



SITAC Quarterly Report

*System Integration Technical Advisory Committee
Texas Workforce Investment Council
December 2011*

System Integration Technical Advisory Committee

The System Integration Technical Advisory Committee (SITAC) is constituted as a Technical Advisory Committee to the Texas Workforce Investment Council (Council). Chaired by a member of the Council's Executive Committee, SITAC includes executive-level representatives from the Council's eight partner agencies, as well as from the Texas Association of Workforce Boards. SITAC's key responsibility is the implementation of the workforce system strategic plan.

Next Meeting

Thursday, June 14, 2012 – 1:00 p.m.
Teacher Retirement System, Austin

The current plan, *Advancing Texas: Strategic Plan for the Texas Workforce System (FY2010-FY2015)* (*Advancing Texas*) was approved by Governor Rick Perry on October 23, 2009. It outlines 14 long term objectives (LTOs), grouped by the three key performance areas that address the critical business issues identified during a yearlong collaborative planning process.

SITAC members meet quarterly, providing status reports on action plans (APs) for which their organization is solely or jointly responsible. The committee is authorized to create and deploy cross-agency teams in order to devise and execute collaborative solutions to issues associated with the system strategic plan's LTOs.

Year 2 Implementation Highlights

Fiscal year 2011 was the second year of *Advancing Texas'* six-year plan cycle. Implementation highlights include:

LTO C3 – English Language Learner (ELL) Employment and LTO C4 – Adult Basic Education/Low Literacy Level Employment – The Texas Education Agency (TEA), the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) and the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) worked together on several tasks:

- ★ Formed a work group to design and develop pilot models to be executed through community and technical colleges (CTCs) and local boards. The group includes representatives from TEA, TWC, THECB, CTCs, local boards, adult education providers and Council staff.
- ★ Identified funding sources, obtained and reviewed pilot program applications.
- ★ Negotiated project terms, with implementation to begin in September 2011: C3 ELL pilots at seven institutions and C4 workforce literacy pilots with three local board areas reported to have robust relationships with their workforce partners.

Message from the Chair

With our second year of *Advancing Texas'* implementation complete, I am pleased to report that progress has been made in many areas. This issue of the quarterly report notes a few implementation highlights in addition to our regular reports.

System partners continue to increase collaborative efforts as work proceeds on new and ongoing projects. In the coming year, we look forward to hearing more about pilot projects underway that have been designed to address critical areas such as earn while you learn training, and programs designed to meet the needs of English language learners and those with low literacy levels.

In September, agencies responsible for several action plans reported recent achievements and members also provided key legislative outcomes from the Texas Legislature's regular and special sessions, as well as federal funding changes. I was pleased to welcome our new member from the Workforce Commission and to announce that Dr. Stephenson, our Coordinating Board representative, has agreed to serve as my Vice Chair.

On behalf of the Council members attending and our fellow members, my congratulations and thanks to system partners for the strides made over the last year!

Paul Mayer

LTO P2 – Apprenticeship – Under the Council’s leadership, LTO P2 requires expansion of the earn while you learn model to address employer demand for skilled workers. Five projects recommended by the Apprenticeship Project Leadership Team and approved by the Council’s Executive Committee are currently being implemented, with regular reporting to the Council and the leadership team.

LTO P4 – Local Board Alignment – TWC assisted with the collection of summative data and information from local workforce boards related to the implementation of *Advancing Texas*. All 28 boards provided information pertaining to:

- ★ increasing employment outcomes for veterans;
- ★ designing and implementing targeted adult education programs to increase employment outcomes for populations requiring workforce literacy skills; and
- ★ cooperative and collaborative efforts with another system partner to increase participant outcomes.

LTO P5.2 – Employer Needs / Satisfaction [THECB] – The agency partnered with the Council to conduct a two-phase survey of CTCs in an effort to document colleges’ strategies for determining employer satisfaction and using that information in institutional planning processes to improve program delivery. Two colleges were selected as models of promising practices and will be formally recognized by the Council in December 2011.

Implementation Update: September 2011

Reports for three *Advancing Texas*’ APs were presented at the September 8 SITAC meeting. Summaries are provided for each, grouped by the plan’s key performance areas (KPA).

KPA: Customer Outcomes

To meet the changing demands of Texas’ employers, everyone must be part of the critical pool of potential employees. *Advancing Texas* specifies four target populations, including *English language learners*, who constitute a rapidly growing population requiring additional skills for workforce-related success.

English Language Learner (ELL) Employment [C3] – By 2013, design and implement integrated Adult Basic Education and workforce skills training programs to enhance employment outcomes for the English language learner population.

Owner: SITAC

Participants: TEA, TWC

LTO C3 requires TEA and TWC to develop new and enhance existing methods, programs and processes for programs targeted at the over 17 ELL population that address both language and occupation skill acquisition. The ELL population is comprised of individuals who have a high school diploma or degree in their native country, but for whom English is not their first language.

TEA previously reported that the Adult Basic Education Innovation Grant application was available on the THECB website. The two

agencies collaborated to issue this grant which was initially limited to selected geographic regions with specific criteria required of the applicants. Due to a lack of applications, the Request for Applications was revised and reissued in March 2011. All pilot elements specified in action plan C3 were retained, but changed from required to preferred criteria. This change allows the pilot projects to be more flexible while still focusing on the intended outcomes.

Pilot implementation was scheduled to begin in September 2011 at Alamo Community College District, Amarillo Community College, El Centro College of the Dallas County Community College District, Hill College, South Texas College, Tyler Junior College and Wharton County Junior College.

KPA: Programs, Products and Services

Middle-skill jobs currently account for nearly half the jobs in the U.S. and in Texas. These are jobs requiring education and/or training beyond high school, but less than a four-year college degree. Training ranges from apprenticeships, certificate programs, and mid- to long-term on-the-job-training, to two-year associate academic or technical degrees.

Texas is facing an increasing need for workers with appropriate middle skills, created by job growth and future workforce retirements for a myriad of industries and occupations. Under the Council’s leadership, **LTO P2** requires expansion of the earn while you learn model to address employer demand for skilled workers in middle-skill occupations.

Apprenticeship [P2] – By 2012, design, develop, and implement a pilot program to demonstrate flexibility of the ‘earn while you learn’ model of traditional apprenticeship programs. Where appropriate, expand and replicate into new occupational areas by 2015.

Owner / Participant: Council

The Council Chair assigned the Executive Committee the responsibility of overseeing implementation and reporting to the full Council. A project leadership team, including members from system partners THECB, the Texas Veterans Commission (TVC) and TWC, was created in 2010 and charged with identifying and recommending potential projects. The team considered target industries in allied healthcare, health information technology, energy, aviation, and logistics and distribution and recommended six projects that were approved by the Executive Committee. Five projects are active, including:

- ★ *Three pilots* – partnership formed to develop a registered apprenticeship program in an occupational area that has not traditionally used apprenticeship as a means to train its workforce:
 - Community Health Worker – Coastal Area Health Education Center
 - Health Information Technology – Dallas-Fort Worth Hospital Council Education and Research Foundation
 - Information Technology – New Horizons Computer Learning Centers
- ★ *Two demonstrations* – partnership formed to adapt an existing registered apprenticeship program to meet emerging industry demand:
 - Comprehensive-National Electrician Solar Training – Austin Electrical Joint Apprenticeship Training Committee and the Capital Area Workforce Board
 - Pre-Apprenticeship, Distance Learning and Outreach to Underserved Populations – Youth and Women – Independent Electrical Contractors of Texas

The Council worked with the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) and pilot project staff to develop action plans with major tasks and timelines for development and implementation of the new programs.

Implementation is underway for all projects. Based on the August 2011 quarterly status reports, all are on track to achieve the majority of their goals and objectives.

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Data gaps regarding employers' needs and customer satisfaction hinder the ability to assess whether existing programs and services adequately meet customer requirements. During the previous strategic plan period, several partner agencies increased their efforts to become more familiar with employers' perception of agency services, and to gather information about projected hiring and training needs.

LTO P5 incorporates five agency projects, with updates presented for four at the September meeting:

- ★ *Health and Human Services Commission – Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) [P5.1]* – DARS is working on two employer-related projects under LTOs P5 and P6. An online survey was developed to collect employer feedback for each

New Horizons Computer Learning Center

"When working with companies in a significant growth mode ... advisable to engage the respective Executive Director and the Business Development Managers from the local board as soon as possible."

- Pilot Project Quarterly Report (May 2011)

New Horizons Computer Learning Centers operates over 300 centers in 65 countries. In 2009, the company was awarded a \$580,685 DOL grant to support development of an apprenticeship model incorporating competency-based learning. Under the grant, New Horizons developed standards for multiple Information Technology (IT) occupations for Indiana's largest healthcare employer. Median hourly wages for the seven occupations ranged from \$20.89-\$54.86 per hour in 2009.



In 2010, New Horizons researched Texas' demand for several IT occupations and proposed a registered apprenticeship project to target the I-35 corridor, including Dallas, Fort Worth, Austin and San Antonio. In 2011, the implementation region was expanded to add the 13-county Gulf Coast Planning Region served by the Houston-Galveston Area Council. As the project convener, New Horizons is working to build project partnerships with DOL, public and private training providers, community-based organizations, local boards and employers.

The apprenticeship program is based on a competency-based model which enables participants to accelerate their completion timeline if they have prior knowledge and skills. Total time commitments range from:

- ★ Computer Support Specialist (Help Desk Technician) – 2,224 hours, including 2,004 hours of on-the-job learning, supplemented by 220 hours of related instruction.
- ★ IT Project Manager – 6,588 hours, including 6,144 hours of on-the-job learning, supplemented by 444 hours of related instruction.

As of August 2011, the project was on track with milestones in the action plan submitted to the Council in October 2010. A partner employer, JPS Health Network, has completed standards development for two entry level IT occupations and submitted them for DOL review. In addition, New Horizons is modifying standards developed under the 2009 DOL grant, with submission to DOL for review expected by the end of 2011.

New Horizons continues to engage additional partners. For example:

- ★ added teleNetwork Inc., with a projected 400 entry-level positions in Austin and San Marcos;
- ★ discussed referral of disabled veterans with South Texas Veterans Health Care System;
- ★ consulted with TWC regarding developing a consortium for possible Skills Development Fund grant application; and
- ★ met with staff from a Fort Worth high school to discuss creating an apprenticeship pathway for students interested in healthcare IT.

If successful, these apprenticeship models could be adopted by a wide variety of businesses that employ IT professionals.

service or interaction. The initial 2010 pilot resulted in overall high levels of satisfaction, and the survey was modified in an effort to address the low response rate and issues identified by respondents. The Divisions for Blind and Rehabilitation Services are piloting similar versions of the revised survey, with the gathered information scheduled to be evaluated by November 2011. Information obtained through the survey will be used to assess employer satisfaction and to identify opportunities for program and service improvements.

DARS is also exploring the purchase of cloud based subscriptions for business relations management software that would enable businesses to screen applicants online and also provide DARS with options for tracking key indicators such as how quickly individuals were hired and retention rates.

Employer Needs / Satisfaction [P5] – Partner agencies will gather data from employer customers at appropriate intervals to determine employer needs and satisfaction.

Owner: SITAC

Participants: HHSC-DARS, THECB, TVC, TYC, TDCJ-Windham

- ★ *THECB [P5.2]*– After developing an online survey system, THECB worked with TWC to notify employers of its availability and also contacted key stakeholder groups in an effort to increase awareness and participation. A low response rate prompted THECB to consider new options to meet the project’s intent, and in 2011 the agency partnered with the Council to survey CTCs.

A two-phase survey process was used to collect information on college strategies for determining employer satisfaction and using that information in institutional planning processes to improve program delivery. Two colleges were selected as models of promising practices and will be formally recognized by the Council in December 2011.

- ★ *TVC [P5.3]*– In late 2009, TVC launched a statewide initiative focused on placing veterans into employment by hiring a dedicated Business Outreach Coordinator. The successful effort was expanded in July 2011 when TVC instituted the Veterans Business Representatives (VBR) initiative with positions strategically located across the state.

The VBRs are working to establish partnerships with regional employers and to directly market TVC employment services. A new web-based survey has been created to evaluate services. Data collection is scheduled to begin in early 2012, allowing time for employers to effectively evaluate the new services. TVC regional managers will collect and analyze data for their region to evaluate the VBR initiative and employers’ needs and satisfaction related to hiring qualified veteran candidates.

- ★ *Texas Department of Criminal Justice – Windham School District (Windham) [P5.5]* – In 2011, Windham employed an electronic survey but encountered low response rates and data. Windham reported that additional effort is needed to accurately match ex-offenders with respective employers, also noting that more investigation is required in order to determine how federal confidentiality statutes apply to the provision of additional individual detail to potential respondents.

Current plans are to develop an alternative instrument and methodology by August 2012. Annual surveys will continue, with data reviewed to determine employer satisfaction and for use in a variety of program planning and management initiatives. In addition, alternate methodologies will be discussed during the biannual plan review process.

<i>SITAC Members</i>	
<i>Chair</i>	Paul Mayer, Executive Committee Member, Texas Workforce Investment Council
<i>Economic Development and Tourism Division</i>	Keith Graf, Director, Aerospace and Aviation
<i>Texas Association of Workforce Boards</i>	David K. Setzer, Executive Director, Workforce Solutions North Central Texas
<i>Texas Department of Criminal Justice</i>	Debbie Roberts, Superintendent, Windham School District
<i>Texas Education Agency</i>	Vangie Stice-Israel, State Director for Career Technical Education
<i>Texas Health and Human Services Commission</i>	Jim Hanophy, Assistant Commissioner, Division for Rehabilitative Services
<i>Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board</i>	Dr. MacGregor Stephenson, Assistant Commissioner for Academic Affairs and Research
<i>Texas Veterans Commission</i>	Shawn Deabay, Director, Veterans Employment Services
<i>Texas Workforce Commission</i>	Luis Macias, Texas Back to Work Coordinator
<i>Texas Youth Commission</i>	