

Modification to the

Combined State Plan

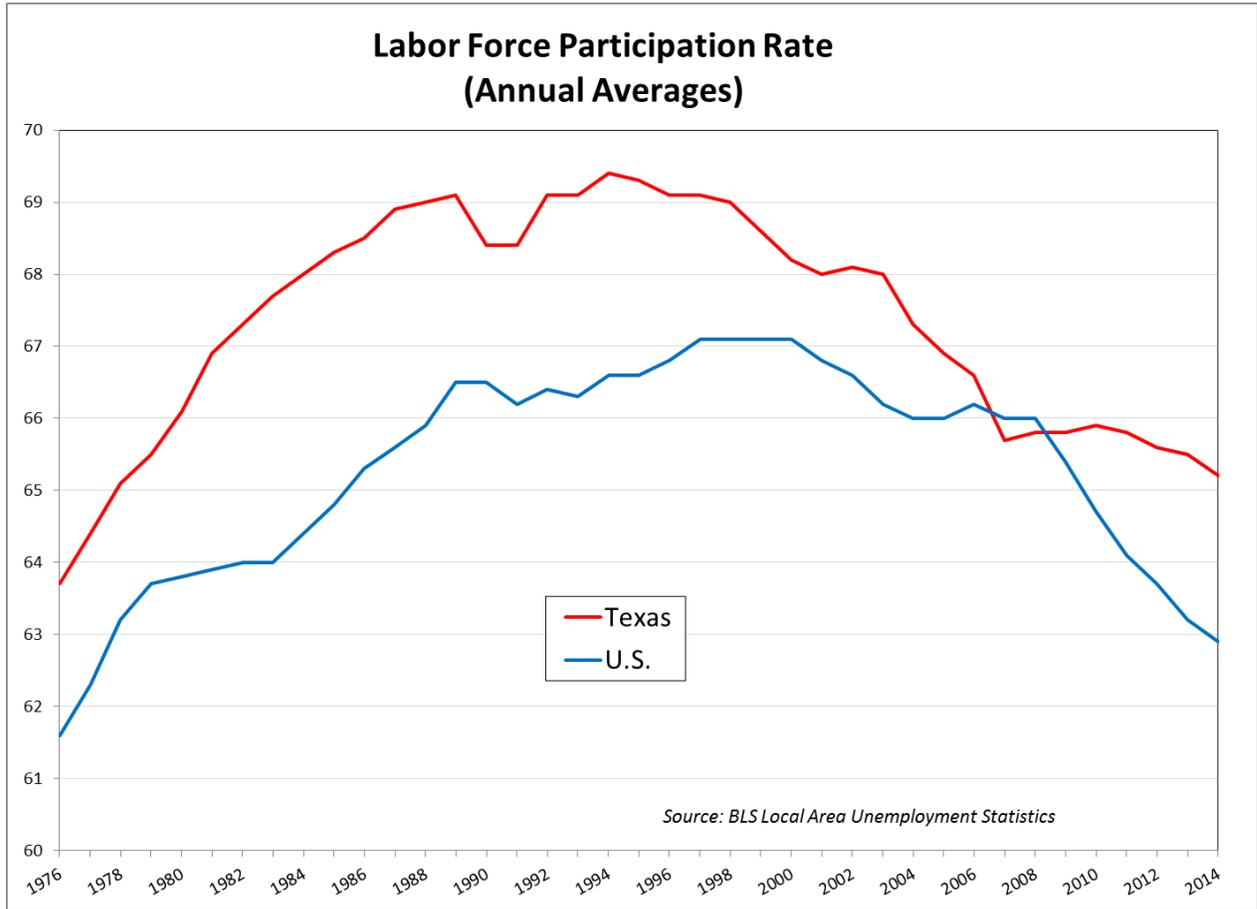
under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)

State of Texas

for Program Years 2016–2019

(July 1, 2016–June 30, 2020)

1 | [The Texas annual average labor force participation rate mirrors the national trend, which peaked](#)
2 | [in the 1990s and has been declining since. The Texas annual average labor force participation](#)
3 | [rate for 2014, the most recent year available, reached 65.2 percent, as compared to the national](#)
4 | [rate of 62.9 percent for that same year.](#)
5 |



1 Priority for Individualized Career Services and Training Services are provided on a priority
2 basis, regardless of funding levels; to:

- 3 • public assistance recipients;
- 4 • other low-income adults; and
- 5 • individuals who are basic skills deficient.

6
7 The individuals who receive these services are prioritized accordingly:

- 8 1. Eligible veterans and eligible spouses who are also recipients of public assistance, low-
9 income, or basic skills deficient.
- 10 2. All other individuals who are recipients of public assistance, low-income, or basic skills
11 deficient.
- 12 3. All other eligible veterans and eligible spouses.
- 13 4. All other individuals.

14
15 TWC ensures that local board policies are in place to ensure priority for the populations
16 described above. In addition, TWC allows the boards the flexibility to create a policy that
17 includes a process that also gives priority to other individuals, as long as priority for those
18 individuals comes after the first three groups described above.

19
20 For example, Boards may establish local priority groups for older workers (age 40 or older)
21 or employed individuals whose income is below the Board's self-sufficiency level, but these
22 local priority groups do not replace the statutory priority given to individuals who are
23 recipients of public assistance, low-income, or basic skills deficient. The Board's local
24 priority groups must fall within Group #4, "All other individuals," as listed above.

1 | **Assessment and Evaluation of Core Programs and One-Stop Partner Programs**

2
3 *Assessment of Core Programs*

4 As noted, TWC has a strong commitment to the use of performance data to evaluate programs
5 and partners. TWC was an early implementer of the Common Measures and in 2005 extended
6 them beyond Wagner-Peyser and WIA to cover other federal and even state-funded workforce
7 system programs. TWC realized that using the same measures and definitions across programs
8 helped improve program evaluations and removed potential barriers to integration of services by
9 creating common definitions of success.

10
11 TWC actively monitors the system through monthly, and in some cases, weekly performance
12 reports. Program staff reviews these reports and communicates with system partners as
13 appropriate to provide technical assistance and obtain information on best practices to share with
14 other partners. TWC’s Commissioners hold open, posted, performance and financial briefings
15 on a quarterly basis. TWC will continue these effective practices under WIOA but extend them
16 further.

17
18 One of the key ways that TWC evaluates programs and partners is by comparing performance to
19 targets. TWC has adopted a system by which performance is compared to target to establish a
20 “Percent of Target” for each measure, and depending on where the Percent of Target falls within
21 a given range, performance is rated as “Meeting” the target (MP) or as being either “Positive
22 Performance” (+P) or “Negative Performance” (–P), as follows:

23

	Where “High is Good” (% Employed, Median Earnings, etc.)	Where “Low is Good” (Avg Cost, Weeks to Reemploy, etc.)
Positive Performance (+P)	>105% of Target	<95% of Target
Meeting Performance (MP)	95–105% of Target	95–105% of Target
Negative Performance (–P)	<95% of Target	>105% of Target

24
25 This makes target-setting a key part of the evaluation and accountability system. TWC’s DOI
26 uses a variety of different models to help set performance targets based upon assumed casemixes
27 and economic conditions. These methods continuously evolve based on input from partners
28 through the negotiation process and additional research. There is no question that this dialog
29 between TWC and its partners represents an important component of continuous improvement,
30 [including continuous improvement in our own assessment processes.](#)

31
32 WIOA, like WIA before it, requires working towards continuous improvement. However,
33 continuous improvement does not simply mean that the system needs to do better on all things
34 every year. Continuous improvement is not as simple as always setting targets a little bit higher
35 than the prior year’s results. Such a simplistic notion operates under the assumption that other
36 than our results, the system is static, that our customers never change, that our economy never
37 changes, that our funding never changes, that the law of diminishing returns does not apply to the
38 workforce system. The reality is that these things do change, and performance in some areas
39 eventually reaches the point of diminishing returns. When that happens, the system is better
40 served by setting targets in the areas of great strength at a “maintenance” level to concentrate on

1 improving in areas of lesser strength. In an environment of fewer resources or greater demand
2 for similar resources, simply maintaining performance can represent improvement—
3 improvement in efficiency.

4
5 It is precisely the fact that we operate in a dynamic system that makes the development of
6 effective statistical models to guide target setting so important. WIOA provides that the
7 Secretaries of Labor and Education will develop a set of statistical models to help set
8 performance targets for the WIOA measures. TWC will use those models as a tool to help it
9 evaluate programs and partners. However, it is not clear when these models will be developed
10 and available for use. In addition, these national models will not be equally accurate for all
11 states; they cannot be because local labor markets are different. Speaking Spanish-only has a
12 lesser impact on employment outcomes in states with large bilingual populations than states
13 where Spanish speaking is far less common. A change in employment in the oil and gas industry
14 may have a huge economic impact in Texas or North Dakota but have little relevance to Illinois
15 performance. As such, TWC will continue to develop its own performance models to use in
16 addition to the national models. [TWC will also use the primary indicators of performance to
17 evaluate local and regional goals set by the Boards.](#)

18
19 However, while the statute provides a set of performance measures to evaluate the six core
20 programs and system partners, these measures are certainly not the only measures of evaluating
21 the system, nor are they even the best such measures. In addition to having far too much lag to
22 be useful for management purposes, most of the WIOA measures were developed by an National
23 Governors Association workgroup in 2004. The reality is that the workforce system in 2015 is
24 very different than it was in 2004. The job search/recruitment assistance options that job seekers
25 and employers had in 2004 were far more limited than they are today. WIOA places great
26 emphasis on the importance of the career pathways that a person might follow over a period of
27 many years, while the performance measures and the Departments' proposed reporting
28 constructs are based on the notion of a person losing employment and coming to the one-stop
29 system for a relatively short, finite period, after which they find a job and leave so that his or her
30 outcomes can be measured.

31
32 Therefore, while TWC will apply the statutorily prescribed performance measures to assess
33 performance across the six core programs, TWC will also apply state-prescribed performance
34 measures and—with input from local Boards, grantees, and other partners—will continually
35 develop and test other measures that may provide a more meaningful means of communicating
36 strengths and identifying areas of improvement. Examples of these measures include TWC's
37 Employment Connection, Priority Employment Connection, and Maintaining Employment
38 Connection performance measures that are currently under development.

39 *Assessment of One-Stop Partner Programs*

40 TWC's experience with integrated Common Measures has demonstrated its value in promoting
41 one-stop partner responsibility for the success of its services while boosting participant
42 accessibility and transparency within the Texas Workforce System. Therefore, TWC will apply
43 the same measures and methodologies to other one-stop partner-programs that it does the core
44 programs, in addition to any program-specific measures that are required by either federal or
45 state regulations or identified by TWC as appropriate for a given program. For example, the
46

1 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' regulations (45 C.F.R §264.30, *et seq.*) allow
2 recipients of assistance to engage in a variety of activities that count toward the TANF Work
3 Participation measure. TWC, as permitted, established an alternate measure that focused on
4 recipients meeting work participation requirements exclusively through paid employment (other
5 than for in-school teens working toward a diploma).
6

7 Regardless of whether a program is a core program or a partner program, or whether a measure is
8 required by WIOA or state law, or was created in partnership with Boards or other grantees,
9 TWC will apply performance measures and perform evaluations at the customer level first and
10 then aggregate results by program or population or partner. [This will also allow TWC to](#)
11 [evaluate local and regional goals set by Boards that may cross programs or focus on specific](#)
12 [groups of participants.](#) As discussed further in the Program Data section of this plan, TWC will
13 need to be able to freely apply data from all sources to customer records to ensure that program
14 results are not artificially boosted or limited because one program has access to critical data that
15 others do not. This is particularly important in those instances where a customer is enrolled in
16 both a core and non-core (perhaps state-funded) program; that customer's results should be
17 reflected the same way at both the system-level and in the results for each program that helped
18 the customer achieve those results.
19

20 *Previous Assessment Results*

21 TWC met or exceeded its Program Year 2013 (PY 2013) and PY 2014 performance targets for
22 WIA Title I and Title III Wagner-Peyser programs with one exception. TWC's PY 2013 WIA
23 Title I Adult Average Earnings performance was only 85.16 percent of target. However, this
24 was largely due a reduction in performance with one of the largest Boards, which TWC and the
25 Board were able to correct with technical assistance.
26

27 PY 2013 and PY 2014 were years of transition for the AEL program in Texas. PY 2013 was the
28 first year that TWC was responsible for the program and much of the focus in that first year was
29 on developing and deploying policy and procedures that would transform the statewide system;
30 expand the participation and enjoyment of critical workforce, postsecondary, and community-
31 based stakeholders; and reinforce increased accountability and responsiveness in the system.
32 Bold program objectives embraced transitions and career pathways programs, and generally
33 focused more heavily on ensuring that education led to employment and career development
34 outcomes. TWC immediately reprocurd the entire statewide system of grantees and
35 incorporated these expectations and requirements into provider contracts that began in PY 2014.
36 TWC also initiated commensurate contract and program management focused on program
37 accountability and date-driven continuous improvement. While some of the grantees had
38 previously been involved in the program, even they experienced capacity building challenges as
39 well as a programmatic shift in program philosophy toward a vision of delivering educational
40 services for the purpose of college and career transition and outcomes.
41

42 The challenges of the transition and program transformation made achieving performance in PY
43 2013 and PY 2014 very difficult, and the system in fact missed many of the targets. In addition
44 to the challenges posed by the transition, performance on the GED Attainment measure was
45 negatively impacted by the change to the GED test itself in January 2014, which saw
46 dramatically lower passage rates nationwide. However, TWC's experience in program

1 transformation with the Boards has been that there is usually a period of one to two years after
2 the transformation where performance numbers drop before rebounding and ultimately
3 improving.

4
5 Texas' VR programs met or exceeded performance expectations over the last two years with the
6 exception of the Earnings Ratio measures. General VR participants only achieved 92.69 percent
7 of target for the Earnings Ratio measure for FY 2014. Preliminary FY 2015 General VR
8 performance shows improvement to 94.04 percent of target on the measure, and performance
9 may meet expectations as the data is finalized. However, preliminary FY 2015 performance for
10 Blind Services participants is currently at only 91.19 percent of target, and while it could
11 improve as the data finalizes, the larger distance from the 95 percent level makes this less likely.
12 RSA research has shown that states with higher average workforce wages such as Texas
13 typically have lower performance on the Earnings Ratio measures.

14
15 TWC's SCSEP performance for Average Earnings was less than 95 percent of target in both PY
16 2013 and PY 2014, and performance in PY 2014 for Service to Most in Need was 94.65 percent
17 of target. Average Earnings performance has been affected by budget cutbacks at public host
18 agencies—resulting in participants often being hired half-time instead of full-time—and more
19 stringent documentation requirements, which made it more difficult to report earnings results.

20
21 PY 2014 represents the fifth consecutive year that TWC met all five MSFW equity indicators.
22 TWC has met all five indicators in eight of the last eleven years.

23 Evaluation

24 Ultimately, the three most important resources available to the workforce system and really any
25 organization are its customers, its people (including Boards and other partners), and its data.
26 TWC's Division of Operational Insight was created to help better leverage that data to help the
27 system become more effective and efficient, and the division has primary responsibility for
28 conducting evaluations of the workforce system in Texas.

29
30 TWC uses a variety of statistical techniques to conduct evaluations but primarily uses quasi-
31 experimental evaluation techniques rather than random assignment trials. While less "academic"
32 in approach than random assignment trials, quasi-experimental evaluation provides a balance
33 between evaluation rigor and the desire to move quickly to implement process changes or new
34 initiatives.

35
36 In addition, TWC uses a blend of Six Sigma, Lean, and Theory of Constraints called Rapid
37 Process Improvement (RPI) to evaluate system processes and identify opportunities for
38 improvement and test the results of changes. RPI is a core part of TWC's approach to
39 continuous improvement and has recently been rolled out to our Boards.

40
41 TWC works with local Boards and other partners and academic researchers on system
42 evaluations and has participated in numerous federal studies such as the WIA Gold Standard
43 Study from several years ago. TWC will look for opportunities to coordinate and cooperate with
44 the Secretaries of Education and Labor on studies that are aligned with the research priorities of
45 TWC and its Boards and partners. In addition, TWC believes that the regular webinars and
46

1 | [regional calls that the Departments of Education and Labor hold provide an excellent avenue for](#)
2 | [coordinating such work and sharing results between the states and the Departments.](#)

3

4

5

6

1 **Addressing the Accessibility of the One-Stop Delivery System**

2
3 Achieving excellence in accessibility is based on three core principles:

- 4 • ensuring that all customers can effectively use workforce products and services;
- 5 • creating a workspace accessible for individuals with disabilities; and
- 6 • complying with all federal and state legal requirements.

7
8 **Electronic and Information and Resources**

9
10 TWC puts principles into practice by making its websites and other electronic and information
11 resources (EIR) accessible and its content user friendly for individuals with disabilities or with
12 Limited-English Proficiency (LEP), including members of the public and TWC employees,
13 pursuant to Title 1, Texas Administrative Code, Chapters 206 and 213. WorkInTexas.com,
14 TWC’s public online job matching system, is tested for compliance upon all updates to the
15 system using the most updated Job Access With Speech (JAWS) software. ~~WorkInTexas.com~~
16 ~~also has information accessible~~ and is available to job seekers in both English, and Spanish, and
17 Vietnamese. -TWC’s website also has information available in Spanish regarding unemployment
18 insurance, unemployment benefits, labor law, employment discrimination, housing
19 discrimination, and TWC press releases.

20
21 Additionally, TWC employs an EIR accessibility coordinator to serve as a contact for EIR
22 accessibility concerns. The coordinator both monitors agency-wide compliance with
23 accessibility policy and facilitates correction of noncompliant EIR. To these ends, the
24 coordinator partners with accessibility-designated liaisons in each business area. An
25 accessibility liaison functions as the primary contact for the business area’s compliance with EIR
26 accessibility requirements. The liaison also assists in staff development, addressing the needs of
27 individuals with disabilities, as well as in sharing TWC’s accessibility goals and requirements.

28
29 Other agency efforts to achieve excellence in accessibility include:

- 30 • providing staff regular classroom training sessions on a range of accessibility topics;
- 31 • developing and maintaining an inventory of all agency EIR;
- 32 • consulting on accessibility purchases and facilitating the exception request process;
- 33 • working with business areas to develop and implement remediation plans for non-compliant
- 34 websites, applications, and products, and consulting as needed during remediation;
- 35 • developing Intranet pages with accessibility resources for employees; and
- 36 • meeting regularly with accessibility liaisons.

37
38 **Accessibility at Workforce Solutions Offices and TWC-Owned Buildings**

39
40 The TWC Equal Opportunity (EO) Unit functions within the Subrecipient and Equal Opportunity
41 Monitoring Department. The EO Unit monitors recipients of WIOA Title I financial assistance
42 to determine compliance with the nondiscrimination and equal opportunity provisions of WIOA
43 §188. Both programmatic and physical accessibility are addressed during an EO compliance
44 review.

1 As recipients of WIOA funding, Boards are monitored on-site based on a three-year rotation
2 schedule, as referenced in the State Methods of Administration (MOA) maintained on file with
3 DOL’s Civil Rights Center (DOL-CRC). All 28 Boards are scheduled for an EO review within a
4 designated three-year period. Dates for EO monitoring reviews generally align with those of the
5 | TWC’s annual Board monitoring review.

6
7 In determining which sites are selected for physical accessibility reviews, current Workforce
8 Solutions Offices lists will be cross-referenced with the database of Workforce Solutions Offices
9 previously reviewed by state-level staff. The EO manager will conduct a risk assessment in
10 selecting locations for physical accessibility reviews based on the following criteria:

- 11 • the location was not previously reviewed by TWC staff based on historical review data;
- 12 • the location was not reviewed by TWC staff during the tenure of the current Board EO
13 Officer; and/or
- 14 • the location reflected numerous deficiencies in the previous EO review, thus warranting a
15 follow-up review by TWC.

16
17 On a case-by-case basis, the EO manager can defer physical accessibility reviews in a given
18 Board area with sufficient justification.

19
20 An EO accessibility monitoring survey is used, outlining all compliance requirements within the
21 following categories:

- 22 • Parking and passenger loading zones
- 23 • Ramps
- 24 • Accessibility routes
- 25 • Entrances and doors
- 26 • Building signage
- 27 • Controls and operating mechanisms
- 28 • Drinking fountains and watercoolers
- 29 • Elevators
- 30 • Toilet rooms
- 31 • Fixed or built-in seating, tables, and counters
- 32 • Telephones
- 33 • Auxiliary aides (available upon request)

34
35 *Training for One-Stop Staff*

36 TWC’s Training and Development Department (T&D) has developed an array of curricula
37 specific for the workforce system, including a comprehensive seven-hour course, titled “Access
38 for All,” tailored to Workforce Solutions Offices staff, and providing comprehensive instruction
39 on serving individuals with disabilities. This training focuses on the basics of the Americans
40 with Disabilities Act and the Rehabilitation Act and how to apply the rules and regulations in
41 Workforce Solutions Offices.

42
43 Topics covered include:

- 44 • basic facts, myths, rights, and etiquette guidelines for dealing with customers with
45 disabilities;

- 1 • helping customers with disabilities in a Workforce Solutions Office environment;
- 2 • resources and funding sources for support services and employment accommodations; and
- 3 • the effects that employment may have on Social Security disability benefits.

4
5 Accessibility for Limited English Proficient Individuals

6 TWC require that Boards ensure all individuals with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) have
7 equal opportunity and access to all federally-funded workforce services, including those funded
8 under WIOA, TANF, Choices, and SNAP E&T.

9
10 Boards must review WIOA’s nondiscrimination and equal opportunity regulations that prohibit
11 discrimination, and specifically the requirements to:

- 12 • provide information in languages other than English, and ensure access to persons with LEP
13 to WIOA services on an equal basis with those proficient in English; and
- 14 • ensure that communications with individuals with disabilities are as effective as
15 communications with individuals without disabilities.

16
17 Boards must comply with the following four requirements to ensure “meaningful language
18 access”:

- 19 1) A thorough *assessment* of language needs, including the identification of language needs of
20 each LEP individual; situations in which the individual will need language services;
21 resources needs; and how to make these resources available;
- 22 2) A comprehensive *written policy* to ensure meaningful communication with LEP individuals.
23 This includes notices to LEP individuals of their rights to free language assistance; staff
24 training; monitoring; and translation of written materials. The guidance warns that the use of
25 family, friends, and/or minor children as interpreters can raise Title VI liability issues;
- 26 3) *Training staff* to implement the language access policy. At a minimum, staff must be able to
27 recognize potential disabilities and conduct initial screenings to identify possible disabilities
28 for individuals who agree to be screened. Boards must ensure that service providers and
29 those entities to which a referral is made have the requisite training and knowledge; and
- 30 4) *Vigilant monitoring* to ensure that LEP individuals can access services.

1 **Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs**

2
3 Allotments under WIOA enable the state to assist Boards in providing workforce investment
4 activities for adults and dislocated workers.

5
6 Workforce development and adult education and training are key services available to prepare
7 job seekers for success in jobs that employers need filled. By improving the skills, education,
8 and literacy levels of individual adults and dislocated workers, these services improve their
9 subsequent employment, job retention, and earnings.

10
11 *100 Percent Transferability between Adult and Dislocated Worker Funding*
12 TWC established a policy that allows Boards the flexibility to transfer up to 100 percent of funds
13 between WIOA adult and dislocated worker allocations consistent with WIOA provisions. The
14 policy states that Boards who are under a Technical Assistance Plan or Corrective Action Plan
15 for an adult or dislocated worker program may be subject to limitations on the amounts they are
16 allowed to transfer.

1 Youth Program

2
3 WIOA sets out a number of changes for the youth formula-funded program. The most
4 significant change is the shift to focus resources primarily on out-of-school youth. WIOA raises
5 the minimum percentage of funds required to be spent on out-of-school youth from 30 percent to
6 75 percent. This intentional shift refocuses the program to serve out-of-school youth during a
7 time when large numbers of youth and young adults are out of school and not connected to the
8 labor force.

9
10 A segment of out-of-school youth are unemployed and may also be enrolled in public assistance
11 programs or detained by the juvenile or criminal justice systems. In addition, many out-of-
12 school youth are dropouts, which may present a significant employment barrier.

13
14 Youth who are no longer in the public school system and are seeking to enter the labor market
15 for the first time are inexperienced. As such, Boards must design services that:

- 16 • acknowledge the problems and characteristics of inexperienced job seekers;
- 17 • outreach and engage with the growing out-of-school youth population;
- 18 • obtain and use information concerning the conditions of employment affecting youth and
19 labor laws restricting their employment;
- 20 • develop and maintain effective relationships with schools, colleges, and other training
21 providers; and
- 22 • develop employment opportunities with career potential for youth.

23
24 Texas operates an integrated workforce system that relies on collaboration and coordination
25 amongst partners. This collaboration and coordination is necessary when developing strategies
26 to achieve improved outcomes for out-of-school youth, as this population will often seek
27 assistive services from public or private community-based organizations. As such, partner
28 programs must continue to build on existing partnerships—and develop new partnerships as
29 needed—with community-based providers such as child welfare agencies, social service
30 organizations, group homes, probation or parole officers, and local schools to find and engage at-
31 risk youth before they become disconnected.

32
33 Additionally, under WIOA, opportunities for work experience become an important element of
34 the program. WIOA prioritizes work experience with the requirement that Boards must spend a
35 minimum of 20 percent of youth funds on work experience.

36
37 WIOA enhances the youth program design through an increased emphasis on individual
38 participant needs by adding new components to the objective assessment and individual service
39 strategy. Career pathways are incorporated as part of both the objective assessment and
40 development of the individual service strategy. In addition, the individual service strategy must
41 directly link to one or more of the performance indicators. The program design under WIOA
42 also includes effective connections to employers, including small employers, in in-demand
43 industry sectors and occupations.

44
45 TWC allocates youth formula funds to Boards, that in turn contract with service providers to
46 deliver services to youth in their respective workforce areas. Boards are required to meet all

1 federal and state programmatic requirements. TWC maintains a rigorous performance and
2 accountability system, holding Boards accountable for their performance as it pertains to the
3 youth program as it does with other workforce programs, and Boards have rigorous standards in
4 place for their contracted service providers. Boards must ensure that all 14 program elements—
5 including new WIOA program elements such as financial literacy and services that provide labor
6 market and employment information about in-demand industry sectors or occupations available
7 in workforce areas—are available to youth participants.
8
9
10
11