



Building Educational Pathways for a Strong Texas Future

Strengthening career-technical education and high-quality Youth Apprenticeships will build the skilled workforce that Texas needs

As one of the nation's largest and fastest-growing economies, Texas faces a pressing need to equip students with the skills and credentials they will need to succeed in the workforce. By 2026, Texas expects to create 2.1 million new jobs.¹ By 2030, our state aims to equip 60 percent of 25-34 year old Texans with a high-quality degree or credential. Today, however, only 43.6 percent of residents have such a credential, several percentage points behind the national average.² Private sector innovations and public sector investments have led to a surge in high-quality career and technical education (CTE) programs and Youth Apprenticeships, which will prepare students today with the skills and experiences they need to succeed in the economy tomorrow. An increase in partnerships between schools and local employers, along with support from the Texas Legislature, will help ensure our state's continued growth.

“ Growing and strengthening our high school pathway programs, including increasing work-based education models like Youth Apprenticeships, across the state is vital for Texas employers and for the continued prosperity of our state.

— Justin Yancy,
President, Texas Business
Leadership Council



Maintaining a Strong Economy Means Addressing a Growing Need

Texas boasts the second-largest economy in the United States and, with a \$1.7-billion annual economic output, is the 10th-largest economy in the world.³ Texas' labor force is also the second-largest in the US, with a total of 14 million civilians employed.⁴ This makes Texas' economy particularly vital to that of the US, and even the globe. Despite its staggering size, Texas' economy is still growing, adding 280,000 jobs a year.⁵ At the current rate, Texas will lack the skilled workforce needed to fill many of these high-demand jobs.

Our Educational Attainment Creates a Gap

By 2030, Texas aims to equip 60 percent of its residents with a high-quality degree or postsecondary credential. Today, however, only 43.6 percent of residents have such a credential, which is several percentage points behind the national average.⁶ The only county in the state that has reached this goal thus far is Collin County, with 61.3 percent. Meanwhile, our lowest-performing counties have fallen staggeringly far behind with, for example, an attainment rate of 11.8 percent in Hudspeth County. Metropolitan hubs also lag dramatically. For example, Austin-Round Rock leads with 51.2 percent, while Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington sits at 42.3 percent, and Houston Metro Area sits at 40.1 percent.

Strong Pathways Must Begin With Our Students

For the Texas workforce to be competitive, it is vital that the state invest in steady pipelines of top talent, starting with reaching students in high school to prepare them for success in postsecondary education and in the workforce. One critical investment the state currently makes stems from Educate Texas' partnership with the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to support Industry Cluster Innovative Academies (ICIA) and Pathways in Technology Early College High School (P-TECH) programs. These designated campuses address key workforce pathways in high-demand fields throughout the state, including those in the following industries:⁷ petroleum refining and chemical products; biotechnology and life sciences; advanced technologies and manufacturing; information and computer technology; aerospace and defense; and energy.

TRIO Electric Pre-Apprenticeship Program: Building the Skills Our Students Need

Youth Apprenticeships offer a valuable experience for both students and employers, offering students hands-on training while in school. TRIO Electric is one private sector innovator who has found Youth Apprenticeships very valuable and has built out a successful program. In 2017, TRIO formed an industry-led partnership with Spring Branch Independent School District (SBISD) and Houston Community College (HCC) to offer electrical training to high school students. This program teaches students how to be safe, productive workers in the electrical industry and equips them with both technical and interpersonal skills that employers value highly, including TRIO. Upon completion, students possess the skills needed for a job with a median salary of over \$45,000 per year. The wages earned in the electrical field, combined with the stackable credentials received during school, give students many options—continue their careers, go to college or both.

Source: TRIO Education. (n.d.) TRIO Career Pathway. <https://www.trioeducation.com/>

These high schools partner with business and industry to ensure their curriculum focuses on workforce needs and partnerships leading to credentials, degrees and certificates for students. Schools target thriving industries in the regions where these students already live.

Conclusion

As we work to recover from COVID-19's impact on the Texas economy, it is critical that we continue to equip our students with the skills and training they need to succeed in postsecondary education and in the workforce. To meet our 2030 goal of equipping 60 percent of Texans with a high-quality degree or credential, we must continue to build strong pathways from high school to college and career. Private sector innovations have made Youth Apprenticeships possible to expose students to high-demand fields, and schools and employers should replicate similar models throughout the state. These

programs add value to students, schools, employers, and to our economy as a whole. It will take a team effort from the legislature, schools, and the business community to invest time and resources into expanding high-quality pathways programs in high schools to build the workforce that we need now and in the future.

 **Giving students a hands-on experience while in high school opens their eyes to careers they have never considered before.”**

— Phil Burks,
CEO, Genesis Group

Endnotes

- 1** Texas Workforce Commission. (n.d.) Texas Wages and Employment Projections, 2016-2026 Employment Projections. <https://texaswages.com/projections>
- 2** Lumina Foundation. (2020). A Stronger Nation, Texas' Progress Towards the Goal. <http://strongernation.luminafoundation.org/report/2020/#state/TX>
- 3** Perry, M. (2018). Putting America's enormous \$19.4T economy into perspective by comparing US state GDPs to entire countries. American Enterprise Institute. <https://www.aei.org/carpe-diem/putting-americas-enormous-19-4t-economy-into-perspective-by-comparing-us-state-gdps-to-entire-countries/>
- 4** U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (n.d.) Civilian labor force and unemployment by state and selected area, seasonally adjusted. <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/laus.t01.htm>
- 5** Texas Workforce Commission. (2020). Texas Adds 279,900 Jobs Over the Year. <https://www.twc.texas.gov/news/texas-adds-279900-jobs-over-year>
- 6** Lumina Foundation. (2020). A Stronger Nation, Texas' Progress Towards the Goal. <http://strongernation.luminafoundation.org/report/2020/#state/TX>
- 7** Educate Texas at Communities Foundation of Texas. (n.d.) Pathways in Technology Early College High School & Industry Cluster Innovative Academies. <https://www.edtx.org/our-impact-areas/college-career-readiness/college-and-career-readiness-models/industry-cluster-innovative-academies>

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1108 Lavaca Street / Suite 110 1A-139 / Austin, TX 78701 / 512.257.7399



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