

19TH ANNUAL
TEXAS WORKFORCE CONFERENCE

CO-HOSTED WITH THE TEXAS CHAPTER OF THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF WORKFORCE PROFESSIONALS



NOVEMBER 18, 2015

**BOARD
AWARDS**

PUSHING BEYOND LIMITS

November 18, 2015

Greetings!

Welcome to the 19th Annual Texas Workforce Conference Board Awards ceremony. As one of the highlights of the conference, the Local Workforce Development Board (Board) awards recognize the outstanding Board accomplishments in the following categories: Child Care Quality, Service to Business, Service to Workers, Service to Community, and Industry Sector Outreach. We are also proud to introduce a new award for outstanding accomplishment in Youth Inspiration & Career Awareness, and we will recognize additional workforce system partners for their important roles in preparing our state's workforce for the future.

Our Boards, the Texas Workforce Commission, and our workforce system partners work together to respond to the needs of employers and workers through innovation, skills training, job search assistance, and other workforce support services. Our focus is to connect Texans with jobs and provide employers with the skilled workforce they need. We are confident that Texas will continue to lead the nation in workforce and economic development.

We thank the judges for their diligent efforts in choosing from among the many excellent nominees. The work done by the Boards and workforce partners reflects the effectiveness of the Texas workforce system and provides examples of best practices to be emulated.

To the Board award winners, our sincere congratulations for a job well done! Thanks to all of you, the Texas workforce system has never been stronger.



Andres Alcantar, Chairman
Commissioner Representing the Public



Ronald G. Congleton
Commissioner Representing Labor



Ruth R. Hughs
Commissioner Representing Employers

TEXAS WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS CHILD CARE QUALITY INCENTIVE AWARD

The Child Care Quality Incentive Awards honor Local Workforce Development Boards that have improved child care quality through the creation of exemplary child care programs that demonstrate positive outcomes for the population served. The goals of these awards are to recognize outstanding programs, and to encourage and foster replication of best practices across the state.

The Texas Workforce Commission recognizes exemplary child care programs for outstanding performance in areas such as consumer education; technical assistance and mentoring; and professional development.

2015 CHILD CARE QUALITY INCENTIVE AWARD NOMINEES

Workforce Solutions Borderplex

Parents as Teachers Program

Workforce Solutions Borderplex's (Borderplex) Parents as Teachers (PAT) program teaches parents about the different stages of child development and provides resources to help them make the best choices for their families. This program also assists in preparing young children for a successful first year of school while offering support to parents throughout the year. Borderplex sponsored the training of 10 AmeriCorps members to become PAT educators and served 100 families.

Workforce Solutions Brazos Valley

Online Training Increases Certified Child Care Providers

In an effort to enhance the local Texas Rising Star Provider program, Workforce Solutions Brazos Valley (Brazos Valley) offered rural child care providers the opportunity for their employees to obtain a Child Development Associate certification at no-cost. Flexible online training and guidance from Brazos Valley staff has produced a high success rate for the 22 participating providers. More than half of the participants have completed the program, which will help meet the need for higher quality child care in the community.

Workforce Solutions Capital Area

Expanding No-Cost Training for Child Care Providers

Workforce Solutions Capital Area (Capital Area) created training opportunities to promote best practices in early childhood education at local child care centers. Capital Area expanded these opportunities for child care providers by offering several no-cost training sessions. During FY2015, Capital Area hosted 42 training sessions—totaling 1,086 hours—including a variety of continuing education and professional development courses. Additionally, presentations on safety, child development, and literacy were made to 1,822 participants attending the Directors' Symposium.

Workforce Solutions of Central Texas

National Association for the Education of Young Children Accreditation Facilitation Project

Through the National Association for the Education of Young Children Accreditation Facilitation Project, Workforce Solutions of Central Texas (Central Texas) collaborates with several local, state, and national organizations to target child care facilities serving high-risk children. Among the many trainings, portfolio development, and improvement projects, Central Texas created an award-winning initiative involving outdoor classrooms. Of the 2,202 children receiving services from Central Texas, a large portion is from military families.

Workforce Solutions of the Coastal Bend

Early Childhood Development Quality Services Program

Promoting the pivotal role that a teacher plays in the development of young children, Workforce Solutions of the Coastal Bend (Coastal Bend) developed the Early Childhood Development Quality Services Program (ECDQSP). The program allows Coastal Bend to address the various educational levels of child care center staff, increase the child care knowledge base, and develop and improve skills for an enhanced level of care. Through ECDQSP, Coastal Bend has presented 14 early childhood education professional development training activities and awarded certificates for over 2,700 clock hours of training to 529 child care employees.

Workforce Solutions Concho Valley

Air Force Community Partnership Initiative Leading the Charge

Partnering with the Goodfellow Air Force Base, Workforce Solutions Concho Valley developed a community partnership initiative to connect on- and off-base child care programs. The partnership is designed to leverage military installations and local community capabilities and resources to reduce operation and services costs in support of the U.S. Air Force mission. Implementing a seamless child care program of well-trained, high-quality providers with two systems—military and civilian—the initiative provides around-the-clock services to meet diverse customer needs.

Workforce Solutions East Texas

CDA Academy Prepares Staff for TRS Certification

Workforce Solutions East Texas (East Texas) created a Child Development Associate (CDA) training program to assist child care providers in improving their skills and preparing for the CDA assessment certification as part of the Texas Rising Star (TRS) provider certification. Of the 56 individuals enrolled in the CDA class this year, 52 successfully completed the class and created appropriate portfolios and 37 received their CDA, a 71 percent certification rate.

Workforce Solutions Greater Dallas

Impacting Children's Lives

Workforce Solutions Greater Dallas (Greater Dallas) is an active member of Commit! and the Dallas Early Education Alliance (DEEA), organizations that help build core community relationships and increase collaboration with numerous early education programs. As part of DEEA, Greater Dallas extended its reach and increased the percentage of children placed in quality day care facilities, while building a cluster of early education partners focused on impacting the lives of area children. Through these collaborative partnerships, Greater Dallas has reduced duplication, streamlined services, and integrated programs and customers while leveraging resources and funding.

Workforce Solutions Gulf Coast

Collaborative for Children

To support a neighborhood-based quality improvement initiative, Workforce Solutions Gulf Coast (Gulf Coast) partnered with contractor Collaborative for Children, the United Way of Baytown, and the United Way of Chambers County. By joining teachers, directors, parents, and community leaders in the Baytown area, the initiative seeks to increase the overall quality of child care programs and the number of programs attaining Texas Rising Star certification, while ensuring that children ages 0–5 from low-income families are school-ready. Currently, five centers are participating, and Gulf Coast anticipates adding two more this year.

Workforce Solutions for the Heart of Texas

Navigating Child Care with ChildOne

Workforce Solutions for the Heart of Texas developed the ChildOne website to increase awareness of quality child care and offer area parents the opportunity to make informed choices for children's services. The ChildOne website has a database supported by 11 child care partners for easy access to child care services, ranging from Texas Rising Star providers to disability services and parenting classes. Resources include a web application that provides busy parents with an interactive map for locating educational programs, health services, employment assistance, and parenting resources.

Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas

Staying Involved with Child Care Providers

Keeping in touch and staying involved with local child care providers are just two of the ways Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas (Northeast Texas) promotes quality child care. By working closely with child care providers, Northeast Texas was able to provide support and alleviate concerns about meeting the new Texas Rising Star guidelines. Collaborating with Texarkana College and Paris Junior College, Northeast Texas provided conferences in several cities in the nine-county region and created a hybrid Child Development Associate course, offering incentives to provider staff upon successful completion.

Workforce Solutions Rural Capital Area

Innovative Program Improves Quality of Care

Workforce Solutions Rural Capital Area (Rural Capital Area) integrated multiyear quality and Texas Rising Star (TRS) plans to improve area early care and education by increasing TRS certification. Rural Capital Area staff conducts individual and bimonthly director and teacher trainings and provides technical assistance for participants. More than 1,200 participants representing 157 providers will receive approximately 614 hours of training and mentoring, and 59 teachers are expected to earn their Child Development Associate certification.

Workforce Solutions South Texas

Inspiring Educators, Inspiring Children

Workforce Solutions South Texas (South Texas) partnered with the Kaplan Early Learning Company and the Texas Workforce Commission to enhance early childhood education and promote school readiness of young children. South Texas was awarded a Texas School Ready! grant, identified more than 60 classrooms to participate, and assessed 1,200 children. The Kaplan project helped 234 teachers representing 44 private child care centers receive 1,632 professional development hours on the Devereux Early Childhood Assessment for infants and toddlers, and the Learning Accomplishment Profile for preschool children.

Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas

Leading by Example

Through child care licensing, provider, and mentor feedback, Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas (Southeast) identified director leadership as a critical development need. To assist local directors in expanding their industry leadership skills, Southeast sponsored attendance to National Association for the Education of Young Children conferences. Southeast also worked with the Lamar Institute of Technology to begin Child Development Associate preparation coursework and coordinated with providers to supplement the cost of training for the Teacher Education and Compensation Helps early childhood initiative.

Workforce Solutions South Plains

Hopping on the FROG Bus

Workforce Solutions South Plains (South Plains) collaborated to maintain the Child Care Provider Resource Room and the Fun Reading on the Go (FROG) mobile resource lab, and offered provider trainings and resources to increase the number of area Texas Rising Star providers. This year, South Plains held 12 live trainings for over 550 participants to strengthen the quality of child care provided and offered a biweekly Training on Thursday class, with 30 FROG bus visits monthly. More than 150 caregivers earned training certificates this fiscal year.

Workforce Solutions Texoma

Director's Academy and Super Saturday

Workforce Solutions Texoma provided the Director's Academy, Super Saturday, and a grant program to increase the viability and quality of local child care providers. The Director's Academy presented training to 232 owners and directors of local child care centers and homes, with additional credit for licensing requirements offered during the Super Saturday training. Quality grants were funded to local Texas Rising Star (TRS) and child care service providers to assist with equipment and curriculum in support of quality education and to help in meeting TRS standards.

TEXAS WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS SERVICE TO BUSINESS AWARD

The Service to Business Award recognizes a Local Workforce Development Board that has demonstrated innovative approaches to meeting employer needs through recruiting, hiring, training, and upgrading employee skills.

2015 SERVICE TO BUSINESS AWARD NOMINEES

Workforce Solutions Borderplex

Ticket to Success

Workforce Solutions Borderplex (Borderplex) upgraded its services to businesses by shifting from a traditional job fair model to targeted industry-driven job fairs. Borderplex implemented Ticket to Success job-readiness workshops, online registration, industry advisory meetings, live interviewing, and partnerships. More than 1,200 job seekers and 50 employers participated in the first industry job fair targeting transportation, government, and other industries.

Workforce Solutions Brazos Valley

Developing a Qualified Workforce

Workforce Solutions Brazos Valley, partnering with the Brazos Valley Community and Business Leaders Partnership, developed a teacher externship project, which allows teachers and counselors to contextualize the connections between academic skills and the workplace. As part of the teacher externship, teachers create lesson plans based on the host companies, and as the knowledge base of skills is applied in the classroom, the teachers are able to influence over 4,000 students within the region.

Workforce Solutions Cameron

Putting Veterans to Work

Workforce Solutions Cameron (Cameron) partnered with Trailboss Enterprises for hiring and recruitment assistance. Cameron advertised job openings on WorkInTexas.com, prescreened job candidates, and referred quality applicants, with online federal background checks conducted at the Cameron Workforce Solutions Offices. Through a veteran pilot program, Cameron identified 50 veterans with transferable experience for recruitment. The partnership was able to provide 140 local federal contract jobs with highly competitive wages.

Workforce Solutions of Central Texas

Military Spouses Work from Home

Workforce Solutions of Central Texas' Business Solutions Unit worked with Hilton Worldwide (Hilton) to develop the military-spouse-focused, employer-driven Work from Home Consultants program. To date, 90 military spouses have been recruited, trained, and employed, with plans for an additional 30 to be hired. As an employee of Hilton, a military spouse is able to earn a salary from anywhere in the world when his or her spouse is deployed.

Workforce Solutions of the Coastal Bend

Hot Jobs

Workforce Solutions of the Coastal Bend (Coastal Bend) assisted IMS/Expert Fire and Safety (IMS) with employee recruitment. Coastal Bend provided a continuum of employer services ranging from performing administrative functions and marketing to hosting job hiring events. Coastal Bend also identified a high number of unemployed OSHA Safety-trained oil field workers who met the type of transferable experience IMS was seeking.

Workforce Solutions Deep East Texas

Soft Skills Training

Workforce Solutions Deep East Texas (Deep East Texas) developed and implemented Soft Skills Training, a three-day, eighteen-hour course offering job seekers basic skills and giving graduates a competitive advantage in the job market. The certification course is offered monthly to the public in each of the area's six Workforce Solutions Offices. Deep East Texas collaborated with several schools and area organizations to ensure that a wide range of job seekers can access the training.

Workforce Solutions East Texas

Assessments for a Work Ready Community

Workforce Solutions East Texas uses the ACT WorkKeys job skills assessment system to identify relevant job seeker skills such as reading, applied mathematics, and locating information. Individuals are then referred to participating employers based on assessments. In all, 1,062 individuals have been assessed through WorkKeys, with more than 60 businesses using the program and 96 individuals having been hired. WorkKeys assessments contributed to Gregg County becoming the first in the state to earn the Work Ready Community designation by ACT, giving current and prospective businesses confidence in the area's skilled workforce.

Workforce Solutions Golden Crescent

Shared Work Program

Workforce Solutions Golden Crescent (Golden Crescent) provided rapid response services in 2014 during employer Berry Plastics' layoff in the Victoria area. Golden Crescent connected Berry Plastics with the Texas Workforce Commission's Shared Work program, allowing the company to maintain service and production standards, avoid further layoffs and plant closure, and gain market share by employees working reduced hours and supplementing their wages with unemployment insurance benefits. Thanks in part to this collaboration, Berry Plastics is projecting growth and is working with Golden Crescent on new hires.

Workforce Solutions Greater Dallas *Improving Communications*

The collaboration of Workforce Solutions Greater Dallas (Greater Dallas) and AT&T provides customized recruitment and supported training for more than 1,400 new hires. Greater Dallas offers ongoing hiring and training services for AT&T, which include on-site testing, customized hiring events, specialized recruiting services, and assessment services. AT&T continues to hire workers and teach technical skills that prepare its workforce for new career opportunities with innovative products within the IP-based network.

Workforce Solutions for the Heart of Texas *Meeting Employer Demands*

Workforce Solutions for the Heart of Texas (Heart of Texas) partnered with employers in professional services and financial services to develop a continuous pipeline of qualified applicants to meet employer demand. This past year, the growth in this industry generated more than 1,300 direct placements, which involved finance and insurance, accounting, legal, business support, engineering, architecture, creative design, scientific, and technical consulting services, through WorkInTexas.com. As a result of the placement of so many individuals in these job openings, Heart of Texas is currently ranked number one statewide in job openings filled.

Workforce Solutions Lower Rio Grande Valley *Connecting Businesses*

By focusing on businesses as the number one customer, Workforce Solutions Lower Rio Grande Valley (Lower Rio) hosted 148 customized hiring events and job fairs. From October 2014 through June 2015, Lower Rio conducted customized hiring events and was able to assist with the placement of 861 new hires. By using multiple social media resources, their website, and the WorkInTexas.com bulletin board, Lower Rio has identified a very effective way of keeping residents informed of hiring events, job fairs, and jobs that are currently available.

Workforce Solutions for North Central Texas *Employer Engagement Initiatives*

Workforce Solutions for North Central Texas (North Central) collaborated with economic development entities in all 14 rural counties by providing labor market information and assessing the individual needs of businesses. With 965 hiring events, all of the North Central centers have dramatically increased the frequency and quality of hiring events as an effective service to local businesses by providing a large number of qualified job seekers and skilled workers.

Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas

Answering the Call

Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas (Northeast Texas) collaborated with The Results Companies (TRC) when a new call center was opened in Paris, creating 500 new jobs. Northeast Texas provided support with recruitment and hiring efforts, job postings on WorkInTexas.com, and use of the workforce center to screen applicants. Northeast Texas also provided TRC a mobile PC lab for use during multiple hiring events.

Workforce Solutions for South Texas

Breaking Down Barriers

Workforce Solutions for South Texas (South Texas) collaborated with the Laredo Disability Alliance to provide advocacy, career fairs, and events to eliminate barriers to employment for individuals with disabilities. South Texas met with more than 55 employers to solicit their participation in the job fair and training workshops to prepare individuals with disabilities for the job fair. The collaboration also included a sensitivity and disability awareness program coordinated with the Texas Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services to educate employers on the benefits of hiring a diverse workforce.

Workforce Solutions South Plains

A Grand Opening

Workforce Solutions South Plains (South Plains) provided a variety of services when a Cabela's opened in Lubbock. Services and support included labor market information and analysis, recruitment, and hiring events. South Plains provided Cabela's a one-stop shop to process applicants, conduct interviews, and provide training prior to the grand opening. More than 400 individuals were interviewed, and 160 were hired.

Workforce Solutions for Tarrant County

Building Successful Communities

Workforce Solutions for Tarrant County's (Tarrant County) Building Successful Communities model is built on three goals: enhance economic vitality of the community, connect industry-specific businesses to solve common problems, and develop the future workforce to sustain industry growth. Tarrant County actively engages with recruiting representatives from businesses that have expanded or relocated to support with recruitment campaigns and targeted hiring events in six workforce centers, as well as at the Veterans Outreach Center at the Naval Air Station Fort Worth Joint Reserve Base and community organizations around the county.

TEXAS WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS SERVICE TO WORKERS AWARD

The Service to Workers Award recognizes a Local Workforce Development Board that has demonstrated its commitment to Texas workers by significantly improving services throughout the Texas workforce system.

2015 SERVICE TO WORKERS AWARD NOMINEES

Workforce Solutions Borderplex ***Transitioning Back into the Workforce***

El Paso County has over 48,000 civilian veteran residents and is the home of Fort Bliss Army Post, the nation's second-largest U.S. Army installation. To target and carry out specific strategies to recruit, upgrade, and transition veteran workers, Workforce Solutions Borderplex (Borderplex) collaborated with veteran-focused partners on various employment-readiness projects. Together, Borderplex and its partners helped 3,244 transitioning veterans with résumé assistance, job searches, job-readiness workshops, training, and customized hiring fairs.

Workforce Solutions Brazos Valley ***Community Coming Together***

After five major layoffs in two months resulted in 500 individuals losing their jobs, Workforce Solutions Brazos Valley, Washington County Chamber of Commerce, and Blinn College worked diligently to assist affected workers. This rapid response, a collaborative effort, helped workers retain employment in the area. Employers were recruited for job fairs that were within the same industries as the job seekers or in industries with transferable skill sets, allowing for a seamless transition from one job to another.

Workforce Solutions Cameron ***Polishing Soft Skills***

While addressing area hiring needs, Workforce Solutions Cameron (Cameron) identified a lack of soft skills in experienced, displaced workers, which impacts employers and job seekers. To address this challenge, Cameron initiated a soft skills program that aligned with the curriculum from the National Work Readiness Council and received an endorsement from the Lower Valley Chapter of the Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM). Nearly 800 job seekers have completed and received Cameron- and SHRM-endorsed certificates, equipping them with skills for long-term employability.

Workforce Solutions of Central Texas ***Sharing Space for Education***

Workforce Solutions of Central Texas and Central Texas College partnered to provide a full-time adult education lab at the Workforce Solutions Office in Killeen, giving workforce customers priority access. The education lab uses computer equipment to prepare job seekers for GED testing and has an on-site instructor and GED classroom assistant. Job seekers and program participants can use the computer lab to enroll in adult education classes, conduct job searches, and attend instructor-led classes at flexible and convenient times.

Workforce Solutions of the Coastal Bend ***Dressing for Success***

Workforce Solutions of the Coastal Bend partnered with Dress for Success Corpus Christi to prepare disadvantaged women with support and resources for economic success. This partnership provides soft skills workshops, networking, mentors, and meetings with staffing agencies and community partners. Once employed, participants received work-related clothing and accessories. The mentoring program will maintain ongoing support for the working women of the Coastal Bend area.

Workforce Solutions East Texas ***Mega Job Fair***

Workforce Solutions East Texas collaborated with economic development corporations from Longview, Kilgore, and Tyler and eight area partners to host the East Texas Is Hiring mega job fair at the Maude Cobb Convention and Activity Complex in Longview. More than 70 employers and 3,400 job seekers from 20 different cities converged on the convention center for jobs in manufacturing, health care, education, and journalism.

Workforce Solutions Golden Crescent ***Independence through Skills Training***

Workforce Solutions Golden Crescent partnered with Victoria College to receive a Self-Sufficiency Fund grant to support infrastructure development in the oil and gas (O&G) industry. By preparing and training Temporary Assistance for Needy Families recipients, noncustodial parents, and other eligible participants in electrical and welding occupations that support O&G, participants are able to learn skills for jobs that pay above the prevailing wage, leading to self-sufficiency and independence from public assistance programs. Core curriculum craft skills for electrical and welding training programs at Victoria College help participants not only become more employable but get jobs with self-sufficient wages.

Workforce Solutions Greater Dallas ***Alternative Teacher Certifications***

Workforce Solutions Greater Dallas (Greater Dallas) formed a partnership with the Dallas Independent School District (DISD) to use Workforce Investment Act funds to train dislocated workers and adults within the alternative teacher certification program. Greater Dallas offered job seekers support for employment with DISD through a series of recruitment opportunities and hiring events, as well as job-readiness assistance, including résumé writing and interview preparation. Two hundred fifty-six teachers earned alternative teacher certifications, with 219 teachers finding employment.

Workforce Solutions for the Heart of Texas ***Access to Transit***

Workforce Solutions for the Heart of Texas demonstrated its leadership and innovation by planning the first evening public transportation service, Evening LINK, in Waco. The goal of this initiative is to provide the region's first evening bus service to increase access to jobs and training during nonstandard hours. On average, Evening LINK helps more than 50 workers remain in the workforce each month.

Workforce Solutions Lower Rio Grande Valley ***Connecting to Jobs***

Using a nontraditional approach to connecting with the local customers, Workforce Solutions Lower Rio Grande Valley (Lower Rio) started the Rio Grande Valley Operation Get Hired Facebook campaign. The campaign uses a targeted social media strategy designed to expand workforce services beyond the brick-and-mortar infrastructure of career centers. The online campaign shares targeted job postings, workforce program opportunities, and career advice, and helps break down distance barriers. A 10-minute average response rate encourages dialogue and provides help to job seekers from anywhere in the Lower Rio area and beyond.

Workforce Solutions for North Central Texas ***Learning on the Job***

Building on a strong foundation of work-based learning opportunities, Workforce Solutions for North Central Texas invested in skills development efforts, designed to provide an “earn and learn” opportunity for job seekers. Eighty businesses partnered in this collaborative effort to provide on-the-job training opportunities. An individualized training plan was developed for each job seeker to bridge the gap from lack of experience to securing the necessary skills required by the employers, resulting in 110 job placements.

Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas

Putting Skills to Work

Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas partnered with Campbell Soup Company and Paris Junior College for a Skills Development Fund grant to address training needs. With the opening of two new product lines, Campbell Soup created approximately 100 new jobs at the Paris facility. To operate this new equipment, 439 new and incumbent employees were provided with a training opportunity to upgrade their current skill set, and in some cases, employees received industry-recognized certifications.

Workforce Solutions for South Texas

Growing Skills

Workforce Solutions for South Texas (South Texas) joined the Border Workforce Alliance to develop proactive and collaborative assistance for job seekers with limited English proficiency and low literacy and education skills through the Growing Regional Opportunities for the Workforce (GROW) program. South Texas prepared participants for employment by providing a chance to earn a GED and certifications in several occupations. Sixty-five participants completed certifications, and 40 GROW participants gained the necessary skills and certifications to become work-ready.

Workforce Solutions for Tarrant County

Taking the Next Step

Workforce Solutions for Tarrant County received a Next STEP grant to provide training to ex-offenders, who have the most barriers to employment, in turn helping them to gain unsubsidized employment, which leads to self-sufficiency. The combination of strong preparation, individual job development, and case management after placement has led employers to hire over 320 reentry job seekers, with more than 76 percent of the hires maintaining their jobs over the course of the program.

TEXAS WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS SERVICE TO COMMUNITY AWARD

The Service to Community Award recognizes a Local Workforce Development Board that has demonstrated commitment to its community through local coordination and collaboration efforts resulting in significantly improved services through the Texas workforce system.

2015 SERVICE TO COMMUNITY AWARD NOMINEES

Workforce Solutions Borderplex

Launch of Workforce Solutions Borderplex

In 2014, Workforce Solutions Upper Rio Grande launched a rebranding campaign as Workforce Solutions Borderplex (Borderplex), with three main objectives: to launch a regional rebrand of identity, to form economic partnerships, and to revamp service delivery strategies. Borderplex was thus able to significantly increase employer engagement and strategically target community needs. Additionally, Borderplex increased the number of employers served by 20 percent and hosted 25–35 customized hiring fairs a month.

Workforce Solutions Brazos Valley

Helping Youth Prepare for Employment

Workforce Solutions Brazos Valley partners with the Brazos Valley Council of Governments, schools districts, and employers throughout a seven-county region to present the Helping Youth Prepare for Employment (HYPE) Career Expo. During this yearly spring event, approximately 60 employers connected with more than 600 students to provide information on local career opportunities, necessary skills and qualifications, and training options.

Workforce Solutions Cameron

La Feria Chamber of Commerce

Workforce Solutions Cameron (Cameron) planned and successfully coordinated an inaugural spring job fair with La Feria Chamber of Commerce to benefit the residents of the small rural community. Days before the event, a torrential rainstorm required the Cameron team to relocate the job fair. The team quickly secured a new location and coordinated the logistics to ensure a quality job fair far exceeding expectations for this first-time event.

Workforce Solutions Capital Area

Rapid Employment Model

To support the transition of ex-offenders and other disadvantaged populations of Travis County into the workforce, Workforce Solutions Capital Area, in partnership with Travis County Health and Human Services, created the Rapid Employment Model (REM). REM provides short-term training and placement for job seekers with significant barriers to employment to reduce the amount of time spent on public benefits.

2015 SERVICE TO COMMUNITY AWARD NOMINEES

Workforce Solutions of Central Texas

Noncustodial Parent Choices PEER Project

Noncustodial parents are finding jobs, paying child support, and learning how to interact with their children through a partnership among Workforce Solutions of Central Texas, the Office of the Attorney General of Texas, and Bell County Child Support Court. The Noncustodial Parent Choices Parent Employment, Education, and Responsibility (PEER) project was initiated to provide support to local families. PEER diverts individuals facing jail sentences to Workforce Solutions Offices, where they attend six weeks of active job search activities for 30 hours per week.

Workforce Solutions of the Coastal Bend

Workforce Career Centers

Workforce Solutions of the Coastal Bend partnered with Coastal Bend College (CBC) to create Workforce Career Centers on three campuses. These one-stop career centers provide employment opportunities, workforce training, literacy courses, and adult education, as well as assistance in applying for admission to CBC, registration, and financial aid. Through this partnership, a cross-referral process was developed to focus on high-demand occupations to address the workforce needs in the region.

Workforce Solutions Concho Valley

Veterans One-Stop

Workforce Solutions Concho Valley (Concho Valley) collaborated with Tom Green County and the Veterans County Service Office to provide a full-service office for veterans transitioning into civilian life. The Veterans One-Stop Center developed a cohesively trained team and features the only veterans' financial coach in Texas, awarded through a nationally competitive grant. The one-stop center integrates federal, state, and county services with workforce services to provide veterans efficiency and ease of access to resources and referrals.

Workforce Solutions East Texas

Basic Education and Literacy

Workforce Solutions East Texas partnered with local colleges and literacy groups to expand and augment the scope and reach of the Adult Education and Literacy Consortium in East Texas. Temporary Assistance for Needy Families/Choices program participants identified as educationally disadvantaged were provided basic education and literacy training with a work-related soft skills component to provide more enhanced job opportunities.

Workforce Solutions Golden Crescent

Supporting Our Veterans

When the local Veterans Affairs office closed in Victoria, the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) were left without a space to operate. Workforce Solutions Golden Crescent (Golden Crescent) stepped up and provided DAV with office space and amenities so that free professional assistance could continue for veterans and their families. In the past year, DAV served more than 1,300 individuals at their new location with Golden Crescent.

Workforce Solutions Greater Dallas

CitySquare Opportunity Center

Workforce Solutions Greater Dallas (Greater Dallas) partnered with local organizations for the CitySquare Opportunity Center. CitySquare's original vision was to provide human services and community programs, but quickly evolved into a workforce center to help Dallas-area families move from poverty to self-sufficiency. CitySquare has a food distribution center, wellness center, comprehensive employment training center, workforce center, Lift Literacy center, WorkPaths employment training division, AmeriCorps offices, and Per Scholas job training area. Additionally, it serves as a staging site for the Food on the Move program.

Workforce Solutions Gulf Coast

THRIVE Workforce Connector Program

The THRIVE Workforce Connector Program (TWCP) is a partnership among Workforce Solutions Gulf Coast, the United Way of Greater Houston, and three area nonprofit organizations. TWCP leverages resources to provide a seamless, holistic approach to receiving services, accessing training, finding employment, and building financial stability. The TWCP model provides customers an enhanced service experience leading to employment and improved financial literacy.

Workforce Solutions for the Heart of Texas

Advocating for Inclusion

Through partnerships and community involvement, Workforce Solutions for the Heart of Texas (Heart of Texas) has directly impacted individuals with disabilities from diverse backgrounds. Heart of Texas partnered with the Texas Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services and Heart of Central Texas Independent Living to provide assistance with job search, cross-referrals, and an increased awareness of inclusion in the community. Heart of Texas also participates in two innovative annual events intended to raise awareness of diversity: Walk and Roll and Join the Pride.

Workforce Solutions Lower Rio Grande Valley

Workforce Solutions Corners

After partnering with 13 public libraries and community-based organizations to provide access to workforce services to traditionally underserved rural communities, Workforce Solutions Lower Rio Grande Valley identified a need to expand the service to residential areas along the border known as colonias. Colonia residents typically work seasonal jobs, and unemployment rates range from 20 to 60 percent. Through a partnership with Hidalgo County Precinct 2, a Workforce Solutions Corner was established at the South Alamo Community Resource Center, with plans for another six Workforce Solutions Corners to serve colonia residents.

Workforce Solutions for North Central Texas

Pathways to Success Youth Career Expo

Workforce Solutions for North Central Texas partnered with Navarro College and local businesses to host the Pathways to Success Youth Career Expo to provide youth in Ellis and Navarro Counties with information on career pathways available through occupational skills training. Once a pathway is identified, Navarro College provides training through Workforce Investment Act and Trade Adjustment Assistance funding for regional high-demand occupations. Through this partnership, youth receive training and earn a degree, and businesses in the community benefit from a qualified and skilled workforce.

Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas

CSI: Career Success Initiative

Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas and the Region 8 Education Service Center invited high school seniors from rural communities in the Northeast Texas area for a day of career preparation at CSI: Career Success Initiative. Students enrolled in career and technology classes were offered sessions on interview skills, résumé writing, and basic financial literacy to prepare them for the transition from student to worker. Six area school districts and 112 students participated in this inaugural event.

Workforce Solutions for South Texas

Operation Housing Heroes

Workforce Solutions for South Texas (South Texas) collaborated with the Laredo branch of the South Texas Afghanistan & Iraq Veterans Association (STAIVA) to assist homeless veterans in need of transitional housing and career and work-readiness training. STAIVA was able to secure transitional housing through the Rio Grande Plaza Hotel for 100 homeless veterans and their families, and South Texas used the mobile unit to provide on-site monthly services to prepare transitioning veterans for the workforce. Veterans were also referred to the Texas Veterans Leadership Program and the Texas Veterans Commission for additional resources.

Workforce Solutions South Plains

Food Safety Seminar

Workforce Solutions South Plains (South Plains) developed needs-based seminars for local employers after they recognized a trend of restaurants receiving a “low performers” rating by the Texas Department of State Health Services. The Food Safety Seminars, in partnership with the City of Lubbock, offer educational information based on community and employer needs. More than 150 employers have participated in the seminars, with information and resources filtering down to approximately 8,400 employees.

Workforce Solutions for Tarrant County

Fathers and Children Together

Workforce Solutions for Tarrant County, along with eight community partners, implemented the Fathers and Children Together (FACT) program. FACT is a collaborative, comprehensive fatherhood program featuring “mentor-navigators,” who provide intensive employment assistance and skills training for responsible parenting and healthy relationships. FACT focuses on low-income families with multiple barriers to employment, economic stability, and mobility. In the past year, 217 parents benefited from the FACT program.

Workforce Solutions of West Central Texas

Military Portal Community Collaborative

The Military Partnership of West Central Texas is a collaborative effort led by Workforce Solutions of West Central Texas in partnership with the Texas Veterans Leadership Program, the Texas Veterans Commission, and 2-1-1 Texas A Call for Help, a resource of the United Way of Abilene. The partnership’s purpose is to reduce duplication of services and leverage resources among partner agencies to better support veterans of every service and era. A virtual one-stop military portal was created on the 2-1-1 website through which veterans and families from across the 19-county region can connect with services and resources.

TEXAS WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS INDUSTRY SECTOR OUTREACH AWARD

The Industry Sector Outreach Award recognizes a Local Workforce Development Board that has made a positive impact helping employers address workforce shortages in the following targeted occupations: nursing, teaching, and information technology. The award also recognizes significant workforce efforts in these additional targeted industries: advanced technology and manufacturing, aerospace and defense, energy, information and computer technology, life sciences and biotechnology, and petroleum refining and chemical products.

2015 INDUSTRY SECTOR OUTREACH AWARD NOMINEES

Workforce Solutions Borderplex

Project GROW

Using a targeted industries analysis, Workforce Solutions Borderplex (Borderplex) identified health care as one of the most developed and fastest-growing industry clusters in the region. Through Project GROW (Growing Regional Opportunities for the Workforce), Borderplex focuses on the health care industry by providing increased skills training and English literacy for eligible participants to better assist area hospitals with hiring needs.

Workforce Solutions Cameron

A Strong Network of Collaborations

Workforce Solutions Cameron (Cameron) collaborated with eight major port industry companies to meet hiring needs as a result of increased business demands. Cameron sponsored skills training, recruitment and hiring, screening and referrals, training through subsidized work experience, and on-the-job training, as well as hosted hiring events. Additionally, Cameron partnered with Keppel AmFELS, Texas Southmost College, and the Brownsville Independent School District to launch a nine-week welding program that offered entry-level job certification for students while they work toward their high school diploma.

Workforce Solutions of the Coastal Bend

Maximizing Resources

The collaboration of the Workforce Solutions of the Coastal Bend (Coastal Bend) and the Port of Corpus Christi facilitates with several industry leaders representing thousands of high-paying jobs in the Coastal Bend area. As a result of this strong working relationship, Coastal Bend is able to expand its role to international businesses looking to relocate, enhance comprehensive employee recruitment, forecast for future hiring and workforce needs, and address challenges in the workplace.

Workforce Solutions Golden Crescent *Building a Stronger Workforce*

Workforce Solutions Golden Crescent (Golden Crescent) partnered with Golden Crescent Petrochemical Consortium to build and train a quality workforce through educational and development opportunities. Because of this partnership, more than \$7 million in Skills Development Fund grants have provided training to over 3,800 new and incumbent workers. Golden Crescent also provides consortium employers support with job postings, employment screening, testing, training, and assessments. As a result of training and assessments, employers have seen an increase in productivity and workplace safety.

Workforce Solutions Greater Dallas *Shaping the Workforce of the Future*

Workforce Solutions Greater Dallas (Greater Dallas) partners closely with Dallas County Manufacturers' Association (DCMA), representing more than 350 thriving manufacturing businesses. Since 2005, Greater Dallas, DCMA, and the Dallas County Community College District have secured approximately \$3.6 million in grant funds to offer more than 30 Garland-area companies training to 5,000-plus employees to date. This partnership benefits the Garland community and local employers by offering a skilled workforce, job applicants to meet employer needs, and labor market information to project areas of growth for potential economic development opportunities.

Workforce Solutions for the Heart of Texas *Hiring for Today's Health Care*

Workforce Solutions for the Heart of Texas (Heart of Texas) has collaborated with community colleges and the Greater Waco Chamber of Commerce to meet the demand for qualified and skilled workers in the health care industry. McLennan Community College and Texas State Technical College joined with Heart of Texas to provide education and training through the Workforce Investment Act for degrees or certifications in the health care field. Heart of Texas and the Greater Waco Chamber of Commerce host area-wide job fairs targeting key industries, including the Work in Waco Job Expo, which targets the future workforce by focusing on graduating students from area colleges to keep their talent local.

Workforce Solutions for North Central Texas

H-1B Technical Skills Training

Workforce Solutions for North Central Texas and training partners IBM, Lockheed Martin, and AT&T received almost \$5 million during the second round of funding for the H-1B Technical Skills Training competition. This funding provides local education, training, and job placement assistance in information technology, science, technology, engineering, and math. The training prepares incumbent workers to successfully and effectively work with the latest technology and reduces the need to hire workers from outside the United States under the H-1B visa program.

Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas

High-Demand Job Training

Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas partnered with economic development corporations from Mount Pleasant, Sulphur Springs, and Paris to provide computer-controlled machine tool operator training to meet the needs of area manufacturing employers. Northeast Texas Community College and Paris Junior College created computer numerical control (CNC) operator training programs at three locations and will train 36 people during the next 12 months. This initiative creates a CNC operator talent pipeline for regional employers to meet hiring needs.

Workforce Solutions for South Texas

Growing Regional Opportunities and Advancement

Due to limited English proficiency and poor résumé preparation, employers were recruiting from other areas to fill local job openings in South Texas. In an effort to keep opportunities local, Workforce Solutions for South Texas interviewed more than 200 employers and identified a targeted need to improve English proficiency and enhance educational, soft, and technical skills lacking in applicants. South Texas partnered with Laredo Community College to integrate Project Growing Regional Opportunities for the Workforce (GROW) and Vocational Advancement for South Texas (VAST)—an Accelerate TEXAS initiative—which provides educational and skills training to local job seekers.

Workforce Solutions for Tarrant County

Community Partnership Grows Local Workforce

Workforce Solutions for Tarrant County partnered with Mansfield Economic Development Corporation, Mansfield Independent School District–Ben Barber Career and Technology Academy, and five manufacturing companies to form the Mansfield Manufacturing Partnership. The partnership collaborated to address the need for computer numerical control machinists at local companies. Through classroom instruction and job shadowing in internships, high school seniors were given hands-on experience with the five partnering companies and provided an opportunity to explore an alternative career path with high wages.

TEXAS WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS YOUTH INSPIRATION & CAREER AWARENESS AWARD

The Youth Inspiration & Career Awareness Award is intended to recognize and highlight three Local Workforce Development Board (Board) initiatives focused on supporting career awareness and exploration for young people. Three awards in this category will be presented.

2015 YOUTH INSPIRATION & CAREER AWARENESS AWARD NOMINEES

Workforce Solutions Borderplex ***Paid Opportunities for Students***

Workforce Solutions Borderplex (Borderplex), in collaboration with the City of El Paso, El Paso County, the Greater El Paso Chamber of Commerce, and the El Paso Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, launched the inaugural Hire El Paso's Youth summer employment initiative. Hire El Paso's Youth was designed to provide summer employment for college students to enhance their potential for growth in their fields of study. The initiative builds a talented pipeline of Borderplex youth to improve regional retention rates after graduation.

Workforce Solutions Brazos Valley ***Career Opportunities***

Based on feedback from local schools, youth, and employers, Workforce Solutions Brazos Valley designed the Helping Youth Prepare for Employment (HYPE) Career Expo as an annual event. HYPE is designed to expose high school juniors and seniors to the diversity of high-growth, in-demand occupations within the Brazos Valley region. HYPE Career Expo provides businesses the opportunity to connect with the future workforce, and encourages students to acquire specific skills to be successful in the workplace.

Workforce Solutions Cameron ***Project Phoenix Takes Flight***

Project Phoenix was launched by Workforce Solutions Cameron (Cameron) to provide career awareness, job-readiness workshops, and work experience opportunities to at-risk youth. With the use of the mobile resources lab, Cameron facilitated job-readiness and soft skills workshops to youth in the juvenile justice system. A total of 107 participants successfully completed workshops and received career awareness services. After a competitive essay contest by Cameron, 24 individuals were given the opportunity for summer employment based on their essays.

Workforce Solutions of the Coastal Bend

Access to Resources

Workforce Solutions of the Coastal Bend created the Coastal Compass Education and Career Resource Center as an innovative, nontraditional solution to inspire the future workforce. Coastal Compass serves as an information hub for adult basic education, industry certifications, and doctoral degree programs, and also offers career exploration services to job seekers and potential students. More than 2,300 Coastal Bend students have benefited from one or more services at the Coastal Compass center.

Workforce Solutions Deep East Texas

Setting Careers in Motion

Workforce Solutions Deep East Texas launched Youth in Motion, a progressive career development initiative focused on identifying, engaging, and empowering today's youth for tomorrow's workforce. Youth gain firsthand experiences and the chance to visit with employers to help cultivate interests and aptitudes before they move to postsecondary education or the workforce. More than 600 youth and 150 employers have participated in Youth in Motion.

Workforce Solutions Golden Crescent

Inspiring the Workforce of Tomorrow

Workforce Solutions Golden Crescent (Golden Crescent) enters its 15th year of partnership with Communities in Schools (CIS) for one of the nation's most recognized and successful dropout prevention programs. This partnership provides Golden Crescent direct access to youth and the opportunity to provide workforce-related guidance. Students are also introduced to careers through a Career Talk series and the Dream Big Expo. More than 14,000 youth and their families have been served through the CIS-Golden Crescent partnership.

Workforce Solutions Greater Dallas

Building Skills

Workforce Solutions Greater Dallas (Greater Dallas) partners with Richland College-Garland Campus to support youth in earning their GED, coupled with innovative vocational and workplace skills training to meet the skilled labor gap for disconnected youth in Dallas County. Through close community partnerships with employers, economic development corporations, and workforce and community leaders, Greater Dallas youth have unique opportunities to obtain the necessary credentials to achieve high-growth, high-demand careers.

Workforce Solutions Gulf Coast *Growing Opportunities*

Workforce Solutions Gulf Coast developed When I Grow Up, a collection of original career exploration resources, in response to community requests for educational resources. When I Grow Up provides lesson plans in Spanish and English for students in pre-K through 12th grade. When I Grow Up also offers an online magazine with information on the region's high-skill jobs and industry and occupation profiles containing local labor market information, including postsecondary options.

Workforce Solutions for the Heart of Texas *Saying YES! to Success*

The YES! Expo is a premier career exploration event for youth created and developed by Workforce Solutions for the Heart of Texas. The YES! Expo takes an innovative approach to educating high school students about careers and career pathways. The expo introduces more than 11,000 high school students and 1,000 teachers and counselors to in-demand occupations. Many more have used online resources on the YES! website to gain additional knowledge about targeted occupations.

Workforce Solutions Lower Rio Grande Valley *Collaborating for the Future Workforce*

Workforce Solutions Lower Rio Grande Valley (Lower Rio) developed strategic collaborations to launch youth-inspired programs to address area workforce needs. Through local partnerships, Lower Rio implemented a comprehensive approach to promoting career awareness in young adults, including Project HIRE, teacher externships, youth career conferences, and a parental engagement conference. These initiatives allow for a more seamless transition to the workforce and create an environment in which youth are able to make informed decisions about their future.

Workforce Solutions for North Central Texas *Getting Life on Track*

Workforce Solutions for North Central Texas (North Central) collaborated with local independent school districts to host a youth career expo. Through this partnership, North Central aimed to change youths' perception of workforce services and demonstrate the potential of leveraging North Central's resources. Information was provided to participants to address pre- and post-occupation selections and establish a life track. Education vendors also counseled attendees on securing funding for higher education.

Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas ***Making It Work In Texas***

Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas (Northeast Texas) and leading manufacturers in the Northeast Texas region partnered to promote manufacturing careers to regional school-age youth through the Make It Work In Texas campaign. Northeast Texas worked closely with community college representatives and regional manufacturing and industry partners to identify workforce needs. The campaign was launched to educate area youth about high-tech careers available in manufacturing and to expose them to opportunities and benefits in this high-demand field.

Workforce Solutions Rural Capital Area ***Generating Interest in STEM***

Workforce Solutions Rural Capital Area was a key partner in planning and executing the second annual Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Fair in San Marcos. The event targeted middle school and high school students with the purpose of educating and generating interest in STEM-related careers. The STEM Fair committee estimated more than 1,500 youth and parents visited the fair held at San Marcos High School.

Workforce Solutions for South Texas ***Providing Opportunities for All***

Workforce Solutions for South Texas (South Texas) collaborated with local school districts on a successful implementation of a teacher externship program. The externships focus on career awareness and place teachers at local job sites to observe the required knowledge, skills, and experience for area high-demand occupations and then incorporate it into their curricula. South Texas worked with community partners on successful grant funding to promote career awareness and fast-track training. Additionally, South Texas partnered with 50 employers on a youth job fair and career expo that attracted nearly 1,000 students.

Workforce Solutions South Plains
Targeting High-Demand Jobs

Workforce Solutions South Plains joined South Plains Tech Prep Consortium as a South Plains Career Expo partner to help high school students understand the relevance of education and diverse career opportunities available in the region. Industries invited to participate in the career expo are targeted based on high-demand, high-skill, or high-wage jobs available and by projecting growth and future workforce needs of the region. The South Plains Career Expo attracts over 4,200 high school students from across the South Plains region.

Workforce Solutions Texoma
Paid Opportunities for Students

Workforce Solutions Texoma (Texoma), in partnership with local economic development entities, employers, a community college, and a school district, developed a comprehensive program focused on viable middle-skill jobs in manufacturing by educating high school students and teachers. In addition to teacher externships and a Cool Jobs series of training videos for students, Texoma offered paid internships during the summer and weekly classroom training at the local community college.

Workforce Solutions of West Central Texas
Career Education for K–12

Workforce Solutions of West Central Texas (West Central) initiated a three-pronged approach to connect with students from elementary to high school. First, West Central partnered with eight elementary schools to distribute the Careers Are Everywhere workbook. Next, West Central and the Texas Alliance for Minorities in Engineering brought the Trailblazer trailer, a hands-on exhibit teaching students about science, technology, engineering, and mathematics careers, to more than 1,720 students in third through eighth grades. Finally, West Central hosted two successful regional career days for high school students in 12 counties.

The Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) awards recognize partners who demonstrate exemplary performance in the areas of employer partnership, college integration, and Local Workforce Development Board (Board) integration. Those selected for recognition have provided outstanding AEL service delivery in partnership with employers, community colleges, and Boards. These partners play a critical role in inspiring replication of successful programs and best practices across the state and in helping nontraditional students acquire the skills needed to attain employment.

2015 EMPLOYER PARTNERSHIP AWARD

Community Action, Inc., of Central Texas

In September 2014, the Leander Independent School District (ISD) Department of Custodial Services developed a strategic collaboration with the Community Action Adult Education Program to develop the Leander English for Custodians (EFC) program for district custodians who wanted to improve their English communication skills. Program design was particularly critical since one-third of the custodians work days and two-thirds work nights. The custodial director insisted on two conditions: that the class be voluntary and offered to all custodians and that the class be held on Saturdays because there was no time during the work week that would accommodate all custodians. It was a challenge to design an English as a Second Language program that would sufficiently interest full-time workers to voluntarily attend a Saturday class and also be of sufficient intensity for workers to improve their English proficiency. In the first EFC program session, 80 percent of students completed the course. Community Action and Leander ISD are already looking forward to even better results next year.

Socorro Independent School District

The Far West Adult Education Consortium consists of grant recipient and provider Socorro ISD, provider El Paso ISD, and fiscal agent and provider Ysleta ISD. During the 2015-16 performance year, the director of Ysleta ISD's Child Nutrition Services approached the Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) program about providing English as a Second Language (ESL) classes for cafeteria employees. As a large urban school district, Ysleta ISD provides food services to over 40,000 students at 63 different campuses, employing about 450 cafeteria workers. Given Ysleta ISD's border location, English is not the first language for many of these employees. The employees' skills were assessed, and by considering their concerns and interests, instructors were able to plan and implement skills, including presenting to small and large groups and using computers for communication. After initial promotion of the classes, there was a tremendous response from the participants. Cafeteria managers quickly identified 39 interested employees willing and able to take the first course, and the initial cohort of participants completed 30 hours of instruction. Participants responded that the course was very helpful at work and outside of work and that they would recommend it to coworkers. Importantly, many participants' coworkers are now expressing an interest in joining regular AEL ESL classes, which the employer will encourage.

2015 COLLEGE INTEGRATION AWARD

Socorro Independent School District

Socorro Independent School District (ISD) teamed up with Yselta and El Paso ISDs to form the Far West Adult Education Consortium (Consortium). In 2014, the Consortium's inaugural year, more than 3,300 adult education students were provided services. Through this AEL program, individuals are offered a transitions class, an English as a Second Language bridge course, and the Texas Success Initiative Academy coursework on the El Paso Community College (EPCC) campus, co-instructed by Consortium and EPCC faculty. Students are given the support needed to develop academic readiness, language support, college and career readiness, and personal readiness, and have access to an array of services at the community college. These courses expressly address gaps in academic curriculum between the adult education level and the college level, using syllabi from EPCC and through input from developmental education instructors.

Additionally, the Consortium collaborated with Workforce Borderplex and EPCC for Project GROW (Growing Regional Opportunities for the Workforce) and the Motivation, Education & Training (MET) program. Project GROW targets students who are pursuing vocational training and obtaining their GED concurrently, while MET targets migrant and seasonal farmworkers and provides intensive retraining for entry-level employment. Most importantly, the Consortium and EPCC set a common goal and expectations for students and have systems for identifying, assisting, and monitoring their progress. After just one year, 26 adult education students were able to enroll in EPCC courses for the fall of 2015, compared to only 18 total students over the last 10-year period.

Austin Community College

Austin Community College (ACC) lists adult education (AE) as a core function in its mission statement. ACC budgets more than \$1.5 million to augment grant funds and has a full academic division devoted to AE. At ACC, three college advisors and one counselor are solely dedicated to AE students. ACC extended its College Connection program to GED students to allow them to get assistance with registration and financial aid and provide them with the same benefits as ACC college students. GED students are also provided the opportunity to participate in official graduation ceremonies alongside students receiving certifications and associate degrees. Through the ACC Foundation, a multiyear college scholarship is offered exclusively to AE students and includes a case management component. An accelerated college transitions program is offered to GED students at no cost, and almost half of ACC's GED students go on to attend college. The AE integration was rooted in 2013 after a long-term effort requiring a sustained commitment from top executives and extensive changes to the ACC system. Since 2013, ACC has had more students complete their GED and continue to college than the overall number of students who completed their GED in 2007.

2015 BOARD INTEGRATION AWARD

Southwest Texas Junior College

Southwest Texas Junior College (SWTJC) and Workforce Solutions Middle Rio Grande (Middle Rio Grande) first forged their partnership during the implementation of Project GROW (Growing Regional Opportunities for the Workforce), a program designed to assist and serve the hardest-to-serve border residents who lack basic education attainment and English proficiency.

During the program year, SWTJC had nearly one-third of its adult education and literacy students enrolled in workforce services through Middle Rio Grande, with the largest number of these participants enrolled in general employment services.

Middle Rio Grande regularly issues referrals for SWTJC—including test scores that point to a need for further literacy requirements for training—to out-of-school youth who are deficient in basic skills, and customers who demonstrate a need for improved English language skills.

SWTJC and Middle Rio Grande staff meets monthly and maintain regular communication on this program.

Texarkana Independent School District

Texarkana Independent School District (ISD) and Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas (Northeast Texas) have strengthened their relationship through partnerships on special initiatives, including the Accelerate Texas initiative, which is funded through a U.S. Department of Labor National Emergency Grant (NEG) and provides unemployed adults with basic education and skills training required for a career-path in technical training and other in-demand occupations.

Texarkana ISD has a long-standing partnership with Northeast Texas and has offered a GED class there for eight years. Texarkana ISD instructors regularly speak with new customers to assist them with their basic skills needs.

Many of Texarkana ISD's adult education and literacy (AEL) students are enrolled in workforce services, with the largest number of participants enrolled in general employment services. Dean Ransdell, director of Texarkana ISD's AEL grant, is a member of the Northeast Texas Workforce Development Board and has made out-of-school youth funding a special interest.

TEXAS WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS PARTNERSHIP AWARD

The Partnership Award highlights the important work of community colleges and other entities integral to providing a skilled workforce. These partners play a critical role in serving the workforce needs of employers that require workers with specific skills to meet the demands of a global economy, and of workers whose skills no longer align with those needed for today's jobs. The colleges and organizations selected for recognition have shown innovation in meeting the needs of local employers and have performed well under the contract provisions for implementation of the programs.

2015 BOARD PARTNERSHIP AWARDS

Austin Community College

Austin Community College (ACC) is a nationally recognized two-year college serving Central Texas. Annually, ACC serves more than 43,000 credit and 15,000 noncredit students through more than 100 degree, certificate, and continuing education programs at 10 full-service campuses and ACC Highland.

As a complement to those opportunities, ACC has successfully implemented and completed numerous Skills Development Fund (SDF) grants from the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC). The SDF grants at ACC were used to train new and incumbent workers in several industries, including manufacturing, finance, and health care. ACC partners with Workforce Solutions Capital Area and Workforce Solutions Rural Capital Area to address business partner needs in an eight-county service area. ACC also serves small business through TWC's Skills for Small Business program.

ACC is committed to helping current military and veterans achieve their educational and professional development goals. Through a \$1.1 million Veteran and Industry Partnership grant from TWC, ACC provided free training and job-training assistance to veterans in four distinct IT pathways—computer-user support, network administration, information security, and mobile application development. ACC also participates in the College Credit for Heroes grant initiative to award college credit, workforce certifications, and workforce licenses for military experience. Subsequently, ACC continues to provide veterans accelerated pathways for certifications and careers in advanced technology, energy, and information and computer technology. In 2014, ACC opened the Veterans Resource Center, offering the college's 2,200 military and veteran students a central, one-stop location for obtaining essential support services, such as VA (Veterans Affairs) certification and advising for VA benefits.

Also in 2014, ACC was a grant recipient of Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) programs from TWC. The grants provide AEL programs, including adult education, high school equivalency preparation, English as a Second Language services, family and financial literacy curriculum, and distance-learning options to increase access to programs. The programs provide transitions and career pathways in collaboration with employers and other training providers.

Through the Dual Credit for Academic and Career and Technical Education Program, high school juniors and seniors earn both high school and college credit at ACC. Courses provide instruction and credit in areas in which employers have identified a high demand for workers: computer network support; electronics engineering; electrical power line installation and repair; and heating, air conditioning, refrigeration mechanics, and repair. The college also participates in a grant to support the development of the AC2 Institute. Classroom and hands-on instruction specific to local biotechnology employers' needs prepare high school students for graduation, career pathways, and employment.

South Texas College

Since 1999, South Texas College (STC) has grown to serve more than 31,000 students across five campuses, three teaching centers, and one virtual campus, offering more than 114 degrees and certificate program options.

STC's Institute for Advanced Manufacturing (IAM) partners with the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) to support regional manufacturers through participation in targeted, customized skills training. Through Skills Development Fund (SDF) grants, STC addressed training needs for new and incumbent workers in critical machining, welding, quality assurance, robotics, and programmable logic for the production of eco-friendly products for South Texas manufacturers. By leveraging the North American Advanced Manufacturing Research & Education Initiative with SDF grants at STC, business partners improved production and increased efficiency. Additionally, IAM supports small business employers' training needs through the Skills for Small Business program.

Through the Healthcare Innovation Project, STC, Workforce Solutions Lower Rio Grande Valley, and South Texas hospitals joined together to address the high demand for nurses in medically underserved areas. The college's Nursing Mentorship Program identifies and trains preceptors from local acute-care hospitals to allow for growth of the nursing program and provide guidance for nursing students at STC. The mentorship program is used to prepare and train registered nurses, increase the number of students admitted to the nursing program, and provide increased job retention and improved job satisfaction among newly licensed nurses at local health care facilities.

STC was one of the first Texas community colleges to participate in the Texas Adult Completion and Skills Initiative, a part of TWC's Adult Education and Literacy program. STC collaborated with local school districts to help 16- to 25-year-olds earn a high school equivalency diploma and enter college training for high-demand occupations. STC was also awarded a Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) grant through the Governor's Summer Merit Program. This grant allowed STC to offer 60 scholarships for the WaterBotics Summer Camp to prepare students for dual-credit courses offered during high school junior and senior years and to allow students to compete for high-skilled, high-demand STEM-related jobs in the future.

