Texas Workforce Commission Comprehensive Summary REPORT

Workforce & Adult Education Integration Initiative

Regional Event Outcomes

August 2015

Abstract: During the summer of 2015, Texas Workforce Commission, local workforce development boards, adult education literacy (AEL) grant recipients and stakeholders in AEL completed ten regional strategic planning events to identify the strengths, weaknesses and opportunities and threats associated with the integration of their respective systems. This report provides a comprehensive summary of those findings and recommendations for next steps.

How to Use this Document

This document summarizes ten regional meetings held to provide a forum for local workforce development boards and adult education and literacy providers/stakeholders to identify gaps and solutions that address regional system integration objectives.

The document will help stakeholders understand how the regions differentiate and align with their internal strengths and weaknesses across the state of Texas. It will also support understanding unique and common external threats and opportunities that impede/enhance the state's ability to deliver adult education literacy in accordance with state and federal legislation.

For ease of use, the document is divided into three priority areas: (1) a comprehensive overview of culled data of all 28 regions; (2) Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) highlights by event; and (3) most representative recommendations for strategy and next steps for enhanced AEL integration, service delivery and change in infrastructure.

Information was culled from individual facilitator reports. These reports, along with attendance sheets, agenda information and event materials can be found in the Appendix.
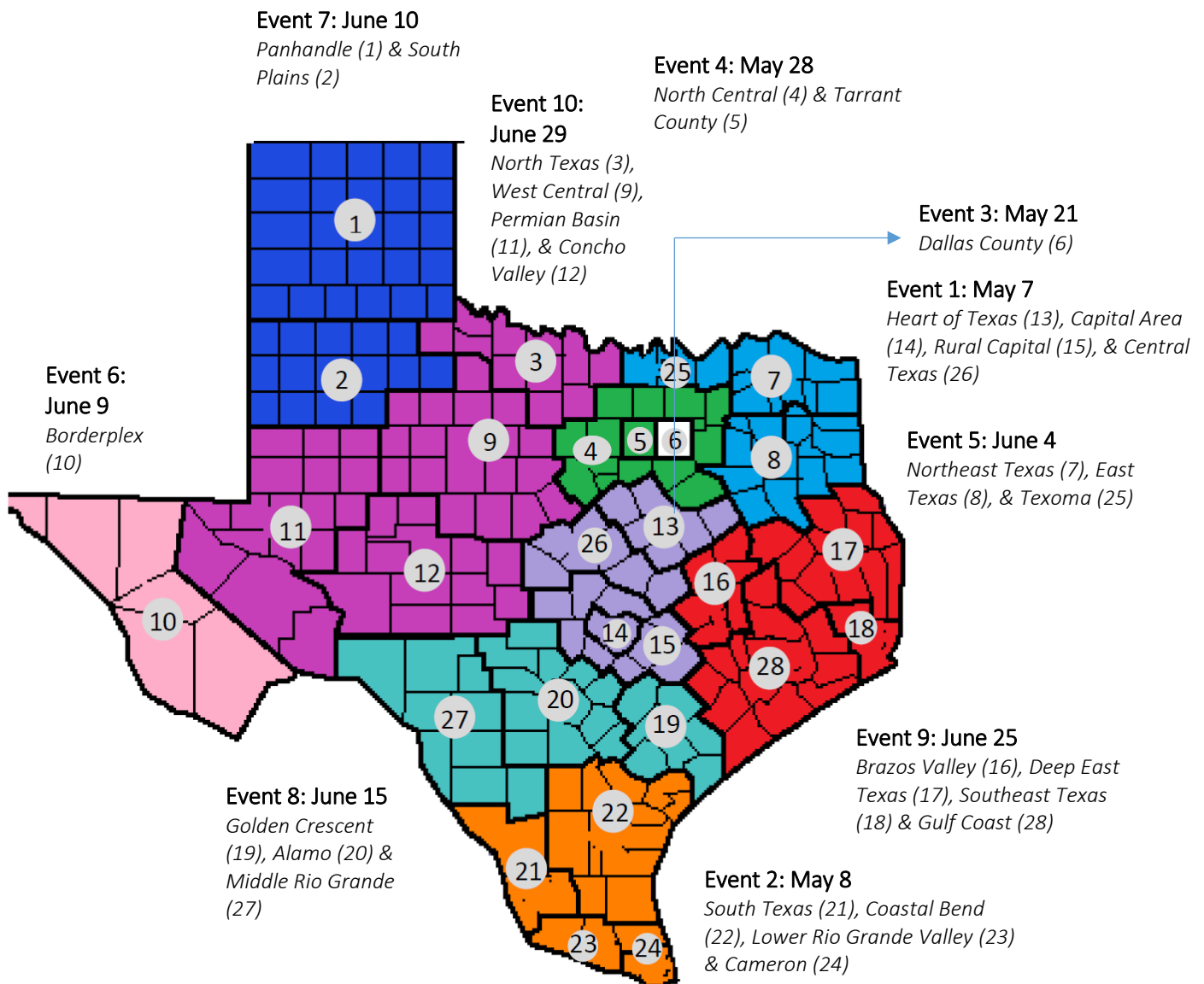
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose. Increasing the collaboration and alignment of services across the Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) system, Local Workforce Development Boards (Boards) and Board contractors is critically important to support the state plans for service integration. In enacting SB 307 in 2013, the Texas legislature expressed the importance of enhancing adult education service coordination with Boards to support accelerated models that are integrated with workforce and training services. The objective is to increase employment outcomes for under skilled populations. The objectives were echoed in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) passed in Congress in 2015. To support this objective, the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) allocated $240,000 for regional adult education and workforce integration planning efforts around the state. Boards were asked to organize a strategy session and assemble stakeholders to discuss strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats associated with the integration of both systems. As a result, ten regional meetings were structured to complete this process, with the intent to identify gaps and solution-oriented strategies. Facilitators of the events submitted their findings to TWC.

Map I. Regional integration events by Board area

Event 7: June 10
Panhandle (1) & South Plains (2)

Event 10: June 29
North Texas (3), West Central (9), Permian Basin (11), & Concho Valley (12)

Event 4: May 28
North Central (4) & Tarrant County (5)

Event 3: May 21
Dallas County (6)

Event 1: May 7
Heart of Texas (13), Capital Area (14), Rural Capital (15), & Central Texas (26)

Event 6: June 9
Borderplex (10)

Event 5: June 4
Northeast Texas (7), East Texas (8), & Texoma (25)

Event 9: June 25
Brazos Valley (16), Deep East Texas (17), Southeast Texas (18) & Gulf Coast (28)

Event 8: June 15
Golden Crescent (19), Alamo (20) & Middle Rio Grande (27)

Event 2: May 8
South Texas (21), Coastal Bend (22), Lower Rio Grande Valley (23) & Cameron (24)

Outcomes. Below is a dashboard of the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) most frequently cited in the individual facilitator reports. They serve as identified gaps for solution building.

INTERNAL STRENGTHS
(Expressed by over 30% of regional reports)
COMMITMENT • COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS • SERVICE DELIVERY • SKILL

INTERNAL WEAKNESSES
(Categories most frequently cited by regional reports)
FUNDING • RESOURCES • INTERNAL ORGANIZATION/INFRASTRUCTURE • COMMUNICATION • MARKETING

EXTERNAL OPPORTUNITIES
(Categorized based on strategies chosen by attendees)
WIOA • NATIONAL WORKFORCE FOCUS • PHILANTHROPIC COMMUNITY • DEMAND

EXTERNAL THREATS
(Categorized based on strategies chosen by attendees)
UNCERTAIN OUTCOMES • GEOGRAPHY • GOAL MISALIGNMENT • EXTERNAL INFRASTRUCTURE • AEL BRAND PERCEPTION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY CONTINUED

Most Commonly Proposed Strategies. The strategies proposed by the regional stakeholders varied because of local/regional environmental challenges (e.g. geographic distance, serving the rural population etc.). Because of the differentiation, authors of this report chose to find synergy in strategy for converting overall weaknesses into strengths, and mitigating threats.

Weakness	Strategy Summary
Resources	- Seek external grants and support from the philanthropic communities. - Braid funding for increased service integration. - Inventory and better align resources. - Repurpose existing facilities and increase number of partners. - Engage employers. - Identify resources and better align through a needs assessment. - Align resources to support increased outcomes and better address student needs. - Leverage volunteering to work with people on wait list. - Allocate Workforce Solutions more funds for transportation. - Expand distance learning. - Increase outreach to retired teachers to increase pool of instructional workforce.
Internal Organization/ Infrastructure	- Study best practice success to scale up/out. - Strategic planning and retreat. - Identify respective goal overlaps and gaps. - Create an integrated meeting schedule, under a larger umbrella initiative and gain stakeholder buy in.
Communication	- Gain knowledge of services available and create a reference guide. - Create a newcomer's presentation orientation. - Learn different terms/acronyms. - Determine commonalities and cross train. - Increase sharing requirements, class schedules, and locations with all AEL providers and cross referrals. - TWC could implement a common software system shared by agencies to track referrals, consents, next steps, such as training or employment. - Redesign MOUs specific to adult education. - Include job shadowing/cross training (TWC/Board staff).
Marketing	- Increase uniformity of messaging to site partners, potential students and stakeholders across consortium partners. - Rebranding AEL programs. - Develop recruiter liaison programs. - Identify potential customers. - Identify our partners for service and collaboration. - Use social media for outreach.

Threat Mitigation	Strategy Summary
Uncertain Outcomes	- Leverage opportunities present in current federal and state changes. - Understand what can be controlled and what is external to your environment. - Determine stakeholders needed to develop a plan. - Participate more frequently in public comments and provision of testimony.
Geography	- Advocate for better transportation. - Create smaller cohorts and more options for low density populations. - Provide distance learning.
Goal Misalignment	Meet labor demand needs in real time.
External Infrastructure	- Change in eligibility criteria for child care just for AEL participants. - Increase data and connectivity.
AEL Brand Perception	- Leverage current national, state and local attention on need for trained workforce. - De-stigmatize lack of high school diploma/GED and emerging bilinguals.

As demonstrated by the synthesis of the SWOT, the regional stakeholders provided detailed strategy for conversion of internal weaknesses and leveraging potential opportunities. However, because of the lack of control and level of uncertainty present in the external entities that dictate end outcomes, there were noteworthy barriers in mitigating threats.

Notes on Methodology. Facilitators and the respective regional stakeholders completed a SWOT analysis and discussions for strategy. However, unique use of methodology for interpretation of the data and also tailoring to support regional issues (e.g. geography and resources) were used. When analyzing the data for comprehensive findings of all regional events, some assumptions were made to categorize and weigh frequency of SWOT issues, which created a margin for error. Please note that findings are meant to support larger, more structured studies of concerns through instruments that are designed to measure change, size, and prevalence of challenges to integration.

Notable Findings and Recommendations. The majority of the organizations desired larger, more strategic discussions about how to move forward with goal alignment and integration of shared outcomes. It is suggested that additional strategic planning sessions and sharing of information among the regions continue with measurable objectives that support stronger internal conversion of weaknesses. As a next step, discussion of which core strategies will support a shared 5 year vision are suggested, followed by creation of an operations plan/timeline to execute the strategy.

STRENGTHS
COMMITMENT • COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS • SERVICE DELIVERY • SKILL

All individual strengths (where applicable) were recorded from each report and compared for commonalities with other individual strengths of other stakeholders.

COMMITMENT & COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS
Over half of the (54%) reports stated that they possessed a collaborative community, built on strong partnerships. The remainder indicated some type of strong partnership with either the school districts or the college community. 30% stated that they had leadership and staff that was committed and passionate about the mission. Only 7% of the reports indicated a strong partnership with the business community on the topic of AEL. Other strengths associated with this category included: (1) a positive relationship with AEL providers; (2) a history of success "and progression of success," (3) sharing of resources; and (4) a demonstration by leadership that there was support for the integration.

SERVICE DELIVERY
Almost all reports (92%) cited service delivery as a strength for the AEL integration process. Specific comments included: (1) "agencies do a good job customizing training for clients", (2) transitional services to postsecondary education; and (3) support for resume and interview preparation. Service delivery was cited as a strength because there was overlap in the customer base and type of services provided accommodated a select listing of goals and performance metrics between AEL and Boards. A smaller group of regional areas (7%) cited cross referral and recruitment as a strength in their service delivery process.

SKILL
Over 30% of the regions cited skill as a strength of their staff in executing the transition. Outside of their commitment to the missions of AEL and workforce development, the reports indicated that staff held a great level of experience (21%), knowledge of resources (14%) and an awareness of issues that were integral to the execution of the integration. In addition, reports indicated that staff were somewhat aware (14%) of what was "trending in the local labor market."

Differentiation in strengths was seen in subject matter expertise. Some regions cited "having professionals from Mexico" as a strength, as well as specific AEL programmatic initiatives. Individual reports showed that a small number of areas were experiencing success in integration efforts via exchange of data and ability to meet target goals.

FUNDING

Nearly half of the organizational reports indicated that the participants saw funding as a weakness, specifically a lack of funding to support the integration. Three regions saw a capacity issue with identifying, writing and submitting grants for funding. Reports for a select number of stakeholders made statements about funding inequality (demand that exceeds capacity). It was unclear if the regions as a whole, saw this as an internal issue that could be controlled or an external challenge outside their ability to address.

RESOURCES – COMPETITION/PARTNERSHIPS

All reports cited the lack of and alignment of resources as a weakness for the AEL integration. 20% stated a concern with resources for rural areas (specifically technology and facilities). Nearly all indicated a challenge with securing resources for student support, specifically child care and transportation. The lack of resources compounded with the lack of funding demonstrated a sense of frustration found in the reports, as seen by the following comments of being "spread too thin."

For purposes of this report, Partnerships were included as a sub-segment of Resources. It is clear that the reports showed a high level of collaboration to meet the needs of the AEL/workforce customers/students. Strengths were highlighted, as were weaknesses to the partnerships that were built. 25% of reports indicated that the regions saw competition between agencies as an issue. Overall, the reports also showed a challenge between Boards and AEL integrating resources, goals and metrics, as well as differentiation in reporting language to work together. Outside of partnership between AEL and the Boards, the reports indicated a need for stronger partnerships with industry and businesses to be integrated. One region cited a need for more partners for the integration.

INTERNAL ORGANIZATION/INFRASTRUCTURE

Nearly 70% of regions made comments regarding the lack of organization and confusion of the resources, partners and support available for the integration. This in turn affected their ability to deliver services in the most effective way possible. 18% of the regions indicated that "systems are designed to meet agency needs more than customer needs." There was also a concern expressed in the lack of uniform performance standards, continuity and accountability. Many stated a lack of compatibility between reporting systems - TWIST and TEAMS. While some cited co-location as a strength, there were a select number of areas that did not have services co-located (11%). It was unclear from the reports how much of the infrastructure reorganization could be done by the regional partners and how much was out of their control and in the authority of state and federal entities governing their processes.

MARKETING

Approximately 40% of reports indicated some concern with marketing. 18% stated they needed more affordable ways to market themselves; others stated that not all marketing collateral was in the language they needed (e.g. Spanish). 14% stated that there was a lack of awareness and urgency present and one region cited a difficulty with co-branding their respective organization's mission with AEL.
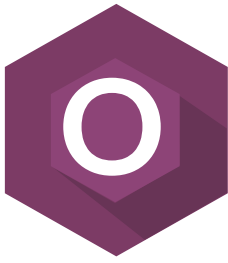
WIOA

Integration event attendee reports described how the legislative change occurring via the Workforce Investment Opportunity Act (WIOA) could create opportunities for strategic planning around the integration. The state law that had created the AEL transition to TWC was also described as creating a "forced alignment of priorities" for AEL and workforce integration. Other organizations discussed how the changes in law would help create partnerships that would facilitate transition past High School Equivalency (also known as GED) attainment.

Event reports and federal law also discussed potential for "braiding of funds" and resources for stronger and more strategic alignment. Changes at the state and federal level would allow for opportunity to re-align the infrastructure, strategy and service delivery to best support the population. One report referenced how WIOA legislation involves employers and an opportunity to work with special populations (e.g. ex-offenders, disconnected youth, and veterans).

NATIONAL WORKFORCE FOCUS

During their discussions, the regions discussed potential for "image changing" and increasing partnerships because of the "national, state and local attention on need for trained workforce." This focal point could allow organizations to create momentum around their work. By taking advantage of the state of the economy, AEL and workforce development work can begin to take more of a priority.

PHILANTHROPIC COMMUNITY

The reports made reference to an opportunity to explore funding opportunities with a "philanthropic community" and other funding resources.

DEMAND

With the exception of three regional areas, the majority of the reports indicated a growing demand for their services, once more reinforcing the importance and relevancy of their work.

Threats
UNCERTAIN OUTCOMES • GEOGRAPHY • GOAL MISALIGNMENT
• EXTERNAL INFRASTRUCTURE • AEL BRAND PERCEPTION

UNCERTAIN OUTCOMES

After review of all the reports, one of the largest threats presented was a sense of uncertainty about future decisions in AEL work. Participants made references to "changes in GED testing," "funding not available when needed," "loss in trust", and most notably the "unrealistic expectations" from federal and state entities. The regions voiced a frustration in operating in a realm of constant uncertainty in which little to no control can be exerted for strategic change.

GEOGRAPHY

Whether struggles in supporting rural areas, to handling overwhelming demand from metropolitan areas, the regions described a struggle with properly canvassing the geographic territory. Lack of resources, technology and appropriate delivery of services were all to be addressed because of this uncontrolled threat.

GOAL MISALIGNMENT

The reports made reference to a misalignment of goals between AEL and workforce development related initiatives. The majority of the concern was based around the prioritization of attaining employment versus education. The problem is further compounded by what is priority for the target student (immediate need for a job). There was discussion about the lack of data available to provide decision making, as well as the lack of continuity of services offered. One region stated "Legislation moving GED/ESL into college – not all students want to go to college," demonstrating goal misalignment with student outcomes. Not all partners choose to follow the same goals or strategy as seen in the "conflict in institutional priorities related to GED attainment." This issues is compounded by the lack of uncertainty mentioned earlier in the threats report. Regions report being "penalized for not meeting goals? Don't know the new goals; New territory, training for something new."

EXTERNAL INFRASTRUCTURE

The reports demonstrated an overlap in description of infrastructure-based challenges, some stemming from internal/local issues and others arising from the need for a newly evolved umbrella system to accommodate the AEL integration. Focus of the threats discussion were around the "disconnect for special populations," specifically ex-offenders and the undocumented." The systems in place created "technology gaps" and "test changes" that were described as not "student focused."

AEL BRAND PERCEPTION

In line with the marketing concerns experienced internally, the reports indicated a concern externally around the AEL brand perception. Seen by the community as "slow to change", "difficult" and "not customer friendly," the participants at the event indicated how this created challenges around recruitment, retention, relevancy and legitimacy.

Other concerns included silo effects in those not wanting to work together, poverty rates, lack of staff understanding of refugee and other populations and lag in computer and academic skill set of students. Discussion around "unfunded mandates" and "funding formula cuts and inequality" were also cited as threats.

STRATEGIES SUMMARY

Overall, the reports demonstrated a resounding need for a community and resource development assessment in order to best create strategy and realign goals and performance outcomes. Despite the differences of each regional area, all demonstrated a desire to build up their internal capacity.

Funding. Regions put forth strategy around re-aligning funding towards end outcomes of the new integration. Before this could be done, the regions described a need for a needs assessment. Regions cited strategy for stronger outreach to the respective philanthropic communities, seeking and applying for external funding and "braiding funding" between workforce and AEL communities. Two regions discussed developing strategy for integrating the business community and third party entities to advocate on their behalf at the legislative level in order to appropriate more funding for the cause. One region described a need to become more involved in public comment and testimony to address "funding inequality."

Resources. As described, every region struggles with a lag in resources. Once more, the reports described a need to create an assessment/inventory of all resources available within the respective community, as well as create visual mapping of what can be of support. Discussions surrounding leveraging volunteer support, the faith-based community and stronger linkages with the nonprofit sector were all described. Some regions discussed use of retired teachers and other professionals to help fill in the gaps of need for full-time instructors. Incorporation of municipalities was discussed by one region.

Internal Organization/Infrastructure. The regions indicated frustration, as seen by their commentary, surrounding re-organizing their infrastructure. The frustration was as a result of inability to control many of the end outcomes of students and meeting performance metrics. Strategies put forth were to revamp their current strategy with a strategic planning retreat and studying best practices to scale up and out. Others cited a need to separate programmatic activity from administrative priorities by creating a larger administrative entity to help organize resources and fix broken communication chains.

Communication. Reports described a desire for shared terminology and information exchange systems for newly on boarded staff. Other regions suggested new software put forth by TWC to help link the two entities. In addition, cross training, job shadowing and establishment of MOUs were discussed. Finally, a stronger meeting schedule (more frequency, better attendance) for information exchange was also proposed.

Marketing. Reports cited a need to rebrand and refresh the image of AEL and workforce to demonstrate the integration and communicate to external stakeholders and students the shared value. Networking and use of social media were also discussed in order to reach new populations.
Threat mitigation proved to be a challenge because of the level of **uncertainty and unpredictability** in which the organizations function. However, WIOA was cited as an ongoing opportunity that could be leveraged in order to work with new populations. One region included developing strategy to control the level of uncertainty that was processed by stakeholders on a day to day basis to help alleviate stress and feelings of being overwhelmed.

Geography. Advocacy for better transportation and increased funding for transportation were posed as strategy. In addition, use of technology for distance learning were also discussed.

Goal Misalignment had several varying strategies among each organization. Most stated a need to better integrate with the needs of the business community (in real time) to adapt curriculum and have more meaningful, integrated impact.

AEL Brand Perception. Reports showed a desire to leverage the current national, state and local attention on need for a trained workforce, in an expectation to raise awareness and credibility for AEL services. As demonstrated by the synthesis of the SWOT, the regional stakeholders provided detailed strategy for conversion of internal weaknesses and leveraging potential opportunities. However, because of the lack of control and level of uncertainty present in the external entities that dictate end outcomes, there were significant barriers in mitigating threats.

Heart of Texas, Capital Area, Rural Capital, & Central Texas • May 7, 2015 • Hilliard Resources • Austin, Texas

CONTENT, FACILITATION, METHODOLOGY, & MATERIALS: Held at the Central Texas Council of Governments Building, the regional stakeholders, collectively known as the Belton System, met for a SWOT session and strategy discussion. An agenda was distributed and the process for the structured SWOT discussion was completed. After lunch, "Next Steps and Solutions for Action" were completed, followed by an Action Summary. Led by Ms. Hilliard of Hilliard Resources, the participants discussed "Meeting Usefulness" before adjourning. Included are the outcomes of the discussions. Ms. Hilliard provided a report with both cumulative and individual outcomes of the SWOT analysis. For a more detailed review of next steps and the action items, please see the Appendix section of this report.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
Established relationships Co-location Experience with integrated training Recruitment and referral Administrative support Existing providers/Stability Shared Self Sufficiency Goals	More knowledge needed of systems Lack of data connectivity Slow start/transition Lack of authority to serve non-residents Proximity Language/ Common language Funding and unfunded mandates Capacity/serving customers from other countries Goal Alignment between community college/Workforce
OPPORTUNITIES	**THREATS**
Access to more students to serve Labor market information sharing Increased collaboration New funding opportunities Incumbent worker training increases Aligning populations Networking with partners Filling in gaps Geography	Lack of final rules from WIOA Lack of technology for students Misinformation/lack of information Historic lack of adequate funding Performance objectives/alignment Unfunded mandates Test changes, sliding requirements Rebidding Reluctance of population English Language Learners to come in to WFS centers

South Texas, Coastal Bend, Lower Rio Grande Valley & Cameron
• May 8, 2015 • Luzelma G. Canalez, PhD • McAllen, Texas

CONTENT, FACILITATION, METHODOLOGY & MATERIALS: Dr. Canales facilitated a session for stakeholders from four board areas to achieve goals in supporting system integration between the partners, AEL grantees and community stakeholders. As indicated in the supporting materials (power point presentation), each community completed a SWOT analysis with their stakeholders and developed an action plan for next steps. Dr. Canales reviewed strengths for "best practices" to further demonstrate the quality of a strength held by the participants. The action plan created at the end of the session included time sensitive deliverables.

SWOT DASHBOARD

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	
Shared vision and aligned goals Strong culture and commitment to serving community Pathways and on ramps Experience of providers Strong partnerships Grants to support work Leveraging resources to support students Flexible and Adaptable	Limited systemic approach Disconnect between provider and local workforce board Student commitment and barriers Accountability measures and incentives Adult Education lacks structure and leadership Lack of transportation Lack of integration of adult education programs and services	AEL program outcomes not aligned with client needs Lack of testing sites Lack of access to data Service to rural areas Inconsistent case management Training for instructors Funding for AEL Retention in GED, Skills and ESL classes
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS	
Creating a systemic approach Improve case management in program design Align system and collaboration Improve student/client assessment Improve curriculum relevancy Formalize consortia and partnerships Career training Leverage strength of existing partnerships Building a collaborative strategic plan Leverage braided funding	Stakeholders recognize need Strengthen use of career pathways Revisit composition of advisory committees	Silos and territorial providers Lack of leadership and coordination Lack of urgency and awareness Large service areas Unrealistic performance measures Continued obstacles and barriers for students Fragmentation of partners Continued low retention Low funding levels Lack of access to data

CONTENT, FACILITATION, METHODOLOGY & MATERIALS: Facilitated by the Social Impact Architects, the regional stakeholders in Dallas County conducted a similar SWOT exercise, with a particular focus on categorization of their weaknesses into key issues for problem solving. Their focus for strategy lay in: (1) Rebranding; (2) Recruitment; (3) Teaching; (4) Recruitment; (5) Retention and; (6) Other. Included is their SWOT dashboard listing all issues associated with the integration.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
AEL POPULATION Dallas population is diverse • Population maintains many skills and languages • Demand for services is high **TEXAS WORKFORCE COMMISSION/WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS OF GREATER DALLAS WSF** Innovative and open to new ideas and out of the box thinking • Committed to testing models and finding best practices **NONPROFITS & FAITH COMMUNITY** Track record/ Way of responding to AEL challenges • Run seasoned, tested programs **EMPLOYERS** Strong employer base **CITY/COUNTY** Dallas is growing • The Mayors of Dallas and Fort Worth work together • City and County work together	**REBRANDING** Marketing to millennials is challenging • Traditional schools not meeting needs of youth who have dropped out of school, consortium must find different ways for delivery of services • Marketing is too focused on graduating or getting the GED, but the real motivation is jobs. • Consortium's value add is not clear to the community • Attracting media interest is difficult • Language remains a barrier – not all materials are in the languages needed • Consortium members have difficulty with co-branding their respective organizations' primary missions with AEL initiatives **RECRUITMENT** Marketing to attract individuals to programs remain a challenge • The consortium does not have a plan to connect nonprofit organizations and corporations (via Cengage Learning) already working with AEL populations to existing wrap around services • The consortium does not feel effective in reaching out to refugee populations • The consortium lacks the data to laser-focus its recruitment efforts **Teaching** Teachers may not know enough about the job market to connect students with the value of their educations • Teacher expectations may need to be adjusted to accommodate workforce needs • Providers may need to rethink the qualities required of contemporary AEL teachers **Retention** There are not enough short-term wins to keep students motivated to remain in the program • Generational poverty and the number of low-level learners increases the difficulty of retaining students **Other** The consortium does not have a plan to engage racial and gender equity groups and their constituents education sector is broadly struggling with its value proposition
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
NEED IN THE COMMUNITY Untapped demand for services exist • Opportunity to work with new populations • Solicit feedback from customers • Growth in customer self-esteem **GROWTH IN RESOURCES** Partners have access to resources • Dallas is a growing technology hub • Consortium partners are innovative/willing to consider alternative systems of delivery.	It is difficult to develop a long-term plan without understanding the context (economic and security threats could change at any moment) • WFS and consortium members could lose funding if they do not meet targets • Changes in government, funders and legislation occurs frequently • Dallas Independent School District has a high percentage of students who are not proficient in English and may not see the connection between literacy and jobs • The GED has become more difficult to pass

CONTENT, FACILITATION, METHODOLOGY, & MATERIALS: Led by facilitator, Estrus Strucker, the regional stakeholders of North Central Texas and Tarrant County proceeded with a day-long agenda for solution building on preliminary SWOT data generated in 2013. In the fall of 2013, the providers of adult education and literacy in Fort Worth began meeting with Board staff for the purpose of developing a strategic plan for the provision of AEL in the Tarrant County group. The plan would be the basis of the area's proposal of service for Adult Basic Literacy in Tarrant County. For this session, the Tarrant County Consortium joined the workforce development and adult education and literacy provider community to discuss integration progress of their respective areas. Because the Tarrant County Consortium had over two years of collaborative activity, they sought to bring their lessons learned to the table for the North Central Texas stakeholders to gain insight from. The format included a "two track breakout" with one focused on the issues at hand in North Central and the other for Tarrant County. The group reconvened as a whole to exchange information and then identified their next steps and solutions for action.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	
"Forced" facilitation of transition for AEL's and TWC priorities	Conflicting performance measures	Large territory
Instructional staff is dedicated	Lack of knowledge of mutual	Limitations on how to spend funds
Partnership helps facilitate past GED	programs	Staff turnover
Increased knowledge of opportunities for students/customers	Lack of clear understanding of who is	Different languages
Leadership supports transition	providing services and what services	TABE not aligned to 2014 GED
Streamlined goals	are provided	Support services (Child care &
Large amounts of funds/resources	Educators have a challenge to shift	transportation)
Website	from affective to performance	Limited daytime facilities and
Providers known in the region	mentality	technology
Leveraging resources with ISDs.		
Data access to make informed decisions		
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS	
Partnership will benefit our shared customers	Conflicting performance outcomes	
Increase outreach	Lack of continuity (by design)	
Motivation of customers	Limitations placed on outside facilities due to their organization's mission	
Relationships between agencies	Lack of testing centers	
Recruitment, increased referrals with TANF		
Visual representation of a shared vision		
Mobile workforce unit		

Northeast Texas, East Texas and Texoma, Texas • June 4, 2015 • Dr. Derek Crews • Texoma, Texas

CONTENT, FACILITATION, METHODOLOGY, & MATERIALS: A SWOT analysis was conducted by region, for both strategic and operational areas. During the SWOT exercise, organizational leaders and direct service providers worked in separate groups within each region. Upon completion of the SWOT analysis, each group reported their findings to their overall region. Participants were then asked to prioritize the items listed on the SWOT analysis. This was done via a voting process. The participants then placed their dots on the SWOT items that they thought were the most impactful or important. The votes were tallied during the lunch break, and summary flip charts were prepared listing the top six to eight items for each region. The participants then discussed solutions and next steps for the six to eight top SWOT impacts. During this portion of the events, the participants were working in small groups, with the direct service providers and organizational leaders comingled, but within each board region.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
Commitment	Relationship with Workforces Solutions Center
Strong AEL service delivery	Student retention/guidance counseling vocational
Board is historically supportive of AEL efforts	Need for more understanding in workforce of how AEL works
Open communication, information sharing	Community awareness
Good support from facilities/local sites	Undocumented
Distance Learning	Different academic and fiscal schedules between programs; TWC deadlines
No turf issues	Marketing needs to be improved
Technology training	Funding
Good community referrals	Not enough students/recruitment
Library	

OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
Networking with employers to offer services to employees needing services	Uncertainty: WIOA funding, goals, performance, holdbacks, and number to serve
Better integrate funds for training, etc.	New GED and how it impacts performance, transitions, do colleges understand it, etc.
Include WFS rep at consortium meetings	Fed and state expectations that are unrealistic (e.g., program testing) leading to a sense of failure for good programs
Leveraging resources	Funding cuts
Collaboration with local business and industry for career pathways	Lack of designing short term course for IET programs
One stop shopping	Student non completion rates
Consider jurisdictional practices	Student perception/cultural threat/fear
Career pathway development	Unrealistic expectations (client who can be a genius in 3 weeks, system with limited end game, significant barriers to success, funding; cost to deliver programs, piling too much on)

CONTENT, FACILITATION, METHODOLOGY, & MATERIALS: Facilitated by Incite Consultancy, a SWOT analysis was used to help organizations select strategies. For purposes of the strategy session the organizations present were asked to focus on three priority areas (1) Policy Reform; (2) Service Delivery; and (3) Communication & Culture. Alternatively, the SWOT was also used to identify where deficiencies lie in current strategies already in place. For purposes of the analysis, regional partners focused on the most important and unique descriptions for the SWOT. This was done to decrease confusion on potential next steps. The information was reviewed for overlapping thoughts and a SWOT analysis for the three areas was completed.

SWOT DASHBOARD:

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
Support from ISDs (and the growing bond between ISDs) Commitment of nonprofit sector leadership Tailored programming/service delivery Financial support	Resistance to change Recruitment/Retention Efforts Teacher turnover Motivation gap Trainer discomfort with technology Orientation/mentorship of new staff/stakeholders Larger coordinated efforts
OPPORTUNITIES	**THREATS**
WIOA – opportunity for supplemental measurements ADA follows student Farmworkers' Program Model Involvement/integration of Workforce Solutions Borderplex	Limited time to provide outcomes to the state Participants'' priority of immediate responsibilities (family, job). Funding formula cuts and inequality Public misconception of AEL (media) Lack of external advocacy arm "one size fits all" mentality Only 1 test Unrealistic expectations – DOE Transportation Academic skills of students

CONTENT, FACILITATION, METHODOLOGY, & MATERIALS: Similar to the other regional events, the Panhandle and South Plains areas worked through a SWOT and strategy session to support integration of the initiatives.

SWOT DASHBOARD:

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	
Partnerships between local TWC and agencies Experienced staff Knowledge of resources Free/reasonably priced programs Staff has awareness of issues Collaborative community There is open communication between agencies Many great agencies providing great services Agencies do a good job of customizing training for clients Partnering with businesses	There could be better communication between local agencies Agencies could do a better job of finding the best option for clients, rather than competing While experienced staff has knowledge of resources, there is no published document for easy access Lack of resource directory Marketing issues Not having clear goals across all groups Jargon/ terminology can be confusing for clients	The length of time between each step of the process can be discouraging for participants Low aspirations of clients Fragmented referral system for social services support Large refugee population- creates cultural and language barriers Lack of understanding of poverty Programs do not receive follow-up data on clients
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS	
WIOA Service/Program Alignment Increased partnerships with local agencies There are plenty of potential students/clients NEG grant Accelerate Texas Grant Philanthropic community Sharing best practices The ability to help someone to become employable	Competing with for-profit trainers Cultural barriers for female (and sometimes male) educational advancement Unemployment rate /Poverty rate Lack of capacity (staff, space, funding, etc) to serve students Computer skills of clients Many clients do not have credit cards to pay for testing Miscommunications	

Golden Crescent, Alamo & Middle Rio Grande • June 15, 2015 •Dr. Federico Zaragoza • San Antonio, Texas

CONTENT, FACILITATION, METHODOLOGY, & MATERIALS: Alamo College Facilitators included Dr. Federico Zaragoza, Vice Chancellor of Economic and Workforce Development, as well as Melissa Sadler-Nitu, Director of the Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST) and Adult Basic Education. The process for the event included a review of Adult Education and Literacy and Workforce Board Services, followed by the identification of the SWOT, and ending with discussion about integration of services, regional strategic planning and gaps identification.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
Cross referrals, shared customers, Help each other recruit Leaderships (AEL/Workforce Boards/TWC) Use of technology/social media integration Strong existing relationships Client/student community Collaboration among partners	Aligning services to meet needs and awareness Utilize technology for everyday use Disconnect of agencies Services not co-located Communication "fading" to front line staff Low momentum Differences in eligibility & program requirements Lack of AEL funding
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
Idea sharing with stakeholders and cross training for all staff Co-locate services and share information Envision of shared data systems Being able to work with Alamo colleges and ISDs Eliminating duplication of services Consider a shared and co-funded job developer/student placement	Strain on resources: program growth, funding and staff Effects immigration reform Retention rates Resistance to change Reduction/loss of funding Impacts quantity and quality of services No integration= stagnant community No positive change

Brazos Valley, Deep East Texas, Southeast Texas & Gulf Coast • June 25, 2015 • Jenny Johnson • Conroe, Texas

CONTENT, FACILITATION, METHODOLOGY, & MATERIALS: Facilitation was completed by Ms. Jenny Johnson of the Workforce Solutions Center. The regional stakeholders took 30 minutes to select and rank the top 5 problems in their region based on urgency and need for a solution. Thereafter, the groups took twenty minutes to discuss and select 5 solutions to the #1 problem. After this session, the facilitator worked with the stakeholders to rank, on a scale from 1 to 5, based on viability, costs and access to resources needed, the strength of their solution. 1 was impossible and 5 was easy to implement. Next the group discussed and selected the top 3 issues and respective solutions for their region. Therefore, for purposes of this report, they were re-categorized into a SWOT to be able to synthesize with other finding from the additional regions.

Solutions/Most Viable	Problems	
Gather and expand internal resources/Identify duplication (15 points) Identify external resources (15 points). Overview of workforce on personal level (15 points) Involve Workforce Solutions in goal setting and alignment (15 points) Need cross training regarding orientation and program requirements. Have regular meetings. Utilize social media with participants for communication and networking (15 points)	Money Cultural/Philosophical Approach Accountability Positive Recognition Change Management Knowledge of Services Staffing Coordination Enrollment/Eligibility Communication/Jargon	Goal Alignment/Performance Outcomes Coordination of employers and community partners Professional development aligned with workforce outcomes Funding TEAMS vs TWIST Cross training for case managers Orientation Referrals for AEL

CONTENT, FACILITATION, METHODOLOGY, & MATERIALS: A SWOT survey was distributed to all four regions, totaling about 50 people from AEL, Workforce and other service providers. Raw data was collected. Results were analyzed to identify over-arching themes. Individual regions also completed their own SWOT analysis meetings to discuss priorities for their region. See the power point slides for summary of their efforts. Combined, these priorities became the foundation for the Planning Session. Priorities

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
Assessing students' needs and providing adult basic education instruction	Increase our number of students
Student preparation for career goals	Limited number of community colleges in the area
Case management, referrals and networking	Communication and coordination with employers
Joint mission collaboration	Partnerships for service availability in rural areas
No cost assistance to finding employees	Lack of resources – rural areas
Convening of partners	Networking with businesses
Understanding of local labor market/economy	Advertising – spreading the word about programs
Excellent instruction in content areas and English language learning	Employers – not understanding what AEL does for the community
Serve rural communities with Education, Soft Skill and Job training	Lack of understanding of current resources available
Bringing employers and job seekers together	Focus on funding restrictions, rather than solutions outside our system
	Media support
	Staff knowledge about GED orientations and ESL classes
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
Inter-agency council	Decrease in living wage jobs
Passage of WIOA	Decrease in living wage job training
Partnerships around job training	Workforce moving to urban areas
Network expansion	Losing trust
Joint venture for additional post-secondary training	Financial resources are limited
Use of social media	Quality advertising/name recognition for AEL programs
Strong labor market	Significant changes in the GED and job skills assessment
National, state, local attention on need for trained workforce	Demand outpaces resources available
Integration of adult education and workforce development	Future water availability

Heart of Texas, Capital Area, Rural Capital, & Central Texas • May 7, 2015 • Hilliard Resources • Austin, Texas

Challenge	Strategy
Goal Alignment	Meeting schedule, stakeholder buy in, "Frontline connections" and a communication plan. Identify respective goal overlaps and gaps.
Authorization to Work	Find # of customers impacted by current rule. Establish contacts with agencies that can assist with customers establishing residency
Lack of Data connectivity	Identify relevant data and goals for both partners. Determine stakeholders needed to develop a plan.
Lack of knowledge of each other's system	Meeting schedule establish. Gain knowledge of services available. Newcomer's presentation orientation. Create a reference guide
Language/Common Language	Learn different terms/acronyms. Determine commonalities and cross train.
Unfunded/underfunded mandates)	Complete an assessment and schedule meeting with all involved in order to educate legislators
Slow start on transition	Change curriculum (life skills/employability). Align what "we" are doing in class with goals, employment and postsecondary education and training. Train instructors on benefit to students.
TABE/GED do not align	Create an online tutor/study GED academy resource. Provide teacher training for higher level math. Do a TABE pre/post performance. Pass individual GED performance. Practice GED test as pre/post test

South Texas, Coastal Bend, Lower Rio Grande Valley & Cameron • May 8, 2015 • Luzelma G. Canalez, PhD • McAllen, Texas

Challenge	Strategy
Limited Systemic Approach	Study best practice success to scale up/out
Lack of transportation	Involve TX-DOT in discussions. Give Workforce Solutions more funds for transportation. Build in distance learning. Advocate for better transportation
Retention	Identify and address barriers. Strengths or start AEL Dropout recovery program. Provide tutoring and include student incentives (learn and earn programs).
Different AEL Providers/Agencies have different requirements and performance measures	Do a better job of sharing requirements, class schedules, and locations with all AEL providers and cross referrals.
Informal agreements for adult education	Redesign MOUs specific to adult education
Need for regular meetings	Regularly schedule quarterly meetings.
Need for better integration on adult education to meet performance measures	Strategic plan and retreat.
Demand exceeds capacity	Institute full time lead teachers. Repurpose existing facilities. Increase number of partners. Engage employers. Leverage volunteering to work with people on wait list.

Dallas County • May 21, 2015 • Social Impact Architects • Dallas, Texas

Challenge	Strategy
Rebranding	Increase uniformity of messaging to site partners, potential students and stakeholders across consortium partners.
Recruitment	Obtain data to inform and enhance recruitment efforts. Develop a marketing plan to boost recruitment efforts.
Teaching	Assess the needs of teachers and partners in building ties between instruction and the workforce and develop customized solutions.
Retention	Keep students' motivation high by developing goals, recognizing short-term wins and showing long term rewards. Develop a stronger ecosystem to support student retention.

North Central & Tarrant County • May 28, 2015 • Estrus Strucker • Fort Worth, Texas

Challenge	Strategy
Accountability	Develop MOUs delineating rules and responsibilities of each other. Develop a consortium to increase coordination, education, communication and collaboration. Develop Workforce 102 and Adult ED 101. Integrate outreach and marketing efforts to increase enrollment and participation.
Large Territory	North Central Texas Steering Committee meet quarterly.
Limitation on funds (how to spend)	North Central Texas Steering Committee – marketing funding pool (assist workforce)
Conflicting Measures	Local Contractor incentives for testing (with communication between agencies)
Support Services	Allow AEL to provide gas cards, incentives, paying for test fees, etc. Chang in eligibility criteria for child care just for AEL programs

Northeast Texas, East Texas and Texoma, Texas • June 4, 2015 • Dr. Derek Crews • Texoma, Texas

Challenge	Strategy
Uncertainty	Let the process happen. Limit number of new things expected in a 12 month period. Concentrate on what you can do and control.
New GED and how it impacts performance.	Train; professional development. Collaboration with local resources (libraries, churches, WIFI availability).
Opportunity of leveraging resources with partners	Communication. Cross Training. Sharing resources. Know our liaisons and their resources. Student support systems. Find out our local business needs.
Weakness: Marketing	Rebranding our programs. Recruiter liaison. Identify potential customers. Identify our partners for service and collaboration.
Threat: Student not completing	Update contact information regularly. Remove barriers to success (transportation, lodging, childcare, transferability). Develop different measures of success.
Threat: Student perception/cultural threat/fear.	Issue ties to career pathways. Student to student information. Address cultural threat.

Borderplex • June 9, 2015 • Incite Consultancy, LLC • El Paso, Texas

Challenge	Strategy
Policy Reform	Work as a region to identify barriers placed on service providers and participate more consistently in public comments and provision of testimony. Partner with business entities that can advocate on behalf of the region on inequality or funding cuts. Engage the business sector in policy reform initiatives.
Service Delivery	Review efforts of targeted recruitment. Emphasize retention strategies (a problem felt by all). Create maps for how the community links resources to ensure that ineligible participants have a safety net for services. Configure methods for braiding Workforce resources into the education community. Engage the City of El Paso for renewed support in adult literacy.
Culture/Communication	Build out an umbrella entity such as the Literacy Council (Grade center) to connect, organize, and distribute information and action throughout the region. Create a mentorship process for new providers/staff. Secure funding for a full time individual to oversee the entity.

Panhandle and South Plains • June 10, 2015 • Sabine Wohlschlag • Lubbock, Texas

Challenge	Strategy
There is currently a fractured referral and feedback systems that results in loss of contact with referral agencies	TWC could implement a common software system shared by agencies to track referrals, consents, next steps, such as training or employment.
There is a lack of employer engagement and buy-in	Both Workforce Solutions and agencies could educate employers on the necessity of teaching employees
There are significant communication gaps among agencies and Workforce Solutions and agencies.	Begin having monthly meetings with stakeholders, agencies, and community colleges.
There is currently not a single resource directory.	Workforce Solutions should create a centralized list of agencies and the services they provide.
There are many students who require access to childcare in order to attend classes.	Refer to those who require childcare to WFC/CSS. Also, make recommendations for students to take advantage of family networks.
Students have low aspirations beyond GED or ESL. There is also a lack of career guidance for incoming AEL students	Agencies can offer greater career guidance around occupations in demand.

Golden Crescent, Alamo & Middle Rio Grande • June 15, 2015 •Dr. Federico Zaragoza • San Antonio, Texas

Challenge	Strategy
Current Strengths	To create an integration regional approach to workforce and integration by 2020.
Current Weaknesses	To create a unified adult education work system with common goals, objective and measures by 2016
Opportunities	To position region to utilize and eliminate stress and utilize resources
Current Threats	To improve assessment, overcome retention challenges and improve student placements with access to opportunities.

Brazos Valley, Deep East Texas, Southeast Texas & Gulf Coast • June 25, 2015 • Jenny Johnson • Conroe, Texas

Challenge	Strategy
Money	Gather and expand internal resources. Duplication. Name recognition. Branding. Visibility in the community. Identify external resources. Apply for available grants.
Change Management "Adjustments"	With communication identify the same end goal and recognizes each other's methods of communication
Culture/Philosophical Approach	Expand knowledge of responsibilities in progress.
Knowledge of Services	Overview of workforce on a personal level
Staffing Coordination based on need	Training/Cross Training
Joint Services Planning	Quarterly Planning/Meeting
Goal Alignment	Involve Workforce Solutions to decide grant outcomes
Professional Development	Utilize existing training for AEL and Workforce solutions staff. Don't reinvent the wheel.
Coordination of organization/groups offering services	Opportunities for face to face, structure discussion-schedule & mandatory
Orientation requirements are sometimes difficult for students which results in not being in the program	Need cross training regarding orientation and program requirements
Finding teachers who are willing to work part time instead of full time	Increase outreach to retired teachers

North Texas, West Central Texas, Permian Basin & Concho Valley • June 29, 2015 • Ann Ranson • Belton, Texas

Challenge	Strategy
Community Needs	Use of an assessment survey with 2 focuses: customers and employers. It will focus on childcare, and distribution of information.
Alignment	To create a unified adult education work system with common goals, objective and measures by 2016
Opportunities	To position region to utilize and eliminate stress and utilize resources
Current Threats	To improve assessment, overcome retention challenges and improve student placements with access to opportunities.

SUMMARY OF METHODOLOGIES

Each region employed strategies similar in design in order to complete a SWOT analysis and facilitate discussion for strategies and "next steps." However, unique use of materials and group activities, as well as the synthesis of data differentiated. At times, outcomes and processes created divergent methodologies. To help identify the most commonly identified issues in the strengths and weaknesses in the region, each issue was recorded among the 28 regional entities that had been grouped into the ten events (with exception for one event that reported only cumulative data). Weights for each issue were assigned by the frequency it was cited by each regional entity. The frequency was divided by the total number of regional entities to provide an approximate percentage of representation across all reports.

Opportunities and threats were assessed differently. Many regional reports combined sections of internal strengths and external opportunities into one category, affecting the weighting technique employed for the strengths and weaknesses sections. Assumptions were made on which were opportunities. Threats were attributed to internal issues that could be controlled by the regional stakeholders and which could not be controlled. This affected any ability to synthesize the overall strategies that were discussed. Oftentimes, strategies were discussed during the Opportunities section. For purposes of this report, these sections were summarized and individual highlights were included in the "Regional Event SWOT and Strategy Snapshot" sections.

CLOSING REMARKS

The efforts employed by the various regional stakeholders created an identification of gaps in the current integration process. This allows for infrastructure to begin deeper discussions on how to continue to integrate the respective systems, all the while maintaining a focus on achieving shared missions and goals.

It is suggested that additional strategic planning sessions and sharing of information among the regions continue with measurable objectives that support stronger internal conversion of weaknesses. As a next step, discussion of which core strategies will support a shared 5 year vision are suggested, followed by creation of an operations plan/timeline to execute the strategy.