

# Appendix H

## Workforce Development System Strategic Planning

This Appendix is submitted in accordance with Texas Government Code, §§2308.104 and 238.1015. This statute requires the Texas Workforce Investment Council (TWIC), or “the council,” to facilitate the delivery of integrated workforce services to the state. The Texas Workforce Investment Council, created in 1993 by the 73rd Texas Legislature, is charged in both state and federal law with the responsibility of assisting the governor and the Legislature with strategic planning for and evaluation of the Texas workforce system. The council serves as the State Workforce Investment Board under the federal Workforce Investment Act. Development of a strategic plan for the workforce system is one of the council’s chief responsibilities. A strategic perspective enables the council to facilitate planning and evaluation across eight agencies with multiple programs (including HHSC and DARS) that comprise the Texas workforce system.

System partner agencies include:

- Economic Development and Tourism (EDT),
- Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ)—Windham School District
- Texas Education Agency (TEA),
- Texas Health and Human Services Commission—Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (DARS),
- Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB),
- Texas Juvenile Justice Department (TJJD),
- Texas Veterans Commission (TVC), and
- Texas Workforce Commission (TWC).

Governor Rick Perry approved *Advancing Texas: Strategic Plan for the Texas Workforce Development System FY2010-FY2015 (Advancing Texas)* on October 23, 2009. The first update to the plan, incorporating input from all partner agencies, was considered by the council in March 2012 and subsequently approved by the governor on May 24, 2012.

The matrix below lists Long Term Objectives (LTOs) for which one or more partner agencies are responsible.

<b>Responsible Agencies</b>	<b>Ref. No.</b>	<b>Long Term Objective</b>
<b>THECB, TWC</b>	<b>S1</b>	Produce each biennium, commencing in 2010, a report that documents an assessment of the number and type of postsecondary education and training credentials (certificate, level two certificate, associate, bachelor’s and advanced degrees) required to match the demand for a skilled and educated workforce. The assessment will include the number of forecast net job openings by occupation at each level of postsecondary education and training and the number of credentials needed to match that forecast.
<b>TEA</b>	<b>S2</b>	By 2013, Texas will decrease high school dropout rates by implementing rigorous Career and Technical Education (CTE) as part of the recommended or advanced high school graduation program.
<b>TEA, THECB</b>	<b>S3</b>	By 2013, education and training partners will have the infrastructure necessary (policies, procedures, data processes, rules, and capabilities) to facilitate the effective and efficient transfer of academic and technical dual credit courses from high schools to community colleges and four year institutions.
<b>HHSC (DARS)</b>	<b>C1</b>	By 2013, the blind and disabled populations will achieve additional employment outcomes.
<b>TVC</b>	<b>C2</b>	By 2013, the veteran population will achieve additional employment outcomes.
<b>TEA, TWC</b>	<b>C3</b>	By 2013, design and implement integrated Adult Education and workforce skills training programs to enhance employment outcomes for the English-language learner population.
<b>TEA, TWC</b>	<b>C4</b>	By 2013, design and implement adult education programs to enhance employment outcomes for populations requiring workplace literacy skills.
<b>HHSC (DARS), TDCJ, THECB, TVC, TYC</b>	<b>P5</b>	Partner agencies will gather data from employer customers at appropriate intervals to determine employer needs and satisfaction.
<b>HHSC (DARS), TDCJ, TVC</b>	<b>P6</b>	Partner agencies will use the employment data/outcomes of their programs to understand and improve those programs.

**Part 1: Long Term Objectives (LTO)**

LTO Reference No.:	C1	Key Actions/Strategies for FY 2013–2017
<p>DARS achieved the objective to increase employment for people with blindness and other disabilities by 2013. DARS has retained this objective as part of the 2015 to 2019 planning period. DARS also has taken additional steps to improve vocational rehabilitation services, including services provided to veterans with disabilities, underserved populations, and transition-age youth.</p> <p>As part of its planning process, DARS has identified veterans with disabilities as a consumer group with unique vocational rehabilitation needs and has committed to more effectively serving this population. To address the needs of veterans, DARS will focus on serving more veterans with disabilities through the agency’s vocational rehabilitation programs. This increased service will take place through multiple initiatives, including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● enhancing the marketing of services to the disabled veterans’ community;</li> <li>● building on collaborative relationships with the Veterans Administration, state governmental entities, and local workforce development boards to enhance coordination of services; and</li> <li>● matching military training and skills with civilian jobs to which those skills can be applied.</li> </ul> <p>DARS also has set a goal of improving service delivery to underserved VR consumers. Underserved VR consumers are those who are eligible to receive services from DARS but are not served as effectively as other DARS consumers. Underserved consumers include people who have</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● developmental or intellectual impairments,</li> <li>● neurodevelopmental disorders such as autism,</li> <li>● mental health disorders such as bipolar disorder or schizophrenia,</li> <li>● other disabilities in addition to blindness, and/or</li> <li>● deafblindness.</li> </ul> <p>The number of underserved consumers has grown steadily in recent years. This growth has occurred for a number of reasons, including the trend toward community integration rather than institutionalization.</p> <p>To better serve these populations, DARS will increase staff members’ skills in rehabilitation strategies for serving people with developmental or intellectual impairments, neurodevelopmental disorders, mental health disorders, disabilities in addition to blindness, and deafblindness. To do this, DARS will research and implement best practices to serve these consumers and seek stakeholder feedback on strategies for improving services. DARS also will increase coordination of and develop new partnerships with other state and community organizations that serve people with developmental or intellectual impairments and mental health disorders. Finally, DARS</p>		

commits to building staff capacity and expertise through coordination with state and community organizations and by using subject matter experts to provide staff training.

As part of its strategic planning process, DARS has also set a goal of improving service delivery to transition-age youth.

H.B. 617, 83<sup>rd</sup> Legislature, Regular Session, 2013, requires each school district to designate a transition coordinator for students in special education, and S.B. 1226, 83<sup>rd</sup> Legislature, Regular Session, 2013, establishes competitive employment as the preferred outcome for people with disabilities. This increased focus on transition services will require DARS to expand its capacity to serve transition-age consumers, develop new service delivery strategies, and increase partnerships with secondary and postsecondary educational programs as well as businesses that might provide pre-employment work experience options for youth.

<b>LTO Reference No.:</b>	<b>P5</b>	<b>Key Actions/Strategies for FY 2013-2017</b>
<p>DARS developed surveys and a process for obtaining feedback from businesses to evaluate their use of DARS’ vocational rehabilitation services as well as to know their satisfaction with those services. Survey results help DARS determine how well DARS is meeting businesses’ needs. Web-based surveys are sent to businesses upon completion of services provided and/or after successful consumer placements.</p> <p>DARS will continue to send surveys to businesses that received services and support from DARS in</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● hiring a consumer referred by DARS (to determine whether or not an appropriate applicant referral was made and if the applicant was hired, and if not, why not);</li> <li>● job retention services (to determine if services provided to the business helped the business retain a valuable employee); and</li> <li>● training, such as sensitivity and diversity training (to determine if the business owners and/or managers believed they received the education necessary to understand the disabilities and abilities of employees with disabilities).</li> </ul> <p>Using the surveys to gauge business feedback is critical to the evaluation of DARS’ business relationships.</p>		

LTO Reference No.:	P6	Key Actions/Strategies for FY 2013-2017
<p>DARS will continue to improve services to businesses by evaluating effectiveness of services provided. DARS routinely provides data to managers for program evaluation and improvement.</p> <p>DARS uses its surveys to find out when it has provided effective services to business as well as to identify areas for improvement.</p>		

**Part 2: Narrative**

DARS collaborates with workforce partners at the local, state, and federal levels to expand service capabilities and improve employment and wage outcomes for eligible individuals with disabilities.

Within the Texas workforce system, DARS specifically

- Coordinates and aligns with other Texas workforce system partners that provide services for DARS consumers to ensure that services are integrated. This is done through participation on local and state workforce development boards.
- Develops and enhances employer relations to ensure that Texas employers understand the capabilities of current and future workers who receive DARS’ services. This is done by maintaining relationships with employers throughout the state.
- Develops and deploys assistive technologies so that Texas workers with disabilities will have a broader range of employment options. This is done by assessing the needs of each worker and providing the correct technology at the right time.

As outlined in *Advancing Texas* and in collaboration with our workforce partners, DARS is engaged in the activities listed below.

**C1 By 2013, the blind and disabled populations will achieve additional employment outcomes.**

DARS achieved this objective and retained it as part of the 2015 to 2019 planning period. DARS has also begun additional strategies to improve vocational rehabilitation services, which include improving the effectiveness of services provided to veterans with disabilities, improving service delivery to underserved populations, and improving service delivery to transition-age youth.

As part of its planning process, DARS has identified veterans with disabilities as a distinct consumer demographic and has set a goal of more effectively serving this population by

- assessing the potential benefits of establishing dedicated caseloads for veterans with disabilities;

- exploring and enhancing communication with and marketing of vocational rehabilitation services to the disabled veterans' community;
- enhancing relationships with local workforce development boards to better coordinate services to veterans with disabilities;
- creating and enhancing business and operational relationships with federal, state, and local governmental agencies that are responsible for providing services to veterans; and
- enhancing alignments between military training and skills and the civilian jobs to which those skills can be applied.

DARS has identified people with developmental or intellectual impairments, neurodevelopmental disorders, mental health disorders, disabilities in addition to blindness, and deafblindness as underserved populations and committed to improving service delivery to these groups. It will do this by focusing on providing expertise, raising capacity, and increasing knowledge of staff and stakeholders, and by educating providers to create better service models. Strategies include

- considering the use of the successful Statewide Autism Team and Benefits Planning Team models;
- using strategies learned from Project HIRE (Helping Individuals Reach Employment) educational opportunities for adults by expanding the opportunities available for persons with significant disabilities in an educational arena to achieve employment outcomes;
- partnering with other federal, state, and community organizations that serve persons in these underserved populations to leverage resources and increase knowledge about how to best deliver services;
- increasing efforts to educate employers about the benefits of hiring persons in these populations; and
- participating on workgroups, committees, or ongoing initiatives at the state and national level to increase expertise, relationships, and opportunities related to these populations.

As part of the strategic planning process, DARS has committed to improving service delivery to transition-age youth. Strategies include

- strengthening partnerships with the Texas Education Agency, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, Independent School Districts, education service centers, the Texas Workforce Commission, and local workforce development boards and centers to improve access to services and to develop and implement additional service delivery strategies;
- expanding partnerships with high schools and community and technical colleges to improve access and transition for students moving from secondary to postsecondary education and training; and
- expanding partnerships with businesses that have an interest in pre-employment training for high school students and developing additional work experience options.

**P5 Partner agencies will gather data from employer customers at appropriate intervals to determine employer needs and satisfaction.**

The department created and implemented two surveys to obtain feedback from businesses. The surveys were

- the **Business Satisfaction Survey**, which provides feedback about DARS services related to consultation and training on disability and disability awareness for businesses; and
- the **Applicant Hiring and Retention Satisfaction Survey**, which provides feedback about services that provide job retention and employment accommodations and/or technical assistance to qualified candidates.

Business partners' levels of satisfaction have been very high for DARS' services. (For example, its potential hire, job retention assistance, accommodations and technical assistance, and diversity awareness presentations have received positive feedback.) DARS has used feedback to improve services that are related to business relationship development. DARS continues to make program changes as appropriate.

DARS has found the surveys to be very useful and continues to use them to improve services and recognize staff members for their commendable work.

**P6 Partner agencies will use the employment data/outcomes of their programs to understand and improve those programs.**

DARS uses survey feedback to identify strengths, weaknesses, and other trends in service delivery. DARS uses this information to identify opportunities for staff coaching and training, staff recognition, program improvements, and replication of successful practices.

