STRATEGIC PLAN
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS
NORTH CENTRAL TEXAS

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STRENGTHEN ORGANIZATIONAL GOVERNANCE AND CULTURE

We continually challenge ourselves to look inwardly and recognize that a stronger, healthier culture directly translates to better performance and reduced risk. We set bold goals to improve our organization's culture, automate processes and reduce cycle times, and elevate awareness of our brand. In doing this, we expect to gain efficiencies and reduce errors; exhibit good stewardship and maintain the trust bestowed upon us; uphold our vision, mission, and values; and increase the visibility and competitive positioning of our organization.

- **Automate Key Work Process**

Over the course of the past four years, we have created uniformity of service delivery within the region by automating key work processes and transitioning core programs to a paperless document management system application using Laserfiche. We were successful at transitioning all nine designated core programs: WIOA Youth, WIOA Adult, WIOA Dislocated Worker, Choices, NCP Choices, SNAP E&T, Rapid Response, TAA and Child Care services. The automation of core program processes, such as intake, eligibility determination and correspondence, has increased efficiencies, reduced cycle times, and decreased errors. The cycle time for the Child Care New Application process experienced a 5.5 day (18.97%) reduction and the Child Care Redetermination process cycle was reduced by 15.1 days (29.61%).

Additionally, the automated launching of a Laserfiche Child Care participant survey is utilized to capture participant feedback regarding their experience going through the New Application and Redetermination processes. Also, a text messaging service was integrated with Laserfiche to communicate with specified program participants regarding program reminders, missing documents, waitlist information, etc.

By converting all Workforce Development key programs to a Laserfiche environment, a virtual case file for each program participant is stored in a Laserfiche repository. Tangible case files are no longer stored/maintained at each Workforce Center but are now accessible via a secured web interface, which is accessible to designated staff and authorized individuals. There is no longer a need to transport physical files from one location to another location. Finally, auditing and monitoring of participant files are conducted remotely as opposed to specified staff/authorized individuals traveling to various locations to conduct their review of participant files or staff having to ship participant files to a specified location. This ability to significantly monitor remotely further ensures security of PII and further mitigates risk. Less staff travel time means more time spent on monitoring and other work tasks, thus allowing the staff to accommodate more work. Laserfiche also allows program participants and customers to submit programmatic required documents, which has the capability to seamlessly initiate additional programmatic processes.

In addition to utilizing Laserfiche to manage key funded programs, we use Laserfiche as a tool to manage the following work processes: customized report requests, systems access requests, surveys, event registrations (job fairs, webinars, etc.), marketing requests, customer/participant complaints, and Personal Identifiable Information (PII) breaches.

Laserfiche was instrumental in the employer authorization process for participation in the iWork Youth Career Exploration events and our Hiring Red, White & You! job fairs. Prior to Laserfiche

implementation, the employer authorization process duration was approximately 6 days. Post Laserfiche implementation, the employer authorization/vetting process was reduced to 3.2 days, which is a 46.67% reduction in cycle time.

Also, the utilization of the Systems Access Management application in a Laserfiche environment provided enhancements in the area of repository management (file management and organization) and workflow management over its ASP.NET predecessor. Documents are automatically stored in a logically designed manner and the routing of requests follow a designed pattern that minimizes users' ability to alter a pre-determined sequence of process steps.

A certified Project Management Professional (PMP) was hired to manage and oversee the implementation of all Laserfiche initiatives. Having a certified PMP staff member overseeing Laserfiche initiatives will increase the likelihood of a successful project outcome, add value to the Laserfiche implementation project, streamline/standardize Laserfiche implementation practices, and expand project communication channels. Specifically, the Data Management Group now adheres to Project Management Body of Knowledge standards and guidelines to manage Laserfiche and other assigned projects to increase the likelihood of favorable implementations. Designated projects are now authorized by leadership to ensure consensus with the project scope. Also, we implemented the use of a formal process for the review and approval of scope changes to ensure the changes do not exceed available resources and project constraints. Finally, we have a formal project closing process to review lessons learned and implemented the use of a project archival process for future reference.

Reduced the cycle time for new child care applications by 5.5 days and shortened the redetermination process cycle time by 15.1 days.

- **Conduct Risk Management**

We operate with the philosophy that while all risk cannot be eliminated, we must engage in acceptable risk and manage it for optimum results. Our controls, policies, oversight, monitoring, financial and performance management is guided with that philosophy in mind. The absence of disallowed costs, findings during external reviews or adverse actions taken as a result of findings is a demonstration of the consistent and diligent "behind the scenes" work we perform. Additionally, our staff is routinely sought out by other workforce board staff and TWC for their expertise in the areas of monitoring and oversight, fraud investigation and financial oversight. We developed a PII Breach Process in our document management system application to manage and track PII breaches. This process tracks the progress of the breach from the completion of the initial incident summary through the investigation, remedy phase and the submission of the final report to TWC. We conduct a risk assessment each year that also looks at risk mitigation factors. We conduct risk-based monitoring; manage risk with our customer and provider hearngs; and ADA and EO reviews; along with fraud fact-finding for fiscal and programmatic integrity. Based on the outcome of these processes, our oversight of the funds is tailored for each program and area of risk. Our managed oversight through risk management resulted in no disallowed costs for the Workforce Board.

Surveys show 84.62% of our staff feel valued and would recommend our workplace to a friend or professional acquaintance.

- **Improve Organizational Culture**

We know that building a solid organizational culture isn't "one and done." Rather, it's a continual work in progress. We made significant strides in the past years toward building and maintaining a healthy and positive workplace. We hosted five organization-wide town hall meetings to promote open communication as well as team-building activities to strengthen our workplace relationships. Further, we encouraged ongoing visits between supervisors and their teams to discuss accountability, collaboration, communication, professional development, and empowerment. We administered a series of surveys to measure our effectiveness in fostering communication and creating an uplifting workplace culture, and the results were positive. In particular, 84.62% of our staff indicated they felt valued at work and would recommend our workplace to a friend or professional acquaintance.

We value our employees and their safety and therefore expanded our existing telecommuting practices very early in the pandemic to allow all staff to work remotely. Additional flexibility was also incorporated which allowed staff to respond to new scheduling challenges amid COVID-19. The established technology infrastructure provided staff a seamless transition to the remote work environment. We expanded access to needed tools and equipment for staff to conduct work remotely, including purchasing additional Zoom and Zoom Webinar licenses to allow staff to connect and facilitate critical meetings virtually to maintain their safety and promote social distancing.

In an effort to understand the challenges and concerns of staff during the early days of COVID-19, we solicited feedback from staff before developing/evaluating the re-opening plans of the agency. Flex schedules and implementing telecommuting were greatly appreciated by staff. This practiced use of technology provided a more seamless transition to COVID-19 operations.

We have continuously invested in professional development as an effort to attract and keep talented employees, boost our reputation as a great place to work and build a work culture that is unafraid of innovation. During the past four fiscal years, we have budgeted $345,913 (an average of $2,082.91 per staff) for professional development endeavors, not including travel and related expenses. Though the COVID-19 Pandemic has impacted staff travel, professional development is still occurring virtually.

- **Expand Brand Management**

We recognize that one of our strongest assets is our brand, and having a solid, trusted brand is important for our company to thrive. To ensure cohesion, we developed foundational tools to assist leadership and staff with presenting and communicating a consistent brand image externally, including Social Media Guidelines, Media and External Communications Guidelines, and a more comprehensive Brand Style Guide.

To increase awareness of our brand and services, we launched various marketing campaigns and advertising strategies to targeted audiences via billboards, broadcast and cable television commercials, digital ads on high-traffic websites, flyers, radio, magazines, social media, videos and newspaper ads. Google Analytics reports show that total yearly page views of our website increased from 400,000 in FY16-17, to 584,057 in FY19-20 which is an increase of 46% since FY16-17. Visits to the homepage of dfwjobs.com alone increased more than 140%, going from 51,411 views in FY16-17 to 125,342 views in FY19-20. Twitter Impressions increased 20% since 2018, and our Facebook Reach has increased 64% since 2019.

The Communications team added two staff members in FY18-19 to bring more marketing and graphic design expertise to the organization. This resulted in more fruitful collaboration across the department, faster turn-arounds on project deliverables and considerable cost savings versus utilizing outside vendors. Since January 2019, the department has saved more than $165,685 on vendor fees. The Communications team's work received international recognition in July by winning five awards in the 2020 Hermes Creative Awards competition, including the competition's highest honor – Platinum – for our FY19 Annual Report, and the second-highest honor – Gold – for our Brand Awareness Campaign.

CULTIVATE & MAXIMIZE PARTNER ENGAGEMENT

On our own, what we can achieve is limited. The synergy created from our partnerships with employers and community stakeholders represents more than the sum of each of our contributions. By leveraging each other's capabilities and resources, our projects and services gain greater credibility and broaden the scope of what we can achieve. Our employers share valuable insight about their workforce needs, and that knowledge helps our systems and offerings remain relevant.

- **Enhance Employer Engagement**

Our strategy is designed to increase the level of engagement with employers by researching, outreaching, deepening relationships, and building a robust network of employers that are engaged in workforce business services. During the current plan year, we engaged with more than 440 employers to provide them with an overview of services available to them and conducted discovery meetings to identify potential Skills Development Fund (SDF) grant application candidates. Since FY17, more than $7.6 million in SDF grant funding was awarded to serve 31 employers in the North Central Texas region, and 35 additional employers were engaged to develop SDF training grants with their local community colleges in FY20. As a result of the Board's collaboration in this grant development, we earned $65,000 in SDF Incentive Funds since FY17.

In an effort to continue to build new employer relationships and strengthen our region's vibrancy, we deepened our focus on Registered Apprenticeships. As a result of our targeted outreach and partnerships, we assisted in the development of two Registered Apprenticeship Programs by connecting the employer to DOL and providing support throughout the development phase. SAF Holland, a manufacturer located in Wylie (Collin County), developed programs for Maintenance Electricians and Tool & Die Makers, two high-demand occupations within their workforce. Bombardier, located in Red Oak (Ellis County), developed an Aircraft Assembler apprenticeship program in collaboration with Texas State Technical College and WSNCT. These efforts began with and are continued through WSNCT's participation with Bombardier's Upskilling Committee.

Due to COVID-19 safety guidelines, we began to outreach and engage with employers virtually, which allowed us to connect with 190 new employers through virtual career fairs, one-on-one employer meetings, and a Town Hall meeting with Aaron Demerson, the Commissioner for Employers at Texas Workforce Commission.

- **Cultivate and Maximize Community Partnerships**

We can't do it alone and building capacity through strategic collaborations is essential to the work we do. We are identifying partners and formalizing those relationships to address our community's needs. Additionally, we collaborate with local organizations to identify collective ways to serve our community, integrate services and leverage resources to create greater impact. We currently serve on the United Way of Denton County's Workforce Success Leadership Team and its Early Childhood Coalition as well as Collin County's Early Childhood Coalition. Through a partnership with Educational First Steps, we provide child care assistance to families who need support while on our waitlist.

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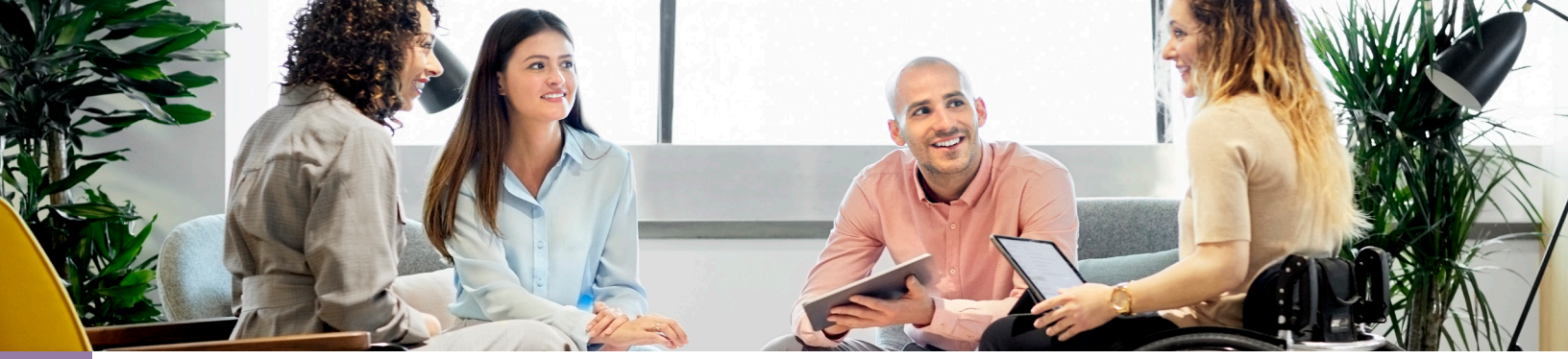

We have embarked on a journey to transform our collaboration opportunities into partnerships by building a formalized review process to identify potential opportunities for collaboration and how to lend support. As the relationships with our community organizations and educational partners continue to flourish, having a formalized review process in place ensures the proposed opportunity aligns with our mission and strategic planning objectives.

With this process in place, we have supported many grants and initiatives within our communities, including the following:

- Jobs and Education for Texans;
- Adult Education and Literacy;
- Building Construction Trades Training;
- Dual Credit Equipment Only;
- Texas Talent Connect;
- Wagner Peyser;
- Help Me Grow North Texas
- Department of Defense's Defense Manufacturing Community Support;
- Texas Workforce Commission's Child Care Retention Strategies;
- Texas Workforce Commission's Family Child Care Networks;
- Department of Labor's Youth Apprenticeship Readiness Grant; and
- Texas Education Agency's CTE Perkins Reserve.

Since 2017, WSNCT has approved 31 applications for the Jobs and Education for Texans (JET) grant. The grant has awarded a total of $2,111,899.00 to the region. During the summer of 2019, WSNCT piloted two JET Workshops to strengthen the number of JET applicants in our area. Out of the most recent pool of 10 applicants from our region, six attended or received information directly from the workshops. With four applications resulting in awards equaling $591,306.00 for our region, WSNCT has deemed the effort successful and hosted a secondary virtual JET grant workshop in September of 2020. The number of applicants and the success of applications continue to rise because of the dedicated efforts for outreach and technical assistance within this initiative.

WSNCT has also applied for grants to support our community from within. WSNCT used alternative funding to create a Teacher Externship program available to our entire service area during 2020. However, due to COVID-19, program cancellation was unavoidable. Most recently, WSNCT secured funding from the Apprenticeship Texas Expansion Grant, which will be delivered into 2021.

The new Perkins V Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment (CLNA) process required Independent School Districts and Post-Secondary institutions to reach various stakeholders within their communities, including Workforce professionals, in an intensive evaluation process in order to meet new requirements to obtain Perkins funding. WSNCT supported 12 educational partners' CLNA applications during the summer of 2020 and, through their hard work, $2,159,816 was brought into the region. WSNCT committed about 45-50 hours to ensuring our assistance was available through this effort. We provided Labor Market Information (LMI) services, presented to a CLNA workgroup at ESC Region 11, and attended offsite and virtual meetings as our partners worked through this intensive CLNA. This new process required researching and comparing data sets.

Outside of the CLNA, LMI remains in high demand. There has been an increase in requests and referrals from and between our educational partners, including added support from the Education Service Centers. This increase in requests for LMI and presentations indicates that awareness of our services is continuing to grow and flourish. Our education partners are under new pressure to stay in the know concerning the latest trends for high-demand/high-wage careers. We have presented on LMI resources, the Target Occupations List (TOL), and career exploration tools at various events and meetings to assist our area's needs. The presentations took place at Region 11's Counselors & Advisors Summit; Collin College's group of Career Counselors who are embedded in local ISD's; the iWork: Youth Career Exploration Event in the Fall of 2019 (for parents and teachers); the Expert-to-Expert event hosted in partnership with Interlink, ESC 10, and ESC 11; the College, Career, and Military Readiness conference at ESC 10; as well as multiple requested meetings held privately with ISD CTE leaders.

After recognizing that the library systems offer complementary services and shared customers, we deepened our collaboration with them. Recently, we provided a virtual information session on LMI, the shifting economy, and the TOL for Plano Public Library system staff. Additionally, Texas Woman's University has requested a presentation to their graduating students on workforce services and how they should be shared and utilized within the library systems. Through these ongoing outreach initiatives, we seek to complement the library systems' skill building, English as a Second Language classes, and other adult education efforts, and increase our cross-referral to our offices for additional services.

Each year of the strategic plan, approximately 150 requests from community partners were answered uniquely with timely LMI and socioeconomic data. In FY19 alone, 25 requests for data involved site selection projects for the relocation or expansion of businesses, one facilitated the creation of a new academic program at the University of North Texas at Frisco, and 10 requests were transcribed into presentations intended to expand the community's understanding of how LMI helps inform decisions.

Through our partnership with the Office of Attorney General (OAG), we work in collaboration and coordination with local judges, attorneys and local OAG staff to provide employment services and support to the Noncustodial Parent (NCP) community of Collin and Denton counties. Workforce staff engagement with the NCP customer during child support court hearings allows early and immediate employment service intervention; providing immediate access to job matching services creates quick employment opportunities. WSNCT provides expert advice to assist the NCP in utilizing Workforce services such as job matching and hiring events. Access to tools such as Work-In-Texas, Resume Pro, and Career Exploration created better opportunity for employment resulting in independent wages. The ability to provide support services and employment incentives to NCP customers has continued to make a positive impact, freeing up earned income which assists the NCP in paying off arrears by making regular and consistent child support payments. For FY20, Collin and Denton counties enrolled 42 NCP customers, collectively leading to the collection of $185,606.40 in child support.

Collaborating with educational partners on CLNA applications resulted in our region receiving $2.16M in Perkins V funding in FY20.

INVEST IN HUMAN CAPITAL AND FOSTER THEIR SUCCESS

We are dedicated to fostering our community members' success and are continuously investing in their growth in every cycle of their lives, from early childhood years to mid-career days. We are committed to investing in our future workforce by producing high-quality offerings to enrich the quality of child care provided in our region. We are empowering our community members to envision their future by embarking on strong, long-lasting impact career exploration activities. Finally, we develop our customers' employability by facilitating work-based learning that deepens their understanding of their career of choice. Above all, we are striving to put our customers first and remove barriers to increase access to our services.

- **Increase the Quality of Child Care**

Recognizing that high-quality early childhood programs can strengthen a parent's job stability and wages as well as increase a child's ability to learn, we have provided more than 19,000 hours of early childhood mentoring services to our child care providers. Our investment in the child care industry has exceeded $4,000,000 over the past four years. To further meet the need for local high-quality professional development opportunities, we have provided the following to early childhood professionals over the past four years (2017-2020).

	2017	2018	2019	2020
Child Development Associate Classes	61	100	87	41
College Credit	11	18	16	25
Professional Development opportunities to include training classes, sessions	1611	718	516	274

Each Spring, we host an annual Bright from the Start Early Childhood Conference. In FY19 we also hosted a parent engagement opportunity at Crayola Experience. The parent engagement event was offered to promote early childhood information to customers who receive child care subsidy. We have continued to provide Professional Development opportunities to early childhood professionals during COVID-19 by using virtual technologies like Zoom and have reached over 150 individuals. Due to COVID-19, our Early Childhood staff has not been able to assess child care programs that want to become Texas Rising Star (TRS) programs, therefore we have not seen a significant increase in TRS programs in FY20. We have continued to mentor TRS programs virtually using available platforms, as requested.

The interest in our Texas Rising Star program and the number of programs that have been certified TRS has increased every year but, due to COVID-19, the numbers have not increased as significantly as anticipated this year.

2017	47
2018	61
2019	73
2020	92

- **Expand Access to WD Services**

We are working on meeting our customers where they are. We are investing resources to serve them through a framework that mirrors today's workplace and allows us to connect with our customers in their own location. The framework will enable us to support their career development needs by reducing barriers, such as access to transportation. Utilizing Zoom, we are conducting appointments, orientations and workshops virtually, as well as using AdobePro to capture required signatures electronically. Since implementation, we have accomplished 597 workshops and orientations, 3476 virtual contacts/appointments with customers, 1450 electronic signature transactions and 129 enrollments. Due to COVID-19, 35 virtual career fairs have also been hosted, serving 244 employers and more than 4,766 career seekers.

During the past four years, we have continued to integrate the Texas Workforce Commission, Vocational Rehabilitation Services into our Workforce System. We have expanded from our initial two locations of Corsicana and Waxahachie, to now include the integration of Granbury, Greenville and McKinney. These efforts are designed to create a seamless delivery system that integrates across all programs, further enhancing access for all our customers.

For the purpose outreaching specialized job seeker populations, we procured the use of a text messaging application (TextLine). Text messaging is an effective tool to reach targeted populations in order to share information regarding services offered to our customers. Since June 2020, we distributed two outreach campaigns (approximately 95,000 text messages sent) targeting Unemployment Insurance Claimants to share information regarding resources, tools, and tips for obtaining employment during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

- **Expand Work-Based Learning**

We're engaging our students with disabilities in powerful experiences. During the past three years, through the Summer Earn and Learn (SEAL) Program, we served 941 students and placed 769 with employers to perform jobs duties that develop their skills, knowledge, and readiness for work, and to support entry or advancement into a career field. Our employer partner, Chick-Fil-A of Allen who participates in our SEAL program, received the Lex Frieden Employment Award (Medium Employer) for 2019. One of our SEAL program participants, Tyler was placed at Chick-Fil-A at the time when his mother actually made the nomination. Tyler secured employment with Chick-Fil-A at the end of the SEAL program. Chick-Fil-A and Tyler were recognized during our November Board Meeting. Based on the collected data for 2018 – 2019, the SEAL program has approximately a 10 percent employment rate.

In total from 2017 – 2020, we have dedicated an estimated $2,789,000 in funding for Work-Based Learning efforts that impact not only the SEAL customers but also our WIOA and Choices customers. These efforts include work experience as well as On-The-Job Training opportunities.

During the past three years, we served 941 SEAL students and placed 769 with employers to perform job duties that develop their skills, knowledge and readiness for work.

- **Promote Career Exploration**

We are increasing our customers' awareness of career options and preparing them to enter workplaces more confident about their future. We hosted five iWork: Youth Career Exploration Events that have served approximately 2,500 students and more than 23 career exploration engagements that supported our students with disabilities. The Career Coach tool on the website received nearly 450 visits per month during the past year. In FY19, the total number of visitors was 6,907.

We conducted a survey as a part of an ongoing needs assessment to better address and support our educational partner's career exploration needs. This survey was meant to assist in gaining a deeper understanding of the Career and Technical Education functionalities of our partnering ISDs, as well as the challenges faced due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. More than 50% of survey participants identified that they are very familiar with WSNCT and have had access to some of our resources. In addition, 22% identified that they interact with us often, and another 20% identified that they are only a little familiar with WSNCT. Only 3% stated that they had never heard of WSNCT.

We asked participants what career exploration resources are currently offered, how the resources are currently offered, and how they would like to offer the resources in the future. Almost half of the respondents stated that more career exploration resources are needed. Many have access to the free resources provided by TWC's Labor Market and Career Information services, which we often share during presentations to create more awareness. Out of Internships, Job Fairs, Career Days, College Fairs, Job Shadowing, externally hosted Career Exploration events, and Educator Externships, we found that all of these opportunities are needed, and may need to be converted to virtual events for the success of students. However, Educator Externships are marked as the highest virtual need, which is great insight as this is one of our goals to offer virtually in Spring 2021.

We also asked what the greatest needs are when they are building their own career exploration initiatives. The number one answer was a need for Employer/Industry involvement. This matches anecdotal information received from in-person meetings with various partners. The survey also indicates a high interest in career exploration resource training for staff.

Our development of "iWork Futuría: Career Lotería" is a creative solution to creating more opportunities for career exploration. This game has been designed to resemble the traditional game of chance, Lotería, but with a career explorative twist. The game incorporates information about high-demand careers and tips to continue learning more about each occupation using the associated SOC code. This game is friendly to all age groups, many differing abilities, and adheres to the Texas Essential Skills and Knowledge – making it an easy and fun way to incorporate career exploration into the classroom for our ISD partners.

Another creative solution to promote career exploration is a poster designed to help promote career exploration. The poster includes a link to the career exploration resource on our website. This project was finalized at the top of the year, but COVID-19 restrictions delayed the disbursement of the poster into libraries and other public spaces.

More than 2,500 students, as well as 200 employers, CTE programs and colleges, participated in our iWork: Youth Career Exploration events from FY18-FY20.

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