

EVALUATION 2021

ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND OUTCOMES OF THE TEXAS WORKFORCE SYSTEM

The Mission of the Texas Workforce Investment Council

Assisting the Governor and the Legislature with strategic planning for and evaluation of the Texas workforce system to promote the development of a well-educated, highly skilled workforce for Texas.

Evaluation 2021

Accomplishments and Outcomes of the Texas Workforce System

Texas Workforce Investment Council
December 2021

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Introduction

Guided by *The Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan FY 2016–FY 2023*, system partners work collaboratively to ensure Texas has a workforce that achieves success in the dynamic global economy. The *Evaluation 2021* report to the Governor and legislature provides a system perspective of the progress and achievement of partner agencies and other system stakeholders. The focal point of the report is a balanced scorecard that presents outcome and trend data for system performance.

The Council and Texas’ Workforce System

The Texas Workforce Investment Council (Council) was created in 1993 by the 73rd Texas Legislature. The Council is charged to promote the development of a highly skilled and well-educated workforce for Texas, and to assist the Governor and the legislature with strategic planning for and evaluation of the Texas workforce system. The 19-member Council includes representatives from business, labor, education, community-based organizations, and member agencies.

The Texas workforce system is composed of the workforce programs, services, and initiatives administered by eight state agencies and 28 local workforce boards, as well as independent school districts, community and technical colleges, and local adult education providers. System partners are responsible for the delivery of 23 programs and services focused on education, workforce education, and workforce training for adults, adults with barriers, and youth.

The Council collects and disseminates performance data and descriptive information on 18 workforce programs, as well as five academic education programs at the secondary and postsecondary levels. Information and data from these five programs assist stakeholders in understanding the state’s efforts to prepare students to transition to further education or enter the workforce.

The Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan FY 2016–FY 2023 was developed by the Council and its system partners to align Texas workforce programs, services, and initiatives. Initially approved by Governor Greg Abbott in 2015 and subsequently updated and approved in 2020, the plan elevates the system-level approach established under the previous two strategic plans and guides system partners in implementing workforce strategies that are

The Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan FY 2016–FY 2023

Vision

An innovative, world-class Texas workforce system ensures success in the dynamic global economy.

Mission

The mission of the Texas workforce system is to position Texas as a global economic leader by growing and sustaining a competitive workforce, aligning programs with employer needs, integrating system services, and leveraging partnerships.

System Partners

- ★ Governor’s Office of Economic Development and Tourism
- ★ Texas Association of Workforce Boards
- ★ Texas Department of Criminal Justice and its Windham School District
- ★ Texas Education Agency
- ★ Texas Health and Human Services Commission
- ★ Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board
- ★ Texas Juvenile Justice Department
- ★ Texas Veterans Commission
- ★ Texas Workforce Commission

The system strategic plan and other Council products are posted on the Council’s website at:

<https://gov.texas.gov/organization/twic/>

designed to achieve specific system objectives. These outcomes are based on key issues identified throughout Texas, which shape the goals, system objectives, action plans, and key performance indicators of the plan.

Annual Evaluation

The Council is required by Texas Government Code, Chapter 2308, to monitor the state’s workforce system. As part of that responsibility, the Council annually reports to the Governor and the legislature on the degree to which the system is achieving workforce goals and objectives. This is the sixth evaluation report for the eight-year strategic plan period. Statutory requirements addressed in the report include:

- ▶ system strategic plan implementation
- ▶ formal and less formal performance measures
- ▶ welfare to work initiatives
- ▶ adult education and literacy
- ▶ skill standards system

Workforce system goals and objectives are the focus of this annual evaluation. Developed collaboratively by the Council and its system partners, many objectives require multi-partner collaboration or alignment of programs, initiatives, and outcomes. Four goal areas address cross-agency, high-priority issues related to employers, partner engagement, system alignment, and program improvement and integration.

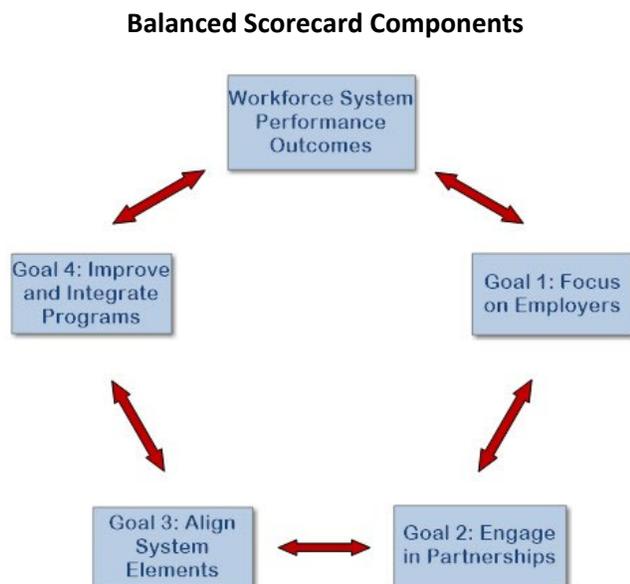
By design, this report presents a system perspective of progress and achievement for partner agencies and other system stakeholders, and meets statutory requirements for reporting to the Governor and legislature. A balanced scorecard aligns with the plan’s structure and supports reporting and performance assessment.

Balanced Scorecard

Performance accountability remains a key element under the system plan, and the balanced scorecard supports Council and system partner efforts to continuously improve the workforce system’s efficiency and effectiveness. The five components—illustrated in the graphic at right—present system and goal-specific performance outcomes attributable to the efforts and actions of partner agencies and their delivery agents.

Workforce System Performance Outcomes (formal measures): The first scorecard presents system performance outcomes for the four formal measures, which are essentially consistent across programs and were first approved in 2003. Fifteen-year performance trends are presented, as well as system and partner agency aggregate data for the most recent 12-month program reporting period.

Implementation of System Goals (Goals 1–4, less formal measures): The plan’s four goal areas include action plans that outline partner agencies’ strategies, activities, and timelines to achieve the less formal measures associated with each system objective. Each goal area scorecard includes data for the relevant less formal measures—the key performance indicators that provide data on agencies’ actions to accomplish the strategies outlined in the plan. Agency implementation highlights and additional data elements that help illustrate accomplishments are also presented.



Key Performance Indicators

Two types of measures were included in the system strategic plan: formal and less formal. The measures meet the statutory requirement for the Council to conduct performance measurement by developing and maintaining a comprehensive system of data gathering and reporting. The formal and less formal measures are presented in the table below.

Formal and Less Formal Measures
Formal – Workforce System Performance Outcomes
Educational attainment
Entered employment
Employment retention
Customers served
Less Formal – Goal Area 1: Focus on Employers
Rate of employer satisfaction
Percentage of revised career and technical education programs of study reviewed by business and industry
Type and number of third-party, industry-based certifications successfully completed by program participants
Certification success rate: total successfully completed certification assessments divided by total attempted certification assessments
Less Formal – Goal Area 2: Engage in Partnerships
Percentage of consumers participating in integrated work-based learning activities
Percentage of individuals co-enrolled in vocational rehabilitation and workforce programs
Percentage of individuals co-enrolled in adult education and workforce programs
Educational attainment rate of students successfully completing Accelerate Texas programs at community and technical colleges
Entered employment rate of students successfully completing Accelerate Texas programs at community and technical colleges
Rate of employer satisfaction
Less Formal – Goal Area 3: Align System Elements
Percentage of grade twelve secondary students who receive career and technical education dual credit, enroll in a two-year institution, and receive credit at the institution
Career and technical education time to degree
Percentage of students and youth with disabilities who participated in transition services and subsequently enrolled in postsecondary education and training
Percentage of students and youth with disabilities who participated in transition services and subsequently entered competitive integrated employment
Percentage of community and technical college students who receive program-of-study-based course credit who transfer to another two-year institution and have that credit recognized
Percentage of career and technical education programs approved for dual credit
Percentage of students successfully completing dual credit career and technical education courses
Less Formal – Goal Area 4: Improve and Integrate Programs
Percentage of students using technology for course content delivery
Utilization of labor market information products
Utilization of self-service options
Utilization of online professional development courses
Percentage of consumers served who have identified as veterans with disabilities
Percentage of consumers served with intellectual and developmental disabilities, mental health conditions, autism, and deaf-blindness who subsequently enter competitive integrated employment
Percentage of child care providers who are certified as Texas Rising Star providers
Entered employment rate of parents receiving child care
Employment retention rate of parents receiving child care

Formal Measures: Four measures approved in 2003 and 2009 were incorporated in the FY 2016–FY 2023 strategic plan: educational achievement, entered employment, employment retention, and customers served. These system

measures, which cross workforce programs and are outcome-oriented, establish responsibility for end outcomes or outputs that are central to the system's success.

Formal measures are included in agency legislative appropriation requests, and may or may not be specified as key measures¹. A formal measure is required to be reported to the Council if it is determined to be a significant intended outcome for a workforce program. As required by statute, program-level data are submitted to the Council by six partner agencies for 23 programs focused on education, workforce, and workforce training services.

Less Formal Measures: This type of measure provides information and feedback that is essential in both the development and the implementation of the system strategic plan. Less formal measures may apply to some or all agency partners. Usually aligned with actions considered critical in determining implementation of a plan strategy, these measures demonstrate success of the plan over time.

Data Treatment and Limitations

Agency Negotiation: Data definitions and methodologies were first negotiated with agencies in 2004. To achieve a higher degree of consistency when aggregating data across programs, the Council requested that federal common definitions be adopted for the formal measures where relevant, and that similar program periods also be used. After renegotiation in 2009, definitions and program periods continued to differ slightly from those used during the previous strategic plan period.

In 2016, Council staff worked with partner agencies to review and update the formal measure definitions and methodologies, and to further align them with Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act requirements. Both entered employment and employment retention are essentially consistent across partner agencies and, where required, the program periods for reporting were adjusted based on federal guidance. Also of note, during the 84th legislative session, the Windham School District was granted the authority to award high school diplomas. Definitions and methodologies for all less formal measures were also negotiated with partner agencies.

Program-Level Data: Formal measures data are reported by program by each partner agency as required by statute. For the purpose of this evaluation report, these data are aggregated and reported as system-level data. Measures are presented as both an absolute number and as a percentage, and are from the most recent 12-month reporting period available.

Unduplicated Data: In most cases, data are unduplicated and conform to reporting definitions and methodologies agreed to by partner agencies. Where known, totals are adjusted to provide an unduplicated count. For example, educational achievement data may include duplicate data where a participant has outcomes for both education and training programs.

Rounding Convention: A rounding convention has been applied to the formal and less formal measures data displayed as a percentage: .001 to .004 has been rounded down to .00; .005 to .009 has been rounded up to the next highest hundredth. Rounding rules are applied after completion of all applicable mathematical operations such as division or subtraction.

Data Ownership: Some partner agencies process their own data, while others have interagency agreements with other partner agencies for data processing. Raw data are confidential records owned by the applicable agency.

Unemployment Insurance Records:

- ▶ *Time Lag* – There is a significant delay in receiving and analyzing unemployment insurance wage records for measuring employment performance. For example, employment retention is based on participants' status a

¹ Key measures indicate the extent to which a state agency is achieving its goals or objectives and consist of the outcome, output, efficiency, and explanatory measures referenced in the General Appropriations Act for each agency. [Legislative Budget Board, *Performance Reporting for New Key Measures* (December 2015)]

full year following program completion. Several factors must be considered, including the time allowed for employers to submit data to the Texas Workforce Commission and the time necessary for agencies to process and report the data to the Council. This means that the performance data reported each year reflects the outcomes of people who exited services one or two years prior.

- ▶ *Coverage* – An unknown number of program exiters obtain jobs that are not covered by the Texas unemployment insurance system. For example, those who are self-employed or in other contract work, those who relocate and become employed in another state, and those who live in Texas but are employed across state lines are not reported. This lack of coverage results in lower levels of documented employment, reflected in lower outcomes when education and training programs are evaluated. More complete data sets may be available where the agency can use other databases—such as the Wage Record Interchange System or the Federal Employment Data Exchange System—to identify employment with employers who do not file unemployment insurance wages in Texas.

Issues Identification

System partners operate in a complex, changing economic environment as they strive to provide employers, current workers, and future workers with services that are comprehensive, timely, and relevant. By 2025, the Texas population is projected to exceed 32.2 million people. The demographic composition is expected to continue to change, with Hispanics growing to the largest percentage of the population (40.66 percent) and the number of females slightly exceeding that of males.²

Growth in middle-skills jobs—those that require more than a high school degree but less than a four-year degree—continues to increase the demand by employers for workers with industry-based certifications. Nationally, there is an abundance of middle-skill jobs available, and half of all STEM jobs require less than a 4-year degree. These middle-skill STEM jobs pay higher (as much as 10 percent) than other jobs with similar educational requirements, according to the Brookings Institution.

Middle-skill jobs account for 54 percent of the Texas labor market. Additionally, 45 percent of workers in these jobs have the adequate level of middle-skill training.³ The top five middle-skill STEM occupations (MSSO) in Texas, in terms of percentage growth, include wind turbine service technicians, physical therapist assistants, occupational therapy assistants, medical assistants, and respiratory therapists.⁴ Finding qualified workers in these occupations, as well as other fast-growing MSSO occupations, will be critical to ensuring that Texas continues to compete in a global market.

The Council is charged with facilitating the development of a systemic, integrated approach to the delivery of programs and services that meet the needs of employers and individuals. This task is accomplished in part through identifying issues and working with system partners to achieve issue resolution. Over the eight-year plan period, issues directly related to the scope as outlined above are included in the annual evaluation report.

The Council also identifies and works to address issues related to the state’s workforce system through other strategies and methods, including:

- ▶ *Council Strategy Sessions* – Convened in addition to, or in conjunction with, regular Council meetings in order to identify and address systemic issues.
- ▶ *Issue Briefs and Reports* – Produced periodically to address specific workforce issues or to provide demographic profiles for population segments such as mature workers, people with disabilities, and veterans.

² Texas Demographics Center, based on the 0.5 migration scenario (<https://demographics.texas.gov/Data/TPEPP/Projections/>, October 2020).

³ National Skills Coalition, *Texas Middle-Skill STEM Fact Sheet*. (November 2020).

⁴ Texas Workforce Commission, Texas LMI (September 2021).

- ▶ *Employer and Stakeholder Panels or Surveys* – Conducted periodically to obtain feedback regarding system stakeholder needs and to assess workforce system usage and satisfaction levels.
- ▶ *Workforce System Initiatives* – Conducted periodically to address system-wide issues. These initiatives are research based with system partner input by way of focus groups, task groups, and other means of collaborative work. The initial workforce system initiative began in 2016 with the Industry-Based Certification System Initiative.

Balanced Scorecard

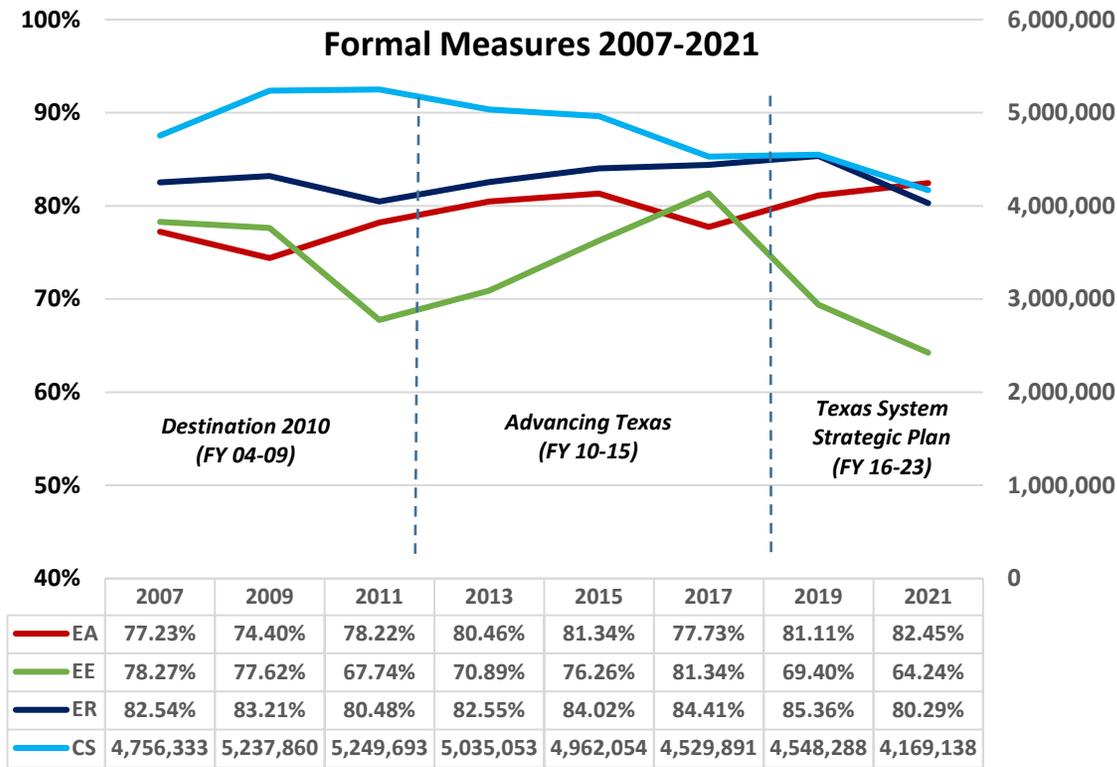
The balanced scorecard framework of this report complements the system strategic plan's structure and supports reporting and performance assessment. By design, a balanced scorecard provides a framework for developing, implementing, and managing strategy by linking objectives, measures, and initiatives to the strategy. The structure of the FY 2016–FY 2023 system plan readily aligns with a balanced scorecard framework—based on four goal areas that address cross-agency, high-priority issues determined critical to achieving the plan's vision and mission.

The Council believes the balanced scorecard supports both Council and system partner efforts to continuously improve the workforce system's efficiency and effectiveness. The components incorporate narrative and graphics to illustrate achievements by both the system and partner agencies, as reported that fiscal year. This evaluation design also supports communication between the Council and its partner agencies and provides an assessment of progress and outcomes to internal and external customers, including the Governor, legislature, and other system stakeholders.

The balanced scorecard presents formal and less formal measures data reported to the Council by six partner agencies:

- ▶ Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) and its Windham School District
- ▶ Texas Education Agency (TEA)
- ▶ Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB)
- ▶ Texas Juvenile Justice Department (TJJD)
- ▶ Texas Veterans Commission (TVC)
- ▶ Texas Workforce Commission (TWC)

Workforce System Performance Outcomes



Fiscal Year 2021 Outcomes

622,199 (82.45 percent) individuals completed a degree, certificate, or other measure of educational achievement

576,852 (64.24 percent) individuals entered employment and/or were enrolled in education or training after program exit

420,406 (80.29 percent) individuals retained employment and/or were enrolled in education or training after program exit

4,169,138 individuals received services through the Texas workforce system

	System Partner	Educational Achievement (EA)	Entered Employment (EE)	Employment Retention (ER)	Customers Served (CS)
	2021	Criminal Justice	650	n/a	n/a
	Education	573,413	145,435	n/a	3,025,220
	Higher Education	39,322	120,765	106,472	610,777
	Juvenile Justice	293	n/a	n/a	1,998
	Veterans	n/a	2,872	3,204	6,160
	Workforce	9,171	307,780	310,730	524,983
	Total	622,199	576,852	420,406	4,169,138
	Percent	82.45%	64.24%	80.29%	n/a

Data Notes

Many programs were affected by the pandemic during 2020, and that is reflected in many of the formal and less formal data sets provided by partner agencies.

Most programs are designed to serve participants that meet specific eligibility criteria and have unique needs. Program objectives and desired outcomes vary, and approved definitions and methodologies are program-specific. Additionally, integrated service delivery strategies may result in duplication of customer counts across programs. Data subsets (duplicates) include Postsecondary Community and Technical College Corrections – Academic and Technical, which have been adjusted to provide unduplicated counts for educational achievement and customers served.

Workforce System Performance

To further align formal measures with Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) requirements, in 2016 Council staff worked with partner agencies to review and update the formal measure definitions and methodologies. Both entered employment and employment retention are essentially consistent across partner agencies and, where required, the program periods for reporting were adjusted based on federal guidance. The federal regulations significantly affected the reported outcomes of certain programs such as Adult Education – WIOA, Title II.

Goal Area 1: Focus on Employers

By accessing critical education and labor data sets, employers can better find and plan for skilled workers to meet their needs in both the immediate timeframe and the future. Through greater engagement with employers, education and training providers can better design career and technical education content and delivery options that are more aligned with industry needs. Providers can make adjustments in program content to benefit employers and students, as well as address both state and regional economic needs.

<i>What are the objectives?</i>	<i>How are system partners addressing them?</i>	<i>What was accomplished this year?</i>
Increase business and industry involvement.	TVC is expanding outreach programs to employers to assist veterans in finding quality employment. TEA is involving business and industry in Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills review and programs of study.	55.74 percent employer satisfaction rate 15.63 percent of revised career and technical education programs of study reviewed by business and industry.
Expand licensure and industry certification.	Five system partners are using third-party, industry-based certifications where relevant as an education or training outcome to connect graduate competencies to job skill requirements: TEA, THECB, TVC, TWC, and Windham.	116,178 third-party, industry-based certifications successfully completed by program participants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ 74,289 (TEA) ★ 20,742 (THECB) ★ 1,702 (TWC), including 73 awarded to veterans (TVC) ★ 19,372 (Windham) Certification success rate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Data are no longer collected (TEA) ★ 93.07 percent (Windham)

Focus on Employers: Action Plan Reports

By improving access to critical education and labor data sets, employers can better find and plan for skilled workers to meet their needs in both the immediate timeframe and the future. Through greater engagement with employers, education and training providers can better design career and technical education content and delivery options that are more aligned with industry needs. Providers can make adjustments in program content to benefit employers and students, as well as address both state and regional economic needs.

System Partner Strategy	Agency	System Objective	System Goal
Expand outreach programs to employers to assist veterans to find quality employment.	TVC	Increase business and industry involvement.	<i>Focus on employers</i>
Involve business and industry in Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills review and programs of study.	TEA		
Use third-party, industry-based certifications where relevant as an education or training outcome to connect graduate competencies to job skill requirements.	TWC TEA THECB TVC TDCJ	Expand licensure and industry certification.	
Align career and technical education program content and outcomes with third-party, industry-based certifications.	TEA THECB		

Five partner agencies are focused on increasing business and industry involvement, as well as expanding licensure and industry certification to more effectively assist employers in finding skilled talent.

The following pages include action plan reports from each of the partner agencies. **Please note that the reports may contain information verbatim as submitted by the agencies.**

Agency	Texas Veterans Commission				
Goal Area	1 – Focus on Employers				
Strategy	Expand outreach programs to employers to assist veterans to find quality employment.				
Part 1–Status Update for Actions					
	Actual [mm/yy]			Specified in Plan	
Status	Start Date	End Date	Action	Start Date	End Date
Finalized	07/19	06/21	Conduct semi-annual employer satisfaction surveys, analyze survey data, and evaluate ways to improve outreach programs to employers.	FY 2019	FY 2023
Finalized	07/19	06/21	Integrate with Texas Workforce Commission business service units across the state.	FY 2019	FY 2023
Finalized	07/19	06/21	Partner with employers and veteran service organizations on hiring events.	FY 2019	FY 2023
Substantially complete	07/19		Participate in corporate events, panel discussions, and presentations.	FY 2019	FY 2023
Finalized	07/20	06/21	Expand the use of social media to target employers through LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter.	FY 2020	FY 2021
In progress	07/21		Partner with institutions of higher education to provide formal training to Texas Veterans Commission (TVC) staff on marketing techniques.	FY 2020	FY 2023
Finalized	07/19	06/20	Seek memberships for TVC staff in professional organizations such as the Society for Human Resource Management and chambers of commerce.	FY 2020	FY 2021
In progress	07/19		Develop a webinar series to promote the skill sets of veterans.	FY 2020	FY 2021
Finalized	09/20	08/21	Develop a strategic alliance with institutions of higher education career services departments.	FY2020	FY 2023
Part 2–FY 2021 Key Activities					

Customer Survey was started in July 2019 to July 2021 and was refined in August 2021 and will be a continuous initiative.

A mandate from the Department of Labor's Jobs for Veterans State Grants program requires that veteran employment services are partnered with all Texas local workforce development areas and their business service units.

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Employment Services partners with American Job Centers and employers to provide in-person and virtual hiring events to meet the employer's needs.

Participation in corporate events, panel discussions, and presentations is a mandatory performance requirement for Employment Services staff. In-person events delayed due to COVID-19 restrictions.

The Texas Veterans Commission (TVC) Communications and Outreach department conducts continuous social media postings in most popular platforms, as well as issuing monthly e-Vets Newsletters to the Texas veteran community, and the employment department posts employment and veteran jobseeker events on LinkedIn. This will be an ongoing routine initiative.

Partnering with institutions of higher education was delayed due to the pandemic. Future plans will include institutions of higher education participating in future agency training symposiums.

State agency not allowed to provide memberships to Chambers of Commerce. Employment staff may pursue individual memberships through the Society for Human Resource Management.

Video series is in progress and will be placed on the agency Learning Management System for TVC veterans employer liaisons to use as a resource for employer outreach. For jobseekers, other series will be developed and placed on the Texas Veterans Commission's YouTube channel.

The TVC Veterans Education Department is the State Approving Agency for Department of Veteran Affairs for all institutions of higher education in Texas. This is an ongoing requirement of the TVC Vets Education Department for Texas under their contract with the Department of Veteran Affairs.

Agency	Texas Education Agency
Goal Area	1 – Focus on Employers
Strategy	Involve business and industry in Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills review and programs of study.

Part 1–Status Update for Actions

Status	Actual [mm/yy]		Action	Specified in Plan	
	Start Date	End Date		Start Date	End Date
In progress	09/20		Involve business and industry representatives on committees for the review and revision of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) for career and technical education (CTE).	FY 2020	FY 2023
In progress	09/20		Revise CTE industry leadership committees for each career cluster to meet annually to assist in CTE programs of study review, industry-based certification review, CTE TEKS review, and technical assistance activities provided by the state.	FY 2020	FY 2023
In progress	09/20		Involve business and industry representatives in work-based learning framework implementation.	FY 2020	FY 2022

Part 2–FY 2021 Key Activities

The Texas State Board of Education (SBOE) accepted applications from individuals interested in serving on a review workgroup for select subchapters of Texas Administrative Code, Chapter 130, Texas Essential Knowledge and Skill (TEKS) for Career and Technical Education (CTE). The SBOE identified educators, parents, business and industry representatives, and employers to serve on these workgroups. The Spring 2021 review of 46 CTE courses by 12 programs of study workgroups included 30 business and industry representatives selected for their expertise in aligned career fields.

A group of CTE courses will be reviewed in each TEKS review cycle to ensure a review cadence that keeps pace with industry changes.

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) prioritized engagement with industry stakeholders to inform programs of study review, industry-based certification review, CTE TEKS review, and a variety of technical assistance activities. Stakeholder engagement included collaboration with a statewide CTE leadership committee as well as representatives from each career cluster.

TEA engaged a variety of education and industry stakeholders to draft a work-based learning framework in fiscal year (FY) 2020. This framework draft now serves as a baseline from which to coordinate with tri-agency partners in implementing House Bill 1247, passed during the 87th legislative session. This bill stipulates that a work-based learning framework be jointly developed by the three agencies in service of a shared vision for encouraging work-based learning in the state. TEA has delayed implementation of the initial framework draft to ensure alignment and successful implementation of a tri-agency framework scheduled for roll-out in December 2022. A tri-agency workgroup has been established and meets monthly to collaborate on work-based learning strategy and on the framework. Business and industry representatives will be consulted throughout framework development and framework implementation.

Agency	Texas Workforce Commission				
Goal Area	1 – Focus on Employers				
Strategy	Use third-party, industry-based certifications where relevant as an education or training outcome to connect graduate competencies to job skill requirements.				
Part 1–Status Update for Actions					
	Actual [mm/yy]			Specified in Plan	
Status	Start Date	End Date	Action	Start Date	End Date
In progress	11/16		Expand the number of apprentices in underserved populations.	FY 2020	FY 2023
In progress	11/16		Provide training toward industry-based certifications to expand the number of work-ready individuals in high demand occupations.	FY 2020	FY 2023
In progress	09/17		Increase the number of employers who participate in work-based learning programs.	FY 2020	FY 2023

Part 2–FY 2021 Key Activities

Apprenticeship is expanding the number of apprentices in underserved populations. The Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) has both federal and state Registered Apprenticeship (RA) funding. The federal funding is through the Department of Labor – Apprenticeship Expansion Grants, and the state is through the Texas Legislature, in Texas Education Code, Chapter 133. Both the federal and state funding support the expansion of RA and, by design, the RA model includes work-based learning as a required component of the RA model, which combines classroom training and on-the-job training (that is, work-based learning). Currently, there are 604 RA programs in Texas providing on-the-job-training/work-based learning to 20,983 active apprentices.

The TWC Apprenticeship Expansion Grants started in November 2016. Currently, TWC has the following active grants:

- Apprenticeship State Expansion (ASE) for \$5.4 million (end date June 30, 2023, extended from June 30, 2022) to support 2,061 apprentices;
- State Apprenticeship Expansion (SAE2020) for \$9.4 million (end date June 30, 2023) to support 4,821 apprentices; and
- State Apprenticeship Expansion, Equity, and Innovation (SAEEI) for \$10 million (end date June 30, 2025) to support 2,000 apprentices.

Each of the Apprenticeship Expansion grants has a focus on underrepresented populations. The State Apprenticeship Expansion (SAE) grant, which expired April 30, 2021, reported a total of 2,948 apprentices, with 2,286 (77 percent) identified as underrepresented populations. Currently, the ASE grant has reported a total of 401 apprentices, with 291 (72 percent) identified as underrepresented populations. As the SAE2020 and the SAEEI start reporting apprentices, they should follow the same strategies to yield opportunities for underrepresented populations.

The TWC Chapter 133 funding in both fiscal year (FY) 2019 and FY 2020 served in excess of 6,000 apprentices, and more than 50 percent of the participants were identified as underrepresented populations. Additionally, in both FY 2019 and FY 2020, approximately 950 of the apprentices were non-custodial parents, identified with a match with the Office of the Attorney General.

Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) and Workforce Training:

AEL statewide grants require grantees to provide integrated educational and training (IET) programs to participants. These program models enable students to get contextualized basic skills support and workforce preparation activities while enrolled in a workforce training program that leads to an industry recognized credential. In state fiscal year 2020, TWC AEL served 7,358

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participants in IET programs. The credential attainment rate in this state fiscal year reporting period for IET participants (who exited AEL during 2018) was 40.43 percent.

In addition to providing workforce training through AEL statewide grants, TWC funds special projects with AEL state leadership funds, such as Accelerate Texas. Accelerate Texas programs are designed to accelerate completion and placement into in-demand and targeted occupations. Since 2014, TWC has invested in the Accelerate Texas model—inspired and modeled on the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board’s (THECB) 60x30TX grants—through AEL grants to community colleges and community-based and nonprofit organizations outside the core AEL statewide service network. Accelerate Texas allows individuals who would otherwise fall below college admission requirements to be admitted into training programs that provide both AEL and workforce training services. After five rounds of grants (for a total of 28 grants awarded), TWC has invested more than \$12 million in the Accelerate Texas program and has supported the training of over 3,500 individuals.

AEL and employer engagement in work-based learning:

AEL statewide grants, which began July 1, 2018, require AEL grantees to provide career pathway services through various models. One model, referred to as workplace literacy, allows AEL grantees to establish AEL classes for a private employer’s employees to enhance their English language acquisition, improve math or other skill areas, and sharpen soft skills (work communication etiquette, workplace digital literacy, etc.) needed to function successfully in the workplace. From July 1, 2019, to June 30, 2020, Texas AEL programs established workplace literacy programs with more than 50 different employers representing industries such as food processing and hospitality. Workplace literacy continues to grow through AEL grantee’s partnerships with employers, and, in August 2021, the Commission approved \$1.2 million of AEL state leadership funds to expand these workplace learning partnerships between AEL providers and employers. This special initiative will award grants to AEL providers who have entered into partnerships with employers to provide workplace literacy activities that include employer-provided training or training that leads to an industry-recognized credential. This initiative will support the creation of replicable models that can be shared statewide with workforce stakeholders.

In addition, since 2017, TWC and Tri-Agency partners have hosted the Texas Internship Challenge. The objective of the Texas Internship Initiative is to create and execute internship models that demonstrate effective work-based learning experiences that prepare high school and community and technical college students for employment in high-demand middle-skill STEM occupations in the state. To date, over 6,200 individuals and nearly 500 employers have participated.

Agency	Texas Education Agency				
Goal Area	1 – Focus on Employers				
Strategy	Use third-party, industry-based certifications where relevant as an education or training outcome to connect graduate competencies to job skill requirements.				
Part 1–Status Update for Actions					
	Actual [mm/yy]			Specified in Plan	
Status	Start Date	End Date	Action	Start Date	End Date
In progress	09/20		Involve business and industry representatives in the review and validation of industry-based certifications.	FY 2020	FY 2021
In progress	05/20		Develop a system to collect data on industry-based certifications directly from certifying entities.	FY 2020	FY 2023

Part 2–FY 2021 Key Activities

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) launched the review process for the 2022-2023 Industry-Based Certification List for Public School Accountability in December 2020. From December 1, 2020 - January 15, 2021, and March 22 - 29, 2021, TEA accepted submissions of recommended industry-based certifications for inclusion on the list. Nearly 900 unique certifications were recommended by stakeholders to be included in the review process. The Ray Marshall Center (RMC) at the University of Texas at Austin, on behalf of TEA, is now engaging with stakeholders to assist in identifying those industry-based certifications that are recognized and valued within industry sectors. RMC released a survey to a large sampling of industry personnel in July 2021, to remain open for industry input through the close of the fiscal year.

TEA Career and Technical Education staff and leadership are engaged in exploratory research with several regional pilot programs and efforts in other states across the country to understand best practices, challenges, and opportunities for collecting data on industry-based certifications directly from certifying entities.

	Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board					
Goal Area	1 – Focus on Employers					
Strategy	Use third-party, industry-based certifications where relevant as an education or training outcome to connect graduate competencies to job skill requirements.					
Part 1–Status Update for Actions						
	Actual [mm/yy]				Specified in Plan	
Status	Start Date	End Date	Action	Start Date	End Date	
Substantially complete	09/16	10/19	Engage industry representatives to collaborate with community colleges in new program development that incorporates national industry-based certifications into programs of study.	FY 2020	FY 2023	

Part 2–FY 2021 Key Activities

Texas Education Code, Section 61.8235, charges the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) to establish programs of study that meet statutory criteria, including the requirement that a program culminate in the attainment of an industry recognized certification, credential, or license; a registered apprenticeship or credit-bearing postsecondary certificate; or an associate or baccalaureate degree. THECB formed advisory committees of subject matter experts, industry representatives, and secondary education stakeholders to establish 19 statewide programs of study under three career clusters: Architecture and Construction, Health Sciences, and Information Technology. The programs of study initiative was paused in October 2019 along with the related fields of study initiative to allow time for the agency to assess and reformulate creation of fields of study. The agency has no current plans to reinstate the programs of study initiative.

Agency	Texas Veterans Commission
Goal Area	1 – Focus on Employers
Strategy	Use third-party, industry-based certifications where relevant as an education or training outcome to connect graduate competencies to job skill requirements.

Part 1–Status Update for Actions

Status	Actual [mm/yy]		Action	Specified in Plan	
	Start Date	End Date		Start Date	End Date
Finalized	07/19	08/21	Work with regulatory agencies to post those military occupational standard classifications or designations that correspond to licensed occupations to establish a clear support system to ensure as many veterans as possible are aware of job options.	FY 2019	FY 2023
In progress	07/20		Develop a Texas resource based upon a national occupational licensing database that corresponds with military occupations.	FY 2020	FY 2023
In progress	07/20		Publish a database for distribution that identifies the responsible Texas agency for occupational licensing and distribute to military installations for use in the transition process.	FY 2020	FY 2022
In progress	07/20		Advocate through the Texas Coordinating Council for Veterans Services on improved legislation for recognition of military skills in the licensing process.	FY 2020	FY 2023
In progress	07/19		Work with regulatory agencies to establish a process for a military service member or veteran to submit an application for a license or apprenticeship and to obtain credit for verified military experience, service, training, or education.	FY 2019	FY 2023

Part 2–FY 2021 Key Activities

Veterans Employment Services continues to work with regulatory agencies and the Department of Labor to enhance and publish crosswalks and continues to advocate for the publication of occupational licensing data on websites to help improve licensure and hiring efforts. Most recently, the State Auditor's Office has updated the military crosswalk information found on its website, as well as the Military Crosswalk Guide for the 2022-2023 biennium, located online at <http://www.hr.sao.texas.gov/CompensationSystem/JobDescriptions>.

The National Conference of State Legislatures has developed an executive summary of 48 licensed occupations that are required in 30 states that have projected growth in employment. The Department of Labor Vets has a Military Spouse Interstate License Recognition public platform informing transitioning service members and military spouses of options for license reimbursements and posts the State Occupational License Finder on CareerOneStop License Finder. The Texas Veterans Commission (TVC) will be updating and publishing links for databases that are already in place for the veteran community and employers.

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TVC has developed a Texas state agency licensing spreadsheet and has published it on its website, connecting it to the Texas Veterans Portal. Progress continues in the agency's outreach efforts to all military installations and partners as part of the Transition Assistance Program.

During 2020, several workgroups were formed in the Texas Coordinating Council for Veterans Services, which advocated for improved legislation for recognition of military skills in the licensing process. Licensing continues to be an ongoing topic and is expected to be addressed during the next council session.

In conjunction with Action 12, the Texas Veterans Commission has advocated for the need to post information on how to transfer or obtain licensing on its website. Veterans Employment Services has validated that the main regulating agency for licensing, which is the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation, does provide oversight for a broad, but not exclusive, list of occupations, businesses, facilities, and equipment for Texas and does advertise updates to military spouses, veterans, and transitioning servicemembers in or coming into Texas. This is an ongoing process. The Texas Veterans Commission is not a regulating agency and can only advocate for the need of the requirement with Texas regulating agencies.

Agency	Windham School District (Texas Department of Criminal Justice)
Goal Area	1 – Focus on Employers
Strategy	Use third-party, industry-based certifications where relevant as an education or training outcome to connect graduate competencies to job skill requirements.

Part 1–Status Update for Actions					
Status	Actual [mm/yy]			Specified in Plan	
	Start Date	End Date	Action	Start Date	End Date
In progress	09/20		Continue to develop and maintain partnerships between industry and the Windham School District in order to provide industry-based certifications to students that will fulfill job requirements in the current workforce market. Strengthen employment opportunities for students by continuing to align career and technical education (CTE) courses with industry partners’ needs.	FY 2020	FY 2023
In progress	09/20		Expand the number of CTE classes, including advanced CTE courses that result in industry-based certifications and apprenticeships within the Texas Department of Criminal Justice.	FY 2020	FY 2023
In progress	09/20		Form articulation agreements with colleges that allow students to build upon earned industry certifications and result in the award of college credits for courses completed with the Windham School District.	FY 2020	FY 2021
In progress	09/20		Evaluate CTE program effectiveness within the Windham School District.	FY 2020	FY 2023
In progress	09/20		Collaborate with the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation to formalize a process for students’ eligibility for a license in their respective trades.	FY 2020	FY 2021

Part 2–FY 2021 Key Activities

Windham School District (WSD), in collaboration with the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ), continues to develop and maintain partnerships with industry employers. Current partners have assisted WSD career and technical education (CTE) staff in modifying and standardizing curriculum. WSD staff will continue meeting with industry partners to discuss improved training programs and updated skills, expectations of employers, and the importance of soft skills and career readiness.

WSD and TDCJ expanded CTE programming and apprenticeships across the district in School Year 2021 (SY 2021). Additionally, WSD and TDCJ increased the number of students enrolled in U.S. Department of Labor apprenticeship programs from 88 to 506 enrolled. Currently, WSD offers 26 occupations and is in the process of adding two more (mechanical drafter and computer numerical control).

WSD has added or expanded the following CTE programs and resources to women's facilities during SY 2021:

- Recreational vehicle service technician
- Medical office support specialist

- Principals of information technology
- Business information management
- Construction technology
- Culinary arts
- Urban farming
- Truck driving simulators

WSD has expanded the following CTE programs within men's facilities during SY 2021:

- Urban farming
- Principals of information technology

In SY 2021, WSD worked with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board for guidance on establishing articulation agreements. WSD executed a dual credit agreement with Lee College and is in the final stages of solidifying an agreement with Central Texas College.

WSD evaluates program effectiveness using multiple metrics including:

1. Recidivism: Students who completed WSD Career and Technical Education programs were 25.5 percent less likely to recidivate.
2. Employment: Students who completed WSD Career and Technical Education programs were 16 percent more likely to obtain employment within one year of release.
3. Course completions: In SY 2020, 13,960 students completed CTE courses. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and WSD serving students on a hybrid instructional model, this is a decrease from the 25,754 courses completed the previous year.
4. Industry certifications earned: In SY 2020, 18,264 industry certifications were earned. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and WSD serving students on a hybrid instructional model, this is a decrease from the 33,695 certificates earned the previous year.

A full view of WSD programming and evaluation can be found in the WSD Evaluation Report and Annual Performance Report at wsdtx.org.

WSD and TDCJ formalized a memorandum of understanding with two other State of Texas agencies (Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation [TDLR] and Texas Workforce Commission [TWC]). The agencies have partnered to assist incarcerated individuals in achieving industry certifications, applying for occupational licenses, and obtaining employment upon release to their communities.

In the 87th Legislative Session, WSD worked with TDLR to formalize language related to eligibility to apply for occupational licenses while incarcerated. WSD and the TDCJ Parole and Reentry Divisions will continue to work with TDLR and TWC to support students in completing occupational licensing applications upon release for employment.

Agency	Texas Education Agency				
Goal Area	1 – Focus on Employers				
Strategy	Align career and technical education program content and outcomes with third-party, industry-based certifications.				
Part 1–Status Update for Actions					
	Actual [mm/yy]			Specified in Plan	
Status	Start Date	End Date	Action	Start Date	End Date
In progress	09/20		Align Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills to industry-based certifications where applicable.	FY 2020	FY 2023
In progress	09/20		Connect industry-based certifications to postsecondary programs and establish articulation from secondary to postsecondary educational institutions.	FY 2020	FY 2023

Part 2–FY 2021 Key Activities

The Texas Education Agency and the Texas State Board of Education have established regular cycles in which to evaluate industry-based certifications of value, Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs of study, and Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills within individual CTE courses to ensure appropriate alignment.

The Tri-Agency Workforce Initiative identified connecting secondary programs, postsecondary programs, and credential attainment as its first priority in the Tri-Agency Report, released in December 2020. The tri-agencies are aligning on the appropriate strategies to meet this priority, to "support efficient and flexible pathways to earning high-value credentials linked to high-wage, in-demand jobs."

Agency	Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board
Goal Area	1 – Focus on Employers
Strategy	Align career and technical education program content and outcomes with third-party, industry-based certifications.

Part 1–Status Update for Actions

Status	Actual [mm/yy]		Action	Specified in Plan	
	Start Date	End Date		Start Date	End Date
In progress	09/16		Convene discipline-specific statewide advisory groups to provide up-to-date input concerning skills, certifications, and licenses required by business and industry in order to align career and technical education programs and courses.	FY 2020	FY 2023
In progress	09/16		Identify and implement relevant industry-based certifications and licenses and incorporate the occupational information into statewide career and technical education programs.	FY 2020	FY 2023
In progress	09/19		Implement input from regional meetings to foster communication between industry and colleges.	FY 2020	FY 2023

Part 2–FY 2021 Key Activities

The Texas Education Code, Section 61.8235, Programs of Study (POS) initiative saw incorporation of industry-based certifications (IBCs) into some courses in created POS curricula. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's (THECB) fiscal year (FY) 2021 policy priorities supported initiatives for data modernization, open educational resources, student advising, and the Governor's Emergency Education Relief funds program development, but agency transitions and the pandemic hampered other initiatives such as alignment of programs and IBCs. Agency Workforce Education staff have posted the Texas Education Agency's (TEA) Industry-Based Certifications list on its Career and Technical Education (CTE) webpage and encourage institutions to incorporate IBCs into new program development.

THECB conducted regional meetings with employers and other stakeholders during fall 2019 for the Perkins V State Plan for CTE, developed jointly with TEA. The Senate Bill 64 Cybersecurity Pathway Workgroup brought industry, colleges, and secondary stakeholders together in FY 2021.

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Goal Area 2: Engage in Partnerships

Through collaborative and transparent processes, workforce system partners focus on outcomes that improve the employability of all program participants—from across a wide spectrum of capabilities and experiences—to meet employer needs. The leveraging of partnerships to enhance system alignment and outcomes depends on trust, a culture of collaboration both within and external to the workforce system, deep working relationships, and technical capacity to communicate to share needs, data, and information. Partnerships can provide for common planning, intake, and reporting on outcomes, as well as ensure a “no wrong door” approach to the provision of workforce programs and services.

What is the objective?

How are system partners addressing it?

What was accomplished this year?

Expand partnerships with system partners and stakeholders to promote collaboration, joint planning, and enhanced participant outcomes.

TWC is working to improve rehabilitation employment outcomes by establishing additional partnerships with secondary and postsecondary entities, and with employers.

TWC is creating greater access and effective services by promoting collaboration and regional planning.

THECB and TWC are increasing access to, referral between, and outcomes of adult education programs and services.

Windham is establishing and leveraging regional employer partnerships to benefit students pre- and post-release.

0.21 percent of vocational rehabilitation consumers participated in integrated, work-based learning activities

4.88 percent of individuals in vocational rehabilitation programs were co-enrolled in workforce programs

6.47 percent of individuals in adult education programs were co-enrolled in workforce programs (TWC)

Of students successfully completing a community and technical college Accelerate Texas program that integrated basic skills with career and technical pathways (THECB):

- ★ **49.28 percent** received a Level 1 or Level 2 certificate or an associate’s degree
- ★ **50.00 percent** entered employment and/or were enrolled in education or training

88.89 percent employer satisfaction rate (Windham)

Engage in Partnerships: Action Plan Reports

Through collaborative and transparent processes, workforce system partners focus on outcomes that improve the employability of all program participants—from across a wide spectrum of capabilities and experiences—to meet employer needs. The leveraging of partnerships to enhance system alignment and outcomes depends on trust, a culture of collaboration both within and external to the workforce system, deep working relationships, and technical capacity to communicate to share needs, data, and information. Partnerships can provide for common planning, intake, and reporting on outcomes, as well as ensuring a “no wrong door” approach to the provision of workforce programs and services.

System Partner Strategy	Agency	System Objective	System Goal
Improve rehabilitation employment outcomes by establishing additional partnerships with secondary and postsecondary entities, and employers.	TWC	Expand partnerships with system partners and stakeholders to promote collaboration, joint planning, and enhanced participant outcomes.	<i>Engage in partnerships</i>
Create greater access and effective services by promoting collaboration and regional planning.	TWC		
Increase access to, referral between, and outcomes of adult education programs and services.	TWC THECB		
Establish and leverage regional employer partnerships to benefit students pre- and post-release.	TDCJ		

Three agencies are committed to expanding partnerships to better serve employers and workforce program participants.

The following pages include action plan reports from each of the partner agencies. **Please note that the reports may contain information verbatim as submitted by the agencies.**

Agency	Texas Workforce Commission
Goal Area	2 – Engage in Partnerships
Strategy	Improve rehabilitation employment outcomes by establishing additional partnerships with secondary and postsecondary entities, and employers.

Part 1–Status Update for Actions

Status	Actual [mm/yy]		Action	Specified in Plan	
	Start Date	End Date		Start Date	End Date
In progress	09/19		Convene representatives from vocational rehabilitation, local workforce boards, and workforce center contractors to review current practices and identify effective practices in implementing a coordinated approach to serving employers; and to identify opportunities and strategies for improved coordination and enhanced participant outcomes based on that review.	FY 2020	FY 2021
In progress	09/20		Develop a plan to implement the effective practices and strategies.	FY 2021	FY 2021
Not started	01/22		Implement the plan, including as necessary, dissemination of guidance, training, and resources.	FY 2022	FY 2023

Part 2–FY 2021 Key Activities

Convene representatives from vocational rehabilitation, local workforce boards, and workforce center contractors to review current practices and identify effective practices in implementing a coordinated service delivery approach:

In late 2019, an internal workgroup of Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) staff was convened to develop a vision and plan for a more integrated workforce system in Texas, specifically as it relates to the following Workforce Solutions Network partners, including TWC: 28 Workforce Development Boards and their contracted service providers and community partners; TWC vocational rehabilitation offices; adult education and literacy grantees and their partners comprising community colleges, educational service centers, independent school districts and community-based organizations across the state; and childcare providers.

This internal workgroup created a draft description of an integrated system: The Texas Workforce Solutions Network functions as an integrated system that effectively and efficiently serves all customers, including those with disabilities, by using a team approach to provide access to a wide array of services that enable individuals to achieve their employment goals and employers to hire and retain a skilled workforce. This team approach results in services that are:

- Coordinated, making access to system services as efficient and streamlined as possible so that the customer can focus on achieving results;
- Comprehensive, offering a portfolio of services that can be tailored to the customer’s needs, all aimed at helping an individual achieve his or her employment goal or assisting an employer to meet their workforce needs; and
- Complementary, delivered by a team whose members have expertise in different services and populations, thereby providing value to the overall customer experience.

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Staff providing services through Workforce Solutions offices and adult education and literacy and childcare partners have clearly defined roles and responsibilities as members of the team, designed to facilitate ease of customer access to services and effective coordination of resources. Integrated service delivery is reflected in the approach, methods, and systems by which team members engage customers at certain critical points.

The internal workgroup determined that specific focus is needed on the following six areas as they related to customer engagement and interaction throughout the service delivery process, including: first point-of-contact, informational sessions, initial intake, referral process, service coordination, and business services.

This draft description was shared with Workforce Boards in February 2020, shortly before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to the pandemic the workgroup efforts were placed on hold to allow all partners to focus on pandemic response and recovery efforts. Workgroup activities will reconvene in fiscal year 2022.

Agency	Texas Workforce Commission
Goal Area	2 – Engage in Partnerships
Strategy	Create greater access and effective services by promoting collaboration and regional planning.

Part 1–Status Update for Actions

Status	Actual [mm/yy]		Action	Specified in Plan	
	Start Date	End Date		Start Date	End Date
In progress	09/20		Participate in regional discussions with the Texas Education Agency about career pathway expansion opportunities for high school students.	FY 2020	FY 2021
In progress	09/20		Continue coordination among adult education and literacy, vocational rehabilitation, and local workforce board providers to promote information sharing and integration of program services.	FY 2020	FY 2023
In progress	09/19		Procure and implement a case management system that further integrates data among multiple programs.	FY 2020	FY 2023
In progress	07/17		Convene multiple state and community agencies for enhancing services to foster youth.	FY 2020	FY 2023
Finalized	09/19	03/21	Rewrite Texas Consumer Resource for Education and Workforce Statistics with expanded analytic tools and more user-friendly navigation.	FY 2020	FY 2021

Part 2–FY 2021 Key Activities

Collaboration with the Texas Education Agency (TEA) in the Texas Regional Pathways Network (TRPN):

Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) staff collaborated with TEA in the continued implementation of the TRPN. For the previous year, staff participated in TRPN Steering Committee meetings and in the review of TRPN grant applications to be awarded for the 2021-2022 school year. Work will continue in the year ahead through the Tri-Agency Initiative.

Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) Coordination with Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and Boards:

In December 2019, TWC approved \$2 million to AEL grantees to build greater capacity for referrals to Boards and VR services, supporting both a referral pipeline to and from TWC programs and follow-up with former AEL participants to track the outcomes of enrollment in TWC programs. This initiative, called the Workforce Integration Initiative, required AEL programs to support participant registrations in the new WorkInTexas.com job-seeker website, develop data-sharing agreements with postsecondary education and training institutions, and create referral pipelines with Boards, VR, and community workforce stakeholders. With these funds, AEL grantees paid for staff time dedicated to the intensive case management often necessary to track participants after they leave the AEL program. As a response to AEL program needs to provide efficient services during COVID-19, the Commission broadened the scope of these initiative funds in April 2020, allowing for programs to use funds for distance learning licenses and computer hardware and related costs to ensure AEL students and instructors had the resources needed to transition to remote learning.

In February 2020, TWC held a Career Navigators Conference Day with support from TRAIN PD. This meeting, designed specifically for career navigators, included the following session topics:

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AEL Integration with Vocational Rehabilitation, Employer Engagement, Serving Internationally Trained Professionals, and Services for Reentry.

Additionally, professional development has been key in expanding the reach of a coordinated workforce system to potential AEL customers. In summer 2020, the Commission awarded three professional development AEL grants. The statewide AEL professional development center grant, awarded to Texas A&M University, provides professional development and technical assistance to workforce stakeholders to enable them to provide comprehensive service delivery to AEL participants. Texas A&M University was also awarded the distance education Professional Development Center grant, which local workforce development boards, VR, and AEL stakeholders can access to build remote learning and distance education opportunities. The career pathway Professional Development Center, awarded to Region 6 Education Service Center, will provide research-based professional development on career pathway models, available to workforce stakeholders.

TWC has completed the procurement to replace The Workforce Information System of Texas excluding child care. The updated system will provide TWC and partners with innovative technology and tools. The new workforce case management system replacement will address the need to replace multiple stand-alone systems and platforms of varying ages with an integrated system based on a common platform to improve functionality and streamline case management activities for TWC staff and Workforce Boards. The updated scalable system will integrate with other internal and external systems to improve and enhance reporting, analytics, and data integrity. The new system will be completed in three phases. The first phase will replace the case management system that supports all board administered programs. In addition, phase one will introduce the capability to include non-board administered programs. VR and AEL programs will be completed in phases two and three. TWC is currently in the design phase, with an expected deployment of the replacement system by summer 2023.

TWC staff have convened multiple state and community agencies annually since 2018 (the 2020 conference was delayed due to COVID-19, and moved to February of 2021). Starting in 2019, TWC also began convening strategic planning sessions to strengthen the network of foster youth transition centers, local workforce boards/contractors, vocational rehabilitation counselors, Department of Family and Protective Services staff, and local community based organizations. The next strategic planning sessions will occur in 2022, along with the annual conference. TWC is also planning to conduct a training for independent school district foster care liaisons to educate them on available TWC resources, and begin to connect them with the existing TWC facilitated foster care network. The TWC annual conference has consistently been a success, receiving over 90 percent positive feedback every year and consistently high marks for content.

The Texas Consumer Resource for Education and Workforce Statistics (Texas CREWS):

Texas CREWS is an interactive dashboard tool providing comparative information about Texas public 2-year and 4-year postsecondary institutions. By evaluating programs and institutions based on resultant wages and student loan levels, Texas CREWS will allow parents and students to make informed decisions about college and get the best return on their educational investment. In partnership with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, the Texas CREWS Rewrite Project redeveloped the current online application with a new Spanish language option, a fully accessible user-friendly design, an improved intuitive workflow, and improved navigation. The new application is also responsive and adaptive for mobile devices to display the application according to device screen size. This version also adds licensed career school and eligible training provider selections.

Agency	Texas Workforce Commission				
Goal Area	2 – Engage in Partnerships				
Strategy	Increase access to, referral between, and outcomes of adult education programs and services.				
Part 1–Status Update for Actions					
	Actual [mm/yy]			Specified in Plan	
Status	Start Date	End Date	Action	Start Date	End Date
In progress	09/20		Continue coordination among adult education and literacy, vocational rehabilitation, and local workforce board providers to promote information sharing and integration of program services.	FY 2020	FY 2023
In progress	09/20		Connect more ex-offenders with adult education programs through better developed referral processes and appropriate short-term integrated training options.	FY 2020	FY 2021

Part 2–FY 2021 Key Activities

Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) Coordination with Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and Local Workforce Development Boards (Boards):
 In December 2019, the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) approved \$2 million to AEL grantees to build greater capacity for referrals to Boards and VR services, supporting both a referral pipeline to and from TWC programs and follow-up with former AEL participants to track the outcomes of enrollment in TWC programs. This initiative, called the Workforce Integration Initiative, required AEL programs to support participant registrations in the new WorkInTexas.com job-seeker website, develop data-sharing agreements with postsecondary education and training institutions, and create referral pipelines with Boards, VR, and community workforce stakeholders. With these funds, AEL grantees could pay for staff time dedicated to the intensive case management often necessary to track participants after they leave the AEL program. As a response to AEL program needs to provide efficient services during COVID-19, the Commission broadened the scope of these initiative funds in April 2020, allowing for programs to use funds for distance learning licenses and computer hardware and related costs to ensure that AEL students and instructors had the resources needed to transition to remote learning.

In February 2020, TWC held a Career Navigators Conference Day with support from TRAIN PD. This meeting, designed specifically for career navigators, included the following session topics: AEL integration with vocational rehabilitation, employer engagement, serving internationally trained professionals, and services for reentry.

Additionally, professional development has been key in expanding the reach of a coordinated workforce system to potential AEL customers. In summer 2020, the Commission awarded three professional development AEL grants. The statewide AEL professional development center grant, awarded to Texas A&M University, provides professional development and technical assistance to workforce stakeholders to enable them to provide comprehensive service delivery to AEL participants. Texas A&M University was also awarded the distance education Professional Development Center grant, which Board, VR, and AEL stakeholders can access to build remote learning and distance education experiences. The career pathway Professional Development Center, awarded to Region 6 Education Service Center, will provide research-based professional development on career pathway models, available to workforce stakeholders.

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AEL Programs for Formerly Incarcerated Individuals:

AEL statewide grant funds allow for the provision of transition to re-entry and post-release services to formerly incarcerated individuals upon or shortly after release from a correctional institution. The services are designed to promote successful adjustment to the community and prevent recidivism. AEL grantees must give priority to serve individuals who are likely to leave the correctional institution within five years of participation in the program.

Each year, AEL grantees work closely with federal, state, and local correctional facilities to assist in providing integrated education and training opportunities to prepare incarcerated individuals for employment upon release. For AEL program year 2019-2020, the TWC AEL grantees collectively served approximately 1,700 individuals residing in federal, state, or local correctional facilities. Approximately 1,100 of those individuals were provided with transition to re-entry services upon or shortly after release from a correctional facility. Some examples of re-entry services performed include education, employment, and family reunification services.

Additionally, Accelerate Texas, a state leadership AEL initiative, supports the development of integrated education and training models in which AEL participants are concurrently enrolled in workforce training and AEL services. One Accelerate Texas grantee, Lee College, provides integrated education and training services to incarcerated individuals in area correctional facilities, providing occupational trainings in the following areas: Commercial Truck Driving; Horticulture; Computer and Information Sciences; Heating, Air-Conditioning, and Refrigeration Maintenance; Welding; and Carpentry. At the 2020 TWC AEL Statewide Fall Institute, the director of Lee College's Adult Education program shared best practices on how to serve AEL customers in a correctional education setting and encouraged fellow AEL program administrators to locate and support these individuals as they reenter communities and the workforce.

In Spring 2021, the U.S. Department of Education selected TWC to participate in a national corrections pilot initiative through spring 2022. Through this initiative, TWC and two AEL providers with corrections programs will receive technical assistance on developing and implementing integrated and educational training programs in correctional facilities.

Agency	Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board
Goal Area	2 – Engage in Partnerships
Strategy	Increase access to, referral between, and outcomes of adult education programs and services.

Part 1–Status Update for Actions

Status	Actual [mm/yy]		Action	Specified in Plan	
	Start Date	End Date		Start Date	End Date
Finalized	09/16	12/19	Promote the importance of community and technical colleges to targeted adult education services that transition adult learners into higher education.	FY 2020	FY 2023
In progress	09/19		Provide statewide program support and professional development to improve targeted adult education services provided through community and technical colleges.	FY 2020	FY 2023
Finalized	09/16	12/19	Increase the number of community and technical colleges partnering with local adult education and literacy providers to support the transition of students into and through higher education.	FY 2020	FY 2023

Part 2–FY 2021 Key Activities

Effective September 1, 2017 (85th Legislative Session), the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) no longer received dedicated rider funds for Accelerate Texas, the integrated education and training (IET) program supporting adult learners. The agency’s Accelerate Texas program was integrated into the Texas Workforce Commission’s (TWC) IET and other adult education and literacy programs and continues to be supported through federal adult education funding administered by TWC. THECB continues to support adult learners transitioning to certificate and degree programs, including through the addition of general educational development and high school equivalency test benchmarks as a Texas Success Initiative exemption (completed April 2021) and the ongoing scaling and enhancement of developmental education corequisite models and comprehensive statewide professional development supporting underprepared students. The My Texas Future portal will support adult learners, including students who have paused or dropped education programs, veterans, and displaced workers. The portal has an estimated launch date of Spring 2022.

Actions 1 and 3 were supported through quarterly cross-agency meetings and other collaborations organized by THECB that included representatives from the Texas Workforce Investment Council, Texas Education Agency, and Texas Workforce Commission. The vacancy in the former position of Deputy Assistant Commissioner, Community and Technical Colleges, along with the agency's reorganization resulted in a temporary hiatus through Fall 2021. Ongoing efforts through the Tri-Agency strategic plan subsume prior collaborations.

Agency	Windham School District (Texas Department of Criminal Justice)
Goal Area	2 – Engage in Partnerships
Strategy	Establish and leverage regional employer partnerships to benefit students pre- and post-release.

Part 1–Status Update for Actions

Status	Actual [mm/yy]		Action	Specified in Plan	
	Start Date	End Date		Start Date	End Date
In progress	09/20		Develop partnerships with employers and implement pre-employment career and technical education (CTE) programs.	FY 2020	FY 2023
Finalized	09/20	08/21	Develop an advisory board, which includes industry partners, to review course offerings and employment opportunities.	FY 2020	FY 2020
In progress	09/20		Expand opportunities for students, pre- and post-release, through career expos and reentry job fairs.	FY 2020	FY 2021
In progress	09/20		Expand CTE instructor site visits with industry partners and increase CTE classroom tours with industry partners.	FY 2020	FY 2023
In progress	09/20		Develop awareness and support completion of employer surveys that are administered through the Windham School District website.	FY 2020	FY 2021
In progress	09/20		Utilize semi-annual employer surveys to support process improvements based on employer feedback related to career and technical education training and hiring experiences.	FY 2020	FY 2023

Part 2–FY 2021 Key Activities

The Windham School District (WSD) industry partners assisted the Career and Technical Education (CTE) Department with modifying curriculum to meet the needs of employers and enhance students' employability skills. WSD collaborated with partners in the following trade areas: HVAC; Automotive Specialization; Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics; Welding; and Culinary Arts.

During School Year 2021 (SY 2021), the advisory board, consisting of eight employers and industry experts, met virtually on multiple occasions.

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, staff of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice and WSD attended career expos virtually and reestablished agreements with five employers.

Campuses were closed to employers due to COVID-19 for a portion of SY 2021. Since reopening, multiple partners have toured education departments.

WSD staff worked with the CTE Advisory Board to develop the employer survey. In SY 2021, WSD established a communications team that assisted with contacting employers and distributing the survey. WSD is analyzing the results. Based on a strong recommendation to focus on soft skills in previous survey results, WSD is currently piloting a career readiness curriculum within our CTE programs.

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Goal Area 3: Align System Elements

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

<i>What are the objectives?</i>	<i>How are system partners addressing them?</i>	<i>What was accomplished this year?</i>
<p>Improve and enhance services, programs, and policies to facilitate effective and efficient transitions.</p>	<p>TEA and THECB are developing and implementing programs of study in community and technical colleges and aligning them with secondary programs of study.</p> <p>TWC is enhancing transition services for students and youth with disabilities to competitive integrated employment or to postsecondary education and training followed by competitive integrated employment.</p>	<p>22.54 percent of grade 12 secondary students who received career and technical education dual credit enrolled in and received credit at a two-year institution (TEA)</p> <p>Excess semester credit hours for career and technical education time to degree (THECB):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ 21 hours – Certificate Level 1 ★ 36 hours – Certificate Level 2 ★ 24 hours – Associate’s degree <p>Of students and youth with disabilities who participated in transition services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ 74.69 percent subsequently enrolled in postsecondary education and training ★ 54.77 percent subsequently entered competitive integrated employment
<p>Develop and implement policies and processes to ensure portable and transferrable credit and credentials.</p>	<p>THECB is working to ensure consistent credit transfer based on programs of study and common technical core curriculum.</p> <p>TJJD is expanding career and technical education courses to provide additional opportunities for dual credit.</p>	<p>67.41 percent of community and technical college students who received program-of-study-based course credit transferred to another two-year institution and had that credit recognized</p> <p>Data collection for two measures began in 2016:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ 3.39 percent of career and technical education programs were approved for dual credit ★ 0.00 percent of students successfully completed dual credit career and technical education courses

Align System Elements: Action Plan Reports

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

System Partner Strategy	Agency	System Objective	System Goal
Develop and implement programs of study in community and technical colleges and align with secondary programs of study.	TEA THECB	Improve and enhance services, programs, and policies to facilitate effective and efficient transitions.	<i>Align system elements</i>
Enhance transition services for students and youth with disabilities to competitive integrated employment or to postsecondary education and training followed by competitive integrated employment.	TWC		
Ensure consistent credit transfer based on programs of study and common technical core curriculum.	THECB	Develop and implement policies and processes to ensure portable and transferrable credit and credentials.	
Expand career and technical education courses to provide additional opportunities for dual credit.	TJJD		

Four agencies are focused on aligning policies, processes, services, and programs to more effectively serve workforce system participants and facilitate system outcomes.

The following pages include action plan reports from each of the partner agencies. **Please note that the reports may contain information verbatim as submitted by the agencies.**

Agency	Texas Education Agency				
Goal Area	3 – Align System Elements				
Strategy	Develop and implement programs of study in community and technical colleges and align with secondary programs of study.				
Part 1–Status Update for Actions					
	Actual [mm/yy]			Specified in Plan	
Status	Start Date	End Date	Action	Start Date	End Date
In progress	09/20		Collaborate with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to develop and adopt policies and procedures that facilitate consistent credit transfer of programs of study from secondary to postsecondary.	FY 2020	FY 2023
In progress	09/20		Connect secondary programs of study to specific dual credit courses in postsecondary.	FY 2020	FY 2023

Part 2–FY 2021 Key Activities

The Texas Education Agency and Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board coordinate regularly on aligning secondary programs, postsecondary programs, and high-value credential attainment along a pathway. In fiscal year 2021 the agencies developed recommendations on alignment in cybersecurity as a particular focus area identified by Senate Bill 64, passed during the 86th legislative session. The processes and recommendations of this workgroup can serve as a blueprint for future alignment efforts as the tri-agencies establish workgroups charged with creating a workplan for Strategy 1.1 from the Tri-Agency report, "Identify students' most efficient paths to attaining high-value credentials by....improving alignment across secondary and postsecondary Career and Technical Education pathways."

Agency	Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board					
Goal Area	3 – Align System Elements					
Strategy	Develop and implement programs of study in community and technical colleges and align with secondary programs of study.					
Part 1–Status Update for Actions						
	Actual [mm/yy]				Specified in Plan	
Status	Start Date	End Date	Action	Start Date	End Date	
Substantially complete	08/20	08/21	Coordinate with the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to provide institutions access to a coordinated non-duplicative sequence of secondary and postsecondary academic and career and technical education courses to help students transition seamlessly from high school to a public community or technical college.	FY 2020	FY 2023	
Substantially complete	09/16	10/19	Expand and support program of study initiatives and adoption rate of a common group of Workforce Education Course Manual courses per discipline.	FY 2020	FY 2023	
In progress	08/21		Coordinate with TEA to ensure alignment of secondary and postsecondary programs of study.	FY 2020	FY 2023	
Not started			Facilitate consistent credit transfer from secondary to postsecondary based on programs of study by working with the Texas Education Agency to develop and adopt policies, procedures, and rules.	FY 2020	FY 2023	

Part 2–FY 2021 Key Activities

Texas Education Code, Section 61.09091 (Senate Bill 64, 86th Legislature), charged the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) to coordinate with the Department of Information Resources to identify and develop strategies to incentivize institutions of higher education to develop degree programs in cybersecurity and to report identified strategies to the legislature. Following the report's Recommendation 4, THECB collaborated with the Texas Education Agency (TEA) in fiscal year (FY) 2021 to develop a secondary-postsecondary articulation pathway in cybersecurity. Recruited workgroup members included secondary-postsecondary career pathways curriculum experts, industry representatives, and postsecondary cybersecurity subject matter experts. The workgroup's year-long collaboration yielded a secondary-postsecondary pathway to a Certificate 1, Certificate 2, and Applied Associate Degree in cybersecurity. The work is substantially complete and undergoing internal review.

The programs of study initiative was paused in October 2019 along with the related fields of study initiative to allow time for the agency to assess and reformulate creation of fields of study. The Workforce Education Course Manual (WECM) is undergoing disciplinary course updates, revisions, and archivals through the WECM Renovation Project funded by a Perkins State Leadership grant.

Creation of the Recommendation 4 secondary-postsecondary cybersecurity pathway established a model for development of future secondary-postsecondary career pathways. THECB will work with TEA to develop and adopt policies, procedures, and rules as needed to facilitate future development of secondary-postsecondary pathways.

Agency	Texas Workforce Commission				
Goal Area	3 – Align System Elements				
Strategy	Enhance transition services for students and youth with disabilities to competitive integrated employment or to postsecondary education and training followed by competitive integrated employment.				
Part 1–Status Update for Actions					
	Actual [mm/yy]			Specified in Plan	
Status	Start Date	End Date	Action	Start Date	End Date
Substantially complete	09/19	05/21	Achieve full implementation of the Pathways to Careers Initiative, including implementation of additional strategies to facilitate delivery of pre-employment transition services to students with disabilities.	FY 2020	FY 2021
In progress	09/20		Review policy, strategies, and services implemented from fiscal years 2016–2021 to refine policy, and to identify best and promising practices.	FY 2021	FY 2022
Not started	07/21		Develop a plan to replicate best and promising practices and, as necessary, to refine policy, strategies, and services.	FY 2022	FY 2022
Not started	09/21		Implement plan to replicate best and promising practices and refine policy, strategies, and services.	FY 2022	FY 2023

Part 2–FY 2021 Key Activities

Summer Earn and Learn was the first Pathways to Careers initiative, beginning in the summer of 2017. In the time since its inception, it has occurred every summer except 2020 when it was cancelled due to COVID-19. The numbers served have steadily increased with a total of approximately 2,500 students served in 2019. 2021 has been a recovery year for the Summer Earn and Learn program, as partners, families, students, employers, and communities return to pre-pandemic activities, while also adjusting plans where needed due to the continued prevalence of the pandemic. The Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) is projecting a total number served of approximately 1,700 in 2021.

Student HireAbility Navigator (SHN) positions have been in place since 2018 in all 28 local workforce development boards, with the first one being hired in March 2018. Since that time, they have helped support the work of the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program by building infrastructure in their communities. The primary modes for creating this support network are meaningful relationships with community partners, including schools and employers, providing training and guidance, and sharing information about the services the VR program can provide. In 2021, a mentor position was added to the SHN policy as a quality assurance measure to utilize highly rated SHNs to provide mentoring to those who are new or struggling to build these connections.

Explore STEM, an initiative to give students with disabilities information and exploration of STEM fields through camps created in partnership with colleges and universities, began in the summer of 2018. Each summer, students are given the opportunity to explore robotics, rockets, engineering, computer programming, drones, the medical field, and other STEM-related careers through hands-on activities that are instructed by college professors. Each camp also includes professionals working in the fields being explored to give students the opportunity to ask

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questions and gain information about how to get a job in these fields. 913 students have participated in an Explore STEM camp since the onset of the program.

Charting the Course: Planning for Life and Careers After High School also began in 2018. Through events held by the Education Service Centers, students and parents gain access to information intended to help them explore different careers and plan for transition into the world of work. Each year has included events intended for more grade levels than the year before, starting with 8th and 12th grade initially.

Capacity Building and Coordination with the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and Independent School Districts (ISD) took place primarily in 2019. Through a partnership with Texas A&M University's Center on Disability and Development, focus group meetings were held to understand the strengths and challenges that exist in the VR-school relationships and data collected was used to inform the content of eight meetings across the state to provide training and information aimed at helping to understand each system better, brainstorming and identifying ways to work together to serve students, and relationship building to strengthen communication. In September of 2019, a statewide conference was held to tie together all of the information collected and shared during the focus group and regional meetings. Since 2019, many staff have reported that ideas that began during these meetings have been developed and continued over time with positive results. A second round of trainings with a similar format has been proposed to continue this work with a focus on serving younger students (ages 14-16).

Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) Elective Course Curriculum: In 2019, the VR program entered into a contract with Texas A&M University's Center on Disability and Development to develop an elective course curriculum for Pre-ETS that could subsequently be adopted by schools at no cost. With the start of the 2021-2022 school year, field testing will begin in the schools to gather feedback and ensure its effectiveness in a classroom setting. The field testing process is expected to take 6-8 months, after which the curriculum will be finalized and ready for use by schools. Anticipated completion date is Summer 2022.

Pre-ETS Tools for Students: Through a partnership with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), work began on this initiative in 2018. The first phase to develop a Texas OnCourse module specific to transition and Pre-Employment Transition services was completed in 2019. The module can be found on the Texas OnCourse website, www.texasoncourse.org. The second phase, to develop an electronic parent tool designed to take some of the anxiety out of the transition process by presenting information that is typically hard to find in a user-friendly platform, is currently underway and is estimated to be completed by October 2022. Through parent surveys about needed information and how people use electronics, information and presentation needs have been thoroughly explored. The estimated completion date is October 2022.

Another partnership with THECB is called Advise Texas IO. In partnership with several universities across the state, THECB contracts for services to be provided to serve students by providing information specific to transitioning to college. In order to tap into these services for students with disabilities and ensure the information was focused on common needs, the VR program contracted with THECB in 2019 to focus services for students with disabilities on self-advocacy and counseling on postsecondary opportunities. Each of the Advise Texas advisers are within a few years of college graduation, and many are first generation college graduates. They utilize their recent college experience to relate to and help students explore and prepare for postsecondary training.

VR has initiated a demonstration project, entitled Explore Apprenticeship 2.0 (EA 2.0), designed to determine if a customized pre-apprenticeship program for students with disabilities will improve their transition from high school to postsecondary education and training, particularly in career pathways that may be accessed through apprenticeship training programs. EA 2.0 is modeled after an earlier project building off Explore STEM camps and featuring an introduction to apprenticeships, in partnership with multiple colleges. The project will provide opportunities for high school students with disabilities to learn about registered apprenticeship as a postsecondary training option, to understand the wide array of occupations, both traditional and non-traditional, that may be entered through apprenticeship training, and to gain hands on experience in those occupations through a variety of work-based learning opportunities. EA 2.0 features partnerships between VR, colleges, employers, education service centers, and workforce development boards who are actively engaged with registered apprenticeship. Program development is currently underway with an expected launch in the 2022 spring and summer semesters.

The State Office Transition and Pre-ETS team, with input from VR staff and leadership, is engaged in an ongoing effort to assess what strategies and services are providing a meaningful experience for customers and have policy that works for staff and providers. When changes are needed, work is done to find solutions that are effective. In 2018, the Standards for Providers chapter 15 for contracted Pre-ETS was substantially restructured to provide guidance where the need was identified, introduce additional structure to the service as a result of staff and provider feedback and questions, and minimize the forms associated with the service.

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In another example, after working with a Pre-ETS provider in the Beaumont area who was employing an embedded services model for the last 4 years, VR has recently implemented a service called Embedded Pre-ETS. Through partnership with the schools and providers, providers can become embedded in the schools which allows them to provide services that build on and enhance what students are already receiving in school. Through this service, students will get a more in-depth understanding of work-related concepts and will have greater opportunities to practice these concepts in a protected environment. Multiple Workforce Development Letters, Technical Assistance Bulletins, Adult Education and Literacy letters, and guides were reviewed and updated to ensure that workforce partners are receiving policy guidance that is clear, concise, and timely, enabling them to provide workforce services and training to customers in accordance with state and federal rules, regulations, and program requirements. Additionally, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, some Boards identified service delivery methods that allowed for virtual service delivery and training. Boards were encouraged to share their best practices with their peers for possible replication.

Workforce Boards submitted updated plans in March 2021. These plans identified in-demand occupations for their specific areas, best practices, and promising practices identified as a result of business operational shifts in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Boards had to find innovative and creative ways to provide services and training to customers. These best and most promising practices were reported to TWC in the Board Plan submitted in March. TWC staff compiled the identified best and promising practices and are working to develop a platform for sharing these practices. Operational efficiencies discovered during pandemic response are being evaluated to determine if they should become permanent.

Staff will develop a plan to identify which best and promising practices can be replicated and scaled for our Board partners, as well as determining whether modifications to how board support and assistance is provided should become permanent.

Agency	Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board
Goal Area	3 – Align System Elements
Strategy	Ensure consistent credit transfer based on programs of study and common technical core curriculum.

Part 1–Status Update for Actions

Status	Actual [mm/yy]		Action	Specified in Plan	
	Start Date	End Date		Start Date	End Date
Substantially complete	09/16	10/19	At regular intervals, seek input from business and industry to identify the essential knowledge, skills, and abilities required for each statewide program of study.	Ongoing	FY 2023
Substantially complete	08/20	08/21	Conduct discipline-specific workshops with faculty to identify common program-level learning outcomes and common sequences of courses.	FY 2020	FY 2023
In progress	08/20		Publish course sequencing of degree programs on the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board’s websites, broadly distribute information to other state agencies, and link to other career and technical education and workforce activities.	FY 2020	FY 2023
In progress	09/16		Align courses in the Workforce Education Course Manual to postsecondary programs of study and secondary/postsecondary pathways for career and technical education.	FY 2020	FY 2023

Part 2–FY 2021 Key Activities

The programs of study initiative was paused in October 2019 along with the related fields of study initiative to allow time for the agency to assess and reformulate creation of fields of study. Existing programs of study have not been updated. In fiscal year (FY) 2021, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) worked with the Texas Education Agency to identify program-level learning outcomes and a course sequence for the secondary-postsecondary cybersecurity career pathway.

The agency has made a course sequence search tool available to the public for many years. It can be accessed at <https://www.highered.texas.gov/apps/award-search/>. THECB publishes the course sequences of existing programs of study and will publish the cybersecurity secondary-postsecondary pathway course sequence after final review is completed.

Alignment of Workforce Education Course Manual (WECM) courses to programs of study and career pathways is complete for the 19 programs of study and the secondary-postsecondary cybersecurity pathway. WECM is undergoing disciplinary course updates, revisions, and archivals through the ongoing WECM Renovation Project.

Agency	Texas Juvenile Justice Department
Goal Area	3 – Align System Elements
Strategy	Expand career and technical education courses to provide additional opportunities for dual credit.

Part 1–Status Update for Actions

Status	Actual [mm/yy]		Action	Specified in Plan	
	Start Date	End Date		Start Date	End Date
Finalized	08/19	11/19	Meet with colleges to assess potential for new partnership to provide college classes and dual credit.	FY 2020	FY 2020
Finalized	11/19	01/20	Once a partnership is formed, assess college classes and dual credit needs to formalize an agreement for service delivery.	FY 2020	FY 2020
Finalized	11/20	01/21	Undertake reaccreditation or accreditation of vocational instructors through Southern Association of Colleges and Schools certification.	FY 2020	FY 2021
Not started			Implement dual credit opportunities for career and technical education courses where available.	FY 2020	FY 2023

Part 2–FY 2021 Key Activities

Primary reason for delayed implementation is due to COVID-19's impact on student movement and the lack of availability of internet connectivity for dorms. The Texas Juvenile Justice Department has a formal agreement with Blinn College to provide college classes, dual credit, and technical dual credit courses.

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Goal Area 4: Improve and Integrate Programs

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

<i>What is the objective?</i>	<i>How are system partners addressing it?</i>	<i>What was accomplished this year?</i>
	TJJD and TWC are identifying and implementing new, relevant technology and service delivery options to expand program and service outcomes.	<p>87.35 percent of students used technology for course content delivery (TJJD)</p> <p>1,459,139 individuals utilized labor market information products (TWC)</p> <p>769,692 individuals utilized the WorkInTexas self-service resource (TWC)</p> <p>20,570 adult education providers utilized online professional development courses (TWC)</p> <p>39,673 child care providers utilized online professional development courses (TWC)</p>
Employ enhanced or alternative program and service delivery methods.	<p>TWC is increasing competitive integrated employment outcomes by increasing awareness of vocational rehabilitation services and better serving underserved populations.</p> <p>TWC is enhancing the quality of and increasing access to quality child care to support parents in obtaining and retaining employment.</p>	<p>2.51 percent of consumers served identified as veterans with disabilities</p> <p>50.68 percent of consumers served with intellectual and developmental disabilities, mental health conditions, autism, and deaf-blindness subsequently entered competitive integrated employment</p> <p>24.74 percent of child care providers were certified as Texas Rising Star providers</p> <p>Of parents receiving child care:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ 67.51 percent entered employment and/or were enrolled in education or training ★ 76.26 percent retained employment and/or were enrolled in education or training

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

System Partner Strategy	Agency	System Objective	System Goal
Identify and implement new, relevant technology and service delivery options to expand program and service outcomes.	TJJD TWC	Employ enhanced or alternative program and service delivery methods.	<i>Improve and integrate programs</i>
Increase competitive integrated employment outcomes by increasing awareness of vocational rehabilitation services and better serving underserved populations.	TWC		
Enhance quality of and increase access to quality child care to support parents in obtaining and retaining employment.	TWC		

Two agencies are working to increase system outcomes by designing, planning, and implementing alternative delivery methods.

The following pages include action plan reports from each of the partner agencies. **Please note that the reports may contain information verbatim as submitted by the agencies.**

Agency	Texas Juvenile Justice Department
Goal Area	4 – Improve and Integrate Programs
Strategy	Identify and implement new, relevant technology and service delivery options to expand program and service outcomes.

Part 1–Status Update for Actions

Status	Actual [mm/yy]		Action	Specified in Plan	
	Start Date	End Date		Start Date	End Date
In progress	09/19		Implement digital arts/animation classes at two additional facilities and include the use of drawing tablets.	FY 2020	FY 2023
Not started			Identify a web design course that can be taught within a correctional institution’s infrastructure.	FY 2020	FY 2021
Not started			Implement web design course(s).	FY 2021	FY 2023

Part 2–FY 2021 Key Activities

One additional digital arts/animation class was implemented with the use of drawing tablets during the 2019-2020 school year; however, since then, due to COVID-19, the Texas Juvenile Justice Department (TJJD) has lost three technology instructors, two of which were teaching the digital/arts animation classes. Another technology instructor took another job at the end of the school year. In total, four technology instructors remain employed by TJJD. Efforts will be focused on hiring new technology instructors. Facilities are still dealing with interruptions to regular schedules and operations impacting school due to COVID-19. Web design is temporarily on hold.

Agency	Texas Workforce Commission				
Goal Area	4 – Improve and Integrate Programs				
Strategy	Identify and implement new, relevant technology and service delivery options to expand program and service outcomes.				
Part 1–Status Update for Actions					
	Actual [mm/yy]			Specified in Plan	
Status	Start Date	End Date	Action	Start Date	End Date
In progress	07/20		Continue self-service options for professional development for child care providers.	FY 2020	FY 2023
Substantially complete	06/18	09/21	Expand rural service delivery options through the use of mobile units and new affiliate sites.	FY 2020	FY 2020
In progress	09/19		Direct students to multiple available training and career path options with onsite support at public middle and high schools.	FY 2020	FY 2023
Substantially complete	09/20	09/21	Expand the use of technology for providing online services such as job fairs, eligibility determination, or other interactions.	FY 2020	FY 2021

Part 2–FY 2021 Key Activities

The Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) continues to support self-service options for child care professionals, including support for the online Texas Early Childhood Professional Development System.

During fiscal year (FY) 2020, 11 local workforce development boards (Boards) used mobile units to provide service delivery to rural areas as well as providing internet access to assist customers with filing unemployment claims during the pandemic.

In FY 2019, TWC issued Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act funds to 21 Boards that provide services to 128 of the state’s counties with the smallest civilian labor forces. These were allocated to assist Boards in providing services to small, rural, and remote counties, to support services such as the following:

- Mobile units for Boards that request them and that have identified a need to expand services into communities where one-stop services are not currently provided on a consistent basis.
- Support for initiatives whereby Boards can onboard staff or contract services to extend service delivery in rural and remote areas to develop and maintain newly created service delivery access points. Funding may be used to support full- or part-time employees, or to contract with libraries or other community partners willing to provide one-stop services at existing sites, congruent with existing offerings. Boards may wish to consider prioritizing expanded service to areas where local community partners show a willingness to contribute through in-kind or monetary support.
- Implementation or enhancement of online and/or virtual service delivery. Funds may be used by Boards when online and virtual services are needed to expand to areas where Workforce Solutions office services are not consistently available, to offer online orientations, workshops, case management appointments, and information about services available through Workforce Solutions offices.
- Rural Training Academies—Training will be developed in consultation with Boards, with the goal of familiarizing staff working in remote areas with TWC’s Labor Market and Career

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Information (LMCI) department's tools, so that they can recognize and connect customers with other community resources, and to familiarize staff with all major programs available through Workforce Solutions offices. Staff from local economic development groups and independent school districts (ISDs) will be invited to participate. Boards participating in training events may use these funds to support staff travel to the training events.

Following a highly successful pilot program, TWC has begun to roll out Workforce Specialists at workforce boards across the state. During the pilot program, Workforce Specialists provided presentations, training, or 1:1 guidance to 215,718 high school students, across 9,607 events. Workforce Specialists will be positioned in local ISDs and will provide labor market and career information to students in an effort to inform endorsement selection and classes with career and university or community and technical college plans in mind. Students will learn about jobs-in-demand, apprenticeship, internships, and dual credit opportunities. The Workforce Specialist will also act as a resource for ISD staff and a connection between the ISD and local employers. 3,133 partner events occurred during the pilot program period. Starting on September 1, 2021, there will be 13 or more boards with workforce specialists, almost doubling the reach of the program. This program is now a permanent option for boards to use their allotment funds on, and TWC (particularly LMCI) will continue to train and support them as the career pathways process continues to develop.

With grants to 18 Foster Youth Transition Centers, TWC provides workforce linkages for foster youth who are aging-out of the foster care system. A full-time workforce advocate provides the youth with information about education and job opportunities, connecting them to services available online and at the local Workforce Solutions offices. Each transition center has a workforce advocate to assist foster youth who are transitioning into employment. As foster youth move through their system of support into the work world, having a handoff from one point-of-contact to another to facilitate the transition is beneficial. Transition centers provide a central clearinghouse of one-stop services to serve the diverse needs of older foster youth, youth experiencing homelessness, or other at-risk youth from age 16 through age 25. Transition centers are designed to serve as host locations for services such as Preparation for Adult Living, job readiness and job search assistance, career exploration, higher education enrollment assistance, food and housing assistance, and mentoring.

All Boards used technology to allow staff to telework, provide services and interact with customers remotely, conduct virtual job fairs, and send and receive documents and collect signatures electronically. Boards used webinars and Youtube videos to provide orientations and information virtually as well as dedicated email addresses to route customer inquiries to specific programs. One Board area used HEAT mapping technology to identify customer concentrations and provide services based on need.

Agency	Texas Workforce Commission
Goal Area	4 – Improve and Integrate Programs
Strategy	Increase competitive integrated employment outcomes by increasing awareness of vocational rehabilitation services and better serving underserved populations.

Part 1–Status Update for Actions

Status	Actual [mm/yy]		Action	Specified in Plan	
	Start Date	End Date		Start Date	End Date
Finalized	01/20	06/21	With the Rehabilitation Council of Texas, jointly conduct the triennial comprehensive statewide needs assessment to assess vocational rehabilitation services to currently identified underserved populations and identify new underserved populations, if any.	FY 2020	FY 2021
In progress	10/19		Build provider capacity to effectively serve underserved populations through identification of new providers where needed for specific services, populations, and/or geographic areas.	FY 2020	FY 2023
In progress	10/19		Revise provider standards as needed to increase efficiency and effectiveness of services to underserved populations.	FY 2020	FY 2023
In progress	09/20		Increase training and communication to providers to support implementation of revised standards and build provider capacity.	FY 2020	FY 2023
Finalized	09/20	07/21	Develop new or revised services and/or service delivery methods to increase effectiveness of service delivery and achievement of employment outcomes for underserved populations.	FY 2021	FY 2021
In progress	09/20		Implement new or revised services and/or service delivery methods.	FY 2021	FY 2023

Part 2–FY 2021 Key Activities

Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA): The most recent CSNA was finalized in June of 2021. Three key areas of improvement were identified and included a lack of providers and a declining provider network, unnecessary administrative processes that are burdensome to staff and providers, and staff retention and training. To improve the provider network, the Texas Workforce Commission's (TWC) Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services Division is taking steps to reduce vendor requirements, ensure payment rates are competitive and equitable, strengthen provider recruiting efforts, enhance provider support and training, and ensure internal systems are relevant. To assist with process improvement, the VR division launched a workgroup to streamline required paperwork for providers and staff to provide services to customers. Staff expertise, including staff retainment, is being addressed by ensuring salary is congruent with new and existing staff expertise. In addition, VR is working with TWC Training and Development to redesign new counselor training, and VR is developing and procuring additional continuing education training for counselors and leadership training for managers. The VR division and the Rehabilitation Council of Texas (RCT) will work together to review, identify, and agree to goals. Then the VR division and RCT will set priorities and strategies to address the needs identified by the CSNA. This will help guide updates to the Workforce

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Innovation and Opportunity Act Combined State Plan modification, development of which will begin in late 2021 for submission in 2022.

Service Delivery Methods: On March 30, 2020, in the wake of the onset of the pandemic in Texas, the VR division implemented the first of several rounds of exceptions to its business processes and procedures in the Vocational Rehabilitation Services Manual (VRSM) and Standards for Providers (SFP). The goal of these exceptions was to streamline and automate processes for both staff and providers to enable continuity of services, both remote and in-person, to VR division customers. In the subsequent months, the VR division observed improved efficiencies using these temporary exceptions. As a result, on September 1, 2020, the VR division incorporated many of the exceptions into its standard operations in the VRSM and SFP. On July 1, 2021, the SFP was updated to allow some services to be provided remotely without an approved VR3472, Contract Service Modification Request, if agreed upon by the counselor, customer, and provider. In-person services that required an approved VR3472, Contract Service Modification Request, to ensure appropriate COVID-19 safety measures will no longer require a VR3472 and may proceed with standard approvals.

Telehealth Options for Neurodevelopmental, Psychological, and Medical Service Providers: In March 2020, guidance was issued to inform staff about options providers may use to meet the continuity of care needs of customers through alternative means of telehealth and telerehabilitation. Telehealth options are available for the following services: Autism Spectrum Disorder Supports, Applied Behavior Analysis, Psychological Services, and Medical Services. Telerehabilitation is the delivery of rehabilitation services over telecommunication networks and the internet and is an option for numerous services listed in the SFP manual.

Provider Focused Business Transformation Project: The Business Transformation Project was commissioned in March 2021 to tackle the problem of not having enough qualified providers to meet customer needs. The project team identified strategies and suggested tactics to pursue based on an extensive root cause analysis done by the team. After root cause analysis, the project team identified five strategies and associated teams to address the root causes. The five strategies are: reducing vendor requirements, ensuring payment rates are competitive and equitable, strengthening provider recruiting efforts, enhancing provider related training, guidance, and support, and ensuring the provider list in the electronic case management system is useful and accurate. Multiple projects are underway within these strategy areas, with initial strategic focus being placed on reducing vendor requirements and ensuring that payment rates are competitive and equitable.

Local Provider Liaison (LPL) Initiative: The Standards for Providers LPL initiative focuses on quality assurance within VR that institutes activities for supporting the continuous improvement of Standards for Provider contractors. The LPL activities include Provider Engagement and technical assistance to reduce audit findings and internal management issues. The LPL initiative promotes effective communication between VR and providers and allows the provider to have a "go-to" person for questions and policy interpretation. This initiative also allows the LPL's to collect demographic information to identify the areas the providers serve, special populations they can work with, and other credentials to help customers make informed choices. This roster also allows VR to identify pockets of the state that are underserved.

Revised Provider Standards: On July 1, 2021, the Standards for Providers were updated to remove COVID-19 related procedures that required advance approval for delivery of certain in person services. The Standards were updated to require providers to have a policy and procedure that describes how they will provide in person services to customers when the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, federal, state (including the Department of Health Services), and local governments have implemented health and safety protocols. In addition, the implementation of remote, in-person and combination services allows customers in underserved areas to receive services virtually and removes travel for both providers and customers. The remote service delivery option ensures customers have the ability to receive quality services and also enhances service ability in areas lacking providers.

Brain Injury Specialty Caseloads and Community of Practice: In October 2019, the employment supports for brain injury policy was implemented to improve services for individuals with brain injuries. The new policy integrated therapeutic services and employment services geared to address the continuum of needs demonstrated in the community of individuals with brain injury. In addition, a community of practice was developed with counselors who maintain a brain injury specialty caseload. Brain injury specialty counselors are selected based on their experience in VR caseload management; interest in developing a caseload with a primary brain injury focus; willingness to gain knowledge in brain injury disabilities, treatment, and resources; skills in communications with partners external to the VR division; knowledge of brain injury services; skills in working as team members with partners external to the VR division; ability to organize and manage work systems that allow for extended time in out-of-office meetings; and passion for working with individuals with the most significant disabilities. Brain injury specialty counselors are trained to work collaboratively with Comprehensive Rehabilitation Services staff to facilitate referrals to and from the Comprehensive Rehabilitation Services program.

Updated Substance Use Disorders Policy: The Substance Use Disorders policy was updated in March 2021 and included removal of the sobriety clause. The sobriety clause required customers

to maintain and document a minimum of 30 days of sobriety prior to eligibility determination for VR services; in addition, if a customer in services failed to maintain sobriety, this meant the customer had to maintain sobriety for 30 days prior to resuming services. The updated policy changed the eligibility requirements to be more inclusive, to help customers reach their potential for recovery and success in line with their employment goal, and to align with best practices for the population. Customers will still be expected to recognize their disability and understand the need for services, participate in treatment and the VR program, and make progress in completing their treatment and achieving goals established in their employment plan.

New Vehicle Modification Policy: The VR division implemented a new vehicle modification policy in March 2021. Using a rapid process improvement approach, a team conducted interviews with customers, representatives from community organizations, vendors, and VR staff. The team recommended and implemented policy revisions to include removing the current emphasis on public transportation, streamlining and simplifying the vehicle modification process by reducing and combining required forms, reducing the number of approvals, establishing a state level budget for vehicle modifications to minimize budget disruptions at the unit level, and centralizing the process with the team of assistive technology specialists across the state. The team also developed a centralized tracking process to track the status of each vehicle modification.

Agency	Texas Workforce Commission
Goal Area	4 – Improve and Integrate Programs
Strategy	Enhance quality of and increase access to quality child care to support parents in obtaining and retaining employment.

Part 1–Status Update for Actions

Status	Actual [mm/yy]		Action	Specified in Plan	
	Start Date	End Date		Start Date	End Date
In progress	09/21		Increase the number of child care providers certified as meeting Texas Rising Star or other recognized quality rating and improvement system standards in the child care system.	FY 2020	FY 2023
In progress	09/21		Facilitate the employment outcomes of parents receiving subsidized child care services.	FY 2020	FY 2023
In progress	02/21		Implement Texas Rising Star Assessor Certification.	FY 2020	FY 2023

Part 2–FY 2021 Key Activities

Texas Rising Star - The Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) completed a full review of the Texas Rising Star standards and guidelines, and published new rules in January 2021. TWC continues to encourage all subsidized child care providers to participate in Texas Rising Star. TWC posted a "Statewide Revenue Calculator Template for Texas Rising Star" to assist child care providers in understanding how their reimbursement rates change as they progress to higher star levels. TWC has also posted "Child Care by the Numbers" on its website, which includes information on Texas Rising Star providers and children enrolled in the program, back to fiscal year 2015.

TWC continues to review employment and retention outcomes of child care parents. Biannually, TWC publishes this information in its Effectiveness of Child Care report to the Legislature. TWC also enacted a waiver of its state rules to allow unemployed parents who are unemployed at the time they apply for child care to receive three months of child care while they conduct job searches. Previously a parent had to be employed in order to be determined initially eligible for child care.

In February 2021, TWC, working with the Children's Learning Institute, rolled out the Assessor Training and Certification Program. Texas Rising Star Assessors must complete the program by Summer 2022, when TWC will contract with a new entity to employ all Texas Rising Star Assessors (as required by House Bill 1792).

Strategic Pillars

To achieve the vision of an innovative, world-class Texas workforce system, the Council identified three core competencies, or imperatives, that must be strengthened across the system: customer service and satisfaction, data-driven program improvement, and continuous improvement and innovation. These three imperatives serve as the foundational pillars upon which the system's capacity to identify and respond to changing market conditions and the needs of all system customers are enhanced. Examples of related system and partner agency initiatives are outlined below.

Strategic System Initiatives

The Council's approach to develop and implement strategic system initiatives is structured around six phases in the life cycle of an initiative, including research, launch, proof of concept, plan, execute, and institutionalize the innovation and learning developed through the process. This approach provides the Council with direct oversight in the planning and management of each phase of any system initiative and the flexibility to introduce new initiatives or adapt, merge, and scale promising practices into system initiatives over the strategic plan period.

In fiscal year 2021, the Council continued its collaboration with system partners in the Results for America State and Local Workforce Fellowship to support continuous, data-driven improvement as a foundational element for building system capacity. System partners developed an evidence framework, grant applications, and review processes designed to get better results by requiring and awarding grants based upon data and evidence of program effectiveness. Two grant programs, Building and Construction Trades and Texas Talent Connection, launched the new applications, selection process, and contracting processes using the evidence framework.

Results for America State and Local Workforce Fellowship

Initiated in 2019, the Results for America State and Local Workforce Fellowship was designed to help innovative state and local government leaders improve employment outcomes in workforce development programs. The initiative brought together leaders from the most data- and evidence-driven state and local workforce offices and boards to collaboratively develop and implement strategies for building and using evidence to direct funding. The initial Texas Workforce Fellowship state team was composed of five total members, representing:

- Workforce policy, Office of the Governor
- Workforce division, Texas Workforce Commission
- Workforce grants and contracts, Texas Workforce Commission
- Local board, Workforce Solutions Rural Capital Area
- Workforce system research and planning, Texas Workforce Investment Council

Members of the Texas team agreed that the work of the entire team would focus—both individually and collectively—on achieving priority outcomes of competitive grant programs through the implementation of evidence-based practices and performance-based contracts. Texas' approach emphasized the production of evidence in grant making through the following Results for America strategies:

Strategy 1: Link funds directly to priority outcomes through performance-based contracts.

Strategy 2: Award preference points to providers offering models with high or moderate causal evidence.

Strategy 3: Build evidence by promoting, conducting, and financing external evaluations.

State and local workforce fellows had access to a peer network of leading workforce officials, expert technical assistance to solve problems and implement evidence-based solutions, and resources to highlight successes that continue to build momentum.

Evidence to Outcomes: Focusing the Workforce System on Evidence of What Works

Traditional metrics used in some federal and state funded workforce programs led some providers to focus on short-term outcomes which indirectly incentivized programs that either served individuals with fewer barriers to employment or repeatedly assisted job seekers who rely on repetitious employment services. The application of models and approaches that are based upon results and supported by evidence is intended to move state and local providers past jobs churn to make resources available and free the workforce system to serve new cohorts of participants. Evidence and data gathered would then be used to further test or scale models and interventions that support increased employment and job retention in target populations.

Encouraging Innovation While Building Evidence: A Tiered Approach

While evidence demonstrates the successful performance of a workforce intervention and can be used to scale proven methods of job training, Texas implemented a two-pronged approach. The state will continue to use funds to facilitate innovative approaches that improve workforce programs and services while requiring and building evidence. Grant funds directly support common priority outcomes and create incentives for grant applicants to identify and replicate program models that have demonstrated a record of effective outcomes. A third party evaluation of the grants outcomes is also being implemented. To ensure broad agency representation in the design of the approach, a task group, designated by the Texas team, defined the scope and developed and implemented common language, processes, and data collection and reporting requirements. Task group members included state and local grant program and contract managers.

To build evidence of effective workforce interventions while continuing to encourage innovative, but less tested program models, the task group designed an evidence framework of clearly defined evidence tiers with the required documentation of evidence for each tier to be implemented in discretionary workforce grant programs. The process ensures that grants remain broadly accessible to programs at all levels of the evidence continuum and recognizes the different capabilities between program developers and potential grant applicants at this time.

Evidence Tier Framework

Texas introduced a graduated method to help state grant programs incorporate and applicants adapt to the requirements of evidence-based grants. By developing the evidence tier framework, the state expects programs to improve data collection and evaluation methods in order to improve a program's evidence over time. Some grant programs in Texas had previously introduced common performance-based outcomes metrics. The data requirements for the evidence tiers build on that experience, and prior grant outcomes data are now required in the application process, where relevant. Because the state recognizes the breadth of experience and capabilities of the grant applicants, the evidence tier framework allows all applicants to participate. Applications include detailed instructions to support the applicant in accurate tier selection and documentation of the evidence. Resource repositories were selected by the Texas team and provide grant program applicants with access to acceptable research and effective models. The evidence tier framework, language, templates, and support materials will be consistent. The following evidence tier definitions are abbreviated but illustrate the state's graduated approach:

High Evidence Program Tier

High evidence programs are ones that are supported by two or more rigorous evaluations of the program or of an essentially similar program design and outcomes. The studies must meet specific criteria to achieve this rating.

Moderate Evidence Program Tier

Moderate evidence programs are ones that are supported by at least one rigorous evaluation of the program or of an essentially similar program design and outcomes. The study must meet specific criteria to achieve this rating.

Performance Program Tier

Performance-based programs offer outputs and outcomes data and information as evidence, conduct assessments of participants to demonstrate effectiveness of their programs, and conduct at least one post program follow-up to track the outcomes of participants. The data provided must meet specific criteria to achieve this rating.

Experience Program Tier

Experience-based programs must have been providing services for at least one year prior to grant application. Anecdotal participant success stories or other testimonials provided must meet specific criteria to achieve this rating.

New Program Tier

Entirely new programs and those that are not similar to an existing program are not required to meet specific criteria to achieve this rating. An applicant must explain why the proposed program will achieve the outcomes specified in the main body of the application and demonstrate that there is capacity to collect sufficient data to track outcomes from the program.

Incentivizing Evidence-Based Proposals: Bonus Scoring Structure

The evidence tier framework aligns directly with a bonus scoring structure that was designed to encourage grant applicants to begin to include applicable evidence in proposals for funding. The process of awarding bonus points based on evidence is a dynamic process. While the application asks for evidence to support the proposed program design and anticipated outcomes, the bonus scoring structure was carefully constructed to allow all programs on the evidence continuum to compete for the grants, from newly created programs to those that are replicating a program that has been rigorously evaluated by an external entity. Bonus points are earned based on the level of the evidence continuum shown in the application. As applicants become familiar with the types and use of evidence, Texas anticipates that applicants will select higher tiers of evidence in future grant solicitations.

Key Elements of Evidence-Based Grants and Performance-Based Contracts

To plan the implementation of evidence- and performance-based grants across multiple grant programs, the task group thoroughly reviewed grant applications, scoring instruments, contracts, and quarterly reports for grant programs administered by TWC and the Council. The group worked to determine where evidence would be found, how to approach the evaluation of evidence and outcomes submitted in a grant application, how to introduce the new requirements and uniformly document evidence in grant applications and contracts, and how to capture data and evidence in reports to support evaluation. A complementary set of resources was developed to support the plan.

Applications and Information

Texas used two grant solicitations as the first point of introduction of the evidence framework to system partners and providers. The grant applications were designed to introduce the benefits of building the body of evidence of effective workforce interventions and the state's approach to transitioning programs to evidence- and performance-based grants. The Texas team hosted a series of webinars with system partners and providers to introduce the framework and to walk through the application, evidence tier selection, performance-based bonus funding structure, and the data collection, reporting, and evaluation requirements.

The grant application requires documentation including a performance outcomes template defined for each evidence tier to support the assessment of common factors of program success. An application must provide complete documentation of evidence as defined for the evidence tier selected. The documentation of evidence provides the critical information that the evidence evaluators use to determine bonus (incentive) points in scoring. It also helps the application review team evaluators understand the strength of each applicant's evidence

base and the likelihood that the proposed intervention will lead to the outputs and outcomes identified in the narrative description of the proposed project.

Performance-Based Contracts and Reports

In 2021, TWC integrated the evidence framework across the program procurement process, including definitions of performance outcomes measures across the selected grant programs, as well as program-specific measures. To incentivize the completion of key benchmarks, TWC implemented pay-for-performance contracts through which grantees will be paid based upon reaching specific milestones. Performance-based contracts serve to further establish metrics, produce evidence of success and performance data, and facilitate external evaluations that demonstrate the return on investment and outcomes of policies.

Embedding evidence-based applications and performance-based outcomes reporting in grant programs will help the state learn about the implementation, effectiveness, and cost of various approaches. Key data points will be used to begin to build the evidence base in order to focus future funding on methods that are proven to produce effective results. The changes to contracts and reporting transition the outcomes of grant making in Texas from an applicant driven description of what will be achieved, specific to each grant, to common data and performance requirements and outcomes that must be reported by all grantees and produce evidence that benefits the workforce system.

Continuing the Work During Phase II

To continue this important work, Results for America launched Phase II of the Workforce Fellowship in May 2021. The State and Local Workforce Fellows continue to have access to a peer network of leading workforce officials, expert technical assistance to solve problems and implement evidence-based solutions, and support and resources to elevate and spotlight successes and continue to build momentum. In this phase, the Texas team will work on the following:

1. Defining Evidence: develop and adopt definitions for “evidence of effectiveness” at the state or local level.
2. Linking Evidence to Funding: award a contract or grant using
 - a. Evidence definitions, and
 - b. Outcomes payments, or
 - c. Prioritize evidence in the agency budget or for all (new or existing) grant programs.
3. Building Evidence:
 - a. Initiate or expand state longitudinal data systems.
 - b. Build internal evaluation capacity and/or implement external evaluations.

The Phase II Texas team consists of five members, including:

- Higher education policy, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board
- Workforce division, Texas Workforce Commission
- Workforce grants and contracts, Texas Workforce Commission
- Local board, Workforce Solutions Rural Capital Area
- Workforce system strategic planning, Texas Workforce Investment Council

Texas Skill Standards System

Preparing workers with the skills and knowledge required for jobs in today's economy is a major goal of the Texas workforce system. Middle-skill occupations, especially those requiring science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), have been particularly hard to fill. Closing the skills gap and hiring qualified employees is one of the key contributors to the success of any organization. But before workers can be prepared with targeted education and training for any job, both the work content and the skills and knowledge needed to perform the work must be identified. Such job specifications and worker characteristics are sometimes called competency profiles or skill standards. Facilitating industry to develop skill standards is one of the main functions of the Texas skill standards system, which is legislatively required to encompass middle-skill occupations. Skill standards are a tool for industry to communicate its occupational requirements to education and training providers.

History

In 1995, the 74th Texas Legislature established the Texas Skill Standards Board (TSSB) to develop a voluntary statewide system of industry-defined and industry-recognized skill standards. TSSB's role was to facilitate industry to: define the content of major skilled, high-demand, high-wage sub-baccalaureate (or middle-skill) occupations; and identify the knowledge, skills, and proficiency levels required by workers to perform the jobs. TSSB was also charged with the following specific mandates:

- Validate and recognize nationally established skill standards to guide curriculum development, training, assessment, and certification of workforce skills.
- Convene industry groups to develop standards in industries and occupations where they're not established and to recognize the standards.
- Facilitate the portability of skills by recognizing standards and credentials from other states and nations.
- Promote the use of standards and credentials.

Over the next 21 years, TSSB recognized skill standards that met its validity and reliability criteria, whether those standards were developed within the state or endorsed by a national or state industry group or government body. The validity and reliability criteria were documented in TSSB's *Guidelines for the Development, Recognition, and Usage of Skill Standards*, which provided guidance and requirements for industry groups developing skill standards for recognition. A labor market information model was developed to identify those occupations that met the legislative criteria for the skill standards system but also did not conflict with existing industry-based certifications. The model identified occupations for standards development, mostly for STEM-related, technician occupations, many of them emerging and evolving, including: fuel cell systems technician, nanotechnology technician, biomanufacturing, digital forensics technician, geographic information systems technician, photonics technician, web development and administration, and manufacturing production and logistics technicians. In fiscal year (FY) 2021, skill standards for 50 occupations were posted in the public domain on the Texas skill standards website.

In collaboration with its workforce system partner, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, which provided incentive grant funding, TSSB developed an initiative to recognize community and technical college programs that incorporated skill standards into their curricula. This initiative required colleges to teach and assess students on the standards. TSSB developed a second policy document, *Guidelines for the Certification and Credentialing of Skill Attainment*, to provide guidance and requirements for colleges applying for program recognition. The program recognition policy included a renewal requirement every three years.

Transfer under Sunset Legislation

In 2015, during the 84th Texas legislative session, the Texas Workforce Investment Council (Council) underwent Sunset review in accordance with Texas Government Code, Chapter 325 (Texas Sunset Act). The Sunset Advisory Commission noted the following in its final report: TSSB had accomplished most of its key tasks. TSSB's remaining duties could easily and more efficiently be assumed by the Council, encompassed within its broader directive to

promote the development of a well-educated and highly skilled workforce. The commission concluded that this consolidation would effectively streamline the administration of related workforce development functions under a single entity. Thus, it recommended that TSSB be abolished and its functions be fully integrated into the Council by the end of FY 2015. On September 1, 2015, House Bill 1606 transferred the statutory functions of TSSB to the Council, and charged it with developing and maintaining the skill standards system. In December 2015, the Council adopted both sets of policy documents governing the system, and recognized the skill standards previously recognized by TSSB.

Fiscal Year 2021 Progress

In FY 2021, the Council achieved the following outcomes to address its skill standards mandates.

Recognition of Industry Skill Standards

The Council recognized the 2020 update of the Manufacturing Production skill standards, developed by the Manufacturing Skill Standards Council (MSSC). The standards are the basis for MSSC's industry-recognized, nationally portable Certified Production Technician credentials and their related system of training and assessments. The credentials are part of the Skills Certification System endorsed by the National Association of Manufacturers, which includes many Texas companies.

The standards met the Council's validity and reliability criteria, as specified in its policy guidelines, including:

- *Facilitated by a national industry group recognized by its constituent industry/business base.* MSSC is an industry-led training, assessment, and certification entity that focuses on the core skills and knowledge needed by the nation's front-line production and material handling workers.
- *Evidence of a rigorous development and validation process.* The Manufacturing Production skill standards were originally developed nationally with the collaboration of 234 leading corporations and trade associations, 378 career and technical education schools, and the leading industrial unions. The standards were then validated nationwide by an additional 500 companies and 4,000 front-line workers.

Subsequently, the standards have been reviewed biennially to ensure that they are updated to current industry practices and new technology. The biennial review is facilitated by MSSC with a national expert panel for manufacturing production, which includes subject matter experts representing all sectors of manufacturing, educators, and a broad cross-section of national and international companies. In 2019, the national panel's most recent review resulted in updates to the standards. For the 2020 edition, a select committee of industry subject matter experts chose and defined nine newly emerging "Industry 4.0" technologies for inclusion in the standards. Those technologies are 5G, Artificial Intelligence, Autonomous Robots, Additive (3D), Data Analytics, Industrial Internet of Things, Augmented Reality, Nanomanufacturing, and Advanced Materials.

The 2020 Manufacturing Production skill standards are posted on the Texas skill standards website in the public domain, where they are available for community and technical colleges to use in their programs. Graduates of such programs are thereby prepared with the skills and knowledge required to earn the MSSC-based technician certifications.

Recognition of College Programs

- Two associate of applied science and three level two certificate programs at three colleges received Council recognition for having skill standards integrated into the curricula. As part of the program recognition, each college signed a statement of assurances to teach and assess students on the competencies identified by industry in the standards.

As noted previously, program recognition is valid for three years, at which time, it must be renewed. Initial renewal requires colleges to have assessments in place to measure students' mastery of all the skill standards' competencies. The Council processed colleges' renewal applications for program recognitions scheduled to expire, as follows:

- Eight colleges, which had previously submitted proof of their assessments at initial renewal, subsequently renewed the recognition for 10 programs.*

In FY 2021, there were a total of 44 recognized programs at 20 community and technical colleges in Texas. Those programs produced 1,270 graduates prepared with the skills and knowledge specified by industry in the standards.

*The number of subsequent renewals was reported in the Council's March 2021 briefing book as 12 programs at 11 colleges. The reduction is due to the subsequent recording of four of the colleges with recognized programs as one college with multiple campuses.

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Welfare to Work Data

Previous iterations of the evaluation report for workforce system performance included welfare to work data reported by program. Programs in the Adults with Barriers category met at least one of four criteria as a characteristic of the participant population: economically disadvantaged, educationally disadvantaged, incarcerated, or physically or mentally impaired and requiring adaptive or rehabilitative services. Data for these programs addressed the Council’s mandate to report on work development programs that focus on welfare to work initiatives.

For the current system strategic plan, relevant program data are incorporated in the aggregated Formal performance measures of entered employment, employment retention, and customers served. Additional agency program data are provided below:

Texas Health and Human Services Commission:

1. Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and State Program cases and recipients for fiscal year 2021 (listed separately by month).

TANF CASES				TANF RECIPIENTS			
Benefit Month	Basic	State Program	Total	Benefit Month	Basic	State Program	Total
Sep-20	16,916	843	17,759	Sep-20	41,502	3,290	44,792
Oct-20	15,817	764	16,581	Oct-20	39,272	2,978	42,250
Nov-20	15,954	769	16,723	Nov-20	39,610	2,959	42,569
Dec-20	15,497	754	16,251	Dec-20	38,502	2,887	41,389
Jan-21	15,087	726	15,813	Jan-21	37,511	2,772	40,283
Feb-21	14,501	673	15,174	Feb-21	36,010	2,539	38,549
Mar-21	13,345	610	13,955	Mar-21	32,835	2,311	35,146
Apr-21	12,773	576	13,349	Apr-21	31,211	2,172	33,384
May-21	12,490	559	13,049	May-21	30,402	2,112	32,513
Jun-21	12,044	514	12,558	Jun-21	29,227	1,903	31,129
Jul-21	11,541	485	12,025	Jul-21	27,982	1,794	29,776
Aug-21	11,363	494	11,857	Aug-21	27,484	1,820	29,304
Average	13,944	647	14,591	Average	34,296	2,461	36,757

2. For August 2021, or the latest 12 months for which data are available, total number of TANF and State Program cases (listed separately by month) new to TANF.

New TANF Cases by Program Type							
Month ¹	Basic	State Program	Total	Month ¹	Basic	State Program	Total
Sep-20	1,664	91	1,755	Mar-21	984	48	1,032
Oct-20	1,468	91	1,559	Apr-21	1,062	61	1,123
Nov-20	1,744	105	1,849	May-21	972	41	1,013
Dec-20	1,515	99	1,614	Jun-21	837	40	877

¹ These are cases that were not actively receiving TANF as of August 2020. The month is the indication of the first month they appeared on the TANF rolls.

New TANF Cases by Program Type							
Month ¹	Basic	State Program	Total	Month ¹	Basic	State Program	Total
Jan-21	1,164	57	1,221	Jul-21	914	46	960
Feb-21	861	47	908	Aug-21	1,044	52	1,096
				Total	14,229	778	15,007

3. Adult TANF Recidivism Rate – For August 2020 to July 2021.

This data consists of the monthly average of TANF clients who had more than one spell on TANF in the previous five years. "More than one spell" is defined as a break in assistance of more than one month.

Clients on TANF in FY 2021	FY 2021 #	Monthly Avg. %
No breaks	5,555	73.75%
More than one spell	1,977	26.25%
Totals	7,532	100.00%

	Aug-20	Sep-20	Oct-20	Nov-20	Dec-20	Jan-21
No breaks	6,679	6,594	6,209	6,328	6,215	6,062
More than one spell	2,370	2,202	2,072	2,038	2,076	2,037
Totals	9,049	8,796	8,281	8,366	8,291	8,099

No breaks	73.81%	74.97%	74.98%	75.64%	74.96%	74.85%
More than one spell	26.19%	25.03%	25.02%	24.36%	25.04%	25.15%
Totals	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

	Feb-21	Mar-21	Apr-21	May-21	Jun-21	Jul-21
No breaks	5,658	5,006	4,751	4,645	4,382	4,136
More than one spell	1,977	1,838	1,855	1,800	1,749	1,709
Totals	7,635	6,844	6,606	6,445	6,131	5,845

No breaks	74.11%	73.14%	71.92%	72.07%	71.47%	70.76%
More than one spell	25.89%	26.86%	28.08%	27.93%	28.53%	29.24%
Totals	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

4. Number of TANF and State Program Applications: Processed and Approved for FY 2021.

TANF APPLICATIONS APPROVED				TANF APPLICATIONS PROCESSED			
Benefit Month	Basic	State Program	Total	Benefit Month	Basic	State Program	Total
Sep-20	1,532	75	1,607	Sep-20	21,793	2,162	23,955
Oct-20	1,412	71	1,483	Oct-20	21,514	1,518	23,032
Nov-20	1,898	118	2,016	Nov-20	33,847	1,868	35,715
Dec-20	1,615	78	1,693	Dec-20	27,602	1,861	29,463

TANF APPLICATIONS APPROVED				TANF APPLICATIONS PROCESSED			
Benefit Month	Basic	State Program	Total	Benefit Month	Basic	State Program	Total
Jan-21	1,219	67	1,286	Jan-21	22,735	1,806	24,541
Feb-21	988	41	1,029	Feb-21	20,238	1,575	21,813
Mar-21	1,151	44	1,195	Mar-21	24,028	1,755	25,783
Apr-21	1,178	44	1,222	Apr-21	23,989	1,758	25,747
May-21	995	44	1,039	May-21	17,243	1,263	18,506
Jun-21	1,131	57	1,188	Jun-21	20,898	1,628	22,526
Jul-21	843	35	878	Jul-21	19,845	1,637	21,482
Aug-21	1,253	58	1,311	Aug-21	29,608	2,409	32,017
Average	1,268	61	1,329	Average	23,612	1,770	25,382

Texas Workforce Commission:

1. TANF Choices Population Data – State average hourly wage for all participants entering employment for fiscal year (FY) 2021. \$12.84
2. Adult education for TANF recipients – funding for FY 2021, including: Federal Section 231 funds, state general revenue (GR) funds, TANF funds, and state GR (TANF Maintenance of Effort) funds. \$5.8 million
3. Adult education for TANF recipients – for FY 2021, the number of customers served. 191
4. Adult education for TANF recipients – for FY 2021, the total number of contact hours. 11,072.75
5. Adult education for TANF recipients – for FY 2021, the percent of customers served who took a progress assessment and completed at least one level. 21.99%
6. Adult education for TANF recipients – for FY 2021, the percent of customers served who completed at least one level and continued to a higher level. 12.57%
7. Adult education for TANF recipients – for FY 2021, the credential achievement rate for earning a high school equivalency certificate. Time period reported: January 2019-December 2019 79/202 = 39.11%
8. Self-Sufficiency Fund² – the number of participating employers in FY 2021. Time period reported: September 1, 2020-August 31, 2021 Not applicable

For TWC data, unless otherwise noted, time period reported is State FY 2021: July 2020-June 2021.

² In FY 2018, the parameters for the Self-Sufficiency measure were changed. Projects do not require employer partners any longer. The contract deliverable is to successfully train and place participants into employment, which could be with a variety of employers. Due to changes in the contracts, TWC no longer requires reporting of employer information.

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Texas Workforce Investment Council

System Partners

Economic Development and Tourism
Texas Department of Criminal Justice
Texas Education Agency
Texas Health and Human Services Commission

Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board
Texas Juvenile Justice Department
Texas Veterans Commission
Texas Workforce Commission

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