



Workforce Development Board Plan Modification for Program Years 2021- 2024

*Equal Opportunity Employer/Program.
Auxiliary Aids available for Individuals with Disabilities
Relay Texas 1-800-735-2989(TTY)/711 (Voice)*

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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
DBS	Division of Blind Services	RSTEC	Rio South Texas Economic Council
DFPS	Department of Family & Protective Services	RTAP	Regional Transportation Advisory Panel
DOE	Department of Energy	RTD	Rural Transit District
DW	Dislocated Worker	RTI	Related Training and Instruction
E&T	Education & Training	SCSEP	Senior Community Service Employment Program
ED	Executive Director	SDF	Skills Development Fund
EDC	Economic Development Corporation	SEAL	Summer Earn and Learn
EN	Employer Network	SHN	Student HireAbility Navigator
ES	Employment Services	SNAP	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
ESL	English as a Second Language	SSB	Skills for Small Business
ETP(L)	Eligible Training Provider (List)	STC	South Texas College
GED	General Equivalency Education	STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Math
HHS	Health & Human Services	TAA	Trade Adjustment Assistance
HDJT	High Demand Job Training	TANF	Temporary Assistance to Needy Families
HEP	High School Equivalency Program	TEA	Texas Education Agency
HS	High School	TIP	Texas Industry Partnership
HUD	Housing and Urban Development	TRS	Texas Rising Star
IHE	Institution of Higher Education	TSR	Texas School Ready (TSR) Project
IHEAS	Institution of Higher Education Academy of Sciences	TSC	Texas Southmost College
IEP	Individual Employment Plan	TSTC	Texas State Technical College
ISDs	Independent School Districts	TVC	Texas Veteran's Commission

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

Part 1: Board Vision and Strategies

A. Vision and Goals

Board's strategic vision to support regional economic growth and economic self-sufficiency

As the Workforce Development Board for Cameron County, WFS 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 membership that reflects the diverse constituencies of the region: business, economic development, education, labor, community organizations, and government.

The WFS Cameron Workforce 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, skilled workforce.

The Mission, Vision, and Board Goal statements for Workforce Solutions Cameron (WFS Cameron) for FY 2021-2024 are essentially carried over from FY 2013-2018 and were originally developed by the Board of Directors (Board) at a Strategic Planning meeting held on October 27, 2012, and are noted below. They have since been expanded by Board approval at its January 26, 2017 Board Meeting to specify additional goals, objectives, and activities required by the new WIOA law of 2014, and/or as prioritized by the Board of Directors. These statements, presented in table format, endeavor to illustrate that the Board works with a variety of regional partners in a collaborative process to collectively achieve economic growth that enables the workforce occupational demand to increase—thus providing the opportunity for more job seekers in the area to attain self-sufficiency.

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.

WFS Cameron Board Goals FY 2021-2024: *As narrated and expanded below, these Goals, objectives, and strategies support regional economic growth and economic self-sufficiency, and include goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce, including youth and individuals with barriers to employment, and goals relating to the performance accountability measures based on performance indicators described in WIOA Section 116(b)(2)(A).*

1. 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 as to 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*

2. *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.*
- *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 WFS Cameron 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 marketing campaigns that increase awareness and parental support for technical education career pathways.*
- *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 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 for participants and the general population of the region.*
- *Strengthen AEL partnership to address basic skills barriers of workforce participants.*
- *Partner with Community Based Organizations (CBOs) to increase number of participants served through leveraged funding and to co- case manage participants resulting in higher number of skilled workers.*

3. *Attain exceptional performance ratings on all Texas Workforce Commission accountability performance measures.*

- *Continue to strengthen policies and procedures at Board and Contractor levels to support an environment of expertise to be able to excel in all TWC-contracted performance measures.*

- *Promote a continuous improvement process to ensure accountability, integrity, quality, and transparency across all workforce programs.*
- *Develop and maintain appropriate internal accounting controls to provide assurance of properly recorded timely transactions in accordance to federal and state regulations.*
- *Continue to apply sufficient monitoring and staff professional development to ensure compliance with Personal Identifiable Information (PII) regulations.*

4. *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 with industry/education councils (EDCs, CTCs) that 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.*
- *Work with Contractor to analyze and improve customer workflow to improve quality and deliver the highest level of timely customer service to job seekers.*
- *Search for funding opportunities to assist target populations of homeless persons, parolees, and youth offenders transitioning into a skilled workforce through grants or cooperative partnerships with other agencies.*

5. *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.*
- *Continue appropriate reporting of risk assessment 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.*

6. *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 in available programs and services.*
- *Continue membership and participation in local collective impact groups whose efforts are associated with economic development, education, and social services.*
- *Participate in the design and implementation of local outreach plan to support a new emphasis on the value of technical education, stackable industry certifications, apprenticeship programs, and career pathway awareness.*
- *Continue production and distribution of our Impact Report to partners and the public to highlight community involvement and the services available from the agency.*

Numerous objectives and strategies were developed and implemented by the Board's Operations Committee as noted in the *Local Workforce Development Plan Matrix* (Table 1-A) below 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, FY2021-2024 that will impact our workforce system:

Issues:

- *The Great Resignation, Immigration/Population shifts, Workforce Statistics--- Educational Levels, Skills Gap, Soft Skills*
- *Population Growth Statistics*
- *Population Characteristics---Illiteracy, Poverty, Single Parent Families*
- *Border Volatility*
- *Public Transportation*
- *Housing—Affordability, New Developments*
- *Alignment of Educational Programs to Available and Emerging Jobs*

Challenges:

- *COVID-19 Pandemic Remnant Issues*
- *2022 National Election Results---Policy/Funding Questions*
- *New trade opportunities and capacity for new jobs via Brownsville ship channel*
- *Workforce Center Facilities Capacity*
- *The Digital Divide*
- *Limited Federal Funding of Workforce Programs*
- *State Funding of Elementary & Secondary Education---CTE programs, Adult Education, and Pre-K concerns*
- *Returning Veterans Entering the Workforce*
- *State ,Federal and Local Grant Solicitation Capabilities*
- *Forced relocation of Workforce Centers from TWC-owned buildings.*
- *Marketing/Outreach Funding--WIOA*
- *High Staff Turnover and Retention Problems for Employers*
- *Regional Collaboration*
- *Pervasive Work Ethic Issues Among Potential Clients*

Opportunities:

- *New SpaceX Boca Chica- Texas Launch Site Development—New Aviation Industry*
- *Port of Brownsville deepening ship channel from 42 feet to 52 feet*
- *TSTC/Texas A & M Engineering Partnership*
- *“Re-shoring” of Manufacturing Jobs back to the US*
- *New Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) Terminals at Port of Brownsville*
- *Proposed Bridge to South Padre Island*
- *Renewed Growth of Oil & Gas Industry in Eagle Ford Shale area*
- *Increased Tourism and Film Making Potential*

- *Cultural richness and scenic coastal landscapes to attract the film industry*
- *UT RGV School of Medicine—New Clinics, etc.*
- *Our Lady of the Lake University- Rio Grande Valley campus in La Feria*
- *University Center at Texas State Technical College*
- *Development of the Spacecraft Tracking and Astronomical Research into Gigahertz Astrophysical Transient Emission (STARGATE)*
- *I-69 Transportation Corridor Development*
- *TAMU Manufacturing HUB*
- *Remote Work*
- *Industry Task Force collaboration*
- *EDC/Chamber Partnerships for Leveraged Grant Funding and Employer Engagement*
- *Distance Learning Potential—Metrix Learning*
- *Potential New Steel Mill for South Texas*

Since 2008, educational institutions' extensions in the Rio Grande Valley have increased award opportunities for residents of Cameron County. Our Lady of the Lake University in San Antonio began offering doctoral classes on 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, currently on for Provisional Accreditation with the next LCME Limited Survey scheduled for the 2022-2023 academic year. 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. These colleges include:

- The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley
- Texas A&M University Kingsville
-
- Wayland Baptist University

Articulation agreements with the following colleges have also been drawn up to accept student transfers from TSTC upon completion of an Associate' Degree:

- Texas A&M University Kingsville
- Texas A&M Central Texas
- The University of Texas at Dallas
- University of Texas at Tyler
- The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley
- Texas Tech University
- Western Governors University
- Baylor University
- Wayland Baptist University
- Bellevue University
- Houston Baptist University
- Howard Payne University
- Lamar University
- Navarro College
- Stephen F. Austin University

- Temple College
- Texas Southmost College
- Texas Women's University
- University of Houston-Victoria
- Texas College Bridge
- Wharton County Junior College
- Percom

THE WFS CAMERON STRATEGIC PLAN MATRIX

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

TWIC-A = The Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan FY 2016—FY2023, 2020 Update

TWC-A = The Texas Workforce Commission Consolidated 2021-2025 Strategic Plan

TWC-B= WIOA Combined State Plan Program Years 2020-2023

TWC-C = TWC- Strategic Plan for Adult Education and Literacy for FY2015-2020

TWC-D= Texas Early Learning Council - Early Learning Strategic Plan 2020-2025 Goals

WFS-A = *WFS Cameron Board Goals 2013-2018*

WFS-B = *WFS Cameron Key Issues, Challenges, & Opportunities 2021-24*

Workforce Solutions Cameron Board Goals continue to support the TWC State Plan and Objectives. The Matrix 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 2021-24 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		Workforce Solutions Cameron		
Local Workforce Development Plan Matrix 2021-2024				
TWIC-A---The Texas Workforce system Strategic Plan, FY2021-2024, 2022 Update:				
	Goal	Objective	WFS Cameron Strategy	Evaluation Elements
TWIC-A1	Focus on Employers	Expand licensure and industry certifications.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Expand the number of apprentices in underserved populations.Provide training toward industry-based certifications to expand the number of work-ready individuals in high demand occupations.Increase the number of employers who participate in work-based learning programs.Form employer work groups to examine current issues and challenges and develop potential solutions.	Type and number of third-party, industry-based certifications successfully completed by program participants. Record of Employer Work Groups—Meetings, Accomplishments
TWIC-A2	Engage in Partnerships	Expand partnerships with system partners and stakeholders to promote collaboration, joint planning, and enhanced participant outcomes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Work with stakeholders to identify and implement effective practices and strategies for improved coordination and enhanced participant outcomes.Promote information sharing and integration of program services among adult education and literacy, VR, and the Board.	Percentage of consumers participating in integrated work-based learning activities. % of individuals co-enrolled in AEL, VR, and workforce programs.
TWIC-A3	Align System Elements	Enhance transition services for students and youth with disabilities to work or education, then employment.	Achieve full implementation of the Pathways to Careers Initiative such as SEAL for students with disabilities.	% of students & youth who participated in transition services and subsequently enrolled in postsecondary training and/or employment.
TWIC-A4	Improve and Integrate Programs	Employ enhanced or alternative program and service delivery methods.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Direct students to multiple available training and career path options.Expand rural service delivery through the use of the Mobile Resource Lab.Expand the use of technology for providing online services such as job fairs, eligibility determination, or other interactions.Increase the number of TRS childcare providers.Promote Distance Learning and Metrix Learning as alternative learning strategies.	Utilization of LMCI, self-serve options, and online professional development courses. Increase in # of TRS providers. DL offerings by colleges, and Metrix tracking.

	<u>Goal</u>	<u>Objective</u>	<u>WFS Cameron Strategy</u>	<u>Evaluation Elements</u>
TWC-A1	Support a Workforce system that allows employers and workers to achieve and sustain economic prosperity.	Expand workforce training, recruiting, and hiring services for employers. Enhance workforce services and resources to help job seekers access information about in-demand occupations, gain the skills needed, and find and retain employment.	Continued integration of services to consolidate resources, and efforts and reduce redundancies. Use TANF funding to hire and place Career Awareness Specialists in Middle Schools and High Schools. Expand marketing/outreach services to promote programs and combat worker work ethic issues.	Monitoring of TWC performance measures. Engagement Reports from Career Specialist TWC Performance measure attainment.
TWC-A2	Promote employers' access to the talent and abilities of individuals with a disability.	Full integration of VR services within the Workforce Solutions network.	Expand the network of employers that recruit, train, and employ the talents and skills of individuals with disabilities through BSU reps, SHN, and Board partnerships with EDCs and industry groups.	# of participating employers. Increased # of participants.
TWC-A3	Prepare individuals for employment by supporting education and training that equips individuals with in-demand skills as identified by employers.	Identify and allocate available state and federal programs and resources for supporting educational programs. Leverage Skills Development Fund grants and other resources to support in-demand job training.	Continue to utilize WIOA funding for training. Identify other sources of funding for training such as TIP, HDJT. Continue to coordinate SDF grants with postsecondary training providers.	# and value of awarded SDF grants to our region.
TWC-A4	Accelerate employment pathways for veterans, service members and their spouses as they transition to civilian occupations in Texas.	Expansion of programs such as Texas Operation Welcome Home, College Credit for Heroes, veterans training and the Texas Veterans Leadership peer mentorship program.	Continued promotion of all veteran's transition programs.	# of veterans and their spouses assisted with transition services.
TWC-A5	Fostering systems that enhance early education, support strong families, advance the growth of at-risk workforce to accelerate employment opportunities, and help support personal and family stability.	Support TRS program and other programs that ensure children are ready for school, ready to learn, and positioned to succeed.	Continue to promote Texas Rising Star and Texas School Ready programs.	# of new TRS and TSR childcare providers enlisted.
TWC-A6	Maintain the highest levels of integrity, accountability, and efficiency in all workforce systems and TWC programs.	Continuous improvements to the systems to minimize fraud, waste and abuse with TWC and all programs it administers.	Continued TWC PII professional development courses, as well as internal and external monitoring and audits.	Regular Monitoring Reports. Annual Audit. Annual TWC Monitoring Results.
<u>TWC-B---WIOA Combined State Plan:</u>				
	<u>Goal</u>	<u>Objective</u>	<u>WFS Cameron Strategy</u>	<u>Evaluation Elements</u>
TWC-B1	Support a Workforce System that allows employers and workers to achieve and sustain economic prosperity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand workforce training, recruiting, and hiring services for employers. Enhance workforce services and resources to help job seekers access 	Continued integration of services to consolidate resources, and efforts and reduce redundancies.	Monitoring of TWC performance measures.

		information, gain skills, and find and retain employment.	Use TANF funding to hire and place Career Awareness Specialists in Middle Schools and High Schools. Expand marketing/outreach services to promote programs and combat worker work ethic issues.	Engagement Reports from Career Specialist TWC Performance measure attainment.
TWC-B2	Promote employers' access to the talent and abilities of individuals with a disability.	Full integration of VR services within the Workforce Solutions network.	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".	# of participating employers. Increased # of participants.
TWC-B3	Prepare individuals for employment by supporting education and training that equips individuals with in-demand skills as identified by employers.	Identify and allocate available state and federal programs and resources for supporting educational programs. Leverage Skills Development Fund grants and other resources to support in-demand job training.	Continue to coordinate SDF grants with postsecondary training providers.	# and value of awarded SDF grants to our region.
TWC-B4	Maintain the highest levels of integrity, accountability, and efficiency in all workforce systems and TWC programs.	Continuous improvements to the systems to minimize fraud, waste and abuse with TWC and all programs it administers.	Continued TWC PII professional development courses, as well as internal and external monitoring and audits.	Regular Monitoring Reports. Annual Audit. Annual TWC Monitoring.
<u>TWC-C---Strategic Plan for Adult Education and Literacy, FY 2015-2020:</u>				
	<u>Goal</u>	<u>Objective</u>	<u>WFS Cameron Strategy</u>	<u>Evaluation Elements</u>
TWC-C1	To support increases in employment, postsecondary education and training transition, skill gains, and secondary completion through demonstrated approaches that integrate system services and leverage community partnerships.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase workforce, secondary, and postsecondary education and training outcomes. • Address demand. • Increase system coordination and integration. • Improve performance excellence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate with AEL on enhanced recruitment and assessment models. • Collaborate with AEL on developing work-based projects with employers to support business expansion and build employers as AEL allies. • Collaborate with AEL to align AEL levels to specific skills and work-readiness requirements, including industry-recognized certifications. 	Increased # of AEL students engaged in workforce activities or programs. Increased # AEL students entering job training or employment upon AEL completion.
<u>TWC-D---Texas Early Learning Council Early Learning Strategic Plan, 2020-2025 Goals:</u>				
	<u>Goal</u>	<u>Objective</u>	<u>WFS Cameron Strategy</u>	<u>Evaluation Elements</u>
TWC-D1	Re-emphasize workforce professional development needs in specific topics, navigating barriers to higher education, and access to opportunities to sustain a career in childcare and development.	Address challenging behaviors, supporting children with special needs, and child/brain development.	Continue TRS promotion for childcare providers. Continue funding of Quality Projects with professional development webinars/presentations in serving children with special needs.	# of TRS providers added each year. Professional development seminars developed and delivered to childcare provider management and staff.

WFS-A---WFS Cameron Board Goals:				
	Goal	Objectives	Strategies	Evaluation Elements
WFS-A1	Increase the presence and linkages with Employers.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Communicate top priorities to stakeholders. 2. Develop strategies to provide and support the delivery of services to meet business needs. 3. Improve and expand internal and external communication to provide business intelligence to our customers. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. ED presentations to all major stakeholders--Chambers, civic org., EDC's, ISD's, business groups, etc. 2. Employer Surveys. 3. Customer Satisfaction Surveys. 4. JobsEQ data searches. <p># of businesses using our data (Business Intel Report).</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Conduct analysis of labor market and industry data and validate. 6. Written BSU strategy plan. 7. Develop outreach plan for the provision of services. 8. Host industry specific gatherings to identify business needs/issues/challenges/opportunities. 9. Invite employers to attend participate in Job Clubs, internships, job shadowing, mentoring, etc. 10. Provide staff training to improve quality of application and job postings. 11. Host annual NDEAM events for employers 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Employer satisfaction ratings from Surveys. 2. Customer satisfaction ratings from Surveys. 3. Job Postings Filled Rate. 4. Improvement of TWC employer performance measures. 5. Numbers of presentations to stakeholder groups. Monthly Reports to Board.
WFS-A2	Facilitate the preparation of an educated and skilled workforce, including youth and individuals with barriers to employment.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Coordinate with ISDs, public community and technical colleges, and CTCs 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 for equipment to train students for jobs in high demand occupations. 2. Provide free GED classes to out-of-school youth and adults without a high school equivalency certificate. 3. Collaborate with VR and DBS to provide services to their customers. 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. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Hold LMCI work sessions with ISDs and CTCs to determine skill gap areas. 2. Enlist industry specific groups to assist CTCs in skills gap program development and alignment with industry-recognized certifications. 3. Assist with new program marketing campaign development. 4. Assist CTCs with TWC, DOL, and DOE grant applications for new program startup 5. SHN will continue to coordinate with ISDs and VRS to promote Pre-ETS. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Number of innovative programs developed. 2. Number of students enrolled in these programs. 3. Number of industry certifications awarded. 4. Number of program graduates. 5. Number of graduates hired in field for which trained. 6. Number and value of grants awarded.
WFS-A3	Attain exceptional performance against	1.Coordinate staff and contractor training on new measures.	1. Attainment of MP+ on at least 90% of performance measures.	1. Monthly TWC MPR Reports

	all Texas Workforce Commission accountability performance measures.	2. Closely monitor contractor performance on measures attainment at highest level.		
WFS-A4	Improve the quality of workforce services to Employers and Job Seekers.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improve customer service training to Board and Contractor staff. 2. Increase quality performance measures of training providers. 3. Develop results-driven monitoring plan for providers and staff functions. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conduct Employer and Customer Satisfaction Surveys on regular basis. 2. Provide professional development for staff. 3. Research and implement results-driven systems approach to performance evaluations. 4. Provide virtual workforce services to employers and job seekers 5. Solicit employer collaboration in developing Industry-Specific Work Groups. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Survey Results. 2. Professional development seminar attendance. 3. Analysis of performance evaluations. 4. Number participating in virtual services 5. Minutes from Industry Work Groups.
WFS-A5	Ensure accountability and transparency in all matters and actions.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure accountability measures as part of personnel evaluation process. 2. Ensure compliance with Board, state, and federal rules regarding postings of meetings, RFPs, minutes, etc. 3. Ensure full disclosure of all financial and operational matters through Board committees. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Post all meetings with full agenda item descriptions in accordance with the law and Board policies. 2. Provide easy access to all stakeholders of all meeting minutes and other open records as requested. 3. Establish culture of staff accountability and transparency in all operations through staff meeting discussions and written procedures and policies. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Documentation of meeting postings. 2. Posting of Board and Committee Minutes. 3. Evidence of accountability and transparency culture in staff meetings and reports to Committees, Board, and state and federal agencies. 4. Documentation of accountability and transparency requirements in policy and procedure manuals.
WFS-A6	Increase presence and image while building community relationships.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Board administrative staff will become involved in public service organization participation and collaboration to the extent possible with outside resources. 2. ED will prepare and deliver agency mission and message to stakeholder civic organizations across the County. 3. Develop outreach marketing plan advertising WFS Cameron customer services to the extent possible with financial resources, using both traditional and social media mediums. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Encourage staff membership in civic organizations. 2. Encourage participation/collaboration/support of civic organization projects and initiatives. 3. Develop outreach plan for agency services to solicit maximum customer access and use of services within budget limitations. 4. Create Community Outreach Committee to promote Board members as “ambassadors” of WFS Cameron Mission. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. # staff memberships in civic organizations. 2. Documentation of participation in civic agency events. 3. Outreach marketing plan developed and funded to extent possible. 4. Social media tracking reports. 5. Evidence of aggressive outreach and awareness campaign with area school districts regarding programs, services, collaborative funding arrangements, grants, and tracking. 6. Minutes from Industry Work Groups.

			5. Solicit employer collaboration in developing Industry-Specific Work Groups.	
WFS-B---KEY ISSUES, CHALLENGES, & OPPORTUNITIES FOR 2021-2024:				
KEY ISSUES:				
		Description	Adopted Action Plans	Evaluation Elements
WFS-B1	The Great Resignation	The Great Resignation of workers due to retirement and the so-called “socialistic work ethic” prior to and during the COVID Pandemic has 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. Will also assist employers in development of technology and incentive solutions to help attract new workers.	. Documentation of outreach efforts. Minutes of Industry Work Group Meetings.
WFS-B2	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.
WFS-B3	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.	(See TWC-A and TWC-B objectives and action plans of this document to address these issues.)	(See TWC-A and TWC-B evaluation tools of this document to address these issues.)
WFS-B4	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.	(See TWC-A and TWC-B objectives and action plans of this document to address these issues.)	(See TWC-A and TWC-B evaluation tools of this document to address these issues.)
WFS-B5	Population Statistics: Illiteracy, Poverty, Single Parent Families, etc.	Elevated levels of illiteracy (37%), poverty (35%), percentage of single parent family units (20%), and low educational levels (13% 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	(See TWC-A, TWC-B, and TWC-C objectives and action plans of this document to address these issues.)	(See TWC-A, TWC-B, and TWC-C evaluation tools of this document to address these issues.)

		cannot keep and attract sustainable wage jobs for our growing population.		
WFS-B6	Border Volatility	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.	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.	Increased # of high school graduates. Lowering of the dropout rates. Increased Parental Involvement projects. Increased Pre-K programs and services.
WFS-B7	Public Transportation	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.	Continue support of Valley Metro Route 45 which connects UTRGV in Edinburg, through rural communities south and east, to the TSC & UTRGV campuses in Brownsville. Continue support services to customers in need of transportation assistance.	Ridership data of Valley Metro Route 45. Analysis of transportation support service payments.
WFS-B8	Housing	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.	Continue to collaborate with the Equal Voice Network, and other public housing authorities and agencies to promote state, federal, and/or grant funding for energy efficient public housing.	# of Cameron County public housing units added annually. Documentation of training for HUD Section 3 participants.
WFS-B9	Alignment of Educational Programs to Available Jobs	(See TWC-A1-3 & TWC-B5)	(See TWC-A1-3 & TWC-B5)	(See TWC-A1-3 & TWC-B5)
WFS-C---CHALLENGES:				
		<u>Description</u>	<u>Adopted Action Plans</u>	<u>Evaluation Elements</u>
WFS-C1	COVID-19 Pandemic Remnant Issues	The COVID-19 pandemic has severely impacted the Valley economy, with our international bridges closed, businesses closed, and unemployment rising to double digits. It has also caused WFS Cameron to find new ways to serve our customers in other than face-to-face contact mode. 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. That said, we will 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. # of client contacts by phone or email. # of f-to-f client appointments at centers. # of employers served with COVID-related trainings.

WFS-C2	2024 National Election Results	Constant concern exists over federal policy changes that could impact our WIOA funding and regulations.	Monitor and implement any legislative guidelines impacting workforce and/or economic development.	Monitoring of WIOA implementation guidelines.
WFS-C3	New trade opportunities and capacity for new jobs via Brownsville ship channel.	Cameron County boasts 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 would 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 of progress on Channel Project.
WFS-C4	Workforce Center Facilities Capacity	WFS Cameron currently services approximately 170,000 customers in its two major locations in Harlingen and Brownsville. 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.	Continue to monitor caseloads and customer demand at all centers. Begin research on potential additional sites for expansion of facilities. Begin planning activities for potential budget funding of additional facilities.	Customer traffic counts. Case worker load analysis. LMCI data analysis.
WFS-C5	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 large portion of our residents. The requirement for online education and virtual-only meetings has negatively impacted students, our clients, and employers	Provide online services to clients by phone and email. Open Centers Only to clients without digital access, and by appointment. Retrofit Centers with COVID precautions. 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.	# of virtual employer presentations provided. # of virtual job fairs provided. # of virtual applications developed for customer services.
WFS-C6	Limited Federal Funding of Workforce Programs	Funding decreases, coupled with increased demand for services to a growing, needy workforce, is a constant concern of the Board and WFS Cameron administration.	Engage Board committees in discussion of alternatives and priorities related to declining federal funding. Perform LMCI and TWIST 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.	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.
WFS-C7	State Funding of Elementary & Secondary Education--CTE programs, Adult	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	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.	Documentation of match between technical programs available and jobs available. Number of high schools increasing the number of CTE programs within their curriculum options. Number of CTE

	Education, and Pre-K concerns	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.	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 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.	program graduates from HS. Number 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. Number of TWC JET and Dual Enrollment Equipment Grants attained across county ISDs.
WFS-C8	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.	# of veterans served by WFS Cameron in various programs/projects. # of veterans trained with ITA's. # of veterans placed in employment. Job retention statistics for veterans placed in employment. # of Veterans Job Fairs conducted, and numbers of veterans participating.
WFS-C9	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 for 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.	# of grants filed. # of grants awarded. \$ value of grants awarded.
WFS-C10	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 workforces.	Develop a contingency budget for marketing funds in the event of WIOA approval of such.	WIOA revision language.
WFS-C11	High Staff Turnover and Retention	Current workforce dynamics and worker attitudes toward work have acerbated turnovers and retirements	Assist employers in finding new employees, and in developing new work	Documentation of outreach efforts by industry.

	Problems for Employers	in our workforce, causing employers to not have available workers to help operate their businesses.	efficiency technologies and worker incentives to rebuild their workforce.	Minutes of Industry Work Groups. Documentation of TWC and other private and public employer webinars broadcast to Cameron employers.
WFS-C12	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.
WFS-C13	Pervasive Work Ethic Issues Among Potential Clients	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.
WFS-C14	Forced Relocation of Workforce Centers from TWC-owned buildings.	TWC is requiring WFS Cameron to move out of their AOBs so they can sell them. This requires WFSC to find new space for its Centers, and to now pay standard private rent costs, which will increase our rental budget from about \$38K per year to almost half a million dollars. This will negatively impact funds available for training and other projects.	WFSC has located a new Harlingen site and is in the process of securing a lease for additional space in upper Cameron County. The Brownsville location Center will take another couple of years to find space and secure a lease.	Rental line item in Budget. Progress on EDA Grant with Cameron County.
WFS-D---OPPORTUNITIES:				
		Description	Adopted Action Plans	Evaluation Elements
WFS-D1	New SpaceX South Texas Launch Site Development—New Aviation Industry	SpaceX is a private spaceport and test site with a new launch facility at Boca Chica Village in Brownsville. This company has the potential to help Brownville and the Valley attain a new economic development comparative advantage for our region—creating over 500 direct, and 400 downstream, well-paying jobs to the area, and setting the stage for a full-blown aerospace/aviation industry development around their launch facility. It will also incentivize STEM-related educational programs within our schools, colleges, and universities, thereby significantly improving the quality of our workforce in the future for aerospace and all kinds of support industries.	Support state TWC incentive funding from SDF and Technology Fund sources. Support workforce training program development at TSTC, TSC, and UTRGV for the type of workers and technicians needed by SpaceX. Join the EDC's Chambers, County & City Governments, and other stakeholders in the public support of this new industry to our area.	Board and Executive Director public support presentations. Supply LMCI data to facilitate workforce capacity and potential. Assist SpaceX with SDF and other grant opportunities. Number of jobs created from the upstream supply chain
WFS-D2	Expansion of the Port of Brownsville ship channel	Entrance to 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.	Increase in vessels carrying supplies into and out of Port area. Increase in cargo in/out of Port.
WFS-D3	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.	Numbers of TAMU students served through this partnership.

WFS-D4	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 workers to build even one site would be over 6,000 jobs, which would severely strain the current workforce. 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.	Research skilled trades occupations to determine skill gaps. 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. Assist in development of Registered Apprenticeship training programs in all trade areas.	Number of participants trained. Number of participants NCCER-certified. Number of participants hired in field for which trained. Number of new Apprenticeship programs.
WFS-D5	New Proposed Causeway Bridge to South Padre Island	Cameron County is pending the clearance of environmental studies and funding 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 within the next 5 years. 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. The demand for construction workers for this project and the LNG projects will severely strain the capacity of our workforce supply.	Publicly support the new bridge proposal. Be proactive in assisting construction and support industry firms in finding and hiring employees.	Numbers of jobs filled for the project.
WFS-D6	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.	Publicly promote the availability of construction, welding, CDL drivers, and other technician jobs available in the Eagle Ford region. Support training for Cameron County citizens who wish to avail themselves of those jobs.	Number of Cameron County residents taking positions in Eagle Ford Shale area.
WFS-D7	Increased Tourism and Film Making	Both SpaceX locating to the region, plus the alluring aspects of our beach and birding potential could increase tourism to our region; National Register listing of 33 properties and districts (historic landmarks) for Cameron County; Brownsville included by Texas Film Commission as potential for continuation of filming destination and on-location filming for border-based movies or clips.	Proactively work through BSU unit to identify employer needs in the tourism and film industries and work with local CTCs to satisfy that demand through new program offerings	Increase in tourism jobs recorded in WIT and TWIST. LMCI data. Increase in number of movies filming on location in the area.

WFS-D8	New UT RGV School of Medicine—New Clinics	Part of the recent legislation creating UTRGV also created a new UT School of Medicine in the Valley—houses the RAHC clinical research center facility in Harlingen. The health industry will expand at an even greater rate than we see currently, bringing new jobs and new career opportunities to our citizenry, as well as improve the quality of life and health for our residents.	Work with county and state legislators in the planning phase of this project. 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. Proactively support the project and supply critical LMCI data to planners so they can make sound decisions relative to the project.	Long-term evidence of new health-related programs entering the curricular offerings of CTC's and the University.
WFS-D9	Our Lady of the Lake University Rio Grande Valley- New (OLLU) Campus in La Feria, TX	OLLU, out of San Antonio, partnered with the City of La Feria to build a permanent campus in La Feria, giving Cameron residents another choice of higher education options—a faith-based university offering Bachelor's and Master's degrees in addition to 2 PhD Programs.	WFS Cameron will proactively support this new higher education facility and collaborate with OLLU on program justification through LMI data and ETPS enlistment.	OLLU enrollments. # of OLLU graduates. Local employment stats of graduates.
WFS-D10	University Center at TSTC Harlingen	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 Cameron County residents' higher education career choices right here at home. Currently Wayland Baptist University, Texas A & M University- Kingsville and Corpus Christi, and UT-RGV are taking advantage of TSTC's facility.	WFS Cameron will proactively support this new higher education facility and collaborate with all universities on program justification through LMI data and ETPL enlistment.	Enrollment in University Center programs. # of postsecondary graduates from Center programs. Employment data on University Center graduates.
WFS-D11	Development of the Spacecraft Tracking and Astronomical Research into Gigahertz Astrophysical Transient Emission (STARGATE)	STARGATE has prompted the UT system to designate the Center for Advanced Radio Astronomy (CARA) 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	Serve on UTRGV Strategic Planning Committee. Participate in fostering community and County-wide meetings to plan for the future of UTRGV. Promote CARA's network of world-renowned scientists/engineers with expertise in space exploration, space missions, RF technologies, signal processing, and "Big Data." Promote Professional PhD level student associates in Physics, Astrophysics,	Enrollment in Summer STARGATE academies when available Enrollment in dual credit courses Enrollment in UTRGV's Physics, Astrophysics, Engineering, Computer Science, and Business courses.

		significantly boost UTRGV's technical and educational resources. This unique partnership will expand the number of opportunities, and the demand for graduates with advanced mathematics, physics, and engineering degrees in South Texas.	Engineering, Computer Science, and Business.	
WFS-D12	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.		Continue to support I-69 improvements
WFS-D13	TAMU Manufacturing HUB	The TAMU Extension Service training facility at the Port of Brownsville is an additional, free cost, training opportunity for Brownsville area students. Trainings available are offered in a variety of manufacturing and engineering disciplines.		Continue to outreach for students to take advantage of this opportunity.
WFS-D14	Remote Work	As a result of the COVID Pandemic, remote work has become popular among a large sector of our workforce. Workers are now demanding remote work options, and employers are struggling with the ability to accommodate those demands.		WFS Cameron will explore the research of remote work to provide employers with any remedies that are available.
WFS-D15	Industry Task Force Collaboration	Industry-specific Work Groups/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 in efficiency platforms and other improvements to better their operations and expand their businesses.		WFS Cameron should serve as the convener of all industry clusters pertinent to our Cameron County.
WFS-D16	EDC/Chamber Partnerships for Leveraged Grant Funding and Employer Engagement	EDs and Chambers in the area need to work together to combine resources to generate more attractive grant packages to fund mutually beneficial projects.		WFS Cameron can serve as the convener of all industry clusters pertinent to our Cameron County to review the possibilities and opportunities.

WFS-D17	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 5,000 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 medium to the public.	
WFS-D18	Potential New Steel Mill for South Texas	Several past attempts to lure a steel plant to our area have failed for one reason or another, but we should continue our efforts to build an industrial workforce that can support such an operation and generate jobs for our economy.		Continue to participate in all economic development efforts to attract the attraction of a steel mill plant to our area.	
WFS-D19	Community College Funding	The <i>Texas Commission on Community College Finance</i> is currently charged with examining and recommending changes to the way CCs are funded by the State---primarily looking at a “performance-based” formula rather than ‘butts in seats’. Any change to CC funding could potentially impact what colleges offer and what it might cost.	WFS Cameron will monitor the legislative activity surrounding this issue.	Public information postings.	

B. Board Strategies

Board's strategy to work with the entities carrying out the core programs and with the required partners to align resources available to the local workforce development area (workforce area) to achieve the vision and goals:

The table below outlines the strategies employed to achieve the Board's vision and goals in conjunction with core program partnerships.

Table 1B-1: Core Program Partnership Strategies to Achieve Vision and Goals

Core Program	Responsible Entity	Partner Entity	Activities/Strategies
Youth Workforce Investment Activities In-School Out of School	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, AEL, 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, WFS Cameron also offers job readiness and soft skills workshops, and workforce readiness certifications. SHN outreaches and coordinates services for co-enrollment. <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, WFS Cameron also offers job readiness and soft skills workshops, and workforce readiness certifications. <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. <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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. • Work with partners on referrals to appropriate entity for needed services. • Workforce services provided: soft skills, financial literacy, LMCI training, job readiness, career, and college awareness. • Reverse referral of candidates.
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. <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, SSA TTW,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. • Student HireAbility Navigator will work with VR to inform students with disabilities on Pre-ETS services such as work experience and employment programs. • Work with partners on referrals to appropriate agency for additional services.

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.

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.

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 (VR) 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 (TANF) employment and training program	CHOICE Orientation and information on training, work activities, and childcare services	Coordinate with partners regarding available resources and training for eligible applicants
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

Actions the Board will take toward becoming or remaining a High-Performing Board:

To continue as a high performing board, WFS Cameron will operate consistent with the goals developed by the TWIC. WFS Cameron will maintain their focus on serving employers, engage in partnerships, align system elements, and improve and integrate programs.

WFS Cameron's goal to remain as a high-performing board begins at the customer's point of entry into our Workforce Centers. Once assessed for the type of service warranted, a customer is routed appropriately. Customers that reach the point of being assessed and determined as needing additional services, which include, but are not limited to, employment assistance, adult & literacy guidance, career pathway guidance, childcare services, or training assistance, he/she is provided excellent customer service. Career coaching will follow throughout the customer's involvement in our system as they receive the continuum of services.

To ensure customer service goals are achieved, customer surveys are in place to capture data on best practices or areas of improvement.

As part of our constant oversight, web and ad-hoc reports are run and extracted to review case management entries to ensure all work being performed is being captured in TWIST.

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 employment within their field of training or a training related occupation.

Another part of our oversight is our internal and external monitoring teams. For our internal monitoring, a yearly schedule is developed by Board staff to identify the programs, both programmatic and financial, to be reviewed in what are considered high risk areas of concern. 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.

For those areas with identified issues and/ or findings, the Board imposes corrective action by formally implementing Performance Improvement Plans or Technical Assistance Plans along with monthly or bi-monthly meetings to discuss strategies that will lead to improved performance.

Part 2. Economic and Workforce Analysis

A. Regional Economic and Employment Needs Analysis

In-demand industry sectors, in-demand occupations, and target occupations and Current and Accurate Description of the Regional Economy

According to the ACS 2021, Cameron County has an estimated population of 423,029, up 4.1% from 406,220 in the April 2010 census data. In comparison, Texas grew by 17% and the U.S. by 7.3 during that period. With as many people, Cameron County is the 13th most populated county in the state of Texas out of 254 counties with a median age of 32.6 compared to Texas' 35.5 and U.S' 38.8. The overall economic conditions in Cameron County were improving significantly in the past years prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, offering employment opportunities for varying occupations and skill levels to local job seekers. The economy was growing and the unemployment rate of **4.7%** in April of 2019 was the lowest in over 50 years, yet climbed as high as **16.9%** in April 2020. Rates that high had not been seen since 1991 when the year ended at 15.4%. In spite of the pandemic, growth in the economy can be observed by the increase in the number of establishments, average employment, average weekly wages, and total wages as reported by TWC's Quarterly Employment and Wages (QCEW). Current data reflect we have experienced a slight *increase* in average weekly wages in the first two quarters of 2022 compared to the previous year and overall total wages had a positive increase in 2022. Employment outlook appears promising due to the observed increase in number of establishments in 2022 and the significant increase in employment. The increase in average weekly wage could have resulted from the type of occupations in the fastest growing industries that are producing the highest number of job openings for the region.

According to TWC's QCEW, the total number of establishments grew by 7.6 percentage points from a total of 6,529 establishments for the first two quarters of 2017 to a total of 7,024 establishments in 2022. 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 25 percent from \$614 in 2017 to \$768 in 2022. A total of 10,660 new jobs were added, from 138,761 in 2017 to 149,421 in 2022. The total purchasing power also grew as a result of the total wage increase, from \$1,108,004,535 to \$1,491,495,538 in the same time period.

Table 2A-1: Economic Indicators

Year	Quarters	Average Establishments	Average Employment	Average Weekly Wages	Average Total Wages
2017	Q1 & Q2	6,529	138,761	\$614	\$1,108,004,535
2018	Q1 & Q2	6,532	138,984	\$633	\$1,143,250,660
2019	Q1 & Q2	6,590	140,659	\$653	\$1,194,154,874
2020	Q1 & Q2	6,697	137,897	\$682	\$1,220,902,813
2021	Q1 & Q2	6,765	143,015	\$713	\$1,326,522,931
2022	Q1 & Q2	7,024	149,421	\$768	\$1,491,495,538

Source: TWC's QCEW

According to TWC's Industry Projections shown in Table 2A-2, the total number of individuals employed in Cameron County is projected to grow by 20,113 new jobs by 2030. The area had a total of 138,987 individuals employed in 2020 and is projected to grow to 159,100, a 14.5% percentage change.

Health Care and Social Assistance continues to drive the economy and positions itself as the leading industry in the area with an average of 40,191 annual employment in 2020, projected to add the most jobs with 9,500 new positions added by 2030.

Utilities, Accommodation and Food Services, and Health Care & Social Assistance are projected to be the industries with the largest percentage change, creating a total of 13,471 positions in Cameron County by 2030. Other key industry clusters such as *Government, Except Postal Services, State and Local Education & Hospitals, Manufacturing, Educational Services, Transportation & Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services, and Retail Trade* are projected to grow at a strong rate with some adding significant jobs to the local economy.

Table 2A-2: Demand Industry Projections				
Industry Title	Annual Average Employment 2020	Annual Average Employment 2030	Number Change 2020-2030	Percent Change 2020-2030
Utilities	352	522	170	48.3
Accommodation and Food Services	13,570	17,371	3,801	28.0
Health Care and Social Assistance	40,191	49,691	9,500	23.6
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	931	1,104	173	18.6
Transportation and Warehousing	4,465	5,118	653	14.6
Government, Except Postal Services, State and Local Education & Hospitals	11,330	12,913	1,583	14.0
Manufacturing	5,478	6,136	658	12.0
Construction	3,289	3,650	361	11.0
Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	9,176	10,151	975	10.6
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	2,378	2,625	247	10.4
Management of Companies and Enterprises	760	823	63	8.3
Wholesale Trade	2,949	3,115	166	5.6
Other Services (except Public Administration)	3,838	4,023	185	4.8
Educational Services	18,850	19,692	842	4.5
Retail Trade	16,422	17,057	635	3.9
Finance and Insurance	3,079	3,173	94	3.1
Information	478	480	2	.4
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	1,451	1,456	5	.3

Source: Texaslmi.com

The five fastest growing demand industries are *Outpatient Care Centers, Offices of Dentists, Restaurants and Other Eating Places, Individual and Family Services, and Other Ambulatory Health Care Services*. These industries have an anticipated average percentage change of over 38.8% by the year 2030.

Table 2A-3: Fastest Growing Demand Industries

Industry Title	Annual Average Employment 2020	Annual Average Employment 2030	Number Change 2020-2030	Percent Change 2020-2030
Outpatient Care Centers	761	1,360	599	78.7

Offices of Dentists	755	1,004	249	33.0
Restaurants and Other Eating Places	11,641	15,084	3,443	29.6
Individual and Family Services	9,274	12,003	2,729	29.4
Other Ambulatory Health Care Services	524	645	121	23.1
Investigation and Security Services	1,044	1,251	207	19.8
Accounting, Tax Preparation, Bookkeeping, and Payroll Services	642	769	127	19.8
Federal Government, Except Postal Services	3,506	4,192	686	19.6
Electronics and Appliance Stores	521	617	96	18.4
Traveler Accommodation	1,325	1,564	239	18.0
Automobile Dealers	1,596	1,857	261	16.4
Employment Services	2,936	3,361	425	14.5
Home Health Care Services	12,685	14,370	1,685	13.3
Offices of Physicians	3,825	4,301	476	12.4
Local Government, Except. Education & Hospitals	6,822	7,636	814	11.9
Health and Personal Care Stores	853	948	95	11.1
Agencies, Brokerages, and Other Insurance Related Activities	935	1,026	91	9.7
Building Equipment Contractors	1,138	1,243	105	9.2
Management of Companies and Enterprises	760	823	63	8.3
State Government, Except. Education & Hospitals	1,002	1,085	83	8.3
Business Support Services	3,480	3,767	287	8.2
Child Day Care Services	1,251	1,354	103	8.2
Other Amusement and Recreation Industries	527	570	43	8.2
Nondepository Credit Intermediation	593	635	42	7.1
Warehousing and Storage	593	632	39	6.6

Source: Texaslmi.com

The industries adding the most jobs are noted in Table 2A-4. The five industries adding the most jobs in the county include *Outpatient Care Centers*, *Computer Systems Design and Related Services*, *Offices of Dentists*, *Individual and Family Services*, and *Restaurants and Other Eating Places*. These industries have an average percentage change of 43.7%.

Table 2A-4: Demand Industries Adding the Most Jobs

Industry Title	Annual Average Employment 2020	Annual Average Employment 2030	Number Change 2020-2030
Outpatient Care Centers	761	1,360	599
Computer Systems Design and Related Services	199	294	95
Offices of Dentists	755	1,004	249
Restaurants and Other Eating Places	11,641	15,084	3,443
Individual and Family Services	9,274	12,003	2,729
Other Ambulatory Health Care Services	524	645	121
Investigation and Security Services	1,044	1,251	207
Accounting, Tax Preparation, Bookkeeping, and Payroll Services	642	769	127

Federal Government, Except Postal Services	3,506	4,192	686
Electronics and Appliance Stores	521	617	96
Traveler Accommodation	1,325	1,564	239
Residential Intellectual and Developmental Disability, Mental Health, and Substance Abuse Facilities	456	532	76
Automobile Dealers	1,596	1,857	261
Employment Services	2,936	3,361	425
Total, All Industries	148,815	169,319	20,504
Home Health Care Services	12,685	14,370	1,685
Offices of Physicians	3,825	4,301	476
Local Government, Except. Education & Hospitals	6,822	7,636	814
Health and Personal Care Stores	853	948	95
Agencies, Brokerages, and Other Insurance Related Activities	935	1,026	91
Building Equipment Contractors	1,138	1,243	105
State Government, Except. Education & Hospitals	1,002	1,085	83
Business Support Services	3,480	3,767	287
Child Day Care Services	1,251	1,354	103
Elementary and Secondary Schools	16,596	17,501	905
Self-Employed Workers	9,214	9,605	391
Source: Texaslmi.com			

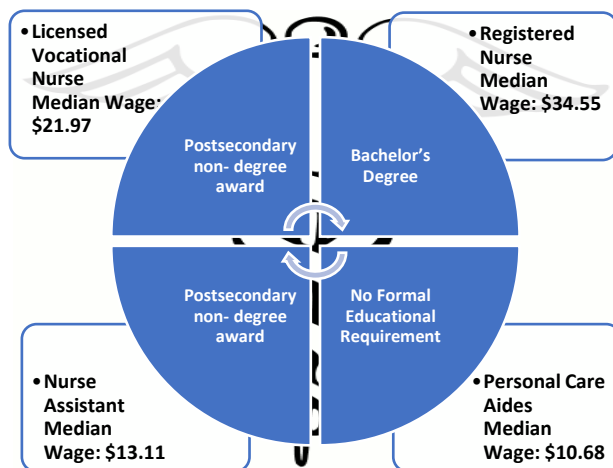
Table 2A-5 below illustrates the type of demand occupations that are found in these demand industry groups. Some of these demand occupations are being targeted by the board due to the projected percentage change in the next 10 years.

As noted in Table 2A-5, *Office Outpatient Care Centers* and *Utilities* industries are projected to change 45 percent or higher. There are a number of in-demand occupations that provide opportunities for upward mobility through career pathways. Some of the fastest growing occupations that are both targeted, and in-demand include Registered Nurses, Medical Secretaries, General and Operations Manager, and Electrical Power-Line Installers and Repairers. As previously noted, total industries are projected to add thousands of jobs by 2030.

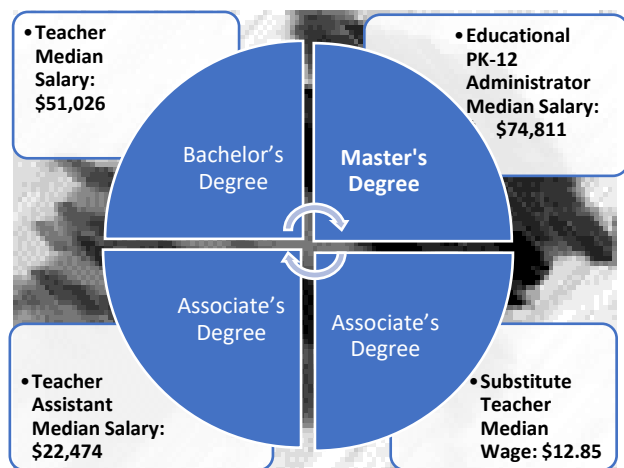
Career pathways have been introduced as a model to help job seekers explore options to navigate from one job to another within a career cluster.

Center staff have created a number of career pathway models that encourage job seekers in lower-level jobs in a career path to pursue more education and experience to enable them to move up within that path. A career path is a smaller group of jobs within a career cluster that use similar skills. Job seekers receive orientation on the various career pathways that can be followed based on training selected in targeted occupations with local training providers. Industry clusters that are perfect examples of such transition are the Healthcare and Educational Career Pathways. See illustration below:

Healthcare Career Pathway: Therapeutic



Educational Career Pathway



Source: Texaslmi.com Occupational Projections

Cameron County has ten (10) school districts within the Region One Education Service Center in Texas. The City of Brownsville has the largest school district (Brownsville Independent School District) in the entire Rio Grande Valley with student enrollment close to 50,000. BISD continues to be one of the largest employers in the county. In the past few years, Cameron County has also seen a significant increase in charter schools. Idea Public Schools has seven (7) campuses throughout the county which has impacted Elementary and Secondary Schools resulting in one of the industries adding the most jobs. Some of the demand occupations targeted by the Board reside within the *Elementary and Secondary Schools* industry including teacher assistants, elementary school teachers, middle school teachers, and secondary school teachers. Other occupations experiencing high demand within this industry include substitute teachers, educational administrators, and preschool teachers. Entry level occupations such as teacher assistants and other support occupations provide upward mobility along a career pathway within this industry.

Outpatient Care Centers and *Construction* are other industry groups that provide numerous opportunities for entry level employment offering career ladder options. Some of the in-demand occupations targeted by the Board include electrician, plumbers, maintenance & repair workers, and general & operations manager.

Economic Development Alignment:

WFS Cameron has targeted a number of demand industry groups that significantly impact our economy. Although these industry groups are strongly aligned with partner initiatives and recruitment efforts, partner agencies such as the local EDCs foster economic growth through business attraction and expansion initiatives. These stakeholders have a long history of collaborative planning to include existing and emerging industries and occupations. The recruitment efforts have been successful, due in part, to opportunities presented by Port of Brownsville initiatives. In 2020, construction began for the South Port Connector Road to increase the entry and exit to and from the Port to facilitate the flow of cargo related to the space industry, and specifically the Boca Chica Launch Facility of Space X. This Connector construction is now complete (2021) and is in service. Keppel AmFELS will be building the largest self-propelled hopper dredge at the port. In 2019, AmFELS was awarded a contract to build two liquefied-natural-gas-powered container ships with an option for two more. The first two of these LNG-

powered ships have been completed and delivered to the owners as of December, 2021. The Port of Brownsville Foreign Trade Zone (FTZ) ranked 2nd in the nation for the value of exports and has consistently ranked in the top three since 2012. The Port of Brownsville is the only deep-water seaport directly on the U.S.-Mexico border, and the largest land-owning public port authority in the nation with 40,000 acres of land. It transships more steel into Mexico than any other U.S. port. With more than \$40 billion worth of projects currently in the works, the Port of Brownsville is transforming the Rio Grande Valley by creating positive investment opportunities and jobs. Activity at the port is responsible for adding more than \$2 billion to the regional economy, \$3 billion to the Texas economy, and for the creation of more than 44,000 jobs statewide. Lastly, the keel was laid at AmFELS for the first Jones Act-compliant offshore wind turbine installation vessel. This overall project is expected to create hundreds of construction jobs and estimated to be around \$500 million dollars.

SATA Group, a high-tech auto components manufacturer, opened their first American plant in 2016 in Brownsville, Texas. This facility marks the Italian SATA Group's first presence in the U.S. and serves as the company's North American headquarters. Some of the positions created include technologically advanced, high skill/ high wage jobs. In the past, Cameron County had a high concentration of less educated, production and manufacturing skilled workers whose jobs were primarily in the garment and mold making or parts industries. Advancements in technology have driven the lower skilled manufacturing jobs to other countries, enabling Cameron County to position itself as a contender for advanced manufacturing companies to relocate; due in part to the accessibility of the Port of Brownsville.

Other workforce partners, such as school districts, have promoted career pathways for a number of years in support of TEA's Achieve Texas initiative. Career and Technical programs that offer entry in various career pathways include Healthcare, Automotive, IT, and Building Trades. Students have the opportunity to obtain licenses and certifications to enter into these fields immediately upon graduation. In recent years, local districts have promoted pre-apprenticeship programs in building trades such as Electrician and Plumbing. WFS Cameron has also partnered with RGV LEAD, a local non-profit, to promote demand industries and occupations as well as identifying training programs in the area that support these occupations. RGV LEAD's mission is to link economic and academic development through educational and business partnerships. A regional annual Labor Market Information Report commissioned by RGV LEAD is updated through a collaborative effort with key stakeholders, including but not limited to, EDCs, Chambers of Commerce, Business, and Workforce Development Boards. Final reports are shared with key stakeholders including school districts to guide youth in various career pathway opportunities in the county.

WFS Cameron identified the high demand occupations noted in Table 2A-6. The listing identifies the occupations offering the largest number of annual openings and, thus, for entry level opportunities into a career pathway. The top five (5) occupations with the most job openings do not require a formal educational credential and support the healthcare and retail trade industries. Collectively, they are projected to create 6,629 openings by 2028. Other high demand occupations that support in-demand industry groups include elementary and secondary school teachers, maintenance and repair workers, registered nurses, and general and operations managers. Listing may need to be revisited within the next 12 months due to some of the occupations directly linked to industries impacted by COVID-19. The top 5 UI Claim industries identified by TWC for

Cameron County are *Temporary Help Services, Home Health Care Services, Full-Service Restaurants, Services for the Elderly and Disabled, and Telemarketing and Other Contact Centers.*

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 large number of high tech and high skill labor, i.e., the SpaceX Launch Facility. As a result, these businesses have given rise to industry that supports their product. Manufacturing plants that depend on raw materials lean on logistics to provide supplies and transport finished products including the industrial and automotive supply industry. Regardless of the industry, Logistics is involved.

The Spaceport built by SpaceX has added to the emerging Aerospace industry in Cameron County. Hundreds of jobs have been created in Cameron County, many in engineering and other highly specialized occupations. WFS Cameron has been in communication 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. Presently, the Board has partnered once again with SpaceX on a Skills Development Grant for the upskilling of its existing workforce.

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 since grown accustomed to ordering out for delivery. The health industry and business has kept the sanitation processes implemented during the pandemic in place. 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 in the area where COVID has already claimed 2,093 lives thus far.

Other emerging industries are Education and Healthcare where distance learning and telehealth have expanded and are introducing 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. In 2021 the city approved \$19.5 million for broadband development for the installation of the Middle Mile Broadband Network, which will include 95 miles of underground fiber that will meet the high-speed internet connectivity needs of the city. This initiative broke ground in October of 2022. Following the completion of the Middle Mile, LIT Communities, LLC will develop 500 miles of underground fiber from the Middle Mile to individual homes and businesses throughout the city limits of Brownsville, completing the loop for digital communications across the city, and closing the digital divi

Table 2A-6: Demand Occupations

Occ Code	Occupational Title	Annual Average Employment 2020	Annual Average Employment 2030	Number Change 2020-2030	Percent Change 2020-2030	Total Annual Openings	Typical Education Needed for Entry into Occupation	2021 Mean Hourly Wage
35-3023	Fast Food and Counter Workers	6,344	7,768	1,424	22.4	1,572	No formal educational credential	\$9.46
41-2031	Retail Salespersons	4,933	5,125	192	3.9	715	No formal educational credential	\$12.77
41-2011	Cashiers	3,298	3,217	-81	-2.5	581	No formal educational credential	\$10.68
43-4051	Customer Service Representatives	3,754	4,142	388	10.3	535	High school diploma or equivalent	\$14.89
43-9061	Office Clerks, General	3,476	3,550	74	2.1	407	High school diploma or equivalent	\$13.93
39-9011	Childcare Workers	2,066	2,609	543	26.3	374	High school diploma or equivalent	\$10.31
37-2011	Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	2,544	2,743	199	7.8	370	No formal educational credential	\$11.68
35-3031	Waiters and Waitresses	1,320	1,670	350	26.5	323	No formal educational credential	\$10.45
53-7062	Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	1,858	2,230	372	20.0	304	No formal educational credential	\$13.17
53-7065	Stockers and Order Fillers	1,668	1,845	177	10.6	289	High school diploma or equivalent	\$13.34
35-2014	Cooks, Restaurant	1,032	1,643	611	59.2	254	No formal educational credential	\$11.75
21-1099	Community and Social Service Specialists, All Other	1,084	1,797	713	65.8	219	Bachelor's degree	\$15.63
25-3031	Substitute Teachers, Short-Term	1,609	1,798	189	11.7	212	Bachelor's degree	-
11-1021	General and Operations Managers	2,159	2,399	240	11.1	211	Bachelor's degree	\$40.38
33-9032	Security Guards	1,313	1,523	210	16.0	206	High school diploma or equivalent	\$15.07
53-3032	Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	1,459	1,677	218	14.9	192	Postsecondary nondegree award	\$21.06
49-9071	Maintenance and Repair Workers, General	1,682	1,874	192	11.4	186	High school diploma or equivalent	\$14.77
43-6014	Secretaries and Administrative Assistants, Except Legal, Medical, and Executive	1,917	1,795	-122	-6.4	186	High school diploma or equivalent	\$14.91
53-3031	Driver/Sales Workers	1,183	1,523	340	28.7	181	High school diploma or equivalent	\$12.89
41-1011	First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers	1,618	1,666	48	3.0	177	High school diploma or equivalent	\$20.29
31-1131	Nursing Assistants	1,110	1,356	246	22.2	174	Postsecondary nondegree award	\$12.77
25-9045	Teaching Assistants, Except Postsecondary	1,700	1,812	112	6.6	171	Some college, no degree	-
29-1141	Registered Nurses	2,235	2,614	379	17.0	164	Bachelor's degree	\$33.78
31-9092	Medical Assistants	1,084	1,325	241	22.2	163	Postsecondary nondegree award	\$13.40
25-2021	Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education	1,928	2,048	120	6.2	153	Bachelor's degree	-
43-6013	Medical Secretaries and Administrative Assistants	1,130	1,298	168	14.9	147	High school diploma or equivalent	\$14.45
35-2021	Food Preparation Workers	735	846	111	15.1	146	No formal educational credential	\$12.02

53-3058	Passenger Vehicle Drivers, Except Bus Drivers, Transit and Intercity	906	1,077	171	18.9	131	No formal educational credential	\$12.17
21-1093	Social and Human Service Assistants	859	1,047	188	21.9	129	High school diploma or equivalent	\$15.34
39-9041	Residential Advisors	459	768	309	67.3	117	High school diploma or equivalent	-
35-2012	Cooks, Institution and Cafeteria	611	778	167	27.3	117	No formal educational credential	\$12.36
29-2061	Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	1,189	1,377	188	15.8	116	Postsecondary nondegree award	\$21.45
21-1021	Child, Family, and School Social Workers	800	1,019	219	27.4	106	Bachelor's degree	\$18.82
13-1041	Compliance Officers	1,025	1,216	191	18.6	106	Bachelor's degree	\$35.95
53-3033	Light Truck Drivers	766	913	147	19.2	106	High school diploma or equivalent	\$19.07
33-3051	Police and Sheriff's Patrol Officers	1,030	1,182	152	14.8	99	High school diploma or equivalent	\$27.78
39-9032	Recreation Workers	394	578	184	46.7	92	High school diploma or equivalent	\$12.03
33-3021	Detectives and Criminal Investigators	929	1,111	182	19.6	91	High school diploma or equivalent	\$42.94
47-2061	Construction Laborers	685	785	100	14.6	82	No formal educational credential	\$14.13
13-2011	Accountants and Auditors	628	743	115	18.3	72	Bachelor's degree	\$31.12

Source: Texaslmi.com

The Target Occupations List identifies the occupations eligible for Training:

2A-7 Targeted Occupations List		2021-2024
SOC Code	Standard Occupational Classification Title	Typical Education or Training
11-9021	Construction Managers	Bachelor's degree
11-9111	Medical and Health Services Managers	Bachelor's Degree
11-1021	General and Operations Managers	Bachelor's Degree
13-1081	Logisticians	Bachelor's Degree
15-1151	Computer User Support Specialists	Some College, No Degree
17-3023	Electrical & Electronic Engineering Technicians*	Associate's degree
17-3024	Electro-Mechanical and Mechatronics Technologists and Technicians*	Associate's degree
25-2021	Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education	Bachelor's degree
25-2022	Middle School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education	Bachelor's Degree
25-2031	Secondary School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education	Bachelor's Degree
25-9041	Teacher Assistants	Some college, no degree
29-1141	Registered Nurses	Associate's degree
29-2034	Radiologic Technologists	Associate's degree
29-2040	Emergency Medical Technicians & Paramedics	Postsecondary non degree award
29-2061	Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	Postsecondary non degree award
29-2098	Medical Dosimetrists, Medical Records Specialist, & Health Technologists & Technicians, AO	Postsecondary non degree award
29-2099	Patient Care Technicians (Excludes Nurse Assistants & Medical Assistants)	Postsecondary non degree award
31-9091	Dental Assistants	Postsecondary non degree award
33-3051	Police and Sheriff's Patrol Officers	Postsecondary non degree award
13-2011	Accountants & Auditors	Bachelor's Degree
43-3031	Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing clerks	Certificate
43-6013	Medical Secretaries and Administrative Assistants	High School Diploma or Equivalent
47-2031	Carpenters	High School Diploma or Equivalent
47-2061	Construction Laborers	no formal education credential
47-2073	Operating Engineers and Other Construction Equipment Operators	High School Diploma or Equivalent
47-2111	Electricians	High School Diploma or Equivalent
47-2152	Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters	High School Diploma or Equivalent
47-2181	Roofers*	High School Diploma or Equivalent
49-3023	Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics	Postsecondary non degree award
49-3031	Bus and Truck Mechanics and Diesel Engine Specialists	High School Diploma or Equivalent
49-9052	Telecommunications Equipment Installers and Repairers	High School Diploma or Equivalent
49-9021	Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers	Postsecondary non degree award
49-9041	Industrial Machinery Mechanics	High School Diploma or Equivalent
49-9051	Electrical Power-Line Installers and Repairers	High School Diploma or Equivalent
49-9071	Maintenance and Repair Workers, General	High School Diploma or Equivalent
49-9096	Riggers*	High School Diploma or Equivalent
51-2041	Structural Metal Fabricators & Fitters*	High School Diploma or Equivalent
51-4081	Multiple Machine Tool Setters, Operators, and Tenders, Metal and Plastic	Postsecondary non degree award
51-4121	Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers	Postsecondary non degree award
53-3021	Bus Drivers, Transit and Intercity	High School Diploma or Equivalent
53-3032	Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	Postsecondary non degree award
53-7051	Industrial Truck and Tractor Operators	no formal education credential
* Denotes Texas data due to insufficient local data -		

WFS Cameron identified the targeted industries listed in Table 2A-8 below. The industry projected to create the most jobs within the next ten years is Outpatient Care Centers. This industry group is projected to grow 78.7% within the next ten years. The following targeted occupations are part of this industry and include, but are not limited to, Registered Nurses, Licensed Vocational Nurses, Medical Secretaries, and Medical and Health Service Manager.. Other demand occupations that are part of this industry include receptionist and information clerks.

Utilities is the industry group projected to create the second largest number of jobs with a growth rate of 48.3% over the next ten years. The following targeted occupations are part of this industry and include, but are not limited to, Electrical Power-Line Installers and Repairers, and Electrical and Electronic Repairers. . Demand occupations that are part of this industry include Water Treatment Specialist and Wind Turbine Technician.

The targeted industries groups selected have at least an 11% job growth rate and are found in either TWC's *Adding the Most Jobs* or *Fastest Growing* Listing. A limited number of industry groups were selected based on anecdotal and local information regarding the site selection in this area by three LNG plants as well as a machining/manufacturing plant and SpaceX launch facility. WFS Cameron anticipates above average growth in construction and manufacturing.

Table 2A-8: Targeted Industry List

2017 North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) Code (4-digit)	NAICS Industry Name	Total current Positions for the Industry in the Area	Total Projected Positions in 10 Years	Additional Rationale, Local Wisdom, Comments	Labor Market and Career Information Data Source(s)	Job Growth Rate
6214	Outpatient Care Centers	761	1360	Industry has over 20% growth and On TWC's Fastest Growing & Adding the Most Jobs Lists	TX LMI	78.7%
221	Utilities	352	522	Industry has over 20% growth	TX LMI	48.3%
5415	Computer System Design and Related Services	199	294	Industry has over 20% growth and On TWC's Adding the Most Jobs List	TX LMI	47.7%
6212	Offices of Dentists	755	1004	Industry has over 20% growth and On TWC's Fastest Growing & Adding the Most Jobs Lists	TX LMI	33.0%
6241	Individual and Family Services	9274	12003	Industry has over 20% growth and On TWC's Fastest Growing & Adding the Most Jobs Lists	TX LMI	29.4%
6219	Other Ambulatory Health Care Services	524	645	Industry has over 20% growth and On TWC's Fastest Growing & Adding the Most Jobs Lists	TX LMI	23.1%
5616	Investigation and Security Services	1044	1251	Industry has over 11% growth and is on TWC's Fastest Growing & Adding the Most Jobs Lists	TX LMI	19.8%
5412	Accounting, Tax Preparation, Bookkeeping, and Payroll Services	642	769	On TWC's Fastest Growing & Adding the Most Jobs Lists	TX LMI	19.8%

4411	Automotive Dealers	1596	1857	On TWC's Fastest Growing & Adding the Most Jobs Lists	TX LMI	16.4%
6216	Home Health Care Services	12685	14370	On TWC's Fastest Growing & Adding the Most Jobs Lists	TX LMI	13.3%
6211	Office of Physicians	3825	4301	On TWC's Fastest Growing & Adding the Most Jobs Lists	TX LMI	12.4%
1013	Manufacturing	5478	6136	Expected growth due to SpaceX and LNG	TX LMI	12.0%
1012	Construction	3289	3650	Expected growth due to SpaceX and LNG	TX LMI	11.0%
2389	Other Specialty Trade Contractors	2193	2353	Specialty contractor for one of the LNG plants met with GBIC, Higher Ed, and Workforce to begin the discussion on the workforce pipeline	TX LMI	7.3%
4931	Warehousing and Storage	593	632	On TWC's Fastest Growing List	TX LMI	6.6%
6111	Elementary And Secondary Schools	16596	17501	On TWC's Adding the Most Jobs List and Industry targeted based on discussion with ISDs regarding the need for teachers and other personnel	TX LMI	5.5%
3255	Basic Chemical Manufacturing	n/a	n/a	Contractor for one of the LNG plants met with GBIC, Higher Ed, & Workforce to begin the discussion on the workforce pipeline	TX LMI	n/a

B. Knowledge and Skills Analysis

Analysis of the Knowledge and Skills needed to meet the Employment Needs in the Region

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.

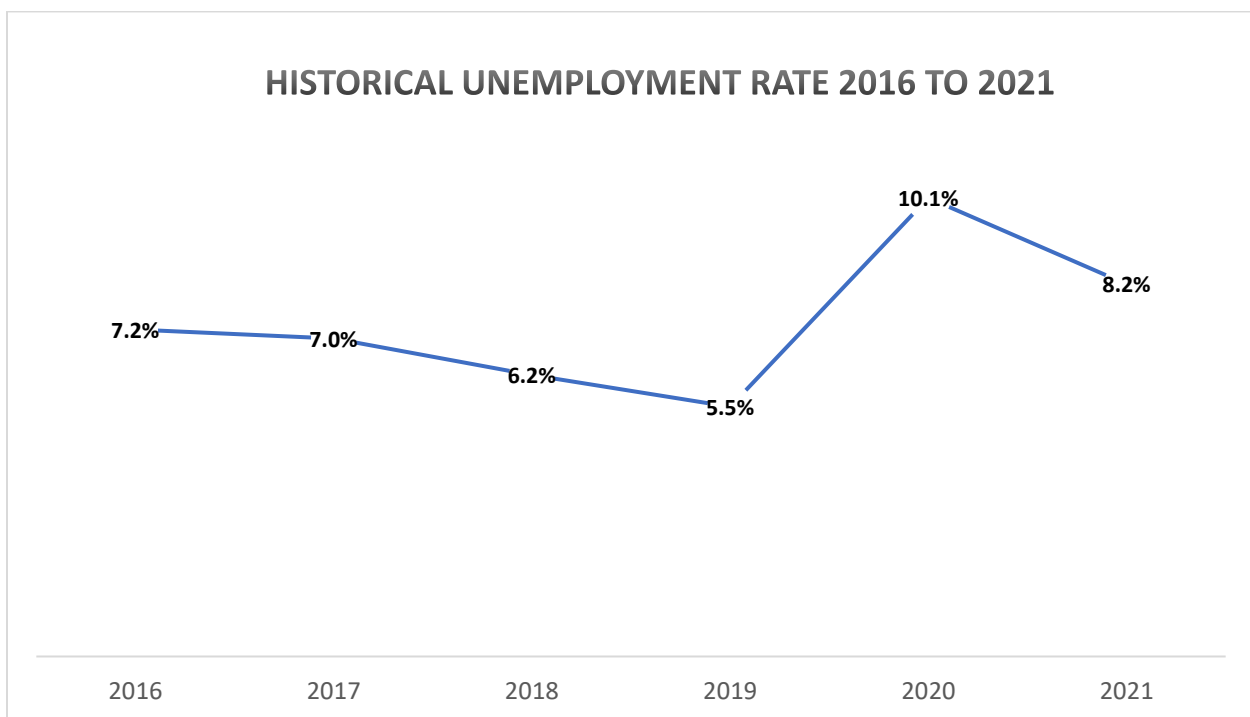
Table 2B-1: Knowledge and Skills for High Demand Targeted Occupations			
Knowledge	Frequency	Skills	Frequency
English Language	31	Speaking	35
Customer and Personal Service	30	Critical Thinking	34
Mathematics	22	Active Listening	32
Mechanical	20	Monitoring	31
Public Safety and Security	20	Time Management	30
Computers and Electronics	17	Reading Comprehension	27
Administration and Management	14	Coordination	26
Design	12	Complex Problem Solving	25
Education and Training	12	Judgement and Decision Making	23
Engineering and Technology	12	Operation Monitoring	21
Production and Processing	12	Active Learning	19
Building and Construction	11	Operation and Control	16
Clerical	9	Social Perceptiveness	15
Psychology	7	Writing	15
Economics and Accounting	5	Quality Control Analysis	14
Law and Government	5	Troubleshooting	14
Medicine and Dentistry	5	Service Orientation	13
Physics	5	Equipment Maintenance	10
Telecommunications	4	Instructing	9
Personnel and Human Resources	3	Repairing	9

C. Labor Force Analysis and Trends

Analysis of the Regional Workforce

Cameron County's civilian labor force (CLF) increased 5% from 2020 to 174,567 (Nov 2022). The current unemployment rate decreased significantly to 5.7 percent (Nov 2022), a 45% decrease from 2020 with a new, lower total of 9,930 individuals looking for work. The estimated growth in employment of 10% for all occupations now stands at 164,637 (Nov 2022). As seen in Graph 2C-1 below, the unemployment rate held steadily at an average of 6.8%, hitting an all-time low in 2019 of 5.5% (not seasonally adjusted) before it rose sharply to 10.1% in 2020 due to the pandemic; and trending downward as evidenced by the current unemployment rate of 5.7%.

Graph 2C-1: Historical Unemployment Rate 2016 to 2021

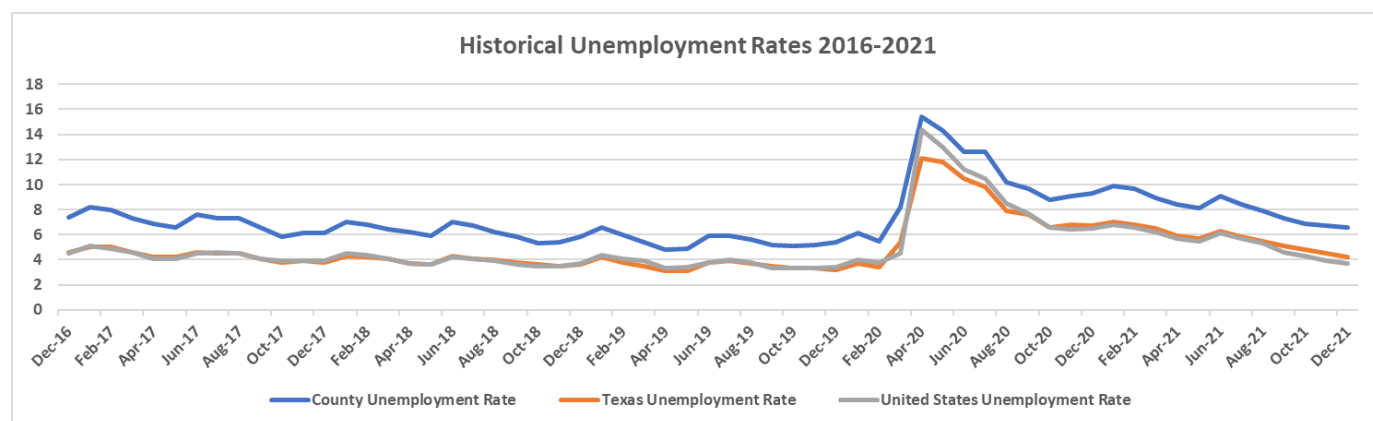


Source: Texaslmi.com

Graph 2C-2 shows the steady rates of unemployment well below 10%, with an occasional rise and dip over the months from 2016 until early 2020 when unemployment rose to 16.9%. During the last quarter of 2020, the unemployment rate continued to drop with a slight rise in early 2021. Since the summer of 2021, the unemployment rate has been steadily trending downward as employers continue to struggle to fill jobs.

Based on the graph, it is apparent that the pandemic of early 2020 drastically altered the employment situation creating unprecedented employment rates before making a gradual descent in the summer months ending the year at 10.3%. The current graph shows a downward trend that has resulted in the current unemployment rate of 5.7%.

Graph 2C-2 Unemployment Rates 2016-2021

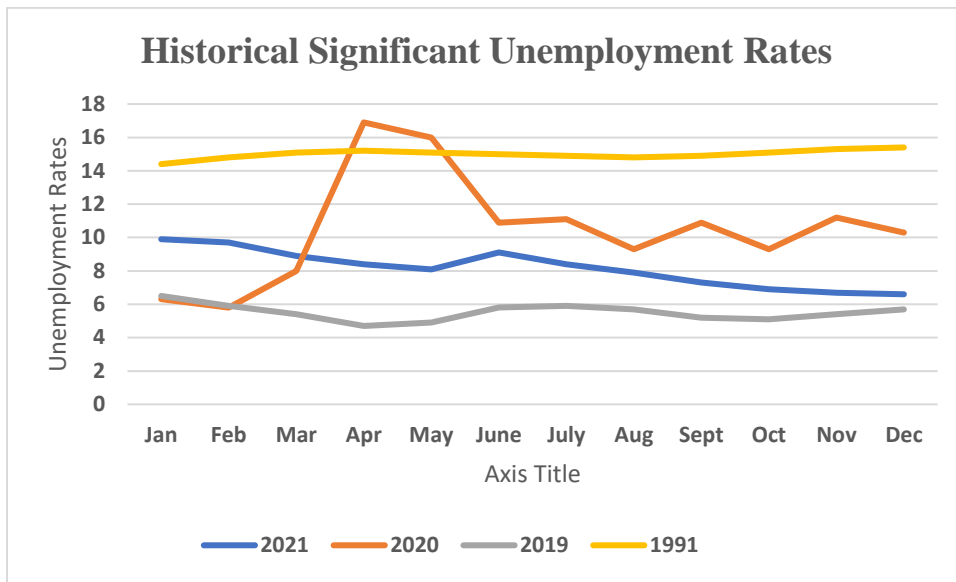


Source: Labor Market & Career Information, Texas Workforce Commission

Graph 2C-3 below illustrates the complete unemployment rates for 2019, 2020, and 2021. 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. 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.

The graph below illustrates the unemployment rates for the last years prior to the onset of the Corona Virus pandemic in 2019 and 2020, the worst year of the pandemic. It also illustrates the unemployment rate in 1991, the last time unemployment was in the double-digit rates. By 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 2022 was for the month of November. The rate stood at 5.1%.

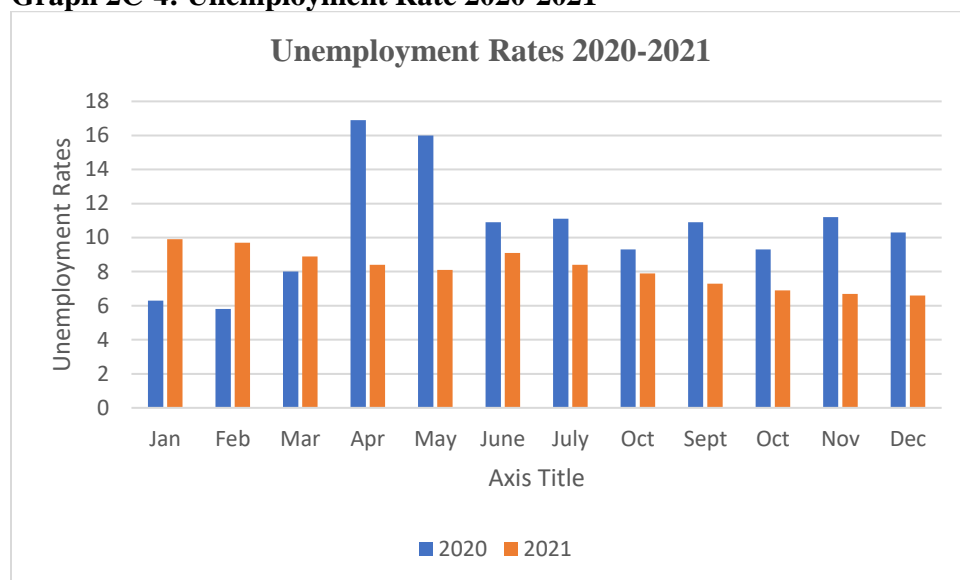
Graph 2C-3: Significant Historical Unemployment Rates



Source Texaslmi.com

Graph 2C-4 shows the years' monthly unemployment rates for 2020 and 2021. There was a significant increase in the unemployment rate in 2020 due to the pandemic. The unemployment rate dipped in February to its lowest level for the year of 5.8% but was trending up the following month before the pandemic hit. The highest recorded rate (RT) for 2020 was observed in April at 16.9%. It has been trending downward at a slow pace beginning in May 2020. Available data for the month of December reflect the year ended with an unemployment rate of 11.2%; 10.3% if seasonally adjusted to reflect the Christmas and holiday temporary employment numbers. The graph below illustrates the continued downward trend in 2021. At the beginning of the 2021 the unemployment rate was around 10% and had steadily decreased throughout the year with a slight upward move in June of 2021. The unemployment rate ended the year slightly above 6%. In 2022, the downward trend continued to the present rate of 5.1% for the month of November 2022.

Graph 2C-4: Unemployment Rate 2020-2021



Source: Texaslmi.com

Educational Attainment

The educational attainment for Cameron County can be seen in the Table below. According to the 2017-2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, a slight decrease in the attainment of a high school diploma was reported for individuals ages 25+ in the area compared to the previous 2015-2019 ACS 5- Year Estimate. The percentage decline of high school graduates is now lower than the state average. The attainment of Bachelor's Degrees also increased slightly to 20.4% even though the total percentage of the population reporting *Some college, no degree* increased to 21.2%. In comparison to the state education attainment levels, Cameron County is now higher in most areas, with the exception of high school graduates. The increase in the attainment of a bachelor's degree may be attributed to the creation of the UTRGV Brownsville campus and the expansion of OLLU to include Bachelor's, Master's and two PhD programs; and the University Center at TSTC that houses four (4) college undergraduate and master's programs.

Table 2C-1: Educational Attainment

Post-Secondary Educational Attainment for Cameron County Population 25 and Over Based on 2017-2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates			
Educational Attainment	U. S.	Statewide Percent	Area Percent
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	26.5%	26.10%	24.5%
Some college, no degree	20.0%	17.10%	21.2%
Associate degree	8.7%	7.40%	7.5%
Bachelor's degree	20.6%	13.20%	20.4%
Graduate or professional degree	13.1%	5.80%	11.2%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2017-2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

The following tables show the top credentials awarded in Cameron County. The majority of credentials awarded are certifications and 2-year degrees, with the top concentration being in the Healthcare industry.

Table 2C-2 Post-Secondary Awards in Cameron County, Texas											
CIP Code	Title	Certificate < 1 Yr.	Certificate 1+ but < 2 Yr.	Associate's	Certificate 2+ but < 4 Yr.	Bachelor's	Post-Baccalaureate	Master's	Post-Master's	Doctorate	Total
51.0801	Medical/Clinical Assistant	154	354	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	508
24.0102	General Studies	0	0	324	0	0	0	0	0	0	324
12.0401	Cosmetology/Cosmetologist, General	0	174	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	174
46.0302	Electrician	160	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	160
43.0104	Criminal Justice/Safety Studies	0	0	143	0	0	0	0	0	0	143
48.0508	Welding Technology/Welder	135	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	135
51.0713	Medical Insurance Coding Specialist/Coder	11	68	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	79
49.0205	Truck and Bus Driver/Commercial Vehicle Operator and Instructor	65	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	65
13.1210	Early Childhood Education and Teaching	0	0	61	0	0	0	0	0	0	61
51.0805	Pharmacy Technician/Assistant	57	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	57
15.0501	Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning and Refrigeration Engineering Technology/Technician	0	55	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	55
43.0107	Criminal Justice/Police Science	53	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	53
52.0101	Business/Commerce, General	0	0	50	0	0	0	0	0	0	50
44.0701	Social Work	0	0	47	0	0	0	0	0	0	47
52.0302	Accounting Technology/Technician and Bookkeeping	45	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	45
51.0601	Dental Assisting/Assistant	0	43	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	43
52.0408	General Office Occupations and Clerical Services	40	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	40
46.0412	Building/Construction Site Management/Manager	28	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	28
51.3902	Nursing Assistant/Aide and Patient Care Assistant/Aide	28	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	28
51.3901	Licensed Practical/Vocational Nurse Training	0	26	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	26
30.1801	Natural Sciences	0	0	22	0	0	0	0	0	0	22
12.0408	Facial Treatment Specialist/Facialist	19	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	19
51.0710	Medical Office Assistant/Specialist	8	11	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	19
50.0701	Art/Art Studies, General	0	0	16	0	0	0	0	0	0	16

19.0709	Child Care Provider/Assistant	5	0	11	0	0	0	0	0	0	16
12.0402	Barbering/Barber	0	15	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	15
47.0604	Automobile/Automotive Mechanics Technology/Technician	5	0	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	14
13.1205	Secondary Education and Teaching	0	0	14	0	0	0	0	0	0	14
12.0410	Nail Technician/Specialist and Manicurist	13	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	13
04.0201	Architecture	0	0	12	0	0	0	0	0	0	12
51.0716	Medical Administrative/Executive Assistant and Medical Secretary	6	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	12
11.0101	Computer and Information Sciences, General	3	0	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	11
11.1006	Computer Support Specialist	11	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	11
51.0908	Respiratory Care Therapy/Therapist	0	0	11	0	0	0	0	0	0	11
51.0910	Diagnostic Medical Sonography/Sonographer and Ultrasound Technician	0	0	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	10
51.0904	Emergency Medical Technology/Technician (EMT Paramedic)	1	3	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	10
47.0201	Heating, Air Conditioning, Ventilation and Refrigeration Maintenance Technology/Technician	7	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	10
22.0301	Legal Administrative Assistant/Secretary	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10
51.3801	Registered Nursing/Registered Nurse	0	0	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	10
12.0409	Aesthetician/Esthetician and Skin Care Specialist	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9
51.0911	Radiologic Technology/Science - Radiographer	0	0	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	9
13.1206	Teacher Education, Multiple Levels	0	0	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	9
52.0401	Administrative Assistant and Secretarial Science, General	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8
51.1004	Clinical/Medical Laboratory Technician	0	0	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	8
51.3501	Massage Therapy/Therapeutic Massage	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8
52.0301	Accounting	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	7
22.0302	Legal Assistant/Paralegal	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
52.1401	Marketing/Marketing Management, General	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
47.0603	Autobody/Collision and Repair Technology/Technician	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
13.1203	Junior High/Intermediate/Middle School Education and Teaching	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
46.0401	Building/Property Maintenance	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
15.1301	Drafting and Design Technology/Technician, General	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
12.0413	Cosmetology, Barber/Styling, and Nail Instructor	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Totals	895	749	819	0	0	0	0	0	0	2,463

[Source: JobsEQ®](#)

Data as of the 2020-2021 academic year, related occupation data as of 2022Q2 except wages which are as of 2021.

Table 2C-2 represents the shortfall in training concentrations for the occupational groups noted. According to the updated data, *Secondary School Teachers, Registered Nurses, Elementary and School Teachers, General and Operations Managers* continue to have the greatest shortfall in credentials awarded with an addition of *Medical and Health Services Managers* to the mix.

Table 2C-2: Educational Shortfalls

Training Concentration, Cameron County, Texas, Occupations with 75%+ College-Educated					
SOC	Occupation	2022 Q2 Employment	Awards (2020-2021)	Training Concentration	Shortfall
25-2031	Secondary School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education	2,082	22	6%	344
29-1141	Registered Nurses	3,768	10	4%	269
25-2021	Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education	2,728	31	18%	139
11-1021	General and Operations Managers	2,990	27	19%	119
11-9111	Medical and Health Services Managers	680	0	0%	88
11-9199	Managers, All Other	533	4	5%	86
29-2061	Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	1,607	26	23%	85
21-1018	Substance Abuse, Behavioral Disorder, and Mental Health Counselors	516	0	0%	75
25-2022	Middle School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education	1,294	14	17%	67
21-1021	Child, Family, and School Social Workers	644	18	22%	64
21-1012	Educational, Guidance, and Career Counselors and Advisors	420	0	0%	51
29-1171	Nurse Practitioners	360	0	0%	49
11-9032	Education Administrators, Kindergarten through Secondary	623	0	0%	48
13-1199	Business Operations Specialists, All Other	930	0	0%	43
13-1071	Human Resources Specialists	656	0	0%	40
15-1252	Software Developers	653	0	0%	37
21-1022	Healthcare Social Workers	371	10	24%	32
13-2011	Accountants and Auditors	915	6	16%	31
25-9031	Instructional Coordinators	373	0	0%	31
11-9151	Social and Community Service Managers	328	9	23%	30
25-3031	Substitute Teachers, Short-Term	994	0	0%	30
29-1127	Speech-Language Pathologists	261	0	0%	29

13-1082	Project Management Specialists	713	6	17%	28
39-9031	Exercise Trainers and Group Fitness Instructors	203	0	0%	28
23-1011	Lawyers	562	0	0%	26
39-7011	Tour Guides and Escorts	58	0	0%	26
21-1093	Social and Human Service Assistants	845	0	0%	24
25-2011	Preschool Teachers, Except Special Education	719	12	35%	23
27-3031	Public Relations Specialists	212	0	0%	22
19-4021	Biological Technicians	74	0	0%	19
29-1123	Physical Therapists	346	0	0%	19
13-1151	Training and Development Specialists	333	0	0%	19
13-1111	Management Analysts	339	4	18%	18
27-3091	Interpreters and Translators	64	0	0%	17
13-1041	Compliance Officers	325	0	0%	16
27-2022	Coaches and Scouts	137	0	0%	16
33-2011	Firefighters	467	0	0%	15
29-1122	Occupational Therapists	196	0	0%	14
21-1094	Community Health Workers	98	0	0%	14
11-3031	Financial Managers	389	0	0%	14
17-2141	Mechanical Engineers	157	0	0%	14
29-1071	Physician Assistants	172	0	0%	14
13-1161	Market Research Analysts and Marketing Specialists	346	4	21%	14
21-1023	Mental Health and Substance Abuse Social Workers	124	3	21%	12
21-1015	Rehabilitation Counselors	108	0	0%	12
19-1042	Medical Scientists, Except Epidemiologists	113	0	0%	12
11-2022	Sales Managers	283	3	18%	12
25-2052	Special Education Teachers, Kindergarten and Elementary School	335	0	0%	12
21-2011	Clergy	222	0	0%	12
29-1051	Pharmacists	278	0	0%	11
25-1071	Health Specialties Teachers, Postsecondary	76	0	0%	11
29-1229	Physicians, All Other	277	0	0%	11
19-3034	School Psychologists	124	0	0%	10
15-1232	Computer User Support Specialists	451	9	47%	10
29-2042	Emergency Medical Technicians	158	6	37%	10
15-2051	Data Scientists	40	0	0%	10
27-2042	Musicians and Singers	79	0	0%	10

15-1299	Computer Occupations, All Other	278	2	20%	10
13-1051	Cost Estimators	104	1	8%	10
13-1131	Fundraisers	88	1	8%	9
25-4022	Librarians and Media Collections Specialists	153	0	0%	9
25-2058	Special Education Teachers, Secondary School	254	0	0%	9
27-1024	Graphic Designers	157	0	0%	9
17-2199	Engineers, All Other	92	0	0%	9
31-2021	Physical Therapist Assistants	159	0	0%	9
21-1091	Health Education Specialists	66	0	0%	9
15-1211	Computer Systems Analysts	254	2	19%	9
17-2051	Civil Engineers	122	0	0%	8
11-3021	Computer and Information Systems Managers	221	2	20%	8
29-1031	Dietitians and Nutritionists	70	0	0%	8
25-2032	Career/Technical Education Teachers, Secondary School	239	0	0%	8
19-1029	Biological Scientists, All Other	39	0	0%	8
25-2012	Kindergarten Teachers, Except Special Education	289	4	34%	8
11-9031	Education and Childcare Administrators, Preschool and Daycare	96	0	0%	8
17-2071	Electrical Engineers	98	0	0%	8
13-1081	Logisticians	116	0	0%	8
11-3012	Administrative Services Managers	185	2	19%	7
29-2043	Paramedics	113	4	37%	7
31-2011	Occupational Therapy Assistants	69	0	0%	7
13-2072	Loan Officers	240	0	0%	7
27-3043	Writers and Authors	66	0	0%	7
27-4021	Photographers	54	1	11%	7
13-2053	Insurance Underwriters	65	0	6%	7
25-3099	Teachers and Instructors, All Other	134	0	0%	7
21-1019	Counselors, All Other	75	2	23%	7
43-1011	First-Line Supervisors of Office and Administrative Support Workers	1,627	3	34%	7
29-1292	Dental Hygienists	158	0	0%	6
21-1099	Community and Social Service Specialists, All Other	135	0	0%	6
21-1029	Social Workers, All Other	72	2	23%	6
17-2112	Industrial Engineers	141	0	0%	6
25-3021	Self-Enrichment Teachers	177	0	0%	6
11-1011	Chief Executives	224	1	19%	6

19-3033	Clinical and Counseling Psychologists	65	0	0%	6
29-2055	Surgical Technologists	105	0	0%	6
11-3121	Human Resources Managers	117	0	0%	6
19-3099	Social Scientists and Related Workers, All Other	29	0	0%	6
19-1021	Biochemists and Biophysicists	28	0	0%	6
15-1244	Network and Computer Systems Administrators	196	1	19%	6
25-1022	Mathematical Science Teachers, Postsecondary	26	0	0%	6
29-1215	Family Medicine Physicians	159	0	0%	6
25-1199	Postsecondary Teachers, All Other	18	0	0%	6
17-2072	Electronics Engineers, Except Computer	73	0	0%	6
19-1031	Conservation Scientists	30	0	0%	6
21-1092	Probation Officers and Correctional Treatment Specialists	74	2	23%	6
25-2057	Special Education Teachers, Middle School	159	0	0%	6

[Source: JobsEQ®](#)

Data as of 2022Q2

Data exclude awards from online schools

Exported on: Friday, December 16, 2022, 12:12 PM

Table 2C-3 below displays a snapshot of local job seekers registered in Work in Texas (WIT), the Texas Labor exchange job matching system, on January 7, 2021. Data indicate that 75.20% of job seekers ages 25-34, have a high school diploma, or higher. The percentage of job seekers aged 35-44 with a high school diploma or higher is 66.30%. TEA and local school districts have implemented aggressive recovery programs which have closed the high school completion gap in the county. Texas Education Agency Dropout Prevention and Credit Recovery grants and initiatives implemented through online platforms are partly responsible for narrowing the gap in the number of completers.

Educational Achievement Levels

Table 2C-3: Educational Levels of Job Seekers by Age Group in Work in Texas, January 7, 2021

Educational Level	Job Seekers												Total Job Seekers	Total %
	14-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	14-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74		
No School Grade Completed	385	428	229	230	167	31	6.01%	9.37%	8.08%	9.97%	12.43%	11.40%	1473	8.29%
1st Grade Completed	1	2	3	2	2	2	0.02%	0.04%	0.11%	0.09%	0.15%	0.74%	12	0.07%
2nd Grade Completed		2	7	4	14	4	0.00%	0.04%	0.25%	0.17%	1.04%	1.47%	31	0.17%
3rd Grade Completed		1	6	12	17	7	0.00%	0.02%	0.21%	0.52%	1.26%	2.57%	44	0.25%
4th Grade Completed		1	6	12	10	6	0.00%	0.02%	0.21%	0.52%	0.74%	2.21%	37	0.21%
5th Grade Completed		2	10	17	21	1	0.00%	0.04%	0.35%	0.74%	1.56%	0.37%	51	0.29%
6th Grade Completed	10	25	60	124	100	26	0.16%	0.55%	2.12%	5.37%	7.44%	9.56%	347	1.95%
7th Grade Completed	13	12	16	39	22	8	0.20%	0.26%	0.56%	1.69%	1.64%	2.94%	110	0.62%
8th Grade Completed	55	40	63	67	43	12	0.86%	0.88%	2.22%	2.90%	3.20%	4.41%	280	1.58%
9th Grade Completed	161	145	170	158	79	12	2.51%	3.17%	6.00%	6.85%	5.88%	4.41%	726	4.09%
10th Grade Completed	241	123	112	77	34	3	3.76%	2.69%	3.95%	3.34%	2.53%	1.10%	591	3.33%
11th Grade Completed	579	229	195	172	72	9	9.04%	5.01%	6.88%	7.45%	5.36%	3.31%	1257	7.08%
12th Grade Completed & Did not receive diploma or equivalent	239	135	89	60	29	5	3.73%	2.96%	3.14%	2.60%	2.16%	1.84%	557	3.14%
High School Equivalency Diploma	1618	941	559	389	228	29	25.25%	20.60%	19.73%	16.8%	16.96%	10.66%	3768	21.22%
High School Diploma	2937	2144	1114	781	406	93	45.83%	46.95%	39.32%	33.84%	30.21%	34.19%	7488	42.16%
1 Year at College or a Technical or Vocational School	70	130	72	60	28	6	1.09%	2.85%	2.54%	2.60%	2.08%	2.21%	366	2.06%
2 Years at College or a Technical or Vocational School	2	16	12	6	3		0.03%	0.35%	0.42%	0.26%	0.22%	0.00%	39	0.22%
3 Years at College or a Technical or Vocational School	9	4	5	6	3		0.14%	0.09%	0.18%	0.26%	0.22%	0.00%	27	0.15%
Vocational School Certificate	33	56	25	22	15	3	0.51%	1.23%	0.88%	0.95%	1.12%	1.10%	154	0.87%
Associate's Degree	15	32	22	20	11	2	0.32%	0.94%	1.18%	1.50%	1.50%	1.37%	102	0.57%
Bachelor's Degree	38	83	45	41	31	6	0.59%	1.82%	1.59%	1.78%	2.31%	2.21%	244	1.37%
Master's Degree	2	14	13	9	7	6	0.03%	0.31%	0.46%	0.39%	0.52%	2.21%	51	0.29%
Doctorate Degree	0	2	0		2	1	0.00%	0.06%	0.00%	0.00%	0.27%	0.68%	5	0.03%
Specialized Degree (e.g., MD, DDS)	0	0	0				0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0	0.00%
Grand Total	6408	4567	2833	2308	1344	272							17,760	
Total # High School/GED and Higher														
Source: WorkInTexas.com														

The success of any workforce or economic development activities in this region will continue to be negatively impacted by the human resource challenges related to literacy, the digital divide, and the skills gap. The primary problem to be addressed is the number of workers in the region that lack proficiency in English, and work skills to meet the demands of today's employers. Recruitment challenges point to a lack of career mindset, attendance problems, and the inability to pass basic job 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. The Board has partnered with the local AEL provider, VRS, training providers, employers, and other community partners to enhance the skills development of job seekers through training and work-based learning. As a result of the pandemic, the Board developed on-demand videos, virtual orientations, and streamed live events to increase its workforce offerings to a larger audience while trying to address some of the shortfalls in skills sets.

Overall, according to the 2021 ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles, compared with the general population of Texas, the Cameron County population is:

- Less Educated--- 30.54% of Civilian Labor Force (CLF) is without high school diploma compared to 15.18% for TX; and only 19.0% of the workforce holds a Bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 31.5% for the State. (2021ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles)
- With a Significant number of Limited English Proficiency (LEP) individuals---71.5% speak a language other than English at home and for the total population 5 years and older, 23.9% speak English less than "very well". (2021ACS 5-year estimates)
- Lower Skilled---Less education and training due to low educational levels translates to the majority of workers without postsecondary training, particularly in available high wage, high skill job categories.

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 2017-2021 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 national numbers.

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

Civilian Noninstitutionalized Population with a Disability 18+ years 2017-2021 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates			
	Population	Population with Disability	Percent of Population
Cameron	236,098	22,471	9.5%
Texas	17,424,480	1,651,720	9.5%
US	199,006,899	20,537,729	10.3%

Source: Census ACS 2017-2021

Total Civilian Veteran population for Cameron County is 12,461, which is 4.3% of the current population, down from 12,717, in ACS 2015 data of the county population. It has decreased by .1% from the last reported percentage. This is significantly less than the percentage of the population for both the State of Texas and the United States.

Table 2C-5: Veteran Status, Civilian Population 18 years+

Table 2C-5: Veteran Status, Civilian Population 18 years+ 2017-2021 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates			
	Population 18yrs +	Civilian Veteran	Percent of Population
Cameron	293,123	12,461	4.3%
Texas	21,313,838	1,426,641	6.7%
US	254,296,179	17,431,290	6.9%

Source: 2021ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles

WFS Cameron is committed to serving the following target populations:

Table 2C-6: 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

Source: TWC

D. Workforce Development Analysis

Workforce Development Activities in the region, including Education and Training.

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 forty-six million dollars (\$46 Million) provided through federal and state sources;
- 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.

However, 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.

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.

Table 2C-1: Occupational Training Providers

Occupational Training Providers	
Colleges & Universities	
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 colleges housed at TSTC
Career Schools	
South Texas Vocational Technical Institute	LHCT Training Center
Allied Skills Training Center	McAllen Careers Institute
DATS/Rio Grande Valley	Dental Assistant Training School

J and R Training Center	Inter-Tech Technical School
Valley Baptist Medical Center School of Vocational Nursing	South Texas Training Center
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
Claudy Vocational Institute, Inc.	RGV Vocational Services
Health Science Institute at Renaissance (HSIR)	Rio Grande Nursing School
South Texas Welding School, LLC	A+ CDL Academy
Careers Unlimited	Texas CDL Institute LLC

Source: TWC

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.

Table 2C-2 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:

Table 2C-2: Apprenticeship Opportunities

Apprenticeship Opportunities	
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
Source: apprenticeship.gov	

As noted in Table 2C-1, 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.

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:

1. **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.
2. **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.
3. **Incumbent Worker Training** – initiative allows the Board to offer businesses an opportunity to upskill existing workforce for modern technologies.

4. **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.
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.

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 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. WFS Cameron Executive Director served on the now disbanded Partners for Postsecondary Success (PPS) Grant Leadership Team and Policy Committee.
- **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 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 Liquified 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 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.

Part 3: Core Programs

A. Workforce Development System

Description of the Workforce Development System

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 TWIST 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.

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 postsecondary 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.

The Board also collaborates with the Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) Program to help individuals with disabilities transition from school-to-work and to obtain and retain employment. This collaboration has been strengthened with the creation of the Student HireAbility Navigator (SHN). In support of VRS, the SHN is charged with the following:

- Convene partners, including school districts and Education Service Centers, to identify strategies, services, gaps, and opportunities
- Increase community and system awareness of resources and activities
- Promote the use of career exploration, postsecondary education planning, and work readiness tools
- Develop and coordinate events and campaigns
- Collaborate with partner agencies to develop work-based learning opportunities
- Outreach to employers to inform them about work-based programs

The co-location of VRS has facilitated the referral process between partners, sharing of resources, including assistive technology, labor market and career information, and business services, to facilitate the customers' employment or career goals. The next step in strengthening our partnership is to begin identifying co-enrollment opportunities.

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

Description of how Board works with entities carrying out Core Programs and plan for working with at least one of the Governor's Industry Clusters.

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 education and training. 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 credentials: 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;
- 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 reopened 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, 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. 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

One-Stop Delivery System in the Workforce Area

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 one (1) full-service center and two (2) affiliated sites 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 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 to 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, Twitter account, LinkedIn, and YouTube. Other social media platforms are being evaluated to determine their reach and engagement capability.

All of the workforce centers and satellite offices 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.

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:

- WD Letter 18-07, Chg. 2, Discrimination Complaint Procedures
- WD Letter 24-01, Prohibition Against Discrimination Based on Disability or Limited English Proficiency in the Administration of Workforce Services
- WD Letter 57-07, Interpreter Services for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Individuals
- Technical Assistance Bulletin 225, 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.

The larger 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

- Telephone handset amplifier
- Video Relay Services
- Telephones with volume control

Printed Material

- Large print

Language

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

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 on mutually beneficial partnerships with other community organizations that also serve the disabled community, 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.

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.

B. Cooperative Agreements

Executed cooperative agreements

Workforce Solutions Cameron maintains Memoranda of Understanding with the following:

Table 4B-1	Memoranda of Understanding/Cooperative Agreements
	Rio Grande Valley Sustainability Council (IT Support MOU)
	Brownsville Independent School District - (At-Risk) Collaborative Dropout Reduction Program Grant
	Harlingen CISD (Financial MOU - TSR! Project) B. Correa
	La Villa ISD (Financial MOU - TSR! Project) B. Correa
	AARP Foundation/Senior Community Service Employment Program
	Alabama-Caushatta Indian Tribal Council Employment & Training Program
	BCFS HHS McAllen Transition Center (TWC TANF Foster Youth Project)
	Housing Authority of the City of Brownsville
	Brownsville Independent School District - Adult Continuing Education MOU (ESL & GED Classes for economically disadvantaged clients)
	Brownsville Independent School District - (Provision of Career & Job and work readiness related services for schools within BISD)
	Brownsville Independent School District-(Education Outreach Specialist Pilot Program)
	Brownsville Independent School District -(Increase awareness of availability of Pre-employment transition services for students with disabilities)
	Brownsville Public Library (Reduce Redundancy/Increase Cost Efficiency & Improve Services MOU)
	City of Brownsville- Brownsville urban System
	Community Development Corporation of Brownsville YouthBuild (Facilitate provision of services to youth participants)
	City of Brownsville (Cooperation and Partnership with regards to workforce development Services)
	Preparation for Adult Living Program/Child Protective Services
	Cameron & Willacy Counties Community Projects, Inc. (Provide services to low-income individuals seeking pre-employment skills, resume writing, training, and education classes)
	Ethel L. Whipple Memorial Library (Reduce Redundancy/ Increase Cost Efficiency & Improve Services MOU)
	Management & Training Corporation, Gary Job Corps Center (GJCC) Mandatory One Stop Partners under WIOA
	Harlingen Consolidated Independent School District (Local Match MOU) Filed with Local Match Contract
	Harlingen Economic Development Corporation , Texas State Technical College (Implementation of High Demand Occupation Training Grant Training Program)
	Housing Authority of the City of Harlingen
	Los Fresnos Community Development Corporation (Cooperative & mutually beneficial working relationship)
	Los Fresnos Consolidated Independent School District (Increase awareness of availability of pre-employment transition services for students with disabilities)
	Motivation, Education, and Training Inc. (Coordinate activities & services for MSFW population)
	MTX (National Dislocated Worker-NDW Temporary Disaster Relief Employment) MOU
	Rio South Texas Economic Council (Cooperative and mutually beneficial working relationship)
	San Benito Consolidated Independent School District
	South Texas College (NIMS Training Initiative)

Senior Texans Employment Services Program
South Texas Manufacturers Association (Cooperative and mutually beneficial working relationship)
TX Dept. of Criminal Justice-Parole Division
Texas Health and Human Services Commission (Implementation of Providing Services)
Texas Southmost College (Local Match MOU) Filed with Local Match Contract
TSTC Workforce Training and Continuing Education (Purchase, delivery & Lease of equipment outlined by High Demand Job Training (HDJT) Grant Agreement)
Texas State Technical College-Harlingen (Cooperative and mutually beneficial working relationship)
Texas Workforce Commission & Motivation Education & Training, Inc. (Coordinate activities and services for TX migrant and seasonal farmworker (MSFW) Population)
Uniting Neighbors In Drug Abuse Defense Tobacco Prevention & Control Coalition
Workforce Solutions Cameron - Harlingen Economic Development Corporation - Texas State Technical College (High Demand Occupation Training Grant Training Program in Auto Collision Repair)
Windham School District (Coordinate Activities & Services to increase success of former inmates' employment)

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

Strategies and Services that will be used in the Workforce Area

WFS Cameron continues to engage employers; especially employers in demand industry sectors and occupations in the workforce development programs, through the Business Services Unit (BSU). The BSU has established successful partnerships with chambers of commerce and economic development councils to enhance the relationships 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. These partnerships have been instrumental in providing an avenue to collect information regarding the needs of employers. Board staff also organizes and facilitates Employer Forums to discuss labor force needs with employers struggling with the recruitment of qualified workers. As a member of Economic Development Councils (EDCs), Chambers of Commerce, and collective impact groups such as RGV LEAD, RGV Focus, Co-Step and RGV Partnership, WFS Cameron is able to engage with area leadership to share resources and information on employment trends and emerging industries and occupations.

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 of 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.

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.

D. Coordination of Wagner-Peyser Services

Plans, Assurances, and Strategies for maximizing coordination, improving service delivery, and avoiding duplication of Wagner-Peyser Act services

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 service delivery 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 and WIT reporting systems, employment, follow-up, and case management.

E. Integrated, Technology-Enabled Intake and Case Management

One-stop centers implementing and transitioning to an integrated, technology-enabled intake and case management information system

Technology has been fully embraced within all the workforce centers 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 Child Care, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education & Training (SNAP E&T), Choices, and the Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act (WIOA).
- ***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.
- ***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.
- ***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:

- **COPSystem** - 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.
- **CASAS** – on-line adult basic skills competency-based testing system.
- **JobsEQ** - Software to assist in converting labor market data into actionable intelligence.
- **WorkKeys** - Skills assessment test for those who are interested in or are currently working for employers that place an emphasis on the National Career Readiness

Certificate (NCRC), which is the credential achieved by those who successfully complete the exam.

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.

Part 5: Workforce Investment Activities

A. Economic Development and Entrepreneurial/Microenterprise Activities

Local workforce investment activities with regional economic development activities carried out in the workforce area and the promotion of 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.

Entrepreneurial/Microenterprise Services:

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
- Communities Unlimited (rural)

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 Fasttrac program to residents of Cameron County. The Kaufmann Fasttrac is a 7-week course offered in three modules for existing small businesses and startups in support of entrepreneurship in the area.

B. Rapid Response Activity Coordination

Board workforce investment activities coordinated with statewide rapid response activities

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 a 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 at these meetings. Material and information provided includes, but is not limited to:

- Information on registering in 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.

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.

C. Youth Activities and Services

Description and Assessment of workforce investment activities for youth including youth with disabilities to include successful models

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. SEEDS has been the project most recognized.

- **SEEDS:** WFSC Cameron encourages and promotes career exploration and job readiness through its SEEDS (Students Empowered to Explore and Develop Skills) initiative in all school districts in Cameron County. The SEEDS initiative is composed of the following four elements: Career Expos and Fairs, Workshops, Industry Forums, and #MyDreamJob social media campaign. This initiative was implemented in an effort to develop well-informed youth and increase their ability to make conscious decisions about their career pathways for today's competitive job market. WFS Cameron believes that the SEEDS initiative directly supports a more prepared, more marketable workforce that meets the needs of local employers. Industry forums in targeted industries have been a very successful part of the SEEDS initiative. With industry-specific panels of experts, staff is able to curate a lineup of successful professionals with ties to the region. This initiative allows students to learn from the industry experts themselves. On top of their valuable insights, their stories are relatable, and we find that the connections they build with the students make the whole experience more memorable and inspiring.
- **Ready, Set, Link!:** WFS Cameron hosts a workshop that provides an overview of the Texas Workforce Commission's labor market and career and education planning tools. Also known as Train-the-Trainer sessions, these workshops target educators and staff who serve customers. This initiative has been so successful that the largest school district in the area adopted the Soft Skills curriculum as part of their Business Communication TEKS plan in 2018. A strong knowledge of how to use the LMCI tools will undoubtedly assist the students in the initial selection of a viable career pathway, orient them to occupations and wage levels within that pathway, and give them a problem-solving tool for their use in the future should a career change be required.
- **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.
- **National Retail Federation (NRF) Customer Service & Sales Certification:** WFS Cameron, at times, may offer this certification for students interested in jobs within the retail sector or occupations that require customer service and sales skills. This certification is beneficial to students in any industry or occupation they select in the future.
- **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.

- **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.

- **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), and other nonprofit organizations, staff has provided a 7-hour long retreat for foster youth. At times, the Board may collaborate with Workforce Solutions Lower Rio to collaboratively engage foster youth through a regional event.
- **Train for Success Virtual Career Fair:** This virtual career fair was designed to spotlight the WIOA eligible programs offered by Eligible Training Providers (ETPs) in Cameron County. Using the Premier virtual platform that hosts our job fairs, each school had a booth where they could interact and provide information to attendees.
- **YES! Coalition:** We are spearheading the revival of the Cameron County Youth Council in collaboration with the Cameron County Juvenile Justice Department (CCJJD), the

Housing Authority of the City of Brownsville (HACB), and YouthBuild. YES! stands for Youth Empowered to Succeed. Our newly formed coalition aims to unite professionals who work in youth-friendly agencies and community-based organizations in Cameron County to facilitate collaboration and networking, and to amplify the impact of their efforts.

- **Assistive Services:** With the co-location of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services 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 to educate the community on the availability of Pre-ETS services for students with disabilities.
- **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.

- **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-VR 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 different 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 in outside 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 the disabled;
- 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 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.

D. Coordination with Secondary and Postsecondary Education Programs

Board will coordinate its workforce investment activities with relevant secondary and postsecondary education programs and activities to coordinate strategies, enhance services, and avoid duplication of services

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 approved vendors 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 9th 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.

United Way of Southern Cameron County, “Partners for Postsecondary Success (PPS)”

The PPS initiative was discontinued by United Way of Southern Cameron County and folded over to RGV Focus with similar goals as originally designed. The PPS initiative, a collective impact project originally funded by the Gates Foundation, was a coalition of leaders from Brownsville ISD, WFS Cameron, Texas State Technical College Harlingen, United Brownsville, BEDC, Brownsville Chamber of Commerce, Texas Southmost College, and UTRGV, with representatives from RGV LEAD and RGV Focus.

Before it was transferred to another entity, the PPS project was molded into the All-In Project.

It was originally launched with a \$1.5 million grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and substantial funding from local businesses and individual stakeholders, Partners for Postsecondary Success (PPS) was a partnership working to improve education and create pathways to quality careers. The Task Forces within the Project illustrate the degree of collaboration and coordination that took place in this effort.

Data Taskforce - Charged with creating a data management system and repository of student achievement, labor demand and employment data from multiple sources to move Brownsville toward a culture of evidence in partner organizations and the community at large. This taskforce was charged with developing and distributing a Community Indicator Report on education to spark data-driven discussions about community issues.

Community Engagement Taskforce – Was responsible for creating and delivering a robust community awareness campaign illustrating the connection between postsecondary credentials and future financial stability for low-income, young adults.

Policies and Practices – Was responsible for strategically aligning partners' institutional policies and practices to PPS goals, including curriculum alignment, a focus on career pathways, programs to increase first-year retention, and increased internship, mentorship, and job shadowing opportunities.

Sustainability Taskforce – Was charged with strengthening the partnership's reach, effectiveness, and sustainability by engaging community leaders, students, and other diverse stakeholders to contribute intellectual and financial capital to PPS, and by dedicating additional staff resources.

United Way of Southern Cameron County, “All-In Project”

The All-In Project has been discontinued by United Way of Southern Cameron County and folded over to RGV Focus. The PPS Project had been now molded into the All-In Project, whereby the community of educators, workforce professionals, city administration, and business leaders committed to continue to plan and work together to support student success through their chosen career pathways. The goal was to “*to double the number of young adults in Brownsville who earn postsecondary credentials with labor market value by 2025*”.

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 9th 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 in the summer of 2023.

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.

ISDs Career & Technical Education Department

WFS Cameron has been working for the past two years to train BISD and other county ISD Career and Technical (CTE) faculty and counselors in the use of the TWC website LMCI functions, 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 LMI 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 schools 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 ISD faculties 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 maximize 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 of 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. 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 current grant award, WFS Cameron was able to partner with local training providers to develop a new Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP) in plumbing, pipefitting, and welding, as well as an electrical pre-apprenticeship program. Currently, the Board is seeking to partner with the healthcare industry to develop new RAP in this sector.

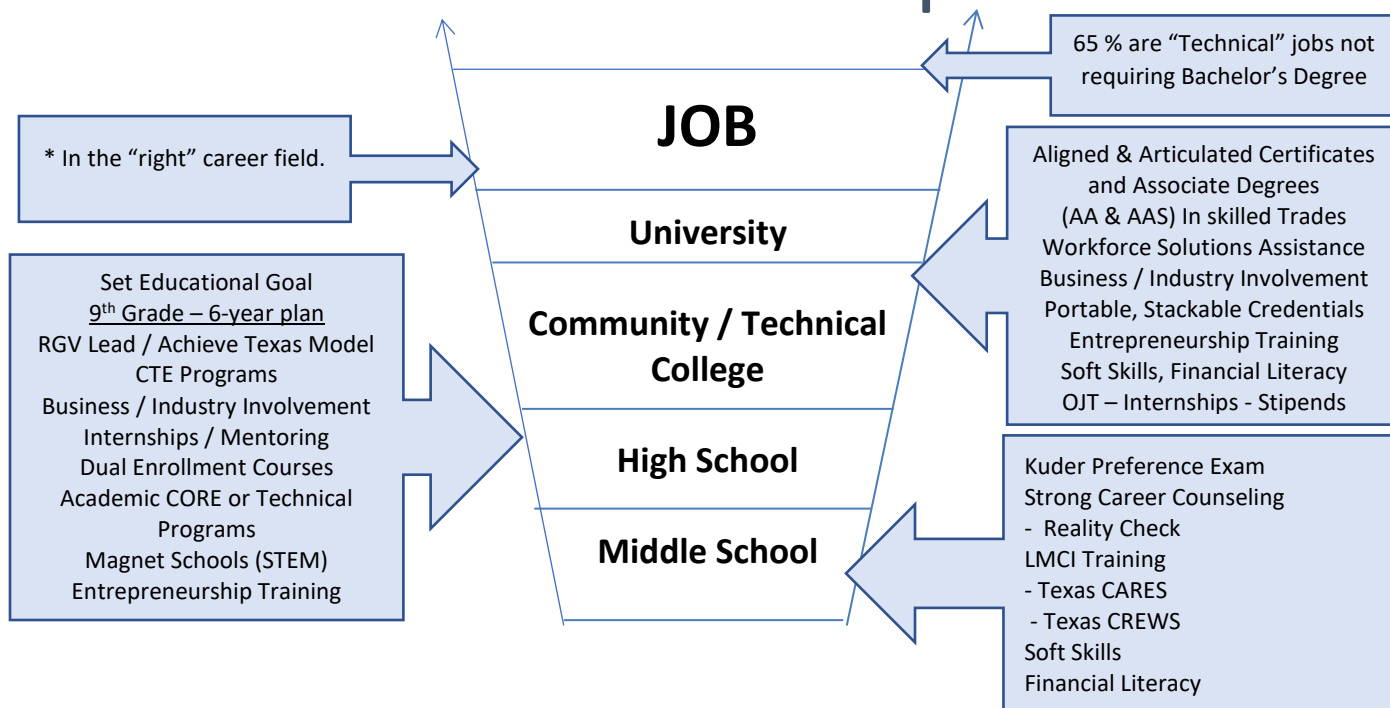
Career Schools

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-ET, 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

“The Workforce Pipeline”



“Guided Education is the Key”

The “Workforce Pipeline” illustration above depicts 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.

1. Middle School career awareness counseling is critical. The question is often asked: “How do you expect an 8th grader to appropriately select a required TEA Endorsement when entering the 9th grade if he/she has no idea what career pathways are available, nor which one best fits their particular attitudes, aptitudes, and abilities?” This 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.
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. 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.

E. Child Care and Early Learning

Managing Childcare and Early Learning within its workforce system to enhance School Readiness and strengthen and support the Childcare Industry

Workforce Solutions Cameron is aware of the demand for high-quality childcare programs and the need for children to receive quality education during ages 0-5 in order to be school-ready. The number of Texas Rising Star certified programs has steadily increased and now with the onset of the Texas Rising Star Level Designation, WFS Cameron is expecting to have an estimated 150 Texas Rising Star certified programs by the end of 2024. This increase of high-quality childcare programs in the community allows an increase in family choice and reassurance that local childcare programs are dedicated in offering the developmentally appropriate education and care to the children they serve.

Strengthens and supports the childcare industry

The roles and responsibilities of early childhood programs have evolved and WFS Cameron has actively participated in developing and strengthening the support and opportunities available to programs and its teaching staff. Mentoring and Coaching services provided by Texas Rising Star and Texas School Ready programs, local professional development opportunities, as well as the acquisition of classroom resources, will assist teachers in acquiring the mandatory training hours and staying up-to-date with new advances and techniques in the early childhood field. WFS Cameron will continue to be an active member of various advisory boards, such as the Child Care and Development program at Texas Southmost College Advisory Board and United Way of Southern Cameron County's Early Childhood Taskforce, serving as an advocate for childcare teachers and programs and promoting the strengthening of educational requirements in early childhood.

F. Transportation and Other Support Services

Providing transportation and other appropriate support services

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.

If it is determined that no one in the community can assist the customer with transportation or other types of requested services, a support service request will be initiated through various WFS Cameron programs. 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
- ✓ 50 - Brownsville - Port Isabel B Metro Routes

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.

G. Coordination of Adult Education and Literacy (AEL)

Coordinate 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 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. BISD is currently holding only one class in person and the rest of the classes virtually, due to the pandemic. Once BISD resumes in-person instruction throughout the county, classes will be offered in the following locations: Brownsville (4 sites), Los Fresnos, Harlingen, San Benito, and Santa Maria. 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 (Welcome Back Center for immigrants with college degrees), US Citizenship classes, Distance Learning (for ESL and ABE participants), and Career Pathways (Certification for Employment). The Career Pathways available include: Microsoft Office Specialist, GS5 (basic computer skills), Welding, Phlebotomy, Carpentry, Certified Nurse Assistant, and Medical Billing & Coding.

The Board has collaborated and coordinated with core partners for different initiatives that support program integration. The creation of an out-of-school youth academy offered the opportunity to collaborate with the AEL provider due to their partnership and history with YouthBuild in serving

out-of-school youth. Participants selected by the Board for this initiative were enrolled into the Workforce Ready Concepts Mobile Learning Platform. The learning programs 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.

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, Dislocated Workers, and Youth Services

A. Adult and Dislocated Worker Employment and Training

Description and Assessment of Adult and Dislocated Worker Employment and Training Activities

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, CASAS, and the TABE. The Board has implemented the CASAS test for basic skills as an alternative to the TABE test. 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.

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
- 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.
- Referrals to other community resources
- Use of resource room materials, equipment, and information on how to access online resources
- Training programs
- 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 necessary to enter and retain employment. Participants must have the skills and qualifications to participate successfully in training services based on assessment results. The types of training available include, but are not limited to:

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

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, as well as other local and state requirements under ETPL. 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 Spanish language or 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 offers basic skills participants their own trainings in demand occupations. In an effort to enhance the workforce experience, participants interested in training are enrolled in job readiness, soft skills, and financial literacy services to provide them a comprehensive mix of services in preparation for entrance into the workforce.

For those individuals with a disability, Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRs) is now co-located within our workforce centers. As core partners, we make available center equipment and services, including assessment testing, for use by VR staff for basic career services for their customers and co-case managed participants. A more comprehensive assessment is conducted by VR staff on a one-on-one basis for their customers.

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

Board policy to ensure that priority for adult individualized career services and training services will be given to recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient, as well as veterans and foster youth

WFS Cameron has an approved policy in place in compliance with above cited section. Our Board policy is also compliant with the TWC Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act: Guidelines for Adults, Dislocated Workers, and Youth, stating: 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 veterans and eligible spouses applies across all qualified employment and training programs. 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 and eligible spouses receive priority of service for all program services, 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. 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

Identification of the entity responsible for the disbursement of grant funds

B. Sub-Grants and Contracts

Competitive process to be used to award the sub-grants and contracts for WIOA Title I activities.

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

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.

Part 8: Performance

A. Board Performance Targets

Local levels of performance used to measure the performance of the local fiscal agent, eligible providers, and the one-stop delivery system

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.

WFS Cameron's performance targets are set by TWC and are evaluated monthly, at minimum, based on the "percent of target" being 'met.' There are three levels once evaluated:

- Not Meeting – attained an outcome less than 90% of the target measure
- Meeting – attained an outcome within 90% to 110% of the target measure
- Exceeding – attained an outcome higher than 110% of the target measure

WFS Cameron has taken pride in meeting or exceeding the contracted performance measures through BCY2018-2019 and the years prior. Performance was impacted as a result of the pandemic in FY20. 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.

Our current Contracted Performance Measures are:

- Claimant Reemployment within 10 weeks
- # of Employers Receiving Workforce Assistance
- Choices Full Work Rate – All Family Total
- Average # Children Served Per Day – Discretionary
- Employed/Enrolled Q2 Post Exit – All Participants
- Employed/Enrolled Q2-Q4 Post Exit – All Participants
-
- Credential Rate – All Participants
- Employed Q2 Post Exit – Adult
- Employed Q4 Post Exit – Adult
- Median Earnings Q2 Post Exit – Adult
- Credential Rate – Adult
 - Measurable Skills Gains - Adult
- Employed Q2 Post Exit – Dislocated Worker
- Employed Q4 Post Exit – Dislocated Worker
- Median Earnings Q2 Post Exit – Dislocated Worker
- Credential Rate – Dislocated Worker
 - Measurable Skills Gains - Dislocated Worker
- Employed/Enrolled Q2 Post Exit – Youth
- Employed/Enrolled Q4 Post Exit – Youth
 - Medians Earnings Q2 Post Exit - Youth
- Credential Rate – Youth
 - Measurable Skills Gains - Youth

Texas Workforce Commission is finalizing performance targets for each measure noted above and any changes to the targets will be due to year-end adjustments. Additional RESEA performance measures noted below will be issued to the Boards in the near future 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)

Part 9: Training and Services

A. Individual Training Accounts (ITAs)

Training Services provided through ITAs

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. Although Training Providers may submit programs listed on the statewide List of Targeted Occupations for approval, Boards may limit the issuance of ITAs for funding *only* programs on the Board's List of Targeted Occupations. 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 as long as it is listed on the Board's approved 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 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.

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. The approved targeted occupations list is provided to program participants along with the statewide listing of training providers to ensure customer choice in the selection of training services. 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. WFS Cameron was an SDF COVID-19 grantee providing COVID-19 related training services outside of ETPL. Additionally, the Board is also an Apprenticeship Expansion grantee providing apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship training. Through this grant award, the Board has been successful in expanding apprenticeship training in Cameron County in preparation for emerging industries. Training providers of recently approved DOL apprenticeship programs will be furnished with information on the process to be followed 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 other workforce programs utilize the system to access training services.

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

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

WFS Cameron prioritizes funding for individuals who are unable to obtain other grant assistance for training, or whose financial needs exceed the assistance available from other sources.

WIOA funds will be awarded as follows:

1. WIOA funds under the ITA system will be awarded for the total cost of training, limited to ITA maximum amounts stated herein, to participants who were unable to find other grant assistance and/or no other funding is available for the training program; and/or
2. WIOA funds under the ITA system will only be awarded for the amount not covered by other resources if a participant's financial need exceeds the assistance available from other sources. In determining financial need, simply reducing the amount of WIOA funds by the amount of the Pell Grant or other sources of Federal student financial assistance is not permitted.
3. Loans shall be excluded from the determination of financial need.
4. A WIOA participant may enroll in WIOA-paid training while a Pell Grant application is pending. If the Pell Grant application is approved, WIOA must be reimbursed for the

amount of the ITA if a portion of the of the Pell Grant is used to pay for training costs already paid for by the ITA.

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 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. 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

Boards must include a description of how the Board will encourage Registered Apprenticeship programs in its workforce area to register with the Eligible Training Provider System 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 Apprenticeship Texas 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 a new

Registered Apprenticeship program in plumbing and an electrical pre-apprenticeship program. The Board continues to reach out to training providers and employers to increase Registered Apprenticeships in our area. It is worthy to note that the first Registered Apprenticeship in healthcare was approved in 2022 in the region. With our outreach strategy, we are hopeful that more will follow.

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 1 and WD 05-19, Change 1. 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 may be 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 the 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.

B. ApprenticeshipTexas

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

WFS Cameron will support 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 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 current grant award, WFS Cameron was able to partner with a local training provider to successfully develop a new Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP) in plumbing and an electrical pre-apprenticeship program.

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. The Board will also explore pre-apprenticeship opportunities for youth with local school districts to promote potential career pathways, in support of the required youth program elements which includes pre-apprenticeship training. Work experience is a funding priority on which at least 20% of local youth allocation must be spent.

Additionally, the Board will coordinate referral and training opportunities with Job Corp since they recognize apprenticeship as a 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. This will be essential as the Board attempts to support the development of additional RAPs in construction. The Business Services Unit (BSU) will also play a key role in supporting the ApprenticeshipTexas effort in Cameron County. BSU will be 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 will coordinate training with the state office so that businesses can obtain a better insight into the benefits of apprenticeships. The services and training sought may include:

- Training staff, including case managers and business service reps (BSRs), on apprenticeship training
- Developing an effective outreach plan,
- Developing 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 promote ApprenticeshipTexas on our website 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. 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), 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.

Supporting ApprenticeshipTexas 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.

It is worthy to note that WFS Cameron filed and was awarded a new ApprenticeshipTexas Expansion grant 2021. The grant will add 177 new apprentices to our construction trades workforce in two (2) new apprenticeship occupations and expand apprenticeships in existing RAP programs. Additionally, the Board won the 2022 Registered Apprenticeship Expansion Grant Award at the 25th Annual Texas Workforce Conference in Dallas, Texas.

Part 11: Public Comment

Minimum Plan Requirements:

Consistent with WIOA §108(d), WFS Cameron will make available to the public the 2021-2024 Workforce Solutions Cameron Texas Workforce Development Plan Modification as follows:

- Copies of the proposed local plan modification will be made available to the public through electronic and other means, such as public hearings and local news media
 - A Notice of Public Comments ad was placed in print media with largest circulations in our WDA.
 - The Plan Modification was made available during the review period for viewing and public comments at the administration office and both full-service Workforce Centers in hard copy.
 - 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
 - The Plan was provided for review to the Board of Directors and Board Committees, County Judge, and the Mayor of Brownsville.
 - Provide a 30-day period for comment on the plan before its submission to TWC, beginning on the date that the proposed plan is made available, before its submission to TWC;
 - Board Action of Approval: January 26, 2023
 - General Publication Date of Public Notice: January 29, 2023
 - Review Period – from January 30, 2023, to February 28, 2023
 - Finalize Plan with Comment as needed: February 28, 2023
 - Submission to TWC: by March 1, 2023
- and,
- Submit any comments that express disagreement with the plan modification to TWC along with the plan modification.

Texas Workforce Investment Council Requirements Local Workforce Development Board 2023 Plan Modifications

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

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

Demonstrating Alignment with Texas’ Workforce System Strategic Plan

The four sections below list and describe the four system goals from The Texas Workforce System Strategic Plan FY 2016–FY 2023 that identify critical, high-priority system issues for the state. Boards inform the development of strategic goals and objectives and are essential to the implementation of the workforce system plan. Board plan responses apprise TWIC of innovative practices and how key strategies in the system plan translate into local action to move the system forward. Examples of select Board responses will be presented to TWIC under each goal. All 28 Boards will be represented in the briefing for the approval of the plans.

For each goal:

- briefly describe how the Board is working to fulfill the intent of the goal as specified in the description; and
- include the corresponding page number(s) within your plan that further details the identified strategy or initiative.

System Goal 1 and Rationale

Focus on Employers

Effective engagement with employers informs many system strategies and functions that address the changing needs of industry as well as state and regional economies. Education and training are a primary system function that may require multiple state and local entities to work with similar employers to design instruction or adjust career and technical education program and delivery options. Coordination and partnerships with employers are essential to gain insight and implement initiatives while ensuring that industrial productivity continues.

System Goal 1—Local Board Response

Please describe how your local Board has improved employer engagement and efforts to collaborate with any other entities that require input, participation, and/or partnership with employers. Specifically, describe how you coordinate efforts to gain more comprehensive insight on employer needs while reducing the demand on the employers who would otherwise be responding to multiple requests. Identify the primary outcomes and, where relevant, list key entities involved and type of information requests for each entity.

Board response and corresponding plan page number(s): 78-86, 98-109

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 and manufacturing industries.

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).

System Goal 2 and Rationale

Engage in Partnerships

Workforce system partners leverage local and regional partnerships to enhance system alignment and improve outcomes and reporting. Partnerships rely on a culture of collaboration and trust, deep working relationships, and communication to provide a solid foundation on which to coordinate planning, integrate processes, and develop the collective technical capacity to share needs, data, and information.

System Goal 2—Local Board Response

Please describe your primary (top) partnerships, how you use them to address key strategies in your plan, and the significant outcomes and progress related to the partnerships. In addition, specifically describe partnerships that foster innovation and improved participant engagement and outcomes in workforce development.

Board response and corresponding plan page number(s): 28-29, 61-69, 77-94

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 enhanced participant outcomes. 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. We meet regularly and collaborate on proposals and program planning with Workforce Solutions (Lower Rio), our sister Board. 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 want to start their own business.

To further the employability effort, TWC awarded five individual grants totaling \$894,953 that will benefit the of 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.

System Goal 3 and Rationale

Align System Elements

Aligning workforce programs and services ensures transparent processes and efficient “no wrong door” access that can improve transitions and help all participants complete programs of study, earn credentials of value, and gain critical employability skills. Primarily, seamless alignment supports greater portability and transferability for Texans in or preparing to enter the labor market.

System Goal 3—Local Board Response

Please describe alignment efforts and the status, outcomes, and plan for continuous improvement of system alignment in your region. In the description, include barriers, considerations, and proposed actions to overcome the barriers.

Board response and corresponding plan page number(s): 14, 28-30, 34, 58-62,

Workforce Solutions Cameron strives to improve and enhance services, programs, and policies to facilitate effective and efficient transitions and achieve full implementation of the Pathways to Careers Initiative for students with disabilities. We also develop and implement policies and processes to ensure portable and transferrable credit and credentials. Working with the local colleges such as Texas Southmost College and Texas State Technical College, we have facilitated the development of short-term programs and apprenticeships to place technical and vocational students into trainings that will quickly lead to earnings. Trainings are aligned with skills gaps identified by new and emerging industries into the area in the last few years. Program design includes, to the widest extent possible, the portability and transferability of credits in articulation agreements between colleges and our local secondary schools to encourage dual enrollment. Apprenticeship programs include transfer of earned credentials stored in a nationwide system that promotes employees’ hiring anytime, anywhere.

Since 2020, WFS Cameron has introduced online learning options for residents who prefer this platform or cannot attend in-person. Metrix Learning offers general workplace courses that complement any work environment to continue furthering an individual’s employment skills. This E-Learning platform offers career exploration pathways in 10 industries with over 200 occupations; and access to free certification in thousands of courses to obtain the skills employers are asking for. Eligible residents who sign up can earn certificates and digital badges in various

areas such as computer and IT fields i.e., Networking, CompTIA, and Windows. The Texas A&M Manufacturing HUB has also introduced the TRAIN (Transforming a Manufacturing Ecosystem in the Rio Grande Valley) whose primary goal is to train 10,000 people across the Rio Grande Valley (RGV) in two years through online and mobile training. To achieve that goal, the program will offer a selection of short courses covering the areas of advanced manufacturing, occupational health and safety, process improvement, COVID-19, cyber security, and heavy equipment. These free courses will be offered at different intervals over the next two years.

The University Center at TSTC partners with reputable universities to provide opportunities and options for the residents of the Rio Grande Valley to obtain undergraduate and graduate degrees. The articulation agreements secured with Texas universities also facilitate the transfer of earned credits toward a Bachelor's Degree at other colleges.

System Goal 4 and Rationale

Improve and Integrate Programs

Coordination and integration of system processes focused on high-priority programmatic needs support service delivery; increase participant access, learning, and transitions through education and training; and improve decision-making at the system, partner, and participant levels.

System Goal 4—Local Board Response

Please describe local efforts to integrate processes and share resources across programs in your region. Identify efficiencies realized and improved participant outcomes as a result. Describe how this work can be leveraged to create new, relevant opportunities that serve the needs of all stakeholders.

Board response and corresponding plan page number(s): 66, 76, 81-82, 86, 93, 98,117,

Workforce Solutions Cameron has never sought as hard to employ enhanced or alternative program and service delivery methods as we did as a response to the pandemic that changed our world in the spring of 2020. WFS Cameron aggressively pursues integration among partners that enables the local workforce system to operate in the most efficient and cost-effective means possible while maintaining flexibility and adaptability without losing their customer focus. As a result of Covid-19, when businesses were forced to close or reduce staff, WFS Cameron was meeting regularly with the Texas Workforce Commission to design strategies for keeping doors open for business and to devise alternate service delivery methods for training. The situation launched new and innovative ideas and opportunities for both providers and consumers in Cameron County. The need for sanitation gave rise to the expansion of the Sanitation field. Employers quickly responded to the opportunity to train their staff in the art of disinfection to maintain a healthy and germ-free environment to allow workers to continue to be employed. The workforce board also addressed the first responder's needs when schools closed and the need for childcare remained. They were able to obtain daycare for their eligible children. Students were also directed towards multiple available training and career path options, some which came into

focus after the pandemic. New avenues for communication through the use of technology via new platforms were introduced for interviews, job fairs, and education. WFSC is constantly exploring new methods to further workforce development.

Strategic Opportunities to Drive Local Implementation

Before TWIC began the process to develop the new system strategic plan, Board directors were invited to provide input on issues and opportunities for consideration in system planning.

Please consider the responses you provided (above) to local board area implementation of the four primary goals in the current system plan and identify how the new system strategic plan can help future implementation of your regional goals and strategies related to the following:

Increase engagement of target populations, including Opportunity Youth, Texans with disabilities, foster youth, and sex-trafficking victims.

Describe Board strategies that support engagement of sometimes underserved populations.

Board response and corresponding plan page number(s): 67, 88,115

WFS Cameron focuses on target populations through program planning and inclusion and MOUs. 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.

Opportunity Youth are served through WIOA-funded programs for employment and training opportunities and MOUs for additional expanded services. Since Vocational Rehabilitation Services is under the TWC umbrella as a Core Partner, VRS is included in providing support and training opportunities to Texans with disabilities, 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.

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. 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.

The revival of the Cameron County Youth Council in collaboration with the Cameron County Juvenile Justice Department (CCJJD), the Housing Authority of the City of Brownsville (HACB), and YouthBuild gave rise to YES! (Youth Empowered to Succeed). This coalition unites professionals who work in youth-friendly agencies and community-based organizations in Cameron County to facilitate collaboration and networking, and to amplify the impact of their efforts.

Improve efficiency and outcomes through data-driven decision-making and investments.

Describe Board strategies that support data-driven decision-making and investments.

Board response and corresponding plan page number(s): 73, 79-80, 91-95, 104

Workforce Solutions Cameron operates as a data driven enterprise, analyzing labor market information on an ongoing basis to ensure career and education pathways are aligned to in-demand industries in the region. WFS Cameron downloads labor market information from various resources including the Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Census Bureau, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, and TWC data banks. Our target occupations list is derived from local labor market information. Our training programs are designed based on the skills gaps and shortages needed to fulfill the industry needs.

