

VISION

Workforce Solutions for North Central Texas is the recognized leader in building tomorrow's workforce.

MISSION

To advance business-driven solutions that promote economic growth, opportunity and a skilled workforce.

VALUES

Trust

Operate with integrity and respect.

We say what we mean, keep our promises and stay open minded to new ideas.

Inclusion

Leverage our collective genius.

We value diversity and believe inclusion drives innovation and connects us closer to the communities we serve. We are building a culture where difference is valued and respected.

Leadership

Courage to shape a better future.

We lead by example because everyone has the ability to pursue excellence and make a positive impact.

Community

We're in this together.

We create positive opportunities by collaborating with our partners to transform the social and economic vitality of those we serve.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Board of Directors

October 2022 to September 2023

Board Officers

David F. Bristol

Chairman
Trinity Captive Group
Collin County

Roger Harris

Past Chairman
Metro Linen Services
Collin County

Kenny Weldon

Vice Chairman
Collier Geophysics, LLC
Erath County

Rolanda Macharia

Board Secretary
Bank of America
Collin County

Board Committee Chairs

Carlton Tidwell

Oversight & Accountability Committee Chair
Terrell Chamber of Commerce
Kaufman County

Chip Evans

Workforce Development Committee Chair
Parker County Adult Literacy Council
Parker County

Aaron Thibault

Strategic Leadership Committee Chair
Gearbox Software
Collin County

Board Members

October 2022 to September 2023

Bindu Adlakha

Public Employment
Services, TWC
At-Large

Kristin Grammar

Frisco Chamber
of Commerce
Collin County

Ken Peters

Luminant (Vistra)
Somervell County

Barbara Batista

Collin County Early
Childhood Coalition
Collin County

Romney Guy

Goodwill
North Central Texas
Denton County

John Rattan

The Body Shop
Collision Repair
Collin County

Mercedes Bolen

Hillwood Properties
Denton County

Gary Henderson

United Way of Denton County
Denton County

Kevin Strength

Waxahachie
Chamber of Commerce
Ellis County

Brian Bondy

Granbury Chamber
of Commerce
Hood County

Mickey Hillock

Hillock Foods, Inc.
Navarro County

Kenneth Thom

AMR-Nextfleet
Palo Pinto County

Amy Crippen

Weatherford ISD
Community Education Dept.
Parker County

Mike Hinojosa

Tarrant County Central
Labor Council - CWA Local 6171
At-Large

Mindy Wooley

CASA for the Cross Timbers
Erath County

Tony Curry

Bombardier Aerospace
Ellis County

Kelly Holloway

TWS - Vocational Rehabilitation
At-Large

Joshua Worthey

International Brotherhood
of Electrical Workers #220
At-Large

Craig Driggers

L3 Harris Technologies
Hunt County

Dr. William King

Collin College
Collin County

Jason Gomez

Farmersville ISD
Rockwall County

Cheri Moseley

Texas Health and Human
Services Commission
At-Large

From the Chairman



Since being appointed Chairman of the North Central Texas Workforce Development Board in Fiscal Year 2023, we have hit the ground running to build deeper connections with our county-level partners and to identify and address workforce development and economic opportunities in our 14-county region.

In pursuit of these objectives, six “Accelerator Sessions” were held this past year with our Chief Elected Officials (County Judges), Mayors, Workforce Solutions for North Central Texas (WSNCT) Board Members, Economic Development Corporations, Colleges, and Community Partners. Our objective with each session was to better assess how we can more effectively leverage our services to meet local needs. Two recurring topics from these sessions were: (1) Challenges in recruiting and retaining law enforcement personnel, and (2) The need to provide enhanced services for children in foster care and the families who support them. In 2024 and beyond, the Board will be providing a platform for county leaders to identify and commit to ways we can coalesce as a region to address these critical needs.

To assure the voices of the region are fully represented, we worked closely with our Chief Elected Officials to carefully identify the right individuals to enrich the Workforce Board roster. Each Board member, new and tenured, has jumped into their role and contributed unique insights that have aided us in carrying out the responsibilities of the Workforce Development Board. I look forward to continuing to work with them to build upon the WSNCT Board’s reputation as a high-performing Workforce Board in the State.

Nowhere is the impact of our collective work more critical than with the childcare services we provide in the North Central Texas region. Curantis, our childcare service provider, began its journey with us in Fiscal Year 2023 to deliver quality childcare services to our customers and Early Learning Programs. See page six for an insightful interview with Kara Waddell, who leads Curantis, on where we are and the opportunities ahead. Data related to the impact of childcare programs can be found on page 12. While the numbers are impressive, what’s most important to remember is each number represents a child, a family, and a community in North Central Texas that now has a better start because of the work done by our Board, Board staff, and WSNCT partners.

Over this last year I’ve been energized by the overwhelming business community, county leadership, and partner agency support for the work of the North Central Texas Workforce Development Board. Board staff and executive director Phedra Redifer have aggressively sought and secured additional funding to extend our region’s impact beyond traditional workforce programs. In the last year, we invested \$23.7 million to make a difference in the lives of more than 100,000 career seekers. Together we are leveraging partnerships and the determination of our customers to achieve the region’s ambitious workforce and economic goals.

As we look to 2024 and beyond, I know collaboratively we will continue to cultivate partnerships, share labor market expertise to support economic growth, and provide high-quality childcare to reduce barriers to employment so North Central Texas has the best educated and most highly skilled workforce in the State.

David F. Bristol
Chairman of the Board
Mayor of the Town of Prosper
North Central Texas Workforce Development Board

From the Executive Director



It’s an amazing time to be in workforce development! The North Central Texas region is experiencing unprecedented economic gains, a growing list of businesses relocating to our area, technological advancements affecting how we live and work, and levels of federal grant funding opportunities we have not seen in a generation. Workforce Solutions for North Central Texas (WSNCT) is leveraging all tools at our disposal – as well as creating new ones – to ensure individuals and industry benefit from this momentum. We are forging workforce development strategies, services, programs and partnerships that will help shape the future of our region.

Amid this wealth of opportunity, we must acknowledge the persistent tight labor market and its effect on our regional economy. Without workers with the right skills, employers face decreased production and rising costs, and career seekers are unable to attain in-demand jobs that provide upward career and economic mobility.

Job readiness is the key. That’s why we revised our Target Occupations List (TOL) this year to encompass our region’s leading industries and increased the number of occupations that only require a high school diploma (or equivalent) or a credential/certification. More pathways equal more possibilities. We are determined to create a new generation of lifelong learners and earners!

WSNCT is recognized as a reputable, high-performing workforce development board at the regional, state and national levels. We were selected to join the Texoma Semiconductor Tech Hub Consortium (one of only 31 tech hubs nationally and the only one in Texas), which is tasked with creating semiconductor and related jobs, strengthening our nation’s economy and national security, and ensuring our region is competing on a global scale. Our innovative approach to workforce development gives us the ability to adapt proven strategies to meet evolving industry needs, resulting in a talent pipeline that fuels business and economic growth.

Innovation is in our DNA and enables us to be agile in meeting the immediate as well as future needs of industry. As such, we’re planning to lean more into ever-increasing workforce-adjacent issues like affordable housing, transportation, and food security, which will lead to laying the groundwork for new initiatives.

These strides are only possible because of our incredibly talented Workforce Board Team that works tirelessly and passionately to make this region the best place to live, work and thrive. It’s an honor to work alongside them. Our efforts are guided and supported by our exemplary Workforce Development Board Members, who lend their time and expertise to help us build better futures for families, communities, businesses and the North Central Texas economy.

This is what we do, and this is why I am so energized by the possibilities! I value and appreciate our local government, education, economic development, industry and community partners who help us accomplish remarkable things in North Central Texas and beyond. I am committed to continuing this critical work with you in the years ahead. Let’s keep working together and push on all the possibilities before us!

Phedra Redifer
Executive Director
Workforce Solutions for North Central Texas

Closing the Skills Gap: Customized Training Programs Address Workforce Pipeline

Closing the skills gap for existing and new employees is a key strategy in long-term workforce sustainability. As a result, WSNCT is keenly focused on identifying the skills employers need, and then engaging education partners to develop customized training programs. This solutions driven approach assures employers can find the skilled workers they need today, and in the future.

As part of its strategic focus on workforce pipeline development, Workforce Solutions for



Brandi H. Trotter speaking at WSNCT's Apprenticeship Forum.

North Central Texas (WSNCT) has ramped up its industry engagement, focusing not just on the delivery of services related to posting jobs and recruiting and hiring workers, but also guiding the front-end workforce strategy as well. "So many employers are dealing with retiring workers, so there is a lot of knowledge walking out the door with not enough skill walking in behind," said Brandi H. Trotter, Industry Workforce Development Specialist for WSNCT. "We need to make sure we close those gaps."

One of the most successful examples of this approach are the Registered Apprenticeship

Programs, coordinated in partnership with the U.S. Department of Labor, the Texas Workforce Commission, local workforce boards, and educational institutions. Within the North Central Texas region, there are 44 active apprenticeship programs, 10 of which WSNCT has either helped initiate or expand.

Bombardier, a global leader in the business aviation industry, launched a Registered Apprenticeship Program in partnership with Texas State Technical College (TSTC) in 2019. The "earn and learn" program provides students with 12 weeks of training at TSTC's North Texas campus, followed by 12 weeks of training at Bombardier's Red Oak facility. The program is invaluable to Bombardier because it allows them to hire – and retain – individuals who know everything about Bombardier's business and operations when they walk in the door. And with a 98% employment and retention rate of TSTC apprenticeship participants, it is a winning workforce development strategy.

WSNCT represents a diverse geographic region that spans 14 counties in North Texas, requiring innovative solutions to workforce development. Building a talent pipeline in rural areas presents a unique challenge. "Students will graduate from high school and move to Dallas where there might be more opportunities," said Trotter. Craig Driggers, a member of the Workforce Development Board, knows this challenge firsthand. Driggers serves as Director of Operations Management at L3 Harris Technologies, a leading defense industry contractor that has maintained a plant in Greenville (Hunt County) for over 70 years.

Finding a way to train local residents and give them opportunities to stay local was a priority for L3 Harris, according to Trotter, who says that rural areas struggle with the "talent drain" that favors more populated urban areas. Driggers first partnered with Greenville High School and initially hired 10 of their Career and Technical Education students who were focused on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) to come work for L3 Harris after high school.

That led to expanding these opportunities to all 10 independent school districts in Hunt County, and ultimately developing an apprenticeship program. "This is huge for a rural area. They're not only building a pipeline of workers, but they're also creating pathways for local students who had limited knowledge of, or exposure to, high-paying career possibilities right in their backyard," said Trotter.

Showcasing opportunities for high school graduates, post-secondary students, and even seasoned workers seeking a new career is important, but much of WSNCT's work focuses on educating employers of the benefits of the apprenticeship training model. Annually, WSNCT hosts forums that include panel discussions, Q&A, and table-top discussions with leading employers running successful apprenticeship programs. These also allow WSNCT to highlight its essential partners in its work, including the Department of Labor, which actively participates with WSNCT and employers in designing and registering programs.

While manufacturing companies have traditionally represented the lion's share of apprenticeship programs, Trotter sees healthcare as the next area of growth. Texas Workforce Commission issued a \$15 million grant related to healthcare to help individuals move towards registered nurse and LVN certifications to address the continued shortage of nurses in Texas and beyond.

In a post-pandemic, competitive economy, the registered apprenticeship programs have provided pathways to sustainability for employers. The structure of the apprenticeship programs also benefits the worker: "You're paid from day one. You're learning a new skill set. You're moving toward an industry certification and there are wage increases built into the model. That sets you up for a career path," said Trotter. And the employer? "They get a highly skilled worker who is going to be more loyal." That's an attraction and retention tool that pays dividends well into the future.



Shaping the Future of Early Learning: An Interview with Kara Waddell

Kara Waddell is the President and CEO of Child Care Associates, a national leader in childcare and one of the largest child development organizations in Texas. Under her leadership, Child Care Associates' subsidiary Curantis Group, LLC partners with Workforce Solutions for North Central Texas (WSNCT) to provide high-quality early learning to young children and professional development to educators. Together we are transforming early learning and building stronger families so parents can work.

Kara sat down with our team to reflect on the childcare industry, its challenges and the work Curantis is performing as WSNCT's childcare services program provider.

How did you get into childcare, and why?

When I was a high school student, I worked as the receptionist for a nonprofit that served children who couldn't be placed in the foster care system. There I saw the challenges families faced and was moved to help support families and at-risk children. My coworkers advised that I should work with younger children and babies. But in college there wasn't a "baby" major; so, I got my teaching certificate with a focus in psychology.

Then I lived and worked overseas where it was clear that other countries managed childcare differently and that each had different cultures with different expectations of government and of business. I'd meet women from all over the world and they would share how they were given as much as a year to be at home when they had a baby. Or how their system pays half the cost of care until the child reaches a certain age. Then they'd ask me what the U.S. offered, and I had to admit that it wasn't much.

When I was asked to consider applying for a leadership role overseeing childcare in the State of Oregon, I wasn't sure because I hadn't lived in the U.S. for a while, and I hadn't even worked in state government. But the more I learned about the U.S. system for childcare, I knew that I couldn't mess it up. So, I applied and was hired as an out-of-the-box candidate. I got to hear firsthand the challenges parents, childcare providers, government, legislators, and

advocates faced trying to balance competing desires and competing demands. We worked together to negotiate a way forward without creating a losing proposition for anyone, and that was really hard to do. But it was worth it, and it led me to North Central Texas and Child Care Associates.

How critical is quality childcare to enabling parents, especially those who are lower income or completing a training program to enter and remain in the workforce?

For parents trying to finish a workforce training or credentialing program, access to quality childcare is a barrier to success for many in our nation and region. It doesn't matter about the family structure or their income level. Even when I was in graduate school at Harvard, I saw fellow students—competent women from all over the globe—making poor developmental choices for their children as they tried to balance school, caring for their children, and staying on a professional track. In far too many cases, accessing and paying for quality childcare is one of the most expensive household budget items; especially if the children are younger than school age.

Our system seems to say: "You had a child; you pay for it." That may sound logical, but we now know childcare can cost up to 40% of a family's income. It's shocking to hear it, but infant care costs more than a student's freshman year at the University of Texas! And that's one reason some parents are choosing to stay out of the workforce, at least temporarily. For some families, an at-home parent may be the winning choice. For many families, that just isn't a realistic option. Childcare is fundamental to a healthy economy—especially for families with young children, so they are empowered to work and thrive in a profession.

It's well researched: society benefits when families flourish. Businesses benefit when they have access to the skilled workers needed to provide goods and services. Children benefit when they're in a safe, stimulating, and supportive learning environment. Quality childcare benefits everyone. That's why childcare programs like those offered through Workforce Solutions for

North Central Texas and Curantis are crucial. We help families, especially those with the youngest children, join...stay in...and contribute to our economy through work.

What can be done to innovate childcare in a balanced way to help more families thrive rather than be crushed by the burden of childcare?

We respect the integrity of families in the U.S. and we respect the different choices families make. But I believe it's time we come to a consensus on this subject. No one wants government overreach, but nobody really wants to put a family into a desperate fiscal state just because they need childcare. I said it earlier and it bears repeating: infant care costs more than the first year of college. At least a family has 18 years to save for college. Yet that's not the case with childcare. There are now even bank loans being given to new parents to be able to afford care in their child's younger years. I believe we can do better as a nation and as a community.



Kara Waddell visiting an Early Learning Provider

"QUALITY CHILDCARE SERVES EVERYONE."

America's system for childcare the last 40-50 years has been a test case in allowing families to figure out how to pay for childcare on their own. Government financial assistance to offset the cost of childcare only serves about 12% of eligible families in our area. And I believe what we're observing today is the slow failing of that experiment. There have been attempts at improvement—such as 30+ years ago when the Childcare Development Block Grant was passed to help offset the cost of childcare for families who income-qualify.

Over the last 30 years, we've learned a lot more about brain science and what young children need developmentally to thrive. These are the greatest brain-building years. In the last few decades, we've learned to respect the profession of early care and education. Trained and credentialed early educators of young children deserve pay commensurate with educators of older children. For early educators without a degree, instead of earning \$8-\$12 an hour, they should likely be paid more around \$18-\$20. If early educators are degreed, we need to develop a compensation that is on par with that of an elementary teacher.

But the cost for all of this can't be borne by parents alone, or by the government alone. And no one realistically expects employers of working parents to do it all either.

To address these needs, I think we need to thoughtfully consider additional public investment for childcare. Employers of working parents probably need to either voluntarily or be incentivized to do their part. A business return on investment is more than worth it when you consider for a small amount paid over a few years, they can keep that new mother employed and growing professionally. And in so doing, they build loyalty while encouraging female participation in the workforce. By removing the barrier or lessening the burden of childcare, employers also encourage female leadership moving up in organizations. The pandemic sealed our understanding as a nation of how critical childcare is... for mothers, single-parent households, and two-parent households. Economists now recognize childcare is economic development. Without a thriving workforce, including working parents, our region cannot attract new companies and cannot attract new talent into the workplace.

Shaping the Future of Early Learning: An Interview with Kara Waddell

One example of an emerging childcare model comes from North Carolina. They are operating a tri-share system of childcare affordability that has government, employers, and parents equally sharing the cost of childcare. This model, which is also being considered in several other states, is available to middle-class families who don't qualify for the current government subsidy program designed to support lower-income families.

So where do we go from here?

You know, I believe Texas loves families. Texas loves children. And Texas loves working families. So, I think North Central Texas has a wonderful opportunity to rethink how we can play a role in helping working families to be able to thrive and flourish. We need to connect the dots on a proposition and a way to move forward that engages and benefits everyone.

That's a big challenge because the appropriation for the Childcare Development Block Grant is only enough to serve about 12-14% of eligible families. There simply aren't enough federal resources currently available to be able to even serve the families who are eligible. Texas could supplement this funding.

Texas is a growing population. Between 2020 and 2050, the child population growth in the U.S. is expected to increase by approximately 5.3%. In North Texas, it's expected to grow 7 times that amount. So not only do we have more children, our child population is growing much faster than the rest of the nation. So our ability to have some local control from the government funds that do come to our area to be able to come up with local solutions is really important. Critical. While there is no one silver bullet way to move forward, I do believe more local flexibility will allow North Central Texas to respond to innovative ideas and opportunities.

There's also a calibration that needs to happen where we figure out how much can parents really afford to pay? How much can government really afford to pay? And how do we supplement that either through employers, philanthropy, reduced costs, or some combination of these and other ways?

Curantis deeply appreciates the opportunity to be a part of the work of the North Central Texas Workforce Board. We've seen and worked alongside you this year as you've grappled with the challenges that families are having as well as the challenges that employers are having. When we came on board as a partner, we realized the opportunity we had to honestly assess childcare and to survey childcare providers and parents to find out—from their perspectives—what worked and where we could improve. So, we spent a lot of time listening and putting processes in place to be responsive to our client input.

"THERE'S NO GREATER TRUST THAN LEAVING YOUR CHILD WITH SOMEONE ELSE."

We've gotten great feedback from those efforts and from our joint commitment to customer service, gritty work, and continuous improvement. We wanted to make sure our team represented the values that we all care about and work towards. We're uber close to hitting the performance levels that our community expects and deserves. In this next year, we will begin building some advisory boards and committees and looking for ways to connect clients to other service providers who can help them.

The work we do is a job of love. Almost everyone I know who's been in early care and education considers it more of a vocation. Early educators feel called to work with young children, and I think we need to come alongside and make the business and economics of it work out around the inspired caregiver. We need to treasure them in our community and recognize the economic value that they're bringing to the workforce, as well as on the individual level. **There's no greater trust than leaving your child with someone else.**

It's not a perfect system. But we're committed to working with the North Central Texas Workforce Development Board to find solutions so that the system is easier for families to navigate, easier for them to find availability and easier for employers to participate.

Resilient Recovery: A Remarkable Job Market Comeback in North Central Texas

The job market recovery in WSNCT's 14-county region, following the 2020 pandemic, showcases a notable example of economic resilience. The North Central Texas area not only recuperated jobs lost during the 2020 pandemic but also added a significant number of new positions, showcasing a stronger-than-ever job market.

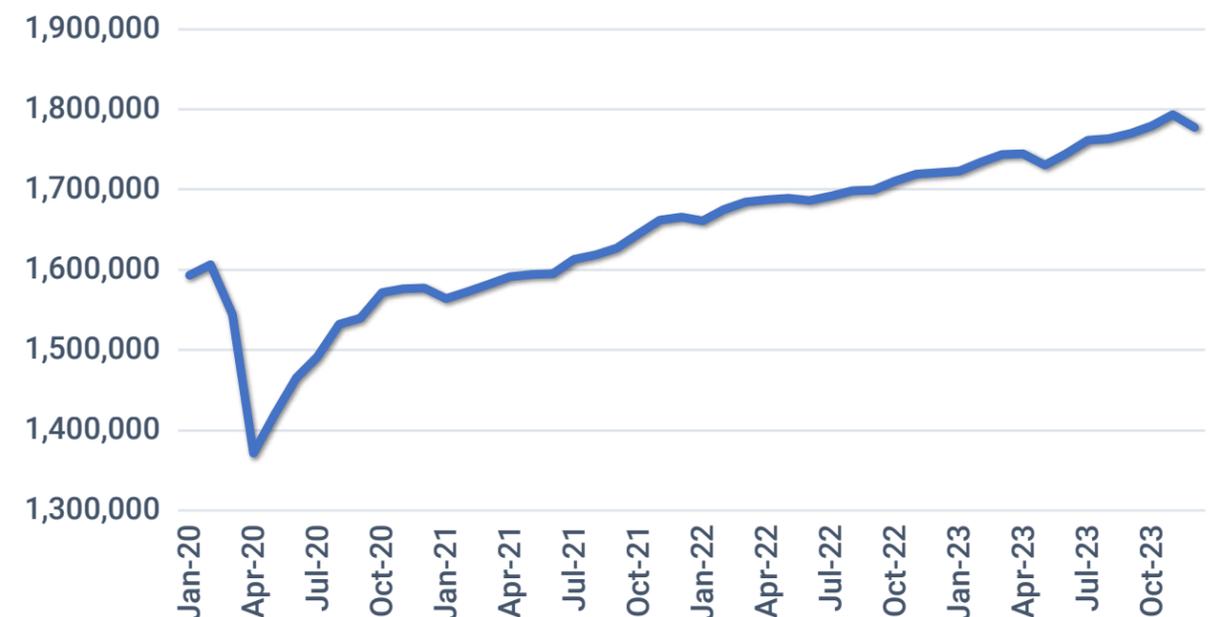
By December 2023, employment in the WSNCT region reached 1,777,795, surpassing pre-pandemic levels with an additional 171,660 jobs. This achievement is particularly striking when compared to the national recovery timeline. While it took 29 months for the US to recover the jobs lost during the pandemic, the WSNCT region recovered in just 17 months.

This swift recovery can be attributed to several factors. The region benefits from a diverse economy and a proactive approach to workforce development, which together have helped to absorb the initial shock and support subsequent growth. The local response also involved targeted support for key industries and investments in skills training, enabling both businesses and workers to adapt to post-pandemic conditions.

Industries with Largest Growth Since the Pandemic

- Professional, Scientific and Technical Services
- Finance and Insurance
- Government
- Accommodations and Food Service
- Healthcare and Social Assistance

Total Regional Employment
2020 - 2023



Driving Towards Success

Ed came into our Workforce Center seeking assistance after facing significant challenges in obtaining employment due to his criminal background. Understanding the complexities of his situation, our team embarked on a detailed assessment to identify potential career paths that would be accessible and promising for him, despite the hurdles he faced.

Recognizing the transportation industry's robust demand for qualified drivers, Ed showed interest in pursuing a career within this sector. To support his aspirations, our team recommended obtaining a Commercial Driver's License (CDL) Class A as a strategic step forward. Through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Adult Program Grant administered by WSNCT, he was able to receive funds for training, case management, and assistance with housing and transportation to complete his certification.

Through dedication and hard work, Ed successfully completed his training and obtained his CDL Class A license along with four additional endorsements. This achievement led to his employment at a local business, where he started at a wage of \$27.00 an hour.

Ed's journey from initial consultation at our Workforce Center to securing meaningful employment exemplifies the impact of targeted support and the effectiveness of workforce development programs in facilitating successful employment outcomes for individuals facing barriers to employment.



A Reason to Smile



Mary's journey to becoming a Certified Dental Assistant is a clear example of her determination and the significant role the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Youth Program (WIOA) can play in an individual's life.

As a young, single mother with a high school equivalency diploma, Mary visited WSNCT's Workforce Center with a focus on establishing a career in dental assistance. The Workforce Center team enrolled her in the WIOA Youth program where she received tailored support that addressed both her career ambitions and the challenges she faced as a single parent. The program began with service planning and assessments to identify her needs and outline a path towards her goal. Training services then provided her with the essential knowledge and skills needed in the dental assisting field. Her WSNCT case manager offered ongoing guidance and support, helping her stay on course.

Mary's efforts and the program's support culminated when she completed her classroom training. Recognized for her competence and dedication, she was offered a full-time position at the company where she completed her externship, just two weeks later. Now working as a Certified Dental Assistant and earning \$17.50 an hour, Mary has started a promising career in the dental field, illustrating the positive impact of targeted support and personal perseverance.

**Names have been changed to protect the privacy of our clients.*

2023 Highlights



Qarbon Aerospace Manufacturing earned the North Central Texas Employer of Excellence award from the Texas Workforce Commission.



Aledo ISD teachers celebrated for their outstanding contributions during the Teacher Externship Program.



United We Work event opened career exploration avenues for students with disabilities.



The 'Hiring Red, White & You' Veterans Career Fair bridged hundreds of employers with career seekers.



WSNCT Executive Director, Phedra Redifer, moderated a panel at the Governor's Small Business Summit in Stephenville.



Collaborative success as the North Central, Dallas and Tarrant Workforce Boards hosted the Regional Childcare Conference for Early Learning Providers.

North Central Texas
Population
3,531,610

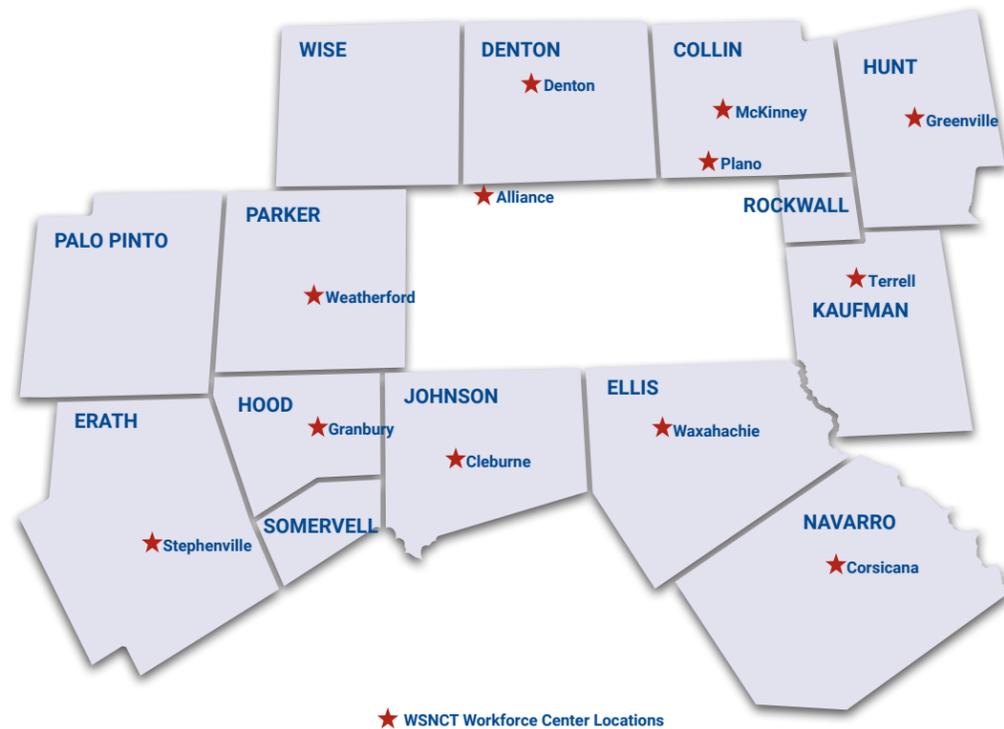


Financial Investment
in the Region

Child Care..... \$66.8 Million
Workforce and
Other Programs \$23.7 Million

Total
\$90.5 Million

October 2022 to September 2023



WSNCT Impact

101,543 Career Seekers Served
10,000+ Veterans
8,700+ Youth & Young Adults



10,492 Employers Served



7,000+ Children Received Quality Childcare
while their parent or guardian worked, attended training or pursued their education



27,826 Local Jobs Posted on WorkinTexas.com



486 Hiring Events Hosted



Collaborated with education, industry and community partners to bring in **\$22.5 Million** in grant funding for training and CTE programs



Facts About the Region

10,986
Square Miles

3.8%
Unemployment Rate

102
School Districts

13
Public Colleges & Universities



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NORTH CENTRAL TEXAS

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