

2025-  
2028

**Workforce Development Board Plan for  
Program Years 2025- 2028**



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**Cameron Works, Inc. dba  
Workforce Solutions Cameron  
2025-2028**

**Workforce Development Board Plan  
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## ACRONYMS

|        |  |          |   |
|--------|--|----------|---|
| AEL    | Adult Education & Literacy                       | MSFW     | Migrant Seasonal Farm-Worker                            |
| ADA    | Americans with Disabilities Act                  | NCCER    | National Center for Construction Education and Research |
| ASE    | Adult Secondary Education                        |          |   |
| BISD   | Brownsville Independent School District          | NCP      | Non-Custodial Parent Program                            |
| BSU    | Business Services Unit                           | NDEAM    | National Disability Employment Awareness Month          |
| CARA   | Center for Advanced Radio Astronomy              | NINOS    | Neighbors in Need of Services, Inc.                     |
| CBO    | Community Based Organization                     | NRF      | National Retail Federation                              |
| CC     | Child Care                                       | OLLU     | Our Lady of the Lake University                         |
| CCJJD  | Cameron County Juvenile Justice Department       | OJT      | On-the-Job Training                                     |
| CCMR   | College Career Military Readiness                | O*NET    | Occupational Information Network                        |
| CDCB   | Community Development Corporation of Brownsville | OSY      | Out-of-School Youth                                     |
| CEOs   | Chief Elected Officials                          | PPS      | Partners for Postsecondary Success                      |
| CE     | Community Engagement                             | Pre-ETS  | Pre-Employment Transition Services                      |
| CEC    | Community Engagement & Communications            | PUF      | Permanent University Funding                            |
| COG    | Councils of Government                           | RA       | Registered Apprenticeship                               |
| CLF    | Civilian Labor Force                             | RAP      | Registered Apprenticeship Program                       |
| CTC    | Committee Community and Technical Colleges       | RAHC     | Regional Academic Health Center                         |
| CTE    | Career & Technical Education                     | RFA      | Request for Application                                 |
| DHHS   | Department of Health & Human Services            | RFP      | Request for Proposal                                    |
| DOL    | Department of Labor                              | RGV LEAD | RGV Linking Education and Academic Development          |
| DFPS   | Department of Family & Protective Services       | RSTEC    | Rio South Texas Economic Council                        |
| DOE    | Department of Energy                             | RTAP     | Regional Transportation Advisory Panel                  |
| DW     | Dislocated Worker                                | RTD      | Rural Transit District                                  |
| E&T    | Education & Training                             | RTI      | Related Training and Instruction                        |
| ED     | Executive Director                               | SCSEP    | Senior Community Service Employment Program             |
| EDC    | Economic Development Corporation                 | SDF      | Skills Development Fund                                 |
| EN     | Employer Network                                 | SEAL     | Summer Earn and Learn                                   |
| ES     | Employment Services                              | SHN      | Student HireAbility Navigator                           |
| ESL    | English as a Second Language                     | SNAP     | Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program               |
| ETP(L) | Eligible Training Provider (List)                | SSB      | Skills for Small Business                               |
| GED    | General Equivalency Education                    | STC      | South Texas College                                     |
| HHS    | Health & Human Services                          | STEM     | Science, Technology, Engineering and Math               |
| HDJT   | High Demand Job Training                         | TAA      | Trade Adjustment Assistance                             |
| HEP    | High School Equivalency Program                  | TANF     | Temporary Assistance to Needy Families                  |
| HS     | High School                                      | TEA      | Texas Education Agency                                  |
| HUD    | Housing and Urban Development                    | TIP      | Texas Industry Partnership                              |
| IHE    | Institution of Higher Education                  | TRS      | Texas Rising Star                                       |

|        |  |          |   |
|--------|--|----------|---|
| IHEAS  | Institution of Higher Education Academy of Sciences  | TSR      | Texas School Ready (TSR) Project  |
| IEP    | Individual Employment Plan                           | TSC      | Texas Southmost College   |
| ISDs   | Independent School Districts                         | TSTC     | Texas State Technical College   |
| ISY    | In-School Youth                                      | TVC      | Texas Veteran's Commission  |
| ITA    | Individual Training Account                          | TVLP     | Texas Veteran's Leadership Program  |
| IW     | Incumbent Worker                                     | TWC      | Texas Workforce Commission  |
| IWT    | Incumbent Worker Training                            | TWIST    | The Workforce Information System of Texas                                   |
| JET    | Jobs and Education for Texans                        | UI       | Unemployment Insurance  |
| JobsEQ | Labor Market Data                                    | UTRGV    | University of Texas Rio Grande Valley                                       |
| LCME   | Liaison Committee on Medical Education Accreditation | VAILWIT  | Valley Assistance for Independent Living Work In Texas                      |
| LEA    | Local Education Agency                               | VOS      | Greeter- Virtual check in system  |
| LMCI   | Labor Market and Career Information                  | VRS      | Vocational Rehabilitation Services  |
| LNG    | Liquefied Natural Gas                                | VRSVAIL  | Vocational Rehabilitation Services Valley Assistance for Independent Living |
| LRGVDC | Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council          | WBL      | Work Based Learning   |
| METRIX | e-Learning Platform                                  | WD       | Workforce Development   |
| MET    | Migrant Education & Training                         | WDBWD    | Workforce Development Board Workforce Development                           |
| MOA    | Memorandum of Agreement                              | WDAWDB   | Workforce Development Area Workforce Development Board                      |
| MOU    | Memorandum Of Understanding                          | WFSWDA   | Workforce Solutions Workforce Development Area                              |
| MPR    | Monthly Performance Report                           | WIOAWFS  | Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Workforce Solutions                |
|        |  | WIT      | WorkInTexas   |
|        |  | WIT WIOA | Work In Texas Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act                      |
|        |  | W-P ES   | Wagner-Peyser Employment Service Program                                    |
|        |  | WCEOS    | Workforce Career & Education Outreach Specialist                            |

## Part 1: Board Vision and Strategies

### A. Vision and Goals

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

#### **Board’s Strategic vision to support regional economic growth and economic self-sufficiency**

Cameron Works, Inc., the workforce development board for Cameron County, dba Workforce Solutions Cameron, is charged with overseeing and directing workforce activities that support economic development initiatives through employer linkages. The WFS Cameron Board of Directors serves as the governing board for the regional workforce system, a network of service providers and contractors that brings people and jobs together. The Board represents the Cameron County area, with a Board membership that reflects the diverse constituencies of the region: business, economic development, education, labor, community organizations, and government. The WFS Cameron Board works under a Partnership Agreement with the local Chief Elected Officials (CEOs), which include the Cameron County Judge and the Mayor of Brownsville. Working together, the Board and the CEOs provide leadership over the WFS Cameron workforce system, working to ensure that the area has an educated and skilled workforce.

The Mission, Vision, and Board Goals Statements for Workforce Solutions Cameron (WFS Cameron) for FY 2025-2028 are mostly carried over from FY 2021-2024. These goals were reviewed at the Board Retreat held on January 10-11, 2025, and the Board members were asked to provide feedback on additional priorities, as shown in the charts below. At the February 20, 2025, Board Meeting, the statements were approved to include the additional goals, objectives, and activities prioritized by the Board of Directors and as required by WIOA 2014 law. These statements, presented in a clear and concise table format, summarize the collaborative efforts of the Board with regional partners, to drive economic growth, increase job demand, and ultimately empower more individuals to achieve self-sufficiency through employment.

**Mission Statement:** “Workforce Solutions Cameron is the local workforce partnership organization devoted to promoting and supporting a workforce structure that provides employers and individuals of Cameron County the opportunity to achieve and sustain economic prosperity.”

**Vision Statement:** Workforce Solutions Cameron is the premier, proven provider of high-quality workforce resources for Cameron County.

*(The mission and vision statement shall be enhanced to include the assembler role targeting regional agencies that will promote innovation in industry (including Advance Manufacturing.)*

#### **Board’s strategic vision to support regional economic growth and self-sufficiency**

The following listing highlights the touchpoints regarding our goals:

- ***Increase presence and linkages with Employers.***
  - *Increase outreach, marketing, and enrollment efforts to employers across the County through aggressive Business Services Unit (BSU) practices and Student HireAbility Navigator (SHN) outreach.*
  - *Work with training providers and employers to better align career and technical education with local industry skill requirements.*
  - *Continue to inform and assist employers apply for Skills Development and Skills for Small Business grant opportunities.*

- *Identify underutilized talent pools, such as Foster Youth, Veterans, individuals with special needs, and residents of underserved areas to increase their marketability through community partnerships, training, support services, and resources that promote linkages with employers.*
  - *Strengthen partnerships with Economic Development Councils to increase workforce presence*
- ***Facilitate the preparation of an educated and skilled workforce, including youth and individuals with barriers to employment.***
  - *Promote and help structure training services with Career & Technical Colleges (CTCs) and other training providers that provide portable, stackable, and transferable credits and credentials.*
  - *Promote workforce services for students with disabilities through outreach and collaboration efforts by the Student HireAbility Navigator in collaboration with VRS counselors.*
  - *Continue to promote and facilitate business and industry internships for high school CTE and college technical students with other partner agencies to help students bond with their chosen career pathway.*
  - *Increase Pre-Apprenticeship and Registered Apprenticeship programs with Independent School Districts and CTCs that align with the Board's List of Targeted Occupations.*
  - *Participate in the design of local initiatives that focus on building technical education programs in STEM and other skilled trades areas.*
  - *Participate in the design, support, and funding of promotional campaigns that increase awareness and parental support career pathways through technical education.*
  - *Promote fully articulated and aligned career pathways from ISDs to CTCs to Universities, as appropriate for building the skill sets needed by industry in each high skill high wage vocation.*
  - *Support small business assistance centers, business incubators, entrepreneurial training, and related new business formation activities.*
  - *Partner with Texas A&M Manufacturing HUB to increase training opportunities for workforce participants and employers.*
  - *Promote Metrix Learning for e-learning that will lead to increased skill sets and credentials of participants in the region.*
  - *Strengthen AEL partnership to address basic skills barriers of workforce participants as well as the attainment of industry recognized credentials.*
  - *Collaborate with Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) through leveraged funding to expand outreach and co-case managing participants, including training that will ultimately lead to an increase in the number of skilled workers.*
- ***Attain exceptional performance ratings on all Texas Workforce Commission accountability performance measures.***
  - *Continue to strengthen policies and procedures at Board and Contractor levels to foster an environment of expertise, enabling the successful achievement of all TWC-contracted performance measures.*
  - *Promote a continuous improvement process to ensure accountability, integrity, quality, and transparency across all workforce programs.*
  - *Develop and maintain effective internal accounting controls to ensure timely and accurate recording of transactions, in compliance with federal and state regulations.*



- *Conduct ongoing monitoring and staff professional development to ensure full compliance with Personal Identifiable Information (PII) regulation.*
- ***Improve the quality of workforce services to Employers and Job Seekers.***
  - *Continue to refine policies and procedures under WIOA law to fully integrate, maximize, and strengthen services to employers and job seekers.*
  - *Continue to build new partnerships and convene industry (including EDCs) and education representatives (CTEs, IHEs) to identify and fill skill gaps in training programs.*
  - *Expand professional development activities for staff to ensure their dealings with employers and job seekers are always of the highest performance and knowledge standards.*
  - *Continue to participate in TWC seminars and training sessions to stay abreast of new rules and requirements of service and of best practices available for adoption by our Board to improve the quality and quantity of services offered.*
  - *Collaborate with the contractor to analyze and optimize customer workflows, enhancing quality and ensuring the timely delivery of exemplary outstanding customer service to job seekers.*
  - *Identify funding opportunities to support target populations, including homeless individuals, parolees, and youth offenders, in transitioning into a skilled workforce through grants or collaborative partnerships with other agencies.*
- ***Ensure accountability and transparency in all matters and actions.***
  - *Continue to provide appropriate levels of oversight, internal and external monitoring of all core program activities and financial operations.*
  - *Ensure continued timely reporting of risk assessments results and monitoring reports to the Board of Directors and the Chief Elected Officials.*
  - *Continue monthly activity reporting to the Board of Directors.*
  - *Set in place a regular review schedule of all policies, both programmatic and financial, to ensure compliance and appropriateness with WIOA law, TWC Guidelines, and federal agency rules.*
- ***Increase presence and image while building community relationships.***
  - *Continue the design and implementation of social media marketing and outreach strategies to fully engage our constituency and build awareness of workforce programs and services.*
  - *Maintain membership and active participation in advisory groups and coalitions whose efforts are associated with economic development, education, and social services.*
  - *Contribute to the design and implementation of a local outreach plan that highlights the value of technical education, stackable industry certifications, apprenticeship programs, and career pathway awareness.*
  - *Continue producing and distributing our Impact Report to partners and the public, showcasing community involvement and our efforts in meeting the workforce needs of industry.*
  - *Continue convening workforce partners to explore strategies for promoting regional alignment for credentialing and increasing awareness of career pathways in targeted industries*



## **Board Goals:**

Numerous objectives and strategies were developed and implemented by the Board's Operations Committee as illustrated in the *Local Workforce Development Plan Matrix* (Table WFS Cameron-A) that support the organization's mission, vision, and goals and the implementation of a fully integrated workforce system under WIOA law. The goals are regularly evaluated and modified every two years or as deemed necessary.

As illustrated in the **WFS Cameron Board Goals FY 2025-2028** tables in the following pages, our Goals, Objectives, and Strategies support regional economic growth and economic self-sufficiency, and include goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce, including the provision of early education services; services for youth; services for individuals with barriers to employment, and goals relating to the performance accountability measures based on the performance indicators described in WIOA §116(b)(2)(A).

### **THE WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS CAMERON STRATEGIC PLAN MATRIX**

Reference Codes assigned to the TWC, TWIC, and WFS Cameron documents referenced throughout this Narrative are as follows:

**WFS-A** = *WFS Cameron Board Goals 2025-2028*

**WFS-B** = *WFS Cameron Key Issues, Challenges, & Opportunities 2025-2028*

**TWIC-A** = *The Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan FY 2024-2031*

**TWC-A** = *The Texas Workforce Commission FY 2025-2029 Strategic Plan*

**TWC-B** = *WIOA Combined State Plan Texas Program Years 2024-2027*

**TWC-C** = *TWC- Adult Education and Literacy Strategic Plan Fiscal Years 2021 to 2026*

**TWC-D** = *Child Care Workforce Strategic Plan 2023-2025*

**Workforce Solutions Cameron  
Local Workforce Development Plan Matrix 2025-2028**

| WFS Cameron-A  | <b>WFS Cameron-A---WFS Cameron Board Goals:</b>   |   |  |
|--|---|---|--|
| Goal Area TWC-   | Objective   | Strategy  | Evaluation Elements  |
| <b>WFS A-1:</b><br>Increase the presence and linkages with Employers   | 1. Communicate top priorities to stakeholders   | 1. ED and BSU presentations to all major stakeholders--Chambers, civic org., EDC's, ISD's, business groups, etc.                          | 1. Employer satisfaction ratings from Surveys<br>3. Job Postings Filled Rate<br>4. Improvement of TWC employer performance measures<br>5. Numbers of presentations to stakeholder groups.<br>6. Monthly Reports to Board               |
|  |   | 2. Employer Surveys   |  |
|  |   | 3. Customer Satisfaction Surveys-<br># of businesses using our data (Business Intel Report)   |  |
|  | 2. Develop strategies to provide and support the delivery of services to meet business needs  | 4. Conduct analysis of labor market and industry data and validate  |  |
|  |   | 5. Written BSU strategy plan  |  |
|  |   | 6. Develop an outreach plan for the provision of services   |  |
|  |   | 7. Host industry specific gatherings to identify business   |  |
|  | 3. Improve and expand internal and external communication to provide business intelligence to our customers   | 8. Invite employers to participate in Job Clubs, internships, job shadowing, mentoring, etc.  |  |
|  |   | 9. Provide staff training to improve quality of application and job postings  |  |
|  |   | 10. Host annual NDEAM events for employers  |  |
| Goal Area TWC  | Objective   | Strategy  | Evaluation Elements  |
| <b>WFS A 2:</b><br>Facilitate the preparation of an educated and skilled workforce, including youth and individuals with barriers to employment. | 1. Coordinate with ISDs, public community and technical colleges, and CTEs to expand career & technical education courses to provide additional opportunities for dual enrollment using JET Grants for the development of career and technical education programs and equipment to train students for jobs in high demand occupations | 1. Hold LMCI work sessions with ISDs and CTCs to determine skill gap areas  | 1.Number of innovative programs developed<br>2.Number of students enrolled in these programs<br>3.Number of industry certifications awarded<br>4.Number of program graduates<br>5.Number of graduates hired in field for which trained |
|  |   | 2. Enlist industry specific groups to assist CTCs in skills gap program development and alignment with industry-recognized certifications |  |
|  |   | 3. Assist with new program outreach campaign development  |  |
|  |   | 4. Assist CTCs with TWC, DOL, and DOE grant applications for new program startup  |  |

|   |  |  |   |
|---|--|--|---|
|   | <p>2. Provide referrals to GED classes to out-of-school youth and adults without a high school equivalency certificate</p> <p>3. Collaborate with VRS to provide services to their customers and outcomes aligned with 3rd party industry-based certifications</p> <p>4. Collaborate with TSTC and TSC in offering new skilled trades programs in condensed calendar format—with content and outcomes aligned with 3rd party industry-based certifications</p> | <p>5. SHN will continue to coordinate with ISDs and VRS to promote Pre-ETS</p> <p>6. Create a marketing outreach strategy around Target Occupations List</p>   | <p>6. Number and value of grants awarded</p> <p>7. Number of increased enrolled participants</p> <p>8. Number of enrollments in Academic based programs</p>   |
| <b>Goal Area TWC</b>  | <b>Objective</b>   | <b>Strategy</b>  | <b>Evaluation Elements</b>  |
| <p><b>WFS A 3:</b><br/>Attain exceptional performance against all Texas Workforce Commission accountability performance measures.</p> | <p>1. Coordinate staff and contractor training on new measures</p> <p>2. Closely monitor contractor performance on measures attainment at highest level</p>  | <p>1. Attainment of MP+ on at least 90% of performance measures</p>  | <p>1. Monthly TWC MPR Reports</p>   |
| <b>Goal Area TWC</b>  | <b>Objective</b>   | <b>Strategy</b>  | <b>Evaluation Elements</b>  |
| <p><b>WFS A 4:</b><br/>Improve the quality of workforce services to Employers and Job Seekers.</p>                                    | <p>1. Improve customer service training to Board and Contractor staff</p> <p>2. Increase quality performance measures of training providers</p> <p>3. Develop results-driven monitoring plan for providers and staff functions</p>   | <p>1. Conduct Employer and Customer Satisfaction Surveys on regular basis</p> <p>2. Provide professional development for staff</p> <p>3. Research and implement results-driven systems approach for performance evaluations</p> <p>4. Provide targeted workforce services to employers and job seekers</p> <p>5. Create employer collaboration in developing Industry-Specific Task Forces</p> | <p>1. Survey Results</p> <p>2. Professional development seminar attendance</p> <p>3. Analysis of performance evaluations</p> <p>4. Minutes from Industry Task Forces</p> <p>5. Results of graduates passing Industry specific tests</p> |

| Goal Area TWC  | Objective   | Strategy  | Evaluation Elements  |
|--|---|---|--|
| <b>WFS A 5:</b><br>Ensure accountability and transparency in all matters and actions.  | 1. Ensure accountability measures as part of personnel evaluation process   | 1. Post all meetings with full agenda item descriptions in accordance with the law and Board policies   | 1. Documentation of meeting postings<br>2. Posting of Board and Committee Minutes<br>3. Evidence of accountability and transparency culture in staff meetings and reports to Committees, Board, and state and federal agencies<br>4. Documentation of accountability and transparency requirements in policy and procedure manuals   |
|  | 2. Ensure compliance with Board, state, and federal rules regarding postings of meetings, RFPs, minutes, etc.   | 2. Provide easy access to all stakeholders of all meeting minutes and other open records as requested   |  |
|  | 3. Ensure full disclosure of all financial and operational matters through Board committees   | 3. Establish a culture of staff accountability and transparency in all operations through staff meeting discussions and written procedures and policies   |  |
| Goal Area TWC  | Objective   | Strategy  | Evaluation Elements  |
| <b>WFS A 6:</b><br>Increase presence and image while building community relationships. | 1. Board administrative staff will become involved in public service organization participation and collaboration to the extent possible with outside resources               | 1. Encourage staff membership in civic organizations<br>2. Presentations to EDCs and local Chambers .<br>3. Encourage participation/collaboration/ support of civic organization projects and initiatives                 | 1. Number of staff memberships in civic organizations<br>2. Documentation of participation in civic agency events<br>3. Outreach/Marketing plan developed and funded to extent possible<br>4. Social media tracking reports<br>5. Evidence of aggressive outreach and awareness campaign with area school districts regarding programs, services, collaborative funding arrangements, grants, and tracking<br>6. Minutes from Industry Task Forces |
|  | 2. ED will prepare and deliver agency mission and message to stakeholder civic organizations across the County.   | 4. Community Engagement and Communications Team will assist in delivering EDs message<br>5. Develop an outreach plan for agency services to solicit maximum customer access and use of services within budget limitations |  |
|  | 3. Develop outreach marketing plan advertising WFS Cameron customer services to the extent possible with financial resources, using both traditional and social media mediums | 6. Create Community Outreach Committee to promote Board members as “ambassadors” of WFS Cameron Mission<br>7. Solicit employer collaboration in developing Industry-Specific Task Forces                                  |  |

Numerous objectives and strategies were developed and implemented by the Board's Operations Committee as noted in the *Local Workforce Development Plan Matrix* (Table WFS Cameron-A) that support the organization's mission, vision, and goals and the implementation of a fully integrated workforce system under WIOA law. However, a number of key issues remain in the Plan to be addressed over the next four (4) years within the various core program areas, integrating the services and partnership activities of our workforce system as much as possible. Although the workforce system in Cameron County was designed to be flexible and responsive to labor market demands, some key issues, challenges, and opportunities exist that will potentially impact economic growth in our region.

### **Cameron County Key Issues, Challenges, and Opportunities, FY2025-2028 that will impact our workforce system:**

#### **Issues:**

- B1: Deferred Resignation Program*
- B2: Immigration/Population shifts,*
- B3: Workforce Statistics---Educational Levels, Skills Gap, Soft Skills*
- B4: Population Growth Statistics*
- B5: Population Characteristics---Illiteracy, Poverty, Single Parent Families, Domestic Violence; Abuse*
- B6: Border Volatility*
- B7: Public Transportation*
- B8: Housing—Affordability, New Developments*
- B9: Aligning educational programs with current and emerging job opportunities*
- B10: Individuals and businesses lack familiarity with the workforce system*
- B11: Brain Drain: Migration of top talent from the region*
- B12: Aging Workforce: addressing challenges related to the retirement of older workers and the loss of institutional knowledge*
- B13: Technological Disruptions: rapid advancements and job automation require ongoing upskilling and reskilling*
- B14: Establishment of satellite offices to support rural communities*

#### **Challenges:**

- C1: COVID-19 Pandemic Remnant Issues*
- C2: 2024 National Election Results---Policy/Funding Questions*
- C3: New trade opportunities and capacity for new jobs via Brownsville ship channel  
Workforce Center Facilities Capacity*
- C4: The Digital Divide*
- C5: Limited Federal Funding of Workforce Programs*
- C6: State Funding of Elementary & Secondary Education---CTE programs, Adult Education, and Pre-K concerns*
- C7: Returning Veterans Entering the Workforce State ,Federal and Local Grant Solicitation Capabilities*
- C8: Forced relocation of Workforce Centers from TWC-owned buildings.*
- C9: Marketing/Outreach Funding--WIOA*
- C10: High Staff Turnover and Retention Problems for Employers*
- C11: Workforce Center Staff Retention Issues*
- C12: Regional Collaboration*
- C13: Pervasive Work Ethic Issues Among Potential Clients and graduates of workforce training programs*
- C14: Generational Gap/Divide between employees and employers*
- C15: Limited EDC engagement with workforce systems*

- C16: Unavailable Data Dashboards for real time data analysis*
- C17: Childcare Accessibility: limited availability and affordability hinder many individuals, especially single parents, from reentering the workforce*
- C18: State, Federal, and Local Grant Solicitation Capabilities*
- C19: Workforce Center Facilities Capacity*
- C20: Uninformed Employers regarding workforce services*
- C21: Climate Change and Resilience*
- C22: Disparity or gaps within employer provided support and work-related needs as identified by employees*

**Opportunities:**

- D1: New SpaceX Boca Chica- Texas Launch Site Development—New Aviation Industry*
- D2: Port of Brownsville deepening ship channel from 42 feet to 52 feet*
- D3: TSTC/Texas A & M Engineering Partnership*
- D4: “Re-shoring” of Manufacturing Jobs back to the US*
- D5: New Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) Terminals at Port of Brownsville*
- D6: Potential new industry in the Port of Brownsville*
- D7: Proposed New Causeway to South Padre Island*
- D8: Renewed Growth of Oil & Gas Industry in Eagle Ford Shale area*
- D9: Increased Tourism and Film Making Potential*
- D10:” Cultural richness and scenic coastal landscapes to attract the film industry*
- D11: Fully Accredited UT-RGV School of Medicine*
- D12: Our Lady of the Lake University- Rio Grande Valley campus in La Feria*
- D11: UT RGV School of Medicine—New Clinics, etc.*
- D13: University Center at Texas State Technical College*
- D14: Development of the Spacecraft Tracking and Astronomical Research into Gigahertz Astrophysical*
- D15: Transient Emission (STARGATE)*
- D15: I-69 Transportation Corridor Development*
- D16: Texas A&M Manufacturing HUB*
- D17: Remote Work*
- D18: Industry Task Force collaboration*
- D19: EDC/Chamber Partnerships for Leveraged Grant Funding and Employer Engagement*
- D20: Distance Learning Potential—Metrix Learning*
- D21: New Steel Mill for South Texas*
- D22: TEA Regional Convener Grant*
- D23: \$2 Million DOL Building Pathways to Infrastructure Grant*
- D24: Bilingual Population*
- D25: Brownsville Gateway Modernization Mega Project*
- D26: Community College Funding*
- D27: Growth of Advanced Manufacturing Sector*
- D28: Articulation Agreements with Texas Southmost College*

**Workforce Solutions Cameron**  
**Local Workforce Development Plan Matrix 2025-2028**  
**WFS Cameron Key Issues, Challenges, Opportunities for 2025-2028**

**WFS-B**  
**KEY ISSUES**

| Issue:  | Description  | Adopted Action Plans  | Evaluation Elements  |
|---|--|---|--|
| <b>WFS B1:</b><br>Deferred Resignation Program  | The Deferred Resignation Program resulting from change in government administration and the retiring baby boomers could hinder economic growth placing a burden on the remaining workforce. The so-called “socialistic work ethic” prior to and during the COVID Pandemic has already caused labor shortages across many industries in Cameron County.   | WFS Cameron will increase outreach efforts to eligible workers, as well as solicit participation from fringe populations to enter the workforce.<br>Will also assist employers in development of technology and incentive solutions to help attract new workers.<br>Capitalizing on retirees’ skills could help alleviate some of the pressure by encouraging “older workers” with relevant skills to reenter the workforce | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Documentation of outreach efforts.</li> <li>• Minutes of Industry Task Force Meetings.</li> <li>• Number of retirees re-entering workforce</li> </ul> |
| <b>WFS B2:</b><br>Immigration and Population Shifts                                       | Population shifts noted in LMI and Census data show a potential negative impact on available workforce numbers in certain industries. Plus, the current immigration situation along the border may have an impact, as yet unknown, on our workforce numbers.   | WFS Cameron will continue to monitor changes and impact of population shifts and immigration outcomes and determine remedial actions as seen fitting.   | LMI data analysis of workforce shifts.   |
| <b>WFS B3:</b><br>Workforce Statistics: Educational levels, Skills Gap, Soft Skills, etc. | The quality of our workforce as judged by HS completion, level of postsecondary education, and industry quality job readiness is a continuing concern, and must be improved in order to attract and keep businesses and jobs. We are a health sector and services sector economy, and need to prepare future generations in STEM related careers that will attract manufacturing jobs to the area. | Encourage post-secondary training at the middle school level during Outreach<br>Assist LEAs with industry data to create trainings for high growth, high paying jobs<br>Assist career schools with necessary paperwork and data to support ETP registration   | #trainings developed at the high school level<br># trainings added to the ETP listing<br># students attending Outreach activities for post-secondary information                               |
| <b>WFS B4:</b><br>Population Growth Statistics  | Cameron County population increased by 9,581, from 417,129 to 426,710 from 2013 to 2023, a 2.3% difference. In births, however there was a decline from 7561 to 5738 between 2011 and 2021, or 24.1% decrease in birth rates.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Secure additional funding to increase the number of skilled workers.</li> <li>• Increase enrollment of individual in training programs to train and/or upskill/reskill.</li> </ul>   | Additional funding secured<br># of trainee enrollments   |



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| <p><b>WFS B5:</b><br/><b>Population Characteristics:</b><br/>Illiteracy, Poverty, Single Parent Families, etc.; Domestic Violence; Abuse</p> | <p>Elevated levels of illiteracy (only 26.4% with High School or GED), poverty (23.5%), percentage of single parent family units (29.7%), and low educational levels (22.7% Bachelors) of our Cameron County workforce are continuing concerns to both our educational institutions and our Workforce Board. Without an educated and trained workforce, the County cannot keep and attract sustainable wage jobs for our growing population. Domestic Violence escalated post pandemic, from 3,209 cases in 2019 to 10,571 in 2021 (229.4% increase in 2 years' time). The Cameron County Domestic Violence Unit sees up to 1,200 cases per year</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to seek funding to increase AEL collaboration</li> <li>• Coordinate with ISDs to strategize on afterschool programs</li> <li>• Educate staff on signs of abuse in children and adults</li> <li>• Provide referrals to resources such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Friendship of Women</li> <li>○ CASA</li> <li>○ Texas Rural Legal Aid</li> <li>○ Tip Of Texas Family Outreach</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reviews of stats</li> <li>• Partnerships with shelters and referrals to organizations</li> <li>• # of referrals provided</li> </ul>  |
| <p><b>WFS B6:</b><br/>Border Volatility</p>  | <p>Growing concern due to spill-over of violence onto the US Border communities as a result of violent competitive activities for drug and human trafficking business of the competing Mexican cartels. Realistic and perceptive information regarding this violence will negatively affect our ability to attract and keep businesses in our area and have a negative impact on the quality of life of our population.</p>  | <p>Continue to support educational efforts at high school level to divert students from the influence and allure of a criminal career. Continue to support community quality of life efforts. Build Awareness of high skilled jobs that lead to self sufficiency</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased # of high school graduates. Lowering of the dropout rates.</li> <li>• Increased Parental Involvement projects.</li> <li>• Increased Pre-K programs and services.</li> <li>• Targeted LMI awareness campaign</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>WFS B7:</b><br/>Public Transportation</p>  | <p>Our County's poor population has a major access problem concerning public transportation. Without reliable and accessible transportation for both children and adults to attend school, attend work, look for work, or access needed social services, they may opt out of the activities that will improve their quality of life.</p>   | <p>Continue support of Valley Metro Route 45 which connects rural communities to TSTC and to TSC &amp; UTRGV campuses in Brownsville. Support residents for rural communities through targeted services including transportation assistance.</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ridership data of Valley Metro Route 45.</li> <li>• Analysis of transportation support service payments.</li> <li>• Rural residents accessing workforce services</li> </ul>  |
| <p><b>WFS B8:</b><br/>Housing- Affordability and Developments</p>  | <p>As with transportation, the availability of affordable, quality built private and public housing for our population is a social issue of concern, leading to the growth of substandard housing “colonias” and an increase in our homeless population.</p>   | <p>Continue to collaborate with public housing authorities and other agencies to promote state, federal, and/or grant funding for energy efficient housing. Leverage funding and resources to support workforce participants in achieving homeownership</p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• # of Cameron County housing units added annually.</li> <li>• # of co-case managed participants</li> </ul>  |

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| <b>WFS B9:</b><br>Alignment of Educational Programs         | The high unemployment rate and the recent demand for specialized skills has left county residents unable to get good paying jobs and businesses with hard to fill job vacancies due to the nature of specialization. Aligning educational programs to the labor market need and developing training for the programs not available to fill the skills gaps will help both these problems. | Coordinate with TRPN to align with Tri-Agency priorities<br>Align programs to Available Jobs and emerging job opportunities and to   | # programs developed<br># jobs filled   |
| <b>WFS B10:</b><br>Limited Visibility to WF Center Services | Individuals and businesses lack familiarity with the workforce system and programs that support the development of a skilled workforce to meet industry needs   | General media campaign to build awareness of the workforce system<br>Targeted outreach campaign for employers<br>Training WF Center staff on WF services available to employers<br>Promoting the childcare program   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in # of job seekers and employers seeking services</li> <li>• # of partnerships developed</li> <li>• # of articles highlighting workforce services in local publications</li> </ul> |
| <b>WFS B11:</b><br>Brain Drain                              | Migration of top talent from the region to other areas of the state or out of state   | Promote Stay in the 956 Job Fair/Campaign<br>Targeted for college graduates<br>TX Works promotion internships for out-of-area college students to return to their hometown<br>Expose high school students to internships in local high demand local target occupations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• # of attendees at the 956 job fair</li> <li>• # of undergraduates doing TX internships</li> <li>• # of high school students completing local internships</li> </ul>                          |
| <b>WFS B12:</b><br>Aging Workforce                          | The need to address challenges related to the retirement of older workers and the loss of institutional knowledge   | Second Career and mentorship opportunities for retirees.<br>Entrepreneurship Opportunities for retirees<br>Upskilling of current workforce to replace retirees.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• # of Retirees re-entering the workforce</li> <li>• Retirees in mentorship programs</li> </ul>  |
| <b>WFS B13:</b><br>Technological Disruptions                | Rapid advancements and job automation require constant upskilling and reskilling  | Explore funding opportunities for upskilling<br>Build awareness of new technology innovations<br>Identifying new skills set requirements and associated trainings  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• # of round table discussions with ISDs and other community partners</li> <li>• # of businesses implementing new technology</li> </ul>  |

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|   |   |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li># of new training programs to develop emerging skill sets</li> </ul>   |
| <b>WFS B14:</b><br>Satellite offices  | WFS Cameron may require the opening of satellite offices to support rural communities   | Explore partnership with municipalities and/or libraries for satellite offices<br>Explore partnership with local ISDs for workforce and CTE colocation opportunities   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li># of partnership established for satellites offices</li> </ul>   |
| <b>WFS-C<br/>CHALLENGES</b>   |   |  |   |
| <b>Challenge:</b>   | <b>Description</b>  | <b>Adopted Action Plans</b>  | <b>Evaluation Elements</b>  |
| <b>WFS C1:</b><br>COVID-19 Pandemic<br>Remnant Issues   | The COVID-19 pandemic severely impacted on the Valley economy in 2020, shutting down business, government, and our international bridges, giving rise to double digit unemployment. It has also caused WFS Cameron to find new ways to serve our customers in other than face-to-face contact mode.<br>Workforce shifts to new delivery systems, worker attitudes toward work, the great resignation, and other forces as a result of the pandemic will have a lasting impact on our workforce, as yet to be fully realized and understood. | Temporary closure of workforce centers to public traffic; Researched and purchased virtual teleconference platform for group meetings and public presentations and Virtual Job Fair platforms; Worked with training providers to develop COVID-related training courses and adopted electronic signature software for job applications.<br>Continue to monitor LMI data and employer and client input to determine how we might adjust to new realities in the future. | # of virtual job fairs offered.<br># of client contacts by phone or email.<br># of face-to-face client appointments at centers.<br># of employers served with COVID-related trainings |
| <b>WFS C2:</b><br>2024 National Election<br>Results   | Concern over how federal policy changes could impact our WIOA funding and regulations.  | Monitor and implement any legislative guidelines impacting workforce and/or economic development.  | Monitoring of WIOA implementation guidelines.   |
| <b>WFS C3:</b><br>New trade opportunities and capacity for new jobs via Brownsville ship channel. | Cameron County features a deep-water Port of Brownsville, which makes us a potential hub for logistics and transportation of raw materials. With the widening of the Panama Canal, forward thought to deepening and widening our Port channel could potentially attract new business opportunity for our region.  | Continue to support regional efforts to deepen and widen the Brownsville Ship Channel and improve Port facilities to accommodate new trade and new industry opportunities and build the capacity for new jobs.   | Monitoring progress on Channel Project.   |
| <b>WFS C4:</b><br>The Digital Divide  | The COVID-19 pandemic crisis heightened the need for our region to confront our limited connectivity, technology access, and lack of digital service to a   | Provide online services to clients through phone, email, and website.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li># of virtual employer presentations provided.</li> </ul>   |

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|   | <p>sizable portion of our residents. The requirement for online education and virtual-only meetings has negatively impacted students, our clients, and employers</p>  | <p>Continue to observe COVID precautions at workforce centers.<br/>Develop “virtual” services and presentations and applications for client and employer use. Support efforts of city, county, and state officials to finance and build an improved digital footprint for the region.</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• # of virtual orientations developed</li> <li>• # of applications accessed through the website.</li> <li>• # of computers accessible for online employment applications</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>WFS C5:</b><br/>Limited Federal Funding of Workforce Programs</p>   | <p>Funding decreases, coupled with increased demand for services to a growing, needy workforce, is a constant concern of the Board’s and WFS Cameron administration.</p>  | <p>Engage Board committees in discussion of alternatives and priorities related to declining federal funding. Perform LMCI and TWIST/WIT data analysis to better target primary customer needs. Prepare alternative budget scenarios for future years considering analysis of data. Continue to work with legislators and local, state, and federal officials on alternative funding sources. Continue to pursue foundation grant sources of funding to leverage federal funding.</p>  | <p>Annual WIOA funding allocations. Documentation of Board Work Groups and Committee discussions related to funding alternatives and priorities. State and federal grants obtained. Foundation grant awards secured.</p>   |
| <p><b>WFS C6:</b><br/>State Funding of Elementary &amp; Secondary Education-- CTE programs, Adult Education, and Pre-K concerns</p> | <p>Education and training are the foundation of a high quality and attractive workforce. WFS Cameron is concerned that the current product of our school systems is not appropriate for our workforce conditions. There needs to be better Pre-K development of our children, more and better technical education programs, and more adult education programs to bring our poorly educated and untrained workforce up to a level that will attract new economic development for our region and create jobs for our growing workforce.</p> | <p>Continue to support local colleges and universities in the development of STEM-related certificates and degrees. Continue funding and support of Pre-K and kindergarten programs and professional development of CTE teachers and staff. Continue to participate and collaborate in CTE-related programs with schools and other related agencies. Continue to collaborate with school systems on dropout recovery programs, industry internships, mentoring, OJT's, and apprenticeship programs. Continue to collaborate with school systems and LRGV LEAD on implementation of Achieve Texas 6-year degree plans and increased CTE program</p> | <p>Documentation of match between technical programs available and jobs available. # of high schools increasing the # of CTE programs within their curriculum options. # of CTE program graduates from HS. # of college STEM-related program graduates each year. Job placement rates of technical college graduates. Decreasing dropout rate. Increased state funding for elementary Pre-K and secondary education.</p> |

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|  |  | options in the high schools. Continue to lobby for increased, directed CTE funding for high schools, and for full-day Pre-K and kindergarten funding.  | # of TWC JET and Dual Enrollment Equipment Grants attained across county ISDs.  |
| <b>WFS C7:</b><br>Returning Veterans Entering the Workforce                        | The Valley has an inordinate number of veterans returning from military service. It is imperative that we provide them with the training and opportunity to secure quality employment in our workforce.  | Veterans Job Fairs. Outreach for industry support of internships, scholarships, OJT's, and other aids to Veterans. Specialized Veterans training programs in job readiness and soft skills. Priority casework and job placement services for veterans. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• # of veterans served by WFS Cameron in various programs/projects.</li> <li>• # of veterans trained with ITA's.</li> <li>• # of veterans placed in employment.</li> <li>• Job retention statistics for veterans placed in employment.</li> <li>• # of Veterans Job Fairs conducted, and numbers of veterans participating.</li> </ul> |
| <b>WFS C8:</b><br>Forced Relocation of Workforce Centers from TWC-owned buildings. | WFS Cameron's relocation required WFSC to find new space for its Centers, and is currently paying going market rate for leasing space. Reallocation of funds from direct training services to operational will cost close to half a million dollars from \$38K per year. | WFSC has located a new Harlingen site and is exploring all options available for the Brownsville office. Continue to seek lease extensions from TWC to the extent possible   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to explore ISDs and EDC collaboration for office space</li> <li>• Explore other partnerships for EDA grant opportunities</li> </ul>   |
| <b>WFS C9:</b><br>Marketing/Outreach Funding---WIOA                                | WIOA rules prevent Boards from advertising what we do as an agency. Hopefully the new WIOA re-enactment will allow Boards to advertise their wares and be more successful in building and maintaining our workforce system.  | Develop a contingency budget for marketing funds in the event of WIOA approval of such.  | Maintain open dialogue with national organization such as NAWB  |
| <b>WFS C10:</b><br>High Staff Turnover and Retention Problems for Employers        | Current workforce dynamics and worker attitudes toward work have acerbated turnovers and retirements in our workforce, causing employers to not have available workers to help operate their businesses.   | Assist employers in finding new employees, and in developing new work efficiency technologies and worker incentives to rebuild their workforce.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Documentation of outreach efforts by industry</li> <li>• Minutes of Industry Work Groups</li> <li>• Documentation of TWC and other private and</li> </ul>  |

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|   |  |   | public employer webinars broadcast to Cameron employers.   |
| <b>WFS C11:</b><br>Workforce Staff Retention Issues   | Challenges and factors that contribute to the difficulty in maintaining a stable and consistent workforce staff resulting in high turnover rates and low employee engagement.  | Develop a Strategic Plan to incentivize employees for meeting program goals. Improve training. Analyze compensation and staffing levels   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• # of team building activities</li> <li>• # of trainings</li> <li>• Caseload realignment</li> </ul>  |
| <b>WFS C12:</b><br>Regional Collaboration   | The siloed efforts of WF Boards, EDCs, Chambers, and non-profit groups in the Valley have hindered substantive progress toward a true “regionalization” of our workforce development efforts.  | WFS Cameron can be a catalyst for bringing these groups together to discuss our working together on common issues and problem solutions.  | Documentation of WD convenings of stakeholders.  |
| <b>WFS C13:</b><br>Pervasive Work Ethic Issues Among Potential Clients and WF program graduates | As a “region,” the RGV is a powerful economic development force—with its 1.3 million population, its young and growing workforce, its deep-water port, and its proximity to Mexico markets. But to take full advantage of our assets, we need to work as a “team” in our economic development efforts. | WFS Cameron can be a catalyst for bringing these stakeholders together to establish a bond of joint effort in economic development efforts of the region.   | Documentation of WD convenings of stakeholders.  |
| <b>WFS C14:</b><br>Generational Gap/<br>Divide between employees (staff) and employers          | Mix of younger workers and baby boomers employed in the same business may present conflicts in the working environment between themselves and with their employer  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Conduct Employer references and provide information to deal with generational gap</li> <li>2. Collaboration with industry associations</li> </ol>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• # References to resources</li> <li>• # Employer sessions attended</li> <li>• # Inquiries</li> </ul>   |
| <b>WFS C15:</b><br>Limited EDC engagement with workforce systems                                | Improve engagement and collaboration with all EDCs to foster economic prosperity in the region.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create Newsletter for business promotion</li> <li>• Share Employment Guide</li> <li>• Provide Training on Business Incentives</li> <li>• Explore Discretionary Funding for Items not budgeted</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• # Newsletters distributed</li> <li>• #Employers distributed Guides</li> <li>• # Trainings</li> <li>• #Discretionary funding awards</li> </ul> |
| <b>WFS C16:</b><br>Data Dashboards for real time data analysis                                  | Improvement is needed in data analysis for day-to-day operations that reflects real time data.   | Dashboard will enhance performance outcomes and allow for adjustments to address any gaps or shortcomings   | Creation and Implementation of Dashboard   |
| <b>WFS C17:</b><br>Childcare Issues   | Limited availability and affordability create accessibility issues that hinder low-income individuals, especially single parents, from re-entering the workforce   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitor waiting list to weed out families who no longer require childcare assistance</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• # families on waiting list</li> <li>• # other childcare options found</li> </ul>  |



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|   |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide counseling to eligible applicants to inform on childcare status situation</li> <li>• Research other options for childcare assistance programs or funding</li> </ul>  |  |
| <b>WFS C18:</b><br>State, Federal, and Local Grant Solicitation Capabilities      | Supplemental funding sources from the State and Federal Governments is a requirement to leverage dwindling WIOA funding, and to provide priority projects not fundable through WIOA guidelines but considered necessary to build a better workforce for Cameron County.  | Research local and foundation grant funding sources and pursue grants in appropriate areas where resources allow.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• # of grants filed.</li> <li>• # of grants awarded.</li> <li>• \$ value of grants awarded.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>WFS C19:</b><br>Workforce Center Facilities Capacity                           | WFS Cameron currently services approximately <b>16,779</b> customers in its two major locations in Harlingen and Brownsville and provides close to <b>170,000 services</b> . As economic conditions deteriorate and as population in the workforce grows, there is concern that increased facilities will be needed to service the demands of our eligible customers. The Mobile Resource Unit is currently serving rural communities throughout the county. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to monitor caseloads and customer demand at all centers. Begin research on potential additional sites for expansion of facilities.</li> <li>• Begin planning activities for potential budget funding of additional facilities.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Customer traffic counts.</li> <li>• Case worker load analysis.</li> <li>• LMCI data analysis.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>WFS C:20</b><br>Uninformed Employers regarding workforce services              | Limited numbers of employers engage in workforce services due to hindered knowledge of availability of workforce center resources  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Campaign for employers to bring awareness of workforce services</li> <li>• Chamber presentations to highlight workforce services</li> <li>• Attendance with Industry associations to engage with employers</li> </ul>                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• # Work-based agreements signed with employers</li> <li>• # applications submitted to TWC for incentives</li> <li>• # Fidelity Bonding applications</li> <li>• #WOTCs</li> </ul> |
| <b>WFS C21:</b><br>Climate Change and Resilience                                  | Need to prepare population for industries focused on sustainability, clean energy and climate adaptation   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of training programs in:</li> <li>• Clean energy</li> <li>• Renewable energy</li> <li>• Weatherization</li> <li>• Photovoltaic</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• # of energy focused programs created</li> <li>• Funding secured for programs</li> </ul>   |
| <b>WFS C22:</b><br>Employee-identified disparity or gaps in work-related needs or | Lack of adequate benefits and resources from employers impacts retention and causes high turnover for families with limited resources such as : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flexible hours</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hold Round table discussions with employers to inform on reasons why employees quit</li> <li>• Discuss employee retention trends</li> </ul>  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. # Meetings with employers</li> <li>2. Retention rates</li> </ol>   |



| support provided by employer   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Insurance benefits</li> <li>• Childcare benefits</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emphasize importance of benefits to impact retention rates</li> </ul>  |   |
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| <b>WFS-D OPPORTUNITIES:</b>  |   |   |   |
| <b>Opportunity:</b>  | <b>Description</b>  | <b>Adopted Action Plans</b>   | <b>Evaluation Elements</b>  |
| <b>WFS D1:</b><br>SpaceX South Texas Launch Site Development—New Aviation Industry | SpaceX's presence in Brownsville, particularly at Boca Chica Village, presents a significant economic opportunity for well-paying job opportunities in the region with the creation of over 3400 direct jobs and 400 downstream jobs and \$800M impact. This development can bring numerous benefits to the area by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishing a competitive advantage for the region in aerospace and aviation</li> <li>• Fostering growth in support industries</li> <li>• Encouraging STEM-related educational programs in local schools, colleges, and universities</li> <li>• Enhancing the quality of the workforce for future industries</li> </ul> The arrival of SpaceX can be a catalyst for economic growth, innovation, and workforce development in Brownsville and the surrounding Valley region. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support state TWC incentive funding from SDF and Technology Fund sources.</li> <li>• Support workforce training program development at TSTC, TSC, and UTRGV for the type of workers and technicians needed by SpaceX.</li> <li>• Join the EDC's Chambers, County &amp; City Governments, and other stakeholders in the public support of this new industry to our area.</li> </ul> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Board and Executive Director public support presentations.</li> <li>b. Supply LMCI data to facilitate workforce capacity and potential.</li> <li>c. Assist SpaceX with SDF and other grant opportunities.</li> <li>d. # of jobs created from the upstream supply chain</li> </ol> |
| <b>WFS D2:</b><br>Port of Brownsville Expansion of ship channel                    | Entrance to <i>17-mile-long</i> ship channel will increase from 42 to 52 feet, making room for larger vessels to dock at the Port of Brownsville. Larger vessels mean more trade possibilities, and more jobs.  | Collaborate with Port Authority to assist in the recruitment of workforce needed to complete widening assignment at the Port entrance.  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Increase in vessels carrying supplies into and out of Port area.</li> <li>2. Increase in cargo in/out of Port.</li> </ol>   |
| <b>WFS D3:</b><br>TSTC/Texas A&M Engineering Partnership                           | Engineering students at TAMU come to TSTC to take hands-on technical courses in their discipline to gain a better knowledge of the actual workplace conditions and skill sets needed to be a better engineer.   | WFS Cameron will support these efforts through outreach and co-enrollment in WIOA where appropriate.  | #s of TAMU students served through this partnership.  |
| <b>WFS D4:</b>   | Reshoring supports the U.S. economy by creating jobs and capital investment. Cost advantages of manufacturing in a foreign country are diminishing as other risks are increasing, such as unstable supply   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer support for American, USA manufacturing business</li> <li>• Encourage hiring of our workers at new shops</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• # new manufacturing jobs created</li> <li>• # worker hires at shops</li> </ul>   |

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| Re-shoring of Manufacturing Jobs back to the U.S.                                      | chains, poor product quality, shipping delays, and potentially long-term global trade wars. The ability to source materials quickly through shorter supply chains, improve communications and decision-making, respond to customer needs, and get the final product into the customer's hands more efficiently eliminates these manufacturing problems in the U.S..   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with training providers to develop advanced manufacturing trainings for emerging jobs</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li># new programs developed</li> </ul>   |
| <b>WFS D5:</b><br>New Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) Terminals at the Port of Brownsville | Three LNG corporations have attained FERC permits to build LNG pipelines and LNG export terminals at the Port of Brownsville. Construction has begun on the first site which should yield over 6,000 jobs. This presents a severe strain on the current workforce if we are unable to replace displaced job openings. WFS Cameron is working with local CTCs and EDCs to develop and/or expand existing skilled trades programs in order to be able to produce the workers needed from local talent to prevent a negative labor deficit in the field. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Research skilled trades occupations to determine skill gaps.</li> <li>Work with colleges to either expand or create programs of study in condensed format to fill those identified gaps in the workforce, preferably in NCCER-certified programs.</li> <li>Assist in development of Registered Apprenticeship training programs in all trade areas.</li> </ul> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li># of participants trained.</li> <li># of participants NCCER-certified.</li> <li># of participants hired in field for which trained.</li> <li># of new Apprenticeship programs.</li> </ol> |
| <b>WFS D6:</b><br>Potential new industry in the Port of Brownsville                    | Ternium, one of Mexico's main steel companies, will invest \$180 million in the construction of a maritime terminal to receive iron ore in Brownsville. The ore will be transferred to Ternium's plant in Pesquería, Nuevo León, for processing.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote WF Center services</li> <li>Offer services to eligible employees</li> <li>Offer referrals to outside services</li> </ul>   | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li># jobs created</li> <li># jobs filled</li> <li>#Services received</li> </ol>  |
| <b>WFS D7:</b><br>Proposed New Causeway to South Padre Island                          | Cameron County is pending clearance of environmental studies and fundings to build a second Causeway Bridge from the Port Isabel mainland across the Laguna Madre Bay to South Padre Island. It is expected to have a decision by 2026. This construction will provide new jobs to the area, new infrastructure development for the Island, and promote increased tourism and economic investment in the area.  | Officially support the new bridge proposal. Be proactive in assisting construction and support industry firms in finding and hiring employees.  | #s of jobs filled for the project.   |
| <b>WFS D8:</b><br>Renewed Growth of Oil & Gas Industry                                 | The proximity of the Eagle Ford Shale oil and gas exploration project give our area residents an opportunity to participate in the good paying jobs available in the Laredo to Corpus area of our state if they are willing to relocate temporarily.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Publicly promote the availability of construction, welding, CDL drivers, and other technician jobs available in the Eagle Ford region.</li> </ul>  | # of Cameron County residents taking positions in Eagle Ford Shale area.   |

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|   |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support training for Cameron County citizens who wish to avail themselves of those jobs.</li> </ul>  |   |
| <b>WFS D9:</b><br>Increased Tourism and Film Making potential             | SpaceX re-locating to Boca Chica Beach, plus the alluring aspects of our island and birding potential could increase tourism to our region. The National Register lists 33 properties and districts as historic landmarks in Cameron County.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Proactively work through BSU unit to identify employer needs in the tourism and film industries and</li> <li>○ Work with local CTCs to satisfy demand through new program offerings</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in tourism jobs recorded in WIT and TWIST.</li> <li>• LMCI data.</li> <li>• Increase in # of movies filming on location in the area.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>WFS D10:</b><br>Cultural richness and scenic coastal landscapes        | Brownsville's unique location on the US-Mexico border makes it an attractive location for filming border-based movies or clips. The Texas Film Commission's recognition of Brownsville's potential creates an opportunity for the city to showcase its culture and landscapes to a wider audience and attract more film productions. This can also have a positive impact on the local economy and tourism industry.   | Encourage Chambers to campaign for Media awareness of our area's offerings to producing companies and film advocates  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• # films or commercials shot in the area</li> <li>• # of ads promoting the industry in the area</li> </ul>  |
| <b>WFS D11:</b><br>Fully accredited UT-RGV School of Medicine—New Clinics | <p>The creation of the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV) School of Medicine, along with the academic medical center facility in Harlingen, is expected to have a significant impact on the region. UT Health Rio Grande Valley is the clinical practice associated with the UTRGV School of Medicine. It provides healthcare services to the community and serves as a training ground for medical students and residents.</p> <p>The expansion of the health industry is anticipated to create new job opportunities, provide new career paths for students, and enhance the quality of life and health for local residents.</p> <p>This development is likely to have a positive effect on the overall well-being and economic growth of the region.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with county and state legislators in the planning phase of this project.</li> <li>• Develop long-range plan for work with CTC's and UTRGV to plan for development of new curriculum options to satisfy expected demand of new career options in the medical field as a result of having a Medical School in our region.</li> <li>• Proactively support the project and supply critical LMCI data to planners so they can make sound decisions relative to the project.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Long-term evidence of new health-related programs entering the curricular offerings of CTC's and the University.</li> <li>• Creation of new job opportunities</li> <li>• Introduction of new career paths for students,</li> </ul> |

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| <p><b>WFS D12:</b><br/>Our Lady of the Lake University Rio Grande Valley- New (OLLU) Campus in La Feria, TX<br/>OLLU and Texas Southmost College (TSC)</p> | <p>OLLU, out of San Antonio, partnered with the City of La Feria to build a permanent campus in La Feria, giving Cameron County residents another choice of higher education options—a faith-based university offering Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees in addition to 2 PhD Programs.<br/>A formal articulation agreement was announced between OLLU and TSC for students seeking to transfer to OLLU upon completion of an associate degree or when ready.</p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WFS Cameron will proactively support this new higher education facility and collaborate with OLLU on program justification through LMI data and ETPS enlistment</li> <li>• Promote graduate studies for center clients with degrees seeking guidance</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• OLLU enrollments.</li> <li>• # of OLLU graduates.</li> <li>• Local employment stats of graduates</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>WFS D13:</b><br/>University Center at TSTC Harlingen</p>   | <p>TSTC invites other colleges and universities to house their programs at the University Center to offer their Bachelors, Masters, and PHD programs to Cameron County residents. This increases our residents’ higher education career choices at home. Currently Wayland Baptist University, Texas A &amp; M University- Kingsville and Corpus Christi, and UT-RGV are taking advantage of TSTC’s facility.</p>   | <p>WFS Cameron will proactively support this new higher education facility and collaborate with all universities on program justification through LMI data and ETPL enlistment.</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enrollment in University Center programs.</li> <li>• # of postsecondary graduates from Center programs.</li> <li>• Employment data on University Center graduates.</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>WFS D14:</b><br/>Development of the Spacecraft Tracking and Astronomical Research into Gigahertz Astrophysical Transient Emission (STARGATE)</p>     | <p>STARGATE has prompted the UT system to designate the Center for Advanced Radio Astronomy (CARA) as the first research unit of the new UT Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV). STARGATE will develop new radio frequency based (RF) technologies for a wide range of academic and commercial applications. STARGATE will enable our students to be directly involved in all aspects of a space mission, including the design of the spacecraft, testing, launch, and orbital operations. In addition, STARGATE will include a focused business incubator for electronics and RF technology companies. This combination in proximity to a commercial space port will create unique opportunities for collaboration and research, introduce the south Texas region into the aerospace industry, and significantly boost UTRGV's technical and educational resources.<br/>This unique partnership will expand the number of opportunities, and the demand for graduates with</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Serve on UTRGV Strategic Planning Committee.</li> <li>• Participate in fostering community and County-wide meetings to plan for the future of UTRGV.</li> <li>• Promote CARA's network of world-renowned scientists/engineers with expertise in space exploration, space missions, RF technologies, signal processing, and "Big Data."</li> <li>• Promote Professional PhD level student associates in Physics, Astrophysics, Engineering, Computer Science, and Business.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enrollment in Summer STARGATE academies when available</li> <li>• Enrollment in dual credit courses</li> <li>• Enrollment in UTRGV’s Physics, Astrophysics, Engineering, Computer Science, and Business courses.</li> </ul> |

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|   | advanced mathematics, physics, and engineering degrees in South Texas.   |  |  |
| <b>WFS D15:</b><br>I-69 Transportation Corridor Development                 | Expansion of the I-69 Corridor will improve the flow of transportation and facilitate the efficiency of trade between the RGV and the rest of the US market. WFS Cameron allocated funds from a DOL grant for transportation infrastructure jobs training. This expansion should create new jobs for the area.                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to support improvements for I-69</li> <li>• Collaborate with training providers to develop training programs for infrastructure jobs</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publication of I-69 improvements</li> <li>• TxDOT updates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. # trainings developed</li> </ul> </li> </ul>                                  |
| <b>WFS D16:</b><br>TAMU Manufacturing HUB                                   | The TAMU Extension Service training facility at the Port of Brownsville is an additional, free of cost, training opportunity for Brownsville area students. Trainings available are offered in a variety of manufacturing and engineering disciplines.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue outreach students to take advantage of this new training opportunity.</li> <li>• Build awareness among our industry partners</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• # of TAMU Certificates awarded</li> </ul>   |
| <b>WFS D17:</b><br>Exploring the Future of Remote Work                      | At the height of the COVID Pandemic, remote work became popular among a large sector of our workforce. Employees sought remote work options, while employers faced challenges in meeting these demands. Now, many employers are transitioning back to in-office work requirements.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BSU will assist businesses in identifying strategies to provide workplace flexibility while maintaining business expectations.</li> <li>• Build awareness of effective strategies such as flexible work hours and hybrid work options.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Roundtable discussions on workplace flexibility</li> <li>• Highlighting businesses that utilize these strategies</li> <li>• # of businesses exploring these strategies</li> </ul> |
| <b>WFS D18:</b><br>Industry Task Force Collaboration                        | Industry-specific Task Forces brought together to discuss and solve common workforce issues would be of assistance to employers and job seekers alike. Common-identified issues could improve grant potentials and assist employers with efficient platforms and other improvements to improve their operations and expand their business. | WFS Cameron should serve as the convener of the industry task forces in all industry clusters pertinent to our Cameron County workforce needs.   | Minutes of Task Force Meetings   |
| <b>WFS D19:</b><br>EDC/Chamber Partnerships for Leveraged Grant Funding and | Economic Development (ED) organizations and Chambers of Commerce can benefit from collaborating to create more competitive grant proposals. By leveraging their resources and expertise, they can:   | WFS Cameron can serve as the convener of these stakeholders across Cameron County to review the possibilities and  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minutes of stakeholder meetings</li> </ul>  |

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| Employer Engagement  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify mutually beneficial projects that drive economic growth and community development</li> <li>Develop more comprehensive and attractive grant packages that showcase the collective impact of their efforts</li> <li>Leverage their combined networks and influence to access a wider range of funding opportunities</li> <li>Enhance their credibility and reputation with grant-making organizations. working together, EDs and Chambers can create a stronger, more unified voice for their community, and increase their chances of securing funding for projects that drive economic growth and prosperity.</li> </ul> | <p>agree on collaborations. Some potential areas for collaboration include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Workforce development initiatives</li> <li>Downtown revitalization projects</li> <li>Small business support programs</li> <li>Infrastructure development initiatives</li> <li>Tourism promotion and marketing efforts</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li># of Collaborative projects</li> <li>Amount of Matching funds secured from EDCs</li> </ul>  |
| <b>WFS D20:</b><br>Distance Learning Potential—Metrix Learning | The workforce and the public need to be informed of the many free learning opportunities now provided through on-line learning platforms. Particularly, the TWC-sponsored METRIX Learning platform is available to the public free of charge, with over 6,000 occupational titles to take and many Certificates to earn for resumes. More certificates can equal better jobs and better pay.   | Continue to promote distance learning mediums to clients and the general public.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Documentation of distance learning certifications</li> <li># and type of certifications</li> </ul>  |
| <b>WFS D21:</b><br>New Steel Mill at Port of Brownsville       | Forza Steel, a Mexican company is under construction. They will be fabricating material pipes for the construction and energy business. This company will create an industrial workforce that can support such an operation and generate jobs for our economy. They are investing \$150 million dollars; hiring about 150 people and supporting 450 indirect jobs in the region.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to participate in all economic development efforts associated with the attraction of a steel mill plant to our area.</li> </ul>   | Public documentation of Cameron County stats   |
| <b>WFS D22:</b><br>TEA Regional Convener Grant                 | Texas Education Agency granted WFS Cameron a \$600,000 planning grant to develop a Plan to align with the Tri-Agency Priority Areas:<br>Priority 1: Workforce Development<br>Priority 2: Early Childhood Education<br>Priority 3: Data Driven Decision Making<br>Additional responsibilities of the Convener Grant include: analysis of labor market information; convening of cross-sector teams; engagement of   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Align training programs and associated credentials with in-demand, high-wage industries</li> <li>Mapping clear pathways to high-value credentials for students, including veterans, incumbent and dislocated workers, and youth involved with the justice system</li> </ul>                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li># of internships in Targeted Career Pathways</li> <li># of employers engaged in Targeted Industries</li> <li># of ISDs with data sharing agreements for IBC info</li> </ul> |



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|   | employers; communication across the region; and sustainability.  |   |  |
| <b>WFS D23:</b><br>\$2 Million<br>DOL Building<br>Pathways to<br>Infrastructure Grant | WFS Cameron was awarded a close to \$2Million grant to develop or create training to prepare workers for infrastructure jobs in growth industries. Cameron County is targeting: Healthcare, Manufacturing, and Construction.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborate with community colleges for training availability for target jobs</li> <li>• Encourage co-enrollment with WIOA funds to maximize funding</li> <li>• Prepare a workforce for Broadband, Renewable Energy, and Transportation</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• # of trainings offered in targeted industries</li> <li>• # of participants enrolled and completed training</li> <li>• # of participants employed</li> </ul> |
| <b>WFS D24:</b><br>Bilingual Population   | The majority of the population in the county is Hispanic and a speak Spanish at home. The ability to speak 2 languages is beneficial to our employers who deal with industry in the U.S. and Mexico, and/or manage employees/customers in two languages as well. This also reduces the need to hire translators and interpreters.  | Encourage bilingual, bicultural business development<br>Promote the bi-linguistic and bi-cultural population availability to potential employers who might want to re-locate  | # of new businesses that hire Spanish speakers<br># of new Mexico-based businesses in the area   |
| <b>WFS D25:</b><br>Brownsville Gateway<br>Modernization<br>Mega Project               | The modernization project will renovate the current land port of entry by demolishing existing facilities. A new 48,000 square foot administration building will replace the current 22,000 square foot space, providing a modern workspace for federal inspection agencies.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify workforce needs for the project</li> <li>• Identify training funds</li> <li>• Collaborate with Office of Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• # of referrals from workforce center</li> <li>• # of hiring events</li> </ul>   |
| <b>WFS D 26:</b><br>Community College<br>Funding                                      | TSC signed articulation agreements with several colleges to increase educational offerings. They continue to seek other opportunities.   | Identify colleges that partner with TSC<br>Encourage options to these programs  | # students enrolling in these programs<br># new programs signing on  |
| <b>WFS D27:</b><br>Growth of Advanced<br>Manufacturing Sector                         | The Governor of Texas has declared Advanced Manufacturing an industry cluster that will serve the state as a significant growth sector. The arena integrates innovative technologies into products and processes while infusing the rapid transfer of sciences into manufacturing. A.M. makes extensive use of computer, high precision, and information technologies in production systems. The arena is largely impacted by the state of raw material and energy availability. | WFS Cameron will serve to assemble our region's economic development entities to ensure alignment with their collective efforts to attract companies that incorporate A.M. into operations.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• # of companies recruited</li> <li>• Ranking on demand industry list</li> <li>• Job creation #s</li> <li>• Impact on productivity</li> </ul>                 |
| <b>WFS D28: Texas<br/>Southmost College<br/>Articulation Agreements</b>               | TSC offers numerous programs that transfer out for a four-year degree at various colleges through Agreements and Articulation Transfer Agreements  | WFS Cameron promotes higher education programs for post associate and options for Bachelor's Degrees and higher   | # programs available for transfer<br># applicants expressing interest in Bachelor's Degrees  |



With the establishment of The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley in 2013, the region has experienced an increase in award opportunities for Cameron County residents. Before this major development, educational institutions in the area had already expanded opportunities for residents of Cameron County. For instance, Our Lady of the Lake University in San Antonio began offering doctoral classes at the TSTC Campus in Harlingen and in 2013 expanded offerings in the Valley to include not only Doctoral Programs but also Bachelor's and Master's Degrees in La Feria where OLLU is now housed in a new, state-of-the-art education facility.

In 2015 the UTRGV School of Medicine was granted preliminary accreditation, with Provisional Accreditation status from the Liaison Committee on Medical Education through the 2022-2023 academic year. The medical education program was consequently granted full accreditation from the LCME on June 30, 2023. The School averages between 6,000 and 7,000 applicants from prospective students each year, and in May 2023 graduated its fourth class and welcomed its eighth class of students in summer 2024.

At the Texas State Technical College, the addition of the University Center proved value add when they partnered with several colleges to set up programs locally that offer undergraduate and graduate degrees. TSTC continues to provide students with opportunities in expanding their education. Articulation agreements with the following colleges have also been drawn up to accept student transfers from TSTC upon completion of an Associate Degree:

- The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (available through August 16, 2025)
- Wayland Baptist University
- Texas A&M University Central Texas
- Bellevue University These colleges include:
- Howard Payne University
- Lamar University
- Stephen F. Austin State University
- Tarleton State University
- Texas Tech University
- University of Houston-Victoria
- The University of Texas at Dallas Pre-Admissions Comet Connection Program (available through July 29, 2025)
- The University of Texas at Tyler
- Western Governors University

Texas Southmost College has signed agreements with several transfer institutions including:

- Texas A&M University-Kingsville
- University of Houston
- Sam Houston State University
- Texas Woman's University
- University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV)
- Texas Tech
- Abilene Christian University
- South Texas College
- Western Governors University
- Marymount University
- Lamar University
- UTSA

The Tables in this Plan provide detailed goals that address goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce, including the provision of early education services and services for youth and individuals with barriers to employment and goals relating to the performance accountability measures based on the WIOA performance indicators.

### **Goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce as defined by WIOA §3(24)**

- **Early Education services are provided through our Early Childhood Providers through a voucher system that can subsidize payment for low-income working parents and:**
- *Provides Child Care Services to parents who are attending a job training or education programs.*
- *Current early childhood educators are a priority population within the third priority group for Child Care Services.*
- *Connect Local Educational Agencies with Texas Rising Star 3- and 4-star certified Early Learning Programs that may serve as placement sites for high school students to Career and Technical Education (CTE) early childhood work experiences.*
- *Encourage and support early childhood educators to obtain postsecondary education credentials*
  - **Services for Youth are provided through our workforce center for eligible youth under various avenues, primarily WIOA to:**
- *Promote and help structure training services with Career & Technical Colleges (CTCs) and other training providers that provide portable, stackable, and transferable credits and credentials.*
- *Continue to promote and facilitate business and industry internships for high school CTE and college technical students with other partner agencies to help students bond with their chosen career pathway.*
  - **Services for individuals with barriers to employment**
- *Promote workforce services for students with disabilities through outreach and collaboration efforts by the Student HireAbility Navigator with VRS counselors.*
- *Strengthen AEL partnership to address basic skills barriers of workforce participants.*
- *Provide free GED classes to out-of-school youth and adults without a high school equivalency certificate.*
- *Collaborate with VRS to provide services to their customers.*

### **Goals relating to the performance accountability measures based on performance indicators described in WIOA §116(b)(2)(A)**

The tables reflect the evaluation elements on the goals relating to performance accountability measures based on the six primary indicators of performance for certain WIOA-authorized programs. Our goals include such goals that align with Effectiveness in serving Employers, the sixth performance indicator recognized as Retention with Same Employer, into the implementing regulations for the six WIOA core programs. Our goals are consistent with meeting performance for the WIOA title I non-core programs, use of supplemental wage information in the definition of the effectiveness in serving employers performance indicator, and measuring retention in unsubsidized employment.

Workforce Solutions Cameron Board Goals continue to support the TWC State Plan and Objectives. The respective Charts on the following pages will illustrate an array of selected objectives, strategies, and evaluation elements from the above source documents, updated and improved, which were deemed by the WFS Cameron Board's Operations Committee to be important for inclusion in the new *WFS Cameron FY 2025-2028 Local Workforce Development Plan*. Subsequent responses to the TWC and TWIC Board Planning Guidelines questions will include expansions on these initiatives, as appropriate to each question.

| Table 1-A  | <b>Workforce Solutions Cameron<br/>Local Workforce Development Plan Matrix 2025-2028</b>                     |  |   |
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| <b>TWIC-A ----The Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan FY 2024-2031</b>   |  |  |   |
| Goal Area TWIC-  | WFS Cameron Strategy   | Action Plan  | Evaluation Elements   |
| <b>TWIC A1:<br/>Employers</b><br><br><b>Accelerate the delivery of relevant education and training programs to meet the demand of employers.</b>                     | Increase upskilling and Reskilling programs  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase SDF awareness to businesses;</li> <li>• Prioritize funding for Occupational skills training through ITAs;</li> <li>• Assist in the development of apprenticeship programs;</li> <li>• Build awareness of Incumbent worker training</li> <li>• Promote High Demand Job Training &amp; Texas Industry Partnership</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of SDF applications submitted.</li> <li>• Number of apprenticeship program applications.</li> <li>• Number of incumbent worker projects</li> <li>• Number of HDJT and TIP applications submitted with collaboration with industry partners</li> </ul>   |
|  | Increase the adult education transition to employment  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthen AEL collaborations;</li> <li>• Co-enroll AEL and workforce program participants;</li> <li>• Collaborate with job fairs, hiring events.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of Workforce and AEL projects undertaken.</li> <li>• Number of co-enrolled participants served.</li> <li>• Number of workforce job fairs attended by AEL participants.</li> </ul>   |
|  | Increase short-term credentials in high demand occupations   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage industry association for customized training projects;</li> <li>• Collaborate with schools for training development;</li> <li>• Metrix learning/online training;</li> <li>• EDC collaborations for retentions and expansions projects.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of projects undertaken.</li> <li>• Number of new short-terms programs created that lead to recognized credentials.</li> <li>• Number industry recognized credentials obtained through Metrix Learning System.</li> <li>• Implementation of new HDJT projects through EDC collaborations.</li> </ul> |
| <b>TWIC A2:<br/>Learners</b><br><br><b>Accelerate the expansion of and access to work-based skill and knowledge acquisition to respond to the needs of learners.</b> | <b>WFS Cameron Strategy</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase work-based learning</li> </ul> | <b>Action Plan</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engagement of employers in targeted industries</li> <li>• Explore ISDs ability to become host sites</li> <li>• Explore Metrix Learning courses that support WBL</li> <li>• Develop work readiness, soft skills, mock interview programs</li> </ul>   | <b>Evaluation Elements</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of new employers in targeted industries</li> <li>• Number of ISDs as internship host sites</li> <li>• Number of interns co-enrolled in Metrix Learning courses</li> <li>• Number of interns enrolled in soft skills and/or participated in mock interviews</li> </ul>    |

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|   | Increase apprenticeship  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build awareness w/ chambers, EDC, Industry associates.</li> <li>• Nontraditional industries healthcare, banking, IT</li> <li>• Increase in nontraditional trade apprenticeships.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Launch a campaign to raise awareness of apprenticeship opportunities</li> <li>• Highlight established nontraditional apprenticeships in healthcare and banking</li> <li>• Host roundtable discussions on apprenticeship training</li> <li>• Percentage increase in nontraditional apprenticeship</li> <li>• Percentage increase of women in apprenticeships</li> </ul>  |
| <b>TWIC A3:<br/>Partners</b><br><br><b>Accelerate the development and use of models to support and build system partners' capacity, responsiveness, continuous improvement, and decision-making</b> | <b>WFS Cameron Strategy</b><br>Identify credentials of value<br><br>Clarify and connect pathways   | <b>Action Plan</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of credentials appear in job postings</li> <li>• Requirement of the credential earned</li> <li>• Alignment of dual credit programs with industry</li> <li>• Short falls within the industry</li> <li>• Increase and expand outreach components</li> <li>• Focus on target industries</li> <li>• Research successful models</li> <li>• Collaboration with Region One</li> <li>• Become designated as a Regional Convenors</li> </ul> | <b>Evaluation Elements</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of credentials earned by workforce participants</li> <li>• Number of credentials earned by high school students</li> <li>• Assist in the identification of gaps in training programs to meet industry demands</li> <li>• Percentage of students on career pathways leading to IBCs</li> <li>• Percentage of students enrolled in IBCs that align with training programs targeted by the Board</li> <li>• Implementation of dashboard for career pathways</li> </ul> |
|   | <b>TWIC A4:<br/>Policy &amp; Planning</b><br><br><b>Accelerate the availability of relevant workforce, education, and other data sets and the use of applied analytics to evaluate</b> | <b>WFS Cameron Strategy</b><br>Increase Texas Rising Star Certification levels<br>Identify and collect industry-based certification data<br>Identify and quantify quality outcomes<br>Enhance wage record<br>Identify and collect industry-based certification data  | <b>Action Plan</b><br>Promote and support the attainment of high-tier Texas Rising Star certification by all childcare providers.<br>Execute a secure, shared data infrastructure and governance model that will facilitate data import, storage, access, integration, analysis, and reporting to understand and quantify quality program outcomes.<br>Pilot and expand an enhanced wage record for use in determining program outcomes and employment in occupational area of study.  |

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| <p><b>program outcomes to respond to the needs of policy makers and planners.</b></p> |  | <p>Develop and implement strategies and procedures to collect and report data, including certifications attained by name of certification and name of third-party, national certifying entity.</p> | <p>Creation of shared data infrastructure database<br/>Online publication of data<br/>Dashboard shared online</p> |
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| Table 2A   | TWC-A Texas Workforce Commission Strategic Plan FY 2025-2029   |  |   |
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| Goal Area TWC-   | WFS Cameron Strategy   | Action Plan  | Evaluation Elements   |
| <p><b>TWC A-1:</b></p> <p><b>Ensure the Local workforce system supports employers and allows business and industry to thrive.</b></p>  | <p>Provide timely, relevant workforce solutions that enable employers to find and retain the qualified workers needed to be successful and globally competitive.</p> | <p>Deploy rapid, creative, flexible, employer-driven, practical solutions to connect employers with workers of all skill and education levels.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthening BSU services to engage employers into the workforce system</li> <li>• Increase number of recruiting and hiring events</li> <li>• Generate listing of qualified candidates from WIT</li> <li>• Refer qualified candidates to required workforce partner for child care services</li> <li>• Utilized mobile unit to connect qualified job seekers to employers in rural communities</li> </ul> |
|  |  | <p>Expand recruiting and hiring services provided by the Board to help employers build and maintain a robust workforce.</p>                        |   |
|  |  | <p>Assist employers in hiring and retaining workers who are able to work but need child care and other critical workforce support services.</p>    |   |
|  | <p>Engage with industry to address current and future workforce development needs.</p>   | <p>Assess and expand workforce training services for employers to prepare skilled workers to meet employer needs.</p>                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continuing to engage employers in round table discussion on workforce needs</li> <li>• Seeking additional funding opportunities for training</li> <li>• Number of presentation conducted to promote SDF and Skills for Small Businesses</li> </ul>   |
| <p>Ensure apprenticeship, pre-apprenticeship opportunities, and other work-based learning strategies such as internships, mentorships, etc. are readily available and aligned with employer needs.</p> |  |  |   |

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|  |  | Assist employers easily understanding and navigating workforce programs and resources that can benefit them.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of employers assisted with apprenticeship applications</li> <li>• Number of internships and other WBL opportunities aligned with industry demand</li> </ul>  |
| <b>TWC A 2:</b><br><br><b>Ensure a skilled workforce is prepared and equipped to fill critical in-demand jobs, both now and in the future.</b> | <b>WFS Cameron Strategy</b>  | <b>Action Plan</b>   | <b>Evaluation Elements</b>   |
|  | Assist workers in obtaining the skills necessary to fill critical occupations, as identified by industry.  | Upskill the current workforce to fill in-demand jobs through work-based learning strategies and workforce and education services.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of employer presentations promoting SDF and Skills for Small Businesses</li> <li>• Number of OJT supported</li> <li>• Number of WBL opportunities</li> <li>• Provide LMI data to training providers to implement program the support middle skills occupations</li> <li>• Convene meeting with training providers and industry to ensure alignment</li> <li>• Establish industry task forces to identify in demand occupations</li> <li>• Identify training program that results in credentials of value for the region</li> </ul> |
|  |  | Develop and deploy programs to end the middle-skills gap.  |  |
|  |  | Ensure alignment between training programs and associated credentials with in-demand, high-wage occupations.   |  |
| Connect a qualified workforce with employers.  | Expand the development of high-quality work-based learning opportunities that provide workers with the skills and experience needed to fill in-demand jobs and ensure qualified workers are matched with hiring employers. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of internships created</li> <li>• Number of job seekers connected to employers</li> <li>• Generate list of qualified job seekers in WIT to link them to demand occupations</li> <li>• Provide support and resources to disparate populations to prepare them for the labor force</li> <li>• Number of job seekers referred to workforce partners for childcare services</li> <li>• Number of veterans, foster youth, and second chance populations connected to employers</li> </ul> |  |
|  | Support all individuals, including people with disabilities, veterans, foster youth, adult learners, and second chance populations, to prepare them to achieve career success and close gaps in labor force participation. |  |  |
|  | Provide child care to eligible families to facilitate their participation in the workforce.  |  |  |

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|   | Prepare a skilled workforce to fill critical jobs in the future.   | Ensure child care providers have the support necessary to provide quality early childhood learning programs.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of child care centers that provide resources and training to increase quality of care</li> <li>• Number of LMI sessions provided to job seekers and participants</li> <li>• Number of sessions conducted on careers and occupations in demand</li> <li>• Number of training provider orientations conducted at workforce centers</li> <li>• Number of ISD connections and presentation on in-demand occupations</li> <li>• Number of training completers hired by employers</li> </ul> |
|   |  | Provide access to the labor market and career information for better-informed decision-making.   |  |
|   |  | Support educational programs for students in Cameron County that inform and prepare them for high-skill, in-demand jobs and career success.                            |  |
|   |  | Align the talent development pipeline with employer demand for qualified workers.  |  |
| <b>TWC A 3:</b>   | <b>WFS Cameron Strategy</b>  | <b>Action Plan</b>   | <b>Evaluation Elements</b>   |
| <b>Provide exceptional customer service and support to all workforce system stakeholders.</b> | Deliver quality customer service to every customer who interacts with the workforce system.  | Ensure that every workforce customer receives timely, efficient, and beneficial services to address their needs.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of customers served</li> <li>• Number of customer complaints</li> <li>• Number of support services received</li> </ul>   |
|   |  | Enhance the overall customer experience within the workforce system, providing multiple integrated pathways for customers to choose how they interact with the system. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of workforce participants served by multiple programs</li> </ul>   |
|   | Seamlessly integrate programs and coordinate services and make them easy for all workforce system stakeholders to access and navigate. | Ensure customers can easily navigate and are comprehensively served across all workforce programs.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of customers served</li> <li>• Number of services provided during workforce visits include resource room usage</li> <li>• Number of workshops/ orientations attended</li> </ul>  |
|   |  | Align and leverage resources available to support workforce development efforts through interagency partnerships and collaboration.                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of cross referrals to program services and activities</li> <li>• Number of round table discussion on resources and services available</li> </ul>   |



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|  | Maintain the highest levels of integrity, accountability, and efficiency across the workforce system and TWC programs. | Strengthen systems in place to reduce and eliminate fraud, waste, and abuse within workforce centers and programs.             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of fraud cases reported</li> <li>• Number of training provided on fraud and waste</li> <li>• Number of meeting or session provided on UI program requirements</li> <li>• Number of review conducted to identify fraudulent activities</li> </ul> |
|  |  | Assist employers and workers with their unemployment insurance program needs by providing quality services in a timely manner. |  |
|  |  | Reduce discrimination in employment and housing through education and fair administration of employment and housing laws.      |  |

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| <b>Workforce Solutions Cameron</b>   |  |  |
| <b>Local Workforce Development Plan Matrix 2025-2028</b>   |  |  |
| <b>Table B</b>   | <b>TWC-B WIOA Combined State Plan<br/>TEXAS PYS 2024-2027</b>                                    |  |
| <b>Goal Area TWC B1:</b>   |  |  |
| <b>Support a Workforce System that allows employers and workers to achieve and sustain economic prosperity.</b>  |  |  |
| <b>WFS Cameron Strategy</b>  | <b>Action Plans</b>  | <b>Evaluation Elements</b>   |
| Expand workforce training, recruiting, and hiring services for employers to ensure that a skilled and ready workforce is available to meet the diverse needs of Cameron County businesses. | Continued integration of services to consolidate resources, and efforts and reduce redundancies. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of targeted hiring events for employers</li> <li>• Number of participants upskilled</li> <li>• Number of round table discussion on resources sharing and co-case management of participants</li> </ul> |

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|   |   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of workforce center recruiting events for employers</li> </ul>  |
| Enhance workforce services and resources to help job seekers access information about in-demand occupations, gain the skills needed by Texas employers, and find and retain employment.   | Expand outreach services to promote programs for job seeker and employers. Provide training to combat work ethic issues.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of work readiness and soft skills training implemented</li> <li>• Number of LMI sessions provided to job seekers during assessment</li> <li>• List of targeted occupations shares</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Goal Area TWC B2:</b>  |   |   |
| <b>Promote employers' access to the talents and abilities of individuals with disabilities. Accommodate such workers in the workplace and assist with maintaining and advancing their careers successfully.</b>   |   |   |
| <b>WFS Cameron Strategy</b>   | <b>Action Plans</b>   | <b>Evaluation Elements</b>  |
| Continue to integrate the state's vocational rehabilitation services for individuals with disabilities within Texas Workforce Solutions so that local service delivery is able to work in concert with other workforce services, and so resources can be shared to better serve the needs of job seekers and workers with disabilities. | Full integration of VRS services within the Workforce Solutions network   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of collaborations with VRS staff for co-enrollment initiatives</li> <li>Number of referrals conducted for accommodations</li> <li>Number of hiring events and job fairs collectively undertaken</li> </ul>  |
|   | Expand the network of employers that recruit, train, and employ the talents and skills of individuals with disabilities through BSU reps and Board partnerships with EDCs and industry groups and "Ticket to Work."   |   |
| Expand the network of employers that recruit, train, and employ the talents and skills of individuals with disabilities through Workforce Solutions Cameron's Business Service representatives, Vocational Rehabilitation Services business relations staff, and Board partnerships with economic development and industry groups.      | WFS Cameron Business Services Unit (BSU) actively participates with Chamber events targeting entrepreneurs and microenterprises, offers services and support to business customers, and actively promotes coordination between other agencies' initiatives. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Number of partnership meetings with Disability Chamber <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of presentation conducted to promote Skills for Small Businesses grant opportunities</li> <li>• Number of chamber events presentation conducted to build awareness of workforce system</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |
| <b>Goal Area TWC B3:</b>  |   |   |
| <b>Prepare individuals for employment by supporting education and training that equips individuals with in-demand skills as identified by employers.</b>  |   |   |
| <b>WFS Cameron Strategy</b>   | <b>Action Plans</b>   | <b>Evaluation Elements</b>  |

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| Continue to support education programs for students in Texas that inform them of and prepare them for high-skill, high-demand jobs through the identification and allocation of available state and federal programs and resources.  | Identify and allocate available state and federal programs and resources for supporting educational programs. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of students outreached by Workforce Education and Outreach specialist to provided LMI and work readiness training</li> </ul>   |
| Address the workforce training needs of employers by leveraging Skills Development Fund grants and other available resources to support in-demand job training. Continue to support work-based learning opportunities through internships, mentorships, apprenticeships and job shadowing. | Leverage Skills Development Fund grants and other resources to support in-demand job training.                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number employers outreached and presented with SDF and other TWC upskilling opportunities</li> <li>Number of apprenticeship applications submitted by local employers or colleges</li> <li>Number of internships support through workforce funds</li> </ul> |
| Continue to coordinate and collaborate with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) and the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to support and develop objectives for increasing the percentage of Texans with postsecondary degrees or certifications.                             | Continue to coordinate SDF grants with post-secondary training providers.                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of postsecondary partnerships developed for SDF projects</li> <li>Number of students at local ISDs provided LMI and information on credentials of value</li> </ul>   |

**Goal Area TWC B4:**

**Accelerate employment pathways for veterans, service members, and their spouses as they transition to civilian occupations in Texas.**

| <b>WFS Cameron Strategy</b>   | <b>Action Plans</b>   | <b>Evaluation Elements</b>  |
|---|---|---|
| Provide an accelerated pathway and demonstrate innovative approaches for transitioning military service members to gain acknowledgement of their military training and quickly transition to employment in Texas through ongoing expansion of programs such as Texas Operation Welcome Home, College Credit for Heroes, veterans training, and the Texas Veterans Leadership peer mentorship. | Expansion of programs such as Texas Operation Welcome Home, College Credit for Heroes, veterans training and the Texas Veterans Leadership peer mentorship program. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of co-enrolled veterans served</li> <li>Number of hiring events collaborations by workforce and TVLP representatives</li> <li>Number of collaborations with Region One Project Pace for teacher certifications</li> </ul> |
|   | Continued promotion of all veteran's transition programs.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of veteran events attended for outreach purposes</li> </ul>   |
| Identify gaps in service to Texas veterans and advance strategies to enhance their education  | Veterans Job Fairs. Outreach for industry support of internships, scholarships, OJT's, and other aids   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of veteran hiring events</li> </ul>   |

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| and employment opportunities to ensure seamless transition into the Texas workforce for veterans and their spouses.   | to Veterans. Specialized Veterans training programs in job readiness and soft skills. Priority casework and job placement services for veterans. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of veteran-friendly employers engaged.</li> </ul>  |
|   | Coordinate with partners to identify and assess qualified individuals in need of services or referrals   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of referred veterans assessed and provided services</li> </ul>   |
|   | Provide Veterans with the training and opportunity to secure quality employment in our workforce.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of veterans served</li> <li>Number of veterans enrolled in training</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Goal Area TWC B5:</b>  |  |  |
| <b>Maintain the highest levels of integrity, accountability, and efficiency in all workforce systems and TWC programs. Through continuous improvements, develop a system that minimizes fraud, waste, and abuse within TWC and all the programs it administers.</b> |  |  |
| <b>WFS Cameron Strategy</b>   | <b>Action Plans</b>  | <b>Evaluation Elements</b>   |
| Monitor and evaluate compliance of local area service delivery for fiscal accountability and program effectiveness.   | Continuous improvements to the systems to minimize fraud, waste and abuse with TWC and all programs it administers.                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Program and fiscal monitoring reviews conducted annually</li> <li>Number of check and balance systems implemented for fraud detect</li> </ul> |
| Make technology and system improvements to leverage current resources and improve the oversight and monitoring of programs.   | Employ enhanced or alternative program and service delivery methods to improve monitoring.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of system improvements identified to strengthen monitoring</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investigate and resolve findings or questioned costs and track each resolution and recovery of disallowed costs.</li> </ul>  | Continued PII professional development courses, as well as internal and external monitoring and audits.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of SPI training</li> <li>Number of internal monitoring reviews</li> </ul>  |

The following table defines our plan to provide or coordinate with partners to provide Adult Education and Literacy services:

|  |                             |                    |                            |
|--|-----------------------------|--------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>Workforce Solutions Cameron</b>                         |                             |                    |                            |
| <b>Local Workforce Development Plan Matrix 2025-2028</b>   |                             |                    |                            |
| <b>TWC-C --Adult Education and Literacy Strategic Plan</b> |                             |                    |                            |
| <b>Fiscal Years 2021 to 2026</b>                           |                             |                    |                            |
| <b>Table C</b>   |                             |                    |                            |
| <b>Goal:</b>   | <b>WFS Cameron Strategy</b> | <b>Action Plan</b> | <b>Evaluation Elements</b> |

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| <p><b>TWC C 1:<br/>Increase in<br/>Outcomes</b></p> <p>Increase workforce, secondary, and postsecondary education and training outcomes to support increases in education and work-related outcomes through enhanced delivery and service integration</p> | <p>Expand capacity to reach new customers with barriers to employment through enhanced outreach and recruitment</p>  | <p>Enhance outreach and follow-up services for justice-involved individuals, adult learners with disabilities, and internationally trained professionals.</p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of special populations served during the program year.</li> <li>• Website webpage links to the AEL provider Outreach activities to promote AEL services to center participants</li> <li>• Round table discussions with AEL partner for sharing program information</li> <li>• Number of cross training sessions between AEL and workforce center staff</li> </ul> |  |
|   |  | <p>Collaborate with workforce partners and industry to promote AEL as an educational resource to enhance literacy and basic education skills.</p>   |   |  |
|   |  | <p>Support cross-training among staff members in AEL programs, Board, and Workforce Center to develop an integrated intake process and increase referrals and service coordination.</p>   |   |  |
|   |  | <p>Facilitate the development of targeted outreach for potential AEL customers in Workforce Solutions Offices.</p>  |   |  |
|   |  | <p>Promote cross-referrals of workforce participants into AEL programs that support college readiness at no-cost or low-cost</p>  |   |  |
|   |  | <p>Develop platforms for Tri-Agency partners to share information on the portability of credit across institutions of higher education.</p>   |   |  |
|   |  | <p>Provide career and college navigation assistance to current, former, and future AEL students/workforce participants entering, returning, and participating in post-secondary education and training to support student retention</p> |   |  |
|   | <p>Promote alternative options for entry into postsecondary education or training programs for students who have not completed high school or obtained a high school equivalent, such as with Ability-to-Benefit program models.</p> |   |   |  |
|   | <p>Increase postsecondary education and training enrollments and support completions</p>   | <p>Convene employers/ employer associations with AEL provider to develop employer-based needs assessments and other applicable resources to enhance work-readiness skills of AEL students.</p>  |   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of participants co-enrolled in AEL and workforce programs.</li> <li>• Number of Tri-agency partner convenings to develop career pathways.</li> <li>• Identify platforms for partner sharing.</li> <li>• Number of orientations provided to co-case managed AEL students regarding programs of study in targeted occupations</li> </ul> |
|   |  | <p>Provide information on work-based learning strategies to include employability skills to strengthen curriculum development for AEL provider.</p>   |   |  |
| <p>Partner with AEL to support the expansion and articulation of portable postsecondary education and training</p>  |  |   |   |  |

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|  |  | <p>credentials including industry-based certifications to develop career pathway ladders.</p> <p>Share workforce requirements on comprehensive assessment platforms used as well as IEP development that include individualized learning goals.</p> <p>Provide information to AEL partner on available workforce resources such as transportation, child care, and other applicable services or incentives, to support AEL program completion .</p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of graduates of postsecondary educational programs</li> <li>• Number of non-high school completers that complete training programs and obtain industry recognized credentials (IBCs)</li> </ul>  |
|  | Enhance AEL curriculum, standards, and skill assessment options to boost employability and college readiness of AEL students | <p>Evaluate policy and practices that may limit the AEL services available to a student within the region.</p> <p>Develop memoranda of understanding with AEL programs to leverage available services and to create more customized education and training plans for the student</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of work readiness training sessions with AEL students conducted</li> <li>• Number of work-based strategies utilized by AEL partner</li> <li>• Number of joint projects that lead to the attainment of industry-based certifications by AEL/Workforce students</li> </ul> |
|  | Enhance student retention supports to increase program completions   | <p>Promote engagement with businesses through workforce business development units and business–employer associations to develop models that incorporate occupation-specific skills and work- readiness requirements into AEL services</p> <p>Implement technical assistance and support work-based initiatives between AEL providers and employers, building capacity for workplace models that focus on employee retention and creating a pipelines of skilled workers .</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of individualized learning goals that align with workforce programs</li> <li>• Number of AEL students co-enrolled to access support services through workforce programs</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>TWC C 2:</b></p> <p><b>Address Demand with Increased Access</b></p> <p>Address demand for AEL in Texas by implementing strategies that</p> | Advance service delivery approach to better serve AEL students   | <p>Expand service capacity and the diversity of program offerings through organizational alliances with community- and faith-based organizations, as well as other organizations not funded through TWC, that augment AEL efforts through leveraged funding and volunteerism .</p> <p>Encourage AEL partnerships with employers who hire adult learners with additional barriers to employment . Examples include second-chance employers who hire formerly incarcerated individuals or those who participate in TWC’s We HireAbility program .</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of established satellites for AEL services throughout the county.</li> <li>• MOU with AEL for leveraging of services and resources</li> </ul>  |



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| increase and streamline access for current and future students  |  | Increase efforts to connect students in rural areas with limited or no broadband service with community partners that offer these services   |  |
|   |  | Continue to implement distance education initiatives that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• support local providers’ adoptions of distance learning applications</li> <li>• further develop the statewide inventory of distance learning programs and blended learning models; and</li> <li>• grow and maintain a distance learning resource platform</li> </ul> |  |
|   | Increase employer, business community, and community-based organization roles in AEL | Promote co-enrollment and referral efforts of customers receiving Titles I and IV services who require AEL support to attain education or career goals.<br>Support co-enrollment and referrals to and from AEL when applicable or necessary .<br>Build awareness of AEL outreach resources used for both recruitment and coordination with key partners.                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of business engagements or hiring events attended by AEL provider</li> <li>• Number of work-based initiatives between AEL and workforce</li> <li>• Number of joint projects that expand service capacity and diversify program offerings</li> <li>• Number of connections made to second-chance employers</li> </ul> |
| Increase student access to digital technology, including broadband connections and distance learning applications |  | Support an integrated intake and follow-up system  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of AEL students utilizing workforce mobile unit to connect to AEL services in rural communities</li> <li>• Number of AEL students utilizing workforce center resource rooms for distance learning</li> </ul>   |
|   |  | Convene regional workforce integration events to identify and align resources, create efficiencies, and close gaps across TWC, AEL, other adult education organizations, and workforce development stakeholders .  |  |
|   |  | Facilitate opportunities for Board, VRS, AEL, and workforce development stakeholders to create and/or implement strategic frameworks to support career pathways.   |  |
|   |  | Distribute career pathway resources to AEL providers and workforce partners to promote occupational advancement for basic skills deficient students into middle-skilled occupations.   |  |
| <b>TWC C 3:</b>   | Support development of career pathway  | Promote use of the high school equivalency voucher program, as passed by the 87th Texas Legislature, Regular Session (2021), to support expansion of the program .   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of co-enrolled AEL students with workforce programs</li> </ul>   |

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| <p><b>Enhance Customer Experience with Increased Coordination</b></p> <p>Enhance the workforce customer’s experience through increased coordination and integration among state and local system stakeholders.</p> | ladders with AEL and its workforce system partners   |   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of workforce program participants referred to AEL programs</li> <li>• Promote AEL linkages in website</li> <li>• Number of co-enrolled AEL students in follow up activities</li> <li>• Track website metrics on visit to AEL program through linkages</li> <li>• Number of career pathways supported by both AEL and workforce</li> <li>• Number of workforce partners convening to develop strategic frameworks to support career pathways</li> <li>• Share career pathway resources with AEL provider</li> </ul>  |
|  |  | Support coordinated data collection with AEL and Board-administered programs by issuing joint policies and technical assistance on performance accountability under WIOA .  |   |
|  | Strengthen coordination and alignment with TEA   | Require AEL programs to implement standard operating procedures for collecting post-exit outcomes of students.  |   |
|  |  | Support follow-up and post-exit tracking of students who have exited the AEL program to obtain accurate performance outcome data as well as refer students to other workforce services, as appropriate .  |   |
|  |  | Explore and implement strategies related to employment and postsecondary education match results.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of AEL and workforce participants provided with program vouchers through joint projects such as the HDJT grant</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>TWC C 4: Improve Program Effectiveness</b></p> <p>Improve AEL program effectiveness, which includes program accountability and fiscal integrity, and provide tools to communicate the AEL program</p>        | Help develop uniform data collection methods that enhance enrollment reporting and inform progress in meeting workforce program goals and objectives | <p>Enhance the statewide data management information system and data warehouse dashboards to provide timely reports that help identify the effectiveness of strategies intended to aid student outcomes related to instructional gains, credentials, and employment.</p> <p>Explore and implement strategies related to employment and postsecondary education match results.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agreement executed supporting data collection for co-enrolled participants</li> <li>• Number of policies developed that support both AEL and WIOA performance accountability requirements</li> <li>• Share best practices for the collection of post-exit outcomes</li> <li>• AEL student referrals to workforce programs</li> <li>• Share best practices on employment outcomes for co-case managed participants</li> <li>• Coordinate employment leads for co-case managed participants.</li> <li>• Sign MOAs with new educational entities that commit to data sharing</li> </ul> |
|  | Increase the quality, accuracy, and speed of data sharing across agencies to support the Tri-  | Increase opportunities to gain support from employers, economic development organizations, and employer organizations through a county-wide campaign to increase AEL visibility as an economic- and community-development tool .  |   |
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| impact to AEL stakeholders. | Agency Workforce Initiative | Follow the Tri-Agency Regional Convener Plan to support and align our data sharing with pathways partnership. |  |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|---|--|

| <b>WC-D---Child Care Workforce Strategic Plan 2023-2025</b>   |   |   |  |
|---|---|---|--|
| <b>Goal Area TWC D 1: Support the Current Child Care Workforce</b>  |   |   |  |
| <b>Objective</b>  | <b>WFS Cameron Strategy</b>   | <b>Action Plans</b>   |  |
| Support the child care workforce through continued support for the Texas Early Childhood Professional Development System (TECPDS) and identifying opportunities to stabilize the child care workforce and promote the hiring and retention of high-quality early educators.                                       | Support the <i>Texas Early Childhood</i> Professional Development System (TECPDS).  | Board has a TECPDS Subject Matter Expert at the Board level who will early learning programs (ELPS) properly utilize TECPDS |  |
|   | Identify opportunities to stabilize the child care workforce and promote the hiring and retention of high-quality early educators.                            | Board will continue to utilize TECPDS for all professional development hosted by the Board                                  |  |
| <b>Goal Area TWC D2: Support a Pipeline of Qualified Child Care Workers</b>   |   |   |  |
| <b>Objective</b>  | <b>WFS Cameron Strategy</b>   | <b>Action Plans</b>   |  |
| Support a pipeline of qualified child care workers by increasing the number of high school graduates working as early childhood educators, linking high school students to the ECE field and supporting early childhood educators in their educational advancement, through stackable (transferable) credentials. | Increase the number of high school graduates working as early childhood educators and link high school students to the Early Childhood Education (ECE) field. | Board is supporting local community college in the development of CTE partnerships in high schools.                         |  |
|   |   | Board continues to work with local community colleges to align degree plans with Texas Rising Star education requirements.  |  |
| <b>Goal Area TWC D3: Examine Opportunities to Improve Administration and Oversight of the CCS Program</b>   |   |   |  |
| <b>Objective</b>  | <b>WFS Cameron Strategy</b>   | <b>Action Plans</b>   |  |
| Ensure consistent CCS administration and transparency by providing ECE programs,  | Align the Workforce Boards on best practices to support and sustain the child care workforce and  | Engage with the Workforce Board member who is a Texas Rising Star 4-star owner/director                                     |  |

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| stakeholders, and the public with transparent, easily accessible information on the child care program and aligning the Workforce Boards best practices to support and sustain the child care workforce and ensure program oversight is responsive to the needs of the child care industry. | ensure program oversight is responsive to the needs of the child care industry. | Board has policy allowing early childhood educators as part of the 3 <sup>rd</sup> priority group for receiving child care financial assistance.                              |
|   |   | Board has established a Child care advisory committee with 15 members to assist Board Staff with the development of quality activities and address local concerns and issues. |

**B. Board Strategies**

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

**Board’s strategy to work with the partners carrying out Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) and Vocational Rehabilitation (VRS) activities to align the resources available to the local workforce development area (workforce area) to achieve the vision and goals.**

A key goal of WFS Cameron is to align resources and coordinate services to participants and to strengthen referrals among the required partner programs. The Workforce Center Contractor is charged with ensuring we meet these goals and make them part of our everyday standard operating procedure to help further our mission and vision; as such, the one-stop operator meets regularly with the core partners to discuss how to better assist each other in service delivery to meet our performance measures.

WFS Cameron Board examines and updates its 4-year strategic plan as needed and submits modifications to the Texas Workforce Commission every two years. The tables below outlines the strategies employed to achieve the Board’s vision and goals in conjunction with core program partnerships.

| <b>Table 1B-1: Core Program Partnership Strategies to Achieve Vision and Goals</b>    |                            |  |  |
|---|----------------------------|--|--|
| <b>Core Program</b>   | <b>Responsible Entity</b>  | <b>Partner Entity</b>  | <b>Activities/Strategies</b>   |
| Youth Workforce Investment Activities<br><br><b>In-School</b><br><b>Out of School</b> | WF Board and WF Contractor | ISDs, Communities in School, Vocational Rehab (General & Blind Services) Juvenile Justice, Literacy Centers, TSTC, TSC, Career Schools, CBOs, YouthBuild, Job Corps, | Coordinate with partners to identify and assess qualified individuals in need of WIOA services. In addition to WIOA career & training services and support services, WFS Cameron also offers job readiness, LMI, and soft skills training through the WCEOS and workforce readiness workshops at the centers for out-of-school youth. SHN outreaches and coordinates services for possible co-enrollment with TWC VRS. |

|   |                                     |  |  |
|---|-------------------------------------|--|--|
|   |                                     | AEL, Texas A&M Manufacturing HUB   | <i>Work with partners on referrals to appropriate agency for additional services</i>   |
| Adult Employment and Training Activities (WIOA)             | WF Board and WF Contractor          | TVC, TVLP, Voc. Rehab (General & Blind), TWC-ES, TSTC, TSC, Career Schools, CBOs, AEL, MET, OAG, TDCJ, Texas A&M Manufacturing HUB   | Coordinate with partners to identify and assess qualified individuals in need of WIOA services. In addition to WIOA career & training services and support services, WRTAFS Cameron also offers job readiness and soft skills workshops, and workforce readiness certifications.<br><i>Work with partners on referrals to appropriate agency for additional services.</i>  |
| Dislocated Worker Employment and Training Activities (WIOA) | WF Board and WF Contractor          | TVC, TVLP, TWC-ES, Vocational Rehab (General & Blind), TSTC, TSC, Career Schools, CBOs, AEL, MET, OAG, TDCJ, Texas A&M Manufacturing HUB, SCSEP                            | Coordinate with partners to identify and assess qualified individuals in need of WIOA services. In addition to WIOA career & training services and support services, WFS Cameron also offers job readiness and soft skills workshops, and workforce readiness certifications.<br><i>Work with partners on referrals to appropriate agency for additional services.</i>   |
| Adult Education and Literacy Activities (AEL)               | WF Board and WF Contractor          | ISDs, TVC, TVLP, TWC-ES, Communities in Schools, Juvenile Justice, Literacy Centers, TSTC HEP (Migrant education) Program, ESC   | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Coordinate with partners to identify and assess qualified individuals in need of WIOA services. In addition to WIOA career &amp; training services and support services, WFS Cameron also offers job readiness and soft skills workshops, and workforce readiness certifications.</li> <li>2. Work with partners on referrals to appropriate entity for needed services.</li> <li>3. Workforce services provided: soft skills, financial literacy, LMCI training, job readiness, career, and college awareness.</li> <li>4. Reverse referral of candidates.</li> </ol> |
| Employment Services (Wagner-Peyser)                         | WF Board and ES WF Contractor Staff | TVC, TVLP, TWC-ES, Vocational Rehab (General & Blind Services), ISDs, Communities in School, Juvenile Justice, TSTC, TSC, Career Schools, CBOs, AEL, MET, OAG, TDCJ, SCSEP | Coordinate with partners to identify and assess qualified individuals in need of WIOA services. In addition to WIOA career & training services and support services, WFS Cameron also offers job readiness and soft skills workshops, and workforce readiness certifications. SHN coordinates with partner entities to promote WIT.<br><i>Work with partners on referrals to appropriate agency for additional services.</i>   |
| Vocational Rehabilitation Services                          | WF Board and WF Contractor          | ISDs, TVC, TVLP, MHMR, TSTC, TSC, Career Schools, CBOs, AEL  | ➤ Coordinate with partners to identify and assess qualified individuals in need of WIOA services. In addition to WIOA career & training services and support services, WFS Cameron also offers job readiness and soft skills workshops, and workforce readiness certifications.  |

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|  |  |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Student HireAbility Navigator will work with VRS counselors to inform students with disabilities on Pre-ETS services such as work experience and employment programs.</li> <li>➤ Work with partners on referrals to appropriate agency for additional services.</li> </ul> |
|--|--|--|---|

**Our Board** has adopted strategies to work with the entities carrying out **AEL and VRS** to align resources available to achieve vision and goals. The required partners representing core services all have a place on the WFS Cameron Board and sit on Board committees and are therefore part of the decision-making process. The chart below outlines the **Core programs of Adult Education and Literacy activities and Vocational Rehabilitation services** and how they align with resources and board strategies.

| Table 1B-2   |  | Required Partnership Strategies to Achieve Vision and Goals  |  |
|--|--|--|--|
| Required Partner                                     | Align Resources  | Board Strategy   |  |
| WIOA adult, dislocated worker, and youth programs    | WIOA career & training services and support services, Job readiness, Soft skills workshops, and workforce readiness certifications.      | Coordinate with partners to identify and assess qualified individuals in need of WIOA services; referrals to appropriate agency for needed services.             |  |
| Wagner-Peyser Employment Service (ES) program        | TVC, TVLP, TWC-ES, Vocational Rehab (General & Blind Services), ISDs, Communities in School, Juvenile Justice, TSTC, TSC, Career Schools | Coordinate with partners regarding available resources for eligible applicants; meet regularly with contractor staff to evaluate progress                        |  |
| Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) program           | Literacy, Career and training and support services   | Coordinate with partners regarding available resources for eligible applicants; establish MOU with provider to ensure service delivery                           |  |
| Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) program     | Workforce Center and Board resources   | Coordinate with partners regarding available resources for eligible applicants. SHN collaboration on NDEAM, transitional fairs, and HireAbility Events with VRS. |  |
| Unemployment Insurance (UI) program                  | RESEA UI Orientation along with career and re-training services  | Coordinate with state UI processes to assist provide information to claimant on how to apply for Unemployment benefits   |  |
| Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) program            | Provide training services; provide TAA forms to employers to ensure proper paperwork is submitted  | Coordinate with Rapid Response efforts with state and local unemployment services; Provide TAA information to affected employers to identify eligibility.        |  |
| Choices, the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families | CHOICE Orientation and information on training, work activities, and childcare services  | Coordinate with partners regarding available resources and training for eligible applicants  |  |



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| (TANF) employment and training program  |  |   |
| Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training (SNAP E&T)                                | SNAP Orientation and information on training, work activities, and childcare services                                  | Coordinate with partners regarding available resources and training for eligible applicants   |
| Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) childcare/Texas Rising Star program/Texas School Ready (TSR) Project | Childcare services for program participants; Support childcare center to improve school readiness of children in care. | Coordinate with partners to identify and assess qualified individuals in need of childcare services; referrals to appropriate agency for needed services. Provide continuous mentoring and training in strategies to improve school readiness for children in care. |
| Apprenticeship programs (Texas Education Code, Chapter 133)   | Registered Apprenticeship Programs, post-secondary education, workforce readiness                                      | Coordinate with RA partners to identify and assess qualified individuals in need of training and employment; Expand interest in the establishment of RA programs.   |
| Veterans' employment and training programs  | Provide Priority Service to applicants and refer   | Coordinate with partners to identify and assess qualified individuals in need of services or referrals  |

## C. High-Performing Board Planning

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

### ***Actions the Board will take to become or remain a high-performing Board***

To remain a high performing board, Workforce Solutions Cameron will consistently operate with the goals developed by the Texas Workforce Investment Council (TWIC). WFS Cameron will maintain its focus on serving employers, engaging in partnerships, aligning system elements, and improving and integrating programs.

WFS Cameron's goal to remain a high-performing board begins with providing high quality customer service at the Workforce Centers' point of entry. This level of service is attained by following through with a thorough assessment of the individual's level and type of service required and ensuring the customer is routed appropriately. We offer a wide range of services designed to support customers' diverse needs. These services include, but are not limited to the following Core Services:

- **Employment Assistance:** Guidance and resources to secure employment.
- **Adult Education and Literacy:** Support for improving literacy and educational attainment.
- **Career Pathway Guidance:** Exploration of career options and development of a personalized career plan.
- **Childcare Services:** Access to affordable childcare solutions.
- **Training Assistance:** Financial support and resources for vocational training and education.
- **Ongoing Support:** Career Coaching with one-on-one guidance and support throughout the customer's journey, from initial assessment to achieving their career goals.

Our commitment to delivering excellent customer service ensures that customers receive comprehensive support throughout their workforce experience.

WFS Cameron contracts workforce and childcare services through our workforce center operator and establishes performance measures in alignment with the TWC contracted measures. To improve the quality of workforce services, additional local performance measures are set to support the broader employment goals of the workforce system. The Board uses these performance metrics to track and assess the implementation of local programs, as well as the integration of service delivery across AEL, VRS, and childcare services.

We stress priority of services and addressing equity in service delivery to marginalized populations. As part of our ongoing oversight, we generate and extract web-based and ad-hoc reports to review case management entries, ensuring that all work performed is accurately captured in the new WorkInTexas Case Management system. To ensure customer service goals are achieved, customer surveys are in place to capture data on best practices or areas of improvement.

We constantly review our customers' choice in fields of study being pursued and their entry into employment once training is completed. We analyze our return on investment, striving to ensure that the customer enters into employment within their training field or a training-related occupation as soon as possible.

Crucial to respectable oversight is our internal and external monitoring. Our internal monitoring is conducted as per a yearly schedule developed by Board staff to identify the programs, both programmatic and financial, to be reviewed in what are considered considerable risk areas. Quarterly reports are created and communicated to staff for review and correction, if applicable. Our formal monitoring of both financial and programmatic operations is conducted by external evaluation firms, which are contracted by RFP according to our procurement process. External monitors perform an annual review of all programs based on a risk assessment that identifies high risk areas.

Our contract with the Workforce Center operator includes deliverables with due dates and internal monitoring for compliance with ADA/EEO, and staff training. Monitoring includes reviews and for most current policy and procedures in place and for compliance with program guidelines.

## **Part 2. Economic and Workforce Analysis**

### **A. Regional Economic and Employment Needs Analysis**

*References: WIOA §108(b)(1)(A); 20 CFR §679.560(a)(1); WIOA §108(b)(1)(B); 20 CFR §679.560(a)(2); WD Letter 24-20, Change 1*

- **Economic conditions**, including existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors, in demand occupations, and target occupations

With the high growth activity at the Port of Brownsville, Cameron County is experiencing growth in several key industries that positively impact economic conditions. Key highlights include:

#### **1. Aerospace and Space Exploration**

- SpaceX: The presence of SpaceX has significantly boosted the aerospace sector, creating numerous high-paying jobs and attracting related businesses.

#### **2. Logistics and Trade**

- Port of Brownsville: Major improvements at the port, including channel deepening and new LNG projects, have enhanced its capacity and economic impact.

#### **3. Manufacturing**

- High-Tech Manufacturing: Investments in high-tech manufacturing, particularly related to aerospace and advanced technologies, are on the rise.

#### **4. Energy**

- LNG Projects: The development of liquefied natural gas facilities is driving growth in the energy sector.

1. Wind Energy: Four wind farms in Cameron County

#### **5. Steel and Petroleum Products**

- Port Activities: The port's handling of steel, petroleum products, and other commodities is contributing to the local economy.

According to TWC's QCEW, the total number of establishments **grew by 9.5** percentage points from a total of 6,585 establishments from second quarter of 2019 to a total of 7,212 establishments in 2024.

The impact of these new establishments can be seen in the rise of the average weekly wages and employment for the same time frame. Average weekly **wages grew by 28.5 percent** from \$659 in Q2 2019 to \$847 in Q2 2024. A total of 15,247 new jobs were added, from 141,505 in Q2 2019 to 156,762 in 2024; **a 10.8% increase**. The total **purchasing power also grew by 42.3%** as a result of the total wage increase from \$1,212,583,390 to \$1,725,523,187 in the same time periods.

| Cameron County Economic Indicators |        |                        |                    |                     |                     |
|------------------------------------|--------|------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Year                               | Period | Average Establishments | Average Employment | Average Weekly Wage | Average Total Wages |
| 2019                               | Q2     | 6,585                  | 141,505            | \$659               | \$1,212,583,390     |
| 2020                               | Q2     | 6,698                  | 132,419            | \$700               | \$1,204,793,970     |
| 2021                               | Q2     | 6,782                  | 144,219            | \$740               | \$1,387,680,388     |
| 2022                               | Q2     | 7,061                  | 150,545            | \$792               | \$1,550,935,675     |
| 2023                               | Q2     | 7,198                  | 155,045            | \$802               | \$1,616,607,821     |
| 2024                               | Q2     | 7,212                  | 156,762            | \$847               | \$1,725,523,187     |

### Existing in-demand industry sectors

Education and Health Services claim 42% of the market share, followed by Trade Transportation, and Utilities with 17%. Leisure and Hospitality, and Professional and Business Services cover another 22%. Manufacturing and Construction are also among the top 10 leading industries with the highest employment in the county in Q3 of 2024. Although Manufacturing reflects an over the quarter and over the year loss, our local knowledge regarding new business relocating into the area as indicators for growth rather than decline. Construction lost jobs over the quarter but is doing well with over the year gains. With the recent change in top government administration, Public Administration numbers already in decline, may continue to fall. Advanced Manufacturing does not have enough local data to report. See Chart below:

### Cameron County In-Demand Industry Sectors

| Industry                            | Q3 2024 Employment | % of Total | Q2 2024 Employment | % of Total | Q3 2023 Employment | % of Total | Quarter Change | Yearly Change |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------|------------|--------------------|------------|--------------------|------------|----------------|---------------|
| Education and Health Services       | 65,783             | 42.10%     | 66,211             | 42.30%     | 64,451             | 41.70%     | -0.60%         | 2.10%         |
| Trade, Transportation and Utilities | 26,631             | 17.00%     | 26,444             | 16.90%     | 26,132             | 16.90%     | 0.70%          | 1.90%         |
| Leisure and Hospitality             | 18,942             | 12.10%     | 19,271             | 12.30%     | 19,172             | 12.40%     | -1.70%         | -1.20%        |
| Professional and Business Services  | 15,742             | 10.10%     | 15,434             | 9.80%      | 15,705             | 10.20%     | 2.00%          | 0.20%         |
| Public Administration               | 7,414              | 4.70%      | 7,463              | 4.80%      | 7,622              | 4.90%      | -0.70%         | -2.70%        |
| Manufacturing                       | 7,049              | 4.50%      | 7,123              | 4.50%      | 7,423              | 4.80%      | -1.00%         | -5.00%        |
| Financial Activities                | 5,418              | 3.50%      | 5,395              | 3.40%      | 5,188              | 3.40%      | 0.40%          | 4.40%         |
| Construction                        | 4,292              | 2.70%      | 4,327              | 2.80%      | 4,119              | 2.70%      | -0.80%         | 4.20%         |
| Other Services                      | 3,012              | 1.90%      | 3,060              | 2.00%      | 2,709              | 1.80%      | -1.60%         | 11.20%        |
| Information                         | 1,537              | 1.00%      | 1,453              | 0.90%      | 1,503              | 1.00%      | 5.80%          | 2.30%         |
| Natural Resources and Mining        | 547                | 0.30%      | 527                | 0.30%      | 663                | 0.40%      | 3.80%          | -17.50%       |
| Advanced Manufacturing *            | N/A                | N/A        | N/A                | N/A        | N/A                | N/A        | N/A            | N/A           |

Source: Texas LMI

\* Insufficient data to report

### Emerging in-demand industry sectors

The economic growth spurt experienced in the Rio Grande Valley, particularly in Cameron County, can be attributed to the development of new manufacturing plants and industry that employ a workforce with a large number of high-tech and high-skill workers, such as the SpaceX Launch Facility. As a result, these businesses have given rise to industry that supports their product. Another emerging industry sector that gives rise to the budding wind energy farms by Acciona employ a smaller number but require specialized skills to manufacture their windmills and maintain their farms. Manufacturing plants that depend on raw materials lean on logistics to deliver supplies and transport finished products including the industrial and automotive supply industry. Regardless of the industry, Logistics is involved.

The Rio Grande Valley (RGV) is poised to become a region of innovation and growth primed to absorb advanced manufacturing into the industrial ecosystem. This transformation is driven by a confluence of strategic advantages, visionary leadership, and a commitment to sustainable development.

**A Strategic Location** - Nestled along the U.S.-Mexico border, the RGV boasts a unique geographical advantage. Its proximity to major trade routes and ports facilitates seamless logistics and supply chain operations. The region's accessibility to both North American and international markets position it as a critical hub for manufacturing and distribution.

**Educational Excellence and Workforce Development** - The RGV is home to a network of esteemed educational institutions, including the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV). These institutions are at the forefront of research and development in advanced manufacturing technologies. Collaborative programs between academia and industry ensure a steady pipeline of skilled professionals, equipped with the latest knowledge and expertise.

**Economic Incentives and Supportive Policies** - Local and state governments in Texas have implemented a range of economic incentives to attract and retain manufacturing businesses. Tax breaks, grants, and infrastructure investments create a favorable business environment. Additionally, supportive policies aimed at fostering innovation and sustainability further enhance the region's appeal.

**Technological Advancements and Innovation** - The RGV is poised to integrate cutting-edge technologies such as automation, robotics, and artificial intelligence. These advancements revolutionize the manufacturing processes, making them more efficient, precise, and cost-effective. The region's commitment to innovation is evident in the establishment of tech incubators and innovation hubs that nurture startups and foster collaboration.

**Sustainability and Green Manufacturing** - As the world shifts towards sustainable practices, the RGV is leading the charge in green manufacturing. Companies in the region are adopting eco-friendly practices, reducing waste, and minimizing their carbon footprint. This commitment to sustainability not only benefits the environment but also enhances the region's reputation as a forward-thinking manufacturing hub.

**Community and Cultural Vibrancy** - The RGV's rich cultural heritage and vibrant community life contribute to its attractiveness as a place to live and work. The region's diverse population brings a wealth of perspectives and ideas, fostering a dynamic and inclusive environment. This cultural vibrancy is a key factor in attracting top talent and fostering a sense of community among residents.

**A Bright Future Ahead** - With its strategic location, skilled workforce, supportive policies, and commitment to innovation and sustainability, the Rio Grande Valley is primed to flourish in the arena of advanced manufacturing. As the region continues to evolve and adapt to the demands of the future, it stands as a testament to the power of vision, collaboration, and resilience.

The Spaceport built by SpaceX has added to the emerging Aerospace industry in Cameron County. Hundreds of jobs have been created locally, many in engineering and other highly specialized occupations. WFS Cameron has collaborated with SpaceX management to develop and implement short-term training programs to upskill their internal workforce as well as this region’s existing labor force to fill some of the industry’s harder to fill high skill labor jobs. The Board partnered with SpaceX on a couple of Skills Development Grants for the upskilling of its existing workforce.

Other emerging industries are Education and Healthcare where distance learning and telehealth have expanded and introduced new platforms for continuing to do business. As a result of the pandemic, Cameron County, as the rest of the world, has seen more E-learning, telehealth, expanded I.T., increase in nanotechnology, clean energy, and data storage. To support this increased need for high-speed internet connectivity, the City of Brownsville has contracted with BTX to tackle the digital divide. The city of Brownsville has made significant strides in improving its broadband infrastructure. The key developments include:

- **\$19.5 million investment:** The city approved funding for broadband development in 2021.
- **Middle Mile Broadband Network:** The project includes 95 miles of underground fiber to meet high-speed internet needs.
- **Groundbreaking:** The initiative broke ground in October 2022.
- **Expansion plans:** LIT Communities, LLC will develop an additional 500 miles of underground fiber to connect individual homes and businesses.
- **Digital divide closure:** The completed project aims to close the digital divide and provide comprehensive digital communications across the city.

### Existing in-demand occupations

The occupational landscape in Cameron County has been changing gradually throughout the last couple of decades. The medical professions, childcare, and service industry are highly in-demand. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, business and industry modified their service delivery to strategically capitalize on e-commerce to essentially survive. New and innovative methods for service delivery were customized to continue to serve the public. These successful models have enabled grocery stores and restaurants to provide different options for delivering their goods and services, with most adopting these strategies, such as curbside pick-up and home delivery. The food delivery business also adopted these new strategies as people have grown accustomed to ordering out and delivery. The Health and Business industries have maintained the sanitation processes implemented during the pandemic. This has led to an increase in the cleaning and disinfection industry as well. Health and Biotech industries expanded with the need for major health care needs in an effort to attend to the large numbers of infected residents. Cameron County continues to assess the need for training and the ability to serve considerable number of residents in the area where COVID has claimed over 2,000 lives thus far.

| SOC Code | In-Demand Occupation Job Title                                     | Annual Average Employment 2022 | Annual Average Employment 2032 | Number Change 2022–2032 | Percent Change 2022–2032 | Annual Change in Employment (Growth) |
|----------|--|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 29-1171  | Nurse Practitioners  | 283                            | 471                            | 188                     | 66.4%                    | 19                                   |
| 21-1018  | Substance Abuse, Behavioral Disorder, and Mental Health Counselors | 384                            | 555                            | 171                     | 44.5%                    | 17                                   |
|          |  |                                |                                |                         |                          |                                      |



|         |  |      |      |      |       |     |
|---------|--|------|------|------|-------|-----|
| 11-9111 | Medical and Health Services Managers                           | 605  | 816  | 211  | 34.9% | 21  |
| 35-2014 | Cooks, Restaurant  | 1302 | 1753 | 451  | 34.6% | 45  |
| 21-1021 | Child, Family, and School Social Workers                       | 1263 | 1694 | 431  | 34.1% | 43  |
| 21-1093 | Social and Human Service Assistants                            | 517  | 674  | 157  | 30.4% | 16  |
| 39-9011 | Childcare Workers  | 3478 | 4532 | 1054 | 30.3% | 105 |
| 31-9092 | Medical Assistants   | 1230 | 1569 | 339  | 27.6% | 34  |
| 35-1012 | First-Line Supervisors of Food Preparation and Serving Workers | 1364 | 1607 | 243  | 17.8% | 24  |
| 13-1071 | Human Resources Specialists                                    | 585  | 685  | 100  | 17.1% | 10  |
| 53-3033 | Light Truck Drivers  | 792  | 920  | 128  | 16.2% | 13  |
| 49-3023 | Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics                   | 763  | 884  | 121  | 15.9% | 12  |
| 53-7065 | Stockers and Order Fillers                                     | 2506 | 2901 | 395  | 15.8% | 40  |
| 43-6013 | Medical Secretaries and Administrative Assistants              | 814  | 933  | 119  | 14.6% | 12  |
| 25-2011 | Preschool Teachers, Except Special Education                   | 706  | 804  | 98   | 13.9% | 10  |
| 35-3023 | Fast Food and Counter Workers                                  | 3980 | 4526 | 546  | 13.7% | 55  |
| 29-2061 | Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses              | 1236 | 1397 | 161  | 13.0% | 16  |
| 53-3031 | Driver/Sales Workers   | 533  | 601  | 68   | 12.8% | 7   |
| 47-2061 | Construction Laborers  | 942  | 1060 | 118  | 12.5% | 12  |
| 31-1131 | Nursing Assistants   | 1039 | 1169 | 130  | 12.5% | 13  |
| 15-1232 | Computer User Support Specialists                              | 514  | 577  | 63   | 12.3% | 6   |
| 53-7062 | Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand         | 1901 | 2119 | 218  | 11.5% | 22  |
| 53-7051 | Industrial Truck and Tractor Operators                         | 550  | 612  | 62   | 11.3% | 6   |
| 41-2031 | Retail Salespersons  | 3854 | 4286 | 432  | 11.2% | 43  |
| 11-9199 | Managers, All Other  | 808  | 896  | 88   | 10.9% | 9   |

**Source: Texas LMI**

### Emerging in-demand occupations

Emerging in demand occupations are sprouting as a result of the new industry growth in the area. New jobs in Construction, Manufacturing, and Healthcare are posted on a regular basis, some which are highly specialized jobs such as *Wind turbine technician, Orbital tube welders, Scaffolding, and Heavy equipment Operator*. Some of the postings are listed here:

| Emerging In-Demand Occupations |               |            |
|--------------------------------|---------------|------------|
| Construction                   | Manufacturing | Healthcare |

|   |                                    |                                    |
|---|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Field Support Administrators                            | Aircraft Pilots                    | Neuro ICU Registered Nurses        |
| Field Welding Engineers                                 | Fabrication Technicians            | Neurosurgical Registered Nurses    |
| Geotechnical Field Engineers                            | Global Supply Managers             | Registered Nurse Case Managers     |
| IT Field Engineers                                      | Ground Support Equipment Mechanics | Biomedical Technicians             |
| Mechanical Field Engineers                              | Indirect Sourcing Managers         | Mother-Baby Registered Nurses      |
| Rodmen  | Integration Technicians            | Telecommunications Operators       |
| Survey Instrument Operators                             | Launch Engineers                   | Private Duty Nurses                |
| Watch Analysts  | Materials Management Supervisors   | Dialysis Patient Care Technicians  |
| Welding Superintendents                                 | Mine Engineers                     | Dialysis Registered Nurses         |
| Workforce Planning Managers                             | OpEx Managers                      | Emergency Medicine Physicians      |
| Production Superintendents                              | Propulsion Engineers               | Oncology Registered Nurses         |
| Hydrovac Operators                                      | Sourcing Specialists               | Maternal Fetal Medicine Physicians |
| Equipment Mechanics                                     | Supply Chain Planners              | Interventional Cardiologists       |
| <i>Source: Lightcast Q1 2025 Data Set February 2025</i> |                                    |                                    |

Other positions such as Benefits Analysts, Continuous Improvement Managers, Detox Counselors, Contract Coordinators, Corporate Benefits Specialists, Environmental Technicians, Emergency Room Travel Registered Nurses are some of the new positions being created.

- **Employment needs and knowledge and skills needed to meet needs within the industry sectors and occupations**

An analysis of the most prevalent knowledge areas required collectively for the targeted high-demand occupations revealed the top knowledge areas needed and sought by employers. According to the high number of times it appears, training must focus on the *English language* to enable job seekers to find and retain employment in these targeted occupations. Employers hiring within these occupations seek candidates that possess knowledge of the structure and content of the English language, including the meaning and spelling of words, rules of composition, and grammar. This knowledge area is closely followed by *Customer and Personal Service*, which requires candidates to possess knowledge of principles of processes for providing customer service and personal services. This includes customer needs assessment, meeting quality standards for services, and evaluation of customer satisfaction. Other required knowledge areas to meet employer expectations are *mathematics, computer and electronics, and clerical*. Notable knowledge areas include *Psychology, Mechanical, and Administration and Management*, based on the frequency of appearance.

In analyzing the top skills collectively for the high demand targeted occupations, *Speaking* was the skill that appeared the most frequently as employers want their workers to convey information effectively when speaking to others. According to the results, employers also highly value *Critical Thinking* and expect their workers to be able to use logic and reason to identify the strengths and weaknesses of alternative solutions, conclusions or approaches to problems. Employers also look for *Active Listening Skills* and expect employees to give full attention to what other people are saying, taking time to understand the points being made, asking questions as appropriate, and not interrupting at inappropriate times. This skill is closely followed by *Monitoring* that gives the worker the skill to gauge and grade the amount and quality of their work. Workers are expected to know their responsibilities and keep up with their own assignments. Other skills employers expect workers to have is good *English Language* reading and comprehension; to understand written sentences and paragraphs in work-related documents. Lastly, the skills that rounded off the list were *Customer and Personal Service*, and *Time Management*.

WFS Cameron has determined, as a result of employer feedback, that soft skills training is an essential part of workforce services in order to ensure participants are able to obtain and retain employment. A combination of interpersonal people skills, social skills, communication skills, character traits, and attitudes are necessary in order to produce effective and productive workers. Soft skills are desirable qualities that do not depend on acquired occupational knowledge. They include common sense, work ethic, communication skills, ability to deal with people, problem- solving skills, and a positive, flexible attitude. Currently, our workforce center contractor offers soft skills training to all program participants, addressing the employer needs, and has shared our Soft Skills course with area ISD CTE programs to infuse into their program KSAs. Skills are also evolving over time. The top 20 skills most requested by employers in Cameron County include communication, customer service, and management. All of these skills have been requested by employers in their job posts.

| <b>Top 20 Skills Requested in Cameron County Over Time</b> |                            |                            |                            |                            |                           |
|--|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| <b>Skills</b>  | <b>Dec 2019 - Sep 2020</b> | <b>Oct 2020 - Jul 2021</b> | <b>Aug 2021 - May 2022</b> | <b>Jun 2022 - Mar 2023</b> | <b>Apr 2023- Jan 2024</b> |
| Communication  | 6,566                      | 7,639                      | 9,623                      | 9,155                      | 9,340                     |
| Customer Service   | 6,324                      | 7,378                      | 8,577                      | 8,084                      | 8,418                     |
| Management   | 4,342                      | 4,673                      | 6,294                      | 6,199                      | 5,729                     |
| Sales  | 4,139                      | 4,484                      | 5,012                      | 4,678                      | 4,691                     |
| Operations   | 2,788                      | 3,591                      | 4,722                      | 4,944                      | 4,869                     |
| Valid Driver's License                                     | 2,560                      | 3,587                      | 4,303                      | 3,827                      | 3,839                     |
| Registered Nurse (RN)                                      | 2,444                      | 3,117                      | 3,343                      | 3,323                      | 3,584                     |
| Leadership   | 2,061                      | 2,278                      | 3,330                      | 3,508                      | 3,369                     |
| Planning   | 2,068                      | 2,421                      | 3,120                      | 3,236                      | 3,327                     |
| Nursing  | 1,943                      | 2,334                      | 2,856                      | 2,615                      | 2,710                     |
| Lifting Ability  | 2,054                      | 2,326                      | 2,623                      | 2,481                      | 2,787                     |
| Writing  | 1,813                      | 2,044                      | 2,812                      | 2,550                      | 2,510                     |
| Detail Oriented  | 1,951                      | 2,331                      | 2,329                      | 2,074                      | 2,663                     |
| Computer Literacy  | 1,795                      | 2,164                      | 2,689                      | 2,383                      | 2,313                     |
| Basic Life Support (BLS) Certification                     | 1,729                      | 2,374                      | 2,543                      | 2,244                      | 2,397                     |
| Bilingual (Spanish/English)                                | 1,660                      | 2,300                      | 2,726                      | 2,366                      | 2,157                     |
| Multilingualism  | 1,774                      | 2,059                      | 2,522                      | 2,254                      | 2,253                     |
| Problem Solving  | 1,521                      | 1,981                      | 2,498                      | 2,314                      | 2,523                     |
| Merchandising  | 1,945                      | 1,951                      | 2,274                      | 2,225                      | 2,155                     |
| Interpersonal Communications                               | 1,502                      | 1,809                      | 2,378                      | 2,190                      | 2,486                     |
| <b>Source: Lightcast Q1 2025 Data Set</b>                  |                            |                            |                            |                            |                           |

The employment landscape is constantly changing. In Cameron County, agriculture played a major role in the economy for more than the half of the last century. At present, agricultural jobs are not growing or adding jobs. The use of technology has made its way into every area of our economy and with the constant change in technology, so has change in knowledge and skills required for high growth jobs. As noted, ability to adapt is among the skills needed in today's workforce, reiterating the need to adapt to the quickly evolving

job market. Reading and writing, along with speaking and listening are still in demand, along with problem solving and decision making. See chart below:

| <b>In-Demand Skills for High Growth Jobs in Cameron County</b>  |                                    |                                    |                   |
|---|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Skills category</b>  | <b>Less than bachelor's degree</b> | <b>Bachelor's degree or higher</b> | <b>Difference</b> |
| <b>Adaptability</b>   | 3.68                               | 4.08                               | 0.4               |
| <b>Computers and information technology</b>   | 2.79                               | 3.66                               | 0.87              |
| <b>Creativity and innovation</b>  | 2.53                               | 3.04                               | 0.52              |
| <b>Critical and analytical thinking</b>   | 2.81                               | 3.64                               | 0.83              |
| <b>Customer service</b>   | 3.25                               | 3.28                               | 0.03              |
| <b>Detail oriented</b>  | 3.57                               | 3.66                               | 0.09              |
| <b>Fine motor</b>   | 2.68                               | 1.93                               | -0.75             |
| <b>Interpersonal</b>  | 3.4                                | 3.66                               | 0.26              |
| <b>Leadership</b>   | 3.02                               | 3.53                               | 0.51              |
| <b>Mathematics</b>  | 2.48                               | 3.03                               | 0.55              |
| <b>Mechanical</b>   | 2.02                               | 1.5                                | -0.52             |
| <b>Physical strength and stamina</b>  | 2.46                               | 1.6                                | -0.86             |
| <b>Problem solving and decision making</b>  | 3.29                               | 3.87                               | 0.58              |
| <b>Project management</b>   | 2.54                               | 3.02                               | 0.48              |
| <b>Science</b>  | 1.57                               | 1.88                               | 0.31              |
| <b>Speaking and listening</b>   | 3.08                               | 3.63                               | 0.55              |
| <b>Writing and reading</b>  | 3                                  | 3.88                               | 0.88              |
| <p>Note: Skills scores are calculated by taking the average skills score for occupations within each education category (weighted by projected employment).</p> <p>Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.</p> |                                    |                                    |                   |

### **Target occupations**

The Target Occupations List identifies the occupations eligible for Training. Occupations are based on the training availability and employment prospects. Occupations are also chosen on a scale of pay to reflect better than average wages that pay at least at the minimum self-sufficiency wage. Target occupations are reviewed regularly and are amended as needed to reflect the needs of the labor market and the training providers' capacity to produce the trained pipeline.

**Targeted Occupations  
List 2025-2028**

| Standard Occupational Code (SOC) | Occupational Title   | Entry Wage | Average Wage | Typical Education or Training |
|----------------------------------|--|------------|--------------|-------------------------------|
| 11 9021                          | Construction Manager   | \$25.40    | \$37.97      | Associate degree              |
| 11 9111                          | Medical and Health Services Managers   | \$25.63    | \$47.12      | Bachelor's Degree             |
| 11-1021                          | General and Operations Managers  | \$17.86    | \$43.06      | Associate degree              |
| 13-1081                          | Logisticians   | \$20.84    | \$31.45      | Bachelor's Degree             |
| 13-2011                          | Accountants and Auditors   | \$21.63    | \$32.87      | Bachelor's Degree             |
| 15-1232                          | Computer User Support Specialists  | \$11.93    | \$18.80      | Some college, no degree       |
| 17-3023                          | Electrical & Electronic Engineering Technicians  | \$23.27    | \$36.84      | Associate degree              |
| 25-2021                          | Elementary School Teachers, Except Special   | \$25.03    | \$29.26      | Bachelor's Degree             |
| 25-2022                          | Middle School Teachers, Except Special and   | \$25.57    | \$29.31      | Bachelor's Degree             |
| 25-2031                          | Secondary School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education                             | \$24.65    | \$29.19      | Bachelor's Degree             |
| 25-9045                          | Teaching Assistants, Except Postsecondary  | \$10.95    | \$15.02      | Associate degree              |
| 29-1141                          | Registered Nurses  | \$26.08    | \$37.21      | Associate degree              |
| 29-2034                          | Radiologic Technologists and Technicians   | \$18.60    | \$28.41      | Associate degree              |
| 29-2061                          | Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses  | \$20.07    | \$24.38      | Postsecondary non             |
| 29-2099                          | Health Technologists & Technicians, All Other  | \$14.86    | \$20.61      | Postsecondary non             |
| 31-9092                          | Medical Assistants (Certified)   | \$12.33    | \$15.36      | Postsecondary non             |
| 31-9091                          | Dental Assistants  | \$13.04    | \$17.42      | Postsecondary non             |
| 33-3051                          | Police and Sheriff's Patrol Officers   | \$20.40    | \$29.46      | Postsecondary non             |
| 43-3031                          | Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing clerks   | \$13.01    | \$18.93      | Certificate                   |
| 43-6013                          | Medical Secretaries and Medical Administrative   | \$12.95    | \$16.05      | Postsecondary nondegree       |
| 47-2061                          | Construction Laborers  | \$11.66    | \$15.01      | Postsecondary non             |
| 47-2073                          | Operating Engineers and Other Construction   | \$14.32    | \$19.02      | Postsecondary nondegree       |
| 47-2111                          | Electricians   | \$15.51    | \$21.38      | Postsecondary nondegree       |
| 47-2152                          | Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters  | \$15.05    | \$21.05      | Postsecondary nondegree       |
| 49-3023                          | Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics   | \$13.41    | \$21.62      | Postsecondary non             |
| 49-3031                          | Bus and Truck Mechanics and Diesel Engine  | \$16.20    | \$22.75      | Postsecondary nondegree       |
| 49-9052                          | Telecommunications Equipment Installers and Repairers <b>(includes power lines and fiber optics)</b> | \$15.77    | \$30.80      | Postsecondary non degree      |
| 49-9021                          | Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration   | \$14.49    | \$20.20      | Postsecondary non             |
| 49-9041                          | Industrial Machinery Mechanics   | \$16.94    | \$24.86      | Postsecondary non             |
| 49-9071                          | Maintenance and Repair Workers, General  | \$10.92    | \$15.98      | Postsecondary non             |
| 49-9096                          | Riggers  | \$12.37    | \$19.18      | Postsecondary non             |
| 51-4121                          | Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers   | \$15.50    | \$20.74      | Postsecondary non             |
| 53-3052                          | Bus Drivers, Transit and Intercity   | \$14.64    | \$19.26      | Postsecondary non             |
| 53-3032                          | Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers  | \$15.64    | \$23.63      | Postsecondary non             |
| 53-7051                          | Industrial Truck and Tractor Operators   | \$10.96    | \$14.12      | Postsecondary non             |
| 49-9081                          | Wind Turbine Service Technicians   | N/A        | N/A          | Postsecondary non             |
| 13-1071                          | Human Resources Specialists  | \$16.79    | \$25.92      | Associate degree              |

**B. Labor Force Analysis and Trends- *Analysis of the regional workforce***

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

**Employment and Unemployment data**

Cameron County’s annual civilian labor force (CLF) increased 6.5% from 170,184 in 2020 to 181,270 in 2023. The current unemployment rate decreased significantly from 10.1 % in 2020 to 5.4% in 2023; a 45% decrease, with a new, lower total of 9,816 individuals looking for work. The estimated growth in employment of 12% for all occupations stands at 171,454 for 2023. As seen in the Graph below, the unemployment rate declined at an annual average of 7.3%, hitting a record high in 2020 of 10.1% (not seasonally adjusted) before it declined sharply to 5.4% in 2023 due to the economy recovering from pandemic; trending downward as evidenced by the current unemployment rate of 5.7%.

| <b>Employment and Unemployment Data Not Seasonally Adjusted</b> |                       |                   |                             |                     |                          |
|---|-----------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>Year</b>   | <b>Area</b>           | <b>Employment</b> | <b>Civilian Labor Force</b> | <b>Unemployment</b> | <b>Unemployment Rate</b> |
| <b>2020</b>   | <b>Cameron County</b> | <b>152,951</b>    | <b>170,184</b>              | <b>17,233</b>       | <b>10.1%</b>             |
|   | Texas                 | 12,872,070        | 13,941,490                  | 1,069,420           | 7.7%                     |
| <b>2021</b>   | <b>Cameron County</b> | <b>161,984</b>    | <b>176,084</b>              | <b>14,100</b>       | <b>8%</b>                |
|   | Texas                 | 13,486,624        | 14,292,315                  | 805,691             | 5.6%                     |
| <b>2022</b>   | <b>Cameron County</b> | <b>167,764</b>    | <b>177,980</b>              | <b>10,216</b>       | <b>5.7%</b>              |
|   | Texas                 | 14,093,906        | 14,672,312                  | 578,406             | 3.9%                     |
| <b>2023</b>   | <b>Cameron County</b> | <b>171,454</b>    | <b>181,270</b>              | <b>9,816</b>        | <b>5.4%</b>              |
|   | Texas                 | 14,472,524        | 15,067,153                  | 594,629             | 3.9%                     |
| <b>2024</b>   | <b>Cameron County</b> | <b>176,009</b>    | <b>186,076</b>              | <b>9,533</b>        | <b>5.4%</b>              |
|   | Texas                 | 14,785,923        | 15,418,231                  | 632,308,            | 4.1%                     |

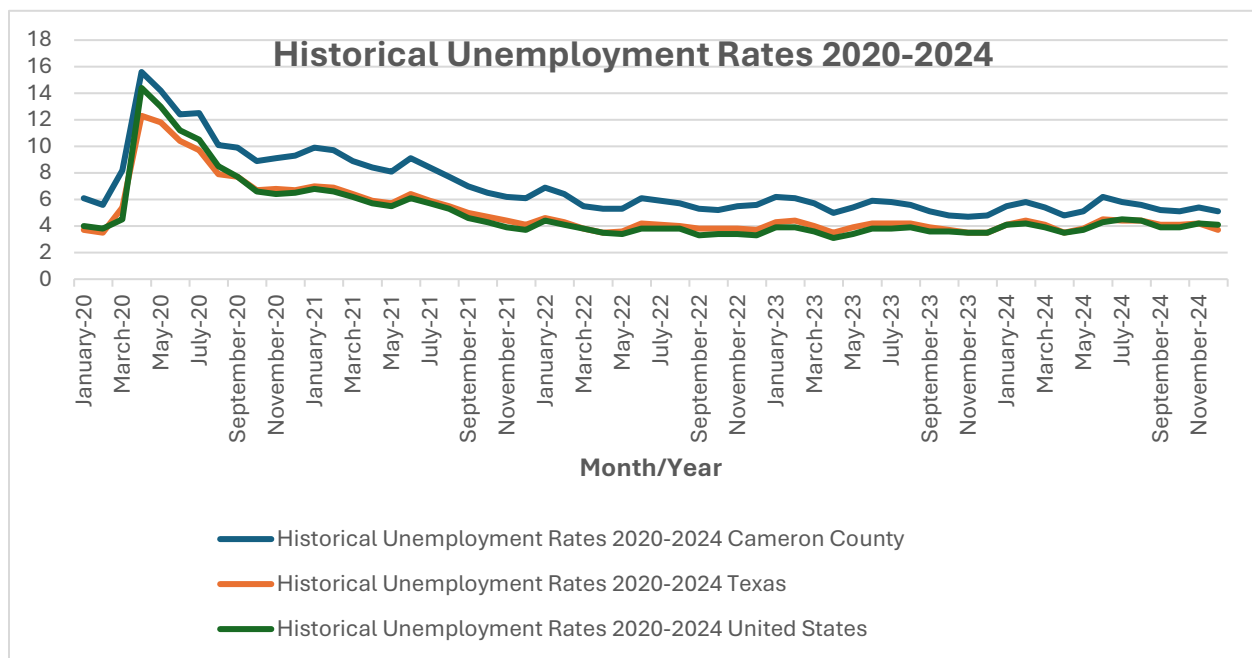
The chart above and the graph below illustrate the gradual unemployment rate has slowly seen a narrowing of the gap between Cameron County and the state and the state with the nation. The 46.7% decrease in unemployment in the county since 2020 replicates the 46.5% rate for Texas.

**Labor market trends**

The residuals of the pandemic, COVID-19, left its permanent mark in the history of our area’s unemployment rates, however, the gradual lowering of the rate trend quickly took an upturn and returned to its original rate prior to the onset of the unexpected pandemic. We are now nearer to closing the gap with the state unemployment rate.

The graph below illustrates the unemployment rates for 2020 through 2024. In 2020, during the first three months from January through March the unemployment rate continued to remain below the double digits last seen thirty years ago. In March 2020, when the pandemic hit, unemployment began to rise, reaching

unprecedented highs last seen in 1991 when unemployment reached 15.4% in December of that year. The graph also illustrates the economic recovery as seen by the 2021 unemployment rates. During that year, the unemployment rate began at 9.9% and by the end of the year dropped to 6.6%. The rate continued to drop in 2022 reaching the lowest level since 1991 to 5.1% rate where it remains to end of year 2024. As a result of the Corona Virus known as the COVID-19 pandemic, some businesses closed temporarily in 2020 while others shut their doors permanently as their business was best done in person. While some employers laid off workers and furloughed others, our Board moved quickly to solve the crisis, meeting with local employers and with Texas Workforce Commission through Zoom and TEAM meetings, etc., to create new options for serving the needs of our employed and newly unemployed residents with a whole new set of issues. This new service delivery model also allowed the Board to continue serving employers and by the end of the 2020 hosted virtual job fairs to match the unemployed with employment opportunities. Presently, the Board has adopted some of the virtual strategies in serving both employers and job seekers but has reintroduced the successful in-person services strategies that were in place prior to the pandemic. WFS Cameron applied for available funding from TWC and explored work-from-home strategies, new training, and communication platforms; and while physical accommodations were done at the workforce centers, the economy began to improve, and employment rates began to rise. The work from home concept has been widely accepted and embraced by both incumbent workers as well as new hires. Providing virtual services is now an option adopted throughout various industries.



Source: Labor Market & Career Information, Texas Workforce Commission

The unemployment graph illustrates the unemployment rates for the years prior to the height of the pandemic in 2020, the worst year of the Corona Virus. It also illustrates the unemployment rate past 2020, the last time unemployment was in the double-digit rates. Early 2019, the unemployment rates had climbed from the double digits of the 90's to the lowest in years prior. The illustration also shows that although the unemployment rate grew drastically, doubling from March to April 2020, it stabled off, closing at 10.3% for the last month of the year. The unemployment rate continued



to drop during 2021 and 2022. The most recent available rate in 2024 was for the month of December. The rate stood at 5.1%.

### Educational and skill levels

The educational attainment for Cameron County can be seen in the Table below. According to the 2023 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimate, a 10.6% increase from 24.5% to 27.1% in the attainment of a high school diploma was reported for individuals ages 25+ in the area compared to the previous 2021 ACS 1- Year Estimate. The percentage of area high school graduates is now higher than the national average. The attainment of Bachelor’s Degrees decreased 30 percentage points from 20.4% to 14.2%, . This aligns with the total percentage of the population reporting *Some college, no degree* , which also decreased from 21.2 to 18.0%. In comparison to the state education attainment levels, Cameron County is only higher in one area; high school graduates. The decrease in the attainment of a bachelor’s degree may be attributed to the closures of schools to in-person learning. Although schools transitioned to remote learning modalities, enrollment numbers after Covid were in decline.

#### Educational Attainment

| Post-Secondary Educational Attainment for Cameron County Population 25 and Over<br>Based on 2017-2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates |       |                   |              |
|--|-------|-------------------|--------------|
| Educational Attainment   | U. S. | Statewide Percent | Area Percent |
| High school graduate (includes equivalency) 25+  | 26.3% | 24.6%             | 27.1%        |
| Some college, no degree  | 18.9% | 19.80%            | 18.0%        |
| Associate degree   | 8.8%  | 8.1%              | 7.7%         |
| Bachelor’s degree  | 21.8% | 21.6%             | 14.2%        |
| Graduate or professional degree  | 14.3% | 12.6%             | 8.5%         |

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2023 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

### Individuals with barriers to employment

In addition to the higher literacy levels and language barrier, the county also has a slightly lower percentage of individuals with disabilities than the national percentage but equal to that of the state’s. This percentage may present itself as an opportunity to increase the pool of workers to meet the demands of the workforce. In an effort to meet the needs of local employers, the Board has actively outreached different populations to try to develop a diversified and skilled workforce. Another priority population that can fill the worker skills gap is the veteran population.

The following tables show the number of individuals with a disability and the estimated population of Veterans in Cameron County. According to the 2018-20223 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 15.4% or 44,688 of the population ages 18 years and older has a disability which is comparable to state and 23.6% lower than the national numbers.

**Table 2C-4: Civilian Noninstitutionalized Population with a Disability**

|   |
|---|
| <b>Civilian Noninstitutionalized Population with a Disability 18+ years 2003 American Community Survey (ACS) 1-Year Estimates</b> |
|---|

|         | Population  | Population with Disability | Percent of Population |
|---------|-------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| Cameron | 423,351     | 52,137                     | 12.3%                 |
| Texas   | 30,020,476  | 3,802,114                  | 12.7%                 |
| US      | 248,031,097 | 37,632,831                 | 15.2%                 |

Source: Census ACS 2023

Total Civilian Veteran population for Cameron County is 15,517, which is 5.06% of the current population, up from 12,461 ( ACS 2021 data) of the county population. It has increased by 21.8% from the last reported percentage. This is slightly less than the percentage of the population for both the State of Texas and the United States.

### Veteran Status, Civilian Population 18 years+

| Veteran Status, Civilian Population 18 years+<br>2023 American Community Survey (ACS) 1-Year Estimates |                    |                  |                       |
|--|--------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
|  | Population 18yrs + | Civilian Veteran | Percent of Population |
| Cameron  | 306,487            | 15,517           | 5.1%                  |
| Texas  | 22,840,216         | 1,394,897        | 6.1%                  |
| US   | 254,296,179        | 17,431,290       | 6.9%                  |

Source: 2023 ACS 1-Year Estimates Data Profiles

WFS Cameron is committed to serving the target populations with barriers to employment. These are our target populations:

### Target Populations

| Target Populations: Individuals with Barriers to Employment        |
|--|
| Migrant Seasonal Farm Workers                                      |
| Justice-involved individuals                                       |
| Homeless Individuals   |
| Individuals with disabilities                                      |
| Individuals who are English language learners                      |
| Individuals who have low levels of literacy                        |
| Individuals lacking a High School Diploma                          |
| Low Income Individuals (including TANF and SNAP recipient)         |
| Older Individuals  |
| Non-custodial parents  |
| Veterans   |
| Foster Youth and those aged out of foster care system              |
| Individuals who are unemployed, including the long-term unemployed |
| Pregnant and Parenting Youth                                       |

In addition to the higher literacy levels and language barrier, the county also has a slightly lower percentage of individuals with disabilities than the national percentage but equal to that of the state's. This percentage

may present itself as an opportunity to increase the pool of workers to meet the demands of the workforce. In an effort to meet the needs of local employers, the Board has actively outreached different populations to try to develop a diversified and skilled workforce. Another priority population that can fill the worker skills gap is the veteran population.

### **C. Workforce Development Analysis**

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

Cameron County's greatest strengths lie in the partnerships developed over the years between workforce development, economic development, educational institutions, and industry. These partnerships satisfy the elements that support innovation and align with the workforce needs of the region.

#### **General workforce development activities**

Workforce development activities in the region contribute to the support the growth of existing and new and emerging industry. With the influx of new business into the Port of Brownsville, Cameron County has experienced a surge in demand for skilled and/or specialized labor. Our mission statement identifies us as the *“local workforce partnership organization devoted to promoting and supporting a workforce structure that provides employers and individuals of Cameron County the opportunity to achieve and sustain economic prosperity.”*

Our objective is to foster prosperity for individuals, businesses, and our community. Our career centers offer employers employment and training services to upskill their workers and prepare them for long-term success. Upskilling training and development for incumbent workers increases productivity, enhances employability, improves job satisfaction and retention, among other factors. It affords workers a competitive advantage by keeping pace with a rapidly evolving job market and technological advancements.

The long-term strategy of the board is to continue developing partnerships, exchanging information, and collaborating in projects to effectively align workforce activities in the region. The alignment of workforce with economic development has enabled the Board to identify trainings that meet the requirements of employers. With the use of labor market analysis, feedback from our customers and partners, and alignment of resources focused on the needs of the high-growth industries, WFS Cameron will continue to enhance and redirect their services and resources to provide a system of flexible and responsive workforce activities.

Partnerships have been instrumental in cultivating effective workforce development activities in Cameron County. These partnerships have leveraged existing resources with WFS Cameron to create a more strategic approach for workforce development. We invite businesses to participate in initiatives that support individuals with underdeveloped skills or non-traditional education, inclusive of continuing and adult education programs and career pathways. Such activities include virtual courses to upskill qualifications, microlearning, mentoring, and coaching. General workforce development activities ensures an in-demand workplace whose workers grow with the company as they impact the growth of the business.

#### **Education activities, including Early Childhood Education (ECE) and K–12**

Workforce Solutions Cameron (WFS Cameron) has a long-standing partnership with Early Education, childcare providers, and local education agencies (LEAs) in Cameron County. Cameron County has an educational system with activities that begin in early childhood and continue through high school. This

collaboration enables WFS Cameron to provide students with valuable resources and information, enhancing their career readiness and employability using TWC resources. Key initiatives include:

1. **Child Care Services (CCS) Program:** infused educational components
  - a. Provides child care scholarships to help parents work, search for work, or attend school/job training.
  - b. Informs parents about available and beneficial high-quality child care options
  - c. Supports child care providers in improving service quality through:
    - i. **Texas Rising Star:** A quality rating and improvement system for Texas early childhood programs
    - ii. **Pre-K Partnership:** Encourages child care programs to expand
- **Workforce Education and Outreach:** Our Workforce Education and Outreach Specialist delivers Career and Labor Market Information to all middle school and select high school campuses in Cameron County.
- **Career and Technical Education (CTE):** LEAs utilize workforce data and information on targeted and in-demand occupations for career planning and pathway selection.
- **Soft Skills Course:** WFS Cameron provides CTE departments with a Soft Skills Course, which is integrated into CTE programs.
- **Labor Market Tools:** TWC offers labor market tools, such as the Texas Reality Check, Texas Career Check, Career and Technical Education downloads, Texas OnCourse, and Discover Texas CREWS, to support informed career decisions.
- **High School Recovery Programs:** Several districts in Cameron County offer high school recovery programs, aiming to increase diploma attainment rates and enhance employment prospects for local youths.

By combining forces, the LEAs, TWC, and Workforce Solutions Cameron can better equip students with the knowledge, skills, and resources necessary to succeed in the workforce.

- Incubate community, workforce and economic development initiatives in critical areas such as early childhood education and youth programs.
  - A number of assets have contributed to the growth of a healthy workforce, including a network of higher education institutions, two international airports, a deep-water port, a medical school, SpaceX, emerging industries, education activities supporting early childhood, and proximity to an international border to support logistics and transportation industries.

### Training activities

There are a number of training strategies that WFS Cameron explores in an attempt to meet the needs of employers. Existing barriers and challenges such as low literacy levels and low post-secondary attainment levels must be addressed prior to or during training in order to develop a skilled workforce. The following are some of the initiatives that have been implemented to address some of the challenges of the existing workforce:

- **Apprenticeship Expansion** – The creation of additional apprenticeships has enabled residents of the area to tap into training programs that provide immediate employment opportunities. The enticement into these programs is immediate placement into employment as an apprentice or pre-apprentice. The response from local employers for this type of training program has been quite encouraging.

- **Pre-apprenticeship Training** – the establishment of pre-apprenticeship training has created a pathway for workers to follow. NCCER credentials have made this activity more appealing.
  - **Incumbent Worker Training** – initiative allows the Board to offer businesses an opportunity to upskill existing workforce for modern technologies.
  - **Internships** – enables program participants to gain valuable experience in their field of study. The Texas Internship Initiative is targeted at youth in programs that lead to an industry recognized credential (IBCs).
5. **Soft skills training** - This program enables participants to learn a combination of interpersonal people skills, social skills, communication skills, character traits, attitudes, and career attributes that enable people to effectively navigate their environment, work well with others, solve problems, think critically, perform well, and achieve their goals with complementing hard skills.
  6. **Teacher Externship** – This initiative allows middle school and high school teachers to engage in activities in a particular industry and learn how classroom content can be applied in the workplace. The externships teach teachers about the skill sets required for a given industry, and teachers can then inform, educate, and guide students toward employment in industries that match their skill sets.

### Strengths and weaknesses of activities

Cameron County has a number of assets which have contributed to the growth of a healthy workforce, including a network of higher education institutions, two international airports, a deep-water port, a medical school, SpaceX, emerging industries, education activities supporting early childhood, and proximity to an international border to support logistics and transportation industries.

Other advantages that WFS Cameron has include:

- Considerable number of professionals and community stakeholders who possess extensive diversified experience serving on the Board of Directors;
- Highly experienced staff with strong community ties and strong backgrounds in education and workforce development programs and services;
- Budget of fifty million dollars (\$50,268,540 52 Million) provided through federal and state sources;
- 2024-2025 \$52,674,791 / 36,616,035 Child Care; Workforce \$12,679,481 and Other \$973,024
- Physical and technology infrastructure with established systems including access to technical assistance through the Texas Workforce Commission;
- Wide range of training providers that are now offering on-line training and exploring apprenticeship training;
- Mandates established through federal and state legislation to operate One-Stop Career Centers, including business services;
- Wide array of programs including Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act (WIOA), WIOA Statewide, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment & Training (SNAP E&T), CHOICES, CHOICES Non-Custodial Parent (NCP), Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA), Veterans, Wagner-Peyser, RESEA, MSFW, and Childcare.
- Texas School Ready (TSR) Project that provides educational and training opportunities for childcare centers and Head Start programs to improve instructional practices in the classroom;
- Funding source to enhance customer skills through referrals to training programs; and a
- Mobile Resource Unit that operates county-wide to connect rural communities to the one-stop system.

The success of any workforce or economic development activities in the region will always be negatively impacted by significant human resource challenges that hinder its success. These challenges can be summarized into three main categories:

1. Foundational Skills Gaps
  - Literacy and proficiency in English
  - Basic math skills
  - Reading and writing competencies
2. Soft Skills Deficits
  - Communication skills
  - Customer service skills
  - Career mindset
  - Attendance and punctuality issues
3. Recruitment and Retention Challenges
  - Difficulty finding qualified candidates for entry-level positions
  - High turnover rates due to the "Great Resignation" phenomenon (from 2021 to 2023)
  - Need for companies to re-examine retention strategies to keep employees.
  - Deferred Resignation Program

### **Effectiveness of programs and services**

The success of any of the workforce or economic development activities in the region will continue to be negatively impacted by the human resource challenges related to literacy and the skills gap reality. While all activities proposed herein are necessary to build a sustainable and quality workforce, the primary problem to be faced and addressed is the number of workers in the region that lack proficiency in English who are not equipped to meet the technology demands of today's employers. Past employers surveyed revealed that a large number of companies reported trouble finding qualified workers for even entry-level positions. Recruitment challenges point to a lack of career mindset, attendance problems, and the inability to pass basic screening processes, such as drug testing and criminal background checks. For existing workers, broad-based employment skills such as communication skills, customer service skills, and basic competencies in reading, writing, and mathematics also top the list. Post pandemic, business and industry have had to navigate through the Great Resignation phenomenon that has forced companies to re-examine retention strategies as record numbers of employees have left their jobs, as these workers continue to evaluate their careers and priorities.

Improving educational attainment levels and increasing basic skill levels is a critical component of WFS Cameron's economic competitiveness. Without these building blocks, workers in the region will continue to lack the necessary foundation upon which to build a solid career. Without a literate and engaged workforce, employers will continue to face obstacles to economic vitality.

These basic demographic characteristics of Cameron County reveal a great need for a workforce organization with the resources to enable job seekers to transform into a skilled workforce to meet industry needs. Effective services and programs must be in place to fully develop the region's talent while addressing the socio-economic factors that plague this region.

## **Board's capacity to provide workforce development activities**

The objectives outlined below were established to support WFS Cameron's mission of creating economic growth and enhancing the quality of life for the citizens and employers of Cameron County. WFS Cameron strives to deliver services in the most efficient and effective way to attain the agency's objectives:

- Ensure employers' workforce needs are met through business services designed around addressing business issues in the areas of recruiting, hiring, and retaining qualified workers.
- Supporting on-line business models and e-commerce.
- Strengthen partnerships with EDCs and Chambers of Commerce to ensure workforce systems are represented and engaged.
- Ensure that workforce customers can meet their employment goals through the provision of workforce development and training services tailored to meet their individual needs.
- Build awareness with Cameron County residents around the benefits and availability of workforce services.
- Provide youth with greater access to higher education, work-based training, and employment.
- Investigate the need to provide additional employment and training services for special populations such as disabled, youth, and the justice-involved.
- Build greater training capacity by promoting apprenticeship, incumbent worker, and customized training.
- Increase awareness of on-line training resources such as the Metrix Learning System and Texas A&M Manufacturing HUB (TRAIN).
- Promote gains in adult literacy and job skills levels.
- Strengthen AEL partnership and collaboration to increase literacy levels.
- Establish and strengthen inter-agency agreements and partnerships which promote workforce development.
- Incubate community, workforce and economic development initiatives in critical areas such as early childhood education and youth programs.
- Promote greater access to high quality childcare programs through the Texas School Ready Project.
- Assure the organization is properly positioned to deliver appropriate services in response to emerging industries.
- Expand collaborations and networks with community-based organizations in key areas such as education, social services, and health services.
- Align resources to operate more efficiently to enhance customer service and respond to decreased funding.
- Ensure the expenditures of resources comply with all federal, state, and local policies, laws, and regulations through vigilant oversight.
- Increase the resources available for workforce and economic development through grant writing and other strategic relationships.
- Minimize duplication of services or overlapping of resources to ensure efficiency as well as effectiveness by expanding community networks and partnerships with CBOs.
- Develop additional mechanisms to attract private and philanthropic investment in workforce and economic development.
- Align financial resources with trainings offered, such that every dollar possible is linked to marketable jobs available in our region.
- Raise awareness of employer recognition programs such as "We Hire Vets" and "We Hire Ability."
- Continue to advocate the "College Credit for Heroes" and "Hiring Red, White & You!" in support of veterans' education and employment.



WFS Cameron is working with numerous system partners to develop strategies, activities, and services to increase employment opportunities for job seekers in both demand and target industries and occupations. The long-term strategy of the board is to continue developing partnerships, exchanging information, and collaborating on projects to effectively direct workforce activities in the region. The alignment of workforce activities with economic development has enabled the Board to identify trainings that meet the needs of industry. WFS Cameron will continue to enhance and redirect services and resources to provide a system of flexible and responsive activities.

The following tables contain a listing of college, career schools, and universities in the area. Training providers outside of the workforce area have been included since WFS Cameron realizes that residents of this county seek training services throughout the region due to training capacity and limited program offerings. Distance learning has created additional opportunities for accessing training through both local and out-of-area training providers.

| <b>Occupational Training Providers</b>                     |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Colleges &amp; Universities</b>                         |  |
| The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley                  | Texas Southmost College                      |
| Texas State Technical College                              | South Texas College                          |
| Our Lady of the Lake University – La Feria, TX             | University Center at TSTC                    |
| Texas A&M University – McAllen Campus                      |  |
| <b>Career Schools</b>                                      |  |
| South Texas Vocational Technical Institute                 | LHCT Training Center                         |
| Allied Skills Training Center                              | McAllen Careers Institute                    |
| DATS/Rio Grande Valley                                     | South Texas CDL Institute LLC                |
| J and R Training Center                                    | Top Gun Truck Driving School                 |
| Valley Baptist Medical Center School of Vocational Nursing | South Texas Training Center – San Benito     |
| Southern Industrial Careers Center                         | Southern Careers Institute                   |
| Cameron County Education Initiative, Inc                   | College of Healthcare Professions            |
| Rio Grande Valley College                                  | Valley Grande Institute for Academic Studies |
| RGV Technology Institute LLC                               | RGV Vocational Services                      |
| Health Science Institute at Renaissance (HSIR)             | One Stop CDL Driving Training LLC            |
| South Texas Welding School, LLC                            | A+ CDL Academy                               |
| Careers Unlimited LLC                                      | Texas CDL Institute LLC                      |
| Super Welders Academy                                      | Divine School for Healthcare Professionals   |
| Careers of America   | Hammer Down CDL School                       |
| The New Start School                                       | LHCT Training Center                         |
| South Texas Vocational Technical Institute                 |  |
| Allied Skills Training Center                              |  |
| DATS/Rio Grande Valley                                     |  |

Furthermore, there are several apprenticeship programs that provide training for individuals interested in careers as electricians or plumbers and pipefitters. These offerings enable individuals to enter simultaneous employment in a targeted occupation that follows a career pathway in their chosen field of study. Typical

apprenticeship programs range from one to four years, most of them four. Apprentices are able to pursue the program because they are working and earning a good living while they attend classes and advance in their career.

The table below lists the apprenticeship programs and training opportunities currently available in the Rio Grande Valley. Registered apprenticeships are expanding as the need for skilled electricians and plumbers grows within the Construction Industry. Within the past two years, apprenticeship training providers have increased 30%. Most recently, a patient care technician registered apprenticeship program was approved in support of the healthcare field. County residents can enlist with the following programs:

### Apprenticeship Opportunities

| Apprenticeship Opportunities for Cameron County residents |  |
|---|--|
| Rio Grande Valley Chapter I.E.C. Inc.                     | South Texas College                          |
| Universal Metal Products                                  | South Texas Initiatives                      |
| Texas Southmost College                                   | RGV/Laredo/JATC                              |
| Rio Grande Valley Independent Plumbers' Alliance          | Super Welder's Academy                       |
| Magic Valley Electric Cooperative                         | Valley Grande Institute for Academic Studies |
| Texas State Technical College                             | DHR  |
| Cameron County Education Initiative                       | JATC of Pipefitters, Local Union 211         |
| Royal Technologies  |  |
| <b>Source: apprenticeship.gov</b>                         |  |

As noted in the table, the substantial number of training providers enable individuals to select from a vast selection of programs. Unfortunately, not all training programs meet the needs of new and emerging industries. Specialized and customized training programs will need to be developed to provide job seekers with the skill sets requirement of potential employers. The following describes the capacity of these programs to supply graduates for future hiring demands:

- Healthcare - there are a vast number of training programs in the area that can meet most of the demands of the labor force. However, there are limitations to the number of enrollments due to capacity issues, particularly in nursing. Programs of study range from certificate programs to Post Baccalaureate degrees.
- Education - demand in this industry requires individuals to have a bachelor's degree or higher. There are a number of supporting occupations in which training requires certificates or associate's degrees. The main training provider in the area is the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. However, capacity to build this pipeline of workers has expanded as a result of the University Center at TSTC and Our Lady of the Lake University campus in La Feria, TX.
- Construction - demand for construction will significantly increase due to the anticipated establishment and construction of two LNG plants, the continued widening of the Ship Channel and the proposed second causeway to connect South Padre Island to the mainland. Community colleges and career schools have a large number of programs that can address this need. There are some specialized trainings that have been developed to address this need, including pre-apprenticeships that award NCCER credentials. Additionally, ISDs have begun to create career and technical programs that result in industry recognized credentials, thereby increasing the workforce pipeline to support workers in all phases of development of this industry.

- Manufacturing - demand for manufacturing has increased due to the establishment of a precision machining/manufacturing plant. High technology CNC machining positions were highly sought after, with limited training opportunities in the area. Local colleges have increased their capacity to begin to address employer demand. Additionally, in 2021 Texas A&M Manufacturing HUB was launched by the Texas A&M University system to provide workforce development opportunities in Cameron County. Texas A&M Manufacturing HUB committed to training 10,000 Cameron County residents in two years.
- Aerospace – demand for aerospace has increased due to the establishment of SpaceX. This aerospace company manufactures and launches space rockets and communication satellites. Specialized training has been developed by local colleges to meet their workforce need in craft trades such as orbital tube welding. Additionally, the Board has partnered with SpaceX through an SDF grant for upskilling of some of their workforce.

### **Individuals with barriers to employment**

The basic demographic characteristics of Cameron County reveal a great need for a workforce organization with the resources to enable job seekers to transform into a skilled workforce to meet industry needs. Effective services and programs must be in place to fully develop the region’s talent while addressing the socio-economic factors that plague this region. Improving educational attainment levels and increasing basic skill levels is a critical component of WFS Cameron’s economic competitiveness. Without these building blocks, workers in the region will continue to lack the necessary foundation upon which to build a solid career. Without a literate and engaged workforce, employers will continue to face obstacles to economic vitality.

WFS Cameron delivers these services through a collaborative partnership between mission-driven, community-based organizations with experience in providing services to the target population and workforce boards. Our purpose is to provide employment and training services to individuals with barriers to employment to ensure participants gain skills and competencies to enter the labor market, retain employment, and achieve economic security. Services are provided through our workforce center staff or referrals to partnerships with community-based organizations or service providers. Our target populations with barriers to employment include:

- Youth: Disconnected from education or employment or Foster Youth
- Adult Workers: Unemployed, Underemployed, Unskilled, under-skilled, or low-wage
- Economically Disadvantaged participants
- Individuals with disabilities
- Women: Seeking training or education in nontraditional fields
- Non-English Speakers: AEL population for whom English is not their primary language
- Incarcerated/Formerly Incarcerated: Individuals soon to be released or already released
- Veterans: Armed services veterans
- Migrants and Seasonal Farmworkers
- Older Workers: individuals over 50 needing retraining

### **Employment needs of employers**

The long-term strategy of the board is to continue developing partnerships, exchanging information, and collaborating in projects to effectively align workforce activities in the region. The alignment of workforce with economic development has enabled the Board to identify trainings that meet the requirements of

employers. With the use of labor market analysis, feedback from our customers and partners, and alignment of resources focused on the needs of the high-growth industries, WFS Cameron will continue to enhance and redirect their services and resources to provide a system of flexible and responsive workforce activities.

In keeping with the TWC's system goals, WFS Cameron works with employers to increase business and industry involvement and expand licensure and industry certification. WFS Cameron has responded to employers' growing need to fill higher skill positions primarily in construction, manufacturing industries, and healthcare. Recently, there has been an urgency to develop the use of technology to achieve efficiency, also known as Advanced Manufacturing, in preparation for employment needs of tomorrow.

Apprenticeship programs approved by the Department of Labor have been developed through the local workforce board and the local colleges, and private training providers. WFS Cameron has collaborated with TWC and Registered Apprenticeship programs to expand the number of apprentices in underserved populations and to provide training toward industry-based certifications to increase the number of work-ready individuals in high demand occupations. Our Board has also sought to increase the number of employers who participate in work-based learning programs. Furthermore, in order to continue to accommodate employers' need for manpower, the service delivery method for training was adjusted to include distance learning in addition to the traditional face-to-face model, being respectful of social distancing guidelines mandated by the Governor due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the last four years, expansion of existing relationships with employers had led to the placement of internship and externship experiences for County residents. Our partnership with the neighboring board, Lower Rio has included the collaboration with the Texas Internship Initiative for high school and college students working on skills development and certification in a middle skill STEM occupation. The Texas Teacher Externship grant funding has expanded our joint offerings to teachers in the summer externship experience whereby their participation will focus on the development of partnership agreements with local employers representing the regions' high demand industries. The consortium will recruit, and pair "teachers" with employers for externships in targeted occupations also with a focus on Middle Skill STEM occupations within these industries, for a couple of weeks during the summer. This experience will allow the teachers to spend 3 days at a job site and perform job shadowing in a related field to the subject they teach. They will use this information to develop a lesson plan to take back to the classroom and present.

WFS Cameron partners with TWC to support collaborations between our local board and industry partners to leverage funding through the Texas Industry Partnership Program (TIP) grant; between our board and economic Development corporations to provide high demand occupational job training with High Demand Job Training Grants (HDJT); and among businesses, public community and technical colleges, Workforce Boards and economic development partners to provide customized job-training projects (including Incumbent Worker Training) through Skills Development Funding (SDF).

### **Part 3: Core Programs**

#### **a. Workforce Development System**

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

**The local workforce development system works with entities carrying out core and required partner programs to support alignment.**

#### **Core programs:**

WFS Cameron supports the strategy identified in the State Plan under WIOA §102(b)(1). In partnership with the Workforce Center contractor, service providers, and other contractors, the Board offers services to

employers, workers, job seekers, and youth throughout Cameron County. The workforce center offers vital tools that help workers secure employment and assist employers in hiring a skilled workforce to grow their businesses. WFS Cameron, in collaboration with core and one-stop partners, including community colleges, adult education & literacy providers, independent school districts, economic development groups, and other state agencies, delivers innovative services and leverages additional funding sources to support employers and workers. Collaboration and coordination across these partners play a critical role in the success of the local workforce system.

WFS Cameron operates under the umbrella of the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA). This allows us to provide fully integrated workforce investment activities through the one-stop system that increase participant employment, retention, and earnings. This workforce system was designed to enable the attainment of recognized postsecondary credentials by workforce participants, and, as a result, improve the quality of the workforce, reduce dependency on government assistance, increase economic self-sufficiency, meet the skills requirements of employers, and enhance productivity and the competitive advantage in the region.

The Board is committed to supporting the strategies outlined in the State Plan including strengthening existing partnerships and forging new ones to provide high-quality career services including, but not limited to, education and training. The following “Core Program” partners under WIOA provide expanded services as part of the one-stop system: WIOA Adult, WIOA Dislocated Worker, WIOA Youth, Adult Education & Literacy, Wagner-Peyser Employment Service, and Vocational Rehabilitation (VR).

WFS Cameron has successfully integrated most core partners into the one-stop system. The only core partner that does not have a physical presence within the workforce centers is the Adult Education & Literacy Partner. However, the Board continues to collaborate with AEL to leverage resources and provide AEL services to workforce participants to achieve their overarching goal of employment. A two-way referral system was established along with case management system access for aligning program services and outcomes. Direct linkages to AEL services are provided electronically through the Board’s website or at the workforce centers in hard copy in the form of program brochures. In an effort to strengthen our partnership, the Board recently extended an invitation to AEL to enable their students to participate in job fairs and hiring events. The goal is to assist their students in finding and securing employment in support of AEL performance measures.

### **Required programs (if operated in the Board Area)**

Other One-Stop partners co-located in our comprehensive workforce centers include: Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment & Training (SNAP E&T), CHOICES Non-Custodial Parent, Veteran’s Employment Services / Texas Veteran’s Leadership Program (TVLP), Trade Adjustment Act (TAA), Migrant Seasonal Farm Workers (MSFW), Child Care Services, and the Texas Veteran’s Commission staff. In 2022 SCSEP has begun outreaching targeted population at the workforce centers.

The Board executes MOUs with core and optional workforce partners that are not linked through a contractual obligation. The MOUs outline respective responsibilities for achieving successful outcomes for target populations and shared customers such as veterans, individuals with disabilities, foster youth, migrant and seasonal farmworkers, and ex-offenders. These formal partnerships facilitate the referral process and enable the Board to leverage partner resources and services for a truly seamless customer-focused service delivery network. WFS Cameron staff sit on various boards and engage with partners in addressing workforce system issues.

The following Core and/or One Stop partners entered into formal agreements through an executed Memorandum of Understanding:

- Adult Education and Literacy Provider (WIOA, Title II) with Brownsville Independent School District (BISD)
- YouthBuild Program
- Apprenticeship Programs (ETP Providers)
- Senior Community Service Employment Program
- Job Corp

The Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 provides an increased focus on the academic achievement of career and technical education students, strengthens the connections between secondary and post-secondary education, and improves state and local accountability. WFS Cameron continues to explore strategies to strengthen collaborations with local ISD Career and Technology Education (CTE) programs for the purpose of increasing interest and participation in STEM and middle skilled jobs for youth and adults.

WFS Cameron supports the state goals for the alignment of CTE with workforce services by:

- Identifying and targeting STEM and middle-skills career pathways
- Supporting the attainment of skills and credentials
- Providing work-based learning such as internships in STEM and middle-skill occupations
- Strengthening employer engagement
- Aligning processes to achieve mutual performance
- Strengthening linkages with partners for resource sharing and reducing redundancies

To support the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006, WFS Cameron works with the following entities on special initiatives formalized through MOUs or other workforce agreements or systems:

- Brownsville ISD
- Harlingen CISD
- San Benito CISD
- La Feria ISD
- Los Fresnos CISD
- Point Isabel ISD
- Santa Rosa ISD
- Santa Maria ISD
- Rio Hondo ISD
- South Texas ISD
- Texas State Technical College-Harlingen
- Texas Southmost College
- Housing Authority of the City of Brownsville
- Housing Authority of the City of Harlingen
- Preparation for Adult Living Program / Child Protective Services
- Senior Community Service Employment Program

It is through these existing and newly established partnerships that WFS Cameron will support the strategies identified in the State Plan and work with the entities conducting core programs and workforce development programs. Post-Secondary partners are linked to the workforce system through the Eligible Training Provider (ETP) system.



The Board also collaborates with some of these partners to educate the future workforce on STEM and middle-skill occupations. The Board co-hosts a Career Expo every year that brings together industry, education, and community partners to provide high school students with an opportunity to explore careers in-demand as they begin to consider their choices on college and/or career options after high school. Over 1,500 youth from throughout the region attend the event each year and over 60 education entities and employers set up demonstrations and exhibits to promote their industries. One of the goals is to highlight local training programs and identify employers hiring graduates of those programs. Through this Expo, the Board hopes to expose youth to various career pathways by listening to local professionals share their success stories and share related educational backgrounds.

**b. Core Programs—Expand Access, Facilitate Development, and Improve Access**

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

WFS Cameron collaborates with our Core partners, one-stop partners, and educational providers to provide a full array of workforce services, including employment and training opportunities for adults, dislocated workers, youth, basic skills deficient job seekers, individuals with a disability, and UI claimants in the county. Through our workforce centers, targeted populations can access employment services, individualized career services, training programs, and work-based training opportunities tailored to serve the needs of these Core program participants.

Through targeted outreach utilizing various social media platforms, center staff is able to serve core program participants in staff-assisted workforce services such as education, training, and employment as a result of discussions regarding labor market information and assessment testing. Career services include job matching in the resource rooms, assistance with WorkInTexas.com registration, resumé development assistance, awareness of LMCI tools for career planning, and individualized career services offered by center staff: assessments, counseling and career planning, development of an Individual Employment Plan (IEP), soft skills training, financial literacy training, and work-based training, etc., as appropriate. Work-based training offers participants an opportunity to test the labor market to assist with a smooth and successful transition into the workforce.

Additionally, the Board works closely with core partners such as the local AEL provider by outlining partner responsibilities and shared resources through an executed MOU. Center staff provides referral to the AEL Provider for basic skills/ GED instruction and WFS Cameron accepts referrals for occupational training and other workforce services. For those core program customers who cannot be placed in employment immediately, training services ranging from subsidized employment, customized training, or other work-based training is offered to fit their needs and abilities. The level of training offered is determined by center staff based upon the customers' education, past work experience, assessment, and their Individual Employment Plan (IEP). Some customers qualify for and receive support services during their training and/or participation. Youth participants receive this follow up support even after exiting from the program.

Through our local AEL provider partnership, WFS Cameron has expanded access to

\. The AEL provider offers workforce center referrals: English-as-a-Second Language (ESL) instruction, basic skills education, GED instruction and occupation-specific training. The Board has begun exploring co-enrollment for the mandatory population in our workforce programs to equip them with the basic skills needed to be able to transition into a training program. The occupational skills training is made possible through community college partnerships that AEL has cultivated through the years. The following are training programs available for AEL participants that lead to industry recognized credential or IBCss: Welding, CNA, IC3, GS5 certification, Microsoft Office Specialist, Medical Assistant, and Computer Support Specialist. These programs also offer career pathways for workforce participants seeking viable opportunities and entry into a specific industry.



Special attention is directed at supporting and preparing youth through WIOA and other workforce programs. For youth customers facing challenges and barriers to success, WFS Cameron collaborates with core and one-stop partners to offer the 14 WIOA Youth Elements available to them. These Elements include:

- Tutoring, study skills training, instruction, and evidence-based dropout prevention and recovery strategies that lead to a high school diploma or its recognized equivalent or postsecondary credential;
- Alternative secondary school services or dropout recovery services;
- Paid and unpaid work experiences that have academic and occupational education as a component, such as summer and non-seasonal employment, pre-apprenticeship programs, internships and job shadowing, and on-the-job-training, in the private for-profit or nonprofit sectors;
- Occupational skills training, which includes priority consideration for training programs that lead to recognized postsecondary credentials in in-demand industries or occupations in the local area;
- Education offered concurrently with, and in the same context as, workforce preparation activities and training for a specific occupation;
- Leadership development opportunities, including community service and peer-centered activities encouraging responsibility and other positive social and civic behaviors;
- Promote young women into leadership positions
- Highlight positive women success stories
- Support services, such as linkages to community services, assistance with transportation, child and dependent care, assistance with housing, needs-related payments, assistance with educational testing, reasonable accommodations for youth with disabilities, referrals to health care, and assistance with uniforms or other appropriate work attire and tools;
- Adult mentoring for at least 12 months;
- Follow-up services for not less than 12 months;
- Comprehensive guidance and counseling, such as drug and alcohol abuse, as well as referrals to counseling, as appropriate;
- Financial literacy education;
- Entrepreneurial skills training;
- Services providing labor market and employment information about in-demand industry sectors or occupations available in the local area, such as career awareness, career counseling, and career exploration services; and
- Activities that help youth prepare for and transition to post-secondary education and/or training.

These collaborations enable WFS Cameron to provide appropriate services that support the development of this future workforce.

WFS Cameron also works closely with the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) to help priority groups such as Foster Youth, and children aging out of foster care, move towards independent living through successful employment and training efforts. The Board is going to resurrect the annual Foster Youth Resource Fair. This fair is important for foster youth since it brings awareness regarding the resources and training available in the region. The Fair highlights important services available to foster youth, as well as provides a platform for the development of leadership and enhancement of soft skills for this targeted population; especially those “aging out.” Additionally, we have entered into a partnership through an MOU with BCFS-HHS Transition Center in Harlingen, Texas to outreach and obtain foster

youth referrals, co-case manage participants, and provide support in the form of training or work-based activities, for successful transition into the workforce.

The Board also works closely with Vocation Rehabilitation Services (VRS) to expand services and access to individuals with disabilities. The co-location of this core partner has strengthened collaboration and coordination between the Board and VRS resulting in a greater number and more variety of work-based learning opportunities such as work experience, internships, on-the-job training, and apprenticeship. VRS also collaborates with the Business Services Unit to jointly serve local employers in meeting their need for a skilled workforce. The VRS and BSU continue to provide sensitivity training to employers that have participated in SEAL and the Year-Round Work Experience program.

Through the partnership with AEL and Vocation Rehabilitation Services (VRS), WFS Cameron is able to expand employment, education, and support workforce customers and co-enrolled participants. Vocational Rehabilitation services are delivered in collaboration with the Workforce Centers, ISDs, colleges, and community rehabilitation providers, to name a few. VRS provides comprehensive training and support services to individuals with disabilities. The co-location of VRS at the workforce center increased coordination to better serve individuals with disabilities. The next step in strengthening this partnership is the co-enrollment of VR participants with workforce programs.

We are continuously enhancing our existing services to determine how we can better serve the residents of Cameron County. We have one comprehensive workforce center within the county that facilitates co-enrollment of core program and one-stop partner programs and two affiliated sites. Our Mobile Resource Unit travels throughout the county making workforce services accessible and providing employment services, especially in rural areas where transportation issues create a barrier for job seekers to physically visit a workforce center. As a result of COVID-19, workforce services are also provided virtually for accessibility and convenience. Even though the delivery of services has adapted to changes using technology, workforce centers have re-opened for face-to-face meetings during normal hours of operation. This is due in part to the existing digital divide in this region. The Mobile Resource Unit is operated by Wagner Peyser staff, a core partner, with knowledgeable staff, and is well-informed in employment services. WFS Cameron has forged multiple partnerships throughout Cameron County that include public entities and businesses that allow the Mobile Resource Unit to operate at their facility providing services to their community.

Employment services have been integrated into the one-stop system for years as part of the Texas Model. Although state merit staff are responsible for providing Employment Services, all center staff are trained to provide employment services as well.

Emerging industries and occupations have enabled WFS Camron to further collaborate with core partners to support the development of industry clusters targeted by the Governor. Corporate Services and Creative Industry have been added to support growing companies of all sizes and to include the state's growing creative industry. The industries across the state allow companies and their workforce limitless opportunities for success.

The Texas Governor's target Industry Clusters are:

- Advanced Manufacturing
- Aerospace, Aviation and Defense
- Biotechnology and Life Sciences
- Information and Computer Technology
- Petroleum Refining and Chemical Products
- Energy
- Corporate Services
- Creative Industry

To Workforce Solutions Cameron's credit, SpaceX South Texas has located its launch site at Boca Chica Beach in the county seat of Cameron and is here to stay. SpaceX held its groundbreaking ceremony on the new launch facility in September 2014, and soil preparation began in October 2015 with the installation of the first tracking antenna in August 2016, and the first propellant tank arrival in July 2018. In late 2018, the first prototype vehicle (Starhopper) was fabricated, tested, and flown between March and August 2019. Since then, additional prototype flight vehicles are being built at the facility for higher-altitude tests conducted in 2020. By March 2020, there were over 500 people employed at the facility, with most of the workforce involved in 24/7 production operations for the second-generation SpaceX launch vehicle, Starship. By late 2023, over 2,100 employees worked there. It is the Board's intention to continue to work with SpaceX in their training and hiring needs. The Board has offered its services to SpaceX management and the company has capitalized on our employment and training opportunities along with the possibility of developing customized training for jobs and training not typically offered in the area. The Board has strengthened its relationship with SpaceX through a partnership under the SDF Grant. The 2021 SDF grant enabled this business partner to identify training needs and develop customized training offerings to increase the skill level and wages of their workforce. At the end of 2022, the Board successfully secured a second SDF grant with SpaceX. This time around, an additional training partner was added to the grant.

Similarly, the Energy business has picked up with the construction of several wind farms located in the Rio Grande Valley. Giving rise to the need for the anticipated training, Texas State Technical College (TSTC) Harlingen opened its Wind Energy Technology (WET) Program over ten (10) years ago to train entry-level technicians for the industry's workforce. A grant from the Governor's Office allowed TSTC Harlingen and Del Mar College of Corpus Christi to welcome students to WET courses at the Renewable Energy Education Center in Ingleside during August 2011. The area is now set to expand the Energy Cluster with downstream wind energy industries to include additional jobs for the transportation industry, construction and assembly phases, and business management and maintenance of the turbine units. WFS Cameron will continue to re-visit its target occupations list to align with local industry growth and expansion.

#### **Part 4: One-Stop Service Delivery**

##### **A. One-Stop Service Delivery System**

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

#### **Board will ensure continuous improvement of eligible providers**

WFS Cameron will ensure that all eligible providers including contracted entities provide services and activities, including training consistent with applicable federal and state laws, regulations, and other requirements. Through continuous oversight of eligible providers, the Board will ensure that workforce programs and services support the goals and strategies outlined in the Board Plan, policies, directives, contracts, and agreements.

WFS Cameron strives to ensure the workforce system is a responsive system that prepares participants for high demand occupations through program and service offerings. Reviews are continuously performed to determine if training providers are meeting the employment needs of local employers, job seekers, and workers. The workforce system is a results-oriented and outcome-based system that enables the boards to assess the performance of all system providers and partners.

WFS Cameron Board analyzes the following performance data of participants who have completed approved training programs:

- Completion rate

- Employment rate
- Median Earnings
- Retention rate
- Rate of certification or licensure
- Measurable Skills Gains

If the results reveal ineffective program outcomes, the Board may entertain halting referrals for a specified period of time for underperforming programs.

The two main systems that are used to collect and evaluate system data are the Texas Workforce Information System of Texas (TWIST) and WorkInTexas.com (WIT). Participant information, such as characteristics, service activities, and outcomes, is captured through both of these systems. These data are available for continuous analysis of the efficacy of the workforce system in producing a skilled workforce that meets the needs of employers and training providers. System partners have the ability to access the labor exchange job matching system (WIT) to conduct matches and review the responsiveness of the workforce system in meeting both employer and job seeker needs. The workforce center utilizes these systems to identify opportunities for improvement and redirection of program funding as well as evaluate the effectiveness of eligible training providers in the system.

Additionally, customer feedback is collected at various times throughout an individual's participation period in an effort to obtain information on the impact of the services and activities provided through workforce system delivery, including, but not limited to, contracted services and eligible training providers. Customer feedback is critical in collecting quantifiable information regarding the system's efficiency and effectiveness in appropriately serving all system participants.

The board collects both formal and informal customer feedback to determine the efficiency of the workforce system. There are different points during workforce participation for both job seekers and employers that allow workforce staff to obtain input. This process allows staff to capture informal feedback on programs, services, and activities. Formal customer feedback is collected through workforce surveys, event surveys, and during monitoring visits. All of the customers in the workforce system provide essential information to enable WFS Cameron staff to improve service delivery as the participants navigate through the system.

WFS Cameron obtains input from the following customer groups:

**Employer feedback** - Employers are a primary customer of the workforce system. Their feedback is essential to identify and better link workforce training with employer demand.

**Job Seeker feedback** – Job seekers are another primary customer of the workforce system. Feedback provides critical information on services and activities to effectively prepare them to meet employer expectations.

**Community Partner feedback** - System partners are essential in the workforce system. Partners may include school districts, CBOs, IHEs, municipalities, collective impact groups, Chambers of Commerce, and training providers. Feedback provides information for improving partner linkages with the system and effectively and efficiently leveraging limited resources.

**Internal Customers/Staff feedback** - Staff is a critical component of the workforce system. Feedback is constantly sought through interviews and exit polls to analyze the service delivery system.

WFS Cameron continuously evaluates system performance both formally and informally in order to build an effective network of program activities. Formal performance evaluations are conducted through Monitoring Reports and reports generated on performance targets and benchmarks. Performance outcomes are used as a tool to determine the effectiveness of the services and activities of the system.

WFS Cameron maintains two (2) full-service centers throughout Cameron County to ensure residents have access to workforce services. Staffing levels are dictated by customer flow and utilization of center services, which are constantly analyzed. This analysis not only helps the Board determine the efficiency of system operations, but also enables the board to determine if the centers are meeting the demands of the community. Additionally, the board has a traveling Mobile Resource Unit (MRU) that provides workforce services throughout the rural parts of the county. This one-stop center on wheels ensures access is available to everyone in the county. The MRU is also utilized during special events and for initiatives to increase capacity and access to WIT for job seekers and employers alike.

WFS Cameron also utilizes its web-based resources as “virtual centers” in order for customers to obtain information on services and activities of the workforce system including, but not limited to, eligibility, program services, employer services, labor market and career information, and special events. This has been extremely beneficial, as our service delivery system was modified to provide “virtual services” due to the pandemic. Platforms and applications purchased to maximize virtual services include Premier Virtual Job Fair, Zoom, Microsoft TEAMS, and DocuSign. The Board anticipates utilizing these platforms in the future as we continue evaluating our service delivery to incorporate virtual services into our system. Linkages to state and federal resources are also provided on the website. The most important system that the board highlights and promotes is the WorkinTexas.com. Since this is an online system, it is the most effective means by which to access workforce services. Center staff are able to run matches between job seekers and employers and convey this information to individuals on a timely basis. Center staff can also teach job seekers how to run their own job matches and expand their search to match more jobs. Additionally, the Board purchased assessment tools that can be delivered and completed virtually for workforce center participants.

WFS Cameron utilizes social media to deliver “real time” workforce information to a large number of users of all ages and backgrounds. The board is able to capitalize on these cost-effective resources to outreach a larger number of individuals that do not normally frequent the workforce centers. Users targeted include job seekers, employers, workforce partners, as well as special populations and any other customer groups that need information on workforce services. WFS Cameron hosts a Facebook page, X account, LinkedIn, and YouTube. Other social media platforms are being evaluated to determine their reach and engagement capability.

Both workforce centers are strategically located to enable county residents to access workforce services. The Board and VRS have developed a strong partnership throughout the years by working together to identify and improve center accessibility. Now, a core partner, VRS staff are co-located in our workforce centers and will undoubtedly provide invaluable information and resources for all eligible workforce participants.

**The Board will use technology and other means to facilitate access to services, including referrals to VRS and AEL services and access to remote areas**

The Workforce Centers are equipped with:

- Computers
- Screen magnification TV
- Screen Magnifier Software -ZoomText, MAGic
- Screen Reader Software - Zoom Text, JAWS
- “Expert Mouse” trackballs
- Large Print Keyboard
- Adjustable Desks
- Raised keys

## Telephones

- i. Telephone handset amplifier
  - i. Video Relay Services
  - ii. Telephones with volume control

## Printed Material

- Large print

## Language

- Bilingual personal
- Interpreters
- Sign language
- Language Identification Cards

## **Compliance with non-discrimination provisions consistent with WIOA §188 and Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990**

As we strive to meet the needs of our disabled population and facilitate their entry into the workforce, WFS Cameron observes and follows TWC's policy noted below to ensure compliance in serving customers with disabilities:

- i. WD Letter 18-07, Chg. 2, Discrimination Complaint Procedures
- ii. WD Letter 24-01, Prohibition Against Discrimination Based on Disability or Limited English Proficiency in the Administration of Workforce Services
- iii. WD Letter 57-07, Interpreter Services for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Individuals
- iv. Technical Assistance Bulletin 311, Customers Requiring Relay Services

Our comprehensive workforce center in Brownsville, as well as affiliated sites, are ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act and ADA Amendments Act of 2008) compliant. Center customers have access to all services offered at each of our full-service centers, as well as our affiliated sites, regardless of disability.

WFS Cameron provides accommodations to assist people with disabilities through the following:

- Access to services, which may include provision of readers, interpreters, and other auxiliary aids necessary for participating as effectively as other customers;
- Modifications or adjustments to the structure or essential functions of the aid, benefit, service, or training that does not compromise the performance criteria or outcomes.
- Modifications or adjustments to the manner in which a training program is conducted, or the provision of auxiliary aids necessary for participating as effectively as people who do not have disabilities.

When a job applicant is referred to an employment opportunity, everyone involved (i.e., the employer, the job applicant customer, center staff) understands that it is the employer's responsibility to make a hiring decision from a range of candidates. When job applicants are pre-screened, center staff refers the requested number of applicants based on employer requirements and job seeker qualifications regardless of job applicants' disabilities.

WFS Cameron will continue building mutually beneficial partnerships with other community organizations that also serve people with disabilities, such as United Way of Southern Cameron County, VAIL, Easter Seals, and the Department of Aging and Disability Services, now part of the HHS system. In addition to these key partnerships, WFS Cameron is now an Employer Network (EN) for the Social Security Administration's "Ticket to Work" program.



## **Roles and resource contributions of the one-stop partners**

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

The roles and resource contributions of the one-stop partners have been integrated into the existing center structure since co-location between WFS Cameron and Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) has been completed. Other core partners that utilize the center are provided an orientation on workforce center operations, workforce programs, and information systems. Core partners also provide training on the services and programs to center staff. The co-location of VRS and integration of other core partners has enabled staff to provide the needed services to customers and enhanced the mix of services available to meet the needs of all workforce customers, including the LEP and disabled populations.

Cameron County's greatest strengths lie in the partnerships developed over the years between workforce development, economic development, educational institutions, and industry. These partnerships satisfy the elements that support innovation and align with the workforce needs of the region.

Partnerships listed below have been instrumental in cultivating effective workforce development strategies in Cameron County. These partnerships have enabled WFS Cameron to leverage existing resources to create a stronger, more holistic approach in workforce development. These collaborative efforts have also been critical in obtaining additional funding to increase resources and services in this region. Partnerships with institutions of higher education directly support our workforce system through the Eligible Training Provider System (ETPS). Board strategies and initiatives are designed to address basic skills and skill set requirements of local employers.

### ***Workforce Partner:***

- **Texas School Ready (TSR) Project**, funded by the Children's Learning Institute at The University of Texas Health Science – Houston, is a comprehensive preschool teacher training program that combines a research-based, state-adopted curriculum with ongoing professional development and progress monitoring. Participating in the program are teachers from the Board's early learning centers, N.I.N.O.S Head Start Program, and school districts. The project's goal is to work with these teachers, to improve their instructional practices in the classroom, helping more children to be more prepared for kindergarten.

### ***Educational Partnerships:***

- **BISD Adult Education and Literacy** is the AEL provider for Cameron County. BISD offers English as a Second Language (ESL), Adult Basic Education (ABE), and Adult Secondary Education (ASE) and English Literacy and Civics classes. Partnership with this provider has strengthened the alignment of system elements within each partner. Regular meetings are held to discuss issues and challenges of the population as well as the referral process. WFS Cameron provides AEL clients with virtual and on-site trainings in soft skills, financial literacy, LMCI tools, job readiness, and career & college awareness trainings to the AEL participants on a scheduled basis. Center staff also provides train-the-trainer sessions to allow the integration of workforce services to AEL participants.
- **United Way of Southern Cameron County** was established to bring communities together to address those issues around education, *healthcare*, early literacy, and family. WFS Cameron collaborates with this community partner to promote early literacy activities in childcare, head starts, as well as parental involvement initiatives.



- **Independent School Districts** have a long history of collaboration with the Board. The ISDs are familiar with the workforce services and provide information to students about TWC tools and resources created exclusively for youth as well as internship opportunities. ISDs also utilize workforce data and information on targeted and demand occupations for career planning and pathway selection based on labor market information. WFS Cameron provides Career & Technical Education (CTE) departments with our Soft Skills Course to be utilized during CTE programs as well as labor market tools such as the TWC's Reality Check Calculator. Additionally, a number of school districts offer high school recovery programs in an effort to increase the attainment rate of diplomas, thereby increasing the employment prospects for youths in Cameron County.
- **YouthBuild** through Community Development Corporation of Brownsville (CDCB) has been collaborating with WFS Cameron for many years. Youth Build provides workforce program information to their participants and assists in the coordination of resources. The workforce center in turn provides referrals to Youth Build for GED instruction and training opportunities in construction. Youth Build continues to collaborate with WFS Cameron to increase the number of out-of-school (OSY) youth served through the workforce system.
- **Lower Rio Grande Valley P-16 Council** advances regional efforts to target, design and implement systemic actions to establish college-going habits and traditions in middle and high schools. They were also created to increase awareness of College and Career Readiness Standards. WFS Cameron is a member of the council and provides workforce data and information as needed.
- **Institutions of Higher Education** had been collaborating with WFS Cameron for many years through the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) system. The recent creation of The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV) increased training program offerings for resident of the area. UTRGV is now part of the ETPL system along with numerous training providers including three community , registered apprenticeship programs, and a large number of career schools.

In addition to the strategies cited above, WFS Cameron evaluates economic development activities to ensure labor market projections are aligned with emerging and existing industry sectors. The following strategies have been implemented in support of the development and growth of the local and regional economy.

- **Economic Development Councils** collaborate with WFS Cameron for information sharing and workforce development. The Board serves on the Brownsville EDC, and is a member of the Harlingen, San Benito, Port Isabel, and South Padre Island EDC's. The Board provides EDCs with labor market information that assists them in identifying job skills and availability of a workforce for attracting potential new businesses to the area. Additionally, the Board has been able to strengthen EDC partnerships which has led to invitations to meet industry representatives who are in the planning stages of site selection.
- **SpaceX** established a rocket launching facility in Cameron County and has employed hundreds of workers for their operations. As a result of SpaceX, UTRGV established STARGATE research facility. This is a private-public partnership between the Center for Advancement Radio Astronomy (CARA) at UTRGV and SpaceX. SpaceX established a plant close to the launching site and is not only test-launching but building rockets in the area. The company has already hired hundreds of employees in high technology, high wage jobs. There are still a large number of job opportunities with SpaceX. A collaboration between SpaceX and CARA at UTRGV, a summer academy that lets high school students experience modern astrophysical research, learn basic astronomy, launch rockets, and try their hand at computer programming. They also can earn UT System dual credit.

- **The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley Medical School** will increase the growth of the healthcare industry in Cameron County. The establishment of this medical school will not only impact healthcare in the region, but will contribute to the growing research on pressing healthcare issues affecting the Hispanic population. The area has seen an increase in clinics support by the medical school, targeted at providing healthcare services for the area, as well as research opportunities. The growth in clinics has created opportunities for UTRGV to partner with Valley Grande Institute to support the newly created Registered Apprenticeship Patient Care Technician program. This pipeline of healthcare support workers will assist UTRGV in meeting some of their workforce needs.
- **Two Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) companies** are at the final stage of the environmental study waiting for the results of the report to establish plants at the Port of Brownsville. The approval and subsequent establishment of these companies will bring hundreds of employment opportunities in construction, chemical manufacturing, and logistics. WFS Cameron has begun collaborating with company representatives by hosting stakeholder meetings to identify skill sets requirements for the anticipated workforce that will lead to instructional programing that will satisfy their workforce needs. In December 2020, Texas LNG announced a long-term lease agreement with the Port of Brownsville to secure the company's export project site for up to 50 years.
- **SATA Group USA** established a precision manufacturing plant in the county and hired a large number of workers for their operation. Due to the continuing workforce needs of industry, WFS Cameron continues to provide labor market information on wages as well as the availability of skilled workers for various high-tech positions. The board is also working with local training providers to identify funding for skills training programs. Other funding that will be explored to meet the hiring and retention needs of the company include the Skills Development Fund.

In order for us to provide wrap-around services, other partnerships that strengthen the workforce system include:

- **Vocational Rehabilitation Services** is now under the umbrella of the Texas Workforce Commission as a Core Partner. VRS will be instrumental in providing support and training opportunities to individuals with a disability, including youths. WFS Cameron continues to collaborate with VRS on a number of initiatives as a result of the close working relationship with the Student HireAbility Navigator. Additionally, the VRS regional office provides support for training on the use of adaptive technology and other requirements to ensure workforce center resources are accessible to this population.
- **Regional Transportation Advisory Panel (RTAP)** provides a platform for collaborative approaches to transit planning for seamless and efficient movement of people and products in the region. WFS Cameron continues to support the RTAP by providing referrals of recent graduates in transit training to meet the need for transit bus drivers. WFS Cameron is an active member of this panel and continues to provide information and resources as needed.
- **Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)** representative is co-located at the workforce centers on a part-time, as needed, basis to provide employment and training opportunities for seniors in the area. Through this partnership, WFS Cameron can connect Seniors to SCSEP to obtain information on their services and work-based programs.
- **Migrant Education & Training (MET's)** Program goal is to ensure that all migrant students reach challenging academic standards and graduate with a high school diploma (or complete a GED) that prepares them for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive

employment. WFS Cameron continuously collaborates with MET to serve the Migrant Seasonal Farmworkers (MSFWs). It enables MSFWs to access additional training and work experience opportunities through co-enrollment in WIOA programs.

- **Workforce Solutions (Lower Rio)** continues to collaborate on special initiatives with WFS Cameron, such as the Texas Internship Program for High School Youth and Pathways for Reentry. In the former, Youth enrolled in Dual Credit CTE programs throughout Cameron County are provided with the opportunity to participate in an internship that supports their classroom training instruction. In the latter, both Boards are charged with enrolling and serving justice-involved individuals through the workforce system to facilitate a successful transition back into the labor force. The Pathway to Reentry is on its final year whereby only follow-up services can be provided. Additionally, both Boards have entered into a partnership to continue operating a teacher externship program for a number of years. This program allows school districts in the region to place teachers in externships to provide them professional development opportunities to enrich the classroom to career connections made for students.
- **Texas School Ready (TSR) Project**, funded by the Children’s Learning Institute at The University of Texas Health Science – Houston, is a comprehensive preschool teacher training program that combines a research-based, state-adopted curriculum with ongoing professional development and progress monitoring. Participating in the program are teachers from the county’s childcare center providers, N.I.N.O.S Head Start Program, and school districts. The project’s goal is to collaborate with these teachers, to improve their instructional practices in the classroom, helping more children become better prepared for kindergarten.

**Texas Veterans Commission/Texas Veterans Leadership Program** has dedicated staff at the workforce centers in order to provide individualized career and training-related services to veterans and their spouses to assist employers in filling their workforce needs with these populations. The emphasis of the targeted population is directed towards serving veterans who are economically or educationally disadvantaged.

## **B. Employer Engagement, Economic Development, and Unemployment Insurance Program Coordination**

*References: WIOA §108(b)(4); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(3); WIOA §108(b)(5); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(4)*

### **Engagement of employers in workforce development programs, including small employers and employers of in-demand industry sectors and occupations**

The BSU has established several key partnerships to address the needs of employers and stay informed about labor market trends. These partnerships include:

- **Employer Forums:** Organized and facilitated by Board staff to discuss labor force needs with employers struggling to recruit qualified workers.
- **Economic Development Councils (EDCs):** Membership provides opportunities to engage with area leadership and share resources and information on employment trends and emerging industries and occupations.
- **Chambers of Commerce:** Participation facilitates collaboration with local businesses and stakeholders.
- **Collective Impact Groups:**

- **RGV LEAD**
- **RGV Focus**
- **Co-Step**
- **RGV Partnership**

These partnerships enable WFS Cameron to collect information on employer needs, share resources and information on employment trends and emerging industries and occupations; and engage with area leadership to address labor market challenges and opportunities.

WFS Cameron continues to facilitate the engagement of employers through the Business Services Unit (BSU) which focuses on employers in demand industry sectors and occupations in the workforce development programs. The BSU has effective and established partnerships with chambers of commerce and economic development councils to enhance our relationship with the employer community. The BSU collaborates on various projects, from job fairs in targeted industries to employer forums and special employer initiatives such as incumbent worker training.

### **Support a local workforce development system that meets needs of businesses**

As part of the workforce center system, the BSU is the liaison between workforce center staff and employers. Since multiple activities within the various workforce programs are employer driven, WFS Cameron continues to expand the function of this unit to meet the unique needs of targeted populations. The Board utilizes a variety of techniques, including social media, to market different programs and services to employers, job seekers, and the public at large. Employers are considered a primary customer of the BSU and staff aggressively outreaches employers that are not part of the workforce system to provide information on the array of services available through the workforce center and its partners. Once the BSU identifies new employers in the region, they begin building a relationship by:

- Contacting them by phone or e-mail to arrange for a virtual or in-person visit;
- Establishing contact through on-site or virtual Zoom meeting visits;
- Presenting specific information on all services, programs, and special employer initiatives;
- Engaging in two-way dialogue to inquire on their current and projected unmet needs;
- Coordinating Workforce Center visits to check availability of interview rooms and conference room for their use or outlining Zoom interview capabilities;
- Providing information on virtual Job Fair capabilities;
- Sharing other programs and sources of information, such as the TWC Skills Development Fund, Skills for Small Business funding, etc.;
- Following up after a specified period of time to see how things are progressing;
- Including them on email listings to provide information on events such as upcoming Job Fairs.

Continued interaction with employers allows the BSU to explain screening and assessment services, available employer tax credits, sources of training providers, grants available through other funding sources, and past and current Labor Market projections.

### **Better coordinate workforce development and economic development activities**

The BSU is the center point for employer information and is provided with resources to ensure the community recognizes WFS Cameron in the area of economic development in terms of training and employment avenues. The updated local labor market studies and labor market data provide the BSU with an opportunity to collaboratively develop strategies with the economic development community, chamber of commerce, and Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs).

Products and strategies currently used for employers include:

- WorkInTexas.com for job postings, job applicant screening, job matching and other employer related services;
- Recruitment and Hiring assistance
- Customized Labor Market Information;
- Tax credits and incentives;
- Fidelity Bonding;
- Employer Forums and Seminars;
- Surveys/Evaluations to identify needs of the employer community;
- Job Fairs for current employers, new companies re-locating to the area, and for special populations such as the Veterans and Foster Youth;
- Lay-off aversion
- Rapid Response
- Work Experience/OJT
- Screening and referral of qualified applicants

Additionally, the Mobile Resource Unit is utilized for companies who request on-site assistance in the form of upgrading computer skills to meet new work requirements, instruction for increasing literacy and language acquisition, and for Rapid Response in the event of a layoff. The Mobile Resource Unit is equipped with the latest technology, wireless capabilities, computer stations, and educational software.

### **Providers meet the employment needs of employers, workers, and job seekers**

The BSU works directly with employers to introduce and market special populations (i.e., TANF) and stressing the benefits (i.e. tax credits, fidelity bonding, OJT) of hiring WFS Cameron target populations. Utilizing input from employers, WFS Cameron collaborates with educational training providers to identify opportunities and facilitate training for a multiple number of individuals in target and demand occupations. This strategy allows exploration for procurement opportunities for direct contracts with institutions of higher education and other eligible training providers to increase the number of customized training classes that meet the need of targeted and demand occupations. This is especially important in coordinating employers' needs with the available pool of workers from multiple programs.

WFS Cameron, through the Business Service Unit, will continue to survey existing employers to identify gaps in training for specific job skills for high growth industries and to enhance current job skills of both incumbent and unemployed workers. This information will be used to continue working with the educational institution partners and other training providers to identify short-term training, customized training, and on-the-job training opportunities to address skills gaps through workforce skills training aligned and consistent with employers' needs. This strategy will continue to provide an opportunity to quickly upgrade skills for under-skilled adults in various programs. Local labor market studies and data provide the BSU with the opportunity to collaboratively develop strategies with the economic development community, chambers of commerce, academic institutions, and city leaders to better align and leverage resources. The BSU coordinates with Workforce Center staff to provide low-skilled individuals identified in workforce programs with opportunities to enhance their employment skills through local training providers.

### **Promote entrepreneurial-skills training and microenterprise services**

WFS Cameron staff, both Board and Contractor, serve on a variety of regional economic development councils, regional and local chambers of commerce, community and technical college Advisory

Committees, and collective impact councils. These councils actively engage in research, planning, collaboration, and implementation of a wide variety of workforce activities, including entrepreneurial skills training, microenterprise services, job fairs, social engagement initiatives, internship engagement, business recruitment, expansion, and retention efforts. Membership and participation in these organizations means lending them the advantage of WFS Cameron LMCI research data, providing them available training options for new businesses, alerting them to TWC for other grant opportunities to assist their causes, such as the Skills for Small Business(SSB) Initiative and Skills Development Fund (SDF) opportunities from TWC, and lending an experienced level of advice on appropriate training programs or social impact programs being discussed for the region.

Cameron County residents benefit from a variety of business development assets, including an active Small Business Administration (SBA) presence, the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV) Small Business Development Center, local Chambers of Commerce, and community development financial institutions (CDFI). All of these partner entities engage in the delivery of entrepreneurial training courses and programs for startups, as well as advice and council on business growth and expansion planning. WFS Cameron also supports the Texas Small Business Forums and Texas Business Conferences at various locations across the County on an annual basis, both of which assist small business owners in staying current with hiring and other legal issues of business ownership. The WFS Cameron Business Services Unit (BSU) actively participates with all local Chamber events targeting entrepreneurs and microenterprises, and strives to offer all of our services and support to their business customers as they visit with them, and actively promotes coordination between other agencies initiatives. WFS Cameron supports these businesses by promoting partner services through printed material available at the centers or social media. Partner agencies that support entrepreneurship and microenterprises include:

- UTRGV Entrepreneurship and Commercialization Center
- TSTC Harlingen
- Texas Southmost College
- Small Business Administration (SBA)
- Greater Brownsville Incentives Corporation
- Brownsville Chamber of Commerce
- Harlingen Chamber of Commerce
- San Benito Chamber of Commerce
- Rio Grande Valley Partnership
- Texas Governor’s Small Business Forum
- Texas Business Conference

The following CDFI companies offer Microlending services in Cameron County:

- Liftfund
- Peoplefund

These companies provide credit and services to small businesses and entrepreneurs who do not have access to loans from commercial sources.

UTRGV Entrepreneurship and Commercialization Center in partnership with the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation offers the Kaufman FastTrack program to residents of Cameron County. The Kaufmann FastTrack is a 7-week course offered in three modules for existing small businesses and startups in support of entrepreneurships in the area.



## **Strengthen the links between one-stop and unemployment insurance**

As part of the workforce center system, the BSU is the liaison between workforce center staff and employers. Since multiple activities within the various workforce programs are employer driven, WFS Cameron continues to expand the function of this unit to meet the unique needs of targeted populations. The Board utilizes a variety of techniques, including social media, to market different programs and services to employers, job seekers, and the public at large. Employers are considered a primary customer of the BSU and staff aggressively outreaches employers that are not part of the workforce system to provide information on the array of services available through the workforce center and its partners. Once the BSU identifies new employers in the region, they begin building a relationship by:

- Contacting them by phone or e-mail to arrange for a virtual or in-person visit;
- Establishing contact through on-site or virtual Zoom meeting visits;
- Presenting specific information on all services, programs, and special employer initiatives;
- Engaging in two-way dialogue to inquire on their current and projected unmet needs;
- Coordinating Workforce Center visits to check availability of interview rooms and conference room for their use or outlining Zoom interview capabilities;
- Providing information on virtual Job Fair capabilities;
- Sharing other programs and sources of information, such as the TWC Skills Development Fund, Skills for Small Business funding, etc.;
- Following up after a specified period of time to see how things are progressing;
- Including them on email listings to provide information on events such as upcoming Job Fairs.

Continued interaction with employers allows the BSU to explain screening and assessment services, available employer tax credits, sources of training providers, grants available through other funding sources, and past and current Labor Market projections. The BSU makes presentations at monthly Chamber of Commerce meetings and Economic Development Corporation Meetings to highlight various employer initiatives available.

To effectively coordinate multiple programs, the Board uses a variety of methods to market services to the public, including direct mail, ads in local newspapers, newsletters, social media, web page, presentations, organizing special events and coordination with other agencies. Most employer initiatives are designed to target all workforce center participants as well as job seekers. Outreach efforts to support BSU initiatives include:

- Contacting customers by phone, regular mail, or email to arrange for a personal or virtual visit;
- Inviting customers to the Workforce Centers for in-person Job Search Assistance;
- Scheduling customers and/or participants to attend interview fairs with business partners;
- Inviting customers to attend or virtually view Workforce Center orientations for explanation of services;
- Providing customers with job matches based on their profile;
- Referring customers to other programs and sources for information;
- Following up on customers and continued services to update work applications, and;
- Provide customers with information on upcoming Job Fairs through email distributions and social media

The BSU is the center point for employer information and is provided with resources to ensure the community recognizes WFS Cameron in the area of economic development in terms of training and employment avenues. The updated local labor market studies and labor market data provide the BSU with an opportunity to collaboratively develop strategies with the economic development community, chamber of commerce, and Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs).

Products and strategies currently used for employers include:

- WorkInTexas.com for job postings, job applicant screening, job matching and other employer related services;
- Recruitment and Hiring assistance
- Customized Labor Market Information;
- Tax credits and incentives;
- Fidelity Bonding;
- Employer Forums and Seminars;
- Surveys/Evaluations to identify needs of the employer community;
- Job Fairs for current employers, new companies re-locating to the area, and for special populations such as the Veterans and Foster Youth;
- Lay-off aversion
- Rapid Response
- Work Experience/OJT
- Screening and referral of qualified applicants

Additionally, the Mobile Resource Unit is utilized for companies who request on-site assistance in the form of upgrading computer skills to meet new work requirements, instruction for increasing literacy and language acquisition, and for Rapid Response in the event of a layoff. The Mobile Resource Unit is equipped with the latest technology, wireless capabilities, computer stations, and educational software.

The BSU works directly with employers to introduce and market special populations (i.e., TANF) and stressing the benefits (i.e. tax credits, fidelity bonding, OJT) of hiring WFS Cameron target populations. Utilizing input from employers, WFS Cameron collaborates with educational training providers to identify opportunities and facilitate training for a multiple number of individuals in target and demand occupations. This strategy allows exploration for procurement opportunities for direct contracts with institutions of higher education and other eligible training providers to increase the number of customized training classes that meet the need of targeted and demand occupations. This is especially important in coordinating employers' needs with the available pool of workers from multiple programs.

WFS Cameron, through the Business Service Unit, will continue to survey existing employers to identify gaps in training for specific job skills for high growth industries and to enhance current job skills of both incumbent and unemployed workers. This information will be used to continue working with the educational institution partners and other training providers to identify short-term training, customized training, and on-the-job training opportunities to address skills gaps through workforce skills training aligned and consistent with employers' needs. This strategy will continue to provide an opportunity to quickly upgrade skills for under-skilled adults in various programs. Local labor market studies and data provide the BSU with the opportunity to collaboratively develop strategies with the economic development community, chambers of commerce, academic institutions, and city leaders to better align and leverage resources. The BSU coordinates with Workforce Center staff to provide low-skilled individuals identified in workforce programs with opportunities to enhance their employment skills through local training providers.

### **Strengthen the links between one-stop and unemployment insurance**

Furthermore, coordinated efforts are made with the Texas Workforce Commission Unemployment Insurance (TWC UI) area representatives for Rapid Response services. Once the TWC UI area representative is notified, they may perform an in-person or virtual visit to our area to provide UI information to the affected employees. The TWC UI representative can educate the affected employees on the UI program and answer UI questions.

### **C. Coordination of Wagner-Peyser Services Planning**

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

Boards must include a description of the strategies that are used to maximize coordination, improve service delivery, and avoid the duplication of Wagner-Peyser Act services and other services that are provided through the one-stop delivery system.

WFS Cameron has fully implemented and operates the Texas Model for workforce system service delivery as commissioned by the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) in 2003 for the delivery of Employment Service (ES) (Wagner-Peyser Act services). In Cameron County, the contractor managing and operating the workforce centers is charged with the responsibility for day-to-day supervision of TWC-ES staff. TWC maintains administrative responsibility of state ES merit staff; however, the workforce center contractor shares responsibility for directing daily work assignments, assigning individual performance goals, coordinating hiring, initiating disciplinary action, and evaluating staff performance.

Operating under the Texas Model ensures system coordination and minimizes duplication of services. In addition, WFS Cameron engages in joint strategic planning with all contractors and partners, stressing the importance of coordination and consistency in service provision. Workforce center contractor and partners share program information and resources to promote integration and cooperation among staff. All staff have access to center management and administrative staff who provide direction in the one-stop system. Contractor management staff holds regular group or one-to-one meetings to discuss information regarding changes in delivery service for improved performance or to resolve identified issues for better program coordination.

Center staff is expected to deliver services in a manner that supports the vision and mission of the Board while complying with governing rules and policies. Ongoing training is provided in the various programs and functions of the center that lead to improved performance such as case file documentation, TWIST, WorkInTexas case management and WIT reporting systems, employment, follow-up, and case management.

### **D. Integrated, Technology-Enabled Intake and Case Management**

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

**One-stop centers are implementing and transitioning to WorkinTexas.com for programs carried out under WIOA and one-stop partners**

Technology has been fully embraced within all the workforce centers operated by WFS Cameron. In addition to the state-wide systems being utilized for case management and information sharing, WFS Cameron utilizes shared drives internally to ensure synchronized communication and information sharing.

Upon entry into one of our centers, front desk staff welcome customers and utilize the VOS Greeter to inform appropriate staff of the customers' reason for the visit to the center. This system enables WFS Cameron to record customer center visits for all programs. It creates a common intake record for new customers, adds customers to a waiting list upon Center sign-in, and allows authorized staff to view customer information on a Daily Customer Log.

Although WFS Cameron has not adopted a truly paperless case management system, the following systems, managed by Texas Workforce Commission, are utilized by staff for case-management and delivery of workforce services:

- ***The Workforce Information System of Texas (TWIST)*** is the computerized system introduced by the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) for intake, eligibility determination, assessment, service tracking, and reporting of TWC administered programs, such as NCP.
- ***WorkInTexas.com*** is a comprehensive online labor exchange job search resource and matching system developed and maintained by the Texas Workforce Commission. It provides recruiting assistance to Texas employers of all types and sizes, and job search assistance to any individual seeking work in Texas.
- ***WorkInTexas Case Management System*** is web-based platform that replaced TWIST used to manage and track participants in workforce programs. It includes features for developing individualized employment plan, tracking services, monitoring progress, and reporting employment outcomes.
- ***Child Care Attendance and Automation (CCAA)*** allows parents and authorized pickup people to check in at a computer check-in station.
- ***Choices OnLine Tracking System (COLTS)*** is a web-based tool used to store and display data regarding NCP Choices participants. This system will be transitioning to chAMP system for the NCP program. The implementation will be complete in late spring of 2025.
- ***Texas Integrated Enrollment Redesign System (TIERS)*** is the automated system that supports Health and Human Services Commission's (HHSC) eligibility determination for cash assistance (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families – TANF), medical assistance (Medicaid), and food assistance (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – SNAP).
- ***Resource Access Control Facility (RACF)*** is used to manage the unemployment insurance benefits system.

Other systems supported locally that contribute to the day-to-day operation of the programs within WFS Cameron include the following:

- COPSsystem - consists of three assessments that measure values, interests, and abilities. Results are combined from each inventory to guide clients toward a career that is the right fit for them.
- TABE Online - an adult basic skills assessment available online to quickly assess skills for training and employment, or to determine readiness for the high school equivalency exam; it is being phased out except for Choices customers.
- CASAS – on-line adult basic skills competency-based testing system.
- JobsEQ - Software to assist in converting labor market data into actionable intelligence.
- Lightcast - Software gathers and integrates economic, labor market, demographic, education, profile, and job posting data

Additional technology/software that is available in our centers, enabling customers to access our services and/or enabling staff to provide services, includes:

- Jaws Screen Reader - Job Access With Speech (JAWS) is developed for computer users whose vision loss prevents them from seeing screen content or navigating with a mouse. JAWS provides speech and Braille output for PCs.
- Zoom Text Screen Magnifier - Zoom Text provides a full range of magnification levels up to 36x.

- Video Phone Relay - Enables persons with hearing disabilities who use American Sign Language to communicate with voice telephone users through video equipment, rather than through typed text.
- Computer Connected Scanning and Reader - Enables blind and low vision users instant portable access to printed material with voice.
- Speech Amplification System – Enables the user to amplify their voice effectively, reducing vocal stress and strain.

Our Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) Core Partner has access to TEAMS and utilizes it as needed to meet TWC program requirements. The other core partners that have access to TWC systems as part of a partner agreement or directly through TWC is Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS). The system utilized by this partner is WorkInTexas.com. Another one-stop partner, Senior Community Employment Program, also has access to WorkInTexas.com. Both of these partners utilize this system to assist customers with job search efforts.

Our Workforce Center on Wheels is open to the public and serves as an extension of employer and workforce services for all rural customers. The Mobile Resource Lab is a 38-foot moving workforce center, bringing services directly to customers in need. Through the use of our 12 computer stations with internet access, we allow job seekers the ability to search for jobs, improve their resumés and receive training wherever needed. The Resource Mobile lab provides:

- On-site interviewing for employers & job seekers
- Work registration on WorkInTexas.com
- Online job search and job matching services
- WinWay Résumé Writing Program
- Mavis Beacon Keyboarding/ Typing Program
- Information on Adult Education & Literacy Programs
- Handicap accessible - wheelchair lift and handicap accessible workstation
- Access with Speech (Jaws) and Zoom Text

Through partnerships with business, local government entities, and school districts in Cameron County, space is made available for service delivery from the mobile lab in their parking lots.

### **E. Third Party Partnership in SNAP Employment and Training Programs Planning**

Reference: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training Third-Party Partnership Guide

The Texas Health and Human Services Commission has directed TWC to expand the use of SNAP E&T Third Party Partnerships (TPP) throughout the state, with a goal of implementing TPP in all workforce areas by Federal Fiscal Year 2029. Boards must provide an assurance that they are planning for the expansion of TPP and must describe any planned or completed steps toward implementation.

#### **Assurance statement from the Board planning for TPP expansion, including a description of any planned or completed steps.**

Boards will contract with TPPs to provide SNAP E&T services to eligible SNAP recipients. The contracts developed with TPPs should consider and define various case management responsibilities.

Board staff recently reached out to one of the FY25 cohort of Boards to obtain an insight into the TPP implementation processes. As a result of this conversation, the Board will consider collaborating with workforce partners that serve SNAP clients with non-federal funding. The partnership will require the organization to screen clients for SNAP eligibility and monitor participation through WITCM data entry. Both the Board and the partner will adhere to the program requirements outlined in the SNAP E&T guide, including those related to program participation, invoicing, and reimbursement.

The Board will begin working with workforce center operator to outline the program requirements under SNAP E&T Third Party Partnerships (TPP) and expectations of the program. The Board intent to join the FY27 and/or FY28 cohort for the SNAP E&T TPP Pilot.

## **Part 5: Workforce Investment Activities**

### **A. Rapid Response Activity Coordination Planning**

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

#### **Board's coordination with local workforce investment activities with statewide rapid response activities described in WIOA**

WFS Cameron coordinates workforce investment activities with Rapid Response activities through the Business Services Unit. Representatives from this unit partake in the delivery of rapid response activities. Within 48 hours of a layoff, a WARN notice, a public announcement of a layoff, or notification that a Trade Adjustment Act (TAA) petition has been filed, designated staff establishes contact with the employer(s) and/or representatives of affected workers to assess employer and employee early intervention needs, including presenting averting lay off strategies such as the Shared Work Program as an alternative to layoffs. The Board with the assistance of the state rapid response coordinator will work to identify other strategies that may help in averting or mitigating a lay off. One of the strategies that the Board is exploring is incumbent worker training to allow workers to obtain or upgrade skills necessary for businesses to remain competitive in this evolving economy. Besides using the Skills Development Fund to assist businesses in upskilling their workforce, an Incumbent Worker Training policy (BCY 21-001) was adopted by the WFS Cameron Board on January 25, 2021, making it possible to now spend WIOA funds on incumbent worker training to assist employers in need.

If a layoff is unavoidable, early intervention services will be provided to enable affected workers to transition to new employment as quickly as possible. In addition to immediate and virtual or on-site contact with the employer, other rapid response services provided include development of a coordinated response to the dislocation event, and emergency assistance adapted to the particular closing, layoff, or disaster. Once contact is made with the employer, Board staff makes initial contact with state unemployment insurance (UI) officials to inform them of the layoff and to arrange for a UI staff personnel to serve as the local contact and designee for on-site or virtual meetings to discuss UI benefits. Board staff, along with the Business Services Unit coordinate the schedule for rapid response events. Board staff ensures required services and activities are conducted in accordance with the requirements for rapid response. Board staff, along with the contractor staff, are responsible for identifying special needs requirements and providing accommodations as necessary in language interpretation, written material, hearing impaired services and/or services for people with disabilities. As the workforce center representative, the Business Services Unit conducts a survey to determine the needs of the affected workers, as well as assists with the registration of workers for rapid response. The survey enables staff to collect information on the following:

- Individual background information;



- Job information about the position from which they were laid off;
- Future plans / interests / needs; and,
- Retraining preferences.

The Business Services Unit integrates Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act activities at the rapid response event by incorporating workforce programs and services information as well as WIOA case managers at these meetings. Material and information provided includes, but is not limited to:

- Information on registering in [WorkInTexas.com](http://WorkInTexas.com)
- Career counseling and job search assistance,
- Resumé preparation and interviewing assistance,
- Information on education and training opportunities,
- Labor market information and reemployment prospects,
- Local supportive services (i.e.: legal aid, United Way, faith-based and community organizations, food, and clothing banks),
- COBRA and HIPAA (written information),
- Information on 211 services to access community resources,
- When appropriate, information on how to petition for TAA
- Other available resources to meet the short and long-term assistance needs of the affected workers.

WIOA staff will assist in identifying affected workers needing training or other services to find and secure employment. If the layoffs are the result of a natural disaster, the Board and contractor staff will coordinate with TWC and other Federal and State agencies to provide assistance in transitioning back into employment as quickly as possible. If a disaster assistance period is declared, Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA), which provides unemployment benefits for individuals who lost their jobs or self-employment, or who are no longer working as a direct result of a major disaster, is coordinated between TWC and Board staff.

## **B. Youth Activities and Services**

### **References: WIOA §108(b)(9); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(8)**

Based on studies and requests from area employers, it was determined that a large part of our youth population was lacking in soft skills, job readiness, and direction with career pathways. Workforce Solutions Cameron strives to plant the seeds of a strong, skilled workforce through its ambitious SEEDS (Students Empowered to Explore and Develop Skills) Initiative. Center staff has systematically facilitated opportunities for career exploration and job readiness in all public-school districts of Cameron County aiming to prepare the youth to meet the challenges and expectations of today's job market and making them aware of different career pathways. As a result, WFS Cameron created special projects to assist in providing the youth elements to strengthen our youth population, while meeting the demands of employers. The following youth initiatives have been adopted by the Board that support youth 14 elements under WIOA.

- **LIFT (Leading to Inspire Fearless Talent):** program offers opportunity youth a range of unique opportunities for career exploration and soft skills enhancement. Visits have included Texas Southmost College's Auto Body Repair Shop where the students engaged in hands-on activities in the automotive industry at the college's International Technology, Education and Commerce (ITEC) Center. Other trips have included Noble Texas Builders and Valley Baptist

Medical Center’s School of Vocational Nursing. These experiences serve to broaden the students’ horizons and guide them in career paths decisions.

1. **Project Phoenix:** Workforce Solutions Cameron (WFS Cameron) has established an MOU with the Cameron County Juvenile Justice Department (CCJJD) to equip students with the information and skills they need to succeed in today’s workforce. Project Phoenix is administered over a 5-month period and exposes students to labor market information, connects the role that education plays in future employment opportunities, and equips students with the professional and personal skills they need to succeed in the workplace. A select group of students have the opportunity to enter into subsidized employment and apply what they have learned. Project Phoenix aims to prepare students to succeed in an academic setting and in today’s workforce.
2. **Job Readiness & Soft Skills:** WFS Cameron conducts resumé writing, interviewing, and soft skills classes for a variety of audiences. The Soft Skills curriculum developed by WFS Cameron has been given to the Career & Technology Education (CTE) programs at several area high schools to be infused into their CTE curricula. WFS Cameron initially trains the CTE faculty on how to deliver the curriculum, and the teachers then take this knowledge back to their respective classrooms and develop lesson plans around the soft skills/job readiness topics. Attendees receive a certificate of completion for each workshop.
3. **Education & Career EXPO:** The EXPO is executed in partnership with RGV LEAD, a local community-based organization. RGV LEAD was designed as a partnership between education and business that prepares young people for today’s skilled workforce. This partnership involves high schools, colleges, and universities, large and small businesses, and government agencies. The EXPO has been held for over twenty (20) years. It is a community-wide effort led by businesses, educators, and community leaders working together to help high school students prepare for career success. The partners come together to provide students with information about career opportunities available in the Rio Grande Valley and the educational institutions providing programs of study for those careers. The goal of the EXPO is to help our future workforce chart a career course by providing relevant and accurate information.
- **Internship:** The goal of this program is to develop and implement new internship opportunities for youth in the county. Participating high school and college students receive educational credit and work experience, and potentially make progress toward an industry-based certification in the occupational area related to their education and training course or program.

WFS Cameron partners with local ISDs, community colleges, and employers to develop and implement work-based Internships with a focus on high-demand Middle-Skill STEM Occupations. The success of the program can be attributed to the following: Students acquire relevant, work-related worksite experience and a deeper understanding of regional employment and develop critical employment and soft skills required for success; and employers participate in direct training of a pipeline of future job applicants, formulate a “grow-your-own” workforce attraction strategy to find new talent, and, get a first look at first-choice from potential employees among their interns. These internship opportunities will assist in addressing the skill shortages in regional high-demand Middle-Skill STEM Occupations while permitting WFS Cameron to develop educational and employer partnerships that promote continuous workforce system improvements.

4. **Foster Success Youth Conference:** In collaboration with Cameron County Juvenile Justice Department (CCJJD), the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services – Preparation for Adult Living (DFPS-PAL), Workforce Solutions Lower Rio, and other nonprofit organizations, the partners host a day-long conference for Foster Youth. Topics discussed included financial literacy,

resume writing, interviewing skills, and testimonials on supervised independent living (SIL). This will be the third year that the Boards are collaborating on this initiative.

5. **Train for Success Virtual Reality Career Fair:** This virtual reality career fair was designed to spotlight the WIOA eligible programs offered by Eligible Training Providers (ETPs) in Cameron County. Using the Transfer VR headsets, individuals seeking funding for training have an opportunity to learn about different careers through simulations. The event was a success last year and will be conducted on an annual basis for young people in the region.
6. **Assistive Services:** With the co-location of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) within the center, all necessary adaptive equipment has remained easily accessible for the youth population, including integration into all existing programs. The Student HireAbility Navigator works closely with VRS counselors to educate the community on the availability of Pre-ETS services for students with disabilities.
7. **The Summer Earn And Learn (SEAL) Program:** A statewide strategy that includes work readiness training and paid work experience for students with disabilities, WFS Cameron collaborates with the local Vocational Rehabilitation Services to identify and place youth with a disability in employment during the summer months. **SEAL** includes basic work-based learning and training services for students with disabilities that provide pre-employment work readiness training and preparation for work- experience placement; work experience helps participants gain familiarity with the workplace environment and develop transferable job skills; with paid compensation for time worked on the job. The objective of the SEAL program is to increase work-based learning opportunities for students with disabilities through the workforce system, thereby providing participants with foundational employment skills and better preparing them for successful transition into postsecondary education and employment.
8. **Transitional Job Fairs:** Transition Job Fairs provide information on work and training opportunities for students with disabilities. These events are collaboratively planned with local school districts, vocational training providers and TWC-VRS transition team. The events usually take place during the school year and showcase speakers engaged in the various industries in the local area. The objective of the fairs is to have students with disabilities ask questions about the various aspects of jobs within each industry. At these events, students also have opportunities to interview for job vacancies with businesses that have a strong inclusion hiring practice. The events also highlight vocational training programs, including curriculum and school entry requirements. These transition fairs are usually held in the school gym or cafeteria; however, sometimes, depending on the partner engagement, the events may be held at community event centers or college conference halls. The request for a transitional fair is usually done by the interested school and/or SPED department or the Special Services Department that accommodates 504 students. Every school semester, a transition fair is planned. The goal of the fairs are as follows:
  - To bring awareness of jobs and training to both students and their families;
  - To bring community resources of agencies that aid and support the disabled population;
  - to bring awareness of the availability of accommodations to students for work or in training;
  - To provide resource education to employers and employer organizations about services available to hire people with disabilities;
  - To provide incentive information to businesses.

As part of its efforts to connect jobseekers and employers, the partnership between Workforce Solutions Cameron and Vocational Rehab is committed to empowering people with disabilities to gain and sustain jobs and careers leading to a better quality of life through gainful employment and self-sufficiency. People with disabilities can, and are willing and eager to work. Their talents and abilities can benefit a business, given the chance. Job satisfaction for a person with a disability is a gateway into becoming a contributing member of the community by entering the workforce and being offered an opportunity to emphasize their abilities rather than their limitations. Recognizing the value-add to the workforce and fostering an inclusive workplace culture is an ongoing effort that requires the buy-in of the business community. Significant leverage is provided by building partnerships with like-minded agencies including Vocational Rehabilitation Services and local agencies and businesses.

### **C. Coordination with Secondary and Postsecondary Education Programs**

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

#### **Coordinate workforce investment activities with relevant secondary and postsecondary education programs and activities, and coordinate strategies, enhance services, and avoid duplication of services**

WFS Cameron has established working relationships with secondary and postsecondary institutions across the county through a number of initiatives, including but not limited to membership on Educational Program Advisory Committees and assisting both ISDs and CTCs with LMCI data to support their applications for JET and other state and federal grants. WFS Cameron considers these partnerships crucial to the design and function of a well-planned career pathway educational system where initiatives planned by either workforce or the educational partners are coordinated, resources are shared and maximized, and services are unduplicated to the greatest extent possible. Workforce Solutions Cameron offers a wide range of vendors approved through the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) system. ETPL is the model utilized to provide training services to participants in a variety of workforce programs.

Cooperative efforts are outlined in the listing of Career Pathway Partnerships noted below in developing a seamless career pathway model for residents in this LWDA.

Workforce Education and Outreach Specialist to be placed within ISDs to perform career awareness and LMCI training to middle school and high school students, parents, and counselors about the research and realities and importance of being fully informed about career choices before they are required to select an endorsement in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade. Such pilot programs have been partially funded by TWC over the past few years and have been deemed quite successful in guiding students toward a viable occupational career that fits their attitudes, aptitudes, and abilities.

#### **RGV LEAD, Achieve Texas Career Pathways, and Industry Academies**

RGV LEAD is a partnership between education and business that prepares young people for today's skilled workforce. This partnership involves high schools, colleges and universities, large and small businesses, governmental agencies -- all working together! RGV LEAD has been responsible over the past several years in working with ISDs in the region to establish the Achieve Texas model in all high schools. This model works with high schools and colleges to develop articulated and aligned six-year technical degree plans to begin in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade and progress through two years of technical college attainment.

#### **Teacher Externships**

WFS Cameron and Workforce Solutions Lower Rio in 2015 partnered with RGV LEAD and Region One Education Service Center (ESC) to fund a regional summer Teacher Externship program whereby volunteer

HS teachers and counselors are placed in business and industry job sites to experience the real world of work. The teachers then develop a lesson plan to take back to their classroom and share their experiences with their students as a method of career awareness and job readiness instruction. Although the pandemic interrupted the implementation of this program, WFS Cameron was able to implement a Teacher Externship in the summer of 2022 and has applied for funding to continue this initiative every summer since, including 2024.

Since the program inception, the Teacher Externship has gained popularity in the business community with one industry leader in Construction opting to train in 3 fields of interest. Noble Texas Builders has helped fund the stipends and placed teachers in various externships.

### **RGV FOCUS**

In 2012, the Rio Grande Valley (RGV) Collective Impact initiative, now RGV FOCUS, was launched to transform college readiness, access, and success across the four-county region. Initially founded by a group of district superintendents and higher education presidents, the collaborative has grown to include educators, workforce professionals, nonprofits, community groups, funders, and business and civic leaders dedicated to making major systemic improvements to educational and career attainment in the RGV. The RGV FOCUS Annual, and Community Reports include information about cross-sector collaboration in the Rio Grande Valley, statistics on adult and student populations, student success data compared to the State of Texas, and highlights from districts, institutions of higher education and community-based organization partners.

RGV FOCUS works to strengthen each step of the educational pipeline and align community resources to provide the support structure that learners need to succeed through high school and postsecondary in order to pursue a meaningful career whether it be in the RGV or elsewhere.

Since its inception, this cross-sector group of leaders – the Leadership Team – has met regularly to identify assets and needs in the RGV, adopt a common vision, and identify shared goals, strategies, and metrics to help drive the following vision: *All RGV learners will achieve a degree or credential that leads to a meaningful career.* After the “Partners for Post-Secondary Success” was folded into the “All-In Project,” the “All-In Project” was flowed to RGV Focus as the lead agency for this general initiative.

### **LEA’s Career & Technical Education Department**

WFS Cameron has been working for the past four years to train BISD and other county ISD Career and Technical (CTE) faculty and counselors in the use of the TWC website. The majority of training focuses on Labor Market and Career Information, with the hope that these teachers will integrate this training into their CTE classes.

A knowledge of how to use Reality Check, Texas CARES, Texas CREWS, and the other applications on the TWC website, along with the LMCI, job data functions can serve the students in career pathway determination, as well as assist them later in life when their careers may change and need to be redirected. WFS Cameron has also given BISD and other districts full access to our Soft Skills curriculum for infusion into their CTE courses, and has begun to offer Financial Literacy, Job Readiness, and College Awareness Training to LEA faculty and student groups

### **AEL Integration**

WFS Cameron works closely with the region’s AEL Provider (BISD Adult Continuing Education Center) to provide integrated training and workforce services to their AEL participants. Center staff is currently providing “train the trainer” session for core partners to maximized staff time and effort in providing workforce services as well as Job readiness skills such as Soft Skills, Financial Literacy, Interviewing, Resume Development, and Job Search are provided virtually or on-site at several external locations.



Additionally, center staff works closely with the AEL contractor to ensure participants are registered in WIT for their job search and matching needs.

### **Texas Southmost College**

In 2014, Texas Southmost College ended its 20-year partnership agreement with the University of Texas at Brownsville (UTB) and has rebuilt its infrastructure and programs to meet the needs of its service delivery area. WFS Cameron is working closely with college administration to assist in providing LMI data for justification of technical programs, and also for submission of JET and Skills Development grants to support their partnership activities with area ISDs and business and industry. Matching viable programs of study, articulated, and aligned from high school CTE to AAS degrees and Certificates is a prime area of concern for the administration so that resources are maximized. TSC is also a major partner with most area CTE high school programs, providing technical dual enrollment courses and developing fully articulated and aligned career pathways with portable and stackable certifications. Furthermore, TSC has revamped its apprenticeship department and has submitted multiple programs to the Department of Labor for apprenticeship designation. Recently, it has achieved apprenticeship approval for several programs. Through these initiatives, TSC is prepared to fully service the technical education needs of the area workforce as new and emerging industries make relocation decisions favoring our area.

### **Texas State Technical College-Harlingen (TSTC)**

Cameron County is fortunate to have a TSTC campus in our region. TSTC is a statewide system of technical colleges that delivers an array of basic and specialty technical programs of study not commonly offered by a community college, but which have statewide demand. Since the needs of the county workforce range from basic to specialty occupations, WFS Cameron works closely to plan new industry programming and to secure JET and Skills Development grants to assist them in program development. TSTC is also a major partner with most area CTE high school programs, providing technical dual enrollment courses and developing fully articulated and aligned career pathways with portable and stackable certifications. TSTC has received multiple awards from TWC to develop NCCER certifications and other certifications sought by businesses in the area.

### **Apprenticeships**

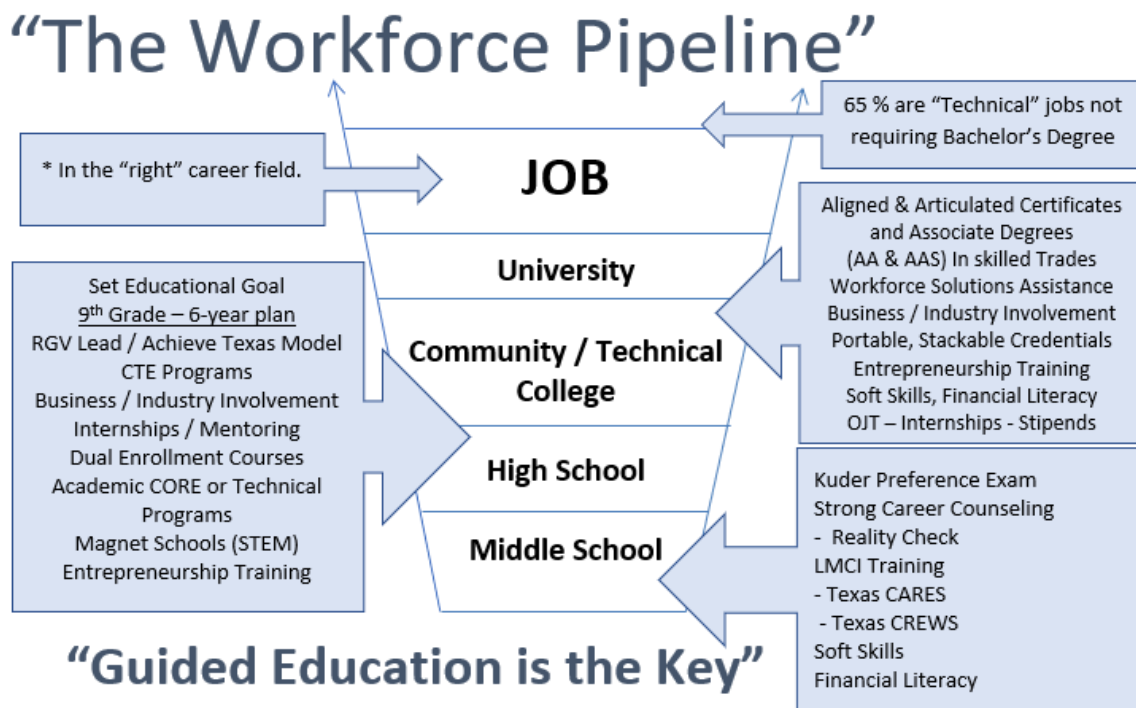
WFS Cameron has been committed to supporting the ApprenticeshipTexas initiative by applying for and successfully securing an ApprenticeshipTexas Expansion grant to expand the number of apprenticeship programs to increase the number of apprentices in Cameron County. Under the previous grant award, WFS Cameron partnered with local training providers to develop new Registered Apprenticeship Programs (RAPs) in plumbing, pipefitting, and welding, as well as an electrical pre-apprenticeship program. Over the past year, the Board collaborated with a local training provider and played a key role in securing approval for the designation of a Patient Care Technician program as a DOL Registered Apprenticeship Program. More recently, the local community college received approval for two additional programs, one in healthcare and the other in banking. The Board continues to explore funding and partnerships with local training providers to continue to expand apprenticeship programs in the region.

### **Career Schools**

Cameron County has a number of career schools regulated by TWC that provide postsecondary training programs for county residents that lead to industry recognized credentials and are listed in the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL). Career schools offer specific instructional programs or courses that focus on the skills required for a particular job function or trade. These career schools offer vocational training to prepare students for specific careers, disregarding traditional, unrelated academic subjects. Vocational training provides hand-on, job-specific instruction, and can lead to certification or a diploma. Typical training programs include occupations targeted by the Board including welding, truck driving, and healthcare programs.



WFS Cameron infuses these local and regional community initiatives and partnerships with applicable workforce development resources, leveraging WIOA, WIOA Statewide, TANF, SNAP E&T, and additional funding to sponsor training, education, and work experience opportunities for workforce participants. These Career Pathway partnerships leverage the entire larger workforce and education communities and ensure coordination of resources to minimize duplication of services.



The “Workforce Pipeline” diagram illustrates the thrust of what WFS Cameron believes will promote a new and healthy growth of the Cameron County workforce for the future, and it assists WFS Cameron officials with delivering this message to area community groups, collective impact councils, ISDs, EDCs, and institutions of higher education IHEs. WFS Cameron supports regional partnerships with employers, secondary education, training institutions, and training providers that increase opportunities for youth and adult learners to transition to postsecondary degrees and/or credentials that are portable and stackable.

There are several key messages imbedded in the Workforce Pipeline illustration, and WFS Cameron works with all of its partner groups to understand and support programs and initiatives that help build the pipeline into a new “culture” of education and workforce training.

- Middle School career awareness counseling is critical. The question is often asked: “How do you expect an 8<sup>th</sup> grader to appropriately select a required TEA Endorsement when entering the 9<sup>th</sup> grade if he/she has no idea what career pathways are available, nor which one best fits their particular attitudes, aptitudes, and abilities?” This is why WFS Cameron supports giving the Kuder Preference Exam to every student in middle school, and why we are training ISDs in the use of TWC’s LMCI applications and other sources of career awareness. WFS Cameron also advocates a variety of career exposure activities in partnership with business and industry. The belief is that a child must make an informed decision on a future career pathway and set an “educational goal” for himself prior to high school. Also, of significant importance is the necessary involvement of parents in career awareness and the selection of pathways and support for the choices made, especially if the choice is a technical career. The last piece to this segment is that more vocational career counselors are needed at the middle school levels of all ISDs.

- High Schools must provide an array of CTE programs and other support initiatives that align with the demand skill trades occupations in their area, and which are articulated and aligned with college technical programs so that there is no “dead end” for the students when they exit high school with basic skills or minimal certifications. The TEA Achieve Texas model as driven in the Valley by Tech PREP/RGV LEAD has, and is, working well in our school systems. Students are strongly encouraged to proceed to the college ranks for at minimum, a Certificate or Associate of Arts Degree level training.
- At the college level, WFS Cameron works with appropriate administrators of regular and continuing education divisions to provide LMCI data that encourages them to make appropriate curriculum decisions for delivery of programs producing graduates in occupations that are in demand, and also supports their business and industry engagement in internships, work experience, OJT, and other workforce services.
- Securing a job that provides a self-sustaining wage is the ultimate goal of this illustration, and of all the partners who play a role in making it happen. That cannot and will not happen without a career goal and guided educational pursuits to accomplish that goal. Parents, counselors, and students must keep in mind that decisions made in middle school will impact their future, and they need to know and understand the realities of life.

#### **D. Child Care and Early Learning**

*References: 40 TAC §809.12*

- ***Incorporate and coordinate the design and management of the delivery of child care services with the delivery of other workforce employment, job training, and educational services;***

Workforce Solutions Cameron understands the increasing importance of high-quality early learning programs and the need for children to receive quality education during ages 0-5. Early learning programs that wish to continue their agreements with Child Care Services must now participate in the Texas Rising Star program. WFS Cameron expects to continue with more than 150 Texas Rising Star-certified programs, which supports WFS Cameron’s goals to offer high-quality child care programs in the community, provide an increase in family choice, and ensure that local child care programs are dedicated to providing developmentally appropriate education and care to the children they serve.

- ***Maximize the delivery and availability of safe and stable child care services that assist families seeking to become independent from, or who are at risk of becoming dependent on, public assistance while parents are either working or attending a job training or educational program;***

With the assistance of Child Care Services, qualifying parents can receive financial aid scholarships that can alleviate the rising cost of child care, which will permit them to obtain a sustainable lifestyle for their families. Initial Job Search for families who may not meet the program’s participation hours offers them three months of child care to allow them to search for employment and refers them to a career coach to help them with their job search. Additionally, The Board will modify local policy to allow current early learning program educators to be part of the third priority group, which may assist with staff retention.

- ***Use strategies for contracted slot agreements, including any local priorities and how the contracted slot agreements help increase access to high-quality care for targeted communities;***

The Board has established a policy to enable the development of child care contracted slots in high-quality early learning programs with the understanding that families who utilize these slots may bypass the waiting list.

- ***Develop and implement strategic quality improvement goals to enhance school readiness;***

The roles and responsibilities of early learning programs have evolved, and WFS Cameron is actively developing and strengthening the support and opportunities available to early learning programs and its educators. The development of the Child Care Advisory Council has assisted WFS Cameron in determining the most immediate needs for early learning programs and how the Board can utilize Child Care Quality funding to meet these needs through the developing professional development training and conferences and the acquisition of classroom equipment and materials.

- **Strengthen and support the child care industry**

WFS Cameron re-emphasizes workforce professional development needs in specific topics, navigating barriers to higher education, and access to opportunities to sustain a career in childcare and development. We continue to address challenging behaviors, supporting children with special needs, and child/brain development. We continue to promote for quality childcare providers and continue to fund Quality Projects with professional development/presentations for serving children with special needs. The continuous support from Texas Rising Star mentoring and support staff will assist early learning programs in obtaining and maintaining Texas Rising Star certification and provide the most recent early childhood advances and techniques. WFS Cameron continues to be an active member of various advisory boards that promote the strengthening of early childhood educational requirements, such as the Texas Southmost College Child Care and Development Advisory Board and Texas School Ready Early Childhood Registered Apprenticeship Program, serving as an advocate for early learning programs' educators.

## **E. Transportation and Other Support Services**

### **References: WIOA §108(b)(11); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(10)**

WFS program customers are constantly being assessed for barriers to continued participation in services leading them to self-sufficiency. As transportation is identified as a barrier, Career Coaches refer customers to external agencies utilizing 2-1-1 Texas.

2-1-1 Texas is a resource of the Texas Health and Human Services Commission, committed to helping Texas citizens connect with the services they need. Whether by phone or internet, their goal is to present accurate, well-organized, and easy-to-find information from state and local health and human services programs. 2-1-1 Texas is a free, anonymous social service hotline available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and 365 days a year.

In an effort to provide wraparound services, the Board utilizes community partnerships to leverage available resources and services to expand our reach. An assessment of community resources and services is conducted several times a year to identify opportunities to leverage support services. These collaborations also provide an opportunity to educate partners on workforce services and resources.

In the event that no local resources are available to assist the customer with transportation or other requested services, a support service request will be processed through the different WFS Cameron program. Support Services may include tools, utilities, uniforms, and pre-loaded gas cards or bus passes for transportation. For those seeking childcare services, a referral is coordinated with childcare center staff to initiate the

eligibility process. All support services are limited to participants that have met the eligibility requirements of the various workforce programs.

WFS Cameron participated in a regional initiative to rate a bus route, now known as Route 45, that connects all the cities within Cameron County to the following local Colleges & University: Texas State Technical College, Texas Southmost College, and The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. To date, WFS Cameron proudly supports Route 45, also known as the *Cameron Career Connection*.

Areas being served via Route 45:

- TSTC
- Harlingen Downtown
- Harlingen Terminal
- Downtown San Benito
- San Benito City Hall
- Los Fresnos City Hall
- Los Fresnos Memorial Park
- Los Fresnos High School
- Downtown Brownsville
- Brownsville Multimodal Terminal
- UTRGV - Brownsville Campus

Connections to Route 45:

- 31 - Business 83
- 40 - Harlingen Medical Center
- 41 - Harlingen Retail
- 42 - Harlingen-San Benito
- 44 - La Feria / Santa Rosa / Primera
- Metro Express Red Line

In effort to ensure that the Board continues to address transportation issues in the county, WFS Cameron remains an active participant and a committee member of the Regional Transportation Advisory Panel (RTAP) that is administered under the Councils of Government (COG) through the Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council (LRGVDC). As a member of this advisory panel, WFS Cameron has strengthened its partnerships with two metros that provide transportation services to residents of this area. These partnerships provide an opportunity to not only leverage resources but to address any hiring needs identified through targeted business services.

Texas has established a network of COGs to assist local governments in planning for common needs and to coordinate regional economic development activity. Cameron County falls within the LRGVDC, the local COG. RTAP is led by the LRGVDC, which is a political subdivision of Texas under the Texas Transportation Code, Chapter 458. As such, it authorizes, and receives state funds for transit services. LRGVDC serves as a Rural Transit District (RTD) for Cameron, Hidalgo, Starr, Willacy, and Zapata Counties.

WFS Cameron also provides services to hard-to-serve communities, specifically the rural community via our WFS Cameron Mobile Resource Unit as a strategy in addressing transportation barriers that limit access to workforce services. WFS Cameron was one of the first Board areas to acquire a Mobile Unit over 20 years ago. Since the Covid pandemic has subsided and no longer presents a serious threat, the Board resumes our efforts to partner with agencies and/or

organizations to leverage resources and space in an effort to continue providing access to workforce services. An updated mobile unit was introduced in 2014 to ensure that the Board's commitment in providing workforce services to all communities in our LWDA remains a priority.

The updated Mobile Resource Unit continues to assist our target populations with outreach and recruitment. The wheelchair lift and other adaptive equipment ensures accessibility for our disabled population. Twelve workstations are set up with computers, monitors, laser printer, and a satellite dish for internet connectivity. The Mobile Resource Unit is equipped with the latest technology, wireless capabilities, and software for basic computer skills and resume writing instruction. Utilizing this Mobile Resource Unit, staff are able to provide employment services to the community in their own neighborhoods.

## **F. Coordination of Adult Education and Literacy**

**References: WIOA §108(b)(13); 20 CFR §679.560(b)(12); WD 18-23, Change 2**

### **Board coordinates WIOA Title I workforce investment activities with AEL activities under WIOA Title II**

The Board has been coordinating WIOA Title I workforce investment activities with AEL activities under WIOA Title II for a number of years. In addition to providing presentations to AEL students on soft skills, financial literacy, job readiness and LMCI tools availability, center staff continues to provide cross referrals between the programs as part of wrap-around services for participants to ensure successful reentry into the labor force. Additionally, in an effort to further integrate AEL into workforce services, the Board has created an AEL webpage on the Board's website to support and offer AEL services to workforce participants. Train-the-trainer sessions are also conducted to equip core partners such as AEL with material and resources so they can incorporate LMI, soft skills, and other job readiness activities into their programs. This year we also partnered with AEL to include them in job fair events for the purpose of providing AEL participants with an opportunity to connect with employers. This collaboration will undoubtedly assist AEL in meeting some of their own contracted performance measures.

As the AEL provider in Cameron County, Brownsville Independent School District (BISD) provides educational services to disadvantaged and under-educated adults, 17 years and older. The COVID-19 Pandemic taught us to be re-active to high-risk situations and to anticipate change. During pandemic BISD held only one class in person and the rest of the classes were virtual. BISD has resumed in-person instruction throughout the county, classes are offered at the following locations: Brownsville (5 sites), Los Fresnos, Harlingen, San Benito, and La Feria. Workforce participants, especially those with an identified need, are informed of programs and services provided by AEL, such as language acquisition, basic education, and transition classes for post-secondary education and employment.

Specific classes offered by BISD include: English as a Second Language, Adult Basic Education/Adult Secondary Education, Transition classes to post-secondary and/or employment, EL Civics (Internationally Trained Professionals for immigrants with college degrees), US Citizenship classes, Remote & Distance Learning (for ESL and ABE participants), and Career Pathways (Certification for Employment). The Career Pathways available include: Microsoft Office Specialist, NCCER-Construction, Welding, Phlebotomy, Electrical, Forklift, CDL – Commercial Driver's License Class A & B, Pipefitting, Heavy Duty Diesel Engine Specialist, & Certified Nurse Assistant.

To strengthen our program integration and co-case management of participants, the Board has formed a contracted partnership through the HDJT grant to secure funding for training. The project aims to train 78 participants in five disciplines, leading to industry-recognized credentials and subsequent employment. The targeted training programs include diesel mechanic, welder, truck driver, transit driver, and pipefitter.

The Board has collaborated and coordinated with core partners for different initiatives that support program integration. The establishment of an out-of-school youth academy provided an opportunity to continue collaborating with the AEL provider, given their established partnership and history with YouthBuild in serving out-of-school youth. Participants selected by the Board for this initiative were enrolled in the Workforce Ready Concepts Mobile Learning Platform. The learning modules in this platform allowed youth to obtain pre-vocational training with an increased focus on meaningful career readiness. For years, the Board has executed an MOU with the AEL provider to coordinate the referral and enrollment process, share outreach material, identification of participants, job placement assistance, and joint planning meetings.

### **The local application review process**

As required under WD 20-17, Ch. 1, the Board has and will continue to review AEL Grant proposals submitted to TWC as required under WIOA regulation §463.21(b). The review gives the Board the opportunity to determine the alignment between the proposed activities and services with the strategies and goals of the Board Plan. Board recommendations will be provided in the areas identified that need further alignment. Furthermore, a staff from the AEL provider is a member of our Board of Directors and provides input on workforce programs, policies, strategies which strengthen the alignment between workforce services and AEL.

## **Part 6: Adult and Dislocated Workers**

### **A. Adult and Dislocated Worker Employment and Training**

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

#### **Description and assessment of the type and availability of adult, dislocated worker employment and training activities**

Any customer entering the workforce center for the first time will receive basic career services including but not limited to:

- Outreach (including worker profiling), intake and orientation regarding other services available at the workforce center
- Initial assessment of skills levels, including literacy, numeracy, and English language proficiency, as well as aptitudes, abilities (including skills gaps), and support service needs
- Job search and job placement assistance, including the information on nontraditional employment and in-demand industry sectors
- Referral and coordination with other programs and services within and outside of the workforce center
- Local, regional, state, and national labor market information (LMI) including job vacancy listings, job skills requirements, and occupational information
- Information on filing unemployment insurance (UI) claims
- Assistance with Work-In-Texas (WIT) registration



- Use of self-directed career exploration and other online resources
- Eligible Training Provider information regarding their programs and cost
- Information on the availability of support services and appropriate referral to those services within the workforce center and/or to other community resources
- Use of resource room materials, equipment, and information on how to access online resources
- Work readiness workshops

If a customer is identified as suitable for WIOA services and needs individualized career services to obtain or retain employment, center staff will assist the participant in providing and accessing a mix of individual career services that will enable participant to achieve their employment goals.

Individualized career services may include:

- Comprehensive assessment using diagnostic testing for determination of skill level and in-depth interviewing
- Development of an individual employment plan (IEP) to identify employment goal, barriers, and support service needs
- Short term prevocational services
- Workforce preparation activities
- Transitional jobs
- Financial Literacy
- Internships, paid and unpaid work experience linked to a career pathway

### **Training Services**

Training services are provided to enable participant to acquire the skills essential to enter and retain employment. Assessment results will determine if participants have the skills and qualifications needed to effectively participate in the training services. training available include, but are not limited to:

- Occupational skills training, including training for nontraditional employment
- On the job training (OJT)
- Registered Apprenticeship
- Student internships
- Incumbent worker training
- Workplace training and cooperative education programs
- Private sector training programs
- Skills upgrading and retraining
- Entrepreneurial training
- Customized training

Specific occupations are targeted annually within targeted industry clusters. The Board has developed a system for the review and approval of training programs based on the State's List of Targeted Occupations. This List of Targeted Occupations is available to training providers seeking to provide training services through the statewide system known as the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL). If minimal responses are received from annual solicitation, and it is determined that there are insufficient numbers of eligible training providers in the local area that can provide specialized training services, an RFP will be issued by the Board. This process will enable the Board to engage other providers that offer these services through contractual agreements. WFS Cameron implemented various strategies to address the employment and training needs of basic skills deficient customers, as well as our Limited English Proficient population. One

of those strategies includes the expansion of training offerings by encouraging the development and submission of bilingual programs for this population. Additionally, the Board has a strong partnership with the Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) provider to access basic skills programs and targeted occupational skills training. The AEL provider also offers their participants opportunities to access trainings funds in demand occupations. Since funding for occupations skills training is limited under AEL, the Board partnered with the local AEL provider to secure additional funding under a High Demand Job Training Grant. Training approved under this grant supports targeted occupations that aligned with Board goals. To further improve the workforce system experience, the Board also provides participants with job readiness, soft skills, and financial literacy services, ensuring they are well-prepared to enter the workforce upon completion of their training.

Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) is now co-located within our workforce centers to better serve individuals with disabilities. As core partners, VRS staff have access to center equipment and services, including assessment testing, to deliver basic career services to their customers and co-case managed participants. A more comprehensive assessment is also conducted by VRS staff on a one-on-one basis for their customers.

### **List of assessment instruments (tools) used for adults and dislocated workers**

WFS Cameron strives to improve comprehensive skills assessment of adult and dislocated job seekers to analyze skill gaps, identify skill deficiencies, and match qualified job applicants to local employers. Qualification of occupational skills is becoming the norm among many industries, and the Business Services Unit coordinates with employers to acquire, whenever possible, employer skill assessment and pre-screening tools to integrate into our assessment process. The current assessment tools utilized for workforce participants include the COPSsystem and the CASAS. Board has implemented the CASAS test for basic skills as an alternative to the TABE test, which was phased out, except for Choices. These assessments will validate the essential skills, knowledge, and abilities of a job seekers to identify the best match between the individuals' existing skills, interests, and experience for job postings. The assessment will also identify whether an individual who is exploring new career options in any of the targeted occupations is suitable for the working conditions, environment or job demands of the position:

- COPSsystem - consists of three assessments that measure values, interests, and abilities. Results are combined from each inventory to guide clients toward a career that is the right fit for them
- CASAS – on-line adult basic skills competency-based testing system.
- Initial assessment of skills levels, including literacy, numeracy, and English language proficiency, as well as aptitudes, abilities (including skills gaps), and support service needs
- Comprehensive assessment using diagnostic testing for determination of skill level and in-depth interviewing

#### **B. Service Priority**

*References: 20 CFR §679.560(b)(21)*

**Board policy to ensure priority for adult individualized career services and training services are given to recipients of public assistance, low-income individuals, and basic skills deficient individuals**

**Board priority groups** are those mandated by law, i.e., public assistance recipients, other low-income adults; and individuals who are basic skills deficient, along with Veterans and Foster Youth. These groups are the populations whom we serve.

The Local WDB and the Governor may establish a process that also gives priority to other individuals eligible to receive such services, provided that it is consistent with priority of service for veterans (see § 680.650) and the priority provisions of WIOA sec. 134(c)(3)(E), discussed above in paragraphs (a) and (b) of this section.

WFS Cameron has an approved policy in place to comply with the above cited section. The policy is also compliant with the TWC Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act: Guidelines for Adults, Dislocated Workers, and Youth. According to policy, service priority for individualized career services and training services must be given on a priority basis, regardless of funding levels to:

- public assistance recipients;
- other low-income adults; and
- individuals who are basic skills deficient.

The priority of service for public assistance recipients, other low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient is a statutory priority that applies only to the receipt of individualized career and training services in the WIOA program.

### **Veterans**

Veterans, as defined in WD Letter 01-21, Change 2 as well as WIOA sec. 3(63)(A) and 38 U.S.C. 101, receive priority of service in all Department of Labor-funded training programs under 38 U.S.C. 4215 and described in 20 CFR part 1010. Additionally, priority of service for veterans and eligible spouses applies across all qualified employment and training programs including childcare.

Priority of service means the right of eligible veterans to take precedence over non-eligible persons in obtaining workforce services or, if workforce services are limited, eligible veterans receive access to workforce services instead of noneligible persons. A veteran still must meet each program's eligibility criteria to receive services under the respective employment and training program.

### **Foster youth**

WFS Cameron works closely with the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) to help priority groups such as Foster Youth and children aging out of foster care, move towards independent living through successful employment and training efforts. An annual Foster Success Youth Conference and Foster Youth Resource Fair bring awareness regarding the Foster Youth program. The youth conference is in collaboration with the CCJJD, the Texas – Preparation for Adult Living (DFPS-PAL), and other nonprofit organizations. The fair highlights services available to foster youth, as well as provide a platform for the development of leadership and enhancement of soft skills for this targeted population, especially those “aging out.” WFS Cameron also partners with BCFS-HHS through an MOU to outreach and obtain foster youth referrals, co-case manage participants, and provide support in the form of training or work-based activities, for successful transition into the workforce. Foster youth will receive priority of service over other equally qualified individuals except eligible veterans in the receipt of federal and state-funded services.

## **Part 7: Fiscal Agent, Grants, and Contracts**

### **A. Fiscal Agent**

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

#### **Entity responsible for disbursement of grant funds**

The *entity responsible* for disbursing the state and federal grant funds provided under this Workforce Development Plan is:

**Cameron Works, Inc. dba Workforce Solutions Cameron**

### **B. Subgrants and Contracts**

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

#### **Competitive process used to award subgrants and contracts**

The procurement of all goods and services is conducted, to the maximum extent practical, in a manner providing full and open competition consistent with applicable administrative requirements.

The amount of award or contract will determine the procedures used to competitively procure goods and services.

The small purchase method of procurement is used when purchasing goods or services for which the aggregate cost does not exceed the simplified acquisition threshold of \$250,000. When using the small purchase method, Board staff obtains price or rate quotations from an adequate number of qualified sources, usually no less than three (3).

Competitive proposal methods of procurement are appropriate when purchasing goods or services for which the aggregate cost exceeds the simplified acquisition threshold. The competitive proposal method is normally used when two or more responsible bidders are willing and able to compete effectively for the business and the procurement lends itself to a fixed-price or cost-reimbursement contract. The competitive proposal method is generally used when conditions are not appropriate for the sealed bid method.

Competitive proposal procurements meet the following federal requirements:

- Requests for proposals (RFPs) are publicized and identify all evaluation factors and their relative importance. Any response to publicized RFPs is honored to the maximum extent practical;
- RFPs are solicited from an adequate number (usually two or more) of qualified sources;
- A method for conducting technical evaluations of the proposals received and for selecting awardees is utilized;

- Awards are made to the responsible firm whose proposal is most advantageous to the program, with price and other factors considered; and
- Competitive proposal procedures, such as request for qualifications-based procurement of professional services, are utilized whereby competitors' qualifications are evaluated and the most qualified competitor is selected, subject to contract negotiation for fair and reasonable compensation. This method, where price is not used as a selection factor, can only be used in procurement of "professional services."

WFS Cameron maintains written standards of conduct which govern the performance of individuals engaged in the award and administration of contracts and provide for disciplinary action in the event that such standards are violated. The definition of immediate family and substantial interest is included in the standards of conduct. No employee, officer or agent of the Contractor may participate in the selection, award, or administration of a contract that is supported by federal or state funds if a conflict of interest or apparent conflict of interest would be involved. In general, a conflict of interest exists when any of the following have a financial or other interest in a firm that is selected to receive an award:

- an employee, officer, or agent;
- any member of the employee's immediate family;
- the employee's partner; or
- any organization that employs or is about to employ any of these groups.

WFS Cameron standards of conduct prohibit the solicitation and/or acceptance of gratuities, favors or anything of monetary value by an officer, employee, or agent of WFS from a bidder or subcontractor. Every reasonable course of action shall be taken to maintain the integrity of the expenditure of public funds and to avoid any favoritism or questionable conduct. Any situation is avoided which suggests that a decision was influenced by prejudice, bias, special interest, or personal gain. WFS Cameron Board Members, Board staff, or agents involved in the procurement process are prohibited from accepting gifts, favors, or anything of monetary value from existing or potential subcontractors. Additionally, bidders are prohibited from contacting any staff or Board members during the procurement process.

## **Part 8: Performance**

### **A. Board Performance Targets**

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

Local levels of performance are negotiated with TWC and the CEOs, consistent with WIOA §116(c), and are used to measure performance of our workforce area, the local fiscal agent, eligible providers under WIOA Title I subtitle B, and the one-stop delivery system

**Local levels of performance to be used to measure performance of the workforce area :**

WFS Cameron performance strategies aim to strengthen the alignment of the TWC contracted common performance accountability measures with requirements governing the one-stop delivery

system. WFS Cameron sets performance measures at the state minimum requirement with Eligible Training Providers. Performance measures for contracted vendors are aligned with the Board performance targets set by TWC. Board Contract year 2024 Year End Report reflects an 86.36% Meeting Performance Rate.

The performance management strategy for WFS Cameron aligns with the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC). The following is a breakdown of the key points:

**Performance Management Strategy:** WFS Cameron aims to strengthen the alignment of performance accountability measures with the one-stop delivery system requirements. Performance measures are set at the state minimum requirement for Eligible Training Providers, and contracted vendors' performance measures are aligned with the Board performance targets set by TWC.

**Performance Evaluation:** Performance targets are set by TWC and evaluated monthly. Evaluation is based on the "percent of target" being 'met.' There are three levels of evaluation:

Texas Workforce Commission sets performance targets for each measure and any changes to the targets will be due to year-end adjustments. RESEA performance measures were a new contracted measure issued to the Boards by TWC:

- Reemployment Rate in the 2nd Quarter after Program Exit Quarter for RESEA Program Participants (a Core Measure)
- Median Earnings in the 2nd Quarter after Program Exit Quarter for RESEA Program Participants (a Program Performance Measure)

WFS Cameron has taken pride in meeting or exceeding the contracted performance measures through BCY2023-2024 and the years prior. Performance was impacted as a result of the pandemic in FY2020-2021. At times, the Board may request a lower performance target based on specific extenuating circumstances such as economic downturn in the service area or program data that warrants the adjustment.

| <b>WIOA Outcome Measures BCY 2025</b>                 |                    |
|---|--------------------|
| <b>Measure</b>  | <b>Target 2025</b> |
| <b>Reemployment and Employer Engagement Measures:</b> |                    |
| Claimant Reemployment within 10 weeks                 | 60.00%             |
| # of Employers Receiving TX Talent Assistance (#TTA)  | 1,927              |
| Successful TX Talent Assistance Rate (STTAR)          | 57.88%             |
| Active Job Seeker New Employment Connection Rate      | 61.14%             |
| Maintaining Employment Connection Rate                | 41.28%             |
| <b>Program Participation Measures:</b>                |                    |
| Choices Full Engagement Rate - All Family Total       | 50.00%             |
| <b>WIOA Measures</b>                                  |                    |



|                                       |             |
|---------------------------------------|-------------|
| Credential Rate-All                   | 71.00%      |
| Employed Q2 Post Exit- Adult          | 78.50%      |
| Employed Q4 Post Exit- Adult          | 77.00%      |
| Median Earnings Q2 Post Exit-Adult    | \$ 7,920.00 |
| Credential Rate - Adult               | 85.00%      |
| Adult MSG                             | 69.70%      |
| Employed Q2 Post Exit -DW             | 82.20%      |
| Employed Q4 Post Exit -DW             | 82.80%      |
| Median Earnings Q2 Post Exit -DW      | \$ 9,660.00 |
| Credential Rate -DW                   | 85.00%      |
| DW MSG                                | 84.60%      |
| Employed/Enrolled Q2 Post Exit -Youth | 79.10%      |
| Employed/Enrolled Q4 Post Exit -Youth | 77.50%      |
| Median Earnings Q2 Youth              | \$3,900.00  |
| Credential Rate - Youth               | 74.80%      |
| Youth MSG                             | 75.20%      |

## Part 9: Training and Services

### A. Individual Training Accounts

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

The Workforce Center Operator utilizes the statewide Eligible Training Provider List to identify and issue Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) to fund WIOA-approved training. Training services are provided to workforce participants for training programs certified and listed under the ETPL System. Additionally, center staff may issue ITAs to participants wishing to enroll in out-of-state training programs not listed under ETPL but approved for this Board area under ETPL. The ETPL is a statewide system utilized by Boards to select training programs certified by the Texas Workforce Commission.

The statewide list of eligible training providers is available on the TWC website. This list is periodically updated to reflect new training providers or programs in the statewide system. To promote customer choice, the approved targeted occupations list is shared with program participants alongside a statewide list of available training providers. If the cost of the training selected exceeds the board approved ITA amount, workforce center staff assist participants in identifying other sources of funding to cover the total cost of training. ITAs are awarded for a twelve-month period and may be renewed for an additional 12 months, for a maximum of 2 years. Since the training must be completed within two years, participants are expected to enroll on a full-time basis. WFS Cameron will pursue a pay-for-performance contract in lieu of an Individual Training Account for training services if such services are on-the-job training, customized training, or incumbent worker training. Additionally, if after a thorough analysis, it is determined there is an insufficient number of eligible providers of training services in the region to meet the skill set requirements of employers, contracted services will be pursued to meet those workforce requirements. The board may also entertain contracted services if it is determined there is a training program with

demonstrated effectiveness offered by a local community-based organization or another private organization that serves individuals with barriers to employment. Regardless of whether training is provided through an ITA or contracted services, the board will ensure that training is provided in a manner that maximizes customer choice.

## **B. ITA Limitations**

*References: 20 CFR §663.420; WD Letter 14-19, Change 2*

### **Board imposed ITA limits and Description of the limitations**

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.

WFS Cameron prioritizes funding for individuals who are unable to obtain other grant assistance for training, or have financial needs that exceed the assistance available from other sources. WIOA (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act) funds are granted for training programs, particularly in relation to the ITA (Individual Training Account) system. The funding coverage breakdown is as follows:

1. WIOA funds will cover the full cost of training for participants who do not have access to other grant assistance or funding. There are maximum ITA amounts set for this coverage.
2. If a participant has other funding sources (like a Pell Grant), WIOA funds will only cover the gap if their financial need exceeds the available assistance. However, the amount of WIOA funds cannot be reduced by simply subtracting Pell Grant or other federal aid amounts.
3. Loans are not considered in calculating financial need when determining WIOA fund eligibility.
4. Participants may begin training with WIOA funds while waiting for a decision on their Pell Grant application. If the Pell Grant is approved, WIOA must be reimbursed for any training costs already covered by the ITA, using the Pell Grant funds.

This ensures that WIOA funding is used efficiently and avoids overlapping or duplicating resources when other financial assistance, like the Pell Grant, is available.

#### **Multi Term Training Programs**

The lifetime limit of an ITA for a multi-term training program is \$9,000 per participant. Participants may receive up to \$4,500 per 12-month cycle for up to 2 years. The use of ITA funds is limited to tuition expenses, fees, books, supplies, and any other related material required by the training provider for any student enrolled in a particular course of study covered by the ITA. Multi-term training programs are defined as programs where the training is divided into semesters and each semester coincides with a new round of tuition payments separate and apart from the initial round of tuition payments.

#### **One-Term Training Programs**

The lifetime funding limitation for ITAs is \$9,000. For each one-term training course, the limit is \$4,500 per program. The use of ITA funds is limited to tuition expenses, fees, books, supplies, and any other related

material required by the training provider for any student enrolled in a particular course of study covered by the ITA. Changes to the training program (or majors) will be allowed as long as the change is in line with the training institution's satisfactory progress standards; the changes will allow the student to complete the new course of study within the original time period, and is approved by the Contractor. The request for change to the training program must be justified and properly documented.

WFS Cameron was an SDF COVID-19 grantee providing COVID-19 related training services through contracted services. Additionally, the Board was also an Apprenticeship Expansion grantee offering apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship training opportunities to residents of this community. As a result of this grant award, the Board successfully expanded apprenticeship training in Cameron County to address the workforce needs in emerging industries. Training providers approved as DOL apprenticeship programs are continuously furnished with information on the process to follow for inclusion into the ETPL system. Apprenticeship programs are also issued ITAs for the classroom portion of the training. The Eligible Training Provider List is used primarily for WIOA occupational skills training services, but many of the workforce programs, such as NCP, CHOICES, SNAP E&T, and other special programs utilize the system to access training services.

Although Training Providers may submit any program listed on the statewide List of Targeted Occupations for approval, Boards may limit the issuance of ITAs for funding *only* for programs on the Board's List of Targeted Occupations. If an individual wishes to receive training in an occupation targeted in another Board area, an ITA may be approved if the individual is willing to relocate to that Board area supporting the demand. The Board establishes maximum ITA funding amounts and certain eligibility and performance criteria for eligible workforce participants and Training Providers. Participants receive Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) to purchase training services for occupational skills training of their choice from among those listed on the Board's targeted list. Workforce center staff develop an Individual Employment Plan (IEP) with program participants seeking to purchase training services through an ITA. The IEP identifies the employment goals, appropriate achievement objectives, and appropriate combination of services for the participant to achieve their employment goals. Funds for training are limited to individuals wishing to enroll in occupational programs approved under ETP and aligned with the Board's targeted occupations and industry sectors. Participants must be determined to be suitable for training services and demonstrate the ability to meet all training program pre-requisites and requirements as evidenced by the results of the assessment testing conducted prior to the approval for training.

### **Exceptions to ITA limitations and the process for requesting an exception**

Exceptions to ITA limitations may be provided for individual cases and must be described in Board policies.

Participants who change program course plans must provide a revised course plan, which demonstrates his/her ability to complete the course within the original time period. The change must be supported by the assessment results, IEP, demand target occupations, skills, and student aptitude. Additionally, the new course of study must be on the state approved ETPL training provider/course list. A limit of one (1) training program change (school change or change of major) will be allowed on each ITA. If the change is approved, the participant will be issued a new voucher for the change in training. However, only the remainder of the lifetime limit will be awarded to the participant and documented in the new voucher.

## **Part 10: Apprenticeship**

### **A. Registered Apprenticeship Programs**

#### **Board's plan for Registered Apprenticeship programs with the Eligible Training Provider System to receive WIOA funding**

Industry-aligned partnerships such as apprenticeships are some of the strategies that WFS Cameron will utilize to increase employer participation. As a service strategy for employers, WFS Cameron applied for and was successfully awarded an ApprenticeshipTexas Expansion grant to increase the number of apprentices in Cameron County. Additionally, under this grant award, WFS Cameron was able to successfully partner with a local training provider to develop Registered Apprenticeship programs in plumbing and an electrical pre-apprenticeship program. The Board continues to engage training providers and employers to expand Registered Apprenticeships in our area. It is worth noting that the first non-traditional Registered Apprenticeship was approved in 2022 in healthcare in support of middle skills occupations within the region. Through ongoing outreach efforts to raise awareness of this valuable business strategy, a second healthcare apprenticeship program was approved in early 2024 followed by the approval of a phlebotomy apprenticeship in late 2024. Additionally, an Early Childhood Educator and Banker Teller, non-traditional Apprenticeships, were approved and are available through Texas Southmost College. With the support of our workforce funds, we will continue to assist individuals that seek this type of training, enabling them to secure immediate employment while simultaneously attending training.

WFS Cameron began collaborating with existing registered apprenticeship programs in the county to coordinate and leverage program services and opportunities available under the workforce system. Through this collaboration, apprenticeship programs experience firsthand, the benefits of partnering with the workforce system through up-front screening and referral of potential participants, and the availability of supportive services for these participants. Newly formed Registered Apprenticeships have been informed and encouraged to apply for automatic eligibility under the Eligible Training Provider system as outlined in WD 17-19, Change 2 and WD 05-19, Change 2. Additionally, the Registered Apprenticeships have been notified about:

- Availability of technical assistance for accessing ETP system,
- Availability of technical assistance for applying and submitting program applications, and
- Availability of Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) for WIOA eligible program participants.

Since this automatic eligibility streamlines the application process, Registered Apprenticeship programs have been more willing to apply under the Eligible Training Provider system. To expand participation with the workforce system, the Board will outline the benefits of co-enrolling participants into WIOA for the leveraging of funding to sustain apprenticeship training due to Chapter 133 funding limitations. WIOA funds may support either a part of the classroom training cost or the work-based training through an On-the-Job training activity. The Board continues to stress the benefits of participating under the ETP system to Apprenticeships for the purpose of promoting industry recognized credentials from these trainings offerings, as well as career pathways opportunities for targeted populations.

The Board will continue to support the development of new Registered Apprenticeship programs and the expansion of existing ones through targeted industry outreach, informed labor market data, discussions with key stakeholders, and a focus on employer needs. The Board believes this strategy will effectively address current and future workforce shortages.

## **B. Apprenticeship Texas**

### **Board's strategy and commitment to support Apprenticeship Texas.**

WFS Cameron supports Apprenticeship Texas through various strategies including those outlined in the above response to increase apprenticeship training in Cameron County. WFS Cameron has fully committed to supporting the Apprenticeship Texas initiative by applying for and successfully securing an Apprenticeship Texas Expansion grant, which expanded the number of apprenticeship programs and increased the number of apprentices in Cameron County. Under the 2021 grant award, WFS Cameron partnered with a local training provider to successfully develop a new Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP) in welding and a pre-apprenticeship program in electrical. This expansion effort also led to the creation of the Apprenticeship Navigator position in Cameron County for the duration of the grant period. This initiative enabled the Board to receive ongoing training, enhanced our understanding of Registered Apprenticeship and exposed us to the various strategies used across the state. Although the grant has ended, Board staff continues to support the development of new RAPs, expand existing RAPs, and increase apprentices in our region. Currently, we are strategizing to develop an apprenticeship training program for local school districts focused on the teaching profession. In an effort to meet the workforce demands of ISDs, it is essential to explore all options available including the development of a skilled workforce within the districts themselves.

This training model has been effectively promoted to the business community as an alternative strategy in developing a skilled workforce in high demand occupations. Since apprenticeships are structured occupational training programs, the Board will outline the benefits of combining on-the-job training and related instruction so workers may learn practical and conceptual skills required for a skilled occupation in a craft or trade while working and earning a paycheck. Using this model, WFS Cameron will be stressing the five core components of RAPs: direct business involvement, On the Job Learning (OJL), relation instruction, rewards for skill gains, and a national occupation credential (NCCER).

The Board has explored pre-apprenticeship opportunities for youth in collaboration with local school districts to promote potential career pathways in alignment with the required youth program elements which includes pre-apprenticeship training. Work experience is a key funding priority, with at least 20% of local youth allocation designated for this purpose. Given that pre-apprenticeship program activities count towards this funding priority, the Board has engaged training providers to offer this activity to youth as a strategy to prepare youth for apprenticeship training. This will ensure that the Board provides meaningful activities that promote career pathways, with apprenticeship serving as an effective training strategy.

Furthermore, the Board will coordinate referral and training opportunities with Job Corps, as they recognize apprenticeship as a viable career pathway. Furthermore, the Board has strengthened its long-term partnership with YouthBuild and continues to support their pre-apprenticeship training in the construction industry. The Board currently supports YouthBuild's expansion efforts into adopting the Construction Plus model with the CDCB's addition of Computerized Numerical Control (CNC) machine operator training. These partnerships are essential as the Board attempts to support the development of additional RAPs in construction. The Business Services Unit (BSU) also plays a key role in supporting the Apprenticeship Texas effort in Cameron County. BSU is tasked with promoting the development of apprenticeship training by informing business that:

- Registered Apprenticeship can be as short as one year,
- Apprenticeship programs are available in various industries and occupations,
- Components of an apprenticeship program are very flexible (e.g., many models),

- Opportunity exists to develop highly skilled workers,
- Apprenticeship training can reduce turnover,
- Apprenticeship training can increase productivity, and that
- A national credential is awarded through apprenticeship training.

The Board coordinates training with the state office so that businesses can obtain a better insight into the benefits of apprenticeships. The services and training sought include:

- Training staff, including case managers and business service reps (BSRs), on apprenticeship training,
- Developing an effective outreach plan,
- Assisting in the development of new apprenticeship programs,
- Assisting in marketing Registered Apprenticeships,
- Obtaining technical assistance to learn about enrollments, exits and other operational details, and
- Providing on-going support and services.

WFS Cameron will continue to promote ApprenticeshipTexas on our website and publications, and utilize the BSU to highlight this initiative at appropriate business functions. Additionally, the Board will set up workgroups to explore nontraditional industries for the expansion and development of apprenticeship training. Healthcare is one such industry that has begun to embrace Some of the targeted populations for this initiative include youth, women, veterans, ex-offenders, and individuals with disabilities. Innovative strategies that were proposed include competency-based training and distance learning. Core components of RAPs are listed below and will be promoted to employers to educate and possibly expand apprenticeship training:

- Employer Involvement,
- Structured On the Job Training (OJT) and On The Job Learning (OJL) component with mentoring,
- Related Training and Instruction (RTI),
- Rewards for skill gains, and
- National Occupational Credential.

RAPs will also be promoted to job seekers utilizing the workforce center so that they may explore all training opportunities available and entice them to try out this training model and take advantage of the following apprenticeship inducements:

- Career pathways to higher skills/wages,
- Nationally recognized credentials and potential to earn college credit,
- Immediate employment to increase skills and earnings, and
- Connection to the workforce system for supportive services opportunities, and
- A nationally portable, industry-recognized certification.

The 2021 ApprenticeshipTexas Expansion grant added 114 new apprentices to our construction trades workforce in two (2) new apprenticeship occupations and expanded apprenticeships in existing RAP programs. For their efforts, the Board won the 2022 Registered Apprenticeship Expansion Grant Award at the 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Texas Workforce Conference in Dallas, Texas. Through this grant funding, the Board supported 30 apprentices not only in the traditional construction trades, but also, for the first time in non-traditional middle skills occupations in the healthcare industry. Businesses in this sector have started embracing apprenticeship training as a way of upskilling their current workforce while addressing their workforce needs.



Supporting Apprenticeship Texas will undoubtedly improve our performance outcomes because participants can begin working and earning wages since Day One. There is a high retention rate for apprenticeship training completers, and this training supports measurable skills gained under WIOA.

## **Part 11: Public Comment**

***References: WIOA §108(d); 20 CFR §679.550(b) and §679.560(b) and (e)***

Consistent with WIOA §108(d), WFS Cameron published and made available for review and comments to the Chief Elected Officials, WFS Cameron Board of Directors, business partners, labor organizations, educational institutions, and the general public, the 2025-2028 Workforce Solutions Cameron Texas Workforce Development Plan as follows:

- Copies of the proposed local Board Plan were made available to the public through electronic and other means, i.e., public hearings and local news media:
    - A Notice of Public Comments ad was placed in print media with largest circulations in our WDA.
    - The Board Plan was made available in hard copy during the review period for viewing and public comments at the administration office and both full-service Workforce Centers.
  - An opportunity was made available for comment by members of the public, including representatives of business, labor organizations, and education
    - **The Plan was made available for viewing and public comments during the review period via the Corporate Website: [www.wfscameron.org](http://www.wfscameron.org)**
    - The Plan was provided for review to the Board of Directors and Board Committees, Cameron County Judge, and the Mayor of Brownsville.
    - The Board Plan was approved by our Local Workforce Board in open meeting
  - A 15-30-day period for comment on the plan was provided before its submission to TWC, beginning on the date that the proposed plan is made available, before its submission to TWC;
    - Board Action of Preliminary Approval: February 20, 2025
    - General Publication Date of Public Notice: February 21, 2025
    - Review Period – from February 21, 2025, to March 10, 2025
    - Finalize Plan with Comment as needed: March 17, 2025
    - Submission to TWC: by March 21, 2025
- and,
- Submitted any comments that express disagreement with the plan modification to TWC along with the plan modification.

**Appendix: Texas Workforce Investment Council Requirements**  
**Local Board Plan Requirements**  
**for Alignment to the Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan**  
**Requirement for Workforce Systemwide Alignment**

State law requires local workforce development boards (local board) to adopt a plan that “sets broad goals and objectives for all workforce development programs in the local area consistent with statewide goals, objectives, and performance standards,”<sup>1</sup> as outlined in the workforce system strategic plan, Accelerating Alignment: Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2024-2031.

The Texas Workforce Investment Council (Council) reviews each board plan to ensure that local goals and objectives are consistent with the workforce system strategic plan. Under state law and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, the Council is charged with recommending the local board plans to the Governor for consideration and approval.

**Demonstrating Local Alignment with Texas’ Workforce System Strategic Plan**

The local board planning process highlights the importance and interdependence of the constituents and partners of the Texas workforce system.

**Directions for Demonstrating Alignment with the Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan**

1. Provide a summary describing the processes, activities, or initiatives in the local board plan align with the specific system goal and objective and each strategic opportunity. Response guidelines are provided.
2. Accurately cite the referenced information in the local board plan by providing the corresponding page number(s) in the plan.

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**System Goals and Objectives**

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**1. Employers Goal – Delivery of Relevant Education and Training Programs**  
(pages 62-63, 67-74, 76-81, 83-96, 108-111, 116-118)

**Describe local board activities, initiatives, or processes that accelerate the delivery of relevant education and training programs to meet employers’ needs**

Our alignment with the TWC (Texas Workforce Commission) system goals is likely to have a lasting impact on the local workforce and economy. WFS Cameron is making a positive impact in our community by addressing the growing demand for skilled workers in construction and

manufacturing; collaborating with employers to provide relevant training; and partnering with service providers offering industry-recognized certifications.

A partnership with the current Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) provider aims to reskill job seekers for middle-skills occupations. The project to train 78 individuals in five targeted occupations is funded by the (TWC) High Demand Job Training Grant. Participants will earn industry-based certifications or licenses and secure employment directly linked to their field of study.

As indicated above, WFS Cameron utilizes TWC business resources to partner with key stakeholders to obtain funding that will lead to the upskilling or reskilling of job seekers or incumbent workers alike. Funding earmarked for these activities includes collaboration between the Board and industry partners to leverage funding for the Texas Industry Partnership Program (TIPP) grant. The High Demand Job Training Grant (HDJT) provides our board and economic development corporations an opportunity to provide high demand job training with businesses, public community and technical colleges.

The Skills for Small Businesses Program includes the Skills Development Fund (SDF) that aims to train new workers or upgrade the skills of existing workers in Texas. The goal is to enhance the skill levels and wages of the Texas workforce. Workforce Development Boards partners with an eligible applicant such as public community and technical colleges and community-based organizations to provide customized job-training projects (including Incumbent Worker Training).

For all these initiatives, the Board utilizes the TWC databases such as TWC CM for data collection and analysis as well as required reports. Furthermore, the Board has developed quarterly performance reports that track key metrics such as enrollment numbers, completion rates, and credentials earned through the projects implemented.

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## **2. Learners Goal – Expansion of Work-Based Learning and Apprenticeship** (Pages 68-69, 72-75,77, 100, 103, 118-121)

### **Local board activities, initiatives, or processes that are expanding work-based experiences, including apprenticeship, to accelerate skills and knowledge acquisition that improves system outcomes for learners**

In the last four years, expansion of existing relationships with employers has led to internship and externship experiences for county residents. Our partnership with Lower Rio, the neighboring board, has included a collaboration with the Texas Internship Initiative for high school and college students working on skills development and certification in a middle skill STEM occupation. The Texas Teacher Externship grant funding has expanded our joint offerings to teachers in the summer externship experience whereby their participation will focus on the development of partnership agreements with local employers representing the regions' high demand industries. The consortium recruits and pairs teachers with employers for externships in targeted occupations for a couple of weeks during the summer. Teacher Externships also focus on Middle Skill STEM occupations within these industries.

Our Board has also sought to increase the number of employers who participate in work-based learning programs. Internships are typically targeted for youth, but we have expanded participation to graduates of training programs that lack experience in their field of study. For internships we employ the same process. The Board utilizes our Business Services Unit to conduct outreach and recruit employers for these work-based learning opportunities. The development of worksite opportunities is essential for complementing classroom training by providing hands-on experience through internships. Interns can then become ambassadors for these employers and programs by helping to attract future interns and top talent for these businesses. Through internships, employers can effectively assess potential future employees, providing a hands-on opportunity to evaluate their capabilities in a real-world work environment. This allows employers to assess interns' skills, work ethic, and cultural fit, helping ensure a seamless transition into full-time roles in the future.

Apprenticeship programs approved by the Department of Labor have been developed through the local workforce board, local colleges, and private training providers. WFS Cameron has collaborated with TWC and Registered Apprenticeship programs to expand the number of apprentices in underserved populations and to provide training toward industry-based certifications to increase the number of work-ready individuals in high demand occupations.

As a Tri-Agency Regional Convener, the Board has forged strong, collaborative partnerships with a wide range of organizations, including Independent School Districts (ISDs), Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs), Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), Economic Development Corporations (EDCs), and Industry Associations. These key stakeholders are instrumental in identifying industries that hold the greatest potential for driving the region's future success. Industry Association representatives provide invaluable insights into the evolving workforce needs of employers, helping to identify skills gaps, emerging industry demands, and the challenges employers face in finding qualified talent. Additionally, these partnerships shed light on regional shortfalls, such as the availability of skilled labor or gaps in training programs. By aligning resources, these collaborations aim to create a more effective, responsive, and sustainable workforce pipeline that meets both the immediate and long-term needs of the region's employers.

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### **3. Partners Goal – Alignment to Support Career Pathways**

(Pages 49, 51-52-52, 67-74, 77, 81-84)

#### **Local board activities, initiatives, or processes to build the board's capacity, responsiveness, continuous improvement, and decision-making**

As a Tri-Agency convener grantee, the Board was able to assemble system stakeholders to obtain input on alignment and articulation of secondary and postsecondary technical programs in specific career pathways. The Board formed a leadership team to identify industries and occupations based on the Board's analysis of employment trends and business intelligence for upcoming projects. The Board created industry task forces to obtain input from employers for curriculum development and to ensure that secondary and postsecondary programs are aligned with actual workforce needs. As a result of this initiative, the Board was able to support work-based learning opportunities like internships for secondary students to ensure they gained real-world skills and knowledge transfer.

Additionally, The Board undertook a credential mapping of current IBCs available through the local school districts.

WFS Cameron promotes efforts to expand partnerships with system partners and stakeholders to encourage collaboration, joint planning, and enhanced participant outcomes. We work with stakeholders to identify and implement effective practices and strategies for improved coordination and program results. WFS Cameron, in its efforts for inclusion, promotes information sharing and integration of program services among adult education and literacy providers, Vocational Rehab, our local training providers, and our Board. The group meets regularly and collaborates on proposals and program planning with Workforce Solutions (Lower Rio). We have developed a solid working relationship and trust that provides for enhancement of workforce programs and services. Our partnerships include the broad spectrum of our required partners inclusive of our Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL), Early Childhood, Youth, Adult Education, ISD Career & Technical Education (CTE) departments, Post-Secondary, Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP), and Workforce training and services. WFS Cameron employs collaborative and transparent processes with its workforce system contractor that focus on outcomes to improve the employability of all program participants. Most recently, our collaboration efforts have increased to include the Economic Development Corporations and Chambers of Commerce, state agencies, and CBOs. WFS Cameron has partnered with the local Chamber to expand on entrepreneurship training and assistance to residents who either have an existing business or plan to start their own business. To further the employability effort, TWC awarded five individual grants totaling \$894,953 that will benefit the Workforce Solutions Cameron area. Two Skills Development Fund grants to TSTC in Harlingen went to partnerships with Fisher and Company, Inc. and SpawGlass Contractors. A Jobs and Education for Texans (JET) grant and Dual Credit, Job-Training Grant went to Brownsville ISD, and a Self-Sufficiency Fund job training grant went to a Cameron County Education Initiative, Inc.

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#### **4. Policy and Planning Goal – Relevant Data Sets**

(Pages 7, 29, 31-42, 49-53, 57-60, 64, 67-106)

##### **Local board activities, initiatives, or processes that support the availability and coordination of relevant workforce, education, and employment data**

Since the majority of the projects and/or initiatives are funded through workforce dollars, the Board has the capacity to evaluate program outcomes and identify best practices that can be replicated in other areas. By collaborating with employers, the board gathers more detailed employment and earnings data, which allows for a deeper understanding of how specific workforce programs are contributing to participant success. This collaboration has resulted in a more accurate picture of how program graduates are faring in the labor market, particularly with respect to wage growth and industry certification attainment. This feedback from industry partners is essential to the Board as we prioritize our funding in targeted industries and particular occupations. Educational institutions including training providers provide data on workforce participants on an on-going basis to enable the Board to analyze program outcomes, specifically in regard to industry-based certifications and wage records.

Through these partnerships, the Board has significantly improved the timeliness and completeness of data, ensuring that industry-based certification data is readily accessible for program evaluation. This data-driven approach enables the board to continuously monitor and adjust workforce programs to better meet the needs of job seekers and employers, ensuring effective use of workforce funds.

## **Strategic Opportunities**

*Accelerating Alignment: Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2024-2031* envisions a collaborative workforce system capable of accelerating the delivery of workforce programs, services, and initiatives to meet the needs of a thriving economy. The strategic opportunities focus system partners on three critical success factors that will lead to broad achievement of the system plan goals and objectives. Review each strategic opportunity and provide the information requested.

### **Strategic Opportunity 1 – Employer Engagement**

#### **Local board coordinates with its stakeholders to gain insight into the needs of employers and minimize “asks” that burden employers**

As a Tri-Agency Regional Convener, the Board has forged strong, collaborative partnerships with key stakeholders including Industry Associations. As previously indicated, industry association representatives provide invaluable insights into the evolving workforce needs of employers, helping to identify skills gaps, emerging industry demands, and the challenges employers face in finding qualified talent. They also shed light on regional shortfalls, such as the availability of skilled labor or gaps in training programs. Through the Tri-Agency initiative, the Board developed industry task forces to align workforce strategies with industry needs. These task forces provide a platform for industry to share insight about challenges, and trends to enable the Board to better match services to employer needs. Additionally, not only did this initiative enhance our collaborative efforts but the Board was able to share labor market information to highlight the in-demand sectors and occupations. This effort allowed industry to validate LMI data and/or provide business intelligence on the emerging trends of each industry.

In an effort to minimize the burden of multiple requests, the Board has streamlined our effort by designating the Business Services Unit as the point of contact for employer inquiries. This allows employers to communicate their needs through the BSU as well as coordinate workforce services to meet their needs. Through the Tri-Agency initiative, the Board also collaborated with partners to assess the results of input gathered from industry request thereby streamlining requests for information that, at time, may overwhelm employers. The Board also organized industry forums that brought together multiple partners, especially employers, to these events. This strategy provided a more comprehensive approach to obtaining insight into industry needs and connecting them to available resources.



## **Strategic Opportunity 2 – Improving Outcomes for Texans with Barriers to Employment Local board engages Texans with diverse needs — including those with disabilities, foster youth, sex-trafficking victims, incarcerated juveniles and adults, and opportunity youth —**

Through various programs and workforce initiatives, the Workforce Development Board has appealed to diverse groups. By establishing tailored programs that cater to the unique challenges and needs of each group, we garner more effective and impactful support. By acknowledging and addressing the specific barriers and obstacles faced by each group, we can:

- Increase program engagement and participation
- Improve outcomes and achievements
- Enhance career opportunities and advancement; and
- Foster a more inclusive and supportive environment

The Board collaborates with TWC Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) for customized job training, skills development, and job placement and provides co-case management system for participants needing adaptive technology and/or workplace accommodations. The Student HireAbility Navigator (SHN) works with VRS counselors to inform residents about VRS Pre-ETS services. Employer incentives are emphasized, such as tax credits and Work-Based Learning (WBL) partnership opportunities.

Workforce Solutions Cameron has made significant strides in providing essential services to foster youth and individuals previously incarcerated. Through our efforts, we have been able to provide information on workforce services, financial literacy, supervised independent living (SIL) and educational opportunities with local training providers. Our staff receives continuous training to enhance services and connect foster youth to resources, promoting independence and self-sufficiency. We host an annual foster youth conference in collaboration with workforce board partners.

Additionally, our partnership with TWC has secured funding to support 40 individuals previously incarcerated from the PROWD Grant Initiative. Services include: On-the-Job Training (OJT), work experience, training services, and support services. Our collaboration with the GEO Center, a Residential Re-entry Center (RRC) enhances outreach and recruitment efforts, and provides a holistic approach to services, improving individuals' chances of a successful transition into mainstream society.

The Board's flexible, inclusive, and comprehensive approach has driven success in serving diverse populations. By collaborating with stakeholders and providing workforce services, the Board has significantly improved outcomes for all. Notable successes include:

1. **Improved outcomes:** Enhanced outcomes for the populations served through comprehensive workforce services and support
2. **Comprehensive services:** Provided a wide range of services, significantly contributing to positive outcomes
3. **Stakeholder engagement:** Fostered close relationships with key stakeholders, driving success and promoting collaborative efforts

### **Strategic Opportunity 3 – Use of Data to Support Investment Decisions**

#### **Local board uses data and evidence to identify and target strategic investments to improve system performance**

The Board analyzes data and program outcomes to prioritize workforce funds to improve performance and align activities and services to industry needs. By analyzing data on employment trends, wage rates, and emerging industries, the Board ensures that funds are directed toward training programs that align with the current needs of industry. The Board uses data from previous programs, such as credential attainment, job placement rates, retention rates, and wages, to assess program effectiveness. The Board continues to fund programs that have been shown to improve participant outcomes including wages and career pathways (e.g., apprenticeships, and/or work-based learning). The Board regularly evaluates programs and makes adjustments in service delivery based on real-time data, ensuring funding is effectively used and proposed outcomes are achieved. The occupations targeted by the Board are strategically selected to fund training programs that provide the skills necessary to fill these gaps, leading to improved workforce alignment and employability for workforce participants.