trucking and Transportation-related Industries with Commercial Truck Drivers (CDL); and in the Healthcare-related Industries, which remain on the Panhandle’s In-Demand Industries and Target Occupations. The region’s training providers keep CDL classes full of students, many of whom are hired as soon as they complete the training. WSP staff develop career pathways in the healthcare field to match customers’ skills along the entire

spectrum of the regional employers' needs, from the Target Occupations such as Medical Assistants to Licensed Practical & Licensed Vocational Nurses, and Medical & Clinical Laboratory Technicians. The region's two major hospitals, as well as multiple Outpatient Care Centers and Home Health Care Services providers, also hire these students as soon as they complete their training.

- The size and scale of the Panhandle region, with its 26 counties encompassing 26,000 square miles, present obvious geographic limitations. The rural areas with the most need for workers have the smallest labor force. The regional downturn in oil and gas production have impacted the rural areas the most, with substantial layoffs and few new jobs to replace those lost. Skills in this industry are often not transferrable to other industries, and many former oil field workers are reluctant to take a lower paying job and hold out in hopes that production will ramp up again in more areas.
- Replacing retiring workers in skilled trades, despite fewer young adults seeking entry into long-term apprenticeship programs in technical occupations remains a challenge. Aligning resources and focusing on "right-skilling" will not only replace workers, but will ensure the replacement workers have the enhanced technical skills to meet the unique requirements created by the increasing demands of an exceptionally complex and specialized business environment.

B. Labor Force Analysis and Trends

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

The population of the Texas Panhandle Workforce Development Area (WDA) is approximately 437,281 residents, across the 26 counties that make up the region. While our area is known for its expansive rural landscapes, it also includes a mix of communities—from the metropolitan center of Amarillo to smaller towns and rural areas—that contribute to our region's economy and local culture.

Over the past five years (2019–2024), the Texas Panhandle's population grew by 7,554 people, an increase of about 1.76%. Projections indicate that this trend will continue, with the population expected to grow by 38,129 over the next five years (2024–2029), a projected increase of approximately 8.72%. This growth supports the ongoing development of the regional workforce and the expansion of local communities.

Population changes, however, vary across the 26 counties in the Panhandle. Amarillo, the largest city in the region and an anchor for employment, education, and healthcare, is expected to see the most significant growth. Smaller towns and rural areas, which are integral to the Panhandle's agricultural and energy sectors, may experience slower growth or population stabilization as they remain tied to industries that are more consistent in size and scope.

While the Panhandle's population growth is modest compared to larger metropolitan areas in Texas, it reflects the region's ability to remain a stable and attractive place to live. Affordable housing, a strong job market, and accessible amenities make the area well-suited for families, professionals, and retirees alike. These factors continue to support the Panhandle as a desirable location for both current residents and those seeking new opportunities.

As the population in our region grows, it will be important to ensure that workforce development initiatives, infrastructure, and public services evolve to meet the changing needs of residents. Workforce Solutions Panhandle is committed to working with employers, educators, and community leaders to prepare for this continued growth. By investing in the skills and potential of our workforce, we can help our region remain competitive, resilient, and ready for the future.

- **Current Labor Force Employment and Unemployment.**

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

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

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

The extensive geography of the Texas Panhandle presents a daunting challenge to the delivery of vital workforce services to the populace, compounded by the existence of only one full-service rural WSP office in Borger and one itinerate location, on the campus of Amarillo College in Hereford. Rural communities continue to have the most need for workers, and yet have the smallest labor force.

The labor force is a critical indicator of economic health, representing the total number of individuals who are either employed or actively seeking employment within a specific region. It encompasses a wide range of skills and occupations, from highly specialized professionals to those in trade and technical fields. A robust labor force is essential for economic growth, as it reflects both the availability of skilled workers and the demand for their expertise. The PWDA labor force is characterized by consistent growth, a low unemployment rate, and a diverse skill base.

As of October 2024, the Texas Panhandle's labor force stands at 216,364, up from 212,667 in 2023. This expansion of 3,697 workers demonstrates the region's ability to attract and retain talent, driven by the economic opportunities available across key industries. This growth in the labor force is a testament to the region's resilience and attractiveness to both job seekers and employers. The area continues to offer a compelling combination of career prospects, affordability, and a high quality of life that draws individuals and families to the Panhandle.

One of the most significant indicators of the strength of the labor market is the region's consistently low unemployment rate. Averaging around 3%, the Texas Panhandle's unemployment rate is well below the state average of 4.0% and often among the lowest in Texas. This low rate reflects a strong demand for labor across various sectors, particularly in industries requiring specialized skills and training. The competition for skilled workers in the area highlights the importance of workforce development initiatives that aim to equip residents with the skills needed to succeed in a growing economy.

The diversity of the Texas Panhandle's labor force is another key strength. The region benefits from a workforce with experience and expertise in a wide range of industries, including agriculture, energy, manufacturing, healthcare, and construction. This diversity not only supports the existing

industry base but also makes the area attractive to new businesses looking to locate in a region with a readily available talent pool. From skilled tradespeople to highly educated professionals, the Panhandle's labor force is well-equipped to meet the evolving demands of the modern economy.

The continued growth and strength of the labor force in the region is essential for the long-term prosperity of the Texas Panhandle. The PWDB, through WSP, is committed to supporting this growth by connecting job seekers with employers, providing training and development opportunities, and collaborating with educational institutions to ensure that the workforce remains competitive. By investing in the people and their skills, the PWDB can ensure that the Texas Panhandle continues to thrive as a dynamic and prosperous region within the state of Texas.

The Labor Force Participation Rate (LFPR) serves as a vital barometer of a region's economic vitality, indicating the proportion of the working-age population currently employed or actively seeking employment. Analysis of recent LFPR data for the Texas Panhandle reveals a generally positive and encouraging trend. The data indicates a consistent upward trend increasing from 64.87% in 2019 to 66.69% in September 2024. This sustained growth signifies a larger percentage of the region's population actively participating in the labor market.

The PWDA's unemployment rate, a key measure of economic health reflecting the balance between job availability and workforce participation trending over the past five years, reveals a region that has remained resilient in the face of challenges, demonstrating consistent recovery and stability.

- **Labor Market Trends.**

The Texas Panhandle's economy is characterized by a diverse range of industries, each contributing significantly to the region's overall prosperity.

- ✓ **Manufacturing:** With 27,421 jobs and a GRP contribution of over \$5.5 billion, manufacturing is a major economic driver. The sector has experienced significant growth since 2018, adding over 2,000 jobs and boasting high average earnings per worker.
- ✓ **Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Hunting:** This sector, deeply rooted in the Panhandle's heritage, remains a significant employer with 22,442 jobs. It has seen substantial 13% job growth since 2018, adding 2,634 jobs.
- ✓ **Retail Trade:** Employing 22,613 people, retail trade is a crucial sector, providing goods to residents and contributing close to \$2 billion to the region's GRP.
- ✓ **Healthcare and Social Assistance:** This sector is also substantial, with 19,807 jobs. While it has experienced a slight decline since 2018, it provides essential services to the region's population.
- ✓ **Transportation and Warehousing:** This sector has experienced strong growth at 23%, adding 1,690 jobs since 2018, reflecting the Panhandle's strategic location and role in logistics and supply chain management. The presence of major highways and rail lines, combined with the growth of e-commerce, likely contributes to this trend.
- ✓ **Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services:** This sector is growing at a rate of 19%, adding 1,115 jobs and indicating an increase in demand for specialized skills and knowledge-based services in the region. This growth may be linked to advancements in technology, innovation in various industries, and the need for specialized expertise in areas like engineering, research, and consulting.
- ✓ **Utilities:** Showing a growth of 18%, adding 306 jobs, this sector's expansion is likely tied to population growth and increasing energy demands in our region, including investments in renewable energy sources.

- ✓ **Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction:** Although this sector has experienced a decline in employment since 2018, it remains significant due to its high earnings per worker and substantial contribution to the GRP.
- ✓ **Construction:** This sector has added jobs, likely fueled by population growth and development projects in our region.
- ✓ **Accommodation and Food Services:** This sector saw a 10% growth, adding 1,703 jobs. This growth is likely linked to increases in tourism, business travel, and local demand, supporting the need for more restaurants, hotels, and related services.
- ✓ **Other Notable Growth Areas:** Information (5% growth); Management of Companies and Enterprises (4% growth); Real Estate and Rental and Leasing (3% growth); Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services (3% growth); and Educational Services (2% growth).

The Texas Panhandle is experiencing a surge of new businesses setting up shop, alongside expansions of existing companies. This growth spans various sectors, bringing new opportunities and further diversifying the region's economy.

- ✓ Chemical Vapor Metal Refinery (CVMR) is developing a large-scale rare-earth mineral refinery in Amarillo. The \$1.5 billion facility covers 540 acres and encompasses 500,000 sqft. It utilizes vapor metallurgy technology to refine 36 different metals, including nickel, cobalt, and lithium, which are critical for industries like aerospace, automotive, and electronics. This is the first refinery of its kind in the U.S., focusing on refining critical minerals and rare-earth elements. The project is expected to create approximately 1,000 jobs, with an annual payroll exceeding \$100 million. Local incentives include \$20 million over 10 years for job creation and a 100% tax abatement for the same period.
- ✓ Plant Agricultural Systems (PLANT-AS), is developing a \$510 million Controlled Environment Agriculture (CEA) facility in Amarillo. This ambitious project spans 400 acres and includes 9 million sqft of advanced hydroponic production facilities, designed to grow leafy greens and vine crops. The facility is projected to create over 700 jobs with an annual payroll of \$35 million as it scales up over the next seven years.
- ✓ Aspen Woods Group LLC, in partnership with The Rob Rockefeller Standard Carbon LLC, is developing a state-of-the-art solar manufacturing facility in Stratford, Texas. This groundbreaking project will position Stratford as a key player in the global renewable energy market. The facility will span 170 acres and produce advanced solar products, including EV chargers, solar panels, and portable battery solutions. The \$750 million project is expected to create over 700 jobs, offering significant economic benefits to the region. Construction will be rolled out in phases to ensure Stratford's infrastructure can support the facility's operations. This initiative reflects a major investment in renewable energy innovation and highlights Stratford's central location and robust transportation infrastructure as strategic advantages.
- ✓ Producer Owned Beef is a newly formed, producer-owned beef processing company. The company will construct a state-of-the-art processing plant in the Panhandle. They anticipate the creation of nearly 1,600 new jobs, with an annual payroll of approximately \$125 million.
- ✓ Albers Aerospace is an aerospace manufacturing company that produces a variety of components and systems for both commercial and defense applications. Their capabilities may include precision machining, composite manufacturing, and system integration. They anticipate hiring 350 new employees at their Panhandle facility.

- ✓ Garrett Container Systems manufactures a wide range of specialized containers for various industries, with a strong focus on defense and government applications. They produce ruggedized containers for shipping, storage, and transport of sensitive equipment. The company is expected to add 50 new jobs in the Panhandle.
- ✓ Ecolomondo is a Canadian-based company that has developed a Thermal Decomposition Process (TDP) for recovering valuable resources from end-of-life tires. Their new facility in the Panhandle will use this technology to process waste tires and create recycled Carbon Black, oil, gas, and steel. The company plans to add 65 employees with their new facility.
- ✓ Buc-ee's is a Texas-based chain of travel centers known for its large size, numerous fueling stations, clean restrooms, and wide selection of food, drinks, and merchandise. Each new Buc-ee's location typically creates around 175-250 jobs, spanning retail, food service, and management positions. Their Amarillo location has added 200 jobs for the area.
- ✓ Bass Pro Shops is a major retailer specializing in outdoor recreation gear, including hunting, fishing, camping, and boating equipment. They also offer a wide selection of apparel, footwear, and home goods related to the outdoors. A new Bass Pro Shops typically creates between 115-300 jobs, encompassing retail, customer service, and management roles. Their new store in Amarillo is approximately 100,000 sqft.
- ✓ Bell, a Textron Inc. company, is a leading manufacturer of commercial and military helicopters. Their Amarillo Assembly Center is a significant part of their operations, responsible for final assembly, completion, and delivery of various helicopter models. The ongoing expansion is expected to add at 400 jobs.
- ✓ The Pantex Plant, located northeast of Amarillo, is the nation's primary facility for the final assembly, disassembly, and maintenance of nuclear weapons. A new contractor, PanTeXas Deterrence (PXD), will be taking over operations. PXD is a joint venture led by BWX Technologies, Inc. (BWXT) and includes Fluor, SOC, A Day & Zimmermann Company, and the Texas A&M University System. The plant plays a crucial role in the U.S. nuclear security enterprise, and the transition to PXD is anticipated to impact staffing and operations. Pantex Plant has recently become the Texas Panhandle's largest employer with over 4,600 staff.
- ✓ Austin Hose is a supplier of industrial hoses, fittings, and related products, serving a wide range of industries, including oil and gas, construction, and agriculture. They offer a variety of hose types, couplings, and accessories, as well as custom hose assembly services. The expansion will add 20 new jobs in 2025, and is expected to grow beyond.
- ✓ Cacique Foods is one of the largest Hispanic foods companies in the U.S., specializing in Mexican-style cheeses, creams, chorizos, and dips. Their new 200,000 sqft facility in Amarillo is expected to create around 200 new jobs. Notably, the company initially had two shifts but has moved to three due to the success of the Amarillo plant. They will also be adding two new product lines in 2025, further increasing the number of employees.
- ✓ International Aerospace Coatings (IAC) provides aircraft painting, interior refurbishment, and graphics services to the aviation industry. Their expansion in the Panhandle will increase their capacity to serve the growing aerospace sector, potentially creating jobs for skilled painters, technicians, and support staff. The expansion will cover 80,000 sqft and add 75 jobs.
- ✓ Soluna Computing develops and operates modular data centers powered by renewable energy. Their Silverton location is a 100-megawatt data center with 50 megawatts live and 50 megawatts under construction, connected to a wind farm with loads of excess energy. Soluna broke ground

on September 3, 2024, on a 50MW expansion of this cryptomining data center site in the Texas Panhandle, known as Project Dorothy. The company also announced the groundbreaking of its Dorothy 2 project in Texas and the energization of Project Dorothy 2 is expected in early 2025.

- ✓ Keystone Towers, a manufacturer of wind turbine towers, is expanding its operations in Pampa. This expansion will increase their production capacity, creating jobs in manufacturing, welding, and related fields.

- Education Levels. The Texas Panhandle's educational landscape presents a complex picture, with both strengths and weaknesses. While a significant proportion of the population holds a high school diploma or equivalent, the region's lower-than-desired percentage of individuals with a bachelor's degree or higher poses a challenge for economic growth and development.

Key Statistics:

- ✓ High school diploma or equivalent: 29.1% (Texas Panhandle), 30.4% (Texas), 33.4% (US)
- ✓ Some college or associate's degree: 31.5% (Texas Panhandle), 32.1% (Texas), 34.6% (US)
- ✓ Bachelor's degree or higher: 22.7% (Texas Panhandle), 28.4% (Texas), 34.6% (US)
- ✓ Graduate degree or higher: 7.0% (Texas Panhandle), 10.3% (Texas), 13.1% (US)

The Texas Panhandle's educational attainment levels are generally lower than those of the state and nation. The region's percentage of individuals with a bachelor's degree or higher is 5.7 percentage points lower than the state average and 11.9 percentage points lower than the national average. Similarly, the region's percentage of individuals with a graduate degree or higher is 3.3 percentage points lower than the state average and 6.1 percentage points lower than the national average.

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

C. Workforce Development Analysis

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

- General Workforce Development Activities. PWDB staff conduct the Board's day-to-day administrative operations and operate, with a high degree of local flexibility for service delivery design, and partner with local training and educational institutions, to ensure employment and training opportunities meet the region's employment needs. WSP provides a variety of online, in-house, and on-site services, including employer services, job search resources, labor market information, and referrals for training. In addition to the traditional "brick-and-mortar" offices, the mobile workforce unit acts as a moving extension of the WSP offices and offers on-site, rapid response assistance to area employers and communities. The PWDB uses a variety of strategies to fully utilize financial resources and meet the needs of customers. Strategies include:

- ✓ Leveraging additional funding sources;
- ✓ Developing, analyzing, and sharing labor market information and regional economic studies;
- ✓ Engaging in planning and service delivery across the PWDA with other workforce and community partners;

- ✓ Incorporating new strategies and adapting current delivery strategies to respond to local economic changes, such as the use of the mobile unit and modern technologies that make service more accessible; and
- ✓ Sharing, modifying, and replicating effective training models and processes.

The PWDA is home to 87,470 millennials, closely aligned with the national average for a similarly sized area, which stands at 88,401. This group represents a vital segment of the workforce, bringing energy and innovation to the local economy.

Retirement risk is notably low here, with 116,048 people aged 55 or older compared to a national average of 131,341 for an area of this size. This demographic trend suggests a stable workforce with fewer immediate retirement challenges.

The PWDA boasts high racial diversity, with 204,118 racially diverse residents—well above the national average of 181,199. This diversity enriches the cultural and economic fabric of the community, fostering innovation and inclusion.

With 24,218 veterans, the area surpasses the national average of 22,182 for regions of similar size. This highlights a strong presence of individuals with valuable skills, discipline, and leadership experience gained through military service.

The area's population is growing steadily, with an increase of 2,199 residents from 2023 to 2024, bringing the total to 437,281—a 1% growth overall.

- ✓ The population of children under 5 years grew by 1%, now making up 6.67% of the total.
- ✓ Working-Age Adults: Adults aged 25 to 44 account for a significant portion of the population, with small but steady increases in the younger end of this range, supporting workforce stability.
- ✓ Older Adults: Residents aged 70 to 84 experienced the largest percentage growth, increasing by 3% to 4%, reflecting a trend toward an aging population.
- ✓ Declines in Some Groups: Slight decreases were seen in populations aged 5 to 14 and 55 to 64, each declining by 1%, though these shifts were minimal.

The Texas Panhandle has a solid representation of its workforce in the prime working-age group, from 25 to 54 years old, which plays a crucial role in sustaining the local economy. This group makes up about 33% of the area's total population and shows encouraging signs of stability and gradual growth.

- ✓ Young Professionals (25 to 29 years): This group grew by 375 people (1%) in 2024, signaling a steady flow of individuals entering the workforce.
- ✓ Mid-Career Stability (30 to 44 years): The population in this range remained consistent, reflecting a healthy balance of professional growth and retention in the region.
- ✓ Experienced Workers (45 to 49 years): This age group saw the largest increase within the range, growing by 505 people (2%).

Although there was a slight dip in the 50 to 54 group, declining by just 83 people (less than 1%), the overall trends indicate a strong and reliable workforce. The Texas Panhandle is well-positioned to meet current labor market needs and sustain long-term economic development.

Nearly 200,000 workers commute daily in the Panhandle, with 81% (162,043) driving alone—a testament to the region's expansive geography and limited public transit options. Carpooling, the second most common method, accounts for 11.1% of commutes (22,064 workers), reflecting efforts to economize and reduce the burden of long drives.

Public transit, however, remains underutilized, with only 0.27% of commuters (545 workers) relying on buses or similar services, a likely result of infrastructure challenges in this predominantly rural region. Similarly, just 1.75% (3,487 workers) bike or walk to work, likely in areas where residential and employment hubs are close together.

Remote work is becoming a notable feature of the Panhandle's commuting landscape, with 4.06% (8,077 workers) working from home. This reflects broader shifts toward workplace flexibility, which may continue to reshape commuting habits in the years ahead.

Commutes in the Panhandle are generally short. The average travel time is 18.98 minutes, and the median commute time is slightly shorter at 16.19 minutes. Most workers (23%, or 43,848) have commute times between 15 and 19 minutes, while 7.04% (13,416) enjoy very short commutes of under 5 minutes.

At the other end of the spectrum, 8.28% (15,791) face commutes longer than 45 minutes, often traveling from rural areas to employment centers. These figures highlight the diverse commuting experiences across the Panhandle, influenced by both geography and the distribution of job opportunities.

- Early Childhood Education (EDE) Activities. WSP operates the PWDB's Child Care Services Program to provide child care subsidies to low-income families so they can work, attend school, or enroll in training to improve the well-being of their families. At the same time, the Program also promotes the healthy development and school success of low- and moderate-income children by providing them with higher-quality early learning and afterschool experiences. The purposes of the Child Care Services Program are to:

- (1) Allow maximum flexibility in developing child care programs and policies that best suit the needs of children and parents;
- (2) Promote parental choice to empower working parents to make their own decisions regarding the child care services that best suits their family's needs;
- (3) Encourage consumer education information to help parents make informed choices about child care services and to promote involvement by parents and family members in the development of their children in child care settings;
- (4) Assist in delivering high-quality, coordinated early childhood care and education services to maximize parents' options and support parents trying to achieve independence from public assistance;
- (5) Assist in improving the overall quality of child care services and programs by implementing the health, safety, licensing, training, and oversight standards established in State law (including State regulations);
- (6) Improve child care and development of participating children; and
- (7) Increase the number and percentage of low-income children in high-quality child care settings.

WSP utilizes funding from TWC for Child Care Quality (CCQ) Improvement Activities to meet needs, determined from input from Texas Rising Star (TRS) mentors and a survey completed by PWDA Child Care Providers, for the purposes of supporting:

- (1) Secondary educational attainment for caregivers and administrators;
- (2) Professional development to assist with teacher/child interactions, curriculum, classroom management, and child development;
- (3) Professional development for child care program managers, directors, and assistant directors;

- (4) Programs with TRS incentives;
- (5) Curriculum content delivery with evaluation and assessment tools;
- (6) Shared Services with back-office software; and
- (7) TRS caregiving staff in obtaining/renewing their Child Development Associate (CDA) credential.

Each year, the PWDB partners with Amarillo College, Texas Tech University and West Texas A&M University, as public entities, to submit to TWC, certification of the schools' expenditures for allowable child care services and activities, as long as the designated funding was not federal or used to match other federal funds. These expenditures allow TWC to draw matching federal funds of \$2 for every \$1 certified to be utilized for direct child care services by WSP. Since 2018, the certifications from these schools' activities totaling more than \$650,000 per year, have secured an additional \$1.3 million annually in funding for the Panhandle.

- Training Activities. The PWDB strongly supports partnerships that increase opportunities for adult learners to transition to postsecondary credentials, including registered apprenticeships, industry-recognized certificates, licenses, and certifications that are stackable. Current strategies position innovation in college and career readiness, courses in postsecondary educational institutions, occupational and industry skill training, and certifications that are widely used and recognized by businesses and industries:

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

Eligible Training Providers (ETP) and Career Schools and Colleges (CSC) are part of the TWC education and training system. ETPs offer job training programs that are certified by TWC to provide WIOA-funded training services through vouchers known as Individual Training Accounts (ITAs). WIOA requires workforce development boards to target high-growth, high-demand, and emerging occupations within their workforce areas. To be approved for the [statewide ETP List](#), a training program must align with an occupation included on the state's target occupations list. ETPs are also required to submit initial and ongoing annual student performance data. DOL Registered Apprenticeships are approved upon request regardless of connection to target occupations and are not required to submit data on student outcomes. CSCs are privately owned institutions that offer classroom or online training in which students are taught the skills needed to perform a particular job. TWC regulates career schools in Texas and provides information and technical assistance to schools, students, and the public. Regulatory functions include licensing schools, approval of programs of instruction, approval of key school staff, site inspections, investigation of student complaints and unlicensed schools, administration of the Tuition Trust Account to assist students of closed schools and coordinating with other approval and regulatory agencies.

Offering training in the PWDA's emerging Target Occupation of Wind Turbine Service Technicians, Optimum Academy's Wind Technician Program has recently been added to the ETP List. More programs and providers from across the region are continually being certified and added. Other PWDA providers on the ETP List currently offering programs training in the PWDB's Target

Occupations include:

- Amarillo College, from its campuses in Amarillo, Dumas, and Hereford, offers more than 85 training programs, including, but not limited to, Aviation Maintenance Technology, Automotive Technology, Construction Technology, Early Childhood Development, and Firefighter;
- Clarendon College, from its campuses in Childress, Clarendon, Pampa and Shamrock, offers 40 training programs including, but not limited to, Commercial Driver's License (CDL) Certification; Industrial Maintenance, Nursing and Welding;
- Frank Phillips College, from its campuses in Borger, Dalhart, Dumas, and Perryton, offers 30 training programs including Diesel Mechanic Technology in its newly-opened Diesel Mechanics Training Center on the Rahll Campus in Dalhart; and
- West Texas A&M University, from its campus in Canyon, offers 39 training programs, including, but not limited to, a recently added Teacher Residency Program.

PWDA providers on the TWC Career Schools and Colleges include Equine Dental School of Texas (Dental Hygienist Program); Milan Institute (Programs in Dental Assistant, Medical Assistant, Executive Assistant and Medical Secretary); and Zollege Healthcare Career School (Dental Assistant and Medical Assistant Programs).

- Strengths and effectiveness of Activities. The strengths of workforce activities in the Panhandle region are the innovative employment and training opportunities developed through the creation of new partnerships with businesses and employers in emerging industries in the Panhandle, such as wind energy, manufacturing, and industrial production, through renewing alliances with existing entities including aviation and child care services, and with other local employers that have maintained a steady presence in the area job market. Additionally:
 - ✓ The Panhandle has seen a significant increase in management jobs, with 6,623 positions added between 2018 and 2023. With an average of 258 unique job postings each month for these roles, it's clear that businesses across the region are expanding and actively seeking qualified leaders;
 - ✓ The transportation and material moving sector remains a cornerstone of the Panhandle's economy. The addition of 2,909 jobs in this area emphasizes its importance, especially given our region's reliance on moving agricultural products, manufactured goods, and energy resources. The 191 average monthly job postings confirm that this sector continues to be a significant source of employment;
 - ✓ Healthcare practitioners and technical occupations added 1,409 jobs, reflecting a clear need for more healthcare workers. The high number of unique monthly job postings (569) suggests that healthcare providers are constantly seeking to fill positions to meet the needs of the community. This sustained demand is likely connected to the Panhandle's population growth and demographic shifts;
 - ✓ While office and administrative support roles are still the largest occupational group in the region (23,135 jobs), their numbers have decreased by 2,275 since 2018. Declines are likely due to increased automation and companies streamlining their operations. However, with 272 unique job postings each month, there's still considerable demand for these skills;
 - ✓ The decline of 2,064 jobs in sales-related occupations suggests that this sector is undergoing changes. This could be due to a variety of factors, such as the continued growth of online shopping or shifts in how consumers make purchasing decisions;

- ✓ The addition of 1,183 production jobs signals steady growth in the region's manufacturing sector. This aligns with the Panhandle's focus on areas like food processing and machinery production;
 - ✓ WSP works to overcoming obstacles encountered in developing short-term training opportunities, such as paid or unpaid work experience, internships, apprenticeships, and other work-based training options like On-the-Job-Training (OJT). Individuals may be reluctant to work without pay, despite the inherent opportunities available at the completion, and employers may be reluctant to take a chance on a relatively unskilled, untested worker, whether or not the training is subsidized, both of which must be addressed;
 - ✓ The large geographic area of the Panhandle and the lack of local child care centers in many communities throughout the area present difficulties for many rural families to obtain affordable licensed childcare options close to home and work. An inadequate supply of child care providers and shortages of available spaces within existing centers can lead to potential issues with parents' ability to work or attend training. WSP staff continually seek out potential providers throughout the PWDA to alleviate this high demand for services compared to the limited capacity and availability of child care choices;
 - ✓ Collaboration and joint planning with VR Services and TWC continues providing a seamless approach for access to integrated workforce services, literacy education, vocational rehabilitation, and in-demand workplace skills that lead to self-sufficient employment and advancement for individuals with disabilities. Promoting partnerships with employers and system stakeholders will overcome barriers to meeting workforce needs through creative use of technology and innovation. WSP staff continue to collaborate with VR staff to provide work-based learning opportunities for students with disabilities through the Summer Earn and Learn (SEAL) program, and are providing participants with foundational employment skills and better preparing them for successful transition to postsecondary education and employment, and work. Developing opportunities for these students to continue gaining valuable work experience and soft skills through other avenues, builds their resumes as well as their employment tool box;
 - ✓ WSP continues increasing collaboration with local AEL partners to consolidate intake, referral, and service strategies that focus on attaining necessary credentials, completing training, and entering employment with the ultimate goal of self-sufficiency;
- Capacity to Provide Workforce Development Activities. Compared to state and national averages, the Panhandle consistently maintains lower unemployment rates, highlighting the region's economic stability and its diverse mix of industries, including agriculture, energy, and manufacturing. While fluctuations are natural, the overall trend reflects a robust job market capable of adapting to challenges and sustaining workforce engagement.

The region has experienced steady population growth in recent years, reflecting its economic diversity and opportunities. Between 2020 and 2024, the Panhandle's population increased by 1.75%, adding nearly 6,848 new residents. Looking ahead, projections show that growth will continue, with an estimated 2.6% increase between 2024 and 2028. This would bring approximately 11,483 additional residents to the area, further strengthening the workforce and expanding local communities.

Population changes, however, vary across the 26 counties in the Panhandle. Amarillo, the largest city in the region and an anchor for employment, education, and healthcare, is expected to see the most significant growth. Smaller towns and rural areas, which are integral to the Panhandle's agricultural and energy sectors, may experience slower growth or population stabilization as they remain tied to industries that are more consistent in size and scope.

While the Panhandle’s population growth is modest compared to larger metropolitan areas in Texas, it reflects the region’s ability to remain a stable and attractive place to live. Affordable housing, a strong job market, and accessible amenities make the area well-suited for families, professionals, and retirees alike. These factors continue to support the Panhandle as a desirable location for both current residents and those seeking new opportunities.

- Individuals with Barriers to Employment. WSP continues identifying individual’s barriers to employment, including veterans and youth with disabilities, and prioritizing services provided to enhance skill levels, complete credentials, and increase earnings potential. Staff continues developing relevant career pathways based on data driven decisions that serve the needs of individuals in removing barriers to employment, attaining credentials, and enhancing skill levels and earning potential. Outreaching and engaging older, out-of-school youth, and re-connecting them with the local job market and employers, is an important focus; and
- Employment Needs of Employers. One of the State’s economic development tools, the Skills Development Fund (SDF) merges employer needs and local job training opportunities to benefit employers and provide needed skills to workers. These grants help incumbent workers upgrade their skills or help create high-skill, high-wage jobs. The use of these grants is particularly significant because, unlike formula funding, these funds are not required to serve categorical populations; thus, the funds can be used to target the workers whom employers identify as needing enhanced skills. By fostering internships and skills development projects in Target Occupations, and encouraging and assisting area community colleges in the development of, and application for, Skills Development grants, including implementation, students will be connected with employers who offer self-sufficient wages, as well as effective mentoring to encourage continued participation.

From August 2023 through November 2024, in a SDF project to provide targeted training for the company's employees, the PWDB and WSP partnered with Plains Dairy, a leading provider of high-quality milk and dairy products in the region. The company is dedicated to producing milk from local farmers and distributing it to customers in the area. The state-of-the-art processing facility allows turning raw milk into a variety of products, including milk, cheese, butter, and ice cream. Through this collaboration, WSP helped Plains Dairy identify key skills gaps and worked with local training providers to develop customized programs aimed at enhancing the technical and operational skills of their workforce. The PWDB invested in measurable skills development to train approximately 100 employees of Plains Dairy, utilizing a customized Safe Quality Food (SQF) food safety and quality management system that provided guidelines for the production, processing, packaging, and distribution of the company’s food products.

Part 3: Core Programs

A. Workforce Development System

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

The PWDB provides oversight of the WSP system with its focus on assisting job seekers in finding self-sustaining, stable employment, as well as helping employers in finding qualified workers and services. Required partner/programs included in the Workforce Development system are:

- ✓ WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs;
- ✓ Wagner-Peyser Employment Service program;
- ✓ Unemployment Insurance (UI) program;
- ✓ Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) program;

- ✓ Choices, the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) employment and training program;
 - ✓ Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Employment and Training program;
 - ✓ Child Care Services;
 - ✓ Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) programs;
 - ✓ Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) programs;
 - ✓ Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) programs;
 - ✓ 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.);
 - ✓ Veteran employment and training programs;
 - ✓ 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;
 - ✓ Efforts toward reentry/reintegration of offenders supporting alignment with entities carrying out services in the PWDA;
 - ✓ Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker programs; and
 - ✓ Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP).
- The Panhandle's **WIOA Adult & Dislocated Worker programs** enrolled 250 individuals from 341 applications, highlighting strong interest in in-demand careers, such as healthcare and transportation. This reflects a strong enrollment rate of 73.31%. With 25.8% of participants from rural areas, they play a vital role in promoting economic stability and meeting local job market needs in the Texas Panhandle.

The **Young Adult Training (Youth) program** serves Young Adults, age 24 and younger, who are experiencing difficulties are eligible for workforce benefits based on individual circumstances. Training Services can assist motivated Young Adults who are authorized to work in the United States, registered with Selective Service (if required), and are experiencing challenges to workforce success. WSP served 86 participants in FY2024, with 58 in training and 28 in workforce-paid internships. It offers diverse training opportunities in industries like healthcare and community services, helping young adults gain the skills needed to succeed in today's job market.

The Middle Skills Employment Supplies Pilot Program & the Upskilling & Training Grant have been vital in advancing workforce development in the Texas Panhandle. The Middle Skills program funded 38 participants, providing essential tools, uniforms, and supplies for occupations requiring education beyond high school but less than a four-year degree, with a total expenditure of \$22,275.18, ensuring individuals are ready to start employment in critical roles.

- Through its **Business Services Unit (BSU) and Employment Services (ES)** group, WSP offers a comprehensive range of employment-related services to employers across the 26 counties of the PWDA. The aim to support the local economy, drive workforce development, and help businesses find and keep skilled talent, through:
 - Job Posting and Recruitment Assistance - Employers receive help posting open positions on statewide and local job boards, gaining access to a large pool of job seekers, including specialized talent pools;
 - Candidate Screening and Referral - Pre-screening services match candidates based on job-specific criteria, referring qualified individuals to streamline hiring and improve retention;

- Onsite Hiring Events and Job Fairs - Organizing and hosting job fairs and recruitment events, both onsite and at community locations, with options tailored to meet employer-specific hiring needs;
 - Providing access to current Labor Market Information specific to the Panhandle region, covering wage trends, workforce demographics, and industry insights, enabling informed workforce planning;
 - Employee Training and Skills Development - Connecting employers with training resources and upskilling programs to develop their workforce, offering information on training grants for skills enhancement and retraining;
 - Work-Based Learning Programs - Supporting apprenticeships, internships, and On-the-Job-Training (OJT) opportunities, with options for partial wage reimbursement for employers participating in OJT programs;
 - Incentive and Tax Credit Assistance - Guiding employers through available tax credits, such as the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC), and other hiring incentives, providing application support for maximum benefit;
 - Layoff Aversion and Rapid Response Services - Offering resources to help avert layoffs through retraining programs and provides Rapid Response services for businesses facing layoffs, closures, or workforce changes;
 - Veteran Hiring Services - Specialized support for hiring veterans, including access to veterans' talent pools and guidance on tax incentives and veteran-friendly recognition programs;
 - Interview Facilities - Offices provide interview facilities equipped with essential amenities, allowing employers to conduct interviews in a convenient, professional setting;
 - Employee Retention Strategies - Advising employers on retention strategies, creating a positive workplace culture, improving satisfaction, and reducing turnover;
 - Compliance Assistance - Helping employers navigate labor laws and regulations to ensure a legal and safe work environment; and
 - Workforce Development Partnerships - Collaborating with educational institutions, industry associations, and community organizations to build strategic partnerships that strengthen workforce development in the region.
- The **RESEA** program is a federal grant program designed to allow states to provide intensive reemployment assistance to individuals who are receiving unemployment insurance (UI) benefits and are determined to be likely to exhaust their benefits before becoming reemployed. In the Board Contract Year (BCY) 2024, of the RESEA Profile Pool Count from TWC, WSP completed 402 of 531 for a Completion Rate of 76%.
 - The **Choices** program helps TANF applicants and recipients transition from welfare to work through job searches, readiness classes, and support services such as childcare and transportation. WSP Career Specialists provide personalized support to meet individual needs.

The PWDB, through WSP, oversees the TANF Summer Work Experience - This program provided 33 youth from rural communities with paid work opportunities in 7 school districts, helping them develop essential skills and a strong work ethic. Collectively, they worked over 6,700 hours and earned \$75,564, supporting their financial needs while preparing them for future employment.

TWC's Noncustodial Parent Choices Program (NCP) significantly benefits the Texas Panhandle community by helping non-custodial parents achieve financial stability. By assisting parents in

securing better jobs, the program promotes individual economic growth and fosters family stability through regular child support payments, ultimately strengthening the local economy. At WSP, the NCP program has positively impacted 65 non-custodial parents, with 23 securing full-time employment, resulting in a 36.5% employment success rate. This initiative not only aids parents in finding jobs but also lays the groundwork for financial stability, benefiting their children and enhancing the overall well-being of families in the region. By focusing on job placement and support, the NCP Choices program contributes to stronger economic and social outcomes in the Texas Panhandle.

- Similarly, the **SNAP Employment and Training** program connects recipients to work-based activities and educational services, with specialists creating tailored plans to address barriers to employment. Together, these programs enhance job security and economic stability in the Texas Panhandle, fostering a more self-sufficient community.
- Child care is vital for working parents, often making the difference between keeping a job and losing one. WSP's **Child Care Services (CCS)** assists low to moderate-income families by helping cover child care costs while parents work, attend school, or participate in training programs to become more self-sufficient. In 2024, CCS served 2,422 families, with an average of 2,349 children receiving care daily. Additionally, 1,996 of these children were in certified Texas Rising Star (TRS) Centers, highlighting the program's commitment to quality. The PWDB has agreements with 102 Child Care Providers to provide services to WSP customers throughout the Panhandle of which 71% are TRS certified. Approximately 54% of the children served through WSP are enrolled in a TRS-certified program.

The PWDB also supports child care providers through Child Care Quality (CCQ) Improvement Activities initiatives, including:

- Indoor/Outdoor Learning Materials – Child Care providers received \$309,105 to acquire indoor and outdoor learning materials. This included the Early Learning Programs onboarding to TRS Programs working on TRS Recertification and programs that expanded classrooms and or child care spots. These resources include educational materials, social emotional supports, and outdoor play equipment. The aim was to create engaging learning environments for children, fostering creativity and development;
- Curriculum - A budget of \$147,460 was allocated to provide child care providers with curriculum resources. These resources included cloud access, print materials and assessment tools aligned with early learning standards. This supports structured and educationally rich programs that prepare children for school;
- National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Week of the Young Child Kick-off – Many child care programs and local organizations came to WSP and provided fun activities for children and families along with helping to bring awareness about the importance of high-quality early learning, and the critical role early childhood educators play in a child's development and learning;
- Professional Development – A budget of more than \$50,000 was allocated to the professional development of early learning program staff. Professional development consisted of trainings in infant and toddler curriculum, lesson planning for centers and home providers, teacher child interactions, classroom management and program management;
- Scholarship Recipients Certification and Degree Awards - WSP CCS along with Amarillo College recognized individuals that participated in the WSP CCS Scholarship Program to attain Provider or Administrator certifications or an Associate Degree in Early Child

Development. 71 individuals have benefited from this Scholarship Initiative;

- A wage supplement program was developed with the first awards in August of 2024 with three awardees meeting program requirements awards were \$2000 each. This activity is to help staff retention in the Early Learning Programs;
- Providers were incentivized to participate in the TRS Program through financial bonuses including recognizing providers who achieve TRS certification, and rewarding providers who consistently meet program standards, promoting year-round commitment to quality care;

The goals of the CCS program include expanding accessible child care options for families and providing a reliable source of information and financial assistance. The program focuses on supporting the holistic development of children and helping providers enhance the quality of care they offer. Ultimately, CCS aims to strengthen the child care industry and serve as a valuable community resource for all child care needs, benefiting both families and the community.

- The PWDB and WSP collaborate with Amarillo College, as Lead Organization of the **Adult Education and Literacy (AEL)** Panhandle Consortium, to:
 - Participate in planning activities, provide labor market information and analysis, and assist with the full integration of services from AEL to postsecondary workforce training to employment;
 - Coordinate AEL service delivery and data sharing between PRPC, WSP, and the AEL Panhandle Consortium;
 - Provide outreach, intake, and eligibility determination to individuals referred through the AEL program; and
 - Provide case management, support services and employment assistance, as needed and as funds are available, to eligible students who are co-enrolled in both the workforce development programs and Amarillo College's educational and training programs.
- The **Trade Adjustment Assistance** grant provides additional training resources and relocation assistance to dislocated workers affected by trade-related layoffs. Trade Adjustment Assistance for Workers is a federally funded program, with no costs to employers, that helps workers who are adversely affected by foreign imports or job shifts to a foreign country. Assistance is provided to eligible workers in the form of reemployment services, training, job search, relocation, and support benefits. Historically, the Panhandle has only had the opportunity to serve a very limited number of individuals who are eligible for this program.
- The partnership between WSP and the Texas Workforce Solutions - **Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)** Program provides streamlined, comprehensive support for individuals with disabilities across the Texas Panhandle. By consolidating resources, these programs offer a cohesive approach to training, employment, and career development, creating accessible pathways to meaningful employment.

The Summer Earn & Learn (SEAL) program is a statewide initiative that provides students with disabilities, aged 14-22, with work readiness training and paid work experience. Over five weeks, participants work with local employers, gaining valuable skills and insights for their transitions to postsecondary education and employment. Some may even be offered full-time positions upon completion.

This program, a partnership between TWC, WSP, and VR, also benefits employers. With a growing demand for a skilled labor force, including students with disabilities can enhance recruitment strategies. SEAL offers a risk-free way to meet short-term staffing needs, with wages

and workers' compensation covered for participants, reasonable accommodations provided, and additional training as needed. Employers also receive site visits to ensure satisfaction with participants.

In 2024, out of 48 referrals, 39 participants were placed at worksites, achieving a placement rate of 84.62%. They completed work readiness training at a rate of 62.5%, working a total of 5,582 hours and earning \$65,499.76. This not only supports their financial independence but also enhances their employability. With 36 participating worksites, the program strengthens community connections and prepares students for successful futures, fostering greater opportunities and economic stability in the region.

- According to the Texas Workforce Investment Council, **Registered Apprenticeship (RA)** programs are training programs that produce highly skilled workers in occupations ranging from trades (carpenters, plumbers, and electricians) to STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) -related industries such as healthcare, energy, and information technology. As a type of postsecondary training that teaches industry-based skills and standards, RAs offer a sequence of classroom instruction and on-the-job training where workers learn academic and practical aspects of an occupation. Apprentices are full-time, paid employees who earn an income and gain valuable work experience while they learn. In Texas, RA programs are typically conducted by an employer, a group of employers, or a group of employers in cooperation with labor, through a local apprenticeship training committee. The local apprenticeship training committee is an independent group that runs the RA program for a particular occupation; however, must be approved by DOL's Office of Apprenticeship. The committee sponsors and develops instructor standards for the apprenticeship program and may interview apprentices for the program.

Texas has 35,541 active apprentices earning an average hourly wage of \$18.65. From fiscal year (FY) 2015 through FY 2024, Texas experienced a 170 percent increase in the number of active apprentices. This growth outpaced the nation's growth rate of 85 percent during the same period.

The PWDB maintains Memoranda of Understanding with local and regional required RA Program Partners including:

- International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local Union 602 and West Texas Electrical Joint Apprenticeship and Training Committee (JATC);
- United Brotherhood of Carpenters Local #665; and
- Plumbers & Pipefitters Local #404.

Under these agreements, the PWDB, WSP, and the program partners agree to:

- Provide information on RA Program and training opportunities to PRPC and WSP;
- Make employers and individuals seeking training aware of WSP resources and services and provide appropriate referrals;
- Market the RA Programs to businesses in the PWDA as a means to recruit and train qualified workers;
- Refer WSP customers to RA Programs;
- Provide workforce center space to RA Program Partners for use in interviewing, testing and conducting informational meetings associated with apprenticeship and training opportunities; and
- Provide automated links to RA-related websites through WSP public-use computers.

- The PWDB collaborates with Amarillo College, Clarendon College and Frank Phillips College throughout the Panhandle in facilitating core programs and other workforce development programs to support alignment to provide services, including programs of study authorized under the **Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education** Act [as amended by the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V)], that support the strategy identified in the State Plan under WIOA §102(b)(1)(E). The act provides an increased focus on the academic achievement of career and technical education students and emphasizes alignment with state-level and local needs. The Panhandle's workforce development system is comprised of the organizations and activities that assist job seekers with finding employment, help workers advance in their careers, provide access to occupational and educational training that leads to self-sufficient employment, improve basic literacy skills among youth and adults, and ensure a skilled workforce exists to support local industry and the local economy over time. This workforce system includes local organizations that serve the adults and youth who may need help preparing for and succeeding in the workforce. The PWDB will support the TWC State Plan strategy through continued and strong collaboration among WSP staff, local employers and industry, training providers and educational institutions, service and advocacy organizations, and other local organizations critical to supporting and delivering effective, integrated workforce services through the core programs.
- **Veteran employment and training programs** - Recognizing the unique challenges Veterans face when transitioning into civilian careers, The PWDB and WSP provide targeted support, including job placement assistance, skills translation, and access to resources tailored to veterans' military experience. In 2024, a total of 504 veterans and eligible individuals received 6,028 individual services, which included:
 - 22 veterans within 180 days of discharge, receiving 165 services
 - 458 eligible veterans, receiving 5,532 services
 - 24 other eligible persons, receiving 331 services

In 2024, 5.3% of customers were Priority of Service Veterans. 5,532 services were provided to Priority of Service Veterans & Qualified Spouses, 6.1% of total services. Of the veterans assisted, 221 served fewer than 180 days in the military, 24 were the qualified spouse of a veteran, and 458 were eligible veterans.

Hiring Red, White & You! is a statewide hiring event that connects veterans, transitioning military members, and military spouses to employers across Texas. The Panhandle's 2024 Hiring Red, White & You! Job Fair occurred on November 7th at the WSP office, featuring 34 participating employers. WSP staff played a key role in the success of the event by entering 84 job postings from participating employers into TWC's Job Matching Platform, WorkInTexas.com. This effort helped increase the visibility of employment opportunities, benefiting both employers and job seekers and amplifying the fair's impact. The event had strong attendance, with 371 job seekers, including 73 veterans—representing 20% of the total attendance. This diverse turnout underscores the event's broad reach, particularly among veterans, and highlights the importance of the fair in creating meaningful opportunities for a wide range of job seekers.

The PWDB supports the TWC Veterans Resource Coordinator for the Texas Veterans Leadership Program (TVLP) in the Panhandle who works with Veteran Services Organizations and other local organizations including Family Support Services of Amarillo's Veterans Resource Center, StarCare Specialty Health System's VetStar Veteran Services, State Nursing Facility, Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), American Legion Post 54, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA),

Panhandle Regional Veterans Treatment Court (PRVTC), the Roan-Creek Marine Corp League; and also works with Texas Veterans Commission Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialist to ensure that Veterans with Severe Barriers to Employment (SBEs) are routed in accordance with DOL requirements.

- **Job Corps** is the largest nationwide residential career education and job training program for young adults ages 16-24. At Job Corps, students have access to room and board while they learn skills in specific training areas for up to three years. In addition to helping students complete their education, obtain career technical skills and gain employment, Job Corps also provides transitional support services, such as help finding employment, housing, child care, and transportation. Job Corps graduates either enter the workforce or an apprenticeship, go on to higher education, or join the military.

The PWDB provides designated space in the WSP facility in Amarillo for use by the staff of North Texas Job Corps, in order to serve individuals who may benefit from the services offered by Job Corps and refer eligible clients, or clients who may be eligible, to WSP for additional services. This can include transferring allowable data which may have been collected on the client in order to expedite the intake process and reduce duplication of effort and eliminate unnecessary redundancy. WSP accepts referrals from North Texas Job Corps and provides all allowable and necessary services to eligible individuals as funding availability permits.

- **Native American programs** - The PWDB and WSP maintain a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ysleta del Sur Pueblo Department of Economic Development as the administering agency of a Native Pathways under the WIOA program funded under Title I of Public Law 105-220, Section 166. The objectives of the Ysleta del Sur Pueblo Department of Economic Development program are to find employment and increase the future employability of economically disadvantaged Native Americans to help coordinate and improve existing approaches in decreasing the employment barriers of the participant. The primary activities of the Ysleta del Sur Pueblo Department of Economic Development program are to provide meaningful work experience leading to permanent employment.

The agreement defines the responsibility in which the Ysleta del Sur Pueblo Department of Economic Development will provide information on the program which provides job search and job placement assistance; information on accessing jobs and training and training providers; information and assistance with applying for financial assistance for training; assessment of individual skills, abilities and interests; labor market information; and supportive services information, regarding economically disadvantaged Native Americans, to the PWDB and WSP; and make employers and individuals aware of WSP resources and services and provide appropriate referrals.

- Panhandle Community Services (PCS) represents the Panhandle's **U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development programs and Employment and training activities carried out under the Community Services Block Grant Act.** The Mission of PCS is to work as a community leader and partner in the Texas Panhandle to change the lives of low-income people by bridging the gap from poverty to self-sufficiency. PCS' services include the Family Development Program, Healthcare Navigation, Housing Assistance, Panhandle Transportation, Retired and Senior Volunteer Program, Tax Preparation and ACE Education, Utility Assistance, and Veterans Assistance.

The PWDB, WSP and PCS:

- Share resources and information, to the extent practicable, that will further the mutual objectives of the parties, such as assistance with training and related services to support the educational and employment success of shared customers;
 - Refer eligible clients, or clients who may be eligible, to the other party for services. This may include data sharing in order to expedite intake processes and reduce duplication of effort;
 - Accept referrals from the other party and provide services to eligible individuals as appropriate and as funding availability permits;
 - Coordinate intake, eligibility certification, assessment, counseling, development of an Individual Service Strategy, assignment to training, and placement of participants into private, public and nonprofit sector jobs that are unsubsidized and that meet their employment needs; and agree to make referrals to the other party;
 - Seek joint case management for dual-enrolled participants, and information sharing among the parties;
 - Review, on a regular basis, the status of joint participants.
 - Identify contact persons and staff who will be responsible for participating in interagency forums and discussion, including planning meetings and goal articulation, to ensure continued coordination between the respective programs and services;
 - Pursue joint training initiatives that will improve the ability of workforce stakeholders to flexibly respond to the diverse needs of workforce system clients; and
 - Coordinate utilizing the WSP and PCS offices, as needed by WSP and PCS staff, to administer participant services.
- The PWDB maintains a general MOU with Amarillo College that states “The purpose of this agreement is to define and formalize the cooperative and mutually beneficial relationship between the parties hereto relative to the workforce development programs administered by PRPC and delivered through Workforce Solutions Panhandle (WSP), and the adult education and post-secondary career and technical training programs conducted by AC.” Amarillo College offers a community college certificate of completion program in Kritser Diesel Basic Mechanics Technology/Technician at the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) William P. Clements Unit in Potter County. Individuals incarcerated in this Unit continue to have the opportunity to enroll in and complete this program and secure employment upon release. WSP encourages these individuals to connect with staff who have been able to assist with Job Search activities, and coordinate and support the **alignment of goals with the entities carrying out Reentry Services throughout the PWDA;**
 - The stated Scope of Work of Motivation Education & Training, Inc. (MET) includes initiatives that target low-income and disadvantaged populations throughout the agency’s service area. MET provides academic and vocational training to **migrant and seasonal farmworkers** with the objective of furthering participants’ economic self-sufficiency. MET also serves as the Sponsor Agency for the Senior Service America, Inc. (SSAI), **Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)**, operated under Title V of the Older Americans Act under an agreement which establishes general policy and specific procedures for delivery of employment and training services to migrant and seasonal farmworkers through the National Farm Workers Job Program (NFJP) and to economically disadvantaged individuals age 55, and older, related to the SCSEP program in the twenty-six counties of the Texas Panhandle.

The PWDB and WSP maintain a Memorandum of Understanding with MET in which the parties agree to:

- Work cooperatively to establish innovative and effective solutions to the problems facing low-income agricultural workers who reside and/or work in Texas.
- Jointly identify and enumerate the needs of Texas migrant and seasonal farmworkers and their families, and specify clear pathways for remediation and resolution.
- Coordinate intake, eligibility certification, assessment, counseling, development of an Individual Service Strategy, assignment to training, and placement of participants into private, public and nonprofit sector jobs that are unsubsidized and that meet their employment needs; and agree to make referrals to the other party;
- Coordinate with the One-Stop centers to identify eligible NFJP clients and coordinate core, training and intensive service delivery to maximize available resources and ensure that farmworker access to employer-driven workforce services available through the One-Stop system is streamlined and integrated more closely with WIOA activities.
- Allow the WSP location to serve as a host agency for placement of older individuals served by SCSEP;
- Coordinate utilizing the WSP office, as needed by MET staff, on an itinerant basis, to administer participant services for the NFJP and SCSEP programs.

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

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

- **Expanding access to employment, training, education, and support services for eligible individuals, particularly eligible individuals with barriers to employment:** WSP Business Services and PWDB staff will continue to provide assistance to community colleges and businesses to obtain training resources to increase students' and workers' skills, and build educational capacity in the region, including the Skills Development Fund, and other grant opportunities which expand capacity. Workforce resources pledged to such prospective projects includes labor market information, grant writing assistance, building employer consortia, assistance with eligible students' tuition, fees and materials costs, and job placement. To respond to continued employer input regarding deficiencies in the work-readiness/soft skills of job applicants and employees, additional work-readiness training options will be made available to job seekers and targeted populations through new tools to be provided in the WSP office in Amarillo, and online, on the WSP website. The PWDB and WSP continue to offer training using Online Learning Management Systems (OLMS), such as MATRIX LMS.

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

- **Facilitating the development of career pathways and co-enrollment, as appropriate, in core programs, including specific career pathways:** WSP case management staff are well-trained in assessing customer workforce needs and collaborating with customers to develop employment plans which meet the customers immediate and future needs. Staff work diligently to identify and develop effective career pathways which reflect realistic employment goals that can involve

occupational training, as well as work-based training, designed to meet the prescribed objectives of the plan. Staff is made aware of sources for labor market and career information, and to look for every opportunity for co-enrollment and integrated case management to enhance desired outcomes. PWDB policy exists for exploring community partners and agencies which may assist in meeting the needs of customers for training and employment.

- **Improving access to activities leading to postsecondary credential or industry recognized credential:** The availability of short-term training options, that can lead to occupations in demand, is limited in the Panhandle. Working with postsecondary institutions to develop more training opportunities involves identifying training needs of employers, assisting colleges with grant applications to generate funding for curriculum development, and covering tuition expenses for eligible students. Integrated language, basic education and occupational skills training are also limited in the region. Most of the occupations that have been targeted for training require a relatively high level of basic education for successful completion of certificates and degrees. However, Amarillo College has piloted instructional programs for Limited-English speakers in the In-Demand Occupation of Certified Nurse Aide, and the Target Occupations of Machinist and Auto Mechanics.

The PWDB continues to partner with regional Economic Development Corporations (EDCs) to apply for High Demand Job Training (HDJT) grant funding to match the EDCs sales tax investments in a dollar-for dollar match, for WIOA-allowable, high demand job training activities which may include individual participant recruitment, skills assessment, job search skills improvement, job search, job referral, equipment and minor renovation of facilities used for program-related job training. The PWDB has facilitated the purchase of equipment for occupational training of students at the post-secondary level at Clarendon College's Childress, Clarendon, Pampa, and Shamrock Centers; and at Frank Phillips College's Rahl Campus in Dalhart, Allen Campus in Perryton, and its main campus in Borger. The PWDB has also facilitated the purchase of equipment for occupational training of students in Career & Technology Education (CTE) for the local Independent School Districts (ISDs) of Bushland, Canyon, Highland Park, and River Road; and for the Amarillo ISD's AmTech Career Academy.

While the PWDB has utilized its awarded grant funds mostly to purchase equipment for the regional community colleges and Independent School Districts (ISDs), future applications are planned to include a combination of all the allowable activities to supplement Career & Technology Education (CTE) training programs throughout the PWDA. This will include Dual-Credit and Career Technical Education Programs as aligning with TWC's Strategic Planning which utilizes funding "to support, create and expand dual-credit and CTE programs that are highly technical in nature, address local demands for high-skill, in-demand and high-wage industries, and allow high school students to complete college credit hours. These programs respond to industry demands for skilled workers in technical fields, while helping high school students prepare for employment or education opportunities."

Part 4: One-Stop Service Delivery

A. One-Stop Service Delivery System

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

- **Continuous Improvement of Eligible Providers:** The PWDB adheres to local performance requirements for the determination of initial eligibility of Eligible Training Provider (ETP) program applications in alignment with TWC's State performance standards. A training provider may apply for certification for any of its programs. However, if the program does not prepare students for

employment in an occupation on the PWDB's Target Occupations list, the school must justify inclusion by demonstrating that the occupation is indeed in demand.

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

WIOA emphasizes the importance of training services providers to afford the highest quality training services and be responsive to In-Demand and emerging industries. Training provider evaluation criteria must include documentation of partnerships with employers related to the particular training program, and providers must document financial stability.

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

- ✓ Positive relationships are sustained in the region with all local providers that offer training in Target and In-demand Occupations. Providers must coordinate with the PWDB to (1) apply to be added to the ETP Statewide List as an Eligible Training Provider, (2) add the providers' programs to the ETP System, (3) present information for the PWDB for consideration in adding a Target Occupation to the PWDB's Target Occupation List, and (4) research other resources in which the PWDB may assist in leveraging to allow customers to receive training (e.g., apprenticeship programs);
 - ✓ To ensure continuous improvement of ETP-certified programs, labor market information is provided to training providers, including input from employers and other workforce customers. In addition, periodic meetings are held with training providers and employers to discuss labor market skill and training needs, prior to the submission to the PWDB for updates to the Target Occupations list;
 - ✓ Maximum flexibility is provided to training providers that apply to certify programs for WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker customer training. Programs that consistently produce student completions that lead to training-related employment are retained on the ETP List. If a substantial percentage of WIOA participants do not complete the program or cannot obtain training-related employment after graduation, PWDB staff will conduct an evaluation with the provider and the WSP staff to determine what improvements, if any, are necessary to increase the program's WIOA student success rate; and
 - ✓ To ensure that training is available and the need for skills is communicated to the public, skilled trades occupations with workers who are expected to retire faster than they can be replaced are included on the Target Occupations list. These occupations include high-demand opportunities in Construction trades such as Carpenters, Electricians and Plumbers; repair workers such as Auto Mechanics, Diesel Mechanics, Heating, Air Conditioning and Refrigeration Mechanics, and Industrial Machinery Mechanics; and manufacturing technicians such as Machinists and Welders. Registered apprenticeship provides some of the local training for these occupations, including those in Construction. Referrals are made to apprenticeship opportunities by WSP staff.
- **Meeting Employment Needs of Employers, Workers, and Job Seekers:** The PWDB will continue to identify opportunities and develop solutions for improving performance and outcomes that have cross-partner implications and hold significant strategic value to the overall success of the workforce

system's ability to meet its vision and mission to:

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

The PWDB recognizes that along with system partners, it is responsible for the delivery of workforce education and training programs and related services, as well as education programs that support career preparation and advancement. The PWDB, WSP, and community partners continue to follow the principal of full integration of core programs, with a strategy of alignment, coordination, and integration of education, employment and training programs. The PWDB continues its objective of structuring collaboration of programs, initiatives and outcomes, to avoid duplication with strategic plans of partner agencies.

The PWDB continues to prepare individuals for employment by supporting education and training that equips individuals with in-demand skills as identified by employers by:

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

- **Facilitating Access to Services Including Remote Areas and Technology:** The PWDB understands that the workforce system must have the capacity to meet the needs of all current and future customers: employers, system program and service providers, and workers, wherever they are in their careers. Customers must be assured that wherever they enter the workforce system, there is a pathway through the system by instituting a "no-closed door" culture to ensure successful outcomes or referrals for customers of the workforce system programs and services. Any point of entry provides access to the full continuum of programs and services.

The PWDB and its partners are committed to customer satisfaction, data-driven program improvement, and continuous improvement and innovation. The ability to accurately assess customer satisfaction with and across workforce system elements and translate this data into useful actions is essential to best meet the needs of workforce system customers. Two innovative products that the PWDB and WSP have recently deployed in the area of customer service:

- ✓ WSP is incorporating Quick Response (QR) Code technology into its Customer Satisfaction Survey process. This technology allows customers to access the optic label provided on WSP printed and digital media and, in a streamlined, convenient, and confidential method, respond on their customer service experience.
- ✓ The PWDB has purchased the digital communication management (DCM) software Granicus GovDelivery to enable WSP to build content to be shared with job seekers and connect/distribute through a number of different mediums, including email, Short Message Service (SMS)/text messages, Really Simple Syndication (RSS) feeds, and social media integration, including, but not limited to, a monthly newsletter.

With 26 counties encompassing 26,000 square miles, the size and scale of the Texas Panhandle presents a daunting challenge to the delivery of vital workforce services to the populace, as the PWDB utilizes limited rural “brick-and-mortar” facilities. Supplementing the main WSP office in Amarillo, the PWDB oversees one full-service rural WSP office in Borger and one itinerate location in Hereford. Although more workforce services are provided online, and the enhanced use of technology allows for better in-person services, many individuals still lack access to fast, reliable, and affordable broadband connectivity. An additional component to this challenge is the fact that the rural communities tend to have the most need for workers, and yet have the smallest labor force.

Fully utilizing the PWDB’s mobile workforce unit, which offers a comprehensive menu of workforce services on a consistent basis to customers in rural areas of the Panhandle who have had limited to no workforce services activity in their area, requires additional approaches. The WSP Business Services team conducts business services activities with a focus on connecting with, and serving, rural employers, by working closely with WSP staff operating the mobile unit to conduct activities that promote full utilization of the unit in the rural communities. Coordinating planning schedules ensure employers in rural communities are introduced to, and delivered, essential workforce services. Increased employer awareness of workforce services will increase job placement opportunities, and advance the potential for developing work-based training and internships. The PWDB’s mobile workforce unit maintains a schedule placing the unit open to customers in different rural communities for at least two days per week, and is available to be stationed at a specified rural location, for employer hiring related functions, such as job fairs, career exploration events, and other opportunities specifically aimed at connecting rural employers with job seekers, and strengthening linkages to workforce services.

Additionally, access to workforce services for rural communities is enhanced through a strategy for improvements in rural wireless Internet connectivity. Through such methods as creating MiFi hotspots throughout the region, and identifying, and advertising, appropriate rural locations which offer free Wi-Fi, such as libraries and courthouses, increased and improved access to Internet-based applications for career exploration and job matching and information about occupational and work-based training opportunities can expand and enhance service delivery to rural customers who do not reside within reasonable travel distance to any WSP office. Further strategies include:

- ✓ Outreaching workforce services to the public through multiple electronic sources, primarily web-based media. This includes the continued development of social media utilization, to promote services and provide immediate responses to customer needs, and increase social media presence on the most popular websites and web applications that appeal to, and will reach, the younger population;
- ✓ Regularly updating the WSPanhandle.com website with interactive and easily accessed resources, such as job search training videos, and maintaining relevant content. The WSP website has been designed to provide, to remote users, services that are like those offered in the brick-and-mortar

offices. Resources available on the website include a user interface; interactive activities such as job search training videos; additional methods for direct, real-time communication to obtain staff assistance; and an approach to reach and engage disconnected youth using appealing smartphone web applications that offer youth the same multitude of services available on the website as those at WSP offices;

- ✓ Maintaining personal contact, through the WSP Business Services Unit, with employers in rural communities, assessing needs and developing customized solutions which address recruiting challenges and skills gaps; and supporting WSP Business Services team members and other key staff continuing to visit employers in our rural communities, assessing needs “face-to-face” and developing customized solutions which address recruiting and skills gaps. Rural partners continue to provide itinerant locations for staff to meet with customers throughout the region, including community-based organizations such as Panhandle Community Services, as well as libraries, colleges, independent school districts and public offices. Combined with regularly scheduled staff visits to rural locations utilizing the mobile unit, offering computer access with Internet connectivity for accessing TWC’s Job Matching Platform, WorkInTexas.com and other employment services, assures rural customers that WSP still has a demonstrated rural presence and can provide services in their communities; and
- ✓ Continuing to host job fairs, career fairs, and hiring events for job openings with rural employers, and expanding the quality and quantity of focused events at locations in the rural communities.

□ The principals within the Panhandle Adult Education Literacy (AEL) Consortium partnering with the PWDB and WSP, are Amarillo College, Region 16 Education Service Center, Clarendon College and Frank Phillips College. These partners maintain facilities in Amarillo and in several communities throughout the PWDA, in addition to employing both traditional instruction and scaled distance-learning options to serve AEL students throughout the Panhandle, including for rural areas.

The PWDB is committed to working with its AEL partners in the collection, reporting and analysis of data, in a consistent and useful manner, which is essential in making effective referrals, identifying potential co-enrollments, demonstrating outcomes, determining if changes are required or desired, and establishing benchmarks for future performance.

□ Texas Workforce Solutions-Vocational Rehabilitation Services is a partner within the Texas Workforce System to support job seekers with disabilities as they prepare for, obtain, maintain, or advance in competitive integrated employment. Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services for adults, individuals who are blind or visually impaired, individuals who are deaf or hearing impaired, students, and older individuals who are blind and in need of Independent Living Services, are available through the co-location of VR staff in the WSP office in Amarillo. VR staff also maintains a VR office in Pampa for services for adults with a physical, or mental impairment, blindness or a visual impairment, deafness, or a hearing impairment, or a brain injury that affects the individual’s ability to find, keep, or advance in meaningful employment. WSP is committed to support everyone who wants to work, with supports and services to help them get a job or keep a job or advance in a career. This includes identification and referral of workforce customers who may be eligible for VR Services. WSP maintains information on its website on the newly launched “[Start My VR](#)”, an online self-referral form that offers a convenient way for individuals with disabilities to take the steps toward employment by meeting with VR staff to learn about VR Services and meet with a VR Counselor.

- **Compliance with Non-discrimination Provisions Consistent with WIOA §188 and Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.** TWC is required to monitor whether its grant subrecipients are complying with the equal opportunity laws of the U.S. Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), a collection of federal laws and regulations that govern labor, including employment, wages, and

mediation. Under (29 CFR § 38.31(b)), TWC conducts annual reviews of the PWDB's Equal Opportunity (EO) policies and procedures stating that EO "is a critical subject because (a) these rules assure all customers full access to every program, and also (b) these rules protect the civil rights of customers, employees and the public." TWC's Equal Opportunity Compliance Department (EOCD) completed its FY 2024 review for the PWDB and WSP reporting that "The EOCD has no findings and there are no issues which would necessitate a corrective action plan."

PWDB EO Policy states, "The PWDB with its Contractor, WSP, as recipients of WIOA funds through TWC, complies with appropriate requirements and standards set forth by the PWDB, TWC, the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL), and applicable federal and State Rules and Regulations; and disseminates EO policy;" and includes, but is not limited to, the provisions summarized below:

- ✓ The PWDB and WSP work to ensure effective communication with people with disabilities. The PWDB and WSP also make appropriate auxiliary aids and services available without charge to ensure effective communication. The PWDB and WSP will generally, upon request, provide appropriate aids and services leading to effective communication for qualified individuals with disabilities so they can participate equally in WSP's services, programs, and activities. These aids and services may include qualified sign language interpreters, documents in Braille, and other ways of making information and communications accessible to individuals who have speech, hearing, or vision impairments.
- ✓ When a qualified individual with a disability requires an auxiliary aid or service to ensure effective communication, the individual may request the auxiliary aid or service of his or her choice, from any WSP or PWDB staff. All requests will be forwarded to appropriate management and the PWDB and WSP will give primary consideration to the choice expressed by the individual. Primary consideration means that the PWDB and WSP will honor the choice, unless it can show that another equally effective means of communication is available, or that use of the means chosen would result in (1) a fundamental alteration in the nature of its service, program, or activity, or (2) an undue financial or administrative burden.
- ✓ In addition to meeting all the requirements in TWC Workforce Development (WD) Letter 16-14, Equal Opportunity Notice, as amended, including provision of forms for individuals who have vision or hearing impairments, WSP staff will ensure all workforce customers sign an Orientation to Discrimination Complaint Procedures Form, (English or Spanish, as appropriate), at first contact. Customers will be provided with the signed original, and copies of signed forms which will be made accessible in electronic or paper files per retention requirements stated in TWC's Financial Manual for Grants and Contracts (FMGC) and PWDB policy. WSP will ensure that all WSP staff responsible for discrimination complaint processing are adequately trained in these processes and procedures. WSP will also post the EO in the Law Notice - English, and the EO in the Law Notice - Spanish, per TWC WD Letter 16-14, as amended.
- ✓ TWC WD letter 18-07, Discrimination Complaint Procedures, as amended, regarding processing discrimination complaints, requires that a Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) representative must be identified at all facilities where a VR program operates, whether the VR office is stand-alone or integrated into a Workforce Solutions Office, and requires that individual be responsible for receiving discrimination complaints from VR customers. WSP will refer all such complaints to designated VR staff.
- ✓ Per 29 CFR §38.40 and TWC WD Letter 02-19, Babel Notices, as amended, WSP must ensure that vital information in written documents or communications is translated into languages spoken by a significant number or portion of the population eligible to be served by Workforce Solutions

Offices in the local workforce development area.

- ✓ Translations must be made readily available in hard copy, upon request, or electronically. WSP will include the Babel notice provided in TWC WD 02-19, as amended, in English, Spanish, and/or Vietnamese on written communications of vital information. Babel Notices from TWC WD 02-19, as amended, are as follows:
 - English: *This document contains vital information about requirements, rights, determinations, and/or responsibilities for accessing workforce system services. Language services, including the interpretation/translation of this document, are available free of charge upon request.*
 - Spanish: *Este documento contiene información importante sobre los requisitos, los derechos, las determinaciones y las responsabilidades del acceso a los servicios del sistema de la fuerza laboral. Hay disponibles servicios de idioma, incluida la interpretación y la traducción de documentos, sin ningún costo y a solicitud.*

□ **Workforce Partners' Roles and Resource Contributions:** Continued collaboration with partners in business and education, and with local community organizations, will enhance the PWDB's workforce system capacity for delivering effective employment and training services, while meeting required performance. Successfully aligning resources and responding to expected shortages of workers in skilled trades and technical occupations due to the skills gap created by employee turnover, combined with the increasing demand for a highly-technically skilled workforce, are essential. The PWDB coordinates with public agencies, nonprofit organizations and private sector businesses in the region to carry out its mission, such as:

- ✓ The region's three community colleges, Amarillo College, Clarendon College and Frank Phillips College, and the public university, West Texas A&M University, are essential, as these institutions provide most postsecondary education supported by the PWDB and numerous methods of support to help students be successful;
- ✓ Work continues to encourage and support local partners to pursue Skills Development Fund (SDF) grant opportunities and to apply for and obtain grants such as TWC's Jobs and Education for Texas (JET) grants.
- ✓ The Panhandle's Economic Development Corporations (EDCs) and related organizations provide financial support for occupational training and related equipment, and business development that leads to increased numbers of jobs. EDC involvement in TWC's High Demand Job Training (HDJT) Projects assures workforce system alignment with local economic development resources. Since 2018, TWC HDJT Grant Awards have provided nearly \$1.2 million, which was matched "dollar-for-dollar" by the EDCs, for the PWDA. The PWDB plans to continue requesting these HDJT grant opportunities, as the EDCs make funding available to match the typically \$150,000 annual offerings, which have supplemented Career & Technology Education (CTE) training programs throughout the PWDA;
- ✓ In alignment with the Jobs for Veterans Act, the PWDB and WSP provide priority service to veterans and spouses of certain veterans for the receipt of employment, training, and placement services in any job training program directly funded, in whole or in part, by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL).

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

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

- TWC's Panhandle Region Hiring Red, White & You! Annual Job Fairs in partnership with

the Texas Veterans Commission (TVC). The 2024 Hiring Red, White & You! Job Fair was hosted on 11/7/2024 at the WSP office in Amarillo, featuring 34 participating employers, including AFLAC Insurance, Amarillo Police Department, BSA Health System, Children's Orchard Academy Early Education and Preschool, First Student Inc. Transportation Services, JBS Meat Packing & Processing, U.S. Department of Energy's National Nuclear Security Administration, (NNSA), Northwest Texas Healthcare System, Pantex Plant, Phillips 66 Energy, SAS Retail Services, Sodexo Food Services & Facilities Management, and United Supermarkets. As part of the event, each employer was asked to complete a survey aimed at helping the WSP Business Services Unit evaluate the effectiveness of their services. The survey covered aspects such as the event's quality, the number of job seekers with whom each employer engaged, and provided an opportunity for employers to share their feedback and suggestions. WSP was able to enter 84 job postings from participating employers into TWC's Job Matching Platform, WorkInTexas.com. The event had strong attendance, with 371 job seekers, including 73 veterans.

- TWC's Texas Veterans Leadership Program (TVLP). The Veterans Resource Coordinator for the program is provided access to the WSP facility in Amarillo and coordinates with the Texas Veterans Commission (TVC) and WSP's Business Services Unit on the Governor's Texas Operation: Welcome Home - Transitioning Texas Troops and TWC's We Hire Vets campaigns. The Coordinator maintains relationships with veteran services organizations including Family Support Services of Amarillo's Veterans Resource Center, StarCare Specialty Health System's VetStar Veteran Services, Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), American Legion Post 54, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Panhandle Regional Veterans Treatment Court (PRVTC), and the Roan-Creek Marine Corp League, connecting veterans with the resources and tools needed to lead productive lives and enjoy the benefits of the society they have served.

✓ Region 16 Education Service Center (ESC):

- a) Continues to partner with the PWDB and WSP to promote TWC's Externship for Teachers Initiative which unites workforce, industry and education representatives to promote an effective workforce system. During the summer, teachers are assigned to a partner business and shadow workers to the assist the teachers to better understand work-based applications of what they teach. This experience is designed to strengthen the connection between business and education, helping teachers learn what skills are critical to small and large businesses and promoting lesson plans that demonstrate how classroom skills are used at work. PWDB Grant funding is utilized for providing stipends to participating teachers. Use of Region 16's facilities for activities, such as teacher and employer orientations, and the assistance of Region 16's staff in identifying teachers potentially interested in the Initiative, serve as "In-Kind" match for the program; and
 - b) Is also responsible for the area's Head Start and Early Head Start program, offering free, high-quality child development services to income eligible families with children ages 0-5 years old. Head Start and Early Head Start is child-focused learning, but also provides comprehensive services to the child's family;
- ✓ To promote Apprenticeship programs between regional businesses, Independent School Districts (ISDs) and community colleges, the PWDB maintains Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with the Plumbers & Pipefitters Local 404, the United Brotherhood of Carpenters Local 665, the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 602 and the West Texas Electrical Joint Apprenticeship & Training Committee (JATC). These MOUs formalize the responsibilities

of the parties to:

- Provide information on apprenticeship and training opportunities to PRPC and WSP;
 - Make employers and individuals seeking training aware of WSP resources and services and provide appropriate referrals.
 - Market the apprenticeship programs to businesses in the PWDA as a means to recruit and train qualified workers;
 - Refer WSP customers to the apprenticeship programs;
 - Provide workforce center space to the apprenticeship providers for use in interviewing, testing and conducting informational meetings associated with apprenticeship and training opportunities; and
 - Provide automated links to apprenticeship-related websites through WSP public-use computers.
- ✓ Amarillo College houses the region's adult basic education program, overseeing Adult Basic Education (ABE), General Educational Development (GED), and English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction throughout the area, delivered both by onsite teachers and distance learning. ABE services include assessment of workforce customers with limited English skills;
 - ✓ The area's Independent School Districts (ISDs) collaborate with the PWDB and WSP to help at-risk youth complete their high school diplomas, prepare for careers and transition to postsecondary education. Alternative secondary school, tutoring, career exploration and assessment, child care and other services may be provided;
 - ✓ Foster youth are a priority population. TWC funds transition centers serving both current and former youth. The centers address critical life barriers facing youth who have or will soon age out of the foster care system. They provide access to education, employment training and services, life skills classes, mentoring opportunities, and appropriate support services. WSP and the PWDB continue to develop and nurture successful partnerships with the Amarillo Foster Youth Transition Center, at Buckner Children and Family Services, to improve and enhance the collaborative process of connecting with foster youth and provide comprehensive workforce services, including career exploration and occupational training or work-based training.
 - ✓ The Texas Health and Human Services Commission's (HHSC's) Texas Works Path to Success Program aims to reduce the effects of situational and generational poverty by increasing economic self-sufficiency, educational opportunities, and housing stability of its participants. HHSC supports WSP staff efforts to help these Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Employment & Training (E&T) customers locate, enter and retain employment;
 - ✓ WSP coordinates with the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) to provide information to local Parole Division Officers, regarding Job Seeker services for its Releasees, to enable the Officers to make referrals to WSP to help these individuals locate, enter and retain employment;
 - ✓ Many other local organizations and agencies, such as Panhandle Community Services, Catholic Family Services, Inc., the Salvation Army, Panhandle Independent Living Center, and Amarillo's Downtown Women's Center, provide significant employment and related services. WSP staff coordinate with over 100 faith- and community-based governmental and private organizations in the region to leverage resources on behalf of customers;
 - ✓ The PWDB continues to engage a Student HireAbility Navigator to fulfil the stated purpose of this position "To improve access to employment and training services and increase employment opportunities for job seekers with disabilities". The Panhandle's Student HireAbility Navigator is fully involved in serving as a resource in the PWDA by "supporting, expanding, and enhancing

the provision of pre-employment transition services that are provided by VR”, co-located in the WSP office in Amarillo. Through active participation in numerous relevant local committee meetings, attending local job fairs and transitional fairs, reaching more employers and service providers as well as educators, the Navigator continually identifies and reaches out to crucial partners who have shared goals and objectives to bring to the table. The Navigator promotes the Texas HireAbility Campaign at meetings with educators, employers and community partners to increase the awareness of the benefits of hiring people with disabilities as well as increasing access to pre-employment transition services.

- ✓ Panhandle Community Services (PCS) continues their partnership with the PWDB and WSP, to enhance employment services to their customers. PCS identifies customers who need assistance with workforce services to obtain full-time employment or complete short-term training leading to self-sufficiency and makes referrals to WSP, to begin the process of determining an individual’s career pathway. PCS’s work-based services include subsidized work experience arrangements and referrals, when appropriate, to WSP, for short-term training. The partners collaborate on the provision of supportive services to referred customers who are eligible to participate in these activities, and job search assistance is provided when customers are job-ready.
- ✓ Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) provides training and employment services to low-income job seekers age 55 and older to assist them in securing unsubsidized employment in the public and private sectors. Program participants earn while they learn, gaining competitive job skills and refining existing skills through paid, part-time, on-the-job training assignments at non-profit organizations and government agencies. During training, participants earn minimum wage and provide valuable community services. Utilizing designated office space in WSP in Amarillo, Motivation Education & Training, Inc. (MET), serving as the Sponsor Agency for the Senior Service America (SSAI), and as the Panhandle’s SCSEP grantee, provides training, counseling, employment assistance, and paid, part-time community service assignments designed to move older workers into unsubsidized employment, which ensures that job seekers identified by WSP, are likely to benefit from services.
- ✓ Motivation, Education and Training, Inc. (MET), referenced above, also serves as the Panhandle region’s National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) contractor, which includes mutual referrals for services, coordination of the delivery career and intensive services co-enrollment of individuals eligible for WIOA and NFJP who would benefit from the services of both programs. Partnering activities, with WSP, include joint case management and employment planning, and joint staff training.

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)

Employer engagement is the key to meeting the Panhandle’s regional workforce needs. The PWDB utilizes WSP’s Business Services Unit to assist and inform the PWDB regarding the design and delivery of services based on business and industry needs; enhancing employer engagement; and supporting industry partnerships under WIOA. WSP’s Employment Services Representatives, working under the Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Services (ES) program, work collaboratively with the Business Services Unit to coordinate and deliver employment and other support services to both job seekers and employers. Strategies and services include:

- Facilitating employer engagement, including small employers and employers in PWDB In-Demand Industry sectors, In-Demand Occupations, and Target Occupations by:

- ✓ Identifying skill needs;
- ✓ Developing and validating career pathways;
- ✓ Promoting communication networks between companies, between managers and workers, and between companies and their communities and educational institutions;
- Supporting the PWDA system that meets needs of businesses by:
 - ✓ Aligning educational curriculum to meet industry needs;
 - ✓ Identifying and developing cost-effective training solutions for companies involving employers' incumbent worker needs to leverage Skills Development Fund (SDF) grant opportunities;
 - ✓ Identifying barriers to "entry level employment" and develop strategies to remove those barriers;
 - ✓ Identifying and addressing organizational and Human Resource challenges;
 - ✓ Developing and providing ideas to increase productivity; and
 - ✓ Identifying and developing business intermediaries to facilitate identifying and meeting employers' immediate hiring and training needs;
- Coordinating workforce development and economic development activities by:
 - ✓ Pursuing creative ideas and methods to improve program service delivery design; and
 - ✓ Engaging in strategic planning with community partners and use data to inform decision-making;
- Promoting work-based learning opportunities, entrepreneurial-skills training and microenterprise services by:
 - ✓ Expanding the utilization of high-quality work-based training by collaborating with PWDB staff in revising policies for customized training and On-the-Job-Training (OJT), and providing training to workforce staff on methods of seeking opportunities for these types of training situations which offer the highest potential for success. This includes developing training contracts which produce highly desirable outcomes in the shortest amount of time and with the least expenditures;
 - ✓ Supporting ongoing efforts to expand and modernize Registered Apprenticeship (RA) by expanding the number of programs and apprentices, diversifying the industries that utilize RA, and increasing access to and completion of apprenticeships for underrepresented populations and underserved communities; and
 - ✓ Promoting business development and strategic planning for small businesses, offering a variety of services, including information regarding governmental services, workforce training programs, contracting opportunities, small business resource referrals, and other areas relevant to small business inception and growth;
- Strengthening the links between one-stop and unemployment insurance by:
 - ✓ Assisting Unemployment Insurance (UI) claimants and employers who wish to use WSP resources to transmit materials to TWC for claims and appeals adjudication purposes.

C. Coordination of Wagner-Peyser Services

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

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

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

Such services to job seekers include:

- ✓ Public access computers, copiers, and telephones for job search;
- ✓ Information and assistance provided to job seekers about available workforce services and programs, both in-person and virtually through phone, email or online access;
- ✓ Assessment resources for self-evaluation of labor market information and determining transferable skills and work preferences;
- ✓ Information about occupations in demand; local employers and their skills needs;
- ✓ Work-based career exploration for eligible youth and adults.
- ✓ Employment planning, by mapping successful career pathways which include the steps needed to prepare for and/or enter employment;
- ✓ Guiding job seekers on effectively building a record in TWC's Job Matching Platform, WorkInTexas.com and completing job matches based on their profile;
- ✓ Staff-directed matching of applicants to job openings, using WorkinTexas.com;
- ✓ Seminars and workshops to help job seekers find and retain employment, such as general job search including online job searching and networking, creating professional resumes and cover letters that highlight skills and experience, and interviewing;
- ✓ Interview preparation including training and practice sessions to improve interview skills and build confidence;
- ✓ Work readiness preparation;
- ✓ Individualized placement services for eligible job seekers, including job development;
- ✓ Rapid Response services for workers after a layoff announcement and/or closure, including all the above services and assessment of transferable skills, reemployment planning and referral to training/training assistance as needed;
- ✓ Financial assistance needed by eligible job seekers to find and retain employment, including support for transportation, child care and other services;

Employment Services (ES) provided under the Wagner-Peyser Act is a core program required under WIOA and an integral component of the one-stop delivery system. Integration of ES in Workforce Solution Panhandle will continue to evolve as TWC works to implement the WPA Staffing Final Rule. The PWDB continues to:

- **Maximize coordination** - WSP's ES staff plays a vital role in enhancing employability for job seekers through career counseling, workshops, job referrals, etc., providing almost 50,000 services both in-person and virtually. Through WSP's Business Services Unit (BSU) and the ES group, WSP offers a comprehensive range of employment-related services to employers across the PWDA including:
 - Job posting and recruitment assistance;
 - Candidate screening and referral;

- Onsite hiring events, job fairs, and recruitment events;
 - Access to current Labor Market Information specific to the Panhandle region;
 - Employee training resources and upskilling programs;
 - Work-based learning programs - supports apprenticeships, internships, and on-the-job training (OJT) opportunities, with options for partial wage reimbursement for employers participating in OJT programs;
 - Incentive and tax credit assistance - guides employers through available tax credits, like the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC), and other hiring incentives, providing application support for maximum benefit;
 - Layoff aversion and Rapid Response services for businesses facing layoffs, closures, or workforce changes;
 - Specialized support for hiring veterans, including access to veterans' talent pools and guidance on tax incentives and veteran-friendly recognition programs;
 - Interview facilities equipped with essential amenities, allowing employers to conduct interviews in a convenient, professional setting;
 - Employee retention strategies - advises employers sharing best practices for creating a positive workplace culture, improving satisfaction, and reducing turnover; and
 - Compliance Assistance to helps employers navigate labor laws and regulations to ensure a legal and safe work environment.
- **Improve service delivery** - WSP's Employment Services have significantly impacted Panhandle communities, with nearly 19,000 office visits, including over 15,000 in Amarillo, highlighting strong community engagement. The services have reached over 7,100 individuals, providing essential employment support. With almost 20,000 job referrals leading to over 1,400 hires, WSP effectively connects job seekers with opportunities, contributing to lower unemployment rates. Additionally, more than 6,000 new registrations on WorkInTexas.com show proactive efforts by individuals to engage with the job market.
- **Avoid duplication** - the complete integration of ES staff into WSP's workforce system eliminates the likelihood of duplication of Wagner-Peyser services with other one-stop services. ES staff maintain current information on availability of services from and referral to local community resources whenever and wherever possible to maximize WIOA funds and prevent duplication of services.

D. Integrated, Technology-Enabled Intake and Case Management

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

WSP staff use WorkInTexas.com, a free online job search and matching system operated by TWC, to connect job seekers with employers, help job seekers build resumes, send email notifications of job postings, provides career tools, and helps employers post job openings and find candidates in the PWDA. They post and customize job listings, ensuring targeted outreach to relevant demographics. The platform's candidate search and matching features streamline the hiring process by identifying potential candidates for employers. Monitoring tools and communication features enhance interactions, making WorkInTexas.com a vital resource for workforce development and local businesses.

WorkInTexas.com in 2024			
Employers		Employer Job Postings	
Total Services to Employers	19,920	Job Orders Placed	5,245
New Employers Registered	132	Employers Posting Jobs	572
Unduplicated Employers Served	1,573	Job Openings	9,763
Subsidized/Unpaid Employment Agreement	112	Job Referrals	19,720
Rapid Response	6	Applications Submitted	15,160

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

- **Implementing and Transitioning to WorkInTexas.com for programs carried out under WIOA and One-Stop Partners.** In April of 2024, TWC transitioned its case management system application for its workforce system customers (excluding the Child Care Services program), from The Workforce Information System of Texas (TWIST) into WorkInTexas.com.

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

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

Features under the case management application of WorkInTexas.com now enable staff to:

- ✓ Upload essential Form I-9 acceptable identity documents (i.e., Driver's license or State-issued photo I.D. card, or U.S. Military card or draft record), Social Security card, and additional documents, such as education or training credentials, required for customer intake, for an electronic, paperless record; and
- ✓ Record, and track staff referrals, made on behalf of the customer, to outside entities for work-readiness activities (i.e., Adult Basic Education (ABE), General Educational Development (GED), English as a Second Language (ESL), tutoring, and comprehensive guidance and counseling, including drug and alcohol abuse and mental health counseling, as needed) and support services (i.e., transportation assistance, or obtaining work-related items). Previously, referrals were only noted in a customer's case file with no consolidated reporting mechanism available for management review.

E. Third Party Partnership in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training (SNAP E&T) Programs

*Reference: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training
Third-Party Partnership Guide*

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) permits states to use 50 Percent Federal Reimbursement Funds (50-50 Funds) to create partnerships with local entities to provide SNAP E&T services to SNAP recipients. Through these third-party reimbursement (TPR) partnerships, third-party partners (TPPs), such as community colleges, local governments, private-sector entities, and community-based organizations, supply funding for the provision of SNAP E&T services and are reimbursed up to 50 cents per dollar expended. TPP service models present the PWDB with opportunities to expand services to SNAP recipients who may not currently receive them due to funding limitations. The TPP service model allows local entities to recoup up to half of their service costs, which creates incentive to provide services that help SNAP recipients.

In 2024, the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) and TWC began working on a joint initiative, with the goal of all of Texas' 28 Workforce Development Boards to be using the TPP service model by 2029. The expected outcome for a SNAP recipient in a third-party partnership initiative is full-time unsubsidized employment.

The PWDB will contract with appropriate TPPs, such as Amarillo College's Advocacy and Resource Center; Goodwill Industries of Northwest Texas; Family Support Services; and Wesley Community Center, to provide SNAP E&T services to eligible SNAP recipients, such as:

- ✓ Employment planning and assessment;
- ✓ Identification of a SNAP recipient's strengths and barriers to employment;
- ✓ Vocational training incorporating:
 - Occupational assessment and remedial and entry-level job-skills training;
 - Short-term, prevocational, entrepreneurial training;
 - Customized training;
 - Institutional skills training;
 - Upgrade training; and
 - Vocational education.
- ✓ Nonvocational Education programs or activities to improve basic skills or employability, incorporating the following:
 - Adult basic education
 - Basic skills and literacy
 - HSE and high school instruction
 - ESL
 - Postsecondary education that does not result in a baccalaureate or advanced degree
 - Work readiness training

In addition to basic skills and literacy, workforce development services must include financial literacy training, and services may include providing child care assistance, when necessary.

Part 5: Workforce Investment Activities

A. Rapid Response Activity Coordination

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

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

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

In 2024, WSP's Business Services Unit provided Rapid Response services to vital support to companies like Northwest Texas Healthcare System, Panhandle Community Services, and Camping World. These services extended to businesses impacted by natural disasters, reinforcing the PWDB's commitment to local resilience and recovery.

Rapid Response activities in rural areas may require temporary, onsite or local offices where WSP staff can meet the needs of affected workers. Both employers and job seekers will have access to "back office" staff who can respond quickly to telephone and electronic communications, in order to provide services to customers who prefer not to go to a WSP office or who are not based in Amarillo.

The PWDB continues to collaborate with other workforce development board areas for the purpose of sharing information to further build capacity for seamless workforce operations and service delivery to workforce customers during a Rapid Response event. Topics discussed in face-to-face meetings range from best practices for developing and fostering successful working partnerships with local entities, to cost sharing, procurements, and budgets, as well as special projects to identify opportunities to leverage critical resources designed to promote economic development in the Panhandle region.

These collaborations focus on identifying best practices for assessing skills training of job seekers and employers to pinpoint relevant credentials necessary for successful job placement and retention, which includes the participation of several employers and multiple local colleges; develop new partnerships with out-of-state partners in adjacent states such as Oklahoma and New Mexico, to share "labor sheds"; develop a strategic approach to producing regional labor market information; and host combined regional job fairs and other events which support workforce development; respond to economic development challenges and ultimately better serve the workforce customers in these adjacent areas.

B. Youth Activities and Services

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

The PWDB and WSP continue to support a designated staff position to enhance youth and young adult activities. This Career Outreach Specialist hosts events, both in area schools and in WSP offices, guiding students in exploration of potential occupations and careers in their areas of interest.

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

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

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

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

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

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

The WIOA youth program, in the Panhandle, includes developing career pathways which lead to self-sufficiency, while meeting required performance measures. The fourteen WIOA youth program elements are key to the overall success of youth program participants. WSP staff determine which

elements would be most effective for youth through initial assessment, develop individualized service plans, and identify career pathways. Staff identify and engage local resources which provide access to, or directly offer, services related to the youth elements.

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

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

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

- ✓ Focusing on outreach and engagement of Out of School Youth and youth disconnected from the workforce, including a streamlined approach to eligibility, identifying appropriate services and career pathways, and developing effective service strategies encompassing educational and employment goals;
- ✓ Transitioning low-income youth from high school to college to prepare for many of the jobs being created in Texas and nationally for “middle-skill” occupations, including those that require postsecondary education leading to attainment of certificate and associate degrees;
- ✓ Accessing alternative secondary school services or dropout recovery services when determined appropriate and necessary to keep youth engaged and connected;
- ✓ Tutoring, remedial skills training, and instruction for dropout prevention and leading to attaining a secondary school diploma or recognized equivalent;
- ✓ Retaining low-income youth in postsecondary training until completion, and providing short term work experience and paid internship opportunities that enhance completion and transition;
- ✓ Providing paid and unpaid short-term work experience opportunities with an occupational education component resulting in a vital connection to the job market and employers, leading to enhanced performance and successful outcomes;
- ✓ Ensuring appropriate supportive services which assist youth in completing program activities, including work based or occupational training, and obtaining and retaining employment are provided under WIOA;
- ✓ Providing adult mentoring during and after program participation for a period of at least 12 months to prevent youth from falling through the gaps or becoming disconnected;
- ✓ Arranging leadership development opportunities such as community service and other similar activities which encourage youth to give back to their community, and builds confidence, maturity, and self-esteem;
- ✓ Affording appropriate guidance and referrals for counseling including drug or alcohol abuse to

address and resolve individual needs of youth program participants;

- ✓ Providing ready access to current relevant labor market information including PWDB specific demand occupations and industries, and career counseling and exploration;
- ✓ Assisting youth with improving and increasing financial literacy by providing relevant and relatable online instruction geared towards youth participants; and
- ✓ Exploring and tapping into local entrepreneurship ventures including a university-sponsored small business incubator program.

C. Coordination with Secondary and Postsecondary Education Programs

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

Strategies include the following:

- ✓ Making available financial aid information and referrals to training providers;
- ✓ Providing career and training plan assistance for eligible individuals, including individuals with barriers to employment, developing successful career pathways and program co-enrollment wherever appropriate and beneficial;
- ✓ Coordinating Adult Education & Literacy (AEL), Adult Basic Education (ABE), English as a Second Language (ESL), and General Educational Development (GED) preparation—either by referral or intensive short-term classes, for eligible individuals;
- ✓ Developing a menu of activities leading to achievement of post-secondary, recognized credentials;
- ✓ Supporting local ISDs and community colleges to pursue skills development grant opportunities including Apprenticeship programs and to apply for and obtain grants such as the TWC's Jobs and Education for Texas (JET) and the High Demand Job Training (HDJT) grants;
- ✓ Collaborating on Innovation partnership grants to upgrade skills and earning potential for incumbent workers, and Industry-Recognized Skills Certification Initiative Grants which provide short term courses through local colleges leading to certification completion and enhanced job placement opportunities; and
- ✓ Facilitating Postsecondary occupational skills training at community colleges, career colleges or universities.

D. Child Care and Early Learning

Reference: 40 TAC §809.12

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

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

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

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

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

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

- **Improving School Readiness through Partnership Opportunities.** WSP's staff position of Child Care Industry Support Specialist assists Child Care Provider owners and managers, as needed, to increase quality and capacity of existing businesses, in creating new business and in connecting to resources available to help increase the likelihood of success. Primary duties include:

- ✓ Providing comprehensive child care professional development resources, (i.e., workshops, webinars, and online courses,
- ✓ Connecting child care providers with TWC's child care provider expansion entity/entities;
- ✓ Connecting child care providers with TWC's funded business coaching and business training in managing the administrative side of providers' businesses, (i.e., financial guidance, employee benefits, workforce development, community engagement, and recruitment and retention;
- ✓ Connecting child care providers with Texas Health and Human Service Commission's Child Care Regulation department to learn about Texas' regulatory requirements for child care operations;

- ✓ Connecting child care providers with the Texas Department of Agriculture to learn about the Child and Adult Care Food Program;
- ✓ Assisting child care providers with understanding how WSP can help them hire support and other workforce assistance services;
- ✓ Assisting child care providers with understanding how to participate in the Child Care Services program and the Texas Rising Star quality rating system; and
- ✓ Assisting child care providers with understanding how to use the Texas Child Care Availability Portal and the Texas Early Childhood Professional Development System.
- **Supporting Professional Growth and Career Pathways for Early Education in the Child Care Industry.** In alignment with the intent of House Bill 619 (HB619), to improve the quality of the infant, toddler, preschool, and school-age child care workforce in Texas, a portion of TWC’s Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) funding for the PWDB is set aside annually for the purpose of Child Care Quality Improvement (CCQI) activities to be utilized in assisting Child Care providers in becoming Texas Rising Star (TRS)-certified or assisting TRS-certified providers in achieving higher levels of TRS certification.
 - The PWDB and WSP continue to follow a Continuous Quality Improvement Plan by supporting:
 - ✓ Secondary educational attainment for caregivers and administrators;
 - ✓ Professional development to assist with teacher/child interactions, curriculum, classroom management and child development;
 - ✓ Professional development for child care program managers, directors and assistant directors;
 - ✓ Programs with TRS incentives;
 - ✓ Classroom content delivery with early learning digital platform;
 - ✓ Curriculum content delivery with evaluation and assessment tools; and
 - ✓ Programs with TRS mentor assistance and support.
 - **Maximizing the Delivery of Child Care Services.** While TWC annually allocates what is referred to as “Formula” funds to the PWDB for the purpose of subsidizing the cost of child care, there is also an opportunity of leveraging even more funds into the Panhandle area through a process of “matching funds” with Federal dollars. In collaborations with Amarillo College, Texas Tech University and West Texas A&M University, each of which certify allowable child care related expenditures at their institutions, TWC is able to draw down, for every dollar, an additional two dollars, that is passed directly through to the PWDB for the Subsidized Child Care Program. Each year, these partners give a big boost to the children and parents of the Panhandle.
 - **Contracted Slot Agreements.** Both Texas Administrative Code 40 (TAC) §809 Child Care Services and TWC’s Child Care Services Guide require workforce development boards to develop local policy if a Board opts to enter into Contracted Slots Agreement(s) with a child care provider to serve a specific number of places, or slots, for children participating in the child care subsidy program, including any local priorities on how the contracted slots will help increase access to high-quality care for targeted communities and population. Historically, child care providers in the PWDB have not limited the number of places available to children participating in the child care subsidy program which means that reserved spaces under Contracted Slots Agreements are not necessary to “guarantee” access to high-quality care for targeted communities and population in the Panhandle.
 - **Strategic Quality Improvement.** High-quality child care has many positive impacts on children, such as increased safety and school readiness, as well as impacts on the parents in obtaining and

keeping a job, or completing job training. Child care assistance promotes long-term self-sufficiency by enabling parents to work, attend school or attend job skills training, and increase educational levels. To address this issue and implement the following strategies, the PWDB:

- ✓ Seeks out additional opportunities to further expand classroom capacity;
 - ✓ Continues to phase in increases to the maximum reimbursement rates paid with workforce resources to providers caring for eligible children;
 - ✓ Sustains efforts to support training and professional development for child care administrators and workers;
 - ✓ Provides follow up training and monitor delivery of recently purchased child care curricula intended to provide an organized and managed approach to promoting critical areas of development;
 - ✓ Ensures monitors and assessors continue regular observation and review of providers to identify areas which need improvement, and assist providers to initiate or improve TRS (Texas Rising Star) rating levels thus continually improving quality of care and potentially increase reimbursement rates; and
 - ✓ Looks for and invest in projects which improve child care quality.
- **Strengthening and Supporting the Child Care Industry.** Also in alignment with HB619 and TWC’s Workforce Development Letter WD 19-23, as updated in December of 2023, Action Item 3.2.2 of TWC’s Child Care Workforce Strategic Plan requires that local workforce development Boards establish a child care committee, in order to gather input from a wide array of entities that are interested in early childhood issues. The PWDB established its Child Care Advisory Committee, which held its first quarterly meeting in January of 2024.

The Membership of the Committee consists of individuals who are willing to serve on the Committee and are elected by the PWDB in an Open Public Meeting. The Committee consists of at least eight (8) members, with composition of the membership, at a minimum, as described below:

Representatives of Licensed child care centers participating in TWC’s Child Care Services (CCS) program	2
Representative of Licensed or registered child care homes participating in CCS	1
Representative of current or former CCS families	1
Representative of PWDB CCS Contractor	1
Representative of PWDB Staff	1
Representatives of other child care stakeholders that represent the interests of the children and/or the families served	2

The PWDB provides the Committee with child care program data to inform the Committee’s work, addressing both the CCS program and quality improvement activities.

E. Transportation and Other Support Services

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

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

- ✓ Residential assistance with rent, mortgage, and utilities;

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

F. Coordination of Adult Education and Literacy

References: WIOA §108(b)(13); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(12); TWC WD 18-23, Change 2

In 2024, the PWDB was enlisted to provide review of the Proposal for the Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) Service Provider Grant, submitted to TWC by Amarillo College (AC), as required under TWC's Workforce Development (WD) Letter 18-23, as updated. This TWC guidance requires local workforce development Boards to review AEL grant application(s) submitted to TWC and provide TWC with recommendations related to the alignment of AEL services and activities with the Board's local plan as set forth in 34 CFR §463.21(b). As required, the Panhandle Workforce Development Director designated an AEL Grant Application Review Committee comprised of Panhandle Workforce Development Program staff for the purpose of providing, to TWC, recommendations related to the alignment of AEL Local Provider Grant proposals with the PWDB Plan under WIOA regulation §463.20. Committee members reviewed the Proposal submitted by AC and provided the Review and Comments to TWC, as required. The comments submitted to TWC confirmed that the application was consistent with WIOA and the Board Plan and are summarized below. AC was awarded the Contract as the Panhandle's AEL Service Provider.

- The PWDA covers the same 26 counties which are included in AC's application for the lead organization for the Panhandle AEL partnership. The region's continuing challenge to ensure that rural communities are able to access needed services, despite the lack of a constant, or limited physical presence, as described in the PWDB Plan, is addressed by the proposal of the Panhandle AEL Partnership to provide integrated and supportive adult education and literacy programming through in-person, remote, and distance modalities regionwide.
- The recruitment and outreach strategies of Panhandle AEL Consortium described in AC's proposal such as leveraging word-of-mouth, referrals and a dedicated website section to inform potential students of flexible scheduling, online coursework, co-enrollment in technical education programs align with the employment and training activities in the partnership with the PWDB. The proposal describes the beneficial regular meetings between the AEL staff and the Board's contractor (WSP) staff being instrumental in improving the referral processes and assisting AEL students in finding suitable career pathways. This aligns with the PWDB Plan which describes the PWDB's ongoing efforts to collaborate with existing programs and funds to provide increased AEL skills, and to reach out to a large immigrant population primarily employed in the meat processing industry which presents unique challenges to provide basic literacy services, including English as a Second Language (ESL), that offer opportunities for increased wage-earning potential.
- AC's proposal addresses the needs of students with barriers in discussing the coordination with the Texas Workforce Solutions Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services co-located in the WSP office in Amarillo. AC offers a range of services to support individuals, including AEL students, with disabilities including academic accommodations (i.e., note-taking assistance, priority registration, tutoring, specialized counseling, and career guidance) tailored to accommodate various disabilities. The proposal discusses joint committees that coordinate efforts to serve populations facing employment barriers, particularly low-income individuals, individuals with

disabilities, and others who encounter significant obstacles to finding employment. This aligns with the PWDB Plan and the Board's collaboration and joint planning with VR Services and TWC as it continues providing a seamless approach for access to integrated workforce services, literacy education, vocational rehabilitation, and in-demand workplace skills that lead to self-sufficient employment and advancement for individuals with disabilities and literacy services.

- The proposal discusses AC's provision of accessible, safe and convenient instructional facilities including ADA compliance, public transportation access, proximity to no-cost parking, and being conducive to learning. The proposal describes the collaboration between the Panhandle AEL Consortium and the VR Services staff co-located in the WSP office in Amarillo as a resource to improve services for people with disabilities. The proposal identifies efforts undertaken by each of the partners in the Consortium and acknowledges that opportunities are being expanded throughout the region. This aligns with the PWDB Plan as it is the PWDB's intention for all of the Panhandle region to grow in the capacity to serve individuals who have disabilities.
- The Panhandle AEL Consortium's proposal's services and activities align with the PWDB's vision and goals. One of the ways is the emphasis which the PWDB places on engagement with employers, education and training providers, to collaborate in career and technical education design, content, and delivery options that are aligned with industry needs. The Panhandle AEL Consortium's proposal discusses actively engaging with stakeholders and participating in employer-based advisory committees to contribute to the region's economic growth and to support workforce development efforts.
- The Panhandle AEL Consortium's proposal discusses the value of co-enrollment which enables partners to provide the necessary services to participants according to their needs. The Consortium collaborates with various agencies, including the PWDB, to assist AEL students, to provide postsecondary training support, counseling, career services, and job placement opportunities; VR Services that offer diagnostics, counseling, adaptive skills training, vocational training, and other services for individuals with disabilities; AC's Career Services, which provides job placement services, career counseling, and instructional support; AC's Advising Center, which assists with comprehensive advising sessions to prepare students for college enrollment; Clarendon College Advising Center, which offers advising and counseling to help students prepare for college enrollment; and Frank Phillips College Advising Center, which provides advising and assessment services for college enrollment. This is aligned with the PWDB Plan which directs the Board to look for every opportunity for co-enrollment and integrated case management to enhance desired outcomes.
- The Panhandle AEL Consortium's proposal discusses promoting Integrated Education and Training (IET) opportunities utilizing Career Navigators to assist students. The Career Navigators work closely with English Language Learners (ELL) to transition into IET courses incorporating effective methods like small group activities, visual aids, and hand-on learning resources. As discussed in the PWDB Plan, AC has piloted instructional programs for Limited-English speakers in the In-Demand Occupation of Certified Nurse Aide, and the Target Occupations of Machinist and Auto Mechanics.
- The Panhandle AEL Consortium's proposal discusses working closely with WSP to design educational programs that target In-Demand industries like healthcare, manufacturing, and information technology to provide high quality adult education. The Panhandle AEL Consortium aligns its programs and services with In-Demand occupational clusters and Target occupations through a partnership with AC's Institutional Research department, industry providers, and the

PWDB. This aligns with the In-Demand occupational clusters and Target Occupations designated by the PWDB Plan.

- The Panhandle AEL Consortium’s proposal discusses how AC, as a U.S. Department of Education Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) grantee, aims to increase access to literacy, academic, and technical skills instruction for incarcerated individuals in the Panhandle region aligning with the guidelines outlined in WIOA Title II and TWC policy, by working closely with facility staff, and providing tailored adult basic education, high school equivalency preparation, English language lessons, integrated technical trainings, and assistance with transition planning. This aligns with the PWDB Plan as the Board, through WSP, coordinates with the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) to provide information to local Parole Division Officers, regarding Job Seeker services for its Releasees, to enable the Officers to make referrals to WSP to help these individuals locate, enter and retain employment.
- The Panhandle AEL Consortium’s proposal discusses how AC has mapped credentials into stackable progression points that lead to accelerated degrees. The programs incorporate credentials as benchmarks, providing integrated instruction tailored to the knowledge and skills needed to pass credential exams and progress in workforce training. By coordinating programs with existing career pathways, this includes AEL activities, workforce preparation activities, and specific training for In-Demand occupations. The PWDB Plan discusses the Board’s ongoing relationship with AC in collaborating on skills development initiatives, incumbent worker training, and achievement of industry-recognized credentials, as well as traditional classroom-based occupational training programs. In alignment with the PWDB Plan, staff with the PWDB, WSP, and AC collaborate to exchange information, improve processes and methods to assist students with arriving at appropriate and effective career pathways; subsequent enrollment including co-enrollment whenever determined beneficial, or necessary, to completion; streamlining and improving the referral process; and tracking customer participation and success.
- The Panhandle AEL Consortium’s proposal discusses working closely with WSP to design educational programs that coordinate efforts to serve populations facing employment barriers, particularly low-income individuals, individuals with disabilities, and others who encounter significant obstacles to finding employment. AC has established referral networks with community organizations serving disadvantaged residents, and through data sharing and cross-referrals, ensures that these partnerships create more access points for priority groups and marginalized populations. This aligns with the PWDB Plan which states that individualized training, career, and education services will be given on a priority basis, regardless of funding levels, to including, but not limited to, public assistance recipients, other low-income adults, and individuals who are basic skills deficient. A local priority group established by the PWDB is all adults who, at the time of WIOA enrollment, have not completed a high school diploma, GED, or other high school equivalency, and have not completed a GED, nor are currently attending GED or equivalency classes.
- The Panhandle AEL Consortium’s proposal discusses actively seek out new linkages with organizations supporting case management, behavioral health, disability services, foster youth, aging workers, English learners, justice-involved citizens reentering society, and individuals experiencing homelessness. A customized Student Service Plan is created which includes suggested education pathways, referrals for community support services, and plans for any necessary academic modifications and accommodations. This aligns with the PWDB Plan which describes that the PWDB understands that the workforce system must have the capacity to assure customers that wherever they enter the workforce system, there is a pathway through the system

by instituting a “no-closed-door” culture to ensure successful outcomes or referrals for customers of the workforce system programs and services.

- The Panhandle AEL Consortium’s proposal discusses established formal partnerships with various community organizations, agencies, and the PWDB to offer key services such as childcare assistance, transportation support, mental health services, and career planning. The proposal describes that AC has partnered with various community groups, such as the Amarillo Area Foundation, Buckner Children and Family Services, WSP, and local resilience/education nonprofits. Supports include connecting youth to financial aid, childcare stipends, internships, counseling, and other resources. AC is coordinating supportive services, as needed, which aligns with the PWDB Plan.

Part 6: Adult, Dislocated Workers, and Youth Services

A. Adult and Dislocated Worker Employment and Training

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

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

- ✓ Initial identification of customer status and information gathering;
- ✓ Assessment of customer information including employment and training needs;
- ✓ Determination of appropriate workforce services, including co-enrollment;
- ✓ Suitable referral and timely follow up; and
- ✓ Documentation of entire process in the case management system, and TWC’s Job Matching Platform, WorkInTexas.com, as appropriate.

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

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

broad range of high-demand career opportunities for eligible adults and dislocated workers.

B. Service Priority

Reference: 20 CFR §679.560(b)(21)

Local workforce development area policies and procedures 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. Services to individuals with barriers to employment, and workers at all skill and occupational levels is paramount, so that these groups receive the resources to be successfully employed, become self-sufficient, and prepared for long-term career growth, and comprise a qualified labor pool available for local employers. Information and training received from Vocational Rehabilitation Services staff will enhance and improve the strategies developed and applied for individuals with disabilities. PWDB's policy states that:

Consistent with WIOA, individualized career services and training services will be given on a priority basis, regardless of funding levels. In addition, WSP will administer programs and services in a manner that is not discriminatory based on a disability, per the cited references in 29 CFR 38.12. Veterans and eligible spouses receive priority of service for all federal and State funded job training programs, which include WIOA programs. Under State law, foster youth and former foster youth, will also be given priority in the receipt of federal and State funded services, as per WD Letter 43-11 as updated, *Priority of Service for Eligible Foster Youth*.

Priority for WIOA individualized career services and training services will be provided in the following order:

1. Eligible veterans and eligible spouses who are also recipients of public assistance, low-income, or basic skills deficient.
2. Foster youth and former foster youth, (as defined in TWC WD Letter 43-11, as updated), who are also recipients of public assistance, low income, or basic skills deficient.
3. All other individuals who are recipients of public assistance, low-income, or basic skills deficient.
4. All other eligible veterans and eligible spouses.
5. All other foster youth and former foster youth.
6. All other individuals, including any local priority groups established by the PWDB.

The local priority group established by the PWDB is all adults who at the time of WIOA enrollment have not completed a high school diploma, GED, or other high school equivalency, and have not completed a GED, nor are currently attending GED or equivalency classes.

Part 7: Fiscal Agent, Grants, and Contracts

A. Fiscal Agent

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

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

B. Sub-Grants and Contracts

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

PRPC's Procurement Manual is aligned with TWC's Financial Manual for Grants & Contracts (FMGC), to ensure that competitive processes are used to award grants and contracts. The Contractor that staffs the WSP offices and delivers associated workforce and child care services is procured through a Request for Proposals (RFP) process. RFPs are also utilized to solicit consulting and professional services. Vendors which offer other services and items determine to be required to complete training or obtain/retain employment are procured through competitive methods that are tailored to the service(s) or item(s) to be purchased. PRPC makes payments directly to training providers and other vendors for goods and services authorized by the WSP Contractor on behalf of workforce customers. These payments include training costs, supportive services, and child care fees.

Part 8: Performance

A. Board Performance Targets

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

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

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

Performance measures set in accordance with WIOA § 116(c):

- Adult Employed Quarter 2 Post Exit
- Adult Employed Quarter 4 Post Exit
- Adult Median Earnings Quarter 2 Post Exit
- Adult Credential Rate
- Adult Measurable Skills Gains
- Dislocated Worker Employed Quarter 2 Post Exit
- Dislocated Worker Employed Quarter 4 Post Exit
- Dislocated Worker Median Earnings Quarter 2 Post Exit
- Dislocated Worker Credential Rate
- Dislocated Worker Measurable Skills Gains
- Youth Employed/Enrolled Quarter 2 Post Exit
- Youth Employed/Enrolled Quarter 4 Post Exit
- Youth Median Earning Quarter 2 Post Exit

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

Reemployment and Employer Engagement Measures:

- Claimant Reemployment within 10 weeks
- Number of Employers Receiving Workforce Assistance

Program Participation Measures:

- Choices Full Engagement Rate – All Family Total
- Child Care - Average Number of Children Served Per Day

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

Part 9: Training and Services

A. Individual Training Accounts (ITAs)

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

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

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

Customers eligible for workforce services that cover all or part of training costs are referred only after comprehensive assessment and individual service plans document the need for training/employment. Training services funded through ITAs, except for registered apprenticeship programs, are directly linked to:

- ✓ Occupations that are on the PWDB's Target Occupations List or are on the Target Occupations List for another local workforce development area to which an eligible participant is willing to commute or relocate; or

- ✓ Occupations that have been determined on a case-by-case basis to have a high potential for sustained demand and growth in the PWDA, based on sufficient and verifiable documentation, in accordance with the Board's procedures and Title 40, Texas Administrative Code (TAC), Part 20, Chapter 840 WIOA Eligible Training Providers §840.1(11)(B).

An ITA covers tuition, fees, books and supplies. An ITA does not include the cost of supportive services (based on assessment). WSP Program Case Managers decide the appropriate total value of each ITA, based on the customer's assessment and employment plan, and the certified training provider's published costs. The key issues with an ITA are:

- ✓ Eligibility and suitability for an ITA determined accurately and effectively;
 - ✓ Training in occupations, targeted by the PWDB, and most likely to offer local employment, career growth, and self-sufficiency;
 - ✓ Consistently high performance and completion rate for eligible training providers; and
 - ✓ Cancellation/forfeiture of an ITA and recovery of unused funds.
- WSP staff maintains a cooperative relationship with the Panhandle training providers' business and industry programs to ensure that training provided meets local employers' needs. Training services programs not associated with TWC's Eligible Training Provider (ETP) List using Training Contract(s) for Services have not been utilized in the PWDA.
 - Access to TWC's Eligible Training Provider Statewide List and the ETP System website providing descriptions of approved programs, and performance and cost information about providers, is made available to each customer in WSP offices to provide maximum opportunity for customer choice.

B. ITA Limitations

References: 20 CFR §663.420; TWC WD 14-19, Change 3

- The PWDB imposes limits on the duration and amount of ITAs but not 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.
- Limits on duration and amounts of ITAs include:
 - Established monetary limits for the total WIOA funded cost per participant for training and support services combined;
 - No limit on the amount for an ITA based on individual training provider cost; and
 - Duration limited to the shortest length of time necessary to complete the level of occupational education and training required to begin entry level employment in the chosen field.
- The PWDB coordinates with all resources while maximizing customer choice. The PWDB may determine if it would be most appropriate to contract with an institution of higher education or other provider of training services to facilitate the training of multiple individuals in PWDB Target Occupations (or occupations that have been determined on a case-by-case basis to have a high potential for sustained demand and growth in the Panhandle WDA), provided this does not limit consumer choice.
- The PWDB allows participants to select training that costs more than the maximum amount available for ITAs if other sources of funds are available to supplement the ITA, for example, Pell Grants, scholarships, and severance pay.

Part 10: Apprenticeship

A. Registered Apprenticeship Programs

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

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

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

B. ApprenticeshipTexas

The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) has awarded various federal Apprenticeship Expansion funding to TWC—branded as ApprenticeshipTexas—to support RA expansion by engaging industry and workforce intermediaries to expand, diversify, and strengthen RA programs throughout Texas. TWC grants funding for statewide RA projects in critical skills occupations. From production machinists and assemblers-to mechanics and more, skilled trade workers are in high demand across the state. This funding supports RA in middle skills careers, defined as occupations that require some education beyond high school but less than a four-year degree. TWC grants money, appropriated by the Texas Legislature, to support classroom instruction in RA programs. Apprenticeship programs work with a local education agency (LEA) or their own apprenticeship committee to help manage the funds. The LEA and the apprenticeship committee are the link between the program and TWC. To get the funds, the apprenticeship training programs and apprentices must register with the DOL Office of Apprenticeship. The PWDBs’ strategy and commitment to ApprenticeshipTexas is based on detailed information and guidance personally provided by TWC Apprenticeship staff. WSP staff and the Business Services team collaborate to develop a strategic approach which involves:

- Working to identify and actively outreach potential employers in both traditional and non-traditional industries to participate in the ApprenticeshipTexas initiative;
- Connecting employers with TWC Apprenticeship staff when appropriate and beneficial;
- Providing complete Apprenticeship Program information including how the RA programs can register with the Eligible Training Provider (ETP) System and tap into WIOA funding; and
- Remaining in communication with and guiding employers through the entire apprenticeship process through successful completion.

Part 11: Public Comment

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

On Thursday, October 24, 2024, partners from regional training providers and stakeholders were notified regarding requests for input and comments on the PWDB’s analysis and development of proposed lists of the In-Demand Industries, In-Demand Occupations and Target Occupations to be

presented for approval to the PWDB in its quarterly meeting on December 11, 2024. Suggestions were incorporated into the lists and Notice of this Public Meeting was published in the Texas Register, Potter County, and on the <https://wspanhandle.com> and <https://theprpc.org> websites. The lists were approved by the PWDB and Consortium's Governing Body (CEOs) in the December 2024 Public Meetings.

On Friday, January 24, 2025, and Friday, January 31, 2025, Legal Notices seeking Public Comment regarding the 2025-2028 PWDB Plan were placed in the Texas Register, the Amarillo Globe-News, and on the <https://wspanhandle.com> and <https://theprpc.org> websites, with comments accepted until February 24, 2025. No comments were received.

Notice of the quarterly Public Meeting of the PWDB held on February 26, 2025 requesting the PWDB's approval of the 2025-2028 PWDB Plan to be submitted to TWC, was published in the Texas Register, Potter County and on the <https://wspanhandle.com> and <https://theprpc.org> websites on February 19th, 2025.

Appendix: Texas Workforce Investment Council Requirements

Local Board Plan Requirements

for Alignment to the Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan

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.

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 responses 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.

System Goals and Objectives

Crucial to the strategic planning process and to align with federal and State statute, the Plan must contain system goals used to create actionable objectives to meet the vision and mission of the system. Four goal areas and their corresponding system objectives, strategies, and action plans have been identified:

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

Reference: Accelerating Alignment: Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan- pages 19-29

Through engagement with employers, education and training providers, the PWDB collaborates in career and technical education design, content, and delivery options that are aligned with industry needs. In alignment with *TWC’s System Goal 1 – Focus on Employers, Delivery of Relevant Education and Training Programs*, the PWDB will continue:

- Instituting and expanding upskilling and reskilling programs as part of core education and training inventory, with an emphasis on meeting the needs of employers for middle-skill workers;
- Developing training opportunities toward industry-based certifications to expand the number of work-ready individuals in high demand occupations;
- Expanding integrated education and training programs for middle-skill occupations and increase learner persistence to completion, certification, and employment;
- Increasing the number of employers who participate in work-based learning programs;
- Engaging industry representatives to collaborate with community colleges in new program development that incorporates national industry-based certifications into programs of study;
- Responding flexibly to employment changes through the identification and delivery of programs that support the attainment of short-term credentials, including industry-based certifications and licenses;
- Assisting with aligning the Texas Education Agency (TEA) Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) to Industry-based certifications, where applicable. (Reference: <https://tea.texas.gov/academics/curriculum-standards/teks/texas-essential-knowledge-and-skills>); and
- Assisting with aligning with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) in identifying and implementing relevant industry-based certifications and licenses, and incorporating the occupational information into statewide career and technical education programs.

In its activities, initiatives, and processes that accelerate the delivery of relevant education and training programs to meet employers' needs, and to institute and expand:

- Upskilling and reskilling programs that address employers' needs for middle skill workers:

Reference: Accelerating Alignment: Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan- pages 19-22

The PWDB and WSP partnered with Plains Dairy on a Skills Development Fund (SDF) project to provide targeted training for the company's employees. Through this collaboration, WSP helped Plains Dairy identify key skills gaps and worked with local training providers to develop customized programs aimed at enhancing the technical and operational skills of their workforce. The project focused on upskilling 166 employees in areas such as equipment maintenance, quality control, and production processes, resulting in improved productivity and efficiency of 30% at Plains Dairy. Leadership at Plains Dairy has reported high satisfaction with the SDF program, noting a substantial decrease in employee turnover and workplace injuries. The training for supervisors and managers has resulted in a significant reduction in leadership turnover.

- Adult learners transitioning to employment through integrated education and training programs:

Reference: Accelerating Alignment: Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan- page 23

- ✓ WSP designed and implemented Texas Panhandle Career Signing Days, an initiative that connects local high school students with in-demand careers. By partnering with schools, employers, and community organizations, WSP equips students with the resources to explore diverse career paths and gain hands-on experience, while also addressing the skills gap and fostering a strong workforce for the region. This year, WSP sponsored 12 events, serving 17 schools and 205 students.

- ✓ The PWDB and WSP participated in the Middle Skills Employment Supplies Pilot Project (WOS), designed to support individuals preparing to join the workforce who are either not enrolled in WIOA programs but are eligible for services; or among current WIOA customers when all available customer service funding has been obligated, and the customer has a letter of intent to hire. WSP provided funding for 38 participants to acquire necessary tools, uniforms, and supplies for middle skills occupations—those requiring education beyond high school but less than a four-year degree. This initiative expended \$22,275.18, ensuring individuals were equipped to begin employment in vital roles.
 - ✓ The WIOA Upskilling and Training to Address Skills Gaps Grant Award offered essential resources to Adult, Dislocated Workers, and Youth seeking industry-recognized credentials in high-demand fields like healthcare and transportation. The program exceeded its targets, with 24 participants enrolled and completing their assessments, expending a total of \$67,483.00. Together, these programs not only support individual career advancement but also strengthen the local economy by preparing a skilled workforce ready to meet the demands of in-need industries.
- Attainment of short-term credentials in programs aligned with high-demand occupations:

Reference: Accelerating Alignment: Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan- pages 24-29

The PWDB continues to participate in TWC's High Demand Job Training (HDJT) Program which has been supporting the PWDB since 2018 in partnering with local Economic Development Corporations that use their local economic development sales taxes for high-demand training. Most recently, with its ninth HDJT grant award, the PWDB, along with the Dalhart Economic Development Corporation, the Dalhart Education Foundation, and Frank Phillips College have entered into an agreement to purchase equipment and supplies to expand the Diesel Mechanics Program at Frank Phillips College-Dalhart Center Rahll Campus. The goal of this project is to align Frank Phillips College's Diesel Mechanics Certificate programs with area industries' hiring and skills needs by providing workforce training to forty (40) students in the occupations of Bus and Truck Mechanic and Diesel Engine Specialists. The purpose of this Grant Award is to purchase equipment and supplies.

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

Reference: Accelerating Alignment: Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan- pages 31-35

Through collaborative and transparent processes, the PWDB and its partners focus on outcomes that improve the employability of program participants, from across a wide spectrum of capabilities and experiences, to meet employer needs. In alignment with *TWC's System Goal 2, Focus on Learners, Expansion of Work-Based Learning and Apprenticeship*, the PWDB will continue to expand partnerships with system partners and stakeholders to promote collaboration, joint planning, and enhanced participant outcomes by:

Reference: Accelerating Alignment: Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan- pages 31-33

- Expanding work-based learning as a core education and training program pre-employment strategy for youth and adults, including collaborating with State and community agencies for enhancing services to foster youth; and improving rehabilitation employment outcomes by establishing additional partnerships with secondary and postsecondary entities, and employers;

Reference: Accelerating Alignment: Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan- pages 34-35

- Expanding registered and industry-recognized apprenticeship programs in both traditional and non-traditional areas to ease workforce shortages through engaging and assisting employers to begin new programs, especially in underserved populations, including increasing access to, referral between, and outcomes of adult education programs and services; and connecting more ex-offenders with adult education programs through better developed referral processes and appropriate short-term integrated training options. The PWDB maintains Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with regional providers conducting apprenticeship programs such as the Independent Electrical Contractors (IEC) of the Texas Panhandle, the West Texas Electrical JATC and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 602, the Plumbers & Pipefitters Local 404, and the United Brotherhood of Carpenters Local 665;
- Representing the Texas Panhandle within the statewide Texas Regional Pathways Network (TRPN) Tri-Agency Grant for Regional Conveners which formed the Panhandle Pathways Leadership Team. This Team includes representatives from, in addition to Region 16 ESC, the PWDB and WSP, the Amarillo Area Foundation, Amarillo College, Clarendon College, Wheeler Economic Development Corporation, and West Texas A&M University. The goal of the TRPN grant is to build high-quality regional career and education pathways into high-wage, in-demand industries by ensuring all Texans have the skills and credentials needed for economic advancement. The PWDB and WSP continue to work with its Tri-Agency partners, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) and the Texas Education Agency (TEA), to increase workforce, secondary, and postsecondary education and training outcomes to support increases in education and work-related outcomes through enhanced delivery and service integration. The Texas Tri-Agency Workforce Initiative is charged with supporting “60x30TX” higher education plan goals, which state that by the year 2030, at least 60 percent of Texans ages 25-34 will have a certificate or degree; and in developing key strategies to prepare and upskill a Texas workforce. Current strategies include:
 - ✓ Identifying students’ most efficient paths to attaining high-value credentials;
 - ✓ Strengthening and streamlining collaboration among key education and workforce system stakeholders who are developing pathways at the regional level;
 - ✓ Expanding opportunities for work-based learning experiences;
 - ✓ Ensuring students and families have the support, tools, and resources needed to achieve education and career success;
 - ✓ Expanding access to effective training and career advising; and
 - ✓ Aligning statewide education and workforce systems with statewide priorities and goals.
 - ✓ Ultimately, the Team’s goal of this work is to create pathways that keep local talent in the region, and participating in regional discussions with the Texas Education Agency about career pathway expansion opportunities for high school students.

3. Partners Goal – Alignment to Support Career Pathways

By improving transitions, aligning programs, and ensuring portability and transferability, the workforce system improves access and the ability of all students to complete programs of study, earn credential(s), transition to further education, and gain critical employability skills. Through the implementation of a common technical core curriculum that is recognized statewide, programs of study can enhance delivery efficiency, dual-credit effectiveness, and improve student outcomes and transitions. Employers are better positioned to find and hire the employees they need through an enhanced education and training pipeline.

In alignment with *Accelerating Alignment: Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan - pages 37-39, System Goal 3, Focus on Partners, Alignment to Support Career Pathways*, the PWDB will continue to:

- Support the identification of credentials of value by:
 - Developing and implementing policies and processes for career and technical education opportunities for dual credit; and
 - Enhancing transition services for students and youth with disabilities to competitive integrated employment or to postsecondary education and training followed by competitive integrated employment, aligning with the Texas Workforce Solutions Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services Pathways to Careers Initiative (PCI) Pre-Employment Transition Services (ETS) Pathways to Career Initiatives.

In alignment with *Accelerating Alignment: Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan - pages 40-41, System Goal 3, Focus on Partners, Alignment to Support Career Pathways*, the PWDB will:

- Streamline and clarify existing career pathways and models to increase alignment between secondary and postsecondary technical programs by:
 - Collaboration with secondary and postsecondary institutions to engage employers to identify and support 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;
 - Developing and executing a model and improve and enhance services, programs, and policies to align with programs of study in community and technical colleges with secondary programs; and
 - Seeking input from business and industry to identify the essential knowledge, skills, and abilities, that they require.

4. Policy and Planning Goal – Relevant Data Sets

By addressing high-priority programmatic needs through an integrated strategy, decision-making, at the system, partner, and participant levels, is improved and system service delivery is enhanced. PWDB activities, initiatives, and processes will 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. In alignment with *TWC's System Goal 4, Focus on Policy and Planning, Relevant Data Sets*, the PWDB will continue to:

- Expand high-quality childcare availability in the Panhandle, including but not limited to:
 - Engagement with childcare providers and employers to establish on-site or near-site, high quality childcare facilities. The number of families served by TWC's Subsidized Child Care Program during the Fall of 2024 in the Panhandle region was more than 1,700 per month with the number of children served averaging more than 2,500 each day. WSP currently maintains Child Care Services Agreements with more than 100 childcare providers across the region and continues to encourage relationships with additional high-quality facilities; and
 - Expand Texas Rising Star certifications. WSP continues to promote and support the attainment of high-tier Texas Rising Star (TRS) certification by all child care providers. Of the current providers working with the PWDB, 18% have a TRS Two-Star Quality

Certification, 28% are Three-Star, and 26% are certified at the Four-Star level. WSP utilizes a Child Care Business Coach under its Child Care Industry Support Division. This staff assists Child Care Provider owners and managers, as needed, to increase quality and capacity of existing businesses, in creating new business and in connecting to resources available to help increase the likelihood of success.

Reference: Accelerating Alignment: Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan- pages 43

- Identify and quantify quality outcomes, including industry-based certification data to:
 - ✓ Improve methods to increase effectiveness of service delivery and achievement of employment outcomes for underserved populations;
 - ✓ Identify and implement relevant technology and service delivery options to expand program and service outcomes, and to collect and report data;
 - ✓ Execute a secure, shared data infrastructure that will facilitate data import, storage, access, integration, analysis, and reporting to understand and quantify quality program outcomes;
 - ✓ Provide rural service delivery options through the use of mobile units and affiliate sites; and
 - ✓ Expand the use of technology for providing online services such as job fairs, eligibility determination, and other interactions.

Reference: Accelerating Alignment: Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan- pages 50-56

- Enhance wage records for improving service delivery that will maximize customer wage and skills gains in employment advancement by expanding customer service beyond simply referring individuals to utilize TWC’s Labor Exchange, WorkInTexas.com, with individualized and customized career counseling and through:
 - collaboration with employers to identify enhanced employment and earnings data to gain deeper insight into program outcomes,
 - utilization of relevant education data to evaluate program outcomes; and
 - examining and strengthening how the PWDB 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.

Reference: Accelerating Alignment: Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan- pages 47-56

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.

Strategic Opportunity 1 – Employer Engagement

Staff with the PWDB and WSP coordinate across agencies and with regional stakeholders to gain insight into the needs of employers and minimize duplication of “asks” from multiple sources that burden employers.

- Representing the Texas Panhandle within the statewide Texas Regional Pathways Network (TRPN), the Region 16 Education Service Center (ESC) was awarded the Tri-Agency Grant for Regional Conveners in October 2023 and formed the Panhandle Pathways Leadership Team. This Team includes representatives from, in addition to Region 16 ESC, the PWDB and WSP, the Amarillo Area Foundation, Amarillo College, Clarendon College, Wheeler Economic Development Corporation, and West Texas A&M University. The goal of the TRPN grant is to build high-quality regional career and education pathways into high-wage, in-demand industries by ensuring all Texans have the skills and credentials needed for economic advancement. Ultimately, the Team’s goal of this work is to create pathways that keep local talent in the region.

An extensive quantitative analysis and robust stakeholder interviews were fundamental components of the Tri-Agency Texas Regional Pathways Network Panhandle Pathways Leadership Team’s three-phase planning process—discovery, opportunity, and implementation. (Source: TIPS Strategies, Regional Solutions Report, Panhandle Pathways Leadership Team, June 2024)

1. Discovery – Participants included leaders from higher education, economic development, workforce development, K–12 education, and community nonprofits. One key takeaway revealed that resourcing for rural areas is an obstacle to improving pathways across the 26 counties. Rural areas often face population loss, resulting in school consolidation which further reduces the education and workforce capacity of areas already experiencing resourcing challenges. Rural communities may be disincentivized to invest in certain training (such as computer programming) because of limited job opportunities in those occupations locally. Additional challenges relate to a lack of infrastructure, particularly transportation.
2. Opportunity – Increased employer engagement, innovative solutions to rural career and technical education, and clear roles for regional collaboration can better align training programs with industry needs.
3. Implementation – Several successful initiatives are providing effective, partnership-based solutions to strengthening education and workforce pathways:
 - WSP’s Education Outreach Specialist (EOS) provides in-school services to school districts in the region. Services provided to these districts are career guidance, career preparation, and workforce information to students. The EOS provides engaging and interactive presentations/workshops to 6th-12th grade students in a classroom setting on the following topics: labor market and high-demand jobs, employability skills, work-based learning, and postsecondary pathways. Virtual Reality career exploration headsets have become a popular tool, enriching this initiative by utilizing today’s technology to help students get hands-on experience in high-demand industries, including manufacturing/construction, health sciences and information technology. The EOS has contracted with school districts in the Texas Panhandle, delivering 2,555 Virtual Reality experience activities, 3,346 participating in workshops, significantly impacting the local workforce by preparing over 5,800 students for future careers;
 - The Amarillo Area Foundation’s Panhandle Community Partnership (PCP) offers an in-depth website that allows anyone to explore careers in accounting, aircraft mechanics, carpentry, education, the skilled trades, food services, healthcare, manufacturing, and computer systems;
 - AmTech Career Academy, a specialized career and technical education campus in the Amarillo Independent School District (ISD), is one example that allows students to practice their skills using technology and machinery that can be found in the workplace;

- Several stakeholders identified Amarillo College’s earn-and-learn Level 1 certification program to upskill ASCO Equipment employees as another example of a scalable model to enhance training accessibility;
 - In more rural areas, communities are overcoming challenges through sub- regional partnerships. The Gateway to Health Careers program brings dual-credit health science CTE programs to Panhandle districts through distance learning. This partnership among Frank Phillips, Amarillo College, Clarendon College, and participating districts brings training for high-demand health occupations into K–12 classrooms;
 - Likewise, the Rural Nursing Education Consortium (RNEC) enables rural jobseekers to attain licensed vocational nurse and registered nurse certifications through a regional collaboration between hospitals and community colleges; and
 - Several stakeholders identified the Rural Schools Innovation Zone model as an avenue to explore for enabling district partnerships centered on training success.
- The PWDB continues its oversight of the WSP system to improve system responsiveness, communication, and coordination with workforce system partner agencies, elements, and programs, with its focus on employer engagement and assisting employers in finding qualified workers and services. WSP’s Business Services Unit (BSU) and Employment Services (ES) group, provide tailored consulting services to over 1,500 employers across the 26 counties, leveraging established relationships, coordinating local and State outreach, addressing workforce needs, supporting the local economy, driving workforce development, and helping businesses find, and keep, skilled talent with:
- Job Posting and Recruitment Assistance - Employers receive help posting open positions on statewide and local job boards, gaining access to a large pool of job seekers, including specialized talent pools;
 - Candidate Screening and Referral - Pre-screening services match candidates based on job-specific criteria, referring qualified individuals to streamline hiring and improve retention;
 - Onsite Hiring Events and Job Fairs - Organizing and hosting job fairs and recruitment events, both onsite and at community locations, with options tailored to meet employer-specific hiring needs;
 - Labor Market Information - Providing access to current Labor Market Information specific to the Panhandle region, covering wage trends, workforce demographics, and industry insights, enabling informed workforce planning;
 - Employee Training and Skills Development - Connecting employers with training resources and upskilling programs to develop their workforce, offering information on training grants for skills enhancement and retraining;
 - Work-Based Learning Programs - Supporting apprenticeships, internships, and On-the-Job-Training (OJT) opportunities, with options for partial wage reimbursement for employers participating in OJT programs;
 - Incentive and Tax Credit Assistance - Guiding employers through available tax credits, like the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC), and other hiring incentives, providing application support for maximum benefit;

- Layoff Aversion and Rapid Response Services - Offering resources to help avert layoffs through retraining programs and provides Rapid Response services for businesses facing layoffs, closures, or workforce changes;
- Veteran Hiring Services - Specialized support for hiring veterans, including access to veterans' talent pools and guidance on tax incentives and veteran-friendly recognition programs;
- Interview Facilities - Offices provide interview facilities equipped with essential amenities, allowing employers to conduct interviews in a convenient, professional setting.
- Employee Retention Strategies - Advising employers on retention strategies, sharing best practices for creating a positive workplace culture, improving satisfaction, and reducing turnover;
- Compliance Assistance - Helping employers navigate labor laws and regulations to ensure a legal and safe work environment; and
- Workforce Development Partnerships - Collaborating with educational institutions, industry associations, and community organizations to build strategic partnerships that strengthen workforce development in the region.

Reference: Accelerating Alignment: Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan- pages 26, 31, 33-36, 40-41, 44-46

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

Staff with the PWDB and WSP strive to engage Panhandle residents 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. Some of these populations face significant barriers prior to and when receiving workforce training and following entry into employment. The lack of critical supportive services or alignment between them may result in the loss of retention in a program of training, as well as employment exit after a relatively short period of time.

In recent years, technology applications have helped to reach, engage, and train more of these individuals, and new applications are continuously being developed that facilitate learning and employment opportunities that may have been previously inaccessible to populations that have historically faced barriers to participation in the labor market. At the same time, consistently high employment demand is opening doors to new career opportunities. The PWDB and WSP provide access to education and training programs that have the necessary supportive services and resources to help individuals reach their full potential in the labor market, including, but not limited to, the following:

- The PWDB and WSP continue to support TWC's Student HireAbility Navigator (SHN) program, a statewide strategy to support, expand, and enhance the provision of Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) to students with disabilities. The Panhandle's SHN develops, plans, coordinates, and promotes systemic and collaborative strategies to make employers aware of the advantages of hiring individuals from these populations. The SHN provides services to educational and community partners as well as employers identified collaboratively with local TWC Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) staff. SHN services support TWC's VR services for individuals with disabilities, as required under Title IV of the Workforce Innovation and

Opportunity Act (WIOA), which modified and amended the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, 29 U.S.C. § 701 et seq. (Rehabilitation Act).

- The PWDB maintains a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to formalize the cooperative and mutually beneficial relationship with North Texas Job Corps, the regional partner in the Job Corps program, the nation's largest free, residential career training and education program for low-income young adults ages 16 through 24. WSP provides co-location in the Amarillo facility to a full-time staff who provides access to Job Corps services to Panhandle residents. This staff attends WSP team meetings; participates in WSP Youth and Young Adult career events; contributes to WSP's social media outreach; and, under the MOU, refers individuals who may be eligible, to WSP for support services. This may include transferring allowable data which may have been collected from the individual in order to expedite WSP's intake process, reduce duplication of effort, and eliminate unnecessary redundancy.

Reference: Accelerating Alignment: Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan- pages 4, 13, 31-33

Strategic Opportunity 3 – Use of Data to Support Investment Decisions

The requirement and collection of key datasets and documentation of evidence that a program or project achieved its intended outcomes can illuminate areas of strength and weakness to better assess high value funding opportunities. The ability of program administrators to assess what programs or projects work, which ones work better, and which ones work less well is critical to the stewardship of public funds.

➤ Strategically Implemented Fund Initiatives

- The Reemployment Services Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) program is a federal grant program designed to allow states to provide intensive reemployment assistance to individuals who are receiving unemployment insurance (UI) benefits and are determined to be likely to exhaust their benefits before becoming reemployed. Through the RESEA program, TWC identifies claimants who would benefit from personalized reemployment services and provides funding to the PWDB and WSP for claimants to access an array of resources and services available that support reemployment, including the opportunity for enrollment in the WIOA Dislocated Worker or other programs, as appropriate. RESEA is mandatory for all claimants that are selected to participate in the program and failure to complete all required services in the Initial RESEA appointment which consists of registration in Wagner-Peyser Services and provision of a resume review, UI eligibility review, customized labor market information, one additional reemployment service or training and a reemployment plan and participation in any subsequent RESEA meetings may result in the suspension of UI benefits. In 2024, WSP reports that, of the 531 individuals in the RESEA Profile Pool Count, 402 Initial Individuals completed the program for a 76% Completion Rate.
- Veteran Services - Recognizing the unique challenges veterans face when transitioning into civilian careers, WSP provides targeted support, including job placement assistance, skills translation, and access to resources tailored to veterans' military experience. In FY2024, a total of 504 veterans and eligible individuals received 6,028 individual services, which included:
 - ✓ 22 veterans within 180 days of discharge, receiving 165 services
 - ✓ 458 eligible veterans, receiving 5,532 services
 - ✓ 24 other eligible persons, receiving 331 services

In 2024, 5.3% of customers were Priority of Service Veterans. 5,532 services were provided to Priority of Service Veterans & Qualified Spouses, 6.1% of total services. Of the veterans

assisted, 221 served fewer than 180 days in the military, 24 were the qualified spouse of a veteran, and 458 were eligible veterans.

- The Choices Program helps Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) applicants and recipients transition from welfare to work through job searches, readiness classes, and support services like childcare and transportation. WSP Career Specialists provide personalized support to meet individual needs. In 2024, of the 92 individuals served, 63 were employed and 55 received Support Services.
- The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Employment and Training program connects recipients to work-based activities and educational services, with specialists creating tailored plans to address barriers to employment. Together, these programs enhance job security and economic stability in the Texas Panhandle, fostering a more self-sufficient community. In 2024, of the 375 individuals served, 137 were employed and 220 received Support Services.
- The TWC's Noncustodial Parent (NCP) Choices program significantly benefits the Texas Panhandle community by helping non-custodial parents achieve financial stability. By assisting parents in securing better jobs, the program promotes individual economic growth and fosters family stability through regular child support payments, ultimately strengthening the local economy.

At WSP, the NCP program has positively impacted 65 non-custodial parents, with 23 securing full-time employment, resulting in a 36.5% employment success rate. This initiative not only aids parents in finding jobs but also lays the groundwork for financial stability, benefiting their children and enhancing the overall well-being of families in the region. By focusing on job placement and support, the NCP Choices program contributes to stronger economic and social outcomes in the Texas Panhandle.

- The PWDB's Summer Work Experience program serves youth from rural communities in the Texas Panhandle. Participants worked for the local school districts where they live and were given work assignments that provided them an opportunity to learn skills and work habits that will benefit them throughout their working careers. Students qualify for this summer program based on family income. A total of 33 participants were placed at seven (7) rural school districts. Students collectively worked over 6,700 hours and earned a total of \$75,564 in wages. This not only supports the participants' financial needs but also fosters a strong work ethic and essential job skills that will benefit them in future employment. By empowering youth and enhancing their employability, the TANF Summer Work Experience Program contributes to the economic vitality and resilience of the Texas Panhandle, helping to build a stronger, more skilled workforce for the future.
- The Summer Earn & Learn (SEAL) program is a statewide initiative that provides students with disabilities, aged 14-22, with work readiness training and paid work experience. Over five weeks, participants work with local employers, gaining valuable skills and insights for their transitions to postsecondary education and employment. Some may even be offered full-time positions upon completion. Out of 48 referrals, 39 participants were placed at worksites, achieving a placement rate of 84.62%. They completed work readiness training at a rate of 62.5%, working a total of 5,582 hours and earning \$65,499.76. This not only supports their financial independence but also enhances their employability. With 36 participating worksites, the program strengthens community connections and prepares students for successful futures, fostering greater opportunities and economic stability in the region. With a growing demand for a skilled labor force, including students with disabilities can enhance recruitment strategies.

SEAL offers a risk-free way to meet short-term staffing needs, with wages and workers' compensation covered for participants, reasonable accommodations provided, and additional training as needed. Employers also receive site visits to ensure satisfaction with participants.

➤ WSP's Participant Training Services

WSP's Training Services aim to enhance workforce development by providing individuals with access to training and employment services. It helps job seekers gain the skills needed for in-demand occupations through funding for training programs, career counseling, and support services. Training Services also emphasizes collaboration among various workforce agencies and encourages partnerships with local businesses to ensure that training aligns with industry needs, ultimately promoting economic growth and individual career advancement.

- Adult & Dislocated Worker programs offered at WSP are crucial for supporting individuals in the Panhandle community, equipping them with the skills needed for in-demand careers in the region.
 - ✓ Out of 341 applications, Training Services enrolled 250 individuals in Adult & Dislocated Worker programs, reflecting a strong enrollment rate of 73.31%. This indicates a high level of interest and successful onboarding into the programs.
 - ✓ Training was provided across various occupations, with a significant focus on healthcare (191 participants) and transportation (79 participants). This variety helps address local job market needs, ensuring that training aligns with available employment opportunities.
 - ✓ With 25.8% of participants coming from rural areas, Training Services programs help bridge the gap for those in less accessible regions, promoting economic stability and opportunity.
- Young Adults, age 24 and younger, who are experiencing difficulties are eligible for workforce benefits based on individual circumstances. Training Services can assist motivated Young Adults who are authorized to work in the United States, registered with Selective Service (if required), and are experiencing challenges to workforce success.
 - ✓ The Young Adult Training program offered a diverse range of training opportunities for young adults in FY2024, with 86 participants, 58 of which are currently engaged in or having completed training while 28 participated in workforce-paid internships. These programs encompass a wide spectrum of skills and industries, equipping Young Adults with the tools they need for successful career paths. These training initiatives are designed to empower participants with the knowledge and expertise necessary to excel in today's competitive job market, fostering a brighter future for our young workforce.

Reference: Accelerating Alignment: Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan- pages 9, 14, 20, 25, 29, 31-33, 44-57