Workforce Solutions Lower Rio (WFS)

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD PLAN

PROGRAM YEARS 2017 – 2020

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Strategic Elements

1. A description of the Board's strategic vision to support regional economic growth and economic self-sufficiency. The description must include:
   a. goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce, including youth and individuals with barriers to employment; and
   b. goals relating to the performance accountability measures based on performance indicators described in WIOA §116(b)(2)(A).

Board Response:

1. Background and Board's Strategic Vision

Workforce Solutions Lower Rio Grande Valley (WFS), under the direction of the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC), is one of 28 workforce development boards located throughout the state. WFS is governed by a group of Chief Elected Officials (CEOs) - the Mayor of the most populated city, County Judges from Hidalgo, Willacy Starr counties, and a 25-member Board of Directors representing the employer private sector, education, community based organizations, labor, vocational rehabilitation, public assistance, and employment services.

The Workforce Solutions Lower Rio Grande Valley Workforce Development Board of Directors (WFS Board) serves as the governing body for the workforce development area that includes Hidalgo, Willacy and Starr counties. The primary goal of the WFS Board is to respond to the needs of local employers and workers through locally designed demand-driven workforce development initiatives. The WFS Board's overarching goals strive to improve and further integrate the workforce system in the Lower Rio Grande Valley.

1.a. Goals to Prepare an Educated and Skilled Workforce, Youth and Individuals with Barriers

WFS Board's Mission: To provide job seekers with the skills, and business with the talent, they need to be successful.

Purpose Statement: Leading Change, Connecting People and Improving Potential within our communities.

Values: Commitment – Integrity - Innovation

The WFS Board's **Key Strategic** objectives align with the Texas' Strategic Plan Goals (TX SPG) for the Workforce System 2017-2020, as follows:

TX SPG: Focus on Employers:

In collaboration with the regional workforce partners, WFS will analyze and interpret Labor Market Information, employer occupational skill and training needs for the development of programs, service design strategies and opportunities that will align and prepare local job seekers to meet employer skills expectation and result in employment.

WFS Goal: Understand business needs through business relationships.

- Communicate top priorities of business community to stakeholders.

- Conduct continuous analysis of local labor market and industry data to validate demand.

- Work in partnership with employers to develop strategies to provide and support the delivery of services to meet business needs.

TX SPG: Engage in Partnerships

WFS is aware that it is vital to the growth and success of the local workforce pipeline to maintain and continuously improve the strong, established, collaborative initiatives with local employers, education, training, economic development, and non-profits. To ensure that individuals within the WFS service area have the expected knowledge, skills and abilities to meet employer needs and result in employment, WFS will continue to support, lead, facilitate, improve and enhance the following strategies.

WFS Goal: Prepare a job-ready workforce and foster external partnerships that promote educational and skill attainment within our communities.

- Support education and literacy initiatives that promote educational attainment.
- Engage in strategic conversations to open doors to new partnerships and strengthen existing partnerships.
- Provide educational and workforce stakeholders with information reflecting the needs of business and state of the workforce to contribute to a demand-driven system.
- Ensure available customer training responds to business demand and addresses current and future skill and educational gaps.
- Develop a mechanism to disseminate employer skill development training requirements to ensure expectations are met.
- Collaborate with educational and training institutions to promote industry recognized certification attainment.
- Collaborate with community colleges and training institutions to establish career pathways opportunities that include key target occupations.

TX SPG: Align System Elements

WFS strives to consistently provide excellent service to workforce customers, both job seekers and businesses. All programs and services are coordinated with internal and external partners to help prepare the local job seekers to meet the employer skill expectation.

WFS Goal: Build strategic partnerships to leverage resources for customers.

- Strengthen collaboration with core partners Adult Education and Literacy (AEL), Texas Workforce Solutions Vocational Rehabilitation Services Division (previously Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services) to leverage resources and possible co-enrollment of customers.
- Collaborate with local organizations to secure and/or leverage resources.
- Conduct a gap analysis (environmental and partnership) to identify community partners where there is goal and service alignment.

- Initiate and develop relationships to address unmet needs.

Youth and individuals with barriers to employment

The WFS workforce system is designed to increase access to, and opportunities for, the employment, education, training, and support services that individuals need to succeed in the labor market, particularly those with barriers to employment including target populations.

WFS's Workforce Career Centers provide career services that encourage, support and empower customers, including individuals with disabilities and other barriers, to make informed decisions based on local and regional economic demand to effectively attain their personal employment and education goals.

All customers are given access to high-quality Workforce Career Centers that connect them with the full range of services available in their communities, whether they are looking to find jobs, build basic educational or occupational skills, earn a postsecondary certificate or degree, or obtain guidance on how to make career choices. The following represents a sampling of strategies targeting youth and individuals with barriers to employment:

- Conduct a gap analysis (environmental and partnership) to identify and maximize opportunities for community partners with similar goals to align services for the benefit of all job seekers.
- Convene meetings with community partners to develop and align workforce local plans to maximize services for area youth and people with disabilities.
- Focus and identify resource and service development opportunities with area youth providers, that includes foster youth agencies, school district dropout recovery programs, and youth offender programs.
- Develop strategic partnerships with regional community alliances to identify possible sources to leverage funding and align service delivery.
- Develop strategic partnerships with agencies such as Adult Education and Literacy (AEL), Texas Workforce Solutions Vocational Rehabilitation Services Division (previously Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (DARS)), and independent school districts (ISDs) to provide cross training of staff.
- Provide training to Business Services Team to provide employers information on the advantages of employing youth and individuals with disabilities.

1.b. Performance Accountability described in WIOA §116(b)(2)(A).

WFS, to ensure continuous improvement in operations and to sufficiently meet the needs of business, job seekers, workers, child care customers and meeting performance measures, negotiates with sub-recipient (s) and establishes measures and strategies that are above and beyond the TWC contracted measures.

- Performance measures within contracts will be negotiated annually and include Strategic Goals and Objectives established by multiple tiers of oversight determined by WFS staff, and sub-recipients' management leadership staff
- Key Performance Indicators that measure the quality and quantity of services are established annually.

- Key Performance Indicators for eligible training providers related to minimum performance requirements including program completion rate(s) and entered employment rate(s) for schools receiving WIOA participants are established annually.

2. A description of the Board's strategy to work with the entities carrying out the core programs and with the required partners to align resources available to the local area, to achieve the vision and goals.

Board Response:

TX SPG: Integrate Programs

WFS has planned and convened core partners in anticipation of the WIOA final rules and regulations. The core partners include WIOA Title II Adult Education and Literacy, WIOA Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation, local community college(s) and community based organizations(s). WFS core partners are committed to consistently provide excellent service to workforce system customers, both job seekers and businesses. As such, the following strategies were collectively identified:

- Develop a referral system and customized initial intake form to ensure a level of consistency across core partner agencies. These standardized electronic forms will support alignment of services across programs by reducing duplicate data collections and allowing core partners to all work from the same basic customer information.
- Establish local Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) specifying how each agency roles and responsibilities associated with supporting an educated and skilled workforce will be maintained.
- Leverage co-enrollment opportunities amongst programs whenever it is beneficial to the customer.
- WFS will continue to support improved customer service and cross-program staff training to increase staff knowledge and capacity that allows seamless service delivery.

Economic and Workforce Analysis

1. A regional analysis of the following:

    a. The economic conditions, including existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors and occupations, as well as target occupations
    b. The employment needs of employers in existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors and occupations

    As appropriate, a local workforce development area (workforce area) may use an existing analysis, if it is recent and provides a current and accurate description of the regional economy.

Board Response:

WFS service area is in the southernmost part of Texas. The WFS region's population, in 2016, was estimated at 945,554 persons and is projected to increase 7% or 67,390 more persons by 2026.   The workforce service area's projected growth rate at 7% aligns with the state.

To accurately explain the dynamics of the WFS fast-growing regional economy, it is necessary to present how population demographics shape employment trends. The WFS region has a population growth rate that is more

than twice the rate of the overall United States. This dynamic is created by high birth rates, as well as inward migration from other regions and countries. The population growth rate creates an increasing demand for Retail, Healthcare, Education, Law Enforcement, and Leisure & Hospitality services.

Table 1 WFS 3- County Population

Area	2016 Population	2026 Population	Change	% Change
WS LRGV Workforce Region	945,554	1,012,944	67,390	7%
State	27,748,024	29,654,593	1,906,569	7%
Nation	323,427,948	334,302,476	10,874,528	3%

Source: QCEW Employees & Self Employed – EMSI 2016.3 Class of Worker

The workforce region's population has 90.29% identifying their Race/Ethnicity as White, Hispanic. This group is projected to grow 8% by 2026. The 6.66% of the WFS population identifying as White, Non-Hispanic in 2016 is projected to decrease 3% by 2026.

Table 2 WFS Population Race/Ethnicity Break-Down

Race/Ethnicity	2016 Population	2026 Population	Change	% Change	2016 % of Cohort
White, Hispanic	853,760	918,233	64,473	8%	90.29%
White, Non-Hispanic	62,979	61,173	-1,806	-3%	6.66%
Asian, Non-Hispanic	9,123	10,328	1,205	13%	0.96%
Black, Non-Hispanic	4,503	5,177	674	15%	0.48%
Black, Hispanic	4,415	5,364	949	21%	0.47%
American Indian or Alaskan Native, Hispanic	4,317	5,013	696	16%	0.46%
Two or More Races, Hispanic	2,614	3,134	520	20%	0.28%
Two or More Races, Non-Hispanic	1,585	1,884	299	19%	0.17%
Asian, Hispanic	1,200	1,441	241	20%	0.13%
American Indian or Alaskan Native, Non-Hispanic	657	707	50	8%	0.07%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, Hispanic	284	334	50	18%	0.03%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, Non-Hispanic	116	155	39	34%	0.01%
Total	945,554	1,012,944	67,390	7%	100.00%
Source: QCEW Employees, Non-QCEW Employees & Self-Employed - Emsi 2016.3 Class of Worker					

The WFS population age 0 to 14, in 2016, was estimated at 262,409 and is projected to grow 3.8% by 2026. Within this population, the 10 to 14 years of age group, numbering at 87,280, in 2016, is projected to decrease 1% by the year 2026.

The workforce region's population age 15 to 74, in 2016, is estimated at 639,908 persons and is projected to increase by 48,760 persons by 2026. Within this population, the 40 to 44 years of age group, estimated at 60,154 is projected to decrease 2,235 (-4%) by 2026.

The remaining WFS population age 75 to 85 years and older, in 2016, is estimated at 43,234 persons and is projected to increase 16.02% by 2026.

Table 3 WFS Population Age Cohorts

Age Cohort	2016 Population	2026 Population	Change	% Change	2016 % of Cohort
Under 5 years	90,520	98,072	7,552	8%	9.57%
5 to 9 years	84,609	88,547	3,938	5%	8.95%
10 to 14 years	87,280	86,171	-1,109	-1%	9.23%
15 to 19 years	80,753	82,528	1,775	2%	8.54%
20 to 24 years	74,731	75,224	493	1%	7.90%
25 to 29 years	65,428	71,450	6,022	9%	6.92%
30 to 34 years	60,725	72,039	11,314	19%	6.42%
35 to 39 years	60,520	63,147	2,627	4%	6.40%
40 to 44 years	60,154	57,919	-2,235	-4%	6.36%
45 to 49 years	53,717	55,315	1,598	3%	5.68%
50 to 54 years	47,359	52,878	5,519	12%	5.01%
55 to 59 years	41,946	46,513	4,567	11%	4.44%
60 to 64 years	36,673	41,286	4,613	13%	3.88%
65 to 69 years	32,598	38,223	5,625	17%	3.45%
70 to 74 years	25,304	32,146	6,842	27%	2.68%
75 to 79 years	18,515	24,279	5,764	31%	1.96%
80 to 84 years	13,033	15,133	2,100	16%	1.38%
85 years and over	11,686	12,075	389	3%	1.24%
Total	945,554	1,012,944	67,390	7%	100.00%

Source: QCEW Employees & Self Employed – EMSI 2016.3 Class of Worker

According to TWC quarterly employment and wage data found in Table 4, in the 2nd Quarter of 2014, there were 12,313 establishments located in the three-county WFS service area and in 2016 the service area grew by 228 establishments. The three-county WFS collectively had $1,456,382,786 in total wages, a 4.6% increase from 2014.

As evidenced in Table 4, two of the counties – Starr and Hidalgo show a steady increase in the number of establishments, average employment, and total wages in the 2nd Quarter in 2014 - 2015 – 2016. Hidalgo County in the same period shows slight increases in average weekly wages, while Starr County shows a decrease in average weekly wages. Willacy County data shows the number of establishments decreased from 266 in 2014 to 260 establishments in 2015 and 2016, average employment, total wages and average weekly wages also decreased for this county during the 2014-2016 period.

Table 4 Establishment Growth by WFS Counties

Area	2014 2nd Quarter				2015 2nd Quarter				2016 2nd Quarter			
	Establishments	Avg Emp	Total Wages	Avg Weekly Wages	Establishments	Avg Emp	Total Wages	Avg Weekly Wages	Establishments	Avg Emp	Total Wages	Avg Weekly Wages
Starr County	523	9,010	$45,355,049	$387	530	9,119	$45,246,783	$382	543	9,278	$46,479,413	$385
Hidalgo County	11,524	185,360	$1,320,945,096	$548	11,644	189,833	$1,355,096,640	$549	11,738	191,934	$1,392,352,677	$558
Willacy County	266	2,838	$22,687,354	$615	260	2,414	$18,487,959	$589	260	2,313	$17,550,696	$584

Source: TWC TRACER 2 Quarter January - September, Employment and Wages 2014, 2015, 2016

WFS has a diversity of industries in the region, per TWC in 2016. The largest employers are in the Education and Health Services Sector, providing 26% of the industry employment in the region. The Government Sector employs 23% of the workforce, while Trade, Transportation and Utilities employs 22% of the WFS workforce force.

McAllen - Edinburg - Mission MSA
(Hidalgo)
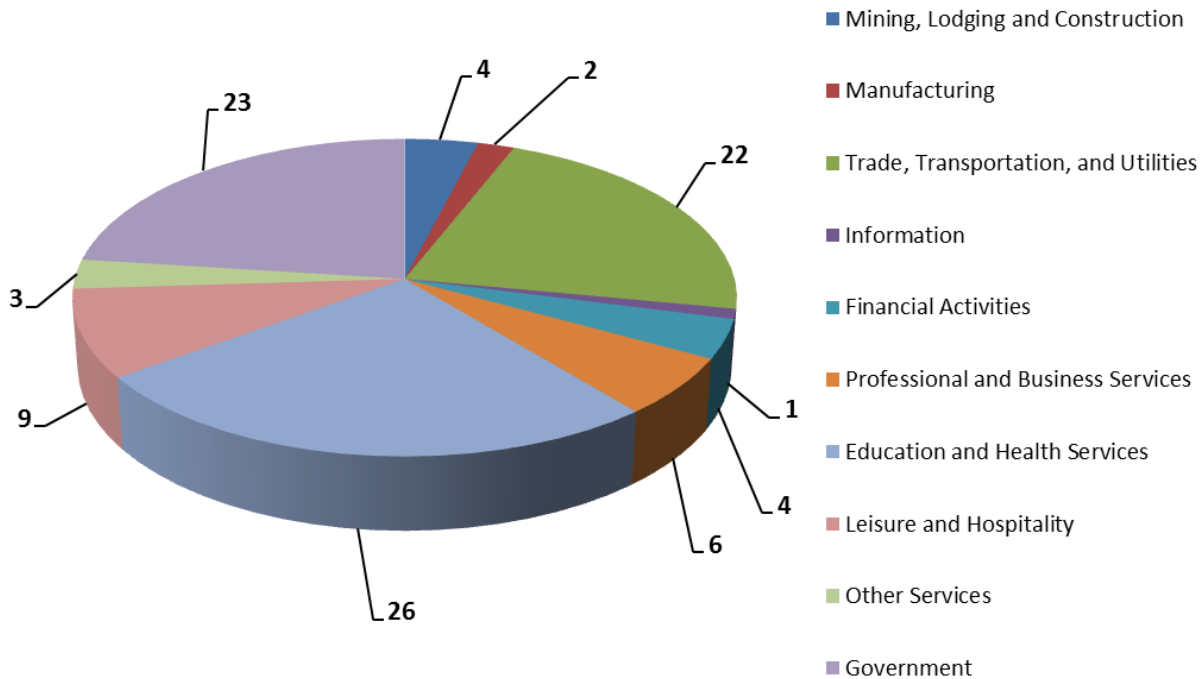
Source: TWC TRACER 2, October 2016, MSA Profile McAllen-Edinburg-Mission

Per TWC employment projection data, the WFS service area in 2014 had 286,630 persons employed and in 2024 is projected to grow by 59,270 new jobs, a 20.7% increase.

Healthcare & Social Assistance Sector will continue to be a significant driver of employment growth in the region. The Healthcare & Social Assistance Sector at 29.0% has the greatest share of employment growth projected between 2014-2024, per TWC data shown in Table 5. The Educational Services Industry is projected to be the 2nd largest employer in the WFS region with a 26.5% or 12,150 job growth by 2024. The Mining Industry, per TWC, is projected to lose 500 employees (-15.9%) between 2014-2024.

Table 5 WFS Total Industry Employment

Industry Code	Industry Title	Annual Average Employment 2014	Annual Average Employment 2024	Number Change 2014–2024	Percent Growth 2014–2024
62	Health Care & Social Assistance	64,550	83,290	18,740	29.0%
61	Educational Services, Public & Private	45,850	58,000	12,150	26.5%
72	Accommodation & Food Services	21,450	27,110	5,660	26.4%
44	Retail Trade	38,370	43,680	5,310	13.8%
N/A	Government	19,280	23,080	3,800	19.7%
	Self Employed & Unpaid Family Workers	22,140	24,720	2,580	11.7%
42	Wholesale Trade	7,710	9,240	1,530	19.8%
48	Transportation & Warehousing	8,270	9,800	1,530	18.5%
81	Other Services, Ex. Government	7,720	9,250	1,530	19.8%
31	Manufacturing	6,390	7,640	1,250	19.6%
56	Administrative & Waste Services	11,150	12,170	1,020	9.1%
54	Professional & Technical Services	4,680	5,680	1,000	21.4%
23	Construction	7,280	8,270	990	13.6%
52	Finance & Insurance	7,140	7,960	820	11.5%
53	Real Estate & Rental & Leasing	2,300	2,790	490	21.3%
51	Information	2,470	2,850	380	15.4%
11	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, & Hunting	3,880	4,240	360	9.3%
71	Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation	1,630	1,980	350	21.5%
22	Utilities	820	990	170	20.7%
55	Management of Companies & Enterprises	410	520	110	26.8%
21	Mining	3,140	2,640	-500	-15.9%
Total All Industries		**286,630**	**345,900**	**59,270**	**20.7%%**

Source: TWC TRACER 2

2.A list of the in-demand industry sectors and occupations

Board Response:

WFS's in-demand occupations and target industries are expected to continue to experience high growth and high demand. Table 6 shows the WFS target industries that align with industries having in-demand occupations in their staffing pattern.

Table 6 Target Industries that Employ In-Demand Occupations

Industry	Composite Industry
Healthcare & Social Assistance	6215 Medical & Diagnostic Laboratories, 6221 General Medical & Surgical Hospitals
Educational Services Public and Private	6111 Elementary & Secondary Schools, 6113 Colleges & Universities, Public & Private
Business, Technology & Professional Services Supersector	5412 Accounting & Bookkeeping Services, 5416 Management & Technical Consulting Services

Source: Texas Industry Profile Staffing Patterns

WFS has selected 19 in-demand occupations that fall in the Business, Technology & Professional Services Supersector. There were 10,970 persons employed in 2014, in the WFS's 19 selected in-demand occupations and are projected to increase 17.64% or by 2,350 employees by 2024. Fourteen of the 19 in-demand occupations require bachelor's degrees, two occupations require a master and doctorate, two occupations require the employee to hold a high school diploma and no education data was available for Sales Representatives, Wholesale & Manufacturing occupations.

Table 7 Business, Technology & Professional Services Supersector In-Demand Occupations

Occ Code	Occupational Title	Annual Average Employment 2014	Annual Average Employment 2024	Number Change 2014-2024	Percent Growth 2014-2024	Typical Education Needed for Entry into Occupation	Hourly Wage 2015	Annual Wage 2015
Business & Financial Operations Occupations								
13-1041	Compliance Officers	1,170	1,370	200	17.1%	Bachelor's degree	$30.15	$62,722
13-1071	Human Resources Specialists	590	690	100	16.9%	Bachelor's degree	$21.71	$45,166
13-1111	Management Analysts	200	250	50	25.0%	Bachelor's degree	$54.90	$114,190
13-1151	Training & Development Specialists	310	370	60	19.4%	Bachelor's degree	$23.17	$48,184
13-1161	Market Research Analysts & Marketing Specialists	150	200	50	33.3%	Bachelor's degree	$28.51	$59,292
13-1199	Business Operations Specialists, All Other	460	560	100	21.7%	Bachelor's degree	$30.22	$62,861
13-2052	Personal Financial Advisors	180	230	50	27.8%	Bachelor's degree	$53.05	$110,347
Computer & Mathematical Occupations								
15-1121	Computer Systems Analysts	220	290	70	31.8%	Bachelor's degree	$31.32	$65,138
15-1131	Computer Programmers	120	130	10	8.3%	Bachelor's degree	$33.13	$68,920
15-1142	Network & Computer Systems Administrators	200	240	40	20.0%	Bachelor's degree	$27.32	$56,819
Management Occupations								
11-1021	General & Operations Managers	2,590	3,120	530	20.5%	Bachelor's degree	$43.87	$91,257
11-3031	Financial Managers	250	300	50	20.0%	Bachelor's degree	$52.81	$109,838
11-9032	Education Administrators, Elementary/Secondary School	970	1,240	270	27.8%	Master's degree		$80,847
11-9111	Medical & Health Services Managers	510	640	130	25.5%	Bachelor's degree	$38.25	$79,568
11-9141	Property, Real Estate, & Community Association Managers	160	190	30	18.8%	High school diploma or equivalent	$22.12	$46,001
Legal Occupations								
23-1011	Lawyers	370	440	70	18.9%	Doctoral or professional degree	$50.64	$105,329
Sales & Related Occupations								
41-3021	Insurance Sales Agents	440	560	120	27.3%	High school diploma or equivalent	$23.54	$48,970
41-3031	Securities, Commodities, & Financial Services Sales Agents	330	390	60	18.2%	Bachelor's degree	$30.62	$63,684
41-4000 (41-4012)	Sales Representatives, Wholesale & Manufacturing	1,750	2,110	360	20.6%	No data	No data	No data

Source: TWC TRACER 2

WFS has selected 17 in-demand occupations that fall in the Educational and Healthcare Super Sector. There were 8,880 persons employed in 2014. In the WFS's 17 selected occupations and are projected to increase by 26% or by 2,300 employees by 2024. All 17 in-demand occupations require postsecondary or higher degrees.

Table 8 Educational and Healthcare Supersector In-Demand Occupations

Occ Code	Occupational Title	Annual Average Employment 2014	Annual Average Employment 2024	Number Change 2014-2024	Percent Growth 2014-2024	Typical Education Needed for Entry into Occupation	Hourly Wage 2015	Annual Wage 2015
Education, Training, & Library Occupations								
25-1199	Postsecondary Teachers, All Other	30	30	0	0.0%	Doctoral or professional degree		$36,880
25-2011	Preschool Teachers, Ex. Special Education	870	1,110	240	27.6%	Associate's degree	$18.00	$37,435
25-2012	Kindergarten Teachers, Ex. Special Education	540	690	150	27.8%	Bachelor's degree		$53,812
25-2032	Career/Technical Education Teachers, Secondary School	350	430	80	22.9%	Bachelor's degree		$54,586
25-2052	Special Education Teachers, Kindergarten & Elementary School	340	440	100	29.4%	Bachelor's degree		$53,119
25-4021	Librarians	390	460	70	17.9%	Master's degree	$28.86	$60,037
25-9031	Instructional Coordinators	600	760	160	26.7%	Master's degree	$34.36	$71,469
Healthcare Practitioners & Technical Occupations								
29-1051	Pharmacists	420	510	90	21.4%	Doctoral or professional degree	$65.81	$136,886
29-1069	Physicians & Surgeons, All Other	120	160	40	33.3%	Doctoral or professional degree	$102.30	$212,777
29-1122	Occupational Therapists	140	190	50	35.7%	Master's degree	$45.75	$95,168
29-1123	Physical Therapists	250	330	80	32.0%	Doctoral or professional degree	$48.04	$99,931
29-1127	Speech-Language Pathologists	280	370	90	32.1%	Master's degree	$35.62	$74,100
Healthcare Support Occupations								
31-1014	Nursing Assistants	2,690	3,420	730	27.1%	Postsecondary non-	$9.57	$19,906
Life, Physical, & Social Science Occupations								
19-3031	Clinical, Counseling, & School Psychologists	170	210	40	23.5%	Doctoral or	$30.68	$63,807
Community & Social Service Occupations								
21-1012	Educational, Guidance, School, & Vocational Counselors	1,010	1,270	260	25.7%	Master's degree	$29.31	$60,966
21-1021	Child, Family, & School Social Workers	510	580	70	13.7%	Bachelor's degree	$19.95	$41,494
21-1022	Healthcare Social Workers	170	220	50	29.4%	Master's degree	$25.08	$52,175

Source: TWC TRACER 2

Board Response:

The WFS target industries currently employ an estimated 72,860 persons and are projected to grow by 25.21% or 18,370 more jobs. Table 9 shows the 15 four digit NAICS with projected growth for each selected industry. Health and Education target industries are projecting a 27.60%(14,470) increase in new jobs in the next ten years.

14

Table 9 WFS 4-Digit NAICS Target Industries

Industry	NAICS Code	NAICS Industry Name	Total Current Positions for the Industry in the Area	Total Projected Positions in 10 Years	Job Growth Rate
Construction	2362	Nonresidential Building Construction	660	840	27.3%
	2382	Building Equipment Contractors	1800	2060	14.4%
Manufacturing	3114	Fruit & Vegetable Preserving & Specialty Food Manufacturing	600	770	28.3%
	3273	Cement & Concrete Product Manufacturing	440	550	25.0%
	3363	Motor Vehicle Parts Mfg	90	110	22.2%
	8111	Automotive Repair & Maintenance	1190	1550	30.3%
Transportation and Warehousing	4841	General Freight Trucking	3130	3850	23.0%
	4931	Warehousing & Storage	780	1000	28.2%
Business & Professional Services	5412	Accounting & Bookkeeping Services	840	1020	21.4%
	5416	Management & Technical Consulting Services	690	1040	50.7%
Education	6111	Elementary & Secondary Schools	38730	49140	26.9%
	6113	Colleges & Universities, Public & Private	4220	5160	22.3%
Health	6215	Medical & Diagnostic Laboratories	510	780	52.9%
	6221	General Medical & Surgical Hospitals	8960	11810	31.8%
Law Enforcement	9221	Police Protection and Correctional Institutions	10220	11550	13.0%

Source: EMSI

Healthcare

Because of the region's demographics, most notably the aging population, and the persistence of chronic conditions such as diabetes, much of the employment growth is expected for direct care positions such as physicians, registered nurses, and licensed vocational nurses. Demand is also expected to continue for technician-level workers —those that provide diagnostic and therapeutic services including the need for more operating room surgical technician positions. The push for electronic medical records is also expected to create demand for health information technology workers.

Physicians - The growing population in the WFS service area has been plagued with an overwhelming number of diabetes and other health related issues which have contributed to a physician shortage. The physician shortage means fewer than six primary care physicians for every 10,000 residents, compared to a state average of more than nine. This does not include the regular influx of foreign nationals because of Texas-Mexico border

location or the seasonal increase when Winter Texans call the Rio Grande Valley a temporary home from cold northern states for about four months a year. The lack of a Medical Program locally has further led to the shortage until the recent addition of the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (URTGV) Medical School. The new UTRGV Medical School will create significant growth in the high skilled professional medical occupations going forward, along with an emerging Research & Development component.

Registered Nurses (RN) – Hospitals have remained the biggest employer in the Healthcare Industry; however, there are some challenges they face when trying to fill nursing positions. In discussions with many hospital Human Resource Managers, one of the major concerns is the lack of candidates to fill the vacancies which is due to the lack of instructor capacity at the local colleges and universities. Most area hospitals, on average, , carry an estimated 30-40 nursing vacancies per month. In 2016, some local training providers have shared with WFS that they were unable to enroll nearly 70 qualified nursing students because they could not accommodate that amount of growth in the program. Of those qualified, most had a 4.0 GPA and about 15 to 20 hours of prerequisite courses. In addition, the aging workforce of RN's retiring and an influx of newly graduated RN's lacking experience also pose a challenge for the industry. Some hospitals have started a Graduate Nurse program (similar to on-the-job training) to address these concerns but lack of qualified faculty poses a critical problem.

For the workforce region's Healthcare Industry, an estimated 50% of the healthcare jobs are related to social assistance and home health care that pay low wage average earnings; this will continue to be a challenge.

The Health Care Industry Sector is one of the target industry sectors for the WFS service area. Table 10 shows the 16 target Health Care occupation staffing pattern correlated with the NAICS 4-digit target industries – 6215 Medical & diagnostic Laboratories and 6221 General Medical & Surgical Hospital. The additional target occupations shown in Table 10 - Medical Secretaries and Billing and Posting Clerks are classified as Office and Administrative positions and are employed by multiple WFS target industries.

Table 10   Health Care Target Industries Correlated with Target Occupations

NAICS	Industry	Occupation
6215	**Medical & Diagnostic Laboratories**	29-2032 Diagnostic Medical Sonographers, 29-2034 Radiologic Technologists, 43-6013 Medical Secretaries, 43-3021 Billing and Posting Clerks
6221	**General Medical & Surgical Hospitals**	29-1126 Respiratory Therapists, 29-2055 Surgical Technologists, 29-2034 Radiologic Technologists, 29-2071 Medical Records and Health Information Technicians, 43-6013 Medical Secretaries, 29-2052 Pharmacy Technicians, 29-2061 Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses, 31-9092 Medical Assistants, 43-3021 Billing and Posting Clerks, 29-1141 Registered Nurses, 31-2021 Physical Therapist Assistants, 29-2041 Emergency Medical Technicians & Paramedics
Source: Texas Industry Profiles and SOCRATES		

WFS's 11 Healthcare Sector target occupations shown in Table 11 accounted for 20,720 employees in 2014 and are projected to grow by 6,608 new jobs between 2014 - 2024. As shown in Table 11, eight of the Healthcare target occupations require an associate degree or certification, two require some college and a high school diploma and one requires the job seeker to hold a bachelor's degree.

Table 11 Healthcare Target Occupations

	Healthcare Practitioners & Technical Occupations					
SOC Code	Target Occupation Job Title	Total Current Positions	Total Projected Positions in Ten Years - Jobs	Starting Wage	Experience Wage	Required Education or Training Component
29-1141	Registered Nurses	8,570	11,911	$25.94	$36.83	Bachelor or Assoc.
29-1126	Respiratory Therapists	710	852	$25.64	$34.17	Associate degree
29-2032	Diagnostic Medical Sonographers	183	244	$27.91	$36.11	Associate degree +Certif
29-2034	Radiologic Technologists	553	664	$11.58	$28.84	Associate degree +Certif
29-2055	Surgical Technologists	328	400	$17.89	$26.02	Associate degree +Certif
29-2061	Licensed Vocational Nurses	4,010	5,326	$17.93	$25.48	Associate degree +Certif
29-2071	Medical Records and Health Information Technicians	558	736	$8.93	$13.50	Associate degree or HS
31-2021	Physical Therapist Assistants	223	344	$27.00	$41.56	Associate degree
31-9092	Medical Assistants (Certified only)	3,350	4,134	$8.72	$12.40	Associate degree +Certif
29-2041	Emergency Medical Technicians & Paramedics	1,003	1,211	$10.70	$17.01	Some college + Certificate
29-2052	Pharmacy Technicians	1,232	1,506	$11.92	$16.73	High school + 1 yr Certificate
Source: TWC TRACER 2						

Education Sector: The WFS regions projected population growth and its relatively young population will create continued demand for educators at all levels. Ensuring enough teachers are in the pipeline will require a continuous effort. A sufficient supply of quality teachers is doubly important to the region's economy because of the role teacher's play in preparing students for entry in the workforce. Recent changes to the Texas K-12 education system require connections between business and education. WFS has taken a leadership role in this arena. Progress has been made with the high school completion rate in the past 15 years. In the 2000 census,

50% of the region's adults had less than a high school education. By 2010, it has dropped to 40% and today it is approaching 35%. Work needs to continue to increase college completion rates.

The Education Industry Sector is another of the target industry sectors for the WFS service area. Table 12 shows the four target Education Sector occupational staffing patterns along with other top hired target occupations correlated with the NAICS 4-digit target industries – 6111 Elementary & Secondary Schools and 6113 Colleges & Universities, Public & Private.

Table 12 Target Education Industry Correlation with Target Education Sector Occupations

NAICS	Industry	Occupation
6111	**Elementary & Secondary Schools**	25-2022 Middle School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education,25-2031 Secondary School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education,25-2021 Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education,25-9041 Teacher Assistants,43-6014 Secretaries and Administrative Assistants, Except Legal, Medical, and Executive, 29-1141 Registered Nurses, 33-3051 Police and Sheriff's Patrol Officers, 15-1151 Computer User Support Specialists
6113	**Colleges & Universities, Public & Private**	43-6011 Executive Secretaries and Executive Administrative Assistants,43-6014 Secretaries and Administrative Assistants, Except Legal, Medical, and Executive, 29-1141 Registered Nurses, 33-3051 Police and Sheriff's Patrol Officers, 15-1151 Computer User Support Specialists, 15-1152 Computer Network Support Specialists, 15-1134 Web Developers
Source: Texas Industry Profiles and SOCRATES		

WFS's four Education Sector target occupations shown in Table 13 accounted for 26,232 employees in 2014 and are projected to grow by 6,321 new jobs between 2014 - 2024. As shown in Table 13, all the Education Sector target occupations require the job seeker to hold a bachelor's degree.

Table 13 WFS Education Target Occupations

	Education, Training, & Library Occupations					
SOC Code	Target Occupation Job Title	Total Current Positions	Total Projected Positions in Ten Years – Jobs	Starting Wage	Experience Wage	Required Education or Training Component
25-2021	Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education	9,379	11,574	n/a	$25.08*	Bachelor degree
25-2022	Middle School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education	4,663	5,720	n/a	$25.53*	Bachelor degree
25-2031	Secondary School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education	6,459	8,008	n/a	$25.66	Bachelor degree
25-9041	Teacher Assistants	5,731	7,251	n/a	$11.66*	BA, some college+Certif.
Source: TWC TRACER 2						

Professional and Business Services Sector: The service area lags in business services and related employment in the technology sectors, but the rapid growth in colleges & universities, and customer care centers along with the increased use of staffing agencies by the business community has helped this to become the fifth (5th) largest sector of the economy in the WFS region. Professional Services firms provide a range of support activities, such as marketing, accounting, and information technology (IT) services, to local companies. The region's growing border-related employment could drive demand for additional IT and communication needs to support increased sophistication in surveillance and inspection operations. WFS has partnered with Economic Development Corporations (EDCs) and supported coding camps to imbed this skill in the workforce region's young workforce.

The Professional and Business/IT Industry Sector is another of the target industry sectors for the WFS service area. Table 14 shows the 16 target Professional and Business/IT Sector occupational staffing patterns, along with other top hired target occupations correlated with the NAICS 4-digit target industries – 5412 Accounting & Bookkeeping Services, 5416 Management & Technical Consulting Services. Colleges and universities are one of the prime employers for IT related target occupations.

Table 14 Target Professional and Business/IT Industry Correlation with Target Sector Occupations

NAICS	Industry	Occupation
5412	**Accounting & Bookkeeping Services**	13-2011 Accountants and Auditors, 43-3021 Billing and Posting Clerks, 43-3031 Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks, 43-6014 Secretaries and Administrative Assistants, Except Legal, Medical, and Executive, 43-4051 Customer Service Representatives
5416	**Management & Technical Consulting Services**	13-2011 Accountants and Auditors, 43-4051 Customer Service Representatives, 43-3031 Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks, 43-6014 Secretaries and Administrative Assistants, Except Legal, Medical, and Executive, 43-5011 Cargo and Freight Agents
6113	**Colleges & Universities, Public & Private**	43-6011 Executive Secretaries and Executive Administrative Assistants, 43-6014 Secretaries and Administrative Assistants, Except Legal, Medical, and Executive, 29-1141 Registered Nurses, 33-3051 Police and Sheriff's Patrol Officers, 15-1151 Computer User Support Specialists, 15-1152 Computer Network Support Specialists,
Source: Texas Industry Profiles and SOCRATES		

WFS's 16 Professional and Business/IT Industry Sector target occupations shown in Table 15 accounted for 30,510 employees in 2014 and are projected to grow by 4,784 or 15.68 % new jobs between 2014 - 2024. As shown in Table 15, six of the industry sector target occupations require the job seeker to hold a bachelor's degree, three target occupations require an associate degree, and two target occupations require a high school diploma.

Table 15 WFS Professional and Business/IT Industry Sector Target Occupations

SOC Code	Target Occupation Job Title	Total Current Positions	Total Projected Positions in Ten Years - Jobs	Starting Wage	Experience Wage	Required Education or Training Component
Business & Financial Operations Occupations						
13-2011	Accountants and Auditors	2,002	2,371	$20.48	$35.01	Bachelor or Masters
Office & Administrative Support Occupations						
43-3031	Bookkeeping, Accounting, & Auditing Clerks	3,854	3,993	$9.54	$17.00	Bachelor degree or HS, Certificate
43-4051	Customer Service Representatives	8,819	10,482	$9.22	$14.15	Bachelor degree or HS + CSvc Exp.
43-3021	Billing and Posting Clerks	1,696	2,092	$10.37	$15.95	Associate degree or HS, certificate
43-6011	Executive Secretaries, Executive Administrative Assistants	1,097	1,219	$19.13	$27.27	Associate degree or HS, experience
43-6014	Secretaries/Administrative Assistants, Except Legal, Medical, and Executive	8,075	9,077	$8.71	$15.10	Associate degree or HS
43-5011	Cargo and Freight Agents	393	430	$8.94	$18.53	High school, Certificate
43-6013	Medical Secretaries	3,128	3,844	$8.97	$13.14	High school + 1 yr Certificate
Computer & Mathematical Occupations						
15-1134	Web Developers	160	218	$21.47	$36.01	Bachelor or Assoc.
15-1151	Computer User Support Specialists	1,033	1,258	$11.20	$20.25	Bachelor or Assoc.
15-1152	Computer Network Support Specialists	253	310	$15.79	$27.55	Bachelor or Assoc.

Source: TWC TRACER 2

The Transportation, Warehousing, and Logistics Sector has more than doubled in size in recent years due to growth in both the manufacturing and produce industries in Mexico. The fast-growing Retail Industry Sector also creates demand in the Transportation Warehousing, and Logistics Sector.

The Transportation, Warehousing, and Logistics Sector is another of the target industry sectors for the WFS service area (Table 16). Table 17 shows Transportation, Warehousing and Logistics industry occupational staffing patterns correlated with the NAICS 4-digit target industries which includes: 4841 General Freight Trucking, and 4931 Warehousing & Storage, and 8111 Automotive Repair & Maintenance.

Table 16 WFS Target Transportation Industries

NAICS	Industry	Occupation
4841	General Freight Trucking	53-3032 Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers,49-3031 Bus and Truck Mechanics and Diesel Engine Specialists, 43-5011 Cargo and
4931	Warehousing & Storage	53-3032 Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers,49-9071 Maintenance and Repair Workers, General
8111	Automotive Repair & Maintenance	49-3023 Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics,49-3031 Bus and Truck Mechanics and Diesel Engine Specialists
Source: Texas Industry Profiles and SOCRATES		

The Transportation, Warehousing and Logistics target occupations for the WFS service area may be found in Table 17, which includes 53-3032 Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers, 49-3031 Bus, Truck Mechanics & Diesel Engine Specialists and 49-3023 Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics.

Table 17 WFS Target Transportation, Warehousing and Logistics Occupations

SOC Code	Target Occupation Job Title	Total Current Positions	Total Projected Positions in Ten Years - Jobs	Starting Wage	Experience Wage	Required Education or Training Component
Transportation & Material Moving Occupations						
53-3032	Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	7,732	8,500	$11.87	$17.99	High school + 1 yr Certificate
49-3031	Bus, Truck Mechanics & Diesel Engine Specialists	636	783	$11.46	$14.67	High school + 1 yr Certificate
49-3023	Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics *dealer-authorized programs only*	3,187	3,594	$10.03	$22.16	Associate degree +Certif
Source: TWC TRACER 2						

22

Advanced Manufacturing Employers: Manufacturing is showing a projected 19.6% increase or 1,250 new manufacturing jobs by 2024, per TWC projections. WFS has been working with local Economic Development Corporations (EDC) to target manufacturing employers in Mexico that are experiencing a surge that has created opportunities for the WFS service area. Manufacturing provides one of the best opportunities for high wage jobs and career development. As the industry becomes more advanced, there has been a need for skills that use high-tech processes, such as robotics, Computer Numeric Controlled (CNC) machines, automotive, aerospace, and other "intelligent" systems, in the production process. WFS has participated in relocation visits with area EDCs involving manufacturers who supply components to the assembly plants in Mexico.

A recent wage & benefit survey conducted by WFS in partnership with the South Texas Manufacturers Association, six area economic development corporations, and 55 Manufacturing Industry firms located in the region, has confirmed that labor rates are rising at an estimated average of 3% for the Manufacturing Industry sector. The Manufacturing Industry pays higher than average wages to their employees and currently has a shortage of high skilled-trained workers that meet the occupational demand.

Construction/Skilled Trade Employers: Construction is projecting a 13.6% increase or 990 new positions between 2014-2024. Construction employment was hard-hit during the recession years and has continued to rebound at a slow pace. While it will take some time for demand to return to prior levels, the WFS service area is experiencing a resurgence of activity with several major projects launched and planned in the Energy Sector. Commercial construction has been strong for the past two years; however, new housing construction continues to be sluggish despite low interest rates. The projected retirement of a large share of workers in the trades – plumbers, electricians, heating and air conditioning technicians – makes the need for developing this segment of the workforce pipeline even greater.

The WFS region has three pending Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) export projects that, if approved and committed, will create over 7,000 construction jobs for the workforce region and several hundred high-paid permanent positions beginning in 2020. WFS, in a collaborative partnership with the WFS Cameron workforce area, is working closely with area training institutions, EDCs, and the LNG companies to ensure the workforce regions are prepared to capitalize on any opportunities should they materialize. These positions include Pipe Welders, Pipefitters, Millwrights, Maintenance Techs, Scaffold Builders, Combo Welders, Electricians, HVAC specialists, and helpers for these positions. [1]

Advanced Manufacturing and Construction are also WFS target industry sectors for the WFS service area. Table 18 shows occupational staffing patterns correlated with the NAICS 4-digit target industries that includes 2362 Nonresidential Building Construction, 2382 Building Equipment Contractors, 3273 Cement & Concrete Product Manufacturing, and 3363 Motor Vehicle Parts Manufacturing.

WFS has also targeted **3114 Fruit & Vegetable Preserving & Specialty Manufacturing** because of trends showing a rapid growth in the region because of the shift in transportation routes to South Texas caused by the Mazatlan to Durango Superhighway (Baluarte Bridge). The superhighway decreases the route across the Sierra Madre Mountains in Mexico to the United States markets by 750 miles (2 days). A study released in September, "Economic Impacts of Increased U.S. Imports of Fresh Produce from Mexico by 2020," by the Center for North American Studies at Texas A&M University estimates produce crossing trends through 2020 will continue to increase for South Texas. Per the study, fresh produce imports from Mexico totaled $7.65 billion in 2012, with 45% ($3.44 billion) entering through all Texas land ports. In the next five to seven years, produce imports from Mexico will grow, with most of the growth coming through Texas, per the study.[2, 3]

Table 18 WFS Target Industry Correlation with Target Occupations

NAICS	Industry	Occupation
2362	Nonresidential Building Construction	47-2152 Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters, 47-2073 Operating Engineers and Other Construction Equipment Operators, 51-4121 Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers, 47-2111 Electricians
2382	Building Equipment Contractors	49-9021 Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers, 47-2111 Electricians, 47-2152 Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters, 43-6014 Secretaries and Administrative Assistants, Except Legal, Medical, and Executive, 43-3031 Bookkeeping,
3363	Motor Vehicle Parts Mfg	51-4011 Computer-Controlled Machine Tool Operators, Metal and Plastic, 51-4041 Machinists
3273	Cement & Concrete Product Manufacturing	53-3032 Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers, 49-3031 Bus and Truck Mechanics and Diesel Engine Specialists
3114	Fruit & Vegetable Preserving & Specialty Food Manufacturing	This industry sector is showing growth and upward trends attributed to shifts in transportation of produce and materials caused by the completed Maztlan to Durango Superhighway.
Source: Texas Industry Profiles and SOCRATES		

WFS's three Construction & Extraction, four Installation, Maintenance & Repair and three Production target occupations shown in Table 19 accounted for 11,498 employees in 2014 and are projected to grow by 1,017 or 8.85% new jobs between 2014 - 2024. As shown in Table 19, eight of the industry sector target occupations require the job seeker to hold a high school diploma plus a 1-year certificate, and two target occupations require associate degrees.

Table 19 WFS Target Occupations

SOC Code	Target Occupation Job Title	Total Current Positions	Total Projected Positions in Ten Years - Jobs	Starting Wage	Experience Wage	Required Education or Training Component
Construction & Extraction Occupations						
47-2073	Operating Engineers & Other Construction Equipment Optrs	982	1,081	$13.00	$18.63	High school + 1 yr Certificate
47-2111	Electricians	1,101	1,189	$12.84	$18.96	High school + 1 yr Certificate
47-2152	Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters	936	862	$12.41	$20.68	High school + 1 yr Certificate
Installation, Maintenance, & Repair Occupations						
49-3011	Aircraft Mechanics & Service Technicians	265	308	n/a	$22.61	Associate degree +Certif
49-9021	Heating, Air Conditioning, & Refrigeration Mechanics/Installers	765	705	$14.06	$19.31	Associate degree +Certif
49-9041	Industrial Machinery Mechanics	460	568	$9.24	$18.73	High school + 1 yr Certificate
49-9071	Maintenance and Repair Workers, General	4,234	4,794	$8.69	$13.59	High school + 1 yr Certificate
Production Occupations						
51-4011	Computer-Controlled Machine Tool Operators, Metal & Plastic	89	118	$9.39	$11.90	High school + 1 yr Certificate
51-4041	Machinists	645	745	$15.36	$23.54	High school + 1 yr Certificate
51-4121	Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers	2,021	2,145	$10.86	$18.26	High school + 1 yr Certificate

Source: TWC TRACER 2

Criminal Justice/Homeland Security: The WFS above average population growth rate creates a high demand for public safety workers such as police officers, fire fighters, and other first responders that serve the region. While our region has lower than average crime rates, the WFS workforce region's location along the Texas-Mexico border creates distinct security issues such as sporadic drug cartel violence, potential terrorist threats, and illegal immigration which also increases the demand for this industry's services. Employment opportunities for the Border Patrol, Texas Department of Public Safety, and Customs and Border Protection professionals have been increasing in recent years. In addition, the presence of a state prison in Willacy County and several regional prisons and detention centers creates a strong demand for correctional officers. The upgrading of public school security forces to require licensed police officers has also increased the need for professionals in this sector.

The Criminal Justice/Homeland Security are also WFS target industry sectors for the WFS service area. Table 20 shows the target Correctional Officers occupational staffing patterns correlated with the NAICS 4-digit target industry 9221 Police Protection and Correctional Institutions.

Table 20 WFS Criminal Justice Industry

NAICS	Industry	Occupation
9221	Police Protection and Correctional Institutions	33-3012 Correctional Officers and Jailers
Source: Texas Industry Profiles and SOCRATES		

WFS's two Criminal Justice/Homeland Security target occupations shown in Table 21 accounted for 3,633 employees in 2014 and are projected to grow by 577 or 15.88% new jobs between 2014 - 2024. As shown in Table 21, one of the industry sector target occupations require the job seeker to hold a high school diploma plus a certificate, and one target occupation requires a high school diploma or associate degree.

Table 21 WFS Criminal Justice Target Occupations

SOC Code	Target Occupation Job Title	Total Current Positions	Total Projected Positions in Ten Years - Jobs	Starting Wage	Experience Wage	Required Education or Training Component
Protective Service Occupations						
33-3012	Correctional Officers and Jailers	1,437	1,641	n/a	$18.46*	High school, Certificate
33-3051	Police and Sheriff's Patrol Officers	2,196	2,569	$17.46	$27.52	Associate degree or HS
Source: TWC TRACER 2						

3. An analysis of the knowledge and skills needed to meet the employment needs in the region, including employment needs in-demand sectors and occupations.

Board Response:

Looking at the 41 target occupations as a group, WFS used the top five skills and knowledge for each of the occupations found in O-NET to analyze the frequency of occurrence for specific requirements for the target occupations. Table 22 details the frequency of occurrence of Knowledge and Skills for the 41 WFS Target Occupations. Analysis of the primary knowledge and skills profiles reveals:

- Required skills to meet employer expectation must focus on critical thinking and monitoring, which are required skills for 40 of the 41 of the target occupations, Reading comprehension and speaking were also a top priority for 38 of the 41 target occupations.
  Forty (40) of the 41 target occupations show that administration and management knowledge is important. In order to ensure job seekers are prepared to succeed in workplace, training must focus on this knowledge area.

Table 22 Knowledge and Skills for the 41 WFS Target Occupations

Knowledge	Frequency of Occurrence	Skills	Frequency of Occurrence
Administration and Management	40	Critical Thinking	40
Biology	36	Monitoring	40
Building and Construction	24	Reading Comprehension	38
Chemistry	23	Speaking	38
Clerical	20	Active Listening	36
Communications and Media	17	Time Management	36
Computers and Electronics	18	Coordination	35
Customer and Personal Service	18	Judgment and Decision Making	31
Design	14	Active Learning	28
Economics and Accounting	15	Complex Problem Solving	28
Education and Training	10	Social Perceptiveness	28
Engineering and Technology	10	Service Orientation	26
English Language	9	Writing	24
Geography	7	Instructing	19
History and Archeology	6	Operation Monitoring	18
Law and Government	6	Operation and Control	17
Mathematics	6	Learning Strategies	15
Mechanical	5	Troubleshooting	12
Medicine and Dentistry	5	Equipment Maintenance	11
Personnel and Human Resources	5	Quality Control Analysis	11
Philosophy and Theology	5	Systems Analysis	11
Physics	4	Persuasion	10
Production and Processing	4	Repairing	9
Psychology	4	Systems Evaluation	9
Public Safety and Security	1	Equipment Selection	8

Source: O-NET

WFS, during industry task force meetings and company visits, asked local industry employers what are the critical skills to better prepare job seekers in the workplace. The most common answers across all the employer responses was critical thinking, active listening, time management, customer service, multi-tasking and improved English proficiency.

Employers expressed a need for job seekers to have graduated from high school and know appropriate workplace ethical behavior and soft skills; thereafter, the employer would train the employee to meet their workplace skill requirements – "take it from there". In addition, a high number of industry employers surveyed, expressed a need for job seekers to hold associate and/or bachelor's degrees, and have a high level of skills for many of their positions.

The WFS service area overall has a good workforce-training pipeline of higher education programs to prepare qualified individuals for high skilled occupations in healthcare, manufacturing, finance, engineering, law enforcement, and construction. However, some training challenges remain that WFS will continue to address in collaboration with our partners such as the limited seating capacity for Registered Nursing programs and the employer required work experience for local graduating students to become more employable. WFS will continue to partner and collaborate to look for resources and opportunities to better prepare students in workplace behavior and soft skills so employers will not be reluctant to mentor or participate in workplace or on the job training and related programs.

WFS will continue to work with local non-profits, EDCs, cities, and counties to connect employers with ISDs, community colleges, private schools, and universities to share occupational training insight, and to ensure training programs align with employer expectation(s). The collaborative effort ensures local students have access to accurate labor market information about local occupational careers and workplace expectation(s) for high demand and target occupations.

The WFS service area has a large population that have less than a high school diploma and this will remain the biggest workforce challenge. The service area has made significant improvements in educational attainment; however, there remain a significant number of unskilled workers who lack the language proficiency and workplace required skills to gain employment that pays a self-sufficiency wage. WFS will collaborate and work with the Adult Basic Education and Literacy Program and other stakeholders to support the improvement and the effectiveness of the literacy programs, which will have a positive impact in the service area.

5. An analysis of the regional workforce, including current labor force employment and unemployment data, information on labor market trends, and educational and skill levels of the workforce, including individuals with barriers to employment. Note: This analysis must include the strengths and weaknesses of workforce development activities and an evaluation of the effectiveness of programs and services. It must evaluate the Board's capacity to provide workforce development activities to address the identified education and skills needs of the workforce. The analysis must include individuals with barriers to employment. The analysis also must address the employment needs of employers.

Board Response:

WFS service area employers need job seekers to have graduated from high school and know appropriate workplace ethical behavior and have soft skills. In addition, many local industry employers require job seekers to have industry-recognized certificates, associate, and bachelor's degrees, and have work experience for many of the positions.

Because WFS workforce region employers are embracing technology and automation to lower labor costs, improve quality, and increase productivity, the area will continue to be challenged with a declining number of employment opportunities for those individuals with language barriers and low educational attainment.

WFS service area partners, because of the high skill expectation the business community has for entry level positions, has identified skill deficiencies and limited English skills training as a critical need that must be collectively addressed to maximize opportunities for job seekers with barriers to employment.

As noted in Table 23, the WFS population age 25 years and older, in 2016,was estimated at 527,660 persons, 39% or 207,909 persons have less than a high school diploma; and 25% of the 39% have less than a 9th grade

education. The service area population in this age group also has 61% that hold high school diplomas or higher, which compares to Texas at 81%. The high school completion rate is projected to increase by 9.7% by 2026 for this age group. The number of WFS's 25 and older population holding post-secondary degrees including associates, bachelors and graduate (19%), are lower in comparison to the state population (33%).

Table 23 WFS Education 25 Years and Older

Education Level	2016 Population	2026 Population	2016 % of Population	2016 State % Population	2016 National % Population
Less Than 9th Grade	132,030	142,964	25%	10%	7%
9th Grade to 12th Grade	75,879	86,128	14%	9%	8%
High School Diploma	130,256	144,355	25%	25%	28%
Some College	87,775	96,444	17%	22%	21%
Associate's Degree	21,424	23,132	4%	6%	8%
Bachelor's Degree	57,293	63,942	11%	18%	18%
Graduate Degree and Higher	23,002	25,436	4%	9%	11%
Total	**527,660**	**582,402**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**
Source: EMSI Q3 2016					

While educational attainment has been a serious challenge across the WFS service area for many years, dramatic improvements have been made through established collaborations with education and community partners over the past ten years. The 2000 census reported that only 50% of all adults age 25 and older had a high school diploma or GED in the WFS service area. The 2010 census reported the high school diploma completion rate had increased to 60%.

Table 24 shows a snapshot of local job seekers registered in the Work in Texas (WIT) job board on January 21, 2016. The data indicates that 86% of job seekers ages 25-34, have a high school diploma, GED or higher. The 35-44 demographic are showing a 75% high school diploma/GED or higher completion rate. In past years, many area high schools have implemented aggressive dropout recovery programs and this is expected to continue which will help to close the high school completion gap in the WFS region.

Table 24 Educational levels of Job Seekers by Age Group in Work in Texas, July 2016

Education Level	JOB SEEKERS														TOTAL JOB SEEKERS	TOTAL %
	14-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+	14-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+		
0- Not Completed First Grade	2	15	18	26	28	8	1	0.06%	0.20%	0.31%	0.59%	1.24%	2.00%	2.44%	98	0.41%
1- First Grade			2	5	11	5	1	0.00%	0.00%	0.03%	0.11%	0.49%	1.25%	2.44%	24	0.10%
2- Second Grade		4	4	14	32	9	1	0.00%	0.05%	0.07%	0.32%	1.41%	2.24%	2.44%	64	0.27%
3- Third Grade		2	14	38	56	17	2	0.00%	0.03%	0.24%	0.87%	2.47%	4.24%	4.88%	129	0.54%
4- Fourth Grade	1	2	15	30	67	14	2	0.03%	0.03%	0.26%	0.68%	2.96%	3.49%	4.88%	131	0.55%
5- Fifth Grade	1	1	11	32	78	22	2	0.03%	0.01%	0.19%	0.73%	3.45%	5.49%	4.88%	147	0.62%
6- Sixth Grade	5	19	124	337	342	59	7	0.14%	0.26%	2.14%	7.68%	15.11%	14.71%	17.07%	893	3.75%
7- Seventh Grade	3	22	40	92	56	14	1	0.08%	0.30%	0.69%	2.10%	2.47%	3.49%	2.44%	228	0.96%
8- Eight Grade	24	51	133	197	112	21	2	0.67%	0.69%	2.30%	4.49%	4.95%	5.24%	4.88%	540	2.27%
9- Ninth Grade	99	237	425	458	192	21	3	2.78%	3.20%	7.35%	10.44%	8.48%	5.24%	7.32%	1,435	6.02%
10- Tenth Grade	127	282	310	230	82	13	2	3.57%	3.81%	5.36%	5.24%	3.62%	3.24%	4.88%	1,046	4.39%
11- Eleventh Grade	292	538	506	342	129	12		8.20%	7.27%	8.75%	7.80%	5.70%	2.99%	0.00%	1,819	7.63%
12- HS Diploma/GED	2,095	3,161	2,108	1,289	538	72	7	58.86%	42.71%	36.46%	29.39%	23.77%	17.96%	17.07%	9,270	38.90%
Vocational School	462	1,232	708	404	144	19	2	12.98%	16.65%	12.24%	9.21%	6.36%	4.74%	4.88%	2,971	12.47%
14- Two Years College, Technical or Vocational School	218	773	515	304	118	24	2	6.13%	10.44%	8.91%	6.93%	5.21%	5.99%	4.88%	1,954	8.20%
15- Associates Degree	72	180	130	106	37	11	2	2.02%	2.43%	2.25%	2.42%	1.63%	2.74%	4.88%	538	2.26%
16- Three Years College, Technical or Vocational School	68	271	218	136	53	10	1	1.91%	3.66%	3.77%	3.10%	2.34%	2.49%	2.44%	757	3.18%
17- Bachelors Degree	84	545	425	273	151	39	3	2.36%	7.36%	7.35%	6.22%	6.67%	9.73%	7.32%	1,520	6.38%
18- Masters Degree	6	57	70	61	35	10		0.17%	0.77%	1.21%	1.39%	1.55%	2.49%	0.00%	239	1.00%
19- Doctoral Degree		9	6	12	2	1		0.00%	0.12%	0.10%	0.27%	0.09%	0.25%	0.00%	30	0.13%
Grand Total	3,559	7,401	5,782	4,386	2,263	401	41	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	23,833	-
Total Number High School/GED and Higher	3,005	6,228	4,180	2,585	1,078	186	17	84.43%	84.15%	72.29%	58.94%	47.64%	46.38%	41.46%	17,279	72.50%

Source: WorkInTexas.com - January 21st, 2016

Table 25 reflects the unemployment/employment trend across the WFS service area by county and reports that during September 2016, the WFS employed labor force was 370,826, while 31,301 persons were unemployed (rate 8.4%). When comparing to Texas at 4.9% and the USA at 4.8% unemployment rates, the WFS unemployment rate remains higher.

WFS unemployment rate shown in Table 25 in September 2015 was 8.1%, one year later in September 2016 the rate increased slightly to 8.4%.

Starr County has the highest unemployment rate in September 2016 at 13.7%, followed by Willacy County at 12.9%. The city of San Juan shows the highest city unemployment rate in the WFS service area at 7.3%, while McAllen has the lowest city unemployment rate at 5.2%.

Table 25 Unemployment Data for WFS

Labor Market Information- Lower Rio Service Area

Geographic Area	Sep-16			Aug-16	Sep-15
	Civilian Labor Force	Unemployed	Rate	Rate	Rate
USA	159,636,000	7,658,000	4.8%	5.0%	4.9%
Texas	13,416,800	662,100	4.9%	5.0%	4.5%
Workforce Solutions	370,826	31,301	8.4%	8.9%	8.1%
Hidalgo County	338,694	26,936	8.0%	8.4%	7.7%
Starr County	25,816	3,549	13.7%	14.1%	12.7%
Willacy County	6,316	816	12.9%	13.3%	12.6%
McAllen	64,135	3,341	5.2%	5.3%	5.1%
Mission	33,530	2,066	6.2%	6.3%	6.1%
Edinburg	38,395	2,093	5.5%	5.4%	5.0%
Pharr	29,289	1,959	6.7%	6.9%	6.6%
San Juan	14,791	1,075	7.3%	7.9%	6.7%
Weslaco	14,460	900	6.2%	6.5%	6.7%

Source: TWC Texas Labor Market Review, September 2016

Table 26 "The Unemployment Trend Report" chart reflects the period between January 2013 – August 2016, which indicates an upward unemployment trend of .3% - 4% lower during that period. Comparing the 2000 – 2012 unemployment rates ranging between 13% and 20%, to the WFS unemployment rate of 8.9% in August 2016 indicate that the WFS unemployment rates have leveled and are making steady improvement. However, the region's unemployment rates remain well above state averages.

Through the 1970 – 2016 period, the WFS service area has transitioned from a primary agricultural economy to a more diversified economy that includes manufacturing, and service-based industries. In 2016, in the WFS workforce region, Healthcare, Education, Law Enforcement, Retail, and Leisure & Hospitality Industry service sectors have created most new jobs.

Table 27 Unemployment Trend Report

2013-2016 Unemployment Rates in Lower Rio Board Area
Source: Texas Workforce Commission, Texas Labor Market Review Issues Jan. 2013-Sep. 2016

Legend: Hidalgo County, Starr County, Willacy County, Linear (Hidalgo County)
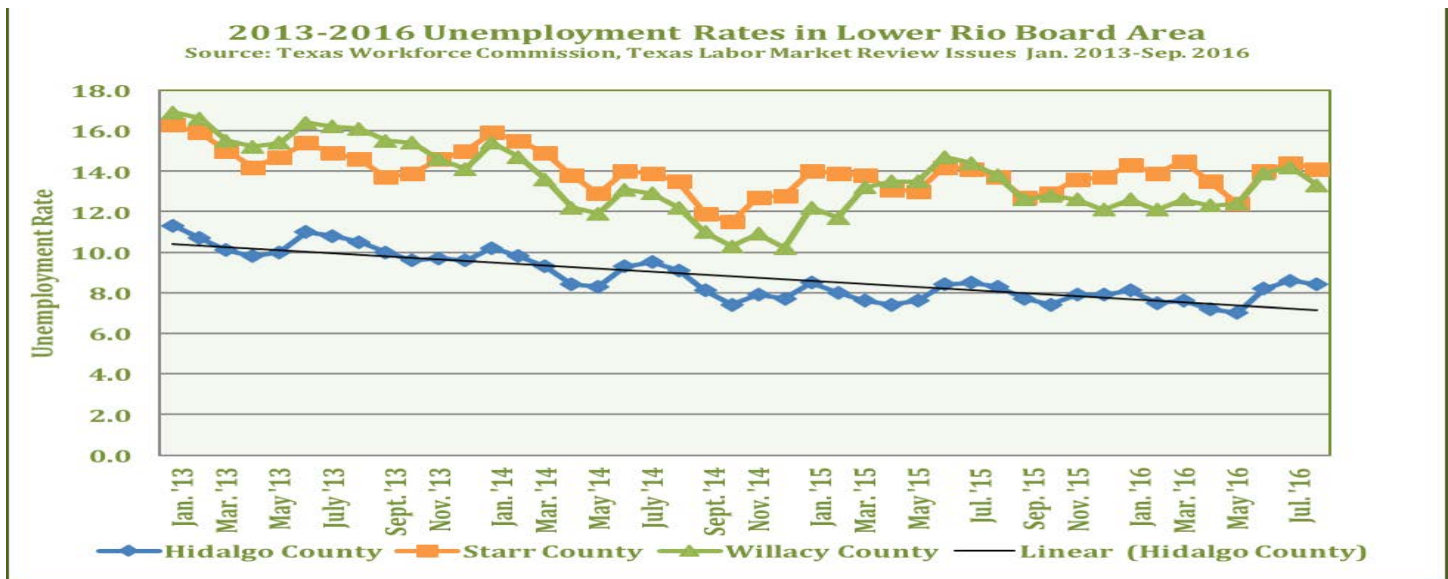
6. An analysis of workforce development activities in the region, including education and training. Note: This analysis must include the strengths and weaknesses of workforce development activities and an evaluation of the effectiveness of programs and services. It must evaluate the Board's capacity to provide workforce development activities to address the identified   education and skills needs of the workforce. The analysis must include individuals with barriers to employment. The analysis also must address the employment needs of employers.

Board Response:

WFS collaborates with the areas economic development agencies, educational institutions and community partners to keep a pulse of the local workforce community, and engages in activities that promote positive economic and workforce development.

Every two years WFS conducts a target industry, target occupation and in-demand occupation assessment to determine where best to invest the limited workforce development resources under the direct purview of the Board. During that process, WFS validates the data with area employers and educational institutions. In addition to guiding the WFS investment of resources, the analysis serves as a guide for numerous other workforce partners including economic development corporations in the region in an effort to align strategies with WFS goals and strategies.

During the 2016 WFS analysis of labor market trends, as well as the efficacy and presence of workforce development and education/training activities in the region, there were significant findings found regarding workforce challenges including:

- The WFS region's large population having less than a high school diploma may be the biggest workforce challenge.

- Local employers have communicated the need for job seekers to hold at minimum a high school diploma.

- Employers stress the need for workers to have critical thinking, active listening, time management, customer service, multi-tasking and improved English proficiency skills.

- The service area has made significant improvements in educational attainment; however, there remains a significant number of unskilled workers who lack the language proficiency and workplace required skills to gain employment that pays a self-sufficiency wage.

- WFS must continue to collaborate and work with Adult Basic Education and Literacy Programs and other stakeholders to improve the effectiveness of the literacy programs, which will have a positive impact in the workforce region.

- WFS must continue to provide labor market information, presentations, build awareness and encourage the use of TWC's Labor Market and Career Information databases that provide tools that align with House Bill 5 initiatives and target occupations.

- Despite the limitations on WIOA Youth funding and the requirement that the bulk of funds be directed toward the out of school youth population, WFS will invest in new initiatives to guide all students towards target careers from an early age (middle –high school).

- WFS's regional partners must continue the practice of collaborating and communicating regularly to discuss new employment trends, training opportunities and employer workforce skill concerns. WFS's participation and membership in college advisory committees, and other entities focused on increasing educational attainment, career development and awareness plays a central and pivotal role in meeting local employer's workforce needs.

Reference responses to questions 1, 2, 7, and 9 in Operational Elements section below for additional details regarding the Board's evaluation of regional workforce, education, and training activities in the region

During the mapping of regional workforce and education/training activities occurring in the WFS service area, the following agencies were identified as key partners for WFS. These partners represent opportunities for WFS to expand strategies to engage educational and training institutions at both the secondary and post-secondary level, to identify education and career pathways for students that are tied to the region's target and demand occupations.

Key strategic educational partnerships:

- **RGV LEAD -** WFS has partnered with Rio Grande Valley Linking Economic and Academic Development (RGV LEAD), a non-profit that works with high schools, colleges, universities, business and workforce to convene and facilitate the Regional Education and Workforce Summit. The summit provides opportunities for regional educational partners and business professionals to connect and discuss employment skill needs to help better prepare youth for the workforce. [4]

- **RGV FOCUS** is composed of more than 40 organizations — school districts, colleges, universities and community groups — and more than 100 individuals and is a collective impact initiative whose cross-sector Leadership Team meets regularly to identify assets and needs in the Valley. RGV FOCUS is dedicated to making major, systemic improvements to education and career attainment in

the RGV. RGV FOCUS works to strengthen each step of the educational pipeline and align community resources to provide the support learners need to succeed throughout high school and postsecondary. RGV FOCUS produced a report in 2015 that set goals, strategies and metrics based on agreed upon common measures for student success across Cameron, Willacy, Hidalgo and Starr counties. WFS serves on the executive leadership team. [5]

- **The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV)** became the newest university in the State of Texas in 2015 when the University of Texas System combined campuses in Edinburg (University of Texas-Pan American) and Brownsville (University of Texas-Brownsville). UTRGV opened with more than 100 degrees and programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels, and built on existing programs - 13 undergraduate and 12 graduate degrees that were previously available only on one campus are now available on both the Brownsville and Edinburg campuses. In addition, the UTRGV School of Nursing Allied Health Programs opened two new primary care clinics.

- **The University of Texas (UT)** Regents appropriated $196 million for construction at UTRGV, including $54 million for a new medical school at UTRGV. The UTRGV Medical School welcomed its first cohort of students in July 2016. With its main academic building in Edinburg, the region-wide medical school interacts with, complements facilities in Brownsville and the Clinical Education Building in Harlingen, and uses extensive online, and distance learning to support continuing education in the region.

  Research dollars grew by more than 60 percent in UTRGV's inaugural year. The South Texas Diabetes and Obesity Institute (STDOI) moved to UTRGV and now has 55 researchers.

  The UT System Board of Regents recently approved $35.6 million for the construction of a new Interdisciplinary Engineering and Academic Studies Building in Edinburg to support the increase in engineering enrollment. [6]

- **University of Texas Rio Grande Valley High School Equivalency Program** is a comprehensive federally funded program of adult education that strives to assist migrant-farm worker individuals to obtain the equivalent of a high school diploma. The program helps migrant and seasonal farmworkers (or children of such workers) who are 16 years of age or older and not currently enrolled in school to obtain the equivalent of a high school diploma and, subsequently, to gain employment or begin postsecondary education or training. The program serves 100 students annually. [7]

- **South Texas College** will begin training on the Festo Certified Training for Robotics and Industrial Automation at its Technology Campus in McAllen, Texas. The Festo Certified Training Center will provide the local workforce with state of the art training and globally recognized credentials in different technologies of advanced manufacturing and industrial automation such as pneumatics, electro-pneumatics, mechanics, sensors, stepper and servo motor technologies, programmable logic controllers, and industrial robotics. STC is now a member of INDEX, the maquiladora industry association making it the first educational institution to become a member and has received a special permit that will enable employers in Reynosa to send their staff to the college for specialized training without the usual formalities of student visas. The permit will be used specifically for customized training. [8]

- **South Texas College Dual Enrollment Academies** work with high school educators to help high school juniors earn an Associate Degree by the end of their senior year in high school. Academy program structure is designed to allow students to take dual college courses including Medical

Science, Engineering, Computer Science, Criminal Justice, Business Administration and School to Career Academies. [9]

- **Region One Education Service Center (ESC) Adult Education and Literacy Program** is the adult education and literacy provider for the Lower Rio Grande Valley and offers English as a Second Language (ESL), Adult Basic Education (ABE), Adult Secondary Education (ASE) and English Literacy and Civics (EL Civics) classes. WFS collaborates with Region One ESC with all literacy programs via a.) regular meetings with leadership to discuss program progress/performance issues and solutions b.) an on-line service registration link, c.) supporting outreach and recruitment, d.) connecting with business and /or community based organizations. [10]

- **Hidalgo County Premier High School Recovery Program** offers a fully accredited Adult Education Program for students between the ages of 19-26 who wish to pursue a high school diploma in an individualized, self-directed, instructional environment. Students enroll in a 4-hour program that allows them to earn credits and graduate from high school. In this Adult Education Program, students have access to math and science specialists; participate in special programs including character and leadership workshops.[11]

WFS also evaluates regional economic developments in key industry sectors regularly to ensure consistency of target and demand industry/occupation lists, and alignment of the WFS workforce development initiatives.

The economic development activities identified below are a representative sample of recent regional industry development that validates some of the labor market projections, and represents local wisdom that influenced the planning process. In evaluating the developments below, WFS determined their proposed strategies and target industries and occupations aligned with local economic developments.

MANUFACTURING

HOLT CAT facility recently opened with the promise of 60 new jobs, some of them earning almost $30 an hour. The $10 million, 47,000 square-foot facility sits on 35 acres north of Edinburg on the I-69C corridor. [12]

Royal Technologies Corporation, an advanced engineering and manufacturing company, specializes in developing products for several diverse industries including automotive, office furniture and consumer goods. The company is located on 12 acres in the Mission Expressway Business Park, Mission, Texas and occupies a 325,000-square foot manufacturing facility and is projected to need 350 to 400 employees. [13]

Denim Burg (formerly known as Santana Textiles), located in Edinburg, manufactures and develops different denim fabrics and is hiring up to 300 employees for its upcoming start-up operations and is projecting within the next few years could grow to 800 employees in Edinburg, Texas. The company will be looking for entry-level industrial maintenance technicians to highly experienced personnel. Duties will vary from basic knowledge of hand and power tools to experienced technicians with knowledge of electronics, Programmable Logic Controllers (PLC), automation, and testing equipment. [14]

WFS is a member of the North American Advanced Manufacturing Research and Education Initiative **(NAAMREI) Consortium** which provides overall guidance to the Rio South Texas project and consists of three regional alliances from the Rio South Texas Region (seven counties) which are:
1) North American Technology & Innovation Alliance;
2) Rio South Texas Manufacturing College Alliance; and
3) Region One Education Service Center (ESC) Texas Science Technology [15]

TRANSPORTATION/LOGISTICS

Lineage Logistics ("Lineage"), a warehousing and logistics company backed by Bay Grove, acquired Loop Cold Storage ("Loop"), Oneida Cold Storage ("Oneida") and Millard Refrigerated Services ("Millard"). Based in McAllen, TX, Loop has the largest cold storage operation on the U.S.-Mexico border servicing the imports of fruits and vegetables and specializing in the international produce trade. The company, through the acquisition, will retain the 250 jobs in McAllen. [16]

SpaceX, located in Cameron County, will house the world's first commercial, vertical and orbital rocket launch facility and STARGATE research facility. The installation will cover 56 acres, 22 of them developed for the platform and support warehouses and towers. The first launch from SpaceX's commercial rocket launch is scheduled for 2018. SpaceX has projected up to 150 new jobs that pay an average salary of $65,000 a year. SpaceX has plans to build rockets at a plant close to the launch site which would further the economic growth impact to not only Cameron County, but also the other three counties making up the Rio Grande Valley - Hidalgo, Starr and Willacy. [17]

The **City of Weslaco** is expanding the runway at the Mid Valley Airport to 6,000 feet, as well as widening the runway and building new hangars. The airport is quickly becoming a general aviation reliever airport for McAllen and Harlingen handling corporate travel. [18]

The **Harlingen Aerotropolis**, located on 479.5 acres at Valley International Airport, is the first in Texas to be designated as a certified site ready for development. The Harlingen Aerotropolis will be recruiting industrial prospects to develop on a site that has determined suitability for development. [19]

TECHNOLOGY

Qualfon has located in Harlingen and is expected to bring approximately 1,000-1,200 new jobs to the region over the next few years in the areas of customer care, tech support, sales, customer retention programs, as well as back-office services, customer service representatives, and technical support representatives. Qualfon Harlingen has access to persons with high-quality skillsets and are bilingual, which are important to the global service company. [20]

Other customer service companies established in the WFS service area in the last three years are also projecting to increase their employees by an estimated 600 new jobs; these companies include Teletech, Black Turtle Services, and Charter Communications. These companies need job seekers to have high-quality technology skillsets, be bilingual and have good communication skills. [21]

HEALTHCARE

The **City of Edinburg** has pledged $1 million over the next 10 years to support the new medical school, which is projected to contribute to economic growth in retail, restaurants, and construction. The City of Edinburg is planning for improvements to city infrastructure, roadways and a new water treatment facility. [22]

Operational Elements

1. A description of the workforce development system in the local area the identifies:
   a. the programs that are included in the system; and
   b. how the Board will support the strategy identified in the State Plan and work with the entities carrying out core programs and other workforce development programs, including programs of study authorized under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006, that support the strategy identified in the State Plan under WIOA §102(b)(1)E).

Description of workforce system and programs:

1.a. WFS administers the following workforce development programs via funding from the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC):

- Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth;
- Trade Adjustment Act (TAA);
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)/Choices;
- Non-Custodial Parent/Choices (TANF NCP);
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment & Training(SNAP);
- Migrant and Seasonal Farm Worker (MSFW); and
- Child Care Services (CCS).

WFS oversees Wagner-Peyser employment and employer services.

- Employment Service (ES)
- Rapid Reemployment Services

Other core and non-core partners include:

- Title II Adult Education and Literacy (Region One ESC)
- Title IV Texas Workforce Solutions Vocational Rehabilitation Services Division (TWS-VRS)
- Title V Older American act (MOU with AARP)
- Job Corps co-located
- Veterans co-located
- Community Action agencies (Hidalgo County and housing authority MOU for job seeker and joint case management. Provision of WFS services at all Housing Authority programs)
- Foster Youth serving agencies (MOU)

Additional programs may be added to the service delivery mix upon receipt of special funding and/or competitive grant awards. Examples of programs that have been added to the WFS service delivery system via such awards include the TWC funded Externship for Teacher Program, High Demand Job Training Program and TWC Industry Recognized Skills Credentials.

The delivery of all services are provided through the sub-recipient for Operation and Management of WFS Career Centers through five one-stop centers located in the WFS three county service area. All services are

delivered via a seamless and integrated system where the job seeking customer or referred program customer is provided with appropriate services including:

- Job Postings
- Hiring Events
- Information sharing/Business consulting
- Job Listing and Referrals
- Labor Market Information (job descriptions, wage data, staffing and recruitment plans)
- Specialized assessment (ProveIt! and other assessments)
- Job search assistance
- Staff assisted job placement
- Unemployment Insurance Information
- Veteran Services
- Job Preparation Classes (i.e. Resume Writing)
- Orientation to information and other services available through Workforce Career Center
- Eligibility determination for programs (WIOA Program: Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth Programs)
- Assessments (TABE, Prove It!, WIN, CAPS/COPS)
- Case Management
- Career Counseling
- Comprehensive and specialized assessments of customer needs
- Individual Employment Planning

- Support services as needed to customers to remove barriers from participation, including:
  - Child Care Services
  - Personal Transportation Services
  - Vehicle Related Assistance
  - Work Related Expenses
  - Training Related Expenses
  Note: Support Services are contingent upon funding availability and eligibility of program participation.
- On-the-Job Training
- Work Experience
- Occupational Skills Training (including performance information and program costs for eligible training providers by program and provider type)
- Group and specialized customer counseling
- Referrals and coordination of activities with other program and services
- Information regarding availability of support service/ assistance, and appropriate referrals
- Other services determined by the Board and allowable as an eligible activity under Agency program

BUSINESS SERVICES

Business Services are provided by a dedicated Business Solutions Unit, and include:

- Job Postings
- Hiring Events
- Information sharing/Business consulting
- Job Listing and Referrals
- Labor Market Information (job descriptions, wage data, staffing and recruitment plans)
- Specialized assessment (ProveIt! and other assessments)

Business Solutions staff stay engaged with key workforce system partners via meetings, committee/panel participation, and presentations to ensure the workforce system remains informed and operates in a manner that supports the regional economy and labor market. This ensures the system stays ahead of local economic trends,

new business developments, workforce occupational skill needs etc. Key regional partners include:

- Economic Development Corporations,
- Chambers of Commerce,
- Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) chapters,
- South Texas Manufacturers Association,
- Rio South Texas Economic Council, and
- North American Advanced Manufacturing Research and Education Initiative (NAAMREI).

MIGRANT SEASONAL FARM WORKERS (MSFW) SERVICES

WFS offers specialized Migrant Seasonal Farm Workers (MSFW) services and activities that include the full range of Workforce Career Center services including Wagner-Peyser Employment Services, benefits and training referral services as provided to non-MSFW's. In addition, WFS employs target outreach strategies to engage and provide services to MSFW customers that are not accessed through traditional outreach intake activities. MSFW outreach initiatives are guided by policies as outlined in 20 C.F.R. §653.107:

Each Workforce Career Center serving an area with a significant MSFW population:
- Provides sufficient coverage in the farm worker community to ensure a significant percentage of MSFW customers are aware of the Workforce Career Center's full range of services, and
- Conducts vigorous outreach in their service areas.

CHILDCARE SERVICES PROVIDED VIA THE WORKFORCE CAREER CENTERS.

Childcare services are managed through regulated providers or eligible relatives whom parents or caretakers have chosen to care for their children in accordance with 40 Texas Administrative Code (TAC) Chapter 809, as amended. Local pledge contributions/match for Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) federal funds are utilized in a timely manner in accordance with the Agency rules (40 TAC Chapter 809), federal regulations (45 CFR Part 98) and with all applicable state, federal guidelines, rules and regulations. Childcare services are also made available for children determined eligible and authorized by TDFPS local Child Protective Services staff.

1.b. Coordination with entities carrying out core programs and other workforce development programs, including Career and Technical Education Programs:

WFS actively supports and coordinates with entities carrying out workforce development programs (including core programs) and secondary/post-secondary institutions with Career and Technical Education programs. Collaboration includes programs related to Texas House Bill 5, which strengthens education alignment with industry requirements. Support of programs includes:

- Referral of adult customers, as appropriate, to entities operating workforce development programs (including core programs) including Texas Workforce Solutions Vocational Rehabilitation Services Division, Adult Education and Literacy, VIDA, and Goodwill of South Texas.
- Co-enrollment and braided funding, as appropriate, with core programs and other workforce

development programs.
- Publication of target and demand occupations list, used as basis for local workforce development resource investments.
- Provision of labor market information and analysis.
- Facilitation of workforce related task forces and advisory body activities to inform curriculum and program design.
- Participation in advisory capacity on regional boards, committees, and workgroups related to workforce development.
- Collaboration on competitive grant funding applications that support WFS Board goals.
- Collaborative relationship with South Texas College and other post-secondary educational institutions on development of Career Pathway Framework (CPF). STC and regional independentschool districts have already incorporated CPFs into their Operational Plans.

2. A description of how the Board will work with entities carrying out core programs to:
   a. expand access to employment, training, education, and supportive services for eligible individuals, particularly eligible individuals with barriers to employment;
   b. facilitate the development of career pathways and co-enrollment, as appropriate, in core programs; and
   c. improve access to activities leading to a recognized postsecondary credential (including a credential that is an industry-recognized certificate or certification, portable, and stackable).

2.a. Expanding access to employment, training, education and support services: WFS is actively engaged in collaborative community planning with partners to enhance the community's access to workforce services. Community workforce, education and training partners, and employers have a history of operating true collective impact models that leverage the full scale of partner resources, braid funding, and provide better outcomes for the areas residents.

A key strategy will be the establishment of a Workforce System Workgroup to address Title II Adult Education and Literacy , Texas Workforce Solutions Vocational Rehabilitation Services Division and WFS alignment of services and outcomes. The workgroup will convene Executive Leadership meetings with agendas tied to workgroup planning tenets: (1) identify opportunities and identify strategies, (2) identify what the entity/organization can bring to the table, (3) build trust, (4) continuously seek to improve delivery of services, and (5) be outcomes oriented. The workgroup will be committed to shared outcomes of:

- Customers
- Expertise, Competencies, Skills and Knowledge
- Programs & Services
- Resources
- Media Outreach

- Social Media Platforms
- Leveraging Resources
- Increasing Access through Partnerships
- On-Line Service Lists
- Connection to job opportunities

A primary focus of the workgroup will be to provide better access to individuals with barriers in accessing services, including individuals with disabilities, low educational attainment and English Second Language customers, and rural customers. Workgroup partners will be representative of workforce system core partners

and the service area.

2.b. Development of Career Pathways and Co-enrollment: WFS facilitates the development of Career Pathway opportunities and co-enrollment strategies by leveraging (1) core programs under management and oversight of WFS, (2) the depth of partnerships developed in the region, and (3) WFS' positioning as a workforce development convener and our labor market expertise.

WFS core programs: WFS staff plan and design service delivery strategies for WIOA, TANF, SNAP, and other WFS operated programs that provide service options for customers to be placed along the continuum of occupations/experience levels that comprise a career pathway. Core program services are integrated and co-enrollment strategies ensure funding is fully leveraged and programs operate efficiently. For instance, service strategies related to career pathways include co-enrollment with Career and Technical Education programs for WIOA Youth customers, work experience/subsidized employment opportunities for early entry into career pathways, and on-the-job training/occupational skills training/apprenticeship for advanced placement along career pathways.

Partnerships: WFS leverages partnerships to expand career pathways opportunities available to customers, and leverages co-enrollment strategies to the full breadth of community resources. Partner programs are integrated into service delivery at their appropriate stage in the career pathway. For instance, AEL contextualized learning programs designed to engage ABE/ESL learners and Career and Technology Education programs provide for entry points early in career pathways. South Texas College and University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV) programs typically provide opportunities for more advanced placement in career pathways. Programs such as Texas Workforce Solution Rehabilitation Services Division provide resources to place individuals with disabilities anywhere along the continuum; other partner programs such as those provided by VIDA or Goodwill of South Texas provide similar flexibility.

Convener and expertise: WFS is a recognized leader in the area regarding workforce, career, and labor market expertise, and its ability to convene partners to address workforce development issues. WFS leverages this status in the community and its staff expertise to develop resources used by workforce programs throughout the community. For example, WFS staff have worked collaboratively with South Texas College on their Career Pathway Framework that has been incorporated into South Texas College and region Independent School Districts Operational Plans. This coordination and consistency provides employer customers with an opportunity to engage a coordinated regional workforce and education system with a common vision and design components. It also provides youth and adult customers to engage with partner agencies that employ a coordinated service strategy. High levels of coordination and alignment of resources provide for greater co-enrollment opportunities.

2.c. Improving access to activities leading to a recognized postsecondary credential: WFS is in the process of establishing a Workforce System Workgroup to provide recommendations regarding alignment of the workforce system. Partners include Region One Education Service Center (Title II: Adult Education and Literacy), Texas Workforce Solutions Rehabilitation Services Division, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, South Texas College and community based organizations.

WFS staff, in partnership with core partners, will develop strategies and action plans for cross-walking and integrating AEL and Career Pathway services into the service delivery system at the Workforce Career Centers,

AEL locations, School Districts and STC. This integrated approach will result in concurrent learning and skills attainment models for adult/youth learners, and will align skill attainment to target and high demand occupations. Emphasis will be on support and proliferation of articulated training programs that result in a certificate/credential that is industry-recognized, portable, and stackable. The workgroup's final product will be a Workforce System Guide connecting education and training strategies to supportive services that enable individuals to secure industry relevant certification and obtain employment within target occupations, and progression to advanced levels along target career pathways.

3. A description of the strategies for coordinating programs and services for target populations.

WFS ensures effective coordination of programs and services for target populations through a controlled process of (1) regional analysis, (2) service delivery design, and (3) accountability.

Regional Analysis: WFS analyzes the regional economy and labor market, contrasted with regional demographic data and local wisdom to identify target populations and service gaps and limitations. Analysis is completed collaboratively with WFS' sub-recipient and partners to ensure its fully contextualized and represents the interests of all constituencies.

Current target populations for the region include: Public Assistance Recipients, Other Low-Income Adults, and Individuals that are Basic Skills Deficient. Additional priority/target groups include Eligible Veterans and Spouses, Migrant Seasonal Farm Workers, Individuals without a Diploma/GED, Foster Youth, Individuals with Disabilities, Referred Court Involved/Offenders, English Language Learners, Unemployed and/or receiving Unemployment Insurance, Individuals earning less than Self-Sufficiency Wage, Individuals with Cultural Barriers (including legal immigrants and refugees), and Individuals facing multiple barriers (such as substance abuse, mental health problems, and domestic violence issues).

(WFS Policy SKL# 021.01 addresses/designates priority target populations. WFS Policy WSYS# 006.00 addresses veteran priority of service.)

Service Delivery Design: Analysis informs the development of programs, service design strategies and opportunities that will align the best interest of job seekers and employers. The WFS workforce system is designed to increase access to, and opportunities for, the employment, education, training, and support services that individuals need to succeed in the labor market, particularly those with barriers to employment to include target populations.

WFS works with sub-recipients and partners to ensure all customers are given access to high-quality Workforce Career Centers that connect them with the full range of services available in their communities (to include partner referrals). This occurs whether customers are looking to find jobs, build basic educational or occupational skills, earn a postsecondary certificate or degree, or obtain guidance on how to make career choices. All programs and services are coordinated, with both internal and external partners, to meet the customer's individual needs. Workforce Career Centers directly provide career services that encourage, support and empower customers, including individuals with disabilities and other barriers, to make informed decisions based on local and regional economic demand and effectively attain their personal employment and education goals.

Accountability: At the beginning of each contract year, WFS establishes service level targets based primarily on (1) TWC contracted measures, (2) target populations identified for specific grants, and/or (3) board/local priorities and service strategies. WFS ensures adherence to and accountability for service level targets, which include special target population enrollment/performance, via monthly data analysis and reporting priority service and activity levels.

The data documents whether projected outreach and service levels relative to WFS priorities and target populations are trending actual overages and/or deficiencies and are adjusted to achieve performance expectations. An example data point tracked by WFS is the Migrant Indicators of Compliance; the indicator provides data on levels of services provided within specific target population that alerts the Board to where services need improvement, increased outreach, and/or activity. In addition, each Workforce Career Center informs the accountability process by capturing customer requests for services, type of service requested and demographic characteristics to identify where the customer is within a specific target population.

Data is trended and analyzed continuously at the WFS staff, sub-recipient leadership, and Workforce Career Center levels, and corrections to service strategies are made to meet service demand. Corrections are situation specific and collaborative between all relevant parties, and include allowable transfers of funding between WIOA program funding streams, transfer of funds between support services and training within a funding stream, increase in outreach levels, modification of services offered, etc. (list is not exhaustive).

4. A description of the strategies and services that will be used in the local area:
   a. To facilitate engagement of employers in the workforce development programs, including small employers and employers in in-demand industry sectors and occupations
   b. To support a local workforce development system that meets the needs of businesses in the local area
   c. To better coordinate workforce development programs and economic development
   d. To strengthen linkages between the one-stop delivery system and unemployment insurance programs

   Note: This may include the implementation of initiatives such as incumbent worker training programs, on-the-job training programs, customized training programs, industry and sector strategies, career pathways initiatives, use of effective business intermediaries, and other business services and strategies designed to meet the needs of regional employers. These initiatives must support the strategy described above.

4.a. Facilitating Engagement of Employers: WFS business service delivery is structured to provide strategic staff resources to ensure an understanding of the needs of the business community through its board staff Community Engagement Department's Business Relations (BR) team and it's sub-recipient's Business Solutions Unit (BSU). The WFS Business Relations Team provides services to all industries but has a focus on two in-demand industries:

(1) Healthcare - One of largest employment industries in the service area and
(2) Manufacturing - An economic growth sector that creates multiple sub-sectors that serve this industry.

These two separate but collaborative internal partnerships enable WFS to provide a full array of services to meet our employers workforce needs. WFS' sub-recipient BSU provides direct employment services to business partners in the service area including small businesses and new start-up businesses.

Table 28 below indicates how these two WFS departments facilitate engagement of employers in workforce development programs:

Table 28: WFS Department Roles and Responsibilities

WFS Community Engagement Business Relations Representatives:	WFS sub-recipient Business Solutions Unit:
• Provides Human Resource technical assistance to businesses • Updates the WFS target and demand industries and occupations (bi-annual) • Releases monthly Labor Market reports • Conducts Business Retention and Expansion visits (in partnership with area Economic Development Corporations (EDCs)) • Develops/manages of two industry specific taskforces, Healthcare (hospitals and behavioral health) and Business Services (call centers) • Conducts bi-annual wage surveys requested by two industries: manufacturing and logistics, and customer care centers • Makes presentations on area workforce resources, labor force availability and skills, and Texas Workforce Commission skills training grants at new employer recruitment meetings in partnership with area EDCs • Member of associations, chambers, coalitions, foundations, or organizes partner meetings, to discuss business issues, provide solutions and identify ways to improve the delivery of business services by WFS and partner organizations. Examples: Local Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), South Texas Manufacturers Association (STMA), city chambers, regional chamber, municipal economic development departments, EDCs, regional economic development organizations, and educational committees, advisory panels and support groups • Researches and applies for grants, in partnership with employers, that bring additional resources or training opportunities for the business • Maintains wfsolutions.org with content on labor market information and employer services available • Manages WFS social media to provide employers with WFS, economic, jobs, and related information • Plans and coordinates large scale job fairs • Outreaches, markets and distributes information about On the Job Training, Work Experience, Skills Development, Work Opportunity Tax Credit, and fidelity bonding resources available to employers • Leads or supports education driven initiatives for better alignment of education/training to employer workforce skills needs. Examples: Education Texas/RGV FOCUS collective impact initiatives and RGV LEAD (Ford Foundation) Next Generation Learning Academies	• Assists employers in recruiting, screening and referring qualified applicants to meet their hiring needs • Utilizes the WorkInTexas.com (WIT) system and navigating employers them through the job order process • Develops job descriptions to ensure quality matches in WIT and enters job postings into WIT • Manages job postings to ensure quality customer service • Coordinates and communicates with the Workforce Career Centers on scheduling and logistics of hiring events and job fairs • Communicates hiring events and other activities through an event calendar that is posted immediately after confirmation to wfsolutiong.org • Coordinates and works with the Workforce Career Center staff to assist customers that are exiting training to facilitate training related placement • Communicate employer request details to Workforce Career Center staff to ensure employer human resource needs are met, as needed • Follow-up regarding referrals made to employers • Presents and provides labor market information in multiple formats to a diverse audience and extracts as necessary, relevant data for customer's needs • Implements strategies from the Goals and Objective of the WFS Board • Outreaches employers regularly by following up with repeat employer customers, reviewing other job announcement resources i.e. Local newspapers, job boards, and hiring websites • Utilizes TWC provided tools to outreach new businesses including: Texas Department of Labor Relations (TDLR) website to look for new business listings; The Workforce Information System of Texas (TWIST) new employer inquiry listings; and via active engagement with area chambers and economic development entities • Manages Work Experience and On the Job training programs with employers • Oversees and maintains a secondary WFS Facebook page that targets job seekers and promotes businesses that are currently hiring • Provides UI information • Provides access to resource room (i.e. phone, computer labs, fax machine, copy machine, etc.)

with area high schools. These initiatives have a strong focus on bringing business and educational delivery systems together to discuss program design and curriculum development and training delivery. This helps ensure future workers leave the educational system with the right skills to fill open positions	

4.b. Meeting the needs of local business: WFS develops and integrates a workforce system in the spirit of our Key Strategic Imperative #1, "Understand the needs of the business community to ensure a demand-driven system."

WFS accomplishes this by utilizing the Target Industry and Occupation research, and establishing functional partnerships with education, economic development and community based entities to ensure scarce resources are focused on meeting the workforce skills needs for the area's businesses. WFS will continue to look for new ways to leverage resources, better align educational/occupational trainings for customers and students through employer participation and feedback. It is WFS's position that this approach increases workforce service satisfaction for employers in our area.

4.c. Coordinating workforce and economic development: WFS staff meet frequently with area economic development entities and collaborate regularly on employer focused services such as city specific job fairs, regional job fairs, business retention and expansion visits and increased sharing of data to benefit area businesses.

The WFS Business Relations Team and Business Solutions Unit attend and participate in economic development meetings and provide information about workforce programs available via the Workforce Career Centers, including WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs, TANF, TANF NCP, SNAP, and other program funding. These partnerships allow for distribution of information on available human resource assistance for businesses as well as skills training, through TWC Skills for Small Business Program, Self-Sufficiency Fund and Skills Development Grants.

WFS staff, in collaboration with area EDCs, actively seek additional and/or special funding and grants geared toward local priorities such as entrepreneurship and training. WFS staff also prioritize development of key partnerships that connect with targeted economic development initiatives, such as the UTRGV Small Business Development Center, a key partner for providing new entrepreneurs with information and services, and programs to assist with business planning, financing and technical guidance.

4.d. Strengthen linkages between the one-stop delivery system and unemployment insurance programs: WFS works to strengthen linkages between the one-stop delivery system and unemployment insurance programs by:
- Providing general information to Workforce Career Center customers about the Unemployment Insurance (UI) Program, as well as contact information for TWC department administering that program. This includes printed "How to" apply for UI benefits material.
- Utilizing a monthly dashboard to identify active UI job seekers and develop jobs with quality matches.
- Leveraging networks and collaborative strategies, which include labor exchange and career counseling services, aimed at providing enhanced services to UI job seekers.

- Analyzing the demographics, work history, and education/skill level characteristics of the population of individuals receiving UI, and aligning employer outreach for job postings, work experience, on-the-job training, and other activities.
- Collaborating with employers laying off individuals to identify retention strategies and/or strategies for rapid placement. Services are tailored to affected worker occupational and skill profiles.
- Marketing and advertising Workforce Career Center services and Rapid Response services, as appropriate, to the general public to reach individuals that may be engaged with the UI Program, but not actively engaged with the Workforce Career Center.
- Coordinating with TWC UI office representatives to notify them of local layoffs and schedule Rapid Response services, and to enable TWC UI representatives to present at affected employee orientations.
- Working with the TWC statewide Rapid Response coordinator to share information on statewide layoffs and help place affected workers across WDA service boundaries.

5. An explanation of how the Board will coordinate local workforce investment activities with regional economic development activities that are carried out in the local area and how the Board will promote entrepreneurial-skills training and microenterprise services.

WFS seeks to continuously enhance coordination with regional economic development partners, by:

- Meeting frequently with regional economic development councils, chambers of commerce, and other economic development agencies to better understand (1) the economic development initiatives and priorities operating in the region and (2) the needs of business, including the staffing and workforce concerns of their employer constituents.
- Developing employer focused service strategies that (1) support partner strategies and (2) address the community's needs, including city specific job fairs, regional job fairs, business retention and expansion visits.
- Sharing of targeted Labor Market Information (LMI) to enhance the business intelligence of partners and employers, and support the development of fact-based business development activities. LMI sources utilized by WFS include Bureau of Labor Statistics data/reporting, Department of Labor data/reporting, Census data/reporting, Texas Workforce Commission data/reporting (i.e. tracer2.com, texasindustryprofiles.com, etc.), HelpWantedAnalytics, SitesOnTexas, Economic Modeling Specialists Inc. (EMSI), etc.
- Collaborating with economic development partners to pursue additional funding through competitive grant proposals that support regional initiatives.

Entrepreneurial skills training and micro-enterprise services: In addition to collaborating with regional partners to pursue grants promoting entrepreneurship and training, WFS provides customers with information and referral to the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV) Small Business Development Center (SBDC). The SWBC provides residents with Business Advisement services, Business Skills Training (including online training), and seminars related to starting and growing businesses. [23]

Additional entrepreneurship and micro-enterprise service partners include:

- Ruby Red Ventures: The *Mission Economic Development Corporation* and the *Mission City Council* unanimously approved the creation of Ruby Red Ventures, a $100,000 small business fund that aimed at nurturing entrepreneurial spirit and promoting the creation of innovative businesses in the City of

Mission. The fund seeks to encourage entrepreneurially oriented Rio Grande Valley residents to expand and/or launch new ventures in Mission. The goal of Ruby Red Ventures is to allow participants to gain a better understanding of how to develop and follow a realistic business plan, as well as, provide the participants with forums in which they develop skill in presenting their ventures. [24]

- McAllen Chamber of Commerce: The Chamber offers business development services as well as the entrepreneurship program, Idea Lab. Idea Lab is part of a larger program offered to foster small businesses and entrepreneurs. The Chamber's program includes small business counseling, an elevator pitch competition, market analysis, educational seminars, a business plan competition, $50,000 for Innovation Grants, and the micro-grant program for micro-entrepreneurs. [25]

- McAllen Creative Incubator: The Incubator is a venue that offers low cost studios for start-up artists. The Incubator is meant to foster the creativity of the tenants and provide emerging artists and organizations with managerial, legal, and technical support. The goal of the McAllen Creative Incubator is to support the continued professional growth of artists in order to enhance the cultural and economic vitality of our local community. The McAllen Creative Incubator markets and publicizes the Incubator as a creative cooperative. Marketing materials are created to promote the Incubator and its resident artists. Events are held at the incubator to develop dynamic relationships between art, artists, audiences and the public. [26]

- UTRGV Center for Entrepreneurship and Commercialization: The Center helps entrepreneurs develop and expand their business through education, offering an entrepreneurial laboratory where entrepreneurs inside and outside of the University can collaborate to take advantage of opportunities and create value. The Center has over 12 years of experience in providing business assistance through the means of its experienced staff, UT System and community partners and delivers its services through its Business Incubation Membership, Entrepreneurship Development, Commercialization and Business Development programs. [27]

- Southwest Community Investment Women's Business Center: The Center provides training, counseling, and technical assistance to individuals seeking to start or expand their business. The Center serves Hidalgo, Cameron, Starr and Willacy counties. [28]

6. A description of the one-stop delivery system in the local area, including explanations of the following:
   a. How the Board will ensure the continuous improvement of eligible providers and how providers will meet the employment needs of local employers, workers, and job seekers;
   b. How the Board will facilitate access to services provided through the one-stop delivery system, including to remote areas, through the use of technology and other means;
   c. How entities within the one-stop delivery system, including the one- stop operators and the one-stop partners, will comply with WIOA §188, if applicable, and with applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 regarding the physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, programs and services, technology, and materials for individuals with disabilities, including providing staff training and support for addressing the needs of individuals who have disabilities; and
   d. The roles and resource contributions of the one-stop partners.

6.a. Continuous Improvement: The WFS sub-recipient for management and operation of Workforce Career Centers, is responsible for the continuous improvement of all system operations, and for sufficiently meeting the needs of businesses, job seekers, workers, and child care customers. To ensure continuous improvement, the following strategies are in place: (1) contract performance measures are negotiated annually and (2) contracts include language obligating sub-recipient(s) to adhere to Strategic Goals and Objectives established by the WFS

Board. Contracts are also structured to ensure the Statement of Work is aligned with the Board Goals and Strategies and adherence is evaluated by multiple tiers of responsible associate oversight.

In addition, WFS negotiates Key Performance Indicators (KPI) with sub-recipient(s). Current KPI are detailed below:

- Key Performance Indicators (KPI) that measure the quality and not quantity of services;
- KPI for eligible training providers related to cost reasonableness and quality services/outcomes for schools receiving WIOA participants. This provides for increased continuous improvement of eligible providers.
- Performance on WFS managed surveys that measure the quality of service from the Job Seeker, Employer and the Child Care Customer perspective.

The WFS management team, which includes WFS staff, sub-recipient management staff, and Workforce Career Center staff, meets regularly to review contractual performance, as well as progress and remedies for deficiencies.

Training Providers: WFS manages the Eligible Training Provider System (ETPS), and requires training providers to apply to the local workforce board for certification to receive WIOA training funds. To obtain approval and to ensure that employer needs are met, an analysis of the area's target industry and target occupations skill requirements is aligned to the training proposed before it is offered on the ETPS. WFS monitors the performance of each training provider that is certified and on the ETPS for program completion rate and entered employment. Regular oversight and updating of the ETPS, along with regular interaction with area employers, ensures that awareness of emerging employment trends and changing needs in the labor market is maintained.

WFS has policies and procedures in place for workforce system operations that are used to ensure efficient operation and continuous improvement of the ETPS, as well as the eligible providers within the system.

6.b. Facilitating Access to Services: WFS is recognized statewide as an innovator in the use of technology to bring workforce services to the customers instead of requiring customers to visit the Workforce Career Center. WFS and sub-recipient staff have been asked to present numerous times at TWC Quarterly Forums and Annual Conferences regarding effective utilization of technology to enhance access. Initiatives and technologies employed by WFS to enhance access to the workforce system, include:

- *Code #RGV Classroom on Wheels (COW)*: WFS partners with Code #RGV to utilize the COW to expand access to services for Adult and Youth customers. Adults are exposed to core computing components such as email, word processing, spreadsheets, online applications for items such as SNAP benefits, and food handler's permits. Youth are offered introductory educational classes related to coding (code.org), robotics, as well as general computer usage. Coding, robotics, and STEM related activities promote STEM education and careers. [29]

- *Libraries and community centers*: WFS partners with area municipalities and other government entities to leverage public infrastructure, including libraries and other community centers to host events and provide temporary office space, expanding the network of locations accessible by the public.

- *Social Media (Facebook)*: WFS operates an active social media campaign on Facebook with a reach of more than 27k users. The campaign allows for broad distribution of events and jobs, outreach for

workforce programs, and an opportunity to provide real time "help desk" services in a virtual space via messenger/chat.

- Affiliation with AEL sites: WFS leverages relationships with AEL providers to expand program services to their locations and market service offerings to AEL students.

- Community Engagement/Partnership: In addition to the initiatives above, WFS maintains relationships with numerous agencies throughout the region that provide services and give WFS the opportunity to expand the footprint of the workforce system. Rural community partners and those that serve special populations are particularly critical to create an effectively coordinated community.

6.c. Compliance with WIOA §188 and with applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990: WFS performs a bi-annual review of all Workforce Career Centers to determine compliance with the nondiscrimination and equal opportunity provisions of WIOA §188. Both programmatic and physical accessibility are addressed during an EO compliance review. In addition, TWC monitors WFS on-site and includes reviews of DOL's Civil Rights Center (DOL-CRC).

WFS provide various methods of access to services compliant with ADA 188. Websites and other electronic and information resources are accessible and content is user friendly for individuals with disabilities or individuals with Limited-English Proficiency (LEP). WorkInTexas.com also has information accessible and is available to job seekers in both English, and Spanish. TWC's website is likewise available in Spanish, providing information regarding unemployment insurance, unemployment benefits, labor law, employment discrimination and housing discrimination.

WFS also designates a staff person to coordinate and serve as a point-of-contact for all accessibility issues. The coordinator monitors compliance with accessibility policy of all WFS facilities and resources, and facilitates prompt correction of any identified compliance concerns/issues. The coordinator partners with sub-recipient staff as an accessibility liaison for accessibility requirements, and assists in staff development, addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities.

The coordinator is also responsible for:

- *Scheduling TWC Training for One-Stop Staff* - TWC's Training and Development Department (T&D) provides WFS and sub-recipient staff with a comprehensive course, titled "Access for All," tailored to Workforce Solutions Workforce Career Center staff that provide comprehensive instruction on serving individuals with disabilities. This training focuses on the basics of the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Rehabilitation Act and how to apply the rules and regulations in Workforce Solutions Workforce Career Centers.
- Scheduling additional regular classroom training sessions on a range of accessibility topics;
- Maintaining an inventory of all adaptive equipment to meet the needs of ADA;
- Consulting on accessibility purchases and facilitating the exception request process; and
- Meeting with and ensuring contracted Workforce Career Center staff are updated and trained on ADA.

6.d. Integration with Texas Workforce Solutions Rehabilitation Services Division (formerly DARS)/Roles and Responsibilities: WFS is prepared for the co-location of Texas Workforce Solutions Rehabilitation Services Division staff at its Workforce Career Centers.

The role and resource contribution of each partner in an integrated workforce system is successful provision of services consistent with its mission and expertise. The co-location will allow specialized reviews and over-views of the systems to identify and improve services to the disabled population, and will likewise enable full WFS resources for the benefit of individuals with disabilities. On-site location will provide immediate services as well as consistent training of all Workforce Career Center and partner staff to better understand how to serve our customers.

7. A description and assessment of the type and availability of adult and dislocated worker employment and training activities in the local area.

WFS, through its sub-recipient(s), administers WIOA funds to provide employment and training activities for WIOA Adults and Dislocated Workers through a network of five Workforce Career Centers located throughout the service area. Services provided to Adult and Dislocated Worker customers include the full range of employment and training activities, i.e. Work Experience, Individual Training Accounts (ITA's), Supervised Job Search and Job Readiness. Workforce Career Centers are in each of the three counties in the WFS service area, ensuring maximum accessibility to services by locating facilities in high density population areas. Reference Table 29 below for location information:

Table 29: Workforce Career Center Locations

Workforce Career Center	County
Edinburg Office 2719 W. University Dr., Edinburg, TX 78539 Tel: (956) 380-0008 / Fax: (956) 316-2626	Hidalgo County
Mission Office 901 Travis St., Ste. 7, Mission, TX 78572 Tel: (956) 519-4300 / Fax: (956) 519-4388	Hidalgo County
Raymondville Office 700 FM 3168, Ste.3, Raymondville, TX 78580 Tel: (956) 689-3412 / Fax: (956) 690-0285	Willacy County
Rio Grande City Office 5408 Brand St., Ste.1, Rio Grande City, TX 78582 Tel: (956) 487-9100 / Fax: (956) 487-9190	Starr County
Weslaco Office 1600 N. Westgate, Ste. 400, Weslaco, TX 78596 Tel: (956) 969-6100 / Fax: (956) 969-6190	Hidalgo County

In addition to the physical locations, WFS (1) leverages partner locations to provide services to customers that are not able to access the Workforce System easily and (2) deploys technology to provide virtual services.

Partner Services: WFS works with regional partners with organizations providing employment and training activities to leverage community resources and expand the reach and impact of the workforce system.

8. A description of how the Board will coordinate workforce investment activities carried out in the local area with statewide rapid response activities described in WIOA §134(a)(2)(A).

The WFS Community Engagement Director oversees services related to employers, to include Rapid Response activities. WFS provides Rapid Response services to eligible workers suffering dislocation from employment due to a permanent closure or mass layoff at a plant, facility, or enterprise, or as the result of a natural or other

disaster that results in mass job dislocation.

Upon receipt of a WARN Notice from the Texas Workforce Commission, the Community Engagement Director:

1. Makes immediate and on-site contact with the employer, representatives of the affected workers, and the local community. Based on the assessment of the layoff plans and schedule of the employer, the Director engages the Business Services Unit (sub-recipient).
2. Business Services Representatives meet with the employer to:
    a. Discuss/plan potential for averting the layoff(s) (in consultation with local economic development agencies).
    b. Plan utilizing the list of affected workers for background and probable assistance needs of the affected workers; reemployment prospects for workers in the local community
3. Business Services Unit coordinates with Workforce Career Center staff to match the affected workers with immediate job referrals or other available resources to meet the short and long-term assistance needs of the affected workers.

Throughout the process, the Community Engagement Department works with the Business Services Unit and Workforce Career Center staff to:

- Determine whether a trade petition and/or whether employer/employee early intervention is needed,
- Engage with the employer and worker representatives, to provide information and access to unemployment compensation benefits, inclusive of Workforce Career Center services employment and training activities (including information on the Trade Adjustment Act program), crisis counseling, financial planning assistance and debt management, interview techniques, resume and application preparation, stress and change management and referral to other partner agencies as needed, and
- Engage affected workers and provide services related to job search, financial management, coping with lay-off stress, etc.

In addition, as the main point of contact the Community Engagement Director coordinates with other state agencies and additional partners to ensure affected workers have access to other services, as needed.

9. A description and assessment of the type and availability of workforce investment activities for youth in the local area, including activities for youth who have disabilities. This description must include an identification of successful models of such activities.

WFS, through its sub-recipient(s), provides workforce investment activities for youth through a network of five Workforce Career Centers located throughout the service area (refer to Operating Elements response #7 for Workforce Career Center Locations). Services made available to youth customers include the 14 Youth Elements required by WIOA. The Workforce Career Centers also offer a full range of assessment tools including TABE, CAPS & COPS and Spanish Assessment for Spanish only speaking customers (SUPERA).

Workforce Career Centers are located in each of the three counties in the service area. Accessibility to services is maximized by locating facilities in high-density population areas. Reference the Table 30 for information on how services/elements are provided:

Table 30: Youth Elements

WIOA Youth Element	WFS Provided Services	Partner Services
Tutoring, study skills training, instruction, and evidence-based dropout prevention and recovery strategies that lead to completion of the requirements for a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent (including a recognized certificate of attendance or similar document for individuals with disabilities) or for a recognized postsecondary credential	WIN Work Keys courseware, participants are engaged in an interactive curriculum providing foundational skills instruction encompassing ten career & education oriented skill and proficiency areas needed in today's workplace	Communities in Schools, GEAR Up
Alternative secondary school services, or dropout recovery services, as appropriate	Identification of Barrier and referral	AEL providers, school recovery programs, South Texas College
Paid and unpaid work experiences t hat have academic and occupational education as a component of the work experience	Paid work experience and job readiness opportunities are offered year round to youth participants who are seeking career exploration and the development of work readiness skills	YouthBuild, Communities In School, School Districts with work experience programs
Occupational skills training, which includes priority consideration for training programs that lead to recognized postsecondary credentials that align with in-demand industry sectors or occupations in the workforce area involved, if WFS determines that the programs meet the quality criteria described in WIOA §123	Eligible youth participants are connected with occupational skills training that are aligned with local target and in-demand occupations	Eligible Training Providers or WFS designated contracted trainings
Education offered concurrently with and in the same context as workforce preparation activities and training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster	Remediation via WIN Work Keys	Region One Education Service Center and South Texas College
Leadership development opportunities, including community service and peer-centered activities encouraging responsibility and other positive social and civic behaviors	Integrated into work experience and other service options	
Support services, as defined in WIOA §3(59), which enable an individual to participate in WIOA activities.	Supportive services include child care, transportation assistance, work-related and training-related expenses	See list of strategic partnerships
Adult mentoring for a duration of at least 12 months that may occur both during and after program participation	Integrated into work experience and other service options	
Follow-up services for not fewer than 12 months after the completion of participation	By WIOA Youth Career Counselors	
Comprehensive guidance and counseling, which may include drug and alcohol abuse counseling, as well as referrals to counseling, as appropriate to the needs of the individual youth	Referrals made to partners as appropriate	See list of strategic partnerships
Financial literacy education	On-site interactive module	Reference partnership listing for applicable entities
Entrepreneurial skills training	Career advising, service planning, and referral by Career Counselor	Small Business Development Center, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

Services that provide labor market and employment information about in-demand industry sectors or occupations available in the workforce area, such as career awareness, career counseling, and career exploration services	Identification of activity by Career Counselor, provision of local data	Various modules available via links to STC, ISDs TWC Sites
Activities that help youth prepare for and transition to postsecondary education and training	Identification of activity by Career Counselor	Various modules available via links to STC, ISDs TWC Sites

10. A description of how the Board will coordinate relevant secondary- and postsecondary education programs and activities with education and workforce investment activities to coordinate strategies, enhance services, and avoid duplication of services.

WFS serves as a convener and facilitator for a continuum of secondary and post-secondary programs and activities in the service area that comprise the broader education/workforce system. The approach is premised on the idea that (1) WFS plays an integral role in convening system partners and informing program and service delivery design and (2) the community is stronger through leveraging partnerships with education providers and community based organizations.

Convening system partners and informing design: WFS engages with a unique mix of community stakeholders, that includes educators, employers, job seekers, and community leaders that provide a unique and valuable perspective into the demands of the region's business community and the challenges of the population in accessing economic opportunity. In addition, workforce boards are equipped by TWC with data and analytical tools to contextualize the region's labor market and quantify trends, supply, and demand. This knowledge base, driven by data, positions WFS to effectively convene and coordinate secondary and post-secondary education programs, inform education partners regarding program and service delivery design.

An example of WFS collaboration includes working with the Career and Technical Education staff at the South Texas College (STC) to develop a Career Pathway Framework that has been incorporated into STC and regional Independent School Districts' Operational Plans.

Leveraging partnerships: WFS also serves a critical role in establishing partnerships and facilitating youth moving into and along the education continuum. For youth that are customers of the workforce system, the initial assessment of needs serves as the triage point and basis for service planning for youth. Based upon initial assessment of needs, youth are engaged in a menu of educational activities with partners including Region One Education Service Center (ESC), South Texas College Continuing Education Department for GED/ESL, Occupational Training Programs and referrals made for Adult Basic Education, etc. Examples of leveraged programs in the community include:

- VIDA: Workforce Career Center staff works closely with STC and VIDA to coordinate referrals and co-case management. VIDA's program model engages case managers with students to provide education and training services, while providing counseling and support services to address barriers to education and training. The partnership creates a wraparound services model for youth engaged in an education pathway. [30]

Avoiding duplication of services: Close coordination with partners and positioning WFS to serve a central and facilitative role in regional partnerships helps to avoid duplication of services, and enables WFS to reach further

with its resources and have a positive impact on the community. Coordinated and collaborative staff training, as well as regular partner meetings with leadership and frontline staff, assists in creating strong functional partnerships that achieve desired outcomes with minimal duplication.

11. A description of how the Board will provide transportation, including public transportation, and other appropriate support services in the local area in coordination with WIOA Title I workforce investment activities.

Transportation: WFS provides transportation related supportive services to eligible customers via: gas cards, vehicle related repair assistance and through its partnership with United Way, which provides bus vouchers to workforce system customers for the purposes of receiving public assistance, job search and other workforce related needs.

WFS also collaborates to advise and build system capacity through its role as a chair member of the Regional Transportation Advisory Panel. The panel is operated by the Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council. This panel meets monthly and all members collaboratively review the region's transportation system and look for additional funding to expand the services provided by transportation entities. WFS provides the group with the latest information concerning the workforce system and offers suggestions on updating bus routes, as well as coordination of transportation for special community events such as job fairs or health related events. In addition, WFS assists the group in writing grants to increase the number of qualified bus drivers, or assistance in providing transportation for individuals with disabilities in the community.

Additional regional transportation resources in the Lower Rio Grande service area include: Cities/County governments, LRGVDC, FHWA, Texas Department of Transportation, Regional Mobility Authorities, Private Sector, Valley Metro, Metro McAllen, Bicycling Advocacy Groups, FTA, Homeland Security, 911, Texas Department Public Safety (DPS), Water Districts, IBWC, TCEQ, Irrigation Districts, EPA, FEMA, TWDB, US Fish & Wildlife, Texas Parks & Wildlife, Environmental Groups, Brownsville Metro, Island Metro, local cycling groups, and Workforce Solutions Cameron.

Additional Support Services: WFS provides a broad range of additional support services including emergency assistance, work related clothing/tools/supplies, books (training related), and additional supports allowable based upon program. WFS, however, understands that traditional workforce system resources are insufficient to meet the community's need. To address this gap, WFS develops partnerships with agencies that can supplement workforce system resources to better meet the customer's needs.

The WFS Community Engagement Specialist maintains a presence with and serves in an advisory capacity on area Community Based Organizations, Non-Profit Organizations as well as private foundations and public entities. A Memorandum of Understanding or Agreement is developed to identify the entity and the services provided.

12. A description of plans, assurances, and strategies for maximizing coordination, improving service delivery, and avoiding duplication of Wagner-Peyser Act services and other services provided through the one-stop delivery system.

WFS administers Wagner-Peyser through its Agency Board Agreement according to which merit state are responsible for providing the core of Wagner-Peyser Act services, with WFS sub-recipient staff supplementing

services. Additionally, under the agreement and consistent with the Texas Model of operations, sub-recipient staff are responsible for providing guidance, in coordination with TWC, of all merit staff. The arrangement allows for maximum coordination, enhanced and consistent service delivery, and minimal redundancy/duplication.

13. A description of how the Board will coordinate WIOA Title I workforce investment activities with adult education and literacy activities under WIOA Title II. This description must include how the Board will carry out the review of local applications submitted under Title II consistent with WIOA §§107(d)(11)(A) and (B)(i) and WIOA §232.

Board Response:
WFS has a history of active coordination with Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) providers in the service area. In 2016, WFS hosted AEL partners, to include Region One ESC and other regional literacy partners, to work with a national consultant to identify strategies for alignment of AEL and the workforce system. As a result, stakeholders have engaged in cross-partnership, cross-functional workgroups to infuse traditional AEL services with work-based literacy and contextualized learning components that are aligned to WFS Career Pathways and Target and Demand Occupations. WFS intends to continue this work and to engage with Industry Task Forces to identify the ways Adult Education and literacy can better align to work-based skill requirements, skills gaps, and emerging industry skill needs; this continuous effort will better position AEL providers to meet educational benchmarks, gainful employment requirements, and employer skills demands.

Review of Local Applications: WFS, as a coordinator and convener for the region, shall review applications to provide adult education and literacy activities under Title II Adult Education and Literacy for the service area to ensure (1) consistency with the local plan and (2) advises applicants on alignment of resources with additional Adult Education and workforce services. WFS staff may offer technical assistance, training, and relevant information sharing to assist applicants.

WFS has executed cooperative agreements that explain how local service providers carry out the requirements for integration of and access to the entire set of services available in the local one-stop delivery system. Cooperative agreements include:

- Adult Education and Literacy: Region One Education Service Center (ESC)

- Rehabilitative Services: Texas Workforce Solutions Vocational Rehabilitation Services Division (formerly DARS)

WFS and its AEL and Rehabilitation Services Division partners have committed to assign appropriate staff to (1) provide system-wide staff training/development, (2) implement appropriate policies/procedures, and (3) compile 'operational manuals' that facilitate full integration of and access to partner services. This document will address the WIOA requirement that the Workforce System, Programs and Service Access are integrated sufficiently so regardless of point of entry, the customer receives information on all services, program requirements (if any) and captures the provision of these services through an automated electronic system for use amongst all partners.

In addition to the core partnerships, WFS maintains MOU relationships with additional partners, co-located and/or coordinating, to implement the region's workforce system service delivery model. MOU Partners include:

- AARP
- Border Workforce Alliance

- Workforce Solutions Cameron
- DFPS Preparation for Adult Living
- Hidalgo County Headstart
- Motivation, Education, & Training
- Mujeres Unidas
- Texas A&M CHUD Colonias Program HEP
- Texas Commission for the Blind
- Texas Department of Human Services
- Texas Juvenile Justice Department
- Valley Association for Independent Living
- La Joya Public Library
- La Estancia Apartments
- McAllen ISD Parental Involvement Program
- Reber Memorial Library
- La Rosita Library
- Abel B. Gonzalez Jr. Community Center
- Starr County Self Help Center
- Hidalgo Public Library

- Rio Grande Public Library
- Pharr Literacy Project
- Weslaco Public Library
- PSJA ISD Library Project
- Office of the Attorney General – NCP
- Gary Job Corps SFA
- Starr County Public Library
- City of San Juan Public Library
- STC Child Care Quality CEUs
- Alabama-Coushatta Indian Tribal Council E&T
- Cesar Chavez Foundation
- Easter Seals SFA
- Texas Veterans Commission
- McAllen Housing Authority
- AVANCE Inc.

14. An identification of the entity responsible for the disbursal of grant funds described in WIOA §107(d)(12)(B)(i)(III), as determined by the chief elected official or the governor under WIOA §107(d)(12)(B)(i).

Board Response:

WFS is responsible for disbursing the state and federal grant funds provided under this plan.

Workforce Solutions Corporate Office is located at 3101 West Business 83, McAllen, TX 78501. WFS is a non-profit, tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization that serves Hidalgo, Starr, and Willacy Counties, in Texas. WFS was certified by the Governor of Texas in 1999 and incorporated in 2000. The WFS Board is a volunteer Board appointed by the Chief Elected Officials of the Lower Rio Grande Valley Workforce Development Area. The WFS Board is composed of a majority of representatives of private sector employers, along with representatives of labor, education, childcare, social services, community based organizations, rehabilitation agencies and other local interests. Workforce Solutions is responsible for planning, evaluation, and oversight of workforce development programs/services in the service area.

15. A description of the competitive process that will be used to award the sub- grants and contracts for WIOA Title A description of the competitive process that will be used to award the sub- grants and contracts for WIOA Title I activities.

Procurement is the process and procedures utilized to obtain goods and services from the marketplace. WFS ensures that the procurement of all goods and services is conducted, to the maximum extent practical, in a manner providing full and open competition consistent with applicable administrative requirements. The estimated amount of award or contract determines the procedures used to competitively procure goods and

services. This process includes standards of conduct and detailed procedures for both small and large procurements as outlined below.

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

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

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

The small purchase method of procurement is used when purchasing goods or services for which the aggregate cost does not exceed the simplified acquisition threshold per 41 U.S.C. §403(11) of $150,000. When using the small purchase method, WFS staff obtains price or rate quotations from an adequate number (usually two or more) of qualified sources.

Competitive proposal methods of procurement are appropriate when purchasing goods or services for which the aggregate cost exceeds the simplified acquisition threshold of $150,000. The competitive proposal method is used when two or more responsible bidders are willing and able to compete effectively for the business and the procurement lends itself to a fixed-price or cost-reimbursement contract. The competitive proposal method is generally used when conditions are not appropriate for the small purchase method.

Competitive proposal methods of procurements meet the following federal requirements:

- Requests for proposals (RFP) are advertised in the newspaper with the highest circulation and identify all evaluation factors and their relative importance. Any response to the advertised RFP is honored to the maximum extent practical;
- RFP is solicited from an adequate number (usually two or more) of qualified sources;
- The method for conducting technical evaluations of the proposals received and for selecting awardees is contained in the RFP;
- Awards are made to the responsible firm whose proposal is most advantageous to the program, with price and other factors considered; and

- Competitive proposal procedures for the qualifications-based procurement of architectural/engineering professional services are utilized whereby competitors' qualifications are evaluated and the most qualified competitor is selected, subject to negotiation of fair and reasonable compensation. The method, where price is not used as a selection factor, can only be used in procurement of "professional services." It cannot be used to purchase other types of services.

All non-competitive or sole source procurements that will be conducted by WFS will have adequate documentation in the procurement file for auditor and monitor review.

16. A description of the local levels of performance negotiated with TWC and the chief elected official consistent with WIOA §116(c), to be used to measure the performance of the local area and to be used by the Board for measuring the performance of the local fiscal agent (where appropriate), eligible providers under WIOA Title I subtitle B, and the one-stop delivery system in the local area.

Board Response:

WFS negotiates performance measures with the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) to ensure standards are reflective of conditions/activity in the Lower Rio Grande Valley service area; data is compiled by WFS and sub-recipient to support deviations from TWC proposed performance and to serve as the basis for negotiated measures.

BCY Performance Measures for the region are detailed on Table 31. Due to changes in performance measures statewide, many measures are still pending resolution.

Table 31: BCY 17 Contracted Measures

BCY 17 Contracted Measures		Target
1	Claimant Reemployment within 10 weeks	58.2%
2	# of Employers Receiving Workforce Assistance	4,216
3	Choices Full Work Rate	50.0%
4	Avg. Kids served Per day-Discretionary At Risk	7463***
5	Employed Qrt 2 Post Exit-Adult	Pending
6	Employed Qrt 4 Post Exit-Adult	Pending
7	Credential Rate-Adult	Pending
8	Median Earnings Qrt 2 Post Exit – Adult	Pending
9	Employed Qrt Post Exit-DW	Pending
10	Employed Qrt 4 Post Exit-DW	Pending
11	Credential Rate-DW	Pending
12	Median Earnings Qrt 2 Post Exit-DW	Pending
13	Employed Qrt 2 Post Exit-Youth	Pending
14	Employed Qrt 4 Post Exit-Youth	Pending
15	Credential Rate-Youth	Pending
16	Employed/Enrolled Qrt 2 Post Exit-All Participants	Pending
17	Employed/Enrolled Qrt 2-Qrt 4 Post Exit-All Participants	Pending

| 18 | Credential Rate-All Participants | Pending |
| 19 | Median Earnings Qrt 2 Post Exit-All Participants | Pending |

All negotiated TWC measures are contracted to the sub-recipient for the Operation and Management of Workforce Career Centers. The sub-recipient is required to meet minimum standards and higher stretch goals are negotiated with the sub-recipient during the contract negotiation process. Performance is measured at monthly intervals utilizing The Workforce Information System of Texas (TWIST) and Work In Texas (WIT) reports as well as ad hoc data analysis. Failure to meet acceptable measures of performance requires WFS to implement Technical Assistance Plans, Corrective Action Plans and or up to including sanctions for continued low performance.

Eligible Training Providers (ETPS) must also meet the minimum performance standards established by WFS for inclusion in the Eligible Training Provider System. The Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) issues ETPs performance outcomes on all providers annually. ETPS providers not meeting minimum performance two consecutive years are not eligible to participate in the delivery of training services.

17. A description of the actions the Board will take toward becoming or remaining a high-performing Board.

WFS has a history of high performance including 6 years of meeting/exceeding all TWC contracted performance measures and receiving multiple awards for performance and service excellence. WFS serves as a resource to peer workforce boards for guidance and/or technical assistance regarding achieving and sustaining levels of performance excellence.

WFS has achieved this status through (1) rigorous accountability standards for sub-recipient and service providers, and (2) maintaining a vision of excellence, leadership, and innovation for WFS staff.

Accountability Standards: WFS has achieved excellence, in part, through a combination of higher performance contracted to its sub-recipient and the use of 3rd party surveys that measure customer satisfaction and other qualitative metrics. In addition, WFS negotiates and contracts Key Performance Indicators (KPI) with its sub-recipient that are indicators of excellence for quality and service to two key customer constituencies, Employers and Job Seekers. Current KPI categories are (1) Customer Satisfaction, (2) New Business/Employers using WorkInTexas.com, (3) Job Placement Rates, and (4) Training Related Placement for customers receiving training assistance.

Board Excellence, Leadership, and Innovation: WFS seeks to "lead the way" in terms of how services are delivered to the local community by implementing best practices from both within, and outside of workforce. WFS innovates through: 1) rapid adoption of technology in every aspect of service delivery for both the Job Seeker and Employer customers, 2) deploying social media campaigns with micro-targeted marketing initiatives, 3) high quality websites with interactive features for the Workforce Career Center network as well as project specific websites, 4) use of chat functions to meet customers where they are, 5) industry and community job fairs,; and 6) active participation in Industry Cluster and Career Pathway committees/projects.

To ensure efficient and effective resource utilization, WFS also reviews (1) internal quality assurance indicators

and (2) staff productivity reports to measure progress towards achieving operational excellence and high performance. These internal reports are reviewed with the sub-recipient and provide data for immediate action to address performance deficiencies.

18. A description of how training services outlined in WIOA §134 will be provided through the use of Individual Training Accounts (ITAs), including, if contracts for training services will be used, how the use of such contracts will be coordinated with the use of ITAs under that chapter, and how the Board will ensure informed customer choice in the selection of training programs, regardless of how the training services are to be provided.

WFS approves training providers through the TWC Eligible Training Provider System (ETPS). The basis for all trainings listed on the ETPS is the WFS Board adopted Target Occupations list. WFS staff conduct an analysis of regional economic conditions, and evaluate industry/occupational growth projections, economic development trends, and other regional factors to determine the occupations that represent the best targets for investment of workforce development resources. WFS staff also work with regional education providers (1) to encourage them to submit applications for inclusion on the ETPS for programs aligned to the Target and Demand Occupations List and (2) to encourage/assist them in developing programs aligned to regional economic and trainee needs.

WIOA customers (Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Out of School Youth) are provided access to training on the ETPS through Individual Training Accounts (ITA). Customers seeking to access training services complete a comprehensive assessment to determine the need, interest and eligibility for training services, and are provided with a full orientation and coaching regarding selection of an appropriate training provider and use of the ETPS. Information provided to customers seeking to access an ITA includes provider/program performance data, training cost, accessibility, and relevant labor market information and Career Pathway information. WIOA customers are counseled to review all information prior to making selection. ITAs are required to be within WFS Board approved allowable limits.

19. A description of how one-stop centers are implementing and transitioning to an integrated, technology-enabled intake and case management information system for programs carried out under WIOA and by one-stop partners.

WFS utilizes The Workforce Information System of Texas (TWIST) and WorkInTexas.com (WIT) as directed by TWC for integrated, technology-enabled intake and case management for programs carried out under WIOA and by one-stop partners. As core partners are incorporated into the service delivery model (e.g. AEL and Rehabilitation Services), WFS will modify practices as directed by TWC to integrate systems and/or enable data entry of core partners. Workforce Career Centers also utilize (1) WCCT, an automated system from the point of entry to capture customer information and track to the core partner customer traffic, (2) an inter-office referral system to account for the services core partners provide and (3) a Web-Based system for service registration of individuals seeking AEL services and sharing this information with Region One ESC.

In addition, WFS has established a Workforce System Workgroup with core partners and additional community partners providing social services, educational services, AEL and TWC Rehabilitation Services Division to develop and test requirements for a common system intake/referral system. The system will directly link representatives and core partner staff will capture common customer data requirements at point of entry and provide for efficient referral with clear description of services and anticipated outcomes. This system will also enable all partners providing services to document customer progress and outcomes to ensure a continuity of

concurrent or sequential services, and will be used to measure successful performance within each partner's unique services or additional reporting requirements.

20. The Board policy to ensure that priority for adult individualized career services and training services will be given to recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient, consistent with WIOA §134(c)(3)(E) and §680.600 of the Final Regulations.

WFS has in place an approved policy in compliance with above cited section. Board policy is also compliant with the TWC Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act: Guidelines for Adults, Dislocated Workers, and Youth revised September 26, 2016 (WD Letter 12-15), stating:

"Individualized career services and training services must be given on a priority basis, regardless of funding levels; to:

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

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

Refer to Board Policies SKL 009.05 and Youth 007.02 governing use of ITAs, to include any limitations imposed by WFS. Also, refer to response 19 in the Operational Elements section of this Plan regarding local use of ITAs.

An overview of ITA Limits and Exceptions in referenced Board Policy SKL 009.05 is below:

ITA Limits

"The amount of funds authorized for an ITA will be based on the training provider's cost (tuition and fees) and other required related program expenses (books, supplies, equipment, tools, uniforms) for the current program year; however, the Board will impose a limit on the length of time and the aggregate amount of an ITA as follows:

1. Maximum amount of time allowed for the use of an ITA - two (2) program years
2. Maximum amount of an ITA - $9,000 ($4,500 per program year)

Customers may select a training program that costs more than the maximum amount available for the ITA if other sources of funds are available to supplement the ITA, e.g., Pell Grants, scholarships, severance pay, etc."

Exceptions

"Exceptions to the requirement that training services for eligible customers are be financed through ITAs include the following:

- On-the-Job training and customized training; or
- With prior approval from TWC, as determined by the Board, there is:

- An insufficient number of eligible training providers in the workforce area to accomplish the purpose of an ITA; or

- A training services program of demonstrated effectiveness offered in the workforce area by a community-based organization, which serves special participant populations that face multiple barriers to employment."

In addition, according to WFS Policy Youth 007.02 "ITAs are one training option available to eligible out-of-school youth participants when it is determined by the career counselor that they will be unlikely or unable to obtain or retain employment that leads to self-sufficiency." Youth participants receiving ITAs are bound to the Limits and Exceptions identified above.

22. A description of the design framework for youth programs in the local area, and how the 14 program elements required in §681.460 of the Final Regulations are to be made available within that framework.

The WFS Youth Program framework is designed to ensure effective service delivery and to maximize the participation of as many eligible youths as possible.

The program serves two main categories of youth: Out-of-School Youth (OSY) and In-School Youth (ISY). Both categories have significant barriers to employment and post-secondary education, including literacy skills deficiencies, substance abuse, and other socio-economic barriers. In addition, job-readiness skills are consistently identified as primary barriers for youth employment. Often referred to as "soft skills," youth must learn non-technical workplace competencies, including problem-solving and other cognitive skills, oral communication skills, personal qualities and work ethic, and interpersonal and teamwork skills. The critical goal for program participants is either advancement into post-secondary education or the attainment of employment with a family-sustaining or self-sustaining wage.

Services provided through the youth program include:

Recruitment and Outreach: Conduct activities, including outreach to local government facilities, non-profit and faith-based organizations that provide support services to disconnected youth and young adults; including the use of word-of-mouth referrals, and social media platforms.

Objective assessment of academic level, skills level, and service needs: Each participant is assessed to include:

- Test of Adult Basic Education – Designed to effectively assess both the knowledge and skills of learners.
- CAPs & COPs Assessment –A computerized career assessment that measures both aptitude and career interest to help begin the career or educational planning process.

Development of Individual Service Strategies: Each participant participates in the development of individual services strategies to include:

- Customized career pathway plan
- Addressing barriers
- Setting goals and related activities
- The documenting of achievements/credentials

Engagement**:** Youth participants often face challenges and life obstacles that result in the cycling in and out of program services. To ensure ongoing engagement workforce staff:

- Recognize the hardships of each individual participant and work to establish trust and create an atmosphere where both participants and staff feel invested in their success.
- Set achievable goals with the participant early in the process and communicate the progress towards meeting the goals.
- Communicate regularly and effectively with the participant, to include programs available services, activities, expectations and the availability of support services that may remove any barriers to participation.
- If participant leaves or exits the program, the career counselor remains in contact with that individual and encourage re-engagement through phone calls, texts, social media, or in person visits at their home.

To adequately address youth barriers, WFS incorporate the required 14 youth program elements as follows:

- *Tutoring, study skills training.* Youth participants in need of tutoring or study skills training are connected with the resources that best meet their individual needs whether it be an internal or external service. For external services, customers are connected with community resources within educational systems (i.e. Communities in Schools, GEAR UP). Internally, utilizing the WIN Work Keys courseware, participants are engaged in an interactive curriculum providing foundational skills instruction encompassing ten career & education oriented skill and proficiency areas needed in today's workplace.
- *Alternative secondary school services or dropout recovery services.* Through community referrals and partnerships, youth participants in need of alternative secondary school services or dropout recovery services are connected to educational institutions or service providers that best meet their needs (i.e. AEL providers, school recovery programs, STC).
- *Paid Work Experience/On the Job Training.* Paid work experience and job readiness opportunities are offered year-round to youth participants who are seeking career exploration and the development of work readiness skills. Participants are placed in a 35-hour job readiness course which targets employability, soft skills, entrepreneurship, and financial literacy skills development. Upon completion, the participant is placed at a worksite that is aligned with their career goals. Youth participants who are seeking permanent employment and skills upgrades are connected with On-the-Job Training opportunities.
- *Occupational Skills Training.* Eligible youth participants are connected with occupational skills training that are aligned with local target and in-demand occupations via the Eligible Training Provider System or WFS designated contracted trainings.
- *Education offered concurrently with and in the same context as workforce preparation activities and training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster.* WFS in partnership with Region One ESC and South Texas College work collaboratively to develop stronger linkages with employers. Core partners support ongoing engagement with employers in the design, delivery, and evaluation of career pathways educational programs, integrated education and training, and workforce preparation activities that are responsive to regional and local labor market demands.
- *Leadership Development.* Leadership development activities are offered that encourage responsibility, employability and other positive social behaviors, such as community and service learning projects, exposure to postsecondary educational possibilities, life skills, training in decision-making, including determining priorities and problem solving.
- *Support Services.* Eligible youth participants are connected with supportive services to remove barriers to

participation in WIOA program activities. Supportive services include childcare, transportation assistance, work-related and training-related expenses.

- *Adult Mentoring.* Opportunities to participate in mentoring programs are provided that foster career awareness and positive social behaviors via a virtual adult mentoring system and through local community resources.
- *Follow Up Services.* Follow-up services are provided to participants after completion that allows workforce staff to monitor the youth's success during their transition to employment or further education and to provide assistance as needed for a successful transition. Services are provided for not less than 12 months after the youth's completion of participation.
- *Comprehensive guidance and counseling.* Youth participants who are in need of comprehensive guidance and counseling are referred and connected with community resources and service providers. Referrals to guidance and counseling includes drug and alcohol counseling, mental heal counseling/therapy, educational counseling, etc.
- *Financial Literacy Education.* Youth participants who engage in the job readiness programs receive financial literacy education to better support their ability to understand, evaluate, and compare financial products, services and opportunities.
- *Entrepreneurial Skills Training.* Youth participants who engage in our job readiness programs receive entrepreneurship education that provides an introduction to the values and basics of starting and running a business from both the employer and employee perspectives. Youth interested in furthering their entrepreneurial skills are connected with additional community resources. (SBDC, UTRGV, etc.)
- *Services that provide labor market and employment information about in-demand industry sectors or occupations.* As a standard offering within our workforce system, youth participants are engaged in multiple services throughout that provide labor market and in-demand industry information such as occupations, pay, career awareness, in addition to career counseling, and career exploration services.
- *Activities that help youth prepare for and transition to postsecondary education and training.* Youth participants interested in preparing for transition to post-secondary education and training participate in transition planning with assigned career counselors to include but not limited to individualized career planning, post-secondary education application assistance, post-secondary education financial aid assistance, the coordination of post-secondary education campus visits, study skills workshops utilizing internal and external resources.

23. A description of how the Board will encourage Registered Apprenticeship programs in its area to register with the eligible training provider system in order to receive WIOA funding.

WFS encourages Registered Apprenticeship programs through collaboration with area educational institutions and employers to (1) identify apprenticeship programs currently operating that can be registered with the Eligible Training Provider System (ETPS) and (2) inventory current pre-apprenticeship programs or related initiatives that can be scaled up into full registered apprenticeship programs.

The WFS Community Engagement and Contract Administration departments work collaboratively with area higher education partners to outreach and educate employers regarding the benefits of apprenticeship programs to include:

- <u>Registered Apprenticeship program eligibility in the ETPS</u>: Under WIOA, all Registered Apprenticeship program sponsors are automatically eligible to be placed on the ETPS.

- Registered Apprenticeship benefits: Registered apprenticeships provide many benefits including nationally recognized credential for apprentices and state tax credits for businesses.

Outreach and marketing efforts are not limited to traditional apprenticeship industries (e.g. skilled trades, construction, manufacturing, etc.). WFS also outreach non-traditional industries employers, such as healthcare, to participate in apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs.

24. A description of the Board's strategy and commitment to support ApprenticeshipTexas efforts across the state, as applicable.

WFS is an active participant in the TWC Apprenticeship Texas program, and shall support the effort by:

- Publicly recognizing support by including its logo on printed material and website;

- Providing assistance to local entities, including industry leaders, economic development organizations, etc. in the development of registered apprenticeship training programs in the service area; and

- Developing outreach strategies for both traditional and non-traditional industries.

In addition, WFS may make in-kind contributions to support this project, such as provision of meeting space or volunteer staff to ensure the success of this endeavor, and will actively outreach regional stakeholders to support and participate in the initiative. WFS has already garnered support from the Rio South Texas Economic Development Council (RSTC). RSTC has agreed to (1) publicly recognize supporting ApprenticeshipTexas, (2) assist in the identification and outreach of traditional and non-traditional industry sectors that would benefit from apprenticeship, and (3) promote this initiative through its website and social media platforms.

Operational Elements Attachments:

1. Cooperative Agreements (reference response 14)
    a. Texas Workforce Commission Non-Financial Agreement Amendment: 2316ABA000
    b. Region One Education Service Center (ESC) Region 20 (Adult Education)
2. Board Priority of Service Policy (reference response 21)
3. Board ITA Policy (reference response 22)

Footnotes:

1. http://www.riograndelng.com
2. http://cnas.tamu.edu/TIPA%20Impacts%20of%20Increased%20Produce%20Imports%20from%20Mexico.pdf
3. http://today.agrilife.org/2014/06/18/ribera-takes-new-international-trade-jobmexico-creates-opportunity-for-weslaco-agricultural-economist/
http://www.usmexicobridge.us/about-rio-grande-city/baluarte-bridge
http://www.thepacker.com/fruit-vegetable-news/South-Texas-produce-shipments-surge--246880571.html
4. http://www.techpreprgv.com
5. http://www.riosouthtexas.com/node/828
6. http://riograndeguardian.com/future-medical-school-means-transformative-growth-in-edinburg/
7. http://ftp.premierhighschools.com/category/featured/
8. http://www.riosouthtexas.com/node/836
9. http://academicaffairs.southtexascollege.edu/highschool/
10. http://academicaffairs.southtexascollege.edu/highschool/academies/
11. http://www.esc1.net/page/182
12. holt cat® celebrates grand opening of Edinburg store
13. http://riograndeguardian.com/massive-manufacturing-plant-opens-in-mission/
14. http://www.riosouthtexas.com/node/834
15. http://www.naamrei.org/about/
16. http://blog.mcallenedc.org/?cat=236331
17. http://www.texasmonthly.com/articles/countdown-to-liftoff/
https://rebusinessonline.com/dynamic-fast-growth-comes-to-the-four-county-area-of-rio-south-texas/
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-moore/the-rockets-green-glare_b_5654957.html#
18. http://www.weslacoairport.com/files/Weslaco.pdf
19. http://texasborderbusiness.com/harlingen-aerotropolis-at-valley-international-airport-designated-shovel-ready-site/
20. http://www.qualfon.com/blog/2015/05/18/may-18-2015-harlingen-texas-qualfon-grand-opening-ceremony-celebrates-harlingens-ideal-domestic-value/
21. http://www.teletech.com/about-us/newsroom/press-release/teletech-opening-new-customer-experience-center-mcallen-texas#.WC3QC3eZPSI
22. http://riograndeguardian.com/future-medical-school-means-transformative-growth-in-edinburg/
23. (www.utrgv.edu/sbdc/)
24. (http://www.rubyredventures.com)
25. http://mcallen.org
26. (http://www.mcallenart.com/about-us)
27. http://www.utrgv.edu/en-us/research/services/economic-development/entrepreneurship/index.htm
28. (http://www.wbcrgv.org)
29. http://www.codergv.org/cow
30. (http://www.pvida.net)