

Employer Services

Texas Workforce Investment Council

The Texas Workforce Investment Council (Council) was created in 1993 by the 73rd Texas Legislature. The Council is charged with promoting the development of a highly-skilled and well-educated workforce for the State of Texas, and assisting the Governor and the Legislature with strategic planning for and evaluation of the Texas workforce development system.

The Texas workforce system is comprised of the workforce programs, services and initiatives administered by seven state agencies, 28 local workforce development boards and their contractors, independent school districts, community and technical colleges and local adult education providers. Partners include:

- Economic Development and Tourism Division
- Texas Association of Workforce Boards
- Texas Department of Criminal Justice
- Texas Education Agency
- Texas Health and Human Services Commission
- Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board
- Texas Workforce Commission
- Texas Youth Commission

The Council's System Integration Technical Advisory Committee (SITAC) is charged with implementation of the workforce development system strategic plan. As part of that effort, the SITAC conducted an assessment of the system's current capacity to serve employers.

System Strategy

The Council's strategic plan – *Destination 2010: FY2004-FY2009 Strategic Plan for the Texas Workforce Development System* – is posted on the Council's website at: www.governor.state.tx.us/divisions/twic/mandate/view.

The workforce system strategy is to provide its customers – employers, current workers and future workers of Texas – with access to relevant and comprehensive workforce services that span a continuum from career planning and preparation, to career development and enhancement.

A key Long Term Objective is to:

Increase system-wide, the number of employers using system products and services.

Partner Agencies

Of the partner agencies, *direct* services to employers are currently provided by the Economic Development and Tourism Division, the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, the Texas Workforce Commission and the Texas Youth Commission.

House Bill 2604 (79th Legislature) requires the transfer of veterans' employment services from the Texas Workforce Commission to the Texas Veterans Commission (www.tvc.state.tx.us). Scheduled for April 2006, the transfer will introduce a new partner agency to the activities of the system and the Council.

Economic Development and Tourism Division

www.governor.state.tx.us/divisions/ecodev

The Governor's Economic Development and Tourism Division markets Texas and promotes opportunities available across the state.

Project Profile
Texas Business Portal
<p><i>"With a single stop, businesses wanting to expand in or move to Texas will be able to apply for all the licenses or permits they might need." - Governor Rick Perry (3/1/05)</i></p>
<p>The Texas Business Portal (www.business.texasonline.com) website was launched in March 2005, simplifying the process of fulfilling state reporting and licensing requirements. The portal includes a guide to starting a business in Texas, including information on setting up a company structure, business opportunities with government, business research and statistics, economic development and expansion and employer resources.</p> <p>In 2005, the 79th Legislature enacted Senate Bill 96, which provides for the expansion of Internet services by requiring state agencies to make all forms available online. No-fee access is to be developed for all business permits and occupational licenses listed on TexasOnline (www.state.tx.us), the official website for the State of Texas.</p>

Regional Lead Specialists provide consultation and technical assistance to the Dallas, East Texas, El Paso, Houston, San Antonio, Valley and West Texas areas of the state. These staff members work with individuals, representatives from all levels of government, industry, and economic development entities to promote business generation and job creation, relocation and expansion across Texas.

The Small Business section assists small and historically underutilized businesses (HUBs) and provides sources of contacts and research information. Periodically, Small

Business Summits are held at various Texas locations with business experts leading discussions and providing advice on topics such as business financing, business plan development, finding qualified employees, exporting opportunities and doing business with the state. For additional information, go to: www.governor.state.tx.us/divisions/ecodev/sba.

Two major initiatives were approved by the 78th Legislature in 2003:

- ▶ Texas Enterprise Fund ➡
- ▶ Economic Development Bank

The Economic Development Bank provides incentives to businesses seeking to expand or relocate in Texas, as well as assisting local communities with the acquisition of capital for economic development. For additional information on available development, finance and enterprise programs, go to: www.governor.state.tx.us/divisions/ecodev/ed_bank/index_html/view.

During the 79th legislative session in 2005, two of the Governor's economic development priorities were (1) continued funding of the Texas Enterprise Fund and (2) creation and funding of an Emerging Technology Fund.

Project Profile
Texas Enterprise Fund
<p><i>Site Selection magazine [March 2006], awarded the annual Governor's Cup to Texas for the second consecutive year for securing the most job creation announcements in the nation. In 2005, Site Selection called the \$295 million Texas Enterprise Fund (TEF) a tool that is "Central to Texas' ability to lure projects" whose role "cannot be overstated."</i></p>
<p>Funds are used to attract new business to the state or assist with substantial expansion of an existing business. Applications must be approved by the governor, lieutenant governor and speaker, with projects demonstrating strong local support and a significant return on investment.</p> <p>For example, in November 2005, Hilmar Cheese Company was awarded a TEF grant that will bring nearly 2,000 jobs to the Texas Panhandle over the next decade. The \$7.5 million incentive package from the TEF and additional funding for transportation improvements and workforce training is expected to generate a return on investment of over 600%.</p>

Nearly \$185 million was appropriated to the Texas Enterprise Fund and House Bill 2421 created a stable funding source for this fund and the Skills Development Fund. In addition, several bills were filed related to the fund's operating and reporting requirements. Finally passed and sent to the Governor was House Bill 1938, which includes performance target provisions for grantees as well as a requirement that the Governor report information about grants awarded prior to each legislative session.

The Legislature also passed House Bill 1765, creating the Texas Emerging Technology Fund. The fund will be administered by a newly created Texas Emerging Technology Committee as a trustee program within the Office of the Governor. The purpose of the fund is to expedite innovation and commercialization; attract, create, or expand private-sector entities that will promote a substantial increase in high-quality jobs; and increase higher education applied technology research capabilities. The initial appropriation is about \$100 million, with more potentially available later depending upon the health of the Texas economy.

Texas Department of Criminal Justice

www.wsdtx.org/divisions/rio.php

Reintegrating offenders into society and reducing recidivism are key components of this agency's mission. Occupational training is provided through Windham School District (WSD) – Career and Technology Education, as well as community college vocational programs. Through partnerships with certification and licensing agencies, WSD provides training and certifications that meet business and industry standards.

Project Profile
Windham School District – Transitional Community Coordinators
<i>The WSD Transitional Coordinator enlists community volunteers to assist offenders with their successful transition from prison back into local communities.</i>
<p>Community volunteers, known as Transitional Community Coordinators, serve as facilitators that assist offenders in preparing a release plan that includes career choices, job readiness, housing and ongoing education and/or treatment and other transition essentials. Prior to release, the offender's transition plan is sent to the Coordinator in the city and county where the offender is releasing.</p> <p>Coordinators are trained to maintain resource files that take into consideration the offender's needs such as employment, housing, local and state support agencies, food, clothing, legal assistance and medical resources. This approach has proven to be a successful path to offender employment; since 2004, over 1,000 offenders have been a part of the program.</p>

Though direct employer involvement is limited, career awareness days and job fairs offer the opportunity for employers to discuss post-release employment opportunities with resident offenders. In addition, employers are involved in service delivery planning and review efforts, as training curricula are designed and/or revised to meet industry standards and entry-level skill requirements.

The program's administrators reported that the direct services most commonly used by employers are customized training and basic employment skills training. In FY2005, over 1,000 offenders were offered employment prior to release.

Texas Education Agency

www.tea.state.tx.us

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) is the administrative unit for primary and secondary public education in Texas, with responsibility for rating school districts under the statewide accountability system. This is a vital role as the education system provides students with the skills and knowledge needed for future success in postsecondary education or employment.

TEA provides services that indirectly benefit Texas employers through the provision of adult education and literacy programs such as:

- ▶ Adult Education of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) – TANF recipients are required to participate in adult basic education and job training programs.
- ▶ Adult Education and Family Literacy Program – Funded under Title II of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, this program is available for out-of-school youth and adults.

In addition, TEA provides direction for the state’s Career and Technology Education (CTE) programs which are designed to enable students to continue their education or gain entry-level employment in a high-skill, high-wage job through the acquisition of relevant knowledge and skills during their secondary education.

Texas Health and Human Services Commission – Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services

www.dars.state.tx.us

Although direct services to employers are minimal, the Division for Rehabilitation Services manages the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program. This program is a state-federal partnership designed to assist disabled individuals prepare for, find and keep jobs. As part of that effort, the agency provides individuals with job placement services and assistance with getting accommodations from employers.

Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board

www.thecb.state.tx.us

In addition to other partner agencies such as the Texas Workforce Commission, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) and the state’s institutions of higher education play an important role in the Governor’s industry cluster initiative related to the development and revision of worker training programs at two- and four-year schools. These institutions partner actively with the local workforce boards to develop and implement a variety of programs funded by federal, state and local dollars.

Many of the THECB mandates directly benefit employers, e.g.:

- ▶ Overseeing the state’s community and technical colleges which are major providers of job training and skills enhancement programs; and
- ▶ Reviewing all customized training programs financed through the Skills Development Fund.

Texas Workforce Commission

www.texasworkforce.org

The Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) oversees and provides workforce development services to Texas employers and job seekers. The agency manages statewide efforts, and works closely with the 28 local workforce development boards that have responsibility for local-level planning and service delivery. For employers, TWC offers

Project Profile
Governor’s Office – Industry Cluster Initiative
<p><i>“ ... for the first time in Texas history, we have a coordinated, market-driven economic development strategy that focuses on the areas of the economy with the greatest growth potential.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>- Governor Rick Perry (10/11/05)</i></p>
<p>In October 2004, Governor Perry announced a long-term, strategic job creation plan designed to focus state efforts in six industry clusters: advanced technologies and manufacturing, aerospace and defense, biotechnology and life sciences, information and computer technology, petroleum refining and chemical products, and energy. For additional information, go to: www.twc.state.tx.us/news/ticluster.html.</p> <p>As part of the initiative, representatives from industry, academia, economic development and trade associations developed legislative recommendations. The report, released in October 2005, includes recommendations on improvements to education, workforce training, transportation and regulatory policies. Priority items for 2006 have been identified and partner agencies are working to develop action plans and begin implementation.</p>

recruiting, retention, training, retraining and outplacement services, as well as information on labor law and labor market statistics.

Many of the direct employer services are provided through or sponsored by the Office of the Commissioner Representing Employers:

- ▶ Texas Business Conference seminars are held across the state each year, providing participants with information on topics such as employment law, workforce system options and UI claims. For additional information, go to: www.twc.state.tx.us/events.html.
- ▶ A variety of free publications and technical assistance tools are available through the agency website.
- ▶ Commissioner's Office staff provides assistance with UI cases and responds to queries received through their dedicated Toll-free number or email address.

The Office of Employer Initiatives takes the lead on business and economic development activities by working with industry representatives to develop industry cluster strategies and to align the services of local workforce boards, government agencies, industry associations and the educators with Texas businesses. [TWC Annual Report 2005]

Project Profile	
Online Economic Development Tools	
State	<p><i>"SitesOnTexas showcases all that Texas has to offer existing and prospective employers by geographically mapping comparative, competitive workforce and industry information."</i> - Governor Rick Perry</p> <p>Launched by the Texas Workforce Commission in coordination with the Governor's Office, Economic Development and Tourism Division, SitesOnTexas is available through local board staff and designated economic development partners. The site uses Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping technology to provide valuable information about worker availability and other resources in any Texas region. This tool also incorporates other tools such as TWC's Labor Market Information database into the site's reporting and mapping functions.</p>
Regional	<p><i>"The CBER website is a tremendous resource for economic development, employers and community leadership to find relevant, local labor market information in one place."</i> - Mary Ross, Director (12/5/05) West Central Texas Workforce Development Board</p> <p>Supported with a grant from the West Central Texas Workforce Development Board and the Development Corporation of Abilene, Abilene Christian University's Center for Business and Economic Research (CBER) launched a website (www.acu.edu/cber) that provides regional economic data and economic analysis for West Central Texas. By consolidating public available information, the site is a one-stop shop that provides readily accessible information to business professionals, community leaders and the public.</p>

Project Profile
WorkInTexas.com
<p><i>"... a comprehensive online job resource that is a fast, easy and effective way to recruit qualified job applicants, no matter what your field. WorkInTexas.com is free, has the largest database of workers in Texas, and is backed by people who are just a telephone call away."</i> - Ron Lehman, Commissioner Representing Employers Texas Workforce Commission <i>Texas Business Today (Winter/Spring 2005)</i></p>
<p>This Internet-based job matching tool allows employers to post jobs, receive job matches, view resumes and access recruitment tools. By the end of 2005, more than 134,000 Texas employers were registered on the system with over 303,000 new hires reported since the site was launched. [TWC Annual Report 2005]</p>

⦿ The agency is expanding Internet-based services, most notably launching WorkInTexas.com in 2004.

By using the Employer Tax Information Online service, employers can report quarterly wages and pay unemployment insurance contributions via the Internet. In addition, employers can respond to notices of unemployment claims online.

Funding sources for employee training include the Skills Development Fund and the Self-Sufficiency Fund. Self-Sufficiency Fund grants finance customized training and support services

for adult recipients of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Food Stamps and Needy Parent support. The training prepares trainees for jobs with specific employers. In FY2005, 14 grants totaling over \$16 million were awarded. Through jobs created or upgraded, 4,322 individuals were served at an average hourly wage of \$10.52. [TWC - March 2006]

By operating in partnership with public community and technical colleges, Skills Development Fund programs assist private employers with the design, financing and implementation of customized job training programs for new or existing jobs. Since the Fund's inception, over 2,700 businesses have obtained training for 154,020 new or incumbent workers. An average hourly wage of \$17.01 was reported for FY2005 program completers. [TWC Annual Report 2005]

House Bill 2421 (79th Legislature) created a stable funding source for the Skills Development Fund and also required TWC to consider giving priority to training incentives for small businesses when awarding Fund grants.

Texas Youth Commission
www.tyc.state.tx.us

The Texas Youth Commission (TYC) is the state's juvenile corrections agency, charged with providing for the care, custody, rehabilitation and reestablishment into society of juvenile offenders.

Project Profile
Prison Industry Enhancement (PIE) Programs
<i>PIE programs create partnerships between private sector employers and juvenile detention facilities. Participants gain practical work experience to increase post-release employment potential.</i>
The Evins Regional Juvenile Center (Edinburg, Texas) offers career training in many areas, including the building trades. Through a collaborative venture with a local employer who constructs and finances homes for low-income qualifying families, incarcerated youth learned construction skills. During FY2005, 24 youth participated and completed construction on three homes.

☉ The Prison Industry Enhancement (PIE) program is available for employers who have a need to start or expand an existing business. The employer must be interested in providing training opportunities to youth, with employment and operating needs that can be met through a training program at a TYC facility. Employers are involved in program planning – from developing eligibility criteria to assisting with the determination of skill levels required to perform job duties.

Based on a March 2005 survey of partner agencies, the direct services most commonly used by employers are (1) screening for placement into a PIE program, (2) general screening and placement services, (3) customized training and (4) basic employment skills training. As with most other boards and agencies, TYC reports that key challenges are employer awareness of available services and meeting employer expectations for job-specific skills training.

Local Workforce Development Boards

Twenty-eight local workforce development boards (boards) are responsible for local program planning, oversight and evaluation. Operating through a network of Texas Workforce Centers and Offices, the boards have primary responsibility for a variety of federal and state workforce programs. In 2005, 684,655 workers entered employment after obtaining services at Texas Workforce Centers [TWC Annual Report 2005] To access the board directory, go to: www.twc.state.tx.us/dirs/wdbs/wdbmap.html.

In recent years, much of the workforce system has shifted to a demand-driven focus – striving to meet the needs of Texas business and industry in a timely and efficient manner. Boards, in particular, have established Business Services Units, and continue to expand the variety of available online, in-house and on-site services.

The boards utilize funding from a variety of federal, state and local sources to create innovative services designed to meet the needs of employers, incumbent workers and job seekers. Through the Texas Association of Workforce Boards, TWC-sponsored events and other informal means, continuous improvement efforts and exchange of 'best practices' is both encouraged and facilitated. As these efforts continue, the boards' capacity to function as an employer-driven network should continue to improve.

In 2005, the Central Texas and Gulf Coast Workforce Boards entered into a contract with TWC to offer training to all boards to assist them in establishing and/or enhancing their business services operations. To prepare for the training effort and to obtain information about employer services, the boards were surveyed in April 2005, with 22 of 28 responding.

Available Employer Services	
Applicant screening and placement	100%
Meeting/technology facilities	100%
Tax information	100%
LMI/business statistics	100%
Rapid response/downsizing assistance	100%
Trade Adjustment Assistance	100%
Work Opportunity Tax Credit	100%
Assessment services	93%
UI information	87%
Customized training	80%
Welfare-to-Work Tax Credit	80%
Basic employment skills training	73%
UI assistance	73%
Alien labor certification	60%
Other	40%
<i>15 of 28 boards responding</i>	

Project Profile
Fort Duncan Medical Center – Middle Rio Grande Workforce Area
<p><i>"By growing our own health care professionals here in the Middle Rio Grande region, we are meeting the needs of local employers, while providing our residents with the opportunity to upgrade skill levels and improve quality of life."</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>- Ricky McNiel, Executive Director Middle Rio Grande Workforce Development Board Texas Workforce Solutions (January 2006)</i></p>
<p>By enhancing their employer-focused Business First approach, the Middle Rio Grande Workforce Development Board has increased partnerships with area employers. To assist with the expansion of the Fort Duncan Medical Center in Eagle Pass, the board collaborated with local colleges to develop a specialized curriculum in order to address workforce shortages in the high-demand health care industry. Salaries range from \$18 to \$20 per hour for new registered nurse, licensed vocational nurse, radiological technician, and physical therapist positions.</p>

Of the direct services currently available in their area, boards indicated that the top four used by employers include:

- ▶ Applicant screening and placement services,
- ▶ Assessment services (e.g., data entry, education level),
- ▶ Meeting/technology facilities, and
- ▶ Labor market information/business statistics (Internet-based and/or written).

Fifteen boards replied that roles and responsibilities have been defined between Business Services staff, Workforce Center staff and board staff. Of the responding boards, 50% indicated that a formal Business Services Plan had been developed, while 72% reported that board members were involved in their area's Business Services planning.

All of the responding boards reported that they participate in collaborative efforts for employer service delivery with local chambers of commerce and economic development agencies. In addition, collaborative ventures have been formed with a

variety of other entities including Small Business Development Centers, higher education institutions and community-based organizations.

Although marketing efforts and the type of available employer services have increased, respondents reported that employer awareness of available services continues to be a major service delivery challenge. ➡

The training conducted by Central Texas and Gulf Coast was designed to help Texas' workforce areas develop a targeted Business Services Unit. Eight sessions of two and one half days were held, with groupings based on size, past performance, and proximity. Twenty-six of the state's 28 boards participated in the optional sessions.

Employers were involved when the Central Texas and Gulf Coast workforce areas designed and implemented their Business Services Units. The employers' priorities and design strategies were used to develop the curriculum used for the training modules. Objectives included:

- ▶ gain understanding of customer relationship management;
- ▶ improve marketing and communication skills;
- ▶ learn methods for screening and assessing quality referrals;
- ▶ expand knowledge of technology available for labor market information products and other resources;

"The business-driven training strategies promoted through the statewide Business Services Unit training effort are designed to develop strong, positive relationships with local businesses. Because the training was provided in a train-the-trainer format, positive awareness and support of the workforce system by Texas' employers' is expected to grow exponentially."
 - Susan Kamas, Executive Director
 Central Texas Workforce Development Board
 (March 2006)

- ▶ learn to develop strategies to improve coordination and communication; and
- ▶ gain skills in developing funding strategies.

One component of training was to develop best practices. As training progressed, they were identified and shared among workforce areas. In addition, a trainee website is being developed that will include identified best practices and provide a forum to share others as they are developed.



Education Service Providers

Community and Technical Colleges

Texas has 50 public community college districts, as well as four colleges in the Texas State Technical College System. For a list of institutions, go to: www.collegefortexans.com/cfbin/inst.cfm. These institutions provide a variety of academic and technical skills training programs, including:

- ▶ Technical programs up to two years in length that lead to certificates or associate degrees;
- ▶ Continuing adult education programs for occupational upgrading;

- ▶ Customized training designed to help companies become or remain competitive by meeting their content, schedule and location needs; and
- ▶ Workforce development programs tailored to meet state and/or local needs.

Adult Education Providers

Adult education and basic literacy services are designed, in part, to help individuals become literate and obtain the knowledge and skills necessary for employment and self-sufficiency. During 2004-2005, publicly funded services were provided to over 132,000 adults (16 and older) without high school diplomas or equivalencies. [TEA – March 2006]

Eligible service providers include local educational agencies, community-based organizations, volunteer literacy organizations, higher education institutions, public or private nonprofit agencies, libraries, and public housing authorities. To access the provider directory, go to: www-tcall.tamu.edu/provider/search.htm.

Project Profile
Adult Education – Industry-Specific Curriculum Development
<p><i>“Adult education’s task is to provide access to relevant workforce-related education as part of the state’s strategic plan for comprehensiveness of workforce services that span a continuum from career planning and preparation, to career development and enhancement.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>- Joanie Rethlake, State Director Texas LEARNS (March 2006)</i></p>
<p>Texas LEARNS¹ has a Memorandum of Understanding with El Paso Community College to develop industry-specific curriculum for use with adults with limited English proficiency. Target industries include health care, sales and service, and construction and manufacturing trades. Texas LEARNS and TEA have contracted with an independent consultant to develop the teacher training materials.</p> <p>Draft deliverables are scheduled to be piloted by adult education programs during the summer of 2006, and will be revised as necessary to ensure they are replicable in other Texas’ regions with similar industry-related instructional needs.</p> <p>With the assistance of TWC and adult education practitioners already engaged in delivering work-related instruction, employers interested in the employment skills of emerging, incumbent, and displaced workers were identified and are being consulted during the product development process. In addition, employers partnering with pilot sites will have opportunity to provide feedback regarding the curricula’s responses to workplace needs.</p>

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¹ Under an agreement with TEA, Texas LEARNS, housed in the Harris County Department of Education, provides nondiscretionary grant management functions, program assistance and other statewide support services to Texas Adult Education and Family Literacy Providers. The TEA Division of Discretionary Grants continues to be responsible for all discretionary, policy, and monitoring functions.