

SITAC Quarterly Report

*System Integration Technical Advisory Committee
Texas Workforce Investment Council
Quarter Ending September 2012*

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 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, December 6, 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 first 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. The first update to the plan, incorporating

input from all partner agencies, was approved by the Council on March 9, 2012 and by the Governor on May 24, 2012.

SITAC members typically meet quarterly, providing status reports on action plans 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.

Featured Action Plan: Career Technical Education – Increase Student Completion [S2]

Career technical education (CTE) programs provide valuable skills training, and often lessen the risk of students dropping out. Texas needs enhanced and more effective integration of academic and CTE options at both the secondary and postsecondary levels in order to increase graduation rates and assist with the transition to further education or the workforce. Two LTOs focus on this critical issue including **LTO S2** that addresses college and career readiness. The intent is to increase the availability of both academic and rigorous CTE courses to support all students through a range of choices including two- and four-year degrees, apprenticeship and the military.

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) continues to make progress on the action plan's (AP) tasks, including the design, development and adoption of CTE courses to meet recommended or advanced high school program graduation requirements. Over 190 new CTE courses have been developed and adopted by the State Board of Education (SBOE). These are organized around the 16 national career clusters, and include 18 courses that meet graduation requirements for fourth year science and fourth year math, as well as options for English, fine arts and speech.

Message from the Chair

In September, we welcomed our new member from the Texas Veterans Commission, as well as several Council members.

Status reports for several action plans and partner agency initiatives were discussed, and Council staff provided an overview of the 2012 edition of the *Texas Index*.

The Texas Education Agency presented on efforts to increase career technical education courses designed to improve student success in a variety of education and career choices. Overviews of all project updates are included in this issue of the *SITAC Quarterly Report*.

Staff is working closely with system partners on the Council's annual evaluation report. The report will be considered by the Council in December, and will document program performance outcomes as well as partner efforts and progress made toward improving Texas' workforce system this year. Our next SITAC report will include implementation highlights for fiscal year 2012 – the third year of *Advancing Texas'* six-year plan cycle.

Paul Mayer

*Advancing Texas and implementation updates available at:
http://governor.state.tx.us/twic/workforce_system/*

Required professional development for CTE teachers has been underway since 2010. Initially, training was scheduled and facilitated through the state's Education Service Centers. Work is in progress to make courses available online as a series. The three final content courses will be available in fall 2012 through Project Share – an Internet portal designed to provide professional development resources for teachers across the state and to build professional learning communities where educators can collaborate and participate in online learning opportunities.

CTE Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS, state-mandated curriculum), incorporating the College and Career Readiness Standards, were adopted by the SBOE and effective as of August 2010. School districts implemented the new courses in 2010-2011 and have completed two instructional years. The SBOE has scheduled the next CTE TEKS revision cycle to begin in 2013.

Career Technical Education – Increase Student Completion [S2] – By 2013, Texas will decrease high school dropout rates by implementing rigorous Career and Technical Education (CTE) as a part of the recommended or advanced high school graduation program.
Owner / Participant: TEA



- ★ *CTE works for higher graduation rates* – The average high school **graduation rate** for students concentrating in **CTE programs is 90.18%** compared to a national graduation rate of 74.9%.
- ★ *CTE works for America's jobs of tomorrow* – Experts project **47 million job openings** in the decade ending 2018 ... nearly all will require real-world skills that can be mastered through CTE.
- ★ *CTE works to reduce high school dropout rates* – High-risk students are **8 to 10 times less likely to drop out** in 11th or 12th grades if they are enrolled in a CTE program compared to general education.
- ★ *CTE works for postsecondary placement* – **70%** of students concentrating in CTE areas **stayed in postsecondary education or transferred** to a four-year degree program ... compared to an overall average state target of 58%.

- National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium (www.careertech.org)

TEA is working with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) to design, develop and coordinate policies and processes related to dual credit courses and credit transfer. Jobs for the Future is conducting a study for the two agencies that assesses the correlation between high school enrollment in dual credit and enrollment, persistence and completion of postsecondary education. The study is scheduled for completion in late October.

The agency continues to develop and deploy early college high schools (ECHS). These innovative high schools are located on or in close proximity to a college campus to allow students in historically underrepresented college-going populations the opportunity to earn a high school diploma and an associate's degree or up to 60 college credits over four years. The designation process is required for all current ECHS, as well as applicants seeking designation. Schools may be provisionally designated, designated or denied and all first-time designations are provisional for at least two years. Nine new ECHSs were designated in fiscal year (FY) 2012 and as of August 2012, there were 62, including five Texas Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (T-STEM) academies.

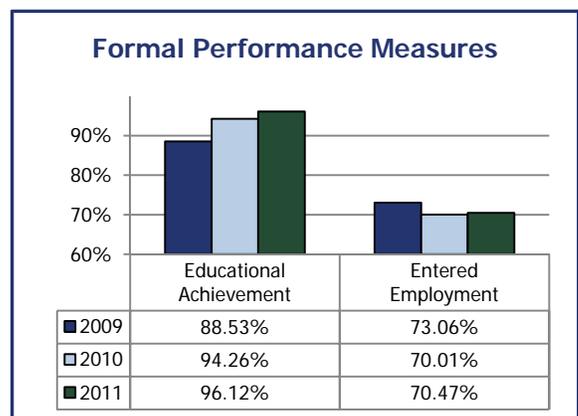
Finally, criteria are being developed for the Campus Distinction Designations for the 21st Century Workforce Development program as required by House Bill 3 (81st Legislature). TEA staff

previously drafted a list of stakeholders, a literature review, a list of possible measurement criteria/indicators, and a list of possible award methodologies. Staff are developing plans to request participation on the committee, and have asked Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) staff to recommend workforce stakeholders. Committee meetings are tentatively scheduled to begin this school year, with the intent of publishing standards and award criteria in summer or fall 2013.

Based on TEA data reported in 2011:

- ★ *Educational Achievement* – Of 135,688 CTE program participants, 130,417 (96.12%) achieved an educational outcome, an increase of 1.86% from 2010 and 7.58% from 2009.
- ★ *Entered Employment* – Of 135,813 CTE participants, 95,708 (70.47%) entered employment – up slightly (0.46%) from 2010, but down 2.59% from 2009.
- ★ *Customers Served* – The total number served by Secondary CTE programs rose from 1,012,774 in 2009 to 1,033,875 in 2011, a two-year increase of 2.08%.

Additional TEA data indicates that CTE students who take two or more CTE classes stay in school at a higher rate and outperform the general population on the reading/language arts and math Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS™). In addition, they graduate at a significantly higher rate than the general population.



Implementation Update: September 2012

Reports for five additional *Advancing Texas*' APs were presented at the September 6, 2012 SITAC meeting. Summaries for each are provided below.

Blind / Disabled Employment

The Health and Human Service Commission's Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (HHSC-DARS) works in partnership with disabled Texans to improve the quality of their lives and to enable their full participation in society. DARS' Division of Blind Services (DBS) and Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) have a dual customer focus – striving to meet the needs of employers and individual consumers.

Blind / Disabled Employment [C1] – By 2013, the blind and disabled populations will achieve additional employment outcomes.
Owner / Participant: HHSC-DARS

The blind and disabled, who with focused assistance can achieve enhanced employment outcomes, are one of four populations targeted by *Advancing Texas*. LTO C1 specifies that DARS will develop system capabilities, including assistance with technologies and services, designed to ensure employment outcomes for workers with disabilities or who are blind or visually impaired.

The Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program assists the blind and visually impaired, as well as individuals with physical disabilities, prepare for, find and keep jobs. Individualized rehabilitation services may include counseling, training, medical services, assistive devices, job placement assistance and other services. The VR program also partners with businesses to help workers with disabilities keep their jobs and to cultivate new employment opportunities for VR consumers. As part of that effort, the agency offers job placement services and assistance with employment accommodations.

For several years, DARS has been involved in successful, innovative models that have created and facilitated partnerships between business/industry and rehabilitation providers. To build on and replicate these models, a competitive request for proposals was issued, and in 2010, contracts were issued to 10 providers in multiple industries and with various job opportunities. DARS also utilizes an embedded training model when working with medium to large businesses in a variety of industries. This year, DARS continued to monitor the contracts and provide technical assistance while developing a template for fee-based embedded training. The template and accompanying policies went into effect on August 1, 2012. The cost reimbursement contracts have been completed and replaced with ongoing, fee-based arrangements.

Using American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009 funds, the VR initiative was expanded to multiple businesses in the medical, hotel and grocery sectors. Ten of 13 ARRA vendors continued and eight new companies have been added. Of the 18 with activity in FY 2012, all but three have multiple training sites.

The Texas Council for Development Disabilities (TCDD) awarded DRS a five-year, \$1.25 million grant (January 2012-December 2016; 10% match requirement). Project partners include South Texas College (STC), The University of Texas Pan American, Workforce Solutions, Access Granted Technology Services, Communication Access Ability Group of South Texas, DBS, and a 12-member Project Advisory Committee from the local disability, business, and education community.

The TCDD grant will assist 50 individuals with severe developmental disabilities in Hidalgo County who are 18 to 35 years old to attend STC with the intent of obtaining a continuing education certificate, vocational certificate or degree and, ultimately, finding employment. DRS will supplement its VR program with wrap-around services that VR does not currently provide. This includes focused, one-on-one assistance such as educational coaches, individual and family support, and both college and employment readiness. The grant will also support work with local businesses to mentor and support the students, including opportunities for job shadowing and on-the-job-training.



English Language Learner (ELL) Employment

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.

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.

To address the lack of available funding for pilot projects, THECB is supporting the effort under Riders 45 and 56, Senate Bill 1 (81st Legislature). THECB was added as a participant in conjunction with the *2012 Update to Advancing Texas*. A Request for Applications

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, THECB, TWC

was issued and later revised and reissued to allow the projects to be more flexible while still focusing on intended outcomes for the integrated basic education and skills training programs.

Pilot implementation began in fall 2011 at Alamo Community College District, Amarillo Community College, El Centro College, Hill College, South Texas College, Tyler Junior College and Wharton County Junior College. A previously funded program at El Paso Community College is also being monitored as a pilot.

Performance reporting for the projects began this year, with data to be published in the *Evaluation 2012* report. Other preliminary data includes:

- ▶ Across the eight projects, 153 of 612 participants (25%) are in the targeted population.
- ▶ Students are enrolled in vocational English as a Second Language (36%), Certified Nurse Aide (31%), Supply Chain Assistant (11.4%), and Community Health Worker certificate (5.7%) programs.
- ▶ Of 153 students, 51 completed a program by July 1, 2012. Forty-five graduates (88%) received a local, state, national, or Level 1 certificate.

THECB staff conducts regular meetings and telephone conferences with program coordinators to identify, provide technical assistance and make applicable process modifications. Pilot evaluation, conducted by Texas State University, began in October 2011 and will continue through August 2013. A draft interim report is to be submitted to THECB in October.



Competitive Data

Data is required to ensure that system initiatives will be developed and executed to strategically position Texas in the global marketplace. Data must be available to benchmark Texas against other states and countries in the most significant and strategic education, workforce and market outcomes. **LTO P3** calls for continuation of the Council's efforts to produce a data set that allows system stakeholders to ascertain Texas' position relative to key indicators of competitiveness.

Since 2005, the Council has compiled data and published the *Texas Index*. The *Texas Index 2012*, the seventh release of this research report, will be distributed this fall. The report will provide trend data for a series of 38 indicators across four domains or categories: Training and Education; Research and Development; Market Composition and Characteristics; and Participant Access and Contribution. Data in the four domains are based on the important value proposition that skilled and educated people create innovations that result in commercialized products and services. These products are sold in the marketplace, generating economic activity that builds wealth for the state, and subsequently increases the standard of living for Texans.

Data Set (*Texas Index*) [P3] – The Council will produce a data set whereby system stakeholders can ascertain Texas' position relative to key indicators of competitiveness.

Owner / Participant: Council

The report will show a ten-year data trend line from 2002-2011 for most indicators. This will be the first *Index* edition with a full decade of trend data, exhibited as a new standard. In a few cases, ten consecutive years of data are not available for a variety of reasons, e.g.: non-assessment year for testing; methodology change; or preferred source has fewer, more recent years of data available.

Based on data verification and analysis, the *Texas Index 2012* shows some continued effects of the recession as well as indications of recovery. Although Texas fared better than most states, signs of an economy in slow recovery are prevalent in the data over the last reporting cycle. Areas in training and education and market composition thrive, as the majority of indicators in these domains reflect a positive change. Conversely, research and development (R&D) and participant access indicators show little movement indicating that the economy is still recovering from the national recession.

The *Index* data show that Texas is doing comparatively well, and continues to build assets for the future. Texas proficiently attracts business and creates jobs. Although the unemployment rate remained elevated due to natural growth in the workforce and the return of previously discouraged job seekers to those counted among the unemployed, the state's unemployment rate is still one percent lower than the U.S. average.

There is room for improvement in the areas of adult educational attainment, workforce educational achievement, and funding for academic R&D. Despite this, education in Texas continues to improve. The 2012 *Closing the Gaps* progress report showed that Texas added 47,000 students to higher education in fall 2011. The state had nearly 533,000 more students in 2011 than in 2000, shrinking the student gap needed to achieve the 2015 goal of 630,000 students to 16 percent. Additionally, 2011 National Assessment Educational Programs math and science test results show that Texas' eighth grade students' scores were higher than New York, California, and Florida.



Employer Satisfaction and Use of Employment Data

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.

LTOs P5 and P6 incorporated five and three agency projects, respectively, that were continued under *Advancing Texas*. Two agency projects associated with LTO P5 – THECB and Texas Youth Commission – were completed and closed in conjunction with approval of the *2012 Update to Advancing Texas*. Performance reporting for the three active projects will begin this year, with data to be published in the *Evaluation 2012* report.

Updates for all active projects were presented at the September meeting.

- ★ *HHSC-DARS [P5.1, P6.1]* – DARS is working on two employer-related projects under LTOs P5 and P6. An online survey was developed to collect employer feedback for each service or interaction. DRS and DBS use the data to assess employer satisfaction and to identify opportunities for program and service improvements.

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, TVC, TDCJ-Windham

DARS is also implementing a customized cloud-based site. DARSforce is a data system for business relations and a mechanism to create a link between job-ready consumers and employers. Businesses will be able to view consumer's employment history, skills and educational levels. DARSforce is not a matching web site, but rather a tool to facilitate positive employment practices.

In addition, DARS received a grant from the University of Massachusetts to work on strategic planning related to VR processes and services. The project will assist in ongoing work efforts related to the implementation of the cloud-based site. By next year, DARS plans to incorporate the employer survey within the cloud-based system and will be working with business and workforce partners to help design the portal.

- ★ *Texas Veterans Commission (TVC) [P5.3, P6.2]* – 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 last year, with four Veterans Business Representatives (VBR) strategically located across the state. The VBRs work to establish partnerships with regional employers and to directly market TVC employment services. TVC has developed a tracking matrix, and strategic plans have been developed for each region based on employer needs and available skill sets.

Use of Employment Data for Program Improvement [P6] – Partner agencies will use the employment data/outcomes of their programs to understand and improve those programs.

Owner: SITAC
Participants: HHSC-DARS, TVC, TDCJ-Windham

The agency uses a web-based survey to evaluate employer satisfaction. In addition, staff review data from monthly performance reports provided by TWC and conduct annual trend analyses in order to evaluate service delivery models and make adjustments where appropriate. This year, the trend analysis was used to assess staffing needs and to complete the annual Jobs for Veterans State Grant modification that was submitted to DOL's Veterans' Employment and Training Service for approval. The review and analysis also facilitates communication of best practices to state, regional and local staff and to other stakeholders.

Annual employer awards will be presented at the fall conference. In addition, employers are featured on the agency's website and in their *Journal* publication.

- ★ *Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) – Windham School District (Windham) [P5.5, P6.3]* – In 2011, Windham administered an electronic survey but encountered low response rates and data. This year, Windham planned to conduct the survey in conjunction with TDCJ's Parole Division. This effort was targeted in the Dallas, Houston and San Antonio metro areas and supplemented by onsite surveying at job fairs and through direct employer contacts.

The process will be reassessed at the end of the current cycle. Annual surveys will continue, with data reviewed to determine employer satisfaction and for use in a variety of program planning and management initiatives.

Due to staff reductions, onsite visits to local workforce centers were not completed this year; however, Windham plans to make quarterly contacts with a sample of the local centers in order to evaluate training effectiveness and to obtain information on labor trends. Employer survey data is also used to assess satisfaction with the job knowledge and skills of program participants. In addition, the Career and Technical Education Department developed a two-year training plan for instructors to work with businesses, trade organizations and industry to improve instruction and plans to develop partnerships, modify training, and conduct employment studies.

SITAC Members

Chair

Paul Mayer, Executive Committee Member, Texas Workforce Investment Council

Economic Development and Tourism Division

Keith Graf, Director, Aerospace and Aviation

Texas Association of Workforce Boards

David K. Setzer, Executive Director, Workforce Solutions North Central Texas

Texas Department of Criminal Justice

Debbie Roberts, Superintendent, Windham School District

Texas Education Agency

Vangie Stice-Israel, State Director for Career Technical Education

Texas Health and Human Services Commission

Jim Hanophy, Assistant Commissioner, Division for Rehabilitative Services

Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board

Dr. MacGregor Stephenson, Assistant Commissioner for Academic Affairs and Research

Texas Juvenile Justice Department

Amy Lopez, Senior Director of Education Services

Texas Veterans Commission

Stan Kurtz, Operations Manager, Veterans Employment Services

Texas Workforce Commission

Luis Macias, Chief of Staff