EVALUATION 2023

ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND OUTCOMES OF THE

TEXAS WORKFORCE SYSTEM

Texas Workforce Investment Council

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 2023

Accomplishments and Outcomes of the Texas Workforce System

Texas Workforce Investment Council
December 2023

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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 2023* 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 designed to achieve specific system

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/

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 its workforce goals and objectives. This is the final 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.

Balanced Scorecard Components

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 into 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 measures[1]. 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.

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[1] Key measures are referenced in the General Appropriations Act [*Performance Measure Reporting in ABEST Instructions for State Agencies* (August 2023)]

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 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

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 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.

▸ *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.
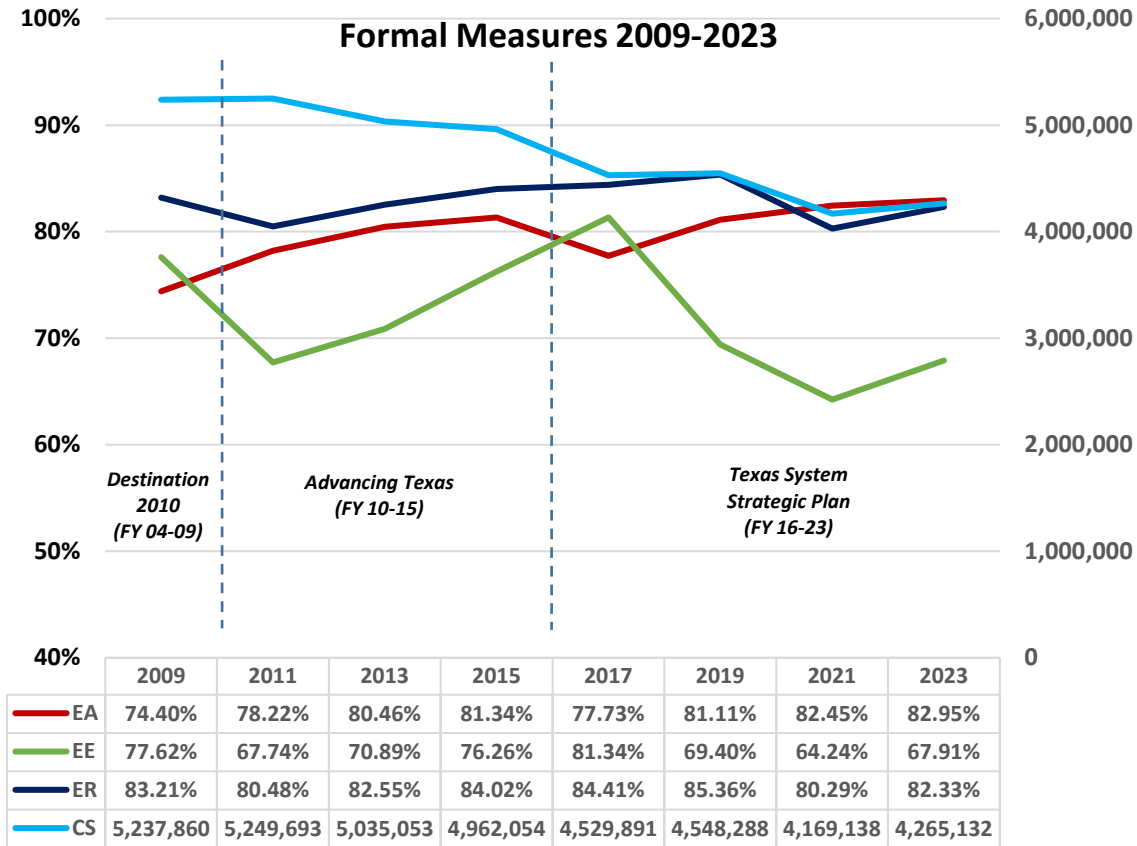
Balanced Scorecard

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 (FY). 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 that administer workforce programs:

- Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) and its Windham School District (Windham)
- 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

Formal Measures 2009-2023

Destination 2010 (FY 04-09)

Advancing Texas (FY 10-15)

Texas System Strategic Plan (FY 16-23)

	2009	2011	2013	2015	2017	2019	2021	2023
EA	74.40%	78.22%	80.46%	81.34%	77.73%	81.11%	82.45%	82.95%
EE	77.62%	67.74%	70.89%	76.26%	81.34%	69.40%	64.24%	67.91%
ER	83.21%	80.48%	82.55%	84.02%	84.41%	85.36%	80.29%	82.33%
CS	5,237,860	5,249,693	5,035,053	4,962,054	4,529,891	4,548,288	4,169,138	4,265,132

Fiscal Year 2023 Outcomes

676,276 (82.95 percent) individuals completed a degree, certificate, or other measure of educational achievement

531,591 (67.91 percent) individuals entered employment and/or were enrolled in education or training after program exit

337,856 (82.33 percent) individuals retained employment and/or were enrolled in education or training after program exit

4,265,132 individuals received services through the Texas workforce system

	System Partner	Educational Achievement (EA)	Entered Employment (EE)	Employment Retention (ER)	Customers Served (CS)
	Criminal Justice	455	n/a	n/a	4,216
	Education	623,541	182,246	n/a	3,196,886
	Higher Education	39,578	99,065	106,472	604,107
2023	Juvenile Justice	221	n/a	n/a	2,110
	Veterans	n/a	2,591	2,048	4,286
	Workforce	12,936	247,689	229,336	457,743
	Total	**676,276**	**531,591**	**337,856**	**4,265,132**
	Percent	**82.95%**	**67.91%**	**82.33%**	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.

Explanatory notes on the formal measures data are provided below:

TDCJ [comments from agency]: The decrease in number of certificates and degrees for 2023 is due to the college's course timelines. Timelines can vary from six months to two years depending on [the] course. There are a significant number of inmate students that enrolled in 2023 that will not complete their course or graduate until 2024. Six of the colleges are scheduled to graduate or issue certificates in 2024. Please note that colleges had to begin this fiscal year working with inmates to complete the courses that were halted due to the Covid pandemic in the previous years that delayed completion. Colleges' enrollments are done as cohorts.

Windham: For the duration of the current strategic plan, for fiscal years 2016 to 2023, Windham's educational achievement formal measures were based on a lagged one-year reporting period. The data available for this report are for the reporting period of September 2021 to August 2022. For future year evaluations, Windham will report its educational achievement formal measures using a current year program period. This was determined as part of the formal measures development process, as required for implementation of the workforce system strategic plan for fiscal years 2024 to 2031. The change to current year reporting will create a one-year data gap for the reporting period of September 2022 to August 2023. Data for this period has been provided by Windham. This information will be maintained by the Council for longitudinal reference.

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.

What are the objectives?	How are system partners addressing them?	What was accomplished this year?
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.	**97.50 percent** employer satisfaction rate **100.00 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.	**253,749** third-party, industry-based certifications successfully completed by program participants: ★ 207,466 (TEA) ★ 23,648 (THECB) ★ 5,774 (TWC), including 173 awarded to veterans (TVC) ★ 16,861 (Windham) Certification success rate: ★ **Data are no longer collected** (TEA) ★ **94.43 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.	*Focus on employers*
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
Finalized	07/19	06/23	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
Finalized	07/21	07/23	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
Finalized	07/19	06/23	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.	FY 2020	FY 2023

Part 2–Key Activities

The Texas Veterans Commission's (TVC) actions to conduct semi-annual employer satisfaction surveys, analyze survey data, and evaluate ways to improve outreach programs to employers began in July 2019 and continued through July 2021. The process was later refined in August 2021 and has become a continuous initiative for the agency.

The Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG) program provides federal funding, through a formula grant, to hire dedicated staff to provide individualized career and training-related services to

veterans and eligible persons with significant barriers to employment and to assist employers fill their workforce needs with job-seeking veterans. As required by the mandate of the grant, Employment Services will continue to be a mandatory partner with all Texas Local Workforce Development Areas and their Business Service Units.

Through its partnership with American Job Centers and employers, Employment Services continues to provide in-person and virtual hiring events to meet employer 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.

TVC's Communications and Outreach department conducts continuous social media postings on most popular platforms, as well as issuing a monthly e-Vets Newsletter to the Texas veteran community and the employment department posts employment and veteran jobseeker events on LinkedIn. This will be an on-going and routine initiative for the agency.

TVC's action to partner with institutions of higher education to provide formal training to agency staff on marketing techniques had been delayed due to COVID restrictions and considered out of scope for the agency. Instead, TVC has adopted marketing techniques from the National Veterans Training Institute and the National Labor Exchange for JVSG staff.

TVC's Employment Services staff continue to pursue individual enrollments with professional organizations such as the Society for Human Resource Management. It has been determined that agency staff is not allowed memberships with chambers of commerce.

TVC has produced a series of videos called "The Employer's Perspective" to promote the skill sets of veterans. Please see https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PL-D996ZO2MVe33RsYgeGdxTZo74scnBei&si=gitGcsohfNMkeGLe, Updated 03/16/20

The TVC Veterans Education Department is the State Approving Agency for the Department of Veteran Affairs for all institutions of higher education in Texas. This is an on-going 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

	Actual [mm/yy]			Specified in Plan	
Status	Start Date	End Date	Action	Start Date	End Date
In progress	09/20	n/a	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	n/a	Revise CTE industry leadership committees for each career cluster to meet annually to assist in CTE program 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	n/a	Involve business and industry representatives in work-based learning framework implementation.	FY 2020	FY 2022

Part 2–Key Activities

The 2023 winter (entrepreneurship and career preparation) and 2023 summer (Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources (AFNR), aviation maintenance, and two career and technical education (CTE) courses that satisfy a science graduation requirement) review of 31 CTE courses by seven work groups included six business and industry representatives selected for their expertise in aligned career fields.

Throughout fiscal year (FY) 2023, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) engaged in a refresh of the statewide CTE programs of study. Recommendations for the refresh were made by an advisory committee comprising of approximately 150 individuals representing education and industry. Over 1,000 applications were received to serve on this committee, enabling TEA to develop balanced sub-committees of subject matter experts for each career cluster. This advisory committee will serve as a foundation for ongoing stakeholder engagement in upcoming Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) review, industry-based certification review, and technical assistance activities.

Since publishing the Tri-Agency Workforce Initiative work-based learning framework in December 2022, TEA has integrated the framework into new and existing programmatic efforts. Advisory committee members in the programs of study refresh aligned a list of recommended work-based learning experiences for each program of study that reflected the definitions and scaffolding of the framework.

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]		Action	Specified in Plan	
Status	Start Date	End Date		Start Date	End Date
In progress	11/16	n/a	Expand the number of apprentices in underserved populations.	FY 2020	FY 2023
In progress	11/16	n/a	Provide training toward industry-based certifications to expand the number of work-ready individuals in high demand occupations.	FY 2020	FY 2023
Finalized	09/17	08/23	Increase the number of employers who participate in work-based learning programs.	FY 2020	FY 2023

Part 2–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 (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. This model combines classroom training and on-the-job training (that is, work-based learning). Currently, there are 769 RA programs in Texas providing on-the-job training/work-based learning to over 25,000 active apprentices.

The TWC Apprenticeship Expansion Grants started in November 2016. Currently, TWC has the following active grants:
1. State Apprenticeship Expansion, Equity, and Innovation Grant for $10 million (end date June 30, 2025) to support 2,000 apprentices.
2. Apprenticeship Building America Grant for $3.66 million (end date June 30, 2026) to support 900 apprentices.
3. State Apprenticeship Expansion Formula for $2.2 million (end date June 30, 2024) to build capacity within other state agencies, such as the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), and workforce boards. The capacity building exercise is intended to increase knowledge and expertise in the development, expansion, and support of RA programs.

Historically, all Apprenticeship Expansion grants focus on underrepresented populations. The 2021 Apprenticeship State Expansion Grant, for example, recently closed with TWC reporting 647 individuals from underrepresented populations served, far exceeding the goal of 200.

The TWC Chapter 133 funding in both fiscal year (FY) 2021 and FY 2022 served in excess of 6,600 apprentices per year, with more than 50% of the participants identified as underrepresented populations.

Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) and Workforce Training
AEL statewide grants require grantees to provide integrated education 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 FY 2022, TWC AEL served over 7,400 participants in IET programs. The credential attainment rate in this state fiscal year reporting period for IET participants (who exited AEL during 2020) was 36.73%.

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 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. While a success, TWC AEL is in process of closing the Accelerate Texas Grant program and identifying other projects that connect adults to workforce training.

AEL and Employer Engagement in Work-based Learning
The current 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 (communication etiquette, digital literacy, etc.) needed to function successfully in the workplace. In state fiscal year 2022, Texas AEL programs served 757 participants through workplace literacy programs. In August 2021, the Commission approved $1.2 million of AEL state leadership funds to expand workplace learning partnerships between AEL providers and employers. The special initiative awarded 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. The initiative supports the creation of replicable models that can be shared statewide with workforce stakeholders.

Texas Internship Challenge
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. In June 2022, TWC also launched Texas Interns Unite, challenging employers to promote and increase the number of internships for Texas students. A series of events was held through the state, promoting the initiative and hearing from employer partners and interns who have benefitted from internships.

Work-Based Learning Framework
As part of Tri-Agency coordination, TWC worked with TEA and THECB to develop a work-based learning framework that local education agencies, workforce boards, community colleges, and other stakeholders may reference to learn the characteristics of high quality work-based learning experiences. The framework was created in response to House Bill 1247, 87th Texas Legislature (Regular).

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	n/a	Involve business and industry representatives in the review and validation of industry-based certifications.		FY 2020	FY 2021
In progress	05/20	n/a	Develop a system to collect data on industry-based certifications directly from certifying entities.		FY 2020	FY 2023

Part 2–Key Activities

In FY 2021, TEA conducted a nomination process for industry-based certifications. In early FY 2022, nominated credentials were validated as "industry recognized and valued" via a survey study conducted by the Ray Marshall Center at the University of Texas at Austin to a large sampling of industry personnel. Industry-based certifications (IBC) that met this criterion were evaluated against five other criteria by panels of Tri-Agency partners. The panels evaluated 847 unique IBCs against criteria listed in 19 TAC §74.1003. The IBCs that met all six criteria were then aligned to programs of study using multiple methods. In August, the 2022-2024 IBC List for Public School Accountability with the associated certifying entities, IBC to Aligned Programs of Study Crosswalk, FAQ, and updated program of study framework documents were published.

From September 19 – October 14, 2021, certifying entities that met the industry valued and recognized criterion were able to apply for re-evaluation by providing additional evidence to prove that they met the evaluation criteria, resulting in an additional 25 IBCs that met all criteria. Documents were updated to reflect these changes. The 2022-2024 IBC List for Public School Accountability contains 296 certifications, as compared to the 2019-2022 list, which contained 244 certifications.

TEA CTE staff and leadership continue to engage 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**
In progress	06/23	n/a	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–Key Activities

Texas Education Code (TEC) 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 an 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. THECB plans to begin working on Programs of Study in fall 2023, when the Workforce Education division will work in partnership with Academic Affairs to form an advisory committee of subject matter experts to devise a plan to move forward on programs of study.

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

	Actual [mm/yy]			Specified in Plan	
Status	Start Date	End Date	Action	Start Date	End Date
Finalized	07/19	06/22	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
Finalized	07/20	06/23	Develop a Texas resource based upon a national occupational licensing database that corresponds with military occupations.	FY 2020	FY 2023
Finalized	07/19	06/23	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
Finalized	07/19	06/23	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
Finalized	07/19	06/23	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–Key Activities

Veterans Employment Services continues to work with regulatory agencies and the Deparment of Labor to enhance and publish crosswalks and continues to advocate publishment of occupational license data on websites to improve licensing and hiring efforts.

Over the past several Texas Legislative sessions, 14 bills were passed related to occupation licensing for military service members, military spouses, and veterans. Please note that TVC is not a regulating agency and can only advocate for these actions. Refer to the Texas Coordinating Council for Veteran Services (TCCVS) report, 6th edition dated 10/01/22, Employment Workgroup, "Veteran Need #3" (pages 16-17), "There is an ongoing need to streamline the information for Occupational Licensing requirements in Texas, for military service members, military spouses, transitioning service members and veterans."

In conjunction with the agency's actions to advocate for improved data systems to capture occupational licensing for veterans through the TCCVS, TVC advocates for licensing transfer or acquisition information to be posted online. Veterans Employment Services has verified that the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation oversees various occupations, businesses, facilities, and equipment in Texas and provides updates to military spouses, veterans, and transitioning service members. Please note that TVC is not a regulating agency and can only advocate for this 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					
Actual [mm/yy]				**Specified in Plan**	
Status	Start Date	End Date	Action	Start Date	End Date
Finalized	09/16	08/23	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
Finalized	09/16	08/23	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	09/19	n/a	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
Finalized	09/19	08/23	Evaluate CTE program effectiveness within the Windham School District.	FY 2020	FY 2023
Finalized	09/19	08/21	Collaborate with the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation to formalize a process for students' eligibility for a license in their respective trade.	FY 2020	FY 2021

Part 2–Key Activities

Windham School District (Windham) continues to develop and maintain partnerships. Windham collaborates with the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) Reentry and Integration Division to identify, engage and assist employers with hiring of program graduates. Both Windham and TDCJ use Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) labor market data and projections to determine program and industry-based certification offerings to fulfill job market needs. The use of Integrated Education and Training (IET), supported by TWC grant funds, engages adult learners by providing contextualized literacy instruction concurrently with workforce training and activities in preparation for specific occupations. The district continuously monitors industry needs, confirming the availability of high-demand training programs for students. Industry partners have been critical in providing Windham and TDCJ with feedback, presenting information to students and providing professional development to teachers. Windham and TDCJ staff, along with college partners, have the requisite qualifications to instruct, facilitate and administer the industry-based certifications offered to students. The Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation (TDLR) also connects Windham with approved examiners, who partner with TDLR, to administer the cosmetology and barbering licensing exams and the Texas Department of Public Safety administers the written and practical exams for truck driving students on track to earn commercial driver's licenses.

In order to expand program opportunities and leverage existing resources at a time when educator shortages are an issue statewide, Windham introduced stackable credentials, allowing more

educational training that aligns with the current needs of various industries. Over 40 career and technical education (CTE) courses are available across 11 career clusters. The district leverages career pathways planning and college partnerships to provide students the opportunity for advanced training. Additionally, Windham and TDCJ continue to increase apprenticeship programs and participants.

In June of 2023, Windham established a College and Career Readiness Department, tasked with partnering with TDCJ and colleges to form dual credit and prior learning assessment (PLA) agreements. Windham has two dual credit agreements with Lee College and Central Texas College in the high school programs for men and women. Through PLA agreements, colleges assess Windham courses and award college credit for participation in the district's courses that align with courses within college certificate programs, allowing students to complete programs more quickly and maximize their use of federal financial aid with the reinstatement of Pell grants for students in state prisons. In January of 2023, Windham and college partners received training on PLAs in corrections by representatives from the state of Ohio, where agreements have been successfully executed. The department is in the process of hiring six regional program coordinators. One of the key tasks of these positions will be to build and maintain college partnerships in collaboration with TDCJ Rehabilitation Programs Division.

Windham continually evaluates program effectiveness through partnerships with employers and associations, the Biennial Evaluation and Report, and monitoring the employment outlook and labor market projections published by TWC.
The most recent biennial evaluation (2023) conducted by the University of Kentucky analyzed program data and identified the following summations:
Of those who completed career and technical education programs:
o 23.1% were less likely to recidivate than their matched sample.
o 10% were more likely to retain employment than non-Windham participants.
o 14.2% had a wage increase after one year of employment than non-Windham participants.
o 78% secured at least one job related to their training.

Windham has an active memorandum of understanding with TDLR, TWC and TDCJ, resulting in the implementation of a student eligibility screening process to support the enrollment of eligible students in regulated trades training. Windham principals and student advisors received professional development training by TDLR enforcement attorneys to aid them in making placement decisions and assisting students with completing and submitting Criminal History Evaluation Letters (CHEL) to TDLR. From inception, in fiscal year 2021, 451 CHELs have been submitted by Windham students for evaluation by TDLR. Effective September 1, 2023, Windham graduates will be able to apply for licenses pre-reentry to be issued post-release. This was accomplished through legislative action and removed a significant barrier for trades regulated by TDLR in which Windham students engage.

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	n/a	Align Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills to industry-based certifications where applicable.	FY 2020	FY 2023
In progress	09/20	n/a	Connect industry-based certifications to postsecondary programs and establish articulation from secondary to postsecondary educational institutions.	FY 2020	FY 2023

Part 2–Key Activities

TEA and the State Board of Education have established regular cycles in which to evaluate industry-based certifications of value, CTE programs of study, and TEKS within individual CTE courses to ensure appropriate alignment. A crosswalk of programs of study and industry-based certifications has been developed to show alignment between knowledge and skills addressed in the TEKS and those assessed by an industry-based certification.

The Tri-Agency Workforce Initiative identified connecting secondary programs, post-secondary 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

	Actual [mm/yy]				**Specified in Plan**	
Status	**Start Date**	**End Date**	**Action**		**Start Date**	**End Date**
In progress	06/23	n/a	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	n/a	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	09/22	n/a	Implement input from regional meetings to foster communication between industry and colleges.		FY 2020	FY 2023

Part 2–Key Activities

The TEC 61.8235 Programs of Study (POS) initiative saw incorporation of industry-based certifications (IBCs) into some courses in POS curricula. Agency Workforce Education staff have posted the Texas Education Agency's Industry-Based Certifications list on its Career and Technical Education webpage and encourage institutions to incorporate IBCs into new program development.

THECB conducted regional employer listening sessions during the 2021-2022 academic year. In June 2023, THECB created a Community College Standing Advisory Committee that is charged to address House Bill 8 (Texas 88th Legislature) policy that includes state funding for outcomes with incentive funding aligned to state and regional education and workforce needs, and providing new programs focusing on affordability for students. Texas Reskilling and Upskilling Education (TRUE) program will be implemented in fall 2023 and requires community and technical colleges to expand existing programs, design new short-term programs, or redesign existing programs to accelerate training that focuses on high-demand skills which lead to industry certification and credentials. THECB Workforce Education staff began meeting in June to discuss implementation of the TRUE grant program.

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.	**7.64 percent** of vocational rehabilitation consumers participated in integrated, work-based learning activities
	TWC is creating greater access and effective services by promoting collaboration and regional planning.	**5.37 percent** of individuals in vocational rehabilitation programs were co-enrolled in workforce programs
	THECB and TWC are increasing access to, referral between, and outcomes of adult education programs and services.	**6.29 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):[2]
		★ **0.00 percent** received a level 1 or level 2 certificate or an associate's degree
		★ **0.00 percent** entered employment and/or were enrolled in education or training
	Windham is establishing and leveraging regional employer partnerships to benefit students pre- and post-release.	**98.08 percent** employer satisfaction rate (Windham)

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[2] THECB Note: Accelerate Texas program ended in fiscal year 2016 and has been phased out. Data are no longer collected by the agency.

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.	*Engage in partnerships*
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

	Actual [mm/yy]			Specified in Plan	
Status	**Start Date**	**End Date**	**Action**	**Start Date**	**End Date**
Finalized	09/22	11/22	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
Finalized	11/22	02/23	Develop a plan to implement the effective practices and strategies.	FY 2021	FY 2021
Finalized	02/23	08/23	Implement the plan, including as necessary, dissemination of guidance, training, and resources.	FY 2022	FY 2023

Part 2–Key Activities

Texas Workforce Commission's (TWC) System Partnership and Service Coordination work group aims to improve customer referral and service coordination processes among Texas Workforce Solutions partners, including Local Workforce Development Boards (Boards) and their contractors. In 2022, the 35-member work group convened with representatives from eight Boards and/or contractors, six Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) regions, and five TWC divisions: Workforce Development; Vocational Rehabilitation; Child Care and Early Learning; Customer Care; and Information, Innovation, and Insight.

The work group presented the following recommendations for calendar year 2023 implementation:

Develop tools to help employers understand the full range of services the workforce system offers.
• TWC Office of Employer Initiatives has developed and disseminated an Employer Services flyer, highlighting the various services offered to employers through the Texas workforce system.

Create professional development opportunities for staff to build consistency in quality of services to employers.
• In November 2023, TWC will host a pre-conference training session during the Annual Texas Workforce Commission Conference to bring together business service teams from both VR and workforce programs. The session will be designed to foster collaboration and will focus on employer engagement, specifically partnering to understand the value add for employers and developing unified messaging.
• Each VR region will host regional training and networking events to promote resources and build connections between VR and workforce business partners.
• TWC VR is exploring additional trainings for the business teams to ensure consistency in quality of services to employers.

Develop a common customer intake/referral form that Workforce Solutions local offices and VR can use.
• TWC is exploring a method to streamline the referral process between programs and to improve customer experience during self-referral.

The implementation of these recommendations will support the development of future memoranda of understanding, which will provide additional guidance to system partners to facilitate ongoing coordination and collaboration.

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

	Actual [mm/yy]		Action	Specified in Plan	
Status	Start Date	End Date		Start Date	End Date
In progress	09/20	n/a	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	n/a	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	n/a	Procure and implement a case management system that further integrates data among multiple programs.	FY 2020	FY 2023
Finalized	07/17	08/23	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–Key Activities

Collaboration with the Texas Education Agency (TEA) in the Texas Regional Pathways Network (TRPN)
TWC staff collaborate with TEA in the continued implementation of the TRPN. For the current and previous years, staff participated in TRPN Steering Committee Meetings and in the review of TRPN grant applications. In 2023, staff took part in the review of applications for TRPN Regional Conveners. The 2023-2024 Regional Conveners will serve as hubs in the development of cross-sector partnerships and in the promotion of quality work-based learning opportunities. Work will continue in the year ahead through the Tri-Agency Initiative.

Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) Coordination with VR and Boards:
In December 2019, the Commission 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.

Additionally, professional development (PD) 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, provides PD 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 PD Center grant, which Board, VR, and AEL stakeholders can access to build remote learning and distance education opportunities. The career pathway PD Center, awarded to Region 6 Education Service Center, provides research-based PD on career pathway models available to workforce stakeholders. The AEL program's work with these three professional development centers continues.

Workforce Case Management System
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 testing phase, with an expected deployment of the replacement system by January 2024.

TWC staff have convened multiple state and community agencies annually since 2018 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. Our annual conference has consistently been a success with over 90% positive feedback every year, and consistently high marks for content. TWC continues to direct a substantial amount of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Statewide funding to grants with the Foster Youth Transition Centers, supporting a workforce advocate in each center with a focus on job preparation and placement. In fall 2023, the Commission will consider funds for a Foster Youth Transition Conference, assisting youth with connections to higher education and employers. Additionally, the Commission will consider funds for the purposes of developing the Texas Foster Youth Network, creating a statewide referral network of organizations whose mission is to serve foster youth, and to share referral and service information that will allow for better coordinated services.

The Texas Consumer Resource for Education and Workforce Statistics (TX CREWS)
TX CREWS is an interactive dashboard tool providing comparative information about Texas public two-year and four-year post-secondary institutions, as well as Career Schools & Colleges and other programs in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Eligible Training Provider List. By evaluating programs and institutions based on resultant wages and student loan levels, Texas CREWS allows parents and students to make informed decisions about post-secondary education options and get a higher quality return on their educational investment. The system features a fully accessible user-friendly design, a Spanish language mode, as well as intuitive workflow and navigation. The application is also responsive and adaptive for mobile devices to display the application according to device screen size.

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	n/a	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	n/a	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–Key Activities

AEL Coordination with VR and Boards

In December 2019, the Commission 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.

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 Re-entry.

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 PD 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 PD Center grant, which Board, VR, and AEL stakeholders can access to build remote learning and distance education opportunities. The career pathway PD Center, awarded to Region 6 Education Service Center, provides research-based PD on career pathway models available to workforce stakeholders. The AEL program's work with these three professional development centers continues.

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.

Each year, AEL grantees work closely with state and local correctional facilities to assist in providing services to prepare incarcerated individuals for employment upon release. For AEL program year 2020-2021, the TWC AEL grantees collectively served approximately 1,700 individuals residing in federal, state, or local correctional facilities. Approximately 800 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,

transportation assistance, and family reunification services.

In July 2022, TWC entered into an intra-agency contract with Windham School District (WSD) to support Integrated Education and Training (IET) models with incarcerated individuals. This partnership solidified a yearlong effort by both parties who participated in a national corrections pilot held by the US Department of Education in collaboration with the Department of Corrections. The pilot leveraged AEL funds to support corrections education programs across the nation. Texas' long-standing partnership with WSD was made stronger by this additional best practice sharing and allowed staff to develop mutually beneficial solutions to support corrections education in Texas. The current contract supports developing and expanding IET models for an estimated 500 incarcerated individuals who are within two years of projected release.

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

	Actual [mm/yy]			Specified in Plan	
Status	Start Date	End Date	Action	Start Date	End Date
In progress	08/23	n/a	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	n/a	Provide statewide program support and professional development to improve targeted adult education services provided through community and technical colleges.	FY 2020	FY 2023
In progress	08/23	n/a	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–Key Activities

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board is planning the implementation of three programs targeting adult education and related services. The Adult Career Education program will provide grants to nonprofits to prepare low-income students to enter high-demand fields. The Opportunity High School Diploma will create opportunities for adult learners to concurrently earn a diploma and a workforce education credential. Texas Reskilling and Upskilling Education (TRUE) program version will be implemented in fall 2023.

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

	Actual [mm/yy]			Specified in Plan	
Status	Start Date	End Date	Action	Start Date	End Date
Finalized	09/16	08/23	Develop partnerships with employers and implement pre-employment career and technical education (CTE) programs.	FY 2020	FY 2023
Finalized	09/19	08/20	Develop an advisory board, which includes industry partners, to review course offerings and employment opportunities.	FY 2020	FY 2020
Finalized	09/16	08/23	Expand opportunities for students, pre- and post-release, through career expos and reentry job fairs.	FY 2020	FY 2021
Finalized	09/19	08/23	Expand CTE instructor site visits with industry partners and increase CTE classroom tours with industry partners.	FY 2020	FY 2023
Substantially complete	09/16	08/23	Develop awareness and support completion of employer surveys that are administered through the Windham School District website.	FY 2020	FY 2021
Finalized	09/16	08/23	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–Key Activities

TDCJ and Windham work together to develop employer partnerships. Currently, TDCJ has 1,100 active employers hiring and registered with Website for Work. Through partnerships and collaborations with industry leaders and field specialists, the district reviews and updates curriculum to ensure the content being taught is aligned to state and industry standards and relevant to the present-day workforce.

Windham recently reestablished guidelines for the Career and Technical Education (CTE) and Workforce Advisory Committee that formalizes district collaboration with businesses and industry partners to ensure programs are current and aligned with employer and workforce needs. Additionally, district administrators consistently review job market trends to determine program needs, which include additions, removals and modifications to meet the evolution of the workforce. The initial advisory committee was developed and met pre-COVID and Windham is in the process of transitioning and reinstating the committee under the leadership of the College and Career Readiness Administrator, position effective June 1, 2023.

In 2023, the TDCJ Reentry and Integration Division has hosted 42 employment events within TDCJ facilities and in the community, with 1,711 participants attending. In FY22, 76% of participants attending a hiring event received employment. Additionally, in school year 2023, Windham has participated in over 30 job fairs, career expos and skills demonstrations in collaboration with the TDCJ.

Windham and TDCJ continue to facilitate industry partner visits to career and technical education classrooms to observe the level of training, provide company and industry-specific information and make employer connections with students. Windham, in collaboration with multiple divisions within TDCJ, has participated in Skills Demonstrations and Career Expos at the Crain, Hilltop, Wynne and Dominguez campuses. Graduates and current Windham students showcased the skills learned through Windham's career and technical education programs such as Culinary Arts, Electrical, Truck Driving and Welding to various industry representatives from across the state. During the Skills Demonstration and Career Expos, industry representatives were able to interview candidates and offer conditional employment pre-release.

Windham and TDCJ encourage employment partners to complete the Employer Survey through email, postal and paper distribution, as well as making the survey accessible on both the Windham and TDCJ website. Windham has seen an increase in the number of employers completing the survey. In school year 2023, to date, 55 surveys have been completed.

Windham continues to use feedback from Employer Surveys to support process improvements across the district. Process improvements such as CTE skills demonstrations, facilitating in-person and virtual employment interviews and partnership with TDCJ Reentry and Integration Division have resulted in higher engagement with employers. Feedback from industry employers indicated the high-level of knowledge and skill sets obtained by students, however noted a lack of confidence in their interactions. From this feedback, CTE courses have implemented a soft skills component to practice communication and professionalism. Additionally, to acknowledge the employer recommendations, the Student Ambassador Program was developed. Student Ambassadors, who are current Windham students, serve as representatives of the class when visitors, including community members and legislators, enter the classroom. They are responsible for greeting visitors, introducing the teacher and themselves, providing details about the class and answering questions.

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.

What are the objectives?	How are system partners addressing them?	What was accomplished this year?
Improve and enhance services, programs, and policies to facilitate effective and efficient transitions.	TEA and THECB are developing and implementing programs of study in community and technical colleges and aligning them with secondary programs of study.	**63.08 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) **Excess semester credit hours** for career and technical education time to degree (THECB): ★ **22 hours** – level 1 certificate ★ **16 hours** – level 2 certificate ★ **27 hours** – associate's degree
	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.	Of students and youth with disabilities who participated in transition services: ★ **69.25 percent** subsequently enrolled in postsecondary education and training ★ **59.80 percent** subsequently entered competitive integrated employment
Develop and implement policies and processes to ensure portable and transferrable credit and credentials.	THECB is working to ensure consistent credit transfer based on programs of study and common technical core curriculum.	**63.08 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
	TJJD is expanding career and technical education courses to provide additional opportunities for dual credit[3].	Data collection for two measures began in 2016: ★ **0.00 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

[3] TJJD encountered operational challenges due to staff shortages, which had an impact on the agency's ability to expand career and technical education dual credit.

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.	*Align system elements*
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	n/a	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	n/a	Connect secondary programs of study to specific dual credit courses in postsecondary.	FY 2020	FY 2023

Part 2–Key Activities

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) coordinate regularly on aligning secondary programs, postsecondary programs, and high-value credential attainment along a pathway. In fiscal year (FY) 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-Agency Workforce Initiative 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**
In progress	08/23	n/a	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
In progress	08/23	n/a	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	n/a	Coordinate with TEA to ensure alignment of secondary and postsecondary programs of study.	FY 2020	FY 2023
In progress	09/19	n/a	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–Key Activities

Currently in the planning stage, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) will implement the Opportunity High School Diploma program and create secondary/post-secondary pathways for adult learners to concurrently earn a high school diploma and a high-demand workforce education credential. THECB plans to begin working on revised Programs of Study in the fall 2023. THECB Workforce Education division is working in partnership with Academic Affairs to establish programs of study and to continue building on the alignment of the Workforce Education Course Manual courses to programs of study that began in 2019.

The Tri-Agency Initiative convened over the past three years to discuss alignment to high-demand credentials pathways at the K-12 level, which include our Pathways to Technology Early College High schools. The Tri-Agency Initiative has also provided the Texas Regional Pathways Network, which brings together state and regional leaders to build strong education and career pathways that prepare students for high-wage, in-demand careers.

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
Finalized	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
Finalized	09/20	08/22	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
Finalized	07/21	08/22	Develop a plan to replicate best and promising practices and, as necessary, to refine policy, strategies, and services.	FY 2022	FY 2022
Finalized	09/21	08/23	Implement plan to replicate best and promising practices and refine policy, strategies, and services.	FY 2022	FY 2023

Part 2–Key Activities

Texas Workforce Commission's Vocational Rehabilitation division (TWC-VR) has implemented numerous projects to refine, implement and replicate best and promising practices and services for students with disabilities. These include:

Refine Summer Earn and Learn (SEAL): In fiscal year (FY) 2023, TWC-VR initiated a SEAL Redesign Project to improve SEAL coordination and administration. TWC-VR streamlined program policy and forms, created and updated outreach materials, improved training for Board and VR staff, and enhanced the monitoring and program oversight of SEAL.

Develop and Implement Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) Elective Course Curriculum: In 2022, TWC-VR partnered with Texas A&M University's Center on Disability and Development and created a Pre-ETS curriculum, to be provided free to schools. Curriculum subjects include career exploration, work-based learning, counseling on postsecondary opportunities, workplace readiness, and self-advocacy.

Implement Embedded Pre-ETS: In FY 2023, Embedded Pre-ETS continued as a partnership with VR providers and independent school districts where students received in-depth instruction in Pre-ETS from VR providers during their school day. The curricula were generally intended to span the school year with some providers opting to create an optional summer component for students. TWC-VR is evaluating the effectiveness of Embedded Pre-ETS for continuous improvement in service delivery to students and youth with disabilities.

Building Capacity for Working with Younger Students: In fall 2022, TWC-VR partnered with Texas A&M's Center on Disability and Development to implement a statewide initiative called Building Capacity for Working with Younger Students, a strategy to build awareness, capacity building, relationships with school partners, and planning tools for working with students ages 14-16. In FY 2023, focus group meetings were held to gather feedback about needs for building capacity in each of the six TWC-VR regions, regional conferences were held, and a statewide building capacity conference was planned.

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

	Actual [mm/yy]				Specified in Plan	
Status	Start Date	End Date	Action		Start Date	End Date
In progress	01/22	n/a	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
In progress	07/23	n/a	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	n/a	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	09/19	n/a	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–Key Activities

In June 2023, THECB created a Community College Standing Advisory Committee that is charged to address House Bill 8 (Texas 88th Legislature) policy, which includes incentive funding aligned to state and regional workforce needs and providing new programs focusing on affordability for students. THECB is planning implementation of the Texas Reskilling and Upskilling Education (TRUE) program, which requires community and technical colleges to expand existing, create new, or redesign workforce education training accelerated programs that focus on high-demand skills leading to industry certification and credentials. As part of the TRUE program, institutions partner with regional workforce advisory boards and industry partners. THECB has a course sequence tool on the THECB website that aligns to career and technical education standards, and is linked to the Texas Education Agency's college and career readiness standards website.

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

	Actual [mm/yy]				Specified in Plan	
Status	Start Date	End Date	Action		Start Date	End Date
Finalized	08/19	01/20	Meet with colleges to assess potential for new partnership to provide college classes and dual credit.		FY 2020	FY 2020
Finalized	08/20	11/20	Once a partnership is formed, assess college classes and dual credit needs to formalize an agreement for service delivery.		FY 2020	FY 2020
In progress	05/22	n/a	Undertake reaccreditation or accreditation of vocational instructors through Southern Association of Colleges and Schools certification.		FY 2020	FY 2021
Not started	08/23	n/a	Implement dual credit opportunities for career and technical education courses where available.		FY 2020	FY 2023

Part 2–Key Activities

The Texas Juvenile Justice Department (TJJD) met with several colleges in the fall of 2019 to assess the potential for partnership to provide college classes and dual credit options for students within TJJD's service population. A formal agreement for service delivery was made with Blinn Community College in 2020. In August 2023, the agency met with Blinn Community College to discuss alternative pathways for students to obtain college credit. The agency continues to explore dual credit and college options in partnership with other community colleges throughout the state, having done so as recently as September 2023.

Due to effects of COVID-19 and agency staffing shortages, the agency has delayed implementation to seek reaccreditation or accreditation of vocational instructors through Southern Association of Colleges and Schools certification. Most recent action on this was in May 2023, when TJJD resubmitted documentation for accreditation of its vocational instructors.

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.

What is the objective?	How are system partners addressing it?	What was accomplished this year?
Employ enhanced or alternative program and service delivery methods.	TJJD and TWC are identifying and implementing new, relevant technology and service delivery options to expand program and service outcomes.	**86.65 percent** of students used technology for course content delivery (TJJD) **1,471,546** individuals utilized labor market information products (TWC) **276,840** individuals utilized the WorkInTexas self-service resource (TWC) **24,013** adult education providers utilized online professional development courses (TWC) **67,358** child care providers utilized online professional development courses (TWC)
	TWC is increasing competitive integrated employment outcomes by increasing awareness of vocational rehabilitation services and better serving underserved populations.	**2.43 percent** of consumers served identified as veterans with disabilities **56.35 percent** of consumers served with intellectual and developmental disabilities, mental health conditions, autism, and deaf-blindness subsequently entered competitive integrated employment
	TWC is enhancing the quality of and increasing access to quality child care to support parents in obtaining and retaining employment.	**22.06 percent** of child care providers were certified as Texas Rising Star providers Of parents receiving child care: ★ **72.53 percent** entered employment and/or were enrolled in education or training ★ **81.13 percent** retained employment and/or were enrolled in education or training

Improve and Integrate Programs: Action Plan Reports

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.	*Improve and integrate programs*
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

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

Part 2– Key Activities

Actions related to the identification and implementation of courses have been put on hold due to agency staffing levels. The Texas Department of Juvenile Justice (TJJD) continues to experience staff shortages for Career and Technical Education instructors. Vacancies for long-term technology instructors exist at three of the five schools that TJJD operates.

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	n/a	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	n/a	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–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 (TECPDS). Additionally, TWC has funded free online professional development modules for child care providers to meet required training hours through the Texas A&M University's AgriLife Learn platform.

In fiscal year (FY) 2019 TWC issued Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) 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.
12 Boards continue to use mobile units to provide service delivery to rural areas as well as providing internet access to assist customers with filing unemployment claims or for providing other services during emergencies. These mobile vans and trailers proved critical during the COVID-19 pandemic, but have been in place for many years prior to that time, and continue to be used strategically by boards.

Through an interagency contract, TWC provided funds to Texas State Technical College to train 500 individuals in rural areas of the state. Short-term training programs will be provided to support Texans in gaining the skills needed to work in several high-demand occupations. Training programs include automotive technician, welding, commercial driver's license, industrial machinery and others.

TWC has been providing education outreach services to students across the state since 2014. In 2019, the agency extended this work at the region-level by conducting a pilot program in which seven Workforce Boards implemented teams of Workforce Specialists, trained by TWC Education Outreach staff, to provide presentations, training, or 1:1 guidance to middle and high school students. These Workforce Specialists, referred to as Career Coaches, provide labor market and career information to students, facilitate career development and exploration workshops, inform on education and training options available after high school, and provide professional development training to faculty and administrations. These teams ensure students make better-informed decisions on what to do beyond high school based on their individual interests, skills, and goals.

The Career Coaches also act as a resource for independent school district staff to connect to local industry and employers. Finally, each Career Coach is also comprehensively trained on the robust resources available through TWC and local partners and act as a referral system to connect students or schools to resources which can help them attain their workforce goals. They lead our customers to appropriate wraparound services to overcome barriers to employment. This could include a referral to foster youth supports, vocational rehabilitation services, adult education and literacy, or childcare.

In 2021, dedicated Education Outreach teams became a permanent option for boards to allocate funding to. Once this happened, seven additional boards joined the network and initiated their own workforce specialist team, expanding the network to 14 regional teams and one state team.

From 2019 through June 30, 2023, the regional and state-level education outreach teams were able to share valuable information with 717,834 students and 145,173 adults, introducing them to industry and career information, work- based learning and other subject matter.

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 address to route customer inquiries to specific programs. One Board area used heat maps 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					
	Actual [mm/yy]			**Specified in Plan**	
Status	**Start Date**	**End Date**	**Action**	**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
Finalized	10/19	08/23	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
Finalized	10/19	02/23	Revise provider standards as needed to increase efficiency and effectiveness of services to underserved populations.	FY 2020	FY 2023
Finalized	09/20	06/23	Increase training and communication to providers to support implementation of revised standards and build provider capacity.	FY 2020	FY 2023
Finalized	09/20	08/21	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
Finalized	09/20	06/23	Implement new or revised services and/or service delivery methods.	FY 2021	FY 2023

Part 2– Key Activities

Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA): The CSNA is required by federal law and describes the VR service needs of individuals with disabilities residing or working in Texas. Every three years, the Texas Workforce Commission's Vocational Rehabilitation division (TWC-VR) uses the CSNA to identify goals and priorities for program administration aligned with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Combined State Plan that addresses the state's workforce system needs. The most recent CSNA was finalized in June of 2021. Based on the CSNA findings, TWC-VR collaborated with the Rehabilitation Council of Texas (RCT) to develop six primary goals and priorities; these were included in the VR section of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Combined State Plan modification, completed in 2022. Progress toward achieving these goals is reported quarterly to RCT and will be evaluated in the 2024 triennial CSNA.

Blind Premium: In late 2022, TWC approved fees for a Blind Premium for Employment Services. The goal of the premium is to increase the number of contracted providers who have the skills, knowledge, and competencies to work with the blind and visually impaired population. The provider requirements for the premium include completion of specialized training and then

obtaining a credential. In November 2022, TWC-VR added policy for the premium within its VR Standards for Providers Manual.

Competitive and Equitable Rates for Providers: TWC-VR contracted with a vendor, Public Consulting Group LLC, to analyze the fee structures, including associated payment rates, that are used in TWC-VR contracts as the basis for compensating providers who deliver services to VR customers. TWC-VR will receive the vendor's final report in August 2023. The final report will include recommendations for payment rates and for a recurring review schedule to ensure rates are competitive and equitable. Addressing provider rates will help retain providers and build provider capacity to effectively serve underserved populations.

Paperwork Reduction: TWC-VR's paperwork reduction will increase efficiency and effectiveness of provider reporting processes, so that providers have more time to deliver quality services to customers. From February 2021 through June 2023, TWC-VR has reduced 98 pages of forms. Efforts to reduce paperwork focused on streamlining the most cumbersome forms first. This included work to streamline forms for supported employment services, pre-employment transition services, Project SEARCH, and assistive technology services for customers with visual impairments. In June 2023, TWC-VR implemented a standard referral form that was integrated into the VR case management system for faster processing. This resulted in a reduction of 24 pages of forms.

Revised Provider Standards: In February 2023, TWC-VR completed a project to revise VR Standards for Providers Manual, Chapter 3: Basic Standards to reduce burdensome requirements and streamline the chapter's content. For this effort, TWC-VR gathered feedback from TWC staff, providers, and RCT and then revised the chapter. TWC-VR also posted quickinars (brief training videos) to its website about the chapter revisions.

Provider Engagement Efforts: In September 2022, TWC-VR implemented a new feedback process and Form VR 2100, Provider Feedback. The process allows providers to submit feedback on specific service issues and concerns that are not resolved timely or sufficiently by engaging local staff. The process helps ensure that provider feedback and the resolution to these concerns are documented. This enables TWC-VR to monitor concerns and identify trends and additional opportunities for service coordination and communication.

Benefits and Work Incentives Counseling Services: In spring 2023, TWC-VR added three certified benefits counselors to its team of program specialists who help resolve complex Social Security Administration benefit issues. TWC-VR also hired a long-term services and supports (LTSS) specialist in state office. The specialist assists with LTSS-related cases to ensure the customer understands how their LTSS benefits will be impacted by employment and how to ensure the needed benefits are received.

Peer Support Specialist Program: TWC-VR is contracting with a vendor for the development of a peer support specialist curriculum. Completion of the curriculum will result in a VR peer support endorsement for individuals who hold the Texas Certification Board credential as a peer specialist. The endorsement will allow TWC-VR counselors to use peer services and peer specialists to assist VR customers who have mental health and substance use disorders. The curriculum will focus on improving successful vocational outcomes by reducing dropout rates in the VR process. The vendor will be required to conduct the training for the peer support endorsement and train TWC-VR staff on the purpose of the endorsement. TWC-VR plans to execute its contract with the vendor in September 2023.

Employment First Expansion: Employment First is Texas state policy; it means that employment is the first and preferred option for individuals with disabilities who receive public benefits. TWC-VR is partnering with the Texas Health and Human Services (HHS) and Texas Education Agency to develop a framework to carry out the requirements of the federal Home and Community Based Services Settings Rule. The rule ensures that customers receive certain social services that are integrated within their communities. The partners also are implementing Texas Senate Bill 50, which requires HHS to establish rules and processes that comply with Texas' Employment First policy. Partnership activities include cross-agency collaborations to improve referral and data exchange systems, development of ongoing training for agency staff, and evaluation of system progress on joint service provision to individuals with the most significant disabilities.

Customized Employment Services: Customized employment is a universal employment strategy that is especially useful for individuals with severe disabilities who are seeking employment. In May 2023, TWC-VR entered a contract with a vendor to provide training and technical assistance, including mentoring as needed, on customized employment to TWC-VR providers and TWC-VR staff. The vendor will also administer a provider credentialing system for customized employment. The vendor's contract period is June 2023 through May 2025.

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

	Actual [mm/yy]			Specified in Plan	
Status	Start Date	End Date	Action	Start Date	End Date
In progress	09/21	n/a	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	n/a	Facilitate the employment outcomes of parents receiving subsidized child care services.	FY 2020	FY 2023
In progress	02/21	08/23	Implement Texas Rising Star Assessor Certification.	FY 2020	FY 2023

Part 2–Key Activities

TWC's Texas Rising Star (TRS) program continues to implement House Bill (HB) 2607 (87th Texas Legislature, Regular Session) which requires that all providers participating in TWC's Child Care Services (CCS) program attain Texas Rising Star certification. In September 2022, TWC approved rule amendments which created a new Entry Level Designation for CCS providers that are working towards certification. TWC has also enhanced the "Child Care by the Numbers" website to include additional information on TRS providers and children enrolled in TRS.

TWC continues to review employment and retention outcomes of child care parents. Bi-annually, TWC publishes this information in its Effectiveness of Child Care report to the Legislature. TWC now also publishes this data quarterly on the Child Care by the Numbers website. Additionally, in October 2022, TWC approved an amendment to the CCS rules to allow parents who are unemployed at the time they apply for child care to receive three months of child care while they conduct job search. Previously a parent had to be employed in order to be determined initially eligible for child care. This rule amendment codified a waiver the Commission previously put in place during the pandemic.

In partnership with the Children's Learning Institute (CLI), TWC completed implementation of the Texas Rising Star Assessor Training and Certification Program in the summer of 2022. Additionally, in 2023, TWC entered into a contract with CLI to employ all TRS Assessors (as required by HB 1792); CLI will complete hiring and transition in September 2023.

Strategic Pillars

To achieve the vision of an innovative, world-class Texas workforce system, the Council identified three core competencies that must be strengthened across the system: customer service and satisfaction, data-driven program improvement, and continuous improvement and innovation. These imperatives serve as the foundational pillars to improve the system's capacity to identify and respond to changing market conditions and the needs of all system customers. Each system partner is expected to enhance these competencies within its respective agency or local board. Examples of related system 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, which include research, launch, proof of concept, plan, execution, and institutionalization of 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 (FY) 2023, 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. In phase one, system partners developed an evidence framework, new grant applications, and review processes designed to get better results by requiring and awarding grants based on data and evidence of program effectiveness. The framework was piloted through two grant programs, which launched the new applications and common selection and contracting processes using the evidence framework. System partners have continued work to link evidence to funding and to develop practices to design evidence to inform future initiatives.

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 Texas workforce fellowship state team is composed of six 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
- Higher education policy and workforce education, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board
- Workforce system research and planning, Texas Workforce Investment Council

Members of the Texas team agreed that work should 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 and expert technical assistance.

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

Traditional metrics used in some federal- and state-funded workforce programs have led some providers to focus on short-term outcomes, which indirectly incentivized programs that either served individuals with fewer barriers to employment or frequently assisted jobseekers who rely on repetitive 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 job churn to make resources available and free the workforce system to serve new cohorts of participants. Each grant or contract provides an opportunity to focus available funding to achieve the greatest impact. Evidence and data gathered would then be used to further test or scale models and interventions that support long-term career mobility in target populations.

Encouraging Innovation While Building Evidence: A Tiered Approach

While the evidence demonstrates the successful performance of a workforce intervention and can be used to scale proven job training methods, Texas implemented a two-pronged approach. The state continues 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 grant 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 for the initial phases. Task group members continue to include state and local grant program and contract managers with subject matter expertise.

To build evidence of effective workforce interventions while continuing to encourage innovative, but less tested program models, Texas 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 being introduced to the requirements of evidence-based grants for the first time.

Evidence Tier Framework

Texas introduced a graduated method to help state grant programs integrate and applicants adapt to the requirements of evidence-based grants. By introducing the evidence tier framework, the state expected programs to improve data collection and evaluation methods to develop a program's evidence over time. Some grant programs had previously introduced common performance-based outcomes metrics. The data requirements for the evidence tiers built on that experience. Prior grant outcomes data are now required in the application process, where relevant, and an increasing number of applicants provide the data required to apply at higher tiers.

Because the state recognizes the grant applicants' breadth of experience and capabilities, the evidence tier framework allows all applicants to participate. Resource repositories were selected by the Texas team, providing grant program applicants with access to acceptable research and effective models. Applications include detailed instructions to support the applicant in accurate tier selection and documentation of the evidence. The evidence tier framework, language, templates, and support materials are largely consistent across each grant program that implements the evidence framework. The following evidence tier definitions are abbreviated but illustrate the state's graduated approach:

High Evidence Program Tier
High evidence programs 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 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 provided services for at least one year prior to a 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 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 designed to encourage grant applicants to begin to include applicable evidence in their 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 the Texas Workforce Commission (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' grant solicitations serve as the first point of introduction of the evidence framework to system partners and providers. As new programs introduce the evidence framework, the application is used 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 has 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. Training webinars are also provided for the evaluation and scoring of evidence as part

of the grant selection process.

Grant applications commonly require 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. This documentation 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.

<u>Performance-Based Contracts and Reports</u>

In 2021, TWC integrated the evidence framework across the program procurement process, including definitions of performance outcomes measures that apply 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 on 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 to focus future funding on proven methods of producing effective results. Essential changes to the requirements in contracts and reports are transforming grant-making in Texas. Previously, an applicant-driven description of what would be achieved, specific to each grant, produced indicators of promising practices. However, common data and performance requirements – outcomes that are reported by all grantees – produce evidence of effective outcomes that benefit the workforce system.

Phase II: Building Evidence and Expansion to System Partners

Through Phase II, Results for America continued to provide access to a peer network of leading workforce officials and technical assistance to solve problems and implement evidence-based solutions to its state and local workforce fellows. The Texas fellows focused on implementation and expansion under the three strategies selected for the first phase of the fellowship and added higher education to its team.

The evidence framework continued to demonstrate success in improving outcomes through competitive grant programs. The state (or its agencies) has improved outcomes by using evidence of effectiveness to allocate funds in grant competitions, including six of its largest grant programs. Through the Building and Construction Trades (BCT) and Texas Talent Connection discretionary grant programs, the state allocated $7 million in 2021 to launch the evidence framework that is designed to improve outcomes so that funders have the confidence that grantees will achieve the intended outcomes. Both programs have completed three application cycles. The evidence evaluation process indicates that applicants understand the evidence tier requirements, are improving internal processes to collect data, and may consider the use of evidence-based studies in planning workforce interventions. In 2021, TWC also allocated $1.2 million to an Adult Education Employer Engagement initiative that used the same evidence framework to better measure and incorporate evidence for the proposed interventions.

<u>Building and Construction Trades Grant Program</u>

In July 2020, TWC allocated $1.8 million in Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) statewide funding for the BCT project, and released the funding in March 2021, becoming the first grant program to pilot the evidence framework with embedded performance outcomes in the application and selection criteria for grantees. Additionally, 15 percent of funds were linked to outcome-based payments. A second round of WIOA funds were allocated at $1.5 million for the BCT program, and in 2022, $1.25 million in funds were awarded for BCT grants, which again included the evidence tiers. TWC continued supporting evidence-based grant-making through the

BCT program by allocating $1.8 million and then approving additional funding for a total of over $1.9 million to fund seven grantees in 2023. In addition, TWC continues to implement outcomes-based contracting, payments, and reporting for the BCT grant program. This work serves as a model for reference to other programs in the state.

To support performance improvement, TWC developed contract management resources to review grant program performance for all competitively procured grants to better assess program-wide success. TWC grant managers also conducted quarterly meetings where BCT grantees could share issues and discuss possible solutions based on the implementation experiences of other grantees.

In addition, the Rural Capital Area Workforce Board uses an outcomes-based model as a pilot for the procurement of workforce services.

Texas Talent Connection Grant Program

In July 2021, the Texas Talent Connection program, funded by Wagner Peyser 7(b), introduced the evidence framework to applicants and awarded $5.5 million to 18 grantees. Quarterly reporting for the initial grants showed that funded programs under the performance and moderate evidence tiers achieved program success in meeting and, in some cases, exceeding the goals. In 2022, the second round of funding to apply the evidence framework awarded a total of almost $6 million in Texas Talent Connection grants, and half of the applicants met the requirements to qualify for one of the top three evidence tiers. Most of the applicants for the top tiers provided the data required to qualify for the performance tier. A primary qualifier for the performance tier is the collection of data using specifically defined performance measures. In addition, several applicants improved their applications to qualify for a higher tier than their prior year application, and three programs were funded in the moderate evidence tier and one in the high evidence tier. In 2023, Texas Talent Connection awarded over $6.5 million to 21 grantees.

Through three rounds of implementation of the evidence framework in two grant programs—BCT and Texas Talent Connection—Texas has been able to examine learnings, adjust processes, and extend the model to other discretionary grant programs.

Carl D. Perkins Excellence Access and Opportunity Program

In 2022, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) added the Carl D. Perkins Excellence Access and Opportunity Program request for applications to the list of grant programs in Texas that have incorporated the evidence framework. Funded by Perkins State Leadership Funds, the Perkins Excellence Access and Opportunity Program requires that proposals promote access and opportunity for Perkins special populations students, which are the nine statutory student categories deemed to have significant barriers to success in career and technical education programs. Four institutions of higher education were awarded over $2 million in funding for a two-year grant period beginning on September 1, 2022. Prior to making awards, THECB staff negotiated programmatic revisions and final project budgets to guide institutions in establishing sustainable models that other colleges can replicate. The projects are structured to track program participant outcomes during and after the project period.

In 2023, THECB revised its request for applications with an incremental introduction of the Texas evidence-based grant-making framework. Applicants submitting FY 2023 proposals provided evidence for the performance, experience, or new evidence tiers; evaluators were trained on the evidence-framework and scoring criteria; and a total of over $2.5 million in grants were awarded. THECB intends to build upon the FY 2023 revisions in subsequent program years to make the evidence-based framework the standard for all Perkins State Leadership grants.

Building Evidence and Using Evidence

To build evidence of effective workforce interventions, Texas has an evaluation policy that outlines its approach

to build and use evidence, including a requirement to make all evaluations publicly available and disaggregate results wherever possible. The evidence framework provides a multi-tiered definition of evidence for research and funding purposes that includes qualitative evidence and lived experience. The tiers allow program participants to learn how to incorporate the evidence framework into their work; understand the value of tracking program outcomes; develop procedures to collect data, as defined by the program measures; and build the required documentation of evidence for each tier to be implemented under the grant.

At the same time, state agencies are learning to incorporate and consider evidence in decision-making through planned evaluations, timelines, and milestones in discretionary workforce grant programs. The Ray Marshall Center at The University of Texas has been contracted as the external evaluator for the BCT grant program. The evaluation will consider the performance of both individual and all grants to determine if the intervention can serve as a model, or models, of effective practice based upon statistically significant and positive outcomes for the participants.

Results for America Alumni Cohort

In April 2023, during the spring Results for America convening, the Texas workforce fellowship state team considered lessons learned and its theory of change—that the implementation of evidence-based grant-making across system partners will result in the identification of effective workforce interventions; funding of evidence and data-informed capacity-building programs; improved system collaboration; and improved processes, programs, and decision-making. The team identified the following two areas to work on improving evidence-based grant-making practices in the state: active contract management and strategic communications. In July, the Texas team applied for, and Results for America accepted, a proposal to join an Alumni Cohort that will continue more focused network convenings and technical assistance for current State and Local Workforce Fellowships to build on the achievements to date.

Through the implementation of the evidence framework in three consecutive rounds of grants, in two of its largest grant programs, and expansion to a third state agency's grant program, the Texas Team found that staff turnover and expansion of the evidence framework to new agencies and programs can affect the efficacy of the evidence framework. Therefore, the Texas team agreed to work on a strategic communications plan to renew cross-agency buy-in and formalize resources that support continuity and expansion of the current evidence framework in programs administered by each of the partners. A communications workgroup will develop and refine resources that demonstrate the value of evidence-based grant-making and highlight key elements of the framework so that all participating agency staff can provide briefings and training to support expansion. The group will also improve training for evidence evaluators for grant solicitations and update webinars that train grant applicants on how to select and meet the requirements of the evidence tiers to improve the scoring of their grant applications.

TWC administers the contracts for the BCT and Texas Talent Connection grant programs. The agency reviews its grantee performance monthly or quarterly and has improved outcomes by providing technical assistance or resources to enhance the performance of programs or grantees that fail to achieve results. Supported by resources available to the Alumni Cohort, Texas launched a work group in the summer of 2023 to design and implement standard practices for active contract management across grant programs that have applied the evidence framework. This workgroup will develop an active contract management toolkit that is designed to improve grant outcomes, further test the outcomes-based payment model, and improve program reporting to inform better decision-making. Improvements to contract management and communications will support the continuity of evidence-based grant-making so that funders have the confidence that grantees will achieve the intended outcomes of a given grant program and that grant programs achieve the intended outcomes of the funds.

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 requiring science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) have been particularly hard to fill. Closing the skills gap and hiring qualified employees contributes 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 composed primarily of 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 groups to define the content of major skilled, high-demand, high-wage sub-baccalaureate (or middle-skill) occupations; and to 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 statutory 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) 2023, skill standards for 56 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 2023 Progress

In FY 2023, the Council achieved the following outcomes to address its skill standards mandates.

Recognition of Industry Skill Standards

The Council recognized the 2021 update of the Manufacturing Logistics skill standards, developed by the Manufacturing Skill Standards Council (MSSC). The standards are the basis for MSSC's industry-recognized, nationally portable, entry-level Certified Logistics Associate and mid-level Certified Logistics Technician credentials, and 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 Logistics 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, MSSC has reviewed the logistics standards with industry subject matter experts to ensure that they reflect current industry practices and new technology. In the 2020 review of the standards for the 2021 edition, MSSC formed a Select Committee on Emerging Logistical Process Technologies to choose and define a set of newly emerging "Industry 4.0" technologies for inclusion in the standards. These technologies include Cybersecurity, Biometrics, 5G, Artificial Intelligence, Autonomous Robots, Data Analytics, Industrial Internet of Things, Augmented Reality, and Remote Learning.

The manufacturing logistics skill standards are posted on the Texas skill standards website in the public domain. They are available for community and technical colleges to use in their programs, thereby preparing workers with the competencies required by industry in the standards.

Recognition of College Programs

The Council's program recognition policy addresses two of its skill standards mandates. The legislation directs that the standards be used to guide curriculum development, training, assessment, and certification of workforce skills. Program recognition addresses this mandate by providing an incentive for community and technical colleges to use skill standards in their programs. Colleges can promote the recognition to employers as evidence that they are preparing their graduates with the skills and knowledge specified by industry in the standards. In FY 2023, the Council facilitated program recognition with community and technical colleges, and processed renewal applications of colleges with program recognitions scheduled to expire, as follows:

Four associate of applied science programs at two colleges received Council recognition for having skill standards integrated into the curriculum. As part of the program recognition, the colleges 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:

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

In FY 2023, there were a total of 45 recognized programs at 20 community and technical colleges in Texas. Those programs produced 1,087 graduates prepared with the skills and knowledge specified by industry in the standards.

Program recognition also addresses the Council's mandate to promote the use of standards and credentials, given that the Texas skill standards system is voluntary. In FY 2023, the list of recognized programs posted on the Texas skill standards website was promoted to employers as a source of qualified applicants that are taught and evaluated on industry standards. In addition, the Council continued its credential seal strategy, which provides a gold-embossed seal on the credentials of all recognized programs' graduates. The seal is a visible symbol for employers that those graduates have been prepared with the skills and knowledge required by industry in the standards.

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 into 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 (FY) 2023 (listed separately by month)

TANF CASES				TANF RECIPIENTS			
Benefit Month	Basic	State Program	Total	Benefit Month	Basic	State Program	Total
Sep-22	7,940	208	8,148	Sep-22	18,768	718	19,486
Oct-22	7,680	218	7,898	Oct-22	18,332	742	19,074
Nov-22	7,497	217	7,714	Nov-22	17,785	745	18,530
Dec-22	7,357	224	7,581	Dec-22	17,373	782	18,155
Jan-23	7,103	226	7,329	Jan-23	16,677	793	17,470
Feb-23	6,771	197	6,968	Feb-23	15,813	694	16,507
Mar-23	6,546	182	6,728	Mar-23	15,152	644	15,796
Apr-23	6,519	182	6,701	Apr-23	15,085	651	15,736
May-23	6,573	186	6,759	May-23	15,323	670	15,993
Jun-23	6,552	175	6,727	Jun-23	15,466	596	16,062
Jul-23	6,775	175	6,949	Jul-23	16,100	596	16,695
Aug-23	6,950	176	7,126	Aug-23	16,721	609	17,330
Average	7,022	197	7,219	Average	16,550	687	17,236

2. For August 2023, 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[4]	Basic	State Program	Total	Month[4]	Basic	State Program	Total
Sep-22	880	42	922	Mar-23	586	21	607
Oct-22	880	45	925	Apr-23	660	27	687

[4] These are cases that were not actively receiving TANF as of August 2023. The month is the indication of the first month they appeared on the TANF rolls.

New TANF Cases by Program Type							
Month[4]	Basic	State Program	Total	Month[4]	Basic	State Program	Total
Nov-22	791	43	834	May-23	719	39	758
Dec-22	793	41	834	Jun-23	804	29	833
Jan-23	589	30	619	Jul-23	765	23	788
Feb-23	563	24	587	Aug-23	863	35	898
				Total	8,893	399	9,292

3. Adult TANF Recidivism Rate – For August 2022 to July 2023

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 2023	FY 2023 #	Monthly Avg. %
No breaks	1,624	67.47%
More than one spell	783	32.53%
Totals	2,407	100.00%

	Aug-22	Sep-22	Oct-22	Nov-22	Dec-22	Jan-23
No breaks	1,714	1,733	1,826	1,791	1,800	1,678
More than one spell	864	875	860	825	851	834
Totals	2,578	2,608	2,686	2,616	2,651	2,512

	Aug-22	Sep-22	Oct-22	Nov-22	Dec-22	Jan-23
No breaks	66.49%	66.45%	67.98%	68.46%	67.90%	66.80%
More than one spell	33.51%	33.55%	32.02%	31.54%	32.10%	33.20%
Totals	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

	Feb-23	Mar-23	Apr-23	May-23	Jun-23	Jul-23
No breaks	1,522	1,402	1,394	1,496	1,508	1,620
More than one spell	750	702	701	702	704	726
Totals	2,272	2,104	2,095	2,198	2,212	2,346

	Feb-23	Mar-23	Apr-23	May-23	Jun-23	Jul-23
No breaks	66.99%	66.63%	66.54%	68.06%	68.17%	69.05%
More than one spell	33.01%	33.37%	33.46%	31.94%	31.83%	30.95%
Totals	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

4. Number of TANF and State Program Applications: Approved and Processed for FY 2023

TANF APPLICATIONS APPROVED				TANF APPLICATIONS PROCESSED			
Benefit Month	Basic	State Program	Total	Benefit Month	Basic	State Program	Total
Sep-22	696	31	727	Sep-22	26,359	2,419	28,778
Oct-22	817	34	851	Oct-22	34,475	3,110	37,585
Nov-22	706	39	745	Nov-22	24,753	2,413	27,166

TANF APPLICATIONS APPROVED				TANF APPLICATIONS PROCESSED			
Benefit Month	Basic	State Program	Total	Benefit Month	Basic	State Program	Total
Dec-22	647	30	677	Dec-22	27,284	2,706	29,990
Jan-23	569	36	605	Jan-23	25,311	2,262	27,573
Feb-23	470	18	488	Feb-23	20,842	2,011	22,853
Mar-23	475	19	494	Mar-23	23,349	2,288	25,637
Apr-23	522	16	538	Apr-23	20,384	1,917	22,301
May-23	781	37	818	May-23	25,931	2,433	28,364
Jun-23	591	32	623	Jun-23	21,170	1,803	22,973
Jul-23	747	27	774	Jul-23	24,321	2,045	26,366
Aug-23	801	21	822	Aug-23	24,254	2,196	26,450
Average	652	28	680	Average	24,869	2,300	27,170

Texas Workforce Commission

1. TANF Choices Population Data – State average hourly wage for all TANF Choices participants entering employment for FY 2023 — $12.68

2. Adult education for TANF recipients – funding for FY 2023, 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 2023, the number of customers served — 187

4. Adult education for TANF recipients – for FY 2023, the total number of contact hours — 8,814.75

5. Adult education for TANF recipients – for FY 2023, the percent of customers served who took a progress assessment and completed at least one level — 16.77%

6. Adult education for TANF recipients – for FY 2023, the percent of customers served who completed at least one level and continued to a higher level — 7.45%

7. Adult education for TANF recipients – for FY 2023, the credential achievement rate for earning a high school equivalency certificate. Time period reported: January 2021-December 2021 — 11/38 = 28.9%

8. Self-Sufficiency Fund[5] – the number of participating employers in FY 2023 Time period reported: September 1, 2022-August 31, 2023 — Not applicable

For TWC data, unless otherwise noted, time period reported is State FY 2023: July 2022-June 2023.

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[5] 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.

Texas Workforce Investment Council

System Partners

Economic Development and Tourism	Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board
Texas Department of Criminal Justice	Texas Juvenile Justice Department
Texas Education Agency	Texas Veterans Commission
Texas Health and Human Services Commission	Texas Workforce Commission

Members	Representing
Rick Rhodes (Chair), Austin	Business and Industry
Michelle Harper (Vice Chair), San Marcos	Community-Based Organization
Paloma Ahmadi, Shavano Park	Business and Industry
Joe Arnold, Muldoon	Education
Jesse Gatewood, Corpus Christi	Labor
Lindsey Geeslin, Waco	Labor
Lauren Gore, Houston	Business and Industry
Thomas Halbouty, Southlake	Business and Industry
John Martin, San Antonio	Labor
Wayne Oswald, Houston	Business and Industry
Paul Puente, Houston	Labor
Richard Rhodes, Austin	Education
Johnny Vahalik, San Antonio	Education
Brandon Willis, Beaumont	Labor
Harrison Keller, Austin	Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board
Mike Morath, Austin	Texas Education Agency
Ed Serna, Austin	Texas Workforce Commission
Cecile Young, Austin	Texas Health and Human Services Commission
Adriana Cruz, Austin	Economic Development and Tourism, Office of the Governor