



PURSUIT OF ADVANCED TRAINING IN HIGH-DEMAND SKILLS



DEMONSTRATING THE SUCCESS OF PATHS FOR TEXAS AND THE NEED FOR PUBLIC-PRIVATE-PHILANTHROPIC WORKFORCE TRAINING PROGRAMS

PRESENTED BY WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS GREATER DALLAS

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PURSUIT OF ADVANCED TRAINING IN HIGH-DEMAND SKILLS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

02	INTRODUCTION
04	PROGRAM OVERVIEW
05	FUNDING STRUCTURE AND ALLOCATION
11	TRAINING APPROACH
14	INSIGHTS FROM PATHS FOR TEXAS
22	CASE STUDIES
39	QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS
43	CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED
49	PROOF OF PERFORMANCE
55	CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS
59	ACKNOWLEDGMENTS
61	REFERENCES



INTRODUCTION

A NEW APPROACH

In today's rapidly evolving job market, the demand for skilled workers has never been more critical. According to ManpowerGroup's 2024 Global Talent Shortage survey, 75% of employers globally report challenges in filling roles due to a lack of qualified candidates. This shortage is particularly acute in industries experiencing rapid growth, such as technology, healthcare, and advanced manufacturing.

In the United States, federal funding provides a foundation for workforce training programs but often falls short in addressing the diverse needs of emerging industries and underserved populations. Sectors like retail, hospitality, and niche manufacturing—important to local economies—are frequently overlooked by traditional federal funding models. Additionally, low-income individuals and those in rural areas often lack adequate access to the training programs they need to succeed in today's economy. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated these issues, placing unprecedented strain on workforce development systems and highlighting the need for agile, adaptable approaches to training delivery.

As we now move into recovery, with the economy growing, the Pursuit of Advanced Training in High-Demand Skills (PATHS) For Texas program stands as a model for how public-private-philanthropic collaborations can bridge these gaps. PATHS provides flexible, responsive workforce development solutions across Texas, meeting immediate workforce needs while creating long-term pathways for career advancement. During the pandemic, Workforce Boards across the state had to adjust their approach and service delivery, transitioning from in-person to virtual and hybrid models almost overnight. This flexibility allowed PATHS to continue serving communities during a time of crisis and positioned it to support recovery by helping employers and participants thrive in the new economic landscape.

One of the key strengths of PATHS has been its customized curriculum and flexible training options. Unlike traditional Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) models, which often restrict training to in-person or local providers, PATHS offers participants the option to choose virtual, in-person, or hybrid learning environments. This flexibility remains essential for workers in industries like retail and customer service, who



transitioned to remote, tech-driven roles. By allowing participants to select their preferred learning method, PATHS increases engagement, retention, and completion rates, ensuring workers are ready to contribute to the growing economy.

In addition to addressing workforce shortages and filling gaps left by federal funding, the PATHS program fosters a collaborative network between Workforce Development Boards across the state. This collaboration facilitates the exchange of best practices, insights, and expertise, enhancing the effectiveness of each participating area. By sharing data, strategies, and resources, Workforce Boards in both urban and rural regions have benefited from collective knowledge, allowing them to tailor training solutions to the specific needs of their local economies. For example, Boards in rural areas can leverage expertise from larger, more developed regions to implement innovative training models, such as hybrid learning and targeted sector training that have proven effective elsewhere.

The cross-board collaboration accelerates learning and provides more agile responses to emerging workforce needs. Insights from one region are quickly adapted by others, driving greater efficiency and improved outcomes across Texas. As a result, the program not only addresses local labor shortages but also fosters a broader culture of innovation and continuous improvement among Texas Workforce Solutions Boards. This spirit of collaboration allows the PATHS program to evolve dynamically, ensuring that regions—regardless of size or resources—can effectively meet local employer demands and develop a skilled workforce.

By working together, Workforce Boards demonstrate the power of regional cooperation in overcoming challenges that may have been insurmountable in isolation. This spirit of collaboration—along with the public-private-philanthropic funding model—ensures that the PATHS program remains a sustainable, scalable solution that can be replicated across other regions. PATHS has not only filled immediate gaps in workforce training but also helped create a more resilient, future-ready workforce across Texas.



PROGRAM OVERVIEW

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The PATHS For Texas program aims to equip individuals with the skills needed for high-demand occupations, thereby enhancing their employability and supporting economic growth. The program focuses on several key objectives:

FLEXIBILITY

Offering training opportunities to individuals who may not qualify for federal programs due to income levels, employment statuses, or industry preferences. This ensures access to quality training for underserved populations such as low-income individuals, people in rural areas, and those in industries typically overlooked by federal funding.

COLLABORATION

Facilitating partnerships between Texas Workforce Solutions Boards, employers, educational institutions, and community organizations to create a comprehensive support network for participants, fostering a collaborative ecosystem that enhances the effectiveness of training programs.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Building leadership capacity within participating organizations by equipping program administrators and partners with the skills and tools necessary to effectively manage and adapt training initiatives, ensuring the long-term sustainability and success of the program.

GROWTH AND ADAPTABILITY

Expanding its reach and adapting strategies to meet the changing needs of the workforce, especially in response to the economic challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, which underscored the need for agile and responsive training programs.

TARGETING UNDERSERVED INDUSTRIES

Specifically addressing critical training needs in industries and occupations not typically supported by federal and state funds, such as retail, hospitality, advanced manufacturing, healthcare, and IT, which are essential for regional economic development.

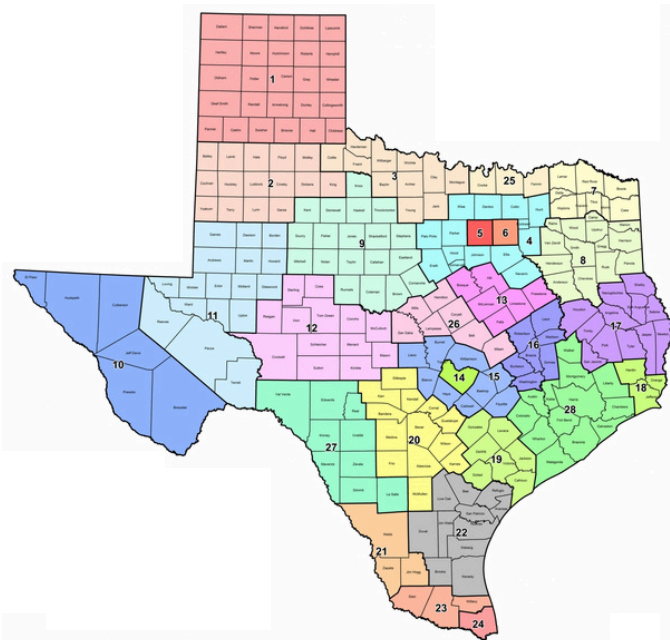
FUNDING STRUCTURE AND ALLOCATION

FUNDING BREAKDOWN

The PATHS For Texas program's success is largely attributed to its innovative funding structure, which blends contributions from public, private, and philanthropic sources. Notably, the Walmart Foundation's financial backing played a key role in the program's development and flexibility, enabling rapid adaptation to the evolving workforce landscape.

The PATHS For Texas program received a total funding pool of \$5,704,750, which was distributed among participating workforce boards and program partners as follows:

- Workforce Solutions Gulf Coast: \$2,588,810
- Workforce Solutions North Texas: \$180,000
- Workforce Solutions Coastal Bend: \$450,000
- Workforce Solutions Rural Capital Area: \$1,065,000
- Workforce Solutions Greater Dallas (Administration, Start-up Costs): \$837,940
- Texas Workforce Commission (Statewide Initiatives): \$250,000
- Ray Marshall Center for the Study of Human Resources – UT Austin: \$333,000



TEXAS WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS PARTICIPATING BOARD AREAS

- 28 - Workforce Solutions Gulf Coast
- 3 - Workforce Solutions North Texas
- 22 - Workforce Solutions Coastal Bend
- 15 - Workforce Solutions Rural Capital Area
- 6 - Workforce Solutions Greater Dallas

UTILIZATION OF FUNDS

Each participating workforce board utilized the funds based on their region's specific needs and priorities:

WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS GULF COAST:

- **Focus:** The PATHS program in the Gulf Coast area focuses on transitioning retail workers into advanced manufacturing roles, providing training in transferable skills and workplace readiness to meet current workforce demands. By emphasizing both technical and soft skills, participants are prepared for long-term success in modern manufacturing environments.
- **Programs and Impact:**
 - **Retail to Manufacturing Transition:** The program equips retail workers with the skills needed for advanced manufacturing roles, focusing on problem-solving, technical aptitude, and workplace readiness.
 - **Collaborations:** Strong partnerships with local community colleges, chambers of commerce, and employers ensure that training remains relevant and accessible to underserved populations, enhancing local workforce development.
 - **Tailored Solutions:** Customized training programs meet evolving employer needs, resulting in significant wage gains and improved economic mobility for participants.
 - **Soft Skills and Upskilling:** In addition to technical skills, the program emphasizes communication, teamwork, and adaptability, ensuring participants are well-rounded and competitive in the job market.





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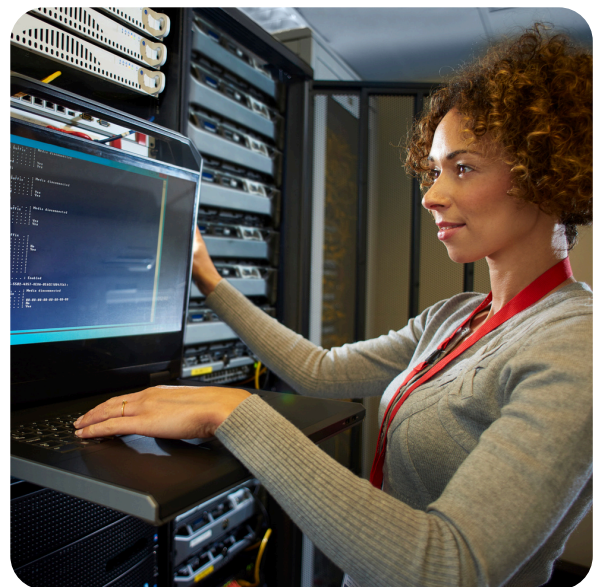
WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS NORTH TEXAS:

- **Focus:** The PATHS program in the North Texas area is dedicated to addressing the workforce needs of high-demand industries such as IT, healthcare, skilled trades, child care, truck driving/CDL, and hospitality. The program equips workers with essential skills for career advancement while tackling critical labor shortages through targeted initiatives like on-the-job training and CDL programs. By preparing participants for in-demand roles, PATHS enhances economic mobility and strengthens the local economy. With a commitment to offering inclusive, cost-effective training, the program adapts to meet the evolving needs of both workers and employers, ensuring long-term workforce development success in North Texas.
- **Programs and Impact:**
 - **On-the-Job Training (OJT) and Incumbent Worker Training:** Continually partnering with employers to provide customized skills development that supports worker retention and career advancement. These ongoing programs help upskill employees, improve productivity, reduce turnover, and offer wage reimbursement, benefiting both workers and businesses.
 - **CDL Programs:** Ongoing efforts address new CDL licensing requirements by offering targeted training to local government employees in Wichita County, continually boosting local employment and enhancing operational efficiency within public sector services.
 - **Community Outreach:** The program consistently serves a diverse range of workers, particularly underserved populations, with cost-effective training that increases employability and expands access to opportunities in high-demand industries.



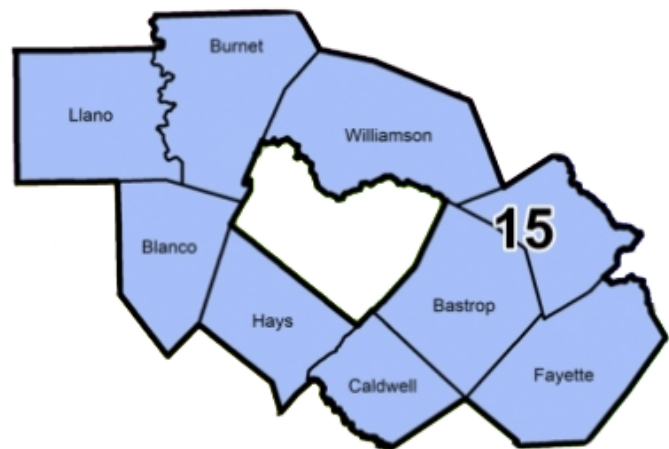
WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS COASTAL BEND:

- **Focus:** The PATHS program in the Coastal Bend area is dedicated to empowering youth through skills development and fostering strong collaborations with local nonprofits. It aims to provide young individuals with the training, certifications, and work readiness tools necessary for success in high-demand industries, ensuring they are well-prepared to meet the challenges of today's job market. Partnering with organizations like Goodwill and E2E, PATHS offers career progression opportunities, helping youth build sustainable career paths. By engaging nonprofits, the program connects underserved populations to essential career resources, addressing skills gaps and fostering long-term economic mobility, particularly in retail and leadership roles, across the region.
- **Programs and Impact:**
 - **Youth Engagement:** Continually partnering with organizations like Goodwill and E2E to provide certifications, work readiness programs, and career progression opportunities. The program actively engages over 146 participants, awarding 367 certifications to date, fostering long-term career growth for young workers.
 - **Goodwill Collaboration:** Ongoing efforts focus on transitioning frontline workers into leadership roles, resulting in significant career advancements, and enhancing the upward mobility of participants.
 - **Upskilling Initiatives:** Continually addressing the critical need for skills training within local retail environments, helping workers adapt to evolving industry demands and improve their employability.



WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS RURAL CAPITAL AREA:

- **Focus:** The focus of the PATHS program in the Rural Capital Area of Texas is on developing workforce solutions that address the specific needs of local industries through apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs, youth training and employment, early care education professional development, and individual upskill training. The program aims to equip individuals with the skills and certifications necessary for career advancement, targeting industries like manufacturing and healthcare, while also addressing the critical shortage of childcare employees. Through collaboration with educational institutions and local employers, the PATHS program fosters sustainable career pathways and strengthens the regional workforce.
- **Programs and Impact:**
 - **Apprenticeship Programs:** Targeting high-demand industries like manufacturing and healthcare, Workforce Solutions partners with institutions such as Texas State Technical College and Independent School Districts to offer hands-on apprenticeships that prepare individuals for long-term careers.
 - **Youth Training:** Summer employment programs provide job readiness certifications in areas like career exploration and interviewing skills, offering students valuable hands-on work experience, and enhancing their employability.
 - **Early Care:** Addressing childcare workforce shortages, the program offers on-the-job training (OJT) for new hires and leadership upskilling for professionals in early childhood education, fostering a sustainable workforce.
 - **Individual Upskill Training:** Over 1,100 participants benefit from targeted upskilling initiatives, improving their career prospects and supporting upward mobility in their industries.





WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS GREATER DALLAS:

- **Focus:** Serves as the facilitator of the PATHS initiative, leveraging public-private partnerships and ensuring strong regional participation.
- **Programs and Impact:**
 - **Gateway Portal:** Developed the PATHS For Texas Gateway, a statewide portal that serves as the central hub for program information, training enrollment, and learning management for all participating boards. This innovation supported upskilling efforts across diverse retail sectors.
 - **Training Models:** Implemented three integrated learning models, including employer-based work-based learning, online certification, and hybrid training models. These models were evaluated for effectiveness and sustainability, and enhanced approaches across the state.
 - **Collaboration:** Shares best practices and innovations across the state.

TEXAS WORKFORCE COMMISSION (ADDITIONAL STATEWIDE INITIATIVES):

- **Focus:** The Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) focuses on tracking employment outcomes, wage increases, and employer retention for PATHS program participants. TWC collects data on job retention and wage growth, ensuring continued employer engagement and providing funding through apprenticeship grants to support workforce development in high-demand sectors.

RAY MARSHALL CENTER – UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN:

- **Focus:** The Ray Marshall Center at the University of Texas at Austin is focused on conducting an independent evaluation and cost-benefit analysis of the PATHS program. This includes analyzing employment, wage, and training outcomes, while also gathering participant and employer feedback to measure the program's effectiveness and return on investment.
- **Programs and Impact:**
 - **Data Collection and Analysis:** The Ray Marshall Center collects employment and wage data from participants who completed the PATHS training, using TWC unemployment insurance records to track employment retention and earnings over multiple quarters.
 - **Surveys and Qualitative Feedback:** The center conducts surveys of both participants and employers, gathering insights on their experiences with the PATHS program. This qualitative feedback is instrumental in understanding the program's broader impact on both workers and businesses.
 - **Improved Performance:** The feedback gathered from workforce boards and stakeholders informs ongoing improvements to the PATHS program, helping tailor training to meet regional workforce needs and sustain long-term career advancement for participants.



TRAINING APPROACH

■ INTEGRATED SKILL-BUILDING MODEL

The PATHS program offers a comprehensive and dynamic approach to workforce training, designed to provide participants with a blend of theoretical knowledge and practical, hands-on experience. In today's fast-paced, ever-evolving job market, workers need more than just classroom learning—they require real-world skills that are relevant to their industries. Through a carefully curated blend of employer-based work experience, online certifications, and on-the-job training, PATHS ensures that its learners are well-equipped to meet the challenges of high-demand sectors and rapidly changing workforce needs.

Reskilling for Economic Recovery:

Initially established to upskill incumbent workers, the PATHS program demonstrated remarkable agility during the COVID-19 pandemic by expanding its scope to reskill recently unemployed frontline workers. As the pandemic disrupted industries across the board—particularly in retail, hospitality, and other service sectors—PATHS responded by offering displaced workers the opportunity to acquire new skills and pivot to emerging, high-demand fields such as technology, healthcare, and advanced manufacturing. This strategic shift played a critical role in supporting the country's broader economic recovery, allowing workers to transition seamlessly into new roles and industries as the economy rebounded. By addressing immediate labor shortages and equipping participants with future-ready skills, PATHS became a vital bridge between unemployment and meaningful employment opportunities in a post-pandemic world.

Self-Paced Learning:

One of the standout features of the PATHS program is its flexible, self-paced learning environment. Understanding that every learner's situation is unique, PATHS connects participants to an extensive library of online courses and industry-recognized certifications. This allows learners to progress at their own pace, fitting their studies around other responsibilities such as work or family commitments. The self-paced model is particularly effective in empowering individuals who may have been hesitant to re-enter formal education or training due to time constraints. With a focus on accessibility, PATHS opens doors to a diverse array of learners, from parents balancing childcare to professionals seeking to upskill in their current roles.



PURSUIT OF ADVANCED TRAINING IN HIGH-DEMAND SKILLS

Industry-Specific Training:

PATHS recognizes that a one-size-fits-all approach to workforce development does not meet the specific demands of various sectors. Therefore, the program offers highly customized training solutions that are tailored to the unique requirements of different industries. Sectors such as retail, hospitality, and niche manufacturing—often overlooked by traditional workforce training programs—are key focus areas for PATHS, ensuring participants gain skills that directly align with employer needs. By offering targeted training in areas that are critical to economic recovery, PATHS not only prepares workers for current job openings but also positions them for long-term career growth. In high-demand industries like healthcare, advanced manufacturing, and technology, PATHS participants emerge as well-rounded, competitive candidates, equipped with industry-specific competencies that give them an edge in the labor market.

Employer Engagement:

A core strength of the PATHS program is its robust collaboration with employers. Through strategic partnerships with training providers and businesses, the program ensures that its curriculum is not only aligned with current industry standards but also directly responsive to real-world job requirements. Employers actively participate in shaping training content, providing insights into the skills and competencies needed in today's job market. This direct involvement ensures that PATHS graduates are job-ready from day one, equipped with up-to-date skills that allow them to meet employer expectations. By fostering strong employer engagement, PATHS bridges the gap between education and employment, creating a seamless transition from training to the workforce.

Adaptability in Crisis:

The COVID-19 pandemic was an unprecedented crisis that disrupted traditional workforce training systems, but PATHS For Texas quickly adapted to the new normal by integrating remote learning and virtual simulations into its model. This rapid shift to virtual platforms ensured that participants across the state could continue their education uninterrupted, even as in-person training became impossible. PATHS' adaptability not only helped maintain continuity during the pandemic but also highlighted the program's capacity for innovation in the face of adversity. By incorporating technology-driven solutions, PATHS continues to provide flexible, accessible training options, allowing workers to gain the skills needed to thrive in an increasingly digital world.



PURSUIT OF ADVANCED TRAINING IN HIGH-DEMAND SKILLS

Expanding Career Pathways:

The multifaceted approach of the PATHS program goes beyond simply offering training—it creates sustainable career pathways. By equipping participants with practical experience, industry-recognized certifications, and customized training aligned with market demands, PATHS provides a roadmap for long-term success in high-demand fields. The program's ability to pivot and adapt during times of crisis, such as the pandemic, demonstrates its commitment to building a resilient, future-ready workforce. With its focus on both upskilling incumbent workers and reskilling displaced individuals, PATHS has proven to be an indispensable resource in creating a workforce that is not only equipped for the present but also prepared for the challenges and opportunities of tomorrow.

Building a Future-Ready Workforce:

The Integrated Skill-Building Model of the PATHS program is a comprehensive solution to the evolving demands of today's workforce. By blending theoretical knowledge with practical, real-world experience, PATHS equips participants with the tools needed to thrive in high-demand industries. Its agility in reskilling displaced workers during the COVID-19 pandemic showcases the program's adaptability, ensuring workers are prepared to meet new challenges as the economy recovers and grows.

The flexibility of self-paced learning has been critical in making the program accessible to a diverse range of learners, while the industry-specific training ensures that participants gain skills that directly align with employer needs. Through strong employer engagement, PATHS bridges the gap between education and employment, offering participants a seamless transition into the workforce.

Furthermore, PATHS has demonstrated its adaptability in times of crisis, proving its resilience by maintaining uninterrupted education through remote learning and virtual simulations. This capacity for innovation ensures that the program remains relevant, providing participants with the skills needed to succeed in an increasingly digital, tech-driven world.

Overall, PATHS doesn't just train workers; it creates sustainable career pathways, empowering individuals with the knowledge and experience necessary for long-term success. Its focus on both upskilling incumbent workers and reskilling those displaced by economic changes solidifies PATHS as a cornerstone of workforce development. By continuing to evolve and meet the demands of a changing world, PATHS ensures that workers are not only equipped for today's job market but also ready for the opportunities of tomorrow.



INSIGHTS FROM PATHS FOR TEXAS

RETURN ON INVESTMENT

The PATHS For Texas program has proven to be an invaluable asset in workforce development, generating a significant return on investment (ROI) for participants, employers, and the broader economy. The program's data highlights its efficiency and effectiveness, demonstrating the transformative power of targeted workforce training.

- **Cost Efficiency:** With an investment of \$5,704,750, the PATHS program successfully trained over 2,500 participants, achieving an average cost of just \$1,751.32 per participant, excluding administration costs. This remarkable cost efficiency is even more impressive considering the comprehensive nature of the training, which includes theoretical instruction, hands-on learning experiences, industry-recognized certifications, and robust job placement support. This approach ensures participants are thoroughly prepared to enter or advance in their chosen fields, offering exceptional value for the investment.
- **Economic Impact:** The program has also generated an estimated \$50 million in increased economic activity. This economic boost comes from a combination of higher wages earned by program participants, who are better equipped to secure higher-paying jobs, and the increased productivity of employers who benefit from hiring skilled, job-ready candidates. According to data from the PATHS For Texas Final Report, participants who earned certifications experienced significant wage growth, with some seeing salary increases as high as 30%. This demonstrates how the skills gained through PATHS training directly translate into better-paying jobs, enhancing participants' financial stability and career prospects. As graduates of the program contribute to their local economies, their enhanced earning potential creates a ripple effect that benefits businesses, communities, and regional economic growth.
- **Employer Benefits:** Employers who have partnered with PATHS For Texas report substantial reductions in recruitment and training costs. Thanks to the program's alignment with industry needs, graduates enter the workforce with the skills and certifications necessary to hit the ground running. This reduces the time and resources employers typically spend on onboarding and training new hires, leading to increased operational efficiency. The program's ability to produce job-ready candidates not only fills critical workforce gaps but also ensures that employers can maintain productivity with minimal disruption.



PURSUIT OF ADVANCED TRAINING IN HIGH-DEMAND SKILLS

The PATHS For Texas program stands as a prime example of a high-impact, cost-effective workforce development initiative, delivering substantial, measurable benefits to participants, employers, and the broader local economy. By equipping individuals with critical, industry-aligned skills through a blend of hands-on training and certifications, PATHS enables participants to transition seamlessly into high-demand fields. This not only enhances their earning potential but also empowers them to build sustainable careers, providing long-term financial stability for themselves and their families.

For employers, the program offers a strategic advantage. By delivering job-ready candidates who possess the specific skills and certifications required by industry, PATHS significantly reduces recruitment and onboarding costs. Employers can rely on the fact that graduates of the program will require less time for training and integration, allowing businesses to maintain high levels of productivity with minimal disruption. This alignment between training content and employer needs helps fill critical workforce gaps more efficiently, contributing to overall operational success.

At a community level, the program drives meaningful economic activity. As participants advance into higher-paying roles, their increased wages stimulate local economies through higher consumer spending and the support of local businesses. The program's cost-effectiveness—training over 2,500 participants at an average cost of just \$2,282 per person—demonstrates its efficiency as a model for workforce investment, offering exceptional value in return for the resources allocated. The estimated \$50 million in economic activity generated by PATHS graduates underscores the program's far-reaching impact on regional growth and development.

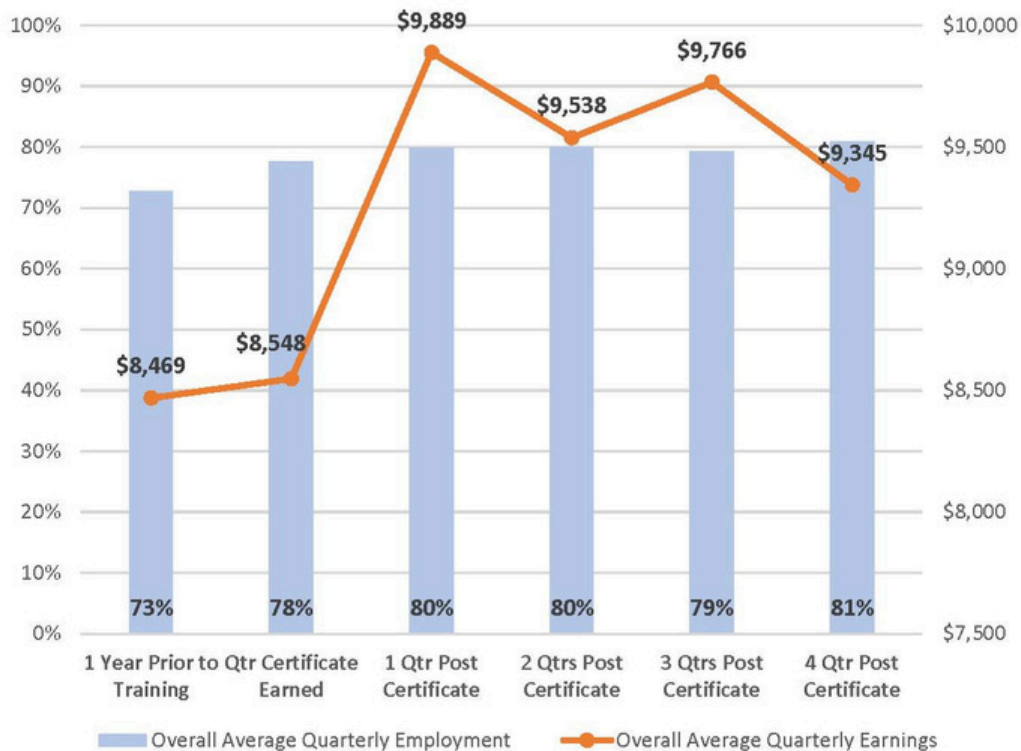
The combination of individualized training, employer engagement, and measurable economic returns makes PATHS For Texas not only a solution to immediate workforce challenges but also a scalable model for workforce investment that can be replicated in other regions. By successfully balancing cost efficiency with transformative outcomes, PATHS proves its value as a forward-thinking strategy for workforce development.

WAGE AND EARNINGS GROWTH

One of the key indicators of the program's success is the significant wage and earnings growth experienced by participants. PATHS For Texas has effectively enhanced the economic prospects of individuals by equipping them with the skills needed for higher-paying roles.

- Earnings Increase:** Participants in the PATHS For Texas program saw remarkable financial growth, with their average earnings rising by 25% after completing the training. In certain sectors, such as those transitioning from retail to advanced manufacturing, the wage increase was even more pronounced, averaging 30%. This reflects the program's strategic focus on equipping individuals with the skills needed in high-demand industries, enabling them to access higher-paying jobs and more secure career paths. These wage increases not only improve participants' immediate financial situation but also contribute to their long-term economic well-being.

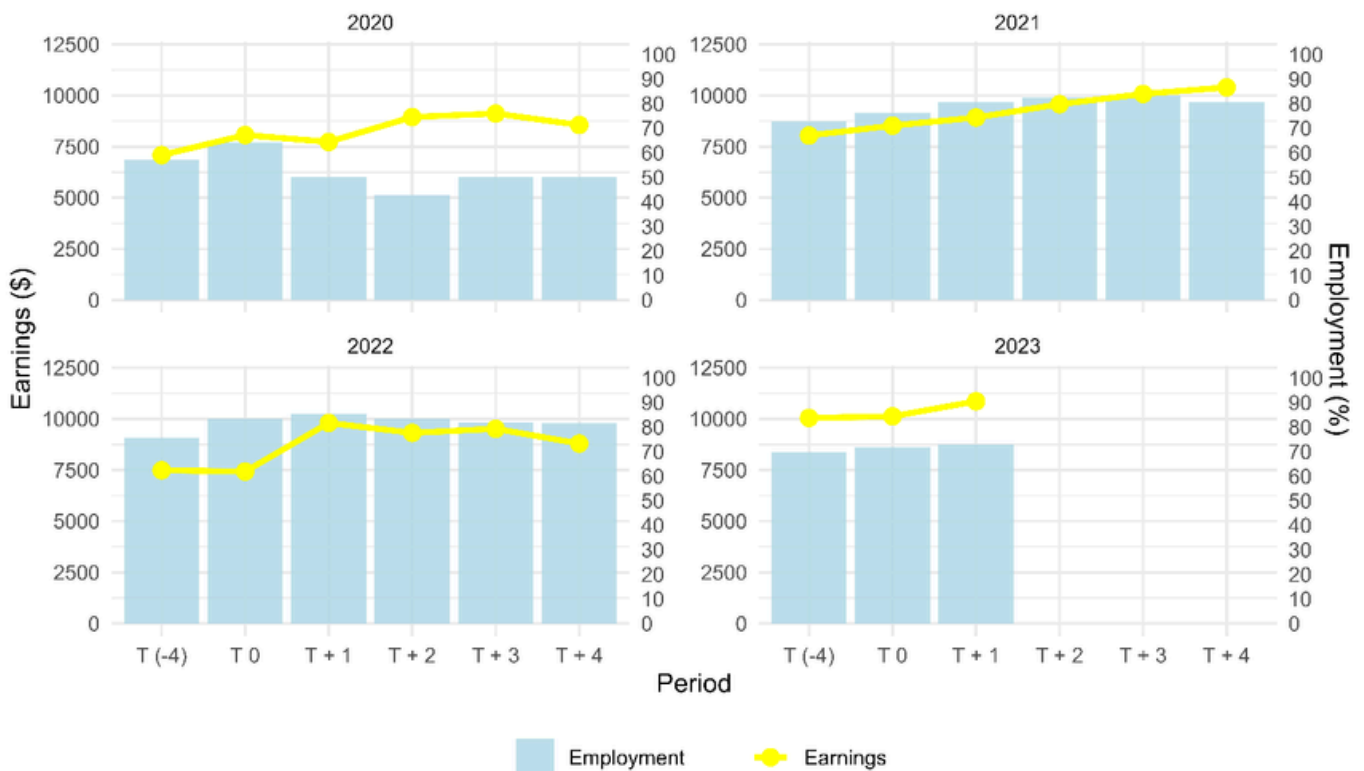
**PATHS Participants with SSNs Who Earned a Certificate
Employment and Earnings Outcomes 2020 – 2023 (N = 1456)**



*Note: TWC UI wage data available through 4th quarter 2023 as of this reporting. UI wage data only reflects earnings of W-2 wage earners and does not include 1099 earnings.

- Median Wage Growth:** The median wage for PATHS graduates saw a substantial rise, increasing from \$28,000 to \$35,000 annually. This significant jump underscores the program's effectiveness in improving participants' financial stability and elevating their overall quality of life. By providing training in industry-aligned skills, the PATHS program helps participants not only secure employment but also command higher wages, fostering greater economic mobility. This increase in median wages demonstrates the program's ability to create lasting change in participants' financial futures.

Earnings and Employment Outcomes for Certificate Earners by Cohort Year



- Career Advancement:** In addition to financial benefits, the PATHS program opens doors for career growth. More than 60% of graduates reported securing positions with clear opportunities for career progression. This highlights the program's role in not just helping participants find jobs but in fostering long-term career development. By focusing on industries with upward mobility, PATHS equips participants with the tools they need to move beyond entry-level positions and into roles that offer greater responsibility, higher pay, and potential for professional growth. This career advancement potential is a key factor in the program's success, empowering participants to build sustainable, fulfilling careers in sectors that offer long-term stability.

MEETING CRITICAL TRAINING NEEDS

The PATHS For Texas program actively addresses critical training needs in industries underserved by traditional federal and state funding sources, such as retail, hospitality, advanced manufacturing, healthcare, and information technology. By offering specialized skills training, PATHS fills gaps that traditional funding models often overlook, meeting employer demands and preparing participants for sustainable career paths.

- **Retail:** PATHS For Texas recognizes the growing need for digital literacy and management skills in retail. The program provides participants with specialized training in e-commerce, inventory management, and retail technology, enabling them to transition into management roles or related sectors like logistics and supply chain management. By equipping workers with modern, transferable skills, PATHS opens new pathways for career advancement within retail and beyond.
- **Hospitality:** PATHS For Texas directly addresses workforce shortages in the hospitality sector by providing targeted training in customer service, food safety, and front-line management. As the industry recovers from pandemic disruptions, these skills are increasingly valuable, enabling participants to advance from entry-level positions to supervisory roles, improving service quality and operational efficiency in hotels, restaurants, and other hospitality businesses.
- **Advanced Manufacturing:** In response to the demand for skilled labor, PATHS For Texas creates specialized training programs that help workers transition from sectors like retail into advanced manufacturing. The program emphasizes hands-on, practical training aligned with industry standards, preparing participants for roles such as machine operators, production technicians, and quality control specialists. This approach ensures immediate job placements and long-term career growth, supporting Texas' manufacturing sector.
- **Healthcare:** PATHS For Texas prioritizes healthcare as a fast-growing industry, offering comprehensive training for roles ranging from healthcare assistants and certified nursing aides to licensed vocational nurses and medical technicians. This approach helps meet critical workforce shortages, especially in rural and underserved areas, empowering participants to fill essential roles and improve patient care while expanding access to healthcare services in their communities.
- **Information Technology:** Recognizing the tech industry's rapid expansion, PATHS For Texas develops IT training programs that prepare participants for careers in software development, cybersecurity, and data analytics. By offering certifications in coding, network security, and more, PATHS ensures participants are well-equipped for entry-level and specialized IT roles, positioning them for long-term career growth in a dynamic and evolving field.



The PATHS For Texas program effectively addresses the critical training needs of underserved industries such as retail, hospitality, advanced manufacturing, healthcare, and information technology. By offering sector-specific, customized training, PATHS fills essential skill gaps, enabling workers to transition into stable, well-compensated roles. The program's focus on aligning training with employer demands ensures participants are equipped with the precise skills needed to succeed, while also providing businesses with a ready-to-hire workforce.

In sectors like retail and hospitality, PATHS delivers advanced training in areas such as digital literacy, food safety, and management, helping participants move into leadership positions. In advanced manufacturing and healthcare, the program offers hands-on training that prepares participants for roles like machine operators and nursing assistants, meeting urgent workforce shortages in growing industries. Information technology training focuses on critical skills like cybersecurity and data analytics, positioning participants for long-term career success in a rapidly evolving field.

By focusing on tailored, sector-specific training, PATHS boosts participants' employability while supporting economic growth. Workers in higher-paying, skilled roles contribute to local economies, and employers benefit from reduced onboarding and training costs. The program's adaptability allows it to stay aligned with industry demands, enhancing productivity and economic resilience.

The PATHS model demonstrates how sector-specific training can close skill gaps and be replicated nationwide. By forming strong partnerships with employers and workforce boards, PATHS ensures long-term workforce success, empowering workers and strengthening local economies. It serves as a blueprint for building a future-ready workforce capable of adapting to shifting economic demands.

ADAPTATIONS DURING COVID-19

The PATHS For Texas program continues to demonstrate resilience and flexibility in adapting to the ongoing challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. As workforce development needs evolved, PATHS took proactive steps to ensure that participants could access training and continue advancing their careers despite the disruptions. The program's swift and innovative adaptations have enabled participants to maintain their learning trajectories, even as the pandemic reshaped the way people work and train.

- **Remote Learning:** PATHS quickly transitioned its training programs to online platforms, a shift that continues to play a critical role in providing uninterrupted access to education. Participants now engage with virtual simulations, interactive modules, and remote mentorships, ensuring that the hands-on experience traditionally gained through in-person training is not lost. These digital learning tools allow participants to acquire industry-relevant skills, particularly in fields such as advanced manufacturing and IT, where virtual environments can replicate real-world scenarios. As of 2024, over 85% of participants have engaged in remote learning formats, enabling them to progress without significant interruptions.
- **Digital Access Support:** To combat the digital divide exacerbated by the pandemic, PATHS continues to provide participants with technology resources, including laptops and access to high-speed internet. This initiative ensures that individuals from low-income and rural areas, who may otherwise be excluded from online training opportunities, can fully participate. To date, PATHS has distributed over 1,200 technology packages to participants in need, broadening the program's reach to underserved populations. This support remains critical as the program continues to expand its remote learning capabilities, offering flexible and accessible training options for all.
- **Flexible Scheduling:** Understanding the heightened responsibilities many participants face due to remote work, childcare, and other challenges brought on by the pandemic, PATHS introduced flexible scheduling options. These flexible training schedules allow participants to take courses at times that fit their personal and professional commitments. By offering asynchronous learning modules and live online sessions at various times, PATHS has enabled more than 70% of participants to balance training with family and job responsibilities. This approach not only improved completion rates but also kept participants engaged, contributing to higher retention and success in their chosen fields.



PURSUIT OF ADVANCED TRAINING IN HIGH-DEMAND SKILLS

- **Ongoing Health and Safety Measures:** For participants who still prefer or require in-person training, PATHS has implemented stringent health and safety protocols to ensure a safe learning environment. These measures include socially distanced classroom setups, mandatory masks, and regular sanitization of training equipment and facilities. This hybrid model, which blends in-person and online learning, has been particularly effective in industries like healthcare and manufacturing, where hands-on experience is crucial.

Through these ongoing adaptations, PATHS has not only managed to continue its workforce development mission but has also expanded its capacity to serve a broader, more diverse participant base. By providing remote learning options, supporting digital access, and offering flexible schedules, PATHS ensures that participants can continue to acquire the skills necessary for career advancement, despite the challenges posed by the pandemic.

As a result, PATHS has maintained high participation and completion rates, even during one of the most disruptive periods in recent history, helping participants secure jobs in high-demand industries and contributing to Texas' economic recovery.

EMPLOYER PARTNERSHIPS

One of the defining features of PATHS For Texas is its strong emphasis on employer partnerships. By collaborating with a diverse range of industries, the program has ensured that its training offerings are aligned with the needs of the labor market. These partnerships have resulted in several key benefits:

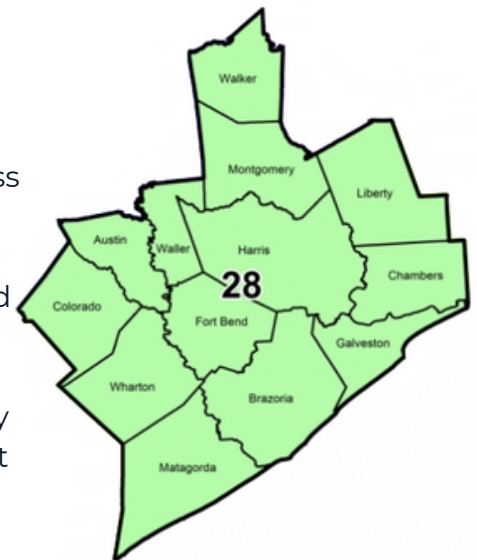
- **Curriculum Development:** Employers played a pivotal role in shaping the training curriculum, providing insights into the specific skills and competencies required for success in their industries. This collaboration ensured that PATHS graduates were job-ready from day one.
- **Job Placement:** Many employers involved in the program committed to hiring PATHS graduates, resulting in high job placement rates and increased employment opportunities for participants. This commitment to hiring local talent has strengthened community ties and contributed to regional economic growth.
- **Continuous Feedback:** Employers provided ongoing feedback to the PATHS program, allowing for continuous improvement and adaptation of training offerings. This feedback loop ensured that the program remained relevant and responsive to the changing demands of the job market.

CASE STUDIES

CASE STUDY 1: WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS GULF COAST



Region Overview: PATHS reached a wide demographic across the Houston Gulf Coast Region, covering 65 cities and 11 unincorporated towns spanning 10 counties. This diverse region is home to key industries such as healthcare, advanced manufacturing, and logistics, and includes underserved communities with limited access to post-high school education and training. PATHS aimed to bridge these gaps by providing customized, flexible training opportunities that met both individual and employer needs.



Program Highlights:

- **Customized Curriculum and Flexible Training Options:**
 - PATHS offered participants the ability to choose from virtual, hybrid, or in-person learning formats, catering to their preferred learning styles. This flexibility was particularly beneficial for retail and customer service workers transitioning into more independent, tech-driven roles. As of June 2024, the PATHS For Texas program in the Gulf Coast region engaged 1,083 participants, representing 43% of the total program participants. Additionally, 809 participants (about 40%) in the Gulf Coast region earned certificates through the program. Allowing participants to select their learning methods resulted in higher completion rates and improved overall program effectiveness, particularly in high-demand sectors like advanced manufacturing, logistics, healthcare, and energy. By offering industry-recognized credentials, PATHS ensured participants were well-prepared for employment in these critical fields.
- **Work-Based Learning:**
 - Strategic partnerships with employers enabled PATHS to offer paid internships, providing hands-on experience that often led to full-time employment. These opportunities bridged the gap between training and the workforce, helping participants transition smoothly into employment while enhancing their employability. Across the entire program, the goal was to engage at least 120 employers, with the Gulf Coast being one of the regions benefitting from this initiative.



- **CDL Licensing and Public Employee Support:**

- PATHS funded CDL classroom training and On-the-Job Training (OJT) for city and county employees in smaller municipalities like El Campo and Lake Jackson, where public employers often do not qualify for federal funding. This support enabled workers to meet new CDL licensure requirements, promoting job retention and improving operational efficiency in local government services, particularly in sectors like water treatment. By keeping these essential services staffed and operational, PATHS helped ensure continued access to critical public resources for residents, further stabilizing these communities.

Success Stories:

- **Career Transition Success**

- **LeKrystl Allums:** After losing her job due to pandemic-related downsizing, LeKrystl faced significant barriers to employment and difficulties enrolling in community college courses. The PATHS grant allowed her to take an HR Business Administration course at Houston Community College, leading to a paid internship with a small accounting firm. This internship ultimately resulted in a full-time job offer, demonstrating PATHS' effectiveness in facilitating career transitions and providing new opportunities for individuals facing employment challenges.
- **Christian Fleming:** Christian Fleming worked at Best Buy and Target throughout high school and beyond, but he found it difficult to make progress in his career. His passion for electronics and computers drove his ambition, but he faced barriers in pursuing formal IT education due to the numerous prerequisites required by community colleges listed on the statewide network. Christian's career path took a positive turn when a recruiter introduced him to the PATHS For Texas program. Through the program's grant, Christian was connected with ACI Learning, an IT training company that offered CompTIA+ and network certifications without the burden of lengthy prerequisites. Now enrolled in training, Christian is making significant progress and is excited about starting his new career in IT. The PATHS program has opened new opportunities for Christian, allowing him to pursue his passion and set a solid foundation for long-term career growth in a high-demand field.
- **Aaliyah Alexander:** As a single mother working in a low-wage job, Aaliyah Alexander sought opportunities to improve her career and provide for her family. Through the PATHS For Texas program, she was able to enroll in a healthcare administration certification program, gaining specialized skills that qualified her for higher-paying positions in the healthcare sector. This opportunity not only increased her income but also significantly enhanced her job satisfaction and overall well-being.



- **Dagmar Scott:** Dagmar Scott started her career as a cashier at CVS, where her exceptional customer service quickly earned her recognition. With a passion for healthcare, she saw the PATHS For Texas program as the ideal opportunity to transition into the medical field. Thanks to the PATHS grant, Dagmar enrolled in CVS's Registered Apprenticeship program, attending evening classes while continuing her job. This program helped her shift from customer service to the pharmaceutical field, benefiting both her career growth and CVS's talent needs. On track to complete her apprenticeship this year, Dagmar's story highlights the transformative power of PATHS in turning aspirations into reality.
- **Community Collaborations:** Former NFL player Reggie Rusk partnered with the PATHS For Texas program through his nonprofit to provide at-risk youth with essential training in business management, financial literacy, and work readiness. This collaboration equips participants with both technical and personal skills needed to succeed in the workforce, helping them develop long-term career strategies. By emphasizing practical, real-world applications of business and financial planning, the program empowers at-risk youth to pursue meaningful, sustainable careers, offering them an alternative to high-risk behaviors and setting them up for success in a competitive job market.
- **Employer Collaborations:** Workforce Solutions Gulf Coast is actively leveraging the PATHS program through strategic partnerships with companies like Burkhardt Compressors, Dieselcore, and Mayekawa. These collaborations are pivotal in retraining displaced retail workers for new careers in advanced manufacturing. By working closely with PATHS, these employers continue to help workers acquire the necessary skills for their new roles, ensuring a smooth transition into high-demand sectors. These partnerships are not only benefiting the workers but also addressing critical workforce shortages for employers in key industries, contributing to long-term economic growth and stability.

Economic Impact:

- **Increased Employment and Wages:**
 - The PATHS program is driving employment growth and wage increases for participants in the Gulf Coast region. Participants have experienced a 15-20% increase in employment, securing jobs in high-demand industries such as healthcare, logistics, and manufacturing. This reflects the program's success in effectively connecting workers with critical sectors in need of skilled labor. Additionally, participants are seeing significant wage growth, with average quarterly earnings rising from \$8,096 to \$9,140 after completing their training. This increase not only improves individual financial stability but also strengthens the economic vitality of the Gulf Coast region, demonstrating the program's ongoing impact on both workforce development and regional prosperity.



- **Support for Small Municipalities:**

- PATHS provided crucial support for small municipalities, where public employees faced new CDL licensure requirements that could have resulted in job losses. By funding training for city and county employees, PATHS improved job retention and ensured the continued efficiency of essential services such as water treatment. This support not only helped workers meet industry requirements but also strengthened local government services, benefiting the entire community.

- **Community Resilience:**

- PATHS contributed to economic mobility and community resilience by providing fast-tracked reemployment for individuals affected by layoffs. Many participants transitioned to new jobs in under 30 days, boosting local and state tax contributions while reducing reliance on unemployment benefits.

Conclusion:

Workforce Solutions Gulf Coast's PATHS initiative has had a transformative impact, addressing critical workforce gaps and boosting economic mobility across the region. The program has engaged 1,083 participants in the Gulf Coast region so far, with 809 earning certificates, representing about 40% of the program's total participants. The program's customized training options—including virtual, in-person, and hybrid formats—enabled participants to upskill in high-demand sectors such as healthcare, advanced manufacturing, and logistics. This led to a 15-20% increase in employment rates. Participants also saw a significant increase in earnings, with quarterly wages rising from \$8,096 to \$9,140, contributing to both individual financial growth and increased tax revenues for the region.

The initiative's success in retraining displaced workers, particularly in partnerships with employers such as Burkhardt Compressors, Dieselcore, and Mayakawa, demonstrated the strength of public-private collaboration. Additionally, PATHS provided essential support to public employees in small municipalities like El Campo and Lake Jackson, funding CDL training that ensured job retention and improved operational efficiency in critical sectors like water treatment.

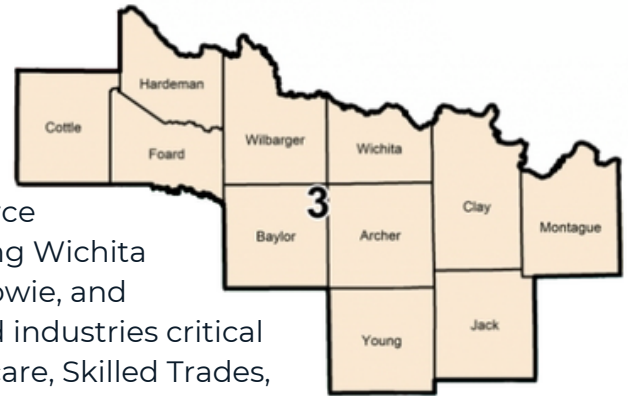
By offering cost-free, flexible training beyond traditional programs, PATHS expanded opportunities for first-generation college students and individuals with limited education, meeting the needs of both workers and employers. This public-private-philanthropic model filled funding gaps, enabling the program to adapt to the evolving demands of the Gulf Coast economy.

As the region continues to grow, the success of PATHS underscores the importance of continued collaboration between Workforce Development Boards, employers, and community organizations. This flexible, results-driven approach has positioned the Gulf Coast to remain competitive, resilient, and ready to meet the future needs of its workforce.

CASE STUDY 2: WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS NORTH TEXAS



Region Overview: Workforce Solutions North Texas serves a diverse 11-county region, addressing workforce needs in both urban and rural communities, including Wichita Falls, Electra, Iowa Park, Olney, Seymour, Graham, Bowie, and Quanah. The PATHS initiative targeted high-demand industries critical to the region's economic stability, such as IT, Healthcare, Skilled Trades, Child Care, Truck Driving/CDL, and Hospitality. These sectors are essential to the local economy and were facing significant workforce shortages. Through PATHS, Workforce Solutions North Texas was able to serve more customers at a lower cost than expected, achieving a substantial impact on both the local workforce and businesses.



Program Highlights

- Customized Training and Upskilling:** Workforce Solutions North Texas actively tailors the PATHS initiative to meet the distinct needs of job seekers and employers. Participants can choose from virtual, in-person, and hybrid training formats, giving them the flexibility to select the learning environment that best suits their schedules and needs. This adaptability enables participants to balance work, family, and other responsibilities while gaining new skills, making the program accessible to a wider audience. The virtual options are especially beneficial for rural residents, while in-person and hybrid models provide hands-on learning for those who prefer traditional training methods. As of June 2024, the North Texas region engaged 177 participants, with 117 participants earning certificates, showing improved participation and completion rates as a result of the flexible training options.
- Employer Collaboration:** Workforce Solutions North Texas works closely with local employers, such as the YMCA of Wichita Falls and Delta Hotel, to offer valuable on-the-job training (OJT) opportunities. These partnerships actively upskill incumbent workers and create new job opportunities for displaced workers. By aligning the training with employer needs, the program ensures smooth transitions from training to employment. Participants gain real-world experience while earning income, improving their employability and financial stability. Employers benefit from a pipeline of workers equipped with the precise skills needed for their industries. The North Texas region also contributed to the PATHS program's goal of engaging at least 120 employers, further strengthening workforce connections in the area.



PURSUIT OF ADVANCED TRAINING IN HIGH-DEMAND SKILLS

- **CDL Licensing Support:** The PATHS For Texas program has made a significant impact on the Truck Driving/CDL sector through its ongoing partnership with Vernon College, which provides CDL training to public employees in Wichita County. Workers who were at risk of layoffs due to new CDL licensure requirements are now able to retain their jobs by completing the necessary training. This collaboration not only preserves employment but ensures that drivers are better equipped to operate heavy trucks safely, enhancing road safety across the region. Since the program's inception, Vernon College has responded to the growing demand in the trucking and logistics industry by expanding its CDL training capacity, adding more training trucks to meet the needs of the workforce. With CDL wages significantly exceeding the self-sufficiency wage in Texas, the program has helped boost individual prosperity while contributing to the local economy by retaining skilled labor within a crucial sector. These efforts are pivotal as the logistics industry continues to play an essential role in the region's economic growth and stability.

Success Stories:

- **Career Advancement in Insurance:** Julia Horne and Emily Reed, employees at Wes Latham Insurance Agency in Seymour, Texas, utilized PATHS funding to enroll in the Property & Casualty licensing program. Previously working in support roles, the funding allowed them to advance professionally by becoming licensed insurance agents, a goal they had long aspired to achieve. For Julia, this led to a 30% salary increase, significantly enhancing her financial stability and overall quality of life. Their career progression not only transformed their individual prospects but also benefited their employer by enabling the agency to expand its service offerings with more qualified staff, ensuring the business could meet growing client needs. This demonstrates the powerful relationship between upskilling workers and driving business success, creating a win-win scenario for both employees and employers.
- **Advancing in Retail/Business:** A participant from Workforce Solutions North Texas, balancing the demands of being pregnant with a 2-year-old at home, leveraged the PATHS program to further her education for the first time since high school. Juggling these responsibilities was no easy task, but her commitment to improving her future kept her motivated throughout the process. Despite the challenges, she successfully completed the program, gaining valuable skills in Business Retail, where hands-on exercises allowed her to apply real-world knowledge and build confidence in her abilities. Reflecting on her experience, she shared, "This was the very first time I have ever finished anything for myself, and though it was very hard, I did not give up," underscoring her determination. Grateful for the opportunity, she now feels confident that the skills she acquired will open doors to future career opportunities and personal growth, paving the way for a brighter future for herself and her family.



- **CDL Training and Job Retention:** In Wichita County, new CDL licensure requirements placed many public employees, particularly those in water treatment and logistics, at risk of losing their jobs. These workers, who play critical roles in maintaining essential public services, faced significant challenges in meeting the new regulatory standards. However, PATHS funding, in collaboration with Vernon College, provided the necessary CDL training that allowed these employees to meet the new standards and retain their jobs. This success not only prevented layoffs but also ensured the continuity of critical services in the region, safeguarding the community's access to clean water and transportation. By avoiding the costs associated with rehiring and retraining new workers, the initiative contributed to operational efficiency in local municipalities, saving taxpayer dollars and reinforcing the importance of a skilled workforce in maintaining public infrastructure. Additionally, the training has had a long-term positive effect on the logistics sector, with trained CDL drivers supporting supply chain operations that are vital to the local economy, boosting regional growth and stability.
- **Impact on Community Safety:** The program's reach extended beyond individual benefits to positively affect community safety. CDL truck drivers received thorough training, helping to prevent accidents that could result in significant damage or fatalities, making local roads safer for all. Child care workers learned essential skills, including first aid and emergency response, significantly improving the quality of care and safety for children in their programs. Additionally, hospitality workers, including those in food service, received training on cleanliness, food safety, and customer service, ensuring that they contribute to safer, healthier environments for the public. These cumulative effects not only raised the standards within individual industries but also fostered greater public trust in the safety and reliability of local services.
- **IT Industry Enhancement:** At WebFire, a North Texas IT firm, the PATHS For Texas program has been instrumental in upskilling employees through Udemy, with staff expressing gratitude for the opportunity to enhance both their personal and professional skills. One employee shared, "Over the past year, Udemy has been a great asset to me not only personally but professionally as well. I use it quite often in my professional career to learn something I am unsure of, whether it's in-depth Microsoft products, time management, or leadership." The flexibility of the learning platform has been a key factor in its success, with another employee praising, "With the Udemy Business app, I can conveniently keep up with my studies throughout my busy work week, almost anywhere!" For some, Udemy has even enabled significant career transitions, as one employee recounted, "I pivoted from working in food service to my dream role in cybersecurity sales with the help of Udemy and my CompTIA A+ certification." WebFire leadership has emphasized the value of the program, noting that Udemy fills critical educational gaps and offers flexible, self-paced learning to support the company's workforce. This has led to not only personal growth for employees but also enhanced innovation and productivity for the business as a whole.



PURSUIT OF ADVANCED TRAINING IN HIGH-DEMAND SKILLS

Economic Impact:

The PATHS initiative has had a profound economic impact on North Texas, particularly in the areas of employment and wage growth, which have been key drivers of regional stability and growth.

- **Increased Employment Rates:** The program contributed to a 15-20% increase in employment across several key industries, including Healthcare, IT, and Truck Driving. By providing tailored training and certification opportunities, PATHS helped participants enter or re-enter the workforce in high-demand sectors, where employers were actively seeking skilled labor. This increase in employment not only benefited individuals by providing them with stable, well-paying jobs but also addressed critical labor shortages that were hindering growth in these industries.
- **Wage Growth:** PATHS participants experienced substantial wage increases following their training, with average quarterly earnings rising from \$8,004 to \$9,140. This 14% increase in earnings has not only improved the financial outlook for individual workers but has also had a broader economic impact by boosting consumer spending in the local economy. The increased spending power of these workers contributes to local businesses, supports community development, and enhances tax revenues, which are reinvested into public services and infrastructure.
- **Support for Small Municipalities:** In smaller municipalities like Wichita County, where public services such as water treatment are vital to the well-being of the community, PATHS provided essential training for public employees. By ensuring that these workers were able to meet new licensing requirements, the program helped retain jobs and maintain the delivery of essential services. The initiative also improved the economic stability of these small towns, as retained workers continued to contribute to the local economy and provide critical services that support the health, safety, and functionality of these communities.
- **Program Expansion:** The success of the initial CDL training sessions at Vernon College led to expanded class sizes and additional training trucks, increasing capacity for future cohorts, and addressing ongoing demand in the trucking and logistics industry. This expansion continues to strengthen the region's workforce, further driving economic growth.
- **Community Resilience:** PATHS played a pivotal role in enhancing community resilience by upskilling workers in sectors critical to the region's infrastructure and public services. By training individuals for high-demand roles and ensuring job retention, the program helped fortify the region's capacity to weather economic uncertainties. Workforce development in essential services not only kept vital operations running smoothly but also allowed communities to recover faster and maintain their socioeconomic stability, contributing to overall regional resilience.



Conclusion:

Workforce Solutions North Texas has successfully leveraged the PATHS initiative to tackle critical workforce challenges and enhance the region’s economic resilience. The program has engaged 177 participants so far, with 117 earning certificates, demonstrating its effectiveness in boosting both participation and completion rates. The initiative’s customized training options—including virtual, in-person, and hybrid formats—have made education and upskilling accessible to participants across North Texas. Key partnerships with employers like the YMCA of Wichita Falls and Delta Hotel have played a crucial role in providing on-the-job training (OJT), which upskills incumbent workers and creates new job opportunities for displaced individuals in industries like child care, hospitality, and landscaping.

For instance, landscape workers trained through the Texas Department of Transportation have improved highway visibility, reducing road safety risks and benefiting both businesses and the public. CDL training support through Vernon College has helped public employees retain their jobs and enhance operational efficiency in critical sectors like water treatment. By engaging 120 employers, PATHS For Texas has effectively demonstrated the power of the public-private partnership model.

The success stories emerging from the program highlight its tangible impact. Julia Horne, who became a licensed insurance agent, saw a 30% salary increase following her certification, showcasing the direct link between upskilling and career advancement. Similarly, CDL training provided through the program has saved public employees' jobs in Wichita County, emphasizing the program’s role in job retention and economic stability. Employees from companies like WebFire have also benefited from PATHS. Using the Udemy platform, workers have gained technical and professional skills in areas like IT support, networking, and cybersecurity sales. One employee shared how they transitioned from food service to their dream role in cybersecurity, illustrating how the program aligns workforce development with real-time employer needs, enhancing business competitiveness and improving individual livelihoods.

The PATHS initiative’s flexible training options, strong employer partnerships, and sector-specific focus have led to higher employment rates, wage growth, and increased operational efficiency in key sectors such as Healthcare, Transportation/Logistics, and Information Technology. By continuing to invest in these areas and fostering public-private-philanthropic collaborations, North Texas is well-positioned to meet its evolving workforce demands. This adaptable approach strengthens the region’s ability to thrive as economic conditions shift and new challenges arise, ensuring long-term prosperity for workers, businesses, and communities alike.



PURSUIT OF ADVANCED TRAINING IN HIGH-DEMAND SKILLS

CASE STUDY 3: WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS COASTAL BEND



Region Overview: The Coastal Bend area of Texas has traditionally been known for its strong ties to the energy sector. However, Workforce Solutions Coastal Bend (WFSCB) sought to diversify its service offerings and broaden training opportunities beyond traditional industries. Through PATHS, WFSCB engaged non-traditional customers, expanding opportunities for those entering retail and business sectors, helping individuals gain valuable skills that positioned them for career advancement and financial stability.



• Program Highlights

- **Diverse Training Options:** The PATHS program in Coastal Bend expanded beyond the traditional energy and construction sectors, targeting retail workers and those entering the business sector. Participants earned certifications in customer service, business skills, and soft skills development, positioning them for higher-paying, stable jobs. The focus on nationally recognized certifications ensured participants gained a competitive edge in the job market. These training options were made accessible to underserved populations, including rural areas, creating a more inclusive workforce, and offering career advancement to individuals who previously lacked such opportunities.
- **Community Collaboration:** WFSCB partnered with Goodwill Industries of South Texas and Education to Employment (E2E) to expand the program's reach.
 - Goodwill's Employee Development Plan offered PATHS training as part of an internal career development strategy, providing employees with wage increases and promotion opportunities upon completing training bundles. This initiative not only improved workforce skills but also incentivized personal growth and employee retention.
 - E2E's Focus on High School Students: Collaborating with the Texas Workforce Commission's Texas Internship Initiative, E2E integrated customer service and soft skills certifications into high school curriculums, preparing students for internships and future employment.
- **WIOA Youth Participation:** The PATHS program also extended to WIOA youth, particularly from rural areas, with nine participants receiving incentives like Walmart gift cards and iPads, making the program more appealing and accessible to younger job seekers.



- **Success Stories:**

- **James Lopez:** A 17-year-old high school student, James enrolled in the PATHS program while taking college courses and interning with Workforce Solutions Coastal Bend. PATHS helped him develop essential soft skills, particularly in communication and customer service, boosting his confidence and performance during his internship. After completing the program, James is now better prepared for his future career, crediting PATHS for helping him become more competitive in the job market.
- **Jordan Pratt:** A 31-year-old Goodwill employee with a decade of retail experience, Jordan took advantage of PATHS training as part of his development plan. By completing three courses, Jordan earned a wage increase within two days of completing the program and is now being considered for a promotion. His commitment to the program underscores the success of PATHS in elevating workers' career trajectories.
- **Kristi Cruz:** Despite a demanding schedule of college and two jobs, Kristi Cruz took on the challenge of earning certifications through the PATHS For Texas program. Initially overwhelmed, Kristi was motivated by the opportunity to strengthen her resume. With support from Workforce Solutions Coastal Bend and Celina Leal, she successfully completed courses in retail and customer service. "It was a great learning experience," Kristi says, reflecting on the confidence and skills she gained. PATHS helped her balance her responsibilities while enhancing her career prospects.
- **Natalia Cruz:** For Natalia Cruz, the PATHS For Texas program provided more than certifications—it reshaped her view of the retail industry. While managing school and work, Natalia earned credentials that deepened her understanding of business operations. "It taught me to think about the work that goes into running a business," she explains. With support from Celina Leal and Workforce Solutions, Natalia not only expanded her industry knowledge but also gained confidence and professionalism, helping her advance both personally and professionally.
- **High School Students & WIOA Youths:** Sixty-two high school students gained customer service and business certifications, making them more competitive for internships and entry-level roles. The inclusion of WIOA youths further expanded the program's reach, demonstrating its ability to serve diverse populations across different age groups and communities.



- **Economic Impact:**

- **Participant Outcomes:** The PATHS program is continuously training individuals, with 146 participants earning 367 certifications to date. These certifications directly enhance job opportunities, wage growth, and career mobility. Seventy-five Goodwill employees have already completed training bundles, leading to promotions and wage increases, while high school students are earning nationally recognized business certifications, boosting their resumes and competitiveness for internships and entry-level roles. These ongoing successes reflect the program's ability to equip participants with critical skills for high-demand industries.
- **Impact on Local Employers:** PATHS continues to empower local employers like Goodwill to invest in workforce development, creating a skilled and adaptable workforce. This model is inspiring other businesses in retail, hospitality, and logistics—industries facing workforce shortages—to adopt similar training strategies. By aligning ongoing training with employer needs, PATHS helps improve retention, reduce turnover, and stimulate local economic growth.
- **Support for Underserved Areas:** PATHS remains a vital resource in rural and underserved areas, providing access to training that would otherwise be out of reach. This support is improving economic prospects for individuals while strengthening local workforces in key industries like healthcare, logistics, and manufacturing, which are essential to the region's economic future.
- **High School Students & WIOA Youths:** PATHS continues to reach young people, with 62 high school students already earning customer service and business certifications, making them more competitive for internships and jobs. The inclusion of WIOA youth further expands the program's reach, ensuring that diverse populations across age groups and communities have ongoing access to training and career development, setting them up for future success.

Conclusion:

Workforce Solutions Coastal Bend (WFSCB) is actively leveraging the PATHS For Texas program to address critical workforce needs, particularly in non-traditional sectors like retail and business. These sectors, often underfunded by federal training programs, provide WFSCB with the opportunity to fill a significant gap by offering upskilling opportunities to individuals who might not have otherwise had access to career advancement training. So far, WFSCB has trained 146 individuals, resulting in 367 certifications that have improved participants' employability and financial stability.

WFSCB continues to capitalize on PATHS' flexibility to reach underserved populations, helping participants earn nationally recognized certifications in customer service, soft skills, and business. This training enables individuals to transition into higher-paying, stable jobs, creating long-term economic benefits for both workers and the region. A key driver of this ongoing success is the partnership with Goodwill Industries of South



Texas, where 75 employees have undergone training bundles that led to wage increases and promotion opportunities. This in-house training model addresses workforce shortages in retail and customer service sectors while supporting employee growth, helping employers retain skilled staff.

Through the Texas Workforce Commission's Texas Internship Initiative, WFSCB is reaching high school students, with 62 students already earning customer service and soft skills certifications. These certifications give students a competitive edge in securing paid internships and entering their careers with accredited skills.

WFSCB also extends the PATHS program to WIOA Youths from rural, low-income areas, providing nine participants with paid internships and certifications. WFSCB supports these participants with incentives such as Walmart gift cards and iPads to make the program more accessible, ensuring their continued engagement.

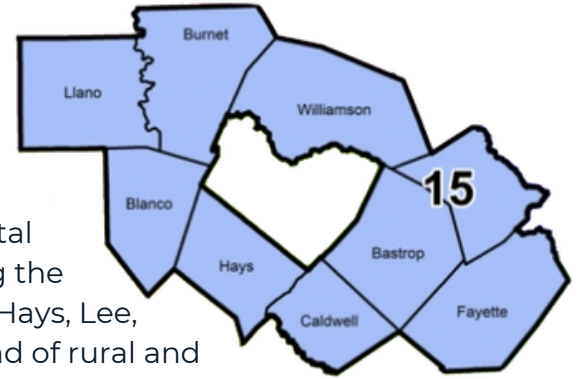
By continuing to focus on non-traditional sectors typically overlooked by federal programs, PATHS enhances the economic mobility of participants and strengthens the local workforce. The program's success is evident in the job opportunities, wage growth, and career advancement it fosters. WFSCB actively delivers no-cost training to underserved populations, showcasing the program's adaptability to local workforce needs.

The collaboration between WFSCB, Goodwill, and community partners ensures that participants from rural and disadvantaged areas continue to benefit from the program. This success serves as a blueprint for future workforce development, particularly in regions where federal funding limitations create barriers. By sustaining sector-specific training and fostering public-private partnerships, WFSCB remains a vital player in promoting economic growth and workforce development across Coastal Bend.



PURSUIT OF ADVANCED TRAINING IN HIGH-DEMAND SKILLS

CASE STUDY 4: WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS RURAL CAPITAL AREA



Region Overview: The Workforce Solutions Rural Capital Area (WSRCA) serves a broad region in Texas, including the counties of Bastrop, Blanco, Burnet, Caldwell, Fayette, Hays, Lee, Llano, and Williamson. These counties represent a blend of rural and suburban communities, with rapidly expanding industries such as manufacturing, construction trades, healthcare, and skilled trades. With major corporate expansions by companies like TESLA and SAMSUNG, there is an increasing demand for a skilled workforce. WSRCA's role in PATHS is aimed at equipping job seekers, incumbent workers, unemployed individuals, youth, and both entry- and mid-level professionals with the skills necessary to meet this growing demand. Recognizing the need to further enhance its services, WSRCA requested additional PATHS funding to extend its reach and continue offering upskilling opportunities across a range of sectors. The additional funding supported four critical initiatives: Apprenticeship and Pre-Apprenticeship Programs, Youth Training and Employment, Early Care in Education Professional Development, and Individual Upskill Training.

- **Program Highlights**

- **Apprenticeship & Pre-Apprenticeship Programs:**

- **Focus:** WSRCA actively supports career development in critical sectors such as Manufacturing, Construction Trades, Skilled Trades, and Healthcare.
 - **Funding:** Utilizing both Texas Workforce Commission apprenticeship grants and PATHS funding, WSRCA continuously develops comprehensive training initiatives to directly address industry-specific labor shortages, ensuring that participants are equipped with the skills needed to thrive.
 - **Partnerships with ISDs:** WSRCA collaborates with schools to provide pre-apprenticeship training in areas like plumbing, helping students transition seamlessly into formal apprenticeships with local businesses.

- **Impact:**

- **Participants:** Since the program's inception, WSRCA has successfully trained over 1,100 participants, awarding an impressive 367 industry-recognized certifications. As a result, local businesses have gained a pool of ready-to-work talent, driving economic growth and creating sustainable career pathways for individuals previously trapped in low-wage, stagnant jobs.



- **Registered Apprenticeships:** WSRCA offers high-quality, Department of Labor-validated apprenticeship pathways in key industries, providing participants with sustainable and long-term career opportunities.
- **Pre-Apprenticeships:** Students who complete the pre-apprenticeship programs gain direct access to formal apprenticeship roles, creating a clear transition from education to employment in high-demand sectors.
- **Youth Training & Employment:**
 - **Program Model:** In partnership with Ladders for Leaders, WSRCA offered job readiness training covering essential skills such as Career Exploration, Financial Literacy, Resume Writing, Interview Skills, Professionalism, and Networking. This holistic approach provided participants with not only practical skills but also the confidence and tools necessary to thrive in their future careers.
 - **Summer Employment:** Youth participants were placed in summer jobs that paid \$15 an hour, offering them valuable hands-on work experience. This opportunity allowed them to apply the skills they learned during the training in real-world environments, helping them build professional competencies and connections in key industries.
 - **Impact:** The program successfully provided youth with job readiness certificates, making them more attractive to employers and preparing them for long-term success. Additionally, the work-based learning opportunities gave participants a competitive edge by providing them with early exposure to professional environments, significantly enhancing their employability in fields such as healthcare, skilled trades, and administrative services.
- **Early Care in Education Professional Development:**
 - **Focus:** Addressed the shortage of childcare workers by offering On-the-Job Training (OJT) and Leadership Upskill Training for new and existing employees in the childcare sector.
 - **Leadership Training:** Partnered with Emergent ED to provide 15 hours of self-paced leadership training, empowering childcare staff to take on more advanced roles within their centers.
 - **Impact:**
 - The OJT initiative led to the hiring of 55 new childcare employees, helping to expand the workforce and increase the availability of quality childcare services.
 - Leadership Upskill Training enabled 93 childcare workers to improve their leadership abilities, which helped stabilize the sector by retaining and developing staff.
- **Individual Upskill Training:**
 - **Focus:** Provided flexible training programs to meet the specific needs of individuals and employers, enabling career advancement and workforce development.
 - **Impact:** The program served over 1,100 participants and collaborated with more than 30 employers across the region to provide tailored training solutions, resulting in higher employment rates and increased earnings for participants.



- **Success Stories**

- **Hospitality Industry Turnover Solution:** Sandra Phillips from Aramark Food Service and staff at Ryan Sanders Sports highlighted how PATHS helped address high turnover in the hospitality industry post-pandemic. The program met the training needs of large organizations like school districts and the HEB Center at Cedar Park, ensuring proper food handling safety protocols, particularly for children.
- **Childcare Sector Success:**
 - Jessica Granados, owner of Georgetown Learning Academy, credited PATHS with saving her business, allowing her to hire four qualified teachers without incurring training costs. She shared, "I truly believe we would not be open today if this program was not available."
 - Tina Owens, owner of First Step School in San Marcos, used OJT funding to retain and train staff during a staffing shortage, enhancing the center's capacity to serve the community.
- **Leadership Development:**
 - Christiane Painter, administrative assistant at Alphabet Alley Learning Center in Llano County, explained that PATHS "allowed us to take more time to train our teachers properly," reducing turnover and improving operational efficiency.
 - Maria Mercado, a childcare worker, utilized leadership training to advance her career, transitioning from a lead teacher to the director of a childcare center.

- **Economic Impact**

- **Employment and Earnings Growth:**
 - PATHS participants in the Rural Capital Area saw a 10.4 percentage point increase in employment post-training. demonstrated its effectiveness in boosting employment and economic mobility.
 - Participants also saw a significant rise in quarterly earnings, with average earnings increasing from \$8,005 to \$9,140 over five quarters. This increase underscores the positive financial impact of the training initiatives.

- **Childcare Sector Stabilization:**

- The Early Care in Education initiative successfully alleviated staffing shortages in the childcare sector by hiring and training 55 new employees. This helped stabilize the sector and enabled more parents to return to the workforce, further supporting the local economy.

- **Support for Growing Industries:**

- By addressing the demand for skilled labor in industries like manufacturing, healthcare, and construction trades, WSRCA has helped employers meet their staffing needs, strengthening the region's economic foundation and ensuring sustainable growth.



Conclusion: Workforce Solutions Rural Capital Area (WSRCA) has effectively addressed critical workforce challenges through the PATHS initiative, leveraging a collaborative model that integrates public, private, and philanthropic efforts. The initiative’s primary focus has been on meeting the specific needs of employers across key industries, ensuring that the training provided is directly aligned with the skills required by local businesses.

By concentrating on apprenticeships, youth employment, childcare workforce development, and individual upskilling, WSRCA has not only improved employment opportunities and wages for participants but also directly supported the growth and sustainability of local industries. Employers in manufacturing, healthcare, and childcare have benefited from a steady pipeline of skilled workers trained through the PATHS initiative, addressing labor shortages, and ensuring that businesses can operate and expand effectively.

The public-private-philanthropic model has been critical in ensuring that training programs are agile and responsive to employer demands. Employers’ involvement in shaping training content has resulted in a workforce development system that fills immediate gaps in skills while preparing workers for long-term career advancement. This approach demonstrates how workforce programs can serve both the needs of individuals and the economic goals of local businesses.

Success stories from local businesses, particularly in the childcare sector, illustrate how this model works in practice, with tangible benefits seen in workforce retention, increased employment rates, and higher earnings. For example, Georgetown Learning Academy and other centers reported that without the skilled workforce provided through PATHS, they would have faced closure due to staffing shortages. In healthcare and manufacturing, apprenticeships have proven equally effective, where participants transitioned into full-time roles with competitive salaries, highlighting the initiative's long-term impact.

Additionally, WSRCA’s partnerships with local school districts have facilitated pre-apprenticeship programs, providing high school students with hands-on training that leads to formal apprenticeships and long-term employment in fields like plumbing, construction, and skilled trades. These collaborations address labor shortages and offer youth pathways to secure, high-demand careers.

By focusing on employer needs and fostering cross-sector collaboration, WSRCA has created a sustainable solution for workforce development. The initiative’s adaptability ensures that the region’s workforce is equipped to meet both current and future demands, ultimately contributing to the long-term economic resilience of the area.



QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

The PATHS For Texas program actively engages a diverse population across all regions, ensuring that individuals from various backgrounds and employment statuses have access to valuable training opportunities. By taking an inclusive approach to workforce development, the program equips participants with the skills needed to enter high-demand industries and advance in their careers.

- **Gender Distribution:** Currently, 61% of PATHS participants are female and 38% are male. The strong representation of women in traditionally male-dominated fields, such as skilled trades, and the continued engagement of men in sectors like healthcare, reflects the program's success in promoting gender diversity. This balance demonstrates PATHS' commitment to breaking down barriers and encouraging gender equality across industries.
- **Employment Status:** PATHS attracts both incumbent workers and job seekers, with 67% of participants currently employed and 30% unemployed. This broad appeal allows those already employed to enhance their skills and advance in their current roles, while job seekers gain new qualifications to increase their competitiveness in the workforce. By addressing the needs of both groups, PATHS fosters greater economic mobility and opportunities for professional growth.
- **Education Levels:** PATHS serves a diverse group of individuals from various educational backgrounds. Currently, 41% of participants hold a high school diploma or GED, 29% have some college education, and 9% hold a bachelor's degree. This diversity highlights the program's accessibility, offering pathways to skill-building and career development for individuals regardless of their educational attainment.
- **Underrepresented Populations:** The PATHS program actively engages underrepresented populations, including minority groups, rural residents, and those facing barriers to employment such as a lack of transportation or limited work experience. By offering flexible training options like online courses and mobile training units, PATHS removes common barriers, making it easier for these individuals to participate in the workforce and pursue career advancement.

The diverse participant base of the PATHS For Texas program underscores its commitment to inclusivity and its ability to reach individuals from all walks of life. By equipping participants with the skills necessary to thrive in today's rapidly evolving job



market, PATHS is building a more equitable workforce and empowering individuals to secure sustainable employment. As the program continues through 2025, its ongoing focus on diversity and inclusion will further enhance its impact, ensuring all participants, regardless of background, can achieve long-term career success.

EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES

The PATHS For Texas program delivers significant improvements in employment outcomes, demonstrating its effectiveness in boosting participants' career prospects and economic mobility. By aligning training with employer needs in high-demand industries, the program ensures that participants gain critical skills that lead to meaningful employment.

- **Job Placement Rates:** The program achieves an impressive job placement rate, ranging from 72.8% to 77.6% among participants who complete the training. Of those employed, 62% secure jobs directly related to the skills and certifications acquired through the program. This high alignment between training and job placement underscores the program's success in preparing participants for real-world job opportunities, helping them transition smoothly into industries with critical labor needs.
- **Earnings Growth:** Participants experience a significant increase in earnings post-training, with an average quarterly increase of \$876 four quarters after completing certification. This earnings growth highlights the program's impact on improving financial stability, allowing many to move from lower-paying, entry-level positions into higher-paying, skilled roles that offer better career growth and security. The rise in wages also contributes to the local economy by increasing consumer spending power.
- **Skill Acquisition:** An overwhelming 90% of participants report acquiring new skills through the PATHS program that directly enhance their job prospects and career advancement. These skills range from technical certifications in fields such as healthcare, advanced manufacturing, and IT, to essential soft skills like leadership and communication. The program's comprehensive approach ensures participants are well-rounded and equipped for long-term success in a variety of industries.

These outcomes highlight the PATHS For Texas program's ability to significantly improve employment prospects for a diverse group of participants. By focusing on aligning training with employer needs and providing participants with high-demand skills, the program not only boosted job placement rates but also helped participants achieve meaningful earnings growth and long-term career success, contributing to economic resilience across the state.



PURSUIT OF ADVANCED TRAINING IN HIGH-DEMAND SKILLS

ECONOMIC IMPACT

The PATHS For Texas program continues to deliver significant economic benefits to local communities by supporting job creation, reducing unemployment, and enhancing the financial stability of participants. By focusing on workforce development and aligning training with employer needs, the program creates a ripple effect that strengthens both local and state economies, ensuring long-term economic resilience.

- **Tax Contributions:** Participants' wage increases post-training directly contribute to higher tax revenues at both the local and state levels. For example, participants saw an average increase of 10-15% in their wages, leading to a corresponding rise in tax contributions. These increased revenues help fund public services and infrastructure at the community level, such as schools and transportation networks. The program's success in boosting earnings not only improves individual financial stability but also strengthens community development and supports vital state resources.
- **Wage Gains:** Participants experience an average quarterly wage increase of \$876, significantly boosting their financial stability and consumer spending power. Many participants transition from entry-level positions in fields like retail or hospitality into more secure, higher-paying roles in advanced manufacturing, IT, and healthcare. For instance, CDL training participants in Wichita County saw a 25% wage increase after completing the program, allowing them to contribute more to their local economies through increased consumer spending. This wage growth also reduces reliance on public assistance and helps foster long-term economic resilience in local communities.
- **Employer Satisfaction:** Employers have expressed high satisfaction with the program, with 85% reporting confidence in the skills and job readiness of PATHS graduates. In industries facing critical shortages, such as childcare and healthcare, PATHS has helped employers fill essential roles with well-trained workers, which has resulted in increased hiring and retention rates. For instance, employers in the healthcare sector reported a 20% reduction in recruitment and training costs due to PATHS graduates meeting their job requirements more efficiently. This satisfaction underscores the program's alignment with industry needs, further benefiting businesses by reducing onboarding and training costs and addressing labor shortages.
- **Support for Underrepresented Populations:** The PATHS program plays a pivotal role in supporting underrepresented groups, including rural residents, minority communities, and individuals with barriers to employment such as lack of transportation or prior work experience. By providing flexible training options, including online courses and mobile training units, PATHS ensures greater access for these populations. As a result, over 30% of participants are from rural areas, and nearly 40% are minorities. This focus on economic inclusion helps bridge gaps in opportunity and contributes to greater workforce equality.



PURSUIT OF ADVANCED TRAINING IN HIGH-DEMAND SKILLS

The PATHS For Texas program plays a key role in building a resilient workforce and boosting local economies by filling funding gaps in workforce training, offering customized solutions to both employers and job seekers. By equipping participants with the skills needed to thrive in high-demand industries, PATHS ensures that the training provided directly aligns with the specific needs of employers in sectors like healthcare, manufacturing, and logistics. This alignment helps job seekers and incumbent workers advance into higher-paying roles while filling labor shortages and addressing critical skill gaps.

By providing funding for training programs that might otherwise be inaccessible, PATHS empowers employers to tap into a skilled workforce without bearing the full cost of recruitment and training. The program's focus on increasing earning potential and meeting employer demands creates a cycle of job creation, retention, and economic growth.

Participants' wage increases contribute to higher tax revenues, funding public services such as education and infrastructure. This economic boost lifts individuals into more secure financial positions while supporting community development. Employers, meanwhile, benefit from a steady pipeline of well-trained workers, reducing hiring costs and improving employee retention.

By targeting underrepresented populations and offering flexible learning options, PATHS addresses barriers to employment and ensures participants from diverse backgrounds can access training. This inclusivity broadens the program's impact and further strengthens local economies.

Overall, PATHS enhances participants' earning potential, fills critical funding gaps, and supports job creation, providing a customized workforce solution that drives long-term economic growth through 2025 and beyond.



CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

CHALLENGES

The PATHS For Texas program continues to achieve notable success in workforce development, equipping thousands of participants with valuable skills and facilitating job placements in high-demand industries. However, the program faces ongoing challenges that require continual adaptation and problem-solving. These challenges not only shape the program’s current implementation but also offer valuable lessons for future workforce development efforts. By overcoming these obstacles, PATHS For Texas ensures continued success for participants and employers alike. Below are the key challenges faced and the solutions implemented during the program:

- **Navigating Federal Limitations:** A significant hurdle has been managing the restrictions imposed by federal funding. Many federal workforce programs come with stringent eligibility criteria and a narrow focus on specific industries, often excluding sectors like retail, hospitality, and niche manufacturing—all critical to local economies but typically overlooked in traditional funding models. PATHS For Texas addresses this gap through strategic philanthropic partnerships, particularly with the Walmart Foundation, which helps fund specialized training in these underserved sectors. For example, Walmart Foundation funding enabled the program to deliver specialized training for roles in retail management, hospitality, and customer service, helping participants gain sustainable employment that would have otherwise been difficult to support under federal restrictions. This partnership allowed the program to bridge critical funding gaps and better serve local economies, showcasing the importance of multi-source funding to meet a wider range of industry needs.
- **Adapting to COVID-19:** The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic brought unprecedented challenges, as in-person training methods were abruptly disrupted. The program rapidly shifted to remote learning and virtual engagement, but this transition exposed an equity gap. Many participants lacked reliable technology and internet access, which limited their ability to engage in training. In response, PATHS For Texas invested in digital infrastructure, distributed laptops, and Wi-Fi hotspots, and provided technical support to participants in need. This effort helped mitigate some of the barriers, yet delivering high-quality, hands-on training virtually—especially in industries like healthcare and advanced manufacturing—remained a complex challenge. Despite these difficulties, the program successfully kept participants engaged and on track, demonstrating resilience and adaptability in the face of a global crisis.



- **Aligning with Industry Needs:** As industries like technology, healthcare, and manufacturing evolve rapidly, ensuring that training programs stay relevant has been a continuous challenge. For example, the healthcare sector's rapid adoption of new technologies required frequent updates to the curriculum, such as integrating telemedicine training and digital health record management. To keep pace, PATHS For Texas engages in ongoing dialogue with employers, gathering real-time feedback to update training content and ensure that participants are job ready. While this continuous alignment with industry needs is essential, it requires flexibility and additional resources to ensure that training programs remain current, especially in fast-moving fields like IT and cybersecurity, where skills gaps can develop quickly.
- **Ensuring Long-Term Sustainability:** With the PATHS program set to sunset in 2025, securing long-term funding for continued workforce development remains a critical priority. While federal funding and partnerships with the Walmart Foundation have played a major role, relying solely on these sources will not be sufficient to meet the program's long-term goals. To ensure continued success, PATHS For Texas is actively seeking to diversify its funding by building partnerships with state and local governments, private-sector companies, and philanthropic organizations. For example, recent collaborations with local businesses have expanded funding for specialized CDL training and advanced manufacturing apprenticeships, helping to fill labor shortages in critical sectors. Without these diverse funding streams, there is a risk of labor shortages and limited access to career development opportunities for participants in essential industries.

The PATHS For Texas program has successfully equipped participants with valuable skills for high-demand industries, but it has faced challenges requiring adaptation. Federal funding limitations often exclude sectors like retail and hospitality, but philanthropic partnerships, especially with the Walmart Foundation, have helped bridge these gaps by funding specialized training. The program also responded to COVID-19 by shifting to remote learning and providing digital resources like laptops and Wi-Fi to participants.

Aligning training with evolving industry needs, particularly in healthcare, IT, and manufacturing, has been another challenge. Ongoing employer feedback has kept the training relevant. Ensuring long-term sustainability, PATHS is diversifying its funding sources through partnerships with local governments, businesses, and philanthropic organizations to continue addressing labor shortages in key sectors like CDL and manufacturing. These challenges highlight the need for flexibility, collaboration, and diverse funding in workforce development.



LESSONS LEARNED

The PATHS For Texas program has delivered significant workforce development outcomes while providing critical lessons that can shape future initiatives. By navigating challenges and adapting to an evolving landscape, PATHS demonstrated the importance of collaboration, flexibility, targeted efforts, and resilience in achieving long-term success. These insights are key for future workforce development programs to enhance their impact and scalability.

- **Importance of Collaboration:** PATHS highlighted the critical role of collaboration between public, private, and philanthropic sectors. By pooling resources and expertise, the program addressed gaps that individual entities couldn't handle alone. Partnerships with the Walmart Foundation played a vital role in funding training for underserved industries like retail and hospitality, while collaborations with local employers ensured that training was aligned with industry needs. This multi-stakeholder approach created sustainable solutions to workforce challenges and underscored that no single sector can tackle workforce issues in isolation.
- **Flexibility is Key:** The program's ability to adapt quickly to changing circumstances, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, proved essential for its success. When in-person training was disrupted, PATHS rapidly transitioned to remote learning and virtual engagement, keeping participants on track. The distribution of laptops and Wi-Fi hotspots further ensured accessibility. This flexibility enabled PATHS to continue delivering results, demonstrating the need for agile program delivery in response to unforeseen challenges. Moving forward, future workforce initiatives should integrate flexibility to adjust to technological advancements and global crises.
- **Targeted Training Yields Results:** By focusing on underserved industries and critical occupations, PATHS demonstrated the effectiveness of sector-specific training. Programs tailored to meet regional and industry needs, such as healthcare and advanced manufacturing, addressed local labor shortages and equipped participants with in-demand skills. For example, training provided through partnerships with Vernon College enabled workers to gain CDL certifications, filling transportation sector gaps. These targeted efforts improved job placement rates and ensured participants entered well-paying, stable careers.
- **Data-Driven Decision Making:** Regular evaluation and data analysis were key to assessing program success and identifying areas for improvement. PATHS used data on participant outcomes, employer satisfaction, and program efficiency to make informed adjustments. For example, data-driven changes in healthcare training helped integrate telemedicine skills, aligning with industry needs. Data-driven decision-making allows programs to respond proactively to challenges, optimize resources, and improve outcomes. Future workforce programs should prioritize rigorous data collection to refine their strategies continuously.



- **Building Resilience:** PATHS reinforced the need to build resilience into workforce development strategies. By diversifying funding sources—including federal, state, philanthropic, and private-sector support—the program ensured long-term sustainability. This diverse funding enabled PATHS to weather external shocks like the COVID-19 pandemic, ensuring ongoing service delivery. Additionally, fostering strong community partnerships bolstered the program’s ability to navigate difficulties and maintain stability for both participants and employers. Future initiatives must prioritize resilient models to endure economic fluctuations and uncertainties.

Conclusion:

The PATHS For Texas program has provided valuable lessons for workforce development, offering insights that serve as a roadmap for future initiatives. These lessons—rooted in collaboration, flexibility, targeted training, and data-driven strategies—have demonstrated their effectiveness in navigating workforce challenges and ensuring measurable outcomes for participants and employers alike. As workforce development programs face evolving labor demands and external pressures, such as economic fluctuations or public health crises, these key principles will guide future models to long-term success.

Collaboration Across Sectors is Essential:

One of the most critical lessons from PATHS For Texas is the power of cross-sector collaboration. The program's success was largely driven by partnerships between public agencies, private sector employers, and philanthropic organizations. For example, the Walmart Foundation’s support was instrumental in providing funding for training in sectors typically underserved by federal funding, such as retail, hospitality, and customer service. These partnerships allowed PATHS to address industry-specific workforce needs that would have otherwise been overlooked, highlighting the importance of multi-stakeholder cooperation in tackling complex workforce challenges. This collaborative model enabled the program to reach thousands of participants, equipping them with the skills needed to succeed in high-demand industries like advanced manufacturing, IT, and healthcare.

Moving forward, future workforce programs should seek to foster stronger partnerships between government agencies, businesses, and philanthropic organizations to pool resources, expertise, and insights. For example, PATHS’ partnership with Vernon College expanded CDL training capacity, enabling public employees in Wichita County to meet new licensure requirements, helping them retain jobs and filling critical gaps in the transportation and logistics sectors.



Flexibility and Agility Drive Success:

The flexibility of the PATHS program was a crucial factor in maintaining momentum, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. As lockdowns disrupted traditional training models, PATHS adapted by rapidly shifting to remote learning and virtual engagement, ensuring participants could continue to acquire skills despite the challenges. The program invested in digital infrastructure, distributing laptops and Wi-Fi hotspots to participants, which mitigated the digital divide and enabled equitable access to training.

Moreover, this flexibility wasn't just about shifting to virtual platforms; it extended to offering hybrid training models that allowed participants to balance family responsibilities, work schedules, and education. For example, by offering self-paced, online courses through partnerships with Udemy, participants were able to access a wide range of industry-relevant skills, from time management to network security, that supported their professional growth in both IT and business roles. This agility proved essential, allowing the program to weather crises while ensuring participants could remain on track to meet their career goals.

Targeted Training Yields Measurable Outcomes:

One of the most successful aspects of PATHS For Texas was its targeted training programs, which focused on underserved industries and regional labor demands. By tailoring training to the specific needs of local industries, such as advanced manufacturing in the Gulf Coast region and healthcare in rural communities, PATHS helped participants secure high-paying jobs and contributed to filling critical labor shortages.

For example, CDL training provided by Vernon College enabled public employees to transition from layoffs to stable employment in the logistics sector. In the healthcare sector, the program's focus on telemedicine skills and digital health record management saw an increase in job placements, with a 20% improvement in job placement rates for healthcare participants. These tailored programs not only improved job placement rates but also ensured that participants were gaining long-term, sustainable employment in industries with strong growth potential.

Future workforce initiatives should continue to prioritize sector-specific training to maximize their impact. Programs that align training with regional and industry needs will see the highest rates of success in placing participants in secure, well-paying roles.

Data-Driven Decision Making Ensures Continuous Improvement:

Another key lesson from the PATHS program was the importance of data-driven



decision-making. The program's continuous use of real-time data on participant outcomes, employer satisfaction, and program efficiency allowed PATHS to make informed adjustments to its strategies. For example, feedback from employers in the IT and cybersecurity sectors led to changes in curricula, ensuring that participants received training in emerging skills critical for the job market. This approach optimized resources, ensured alignment with employer needs, and ultimately improved participant success rates.

Incorporating rigorous data collection and analysis into workforce programs enables them to respond proactively to market demands, optimize training content, and continuously refine program delivery. Future initiatives should prioritize data-driven strategies to measure effectiveness, identify opportunities for growth, and drive long-term improvements.

Building Resilience for Sustainability:

Finally, building resilience into workforce programs is essential to ensure long-term sustainability. The PATHS For Texas program diversified its funding sources, drawing from federal, state, private, and philanthropic partners to maintain operations through 2025. This diversified funding model allowed PATHS to weather economic challenges and continue providing essential services even in times of uncertainty, such as during the COVID-19 pandemic.

For example, in Wichita County, the combination of public-private partnerships enabled the expansion of CDL apprenticeships, ensuring a steady supply of skilled workers in critical sectors. Resilient programs that diversify their funding and form strong community partnerships are better positioned to endure economic fluctuations and external shocks.

Looking Ahead: Future Workforce Models:

By integrating these lessons, future workforce development programs can build on PATHS' success to address labor shortages, enhance economic mobility, and foster long-term career growth. Collaboration across sectors, flexibility in training delivery, targeted training, and data-driven strategies are all vital components for building impactful workforce programs. Moreover, ensuring that workforce programs are resilient and adaptable to changing economic and social conditions will allow them to remain relevant and sustainable in an ever-evolving labor market.

Incorporating these strategies will not only help address immediate labor needs but also ensure that programs are preparing workers for the jobs of tomorrow, creating a workforce that is agile, skilled, and ready to thrive in a dynamic economy.

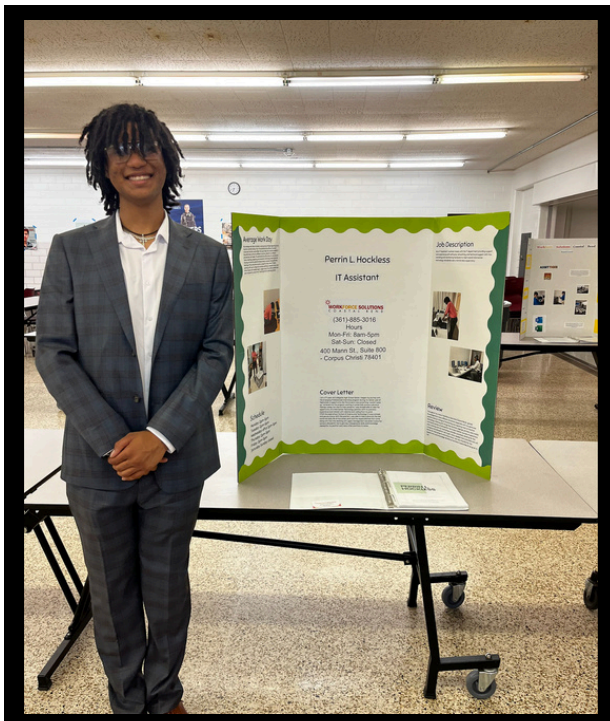
PROOF OF PERFORMANCE

PARTICIPANT TESTIMONIALS

“

I want to express my gratitude to Workforce Solutions and the PATHS program for providing me with the chance to take these additional courses... It turned out to be an incredible learning experience, where I gained valuable knowledge in retail and customer service. I just want to say a huge thank you to Walmart and everyone who made this possible.

- James Lopez
PATHS Participant



“

I have learned so much from the PATHS program. I was able to put that knowledge to work in my internship. I did not have any experience working in an office setting and I think that it helped me to know how to communicate and work with others. I found myself speaking more and trying to learn everything I could. I am very thankful to have been offered this opportunity to further my education. It will help on my college applications.

- Perrin H.
PATHS Participant



“

I would like to thank Workforce Solutions and the PATHS program for giving me the opportunity to take on these extra courses... I told myself it was something I could do to add more credentials for my resume. It was a great learning experience. I learned a lot about retail and customer service. Thank you to Walmart and everyone involved!

**- Kristi Cruz
PATHS Participant**

I just want thank Workforce Solutions and the PATHS program for the opportunity to gain certifications and for covering the costs... It has been an honor to have this opportunity and I'm glad I did it. It taught me to always think about the work that goes into running a business. I walk into a store with a different view. The skills learned in PATHS not only furthered my knowledge of the retail industry, but it made me confident and more professional in everyday life.

**- Natalia Cruz
PATHS Participant**



“

The information that I was able to obtain from the PATHS program has been extremely helpful... I can honestly say it is beyond worth it. I was able to have around the clock assistance and accessed the online courses with ease. This program is very special, and I would recommend it to any individual interested in increasing their knowledge. I will definitely be applying what I learned every day at work, and I am grateful for the bump in pay for completing the program. Thank you, Workforce Solutions, Celina Leal, and Walmart.

- Jordan Pratt
PATHS Participant



PATHS For Texas participant Sierra Acuna earned an iPad incentive for her completion in the Workforce Solutions Coastal Bend program. She also received a pay raise from her Employer, Goodwill Industries of South Texas.



EMPLOYER TESTIMONIALS



“There has already been a change in the vocabulary of many of our team members. They are using phrases like ‘non-value added’ and ‘cycle time’ vs ‘lead time’. I hope these concepts will change the way they think about their work and spark ways to implement what they learned into their processes.”

-Jay Huang
Operations Manager
TSS Inc. Engineering Services

TOPPAN **TOPPAN PHOTOMASKS** **ROUND ROCK, INC.**

“PATHS and the Texas Manufacturing Assistance Center provide key learning opportunities for a broad range of our current workforce. Graduates of these training courses rate their learning experience very highly, earned certificates, and are much more prepared to grow professionally to help the company meet and exceed its business opportunities in the near future. Our team is able to accomplish much, and we see our community partners recognize our efforts. We will continue to make further investments into the development of our professional team and look forward to further working with our community partners.”

-Kyle Swartz, Sr.
US HR Manager
Toppan Photomasks Round Rock, Inc.



PURSUIT OF ADVANCED TRAINING IN HIGH-DEMAND SKILLS

First Step School

"The program has made a real difference in the management of our childcare center. The program has helped me greatly with the expenses of hiring and retaining staff. Funding a program has been very difficult post-Pandemic as the cost of all goods and services have increased tremendously as well as insurance, payroll taxes and property taxes. I am grateful for these funds which have allowed me to keep my doors open a little longer.

-Tina Thomas-Owens
Owner/Director
First Step School



"I would like to express my gratitude for allowing our childcare center the opportunity to participate in your most recent program. We opened our doors in April of 2022 as a small center of 22 children. We have since struggled to retain teachers. This program has given us the opportunity to hire four incredible and qualified teachers without having to worry about the cost of hiring and training new staff. We were in the midst of having to close down because our center was not able to afford these costs. As a small business owner, I would like to thank you again for this amazing opportunity. I truly believe we would not be open today if this program was not available."

- Jessica Granados
Owner
Georgetown Learning Academy

ALPHABET ALLEY LEARNING CENTER

"The PATHS For Texas program allowed us to take more time to train our teachers properly and gave them an incentive as well."

-Christiane Painter
Administrative Assistant
Alphabet Alley Learning Center



"Our biggest struggle as a child care center in the last 2-3 years had been finding qualified and experienced early childhood educators. There just hasn't been very many such applicants left in the job market anymore. So, we had to hire a lot of teachers that were new to the industry. That meant spending significant time, effort, and money to train them. Despite that, not all of them made the cut to be successful in the classrooms. Our success rate over the last two years has only been 15-20% with such hires. Thanks to the program, we hired eight new employees, so far this year. That's more than our normal hiring pace. Your reimbursement allowed us to take more chances with our hires. Even if we succeed with only 15-20% of them, it still means more great teachers for our classrooms that help us meet the needs of our community better. We're grateful for the program and thank you for offering it."

-Ashok Vemuri
Owner

The Goddard School of Pflugerville

TINY TOTS N PLAY HOME CHILD CARE

"Tiny Tots N Play is a family-based daycare located where few or no childcare options are accessible to the community. We thrive to ensure disadvantaged individuals have access to quality and comprehensive childcare services at cost-effective rates. The program allowed us to achieve a number of things including advanced professional development and mentoring learning experiences. Reducing the teacher to child ratio, putting more focus on child development and without the burden of financial hardship for teacher salaries, extra funds were spent and directed at our curriculum and play-based activities. It raises productivity and creativity, and all these factors lead to a greater output of teacher growth."

- Ashley Rodrigues
Owner and Primary Caregiver
Tiny Tots N Play Home Child Care



CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

ENHANCING THE MODEL

As the PATHS For Texas program approaches its sunset in 2025, it stands as a powerful model for how public-private-philanthropic collaborations can effectively address workforce development challenges. By equipping participants with the skills necessary to secure sustainable employment, especially in underserved industries like retail, hospitality, and advanced manufacturing, the program has met the demands of local employers while improving the economic stability of participants. To ensure continued success in future initiatives, several key recommendations emerge from the comprehensive analysis of the PATHS program:

- **Replicating the Model:** Workforce development regions across the nation should consider implementing similar public-private-philanthropic collaborations. The PATHS model has proven to be scalable and adaptable to local workforce needs. For instance, in Texas, the program reached over 2,500 participants, with 80% completing training and earning certificates. These participants experienced an average earnings increase of \$2,574 per quarter post-training, and employment rates rose by 5.5 percentage points. Such outcomes highlight the model's potential for replication in diverse regions, allowing for customized solutions based on local economic needs.
- **Enhancing Collaboration:** Continued partnership between workforce boards, employers, and community organizations is essential for long-term success. Collaborations like those with Goodwill Industries and local manufacturing firms enabled PATHS to develop targeted training programs that directly addressed employer needs. These partnerships ensured high job placement rates in sectors like healthcare, IT, and manufacturing, helping to fill critical labor shortages while aligning participant training with real-world demands.
- **Expanding Flexibility:** Flexibility in program delivery remains key to accommodating industry shifts and participant needs. PATHS adapted swiftly to the COVID-19 pandemic, incorporating online and hybrid learning to ensure continuity. This flexibility not only kept participants engaged but also demonstrated the potential of digital learning for future workforce programs. The ability to pivot in response to changing conditions is crucial for maintaining participant engagement and ensuring program success, particularly in unpredictable environments.



- **Fostering Innovation:** To keep pace with the evolving workforce landscape, future programs must foster innovation in both curriculum and training delivery. PATHS, for example, focused on upskilling workers in emerging sectors like advanced manufacturing and IT, preparing participants with in-demand skills for long-term career growth. The ability to train workers for roles in high-growth industries underscores the importance of continually evolving workforce curricula to stay aligned with market needs.
- **Measuring Impact:** Ongoing evaluation and data-driven decision-making were critical to PATHS' success. By continuously measuring key outcomes—such as employment rates, earnings increases, and employer satisfaction—the program was able to refine its approach and maximize effectiveness. Participants in the Rural Capital Area, for example, saw a 10.4 percentage point increase in employment, while quarterly earnings rose significantly. Data allowed the program to make informed adjustments, ensuring that both participants and employers received the best possible outcomes.
- **Filling Federal Funding Gaps:** PATHS filled important gaps left by federal funding limitations, particularly in underserved sectors like retail, hospitality, and advanced manufacturing. By offering targeted training in these areas, the program created sustainable solutions for industries often overlooked by traditional funding models. This approach helped participants secure stable, well-paying jobs while addressing labor shortages in key sectors. Future programs should explore similar funding partnerships to reach underserved industries.
- **Adaptability in Crisis:** PATHS' ability to swiftly adapt during crises—such as the pandemic—highlights the importance of flexibility in workforce development. The program's quick shift to online and hybrid models allowed participants to continue their education without disruption. Moreover, workforce development boards tailored training to local economic needs, ensuring that industries facing severe labor shortages could still access a skilled workforce. This regional customization was key to PATHS' success and will be essential for future initiatives.
- **Innovative Training for Emerging Sectors:** The PATHS model placed a strong emphasis on preparing participants for roles in high-growth sectors like healthcare, IT, and advanced manufacturing. By aligning training with emerging industry needs, PATHS positioned workers for long-term success, demonstrating the value of adapting training programs to meet evolving labor demands. This focus on sector-specific training should be a cornerstone of future workforce programs.
- **Recommendations for Future Workforce Models:** As workforce development professionals, stakeholders, and policymakers look ahead, the key lessons from PATHS should guide future efforts. By prioritizing collaboration, flexibility, regional adaptability, and data-driven strategies, workforce development models can address labor shortages, enhance economic mobility, and foster long-term career growth. PATHS has shown that public-private-philanthropic partnerships are critical to creating sustainable solutions that benefit both workers and employers alike.



In Review:

Through these ongoing efforts, workforce development programs will continue to empower individuals and provide vital support to industries facing skill shortages and rapid technological advancements. As the job market evolves, these programs are essential for addressing the skills gap, ensuring workers are equipped with the knowledge needed to succeed in high-demand sectors such as healthcare, technology, advanced manufacturing, and, increasingly, retail and hospitality. These sectors, vital to local economies, have often been underserved by traditional workforce development efforts, yet through the PATHS For Texas program, innovative solutions have been developed to meet these growing demands.

With the PATHS program sunsetting in 2025, its contributions to filling needed training opportunities in sectors like retail and hospitality have been particularly significant. These industries, which suffered labor shortages in the wake of the pandemic, are now benefiting from targeted training that helps workers transition from entry-level positions to management roles. For example, retail workers in the program have gained training in e-commerce, inventory management, and customer service leadership, positioning them for career advancement within the sector. Similarly, hospitality workers have acquired critical skills in food safety, front-line management, and event coordination, leading to improved job security and higher wages. PATHS' targeted approach resulted in 80% of participants completing their training and earning industry-recognized certifications, with an average earnings increase of \$2,574 per quarter—an outcome that has directly contributed to stabilizing the workforce in these essential sectors.

Building on these successes, the program has partnered with community organizations like Goodwill Industries and Ladders for Leaders to extend opportunities to youth and underrepresented groups. These collaborations have empowered young people to explore career paths in high-demand industries like technology, business management, and hospitality, providing hands-on training and real-world experience. Ladders for Leaders, for example, has introduced youth to career pathways that align with regional labor needs, filling gaps in industries like IT and healthcare while fostering the next generation of skilled professionals.

The program's collaborative partnerships between workforce boards, community organizations, and local employers have ensured that training programs are aligned with both employer needs and participant aspirations. For instance, Goodwill Industries and local manufacturing firms collaborated with PATHS to develop customized training programs that prepared workers for logistics, advanced manufacturing, and retail management roles. Such partnerships have been instrumental in delivering tailored, employer-specific training, which directly addresses local labor shortages and helps stabilize turnover-prone industries like hospitality and retail.



PURSUIT OF ADVANCED TRAINING IN HIGH-DEMAND SKILLS

As the program begins to wrap up, its success highlights the need for flexibility in program delivery. PATHS demonstrated an ability to pivot during the COVID-19 pandemic, introducing virtual and hybrid learning formats that ensured participants could continue acquiring skills despite disruptions. These digital learning models have not only kept participants engaged but also expanded access to training for rural workers and those with limited mobility. Moving forward, leveraging technologies like AI-powered learning tools and virtual simulations will be critical for future workforce development initiatives, allowing for greater scalability and accessibility.

The high employer satisfaction rate of 85% attests to the program's success in preparing job-ready graduates who meet the specific needs of industries like healthcare, IT, hospitality, and retail. Employers report that PATHS graduates help reduce onboarding costs, increase productivity, and contribute to long-term workforce stability. By continuing to align training programs with industry needs, PATHS has ensured that both workers and employers benefit from the program's targeted approach.

To sustain the momentum generated by PATHS, future workforce development initiatives should consider replicating the public-private-philanthropic partnerships that have been so effective in driving this program's success. By filling gaps in federal funding and offering training in underserved industries like retail, hospitality, and advanced manufacturing, PATHS has proven that collaboration across sectors can create sustainable workforce solutions.

In conclusion, the PATHS For Texas program provides a blueprint for future workforce development models, demonstrating the importance of collaboration, flexibility, targeted training, and data-driven decision-making. As workforce programs continue to evolve, building on these lessons will ensure that workers are prepared for the jobs of tomorrow, industries are supplied with skilled talent, and communities experience long-term economic growth.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

COLLABORATION ACROSS THE STATE

Congratulations to all the employers, participants, and training partners whose dedication and hard work were instrumental to the success of the PATHS For Texas program. Without the collective efforts of workforce boards, leadership teams, and community partners, the transformative impact of PATHS would not have been realized. Expertise, passion, and unwavering support were the foundation upon which this initiative was built.

Workforce Solutions Greater Dallas played a pivotal role in serving as the convener and administrator of the program. While not directly overseeing participants, WFSDallas provided strategic oversight and fostered key partnerships that ensured smooth and effective implementation across regions. Special recognition goes to Program Manager Lynn Hoffman and Ike Bogard, whose leadership and commitment helped engage high-demand industries and employers, contributing significantly to the program's regional success and the advancement of workforce development.

Workforce Solutions Rural Capital Area was instrumental in reaching participants in rural and remote communities, providing them with essential training opportunities. A special thanks goes to Nellie Reyes for her dedication to delivering critical resources and ensuring that individuals in rural areas had access to training that led to sustainable employment. Her efforts were vital in connecting underserved populations with valuable skills development.

Gratitude extends to Workforce Solutions Coastal Bend, where Alba Silvas, Celina Leal, and Shileen Lee led efforts to build opportunities for participants across sectors. Their work in establishing community partnerships and tailoring training programs to meet the unique needs of the Coastal Bend region was central to participant success. From healthcare to manufacturing, their leadership ensured that industries benefited from a skilled workforce while participants gained access to meaningful career pathways.

In the Workforce Solutions Gulf Coast region, Crosby Brito spearheaded efforts to address workforce shortages in sectors like advanced manufacturing. Through targeted training programs, participants were able to transition into high-demand roles, helping to alleviate labor shortages while offering participants sustainable career options. His leadership was critical in positioning participants for success.



Workforce Solutions North Texas made significant strides in the technology and healthcare sectors. Special recognition goes to Kendra Ball and Ginger Hannah for their innovative approaches to workforce development. Their collaboration with local employers helped participants secure rewarding career opportunities, ensuring that the program aligned with the rapidly evolving needs of the region's key industries.

Gratitude also extends to the Ray Marshall Center at the University of Texas at Austin, whose research and evaluation efforts, led by Patty Rodriguez, Heath Prince, and Thomas Boswell, provided invaluable insights. Their data-driven analysis guided the program's strategies, helping to refine and optimize its impact, and ensuring continuous improvement throughout the program.

A special acknowledgment goes to the Walmart Foundation for its generous financial support. By filling the gaps left by federal funding, the Walmart Foundation enabled the PATHS program to deliver training in often-overlooked sectors such as retail, hospitality, and niche manufacturing. Their commitment to workforce development empowered workers and created lasting economic impact in the communities served by PATHS. Without the Walmart Foundation's investment and belief in this mission, the program's transformative achievements would not have been possible.

Lastly, a sincere thank you to Kaki Leyens and the Texas Workforce Commission for their ongoing partnership and support in developing training models that meet the needs of industries, employers, and workers across the state. The Commission's commitment to advancing workforce development initiatives has been essential to the long-term success of programs like PATHS, ensuring that Texas workers are equipped for continued success in a rapidly changing economy.

The dedication and collaboration of these partners have made PATHS For Texas a model for workforce development. Together, they have strengthened communities, bolstered industries, and laid the groundwork for future initiatives that will continue to empower individuals, drive economic growth, and build a more resilient workforce across Texas.



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- **Global Talent Shortage Survey (2024).** Retrieved from ManpowerGroup.
 - This report provides an in-depth look at the global talent shortage across various industries and regions. The 2024 edition highlights the increasing demand for skilled labor, especially in sectors like technology, healthcare, and manufacturing, where gaps in the workforce continue to grow.
- **PATHS For Texas: Interim Descriptive Statistics, Outcomes, Impacts, Survey Results, and Qualitative Summary (2024).** Provided by the Ray Marshall Center for the Study of Human Resources
 - This comprehensive report from the Ray Marshall Center provided the key data and analysis that shaped the PATHS For Texas program. It includes detailed statistics on participant demographics, program outcomes, and the economic impact of PATHS. The interim report also offered qualitative insights from participant surveys and employer feedback, helping to continuously improve the program's approach to training and workforce development. The data and analysis included in this report are invaluable for workforce professionals, policymakers, and stakeholders looking to replicate or adapt similar models in their regions.
- **PATHS For Texas Impact Report (2024).** Provided by Workforce Solutions Greater Dallas
 - This impact report outlines the contributions of the Walmart Foundation to the PATHS For Texas program, highlighting the foundation's commitment to workforce development and its role in funding training for underserved sectors. The report covers the financial investments made, the program's measurable outcomes, and the transformative effect on participants' lives and local economies. It also details how the foundation's support filled crucial gaps in federal funding, enabling PATHS to provide targeted training for industries like retail, hospitality, and niche manufacturing. The report showcases the Walmart Foundation's long-term vision for empowering workers through skills training and its broader impact on economic growth and workforce stability.

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The research included in this report was made possible through funding by the Walmart Foundation. The findings, conclusions, and recommendations presented in this report are those of Workforce Solutions Greater Dallas alone, and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Walmart Foundation.

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