

Senate Committee on Business & Commerce

Comments

Good afternoon committee members, I am David Setzer, Executive Director with Workforce Solutions for North Central Texas. Thank you for inviting me to speak before your committee studying workforce training. I would like to discuss some of the initiatives taking place in North Central Texas as well as some of the training that has both taken place and is being offered today. And although I will be speaking specifically about our local efforts in my area, all of the 28 local Workforce Boards across our State operate with similar coordination with their local business community. Workforce development is critical to long term economic prosperity; one cannot exist without the other. The North Central Texas region has collaborated with business, economic development organizations, chambers and other government and non-profit groups to identify training gaps and opportunities that can assist us in addressing the specific industry training needs within our region and expand opportunities for business in North Central Texas.

Our primary goal is to ensure that our business community has the labor resource it needs to be successful and grow. We accomplish that mission through the administration of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) funding. This is a shared responsibility between the Texas Workforce Commission and the 28 local Workforce development Boards. Through this program, we deliver training that is targeted to the labor needs of the local businesses. With input from local business leaders, each Workforce Board develops a "Targeted Occupations List", and then trains eligible WIA participants in those occupations.

In addition, Workforce Solutions for North Central Texas has been a member of the Regional Workforce Leadership Council (RWLC) for over 10 years. The RWLC was formed to identify key industries in North Central Texas and focus resources on the development of employment, training and certification programs to support industry in our service area. The council is comprised of workforce boards, chambers and universities that serve the 16 county North Central Texas region. The boards include Workforce Solutions for North Central, Tarrant and Greater Dallas. The members are focused on specifically identified industry sectors that are major employers in our region. Those sectors include logistics, aerospace, health care, infrastructure and technology. To date, RWLC members have received over \$17 million in discretionary grants and educational incentives that are used to meet the needs of industry.

The North Central board elected to focus on logistics and formed an industry based advisory group to counsel the board on workforce development issues and challenges related to the logistics industry and take a part in the development of an industry driven solution. The board won a \$1.5 million DOL grant in 2006 to develop the first of its kind industry recognized, national certification in logistics and saw the first class of certified logistics students in May of 2009. The Certified Logistics Technician (CLT) program is in its third year and has been expanded to 21 states and is being introduced to Mexico and Canada where the curriculum is being examined. North Central also won a second \$3 million DOL grant in 2010 to deploy the CLT certification in the greater Dallas and Houston metropolitan regions. The CLT program

is a model of cooperation between the public and private sector and demonstrates how a partnership can work to address industry challenges. To date the CLT program has certified over 700 students in North Texas and over 2700 students nationwide with over 160 employers in Texas having hired a CLT certificate holder.

North Central has also recently won a \$5 million DOL H-1B technical skills grant that will provide education, training and job placement in information technology, professional, scientific and technical services within the North Central Texas board area. The H-1B grant will train 4000 individuals in the next four years in fields that employers may otherwise have to bring in foreign workers to do. This grant is intended to raise the skill levels of North Central Texas workers and eventually reduce the need to use the H-1B program.

Another significant source of training funds that serve the entire North Central Texas region is the Texas Skills Development Fund (SDF). The Texas Workforce Commission defined Metroplex region saw 19 individual SDF applications submitted which resulted in over \$6 million in funded projects in FY 2011. There were 90 Metroplex region companies involved in those projects resulting in over 4300 employees that received training. The specific North Central board area receives a significant portion of SDF funds and sees a wide distribution of funded projects across our region. The majority of those projects are targeted towards manufacturing, followed by health care. Most of these training funds are used to expand the business, increase employment and build the training capacity of the community colleges. These grant funded training programs help to make our region more attractive to new companies and demonstrate the commitment of existing employers to our region and the positive business climate that exists in Texas at large.

I hope the committee has benefitted from my testimony this morning, and I would be happy to answer any questions you have.