

Northeast Texas Pathways



Strategic Plan

2025 - 2030



A proud partner of the AmericanJobCenter network

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank the Northeast Texas Pathways Leadership Team for their time and commitment to the success of this initiative.

- Kerri Bowles, Region 8 Education Service Center
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- Emily Newsome, Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas
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Northeast Texas Pathways

Strategic Plan 2025 - 2030

Executive Summary

Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas became a partner with the Texas Regional Pathways Network in 2023 when awarded the Tri-Agency Grant for Regional Conveners. At the grant period's end, Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas will apply for the Regional Convener designation to serve as a neutral voice for regional stakeholders and coordinate alignment of regional pathway efforts. The Regional Convener will demonstrate leadership proficiency in the following domains:

- Regional Alignment Leadership
- Regional Work-Based Learning
- Regional Data
- Regional Communications

A cross-sector partnership leadership team was established in the summer of 2023. The landscape map and a regional asset map and gap analysis processes were conducted in fall 2023. Based on the findings of these two documents, a strategic plan for connecting and convening regional pathway leaders to coordinate regional pathway systems and efforts was made to drive these efforts for the next 5 years.

At the conclusion of a 2-year implementation period, members of the Pathways Leadership team will evaluate the successes, best practices established, and methods for improvement.

Pathways Leadership Team and Stakeholders

Pathways Leadership Team Members

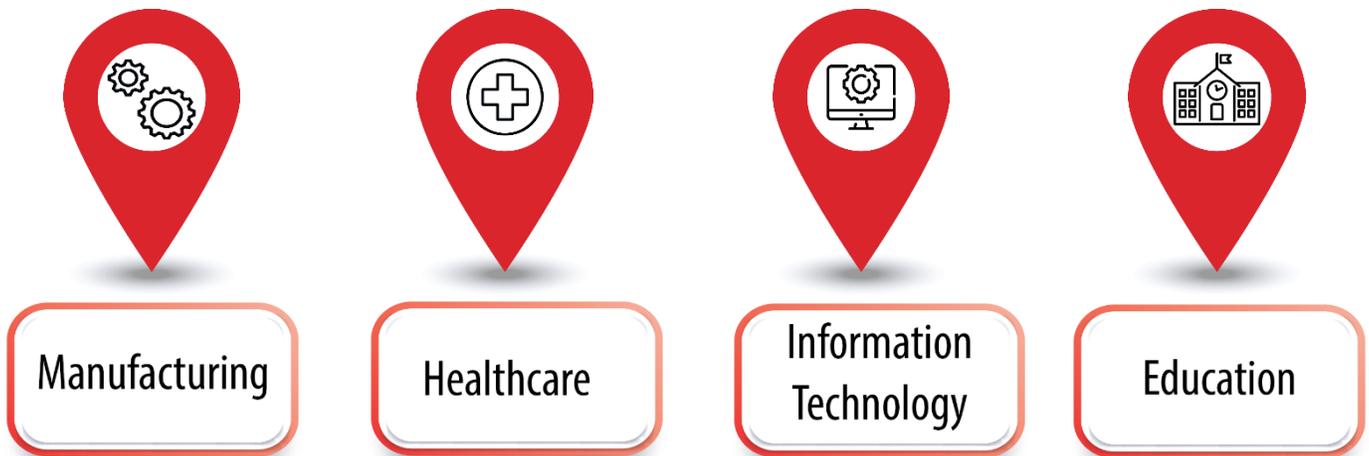
The Pathways Leadership Team members were strategically selected to serve in this capacity and representatives from each of the following sectors:

- Regional Education Service Center (2 Seat minimum) – Campus Leadership Coordinator and Career and Technical Education Coordinator. The representatives will act as the liaisons to regional school districts and will actively communicate with and engage the appropriate parties on pathway development and data collection.
- Higher Education (1 Seat minimum) – Representatives will act as the liaisons to regional institutions of higher education and will actively communicate with and engage the appropriate parties on pathway development and data collection
- Economic Development (1 seat minimum) – Representatives will engage in leadership team meetings and focus groups offering feedback and the perspective through the lens of an economic developer for the region
- Industry (1 seat minimum) – Representatives will engage in leadership team meetings and focus groups offering feedback and the perspective through the lens of an employer in the region
- Workforce Solutions (2 seats minimum) – Representatives will actively coordinate pathway development efforts and will act in the role of Regional Convener

Additional Key Stakeholders – Representatives of the following sectors will be invited to participate in surveys, focus groups and other strategic activities to develop pathway efforts and work-based learning educational materials used to produce a skilled talent pool.

- Faculty and Staff of regional education entities (K12 and Postsecondary)
- Industry/Employers
- Economic Development
- Students
- Employees

Regional labor market data suggested a focus on the regional high demand industries of:



Vision: To build a regional talent pipeline by ensuring that all students, employees, and employers have access to educational and training needs for a competitive economy.



Mission: To support pathways that align community, industry, and training resources for the empowerment of students pursuing career opportunities in Northeast Texas



Goal #1: Increase Stakeholder engagement and break silos across:

- Employers/Workforce
- K12 Education
- Institutions of Higher Education
- Community Based Organizations and Non-profits

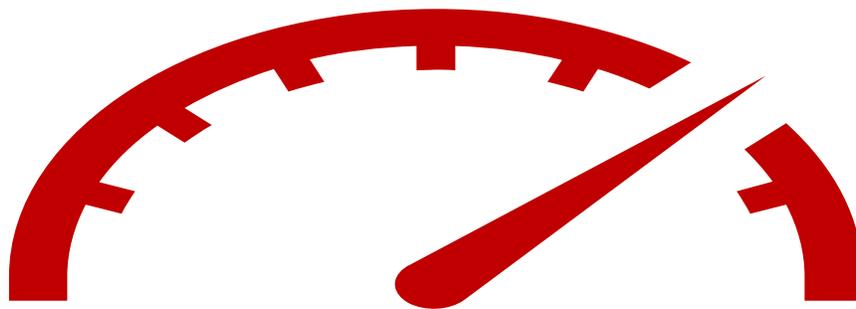


Goal #2: Increase the number of students who complete a postsecondary certificate or degree in the region overall with a particular focus on:

- Manufacturing
- Healthcare
- Information Technology
- Education



Goal #3: Create a stronger infrastructure for work-based learning opportunities



Northeast Texas Overview

The Northeast Texas region, comprised of nine counties, is a largely rural corner of the state but enjoys many substantial advantages in developing effective career and education pathways. The region's proximity to Dallas/Fort Worth, access to Interstate 30, and pro-business climate provide companies with a strong foundation for success. In essence, businesses throughout the region enjoy easy access to the large customer base and sophisticated supplier networks. As a result, the region benefits from the presence of a surprisingly diverse and strong foundation of major goods producing and service providing industries. The region is also home to one university (Texas A&M University – Texarkana), three community colleges (Northeast Texas Community College, Paris Junior College, and Texarkana College, and 44 school districts.

The population in the Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas area was 278,911 per American Community Survey data for 2017-2021. The region has a civilian labor force of 125,369 with a participation rate of 57.3%. Of individuals 25 to 64 in the Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas region, 19.9% have a bachelor's degree or higher which compares with 35.1% in the nation. The median household income in the Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas is \$53,256 and the median house value is \$122,422.

For more information, please see the [Northeast Texas Pathways Asset Map and Gap Analysis](#).

Regional Industry Sectors

The largest sector in the Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas Region is Health Care and Social Assistance, employing 20,905 workers. The next-largest sectors in the region are Manufacturing (19,583 workers) and Retail Trade (14,632). High location quotients (LQs) indicate sectors in which a region has high concentrations of employment compared to the national average. The sectors with the largest LQs in the region are Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting (LQ = 3.02), Manufacturing (1.92), and Utilities (1.29).

Sectors in the Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas Region with the highest average wages per worker are Management of Companies and Enterprises (\$97,546), Utilities (\$87,132), and Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction (\$71,072). Regional sectors with the best job growth (or most moderate job losses) over the last 5 years are Manufacturing (+1,733 jobs), Construction (+1,239), and Retail Trade (+1,116).

Over the next 10 years, employment in the Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas Region is projected to contract by 2,955 jobs. The fastest growing sector in the region is expected to be Health Care and Social Assistance with a +0.6% year-over-year rate of growth. The strongest forecast by number of jobs over this period is expected for Health Care and Social Assistance (+1,323 jobs), Transportation and Warehousing (+82), and Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services (+53).

For more information, please see Appendix A.

The per capita income, education attainment, and poverty level of the nine counties that comprise Northeast Texas were measured against state levels and overall regional level. Three of the nine (represented in yellow below) counties measured negative in all three categories. Two (represented in green below) Measured negative in two out of three categories. These five counties are considered to be the most under-resourced counties in the region.

	Per Capita Income	Associate Degree or Higher	Poverty Level
Texas	\$34,255	40.3%	14.0%
Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas	\$27,066	28.5%	16.1%
Bowie	\$28,630	30.7%	16.4%
Cass	\$24,465	24.3%	18.4%
Delta	\$30,315	35.0%	15.9%
Franklin	\$34,631	36.2%	8.7%
Hopkins	\$28,882	30.9%	12.5%
Lamar	\$26,686	29.6%	16.9%
Morris	\$24,165	21.9%	14.6%
Red River	\$22,998	21.3%	21.4%
Titus	\$22,855	23.2%	16.9%

Aligned Efforts

The Northeast Texas region is home to several organizations supporting pieces of the career pathways model. Some of these organizations have a regional focus, while other efforts focus on a single county or city. Organizations with a regional focus include Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas, ArTex Council of Governments, and the Region 8 Education Service Center. Organizations with a smaller focus include the Texarkana Chamber, Mount Pleasant Chamber, Paris Chamber, Sulphur Springs Chamber, Ar-Tex Redi Economic Development, Nash Industrial Foundation, TexAmericas Center, City of Texarkana TX, Atlanta EDC, Linden EDC, Mount Pleasant EDC, Paris EDC, Sulphur Springs EDC, and private industry employers. Each of these organizations has a professional interest in supporting area employers with skilled and qualified workers. Although some of this work may not be defined by the organization as career pathway efforts, the activities and anticipated outcomes relate to pathway development. One of the goals of Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas will be to make each of these organizations aware of how their efforts fit into the regional pathways model. There appears to be evidence of inequities across the region related to funding and efforts for career pathway development. Naturally, the more populated areas and larger school districts have more resources devoted to career pathways. The region's largest school districts have multiple career focused learning tracks, more employer partners for work-based learning, more technology for distance based dual credit, and the ability to transport students to post-secondary partners based on proximity. The region must develop efforts to better connect these students with post-secondary and career exploration opportunities.

Regional Data and Key Elements from Asset Map and Gap Analysis

Data is essential to workforce development, shaping every decision, informing every strategy, and driving growth. Effective data management is not merely an operational need but a critical component of overall success. This data management strategy demonstrates our organization's commitment to building a robust data infrastructure, emphasizing accuracy and relevance. It will guide our efforts to standardize data processes, enhance quality, and enable comprehensive analysis. Data elements will align the strategic goals, including stakeholder engagement, degree/certificate attainment, and growth of work-based learning opportunities. Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas will leverage the power of data to strengthen stakeholder relationships and drive innovation across the regional pathway network. This strategy is about more than collecting and sharing data—it's about transforming data into a strategic asset that advances progress for our region.

Since the beginning of the Regional Convener grant, the Board has expanded research into available data resources and data collection efforts. As the Northeast Texas Workforce Development Board, labor market data is used extensively in strategic planning and decision making. However, staff are less familiar with data resources from the Texas Education Agency and Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. With the help of the Region 8 Education Service Center and higher education partners, staff now have a better understanding of the data available through these agencies. Data on graduation rates, degrees/certificates awarded, students completing a CTE high school course, and community college to university transfers, all play a significant role in the Board's plans to expand and enhance career pathways in Northeast Texas. Some of the outcomes from the data analysis has been unexpected. The region's ISDs offer a total of 192 dual credit CTE courses, but 109 of those are offered by 6 ISDs. Additionally, 15 ISDs offer 2 or fewer dual credit CTE courses, and 13 ISDs don't offer any at all. Staff believe the lack of or low number of dual credit CTE courses in area high schools, puts those students at a disadvantage when preparing for higher education and the workforce.

Additionally, staff were surprised to see the decline in degrees/certificates awarded in the region for the 2022 school year. The region declined from 4,096 in 2021 to 3,277 in 2022, a 20% decrease. This decrease follows a four-year span of increases. The significant decrease is alarming when compared to a .2% decrease in Texas and .06% decrease in the US from 2021 to 2022. Further analysis on job postings for the year following the 2021 and 2022 academic years, June 2021 – May 2022 and June 2022 – May 2023, showed an increase in overall job postings that required a degree or certificate. In June 2021 – May 2022, employers in the region posted 15,688 jobs, 10,174 of which listed an education level in the job posting. Of those that listed an education level, 59% required a degree or certificate. In June 2022 – May 2023, employers in the region posted 17,208 jobs, 11,124 of which listed an education level in the job posting. Of those that listed an education level, 63% required a degree or certificate. In 2023, the regional employers posted 1,049 more jobs that require a degree or certificate, while during that same school year, the region awarded 819 fewer degrees/certificates than it did the previous year. This indicates that additional efforts are needed in order to provide area employers with the educated, skilled, and qualified workforce they need.

Having examined the data, we now have an understanding of the key insights and trends that will inform next steps. With this evidence in mind, we can move forward to align these findings with our strategic goals, ensuring that our plan is both data-driven and focused on achieving measurable success.

Northeast Texas Regional Pathways Initiative Strategic Plan

2025 – 2030 Northeast Texas Pathways Initiative Strategic Plan Overview

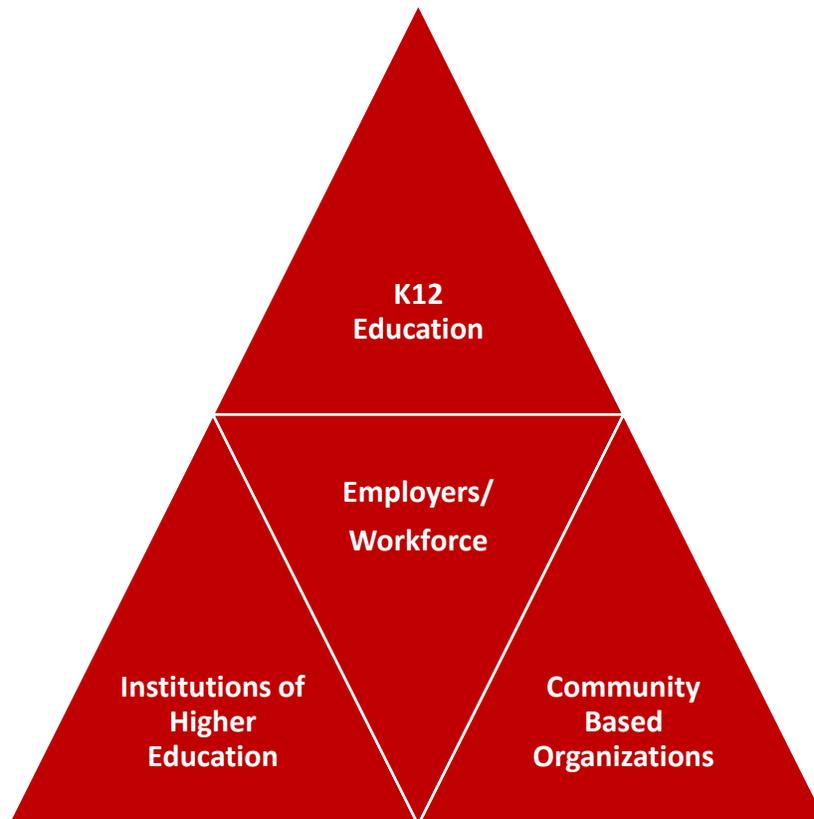
Goal	Strategy	Partners
<p>Goal #1: Increase Stakeholder engagement and break silos across: Employers/Workforce, K12 Education, Institutions of Higher Education, Community Based Organizations and Non-profits</p>	<p>1.1 Establish consistent communication channels to keep stakeholders informed and involved</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Convener/Pathways Leadership Team • Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas • K12 Education • IHE partners
	<p>1.2 Create opportunities for direct interaction among stakeholders and with the regional convener</p>	
<p>Goal #2: Increase the number of students who complete a postsecondary certificate or degree in the region overall with a particular focus on: Manufacturing, Healthcare, Information Technology, and Education</p>	<p>2.1 Increase access to K12 credential programs that feed into regional community college degrees and programs to increase completions of credentials with value</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Convener/Pathways Leadership Team • Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas • K12 Education • IHE partners • Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas Career Coaches
	<p>2.2 Increase communication to students and parents about the availability and value of postsecondary credentials in the region</p>	
<p>Goal #3: Create a stronger infrastructure for work-based learning opportunities</p>	<p>3.1 Increase Awareness of Work-Based Learning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Convener/Pathways Leadership Team • Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas • K12 Education • IHE partners • Employers
	<p>3.2 Increase Work-Based Learning opportunities in Northeast Texas</p>	

Two Year Implementation Plan

Goal 1: Increase Stakeholder engagement and break silos across:

- **Employers/Workforce**
- **K12 Education**
- **Institutions of Higher Education**
- **Community Based Organizations and Non-profits**

In order to increase stakeholder engagement and break down silos, consistent and frequent opportunities for engagement need to occur. The Regional Convener will develop a website that highlights information about the Northeast Texas Pathways Initiative, houses a data dashboard that contains labor market statistics about targeted industries, work-based learning best practices, and celebrates employers engaging in work-based learning activities. The dashboard will allow stakeholders to access data and the progress toward the Northeast Texas Pathways Initiative, but these elements will also be communicated in the bi-annual newsletter as well as focus groups and at the Pathways Summit. These strategies are about more than collecting and sharing data – it's about transforming data into a strategic asset that advances progress for our region.



Strategy	Action	Partners
1.1 Establish consistent communication channels to keep stakeholders informed and involved	1.1.1 Develop website to communicate information about targeted industries and pathways initiatives and pathway maps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional Convener/Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas
	1.1.2 Present information on the Northeast Texas Regional Pathways at Region 8 ESC Advisory Committees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional Convener/Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas K12 School Districts IHE partners
	1.1.3 Bi-Annual email newsletter to stakeholders on regional pathway progress, value, and success stories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional Convener/Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas
	1.1.4 Send annual surveys to stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional Convener/Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas
1.2 Create opportunities for direct interaction among stakeholders and with the regional convener	1.2.1 Host regional pathways summit for stakeholders to provide updates on progress and gather input.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional Convener/Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas Pathways leadership team
	1.2.2 Host quarterly webinars/focus groups with stakeholders to provide updates on progress and gather input.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional Convener/Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas Pathway leadership team IHEs

Metrics
Increase Pathway survey response rates
The number of new stakeholder entities that provide a survey response or attend a focus group
Percentage of stakeholder entities that continue to provide a survey response or attend a focus group
Number of new employer and education partnerships as a result of pathways initiative

Strategy 1.1: Establish consistent communication channels to keep stakeholders informed and involved

Establishing consistent communication about pathways work in our region is crucial to telling the most accurate story of our region. The Pathways Leadership Team is committed to presenting consistent information about education to career pathways in our region and receiving feedback about best practices and success stories.

Action	Domain	Benchmarks	Timeline
1.1.1 Develop website to communicate information about targeted industries and pathways initiatives and pathway maps	Regional Leadership Communication/Data Domains	Count of clicks and time spent on website	Year 1
1.1.2 Present information on the Northeast Texas Regional Pathways at Region 8 ESC Advisory Committees	Regional Leadership Domain	Count of participants attending presentations	Year 1
1.1.3 Bi-Annual email newsletter to stakeholders on regional pathway progress, value, and success stories	Regional Leadership and Communications Domain	Percentage of recipients engaging with newsletter, number of new subscribers	Year 1
1.1.4 Send annual surveys to stakeholders	Regional Leadership Domain	Survey response rate	Year 1



Strategy 1.2: Create opportunities for direct interaction among stakeholders and with the regional convener

Quarterly webinars and/or focus groups about educational pathways to careers will ensure frequent opportunities for stakeholders to engage in conversations about improvement and successes.

Action	Domain	Benchmarks	Timeline
1.2.1 Host regional pathways summit for stakeholders to provide updates on progress and gather input.	Regional Communications and Leadership Domain	Count of different stakeholder participants (employers, educators, nonprofits, students)	Year 3
1.2.2 Host quarterly webinars/focus groups with stakeholders to provide updates on progress and gather input.	Regional Communications and Leadership Domain	Count of different stakeholder groups (employers and nonprofits)	Year 1

Goal #2: Increase the number of students who complete a postsecondary certificate or degree in the region overall with a particular focus on:

- **Manufacturing**
- **Healthcare**
- **Information Technology**
- **Education**

The Northeast Texas Pathways Initiative is working to improve education and training completion rates in support of the Building a Talent Strong Texas initiative. [The Northeast Texas Asset Map and Gap Analysis](#) revealed some unexpected findings. While the region’s ISDs offer 192 dual credit CTE courses, 109 of those are provided by just 6 ISDs, and 15 ISDs offer 2 or fewer, with 13 offering none. This lack of dual credit opportunities is seen as a disadvantage for students preparing for higher education and the workforce.

Additionally, the region saw a concerning 20% decrease in degrees and certificates awarded from 4,096 in 2021 to 3,277 in 2022, a sharp contrast to the modest national and state declines of 0.2% and 0.06%, respectively. This decline is especially troubling given the increase in regional job postings that require a degree or certificate. From June 2021-May 2022, 59% of 10,174 job postings requested an educational qualification. In the following year, 63% of 11,124 postings required a degree or certificate. Despite the increase in demand for qualified workers, the region awarded 819 fewer degrees and certificates in 2022 compared to 2021, indicating a need for stronger efforts to align education outcomes with workforce needs.

Strategy	Action	Partners
2.1 Increase access to K12 credential programs that feed into regional community college degrees and programs to increase completions of credentials with value	2.1.1 Host Design Labs for Pathway Mapping for targeted industries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Convener • Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas • K12 School Districts • IHE partners
	2.1.2 Identify gaps in Dual Credit CTE Programming at regional high schools (from Design Labs) in targeted industries and communicate to IHEs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Convener • Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas • K12 Education • IHE Partners
	2.1.3 Career Coaches outreach K12 students and their parents with information about career opportunities in the region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Convener • Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas Career Coaches
	2.1.4 Make presentations to school administrators, including curriculum directors and counselors about high demand postsecondary credentials.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Convener • Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas • Region 8 ESC • IHEs
	2.1.5 Host bi-annual College Presidents' Roundtable to discuss opportunities for the community colleges and university to increase student transfers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Convener • Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas • IHEs
2.2 Increase communication to students and parents about the availability and value of postsecondary credentials in the region	2.2.1 Using Community College Pathway Maps, create Regional Pathway Maps for targeted industries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Convener • Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas • IHEs
	2.2.2 Co-host Transfer Fair with regional community colleges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Convener • Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas • IHE partners

Metrics
Increase the number of degrees and certificates awarded by regional IHEs by 5% in year 5.
Count of schools that can offer at least one additional CTE dual credit course
Increase the number of community college students transferring to regional universities by 5% in year 3
Count of students impacted by Workforces Solutions Northeast Texas Career Coaches

Strategy 2.1: Increase access to K12 credential programs that feed into regional community college degrees and programs to increase completions of credentials with value

The creation of pathway maps with regional labor market data will give student information to make informed decisions about their education and regional employment opportunities.

Action	Domain	Benchmarks	Timeline
2.1.1 Host Design Labs for Pathway Mapping for targeted industries	Regional Alignment Leadership/Regional Work-Based Learning Domains	Count of pathway maps produced	Year 2
2.1.2 Identify gaps in Dual Credit CTE Programming at regional high schools (from Design Labs) in targeted industries and communicate to IHEs	Regional Alignment/Regional Communications Leadership Domains	Work with ESC and IHE partners to address gaps found	Year 2
2.1.3 Career Coaches outreach K12 students and their parents with information about career opportunities in the region	Region Alignment/Regional Communications Leadership Domains	Count of student engagements	Year 1
2.1.4 Make presentations to school administrators, including curriculum directors and counselors about high demand postsecondary credentials.	Region Alignment/Regional Communications Leadership Domains	Number of school administrators attending information sessions.	Year 2
2.1.5 Host bi-annual College Presidents' Roundtable to discuss opportunities for the community colleges and	Region Alignment/Regional Communications Leadership Domains	Number of transfers from community colleges to universities in Northeast Texas	Year 1

university to increase student transfers			
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Strategy 2.2: Increase communication to students and parents about the availability and value of postsecondary credentials in the region

Using the pathway maps created for schools, industry specific reverse maps will put even more information into the hands of students and employers. By utilizing the pathway maps created for schools, we aim to develop industry-specific reverse maps that will provide students with a more clear understanding of career opportunities, while also offering employers valuable insights into the qualifications they can expect from prospective employees.

Action	Domain	Benchmarks	Timeline
2.2.1 Using Community College Pathway Maps, create Regional Pathway Maps for targeted industries	Regional Alignment Domain	Count of pathway maps produced	Year 2
2.2.2 Co-host Transfer Fair with regional community colleges	Regional Alignment Domain	Number of students attending	Year 2

Goal #3: Create a stronger infrastructure for work-based learning opportunities

A robust infrastructure for work-based learning opportunities that aligns with the Tri-Agency framework is a priority for the Northeast Texas Regional Pathways Initiative by communicating and celebrating the opportunities for students and employers in our region.

Strategy	Action	Partners
3.1 Increase Awareness of Work-Based Learning	3.1.1 Develop and distribute WBL Best Practices and Training videos and one page handouts for employers, schools, and students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional Convener Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas
	3.1.2 Host Employer Engagement Meetings 3 times a year (one in west end of the region, one in middle area of the region, and one in the east end.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional Convener Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas K12 School Districts IHE partners
	3.1.3 Create online hub for work-based learning opportunities in Northeast Texas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional Convener Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas
	3.1.4 Bi-annual email newsletter with a focus on Work Based learning success stories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional Convener Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas
	3.1.5 Host Workforce Solutions programs such as: Teacher Externships, Teacher Industry Tours, Summer Earn and Learn (SEAL),	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional Convener Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas Pathways leadership team

	Financial Literacy for Youth (FLY), Career Coaching in K12 participation	
3.2 Increase Work-Based Learning opportunities in Northeast Texas	3.2.1 Coordinate an interview Day event to bring multiple K12 schools, employers, and postsecondary at the same location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Convener • Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas • Pathways leadership team • IHEs
	3.2.2 Count how many districts have students in Career Prep (Work Release) or practicum. Count the number of students enrolled and the number of districts that have students participating in Career Prep	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Convener • Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas • K12 School Districts • IHE partners
	3.2.3 Gather IHE data for student employment. Start with student worker opportunities and count the number of students employed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Convener • Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas • K12 Education • IHE Partners
	3.2.4 Develop a tool that engages employers in WBL opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Convener • Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas Career Coaches

Metrics
Increase the number of employers participating in the Northeast Texas WBL Program by year 5
Count of students participating in WBL programs
Click rate on WBL training guides
Count of employers who utilize WBL as ways to recruit and train staff (survey response)



3.1: Increase Awareness of Work-Based Learning

Raising awareness of work-based learning is crucial because it bridges the gap between academic knowledge and real-world skills, ensuring that individuals are better prepared for the workforce. By fostering understanding of these opportunities, we empower learners to make informed decisions about career paths, while also helping employers identify and develop talent that meets industry demands. Promoting work-based learning ultimately leads to a more skilled talent pipeline.

Action	Domain	Benchmarks	Timeline
3.1.1 Develop and distribute WBL Best Practices and Training videos and one-page handouts for employers, schools, and students	Regional Communications Leadership Domain/ Work-Based Learning Domains	Count of video views and number of clicks on one page handout pdf files	Year 1
3.1.2 Host Employer Engagement Meetings 3 times a year (one in west end of the region, one in middle area of the region, and one in the east end.	Regional Alignment /Regional Work-Based Learning Leadership Domain	Increase the total number of employer participants by 5% annually	Year 1
3.1.3 Create online hub for work-based learning opportunities in Northeast Texas.	Regional Work-Based Learning	Number of engagements	Year 4
3.1.4 Bi-annual email newsletter with a focus on Work Based learning success stories	Regional Leadership and Communications Domain	Percentage of recipients engaging with newsletter, number of new subscribers	Year 1
3.1.5 Host Workforce Solutions programs such as: Teacher Externships, Teacher Industry Tours, Summer Earn and Learn (SEAL), Financial Literacy for Youth (FLY), Career Coaching in K12 participation	Regional Work-Based Learning Domain	Participation numbers, new participants, repeat participants	Year 1

3.2: Increase Work-Based Learning opportunities in Northeast Texas

Expanding work-based learning opportunities is essential for narrowing the skills gap between education and the workforce. By increasing work-based learning opportunities we can provide learners with hands-on experiences that equip them with practical skills needed to succeed in careers. Moreover, it allows employers the opportunity to cultivate a skilled workforce that fulfills sector demands driving economic growth and improving long-term employment outcomes for individuals.

Action	Domain	Benchmarks	Timeline
3.2.1 Coordinate an interview Day event to bring multiple K12 schools, employers, and postsecondary at the same location	Regional Leadership/Regional Work-Based Learning Domains	Count of student and employer participants	Year 2
3.2.2 Count how many districts have students in Career Prep (Work Release) or practicum. Count the number of students enrolled and the number of districts that have students participating in Career Prep	Regional Work-Based Learning Domain	PEIMS data	Year 1
3.2.3 Gather IHE data for student employment. Start with student worker opportunities and count the number of students employed	Regional Work-Based Learning/Regional Communication Leadership Domains	Percentage of student employees in targeted industries	Year 1
3.2.4 Develop a tool that engages employers in WBL opportunities	Regional Work-Based Learning/Regional Communication Leadership Domains	Count of employers who participate in the program	Year 1

Conclusion

The Northeast Texas Regional Pathways Initiative Strategic Plan is a bold and forward-thinking roadmap designed to address the critical need for a skilled, adaptable workforce. With an emphasis on collaboration, innovation, and inclusivity, this plan seeks to unite education providers, industry leaders, community organizations, and policymakers to create an interconnected talent pipeline that serves both individuals and the regional economy.

At its core, this plan is about aligning educational opportunities with workforce demands, ensuring that students, employees, and employers alike are equipped to thrive in an ever-changing economic landscape. Through strategic goals centered on breaking silos between stakeholders, increasing postsecondary attainment, and building a robust infrastructure for work-based learning, we aim to establish Northeast Texas as a model for workforce and education alignment.

The plan's success relies on the collective efforts of its stakeholders, whose collaboration will drive meaningful progress. By leveraging data-driven strategies, fostering community engagement, and maintaining a focus on equity, we can ensure that no community or individual is left behind. The implementation of this plan will not only create opportunities for students but will also empower

employers to recruit and retain a highly skilled workforce, thereby strengthening the region's economic foundation.

Sustainability is a key component of this initiative. By aligning with state and national workforce development goals and exploring innovative funding solutions, we aim to secure the longevity and impact of these efforts well beyond the initial five-year timeline. Regular evaluation, feedback from stakeholders, and a commitment to continuous improvement will ensure that the plan evolves to meet emerging challenges and opportunities.

This strategic plan is more than a document—it is a call to action. It invites educators, businesses, policymakers, and community members to join forces in transforming Northeast Texas into a region where every individual has access to education and training that leads to meaningful careers and economic mobility. Together, we can create a future where the region's talent pipeline becomes a powerful driver of prosperity and resilience.

We look forward to building this future with you. Join us in building the future of our communities—support the implementation of Northeast Texas Regional Pathways infrastructure to create a sustainable, connected, and thriving region for generations to come. Together, we can pave the way for economic growth, improved career mobility, and a stronger, more resilient regional talent pipeline by ensuring all who live in Northeast Texas have access to educational and training needs.

Appendices

Appendix A: Northeast Texas Industry Sectors

Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas, 2023Q2¹

NAICS	Industry	Empl	Current		5-Year History		10-Year Forecast				
			Avg Ann Wages	LQ	Empl Change	Ann %	Total Demand	Exits	Transfers	Empl Growth	Ann % Growth
62	Health Care and Social Assistance	20,905	\$49,603	1.15	776	0.8%	23,364	10,138	11,903	1,323	0.6%
31	Manufacturing	19,583	\$66,556	1.92	1,733	1.9%	20,107	7,705	13,152	-750	-0.4%
44	Retail Trade	14,632	\$37,201	1.16	1,116	1.6%	18,827	8,518	11,389	-1,080	-0.8%
61	Educational Services	11,114	\$42,708	1.11	154	0.3%	9,969	5,029	5,571	-631	-0.6%
72	Accommodation and Food Services	10,727	\$20,677	0.98	327	0.6%	18,165	8,348	10,119	-302	-0.3%
23	Construction	7,818	\$54,773	1.03	1,239	3.5%	7,343	2,709	4,827	-193	-0.2%
92	Public Administration	6,198	\$57,773	1.07	-953	-2.8%	5,606	2,454	3,504	-353	-0.6%
81	Other Services (except Public Administration)	5,349	\$29,042	0.99	129	0.5%	6,256	2,664	3,715	-123	-0.2%
42	Wholesale Trade	5,079	\$63,852	1.06	428	1.8%	5,184	2,010	3,455	-280	-0.6%
56	Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	4,943	\$38,946	0.61	39	0.2%	5,923	2,413	3,530	-20	0.0%
11	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	4,894	\$27,491	3.02	-270	-1.1%	5,435	2,619	3,284	-468	-1.0%
48	Transportation and Warehousing	4,250	\$60,655	0.68	-514	-2.3%	5,191	2,060	3,048	82	0.2%
52	Finance and Insurance	3,421	\$61,641	0.68	-8	0.0%	3,095	1,188	1,968	-61	-0.2%
54	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	3,033	\$66,502	0.33	408	2.9%	2,799	1,010	1,736	53	0.2%
53	Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	1,401	\$53,115	0.62	137	2.1%	1,416	641	794	-19	-0.1%
71	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	962	\$25,271	0.39	79	1.7%	1,473	612	843	19	0.2%
22	Utilities	825	\$87,132	1.29	-192	-4.1%	603	264	466	-128	-1.7%
51	Information	684	\$52,505	0.27	-90	-2.5%	627	234	422	-30	-0.4%
55	Management of Companies and Enterprises	499	\$97,546	0.25	33	1.4%	489	175	300	14	0.3%
21	Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	146	\$71,072	0.32	-229	-17.2%	141	48	100	-8	-0.5%
99	Unclassified	61	\$46,867	0.22	-41	-9.8%	69	29	42	-2	-0.3%
Total - All Industries		126,525	\$48,235	1.00	4,300	0.7%	140,857	59,970	83,842	-2,955	-0.2%

Source: [JobsEQ®](#)

Data as of 2023Q2

Note: Figures may not sum due to rounding. 1. All data based upon a four-quarter moving average. Exits and transfers are approximate estimates based upon occupation separation rates. Employment data are derived from the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, provided by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and imputed where necessary. Data are updated through 2023Q1 with preliminary estimates updated to 2023Q2. Forecast employment growth uses national projections adapted for regional growth patterns

Appendix B: Process and Cadence for Identifying Targeted Industries and Occupations

Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas will review and update target industries and occupations every two years. Staff will utilize labor market information and local knowledge for analysis and decision making. Labor market information data comes from a number of sources, including the Texas Workforce Commission, JobsEQ, and Lightcast. Local knowledge includes input on industries and occupations, from regional stakeholders including employers, economic developers, and employers. The Board will utilize surveys to request stakeholder feedback from area employers, small businesses, economic development corporations, and chambers of commerce.

The Board has set criteria for the region's target industries and occupations. The Board identifies target industries as those with employment of 5,000 or more, 10 year growth projections of 100 or more, and average annual wages equal to or more than the region's self-sufficiency wage level (\$34,257). The Board identifies target occupations as those related to a target industry, with a mean hourly wage of \$16.47 (self-sufficiency wage level for Northeast Texas) per hour or more, and a combined job growth and replacement total of at least 10 per year. The Board may also consider emerging industries and occupations for the target list. For example, the Board has identified the Information Technology industry as a target industry, even though it falls short of total employment and employment growth numbers. The Information Technology industry is included because it is critical to the growth of other industries in the region, including manufacturing, health care, and education. A formal plan for growth and development within the Information Technology industry is important to regional growth. Staff will also use local knowledge and feedback from stakeholders to identify additional target industries and occupations that might not fit within the outlined parameters.

The Board will share the final data analysis report, including any changes to target industries and occupations with the Pathways Leadership Team for review and feedback, prior to final approval. If this analysis results in the addition or removal of a target industry/occupation, the impact to the Board's strategic and implementation plan will be minimal. New target industries may expand the employers' outreach for focus groups or include additional secondary/postsecondary training program development. However, the actual action items within the implementation plan will not deviate.

Appendix C: Two Year Implementation Timeline

Year One

This timeline is subject to change depending on the Implementation Grant cycle. Additional activities will be added as work progresses.

January

- Reevaluate Target Industries and Occupations – Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas will review and update target industries and occupations every two years. Staff will utilize labor market information and local knowledge for analysis and decision making. (1.1.1)
- Meet with employers that have conducted successful Work-based learning programs to get feedback on best practices (3.1.1)
- Establish cadence and sequence for the Newsletter. Publish 1st edition (1.1.1)
- Finalize Employer Engagement Matrix (3.2.4)
- Pathways Leadership Team Meeting (1.2.2)

February

- Update Landscape Map – Using the target industries and occupations, update the top 5 employers in the region for occupation and map existing training to each. Align existing postsecondary pathways to targeted industries and occupations. With guidance from Region 8 Education Service Center, identify Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses that align with targeted industries and occupations. Continue to look at new assets and gaps. (2.1.2)
- Submit Summer Earn and Learn program description (3.1.5)
- Develop Annual Stakeholder survey (1.1.4)

March

- Using the matrix for employer engagement, develop a list of local businesses that will host teacher industry tours and teacher externships. (3.1.5)
 - The goal will be to have at least one industry tour in each target industry. Work with Region 8 Education Service Center to see if there is a way to incentivize participation for teachers.
 - Incentivize employers by listing them as Education Partners on the website and social medias. (Possibly a plaque or framed certificate to display in their business)
- Work with vocational rehab to identify Summer Earn and Learn students and employers. Offer the same incentivization to employers (3.1.5)
- Financial Literacy for Youth (FLY) – This event is targeted to high school juniors and provides real world information concerning finances when considering career choices. There are employer panels from targeted industries and a financial simulation event in which students choose careers, receive a salary, and make real life decisions about housing, transportation, essential items, and entertainment while “curve balls” are thrown their way. After the simulation, student decisions are evaluated at the “bank” where staff and local banking professionals examine if choices are within budget. (3.1.5)
- Attend and present at CTE advisory boards about the pathways initiative and the next year’s events. (2.1.4)

- Pathways Leadership Team Meeting (1.2.2)

April

- Develop/Edit Work-based learning one-page handouts and get feedback from employers and educators (3.1.1)
- Host employer engagement focus group – these groups began in the summer of 2024, and will continue three times per year moving forward. Location: TBD (3.1.2)
- Host IHE focus group (1.2.2)
- Present at a Region 8 CTE meeting (1.1.2)
- Deploy Annual stakeholder survey (1.1.4)
- College Presidents Round Table – Opportunity for college presidents to connect with each other (2.1.5)

May

- Finalize Industry Tour dates (3.1.5)
- Prepare contracts and teacher externship paperwork (3.1.5)
- Developing work-based learning script for training videos (3.1.1)
- Continue stakeholder survey (1.1.4)
- Pathways Leadership Team Meeting (1.2.2)

June

- Execute Industry Tours and Teacher externships (3.1.5)
- Production of work-based learning training videos (3.1.1)
- Host Employer Engagement Focus Group (3.1.2)
- Analyze survey data and compare to baseline data (1.1.4)

July

- Continue Teacher Externships (3.1.5)
- Work with Region 8 Education Service Center to count how many districts had students in Career Prep or practicum in school year 24-25 in target industries. (This timeline may need to change based on PEIMS data) (3.2.2)
- Gather IHE data for student employment for previous year (3.2.3)
- Production of Work-based learning training videos (3.1.1)
- Publish Newsletter (1.1.1)
- Target Industry Focus Group (1.1.2)
- Publish survey results to dashboard on website (1.1.4)
- Pathways Leadership Team Meeting (1.2.2)

August

- Continue production of work-based learning training videos (3.1.1)
- Develop survey for employers to find out how many students work at their business (3.2.3)

- Present to regional school district(s) about regional pathway efforts during professional development days. (2.1.4)

September

- Publish work-based learning training videos to website (3.1.1)
- Career Coach presentations to students and parents (2.1.3)
- Pathways Leadership Team Meeting (1.2.2)
- Identify community college to co-host transfer fair (2.2.2)

October

- College Presidents Round Table – Opportunity for college presidents to connect with each other (2.1.5)
- Host Employer Engagement Focus Group. Present the work-based learning training videos – Location: TBD (3.1.2)
- Transfer Fair planning meeting (2.2.2)

November

- Red, White, and You Career Fair – Pathway survey booth (3.1.5)
- CBO focus group (1.1.2)
- Pathways Leadership Team Meeting (1.2.2)
- Set date for Transfer Fair (2.2.2)

December

- Begin prep work to update the Landscape Map with current course work at regional schools and IHEs (2.1.2)
- Public School Education Focus Group (1.1.2)

Year Two

January

- Publish Newsletter (1.1.1)
- Plan Design Lab logistics for pathway mapping - Map CTE courses to specific credential programs at each community college (Texarkana College, Northeast Texas Community College and Paris Junior College) and then to Regional Universities (Texas A&M University-Texarkana and East Texas A&M University). East Texas A&M University is not in our 9-county region. However, for many students in the western counties of the region, it is the closest. In addition, each university offers different programs of study. Labor market information and top employers will be listed on the map as well.
 - Option 1 – Plan 3 Design Labs at each of the 3 community colleges. Each design lab will be 1 to 2 days.

- Option 2 – Plan design lab at Region 8 ESC with all representatives from all stakeholder groups in one location. Have breakout rooms for each region. 1 to 2 days. (2.1.1)
- Update and deploy the annual stakeholder survey (1.1.4)
- Pathways Leadership Team Meeting (1.2.2)

February

- Update Landscape Map (2.1.2)

March

- Using the matrix for employer engagement, develop a list of local business that will host teacher industry tours and teacher externships. (3.1.5)
 - The goal will be to have at least one industry tour in each target industry. Work with Region 8 Education Service Center to see if there is a way to incentivize participation for teachers.
 - Incentivize employers by listing them as Education Partners on the website and social medias using the same method as previous year.
- Work with vocational rehab to identify Summer Earn and Learn students and employers. Offer the same incentivization to employers (3.1.5)

April

- College Presidents Round Table – Opportunity for college presidents to connect with each other (2.1.5)

May

- Finalize the Design Lab dates and method (2.1.1)
- Continue Planning of Design Labs and recruit for participation
- Begin brainstorming of Spring Pathway Summit – The Northeast Texas Regional Pathway Summit. The vision for the summit is to be a hybrid student showcase, job fair, and interview day. In the morning, students from K12 and institutions of higher education will have the opportunity to have poster presentations, examples of their work, programs, etc. Community members and employers will have the opportunity to experience the work of students. In the afternoon, employers will have the opportunity to exhibit booths about what they do and recruit. Institutions of higher education will have the opportunity to see K12 student work and recruit. While this event is not scheduled to occur until Year 3, there will be considerable coordination in order the event to be successful. (1.2.1)
- Continue survey and analyze survey data (1.1.4)
- Attend and present at CTE advisory boards about the pathways initiative and the next year's events. (2.1.4)
- Finalize Industry Tour dates (3.1.5)

June

- Host Pathway Design Labs (2.1.1)

- Plan logistics for Pathway Summit including standardized testing dates and the next school years holidays and breaks. Set date (1.2.1)
- Publish survey data to dashboard on website (1.1.4)
- Execute Industry Tours and Teacher externships (3.1.5)

July

- Design Lab Debrief session with Region 8 ESC team members and begin developing pathway maps (2.1.1)
- Continue Teacher Externships (3.1.5)
- Identify Community College to co-host Transfer Fair (2.2.2)
- Begin marketing/recruiting for participants for Pathway Summit (1.2.1)

August

- Continue developing pathway maps (2.1.1)
- Host Employer Engagement Focus Group– Present Employer Engagement Partners and Pathways Summit Information and get feedback – Location: TBD (3.1.2)
- Continue Teacher Externships (3.1.5)

September

- Conduct focus groups at schools that participated in design labs and/or present information to Regional CTE instructors at Region 8 ESC (1.2.1)
- Publish Pathway Maps (2.1.1)
- Using the Pathway Maps, begin developing Industry Specific Pathway Maps (2.2.1)

October

- Continue Developing Industry Specific Pathway Maps (2.2.1)
- Continue planning of Pathway Summit (1.2.1)

November

- Red, White, and You Career Fair – Pathway survey booth (3.1.5)
- Focus group – stakeholder group TBD (1.1.2)
- Pathways Leadership Team Meeting (1.2.2)

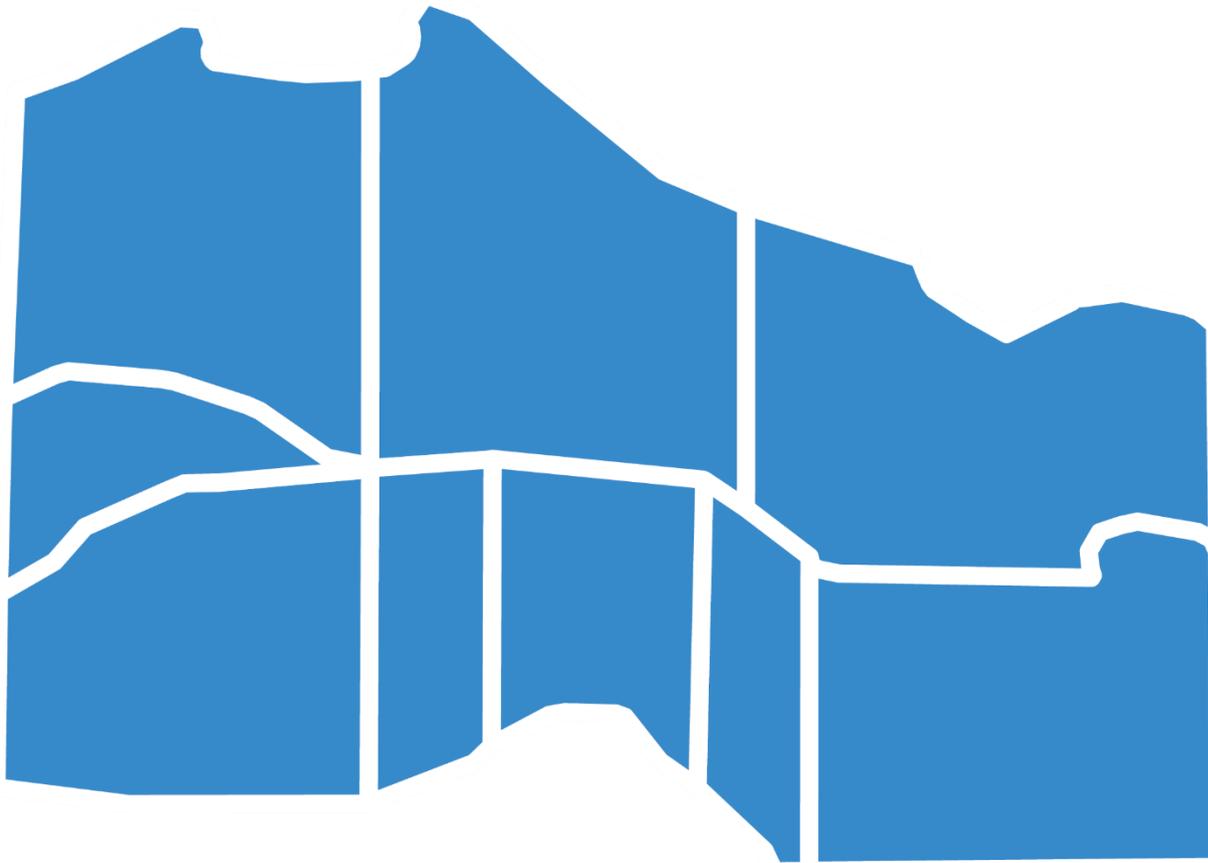
December

- Begin prep work to update the Landscape Map with current course work at regional schools and IHEs (2.1.2)
- Begin prep work to reevaluate target industries

Appendix D: Sustainability Strategy for Regional Convener

The Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas Board has discussed keeping the existing pathways leadership team together during the implementation phase. All members of the team have agreed to participate, because they know the value of pathways development within each of their unique roles and the overall value to the region. Initially the Board provided stipends for members of the Pathways Leadership Team. Some members were unable to accept stipends and others have agreed to continue to serve without the stipend. The Board does not plan to offer monetary incentives to pathways leadership team members going forward. As a Workforce Development Board, Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas is the recipient of federal funding for workforce development activities. Some workforce development goals overlap with the regional convener career pathway goals, so existing funds may be used to further progress. The Board will explore additional grant opportunities that may support certain aspects of career pathways, such as work based learning activities for students and teachers. The Board does plan to maintain the regional convener lead position. As previously mentioned, there is some overlap for the Board's existing efforts and new career pathway plans, and as such, some existing funding is available for staff expenses. Additional funds may be necessary for this staff member to devote 100% of their time to oversight and daily operations of the strategic plan. While the lack of additional funding will not eliminate all aspects of the proposed strategic/implementation plan, it will certainly impact the Board's ability to achieve the goals as written and within the proposed timeframe.

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