



LOCAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD PLAN PROGRAM YEARS 2021-2024

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Workforce Solutions North Texas

Local Workforce Development Board Plan

Program Years 2021-2024

Introduction

Under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) §108, each Local Workforce Development Board (Board) is required to develop and submit to the state a comprehensive four-year plan (Local Plan) that identifies and describes policies and procedures as well as local activities that are in line with the State Plan. This Local Plan must be developed openly and be available to the public for comment for 30 days, particularly to members of the business and educational communities as well as various other labor organizations. Along with submission of the Local Plan to the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC), the Board must submit all public comments of disagreement with the plan to TWC.

At the end of the first two-year period, the appropriate chief elected officials and the Board review the local plan and prepare and submit modifications to reflect changes in the labor market and economic conditions, factors affecting the implementation of the plan, changes in financing, changes to the structure of the Board, and/or the need to revise strategies to meet local performance goals.

Part 1: Board Vision and Strategies

The strategic elements of the Local Workforce Development Board Planning Guidelines (Guidelines) are as follows:

A. Vision and Goals

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

Boards must include a description of the Board's strategic vision to support regional economic growth and economic self-sufficiency. The description must include:

- goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce, including early education services, and services for youth and individuals with barriers to employment; and
- goals relating to the performance accountability measures based on performance indicators described in WIOA §116(b)(2)(A).

The mission of Workforce Solutions North Texas is to place North Texans in jobs and equip workers with skills that foster economic development. Through partnerships and frequent communication with independent school districts, Region 9 Education Service Center, community colleges, and Midwestern State University, the Board works to determine how to

support regional economic growth and economic self-sufficiency. In addition to working closely and sharing information with these partners about the local outlook of education for the youth and adult populations, the Board ensures that quality childcare is prioritized as a means for preparing an educated, self-sufficient workforce through supporting early educational development.

Board resources are used to help prepare an educated and skilled workforce beginning with our youth. They include an annual Youth Career Fair for eighth graders preparing to choose a career pathway to carry them through high school. This event highlights in-demand careers to help these youth make an educated decision about the fields they are interested in entering. The Transition Fair is a similar event for high school juniors and seniors with disabilities and barriers to employment to help them transition to work or training beyond high school. We also provide paid work experience opportunities for area youth, participate in advisory committee discussions about career and technical education programs at the school district, community college, and university levels, and engage with employers at chamber of commerce and economic development meetings about their needs for trained workers.

Meeting performance measures as outlined in WIOA federal legislation and applied by the Texas Workforce Commission is only a piece of our Board's goal. The main work of the Board and its partners is to match employers and job seekers while determining what resources and skills are most needed, then supporting that need of the workforce through education and training. The Board coordinates with partners like adult education and literacy and the operators of workforce center services to identify mutual goals and determine how best to track and report successes. This is achieved by tracking the numbers of individuals who move to unsubsidized employment with self-sufficient wages following the attainment of recognized skills training and certificates.

B. Board Strategies

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

Boards must include a description of the Board's strategy to work with the entities carrying out the core programs and with the required partners to align resources available to the local workforce development area (workforce area) to achieve the vision and goals.

The Board's strategy is to involve all staff members of the workforce centers and childcare office in the planning and implementation of the Board's vision and goals and seek input from Board members. Management meetings are held between Board staff and workforce and childcare management staff regularly. Without the "big picture," staff members may focus on only their immediate tasks instead of understanding how each part of the system is interdependent. During the procurement phase of setting up new operational contracts, the Board focuses attention on providing staff members with the support and tools that they need to work successfully. A positive relationship with the sub-recipient administrators is important, but if local management staff are not allowed flexibility to meet local needs, success will be less achievable.

In addition to working with the sub-recipients to deliver local services, the Board ensures that service delivery is enhanced through Memoranda of Understanding and periodic contact with representatives of a variety of organizations that provide additional resources. Each Board meeting includes reports from partners that provide data and narratives about workforce center program participation, childcare quality, adult education, and featured presentations from representatives of vocational rehabilitation, other area nonprofit organizations, and education. In addition to board meetings, collaboration meetings are often scheduled with our partners to focus on specific program strategies and coordination of services between partner agencies. Key steps we have taken include:

- Monthly partnership meetings with Adult Education, Vernon College, North Central Texas College, Vocational Rehabilitation, and the Workforce Center about educational support and programs applicable to populations with barriers to employment.*
- Inviting adult education staff members to participate in WIOA orientation sessions at the Wichita Falls workforce center*
- Developing a process to coordinate how to identify and track TANF and SNAP participants*
- Working with childcare management staff members to apply new federal regulations to enroll and track children within a restricted budget*
- Meeting with vocational rehabilitation representatives of both the state program and a local provider to update and refine the long-time referral process resulting from changing requirements*

These partnerships support the Board's strategic vision to support regional economic growth and economic self-sufficiency.

C. High-Performing Board

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

Boards must include a description of the actions the Board will take toward becoming or remaining a high performing Board, consistent with the factors developed by the Texas Workforce Investment Council (TWIC).

Members of the Board Monitoring Committee review monthly performance reports at each meeting and provide input about any questioned measures. They also review reports issued by TWC during annual monitoring and technical assistance visits and hear from Quality Assurance staff about program reviews conducted on rotation. Members of the sub-recipient management team present oral and written reports at each Board meeting where performance may be discussed and includes information about workforce center activities. Any concerns or recommendations for changes or improvement in performance may be addressed in these meetings. In 2020, the Board procured a third-party to conduct program Quality Assurance reviews. This action proved to be effective and validated each sub-recipient QA staff reviews which indicated minimal errors or concerns. In 2021, the Board will also procure a third-party entity to complete the fiscal review. Moving forward, the Board will continue to outsource the monitoring of both programs and fiscal.

Periodic management meetings are hosted by the Board staff to share information with sub-recipient management team members and to explore any issues. These actions have proven successful in providing an opportunity for quality relationship building and strengthening communication with sub-recipient management. This platform for frequent sharing of information has become a boon for circumventing larger issues. If questions do arise, technical assistance is requested from the Technical Assistance department at the Texas Workforce Commission.

In a recent Board meeting, members heard about our latest performance success of achieving the TWC WIOA Career Pathways Award through efforts and collaboration with our Board, our sub-recipient, and our community partnerships. We look forward to duplicating and deepening our efforts, to continue a successful program.

Part 2. Economic and Workforce Analysis

A. Regional Economic and Employment Needs Analysis

(WIOA §108(b)(1)(A); 20 CFR §679.560(a)(1))

Boards must include a regional analysis of the following:

- The economic conditions, including existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors, in-demand occupations, and target occupations
- The employment needs of employers in existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors, in-demand occupations, and target occupations

The North Texas workforce development area includes almost 10,000 square miles spread across 11 counties between the Panhandle and the Metroplex near the Red River where Texas

meets Oklahoma. According to the 2020 U.S. Census Bureau Statistics, the population of Wichita Falls, TX and immediate surrounding area was 152,144, which includes Burkburnett and Iowa Park. The labor market is shared with southern Oklahoma communities just across the river, which is a short 15 miles from Wichita Falls, the largest city with just over 104,000 residents. Traditionally, the economy is based on agriculture with some cotton fields to the North and West, wheat farms, and cattle ranches, and a strong oil and gas production base. A strong manufacturing presence peaked in the last century and efforts to revive and retain those employers continue. The area population is over 200,000 and continues to age and decline, although there has been success in the numbers of younger residents who have moved away and chosen to return to raise their families amid surrounding family support after they have experienced larger urban areas. This combination of small urban and rural centers Wichita Falls as the hub for higher education and skills training, administration of the services sector, shopping, and health care which also means a choice of Dallas/Fort Worth and Oklahoma City destinations. Other area communities are more rural and choose to market their strengths with historical and quality of life attractions.

The area's largest employer is Sheppard Air Force Base, which hosts the Euro-NATO Joint Jet Pilot Training program in which 14 nations participate. This military installation supports two training wings encompassing 17 tenants comprised of more than 5,900 military, civilian and contractor personnel, and 81,900 joint trainees annually and 9,200 dependents and retirees. Altogether, the 82nd Mission Support Group alone supports both wings and 20,000 people. Many of the trainees from throughout the world, including the Netherlands, Canada, Belgium, Germany, Greece, Denmark, Spain, Italy, and others, enrich the culture of the area with a variety of spoken languages and shared customs. Many retired veterans choose to remain in the area or return to live after retirement. Sheppard is one of 3 military installations within 100 miles along with Fort Sill Army Base in Lawton, Oklahoma, and Altus Air Force Base in Oklahoma.

In March of 2020, we were faced with the unanticipated disruption and challenges that the COVID-19 pandemic brought. No one could have foreseen what dramatic disruption this would bring to our operations, economy, and way of life. Without hesitation, we began taking steps to ensure the safety of our customers and staff. We were tasked with completely changing our service delivery method from in-person to virtual services when stay-at-home orders were recommended. All staff moved quickly to transition to virtual service delivery to the communities we serve. We were able to mobilize our resources quickly and still provide the highest level of service to our customers, partners, and communities. This brought forth a whole new meaning of "thinking outside the box".

Prior to the pandemic, the decline of manufacturing and the cyclical ups-and-downs of the oil and gas industry, the growth and steadiness of jobs in North Texas were and continue in health care and entry-level wage jobs in the hospitality and service sectors. There are jobs that pay self-sufficient wages, but employers continue to voice dissent about the lack of employability and soft skills of many job seekers. Job readiness workshops are offered to

everyone. Staff members often travel to community locations outside the workforce center to conduct ad-hoc workshops within our less-mobile populations like the housing authorities, high schools, and colleges.

Virtual, curbside, and in-person services introduced by necessity during the pandemic, continue to offer a variety of ways to assist our customers and employers. These, now routine, give another way to engage with customers and employers even when travel is an issue. This transition has also encouraged staff and management to think outside the box and has proven very successful even after pandemic restrictions were lifted.

Representatives of area economic development organizations strategize about how to return to normalcy, retain businesses, develop new interests and business, and attract younger workers to remain in the area. The next section outlines the in-demand industries and occupations of our area and the demographics of the populations in the communities we serve.

IN-DEMAND INDUSTRY SECTORS

Industry Sector Title	Projected Employment (2028)
Health Care and Social Assistance	17,628
Retail Trade	10,433
Accommodation and Food Services	8,760
Educational Services	8,579
Manufacturing	8,502
	4,240
Other Services, Except Public Administration	3,561
Construction	3,551
Transportation and Warehousing	2,559
Finance and Insurance	2,525

** This chart represents all industries with >2,500 employees and showing growth through 2028.*

HIGH-IN-DEMAND OCCUPATIONS

Occ Code	Occupational Title	Annual Average Employment 2018	Projected Growth 2018-2028
35-3021	Combined Food Preparation and Serving Workers, Including Fast Food	2,382	403
39-9021	Personal Care Aides	1,246	310
43-4051	Customer Service Representatives	1,546	247
29-1141	Registered Nurses	1,673	199
47-2061	Construction Laborers	1,313	193
31-1014	Nursing Assistants	1,336	184
47-5071	Roustabouts, Oil and Gas	558	173
35-2014	Cooks, Restaurant	629	163
11-1021	General and Operations Managers	1,305	158
41-2031	Retail Salespersons	3,212	153
29-2061	Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	1,794	146
35-3031	Waiters and Waitresses	1,735	140
53-3032	Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	1,864	116
37-2011	Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	1,426	108
43-6013	Medical Secretaries	817	91
53-7062	Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	1,126	76
49-9071	Maintenance and Repair Workers, General	837	59

** This chart represents all overlapping occupations in the top 25 occupations for # of employees AND in the top 50 occupations for # of added jobs through 2028.*

The current Target Occupations List for North Texas is:

	Occupational Code (SOC)	Occupation
1	11-3021	Computer and Information Systems Managers
2	11-3031	Financial Managers
3	11-3071	Logistics Managers
4	11-9051	Food Service Managers
5	11-9151	Social and Community Service Managers
6	11-1021	General and Operations Managers
7	13-1081	Logisticians
8	13-1111	Management Analysts
9	13-2011	Accountants and Auditors
10	15-1121	Computer Systems Analysts
11	15-1142	Network and Computer Systems Administrators
12	15-1232	Computer User Support Specialists (<i>formerly 15-1151</i>)
13	17-2112	Industrial Engineers
14	17-2141	Mechanical Engineers
15	17-2171	Petroleum Engineers
16	17-3024	Robotics Technicians (or Electromechanical Technicians)
17	21-1022	Healthcare Social Workers
18	25-2021	Elementary School Teachers, except Special Education
19	25-2022	Middle School Teachers, Except Special and CTE
20	25-2031	Secondary School Teachers, Except Special and CTE
21	25-9041	Teacher Assistants
22	27-2022	Coaches and Scouts
23	27-3092	Court Reporters (<i>formerly 23-2091</i>)
24	29-1122	Occupational Therapists
25	29-1123	Physical Therapists
26	29-1131	Veterinarians
27	29-1141	Registered Nurses
28	29-1171	Nurse Practitioners
29	29-2021	Dental Hygienists
30	29-2041	EMTs/Paramedics
31	29-2052	Pharmacy Technicians
32	29-2055	Surgical Technologist
33	29-2061	Licensed Practical/Vocational Nurses

	Occupational Code (SOC)	Occupation
34	29-2098	Medical Dosimetrists, Medical Records Specialists, and Health Technologists & Technicians <i>(formerly 29-2071)</i>
35	31-1013	Psychiatric Aides
36	31-1014	Nursing Assistant
37	31-2021	Physical Therapist Assistants
38	31-9011	Massage Therapists
39	31-9091	Dental Assistants
40	31-9092	Medical Assistants
41	33-2011	Firefighters
42	33-3012	Correctional Officers/Jailers
43	35-1012	First-Line Supervisors of Food Preparation and Serving Workers
44	35-2014	Restaurant Cooks
45	41-1011	First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers
46	43-3031	Bookkeeping, Accounting and Auditing Clerks
47	43-4051	Customer Service Representatives
48	43-6013	Medical Secretaries
49	47-1011	Supervisors of Construction and Extraction Workers
50	47-2031	Carpenters
51	47-2051	Cement Masons and Concrete Finishers
52	47-2061	Construction Laborers
53	47-2073	Operating Engineers and Other Construction Equipment Operators
54	47-2111	Electricians
55	47-2152	Plumbers
56	47-5071	Roustabouts, Oil and Gas
57	49-2094	Electrical and Electronics Repairers, Commercial and Industrial Equipment
58	49-3023	Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics
59	49-9021	Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers
60	49-9041	Industrial Mechanics
61	49-9043	Maintenance Workers, Machinery
62	49-9071	Maintenance and Repair Workers, General
63	51-4041	Machinists
64	51-4121	Welders/Cutters/Solderers/Brazers
65	51-9161	Computer Numerically Controlled (CNC) Tool Operators <i>(formerly 51-4011)</i>

	Occupational Code (SOC)	Occupation
66	53-3032	Truck Drivers, Heavy/Tractor-Trailer
67	53-7062	Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand
68	53-7065	Stock Clerks and Order Fillers (<i>formerly 43-5081</i>)

B. Knowledge and Skills Analysis

(WIOA §108(b)(1)(B); 20 CFR §679.560(a)(2))

Boards must include an analysis of the knowledge and skills needed to meet the employment needs of the employers in the region, including employment needs for in-demand industry sectors, in-demand occupations, and target occupations.

Employers continue to communicate the lack of soft skills which the workforce system meets through job readiness workshops that role play handling difficult customers, responding to negativity, thinking outside the box, problem solving, using resources, and other critical thinking supports to develop soft skills. Other workshops offered through our Workforce Centers provide individualized assistance for resume preparation, financial literacy, and often include visits from employers who detail expectations of jobs offered at their facility or preparing to enter their industry in general. These opportunities help to prepare workers in our in-demand sectors of Health Care and Social Assistance, Retail Trade, Accommodation and Food Services, Educational Services, Manufacturing Administrative and Waste Services, Other Services Except Public Administration, Construction, Transportation and Warehousing, and Finance and Insurance. Additional training financed through the workforce system prepare workers with skills needed that require more formal training settings and platforms.

C. Labor Force Analysis and Trends

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

Boards must include an analysis of the regional workforce, including current labor force employment and unemployment data, information on labor market trends, and educational and skill levels of the workforce, including individuals with barriers to employment.

The January 2021 report from TexasLMI.com for North Texas WDA shows a civilian labor force of 93,737 individuals with 87,434 employed and 6,303 unemployed for a rate of 6.7%. The unemployment rate has steadily decreased from 9.9% in April 2020 at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to Sites on Texas 3.0, there are 8,939 businesses in North Texas and, as of 2010 official U.S. Census data, 85,271 households including 57,436 (67.4%) owner-occupied and 27,835 (32.6%) renter-occupied properties.

While the median income is \$50,207, the household income distribution is as follows:

2020 Households by Income (U.S. Census estimated)	Number	% of Total
\$0-25,000	22,133	26%
\$25,000-50,000	20,938	24%
\$50,000-100,000	26,271	30.4%
\$100,000-200,000	14,845	17.2%
>\$200,000	2,324	2.7%

Source: Sites on Texas 3.0

Additionally, Sites on Texas 3.0 also indicate that:

- *14% of the population has No High School Diploma*
- *26% have a High School Diploma or Equivalent*
- *31% have Some College*
- *21% have a Bachelor's, Graduate or Professional Degree*

Other key indicators for the region include people with barriers to employment. Sites on Texas 3.0 indicates:

- *27,650 (32.4%) households with at least one person with a disability in residence*
- *632 households with someone(s) ages 18-64 who speaks Spanish and no English*
- *246 households with someone(s) age 65 or older who speaks Spanish and no English*
- *84 households with someone(s) ages 18-64 speaking an Asian or Pacific Islander Language and no English*
- *3,538 renter-occupied households are without a personal vehicle*
- *1,211 owner-occupied households are without a personal vehicle*

According to the county-based population estimates from the United States Census Bureau, the Census population in April 2010 was 222,860. The projections show a population decrease of 2,079 from 2010-2019. This reflects a decrease of -0.9 percent in population. During the same time period, the state's population increased by a projected 3,838,480 residents from 25,145,561 to an estimated 28,984,041 residents representing a juxtaposed increase of 15.3%.

The region's race/ethnic distributions by gender are a product of county data from the 2010-2019 United States Census Bureau county-based population estimates and are as follows:

North Texas Workforce Development Area	2010	% of Total	2019	% of Total
Total TEXAS Population	25,145,561		28,984,041	15.3%
Total NORTH TEXAS Population	222,860		220,781	-0.9%
Total Male Population	113,059	50.7%	112,678	51.0%
Total Female Population	109,801	49.3%	108,103	49.0%
Total Population Ages 15-64	140,004	62.8%	141,115	63.9%
	2010	M/F % Pop.	2019	M/F % Pop.
White Female	97,232	88.6%	94,303	87.2%
White Male	99,037	87.6%	96,874	86.0%
Hispanic Male population	18,498	18.7%	21,465	19.0%
Hispanic Female population	16,116	16.6%	19,236	17.8%
Black or African American Male	9,118	8.1%	9,652	8.6%
Black or African American Female	7,496	6.8%	7,667	7.1%
Two or More Races Male Population	2,033	1.8%	2,781	2.5%
Two or More Races Female Population	1,996	1.8%	2,646	2.4%
Asian Female	1,684	1.5%	1,924	1.8%
Asian Male	1,438	1.3%	1,731	1.5%
American Indian and Alaska Native Female	1,311	1.2%	1,452	1.3%
American Indian and Alaska Native Male	1,338	1.2%	1,497	1.3%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander Male	95	0.1%	143	0.1%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander Female	82	0.1%	111	0.1%
Total White Population	196,269	88.1%	191,177	86.6%
Total Hispanic Population	34,614	15.5%	40,701	18.4%
Total Black or African American Population	16,614	7.5%	17,319	7.8%
Total Two or More Races Population	4,029	1.8%	5,427	2.5%
Total Asian Population	3,122	1.4%	3,655	1.7%
Total American Indian and Alaska Native Population	2,649	1.2%	2,949	1.3%
Total Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander Population	177	0.1%	254	0.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

The following table represents population projections for North Texas from the Texas Demographic Center, Texas State Demographer using the 2018 Texas Population Projections Data Tool.

Population Projections for North Texas						
Year	Total Pop	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Other
2010	222,860	164,519	15,526	34,614	2,893	5,308
2015	221,741	158,846	15,557	38,598	3,092	5,648
2020	221,303	153,427	15,657	42,895	3,292	6,032
2025	219,987	147,312	15,706	47,165	3,437	6,367
2030	216,954	140,145	15,692	50,978	3,528	6,611
2035	212,316	132,056	15,493	54,455	3,532	6,780
2040	206,686	123,613	15,062	57,643	3,478	6,890
2045	200,971	115,344	14,582	60,686	3,389	6,970
2050	195,272	107,603	14,065	63,308	3,267	7,029

Source: demographics.texas.gov

HOUSEHOLDS BY PRESENCE OF PEOPLE UNDER 18 YEARS BY HOUSEHOLD TYPE (2014-2018 estimate)		
Households with one or more people under 18 years	25,762	31.0%
Family households	25,528	30.7%
Married-couple family	16,339	19.7%
Male householder, no wife present	2,547	3.1%
Female householder, no husband present	6,642	8.0%
Nonfamily households	234	0.3%
Households with no people under 18 years	57,325	69.0%
Married-couple family	24,314	29.3%
Other family	4,994	6.0%
Nonfamily households	28,017	33.7%

Source: Sites on Texas 3.0

**POPULATION AGE 3+ YEARS BY SCHOOL ENROLLMENT
2014-2018 Estimate**

Total Population Age 3+ Years	213,047	100.0%
Enrolled in school	52,324	24.6%
Enrolled in nursery school, preschool	3,198	1.5%
Public school	2,223	1.0%
Private school	975	0.5%
Enrolled in kindergarten	3,055	1.4%
Public school	2,920	1.4%
Private school	135	0.1%
Enrolled in grade 1 to grade 4	11,438	5.4%
Public school	10,959	5.1%
Private school	479	0.2%
Enrolled in grade 5 to grade 8	11,684	5.5%
Public school	11,076	5.2%
Private school	608	0.3%
Enrolled in grade 9 to grade 12	10,734	5.0%
Public school	10,049	4.7%
Private school	685	0.3%
Enrolled in college undergraduate years	10,202	4.8%
Public school	9,171	4.3%
Private school	1,031	0.5%
Enrolled in graduate or professional school	2,013	0.9%
Public school	1,597	0.7%
Private school	416	0.2%
Not enrolled in school	160,723	75.4%

Source: Sites on Texas 3.0

D. Workforce Development Analysis

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

Boards must include an analysis of workforce development activities in the region including education and training.

The strength of workforce development activities in North Texas is that Workforce Solutions has been progressively increasing our focus into the more rural areas of our counties to assist employers and job seekers. Limited resources in a mostly rural area necessitate organizations coordinating with each other to be as effective as possible. Workforce development begins with education and all levels are represented in North Texas. Beginning with quality childcare services subsidized for working families, then youth supportive services and programs, community colleges, a public university, and adult and continuing education all provide support to an educated workforce over time. The Board also maintains contact with educational institutions outside of the area through the Eligible Training Provider (ETP) system to provide opportunities for additional training and skills.

Workforce Solutions North Texas has formed relationships with area organizations to share information and coordinate services to avoid duplication and stretch financial resources. The Board has worked closely with the vocational rehabilitation system to provide employment and training to people with disabilities. An additional asset to the Wichita Falls community is Work Services Corporation. This non-profit organization and business is located across the street from our workforce center in Wichita Falls. This organization provides sheltered workshop jobs for people with disabilities including a federal government contract for the manufacture and assembly of paper clips, mail distribution and dining hall services at Sheppard Air Force Base, and linen folding services for the North Texas State Hospital. Work Services Corporation has hosted multiple on-the-job and work experience training contracts for several of our customers with disabilities and they continue to be a valuable partner for education and training.

In addition to the core programs offered through Workforce Solutions, the Board participates in the following activities:

- Board meetings include reports about activities, services and successes achieved through quality childcare, adult education, and career and technical programs. An accounting of layoffs and unemployment is also prioritized to educate the decisions that are made by members.*
- Board and workforce center staff members participate in advisory committees for the Skills Training Center at Vernon College in Wichita Falls, Wichita Falls*

Independent School District career and technical education, Regional Transportation Committee, Economic Development Advisory Committee at Nortex Regional Planning Commission, a variety of Wichita Falls Chamber of Commerce and Industry groups, and all chambers of commerce in the communities of the 11-county area.

- *Adult education and literacy activities are coordinated by Workforce Solutions, Region 9 Education Service Center, and the Wichita Adult Literacy Council. A monthly Partnership Meeting between Workforce Solutions, Region 9, Vernon College, North Central Texas College (NCTC), and Vocational Rehabilitation provides a mechanism to share expertise and coordinate customer referrals between new and ongoing programs. These partnerships help develop and support integrated work and education training.*
- *Board staff participates in business recruitment meetings alongside the Wichita Falls Chamber of Commerce when they are hosting a prospective new business or expansion project. We provide details about the available workforce, their skills, training opportunities, outline the supports available through partnerships with Workforce. As the Chamber CEO has said many times, “Workforce is the number one driver in economic development decisions.”*
- *The Executive Director and Business and Outreach Manager for the board also participate in Wichita Falls Chamber of Commerce Chairman’s Council roundtable discussions with other city leaders and business owners across the city to discuss the state of the economy and other hot topics of the day that concern our top industries and to provide a support system for both.*
- *Board and sub-recipient staff frequently present workforce updates and information to area employers and community groups. These presentations often lead to future partnerships whether it be for a hiring event or enrolling as an on-the-job training site.*

Part 3: Core Programs

A. Workforce Development System

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

Boards must include a description of the workforce development system in the workforce area that identifies:

- the programs that are included in the system; and

- how the Board will work with the entities that facilitate core programs and other workforce development programs **to support alignment to provide services**, including programs of study authorized under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006, that support the strategy identified in the State Plan under WIOA §102(b)(1)(E)

Programs included in the North Texas workforce development system are programs as described in the state plan through WIOA for adults, dislocated workers, and youth; employment and training assistance for recipients of TANF and SNAP benefits; Trade Adjustment Assistance; training and employment opportunities for older workers; vocational rehabilitation; and adult education and literacy.

Management of the Workforce programs is coordinated by the Board with key members of sub-recipient staff to facilitate the operation of the workforce centers and subsidized childcare program. Management staff for all programs are housed in Wichita Falls. The workforce centers in Bowie, Graham, and Vernon traditionally employ two full-time staff members, and as the need arises, temporary full-time workers or host part-time workers from the local unit of the federal Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP). A mobile workforce office visits six additional communities weekly or bi-weekly to allow residents who do not have close access to a workforce center to participate in job search activities, orientations for Choices and SNAP, and receive information about additional education and training opportunities.

Community partners throughout the North Texas Workforce Development Area have consistently practiced a close working relationship with information-sharing and referrals. For example, Workforce Solutions and Vocational Rehabilitation may share the costs for training and support services for a mutual customer. Another example is a grant received from the North Texas Area United Way by the Wichita Adult Literacy Council, Inc., to provide financial literacy instruction, which a WALC staff member does each week for the job-readiness classes at the Wichita Falls Workforce Center. The grant also helps to support a classroom in the same building for adult education and language instruction.

As mentioned earlier, staff participate on advisory committees for skills training programs at Vernon College and area school districts, including the Wichita Falls Independent School District Career Education Center. Skills training programs have been housed at an aging elementary school with limited space, but a taxpayer-approved initiative to build the new center has allowed the expansion of existing programs. The addition of programs and enhanced coordination with Vernon College, Midwestern State University, Sheppard Air Force Base, and other entities has enhanced the effectiveness of the vocational programs offered. The staff members are asked to provide labor market information and share the rationale for developing the area target occupations list. Staff members also are asked to

present labor market information at summer workshops for teachers at Region 9 Education Service Center in Wichita Falls. For the past several years, the Jobs Y'all Youth Career Fair, which has been generously funded by TWC, has allowed eighth grade students preparing to select career pathways as required by the legislation of House Bill 5, to experience first-hand information and demonstrations of a variety of occupations. These efforts support the strategies in the state plan and the tenets of Carl Perkins legislation. A separate annual youth event, the Transition Fair, is hosted by a committee partnership of Workforce Solutions, Vernon College Continuing Education, Midwestern State University Disability Services, Region 9 Transition Services, and Vocational Rehabilitation, to highlight opportunities beyond high school for students with disabilities. This event provides breakout sessions for students to attend to learn about various occupations, employers, supportive services, and education.

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

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

Boards must include a description of how the Board will work with entities carrying out core programs to:

- expand access to employment, training, education, and support services for eligible individuals, particularly eligible individuals with barriers to employment;
- facilitate the development of career pathways and co-enrollment, as appropriate, in core programs, including specific career pathways occupations that the Board currently includes on its Target Occupations List, and career pathways occupations that the Board is planning to develop; and
- improve access to activities leading to a recognized postsecondary credential (including a credential that is an industry-recognized certificate or certification, portable, and stackable).

Boards must include a description of the Board's plan for working with at least one of the Governor's industry clusters.

Efforts to enhance access for eligible individuals is ongoing for our area to recruit for our training and childcare programs. The workforce center in Wichita Falls participates with partner agencies at local events that provide increased opportunities for collaboration. Both Board and workforce staff attend various monthly/quarterly partnership meetings to include Wichita Falls Housing Authority and Region 9 Education Service Center with staff in attendance from various agencies and schools in our service area to continually inform of our services in an effort for stronger referrals.

Increased participation in the development of career pathways and workforce preparation opportunities is occurring through activities with the new Career Education Center at the Wichita Falls ISD and the opportunity to present youth career fairs for more than 2,000 area students. For the past 15 years, the Board has partnered with other organizations to host a similar career event—the Transition Fair—for area high school juniors and seniors with

disabilities who learn from employers and community partners about entering the workforce or pursuing education and training beyond high school.

The Board works with Adult Education and Literacy to develop and support opportunities for integrated training and education projects. Staff members of the programs meet monthly to better coordinate how to share information and make referrals between agencies. This meeting also includes representatives from Vernon College, North Central Texas College and Vocational Rehabilitation.

Workforce system staff members work with representatives of local community colleges and Midwestern State University to identify programs that address the skills needs for target occupations. Representatives from MSU and Vernon College sit on our Board's Outreach Committee which reviews labor market data on an ongoing basis to ensure we have the correct occupations identified as targets for our market. Coordinating with the educational entities streamlines our workforce pipeline from program enrollment, credential attainment, and finally to sustainable employment.

Opportunities for career development strengthen access to and attainment of industry-recognized certifications. Additional efforts beyond training individuals are imperative to the success of the workforce. One of the obstacles we are working to overcome involves employers being willing to provide internships, apprenticeships, and work-based learning opportunities to area residents, including youth. Another limiting factor is the continuing decline of public funding to pay for institution-based training, work experience, and on-the-job training opportunities.

Workforce Solutions North Texas recently partnered with Weatherford College and Management & Training Corporation (MTC) to provide Logistics training to individuals who are currently incarcerated at the Lindsey State Jail and are within 90 days of being released. Logistics training is approximately six weeks in length. Upon completion students will have two certifications: Certified Logistics Associate (CLA) and Certified Logistics Technician Certification (CLT). This training is taught by Weatherford College on site at Lindsey State Jail with minimal tools and without the use of the internet. Upon release, individuals can work in warehouses and distribution centers such as Walmart and Amazon. The entry hourly wage for positions in the Wichita Falls MSA is \$13.12 - \$22.97, depending on the position and the company. The overall goal of this initiative is to reduce recidivism and help inmates obtain gainful employment upon their release.

The Board works to communicate and coordinate programs and provide services to fit the needs of the North Texas WDA. In the Wichita Falls workforce center, there are separate case managers for SNAP and TANF recipients and separate case managers for eligible adult and youth participants in WIOA. Veterans and foster youth receive priority service. Center staff members trained to work with any customer, first screen for eligible veterans and foster youth. When a veteran or foster youth are identified, the staff member will provide a separate

referral to the appropriate staff member with specialized services related to their needs. Staff continually work on how to target and provide services to individuals with disabilities. Job-readiness classes, which include financial literacy training provided by a staff member of the Wichita Adult Literacy Council, Inc., are open to all center customers. Customers who need additional services, such as childcare, are introduced to the childcare office. An example is when a pregnant or parenting teen in working with our WIOA youth case manager for job placement or training, the case manager will also provide information about childcare programs and often a direct referral.

In addition to the efforts described above for coordinating programs and services for target populations with existing community partners, the Board will continue to seek out and learn about additional organizations with provisions related to our customers' needs. Currently, there are representatives from the federal Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) in all area locations. Recently some of our areas have moved under the organization of American Association of Retired Persons (AARP). There are frequent staffing and contractor changes within programs like the SCSEP and Job Corps which make it difficult from a continuity of services perspective and make it difficult to provide quality referrals to these programs. Contracts change from the national level with operations often centered in another state or with offices in the Metroplex that send representatives to North Texas on a transient basis. Workforce Center staff members keep a comprehensive list of resources to provide to customers when there is a need. Workforce Solutions staff members maintain a strong relationship with 211 who are operated by the North Texas Area United Way. They help keep information on our resource list updated. Board members also share their expertise by offering referrals to private-sector resources. Participation by staff members as described in area organizations and planning groups facilitate closer coordination and knowledge of available resources.

The engagement of employers in workforce development programs encourages more opportunities for work-based learning. Our sub-recipient's Business Services Consultants at the workforce center work hard to attract employers to participate in hiring events and job fairs. They also recruit worksites for work experience and on-the-job training activities for eligible individuals. With just under 9,000 employers in our service area, there is not enough funded positions to accomplish all that work that could be done in the area of business relations. The Wichita Falls Chamber of Commerce, which is represented on the Board, continues to include Workforce Solutions at initial meetings for prospective employers and relies on the Board's labor market information to add to the area quality-of-life attractions. The Chamber members also ensure that they include representatives from the appropriate skills training areas at Vernon College and Midwestern State University to provide facts about education in the area and information about assistance such as funds for skills development and small business. Participation in the area chamber of commerce organizations by workforce staff members provides the direct link to ensure that job openings are posted, and employers know where to go for assistance.

A partnership that works to coordinate workforce development programs and economic development is the Economic Development Committee facilitated by the Community & Economic Development Director at Nortex Regional Planning Commission. Members include representatives from economic development entities and Workforce Solutions Board staff's Business and Outreach Manager. The group communicates regularly about economic development opportunities within the 11-counties of North Texas.

Members of the Board Outreach Committee, which includes representatives from the private sector, economic development, education, and other related organizations, meet quarterly to discuss the economy and how to ensure that the target occupations list encourages the most appropriate workforce and training for local market. Another Board committee, the Youth Advisory Group, meets bi-monthly to plan career pathway initiatives and activities with representatives of education and workforce development.

Linkages between the one-stop delivery system and unemployment insurance programs are strong as the Board coordinates Rapid Response activities with Business Services staff members at the workforce center and with a regional TWC UI representative who often travels to provide specific UI information to affected workers facing a layoff. The Board receives an accounting of layoffs at each Board meeting from the Board's Rapid Response Coordinator, who also has other duties, and provides input on hiring and management changes.

The Board participates in all regional economic development activities as requested or initiated. Although the three workforce center locations outside of Wichita Falls in Bowie, Graham, and Vernon each have two core staff members, they are involved in their respective communities and respond to the needs of local customers. The Board pays annual membership dues to area Chambers of Commerce and staff members participate in Leads Groups, workforce and education committees, and the regional Economic Development Advisory Committee facilitated by Nortex Regional Planning Commission Community & Economic Development Director. A regional economic development plan has been developed with input from economic development groups in more rural communities, in addition to the Wichita Falls Chamber of Commerce which doubles as the economic development organization for the area's largest city. Workforce Solutions staff members participate in activities in their respective communities and sometimes travel with the mobile workforce unit that visits communities further away from workforce center locations to ensure the more remote, rural communities needs are met. Staff members have hosted hiring events for employers, are invited to attend meetings to meet with prospective employers and discuss the available workforce and training opportunities, in addition to working with Vernon College and North Central Texas College on grant applications to customize training for employers. Midwestern State University in Wichita Falls is a vital partner and hosts the Small Business Development Center, internship opportunities for students, and entrepreneurial skills training. In partnership with the Wichita Falls Chamber and the SBDC, MSU annually sponsors a competition for entrepreneurs with as much as \$250,000 in funding and other benefits to the winning entry for new business. The Board can refer interested individuals to the most

appropriate source for assistance and often has included representatives of organizations to participate in assisting dislocated workers when there have been large layoffs or plant closures so that they can provide information directly.

Part 4: One-Stop Service Delivery

A. One-Stop Service Delivery System

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

Boards must include a description of the one-stop delivery system in the workforce area, including explanations of the following:

- How the Board will ensure the continuous improvement of eligible providers and how providers will meet the employment needs of local employers, workers, and job seekers
- How the Board will facilitate access to services provided through the one-stop delivery system, including remote areas, through the use of technology and other means
- How entities within the one-stop delivery system, including the one-stop operators and the one-stop partners, will comply with WIOA §188 (related to Non-Discrimination), if applicable, and with applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 regarding the physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, programs and services, technology, and materials for individuals with disabilities, including providing staff training and support for addressing the needs of individuals who have disabilities

The roles and resource contributions of the one-stop partners

During the 25-year history of the Board, there has been continuous improvement to eligible providers and how we work best with them to meet the employment needs of local employers, workers, and job seekers. The Board follows requirements to procure providers of services and manages the operations in close working relationships with management staff members from the Board and sub-recipients. In addition to the provider procurement duties, the Board Business and Outreach Manager receives and processes requests from training providers for enrollment in the Eligible Training Provider System and equates their offerings to local needs. Additional information may be requested of staff members at the workforce center who work with eligible individuals for training and with employers who post job openings in Work in Texas to ensure that the training matches occupations on the Board's target occupations list. Different attempts have been made over the years to offer the best method for reviewing and reporting the performance of training providers. As mentioned, Board and Center staff members participate as members of advisory groups for training providers in the area and can receive and share valuable information from employers. When potential problems occur—such as the impending closure several years ago of the main proprietary training program in the area and a recent example of an instructor shortage in a training program where most of the Board-subsidized students in training were not meeting requirements—Board and workforce center staff members are able to coordinate with training providers to offer

strategies for how best to accommodate the needs. One of the supports added in this area is coordination with Adult Education and Literacy for tutoring students who are needing assistance with their college coursework due to a learning gap. Representatives of Vernon College and Midwestern State University are members of the Board and its Outreach Committee. This committee meets quarterly to discuss the economy and how to ensure that the target occupations list encourages the most appropriate workforce and training for the local market.

Since 2002, the Board has operated a mobile workforce unit which conducts at least bi-weekly visits to communities whose residents do not live within proximity to a workforce center location in Bowie, Graham, Vernon, or Wichita Falls. The mobile unit is a Ford Transit van and parks at a central location in the community such as the courthouse, chambers of commerce office, or other public location familiar to the local community members with notice of the schedule sent to county judges and other local officials monthly. The driver is a case manager with knowledge of all programs and can guide and assist individuals with job search activities and give additional assistance and resources as needed. The Board has also worked with area libraries to offer staff or computer training or as a link to workforce services.

The Board's website includes interactive opportunities to facilitate remote use, such as an online form for the childcare interest list, live maps for locations, and the ability for Board staff members to administer the site. This enables our local Board staff to revise and enhance offerings as resources change and advertise current events and activities to the public.

Throughout its history, the Board has complied with accessibility requirements, both in physical and program access. The Board's designated Equal Opportunity Officer, who combines oversight with other duties, completes the required accessibility reviews of facilities. This position aides in coordinating with the vocational rehabilitation services to ensure that our workforce centers and offices comply with accessibility standards that our customers need to receive quality services from our locations. Coordination among organizations in North Texas is essential because of limited resources. Through the years, the Board has often shared costs of training and support for eligible individuals with the vocational rehabilitation agency. With additional funding provided through the Board contract with TWC, more specific assistive technology and equipment has been purchased by the Board to facilitate service to additional customers. All workforce systems staff members, including the Board, Center, and childcare programs, have participated in training to assist hard-of-hearing and deaf individuals. The mobile unit can also provide outreach services to residents in other areas of Texas or our bordering neighboring states affected by natural disasters.

Since the area manager for VR services is a Board member, periodic updates about changes in the provision of services to individuals with disabilities have been presented as part of the agendas for Board meetings. Another important partner is Work Services Corporation, whose

main location is across the street from our main workforce center in Wichita Falls—a building which also houses adult education classes and the Wichita Adult Literacy Council. Although coordination traditionally has been close with Work Services, the move to the larger facility across the street just a couple of years ago has allowed them to expand their services, which already include federal contracts at Sheppard Air Force Base for dining hall and post office services, manufacture of all paper clips provided to federal agencies, a laundry service for the North Texas state hospital in Wichita Falls, and a wood-working shop. The Board always has had a representative of Work Services as a Board member and staff members meet regularly with staff members from Work Services and vocational rehabilitation to work out referral processes and joint activities.

B. Cooperative Agreements

(WIOA §108(b)(14); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(13))

Boards must provide copies of executed cooperative agreements that explain how all local service providers, including additional providers, will carry out the requirements for integration of and access to the entire set of services available in the local one-stop delivery system. This includes cooperative agreements (as defined in WIOA §107(d)(11)) between the Board or other local entities described in §101(a)(11)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 USC 721(a)(11)(B)) and the local office of a designated state agency or designated state unit that administers programs that are carried out under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act (29 USC 720 et seq.) (other than §112 or part C of that title (29 USC 732, 741) and are subject to §121(f)) in accordance with §101(a)(11) of the Rehabilitation Act (29 USC 721(a)(11)) with respect to efforts that will enhance the provision of services to individuals who have disabilities and to other individuals, such as cross training of staff, technical assistance, use and sharing information, cooperative efforts with employers, and other efforts.

The Board maintains a variety of Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs). In addition to agreements which have been executed between the Board and local service providers, the Board is a member of the Rural Workforce Network, which traditionally has included staff members from Boards in Concho Valley, Panhandle, Permian Basin, North Texas, South Plains, and West Central, representing most of the counties in Texas. Since regional administration of several programs is centered in Abilene or Lubbock for the Board areas, it is more practical to have one agreement with the stated duties with signatures from all Board areas. Representatives of the Boards also have met on numerous occasions to discuss other ways to jointly provide services, such as regional program appeals, similar target occupations lists, and how to share technology services more efficiently.

C. Employer Engagement, Economic Development, and Unemployment Insurance Program Coordination

(WIOA §108(b)(4); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(3))

Boards must include a description of the strategies and services that will be used in the workforce area to do the following:

- Facilitate engagement of employers in the workforce development programs, including small employers and employers in in-demand industry sectors, in-demand occupations, and target occupations
- Support a local workforce development system that meets the needs of businesses in the workforce area
- Better coordinate workforce development programs and economic development
- Strengthen links between the one-stop delivery system and unemployment insurance programs

Note: This may include the implementation of initiatives such as incumbent worker training programs, on-the-job training programs, customized training programs, industry and sectors strategies, career pathways initiatives, use of effective business intermediaries, and other business services and strategies designed to meet the needs of regional employers. These initiatives must support the strategy described above.

The engagement of employers in workforce development programs require more collaboration to facilitate opportunities for work-based learning. Sub-recipient Business Services Consultants work hard to attract employers for participation in hiring events and job fairs and enter into worksite agreements for work experience and on-the-job training activities for eligible individuals. With just under 9,000 employers in our service area, there is not enough funded positions to accomplish all that work that could be done in the area of business relations. The Wichita Falls Chamber of Commerce, which is represented on the Board, continues to include Workforce Solutions at initial meetings for prospective employers and relies on the Board's labor market information to add to the area quality-of-life attractions. The Chamber members also ensure that they include representatives from the appropriate skills training areas at Vernon College and Midwestern State University to provide facts about education in the area and information about assistance such as funds for skills development and small business. Participation in the area chamber of commerce organizations by workforce staff members provides the direct link to ensure that job openings are posted, and employers know where to go for assistance.

A partnership that works to coordinate workforce development programs and economic development is the Economic Development Committee facilitated by the Community & Economic Development Director at Nortex Regional Planning Commission. Members include representatives from economic development entities and Workforce Solutions Board staff's Business and Outreach Manager. The group communicates regularly about economic development opportunities within the 11-counties of North Texas.

Members of the Board Outreach Committee, which includes representatives from the private sector, economic development, education, and other related organizations, meet quarterly to discuss the economy and how to ensure that the target occupations list encourages the most appropriate workforce and training for local market. Another Board committee, the Youth

Advisory Group, meets bi-monthly to plan career pathway initiatives and activities with representatives of education and workforce development.

Linkages between the one-stop delivery system and unemployment insurance programs are strong as the Board coordinates Rapid Response activities with Business Services staff members at the workforce center and with a regional TWC UI representative who often travels to provide specific UI information to affected workers facing a layoff. The Board receives an accounting of layoffs at each Board meeting from the Board's Rapid Response Coordinator, who also has other duties, and provides input on hiring and management changes.

The Board participates in all regional economic development activities as requested or initiated. Although the three workforce center locations outside of Wichita Falls in Bowie, Graham, and Vernon each have two core staff members, they are involved in their respective communities and respond to the needs of local customers. The Board pays annual membership dues to area Chambers of Commerce and staff members participate in Leads Groups, workforce and education committees, and the regional Economic Development Advisory Committee facilitated by Nortex Regional Planning Commission Community & Economic Development Director. A regional economic development plan has been developed with input from economic development groups in more rural communities, in addition to the Wichita Falls Chamber of Commerce which doubles as the economic development organization for the area's largest city.

Workforce Solutions staff members participate in activities in their respective communities and sometimes travel with the mobile workforce unit that visits communities further away from workforce center locations to ensure the more remote, rural communities needs are met. Staff members have hosted hiring events for employers, are invited to attend meetings to meet with prospective employers and discuss the available workforce and training opportunities, in addition to working with Vernon College and North Central Texas College on grant applications to customize training for employers. Midwestern State University in Wichita Falls is a vital partner and hosts the Small Business Development Center, internship opportunities for students, and entrepreneurial skills training. In partnership with the Wichita Falls Chamber and the SBDC, MSU annually sponsors a competition for entrepreneurs with as much as \$250,000 in funding and other benefits to the winning entry for new business. The Board can refer interested individuals to the most appropriate source for assistance and often has included representatives of organizations to participate in assisting dislocated workers when there have been large layoffs or plant closures so that they can provide information directly.

D. Coordination of Wagner-Peyser Services

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

A description of plans, assurances, and strategies for maximizing coordination, improving service delivery, and avoiding duplication of Wagner-Peyser Act services and other services provided through the one-stop delivery system.

All one-stop partners play an important role in the provision of services to area employers and residents. Through the years, the Board's allotment of Wagner-Peyser staff members has suffered cuts from about 16 to the current 4. Coordination is very successful with staff members representing other programs, such as adult education, vocational rehabilitation, older workers who serve valuable roles in all area centers assisting jobseekers, and childcare services. One example is the annual Transition Fair which has been in existence for 15 years to provide resources and valuable information to area high school juniors and seniors who have disabilities, assisting them with information about education, training, and services from Helen Farabee Centers, military service, area employers, Vernon College and North Central Texas College, Job Corps, among others. Priority of service is, provided to veterans in our workforce centers. In addition to staff members provided through the Texas Veterans Commission in the Wichita Falls Center, additional staff members are experienced with assisting veterans with all the available services at our disposal, including childcare. Representatives of other partners, such as Job Corps and Texas Veterans Leadership Program, send representatives from administrative offices in other areas such as DFW and Abilene, to meet with North Texas area residents who require specific services.

E. Integrated, Technology-Enabled Intake and Case Management

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

Boards must include a description of how one-stop centers are implementing and transitioning to an integrated, technology-enabled intake and case management information system for programs carried out under WIOA and by one-stop partners.

- *The Board has used Cabinet/SAFE for our document storage for all programs since 2015.*
- *Over the course of 2020, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, our service delivery system statewide had to adapt to ensure the safety of both staff and customers.*
- *Cross-training of staff continues to be a priority for our Board to ensure that staff are knowledgeable of the overall services provided to truly fulfill the mission and vision of the Board. Staff step in immediately and serve customers when needed in critical areas, such as when there is a sharp increase in unemployment. Rapid re-employment strategies have proven essential over the past year 2020 during the pandemic unemployment spikes.*
- *Staff were able to transition from in-person to virtual services quickly when challenged in early 2020 with the pandemic and those services will continue as this has allowed for more convenience for job seekers and employers.*

- *Virtual hiring events, video intake eligibility sessions, and virtual workshops have enabled a unique way to provide customer service to our population in the most challenging times to date and have been successful in doing so.*
- *The Board IT Manager participates in the Technical Administrators Group that meet twice yearly with other boards to stay current on the programs and information systems used across the state.*

Part 5: Workforce Investment Activities

A. Economic Development and Entrepreneurial/Microenterprise Activities

(WIOA §108(b)(5); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(4))

Boards must include an explanation of how the Board will coordinate local workforce investment activities with regional economic development activities that are carried out in the workforce area and how the Board will promote entrepreneurial-skills training and microenterprise services.

The Board participates in all regional economic development activities as requested or initiated. Although the three workforce center locations outside of Wichita Falls in Bowie, Graham, and Vernon each have two core staff members, they are involved in their respective communities and respond to the needs of local customers. The Board pays annual membership dues to area Chambers of Commerce and staff members participate in Leads Groups, workforce and education committees, and the regional Economic Development Advisory Committee facilitated by Nortex Regional Planning Commission Community & Economic Development Director. A regional economic development plan has been developed with input from economic development groups in more rural communities, in addition to the Wichita Falls Chamber of Commerce which doubles as the economic development organization for the area's largest city.

Workforce Solutions staff members participate in activities in their respective communities and sometimes travel with the mobile workforce unit that visits communities further away from workforce center locations to ensure the more remote, rural communities needs are met. Staff members have hosted hiring events for employers, are invited to attend meetings to meet with prospective employers and discuss the available workforce and training opportunities, in addition to working with Vernon College and North Central Texas College on grant applications to customize training for employers. Midwestern State University in Wichita Falls is a vital partner and hosts the Small Business Development Center, internship opportunities for students, and entrepreneurial skills training. In partnership with the Wichita Falls Chamber and the SBDC, MSU annually sponsors a competition for entrepreneurs with as much as \$250,000 in funding and other benefits to the winning entry for new business. The Board can refer interested individuals to the most appropriate source for assistance and often has included representatives of organizations to participate in assisting dislocated workers when there have been large layoffs or plant closures so that they can provide information directly.

B. Rapid Response Activity Coordination

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

Boards must include a description of how the Board will coordinate workforce investment activities carried out in the workforce area with statewide rapid response activities described in WIOA §134(a)(2)(A).

A Board staff member, the Business & Outreach Manager, serves as the Rapid Response Coordinator for the area. When any report or rumor of a layoff is received, the Rapid Response coordinator contacts the business to confirm information about the layoff or closure and to help. These reports of layoffs come from a variety of sources—a visit or call to a workforce center for assistance, media reports, community meetings, etc.—so it is essential that the RR Coordinator makes that initial contact to confirm information reported. If the employer consents to a visit by the Rapid Response team, the requested services are coordinated with Board and workforce center staff members. When available, a regional TWC UI representative will travel to the business to provide information about unemployment compensation alongside the employment information provided by the workforce center staff. If the regional UI representative is not available, an experienced employment services staff member from the Wichita Falls workforce center provides basic UI information to the group. Additional information is offered about training opportunities and supportive services and may include representation from other organizations if the situation and affected workforce situation warrants it. A variety of arrangements have been made through the years to accommodate the needs of the employer and affected workers, such as coordination about shared work, on-site workforce centers to allow workers to receive information on multiple shifts when a longer amount of time has been given for notice of layoff or closure, orientation sessions at the Center locations for workers whose employment was terminated and access was not granted to workforce staff members to visit with information before the layoff or closure, and the provision of information packets when no access is granted to workers. Services are then provided for dislocated workers as described above. The Board Rapid Response Coordinator also maintains and provides an accounting of area layoff activities at the bi-monthly Board meetings to allow Board members an opportunity to provide additional knowledge or information. The efficient coordination of services to area dislocated workers and employers is key between our board and sub-recipient to deploy our Rapid Response Team in a timely manner with minimal wait time for those affected by the layoff/closures.

C. Youth Activities and Services

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

Boards must include a description and assessment of the type and availability of workforce investment activities for youth in the workforce area, including activities for youth with disabilities. This description must include an identification of successful models of such activities.

Although funding over the years has caused a decrease in services available to area youth, the Board maintains a focus on how best to serve both students and out-of-school youth.

- Center staff includes a youth case manager who visits area schools and works with organizations, including juvenile probation and foster youth, to provide education and training opportunities.*
- A strong summer youth work program transitioned to opportunities for a few eligible youth to participate in year-round work experience and skills training.*
- The addition of the Summer Earn & Learn (SEAL) program has also provided additional services to youth with disabilities transitioning to college. They participate in employment skills training and are eligible to receive incentives, which have included laptop computers. They are also eligible to access support services, as needed, to include referral to subsidized childcare and assistance for transportation and supplies.*
- The Board's Youth Advisory Group includes Board members from school districts, the Wichita Adult Literacy Council, and Communities in Schools, in addition to representatives from other organizations including Midwestern State University and Region 9 Education Service Center, to hear reports from the workforce center's WIOA Youth Case Manager and coordinate youth activities. Several successful models of activities include the Transition Fair, which annually attracts several hundred high school juniors and seniors with disabilities to visits with employers, training providers, and area resources to explore options for work and education after high school. The annual Youth Career Fair provides career pathway information for eighth grade students. Additional Careers in Texas funding has made it possible to continue to bring area eighth grade students together in person, or virtually, for a variety of activities, including hands-on sessions with skills training, visits with employers and their vehicles, including ambulances, fire trucks, police tactical vehicles, as well as robotic equipment.*
- The Board also took advantage of the recent additional funding for purchase of software and camera equipment to produce career-inspired videos and connect students at our area schools served by Region 9 Education Service Center and Wichita Falls Independent School District. These videos enabled us to provide the same high-level career and education overviews to students at the Youth Career Fair for eighth graders and the Transition Fair for juniors and seniors in high school with disabilities through an online platform when in-person activities were not feasible.*

D. Coordination with Secondary and Postsecondary Education Programs

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

Boards must include a description of how the Board will coordinate its workforce investment activities with relevant secondary and postsecondary education programs and activities to coordinate strategies, enhance services, and avoid duplication of services.

The Board coordinates discussions with training providers and Board members to frequently assess the inclusion of occupations on the target occupations list to ensure that adequate opportunities are available to eligible individuals and to meet the needs of area employers. Board and workforce center staff members participate as members of advisory committees for training programs at both the secondary and post-secondary levels, including the newly constructed Career and Education Center for the Wichita Falls school district. The Board's Outreach Committee includes representatives of Vernon College and Midwestern State University, area employers and vocational rehabilitation, to discuss strategies to assess and meet workforce needs. The board and workforce center staff members are invited to meet with prospective employers in the chambers of commerce and economic development organizations of the area, alongside representatives of MSU and the community colleges. During these meetings, various education and training opportunities and additional skills development and small business funding options through TWC. Discussion and information about the services avoid any duplication and work only to provide the most efficient and effective way to meet the needs of area employers, whether they have been in business for a long time or are investigating possible location in North Texas.

E. Child Care and Early Learning

(40 TAC §809.12 Board Plan for Child Care Services)

Each Board must include a description of how the Board is strategically managing childcare and early learning within its workforce system to enhance school readiness and strengthen and support the childcare industry.

Note: This may include efforts to:

- Coordinate with employers, economic development, and other industry leaders to increase the awareness and importance of early learning as a workforce and economic development tool
- Support improved school readiness through higher-quality childcare, including Texas Rising Star, and through partnership opportunities such as prekindergarten partnerships
- Support the needs of the childcare industry, which could include assistance with business development or shared services, as well as opportunities to support professional growth and career pathways for early education

In 2020, the Board created a new position for a Childcare Contract Manager to oversee the operations and coordinate with our local subrecipient provider to ensure that North Texas continues to support the childcare industry in the most efficient and effective way to enhance the importance of early learning and quality childcare.

The board supports early care and education providers with their business and employment functions. The board plans for coordinating the services of Business Services outreaching the

childcare providers in support of their business and hiring needs. Provider services can be supported through workintexas.com for their hiring needs.

The board supports the parents in the childcare program through several services. Enrollment materials and information resources are available for the workforce system. Other services include referrals to workforce services such as when the parent has job loss, reduced hours or help with job search, help with completion of education and training, or assistance with upskilling for career pathways.

The board has developed several quality initiatives to aid in increasing skills with our area providers. One of those is to supply training and professional development for our area providers through the Child Development Associate (CDA) Program course at Vernon College. Training for infant/toddler certification and pre-k certification includes tuition, books, and cost of certification per student. The impact is measured through the number of certified teachers within the TRS facility and application of new skills acquired through the education received.

The board also offers a Child Care Professionals Leadership Course/Child Care Professionals and budgeting basics course in partnership with Vernon College. Students completing the course will have the choice to receive a software incentive per childcare facility. The impact of this initiative is measured using innovative technology within the provider facility and improved scores in Director/Caregiver Qualifications.

The board is proud that 41.33% of our contracted centers are Texas Rising Star (TRS) accredited. This is due in part to the on-going strategies that have been developed to increase awareness to our providers and supply incentives for becoming TRS providers. Beyond the Page quality initiative will buy books for TRS classrooms and supplemental materials to supply on-site training for all TRS classroom teachers on read-aloud strategies and early learning literacy, as well as, choosing age-appropriate books and training teachers on engagement skills. Progression is tracked through evaluations, training needed and quarterly observations. This initiative is intended to have a positive impact on child/teacher interactions.

The annual Quality Needs Assessment has been targeted to survey and assess Texas Rising Star facilities based on the new TRS revisions and virtual learning/training needs. We expect expenditure on individualized professional development for directors, lead teachers, and supervisory staff. We are also expecting a need for technology equipment purchases to give childcare providers access to virtual learning and virtual training.

The board is also planning to have the 3 TRS Mentor/ Assessors trained to be certified in CLASS for the Pre-K age group to begin to gather data on teacher/child interaction and finding areas of concern to assist center staff on needed improvements. CLASS assessments are expected to be built into the annual TRS visits.

Informing the public of the importance of choosing quality childcare centers is crucial for engagement with the Texas Rising Star program. Community awareness is vital to keep our clients and providers aware of what the Texas Rising Star can do for their children. Promotional materials provide this awareness needed for continued advancement and growth of the TRS to all childcare facilities.

The board also participates in the Childcare Coalition which is made up of the Wichita Falls Area Food Bank, Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters, United Regional Healthcare System, Wichita Falls Public Library, WFISD, United Way (Texas Home Visiting Program), Child Care Partners, Housing Authority, and Helen Farabee Center to promote early childhood education. They group meets on a monthly basis. Their most recent mission is to bring community awareness to adverse childhood experiences and create a community plan to address prevention. The members of the coalition are divided into one of 4 groups: fatherhood engagement, reading/literacy, family self-sufficiency and nutrition/health. The board is part of the family self-sufficiency group. This group also works together to discuss ways that our programs could come together to offer comprehensive services to families such as home visits for qualified families to teach parents how to parent young children and what they can do to help get their children ready to start public school.

With the onset of COVID19, the Board plans to continue the support of all contracted childcare providers in the purchase of PPE equipment and supplies. The board was able to provide PPE supplies by purchase and distribution to 76 contracted childcare centers in January 2021. More funding for a second supply purchase is scheduled for May 2021. As we move forward, we will continue to support the providers as we can to ensure health and safety.

F. Transportation and Other Support Services

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

Boards must include a description of how the Board will provide transportation, including public transportation, and other appropriate support services in the workforce area in coordination with WIOA Title I workforce investment activities.

The Board works to provide a variety of support services to eligible individuals to ensure that they are successful in their workforce preparation. Among the services is the availability of gas cards to facilitate travel from residence in more rural communities to work and training opportunities in more distant communities. Bus passes are often provided to eligible individuals in Wichita Falls which has the only city-provided mass transit system. Coordination of transportation in the area takes place with the regional transportation advisory committee, which is administered by Nortex Regional Planning Commission with grant funds from the Texas Department of Transportation. Several staff members of the Board and Center are members of the advisory committee to ensure that, in addition to available transportation for elderly and disabled individuals, area residents who must travel to work or training in other communities have similar access. The formation of the regional committee certainly improved the formerly siloed system that only directed TxDOT funds to

area providers for limited uses. As a result, different projects have been developed and implemented with funding to assist workers to travel in the area, to facilitate the transportation of area veterans to access medical services in Fort Worth and Oklahoma City, to coordinate outreach and marketing activities about available transportation to area residents, and to ensure that all available transportation sources, including senior citizen centers with vehicles, taxis, the American Red Cross, and regional transportation providers work together to provide resources. In addition to workforce and veteran services, the committee includes representatives of the Wichita Falls Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) that coordinates city bus service, bicycle and pedestrian travel, and aviation activities; Sharp Lines, the regional van service operated by Rolling Plains Management Corporation out of Crowell which is in the western part of the area; area cities, counties, and economic development organizations; and the Area Agency on Aging; in addition to others. One of the biggest projects of the committee has been to ensure that all residents of the area have access to transportation services. Another area service provider, Texoma Area Paratransit Services, located in the Texoma Board region, received funding to provide transportation to residents in the more eastern part of the area. Changes in operational staff and financial difficulties forced TAPS to curtail services, which left residents in Clay and Montague Counties without access to other communities. Sharp Lines worked with TxDOT and the regional committee to close the gap in the provision of services. At a recent public meeting with TxDOT representatives, information was provided by new staff members at TAPS to regain service to other parts of the region. Several years ago, the City of Wichita Falls constructed a travel center as a central location for transferring from rural van service providers to city buses and for boarding major bus lines for travel outside of the region.

G. Coordination of Adult Education and Literacy (AEL)

(WIOA §108(b)(13); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(12))

Boards must include a description of how the Board will coordinate WIOA Title I workforce investment activities with AEL activities under WIOA Title II. This description must include how the Board will carry out the review of local applications submitted under Title II consistent with WIOA §§107(d)(11)(A) and (B)(i) and WIOA §232.

The Board has a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Region 9 Education Service Center (Region 9) located in Wichita Falls. Literacy activities are coordinated for the area by the Wichita Adult Literacy Council, Inc. (WALC), which moved from Region 9 many years ago to the Galaxy Center in Wichita Falls which also houses the Workforce Solutions Center. Workforce Solutions, Region 9 adult education, and WALC have coordinated to develop and implement several projects.

The Board is sensitive to the needs of our English language learners' customers. Forms and instructions are available in both English and Spanish. Signs are posted in Workforce Centers

in both English and Spanish, asking customers if they require assistance due to limited English proficiency, and free interpreter services are offered if needed.

To effectively meet the needs of the Limited English Proficiency (LEP) customers, the Workforce Solutions North Texas Board's two contractors; 1) employ and maintain bilingual staff, 2) materials are provided in both English and Spanish, 3), maintain a sufficient referral base (to include training and education providers) to ensure all LEP customers of any primary language are not excluded from participating in or benefiting from Workforce Solutions Center Services. AEL also administers the TABE assessments ESL customers.

Representatives of the workforce and AEL have a monthly Partnership Meeting. This meeting is hosted by the Director of Region 9 AEL and includes staff from both AEL and workforce local leadership to include the Executive Director and Center Director, the WIOA team, staff from Vocational Rehabilitation, and staff from Vernon College. This meeting is to discuss upcoming events and efforts on which Workforce Solutions and these other partners can collaborate. This partnership ensures that these events are a success and offer the most value to those in attendance. These meetings also allow for these agencies to discuss any students or customers who may be struggling and what steps can be taken to help.

Several times per year, our WIOA team presents a portion of the orientation at Region 9 Adult Education Service Center for the High School Equivalency (HSE) class. At this orientation, workforce center services and the WIOA program are explained, as well as what supportive services can be provided to individuals. This orientation is normally a morning and evening session. Most recently, these presentations are being provided both virtually and in person.

Workforce Solutions also provides presentations for their HUB (Helping U Build) program. This program is to assist current or future college students one-on-one through tutorials and extra assistance to ensure their success. Workforce Solutions provides workforce preparatory skills including resume development, a WIOA program orientation, and Work in Texas registration. We work very closely with Region 9 Adult Education Service Center and have garnered referrals to our WIOA Program from the HUB program for students attending or about to attend college. Most recently, we have enrolled participants from the Culinary Arts program and Welding program that were attending Vernon College.

We partner to provide supportive services through our WIOA program when needed for student success. Supportive services have included items such as laptops, gas cards, and tuition costs.

In addition, when a customer comes through one of our programs and does not have a high school diploma or HSE, we provide counsel in explaining the important role continuing their education will have in introducing better opportunities in the workforce and in gaining employment in general. We recommend the customer attend Region 9 for free HSE classes and explain that Workforce Solutions will cover the cost of their tests when they are ready.

Workforce Solutions has also partnered with Region 9 to assist with basic math for skilled trade programs like Welding, Machining or HVAC, to supplement college course expectations and bring the students up to the necessary level. Tutoring is also being provided for Certified Nurse Aide and Licensed Vocational Nursing students. Region 9 has also started ESL (English as a Second Language) in CNA tutoring. At every opportunity, Workforce Solutions works together with Region 9 to help struggling students find tutoring through a referral process. Our process consists of calling or emailing Region 9 and scheduling for the customer to meet with the necessary staff for the help they need.

Coordination efforts will continue to support the development of projects integrating work and education.

Customers who visit the Wichita Falls workforce center and reveal a need for reading instruction, high school diploma equivalency instruction, or difficulty with the English language can also be personally escorted down the hall to the WALC office for assistance. Visitors to WALC who express a need for job search assistance or training are in turn referred to the workforce center. The workforce center's job-readiness classes feature a segment on financial literacy, which is taught by a WALC staff member who is paid through a grant from the North Texas Area United Way. Management staff members of the Board, Center, adult education, and literacy, and vocational rehabilitation meet periodically to coordinate additional strategies for more integrated service delivery.

To comply with WIOA requirements, the Board will identify a review team and implement the review of proposals for the local adult education competition based on Agency guidance.

Part 6: Adult, Dislocated Workers, and Youth Services

A. Adult and Dislocated Worker Employment and Training

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

Boards must include a description and assessment of the type and availability of adult and dislocated worker employment and training activities in the workforce area. Boards must include a description and assessment of the type and availability of adult, dislocated worker and youth employment and training activities in the workforce area.

Boards must also include the list of assessment instruments (tools) used for adult, dislocated worker, and youth.

- *Any individual may visit a local workforce center to receive assistance with job search activities, including job-readiness classes that also feature financial literacy information provided by a staff member from the Wichita Adult Literacy Council in Wichita Falls, and resume-preparation.*

- *Individuals who are eligible to receive education and training as adult and dislocated worker participants are invited to an orientation session to learn about WIOA activities.*
- *Case managers in all Center locations, as well as the mobile unit, work with eligible individuals to discuss their support service needs and plans for training to facilitate entry or a return to the workforce. Assistance includes a discussion of desired training and the Board's target occupation list to ensure that training is available for funding and will result in job placement. Also included is an assessment of the individual need for support services, such as:*
 - *subsidized childcare;*
 - *access to assistive technology or interpreter services;*
 - *transportation assistance including bus passes in Wichita Falls or gas cards;*
 - *supplies for training or work such as uniforms, tools, and supplies;*
 - *referral to area organizations for food, adult education classes, and individual tutoring, among others.*
- *Center staff members maintain an extensive list of area resources to be able to efficiently assess and assist the individual's needs. Eligible individuals then select the desired service and will visit training providers such as Vernon College, which has campus locations in Vernon and Wichita Falls, including the Skills Training Center; North Central Texas College, with campus locations in Bowie and Graham; and Midwestern State University in Wichita Falls.*
- *Center staff members also work with area employers to place eligible individuals in work activities, including work experience, on-the-job training, and job development.*

B. Priority to Recipients of Public Assistance and Low-Income Individuals

(20 CFR §679.560(b)(21))

Boards must include the Board policy to ensure that priority for adult individualized career services and training services will be given to recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient, consistent with WIOA §134(c)(3)(E) and §680.600 of the Final Regulations, as well as veterans and foster youth, according to the priority order outlined in the WIOA Guidelines for Adults, Dislocated Workers, and Youth. Boards must also include a list of any Board-established priority groups, if any.

Board policy ensures that priority of adult individualized career services and training services are given to recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient. The operator of the one-stop delivery system also ensures that procedures follow the Board policy.

Part 7: Fiscal Agent, Grants, and Contracts

A. Fiscal Agent

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

Boards must include identification of the entity responsible for the disbursement of grant funds described in WIOA §107(d)(12)(B)(i)(III), as determined by the CEOs or the governor under WIOA §107(d)(12)(B)(i).

The original partnership agreement crafted when the Boards were formed 25 years ago identifies the Board and its staff as the administrative entity for the provision of workforce services in the North Texas area and Nortex Regional Planning Commission as the local grant subrecipient of the funds as the Board's fiscal agent. The evolution of this arrangement has included monthly budget meetings with the Director of Finance and the Executive Director of Nortex; management and financial staff members of both providers of workforce and childcare services; and Board staff members. They review the status of each grant to determine if the expenditure of funds should increase or decrease, be redirected, or if the grant is ready to close. The Board and Nortex, with guidance from the chief elected officials, jointly procure and participate in annual audit activities and preparation of the Board's Form 990 as a nonprofit organization. Contracts from TWC to the Board are reviewed by the Board Executive Director and signed by the Board Chair and the Executive Director of Nortex.

B. Sub-Grants and Contracts

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

Boards must include a description of the competitive process that will be used to award the sub-grants and contracts for WIOA Title I activities.

In North Texas, there traditionally have been two major contracts awarded for the provision of workforce and childcare services to separate organizations. During the time frame identified in WIOA and by TWC, the Board conducts competitive procurement activities, as required. Beginning in late fall of the year prior to the awarding of a new contract, Board staff members review and prepare the procurement instrument for reference and adherence to current rules. The Request for Proposal is released during the first quarter to an extensive and updated list of prospective bidders with a bidders' conference hosted by the Board. Questions and answers are then provided in writing to all prospective bidders. When proposals are received at a deadline identified in the RFP with at least a month to respond, Board staff members review the proposals for submission of required elements. Since the Board is a small Board with limited resources, volunteer Board members traditionally score and rank the proposals with staff members serving as resources to answer questions and make recommendations. A representative of the Evaluation Committee then makes a recommendation to the Board for approval before the contract negotiation begins. The contract then becomes effective by October 1 of that year. Adequate time is included for review, potential visits and meetings with Board representatives from bidders, and negotiations to finalize all aspects of the contract.

The required competitive process is also utilized to award other sub-grants and contracts for the provision of additional services that may be identified.

Part 8: Performance

A. Board Performance Targets

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

Boards must include a description of the local levels of performance negotiated with TWC and the CEOs consistent with WIOA §116(c), to be used to measure the performance of the area and to be used by the Board for measuring the performance of the local fiscal agent (where appropriate), eligible providers under WIOA Title I subtitle B, and the one-stop delivery system in the area.

The Board works to meet or exceed the levels of performance negotiated with TWC as designated in the contracts. In contracts with service providers in the one-stop delivery system, the Board does not impose any additional performance measures. Contracted performance is reviewed by members of the Board Monitoring Committee at each meeting with discussion provided by members of the sub-recipient management team. Members view the monthly performance reports as provided by TWC for the area and provide input. The performance of the Board fiscal agent is not measured in particular standards, but during monthly budget meetings and on a case-by-case basis when resolution of a particular issue is required.

The performance of eligible training providers is reviewed by the Board staff member whose duties include maintaining the system when programs are added or deleted and when training providers are required to update information. The Board follows the process outlined by TWC to review performance. When periodically reviewing the Board target occupations list, members may ask for numbers of individuals enrolled in training programs and status of completion which may be provided through TWIST or by the respective training providers.

Performance of the one-stop delivery system is reviewed by members of the Board Monitoring Committee as they review the TWC monthly performance reports. Performance is also noted during consideration of annual contract renewal and as part of the procurement process when it requires the submission of proposals.

The following performance measures were set in accordance with WIOA §116 (c):

All Participants Employed/Enrolled Q2 Post Exit

All Participants Employed/Enrolled Q2-Q4 Post Exit

All Participants Median Earnings Q2 Post Exit

All Participants Credential Rate

Adult Employed Q2 Post Exit

Adult Median Earnings Q2 Post Exit

Adult Employed Q4 Post Exit

Adult Credential Rate

Adult Measurable Skills Gain

Dislocated Worker Employed Q2 Post Exit

Dislocated Worker Median Earnings Q2 Post Exit

Dislocated Worker Employed Q4 Post Exit

Dislocated Worker Credential Rate

Dislocated Worker Measurable Skills Gain

Youth Employed/Enrolled Q2 Post Exit

Youth Employed/Enrolled Q4 Post Exit

Youth Credential Rate

Part 9: Training and Services

A. Individual Training Accounts (ITAs)

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

Boards must include a description of how training services outlined in WIOA §134 will be provided through the use of ITAs, including, if contracts for training services will be used, how the use of such contracts will be coordinated with the use of ITAs under that chapter, and how the Board will ensure informed customer choice in the selection of training programs, regardless of how the training services are to be provided.

Through the contract with the Board, the sub-recipient provider of workforce center services maintains the process of determining how eligible individuals will participate in subsidized training activities. Following the determination of eligibility, case managers work individually to develop a training plan based on the individual's choice of training and the availability of

eligible training providers for the occupations listed on the Board target occupation list. Members of an inter-departmental committee assigned by the sub-recipient reviews the ITAs that have been proposed to determine if the training request meets all the requirements and that there are adequate training funds to support the individual goals. Often, an individual comes to the workforce center with a prescribed training plan after working with the chosen training provider and is ready to complete the process to begin training. The Board ensures that the sub-recipient operators at the workforce center informs customer choice by describing the process during orientation sessions before individuals begin. The individuals receive referral information and are encouraged by staff members to investigate the available education and training choices. The fiscal portion of the ITA process continues during the monthly budget meetings, described earlier, where training and staff costs that have been submitted to the Board fiscal agent for payment are verified and documented that they fit in the allocated budget.

B. ITA Limitations

(20 CFR §663.420)

Boards may impose limits on the duration and amount of ITAs. If the state or Board chooses to do so, the limitations must be described in the Board Plan, but must not be implemented in a manner that undermines WIOA's requirement that training services are to be provided in a manner that maximizes customer choice in the selection of an Eligible Training Provider. Exceptions to ITA limitations may be provided for individual cases and must be described in Board policies.

The current Board policy has no caps in the amount of ITA.

Part 10: Apprenticeship

A. Registered Apprenticeship Programs

Boards must include a description of how the Board will encourage Registered Apprenticeship programs in its workforce area to register with the Eligible Training Provider System in order to receive WIOA funding.

The Board continues to encourage Registered Apprenticeship programs in the area to register with the eligible training provider system. Efforts to identify the programs continue when information is available. The Board has traditionally worked with the Board member representing labor unions to share information and with Region 9 Education Service Center in Wichita Falls that annually applies for and receives TWC funds to support apprenticeship training programs.

B. Apprenticeship Texas

Boards must include a description of the Board's strategy and commitment to support Apprenticeship Texas efforts across the state, as applicable.

The Board commits to support Apprenticeship Texas efforts across the state, as applicable. Board staff members attempt to follow-up on information about possible local programs and opportunities when notified.

Part 11: Public Comment

Boards must include a description of the process used by the Board, consistent with WIOA §108(d), 20 CFR §679.550(b) and §679.560(b) and (e), to:

- make copies of the proposed local plan available to the public through electronic and other means, such as public hearings and local news media;
- include an opportunity for comment by members of the public, including representatives of business, labor organizations, and education;
- provide at least a 15-day, but no more than a 30-day period for comment on the plan before its submission to TWC, beginning on the date that the proposed plan is made available, before its submission to TWC; and
- submit any comments that express disagreement with the plan to TWC along with the plan.

Initial public notice of the plan was accomplished by placing on our website at www.ntxworksolutions.org on March 29, 2021. We published a public notice in newspaper announcing the availability on board's website or by email request to offer the public an opportunity to make comment for the required 15-day period. The Board Plan was presented and approved at the Board meeting on April 22, 2021.

Appendix: Texas Workforce Investment Council Requirements

Local Workforce Development Board Strategic Planning

The Texas Workforce Investment Council (TWIC) is charged under Texas Government Code §2308.101(5), 2308.302(a), and 2308.304(a)(b)(4), and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 (WIOA) (Public Law 113–128) with recommending the plans of Local Workforce Development Boards (Boards) to the governor for consideration for approval. TWIC reviews each Board Plan to ensure that local goals and objectives are consistent with the statewide goals and objectives in the system plan, The Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan FY 2016–FY 2023, which can be found at

<https://gov.texas.gov/uploads/files/organization/twic/System-Strategic-Plan-Update.pdf>.

Additionally, state law charges TWIC with reporting annually to the governor and to the Texas legislature on the implementation of the system’s strategic plan and monitoring the operation of the state’s workforce system to assess the degree to which the system is effective in achieving state and local goals and objectives. Therefore, TWIC also reviews Board Plans and plan modifications to determine each Board’s progress in implementing strategies that align with the strategic plan for the Texas workforce system. Following consideration for approval at a regularly scheduled quarterly meeting, TWIC recommends the Board Plans to the governor for consideration for approval. Boards’ responses to the following planning elements are reviewed by TWIC for alignment and are the basis for recommending approval.

Demonstrating Alignment with Texas’ Strategic Plan for the Workforce System

The four sections below list and describe the four system goals from The Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan FY 2016–FY 2023 (2020 Update) that identify critical, high-priority system issues for the state. **For each goal, briefly describe one significant Board strategy or initiative that fulfills the intent of the goal. Also, please include the corresponding page number(s) within your plan that further details the identified strategy or initiative.**

System Goal 1 and Rationale

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 time frame 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 Goal 1—Local Board Response

Board response and corresponding plan page number(s):

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The North Texas workforce development area includes almost 10,000 square miles spread across 11 counties between the Panhandle and the Metroplex near the Red River where Texas meets Oklahoma. According to the 2020 U.S. Census Bureau Statistics, the population of Wichita Falls, TX and immediate surrounding area was 152,144, which includes Burkburnett and Iowa Park. The labor market is shared with southern Oklahoma communities just across the river, which is a short 15 miles from Wichita Falls, the largest city with just over 104,000 residents. Traditionally, the economy is based on agriculture with some cotton fields to the North and West, wheat farms, and cattle ranches, and a strong oil and gas production base. A strong manufacturing presence peaked in the last century and efforts to revive and retain those employers continue. The area population is over 200,000 and continues to age and decline, although there has been success in the numbers of younger residents who have moved away and chosen to return to raise their families amid surrounding family support after they have experienced larger urban areas. This combination of small urban and rural centers Wichita Falls as the hub for higher education and skills training, administration of the services sector, shopping, and health care which also means a choice of Dallas/Fort Worth and Oklahoma City destinations. Other area communities are more rural and choose to market their strengths with historical and quality of life attractions.

The area's largest employer is Sheppard Air Force Base, which hosts the Euro-NATO Joint Jet Pilot Training program in which 14 nations participate. This military installation supports two training wings encompassing 17 tenants comprised of more than 5,900 military, civilian and contractor personnel, and 81,900 joint trainees annually and 9,200 dependents and retirees. Altogether, the 82nd Mission Support Group alone supports both wings and 20,000 people. Many of the trainees from throughout the world, including the Netherlands, Canada, Belgium, Germany, Greece, Denmark, Spain, Italy, and others, enrich the culture of the area with a variety of spoken languages and shared customs. Many retired veterans choose to remain in the area or return to live after retirement. Sheppard is one of 3 military installations within 100 miles along with Fort Sill Army Base in Lawton, Oklahoma, and Altus Air Force Base in Oklahoma.

In March of 2020, we were faced with the unanticipated disruption and challenges that the COVID-19 pandemic brought. No one could have foreseen what dramatic disruption this would bring to our operations, economy, and way of life. Without hesitation, we began taking steps to ensure the safety of our customers and staff. We were tasked with completely changing our service delivery method from in-person to virtual services when stay at-home orders were recommended. All staff moved quickly to transition to virtual service delivery to the communities we serve. We were able to mobilize our resources quickly and still provide the

highest level of service to our customers, partners, and communities. This brought forth a whole new meaning of “thinking outside the box”.

Prior to the pandemic, the decline of manufacturing and the cyclical ups-and-downs of the oil and gas industry, the growth and steadiness of jobs in North Texas were and continue in health care and entry-level wage jobs in the hospitality and service sectors. There are jobs that pay self-sufficient wages, but employers continue to voice dissent about the lack of employability and soft skills of many job seekers. Job readiness workshops are offered to everyone. Staff members often travel to community locations outside the workforce center to conduct ad-hoc workshops within our less-mobile populations like the housing authorities, high schools, and colleges.

Virtual, curbside, and in-person services introduced by necessity during the pandemic, continue to offer a variety of ways to assist our customers and employers. These, now routine, give another way to engage with customers and employers even when travel is an issue. This transition has also encouraged staff and management to think outside the box and has proven very successful even after pandemic restrictions were lifted.

Representatives of area economic development organizations strategize about how to return to normalcy, retain businesses, develop new interests and business, and attract younger workers to remain in the area. The next section outlines the in-demand industries and occupations of our area and the demographics of the populations in the communities we serve.

Page 12

Employers continue to communicate the lack of soft skills which the workforce system meets through job readiness workshops that role play handling difficult customers, responding to negativity, thinking outside the box, problem solving, using resources, and other critical thinking supports to develop soft skills. Other workshops offered through our Workforce Centers provide individualized assistance for resume preparation, financial literacy, and often include visits from employers who detail expectations of jobs offered at their facility or preparing to enter their industry in general. These opportunities help to prepare workers in our in-demand sectors of Health Care and Social Assistance, Retail Trade, Accommodation and Food Services, Educational Services, Manufacturing Administrative and Waste Services, Other Services Except Public Administration, Construction, Transportation and Warehousing, and Finance and Insurance. Additional training financed through the workforce system prepare workers with skills needed that require more formal training settings and platforms.

System Goal 2 and Rationale

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 ensuring a “no wrong door” approach to the provision of workforce programs and services.

System Goal 2—Local Board Response

Board response and corresponding plan page number(s):

Page 5

In addition to working with the sub-recipients to deliver local services, the Board ensures that service delivery is enhanced through Memoranda of Understanding and periodic contact with representatives of a variety of organizations that provide additional resources. Each Board meeting includes reports from partners that provide data and narratives about workforce center program participation, childcare quality, adult education, and featured presentations from representatives of vocational rehabilitation, other area nonprofit organizations, and education. In addition to board meetings, collaboration meetings are often scheduled with our partners to focus on specific program strategies and coordination of services between partner agencies. Key steps we have taken include:

- Monthly partnership meetings with Adult Education, Vernon College, North Central Texas College, Vocational Rehabilitation, and the Workforce Center about educational support and programs applicable to populations with barriers to employment.
- Inviting adult education staff members to participate in WIOA orientation sessions at the Wichita Falls workforce center
- Developing a process to coordinate how to identify and track TANF and SNAP participants
- Working with childcare management staff members to apply new federal regulations to enroll and track children within a restricted budget
- Meeting with vocational rehabilitation representatives of both the state program and a local provider to update and refine the long-time referral process resulting from changing requirements

These partnerships support the Board’s strategic vision to support regional economic growth and

economic self-sufficiency.

Page 17-18

The strength of workforce development activities in North Texas is that Workforce Solutions has been progressively increasing our focus into the more rural areas of our counties to assist employers and job seekers. Limited resources in a mostly rural area necessitate organizations coordinating with each other to be as effective as possible. Workforce development begins with education and all levels are represented in North Texas. Beginning with quality childcare services subsidized for working families, then youth supportive services and programs, community colleges, a public university, and adult and continuing education all provide support to an educated workforce over time. The Board also maintains contact with educational institutions outside of the area through the Eligible Training Provider (ETP) system to provide opportunities for additional training and skills.

Workforce Solutions North Texas has formed relationships with area organizations to share information and coordinate services to avoid duplication and stretch financial resources. The Board has worked closely with the vocational rehabilitation system to provide employment and training to people with disabilities. An additional asset to the Wichita Falls community is Work Services Corporation. This non-profit organization and business is located across the street from our workforce center in Wichita Falls. This organization provides sheltered workshop jobs for people with disabilities including a federal government contract for the manufacture and assembly of paper clips, mail distribution and dining hall services at Sheppard Air Force Base, and linen folding services for the North Texas State Hospital. Work Services Corporation has hosted multiple on-the-job and work experience training contracts for several of our customers with disabilities and they continue to be a valuable partner for education and training.

In addition to the core programs offered through Workforce Solutions, the Board participates in the following activities:

- Board meetings include reports about activities, services and successes achieved through quality childcare, adult education, and career and technical programs. An accounting of layoffs and unemployment is also prioritized to educate the decisions that are made by members.
- Board and workforce center staff members participate in advisory committees for the Skills Training Center at Vernon College in Wichita Falls, Wichita Falls Independent School District career and technical education, Regional Transportation Committee, Economic Development Advisory Committee at Nortex Regional Planning Commission, a variety of Wichita Falls Chamber of Commerce and Industry groups, and all chambers of commerce in the communities of the 11-county area.
- Adult education and literacy activities are coordinated by Workforce Solutions, Region 9 Education Service Center, and the Wichita Adult Literacy Council. A monthly Partnership Meeting between Workforce Solutions, Region 9, Vernon College, North

Central Texas College (NCTC), and Vocational Rehabilitation provides a mechanism to share expertise and coordinate customer referrals between new and ongoing programs. These partnerships help develop and support integrated work and education training.

- Board staff participates in business recruitment meetings alongside the Wichita Falls Chamber of Commerce when they are hosting a prospective new business or expansion project. We provide details about the available workforce, their skills, training opportunities, outline the supports available through partnerships with Workforce. As the Chamber CEO has said many times, “Workforce is the number one driver in economic development decisions.”
- The Executive Director and Business and Outreach Manager for the board also participate in Wichita Falls Chamber of Commerce Chairman’s Council roundtable discussions with other city leaders and business owners across the city to discuss the state of the economy and other hot topics of the day that concern our top industries and to provide a support system for both.
- Board and sub-recipient staff frequently present workforce updates and information to area employers and community groups. These presentations often lead to future partnerships whether it be for a hiring event or enrolling as an on-the-job training site.

Page 27-28

A partnership that works to coordinate workforce development programs and economic development is the Economic Development Committee facilitated by the Community & Economic Development Director at Nortex Regional Planning Commission. Members include representatives from economic development entities and Workforce Solutions Board staff’s Business and Outreach Manager. The group communicates regularly about economic development opportunities within the 11 counties of North Texas.

Members of the Board Outreach Committee, which includes representatives from the private sector, economic development, education, and other related organizations, meet quarterly to discuss the economy and how to ensure that the target occupations list encourages the most appropriate workforce and training for local market. Another Board committee, the Youth

Workforce Solutions North Texas 28 Advisory Group, meets bi-monthly to plan career pathway initiatives and activities with representatives of education and workforce development.

The Board participates in all regional economic development activities as requested or initiated. Although the three workforce center locations outside of Wichita Falls in Bowie, Graham, and Vernon each have two core staff members, they are involved in their respective communities and respond to the needs of local customers. The Board pays annual membership dues to area Chambers of Commerce and staff members participate in Leads Groups, workforce and education committees, and the regional Economic Development Advisory Committee facilitated by Nortex Regional Planning Commission Community & Economic Development Director. A

regional economic development plan has been developed with input from economic development groups in more rural communities, in addition to the Wichita Falls Chamber of Commerce which doubles as the economic development organization for the area's largest city.

Workforce Solutions staff members participate in activities in their respective communities and sometimes travel with the mobile workforce unit that visits communities further away from workforce center locations to ensure the more remote, rural communities needs are met. Staff members have hosted hiring events for employers, are invited to attend meetings to meet with prospective employers and discuss the available workforce and training opportunities, in addition to working with Vernon College and North Central Texas College on grant applications to customize training for employers. Midwestern State University in Wichita Falls is a vital partner and hosts the Small Business Development Center, internship opportunities for students, and entrepreneurial skills training. In partnership with the Wichita Falls Chamber and the SBDC, MSU annually sponsors a competition for entrepreneurs with as much as \$250,000 in funding and other benefits to the winning entry for new business. The Board can refer interested individuals to the most appropriate source for assistance and often has included representatives of organizations to participate in assisting dislocated workers when there have been large layoffs or plant closures so that they can provide information directly.

Page 32-33

The Board coordinates discussions with training providers and Board members to frequently assess the inclusion of occupations on the target occupations list to ensure that adequate opportunities are available to eligible individuals and to meet the needs of area employers. Board and workforce center staff members participate as members of advisory committees for training programs at both the secondary and post-secondary levels, including the newly constructed Career and Education Center for the Wichita Falls school district. The Board's Outreach Committee includes representatives of Vernon College and Midwestern State University, area employers and vocational rehabilitation, to discuss strategies to assess and meet workforce needs. The board and workforce center staff members are invited to meet with prospective employers in the chambers of commerce and economic development organizations of the area, alongside representatives of MSU and the community colleges. During these meetings, various education and training opportunities and additional skills development and small business funding options through TWC. Discussion and information about the services avoid any duplication and work only to provide the most efficient and effective way to meet the needs of area employers, whether they have been in business for a long time or are investigating possible location in North Texas.

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The board also participates in the Childcare Coalition which is made up of the Wichita Falls Area Food Bank, Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters, United Regional Healthcare System, Wichita Falls Public Library, WFISD, United Way (Texas Home Visiting Program), Child Care Partners, Housing Authority, and Helen Farabee Center to promote early childhood education. They group meets on a monthly basis. Their most recent mission is to bring

community awareness to adverse childhood experiences and create a community plan to address prevention. The members of the coalition are divided into one of 4 groups: fatherhood engagement, reading/literacy, family self-sufficiency and nutrition/health. The board is part of the family self-sufficiency group. This group also works together to discuss ways that our programs could come together to offer comprehensive services to families such as home visits for qualified families to teach parents how to parent young children and what they can do to help get their children ready to start public school.

Page 35-36

The Board works to provide a variety of support services to eligible individuals to ensure that they are successful in their workforce preparation. Among the services is the availability of gas cards to facilitate travel from residence in more rural communities to work and training opportunities in more distant communities. Bus passes are often provided to eligible individuals in Wichita Falls which has the only city-provided mass transit system. Coordination of transportation in the area takes place with the regional transportation advisory committee, which is administered by Nortex Regional Planning Commission with grant funds from the Texas Department of Transportation. Several staff members of the Board and Center are members of the advisory committee to ensure that, in addition to available transportation for elderly and disabled individuals, area residents who must travel to work or training in other communities have similar access. The formation of the regional committee certainly improved the formerly siloed system that only directed TxDOT funds to

Workforce Solutions North Texas 36 area providers for limited uses. As a result, different projects have been developed and implemented with funding to assist workers to travel in the area, to facilitate the transportation of area veterans to access medical services in Fort Worth and Oklahoma City, to coordinate outreach and marketing activities about available transportation to area residents, and to ensure that all available transportation sources, including senior citizen centers with vehicles, taxis, the American Red Cross, and regional transportation providers work together to provide resources. In addition to workforce and veteran services, the committee includes representatives of the Wichita Falls Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) that coordinates city bus service, bicycle and pedestrian travel, and aviation activities; Sharp Lines, the regional van service operated by Rolling Plains Management Corporation out of Crowell which is in the western part of the area; area cities, counties, and economic development organizations; and the Area Agency on Aging; in addition to others. One of the biggest projects of the committee has been to ensure that all residents of the area have access to transportation services. Another area service provider, Texoma Area Paratransit Services, located in the Texoma Board region, received funding to provide transportation to residents in the more eastern part of the area. Changes in operational staff and financial difficulties forced TAPS to curtail services, which left residents in Clay and Montague Counties without access to other communities. Sharp Lines worked with TxDOT and the regional committee to close the gap in the provision of services. At a recent public meeting with TxDOT representatives, information was provided by new staff members at TAPS to regain service to other parts of the region. Several years ago, the City of Wichita Falls constructed a travel center as a central location for

transferring from rural van service providers to city buses and for boarding major bus lines for travel outside of the region.

Page 36-37

Throughout the 25 years of Board operation, coordination with community partners has been strong. These partnerships include adult education and literacy (AEL). Adult education has been provided through Region 9 Education Service Center located in Wichita Falls and literacy activities are coordinated for the area by the Wichita Adult Literacy Council, Inc. (WALC), which moved from Region 9 many years ago to the Galaxy Center in Wichita Falls which also houses the Workforce Solutions Center. Workforce Solutions, Region 9 adult education, and WALC have coordinated to develop and implement several projects, including a community-wide service program in Vernon which featured education, childcare, Workforce Solutions North Texas 37 transportation, and family literacy at one site. Representatives of the workforce and AEL meet often to discuss better utilization of staff resources and how to further integrate referral of services. In the past, when a large plant with many non-English-speaking workers was relocated, Adult education and literacy ensured, through our partnership, that workers dislocated by the closure received assistance with English language instruction for Spanish and Vietnamese speakers. They also provided workforce education and training and adult education classes. Coordination efforts continue to support the development of projects integrating work and education.

Customers who visit the Wichita Falls workforce center and reveal a need for reading instruction, high school diploma equivalency instruction, or difficulty with the English language are personally escorted down the hall to the WALC office for assistance. Visitors to WALC who express a need for job search assistance or training are in turn referred to the workforce center. The workforce center's job-readiness classes feature a segment on financial literacy, which is taught by a WALC staff member who is paid through a grant from the North Texas Area United Way. Management staff members of the Board, Center, adult education, and literacy, and vocational rehabilitation meet periodically to coordinate additional strategies for more integrated service delivery.

To comply with WIOA requirements, the Board will identify a review team and implement the review of proposals for the local adult education competition based on Agency guidance.

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Case managers in all Center locations, as well as the mobile unit, work with eligible individuals to discuss their support service needs and plans for training to facilitate entry or a return to the workforce. Assistance includes a discussion of desired training and the Board's target occupation list to ensure that training is available for funding and will result in job placement. Also included is an assessment of the individual need for support services, such as:

- subsidized childcare;

- access to assistive technology or interpreter services;
- transportation assistance including bus passes in Wichita Falls or gas cards;
- supplies for training or work such as uniforms, tools, and supplies;
- referral to area organizations for food, adult education classes, and individual tutoring, among others.

Center staff members maintain an extensive list of area resources to be able to efficiently assess and assist the individual’s needs. Eligible individuals then select the desired service and will visit training providers such as Vernon College, which has campus locations in Vernon and Wichita Falls, including the Skills Training Center; North Central Texas College, with campus locations in Bowie and Graham; and Midwestern State University in Wichita Falls.

Center staff members also work with area employers to place eligible individuals in work activities, including work experience, on-the-job training, and job development.

System Goal 3 and Rationale

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.

System Goal 3—Local Board Response

Board response and corresponding plan page number(s):

Page 33

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Committee includes representatives of Vernon College and Midwestern State University, area employers and vocational rehabilitation, to discuss strategies to assess and meet workforce needs. The board and workforce center staff members are invited to meet with prospective employers in the chambers of commerce and economic development organizations of the area, alongside representatives of MSU and the community colleges. During these meetings, various education and training opportunities and additional skills development and small business funding options through TWC. Discussion and information about the services avoid any duplication and work only to provide the most efficient and effective way to meet the needs of area employers, whether they have been in business for a long time or are investigating possible location in North Texas.

System Goal 4 and Rationale

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.

System Goal 4—Local Board Response

Board response and corresponding plan page number(s):

Page 4-5

The Board’s strategy is to involve all staff members of the workforce centers and childcare office in the planning and implementation of the Board’s vision and goals and seek input from Board members. Management meetings are held between Board staff and workforce and childcare management staff regularly. Without the “big picture,” staff members may focus on only their immediate tasks instead of understanding how each part of the system is interdependent. During the procurement phase of setting up new operational contracts, the Board focuses attention on

providing staff members with the support and tools that they need to work successfully. A positive relationship with the sub-recipient administrators is important, but if local management staff are not allowed flexibility to meet local needs, success will be less achievable.

In addition to working with the sub-recipients to deliver local services, the Board ensures that service delivery is enhanced through Memoranda of Understanding and periodic contact with representatives of a variety of organizations that provide additional resources. Each Board meeting includes reports from partners that provide data and narratives about workforce center program participation, childcare quality, adult education, and featured presentations from representatives of vocational rehabilitation, other area nonprofit organizations, and education. In addition to board meetings, collaboration meetings are often scheduled with our partners to focus on specific program strategies and coordination of services between partner agencies.

Page 12

Employers continue to communicate the lack of soft skills which the workforce system meets through job readiness workshops that role play handling difficult customers, responding to negativity, thinking outside the box, problem solving, using resources, and other critical thinking supports to develop soft skills. Other workshops offered through our Workforce Centers provide individualized assistance for resume preparation, financial literacy, and often include visits from employers who detail expectations of jobs offered at their facility or preparing to enter their industry in general. These opportunities help to prepare workers in our in-demand sectors of Health Care and Social Assistance, Retail Trade, Accommodation and Food Services, Educational Services, Manufacturing Administrative and Waste Services, Other Services Except Public Administration, Construction, Transportation and Warehousing, and Finance and Insurance. Additional training financed through the workforce system prepares workers with skills needed that require more formal training settings and platforms.

Page 17

The strength of workforce development activities in North Texas is that Workforce Solutions has been progressively increasing our focus into the more rural areas of our counties to assist employers and job seekers. Limited resources in a mostly rural area necessitate organizations coordinating with each other to be as effective as possible. Workforce development begins with education and all levels are represented in North Texas. Beginning with quality childcare services subsidized for working families, then youth supportive services and programs, community colleges, a public university, and adult and continuing education all provide support to an educated workforce over time. The Board also maintains contact with educational institutions outside of the area through the Eligible Training Provider (ETP) system to provide opportunities for additional training and skills.

Workforce Solutions North Texas has formed relationships with area organizations to share information and coordinate services to avoid duplication and stretch financial resources. The Board has worked closely with the vocational rehabilitation system to provide employment and training to people with disabilities.

Page 29-30

One-stop centers are implementing and transitioning to an integrated, technology-enabled intake and case management information system for programs carried out under WIOA and by one-stop partners.

- The Board has used Cabinet/SAFE for our document storage for all programs since 2015.
- Over the course of 2020, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, our service delivery system statewide had to adapt to ensure the safety of both staff and customers.
- Cross-training of staff continues to be a priority for our Board to ensure that staff are knowledgeable of the overall services provided to truly fulfill the mission and vision of the Board. Staff step in immediately and serve customers when needed in critical areas, such as when there is a sharp increase in unemployment. Rapid re-employment strategies have proven essential over the past year 2020 during the pandemic unemployment spikes.
- Staff were able to transition from in-person to virtual services quickly when challenged in early 2020 with the pandemic and those services will continue as this has allowed for more convenience for job seekers and employers.
- Virtual hiring events, video intake eligibility sessions, and virtual workshops have enabled a unique way to provide customer service to our population in the most challenging times to date and have been successful in doing so.
- The Board IT Manager participates in the Technical Administrators Group that meet twice yearly with other boards to stay current on the programs and information systems used across the state.

Page 36-37

Throughout the 25 years of Board operation, coordination with community partners has been strong. These partnerships include adult education and literacy (AEL). Adult education has been provided through Region 9 Education Service Center located in Wichita Falls and literacy activities are coordinated for the area by the Wichita Adult Literacy Council, Inc. (WALC), which moved from Region 9 many years ago to the Galaxy Center in Wichita Falls which also houses the Workforce Solutions Center. Workforce Solutions, Region 9 adult education, and WALC have coordinated to develop and implement several projects, including a community-wide service program in Vernon which featured education, childcare, transportation, and family literacy at one site. Representatives of the workforce and AEL meet often to discuss better utilization of staff resources and how to further integrate referral of services. In the past, when a large plant with many non-English-speaking workers was relocated, Adult education and literacy ensured, through our partnership, that workers dislocated by the closure received assistance with English language instruction for Spanish and Vietnamese speakers. They also provided workforce education and training and adult education classes. Coordination efforts continue to

support the development of projects integrating work and education.

Customers who visit the Wichita Falls workforce center and reveal a need for reading instruction, high school diploma equivalency instruction, or difficulty with the English language are personally escorted down the hall to the WALC office for assistance. Visitors to WALC who express a need for job search assistance or training are in turn referred to the workforce center. The workforce center's job-readiness classes feature a segment on financial literacy, which is taught by a WALC staff member who is paid through a grant from the North Texas Area United Way. Management staff members of the Board, Center, adult education, and literacy, and vocational rehabilitation meet periodically to coordinate additional strategies for more integrated service delivery.