

IRION COUNTY

Community Strategic and Service Delivery Plan

*Concho Valley Workforce Development Board
Texas Workforce Centers of the Concho Valley
April 2003*

Contents

Introduction	3
Geographic Scope	6
Income & Wages	6
Major Firms	7
Labor Force, Employment, Unemployment	8
Building Permits	8
Transportation	9
Poverty	9
Demand Side of the Labor Market	10
Supply Side of the Labor Market	18
Worker Interviews	21
Service Delivery Strategies	29
Service Delivery Plans	30
Basic Skills	30
Computer Technology	30
Economic Development	30
Career Opportunities	30
Job Search	31
Training Providers	31
Transportation	31
Entrepreneurship	31
Youth	31
Services for the Disabled	32
Employer Links and Services	32
Churches and Faith-Based Organizations	32
Acknowledgments	33

Introduction

The community audit and service delivery plan for Irion County has been developed in coordination with local employers, economic development entities, civic leaders, business owners, the Chamber of Commerce, churches, social services agencies and private citizens in an effort to better understand Irion County's workforce. Meetings with community partners and members were conducted to explain the Community Audit Demonstration Project Grant, the importance for community involvement, and to update the community on the status of the community audit activities. The Concho Valley Workforce Development Board collected and has interpreted the county's labor market information. The Consortium (Concho Valley Workforce Development Board and the Texas Workforce Centers of the Concho Valley) and community have built consensus and partnerships to implement skills enhancement training services that are tailored to the unique needs of the employers in the business sector. Through mapping of assets, existing programs and providers who are presently serving clients were identified, which reduces duplication of services, along with identifying gaps in services.

This document presents both short and long-term goals and objectives, local demographics, the scope of existing training/support programs and linkages with the business community, faith-based organizations, services providers and educational institutions.

The Concho Valley Workforce Development Board utilizes labor market information to plan services for the present and for future needs. Employer input allows the Concho Valley Workforce Development Board to effectively plan services, designate funds, and formalize policies and procedures in advance of needs. Employer input allows the Board to effectively maximize the shortage of education and training dollars, develop strategies to implement short-term industry specific training, and provide for current worker training that meets both the needs of the employer and the worker. Along with self-assessment tools, the Board and the business community can rapidly move to identify current skilled workers and potential employees with the aptitude to succeed and tailor training for career advancement.

The Concho Valley Workforce Development Board conducted a local labor market analysis specific to providing skills enhancement and training services in Irion County from January 2003 to March 2003.

The goals of the local labor market analysis were to:

- Gather primary information on economic and labor market trends
- Address critical information gaps in the regional economy
- Develop informed strategies to respond to employer and worker needs
- Establish linkages between employers and educational institutions to ensure responsiveness to labor market needs

The purpose of conducting the local labor market analysis was to obtain current information that accurately identifies skill shortages, which allows the Consortium and community partners/members to respond to technological change and a tight labor market. The community audit and service delivery plan will assist the community and individuals with up-to-date information on good job and career opportunities, provide employers with assistance in finding employees with the right sets of skills, assist service and training providers with information to design appropriate workforce development interventions, obtain timely information on the supply and demand sides of the labor market, and identify business trends that allow us to respond to employers needs prior to any adverse actions. In a geographically isolated rural area, it is critical for the Concho Valley Workforce Development Board and workforce system partners to include quantitative analysis of both the demand and supply side of the labor market, along with identifying funding sources and providers for labor exchange, training, and support services.

Primary sector/cluster analysis was conducted through surveys and interviews to identify industries and business clusters that are critical to maintain in the local economy. Survey and interview instruments were tailored specifically to employers and workers. The Business/Civic Organization Coordinator, in conjunction with the Consortium, conducted the surveys and interviews. The Business/Civic Organization Coordinator obtained data from a local real estate office and the City Office on new or expanded/expanding business facilities by industry sector and size. The

Business/Civic Organization Coordinator collected data and compiled survey, interview, and resource results. Concho Valley Workforce Development Board staff, Texas Workforce Center staff, and Child Care Services staff conducted community meetings.

The Consortium and community partners conducted local labor market analysis to provide insight into broad occupational trends that can be related to skill trends by gathering primary information on the demand and supply sides of the labor market and the employment and training resource base. The basic profile of the geographic area was created with quantitative data utilizing the following sources: U.S. Census Bureau; Health and Human Services Commission; and Texas Workforce Commission-Labor Market Information. The quantitative data, along with the primary research, will ensure timely responses to the rapidly changing economy and build upon the employment and training resource base.

Geographic Scope

Irion County is located in the Concho Valley region, and Mertzon is the county seat. Divided by the Middle Concho River, Irion County is home of the Dove Creek Battlefield. The primary sector in Irion County's economy is the Service industry (Texas Workforce Commission, Labor Market Information, <http://www.twc.state.tx.us>). The population of Irion County increased 8.7% from 1,629 persons in 1990 to 1,771 persons in 2000, according to Census 1990 and Census 2000, U. S. Census Bureau (<http://www.census.gov>).

The projected 2003 population for Irion County is noted in the following chart:

Age Group	# of Persons	% of Projected 2003 Population
Age 0	18	1.00%
Age 1-5	95	5.27%
Age 6-17	313	17.36%
Age 17-64	1,078	59.79%
Age 65+	299	16.58%
Total:	1,803	100%

(Health and Human Services Commission, Projected 2003 Texas Population by County & Selected Age Groups, March 2003, www.hhsc.state.tx.us)

This 2003 projection indicates a slight increase in total population (1.81%) compared to the total population of 2000.

Income and Wages

Irion County's annual per capita income was \$19,092, which is \$8,660 lower than the annual per capita income of \$27,752 for the State of Texas in 2000. The average weekly wage, as reported by the Texas Workforce Commission in the 1st Quarter of 2002, was \$607, which is \$98 below the state average weekly wage of \$705 (Texas Workforce Commission, Labor Market Information, <http://www.twc.state.tx.us>).

Major Firms

Major industries in the county are listed below with the related number of employees under covered employment:

Industry	2001 2nd Qtr.	2001 3rd Qtr.	2001 4th Qtr.	2002 1st Qtr.
Natural Resources/Mining	83	80	78	79
Construction	42	57	58	50
Manufacturing	9	8	9	11
Trade, Transportation & Utilities	105	102	102	103
Information	0	0	0	0
Financial Activities	-	-	-	-
Professional/Business Services	10	10	9	8
Education/Health Services	10	10	10	10
Leisure/Hospitality	-	-	-	-
Other Services	-	-	-	-
*Non-classifiable	36	28	29	33
Federal Government	4	5	4	5
State Government	16	19	18	16
Local Government	112	108	101	96

(Texas Workforce Commission, Labor Market Information, 2001 & 2002, <http://www.twc.state.tx.us>)

*The Texas Workforce Commission, Labor Market Department clarifies “Non-classifiable” as “not been assigned an industry classification.” These businesses are new to the tax reporting system and eventually will be reclassified as more information is obtained about their businesses for identification in an industry. The dashes noted in Financial Activities, Leisure/Hospitality, and Other Services indicate the tax reporting information is considered confidential. If an industry in a geographical area has less than three employers or one employer has 80% or more of the employees, the information is considered confidential. This confidential information is then combined and put into the Non-classifiable category.

Analysis

From the 2nd quarter of 2001 to the 1st quarter of 2002, an increase in employment is noted in Construction and Manufacturing. The number of employees has decreased in Natural Resources/Mining; Trade,

Transportation and Utilities; Professional/Business Services, with the largest decline; and Local Government. Education/Health Services, Federal Government, and State Government have remained static. The largest employment base is found in the Trade, Transportation and Utilities; Local Government; and Natural Resources/Mining.

Labor Force, Employment, Unemployment

The county seat is the community of Mertzon and the largest employers are Irion County Independent School District, Irion County, ConocoPhillips, Tom Thorp Transports, Inc., Shelton Oil & Gas, Inc., First National Bank of Mertzon and West Texas Wool and Mohair Association.

The civilian labor force has increased 1.29% from 699 persons in January 2002 to 708 persons in January 2003. The unemployment rate has increased from 2.6% in January 2002 to 3.5% in January 2003. Irion County's unemployment rates in November 2002 (4%) and in January 2003 (3.5%) were at their highest, compared to the state's average unemployment rate of 6.4% (Texas Workforce Commission, Labor Market Information, <http://www.twc.state.tx.us>). The Concho Valley Workforce Development Board did not receive any reported layoffs in 2001 or 2002 from Irion County employers (Concho Valley Workforce Development Board, Employer Services, Rapid Response Report).

Building Permits

The Texas Workforce Commission's Labor Market Information did not have any listings for building permits for new or expanded business facilities (<http://www.twc.state.tx.us>). According to the Mertzon City Office, no building permits are required for new or expanded businesses; although, Stephens Ranch Real Estate and the Mertzon City Office reported 7 new or expanded/expanding businesses in Irion County. New businesses included a real estate office with one realtor with no employees; an air conditioning and heating service company with no employees (but currently looking for two seasonal employees); a rustic furniture builder with no employees (but currently looking for one employee); and a pet and plant care business with no employees. Expanded/expanding businesses included a bakery/restaurant with one employee; a floral shop/grocery store with no employees; and a plant nursery with no employees.

Transportation

According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census, Census 2000, workers commuting to work (age 16 and older) total 835 with a mean travel time to work in minutes as 25.9. Of those 835 commuters, 274 (32.8%) travel to San Angelo due to the close proximity (Texas Labor Market Information Tracer, Texas Labor Market, <http://www.tracer2.com>). There is not a public transportation system in Irion County. Thunderbird Transit operates Monday through Thursday from 1:45 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. San Angelo trips are available Monday through Friday, with a regularly scheduled trip on Friday. Trips are also available to and from Barnhart Monday through Thursday. The following table shows a breakdown of transportation related information:

	Number	Percent
Vehicles Available		
None	24	3.5%
1	210	30.3%
2	318	45.8%
3 or more	142	20.5%
Drove Alone	684	81.9%
Carpooled	92	11.0%
Walked	26	3.1%
Other means	5	0.6%
Worked at home	26	3.1%

U.S. Bureau of the Census, Census 2000, Table DP-3 & Table DP-4. Profile of Selected Economic Characteristics: 2000, Irion County.

Poverty

According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census, poverty status in 1999 for families with female householder, with no husband present, was at 27.3% below poverty level. Those female householders' with related children under 18 years of age were 28.1% below poverty level, and female householders' with related children under 5 years of age were 42.9% below poverty level.

Demand Side of the Labor Market

The Concho Valley Workforce Development Board conducted employer surveys in Irion County from January 2003 to March 2003 to gather primary information on the demand side of the labor market. The number of businesses identified to participate was 130. This number was determined by utilizing infoUSA's database of local businesses, which is based upon taxpayer identification numbers, and the identification of new businesses or businesses not listed in the database. Of those 130 businesses, 70 were unable to participate for the following reasons: out of business, bad phone number, unable to make contact with employer, business with no employees, business moved out of Irion County, duplicate entry of business, federal office, seasonal business, not an Irion County business, employer is ill, and volunteer organization/department. The following table outlines the results of the recent employer surveys:

Inability to participate (70)	53.85%
Employer surveys not returned (28)	46.67%
New Businesses or Unlisted Businesses Identified (46)	54.76%
Businesses Surveyed (60)	46.15%
Number of Surveys Returned (32) from those employers that had the opportunity to participate (60)	53.33%

Based on survey results, the Concho Valley Workforce Development Board tabulated the numbers of current full-time and part-time employees and projected full-time and part-time employees as outlined in the table below:

	Service Sector	Service Sector	Goods Sector	Goods Sector	Goods & Service	Goods & Service
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time
Current	138	26	32	3	6	3
Projected	14	18	23	4	0	1

Analysis

Employer projected labor needs were based on turnover rates noted on the surveys. Employers indicated that turnover ranged anywhere from “no turnover” to “over 200%,” with the majority noting no turnover.

Job positions reported to experience the largest turnover were: truck driver, roustabout, swamper, heavy equipment operator, shop hands, clerical, office administrator, electrical helper, cook/cleaning, sales clerk, cashier/pizza deli, county extension agent, warehouseman, manager, store manager, assistant manager, administration, bookkeeper, and station attendant.

Indicators of labor market problems evidenced from the employer surveys are listed below:

Survey	# of Answers	% of Responses
Responses	77	100%
Lack of experience	16	20.78%
Poor work history/references	15	19.48%
Lack of skills	14	18.18%
Work ethic	11	14.29%
Lack of proper education/training	11	14.29%
Not applicable	5	6.49%
Lack of preparation	4	5.19%
Other	1	1.30%

Analysis

The survey results indicate that “lack of experience,” “poor work history/references,” and “lack of skills” are the greatest issues related to workers that are not hired, which indicates the need to inform and educate job seekers on: how to complete applications and resumes, how to utilize references, how to utilize labor market information, services available through the Texas Workforce Centers, and resources available to meet employment and educational needs.

Based on the survey and responses, the table below documents what entities are contacted for workforce training:

Answers Given	# of Responses	% of Responses
Responses	50	100%
On-the-job	18	36.00%
Video	8	16.00%
Professional Organizations	7	14.00%
Educational/Training Institutions	7	14.00%
No one/Not applicable	6	12.00%
Texas Workforce Centers	4	8.00%

Skills required by survey respondents in relation to job positions were noted as:

Answers Given	# of Responses	% of Responses
Responses	427	100%
Communication skills	59	13.82%
Listening skills	57	13.35%
Time management skills	54	12.65%
Interpersonal skills	52	12.18%
Problem solving skills	51	11.94%
Technical skills	49	11.48%
Customer service skills	48	11.24%
Computer skills	39	9.13%
Other	18	4.22%

“Other” includes mechanical, maintenance, oilfield, water and sewer maintenance, street maintenance, animal control, park maintenance, math, typing, and passenger/wheelchair assistance.

Analysis

The number of responses (427) in relation to employer surveys returned (32) indicates that employers require more “soft” skills than “hard” or tactile skills.

When asked how the Texas Workforce Centers can help with workforce needs, survey respondents noted:

Answers Given	# of Responses	% of Responses
Responses	42	100%
Provide training	12	28.57%
Provide information	9	21.43%
Don't know	9	21.43%
Provide skilled workers	8	19.05%
Can't help	4	9.52%

Analysis:

A correlation could be drawn between the labor market problems and the fact that only 8% of the business respondents contact the Texas Workforce Centers to help with them with their workforce needs and 12% feel it is not applicable to contact anyone for workforce training. Survey responses indicate the need to promote the Texas Workforce Centers and the services available to meet employer and business needs in obtaining and training employees with the required skill sets and providing information. Survey responses indicate opportunities to partner and share resources with professional organizations, educational and training institutions, and employers who utilize on-the-job training.

The 3 most important attributes that an employer looks for in employees are:

1. Honesty (20.66%)
2. Hard Worker (14.88%)
3. Ability to Learn (14.05%)

Analysis

These are qualities or characteristics that are not easily discernible during a job interview and would require in-depth assessment to identify potential employees capable of these attributes. These qualities or characteristics are more discernible with current employees who have been on the job and have exhibited these attributes.

The responses to the average cost to train one employee in his/her position in relation to dollars were ranked as follows:

Answers Given	# of Answers	% of Responses
Not Applicable	7	24.14%
\$100 or less	2	6.90%
\$500 or less	7	24.14%
\$1,000 or less	6	20.69%
\$5,000 or less	1	3.45%
\$10,000 or less	4	13.79%
\$50,000 or less	1	3.45%
Over \$50,000	1	3.45%

The average time to train one employee in his/her position is ranked as follows:

Answers Given	# of Answers	% of Responses
Not applicable	4	13.33%
One week or less	5	16.67%
One month or less	9	30.00%
One year or less	8	26.67%
Over one year	4	13.33%

Analysis

Due to the high response of “Not Applicable,” it is difficult to project a typical cost. Based on the remaining responses, the majority of responses indicate the cost to train an employee typically is from “\$500 or less” to “\$1,000 or less.” Based on the majority of responses, the average time it takes to train one employee is indicated from “one month or less” to “one year or less.”

The following is a listing, ranked in order, of issues related to present or currently employed workers as identified by employer responses:

Answers Given	# of Answers	% of Responses
Total Responses	71	100%
Salary	16	22.54%
Training	10	14.08%
Skills	9	12.68%
Turnover	9	12.68%
Work Ethic	7	9.86%
None/Not applicable	7	9.86%
Benefits	7	9.86%
Understaffed	5	7.04%
Other	1	1.41%

When asked how more skills training and increased skills affect their business, the responses were:

Answers Given	# of Answers	% of Responses
Responses	80	100%
Increase employee efficiency	25	31.25%
Add value to your product or service	17	21.25%
Help decrease training time	13	16.25%
Increase production	9	11.25%
Help to retain employees	6	7.50%
Not applicable	6	7.50%
Make your company more competitive	4	5.00%

Pay increases, in relation to skill development, would be supported by 32.26% of the respondents compared to 67.74% of the remaining businesses responding “no” or “not applicable”. Noted from those responding “no,” skill development may make an employee more competitive in a bid for promotion. Most businesses responded that the typical pay increase that could be expected would range from: 5% or less (28.57%), 10% or less (35.71%), and 25% or less (28.57%). Employee benefits are provided by 65.63% of the 32 respondents in comparison to 34.38% of respondents that do not provide any employee benefits.

The majority of the firms in Irion County require some specific credential or level of education, which employers may use as a screening protocol. Survey respondents listed credentials or levels of education that would be required as depicted in the table below:

Answers Given	# of Answers	% of Responses
Responses	93	100%
High School Diploma	44	47.31%
GED	19	20.43%
None	8	8.60%
Certificate or License	8	8.60%
Other	6	6.45%
Bachelor's Degree	6	6.45%
Associate's Degree	2	2.15%

“Other” responses include 90 college hours, oilfield knowledge, 10th or 11th grade, experience, and Master’s degree. The answers given may be duplicated in some categories because the specific requirement was a high school or general equivalency diploma plus a degree, a certificate or license, and/or experience. The majority of Associate’s degree, Bachelor’s degree, and certificate or license responses related to job positions of Librarian, Library Aide, Deputy Sheriff, Game Warden, Truck Driver, Roustabout, Banking, Director of Children Services, Teacher, Teacher’s Aide, Transportation and Grounds, Agriculture/Natural Resources, Family and Consumer Science, and Research Assistant.

Analysis

A large number of employers (84.94%) require education levels at or above a high school diploma, indicating to workers the importance of completing their high school education and gaining the knowledge and skills they need in their particular fields.

The typical beginning salary paid in Irion County per survey respondents is listed below:

Answers Given	# of Answers	% of Responses
Responses	64	100%
Not applicable	3	4.69%
\$5.15 an hour	7	10.94%
\$5.16 - \$5.75/hour	2	3.13%
\$5.76 - \$6.75/hour	10	15.63%
\$6.76 - \$7.75/hour	9	14.06%
\$7.76 - \$9.75/hour	10	15.63%
\$9.76 - \$12.75/hour	9	14.06%
\$12.76 - \$15.00/hour	3	4.69%
\$15.01/hour or more	7	10.94%
Varies according to skills & experience	4	6.25%

Analysis

The correlation of the level of education to the associated wage levels in Irion County are predominantly in the range of \$5.76 an hour to \$12.75 an hour with a high school or general equivalency diploma, specific license/certificate, Associate's degree, Bachelor's degree, and/or industry specific knowledge or experience. The wage level indicated from \$12.76 an hour to \$15.00 an hour was predominantly noted for those positions requiring a high school diploma, specific license/certificate, Associate's degree, and/or Bachelor's degree. Wage levels above \$15.00 an hour required a high school diploma, 90 college hours, or Bachelor's degree.

Supply Side of the Labor Market

The Concho Valley Workforce Development Board conducted worker interviews, with the approval of the employer, in Irion County from January 2003 to March 2003 to gather primary information on the supply side of the labor market.

Based on the 2000 U. S. Census, Irion County's 1,771 total population break down by age, as it might relate to an available workforce, is depicted below:

Age	Number	Percent
15-19 yrs.	130	7.3%
20-24 yrs.	53	3.0%
25-34 yrs.	176	9.9%
35-44 yrs.	300	16.9%
45-54 yrs.	249	14.1%
55-59 yrs.	134	7.6%
60-64 yrs.	80	4.5%
65-74 yrs.	166	9.4%
Median Age (years)	39.9	N/A

U.S. Census Bureau, Table DP-1. Profile of General Demographic Characteristics: 2000

Persons under the age of 18 in Irion County comprise 26.7% of the population in 2000. Persons of Hispanic or Latino origin comprise 24.6% (436) of the population in 2000 as compared to 23.6% (385) of the population in 1990, indicating a slight increase of 1% in the Hispanic or Latino population in Irion County.

Analysis

Irion County's median age of 39.9 is higher than the nation's median age of 35.3. The number of persons under the age of 18 in Irion County is projected to decrease 3.1% from 26.7% in 2000 to 23.6% in 2003 while the nation is projected to only decrease 0.5% from 25.7% in 2000 to 25.2% in 2003. Due to the higher median age and larger decrease in number of persons under the age of 18, Irion County may have a shortage of an available workforce when job openings need to be filled in the future.

According to the U. S. Census 1999 Poverty Estimates (model-based estimate), the following chart shows the break down in numbers and percentage of population in that category:

Category	Number	Percentage
People of all ages in poverty	192	10.8%
People age 0-17 in poverty	77	16.3%
Related children age 5-17 in families in poverty	46	12.7%
Median Household Income	\$37,500	N/A

Poverty is a condition under which individuals, or entire families, do not have sufficient economic resources, or money income, to pay for their basic needs of food, shelter, utilities, health care, transportation, and clothing.

According to the Health and Human Services Commission, the percent of people below poverty in the State of Texas in 2000 is listed below:

Ages 0 – 6

Below 100% of Poverty	21.76%
Below 150% of Poverty	35.06%
Below 200% of Poverty	49.45%

Ages 0 – 17

Below 100% of Poverty	20.52%
Below 150% of Poverty	32.41%
Below 200% of Poverty	44.81%

All Ages

Below 100% of Poverty	14.68%
Below 150% of Poverty	24.72%
Below 200% of Poverty	35.11%

The 2003 Poverty Guidelines, along with Percent of Poverty, are outlined in the following chart:

Size of Family	Poverty Guideline-100%	150% of Poverty	200% of Poverty
1	\$ 8,980	\$13,470	\$17,960
2	12,120	18,180	24,240
3	15,260	22,890	30,520
4	18,400	27,600	36,800
5	21,540	32,310	43,080
6	24,680	37,020	49,360
7	27,820	41,730	55,640
8	30,960	46,440	61,920

Poverty guidelines are used by a number of government assistance programs for administrative purposes, such as determining eligibility for Food Stamps, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Child Care, rent and utility assistance, and others. Some programs use the guidelines as only one of several criteria for eligibility.

In February 2003, 5 Food Stamp recipients were available for work (Food Stamp Employment and Training Mandatory Workers) (Texas Workforce Commission, Performance Analysis and Reporting, March 12, 2003).

The Texas Workforce Centers serve Temporary Assistance for Needy Families recipients, which Irion County has had minimal to no TANF recipients in the past six months.

Worker Interviews

Out of the 32 participating businesses in employer surveys, 24 of those businesses participated in worker interviews (75.00%). The table below depicts the type of the participating workers' job positions:

Position	# of Positions	% of Total Positions
Building Service/Domestic Work	5	8.62%
Clerical	5	8.62%
Drilling/Mining (Oil & Gas)	5	8.62%
Education – Certified	3	5.17%
Education – Non-Certified	1	1.72%
Food Processing	2	3.45%
Food Service Work	2	3.45%
Library	2	3.45%
Management	5	8.62%
Other	5	8.62%
Personal Services	3	5.17%
Sales Clerk/Cashier/Desk Clerk/Teller	4	6.90%
Tax Preparing/Bookkeeping/Accounting/Finance	6	10.34%
Trade/Technical/Specialized Work	6	10.34%
Transportation	4	6.90%

Worker interviews were conducted on a personal, one-on-one basis. The Business/Civic Organization Coordinator asked each worker the exact same twelve questions and documented their responses. Worker interviews were approximately 10 minutes in length. The “Trade/Technical/Specialized Work” category includes: electrician’s helper, maintenance, mechanic, heavy equipment operator, water and sewer maintenance, welding, street maintenance, and equipment repair. The “Other” category includes: social work, head dispatcher/911 and terminal agency coordinators, sales, station attendant, and parks and wildlife.

Workers' skills related to their jobs are outlined in the table below:

Skill	# of Responses	% of Responses
Other Trade/Technical/Specialized Skills	19	15.08%
People Skills/Public Relations/ Customer Relations	16	12.70%
Computer Skills	15	11.90%
General Office Skills	14	11.11%
Basic Skills	9	7.14%
Critical Thinking Skills	7	5.56%
Accounting/Bookkeeping/Financial	5	3.97%
Communication/Bilingual Skills	5	3.97%
Drilling/Mining (Oil & Gas) Skills	4	3.17%
Heavy Equipment Operation Skills	4	3.17%
Maintenance/Mechanic Skills	4	3.17%
Management Skills	4	3.17%
Other	4	3.17%
Construction/Carpentry Skills	3	2.38%
Electronic/Electrical Skills	3	2.38%
Organizational Skills	3	2.38%
Plumbing Skills	3	2.38%
Truck Driving Skills	3	2.38%

“Other Trade/Technical/Specialized Skills” includes cooking/food preparation, food processing, law enforcement, library, welding/fitting, child development, custodial, legal, sales, teaching, and use of pesticides. The “Other” category consists more of qualities needed for the job than skills such as: able to handle long hours and stress, physically capable, and persistence.

The experience that workers brought to their jobs when they were hired are:

Experience	# of Responses	% of Responses
Education	10	11.76%
General Office/Secretarial	9	10.59%
Customer Relations	8	9.41%
Other Trade/Technical/Specialized Experience	7	8.24%
Maintenance/Mechanics Operating	6	7.06%
Oil/Gas/Ranching	6	7.06%
Food Service	5	5.88%
Heavy Equipment Operating	4	4.71%
Teaching Experience	4	4.71%
Accounting/Bookkeeping/Financial	4	4.71%
Communication/Bilingual	4	4.71%
Construction/Welding/Fabrication	3	3.53%
Truck Driving	3	3.53%
Child/Elder Care	2	2.35%
Food Processing	2	2.35%
Management Experience	2	2.35%
Personal Services	2	2.35%
Building Service/Domestic Work	2	2.35%
Other	1	1.18%
None	1	1.18%

“Other Trade/Technical/Specialized Experience” consists of computer technician, program instructor, victim’s coordinator, telephone counseling, plumbing, health occupations training, art, and library experience.

During the worker interviews, the Business/Civic Organization Coordinator did not ask whether the worker received or did not receive any job related benefits. The following are responses to the statement “Tell me, in order of importance, what benefits would be important to you as a valued employee.”

Benefit	# of Responses	% of Responses
Health/Medical/Dental/Vision Insurance	28	25.69%
Retirement Plan/Savings Plan	17	15.60%
Good Working Environment/Relationship	13	11.93%
Paid Vacation/Personal Time Off/Holidays	11	10.09%
Other	7	6.42%
Flex Time/Flexible Schedule/Comp Time	6	5.50%
Good Pay/Pay Increase	6	5.50%
Job Satisfaction	5	4.59%
Sick Leave Benefits	3	2.75%
Equipment/Technology	3	2.75%
Job Security	2	1.83%
Life Insurance	2	1.83%
Training/Education	2	1.83%
Bonus/Promotion/Work Incentives	2	1.83%
Product/Service Benefits	2	1.83%

“Other” includes: reduction in teacher/student ratio, employee empowerment, own office, safety, open door policy, and tuition assistance. Workers positively responded by 92.86% that they felt they were an important part of the company.

Workers noted what steps companies could take to keep a worker as a valued employee:

Steps	# of Responses	% of Responses
Job Satisfaction	12	20.00%
Good Pay/Pay Increase	11	18.33%
Education/Training Opportunities	7	11.67%
Keep or Offer Benefits/Incentives/Promotions	7	11.67%
Good Working Environment/Relationship	4	6.67%
Job Security	4	6.67%
More Staff	3	5.00%
Respect/Trust/Fairness/Honesty/Support	3	5.00%
Employee Empowerment	2	3.33%
Increased/Improved Technology	2	3.33%
Nothing	2	3.33%
Other	2	3.33%
Open Communications	1	1.67%

Workers who responded “keep doing what they are doing” or “happy with job” make up the “Job Satisfaction” category. “Other” accounts for eliminating paperwork and changing employee’s work hours.

There is a high percentage of companies in Irion County that provide training (92.86%) as compared to those that do not provide training (7.14%). A large majority (87.18%) of current workers take advantage of this training benefit to advance their skills, whereas 12.82% of current workers do not avail themselves of this training benefit.

Although training is provided as a benefit and workers take advantage of the training benefit, the following table clearly shows that workers feel they need additional computers skills and education and training to advance in their careers:

Response	# of Responses	% of Responses
Computer Skills	15	29.41%
Education/Training	13	25.49%
Nothing	11	21.57%
Increased/Improved Technology	5	9.80%
Other	4	7.84%
Math/Accounting/Bookkeeping Skills	3	5.88%

Responses in regard to types of training workers feel they need to advance in their careers are: computer software and technology, journeyman electrician license apprenticeship, commercial driver licensing, air conditioning and gas certified courses, civil engineering degree, business skills updating, continued education and hands-on training in children services, early childhood, meat smoking, on-the-job training as lease operator, paramedic certified, specific healthcare training on the job, cross-training, x-ray technician, and/or art teaching. The “Other” category respondents need job security, work experience, more staff to take clerical duties away, and tuition assistance to advance in their careers.

The following tables are in relation to where workers see themselves, in regard to their careers, in one year and in five years.

One-Year Career Goals

Response	# of Responses	% of Responses
Same Position in Same or Different Company	34	66.67%
Advanced Position in Same or Different Company	3	5.88%
More Efficient/Confident	3	5.88%
Don't Know	2	3.92%
More Responsibilities/Duties	2	3.92%
Receiving Benefits/Bonuses/Incentives/Awards	2	3.92%
Retired or Semi-Retired	2	3.92%
Enrolled in Education/Training	1	1.96%
Receiving License/Certification	1	1.96%
Working Full-Time	1	1.96%

Five-Year Career Goals

Response	# of Responses	% of Responses
Same Position in Same or Different Company	17	36.17%
Advanced Position in Same or Different Company	12	25.53%
Retired or Semi-Retired	8	17.02%
Don't Know	3	6.38%
Receiving Benefits/Bonuses/Incentives/Awards	2	4.26%
Other	1	2.13%
Completed Education/Training	1	2.13%
More Efficient/Confident	1	2.13%
Self-Employed	1	2.13%
Working Full-Time	1	2.13%

Under one-year career goals, “Enrolled in Education/Training ” and “Receiving License/Certification” respectively include early childhood and commercial driver’s license. Under five-year career goals, “Completed Education/Training” includes early childhood degree.

Analysis

The majority of the responses indicate workers are happy with their jobs. Responses also indicate workers perceive advancement opportunities are available to them within their companies or Iriion County. It is interesting to note that while workers indicated the need for additional computer skills and education and training, workers do not predominantly address these needs in their one- and five-year goals.

The table below shows the responses to the question “What do you expect from your employer”:

Expectations	# of Responses	% of Responses
Respect/Trust/Fairness/Honesty/Understanding	24	32.43%
Benefits/Bonuses/Incentives/Awards	8	10.81%
Appreciation/Recognition	6	8.11%
Job Security	6	8.11%
Good Working Environment/Relationship	5	6.76%
Increased Wages	5	6.76%
Job Satisfaction	5	6.76%
Pay Check	4	5.41%
Other	3	4.05%
Good Communication	3	4.05%
Training	2	2.70%
Employee Empowerment	1	1.35%
Increased Hours	1	1.35%
Nothing	1	1.35%

Workers’ expectations of their employers are based on more intangible or intrinsic qualities such as respect, trust, fairness, and appreciation rather than tangible outcomes such as benefits, job security, increased wages, and good communication. “Other” includes stability in company and to have high expectations from employees and students.

Service Delivery Strategies

Initial workforce strategies were determined based on critical skill shortages identified through primary sector/cluster analysis surveys with employers, workers interviews, and community member groups. These strategies focus on:

- Employer-focused training to improve the productivity and employability of the business/industry's workforce;
- "High Road" to ensure limited funds target industries, firms, and occupations that provide the most benefit in increased wages, job opportunity, skill upgrading, and job retention;

Through the employer survey and worker interview instruments, there is an indication of the need for skilled entry-level workers and some skill upgrading for current workers. Since Irion County's business sector is comprised mostly of small businesses and a couple of medium-sized businesses, the Concho Valley Workforce Development Board will target limited funds to occupations that provide the most benefit in increased wages, job opportunity, skill upgrading and/or job retention. Skills shortages can be the single greatest barrier to economic growth. The number one issue from the Community Audit is that employers need an existing workforce that has both "soft" skills and "hard" skills. Soft skills are the fundamental skills such as, communication, listening, time management, interpersonal, etc. Hard skills are the more tactile skills such as, technical, computer, oilfield, street maintenance, etc. Skilled workers who receive training, or are involved in life-long learning, to keep abreast of changes in their field are essential to the survival of a business. High-skilled workers are essential to attract new industries, retain industry and business, and expand businesses for economic development.

Service Delivery Plans

To respond to employer and worker needs in Irion County, the Concho Valley Workforce Development Board's service delivery plan will focus on the following:

Basic Skills

- Partner with Co-op 42 Adult Basic Education to promote and provide basic skills improvement, General Equivalency Diploma and English as a Second Language courses to increase skill and education levels.

Computer Technology

- Partner with the Irion County Independent School District, Irion County Library, Education Service Center Region XV, the Small Business Development Center, Howard College – San Angelo, and other area agencies, such as Christian Women's Job Corps, to develop and provide computer courses, such as: computer literacy, operating systems, Internet, web page, and software training utilizing existing computer resources and space.

Economic Development

- Partner with the Executive Planning Committee through the Texas Cooperative Extension to assist in attracting new industries and businesses to the area that will increase wages and job opportunities and explore opportunities that exist for business expansion and retention.

Career Opportunities

- Educate and promote the use of Internet technology to increase utilization of programs and resources such as: Socrates, Work in Texas, Oscar, the Education Training Provider List and other on-line assessment and resource tools to both employers and job seekers.

Job Search

- Partner with Texas Cooperative Extension, Christian Women’s Job Corps, the First Baptist Church, and the County and City offices to provide and promote job search seminars or clubs to increase job readiness.
- Promote job opportunities in partnership with local employers through job fairs.
- Educate and promote the use of Work in Texas and America’s Workforce Network to local employers to increase available pools of applicants.

Training Providers

- Partner with Texas Cooperative Extension, the Small Business Development Center, Howard College – San Angelo, and area organizations such as, Christian Women’s Job Corps, to increase access to short-term training opportunities.

Transportation

- Partner with the City, the County and the Concho Valley Council of Governments to identify transportation options to increase availability to jobs and job opportunities.

Entrepreneurship

- Partner with Texas Cooperative Extension, the Small Business Development Center, and Howard College – San Angelo to offer and promote courses (including on-line courses), seminars and workshops to increase opportunities for entrepreneurship in the area.

Youth

- Partner with Texas Cooperative Extension, the Irion County Independent School District, Howard College – San Angelo, and

School-to-Work/Tech Prep to identify and increase opportunities for youth.

Services for the Disabled

- Partner with agencies and organizations such as: Texas Rehabilitation Commission, Texas Commission for the Blind, and MHMR of the Concho Valley to increase services to employers that employ people with disabilities.
- Promote peer-to-peer network and resources for employers accessible through the Texas Workforce Center website under the Employer Services Division.
- Promote Ticket-To-Hire to increase employment outcomes for people with disabilities.

Employer Links and Services

- Develop and disseminate a quarterly newsletter to increase communication with local employers, the Irion County Independent School District, the Irion County Judge's Office, and the Mertzon City Office.

Churches and Faith-Based Organizations

- Identify opportunities for partnership with the First Baptist Church, Christian Women's Job Corps, and other faith-based organizations to increase services in areas such as: child care, transportation, volunteers, and community programs.

Acknowledgments

The Concho Valley Workforce Development Board and the Texas Workforce Centers recognize the following community partners who contributed extensively to the community audit to develop the Community Strategic and Service Delivery Plan for Irion County:

ACS State & Local Solutions, Inc.
Dolan's Roustabout & Welding, Inc.
First Baptist Church
Irion County Judge's Office
Irion County Sheriff's Department
Irion County Tax Assessor-Collector's Office
Irion County Treasurer's Office
Mertzson City Office
Mertzson Head Start
Mertzson Pump & Supply
Stephens Ranch Real Estate
Texas Workforce Commission
U. S. Post Office – Barnhart
Virginia Wales