

Workforce Solutions Brazos Valley Board Local Workforce Development Plan Program Years 2021-2024

Introduction

Under WIOA Section 108, each Local WDB is required to develop and submit a comprehensive 4-year plan to the Governor 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 in an open manner and be available to the public for comment for a 15-day period, particularly to members of the business and education communities, as well as various other labor organizations. The Local WDB must submit any public comments of disagreement with the plan to TWC along with the submission.

At the end of the first two-year period, the appropriate chief elected officials and the Local WDB will review the local plan and prepare and submit modifications that reflect any changes in the labor market and economic conditions, factors affecting the implementation of the plan, various changes in financing, changes to the structure of the workforce board, or the need to revise strategies to meet local performance goals. The plan is presented as part of a template supplied by TWC. The TWC questions are written in **bold** font. The Board’s responses are in *italic* font.

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

Workforce Solutions Brazos Valley Board’s (WSBVB) is the publically funded workforce development organization serving the Brazos Valley Workforce Development Area. The Brazos Valley WDA consists of Brazos, Burlison, Grimes, Leon, Madison, Robertson, and Washington counties. The Board’s fiscal and administrative agent is Brazos Valley Council of Government (BVCOG). The Board’s vision is to be the workforce organization of choice for employers and job seekers. The organization’s mission statement is to provide employers with a quality workforce.

The Board’s goals are:

- 1) *Expand collaborations and networks with community-based organizations in key areas such as education, social services and health services.***

Specifically through educating community-based organizations about Workforce and Adult Education and Literacy services, the Workforce Board will develop and implement Memoranda of Understanding that will allow engagement with various agencies so that the workforce board can have more engagement with employers, educational entities, community partners and training providers. The Board will continue to work with area partners to leverage resources to establish shared points of entry that allow jobseekers to receive workforce services through a fail proof effective referral system.

2) Build awareness with Brazos Valley Residents about the benefits and availability of Workforce and Adult Education & Literacy (AEL) services.

Specifically by updating technology to increase visibility and accessibility to workforce services for jobseekers, the Board will promote all community workforce targeted programs in the American Job Centers and will share resources that assist in other partner programs by using electronic and social media. To promote one-stop services, information about available services are available to board members, employers and jobseekers.

3) Coordinate with partners to identify and assess qualified individuals in need of workforce services, by utilizing the established referral system.

Specifically the Board will coordinate with partners to identify and assess qualified jobseekers in need of workforce services, especially veterans, by utilizing the established referral system. The Board will continue to work with area partners to leverage resources and establish a fail proof and effective referral system to address all WIOA defined barriers to employment through Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth program activities. The Board will collaborate with community program providers to enhance the skill level and earnings potential for jobseekers that have significant barriers to employment. The Board will continue to promote all community workforce targeted programs in American Job Centers and to share resources that assist in other partner programs.

4) Promote a robust, holistic one-stop service that includes secondary education, occupational training and intensive case management and support.

Specifically by providing monthly reporting on Outreach activities to jobseekers completed by the workforce center contractor, providing monthly reporting on Workforce and AEL referrals to all Childcare Services customers and monthly jobseeker success stories

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 core programs for the WSBVB include the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), Child Care Services (CCS), Employment Services (ES), Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF or Choices), Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP), Adult Education Literacy Program (AEL), and TANF Non-Custodial Parent Program (NCP). The priority of service focuses on adult career and training services for recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient as well as veterans, spouses of veterans, and foster children. An additional focus is creating opportunities for out of school youth to engage in labor market and career information resources. To accomplish the plan for delivery of the core programs, WSBVB

chooses partners with which they can collaborate to provide access to workforce development and career and training assistance for employers and jobseekers alike. Working with local partners, the Board can enhance services provided to jobseekers and can address jobseeker barriers. Partnerships with employer organizations as well as industry groups ensures that the Board and its contractors understand employer needs and addresses those needs through their program design and workforce center system operation. Through local partnerships, the Board ensures customers are outreached and their barriers addressed. The Board and workforce center contractor also seek partnerships with employer organizations and various industry groups to understand employer needs so they can address any opportunities through program design and workforce center system operations.

The workforce center engages a reciprocal referral process with Vocational Rehabilitation Services to serve customers with disabilities that might present barriers to potential employment. Workforce center personnel continually focus on specific training to assist jobseekers who have disabilities.

Key partnerships and their operational components are:

- *Area Agency on Aging – deliver workforce services for older workers*
- *Blinn College - Non-Certificate Post-Secondary Career & Technical Training Provider, credit certificate and degree training – coordination of core services assessment, education and employment services, AEL Program*
- *Brazos Valley Aging and Disability Resource Center – referral for access to services*
- *Brazos Valley Mental Health and Mental Retardation – referral for employment services for customers with mental health and substance abuse*
- *Department of Family and Protective Services Preparation for Adult Living Program – employment training and support services*
- *AARP Foundation SCSEP – opportunity for older workers to obtain and/or train for meaningful employment*
- *BVAHC Financial Fitness – financial coaching*
- *Project Unity – interagency case management*
- *The Brazos Valley Council on Alcohol and Substance Abuse – referral service*
- *The Office of the Attorney General – employment referral for unemployed/underemployed non-custodial parents*
- *Housing Choice Voucher Program – referral services, training and support*

Each partner plays an important role in providing access to workforce development services. Partner agencies share information on jobseeker needs, business developments, available services to customers, and access to resources to ensure that workforce development services are efficient and not duplicated.

C. High-Performing Board

The actions a Board will take to become or remain a high-performing Board

Board Response:

WSBVB monitors contractor performance monthly. WSBVB reviews any measure at risk of not meeting the required performance to determine if there is a need to implement corrective actions for the contractor. Continued failure to meet required performance by the contractor may result in the development of a technical assistance plan with specific steps to address deficiencies. The Board will ask for assistance if there is failure to meet performance to seek out best practices.

Part 2. Economic and Workforce Analysis

A. Regional Economic and Employment Needs Analysis

- **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**

Board Response:

The Brazos Valley Workforce Development Area (WDA) is located in south central Texas in an area consisting of seven counties: Brazos, Burleson, Grimes, Leon, Madison, Robertson, and Washington. Bryan and College Station are the major cities in the WDA. Cities in the region are presented in Table 1. There are also a number of unincorporated communities in the region. Texas A&M University, located in College Station, is one of the largest employers in the WDA and attracts firms related to high-tech, medical research and agribusiness.

Employers seek job applicants who have mastered soft skills, which include working well with others, taking direction, punctuality, initiative, appropriate dress and demeanor, and being drug free. This last category has proven to be a barrier to many job applicants who have a criminal record or are unable to pass a drug-screening test. The Board contractor works with customers with such barriers to provide counseling to develop work maturity skills and refers these individuals for drug intervention counseling. The goal is to refer qualified, work ready applicants to employment opening.

The Board collaborates with its education partners to provide occupational skills training. Many jobseekers do not have the necessary math and literacy skills to begin skills training for many of the occupations in demand in the region. The workforce center contractor refers these individuals to the adult education and literacy services managed by the WSBVB AEL Program contractor. The AEL program provides the necessary remediation do jobseekers can take advantage of more advanced occupational skills training.

Most of the growing occupations in the region require at least a High School Diploma or high school equivalency to be considered for employment, even in entry level jobs.

The BVCOG Region has experienced and is continuing to experience growth. Regional population has increased by 6.5% since 2015, and is expected to increase by 4.5% between 2020 and 2025. The total working age population for the region is at 302,009 with 176,246 in the labor force. Labor force participation rate trends followed an upward trend up until the recent pandemic, dropping to 56% January 2020 through March 2020. It is currently steadily increasing and as of October 2020 hit a rate of 58.3%, a rate that exceeds participation rates since 2015. Following the population trend, jobs also increased by 7.1% from 2015 to 2020 to a total regional employment of 174,008. Unemployment

was also significantly impacted by the pandemic hitting its highest rate of 5.93% in September 2020. However, it is important to note that it is currently declining. Educational attainment reports show that a little over half of the regional population has attained some college or higher, however the region's percentage of Bachelor's Degree and Associate's Degree possession is below the national average.

The BVCOG Region's largest industries are in Government, Accommodation and Food Services, and Retail Trade. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is yet to be fully seen, but has significantly impacted the Accommodation and Food Services Industries. These areas will be watched closely in the upcoming months. From 2015 to 2020, the greatest percent change in jobs was in Administrative and Support Services, Waste Management and Remediation Services with an increase of 38%. There was a 19% increase in Educational Services and Accommodation and Food Services. The largest Gross Regional Product (GRP) for the regional goods and services produced in 2019 exceeded one billion dollars in both the manufacturing and government industries.

Regional occupation data shows the highest percent increase in change came from Business and Financial Operations Occupations with a little over 50% increase and an additional 2,214 jobs added from 2010-2020. Life, Physical, and Social Science Occupations and Farming, Fishing, and Forestry Occupations experienced a 42% increase from 2010-2020. The occupation with the largest increase in total number of jobs from 2010-2020 included Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations with an increase of 4,530 jobs, Educational Instruction and Library Occupations had an increase of 3,864 jobs and Management Operations had an increase of 2,975 jobs. Looking ahead, the occupations that are predicted to have the highest percent regional growth within the next five years are Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations, Healthcare Support Occupations and Community and Social Service Occupations.

Business and Financial Operations occupations falls mostly in Education and Hospital industries with skills needed in accounting, auditing and financial statements. Soft skill needs focus on operations and management experience. Life, Physical, and Social Science Occupations are also mostly in the education and hospital industries. The skill needs for these occupations include; biology, chemistry and bio-chemistry. Skills are needed in agriculture, poultry science and food safety.

For the emerging regional occupations in Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations, Healthcare Support Occupations and Community and Social Service Occupations, jobseekers will need some skills training to be competitive for available positions. Although the Food Preparation Occupation has a supply in jobs in the Region that is higher than the national average, candidates to fill positions will still need some training to be competitive with their competition. In the last 12 months, 331 employers posted 3,381 unique job postings. This occupation will require some skills training in restaurant operations, food service and food preparation, communications, sanitation and customer service.

Occupations in Healthcare Support will continue to grow over the next five years. Currently most occupations in this industry are in the Home Health Care Services and Skilled Nursing Facilities. Currently, there are 273 employers competing for employees in this occupation. Hard skills needed are nursing, caregiving, vital signs and medical records with common necessary skills being communication, customer service and compassion skills. There were 103 degrees/certificates that were awarded for this occupation in 2019 with seven (7) programs in the region that can produce degrees and 50 programs that can train for this job. The Texas Workforce Commission Labor Market and Career Information Department provides industry and occupation projection tables. The cities located in the Brazos Valley WDA are listed in Table The major industries by level of employment are listed in Table 2.

Table 1: Cities in Brazos Valley WDA

Anderson	Jewett
Bedias	Kurten
Bremond	Leona
Brenham	Madisonville
Bryan	Marquez
Buffalo	Midway
Burton	Navasota
Caldwell	Normangee
Calvert	Oakwood
Centerville	Snook
College Station	Somerville
Franklin	Todd Mission
Hearne	Wixon Valley

Table 2: Industries by Employment (2nd Quarter 2020, Percent Change)

Industry	Employment	% of Total	% Quarterly Change	% Yearly Change
Natural Resources and Mining	4,572	3.4%	-7.4%	-11.1%
Construction	7,886	5.8%	-3.4%	-4.2%
Manufacturing	10,361	7.6%	-2.9%	-4.3%
Trade, Transportation and Utilities	22,510	16.5%	-5.8%	-5.8%
Information	1,328	1.0%	-14.7%	-16.3%
Financial Activities	5,190	3.8%	-3.0%	-5.0%
Professional and Business Services	11,128	8.2%	-2.1%	-0.5%
Education and Health Services	49,034	36.0%	-7.8%	-3.1%
Leisure and Hospitality	14,317	10.5%	-30.2%	-28.8%
Other Services	2,634	1.9%	-13.8%	-14.9%
Public Administration	7,403	5.4%	-1.5%	3.5%

Source: TWC LMI Profile

As presented in Table 2, the region's employment is concentrated in five industries: Education and Health Services, Trade, Transportation and Utilities, Leisure and Hospitality, Manufacturing and Professional and Business Services. Construction and Natural Resources and Mining also add to employment industries.

Employment by ownership indicates 67% of jobseekers employed are in private sector jobs. State government accounts for 21% of employment in the region. Local government employs 11% of individuals in the labor market and Federal government employment is at 1%. (Source: Texas Workforce Commission Labor Market and Career Information Economic Profile for Brazos Valley September 2016)

Employment by industry shows 36.0% of employment is in Education and Health Services. The next largest sector is Trade, Transportation and Utilities at 16.5%. Manufacturing employment represents 7.6% of the total. Professional and Business Services is 8.2% of employment by industry. Construction accounts for 5.8% of

employment in the region. The trend shows declining employment in all of the 12 industries identified by TWC information. Education and Health Services, Leisure and Hospitality and Professional and Business Services show the least decline. Natural Resources and Mining declined at a rate of 11.1%.

Optimizing economic growth will require well-trained workers across a spectrum of occupations. The occupations with the highest overall growth tend to occur in education, government, accommodation and food services and health care fields. Technical occupations are important occupations also. Between 2015-2040, the Brazos Valley Region will need workers with Bachelor and Associate degrees or some other type of postsecondary training to meet growth and replacement needs.

The Texas Workforce Commission Labor Market and Career Information Department provides Boards with industry and occupation projection tables.

Projected Employment by Industry to 2028

SOC	Industry	2018 Annual Average Employment	2028 Annual Average Employment	Number change 2018-2028	Percent Growth 2018 - 2028
7225	Restaurants and Other Eating Places	11,827	14,278	2,451	20.7
6113	Colleges, Universities, and Professional Schools	24,113	26,121	2,008	8.3
67	Self-Employed Workers	25,792	27,255	1,463	5.7
5617	Services to Buildings and Dwellings	1,817	3,016	1,199	66.0
5614	Business Support Services	1,030	2,176	1,146	111.3
6111	Elementary and Secondary Schools	9,581	10,598	1,017	10.6
6221	General Medical and Surgical Hospitals	3,918	4,839	921	23.5
2371	Utility System Construction	943	1,488	545	57.8
2131	Support Activities for Mining	2,020	2,533	513	25.4
5419	Other Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	871	1,320	449	51.5
4450	Food and beverage stores (4451 and 4452 only)	3,307	3,701	394	11.9
7211	Traveler Accommodation	1,433	1,782	349	24.4
2382	Building Equipment Contractors	2,325	2,645	320	13.8
6214	Outpatient Care Centers	320	616	296	92.5
4238	Machinery, Equipment, and Supplies Merchant Wholesalers	747	1,010	263	35.2
5611	Office Administrative Services	627	884	257	41.0
4441	Building Material and Supplies Dealers	1,243	1,498	255	20.5
930000	Local Government, Except. Education & Hospitals	5,083	5,305	222	4.4
7139	Other Amusement and Recreation Industries	1,332	1,536	204	15.3

SOC	Industry	2018 Annual Average Employment	2028 Annual Average Employment	Number change 2018-2028	Percent Growth 2018 - 2028
5416	Management, Scientific, and Technical Consulting Services	762	961	199	26.1
8129	Other Personal Services	192	391	199	103.6
6241	Individual and Family Services	564	744	180	31.9
3023	Automotive Repair and Maintenance	911	1,085	174	19.1
920000	State Government, Except. Education & Hospitals	4,738	4,907	169	3.6
6216	Home Health Care Services	1,459	1,619	160	11.0
4471	Gasoline Stations	1,463	1,623	160	10.9

Source: TWC LMI Profile

No industry growth is expected in the Oil and Gas Extraction industry, which is projected to decline 11.1%. Activities for Mining will also decline. Services industries are expected to have substantial gains in employment. For example, the Personal Care Aides categories is expected to see an increase of about 30.7%. The services sector is projected to generate a majority of net new jobs through 2028. The government sector, which includes employment at Texas A&M as well as public schools, is also likely to experience significant job expansion.

Target occupations are presented in the table below. These are the occupations available for WIOA training subsidies in the Brazos Valley for eligible customers. The list presents several new occupations for the 2021 plan. New occupations are Service Unit Operators and Heating, Air Conditioning and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers. The criteria for consideration as a target occupation are at least 10 average openings annually, a \$14.00 an hour wage or more, and training of two (2) years or less. For the occupations requiring a Bachelor's degree, the Board may cover the costs of the last two years of training. Many of the occupations that show a Bachelor's degree also have one (1) and two (2) year certificate programs that gain individuals entry level jobs in the occupation. Occupations that do not appear to show sufficient annual openings (10 or more) may be included in the target list if evidence of potential future openings are submitted to the Board as "local wisdom".

Target Occupations List

SOC	Occupational Title
11-1021	General and Operations Managers
15-1132	Software Developers, Applications
15-1151	Computer User Support Specialists
19-4021	Biological Technicians
19-4041	Geological and Petroleum Technicians
25-2021	Elementary School Teachers
25-2022	Middle School Teachers
25-2031	Secondary School Teachers
29-1141	Registered Nurses
29-2021	Dental Hygienists
29-2052	Pharmacy Technicians
29-2055	Surgical Technologists
29-2061	Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses
31-2021	Physical Therapy Assistants
31-9091	Dental Assistants
33-3051	Police and Sheriff's Patrol Officers
43-3031	Bookkeeping, Accounting and Auditing Clerks
43-6013	Medical Secretary
47-1011	Supervisors of Construction and Extraction Workers
47-2031	Carpenters
47-2073	Operating Engineers and Other Construction Equipment Operators
47-2111	Electricians
47-2152	Plumbers, Pipe Fitters and Steamfitters
47-5013	Service Unit Operators
49-2022	Telecommunications Equipment Installers and Repairers, Except Line Installers
49-3023	Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics
49-9021	Heating, Air Conditioning and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers
49-9041	Industrial Machinery Mechanics
49-9051	Electrical Power-Line Installers and Repairers
51-4041	Machinists
51-4121	Welders, Cutters, Solderers and Brazers
53-3022	Bus Drivers, School or Special Client
53-3032	Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers

B. Knowledge and Skills Analysis

An analysis of knowledge and skills needed to meet employers' needs and employment needs in in-demand industry sectors, in-demand occupations, and target occupations.

Board Response:

Part 2, Section A above, discusses employer needs in general. Specific skills needs are dependent on the occupation; however, minimum general requirements for jobseekers include the ability to speak, read and write at least at the 12th grade level, the ability to understand high school level math and possess some experience in the occupation field or industry.

Employers need applicants with basic skills such as active learning, active listening, critical thinking, reading comprehension, monitoring and assessing performance, using scientific methods, speaking to convey information and writing ability. Employers need applicants who demonstrate good social skills which include coordination, instructing others, negotiating, persuasion, service orientation and social perceptiveness, and successful interpersonal relations. Jobseekers learn these skills through work ready instruction and on the job experience. The workforce center business services unit staff works with employers who are willing to provide applicants help with acquiring and advancing these skills and abilities.

For specific occupations, applicants need cognitive, physical, psychomotor, and sensory abilities. Cognitive abilities include skills such as deductive reasoning, fluency of ideas, inductive reasoning, information ordering, mathematical reasoning, oral comprehension and expression. ONETonline.org specifies the required skills needed for specific occupations. The workforce contractor tests and assesses jobseeker skills to connect job opportunities to individuals.

C. Labor Force Analysis and Trends

An analysis of regional workforce, including employment data, unemployment data, labor market trends, educational and skill levels, individuals with barriers to employment.

Board Response:

According to the Texas Workforce Commission report the unemployment rate for the Brazos Valley in September 2019 was 2.9% compared to 3.5% for the State of Texas. In September 2020, the unemployment rate for the Brazos Valley dropped to 5.9% compared to 8.3% for the State of Texas. Due to employment closures caused by the COVID-19 virus, the Texas unemployment rate and the Brazos Valley unemployment rate dropped dramatically. The U.S. unemployment rate for the same period was 7.9%. The civilian labor force in Brazos Valley increased to 175,456 as of December 2020.

Industries that saw a drop in employment in the second quarter 2019 were Natural Resources and Mining (-7.4), Manufacturing (-2.9%), Trade, Transportation and Utilities (-5.8%), Financial Activities (-3.0%), and Information (-14.7%). No industries experienced an increase in employment.

Population Change 2010 to 2020 Brazos Valley WDA				
<i>Area</i>	<i>Population Source</i>	<i>2010 Population</i>	<i>2020 Population Estimate</i>	<i>% change</i>
<i>Brazos County</i>	<i>Texas Demographic Center</i>	<i>194,851</i>	<i>233,071</i>	<i>19.6</i>
<i>Burleson County</i>	<i>Texas Demographic Center</i>	<i>17,187</i>	<i>18,361</i>	<i>6.8</i>
<i>Grimes County</i>	<i>Texas Demographic Center</i>	<i>26,604</i>	<i>29,730</i>	<i>11.8</i>
<i>Leon County</i>	<i>Texas Demographic Center</i>	<i>16,801</i>	<i>17,649</i>	<i>5.0</i>
<i>Madison County</i>	<i>Texas Demographic Center</i>	<i>13,664</i>	<i>14,088</i>	<i>3.1</i>
<i>Robertson County</i>	<i>Texas Demographic Center</i>	<i>16,622</i>	<i>17,613</i>	<i>6.0</i>
<i>Washington County</i>	<i>Texas Demographic Center</i>	<i>33,718</i>	<i>35,612</i>	<i>5.6</i>
<i>Total</i>		<i>319,447</i>	<i>366,124</i>	<i>14.6</i>

The population table above, shows an overall population growth of 19.6% for 2020 (Texas Demographic Center) and TWC Tracer LMI projections. The bulk of this growth is in Brazos County. Grimes and Washington had growth at 11.8% and 5.6% respectively. Madison County's increase was 3.1%. Leon and Burleson Counties had a growth increase of 5.0% and 6.8% respectively. Robertson County had a population increase of 6.0%. The ethnicity of the Brazos WDA consists of 79.6% Anglo, 11.2% Black, and 26.2% Hispanic. Projections for 2025 show a dramatic increase in Hispanics with 52.51% Anglo, 11.98% Black and 28.87% Hispanic. The estimated total number of homeless persons across reporting categories is 754 for the year 10/1/2015 – 9/30/2016 in our seven counties per Twin City Mission Inc. The categories include persons in families in emergency shelters; persons in families in transitional housing, individuals in emergency shelters, individuals in transitional housing and individuals in permanent supportive housing. Forty two percent were ages 13 to 61. According to Texas Workforce Commission estimates for September 2019 Brazos Valley had a civilian labor force of 174,381. Unemployment for September 2019 was 5,052 or 2.9% of the labor force, which is a slight decrease (.9%) from September 2015. Data by county is presented below. Grimes and Leon Counties are experiencing a significantly higher unemployment rate at 8.34% and 8.91%. The table below presents labor force data by county.

Civilian Labor Force Estimates for Brazos Valley WDA

September 2020

AREA	CLF	EMP	UNEMP	RATE
BRAZOS	121,520	115,598	5,922	4.87%
BURLESON	8,573	8,049	524	6.11%
GRIMES	11,363	10,415	948	8.34%
LEON	6,366	5,799	567	8.91%
MADISON	4,514	4,147	367	8.13%
ROBERTSON	7,837	7,321	516	6.58%
WASHINGTON	15,283	14,355	928	6.07%
WDA TOTAL	175,456	165,684	9,772	5.57%

Source: TWC LMCI, December 2020

Education plays a key role in obtaining employment at a self-sufficient wage. US Census data estimates indicate the educational attainment of person 25 years of age and above is below the national average for attainment of a high school diploma. The region's educational attainment ranges from a high of 87.2 percent, near the national average, to a low of 80.6% in Grimes County. The Texas average is 83.76%. Five counties in the region are below the state average. The presence of Texas A&M University in Brazos County probably contributes to the higher attainment percentage for Brazos Valley. Overall, there is opportunity to increase the region's workforce. This factor could weigh negatively for companies seeking a skilled educated workforce and result in the region being less competitive in national and global markets. Workforce education levels are a key component for location decisions for expanding companies. The workforce will partner with area ISDs to focus on improving the high school graduation rates in all counties, especially the ones with a higher percentage that is below the national average.

High school graduate or higher, percent of persons age 25+, by County Brazos WDA

County	Educational Attainment County.	Educational Attainment US
Brazos	87.2	83.7
Burleson	82.5	83.7
Grimes	80.6	83.7
Leon	81.8	83.7
Madison	80.8	83.7
Robertson	84.5	83.7
Washington	86.7	83.7

Source: US Census ACS 5 year estimates 2015 - 2019

Percent of Persons with a Disability under 65 Years of Age

County	% Persons with Disability under age 65 by County	US Average
Brazos	6.0	7.9
Burleson	10.8	7.9
Grimes	8.3	7.9
Leon	14.3	7.9
Madison	9.6	7.9
Robertson	10.2	7.9
Washington	9.6	7.9

Source: US Census ACS 5 Year Survey

The table above presents the percent of persons with a disability under age 65 by county in the Brazos WDA. The region has significantly greater proportion of individuals with disabilities than the national average, except for Brazos Valley. The US average is 7.9%. This increase in the number of job seekers with disabilities in the region shows that attention is needed to add additional accommodations for training for skills in the workplace.

Percent of Persons in Poverty by County

County	% Persons in Poverty	US Average
Brazos	20.0	13.6
Burleson	13.8	13.6
Grimes	15.9	13.6
Leon	14.4	13.6
Madison	17.8	13.6
Robertson	20.7	13.6
Washington	10.6	13.6

Source: US Census ACS 5 Year Survey

Poverty rates for the Brazos WDA are presented in the table above. The national average for persons in poverty is 13.6%. Washington County is the only county in the Brazos Valley Region that does not exceed the national poverty rate. The Texas average is 16.0%. Three of the seven counties in the region exceed the state rate for percent of persons in poverty. The more urbanized Brazos County is experiencing nearly double the national rate. This represents a significant challenge for workforce development programs and social services. Individuals most in need of skills training are often unable to afford attending training without some form of income support or stipend, which are generally not available in workforce programs.

Number of Veterans in Brazos Valley WDA by County

County	Number of Veterans
Brazos	8,371
Burleson	1,217
Grimes	1,901
Leon	1,313
Madison	889
Robertson	797
Washington	2,139
Total	16,627

Source: US Census ACS 5 Year Survey

The table above presents the number of veterans by county in the Brazos Valley WDA by county. The region has a significant population of veterans with 50.0% of the total in Brazos County alone. Workforce development services to veterans are a priority at both the local, state and national levels. In addition to skills needs some veterans also face barriers to employment due to drug use, PTSD, homelessness and psychological problems affecting their ability to complete training and return to the labor force. While many veterans have social and family networks and resources to tap into for support, some veterans are in need of special targeted assistance both for skills training and for referral to other programs to address their barriers. The Board works with Veterans programs to ensure that veterans receive assistance to become gainfully employed and address difficulties with adjusting to civilian life.

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.

Board Response:

The Workforce Solutions Brazos Valley Board is the primary planning and operational entity for workforce development programs in the Region. Workforce Solutions Brazos Valley Board is also responsible for the public funding allocated to the Region for adult education and literacy services. The Board works with its partner agencies to ensure that access to services is available for all job seekers in the region and that employers are provided with a pipeline of qualified applicants for available jobs. The Board’s mission is to provide employers with a quality workforce so that they may be competitive in the local and regional economy. Workforce Solutions Brazos Valley partners with entities to provide access to workforce development programs

through the workforce center system and through childcare services to provide child care for parents who are working or are in training. Jobseekers go through a series of trainings to become work ready to ensure that they are ready to interact professionally with employers. These WSBVB Certified Jobseekers are provided priority access to job fairs and other workforce center programs.

The Board encourages regional employers to actively participate in the workforce development system by providing a high level of quality and responsiveness to the needs of employers. To seek employer input into the operation of business services activities, the WSBVB convenes regular meetings with representatives of major employers in the Region, requires workforce center contractor staff to attend economic development meetings and functions to represent the workforce development system and provides labor market and career information to employers. The Business Services staff works with employers to better understand the employer's business and industry sector, to anticipate employer needs regarding recruiting, screening and hiring qualified applicants and to obtain employer feedback on the quality of services provided to them by the workforce center contractor. The workforce center is available to employers for hiring events, interviewing and applicant screening, labor market and career information research and explanation of labor law requirements.

The Board's workforce center contractor implements customized training and on-the-job training for employers. Training can be specific to the employer operations and procedures and can be adjusted as needed. Area employers represent more than fifty percent of the workforce board's membership and are active participants in the development of strategies and actions to meet employer needs. On-going oversight of programs and activities by board members through committee meetings, planning sessions, and industry-specific employer meetings ensure employer needs are understood and anticipated in designing programs and services. The Board holds the workforce center contractor to strict standards of conduct in outreaching businesses for workforce development services. Business Services staff reports on employer contacts made, new hires made, and the current and changing economic climate in the region.

WSBVB jobseekers have access to essential skills training through the workforce center's virtual workshops and webinars. The workforce center offers various five-minute professional training modules that cover topics pertinent to gaining job readiness soft skills for employment as well as resume writing, labor market and career information and interviewing skills. Jobseekers can access these modules on demand. The goal is to meet the specific needs of each jobseeker with customized resources and services.

WSBVB prioritizes services to those experiencing barriers to employment (poor work history, lack of work experience, lack of educational or occupational skills attainment, dislocation from high-wage, high benefit employment, low levels of literacy, low levels of English proficiency, disability status, homelessness, ex-offender status, veterans and foster children).

The Board's workforce center contractor outreaches jobseekers with barriers, assesses their eligibility and need for services and develops a service plan that addresses the barriers to provide jobseekers access to employment, training, education and support services. Supportive services provided by the workforce center contractor and agency partners help eliminate barriers. Working with partners helps to provide streamlined services that assist customers in addressing barriers, realizing their goal of skills attainment and employment.

Career Navigators examine the jobseeker's employability and develop plans for making the jobseeker marketable for available jobs and occupational demands in the Region by recommending appropriate academic or vocational programs within the center that concentrate on developing job readiness training to hone interview skills, life skills and job search skills. Employment specialists have access to the Texas Workforce Commission's WorkInTexas database of current job listings to match participants with jobs. The workforce center's job readiness classes focus on the proper completion of work applications, preparing resumes, performing mock interviews and the accomplishment of practical training that readies the jobseeker for competition in the job market. Research has shown that ex-offenders with jobs are less likely to commit new crimes. The Board's goal is to develop relationships with employers willing to hire ex-offenders and to help ex-offenders secure well-paid employment.

Programs operated through the workforce center system are:

Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA) – provides assessment, training, case management and job placement services to eligible individuals. In addition, workforce center services in the form of resource rooms for job searching are available to all. Services are provided to adults, dislocated workers, and youth especially

out of school youth, to include individuals with barriers to employment and who are eligible for services based on income criteria or barriers. Services are accessed through the local workforce centers staffed by the workforce center contractor, who was selected through a competitive procurement process.

Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), Choices – Choices provides a foundation for customers to transition from public assistance to work and self-sufficiency through employment-related services. Choices participants are referred from HHS, tested, assessed and counseled in basic job search techniques to begin their job search. The expectation is that a participant will attain the necessary job skills to obtain a better paying job and eventually leave the TANF program. Activities include assessment, job search, subsidized and unsubsidized employment and educational services for individuals that have not completed secondary school.

Non-Custodial Parent Program (NCP) – The program targets unemployed or underemployed non-custodial parents who are behind on child support payments. Services include job search, assessment, intensive case management, development of an employment plan and weekly contact with program staff. Workforce center staff works with the Office of the Attorney General and Judges to support and maximize the participant's journey to sustainability.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program - Promotes long-term self-sufficiency and independence by preparing Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) recipients for employment through work-related education and training activities. Activities include job search, work experience, workfare, non-vocational training and unsubsidized employment. Participants have to meet work requirements to continue receiving SNAP benefits.

Employment Services - Provides comprehensive recruiting, job search and related services to businesses and job seekers to connect employers seeking workers and individuals seeking employment. The program provides recruitment services for employers with job openings, job search assistance, job referral and job placement assistance for job seekers, and reemployment services for Unemployment Insurance claimants. Coupled with Employment Services is the business services unit which works in partnership with the ES staff to provide outreach and job matching services for area employers, provide facilities for employer hiring events, advise employers on labor laws and screens applicants for prerequisites prior to job referrals. The business services unit also serves as the means by which the Board and contractor listen and understand employer needs and tailor workforce development services to meet those needs.

Child Care Services - Subsidizes child care services for eligible, low-income families, which promotes long-term self-sufficiency by enabling parents to work, attend school or participate in job training. Eligible families of children under the age of 13 may receive child care financial assistance so that parents can work, attend school, or participate in training. Eligible families may choose from providers that meet local and state requirements. The Child Care services program also provides information to customers about child care options. Child care providers can obtain information for provider certification, attendance tracking and child care quality improvements.

Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) – Addressing educational deficiencies is the beginning to effective academic and career options that will allow jobseekers to achieve the successful completion of courses needed to attain needed skills. As the labor market becomes more specialized and economies demand higher levels of skill, most upwardly mobile positions require at the very least a high school diploma or equivalent. Individuals with limited English proficiency will find it difficult to acquire jobs paying a self-sufficient wage. The Texas economy is growing rapidly so employers need access to every available skilled worker. Lack of a high school diploma or lack of English proficiency reduces the number of qualified job seekers in the labor force. Adult Education Programs provide classes for High School Equivalency Programs and Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Programs. In these classes job seekers can receive tutoring and small group sessions for adults at the 6th grade level or below. Common reasons for High School Equivalency and LEP participants not having received a high school diploma include leaving high school early, the inability to pass required courses or mandatory achievement tests, the need to work, personal problems, and wanting to get into college early. Workforce Solutions Brazos Valley has partnered with BVCOG to provide High School Equivalency classes throughout the region. BVCOG contracts with Blinn College to manage the Adult Education & Literacy classes in all counties except Madison County.

The Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) program serves adults who are at least 16 years old and/or are beyond

the compulsory school attendance age, and meet any of the following criteria: function below the high school level, lack a high school credential or, are unable to speak, read or write in English. Through the Boards AEL program consumers can get their high school equivalency certification as well as work towards their citizenship. Workplace literacy classes provided to employers under the local AEL program provides incumbent workers with access to employer based certifications such as hospitality industry certificates. Intensive College Readiness AEL classes offered by WSBVB prepare consumers to take the college entrance exam and successfully transition into post-secondary academic or occupational training certifications. The effectiveness of workforce development programs is measured by the Texas Workforce Commission through its contracted performance measures regarding program outcomes and placement of customers into employment.

Part 3: Core Programs

A. Workforce Development System

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).**

Board Response:

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Adult, Dislocated Worker, In School Youth, Out of School Youth, Child Care Services (CCS), Employment Services (ES), Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF or Choices), Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP), Adult Education Literacy Program (AEL), and TANF Non-Custodial Parent (NCP).

The core workforce development programs that WSBVB provides through the workforce center system include the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), providing Adults, Dislocated Workers and Youth with skills training, job search assistance, support services, counseling, case management, work experience and placement services; Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF or Choices program), assisting Choices participants in gaining employment experience, workforce maturity, and access to placement in a job paying a self-sustaining wage; Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), providing program recipients with job search assistance and referral and placement in jobs paying a living wage; Adult Education Literacy Program (AEL) that supports an increase in education and work-related outcomes including secondary and post-secondary training outcomes; and TANF Non-Custodial Parent (NCP), aiding non-custodial parents with education, job training and workforce services. These programs are supported by the Child Care Services Program, which provides childcare assistance to families with parent(s) who are working or in training.

The Workforce Solutions Brazos Valley Workforce Board is committed to preparing students with disabilities to have a competitive and integrated employment experience. This will be accomplished by Workforce Solutions and Vocational Rehabilitation staff directing students to participate in employability skills training, work readiness training career exploration activities, work experience and postsecondary education. The Board's Student HireAbility Program is designed to create a long-term sustainable effort of collaboration based on

implementing processes that can effectively deliver services efficiently. The goal is to identify services, partners and programs for students in the 14-22 year old range, particularly those that are transitioning to employment. Vocational Rehabilitation Services determines the services needed by individuals with disabilities. The Board works with the workforce center contractor to determine how services are being delivered and to identify gaps or duplication in resources and services that exist. This includes gathering data and information, creating community and employer awareness and organizing and engaging service providers.

The State Plan identifies a number of strategies tied to individual state agencies objectives to meet the Texas Workforce Investment Council's State Plan. The vision is "an innovative, world-class Texas workforce system ensures success in the dynamic global economy". The mission of the workforce development system is to position Texas as a global economic leader by:

- *Growing and sustaining a competitive workforce*
- *Aligning programs with employer needs*
- *Integrating system services*
- *Leveraging partnerships*

The State Plan identifies four goals for its partner agencies. Below is each goal statement and how WSBVB will support each goal.

Goal 1: Focus on Employers

Board Response: WSBVB focuses on employer needs through the establishment of its business services unit, through the operation of labor exchange services under the Wagner Peyser Act, through employer membership on its board and through its work with employers to outreach veterans to find quality employment. The Board workforce center staff interacts with employers daily with one dominating mission – to listen to what employers to understand their business needs and to ensure that information is disseminated to staff and Board members who make program decisions. The Board works with providers of career and technical education programs to ensure that graduates connect with the workforce center system and gain the competencies needed to meet employer job skill requirements.

Goal 2: Engage in Partnerships

The Board collaborates with the education community to provide funding for occupational skills training resulting in creating a pipeline that can move secondary school graduates into the labor market or on to post-secondary education opportunities. The Board works with Vocational Rehabilitation Services to ensure that job seekers with disabilities have access to employment opportunities and access to training, workforce center services and job placement. The Board also works with community partners to assist customers with any life challenges they experience while they are working or in training. The Board makes referrals to agencies that have the resources and programs necessary to address barriers to employment that are not specifically addressed in workforce development programs. The Board collaborates with the Adult Education Program to provide support for participants in high school equivalency programs and limited English proficiency programs.

Goal 3: Align System Elements

The Board is works to align programs to ensure all students can complete areas of study, earn credentials and gain employment skills. The Board gives special emphasis is given to students and youth with disabilities to position them for training and employment or post-secondary

education. The Board will work with education entities to support the development of career and technical education courses that will enhance transition services for students and youth with disabilities and allow them the ability to assimilate into employment and postsecondary opportunities.

Goal 4: Improve and Integrate Programs

The focus of this goal is to accelerate employment and improve efficiencies through shared resources to create new opportunities for customers and stakeholders. The TWC strategy is directed at expanding self-service and distance learning options for the delivery of workforce services and professional development for childcare providers. TWC is charged with enhancing the ease of access to labor market information tools. The Board supports improvements in efficiencies to provide services to rural areas and to improve self-service capabilities within the workforce center system. Local jobseekers and employers use WorkInTexas to access information that facilitates the connection between employer and job seeker. Employers can discover jobseeker skills and capabilities. Jobseekers can understand the requirements for becoming a successful job candidate. The Board works with Vocational Rehabilitation Services and the Adult Education and Literacy staff to incorporate their services into the workforce development system in the region.

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

Minimum Plan Requirements:

- a. A description of the workforce development system in the workforce area that identifies programs included in the system.**

Board Response:

See Part 3A. The core programs that WSBVB has planning and oversight responsibility for include the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), Child Care Services (CCS), Employment Services (ES), Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF or Choices), Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP), Adult Education Literacy (AEL), and TANF Non-custodial Parent (NCP). The priority of service focuses on adult career and training services for recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient as well as veterans, spouses of veterans, and foster children. An additional focus is creating opportunities for the engagement of out of school youth in the labor market. In order to carry out the plan for delivery of the core programs WSBVB selects contractors through a competitive procurement process. That process results in one or more contractors charged with providing access to workforce development and career and training assistance for employers and job seekers. Through local partnerships, the Board is able to ensure that youth customers are outreached and barriers addressed. Partnerships with employer organizations as well as industry groups ensures that the Board contractors understand employer needs and can address those needs through their program design and workforce center system operation.

The workforce center contractor engages the Youth population in their Youth Career Pathway Program Model to experience a robust and meaningful launch into employment. Designed activities support career goals and individual strengths and address needs and challenges youth may have.

Youth receive targeted assistance with any deficiencies. The experience begins with career exploration with a Career Navigator. Updates to programs are listed on Facebook and Twitter, keeping Youth informed about hiring events, upcoming classes and training opportunities.

Key partnerships and their operational components are:

- *Area Agency on Aging – deliver workforce services for older workers*
- *Blinn College - Non-Certificate Post-Secondary Career & Technical Training Provider, credit certificate and degree training – coordination of core services assessment, education and employment services; coordination of adult education and literacy program*
- *Brazos Valley Aging and Disability Resource Center – access to services*
- *Brazos Valley Mental Health and Mental Retardation – referral for employment services for customers with mental health and substance abuse*
- *Department of Family and Protective Services Preparation for Adult Living Program – employment training and support services*
- *AARP Foundation SCSEP. – opportunity for older workers to train for meaningful employment*
- *BVAHC Financial Fitness – financial coaching*
- *Project Unity – interagency case management*
- *The Brazos Valley Council on Alcohol and Substance Abuse – referral service*
- *The Office of the Attorney General – employment referral for unemployed/underemployed non-custodial parents*
- *Housing Choice Voucher Program – family self-sufficiency, employment referral services, training and support*

Each partner plays an important role in providing access to workforce development services. Partner agencies share information on customer needs, business developments, provide services to customers, and share resources where available to ensure that workforce development services are efficient and non-duplicative.

Part 4: One-Stop Service Delivery

A. One-Stop Service Delivery System

Boards must include a description of the one-stop delivery system in the workforce area.

- **How the Board will ensure the continuous improvement of eligible providers and how providers will meet the employment needs of local employers, workers, and jobseekers**

Board Response:

The Board encourages employers to work with area training providers to ensure that training meets the employer's needs and such training is within the capacity of the training provider to implement. Tracking of current performance in graduation rates and job placements is one method the Board uses to determine the effectiveness of training programs. In addition, both the local community college and area employers are represented on the Board.

- **How the Board will facilitate access to services provided through the one-stop delivery system, including to remote areas, through the use of technology and other means.**

A large portion of the Region's population lives in areas that has limited communications infrastructure. The typical average revenue per user is low, and the rural environment poses numerous economical and operational difficulties such as rough terrain, limited power supply and dearth of skilled labor. However, the Board collaborates with the Brazos Valley Council of Governments Brazos Valley 2020 Vision to provide broadband internet service to the rural workforce centers. Many of the services offered by the Workforce Center are available via the internet. This partnership allows customers to access workforce services such as WorkInTexas (WIT) and other TWC and workforce center websites for information about employment and available services along with and virtual services such as training modules. The Brazos Valley Council of Government website also has a wealth of information concerning programs offered. Workforce Solutions of the Brazos Valley has a robust website, bvjobs.org, which offers an abundance of information on programs and services available at the workforce centers in the region. There is information on the resources at the workforce center, labor market and career information, job search tools, links and resources, and the events calendar, which features, employer hiring events, and other events related to employment in the Brazos Valley. The Workforce Center Facebook and Twitter pages offer live hiring events and information about Workforce Center training and events, recent job postings and informational employment articles that assist jobseekers with job readiness skills, interviewing skills and resume development. The workforce center contractor offers

- **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 Board's internal monitoring ensures that its activities are in strict compliance with all non-discrimination and ADA requirements. The Texas Workforce Commission also periodically monitors for EEO requirements to include ADA accessibility requirements for physical facilities. Any deficiencies are noted and immediately addressed in a corrective action plan to bring the

deficiency up to compliance. Staff is trained in the EEO and ADA requirements. Required notices are prominently posted in public areas of the workforce centers as well as staff office area. Individuals assessed as needing accommodation for their specific disability are provided that accommodation through the workforce center services or through a partner agency, such as Vocational Rehabilitation Services or the Aging & Disability Resource Center. Accommodations are noted in the customer's employment plan and in their case notes.

- **The roles and resource contributions of the one-stop partners**

Every one-stop partner in the workforce center system plays a role to provide services to shared customers. Depending on specific grant requirements, partner agencies provide services that may not be available through workforce development funding, such as adaptive equipment for disabled jobseekers, special counseling for personal crises management and financial literacy counseling. Partners support the overall service blend to customers entering the workforce center system. If necessary, the Board works with partner agencies to pay for a share of the costs of the workforce center systems physical space, maintenance and utilities.

B. Cooperative Agreements

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.

Board Response:

Below is a list of WSBVB partner agencies. WSBVB partners with these agencies to enhance services to jobseekers and address any barriers they may have. WSBVB continues to identify partners that can provide needed services for jobseekers. Once identified, the Board will develop a Memorandum of Understanding with the agency and work with the workforce center contractor to create a referral process for job seekers who need the barrier addresses. Memoranda of Understanding are in Appendix A.

Cooperative agreements:

- *Area Agency on Aging*
- *Blinn College*
- *Brazos Valley Aging and Disability Resource Center*
- *Brazos Valley Mental Health and Mental Retardation and The Brazos Valley Council on Alcohol and Substance Abuse*
- *Department of Family and Protective Services Preparation for Adult Living Program*
- *AARP Foundation SCSEP*
- *BVAHC Financial Fitness*
- *Project Unity*
- *The Office of the Attorney General*
- *Housing Choice Voucher Program*

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

Boards must include a description of the strategies and services that will be used in the workforce area to do 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 and strengthen links between the one-stop delivery system and unemployment insurance programs.

Board Response:

The workforce center staff works with individuals receiving unemployment insurance (UI) to ensure a rapid re-entry into the workforce and the success in gaining employment at a self-sufficiency wage. Assistance for UI claimants includes help with accessing the UI system to maintain their eligibility, help with registration in WorkInTexas and referrals to job opportunities.

The Brazos Valley Council of Governments (BVCOG) Community and Economic Development staff supports on-going communication and regional planning goals within the seven-county region. Through a strong emphasis on community and economic development, BVCOG staff works with city and county officials to concentrate on rural transportation planning, economic development, small business funding, community development, grant writing, demographic interpretation, and GIS and mapping services. Workforce development staff and BVCOG staff meet regularly with economic development organizations in the Region to discuss employer needs. The group includes chambers of commerce, economic development foundations and city economic development departments. Though this collaboration, employers can identify skill grants needed to enhance manufacturing production or employee productivity. Forum goals include assisting member governments, industrial and economic development foundations. This collaboration creates visibility for workforce development systems and allows Board and contractor staff to stay updated on the changing economic circumstances in the region to be ready to respond to employer needs.

The Board encourages regional employers to be active participants in the workforce development system. The Business Services Unit provides a high level of quality and responsiveness to employer needs by seeking employer input into the operation of business services activities. Business Services meets with major employers in the Region to discuss industry workforce and training essentials. The Board and contractor staff attend economic development meetings and functions to provide information to employers. The Business Services staff also works with employers to understand their business and industry sector. Business Services tries to anticipate employer needs regarding recruiting, screening and hiring qualified applicants and to obtain employer feedback on the quality of services provided by the workforce center contractor. The workforce centers sponsor virtual hiring events and are the source for jobseeker labor market and career information.

The Board has the ability to conduct customized training as well as on-the-job training if these strategies best fit employer needs. In either strategy a customized training plan is developed for potential hires giving trainees actual experience in the employer's business prior to being hired. Training is specific to the employer's operations and procedures and is adjusted to changing circumstances and specific needs of the trainee as well as the business.

D. Coordination of Wagner-Peyser Services

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.

Board Response:

The workforce center contractor is responsible for all functions within the one-stop system. Jobseekers have access to Wagner-Peyser services and other employment services through the workforce center resources and TWC Employment Services staff. Therefore, there is no duplication of employment services provided by outside agencies. Board program coordinators oversee program operations for every aspect of the job seeking experience to ensure that the workforce center contractor manages all functions in an efficient manner. The contractor provides monthly reports of activities and developments that align with the contract work-statement. The workforce center contractor shares processes and concerns with Board members at weekly meetings.

E. Integrated, Technology-Enabled Intake and Case Management

A. How Workforce Solutions Offices are implementing and transitioning to an integrated, technology-enabled intake and case management information system

Board Response:

The WSBV one-stop centers use the State automated systems WorkInTexas (WIT), Eligible Training Providers List (ETPL), TWIST, and the workforce center's customer tracking system Virtual One-Stop Greeter VOS Greeter. The application for the WIOA Program and childcare services is on-line. The workforce center uses Facebook to outreach and educate consumers regarding services and employment/training topics and to feature employers and industries that have job openings.

The VOS Greeter system ensures that all customer interactions are captured during the customer's workforce center visit. The system records customer information, identifies priority of service veterans, allows Workforce staff to designate Workforce center staff when customers check-in to the resource room, allows Workforce Center staff members to view customer information via the Office Assisting Log screen, notifies staff that a customer is waiting to be seen via an instant pop-up alert and/or email, provides reports identifying how customers and/or staff are using the Greeter interface with up-to-date data and metrics and allows Workforce staff to customize Workforce Office visits reasons above and beyond TWC state-level configured defaults.

Participant records are stored on the Board's Docubase system. This allows easy access to participant case information. The Docubase Information Suite brings efficiency to the forefront in terms of managing case information at the Brazos Valley workforce center. The Docubase software provides processes that allow case managers to immediately capture and archive documents in their current form (paper, emails, web files, computer files, etc.), which gives real time retrieval access for all case managers that have security clearance to view specific case files.

Part 5: Workforce Investment Activities

A. Economic Development and Entrepreneurial/Microenterprise Activities

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.

Board Response:

The Board's coordination with the Region's economic development center promotes entrepreneurial skills development. In this effort, the Board promotes the achievement of self-employment through skills development and microenterprise training centers. Success depends on the characteristics and experience of potential customers, the customer's relative level of work experience, and the customer's access to training in business skills that include planning and financial management. The Board will increase entrepreneurial skills training and the development of microenterprise services regarding best practices for these services. The Board is scheduling entrepreneurial boot camps for women. The Board will partner with the Chamber of Commerce, Economic Development Corporations, Blinn College District, Texas A&M McFerrin Center for Entrepreneurship, area banks and women entrepreneurs to advocate participation in the boot camp for anyone who wants to start a business. Topics of the boot camp will include how to write a business plan, how to obtain business financing and how to promote business through social media.

The Business Services team attends relevant industry and partner meetings, Chamber of Commerce events and economic development group meetings to identify businesses for outreach to provide consultative information about target industries and occupations and to promote skills training that is available through the workforce center.

B. Rapid Response Activity Coordination

A description of how the Board will coordinate local workforce investment activities with statewide rapid response activities.

Board Response:

The Board selects a contractor to provide rapid response services in coordination with TWC efforts for the population experiencing dislocating disasters, layoffs, plant closings and other events that precipitate substantial increases in unemployment in the Region. The Board procured the rapid response contractor through a competitive procurement process described in Part 7 B.

C. Youth Activities and Services

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.

Board Response:

Workforce services offer youth different tangible life experiences to prepare them for the world of work. The workforce center contractor developed a job readiness program to prepare Youth to be effective jobseekers. Youth attend the job readiness for one week. One of the eligibility requirements for participation in this program is individual TABE assessment. In School and Out of School Youth are TABE tested. Participation requires achievement of a TABE score of 8.9 or better. The emphasis is for youth to be well rounded, capable of comprehending assigned job duties, adept at following

direction and being skill ready. Workforce services offer youth high school equivalency classes and remediation to assist them in obtaining a high school diploma or equivalent if needed.

The job readiness training includes the following components:

- Labor Market Information
- Work Readiness Skills (assessment)
- Proper Work Etiquette
- Skills Training/Occupational Training
- Support Services
- Employment
- Job Retention

Required youth program activities and method of access are presented below:

<i>Required Youth Activity</i>	<i>Method of Access</i>
<i>Tutoring, study skills training, drop-out prevention and recovery and achievement</i>	<i>Workforce center contractor Coordination with ISDs, juvenile justice</i>
<i>Alternative Secondary School</i>	<i>Procured contractor for on-line AEL-HSE</i>
<i>Paid and unpaid work experience with academic and occupational component</i>	<i>Workforce center contractor Public/private worksite agreements</i>
<i>Occupational skills training</i>	<i>Workforce center contractor with community colleges</i>
<i>Education/training for occupational cluster</i>	<i>Workforce center contractor with community colleges</i>
<i>Leadership development</i>	<i>Workforce center contractor</i>
<i>Supportive services</i>	<i>Board and workforce center contractor</i>
<i>Adult mentoring</i>	<i>Procured contractor</i>
<i>Follow up services</i>	<i>Workforce center contractor</i>
<i>Comprehensive guidance and counseling</i>	<i>Workforce center contractor</i>
<i>Financial literacy education</i>	<i>Procured contractor</i>
<i>Entrepreneurial skills training</i>	<i>Workforce center contractor</i>
<i>Labor market information</i>	<i>Workforce center contractor</i>
<i>Activities to prepare for and transition to post-secondary education and training</i>	<i>Workforce center contractor</i>

D. Coordination with Secondary and Postsecondary Education Programs

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.

Board Response:

The Board coordinates with area Independent School Districts and the community college to provide access to workforce center services for their students. These partners refer to the workforce center system all individuals who have barriers to employment need additional assistance to remain in school need additional assistance to return to school or who seek employment. The workforce center adult education and literacy program contractor also conducts outreach to inform students about available

workforce center services so the student can remain in school. Outreach efforts include posting individuals signs in neighborhoods and at business sites, stamping adult education and literacy information on outgoing utility bills, social media postings, television commercials, radio station commercials and billboards.

The Student HireAbility Navigator Program works with the workforce center contractor to establish pre-employment services for students with disabilities. Students between the ages of 14 and 22 years of age can be included to receive special education or related services are part of this program. The Student HireAbility Navigator works to improve access to employment and training services to increase employment opportunities and post-secondary opportunities for jobseekers with disabilities. The aspiration is to make students with disabilities aware of services available to them that can help them prepare for their transition to postsecondary education and employment. The Navigator also is also a resource to help support, expand and enhance the provision of pre-employment transition services that are provided by Vocational Rehabilitation Services and other agencies and partners in the Region.

The workforce center staff provides strategic services training for students 14 to 22 who are transitioning from secondary education and provides a description of all training to the Student HireAbility Navigator. The workforce center contractor's employability/work readiness training helps to determine strategies that can increase the number of referrals of students who complete the readiness training. This training is geared to students 14 to 22 that are transitioning from high school to post-secondary education.

The Student HireAbility Navigator works with Vocational Rehabilitation Services, Brazos Valley Center for Independent Living, Texas A&M University and other agencies to strategize career exploration, identify internships that can be extended from the SEAL program to year round opportunities, identify open sessions for public awareness of training and promote services and opportunities available with Blinn College and Texas A&M University that develops innovative strategies, builds capacity for students with disabilities and provides workforce readiness training.

The workforce center contractor works with Board staff to raise awareness of issues students may encounter as a jobseeker that may become a barrier to receiving employment such as transportation within the region or adaptive services the student may need to experience successful employment.

The Student HireAbility Navigator develops information to distribute to school districts about available services for students with disabilities. The Navigator also works with the workforce center to develop a referral process that refers students to Vocational Rehabilitation Services and other agency partners.

Most importantly, the workforce center staff works with employers to market students with disabilities, highlighting their capabilities for listed jobs. Employers are provided with information on resources and services available to these students to determine the student's eligibility for employment.

B. Child Care and Early Learning

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

Board Response:

In August 2019, TWC's Child Care Services department was promoted to division status within the Agency. The Child Care and Early Learning Division provides child care subsidy assistance to eligible low-income families with children under age 13, allowing parents to work, attend school, or participate in training. In addition to assisting families, Child Care and Early Learning helps childcare providers improve the quality of services for all children in Texas through resources and assistance.

In the Brazos Valley, Child Care Services is co-located with Workforce Center operations staff lending to a more consistent and intensely integrated partnership. When a parent who is receiving childcare subsidies loses employment, Child Care Services staff inform parents of WorkInTexas, a free online-

automated job matching system, and provide the parent with a referral directly to Workforce Center staff who are able to assist them to resume participation in work, school, or training to retain childcare subsidies. Parents are provided with up to three-months to “Activity Interruption”, during which time the family will continue to receive childcare assistance at the same level unless requested otherwise by the parent. Additionally, parents are provided with a referral to the Financial Fitness Center provides one-on-one financial coaching to develop healthy financial habits to gain financial stability. The integration of our local One-Stop to include childcare as well as workforce services helps smooth employment transitions for low-income parents, supporting greater economic stability for our local families and children. In addition to the co-location of these TWC programs, the Brazos Valley Council of Governments (BVCOG) houses the following agencies and programs:

- *911 Regional Planning*
- *Adult Education & Literacy (AEL)*
- *Aging & Disability Resource Center (ARDC)*
- *Area Agency on Aging*
- *Brazos Valley Affordable Housing Corp (BVAHC)*
- *Community Action Programs*
- *County Indigent Healthcare*
- *Early Head Start & Head Start Programs*
- *Economic & Community Development*
- *Fiber Optic Broadband*
- *Financial Fitness Center*
- *GIS & Graphics*
- *HIV/Health Services*
- *Housing Choice Voucher Program*
- *Meals on Wheels*
- *Public Safety Planning*
- *Purchasing Solutions Alliance (PSA)*
- *Solid Waste Management*
- *Transportation Planning*
- *Utility Assistance*
- *Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VR)*
- *Women, Infant & Children (WIC) Nutrition Program*
- *Workforce Solutions Brazos Valley*

WSBVB is working to design a parent-centered approach to expanding the knowledge, skills, and capacity to become meaningful partners in supporting their children's positive development, due to the lack of a local office or supports for our childcare programs and families from the Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) program. ECI is a statewide program designed to support families with children ages birth to three years that have disabilities and developmental delays with a mission to help children reach their potential, are currently only available to families in our Workforce Development Area through Easter Seals of Greater Houston, LLC.

Each Fiscal Year, Workforce Solutions Brazos Valley Board sets aside a minimum of 2 percent of its yearly child care allocation for quality initiatives ensuring that priority is given to quality child care initiatives benefiting child care facilities that are working toward Texas Rising Star (TRS) certification or are actively TRS providers. In FY'21, over 11 percent the total quality budget was allocated to support infants and toddlers in the Brazos Valley by providing developmentally appropriate equipment and learning materials.

The Texas Rising Star (TRS) program encourages providers to exceed minimum licensing requirements and improve quality of services in order to achieve a higher star-level recognition and receive higher reimbursement rates for serving children participating in the childcare subsidy program. In 2019, a workgroup with members representing state agencies, Boards, childcare providers and other stakeholders assembled to review the Texas Rising Star guidelines and assessments and began training on program changes in January of 2021 with an effective date of April 1, 2021. The new Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) strengthened program certification standards and professional development requirements to better help families identify quality early learning programs based on a 2-star, 3-star, or 4-star recognition levels.

Texas Rising Star Mentors provide technical assistance to providers working to become TRS-certified and to TRS providers working to attain higher levels of certification. TRS Assessors are responsible for conducting on-site assessments of providers to determine compliance with TRS standards. The enhanced system includes observations of teachers, mentoring of directors, one-on-one training, coaching, providing resources/feedback and recommending corrective actions. TWC provides funds to TEA to be used by CLI to develop guides, tools, statewide online and in-person trainings, and consumer education materials to support TRS Provider Certification Guidelines content and outreach. Through quality funds WSBVB provides childcare staff and directors access to professional development and training, educational equipment, and other subsidies to motivate providers to improve their services. All professional development and training opportunities are designed to provide attendees with information, tools, and resources to improve the quality of early care experiences. Promoting the social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development of children, including those efforts related to nutrition and physical activity, using scientifically based, developmentally appropriate, and age-appropriate strategies are all essential elements of every-day child care.

Since 2016, Workforce Solutions Brazos Valley Board has collaborated with the Blinn College Child Development Department to provide the Child Development Higher Education Scholarship and one-on-one assistance to eligible students in pursuit of higher education. Recipients of the scholarship have the opportunity to earn up to an Associate's degree from Blinn College, while allowing those looking to obtain only their CDA Credential or a Child Care Worker Certificate (CCWC) to earn non-expiring college credit hours along their career pathway. This stackable approach to the certificates that WSBVB subsidizes is an important piece to growing and professionalizing the child care industry and local labor force. Other opportunities for CDA and other professional growth options offered on a statewide level through T.E.A.C.H., Federal Pell Grants, CLI Engage, the CDA Council, and various other sources are provided as resources to child care programs and their teachers.

In 2020, WSBVB established a new partnership and pilot program with the Blinn College Adult Education & Literacy (AEL) Program to better support our Child Development Higher Education Scholarship recipients by preparing them to pass the Texas Success Initiative Assessment 2.0 (TSIA2). Successful completion of the TSIA2 allows students to be deemed 'college ready' and eligible for higher-level courses as well as graduation with an Associates' degree.

WSBVB coordinates local trainings and professional development opportunities and provides local childcare programs with external resources for additional opportunities. These include, but not limited to Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Services, CLI at the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston, Texas Early Childhood Professional Development System (TECPDS) in partnership with the Texas Workforce Registry (TWR), Texas Association for the Education of Young Children (TxAEYC), Texas Early Childhood Learning Summits, Frog Street Press, and edWeb.

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service http://extensiononline.tamu.edu/courses/child_care.php offers online training topics including health and safety, developmentally appropriate activities, observation and assessment, professional leadership, and supporting the development of infant and toddlers as well

as for Children with Special Needs.

CLI's Engage <https://cliengage.org/static/> is a comprehensive professional development and child progress-monitoring platform, provides resources for professional development content, child progress monitoring tools, and classroom observation tools. These resources help providers to implement developmentally appropriate, evidence-based curricula and to design learning environments that align with early learning guidelines. In an effort to improve the quality of infant and toddler care, CLI offers a series of web-based training modules highlighting early learning guidelines, social and emotional skills, and cognitive development. The modules provide caregivers with lessons that promote child development across all early learning domains. Developmental checklists allow caregivers to screen for developmental delays against important milestones in the early learning guidelines. These online tools and resources are available at no cost to all early childhood teachers at TRS providers and Head Start programs.

Texas Early Childhood Professional Development System (TECPDS) <https://tecpds.org/wp/> was designed to house education and employment history as well as training hours and certificates as a support to the Texas Workforce Registry (TWR), a web-based application for early childhood education (ECE) professionals who work with children birth to age 8. The TECPDS system supports early childhood professionals by providing them with resources and tools to help meet their professional development needs. TECPDS defines professional development as any opportunity that enhances the knowledge and skills of those working with young children, including training, education, and employment. The four components of TECPDS are Core Competencies, Texas Trainer Registry, Texas Workforce Registry, and the Early Childhood Career Lattice. Beginning in FY'21, WSBVB will have the opportunity to work more closely with TECPDS staff as well as local childcare providers to support professionalization of the childcare by increasing provider and teacher knowledge of this free resource. The Board submits quarterly reports to TWC regarding the activities funded through the 2 percent quality expenditures and the progress made toward improving the quality of childcare programs through a mix of provider financial aid and other quality activities that best meet the needs of the local area. These reports and expenditures are monitored annually internally, by an independent 3rd party reviewer, as well as TWC's SRM department to ensure that the funds are being spent in accordance with applicable federal and state statutes, regulations, and rules. The provision of financial aid to providers' caregivers and provider facilities, scholarships, bonuses, reimbursements for training expenses and other supports are continually adapted to meet the needs of local childcare programs.

To improve access to quality childcare for low-income families, base reimbursement rates were increased by 2 percent for all providers in FY'19 and additional rate increases were implemented in FY'20. Quality investments implemented in FY'19 and FY'20 included enhancements for quality and school-readiness, health and safety, and professional development opportunities that focus on building up a well-qualified workforce of early learning teachers.

WSBVB leverages local public expenditures in the workforce areas as match for federal CCDF matching funds by working with public institutions of higher education, ISDs, and local governments to certify local public expenditures for direct childcare services to low-income families and for childcare quality improvement activities. The federal CCDF matching funds resulting from the public certifications are utilized to increase direct childcare services to CCDF-eligible families targeted to meet the childcare needs in workforce areas. The funds are also used to expand quality improvement activities in the workforce areas. In the Brazos Valley, Kids Klub and College Station ISD have been a long-standing partner and resource in this capacity.

In FY'19, TWC awarded TEA funds to support planning grants to build partnerships between school districts and early learning programs to expand pre-K service capacity. Through this grant, early learning programs achieving a 4-star certification level under TWC's Texas Rising Star program have

an opportunity to collaborate with our local independent school districts and charter schools to expand quality prekindergarten services to children three to four years old. WSBVB works with TWC to coordinate services for prekindergarten and school age children by providing open lines of communication with the Texas Education Agency (TEA), local independent school districts (ISDs). Child Care-Pre-K Partnership goals include the following:

- 1. Prepare children to be Kindergarten ready by expanding access to high quality prekindergarten programs for low income families;*
- 2. Offer full-day, full-year child care services; - Increase the number of children accessing high-quality care;*
- 3. Allow school districts and private child care providers to leverage assets and share resources such as professional development, facilities, and staff;*
- 4. Provide an opportunity for TRS 4-star private child care provider to sustain their business by offering financial stabilities;*
- 5. Support and expand continuity and quality of prekindergarten instruction;*
- 6. Assist private child care providers to gain qualified staff; and*
- 7. Provide for shared standards of quality (curricular, instructional, assessment, professional development, instructional coaching, and family engagement) between school districts and private childcare providers.*

The coordination and collaboration between Head Start and CCDF is a new collaboration that provides comprehensive child care and development services for children who are eligible for both programs. In 2019, Brazos Valley Council of Governments (BVCOG), the managing authority for WSBVB, incorporated a variety of community programs including the Early Head Start and Head Start programs for our region. This shift puts Brazos Valley in a unique position to implement a collaborative program to ensure seamless services and provide shared resources ensuring that the provisions of full working day, full calendar year comprehensive services are available as set forth by sections 640(g)(1)(D) and (E); 640(h); 641(d)(2)(H)(v); and 642(e)(3) of the Head Start Act.

WSBVB continues to work with local ISDs to provide wrap-around childcare to serve the needs of working parents with eligible children. Examples of partnerships include, but are not remain limited to:

- 1. AlphaBest Education (<https://www.alphabest.org/bryantx>)*
 - a. Available to Bryan ISD Elementary and Intermediate School families*
- 2. Dual After School Program (D.A.S.P.) (<https://www.dualafterschool.com/>)*
 - a. Available to Bryan ISD Johnson Elementary School families and International Leadership of Texas, College Station K-10 Charter School families*
- 3. Kids Klub (<https://sites.google.com/a/csisd.org/the-kids-klub/>)*
 - a. Available and solely offered through College Station ISD*
- 4. Lil' Rattler Academy*
www.navasotaisd.org/apps/pages/index.jsp?uREC_ID=1548123&type=d&pREC_ID=1674288
 - a. Available to families in Navasota ISD*

WSBVB plans to continue to work with TWC and TEA to expand these partnerships within our local community by working closely with local ISDs and childcare providers to understand the availability of childcare in their workforce areas and to formulate strategies to expand availability by leveraging additional quality funds and resources.

C. Transportation and Other Support Services

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.

Board Response:

The Board's support services policy provides for assistance with transportation by distributing debit cards for gas cards or bus passes to jobseekers. In some cases, vehicle repair is authorized so customers can participate in training activities or job search. Brazos Valley Council of Government, as the fiscal agent, pays support services and payments are coordinated/tracked/managed through the workforce center contractor. The Child Care Services program contractor provides childcare services to customers. Board staff serves on the Regional Transportation Advisory Committee.

D. Coordination of Adult Education and Literacy (AEL)

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

Board Response:

WSBVB is the Title II grantee for the Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) Program as well as the Title I grantee for WIOA activities in the Region. The workforce center contractor and the adult education and literacy program contractor coordinate access to these services through a referral system. The AEL contractor has labor market information, workforce program applications, and a career navigator to advocate for students across program lines. The AEL contractor uses the WIOA subcontractor for customer support, recruitment, testing, space, and coordinated case management for joint customers. The WIOA subcontractor refers any customers experiencing education and literacy barriers to employment to the AEL contractors for remediation and tutoring. Both contractors participate in monthly staff meetings to triage joint cases. The Board also works with local libraries to provide access to students for distance and virtual learning services. The Board AEL contractor reviews AEL Program applications for eligibility to determine if the student is an English language learner or does not have a high school diploma.

Part 6: Adult, Dislocated Workers, and Youth Services

A. Adult and Dislocated Worker Employment and Training

**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.**

Board Response:

WSBVB provides through the workforce center system skills training, job search assistance, support services, counseling, case management, work experience and placement services, to Workforce Investment Opportunity Act participants, Dislocated Workers, Youth, Choices Program participants, veterans and foster youth. The workforce center contractor helps participants to gain employment experience, develop skills and have access to jobs paying a self-sustaining wage. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) recipients are helped with job search assistance, referral and placement in jobs paying a living wage. These programs are supported by the Child Care Services by providing child care assistance to families where the parent(s) are working or in training.

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

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.

Board Response:

See Service Priority for Individualized Career Services and Training Services Policy below.

Workforce Solutions Brazos Valley Board Policies and Procedures Manual

WIOA

Service Priority for Individualized Career Services and Training Services Policy

Date Issued: 06/18/ 2015

**Date Revised: 05/04/2020
08/18/2016**

Date Reviewed: 02/05/2021

Policy

The Workforce Center Operator will provide WIOA basic and individualized career services as well as training services, to eligible adults that meet the WIOA eligibility guidelines requirement. The Workforce Center Operator will follow the priority of service order for individualized career services and training services once eligibility for WIOA adult is determined. The Workforce Center Operator will follow the Texas Workforce Commission Guidelines regarding allowable services for basic and individualized career services as well as training services.

Guidelines

WIOA Adult Eligibility

To be eligible to receive WIOA services in the adult programs, an individual must:

1. be 18 years of age or older;
2. be a citizen or noncitizen authorized to work in the United States; and
3. meet Military Selective Service registration requirements (males only).

Priority for WIOA individualized career services and training services must be provided in the following order:

1. Eligible veterans and eligible spouses (as defined in WD Letter 25-15) who are also recipients of public assistance, low-income, or basic skills deficient.
2. Non-covered persons (individuals who are not veterans or eligible spouses) who are also recipients of public assistance, low income, or basic skills deficient in the following order:
 - a. Foster youth and former foster youth (as defined in WD Letter 43-11, Change 2) as required by Texas Family Code §264.121
 - b. Non-foster youth
3. All other eligible veterans and eligible spouses.
4. Priority populations established by the Governor and or the Workforce Solutions Brazos Valley Board in the following order:
 - a. All other foster youth and former foster youth, as required by Texas Labor Code §264.121

- b. Local Workforce Solutions Brazos Valley Board priority groups
- 5. Non-covered individuals outside of the groups given priority under WIOA.

Low-Income Individuals

An individual who meets any *one* of the following criteria satisfies the low-income requirement for WIOA adult services:

- 1. Receives, or in the past six months has received, or is a member of a family that is receiving or in the past six months has received, assistance through SNAP, TANF, or the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program, or state or local income-based public assistance;
- 2. Receives an income or is a member of a family receiving an income that, in relation to family size, is not in excess of the current combined U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) 70 percent Lower Living Standard Income Level and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Poverty Guidelines shown on the WIOA Income Guidelines web page at <http://www.twc.state.tx.us/workforce-innovation-opportunity-act-eligibility-income-guidelines>;
- 3. Is a homeless individual as defined in §41403(6) of the Violence Against Women Act of 1994, or a homeless child or youth as defined in §725(2) of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act;
- 4. Receives or is eligible to receive a free or reduced-price lunch under the NSLA (**for the WIOA adult program, this only applies to the individual receiving the free or reduced-price lunch**);
- 5. Is a foster youth, as defined in Texas Family Code §264.101(a-1) and §264.101(d), on behalf of whom state or local government payments are made; or
- 6. Is an individual with a disability whose own income meets:
 - a. WIOA's income requirements, even if the individual's family income does not meet the income requirements; or
 - b. the income eligibility criteria for payments under any federal, state, or local public assistance program.

Family

A family is defined as two or more individuals related by blood, marriage, or decree of court, who are living in a single residence and are included in one or more of the following categories:

- 1. A married couple and dependents;
- 2. A single individual, parent or guardian and dependents; or
- 3. A married couple.

In a situation in which a job seeker is claiming, for the purpose of defining his or her family, to be in a common-law marriage, written attestation must be obtained from both parties affirming the fact.

Family Income

For the purpose of determining WIOA income eligibility, the following are excluded from income:

- 1. Needs-based scholarship assistance
- 2. Financial assistance under Title IV of the Higher Education Act—Pell Grants, Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity grants, Federal Work Study Program, PLUS, Stafford loans, and Perkins loans
- 3. Cash assistance payments (including TANF, SSI, Refugee Cash Assistance, general assistance, emergency assistance, and general relief)

4. Onetime income received in lieu of TANF cash assistance
5. Income earned by a veteran while on active military duty and certain other veterans' benefits, such as compensation for service-connected disability, compensation for service-connected death, vocational rehabilitation, and education assistance
6. Lump sum payments received as assets in the sale of a house, in which the assets are to be reinvested in the purchase of a new home (consistent with IRS guidance)
7. Payments received as the result of an automobile accident insurance settlement that are being applied to the repair or replacement of an automobile
8. Foster care payments
9. Any withdrawal from an Individual Development Account for the purchase of a home, medical expenses, or educational expenses
10. Onetime cash payment, including tax refunds; loans, which are debt and not income; onetime insurance payments; gifts; and lump sum inheritances
11. Noncash assistance such as employer-paid fringe benefits, food, or housing received in lieu of wages, Medicare, Medicaid, SNAP, school meals, and housing assistance

Anything that is not listed above as excluded from income is included as income. Additionally, Department of Labor (DOL) Employment and Training Administration recently clarified in Training and Employment Guidance Letters 19-16 and 21-16 that unemployment compensation, child support payments, regular payments from Social Security, and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) are all "included" as income when determining income eligibility.

Note: When a federal statute specifically provides that income or payments received under such statute shall be excluded in determining eligibility for the level of benefits received under any other federal statute, such income or payments shall be excluded in WIOA eligibility determination (for example, adoption subsidies).

Basic Skills Deficient

An individual who is unable to compute or solve problems, or read, write, or speak English, at a level necessary to function on the job, in the individual's family, or in society satisfies the basic skills deficient requirement for WIOA adult services.

Workforce Center staff must use assessment instruments that are valid and appropriate for the target population and must provide reasonable accommodation in the assessment process, if necessary, for individuals with disabilities.

Workforce Center staff may:

- determine the method of assessment and process used to determine an individual's inability to compute or solve problems, or read, write, or speak English at a level necessary to function on the job, in the individual's family, or in society; and
- based on the method of assessment or assessment tool used, set benchmarks for assessment results that determine basic skills deficiency.

Workforce Center staff must document in The Workforce Information System of Texas (TWIST) counselor notes of how basic skills deficiency is determined.

Initial assessment of skills levels and determinations of whether the individual is eligible to receive assistance from adult and dislocated worker programs are basic career services, which are allowable services and allowable costs for any individual who meets basic eligibility criteria (age, authorization to work in the United States, and Selective Service).

Once determined eligible for individualized career services the Workforce Center operator will provide a comprehensive and specialized assessment of the skills levels and service needs of the customer, which will include:

- In-depth interviewing and evaluation to identify employment barriers and appropriate employment goals to be addressed on the individuals' employment plan.
- Diagnostic testing or use of other assessment testing tools; and
- Additional specialized assessments for eligible individuals in the individualized career services can be paid for using WIOA funds as part of their Individual Training Account (ITA) after all other resources have been ruled out.

The Workforce Center operator will provide a battery of assessments to WIOA individuals to determine skills deficiencies. These assessments can also be given at a basic career service level prior to eligibility determination:

- O*Net Interest Profiler – used as an initial assessment that can help the customer discover the type of work activities and occupations that the customer would like and find exciting.
- TABE (most current version) – used to provide a solid foundation for effectively assessing the skills and knowledge of adult learners.
- Work Keys Talent Assessment – helps employers find and develop employees by measuring work-related attitudes and behaviors.
- Work Keys Applied Math Assessment – measures critical thinking, mathematical reasoning, and problem solving techniques for situations that occur in today's workplace.
- Work Keys Graphic Literacy – measures the skill needed to locate, synthesize, and use information from workplace graphics.
- Work Keys Workplace Documents – measures the skills people use when they read and use written text on the job.

If an individual applies for WIOA individual career services then the Workforce Center staff can use the prior assessments to establish skills deficiencies for that eligibility qualification.

Workforce Center staff must document in The Workforce Information System of Texas (TWIST) counselor notes the assessment name and results of the assessment administered.

References:

For more information, refer to [Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Guidelines for Adults, Dislocated Workers, and Youth April 2020](#)

[WD Letter 43-11, Change 2](#) – Priority of Service for Eligible Foster Youth – Update
[TEGL No. 21-16](#) – Third Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I Youth Formula Program Guidance

[TEGL No. 19-16](#) – Guidance on Services provided through the Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and the Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service (ES), as amended by title III of WIOA, and for Implementation of the WIOA Final Rules

[WD Letter 25-15](#) – Applying Priority of Service and Identifying and Documenting Eligible Veterans and Transitioning Service Members

Part 7: Fiscal Agent, Grants, and Contracts

A. Fiscal Agent

Boards must include identification of the entity responsible for the disbursement of grant funds.

Board Response:

The WSBVB fiscal and administrative agent is the Brazos Valley Council of Government as determined by the partnership agreement.

B. Sub-Grants and Contracts

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.

Board Response:

WSBVB uses a competitive procurement process to select contractors for WIOA activities. The Board releases a Request for Proposal (RFP) for operation of the workforce center system in the Brazos Valley WDA. The RFP contains the requirements and restrictions concerning the contracting and operation of the programs as well as the scoring criteria and timeline for the procurement. The RFP details the submission requirements and narrative and budget instructions. The Board maintains a "bidders list" of vendors who may be interested in submitting a proposal. A notice of the availability of the procurement is posted in local newspapers, on the BVCOG web page and sent to vendors on the bidders list. A "bidders' conference" is held either on-site or by telephone to discuss the RFP elements and to answer questions bidders may have about the RFP. A question/answer document is posted on the BVCOG web page after the bidders' conference and emailed to vendors on the bidders list. Proposals are due on an assigned due date and time. Late proposals are not accepted. An independent evaluation team reviews proposals submitted in response to the RFP. This team evaluates the proposals using a standardized scoring instrument based on the RFP scoring criteria and instructions. The independent evaluation team submits its report to the Board detailing the evaluation score and strengths and weaknesses of each proposal. The Board reviews the evaluation report and takes action on the evaluation team and staff recommendation to select a proposer for contract negotiations. If negotiations are successful, the successful respondent signs a contract for the services requested. The Board notifies unsuccessful Proposers about the action taken by the Board. Proposers may elect to receive a debriefing on the evaluation of their proposal. Vendors that want to appeal the decision may follow the Board's appeal process within a certain time from the date of Board action on the procurement.

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.

Board Response:

The performance measures for WIOA are negotiated with TWC by the WSBVB Executive Director based on local information acquired by TWC that can affect performance measures, such as the downturn of a particular industry and the downturn's impact on workers attaining re-employment within 10 weeks. The performance of the WSBVB fiscal agent, BVCOG, is reviewed by the Board's certified public accountant (CPA) annual review, the TWC financial teams annual monitoring and the BVCOG annual financial A-133 audit. The chief elected officials review the BVCOG audit and the WSBVB board members review the Board's CPA and TWC financial monitoring report. An initial and annual evaluation of eligible training providers (ETP) is done following TWC requirements concerning performance by Board staff to remain on the training provider list for the area. The Board CPA, Board programmatic monitor and the TWC Sub recipient monitoring team monitor ETPs used by consumers to ensure they are the ETP approved.

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

Adult Employed Q2 Post Exit – 68.40%

Adult Median Earnings Q2 Post Exit - \$5,000.00

Adult Employed Q4 Post Exit – 73.50%

Adult Credential Rate – 65.40%

Dislocated Worker Employed Q2 Post Exit -84.40%

Dislocated Worker Median Earnings Q2 Post Exit - \$6,600.00

Dislocated Worker Employed Q4 Post Exit – 82.10%

Dislocated Worker Credential Rate – 81.30%

Youth Employed/Enrolled Q2 Post Exit – 73.00%

Youth Employed/Enrolled Q4 Post Exit – 72.10%

Youth Credential Rate – 32.50%

Part 9: Training and Services

A. Individual Training Accounts (ITAs)

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.

Board Response:

The target occupations list for occupational skills training that is funded through WIOA is posted on bvjobs.org and is available in the workforce center resource rooms of WSBVB. Local labor market information is available to participants on the Texas Labor Market Career Information website at [Labor Market and Career Information \(state.tx.us\)](http://LaborMarketandCareerInformation.state.tx.us). The workforce center also distributes an informational pamphlet that includes this information. AEL Program class information is provided in each workforce center resource room, on WSBV social media and through local outreach. ONET is used for career exploration, TABE or Supra for basic skill deficiency assessment and Work Keys for basic skills assessment. The eligible training providers are listed on the TWC web site under [https://apps.twc.state.tx.us/PROVIDERCERT/dispatcher?link=HREF&pageid=PUBLIC_SWL_SEAR CH](https://apps.twc.state.tx.us/PROVIDERCERT/dispatcher?link=HREF&pageid=PUBLIC_SWL_SEAR_CH). Recruitment for contracted training is provided through the local newspaper, the WSBV social media, contact with other agency partners and by resource rooms personnel. Workforce Center case managers provide this information to jobseekers through basic career services and individualized career services.

Training Services within the parameters of the WSBV target occupations will be provided to eligible jobseekers through the TWC eligible training provider system using the WSBV individual training accounts (ITA). These training accounts have a lifetime benefit of \$10,000.00 per individual with an additional \$5,000.00 that can be used for supportive services. The dollar amount for supportive services excludes childcare services and transportation services.

If an industry in the region identifies a training need that is needed in the area and meets the WSBV criteria for self-sufficiency wages, high growth and two-year completion, a competitive procurement could be considered with the cost of the training being allocated to each participants ITA as tuition.

Adult Education and literacy activities that lead to a secondary school diploma (WIOA sec 3(3)) may be considered as a training services. However, if Title I adult and dislocated worker funds are used for these activities, they must be done concurrently or in coordination with any training activities in WIOA sec 134(c) (3) (D) (i)-(vii). See 680.350. Because WSBVB is the grantee for TWC state AEL funding for the region, it is open to combining AEL funding to pay for an AEL teacher to provide contextualized high school equivalency (HSE) training while using Title I adult/dislocated funds to provide concurrent targeted occupational training for eligible WIOA participants. This training would be competitively procured contracted training. The cost of the training would be based on an individual tuition that would be charged to an ITA for particular individuals.

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.

Board Response:

The Board limits ITA amounts to a \$15,000.00 lifetime benefit. Supportive services have a limit of \$5,000.00 per individual jobseeker. Any exceptions to this limit are described in the Board’s ITA policy.

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.

Board Response:

There are no registered apprenticeship programs in this region. The Board will work with any apprenticeships that may be available to the area.

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.

Board Response:

There are no registered apprenticeship programs in this region. The Board will work with any apprenticeships that may be available to the area.

Part 11: Public Comment

Board Response:

The Workforce Board provided public notice for the 2021 Integrated Plan. The notice included language stating that the Integrated Plan outlined strategic program delivery for program services for WIOA, CCS, TANF, Choices, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment Services, Veteran Services, Adult Education and Literacy Program and the Non-Custodial Parent Choices Program. The Public Notice was advertised in the regional newspaper and the Texas Register. The notice informed the public that the Workforce strategic plan would be available for review and comment at the Center for Regional Services for a period of 15 days, Monday through Friday, 8:00 am to 5:00 pm and included the dates the plan was available for review. The notice also informed individuals that the plan could also be viewed on the Workforce Board website. The notice listed a contact for questions and that contact's email address. The Board received no comments to the Integrated Plan during the Public Comment period.

Appendix: Texas Workforce Investment Council Requirements Local Workforce Development Board Strategic Planning

Demonstrating Alignment with Texas' Strategic Plan for the Workforce System

System Goal 1 and Rationale

Focus on Employers

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

System Goal 1—Local Board Response

Board response and corresponding plan page number(s):

The Board focuses on increasing the visibility of Workforce Solutions in the community and promoting the regional workforce centers as a resource to employers for their employees to receive industry certifications that will enhance the employee's productivity. The goal is to enhance Workforce social media postings and to increase the market share and number of job order postings quarterly. This will be done by disseminating information about Workforce Solutions resources and benefits available to employers, job seekers and civic organizations, creating a more robust social media site that includes information on interviewing skills, job

search skills and developing resumes. The site also promotes Workforce center services to employers through community events along with emphasizing the quality of applicant referrals to employers by matching the level of applicant skills to employer job requirements. Workforce center staff monitors business customer satisfaction regarding the quality of job opening referrals, the quality of WorkInTexas registrations monthly and the number of job seekers enrolled in skills training, the number of jobseekers who completed training and the number of jobseekers placed in an occupation. See page 14.

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):

WSBVB collaborates with multiple partners for the purpose of collaborative identification, planning and implementation of services to improve the employability of all program participants to meet employer needs. These collaborations enhance service delivery for all partners and reduce duplication. WSBVB requires all subcontractors to make referrals to community resources to benefit the consumers and enhance retention. See page 6 and page 23.

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 students to complete programs of study, earn credentials, transition to further education, and gain critical employability skills. Through the implementation of a common technical core curriculum that is recognized statewide, programs of study can enhance delivery efficiency, dual-credit effectiveness, and improve student outcomes and transitions. Texas employers are better positioned to find and hire the employees they need through an enhanced education and training pipeline.

System Goal 3—Local Board Response

Board response and corresponding plan page number(s):

WSBVB intends to work with the Texas Workforce Commission, the Texas Education Agency and local education agencies to assist in the implementation of improving transitions aligning programs and ensuring portability. See pages 4, 5, 20 and 21.

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):

WSBVB uses technology and service delivery options to expand program and service outcomes for childcare providers and AEL providers. See pages 5,6,17 and 18.