

# Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Annual Report

## Titles I and III, Program Year 2022





# CONTENTS

- 04** Introduction
- 06** Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Waivers
- 07** Measuring Success
- 12** Activities Provided with Funds Reserved by the Governor
- 20** Rapid Response
- 21** National Dislocated Worker Grants
- 22** Customer Satisfaction
- 23** Promising Practices, Lessons Learned, and Success Stories
- 27** Conclusion

# INTRODUCTION

## Vision

TWC and its Workforce Solutions partners will continue to maximize the power of innovation and partnerships to boost superior business outcomes and realize a competitive advantage for all Texans in the global economy.

The Texas Workforce Commission works to ensure the Texas workforce system provides both Texas employers and the Texas workforce with the opportunity to maximize economic potential. In Program Year (PY) 2022, Texas saw 540,700 jobs added to the economy and a 2.4 percent increase in the state's workforce. With more than 644,000 employers and three million small businesses in the state, and almost 15 million Texans in our labor force, TWC works to provide the support and tools needed to sustain the state's growth. In PY 2022, TWC provided career and training services to 367,590 with the goal of placing them in good jobs.

The significant job creation creates opportunities for upskilling and reskilling for many different job sectors. Additionally, the Commission adopted and funded new apprenticeship and internship initiatives to develop the growing workforce, specifically addressing the need created by in-demand occupations such as nursing or middle-skill professions such as logistics management.

Work-based learning opportunities prepare individuals for careers and give employers the confidence that they have the talent to meet their needs.

## Focus on Integration

The Texas workforce system is composed of a number of programs, services, and initiatives administered by eight state agencies, the Texas Association of Workforce Boards, local workforce development boards, community and technical colleges, local adult education providers, and independent school districts. This comprehensive system continues to refine and improve Texas' integrated structure to operate in the most efficient and effective manner possible while ensuring that the workforce system remains both flexible and adaptable. Improved access and efficiency, along with value-added services, are among the many benefits customers receive from an integrated system.

One such improvement to the Texas workforce system was initiated in recent years when TWC began integrating staff to support the delivery of vocational rehabilitation (VR) services to help individuals with disabilities gain skills to prepare them for sustainable employment. To date, 21 Boards have completed integration of VR staff within their local workforce development areas (workforce areas), and VR staff have

## Texas Workforce System

### By the Numbers

**644,000**

Texas Employers

**3 Million**

Small Businesses

**15 Million**

Civilian Labor Force

**540,700**

Jobs Added

**367,590**

Texans Received Career  
and Training Services

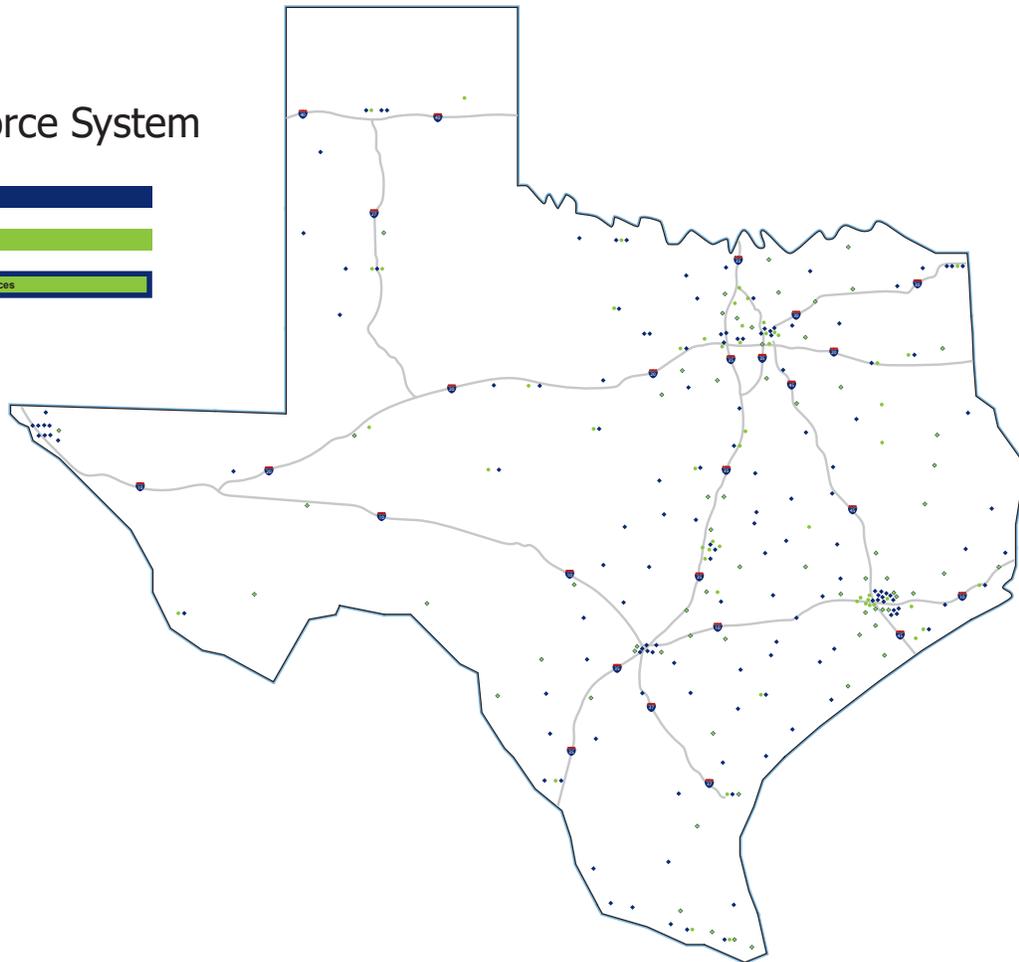
collocated in 104 Workforce Solutions Offices in all 28 of the state's workforce areas. TWC expects to complete 13 more office integrations by Fiscal Year 2026 (FY'26).

TWC fosters partnerships and initiatives to strategically position the statewide workforce system in new directions related to full system integration. One example is the Adult Education Engagement project which is designed to build capacity and expand the deployment of workplace literacy programs that support job advancements, skills gains, and demonstrated approaches serving employers while improving the transferrable skills of Texans.

On November 7, 2022, TWC approved amendments to Title 40, Texas Administrative Code Chapter 801, to update the required partner programs to align with the requirements of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). Prior consistent state law in place during implementation of the Workforce Investment Act allowed the 28 Boards in Texas to operate Workforce Solutions Offices with fewer required partnerships. This exemption was maintained with the implementation of WIOA. However, TWC believes that significant changes in workforce development systems and ongoing regional efforts to serve workforce customers more holistically demonstrate the benefit that more formal partnerships will have for all Texans.

## Texas Workforce System

- Texas Workforce Solutions Offices  
[bit.ly/TWC-WFSDirectory](https://bit.ly/TWC-WFSDirectory)
- Vocational Rehabilitation Offices  
[bit.ly/VROffices](https://bit.ly/VROffices)
- ◆ Texas Workforce Solutions/VR Offices



# WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT WAIVERS

The Texas workforce system and its customers have benefited from the US Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration's (DOLETA) authority to waive certain statutory and regulatory provisions. These waivers have provided TWC and Boards with the flexibility to be more innovative and efficient in delivering workforce services.

On September 20, 2022, DOLETA approved two WIOA waivers regarding the use of individual training accounts (ITAs) for in-school youth (ISY) and local performance accountability and flexibility for Texas for PY'22 and PY'23 (July 1, 2022, through June 30, 2024). On February 2, 2023, DOLETA approved a third waiver regarding reallocation of local funds for PY'22 and PY'23.

## Use of Individual Training Accounts for In-School Youth

This waiver removes the requirement under the WIOA rule at 20 CFR §681.550 that limits the use of ITAs for youth participants to out-of-school youth (OSY) ages 16 to 24. This allows TWC to extend the use of ITAs to ISY ages 16–21, thus permitting Boards to serve ISY in the workforce area while maintaining priority of service for OSY. Boards exercising this waiver have used ITAs to fund training for ISY enrolled in programs such as welding, nursing, HVAC, emergency medical technician, and accounting. In PY'22, 47 percent of ISY enrolled in postsecondary training programs used ITAs to fund training. Boards view this waiver as an excellent opportunity to promote apprenticeship programs and the application of pre-apprenticeship standards, with a focus

on nontraditional industries and occupations. This waiver also helps ISY living in rural workforce areas overcome the unique economic and employment challenges facing rural and often remote Texas communities.

## Local Performance Accountability Flexibility

This limited waiver from WIOA §116(c) pertaining to local performance accountability measures for Subtitle B provides TWC with greater flexibility when contracting performance measures with Boards. Through the



application of this waiver, TWC will increase the integration of services to customers, evaluate Boards more effectively—promoting accountability—and provide Boards with flexibility in implementing Workforce Solutions Offices services. This waiver provides TWC with continued administrative relief that will remove barriers to

coenrollment and promote a more integrated case management system across multiple programs.

## Reallocation of Local Funds

Addressing the provisions of WIOA §128(c)(3) and §133(c) and 20 CFR §683.140 regarding reallocation of WIOA funds among local areas, this waiver grants TWC flexibility in redistributing funds that have been voluntarily deobligated. This waiver gives TWC the discretion to consider additional factors in determining local workforce development area eligibility for reallocation of recaptured funds.

# MEASURING SUCCESS

## Evaluations

The Texas workforce system's success depends on effectively serving its customer groups, engaging its employees (including TWC, Boards, and other workforce partners), and understanding its data. TWC leverages relevant data and transforms it into actionable information to advance the workforce system's overall efficiency and value.

TWC relies on a variety of analytical and statistical techniques to conduct evaluations, including quasi-experimental techniques and randomized controlled trials (RCTs). Although not as conclusive as RCTs, TWC frequently uses quasi-experimental study designs because they balance rigor with the ability to implement process changes and new initiatives quickly. Additionally, TWC is exploring how machine learning can identify strengths and weaknesses in its programs and suggest enhancements.

To translate evaluation results into systemic improvements and to measure success, TWC has used a blend of Six Sigma, Lean, and Theory of Constraints methodologies for a continuous improvement model

called Rapid Process Improvement (RPI). RPI has been used to evaluate dozens of system processes, identify opportunities for improvement, and test the results of implemented changes.

Over the last four years, TWC has further expanded its continuous improvement model to move beyond RPI by designing a new methodology called Business Transformation (BT). The primary distinction between RPI and BT is the nature of the problem that is being targeted for improvement. RPI seeks to improve quality and efficiency in business processes, while BT is designed to uncover and address the root causes of system-level issues and limitations. BT tends to be used to address broader problems that consist of multiple processes. BT's goal is not only to improve efficiency and quality but also to provide a strategic rethinking of entire business approaches, priorities, and value systems associated with core business functions. To conduct program evaluations, TWC collaborates with Boards, partners, and academic researchers on evaluations and participates in federal studies, such as the Workforce Investment Act Gold Standard Study. TWC proactively engages with the Secretaries of Labor and Education on studies that

further the research priorities of TWC, Boards, and partners. Additionally, TWC believes that the webinars and regional calls held by DOL and the US Department of Education (ED) provide a valuable avenue to coordinate work and share results between the states and the departments. TWC also plays an active role in the Clearinghouse for Labor Evaluation and Research (CLEAR) community and shares results and best practices with other community members.



## Adult Education and Literacy

In 2020, TWC participated in a new national reporting system for the adult education evaluation learning community. This 15-month project brought together research and evaluation experts from many states to develop and conduct high-value evaluation projects for adult education and literacy (AEL). TWC evaluated the impact that different intake and onboarding mechanisms that AEL grant recipients used had on variables such as length of participation. The final report was issued during PY'20 and was used to develop curriculum for a session at TWC's AEL summer institute for AEL providers, which was held in August 2021. More recently, in August 2022, TWC proposed developing a machine-learning model to predict the likelihood that an AEL student receives a measurable skill gain (MSG) within a particular program year. TWC anticipates that the model will provide deeper insight into the interaction between demographic characteristics and TWC services, thereby helping to identify factors that the agency can influence to increase the ratio of MSGs to total AEL participants as a measure of program effectiveness and engagement.



## Vocational Rehabilitation

TWC is engaged in several ongoing evaluations of its VR program. One project nearing completion involves a quasi-experimental evaluation of TWC's Project SEARCH's impact on individuals with developmental disabilities. Project SEARCH provides participants with on-the-job experience via three 10- to 12-week paid internships in competitive integrated employment settings. The goal is to obtain and retain permanent employment. Common local employers involved in Project SEARCH include hospitals, law firms, and supply chain industries, which offer diverse internships in areas such as office administration, data entry, assembly/packaging, and housekeeping and food preparation. TWC reviewed a sample of 904 individuals divided evenly into Project SEARCH and a VR program comparison group and determined that Project SEARCH participants have an 87.39 percent successful employment rate compared to 60.40 percent for other participants of the same demographic in the VR program. Based on a chi-square test, the result is significant, with greater than 95 percent confidence ( $p < 0.001$ ). TWC also found

that Project SEARCH participants enjoyed a greater employment retention rate during Q2–Q4 post-exit than their comparison group peers, with 95 percent confidence (70.35% versus 63.27%,  $p = 0.0238$ ). TWC did not discover any significant impact on Q2 post-exit earnings. This study is expected to meet CLEAR's standard for moderate evidence of causality.

Another project still in development involves building a machine-learning model to identify VR participants who, six months into their cases, appear to be headed for an unsuccessful closure. The goal is to find commonalities that can be targeted with an intervention to change an unsuccessful case trajectory into a successful one. The VR program is developing

the intervention, which will be tested using an RCT experimental design to identify cases at risk of unsuccessful outcomes and randomly assign them to receive the intervention. This approach will enable staff to determine whether the intervention has a causal impact on program outcomes. Although this work is being conducted within the VR program, the results likely will be applicable to WIOA core partner programs and other partner programs.



## Workforce Development

TWC is collaborating with Texas A&M's Public Policy Research Institution on several evaluations of DOL-funded programs. The first study evaluates a new service that would be funded by WIOA dislocated worker (DW) statewide funding and that involves specialized job-coaching and related resources. The planned evaluation will involve the random selection of Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) claimants for access to such services and will serve as a WIOA DW evaluation. The TWC divisions and the institute are also conducting a study that encompasses a quasi-experimental design to address the impact of the RESEA program on benefits usage and return to work. This study is expected to meet CLEAR's standard for high evidence of causality. Another study, which uses a broader quasi-experimental design, aims to investigate the impact of RESEA services on reducing UI

duration and increasing reemployment outcomes, and is anticipated to meet CLEAR's standard for moderate evidence of causality. Moreover, TWC regularly participate in multistate meetings to exchange ideas about RESEA interventions and evaluations.

TWC also recently examined post-program employment outcomes for Texans who participated in employment training as part of the WIOA Title I Adult program.

TWC used a quasi-experimental design to analyze three years of post-program employment data for adults who completed the program between July 1, 2017, and June 30, 2018. Adults who completed training were employed in significantly more post-program quarters than adults who either enrolled in training but did not complete the course or who were not enrolled in training. Analysis between adults with varying levels of employment barriers and who completed training did not result in a significant difference in post-program employment outcomes. TWC also

found that whether the study participants received additional TWC-administered program services after completing the training service had no effect on the number of employment quarters post-program. However, an increase in the number of employment quarters five years before beginning a Title I Adult training service led to a statistically significant increase in post-program employment quarters. This study is expected to meet CLEAR's standard for moderate evidence of causality.

Adults who completed training were employed in significantly more post-program quarters than adults who either enrolled in training but did not complete the course or who were not enrolled in training.

## Unemployment Insurance

TWC dedicates substantial analytical and evaluation resources to prevent waste, fraud, and abuse within Texas' UI system by developing predictive models used by UI's benefit payment control and investigative staff. TWC is active within the national UI integrity sphere and supports other states' efforts by sharing best practices and contributing to the National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA), NASWA's Integrity Data Hub (IDH), and associated workgroups.

## Performance Accountability System

TWC supplements WIOA statutory measures to address inconsistencies between the statutory measures and what it considers the statutory vision. For example, although WIOA emphasizes the importance of career pathways, its measures only recognize steps along a career pathway as success for former youth participants. From TWC's perspective, helping a veteran who recently transitioned out of the military or a worker looking for a mid-career change constitutes a significant success, even if the workforce system is not funding the individual's education or training. Therefore, TWC's supplemental WIOA-based measures also identify either employment or educational enrollment in post-exit quarters.



Texas also supplemented the statutory employment/enrollment Q4 measures with a Q2–Q4 employment or enrollment retention measure. The measures build as follows:

1. Employed or Enrolled Q2 Post-Exit: What percent of exiters were employed or enrolled in Q2?
2. Median Earnings Q2 Post-Exit: How much were those employed in Q2 earning?
3. Employed or Enrolled Q2–Q4 Post-Exit: Of those employed or enrolled in Q2, what percent were also employed or enrolled in both Q3 and Q4?

## Target Setting

WIOA provides for a two-stage performance target process. DOL develops a statistical model based on the presumed case mix and economic conditions for the performance periods and cohorts. Each state then negotiates a set of initial targets based on these assumptions and other factors. At the end of the year, DOL reapplies the statistical model. For the current reporting year, TWC exceeded 90 percent of the originally negotiated targets across all programs, although the departments have yet to make their year-end adjustments.

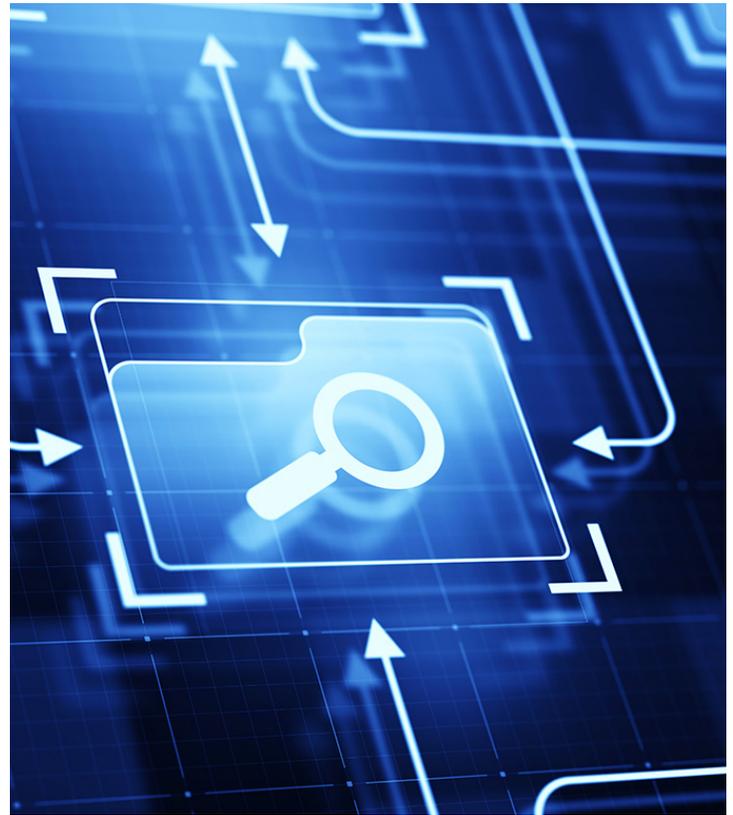
## Effectiveness in Serving Employers

Together with job seekers and employees, Texas employers are primary TWC customers in the Texas workforce system. Measuring the success of services provided to employers is important for the state's economic success, and TWC continues to be concerned about the three measures that DOL and ED chose to pilot in response to the information collection requests that the departments published to obtain input on the proposals. Nevertheless, the agency has continued to

report all three measures to ensure that DOL and ED have complete data for evaluating the measures and, ideally, developing improvements.

TWC takes the following four-pronged approach to validating data:

1. TWC's case management system uses data validation codes to ensure consistent data collection. In this system, field values must meet the required Participant Individual Record Layout (PIRL).
2. TWC's Subrecipient Monitoring department (SRM) conducts data validation testing for all Boards and AEL grant recipients. Beginning in September 2022, in coordination with the Business Support Section of TWC's Division of Fraud Deterrence and Compliance Monitoring, SRM developed a dedicated database to capture testing results while allowing TWC to generate testing outcomes by workforce area.
3. TWC performs error-checking audits designed to conform with DOL reporting requirements.



4. TWC's case management system uses internal data integrity (DINT) functions that allow local system partners to make corrections to data entries while enabling TWC to validate and approve the corrections or invalidate them based on standardized procedures. The DINT process is engaged when edits or corrections are submitted for system entries made in the previous quarter plus 20 days, effectively giving Boards 20 days after the previous quarter to make edits or corrections without the need to submit a DINT request. After that time, any changes to previous quarter entries require validation and approval by TWC's Workforce Automation department.

# ACTIVITIES PROVIDED WITH FUNDS RESERVED BY THE GOVERNOR

TWC uses governor’s reserve statewide funding in conjunction with Temporary Assistance for Needy Families funds, Adult Education and Family Literacy Act state leadership funding, and other funding, where feasible and appropriate, to encourage innovation in workforce areas through grants to Boards, institutions of higher education (IHEs), community-based organizations (CBOs), and other eligible entities. TWC prioritizes programs that assist specific populations and initiatives, including veterans, youth, and science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) programs.

The following activities were undertaken in whole or in part with WIOA funds reserved by the governor.

## Texas Talent Connection

The Texas Governor’s Texas Talent Connection Grant provided more than \$5.9 million to support innovative education and workforce skills training programs that lead to successful employment placements, increased wages, and job retention, in addition to serving workforce populations with special needs.

Leveraging their \$350,000 award, Workforce Solutions Tarrant County continued year two of the 21st CENTURY—Customers Embracing New Technology Upon Reentry program. The program serves reentering citizens by providing technology-based training that focuses on digital literacy to aid in job search, job placement, and financial management. Based on the needs of each participant, the appropriate combination of services are provided. Workforce Solutions Tarrant County will also consider providing training in one of the area’s eight high-demand, high-paying industries that represent more than 25 occupations offering industry-recognized, portable credentials.

Additionally, Workforce Solutions of Southeast Texas used their award of more than \$350,000 for the Southeast Texas Internship and Externship Training Initiative, which provides opportunity youth, ages 18–24, with eight-week paid internships in their field of study. The Teacher Externship initiative afforded 60 teachers the opportunity to partner with employers and training institutions that are aligned to the area’s high-growth, high-demand industries: petrochemical, maritime, health care/medical, and manufacturing. The experience enhanced their understanding of industry trends.

## Upskill Texas

TWC has made up to \$5 million available for employers to provide qualified training for current employees through the Upskill Texas Initiative. Grants were available for medium and large employers, a consortium of these employers, or their designees for the purpose of retaining a skilled workforce to avert the need to lay off employees. This initiative allows employers operating in multiple areas of the state to receive training for their incumbent workforce regardless of their location or the capacity of the local Board to support additional incumbent worker training. Awards for the initiative range from \$150,000 to \$500,000.

## Externship for Teachers

The need to connect skilled workers with good jobs is a high priority for Texas educators and employers. The Externships for Teachers program allows middle school and high school teachers to engage in different industry activities to develop curriculum based on that industry. This curriculum helps students understand and develop the academic and technical skills required to enter the workforce. TWC distributed \$1 million to Boards to support externships in existing and new programs.

# Grant Awards



**\$5.9M**

Texas Talent  
Connection



**\$5M**

Upskill  
Texas



**\$1M**

Teacher  
Externships



**\$500,000+**

College Credit  
for Heroes



**\$2M**

Veterans  
Network



**\$1M**

Military Family  
Support Program



**\$1.2M**

Youth  
Initiatives



**\$1.9M**

High Demand  
Job Training



**\$21M**

Texas Industry  
Recognized Apprenticeship



**\$8M+**

Texas  
Education Code



**\$3M**

Innovative  
Academies

## Military and Veterans Support Initiatives

### *College Credit for Heroes*

The College Credit for Heroes (CCH) program seeks to maximize college credits awarded to veterans and service members for their military experience to expedite their transition into the Texas workforce. The program's goal is to eliminate obstacles to attaining licensing, certification, accreditation, and degrees awarded at state and national levels so veterans may transition more quickly from college classrooms into the workforce. Texas institutions value student veterans on their campuses and work on their behalf to award academic credit for their military experience, education, and training. In February 2020, TWC announced a new CCH Capacity Building Program grant designed to help Texas institutions develop or improve an integrated system for evaluating military transcripts.

To date, 22 Texas colleges and universities have been awarded grants, resulting in the creation of 91 acceleration curricula courses in fields such as emergency medical services, surgical technology, respiratory therapy, health information technology, nursing, cybersecurity, information technology, advanced manufacturing, and logistics.

### *CCH Phase 9 Capacity Building and Sustainability Program*

The Capacity Building and Sustainability Program allows IHEs to develop or improve their military evaluation processes by using a fully integrated system to identify and track student veterans participating in the CCH program. In PY'23, TWC will award \$589,633 to three IHEs for the CCH Phase 9 Capacity Building and Sustainability Program.

The program's primary goals include:

1. Develop and document a pilot military transcript evaluation process that ensures that academic credit will be awarded consistently to all veterans and service members.

2. Develop a sustainable tracking system for students participating in the program that accurately gauges the benefits that students receive and confirm that processes and policies are being implemented consistently across the institution.
3. Recruit program champions from students, alumni, and faculty members who are participating or have participated in the CCH program to act as advocates and resources regarding the program.
4. Integrate CCH program information into veteran or active-duty service member resources.

### *Hiring Red, White & You*

The Hiring Red, White & You (HRWY) event is an important initiative in the state of Texas aimed at helping veterans, transitioning military personnel, and military spouses find meaningful employment opportunities. This statewide event is a collaborative effort organized by various government agencies and organizations, including TWC, the Office of the Texas Governor, the Texas Veterans Commission, and an array of employer partners.

Since 2012, HRWY has connected 114,778 veterans and job seekers to employment opportunities with 20,131 employers. This includes 3,198 same-day hires.

### *Veterans Workforce Outreach Initiative*

The Veterans Workforce Outreach Initiative is designed to outreach veterans who have one or more barriers to employment and who are not currently being served through Workforce Solutions Offices. The program seeks to address these barriers and reintegrate the veterans into meaningful employment.

Employment barriers are addressed, and resources are accessed to overcome barriers under the guidance of a case manager. Veterans benefit from a range of services that may include assessments; job development and placement; case management and support services, such as transportation; rent and utility assistance; mental health assistance, including clinical counseling; wheelchairs, crutches, and medical beds; food assistance; and financial assistance.

In FY'22 the Veterans Workforce Outreach Initiative conducted 1,765 outreach activities, which resulted in 319 assessments, 209 enrollments, 244 participants receiving basic skills training, and 151 participants placed in employment.

### **Veterans Network**

The Veterans Network initiative provides funds to CBOs to develop networks of entities whose missions include providing services and support to veterans. Referral and service information shared among network partners—including CBOs, the Texas Veterans Commission, and other veteran-centric organizations—allows for the coordination of services over large areas of the state, regardless of the community in which veterans seek services. At the grant's conclusion in March 2023, 474 organizations had become participants in the Texas Veterans Network.

TWC awarded a \$2 million grant to create a statewide automated veteran service coordination referral system that captures services received, referrals made, and services available through an integrated network designed to increase a veteran's opportunity to receive all services necessary for a successful transition into civilian life.

### **Military Family Support Program**

The Military Family Support Program provides military spouses with enhanced job search assistance, skills assessment, labor market information, résumé writing, and interview training. If funding is available, military spouses may receive certification or licensure training in target occupations. Since 2017, the Military Family Support Program has been funded annually with a \$1 million allocation per fiscal year. Currently, there are eight military installations throughout the state that have signed memoranda of understanding with their respective Boards to participate in the program.

To date, the Military Family Support Program has conducted outreach to 2,181 military spouses and

registered 1,474 of those spouses into program services. This effort has led to 248 spouses receiving credentials and 245 becoming employed.

The Military Family Support Program has yielded positive outcomes that have resulted in employment opportunities, including the following:

- A military spouse who completed the registered nurse training program at Central Texas College received an associate's degree in nursing. The spouse was employed in a position with a starting salary of \$28.75 an hour.
- A military spouse who worked with a military family support liaison received an internship with the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS). The internship led to employment with DFPS in the Human Resources department, with a starting salary of \$63,600 a year.
- TWC and the Fort Cavazos Transition Assistance Program sponsored a military spouse job fair at Fort Cavazos, in partnership with TVLP, Fort Cavazos's Employment Readiness Program, and Workforce Solutions of Central Texas. Fifty-four employers and more than 200 military spouses, family members, and transitioning service members attended the job fair.

### **We Hire Vets Campaign**

TWC and TVC sponsor We Hire Vets, an employer recognition program that recognizes Texas employers for their commitment to hiring veterans. Employers whose workforces are composed of at least 10 percent military veterans are eligible to receive a "We Hire Vets" decal to display on their storefronts and an electronic decal to display on their websites.

Since 2017, We Hire Vets has issued 984 decals and letters to Texas employers.

**1,474**

Registered into the  
military spouses  
program services

## Youth Initiatives

### *Texas Science and Engineering Fair*

Sponsored by TWC, ExxonMobil, and other partners and hosted by Texas A&M University, the Texas Science and Engineering Fair (TXSEF) is an annual event in which participating middle and high school students display their projects and compete in 21 different project categories. Awards are given for first through third place in each category, with two grand prizes and one Best-of-Show winner in both the junior and senior divisions. Top finishers from the high school division also are awarded a scholarship to attend the prestigious Governor's Science and Technology Champions Academy. Top competitors in the junior division advance to the national Broadcom Masters competition. Additionally, some of the winning senior division entries go on to compete in the Regeneron International Science and Engineering Fair (ISEF). Texas has produced many ISEF winners and has a proud history of success for its participants.

### *Governor's Science and Technology Champions Academy*

The Governor's Science and Technology Champions Academy is a weeklong, hands-on residential summer camp that helps students explore the practical applications of STEM endeavors and exposes students to exciting career options that involve high-tech skills. This camp supports the development of Texas' future workforce by focusing on the advanced skills required for high-demand careers within target industries and is designed to inspire students to pursue STEM-related college degrees and careers in Texas. Top finishers from the high school division of the TXSEF are awarded scholarships to cover the entire cost of the program.

### *Building and Construction Trades*

Grants provided under this initiative support workforce development training to prepare participants for industry-based certifications (IBC) and employment in building and construction trade (BCT) occupations. This program provides training for occupations that align with one or more of the specialty trades identified by the

North American Industry Classification System and one or more high-demand occupations in the BCT sector, including carpenters, plumbers, pipefitters, welders, masons, and electricians. In 2021, the BCT program piloted Texas' new evidence-based grant-making approach, and it has also piloted a new outcomes-based payment model, which TWC has further improved in the 2023 program.

In PY'22, TWC awarded grants totaling \$1,246,358. The grants provided opportunities to 519 program participants. A total of 443 participants completed the program, with 331 earning an IBC and 312 entering employment.



## Other Initiatives

### **High-Demand Job Training Program**

TWC supports collaborations between Boards and economic development corporations (EDCs) to provide high-demand occupational job training in workforce areas. This program supports Boards' partnerships with local EDCs to leverage local economic development sales taxes for high-demand job training. Boards collaborate with local EDCs and match their local economic development sales tax funds to jointly support the provision of such training.

In PY'22, TWC awarded grants totaling \$1,950,639 to 18 Boards. Funds provided through these grants were used to enhance training, support services, and skills assessments and to expand capacity by purchasing necessary equipment and supplies. These grants have improved immediate training opportunities for 2,618

# \$1,950,639

in TWC grants awarded  
to 18 Boards

participants and will continue to serve Texans and help them fill future in-demand jobs.

### **Texas Interns Unite!**

Industry connections can make a big difference when beginning a successful career. The Texas Interns Unite! network emphasizes the many benefits of internships and connects interns across the state with Texas employers and each other. Throughout the year, this program hosts virtual and in-person events to build relationships and strengthen industry connections culminating with the National Intern Day with a Texas Twist annual conference.

### **Texas Industry Recognized Apprenticeship Grant**

The Texas Industry Recognized Apprenticeship Grant promotes the growth of high-quality, sustainable jobs for the Texas workforce by establishing apprenticeship pathways that address the varying needs of different industries seeking to address the skills gap in the labor force. TWC approved \$1 million for two years to support grant operation. Additionally, the Texas Legislature approved an investment of \$20 million for the biennium (FY'24 and FY'25) to bolster the state's commitment to apprenticeships as a viable option for employers and workers.



### **Texas Education Code (TEC) Chapter 133**

One of TWC's primary programs in the support of Registered Apprenticeship Programs is the Texas Education Code (TEC) Chapter 133 program, funded through General Revenue appropriated by the Texas Legislature. As authorized in TEC Chapter 133, TWC grants funds to local public educational institutions and apprenticeship committees to support the costs of related classroom instruction in registered apprenticeship training programs. In FY'22, \$4.98 million was allocated for the TEC Chapter 133 program and another \$3.7 million in FY'23.

### **Innovative Academies**

This program establishes a relationship between TWC and the Texas Education Agency regarding the coordination and development of the Pathways in Technology Early College High School (P-TECH) and Industry Cluster Innovative Academy (ICIA) programs. Funds support innovative partnerships among schools, employers, and colleges to provide opportunities for students to acquire skills, certifications, and credentials in high-demand occupations in key industry clusters while

allowing them to earn college credit toward an associate's degree or an articulated agreement toward a bachelor's degree.

In PY'22, TWC awarded grants totaling \$3 million to Pathways in Technology Early College High School (P-TECH) and College and Career Readiness School Model (CCRSM) P-TECH schools. The grants allowed students to have a smooth transitional experience to postsecondary education and the workforce. P-TECH models give students the opportunity to earn a high school diploma while simultaneously earning industry certifications. This includes Levels 1 and 2 certificates, and/or an associate's degree to complete by the sixth anniversary of a student's first day of high school. This is at no cost to the student and includes enhanced training, support services, and skills assessments to expand capacity by purchasing necessary equipment and supplies.

The P-TECH grants have given opportunities to 34 school districts, with 2,148 senior graduate participants. The credentials attained, include 718 associate's degrees, 240 certificates, and 364 IBC.



### **Ending the Middle Skills Gap**

On June 30, 2021, TWC's three-member Commission earmarked funding for a comprehensive statewide strategy to end the middle skills gap in Texas. Due to technological advances in the workplace, employment demand has dramatically increased for individuals with middle skills, defined as workers with some education beyond high school but less than a four-year degree. The Commission approved initiatives focusing on career information, preparedness, connection, and progression activities to help put more Texas workers on a path to a career in a rewarding middle skills job.

TWC's initiatives to end the middle skills gap in Texas include the following:

- TWC partnered with Metrix Learning™, an online learning management system that helps job seekers upgrade their skills to secure employment. In PY'22, more than 90,000 Texans registered in the Metrix Learning™ system to access online learning content and complete nearly 99,000 courses at a cost of \$1.5 million. Metrix Learning™ also provided \$396,000 in certification services to TWC and the 28 Boards, including access to all training content to prepare for certification, practice tests, practice labs, and exam vouchers for all participants. With this funding, participants completed 243 industry-based certification exams.
- TWC earmarked \$2 million in WIOA funds to provide WIOA training services of less than three months in duration to parents receiving Child Care Services program subsidies. Specifically designed for parents who are in an initial three-month job search period, this initiative helps child care customers become employed before this period of child care services ends.
- TWC instituted a statewide career and education outreach initiative that raises awareness about occupations requiring more than a high school degree but less than a four-year degree. This youth-focused awareness campaign promotes middle skills occupations and career pathways and directs Texans to the tools and programs available to receive training and obtain the certifications required to enter those occupations.
- TWC partnered with Texas State Technical College to support upskilling Texans and to provide talent to employers by providing training programs to existing opportunities to prepare individuals for employment in high-demand occupations. One of the goals of the trainings, which are designed to be completed within 16 weeks, is for participants to earn an industry-recognized credential supporting an in-demand career in the region (or statewide).
- TWC has piloted the Middle Skills Employment Supplies program. Funds were distributed through the 28 Boards to partner with other nonprofit and community programs and other state agencies that provide training and certifications for middle skills occupations, in order to support Texans who have limited or no funds to purchase tools or supplies that these occupations require.
- TWC continues to enhance the Texas Credential Library. The library aligns workforce development with high-demand jobs in Texas and allows users to compare credentials and programs, and even seek out pathways for educational or professional advancement. The Credential Library is publicly accessible and contains information on diplomas, certificates, certifications, digital badges, apprenticeships, licenses, and degrees offered by public and private universities, colleges, career schools, and career-focused high school courses.
- TWC is refining its previous investment in Jobs Y'all, a website that targets Texans ages 14–24 and provides career exploration tools and information on careers in different industries. The website features TWC's career tools and now emphasizes middle skills occupations in eight fast-growing industries in Texas. The site will also help youth with disabilities and foster youth by including landing pages that direct them to services. New content, such as social media animations, public service announcements, and career videos, will be developed to promote a plethora of occupations and drive traffic to Texas Career Check, Texas Reality Check, Texas Internship Challenge, Texas HireAbility/StartMyVR, and MyTXCareer.com. Furthermore, information about apprenticeships, internships for students with disabilities, and foster youth will be added. To meet Texans where they are, this initiative is being promoted online through email, social media channels, and other platforms, as well as in person, such as at school, at career exploration and job hiring events, and at local Workforce Solutions Offices.

## RAPID RESPONSE

TWC, Boards, and Workforce Solutions Offices offer many services to help businesses and workers manage the effects of layoffs and plant closures, including those that result from natural disasters, increased competition from foreign companies, and other causes. TWC uses early warning indicators within its enterprise data warehouse to identify employers that might benefit from rapid response (RR) activities and specific short-term compensation services. RR is a proactive strategy designed to respond quickly to layoffs and plant closures through the provision of immediate on-site and/or virtual assistance with reemployment services and UI information, as well as group seminars to address stress and financial management issues. Some Boards have used mobile units to offer these services.



During PY'22, TWC offered RR services to 23,324 dislocated workers and 368 employers impacted by a layoff or closure. Employees were provided with information on UI, job search, and available workforce services, including the WIOA and Trade Adjustment Assistance programs. Employers received technology and personal protective equipment to keep their employees working, short-term compensation through the UI program, and customized training to ensure that companies can operate safely.

RR services help workforce area employers, workers, and communities manage reductions in force. To ensure that Texas is poised to meet the needs of local employers, RR services are funded through the Boards' WIOA Adult,

Dislocated Worker, and Youth formula programs. The funding stream allows for a prompt rebound from layoffs, as funds are readily and locally available. Texas has also reserved RR funds at the state level for Boards that demonstrate a need for additional assistance.

TWC and Boards use multiple resources to craft layoff aversion solutions. Past employment solutions include the development of incumbent worker programs which help address employer training needs and avert or mitigate layoffs. RR-funded training focuses on skills attainment activities. Upon layoff notification, transition efforts are

implemented to help dislocated workers engage in employment or training services that facilitate a quick return to work. Layoff notices, including those submitted in compliance

with the Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification Act, are received at the state level and forwarded to Boards by the next business day.

Workforce Solutions Offices are encouraged to engage RR staff in the activities of TWC's Business Service Unit (BSU). RR staff within the BSU has access to team resources that help match worker skill sets with company hiring requirements. TWC and the Boards set the stage to assist businesses with future staffing needs by maintaining positive relationships throughout the layoff process. To this end, outreach efforts highlight both the services available to at-risk employers and the services available once business improves.

# NATIONAL DISLOCATED WORKER GRANTS

TWC was awarded more than \$39 million in Disaster Recovery Dislocated Worker Grant (DWG) funds to provide COVID-19 disaster relief services in Texas. These funds were used to help local health departments with jobs related to virus response and to support food banks and other humanitarian endeavors. DWG funds aided in the delivery of career services, training, and support services, including transportation and supplies, to help facilitate a successful return to work. When the grant closed, on March 31, 2023, 4,787 Texans had been served, 1,107 participants had been placed in temporary disaster relief employment, and 2,139 participants had been enrolled in training.

## 4,787

Texans received Disaster Recovery Dislocated Worker Grant assistance

TWC received two additional Disaster Recovery Dislocated Worker Grants in response to Hurricane Laura and the winter storm of February 2021. Funds totaling \$5,620,612, were awarded to support cleanup and recovery efforts. The grants served 488 Texans, including 160 participants who were placed in temporary disaster relief employment and 157 participants who were enrolled in training.

## 488

Texans received temporary disaster relief employment training

On December 1, 2021, TWC received an \$8,032,410 grant to address the needs of transitioning military service members and their spouses from Fort Cavazos, a US Army base in Central Texas. To date, 1,050 individuals have been enrolled, 998 of whom have been receiving training or participating in apprenticeships.

## 1,050

transitioning military service members received training

The DWG led to several success stories, including the following:

- A military spouse was laid off from their job after working with a company for 20 years. Through the grant's funding and with the guidance from Workforce Solutions Office staff, the spouse secured a full-time position as a military talent specialist, earning \$90,000 a year.
- A veteran who was newly employed as an automotive technician needed help to maintain employment. Through the grant's funding and with the assistance of a military transition liaison, the veteran received a toolbox, uniforms, and boots.



*The appearance of U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) visual information does not imply or constitute DoD endorsement.*

# CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

Leading efforts to transform how TWC interacts with all its customers, the Customer Care Division comprises three departments: Governmental Relations, Customer Relations, and Customer Experience. The division's desired outcomes are that customers become aware of a clear and direct pathway into the agency for the services they seek; customers have knowledge of other services offered by the workforce system; and service delivery is centered on customers and designed around the customer's needs.

Customer Care is responsible for TWC's public-facing website. A complete redesign to modernize the agency's online presence and improve how customers engage with the agency was completed in Fall 2023. The redesign includes an updated look, enhanced search and navigation, and improved design and content strategies that make accessing information as effortless as possible.

Customer Care is also charged with developing a single point-of-entry (or Main Door) to the agency through a suite of cloud-based technologies, such as artificial intelligence-enabled chat bots, live chat, SMS texting, self-service portals, and customer relationship management software. These channels will offer the customer a seamless experience and provide a comprehensive picture of customer journeys across agency and Board services.

In conjunction with the Main Door project, Customer Care obtained approval to pilot an omni-channel cloud contact center solution called Zendesk. The pilot, which began in March 2023, involved creating and operating a self-service help desk with knowledge base articles, a new chatbot that resides on both the help desk and the agency's public website, a customer relationship management software component, customer service

agent support workspace, contact forms, and Interactive Voice Response call routing. In addition to collaborating with

select business areas within the agency, Customer Care is working closely with the 28 Boards to route customer inquiries related to Board services. The Zendesk pilot will continue until a permanent Main Door solution is implemented.

**Our website has a new look!**  
Our enhanced website prioritizes the public's experience by being mobile-friendly, available in multiple languages, and accessible, all aimed at improving navigation and usability.

See what's new

- PROGRAMS**  
Texas HireAbility
- JOB FAIR**  
Hiring Red, White & You!
- EVENTS**  
Texas Interns Unite!
- EVENTS**  
National Apprenticeship Week
- JOB FAIR**  
Statewide Hiring Events
- SERVICES**  
Find Child Care

**LARRY - TWC VIRTUAL ASSISTANT**

2:35 PM  
Larry TWC Virtual Assistant  
Hi, I'm Larry, the Texas Workforce Commission's Virtual Assistant.  
I can help answer common questions about TWC services. You can choose an option or type a question below.  
Please type one question at a time and avoid entering personal information.

Just now

- ID.me Support
- Unemployment Eligibility
- File for Unemployment
- Requesting and Receiving Payments
- Unemployment Insurance Taxes
- Overpayment Assistance

Type a message

# PROMISING PRACTICES, LESSONS LEARNED, AND SUCCESS STORIES

## State Success Stories

### *Texas Industry Partnership*

The Texas Industry Partnership (TIP) program was established to address skills gaps and ensure that a talent pipeline is available to address regional industry needs. The TIP program supports collaborations between Boards and private employers, corporate foundations, and most 501(c)6 organizations by leveraging matching contributions of cash or qualifying expenditures for workforce-related activities including occupational job training. Matching funds must focus on High-Demand/Target Occupations, as determined by the Boards and/or the occupations in industries targeted by the Office of the Texas Governor.

In PY'22, TWC awarded seven grants totaling \$645,023 to six Boards. Funds provided through these grants were used to enhance training, support services, and skills assessments and to expand capacity by purchasing necessary equipment and supplies. The grants have improved immediate training opportunities for 923 participants and will continue to serve Texans and help them fill future in-demand jobs.



### *Skills Development Fund*

Texas has long been a state that has cultivated a business-friendly environment and has consistently ranked as not only the Best State for Business, but



also the Best Place to Start a Business. The state has placed a priority on cultivating a workforce that will continue to attract innovation, significant investment, and job creation.

Accordingly, the Skills Development Fund helps businesses upskill their new or incumbent workforce. This is accomplished by providing customized training opportunities for Texas businesses and workers to increase skill levels and wages of the Texas workforce. The program's success is achieved through collaborations among businesses, the public community and technical colleges, the Texas A&M Engineering Extension Service, Boards, and local economic development partners.

The state's investment of \$18,240,416 in PY' 22 has trained 9,954 workers across 46 projects. Since the program's inception, Texas has provided training opportunities in partnership with at least 4,801 employers to upgrade or support the creation of more than 419,900 jobs.

## Local Best Practices

### **Removing Barriers to Second Chance Employment**

Workforce Solutions North Central Texas has created a series of partnerships and pathways that remove barriers to employment for individuals who have been involved with the justice system. This includes a partnership with Bridgeport Correctional Facility and Weatherford College to administer a Certified Logistics Technician (CLT) training program inside the correctional facility for those being released within 6 months. Successful graduates of the program receive a CLT Certification and are connected with Second Chance Employers who are hiring for those occupations.

A referral program with the Greenville District Parole Office has also been established to connect new parolees with WSNCT's Greenville Workforce Center immediately upon release. These individuals receive customized career services and resources to aid their successful reentry into their communities.

### **Record Setting Career Expo**

In February 2023, Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas, exhibitors, and sponsors hosted 3,312 students from 35 schools, the largest number of participants since the

inception of the Expo in 2015. Exhibitors provided hands-on demonstrations to engage the students and generate interest in high growth/high wage occupations in Southeast Texas. The event also provided networking opportunities for businesses to interact with teachers, counselors, and administrators and share their industry's need for a skilled and diverse workforce.

### **Future Workforce Committee**

Workforce Solutions Heart of Texas developed the Future Workforce Committee (FWC) to strengthen the Board's position in addressing "workforce pipeline" issues and opportunities. The FWC is comprised of private employers, three two-year colleges, an economic development corporation, a chamber of commerce, and past industry employees. The FWC's goal is to advocate and support opportunities that prepare the talent pipeline for business industry in the Heart of Texas region.

### **Service Expansion**

At Workforce Solutions Middle Rio Grande, the priority of service to Migrant Seasonal Farm Workers will expand services to this group by re-establishing the Quarterly MSFW Network. This expansion includes other community resources such as migrant contractors, Adult Education and Literacy, education, training, health, and housing providers. The goal is to expand resources to these families including their youth who may choose to continue migration or train for a job in the local economy.

### **Virtual Reality Career Exploration**

Workforce Solutions Cameron is bringing career exploration into the virtual world by utilizing Oculus Virtual Reality (VR) headsets that allow customers to participate in a Career Fair and explore in-demand industry simulations such as automotive, manufacturing, construction, public safety, and hospitality. Following the presentation, customers can speak directly with industry experts that provides the customers an opportunity to build relevant connections to industries.



## Local Success Stories

The Texas workforce system is strong and effective because of dedicated Board members, Workforce Solutions Office staff, and workforce partners that work diligently to improve employment, education, and economic outcomes for the individuals they serve within their local communities. It is through their collective efforts that the Texas workforce system succeeds. Below are a few of the many success stories from around the state.

A justice-involved individual obtained a GED and enrolled in a medical assistant (CMA) program. With the support of Workforce Solutions Panhandle, the individual completed the CMA program, ultimately becoming a registered nurse (RN). The individual attributed this successful outcome to the crucial financial assistance and foundational skills provided by Workforce Solutions Panhandle. The individual is now employed as a nurse education success coach at a local community college, advocating for student success and retention.

# 3,312

Students hosted by  
WFS Southeast Texas  
at the Career Expo

A customer with no prior work experience sought assistance from Workforce Solutions Coastal Bend to gain the skills to be successful in a job. The customer was placed in a 12-week work experience as a medical receptionist. Through this opportunity, the customer learned how to operate a telephone switchboard, schedule appointments, and provide customer services. Throughout the work experience, the customer received support services. After successfully completing the work

experience, the customer earned a \$400 incentive and was hired full-time as a medical receptionist and is working with the employer to become a medical assistant.



As a customer's career came to an end in the pipeline industry, they sought assistance from Workforce Solutions East Texas. After attending a Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment appointment, the customer learned about the many services offered by Workforce Solutions East Texas. Through coenrollment in the WIOA dislocated worker program, the customer began an OJT program as a restoration and auto body repair worker, where the customer continues to work on a career path that allows them to do something they are passionate about.

An OSY was interested in obtaining a welding certification. A career counselor at Workforce Solutions Lower Rio Valley talked to the customer about the benefits of the WIOA Youth program and support services to address financial barriers. After receiving a certificate of completion for a structural maintenance welder program, the customer continued his pursuits and earned a welding license. The customer is now employed full-time and earning \$20 an hour.



A nursing student facing difficulty in balancing attending school while working full-time to pay for school, enrolled in the WIOA program which allowed the student to receive assistance paying for tuition as well as support services and job search assistance. After graduating from the nursing program with honors and passing the NCLEX, the student obtained a position in a Pediatric Emergency Room.

With the long-term goal of working in the health care field, an OSY enrolled in the Workforce Solutions NextGen youth program at Workforce Solutions Gulf Coast. The program helps youth earn their GED and gain on-the-job experience, in addition to providing job readiness and job search assistance. In a short-term work experience placement, the customer gained valuable health care knowledge and skills to assist with future employment in the industry. The customer completed a medical assistant course, passed the national certification exam, and is now employed full-time in a leading orthopedic practice.

An individual who exhausted their unemployment benefits while facing other barriers to employment received assistance from a Career Planner to start a new career. It was decided that Truck Driver Training at Texarkana College would offer a more stable and sustainable career path. They completed the CDL training and immediately went to work earning \$34.38 an hour as an over-the-road truck driver.

A justice-involved customer sought employment assistance at the local Workforce Solutions office. He attended the Hiring Red, White, and You! Job fair and made sure to follow through on each job lead provided. The customer began full-time employment as a Maintenance Mechanic, earning \$21.75 per hour.



**\$36.00/hr**

Registered  
Nurse



**\$34.38/hr**

Over-the-road  
Truck Driver



**\$21.75/hr**

Maintenance  
Mechanic

A single parent sought assistance from Workforce Solutions North Texas to obtain a Registered Nursing license after exhausting financial aid. Workforce Solutions North Texas provided assistance with completion of a BSN degree and earning an RN license. The parent now earns \$27.50 per hour at a medical facility.

An individual who migrated to the United States sought assistance from the local Workforce Solutions Office to obtain a Registered Nurse (RN) license. Through training at Vernon College, the individual earned their RN license and, soon after, began employment at a care center earning \$36 per hour.

A graduate of the Youth Empowerment Services program went from working low-wage jobs to training to become a dental assistant. The graduate is now taking steps to continue their education to become a dentist.

A customer with a disability sought assistance obtaining a paid work experience, with the goal of receiving permanent employment. Workforce Solutions Panhandle assisted the customer to obtain a paid work experience with a local employer. During the paid work experience, the customer's supervisor was very pleased with their work performance. The employer wanted to offer permanent employment but did not have the budget to hire, so the paid work experience was extended. The customer was ultimately hired as a full-time employee.

## CONCLUSION

The Texas Workforce Commission remains committed to increasing, improving, and innovating the services we provide as we pursue the strategies to achieve our mission. With the continued support of our partners — the Governor and the 28 Workforce Boards — we proudly serve all Texas employers, partners, and job seekers. The Texas Workforce System is here for all Texans.





101 East 15th Street  
Austin, Texas 78778-0001  
(512) 463-2222  
[twc.texas.gov](http://twc.texas.gov)

Equal Opportunity Employer/Program. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities. Relay Texas: 800-735-2989 (TTY) and 711 (Voice).