

Strategic Plan Modification

Effective October 1, 2009 through September 30, 2010
for the

South Plains Regional Workforce Development Board Area

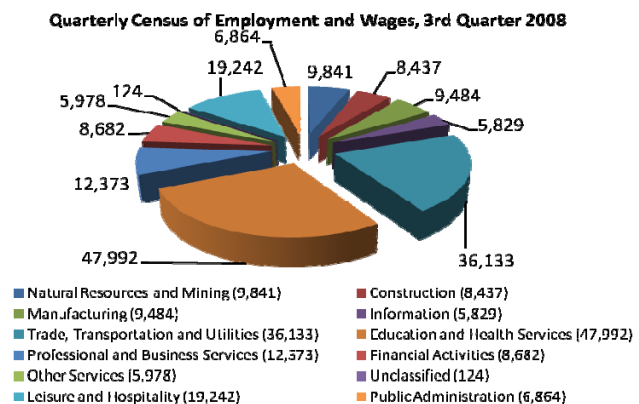
PART I: Introduction

The Fiscal Year 2009-2010 strategic plan for the South Plains Regional Workforce Development Board (SPRWDB), dba WorkForce Solutions South Plains (herein, “WorkForce Solutions” or the “Board”), sets forth the objectives and key strategies that will direct the business of the South Plains Regional Workforce Development System for the period beginning October 1, 2009 and ending September 30, 2010. The Board’s vision - to build a strong network of community partnerships that makes our customers competitive in the global marketplace - will be the driving force that leads us to the accomplishment of our mission, which is to develop and support, through partnerships, a workforce development system that meets employer’s needs, that creates jobs with career paths, and that educates, trains and employs workers. By establishing a community partnership between the public workforce system, educational organizations, business and industry, economic development, and community-based organizations, the Board will build and implement solutions for workforce challenges in an effective and resourceful manner.

1.1 Background

The Board is comprised of 35 members with diverse interests and abilities that oversee the operations of the South Plains Regional Workforce Development System. WorkForce Solutions was established as a 501C3 Non-profit Corporation in 1998 to administer workforce development services authorized by the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) for the 15-county South Plains Regional Workforce Development Area (WDA) which consists of Bailey, Cochran, Crosby, Dickens, Floyd, Garza, Hale, Hockley, King, Lamb, Lubbock, Lynn, Motley, Terry and Yoakum Counties. Pursuant to Texas Government Code §2308.256, Board members are appointed by the local Chief Elected Officials (CEO’s) and reflect the ethnic, gender and geographic diversity of the WDA.

The Region encompasses one Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA): Lubbock and Crosby Counties comprise the Lubbock MSA. The U. S. Census estimates the population for the 15-county region to be 385,254.¹ Of this number, 32% of our citizens reside outside of the Lubbock MSA. The population is expected to grow at a rate of 1.3% over the next five years as compared to the projected growth rate for Texas as a whole of 8.8%. Projections indicate that some of our more populous rural counties - Cochran, Dickens, Floyd, and Motley Counties – will experience population losses ranging as high as



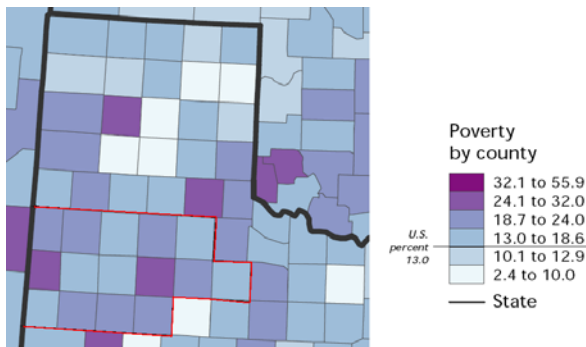
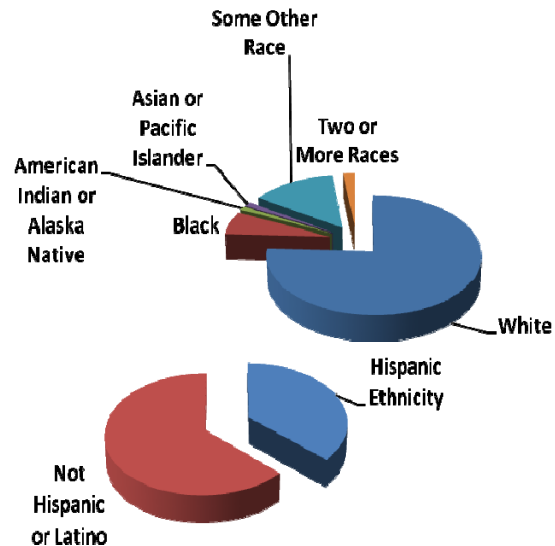
¹ U. S. Census Bureau, July 2008 Population Estimates

4.1% to 11.2% from 2008 to 2013.²

The Region as a whole enjoys one of the lowest unemployment rates in the State, 4.9% in March 2009³, up from 3.6% in March 08 but still 1.8% below the Texas rate of 6.7% for the same period. The Region was experiencing a similar rate of 4.3% two years ago in April 2006 - attesting to the area's stability in spite of the recent economic downturn. The primary industries are Education and Health Services and Trade, Transportation and Utilities as shown on the chart on the previous page. Average weekly wages are consistently below the Statewide average, averaging 26% below the Statewide average for at least the past five years.⁴ In 2008, the median household income in the South Plains Region was \$39,797, compared to the Texas median which was \$51,025.⁵ The Civilian Labor Force numbered 204,157 in March 2009, posting a decline of 3,864 persons over the previous year. A total of 10,037 of the Region's residents were unemployed in March 2009.

The racial makeup of the South Plains Region is illustrated in the chart to the right. People of Hispanic ethnicity, counted independently of race, comprised an estimated 36.9% of the Region's population in 2008, a slightly higher percentage than that of the State as a whole which was 36.8% in 2008. School enrollments, however, reflect a larger Hispanic population with 52% of the Region 17 Education Service Center's student population of Hispanic ethnicity. The percentage for the South Plains is projected to increase to 39.2% in 2013; however, the large student population signals a greater increase than projections may indicate. Studies indicate that Hispanics traditionally have had lower rates of school completion, higher dropout rates, a greater likelihood to function below grade level, and less chance to be enrolled in college.⁶ This trend presents special challenges for the workforce development system.

Ethnic and Racial Composition of the South Plains Region



The U.S. Census Bureau estimates the 2007 poverty population for the South Plains Region for people of all ages at 67,439 persons. Percentages by county range from 15% to 24% as compared to the State average of 16% of the population during that same period. The image to the left illustrates the percentages by county

² Projections based on U. S. Census Bureau data, published by Experian/Applied Geographic Solutions, 2008, for Cochran, Dickens, Floyd and Motley Counties.

³ TWC, Local Area Unemployment Statistics, Not Seasonally Adjusted.

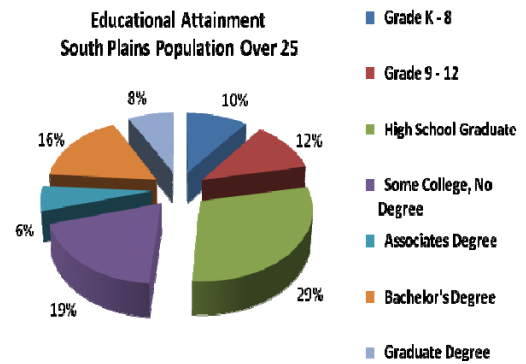
⁴ As of second quarter of 2008, the average weekly wage for all industries, all occupations, was \$632, approximately 26% lower than the Statewide average of \$849. Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, 2nd Qr. 2008.

⁵ SitesonTexas.com, Experian Applied Solutions, 2008.

⁶ Texas Strategic Two-Year State Workforce Investment Plan, 2005-2007

for the Region (outlined in red).⁷ School enrollment records indicate that 58% of the students enrolled in Region 17 ESC schools, which includes our Region's school districts, are economically disadvantaged.⁸

The educational attainment levels for the South Plains population over 25 are illustrated in the chart to the right. Of the 2008 population aged 25 or over, a number totaling approximately 235,103 persons, 22% had not completed high school; 29% were high school graduates; and 30% had completed a college degree program.⁹ In 2006, of 236,438 persons over 25, 26.8% had not completed high school; 24.7% were high school graduates; and 23.6% had completed a college degree program.¹⁰ Clearly, the workforce development system has made significant progress in increasing the educational attainment of the residents of the South Plains.



A review of school completion rates reported for the 2006-2007 school year for the Region 17 Education Service Center Region indicates a longitudinal dropout rate of 12.3% for the Class of 2007. Dropout rates for the 15 counties included in the South Plains Region range from as high as 19% in Hale County and 13.9% in Lubbock County, the Region's most populous areas, to 2.8% in Cochran County.¹¹ The Texas Education Agency reports that 60% of the Class of 2007 tested for college admission with only 25.8% testing at or above the criterion indicating College Readiness.¹² The WorkForce Solutions Board of Directors have responded to the need for improvement in the achievement levels of our Region's student population and recently adopted new strategic goals and objectives to address this need.

Currently, 9.6% of South Plains residents are 55 to 64 years of age and the number is projected to increase by 12.3% by 2013. The projected increase is not as high as the increase of 23% projected for the State as a whole. However, in counties like Cochran, Crosby, Floyd, Lamb where the population over 55 years of age already comprises 27% or more of the total population,¹³ the projected increase poses a significant challenge for the workforce system as well as for other systems such as Health Care and Education in the coming years.

The primary challenges facing the South Plains Workforce Development System in the next few years include higher than average high school dropout rates in some of the Region's rural counties coupled with declining academic achievement, especially low numbers of students achieving college readiness relative to the number of students interested in pursuing a post-secondary education; a declining rural population; the aging of the workforce; and relatively low average income in the rural areas. The Board has established strategic goals that will strengthen the Region's ability to confront and overcome these challenges in order to ensure continued economic growth and prosperity for residents of the South Plains.

⁷ U.S. Census Bureau, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates, 2007, <http://www.census.gov/cgi-bin/saie/saie.cgi>.

⁸ Texas Education Agency, Academic Excellence Indicator System, 2008.

⁹ SitesonTexas.com, Experian-Applied Geographic Solutions, based on U. S. Census Bureau estimates, 2008.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Texas Education Agency, "Secondary School Completion and Dropouts in Texas Public Schools, 2006-2007" and Academic Excellence Indicator System, 2008.

¹² Texas Education Agency, Snapshot 2008 Summary Tables, Region 17 Education Service Center.

¹³ SitesonTexas.com, Experian-Applied Geographic Solutions, based on U. S. Census Bureau estimates, 2008.

1.2 Duties and Functions of the Board

The duties and functions of the SPRWDB include, but are not limited to, the following responsibilities:

- ❖ Serving as a single point of contact for local businesses to communicate their skill needs;
- ❖ Developing a local plan for addressing the workforce development needs of the local area;
- ❖ Serving as the Board's fiscal agent to be responsible and accountable for the management of all workforce development funds available to the Board;
- ❖ Creating local workforce development centers;
- ❖ Reviewing plans for workforce education to ensure that the plans address the needs of local businesses and recommend changes in delivery of education services as appropriate;
- ❖ Assuming the functions and responsibilities of local workforce development advisory boards, councils, and committees;
- ❖ Monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the Business and Career Centers and other contractors providing workforce training programs and services; and,
- ❖ Promoting cooperation and coordination among public organizations, community organizations and private business providing workforce development services.

1.3 Service Delivery

The Board receives funding from TWC from eight funding streams to administer such programs as the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Choices Employment Services, Trade Act Services (TAA), Veteran's Services, Wagner-Peyser Employment Services (ES), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Employment and Training, and subsidized child care under the federal Child Care and Development Fund.

The Board administers approximately \$14 Million in funding each year. Additional funding is available to the Board during FY2010 through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). Approximately half of the funds are dedicated to the provision of subsidized child care services.

The WorkForce Solutions Business and Career Centers are the points of access to the programs and services available to the Region's employers and jobseekers. The six full-service centers and two satellite offices all provide employers and jobseekers with the resources needed to connect to employment solutions. Since 1998, over 450,000 South Plains residents from a 15-county area have benefited from the services offered by WorkForce Solutions. Over 39,000 job seekers sought employment services, more than 18,626 job-seekers were placed in employment and 370 individuals were enrolled in training programs. Over 11,324 employers were served and over 6,700 of their job openings were filled. These numbers reflect the need for employment and training related services in the South Plains Region. Additionally, these numbers confirm the need for increased employer outreach initiatives to increase the number of job openings that are posted through Work-in-Texas.com in 2010 and beyond.

The Region's youth are served by the Youth Zone program, a program designed to provide information and counseling for young people as they make their career decisions. Youth Zone participants have access to resources on money management, preparing for college, and career planning. The 235 in-school and out-of-school youth served during FY 2008 by the YouthZone

program participated in the Board's First Generation Grant Program which provided support and financial assistance to many to encourage college attendance. These students also had an opportunity for work experiences. Over 390 students were served through the Board's SEED (Summer Employment for Economic Development) Program. The Board plans to serve approximately 500 youth in summer employment and other activities to promote workforce readiness during the summer of 2009 made possible by the WIA funding received through the ARRA.

The WorkForce Solutions Child Care Services center is the provider of child care services funding. As the largest funding agent for child care services in the South Plains, WorkForce Solutions Child Care Services provides parents with quality care as they pursue training and/or employment activities. Approximately \$7 Million dollars are expended annually to subsidize the child care needs of low-income and otherwise eligible program participants throughout the South Plains Region. The number of children in subsidized childcare in the region averaged 2,166 children per day. The Board has assisted 19 childcare providers in achieving Texas Rising Star Certification signifying their commitment to provide high-quality childcare services. Employers benefit from these services through the increased productivity and reliability of employees who have access to dependable child care. ARRA funding received will allow the Board to increase the number of families served through the Child Care Services program during FY2010.

The Board's "funded programs" are the community partners who receive funding from the Board to administer a variety of employment and training initiatives. A listing of these partners along with additional details regarding their activities is included in Parts III and IV of the strategic plan.

The Board has invested in advanced technology and is now maintaining local website and e-mail exchange systems. Computer equipment and systems are continuously upgraded to state-of-the-art throughout the WorkForce Solutions Career Centers and Child Care System facilities.

1.4 Strategic Goals

The Board meets annually as needed to review the strategic goals for the upcoming year. The Board has established the following goals to guide the workforce system for the period covered by this strategic plan, FY 2010.

1. Increased Employer Driven Initiatives
2. Increased Rural Enhancement Initiatives
3. Enhanced Educational Opportunities for Youth
4. Increased Marketing Initiatives including Branding/Awareness Strategies

Additional information on the Board's goals and objectives is provided in Section II, Strategic Narrative. WorkForce Solutions delivers quality service while practicing the highest standards of ethics and accountability to the public and is committed to excellence in the efficient and effective deployment of public resources. The Board anticipates achieving a fair rate of return on taxpayer investment in the development of the Region's workforce as an outcome of achieving the stated goals.

As part of the annual strategic planning process, the Board convenes the Labor Market Information (LMI) Task Force, a group of local and regional partners, employers and stakeholders, and engages them in the process of identifying the industry sectors and

occupations that will be targeted for expenditures of Workforce Investment Funds for the upcoming fiscal year. The LMI Task Force is an advisory group to the Board and recommends the high-growth, high-demand industries and occupations that represent the best investment of workforce system funds and the greatest potential for enhancing the Region's economic prosperity. The Task Force analyzes labor market information and local industry and occupational trends, including pending and potential economic development projects, local skills shortages, and workforce training needs. Additional information on the criteria used to identify the targeted industries and occupations for FY 2010 is provided in Part II – Strategic Narrative.

1.5 Performance Monitoring

The Board is responsible for the planning, oversight and implementation of workforce development programs throughout the South Plains Region. In addition to the performance measures reported to TWC, the Board utilizes a WorkForce Solutions System Report prepared monthly by the Workforce Center Contractor to report on system activity that is not captured by the Board's contracted and common performance measures. The indicators included in this System Performance Report are Training Services Activities provided by county. Specific indicators are listed below:

Training Information

1. Individuals enrolled in training by training program
2. Individuals completing training
3. Amount of Individual Training Accounts funded
4. Individuals placed in employment
5. Number of out-of-school and in-school youth served
6. Amount of Youth Program funding expenditures

The WorkForce Solutions System Report will be used, along with performance reports on the contracted and common measures, to monitor the Board's progress in achieving its goals.

In addition to the System Report, the Board reviews the contractor's performance on a quarterly basis as reported on the Contractor's Quarterly Performance Report and periodically through the WorkinTexas.com database. Business Services Unit activities and activities provided to WIA, Project RIO, SNAP and TANF customers are reviewed on an ongoing basis as part of the Board's ongoing monitoring process.

During FY2010, the Board will provide additional performance reports to TWC on training and other services provided which are funded by ARRA program funds. In addition to the training information listed above, reports will include information on support services, childcare services and related program expenditures. Reporting is conducted in compliance with the ARRA requirements for full accountability and complete transparency of ARRA funding expenditures.

1.5 Format

Strategies planned for the next two years that will enable the system to achieve the previously stated goals are the subject of Part II of this strategic plan. Part III describes the operations of the SPRWDB service delivery system, the system structure and processes, and the mechanisms that gear us toward continuous improvement. Part IV provides supporting information to address compliance issues and related planning issues.

Part II: Strategic Narrative

Strategy 1: Increased Employer Driven Initiatives

The SPWDB continues to identify and embrace innovative ways to respond to the needs of business and industry. Over the past two years, the South Plains Workforce system has shifted its focus from basic employer services to customized business services that serve the needs of industry; from an emphasis on 'listing and placement' services to a more holistic approach that extends beyond meeting an employer's worker requirements and seeks to increase the employer's global competitiveness; from a program/center role to a more systemic role that provides leadership to the partners and stakeholders with a vested interest in workforce development. WorkForce Solutions increasingly engages employers and other workforce partners in validating the focus of the system's goals and in guiding the allocation of resources that will maximize our success and the success of South Plains employers. Through this process, WorkForce Solutions has positioned itself to become the primary point of contact for resolving employment and business issues in the South Plains Region. The strategies and mechanisms employed to engage employer participation and maximize employer satisfaction are described in the sections below.

Employer Feedback Mechanisms

The employer feedback loop is vital because all workforce partners (economic developers, businesses, the Texas workforce system, and educators) coordinate with each other in ways that ensure workers will be trained to meet businesses' needs. As a result, the mutual needs of job seekers, the Texas workforce system, employers, and economic developers will all be met. The employer feedback loop promotes continuous evaluation and improvement of strategies and programs as the Board continually examines and adjusts service offerings based upon the demands of the local market. By gathering feedback from local employers and individuals, the Board develops strategies that will enable the existing service delivery network to meet the needs of these groups and will foster their increased participation in the workforce development system.

WorkForce Solutions has developed mechanisms that engage local businesses in dialogue for validation and identification of the knowledge, skills, and abilities they require in their workforce in order to grow and compete, not only regionally but globally. The Business Services Unit (BSU) collects information on the future workforce needs of employers and posts available openings in WorkinTexas.com. In the Spring of 2008 and again in Spring of 2009, employers were asked to provide information on their labor and hiring needs. Results of the Employer Survey have informed decision-making regarding the industries and occupations to be targeted for Workforce Investment Act (WIA) training expenditures. The results of the survey conducted in 2009 are provided in Appendix 2 of the strategic plan. The information will be collected on an ongoing basis to inform the workforce system regarding projected changes in labor demand and changes in employer needs for workforce training. Once the Board determines the skills that that are most in demand and training needed, the Board can begin the process of working with training providers to update or revise available training options.

Since 2007, the Board has worked closely with small manufacturers in the region, local school districts, and South Plains College (SPC) to develop the career pathway for the Manufacturing Certified Production Technician Occupation (CPT) as part of a grant received from TWC's "Meeting Industries Critical Workforce Needs" Grant Program. The manufacturers worked with the grant partners, including the two local school districts, the Texas Manufacturing Assistance Center and SPC, to validate the MSSC curriculum and validate the customized curriculum

developed by SPC for a new certificate program and an Associates in Applied Science Degree program designed to prepare Industrial Manufacturing Technicians. The career pathway has been articulated from the high school level to the community college level and on through the four-year Industrial Engineering degree level at Texas Tech University. In addition, two manufacturers in the region are involved in providing CPT training for incumbent workers, not only to their own workforce, but as part of the SPC Workforce Development Division's continuing education course offerings.

In 2008, small employers, including members of the Lubbock Apartment Association, asked the Board to assist them in building the supply of trained maintenance technicians. The Board collaborated with SPC and assisted in the development of a customized training program for General Management Technicians that includes an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Certification, an OSHA Safety Training Certification – with training provided by the Texas Manufacturing Assistance Center, a program affiliated with the Texas Tech University System. The participating employers committed to hire the trainees who completed the training, once basic criteria were met. The Board assisted SPC in completing a Self-sufficiency Fund Grant Application and SPC was awarded a grant to train 60 or more workers. The grant will end in 2009; however, the program developed will continue to be offered to the Region's unskilled workers who desire to enter the construction and maintenance fields.

During PY2007, the Lubbock Chamber of Commerce conducted a survey of over 1,000 employers with responses received from 269 employers. The majority, 66%, of those responding reported familiarity with the services offered by WorkForce Solutions. When asked how satisfied employers were with WorkForce services, 91 responded with 27 reporting being somewhat satisfied, 40 reporting being satisfied and 16 reporting being very satisfied for a total of 83 reporting satisfaction with the system. The Board engaged Texas Tech University in the development of an online survey system to survey employers and obtain information to both inform the strategic planning process and deliver labor market information. The first of four surveys was deployed in April 2008 with 144 employers responding. Of those, 20 requested a visit from the BSU representative and 90 requested labor market information. Reports containing occupational growth rates and average hourly wages for the Lubbock MSA for key occupations in the employer's industry were mailed out to each of the 90 employers requesting the packet of information. As an example of the feedback received, 42% of employers reported difficulty growing their business due to a lack of skilled labor and 31% reported that increased ability in assessing core competencies to determine needed skills would enhance their hiring effectiveness. Small employers have also provided input via a Labor and Hiring Needs Survey conducted in April 2009 wherein they identified the types of occupations they projected they would need to hire in the next two to three years. Through this survey and a survey completed in October 2008, employers have told us that they project to hire over 12,000 workers in the next few years. The information obtained through these survey efforts is being used to improve program services.

WorkForce Solutions has targeted and prioritized services using labor market data, local demographic data, results from employer surveys and local wisdom. Local wisdom has been obtained primarily through meetings of the Labor Market Information (LMI) Task Force, a group comprised of workforce professionals, training providers, and other community representatives including a representative of our local Congressman and representatives of the WorkForce Solutions Board. Members of the Task Force have guided the targeting process and have validated the data gathered from TWC, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and other sources by applying their wisdom and expertise as to the needs of industry to the analysis. More

information on the Task Force and major insights gained is provided in Appendix 2 of the strategic plan.

In 2010, the Board will collaborate with regional economic development entities to offer services to employers to help them recruit workers to fill long-standing job vacancies in occupations with significant skills shortages. The Lubbock Economic Development Alliance, Floyd County Economic Development, Brownfield Economic Development and Muleshoe Economic Development Corporations will partner with the Board to promote WorkForce Solutions Programs and training resources available to incumbent workers to increase retention in the rural areas. In addition, the Board will facilitate the placement of over 200 individuals from areas of the Nation experiencing labor surplus and high unemployment to fill long-standing job vacancies and assist with their relocation to the South Plains Region. The South Plains Recruitment and Reemployment Initiative will leverage funding invested by local economic development entities to recruit business to the South Plains Region and retain businesses in the rural areas.

It is anticipated that, in addition to providing an excellent source of intelligence regarding industry trends, this initiative will have a significant positive impact on the Board's contracted performance measures, particularly the Reemployment and Employer Engagement measures. Market Share will be positively impacted by increasing the number of employers that receive specialized or other services and utilize the Work-in-Texas system. Relationship-building activities are expected to build customer loyalty and lead to an increase in the number of employers who are repeat customers thereby positively impacting the Board's Sustainability Measure. Increased usage of the Work-in-Texas system will positively impact the Job Openings Filled Measure by providing more opportunities for WorkForce Solutions Career Centers to successfully place job seekers.

Employer Satisfaction

Initiatives to increase employer input into the system have as their objective a resultant increase in the Board's awareness and understanding of employer needs. Information gained from these initiatives will be used for continuous process improvement as well as to guide and direct the Board's priorities and the Board's ability to stay in step with evolving business practices and technological advances within targeted industries. With information as to the Region's employer needs in hand, the system can then effectively assess, guide, motivate and train the right workers for the right jobs, translating employer needs into career guidance and training programs. The bottom line is that employer satisfaction is maximized when the workforce system is providing well-qualified employees that can fulfill the needs of business; well-qualified employees translate into increased worker productivity which, in turn, fuels the economic prosperity of businesses, families and communities.

Often employers and workers are not aware of existing training resources and how to access them. As a catalyst for change, the Board is positioning itself to better assist employers in identifying their training needs and to connect them to appropriate training providers and services. In FY 2010, as part of the SPRR Initiative, the Board will implement a job profiling capability to facilitate job matches. The profiler will work with employers, in particular with small employers with limited human resource staff, to identify the skills needed for specific jobs. The profiler will be trained in assessing the skills and training needs of potential candidates in order to more successfully fill the employer's job vacancies.

Occupational assessment and screening are critical to ensuring that an employer's skill requirements are met and that competent employees are available when needed. Efforts to describe and classify the characteristics of the current labor force according to their knowledge, skills, abilities (KSA) and education are continuous and ongoing. Workforce Centers assess the overall employability of job seeker customers on an ongoing basis. Proposed strategies to increase the system's ability to increase employer satisfaction with WorkForce Solutions services include improved occupational assessment and assessment of worker preparedness. Support services and intensive services such as short-term, pre-vocational training options are made available to maximize the probability of success in meeting an employer's worker requirements. Workforce Center Counselors currently utilize the Prove-it and TABE (Texas Assessment of Basic Education) assessments to determine suitability for training.

New initiatives are planned to better meet the needs of South Plains employers for labor market information. SPWDB has collaborated with the Rural Workforce Network (RWN), a partnership comprised of five workforce boards located in the West Texas Region. The RWN boards which include South Plains, Panhandle, Permian Basin, Concho Valley, West Central Texas, and North Texas, are committed to work together to develop new strategies and resources to meet the labor force needs of the West Texas Region. As part of their commitment, the RWN shares best practices and coordinates strategic planning to the extent possible. In 2009, the Texas Workforce Commission conducted a Regional Labor Market Analysis for the RWN Region to determine the opportunities for increased collaboration and coordination to minimize duplication of services and maximize opportunities for leveraged resources. The study highlighted industries that are high-growth industries in the region. The Board will utilize the information to enhance service coordination. This information will also be used to inform decision-making regarding industry cluster alignment and resource allocation. For example, the data might highlight different occupational availabilities in surrounding regions that do not exist in the Lubbock MSA that represent targets of opportunity for economic growth that can be facilitated by appropriate workforce development efforts. More information regarding the study is provided in Appendix 2 of the strategic plan.

The Board will provide information on targeted industries and occupations, along with occupational profiles, information on career pathways and transferable skill sets on the WorkForce Solutions website. This automated exchange of qualitative and quantitative data will be current and accurate to the maximum extent possible to support businesses by providing information they need in order to develop and maintain a highly skilled labor force. In addition, beginning in FY 2010, as part of a grant-funded, regional coordination project, the Board will provide LMI and career information on the RWN website. Plans are in process to develop a website to provide information on occupational career pathways through the RWN website.

The BSU provides customized workshops and seminars for employers on such topics as customer service, unemployment insurance, immigration laws, increasing business productivity, employee rights and discipline, diversity and equal employment, and project management, among other topics. Employers are asked to evaluate the quality of seminars and workshops after each session. Evaluation forms are reviewed by Business Services Unit staff to determine where session content needs to be adjusted or revised. Employer input is used to determine the need for new offerings and select topics for future seminars or workshops. In 2010, in addition to the previously mentioned offerings, WorkForce Solutions will also offer training in topics to include: identification of competencies and skills; developing job profiles; devising an assessment strategy; developing a successful new employee orientation/transition process; and, developing training and talent development initiatives. Training will continue to be provided in centrally located areas of the Region, in Lubbock and also in the smaller rural communities.

Beginning in FY2010, as part of the RWN regional coordination grant project, the RWN will provide training videos online to address the needs of small, rural employers for training required by regulatory agencies such as the Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA). This effort is in response to employer input regarding the lack of training available to employers in rural areas of the South Plains and larger RWN Region. For example, employers must travel to Dallas for OSHA training and must incur significant downtime and travel costs, in addition to the cost of training, in order to comply with OSHA regulations.

The Board conducts a customer satisfaction survey to obtain feedback from employers who utilize Career Center facilities to gauge their satisfaction with the quality and type of services made available. Career Center facilities are made available to employers for the purpose of conducting applicant pre-screening, interviews, testing and assessments as well as for job-matching services through Work-in-Texas. The results of this survey are used to inform the system as to additional services that are needed by the employer community in different locations throughout the SPWDB area.

Efforts to improve the level of employer satisfaction with the Board's services are expected to positively impact the Board's contracted Integrated Common Measures. Satisfied employers will be more likely to utilize the WorkForce Solutions Career Centers to fill available job openings which provides increased opportunities for successful job placements. The Board anticipates a significant positive impact on the number of job seekers entering and retaining employment.

Supporting the Needs of Targeted Industries

The Board is a member of the Rural Workforce Network, a partnership of five boards in the West Texas Region that share best practices, collaborate on the delivery of staff training and coordinate strategic planning. The RWN engaged the Texas Workforce Commission Labor Market Career Information Division Director to conduct a Regional Labor Market Analysis in February 2009. The result was a listing of industries and occupations that represent those with greatest potential for economic growth in the greater RWN Region. TWC's Regional Analysis served as a starting point for the Board's targeting process. The Board added several industries and occupations to the RWN targeted lists that were a priority locally in the South Plains Region and removed several from the list that did not contribute significantly to the Region's future job prospects.

The Board examined employment patterns reflected in unemployment insurance records to identify the industry sectors that comprise the major South Plains employers. We reviewed industry location quotients to identify those industries with a greater degree of value added per employee. We conducted an industry evaluation to examine industry growth rates at the 3-digit and four-digit NAICS levels and a shift-share analysis to determine the industries that enjoyed a significant comparative advantage thereby qualifying as regional export industries. A Labor Market Information (LMI) Task Force, comprised of local workforce development partners, training providers and employers, participated in identifying the industries that were most critical to the South Plains Regional economy and also represented the greatest potential for job growth in the next few years based on the analysis of the relative size of employment within the industry in the Region, location quotients, shift-share and qualitative factors. Guided by the LMI Task Force, the Board established the following criteria for selection of targeted industries:

- ❖ 10% or higher growth rate at 3-digit and 4-digit NAICS¹⁴ level
- ❖ High Location Quotient
- ❖ Greatest Number of Projected Jobs
- ❖ Critical to the South Plains Economy (based on local wisdom)

The LMI Task Force identified 17 targeted industries within 11 Industry Divisions. Employment in these targeted industries comprises approximately 21% of the current South Plains employment¹⁵ and the estimated 1,118 employers represented are projected to add 7,550 high-skill, high-wage jobs by 2016. The targeted industries list is provided in below and additional detail on how the list was derived is provided in Appendix 2.

NAICS	Industry	2006		2008		2016		
		LQ	Jobs	Jobs	Growth	Jobs	Change	Growth
		>1.09		06-08				
2211	Power Generation and Supply	1.47	700	724	7.4	750	50	7.1%
2362	Non-Residential Building Construction	0.81	650	840	32.5	700	50	0.077
2371	Utility System Construction	1.16	600	651	13.4	700	100	16.7%
2382	Building Equipment Contractors	0.92	2,150	2,349	12.1	2,850	700	32.6%
3331	Agriculture, Construction and Mining Manufacturing Machinery	2.14	500	608	28	500	0	0
3336	Turbine and Power Transmission Equipment	0.57	100	72	-17.2	100	0	0.0%
4842	Specialized Freight Trucking	1.54	700	813	19.6	900	200	28.6%
5112	Software Publishers	1.23	250	387	51.8	350	100	40.0%
5413	Architectural, Engineering Services and Related Services	0.49	750	881	24.3	900	150	20.0%
5511	Management of Companies and Enterprises	0.35	750	788	7.95	1,050	300	40.0%
5611	Office Administrative Services	1.27	500	628	40.49	650	150	30.0%
6111	Elementary and Secondary Schools	1.10	12,600	11,472	2.11	13,850	1,250	9.9%
6215	Medical and Diagnostic Laboratories	0.99	200	259	23.3	250	50	25.0%
6216	Home Health Care	3.01	2,850	3,501	13.7	4,650	1,800	63.2%
6221	General Medical and Surgical Hospitals	1.62	9,950	10,110	4.5	12,350	2,400	24.1%
6233	Community Care Facilities for the Elderly	0.91	550	754	29.8	750	200	36.4%
8113	Commercial Machinery Repair and Maintenance	2.01	400	467	23.5	450	50	12.5%
			34,200	35,304		41,750	7,550	

Guided by the LMI Workgroup, the Board has established the following criteria for selection of targeted occupations:

- ❖ Emerging Occupations Critical to Region's Future Economic Prosperity
- ❖ Average wages higher than or equal to the Board's Self-Sufficiency Wage Standard

¹⁴ North American Industry Classification System

¹⁵ Based on average employment, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, 3rd Quarter 2008.

- ❖ Projected Number of Jobs in 2016
- ❖ Occupations Require Formal Training
- ❖ Demand Validated by Employer Input

The LMI Task Force examined the key occupations employed within the targeted industries that meet the Board's criteria for targeting. For FY 2010, the group has identified 30 high-skilled, high-demand occupations that will be targeted for expenditures of WIA funds. The Board also conducted an occupational evaluation using the TWC Standard Occupational Components for Research and Analysis of Trends in the Employment System (SOCRATES) to review wage levels, projected growth and occupational location quotients. In addition, the Board reviewed the skill sets that workers currently need and will need in the future to work for these occupations, primarily through an analysis of the ONET Occupational Profiles and Detailed Work Activities. The list of targeted industries and occupations, the skill sets needed and related information gained from our analysis is presented below and in Appendix 2 of the strategic plan. A second list of high-demand occupations, those that were not identified for targeting, will be used to prioritize the training provided using funds other than WIA funds. The needs of the Region's high-growth industries will be taken into consideration in determining the training to be provided using the demand list.

SOC Code	Occupation Title	Avg.	Annual Average				Training
		Hourly Wage	Employment 2006	Employment 2016	Number Change	Growth Rate	
11-9021	Construction Managers	\$ 24.26	600	750	150	25.0%	BA
13-2011	Accountants and Auditors	\$ 24.26	1,350	1,600	250	18.5%	BA
15-1041	Computer Support Specialists	\$ 16.65	600	700	100	16.7%	AA
15-1071	Network/Computer Systems Admins	\$ 25.04	400	500	100	25.0%	BA
17-3023	Electrical/Electronic Eng Techs	\$ 26.56	150	200	50	33.3%	BA
25-2021	Elementary School Teachers	\$ 18.88	2,400	2,800	400	16.7%	BA
25-2022	Middle School Teachers	\$ 19.62	1,250	1,400	150	12.0%	BA
25-2031	Secondary School Teachers	\$ 20.07	1,550	1,700	150	9.7%	BA
29-1111	Registered Nurses	\$ 25.10	4,050	5,350	1,300	32.1%	ADN/BA
29-1126	Respiratory Therapists	\$ 21.65	200	300	100	50.0%	AA
29-2012	Medical/Clinical Lab Techs	\$ 13.71	350	400	50	14.3%	AA
29-2034	Radiologic Technols/Techs	\$ 19.56	350	400	50	14.3%	AA
29-2052	Pharmacy Technicians	\$ 12.25	500	700	200	40.0%	VocTng
29-2061	Licensed Practical/Voc Nurses	\$ 16.11	1,500	1,850	350	23.3%	VocTng
29-2071	Medical Records and Health Information Technicians	\$ 10.49	250	300	50	20.0%	AA
43-3031	Bookkeeping/Accounting/Auditing	\$ 13.38	2,350	2,700	350	14.9%	VocTng
47-2051	Cement Masons/Concrete Finishers	\$ 12.87	200	250	50	25.0%	VocTng
47-2111	Electricians	\$ 16.14	700	850	150	21.4%	VocTng/AA
47-2152	Plumbers/Pipefitters/Steamfitter	\$ 15.53	400	550	150	37.5%	VocTng
47-2211	Sheet Metal Workers	\$ 13.08	100	150	50	50.0%	VocTng

49-3023	Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics	\$ 15.82	1,000	1,150	150	15.0%	VocTng/AA
49-3031	Bus/Truck Mech/Diesel Specialist	\$ 14.61	350	400	50	14.3%	VocTng/AA
49-3042	Mobile Heavy Equip Mechanics	\$ 15.84	200	250	50	25.0%	VocTng
49-9021	Heating/Air Conditioning/Refrig. Mechs	\$ 16.66	400	500	100	25.0%	VocTng/AA
49-9041	Industrial Machinery Mechanics	\$ 16.26	350	450	100	28.6%	VocTng/AA
49-9042	Maintenance/Repair Workers, General	\$ 12.09	1,650	1,850	200	12.1%	VocTng
49-9051	Electric Power-Line Installation/Repair	\$ 26.04	150	200	50	33.3%	VocTng
51-4041	Machinists	\$ 13.87	300	350	50	16.7%	VocTng/AA
51-4121	Welders/Cutters/Solderers/Brazers	\$ 12.73	600	750	150	25.0%	VocTng
53-3032	Truck Drivers, Heavy/Tractor-Trailer	\$ 15.85	2,600	3,100	500	19.2%	VocTng/AA
			26,850	32,450	5,600		

The Board establishes Individual Training Accounts and issues vouchers to WIA-eligible individuals to assist with the cost of training, including related support services. Through ITAs, the Board provides up to \$5,000 in training funds to eligible individuals that can be used to cover the cost of vocational training and/or post-secondary education. Training is limited to programs under two years in duration. Bachelor degree programs are allowable; however, the Board reserves the right to fund the final two years of the program in order to ensure that the student receives a credential at the completion of the enrollment period.

During FY 2010, the Board will utilize approximately \$3.9 Million in funding received from the ARRA Funding to increase the number of individuals trained by as much as 50%. Additional funds received for Employment Services and Child Care Services will be used to provide job counseling, labor-exchange services and child care services to the Region's jobseekers and employers. Beginning in FY 2010, the Board will have the flexibility to train individuals in high-demand occupations that do not meet the criteria for targeting using funding streams other than WIA, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Employment and Training Fund, the TANF Choices Fund, and/or the Trade Assistance Fund Programs.

In May 2009, the Board was awarded a \$360,000 Wagner-Peyser 7B Grant to implement the South Plains Recruitment and Reemployment (SPRR) Initiative. This program will provide employers an opportunity to recruit workers with skills that are not available or in short supply in the local labor market by marketing their job openings nationally. Under the auspices of the National Association of Workforce Boards and in coordination with employers and a professional staffing firm, WorkForce Solutions will recruit workers from areas of the nation with labor surplus and provide relocation assistance to workers and their families to facilitate relocation to the South Plains. The SPRR Initiative will coordinate with the Trade Adjustment Assistance Program (TAA) and workforce boards in selected areas of the country in order to facilitate the placement of eligible TAA and Dislocated Workers. SPRR will develop a job profiling capability in the region where one is not currently available. A trained job profiler will work with employers to enhance the job matching process.

In 2008, the Board received a \$134,000 grant to promote regional coordination between the five RWN workforce boards. The RWN has engaged consultants from the National Center for Education and the Economy to conduct a feasibility study and recommend methods and strategies that will help the boards achieve efficiencies and economies, potentially through a reduction of duplicitous work and decreases in administrative costs. The RWN's goal is to maintain or increase the level and quality of services provided to the customers in light of projected reduction in funding allocations.

The Board's partners have also received grant awards that supplement the training resources available in the Region. As previously mentioned, SPC received approximately \$90,000 to train General Maintenance Technicians. The SPC Allied Health Education Division received a \$1.6 Million Department of Labor Community-Based Job Training Grant to fund the development of a regional simulation lab to increase the region's capacity to train nurses. Nurses can now obtain several hours of required clinical lab experience through use of the simulation lab rather than vying for limited clinical training space at local hospitals and clinics. The Board is anticipating the award of \$550,000 in funds from a private foundation to fund training for entry-level construction workers to be trained in 'green' construction technologies through a program developed by Lubbock Christian University (LCU). The training program will articulate the career pathway from the certificate-level program to a newly-developed, two-year degree program in Alternative Energy at SPC College and a newly-developed, four-year degree program designed to train scientists for the Geothermal industry and other renewal industries.

Mechanisms are in place that enable the Board to monitor current and emerging trends in order to glean information that will give job seekers and workers the best opportunity to secure and retain jobs in high-growth, high demand industries. The Texas Tech University Economic Development Resource Center has established a model to analyze the occupational and industrial composition of various geographic configurations, both within and outside the South Plains Region, based on data including, but not limited to, unemployment insurance tax records and Occupational Employment Survey data. The analysis, conducted periodically as conditions warrant, will be consistent across geographic areas, will utilize statistically sound research principles, will be customized to the needs of the Region and can be deployed on a recurring and timely basis at minimal cost to the Board.

To facilitate reemployment, Employment Services (ES) staff assists jobseekers in identifying transferable skills and helps customers create the best possible application and resume in the workintexas.com system to afford them an opportunity to match with the best possible jobs. Staff also identifies potential interest occupations and industries and enters this information in their profile to insure customers are matched with entry level type jobs. During this process customers are also screened and referred to our Workforce Investment Act Staff (WIA) for further screening for OJT, Educational and Supportive Service assistance. Our Career Center offers weekly seminars to the customers to help them better prepare for interviews and provides various websites for online job opportunities. The Board will also continue to provide professional development and training of frontline staff to remain proactive and provide quality service to jobseekers. A quality application helps jobseekers find work faster thus satisfying our reemployment measure.

Utilizing the additional funding received through the ARRA, the Board is increasing the number of ES staff by 6 additional staff members in order to ensure that Unemployment Insurance (UI) Claimants receive adequate support to facilitate their rapid reemployment. The Board will also lower the threshold score used to identify the UI Claimants who are required to report to the

Career Center for Work Orientation (WO) sessions and will increase the number of WO sessions offered to accommodate the increased number of attendees. The Board has also engaged local human resources professionals, including the human resources (HR) director of the Region's largest hospital and the HR director of one of the region's largest banking institutions – so far, to serve as panelists and leaders for a local job club that meets monthly to assist jobseekers in networking and developing their resumes.

During FY 2010, the Board will implement the SPRR Initiative described previously. As part of this Initiative, the Board will develop a job profiler capability in the Region, where one does not currently exist. The job profiler will identify specific job requirements, assess candidate skills and facilitate the job-matching process. By identifying the specific skills needed by employers, rather than only relying on a 'job title', the job profiler will be able to increase the likelihood that a qualified candidate will be found to fill the job, increasing the number of job placements and the system's ability to facilitate reemployment for workers dislocated from declining industries. The job profiler will also analyze the local labor market to locate long-standing job vacancies that employers have not been able to fill due to skills shortages. The Board can then recruit workers with the necessary skills from outside the State to fill immediate needs and later work with training providers to develop the training programs needed to build a local labor pool with the requisite skills.

A Better Educated Workforce to Fill High-Skill, High-Wage Jobs

A well-educated supply of workers is one of the most important elements of a vibrant regional economy. A strong system – including early education, K through 12, and post-secondary providers – helps ensure a high level of educational attainment. Preparation for college and other post-secondary opportunities is essential for our Region to remain economically viable. The long-term economic and social benefits of a well-educated population are well-documented. For our Region and the State of Texas to compete globally, the number of Texas students enrolling in institutions of higher education and completing degree programs must increase. Our task is to motivate our youth to select definite career paths after high school graduation and teach them transferable job skills needed to progress through the career pipeline.

Through projects such as the First Generation Funded Program which was effective through December 2008, the Board assisted in the student transition from secondary into post-secondary institutions and helped prepare students to meet emergent workforce demands. The First Generation Program was a collaboration between WorkForce Solutions and the South Plains College Tech Prep Department that identified and offered \$1,000 scholarships to qualified area high school students who were the first in their families to attend college. In 2009 and through FY 2010, the Board will use additional funding received through the ARRA, to enroll approximately 500 youth in summer employment and work experiences to promote job readiness. Older youth identified through this initiative will be provided with career information and counseling to encourage them to continue or enroll in post-secondary education or will be assisted with job placement.

The targeted occupations selected by the LMI Workgroup for Program Year 2009 are high-skill, high-wage jobs that will require a greater degree of preparation on the part of job seekers. Selection criteria reflected the Board's higher expectations that training dollars be invested in training for occupations that pay an average hourly wage greater than the Board's Self-sufficiency Wage Standard which is adjusted based on household size. The Board will examine the training that the employers in the targeted industry sectors may supply internally to entry level workers as well as the training and credentials they require of first time workers entering

the job market. Our objective will be to provide jobseekers with more opportunities to adequately prepare for the high-skill, high-wage jobs identified through the targeting process. Utilizing the “pipeline” concept, we will continue to engage training providers and other workforce partners in an ongoing dialogue and a higher level of collaboration to promote the progression of an employee throughout his or her employment lifetime.

The pipeline analogy illustrates the continuous flow beginning with an entry-level employee and ending with a highly skilled professional. Working together with our partners, we will assist area job seekers in advancing through the career pathway. The Board collaborates with South Plains College to pursue grants from the Self-sufficiency Grant Program and the Skills Development Fund Program to secure incumbent training funds. While the Board’s main funding streams must be used to serve categorical populations, Self-sufficiency Grants and Skills Development grants do not carry those restrictions and, therefore, present a unique opportunity for the Board to target the workers who employers identify as needing enhanced skills. SPWDB affirms the commitment to assist individuals who assume personal responsibility for enriching their lives through education, training and work. In 2008, the SPC received a grant from the Self-Sufficiency Fund Program to train 60 entry-level General Maintenance Technicians (GMT). Individuals trained through this program are guaranteed a job, upon meeting basic criteria, with a participating employer. Participants are recruited and assessed by WIA counselors to determine eligibility for WIA prior to referral to the GMT training program to ensure that eligible participants are co-enrolled. In 2008 and 2009, the Board received a two-year grant to implement the Manufacturing Skills Standards Council (MSSC) Basic Production Technician Certification Program at the high school level. The program was also implemented at SPC and students received dual credit to be applied toward an AAS degree upon completion of the high school level courses. SPC has since developed an AAS program for Industrial Manufacturing Technician that builds on the MSSC course and prepares workers in five different career tracks including Manufacturing and Wind Energy.

SPWDB will continue to exchange labor market information with training providers so that regional training programs can operate more efficiently. The Board is prepared to assist providers in detecting and avoiding duplication of training programs. New projects are planned and several are currently ongoing with all levels of primary and secondary education, community colleges, vocational programs, and community service organizations to ensure that students attain workforce readiness skills by the time they enter the labor market. These partners and projects are detailed in Part III of the strategic plan.

SPWDB will continue to hold job fairs that recruit older workers and out-of-school youth to retrain individuals in new careers or upgrade their existing skills to meet the needs of a more technologically-advanced economy. The Board recognizes the valuable resources that can be recovered by assisting those individuals who, because of age or other perceived barriers, have chosen to leave the workforce and/or dropped out of the educational system.

Individuals with a disability, also, are a valuable resource and will contribute greatly to the Region’s ability to fill job vacancies during periods of low unemployment. The Board’s has developed policies to ensure that disabled individuals receive necessary accommodations to facilitate access to services and programs. The Board also works with organizations such as the Department of Adaptive and Rehabilitative Services that serve the disabled community in order to increase the resources available to serve that population. In 2008, the Board collaborated with the Texas Tech University Burkhart Center for Autism Research. The Center received a \$1.5 Million Wagner-Peyser 7B Grant to provide transitional services to youth graduating from high school in order to prepare them to enter the workforce. The program staff

enlists employers to provide work sites for the students and works to develop long-term employment opportunities for the youth, most of whom graduate from high school with very limited options for employment without the assistance that the Grant program provides. The program will continue through FY 2010.

Since 2003, SPWDB has issued a yearly Request for Applications to solicit grant applications from area employers for customized training services. Through this initiative, the Work Skills Enhancement Project, the Board has awarded thousands of dollars in training funds to area businesses to train incumbent workers. Training programs made available to workers through this grant initiative have ranged from courses in Sign Language to course in computer software applications. In addition, the Board funds incumbent training projects through the use of local activity funds and other grant-funded projects such as the SPRR Initiative. Information on incumbent worker training outcomes is included in Part III of the strategic plan. SPWDB will continue to pursue grant funding to support incumbent and new worker training.

Additional information on these and other partnerships designed to increase access to post-secondary education and training opportunities for our current and future workforce are described in Part III of the strategic plan.

Strategy 2: Increased Rural Enhancement Initiatives

When analyzing local market dynamics and common priorities that exist among community partners and residents of our South Plains communities, SPWDB examined rural areas separately from the Lubbock MSA. The relative size of the Lubbock economy compared to the rest of the Region obscures views of the rural areas. Employment patterns that exist in the rural areas were examined to determine which industries are the major employers, which possess the greatest potential for job growth and which enjoy the greatest degree of comparative advantage. During the next two years, customized approaches will be designed and implemented, in collaboration with our partners, to ensure that the Board's resources are correctly targeted to high-growth, high-demand industries in the rural areas and that workforce needs endemic to rural communities are addressed.

Through the SPRR Initiative Program, the Board will fund employer workshops and training in Lean Manufacturing processes to assist rural manufacturers in increasing their competitiveness and retaining their current workforce. The Texas Manufacturing Assistance Center (TMAC) will work with participating employers to assist them in developing retention strategies. As part of their training program, TMAC conducts extensive 90-day follow-up to ensure that employers benefit to the greatest extent possible from the training to maximize the return on investment.

The SPWDB Chief Executive Officer meets no less than yearly with County judges in the South Plains Region. 'State of the Workforce' presentations are conducted yearly and upon request for rural Chambers of Commerce organizations and their members to allow them an opportunity to express their expectations of the workforce system. The meetings also address what the workforce system needs from those entities.

A major focus of the rural initiative is to make Business Services workshops and seminars available throughout the Region, not only in Lubbock County. The workshops and seminars that have been delivered have covered a wide number of topics and have been conducted at a central regional rural county, most often in coordination with a community partner. Attendance

has consistently been to capacity and the Board anticipates continued success with this initiative. Examples of workshops and seminars provided to date include the following:

Topic	Location	Partner
Employer's Guide to Preventing Lawsuits	Brownfield	Brownfield COC (Terry County)
It All Begins With Your Attitude	Levelland	Levelland COC (Hockley County)
Good to Great	Levelland	Levelland COC (Hockley County)
Amazing Face Reading	Muleshoe	Muleshoe COC (Bailey County)
State of the Workforce	Floydada	Floydada COC (Floyd County)
State of the Workforce	Morton	Morton COC (Cochran County)
The Spirit of MOJO	Lubbock	Lubbock
How to Implement and Execute Conflict Resolution in Your Workplace	Lubbock	Society of Human Resource Professionals
Fundamentals of Employee Relations	Lubbock	Society of Human Resources Professionals
"I Am Not My Mental Illness": Strategies for a Productive Workplace	Plainview	Llano Estacado Alliance for Families; Walmart, Inc.; Lubbock County Dispute Resolution Center.
Occupational Health and Safety Basic Training	Lubbock, Muleshoe, Plainview	Texas Manufacturing Assistance Center
Lean Manufacturing	Lubbock, Muleshoe, Plainview	Texas Manufacturing Assistance Center

More seminars are planned in the current year, including business seminars and 'State of the Workforce' presentations to Ralls, Muleshoe, Denver City, Plains, Littlefield, Levelland, Brownfield, Tahoka, Post, Crosbyton, Spur and Plainview in coordination with local chambers. In addition, WorkForce Solutions has increased the number of Child Care Services Self-Arranged Provider Training Sessions held in rural counties. Marketing staff are working closely with the rural media and regional chambers to post weekly 'Hot Jobs' listings and publish LMI press releases. Information on specific performance objectives is provided in Part III.

Representatives from the rural office Business Services Unit (BSU) have increased their visibility by publicizing WorkForce activities via the local media and participating in local events. For example, the Brownfield representative regularly informs the community on upcoming events on the local radio presentation, "Town Talk". The Muleshoe representative conducts presentations to local entities such as the Muleshoe Rotary Club. Two WorkForce bi-annual newsletters, the WorkForce Solutions and Youth Zone, are distributed to educational entities and community based organizations throughout the SPWDA.

During the past year, three rural WorkForce Career Centers, the Brownfield, Levelland and Plainview centers, have been relocated to more amenable and/or more strategically located facilities. The computer equipment and Internet connectivity at these locations have been upgraded and are state-of-the-art.

The Board provides mobile service to outlying rural areas. A WorkForce Solutions counselor operates a mobile unit, a specially equipped van, and visits rural areas to make core services available to jobseekers and technical assistance available to employers who wish to utilize the Work-in-Texas automated labor exchange system.

The Board has continued to provide facilities and support to Region 17 Adult Basic Education. This partnership, targeted primarily at rural counties, provides access to literacy services that otherwise would not be available. Adult Basic Education provides teacher supplies and curriculum and the Board provides space, equipment, and software. The Board is collaborating with South Plains College, Yoakum County Family Literacy Council, and Muleshoe Advisory group to bring distance learning ability to rural counties. The Board used the Industry Sector Award to purchase Interactive Television Equipment for one lab. The partner organizations will provide all other resources including the connectivity. The labs will be placed in the satellite offices in Denver City and Muleshoe. South Plains College will conduct Continuing Education classes as well as provide other distance learning opportunities.

In 2004, WesTex Allied Communities, an organization based in Littlefield in Lamb County was awarded a Governor's Wayner-Peyser 7B Grant to support the Enterprise Facilitation Project. This project, modeled after the Sirolli Enterprise Facilitation Model, is only one of two such projects in Texas. The goal of the project is to provide one-on-one coaching and support to potential business owners and develop new businesses, and thus new jobs, in the rural areas. Through a subsequent grant received in 2008 from the Wagner-Peyser 7B Program, the project that originally served the County of Lamb and the City of Anton in Northwest rural Texas, has expanded to also serve all of Hockley County. The Enterprise Facilitation Project has met and exceeded established performance targets, creating over 23 businesses and over 63 new jobs since the start of the program. More information on project outcomes is provided in Part III of the strategic plan.

Strategy 3: Expanded Youth Activities

The South Plains workforce development system faces major challenges to the development of a better educated workforce. Our students need a strong foundation in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics to be successful in a competitive world economy. Yet, many of our Region's high school graduates require remediation programs to prepare them for college-level course work in these disciplines. High school dropout rates continue at disturbingly high levels, particularly among the Hispanic and African American populations in our rural areas. During the next two years, SPWDB will continue to research, identify and confront barriers to participation in higher education, whether cultural, financial, or other, for all populations and age groups.

In 2007, the Board adopted the a resolution in support of the goals and strategies outlined in the report published by the National Center on Education and the Economy (NCEE), "Tough Choices, Tough Times." Based on the findings of the NCEE, the Board established objectives for the goal of providing "Expanded Educational Opportunities for Youth". Specific objectives adopted as part of this goal include the following:

1. The Board will support quality Early Childhood Education as the first step to successfully preparing children for a positive and productive educational experience. The Board will:

a. Collaborate with employer associations such as the South Plains Day Care Association, South Plains Association for the Education of Young Children, and the Texas Professional Home Child Care Association to leverage resources.

b. Partner with Success by Six, the Region 17 Texas Early Education Model (TEEM) Program, and other organizations engaged in similar efforts to enhance the quality and availability of Early Childhood Education.

c. Continue to promote the Texas Rising Star Provider Certification Program which provides incentives to licensed child care providers whose standards exceed the minimum required standards for licensing.

2. The Board will continue supporting Career and Technology Education as the WDA mirrors the global economy. The Board will work to prepare youth to enter the workforce with skills demanded by local employers; develop career pathways for youth and adults; and, encourage parent involvement and awareness of Career and Technology Education (CATE).

3. The Board will continue to form regional alliances and coalitions with economic development agencies, area Chambers of Commerce, and educational entities in order to successfully prepare youth for work and learning beyond high school, including continued collaboration with the South Plains P-20 Council. The Board will also seek opportunities to promote initiatives similar to the WTMA MSSC project which is a partnership between LISD, Frenship ISD and industry partners.

4. The Board will be an advocate for equitable funding that places priority on recruitment and retention of master teachers and that provides student allocations that reflect the higher cost of educating special needs populations, at-risk students and early childhood education with Congress, the State Legislature and with local governments.

5. Board members will be advocates for workforce issues with Congress, the State Legislature, with local governments and other organizations.

The Board actively supports education system partners to assist them in preparing our students for college and other post-secondary opportunities. Through efforts such as the First Generation Grant Project and others referenced in the preceding narrative, SPWDB has developed strong partnerships among secondary (high school), post-secondary (community college and university), and business and industry.

In 2008, the Board collaborated with the Texas Tech Health Sciences Center School of Nursing (SON) to submit a proposal to the Health Resources and Services Administration for a Nurse Family Partnership Grant. The SON received a \$1.8 Million award to fund an early childhood development program that has been proven to enhance the future prospects of both first-time mother and child participants and further the goal of self-sufficiency for the families served by the program. Registered nurses work with first-time mothers to increase the health and welfare of the families and the early development of the child from pre-natal to 2-years of age. The mothers are referred to the Career Center to determine eligibility for training services or for assistance with job placement.

Part III of this plan will address specific strategies the Board will employ to support the local education system and identifies those partners that are working with the Board to design and implement solutions to the aforementioned challenges. For example, one such strategy that is available this summer to rural youth is the Summer Employment and Enterprise Development

Project (SEED). The program is targeted at area youth ages 16-18 and is being marketed through local high schools. It is designed to put young people to work for four to six weeks during the summer. The goal is to help them gain valuable work experience and enhance employment prospects upon completion of their studies.

The Board will increase participation in planning sessions and activities sponsored by school districts located in the rural areas to engage high school students and out-of-school youth in programs like SEED and the WorkForce Solutions Youth Zone WIA Program. The Board will collaborate with SPC to facilitate access for rural youth to training programs offered at the Plainview and Levelland locations. The Board also anticipates collaborating with Texas Tech University's College of Engineering as they implement plans to develop a "technology entrepreneurship pipeline" aimed at developing students' interest in engineering careers at an early age.

During the summer of 2009, an estimated 500 youth ages 14-24 will be placed in summer employment in work sites located throughout the South Plains Region. With the assistance of ARRA funds, these youth will receive work experience as well as training and mentoring to increase their work readiness. Older youth will be exposed to career information to encourage them to continue their education. Those who have completed high school will be assisted with job placement or with training assistance if eligible for the WIA program.

The Board anticipates that, through its efforts and the efforts of the Board's partners, the South Plains Region will see an increase in the number of students graduating with a Bachelor's Degree in the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering or Math. The Board also anticipates an increase in the percentage of high school graduates that enroll in Texas college or universities from our rural areas as well as from with the Lubbock MSA. By facilitating programs that mentor youth in the early stages of their educational careers, the Board anticipates an increase in the number of South Plains students that complete a high school education. These benchmarks will be monitored to determine our progress in the development of the Region's future workforce.

Strategy 4: Increased Marketing Initiatives, Including Branding/Awareness Strategies

Marketing, public relations, and involvement in the community outside of the Texas workforce system are necessary to make employers aware of the value of the Board's services and its performance. SPWDB has developed a marketing plan designed to create strong, local visibility in the South Plains while expanding outreach to the Employer and Job Seeker Markets as well as Youth. The Marketing and Communication Objectives are addressed in Part III of the strategic plan.

Because it is vital that the message delivered to employers and partners regarding the Board's accomplishments be communicated in terms that are valuable to employers, the Board has developed and will continue to refine local criteria that measure success in ways that are important to employers while, at the same time, complementing the State's contracted performance measures. These measures, described in Section 2 of this part, entitled "Strategic Goals", will then be used to report accomplishments yearly via the Board's Annual Report.

The Board is instrumental in setting priorities for regional workforce resources. Additional resources are being sought from both public and private entities that can fund local initiatives for workforce training and economic development. SPWDB is in an excellent position to attract

funding from other sources given the Boards' knowledge of public resources that can be used to leverage private investments. The Board intends to maximize its advantage in this area.

The Board has consistently dedicated resources to nurture partnerships with local businesses, community-based organizations, elected officials, local educators, and community residents. These partnerships not only foster community participation in the workforce development process, but also provide an effective platform for attracting new industries, improving current businesses, and addressing workforce deficiencies. Looking forward, the Board will utilize these partnerships to implement smart solutions and generate results that continuously upgrade the quality of life for South Plains residents.

A primary aim of the Board's efforts will be to streamline community resources to prevent duplication of programs. The Board will seek to eliminate barriers that prevent entry-level and incumbent workers from progressing into higher skilled jobs. Through these partnerships, the Board also will sponsor business creation and expansion.

The Board will continue to consistently deliver quality services to businesses, current workers, and job seekers. For it is not sufficient to have name-brand recognition. The Board must be recognized for high quality services and programs that ultimately empower the entire community.