

# AUSTIN METRO AREA MASTER COMMUNITY WORKFORCE PLAN

## YEAR TWO EVALUATION REPORT

SEPTEMBER 2020



# **Austin Metro Area Master Community Workforce Plan**

## **Year Two Evaluation Report**

**Greg Cumpton  
Cynthia Juniper  
Ashweeta Patnaik**

**September 2020**



---

3001 Lake Austin Blvd., Suite 3.200  
Austin, TX 78703 (512) 471-7891  
[www.raymarshallcenter.org](http://www.raymarshallcenter.org)

This report was prepared with funds provided by Workforce Solutions Capital Area Board with financial sponsorship from Google.org, JPMorgan Chase, City of Austin Economic Development, and Travis County (Grant number: UTA18-000610), to the Ray Marshall Center for the Study of Human Resources at the University of Texas at Austin. The views expressed here are those of the authors and do not represent the positions of the funding agencies or The University.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Contents .....	i
List of Figures .....	ii
List of Tables .....	ii
Acknowledgements .....	iii
Acronyms .....	iv
Highlights.....	5
Introduction.....	7
Implementation Strategies, Services and Partnerships .....	9
MCWP Primary Strategies .....	9
Awareness and Enrollment: Cultivate Interest in High-demand, Middle-skill Careers.....	9
Training: Equip Workers with the Skills They Need to Succeed.....	12
Placement: Connect Employers with Local Talent to Fill Middle-skill Jobs.....	16
Upskilling: Assist Frontline Workers in Acquiring Skills to Advance into Middle-skill Jobs .....	17
Discussion .....	19
Outcomes: Workforce Training and Education .....	21
Overall Results .....	21
Demographic-Level Results .....	22
Agency-Level Results .....	25
Enrollment .....	25
Completion .....	27
Sector of Completion.....	29
Employment.....	30
Earnings .....	31
Poverty .....	32
Year One Update .....	33
Employment.....	33
Earnings .....	34
Outcomes: Upskilling .....	36
Overview .....	36
Skills Development Fund.....	36
Apprenticeships .....	37
MCWP Project Attainment and Assessment .....	40
Appendix A: Definitions.....	42
Appendix B: Austin Career Institute.....	44

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Share of Employed Completers (1Qtr), by Race/Ethnicity and Year .....	22
Figure 2. Share of Employed Completers Earning Above Poverty, by Race/Ethnicity .....	23
Figure 3. Year One Share of Completers Employed and Earning Above 200% FPG Over Time, by Race/Ethnicity .....	24
Figure 5. Enrollment by Year and Organization.....	26
Figure 6. Year Two Enrollment Status .....	26
Figure 7. Sector of Program Enrollment.....	27
Figure 8. Year One Completers, by Organization Type .....	28
Figure 9. Year Two Time to Completion.....	29
Figure 10. Sector of Program Completion.....	29
Figure 11. Employment Numbers, 1 <sup>st</sup> Qtr After Program Completion.....	30
Figure 12. Share of Employed Completers, 1 <sup>st</sup> Qtr Post Completion.....	31
Figure 13. Median Quarterly Earnings for Employed Completers 1 <sup>st</sup> Qtr Post Completion.....	31
Figure 14. Median Earnings Pre/Post Program.....	32
Figure 15. Number of Completers Earning Above 200% FPG, 1 <sup>st</sup> Qtr Post Completion.....	32
Figure 16. Share of Completers Earning Above 200% FPG, 1 <sup>st</sup> Qtr Post Completion .....	33
Figure 17. Share of Employed Completers One Year Post Exit, By Completion Year .....	33
Figure 18. Median Annual Earnings 1 Year Post Exit.....	34
Figure 19. Increase in Annual Earnings for Employed Completers .....	34
Figure 20. Share of Completers Above Poverty, 1 Year Post Completion.....	35

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Enrollment, Completion, and One Quarter Outcome Numbers, by Year.....	21
Table 2. One Year Outcome Numbers, by Year .....	22
Table 3. Median Annual Earnings for Employed Year One Completers One Year Post-Completion .....	25
Table B-1. Austin Career Institute Training Programs .....	46

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many individuals and agencies contributed to the development, evolution and execution of this project and the completion of this report. Researchers at Ray Marshall Center express their gratitude to everyone who has contributed to this project.

Key staff members of six community based workforce development organizations contributed data and information to this report. Traci Berry, Chief Learning and Engagement Officer of Goodwill of Central Texas coordinated the contributions of Goodwill staff including, Jennifer Tucker, Vice President of Workforce Advancement, Matthew Williams, Vice President of Education, Jason Walters, Data Analyst, and Erin Kingsbury, Manager of Career Advancement. Aaron Hill, Skillpoint Alliance Austin Programs Director, and Data Media Specialist Sean Chitty provided program information and data to this project. David Clauss, YouthBuild Austin Program Director and Britni Trustman, Assistant Director Grants Management contributed information and data on the American YouthWorks program. Austin Careers Institute's Shawn Jamali, Director, provided organizational structure and program context. Capital IDEA's Steven Jacobs, Executive Director, Eva Rios-Lleverino, Deputy Executive Director, and Marvin Leonard, I.T. Manager furnished data and program information. Workforce Solutions Capital Area Board team members, Janee White, Manager of Workforce Development Contracts/EO Officer and Ian Fitch, Data Analyst contributed data, Leslie Puckett, Director of Research and Career Awareness provided information on workforce career and education outreach, and Megan Elkins, Director, Talent Pipeline Success, provided guidance and insight throughout the process of working with programs to create this report.

Austin Community College staff members contributing to this report include: Dr. F.C. Caranikas, Director, Institutional Effectiveness, Garrett Groves, Vice President of Business and Industry Partnerships, Jenna Culinane Hege, Vice President of Institutional Research & Analytics, Dr. Guillermo Martinez, Associate Vice President, Student Engagement & Analytics, Brette Lea, Vice President of Communications & Marketing, Jessica Vess, Associate Director of Communications, Dr. Melissa Curtis, Associate Vice President, Enrollment Management and Dr. Xiaoling Liang, Institutional Effectiveness Analyst.

Finally, we would like to express our sincere appreciation to Ray Marshall Center staff members who helped with this project, Patty Rodriguez, data analyst, was essential in preparing the data for this report, and Susie Riley, administrative manager.

## ACRONYMS

ABE.....	Adult Basic Education
ARCH .....	Austin Resource Center for the Homeless
ACC .....	Austin Community College
CBO .....	Community Based Organization
CCDF .....	Child Care Development Fund
CEP .....	Community Eligibility Provision
CNA .....	Certified Nurse Aide
CTE .....	Career and Technical Education
ECCE .....	Early Childhood Care and Education
EITC .....	Earned Income Tax Credit
ECM .....	Empowered Case Management
ESL .....	English as a Second Language
ETPS .....	Eligible Training Provider System
FPG .....	Federal Poverty Guidelines
GACC .....	Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce
GAIN.....	General Assessment of Instructional Need
GCTA.....	Goodwill Career and Technical Academy
GED .....	General Education Diploma
HSE .....	High School Equivalency
OT .....	Occupational Training
OSHA.....	Occupational Safety and Health Administration
MCWP .....	Austin Metro Area Master Community Workforce Plan
MSA .....	Metropolitan Statistical Area
NAEYC.....	National Association for the Education of Young Children
NSLP .....	National School Lunch Program
PLC .....	Master Plan Leadership Council
RMC.....	Ray Marshall Center
RN .....	Registered Nurse
SNAP .....	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
TABE .....	Test of Adult Basic Education
TANF .....	Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
TSI.....	Texas Success Initiative Assessment
WERC .....	Workforce and Education Readiness Continuum
WFSCA.....	Workforce Solutions Capital Area Board
WFSRCA .....	Workforce Solutions Rural Capital Area Board
WIC.....	Women, Infants, and Children
WIOA.....	Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act



## HIGHLIGHTS

The number of enrollees and completers in Year Two declined slightly from Year One despite the inclusion of Austin Careers Institute<sup>1</sup> (ACI) participants. However, more completers in Year Two immediately found employment (1,267) representing a larger share of all completers (77%) compared to Year One initial employment (x%). Year Two completers earned higher median income (\$6,673) during the first quarter following completion, an increase of more than 14% (\$834) compared to Year One completers. Year Two completers received a 224% increase in median earnings when compared to their income prior to enrolling in a program. These higher median earnings led to a higher number (595) and a greater share (36%) of Year Two completers earning 200% above Federal Poverty Guidelines compared to Year One participants' first quarter outcomes (517 and 31%).

In continuing to follow-up on Year One participants, their year-long outcomes were better than predicted using their first quarter post completion earnings information. The goal of the MCWP is not only to help individuals enroll, complete a program and find employment in the short term, but to ensure that those who complete continue to earn above poverty wages. In the first quarter after exit, 72% of Year One completers found employment, after a full year the share employed increased to 84%. Year One employed completers earned median wages of \$27,319 in the year post-exit, an increase of \$19,425 compared to median pre-entry earnings. Yearly earnings also increased the number of Year One completers who earned above 200% FPG from 515 to 652.

Year Two also provided additional data sources, including detailed aggregate apprenticeship information, allowing researchers the ability to construct a minimum threshold of those moved out of poverty in both Year One (269) and Year Two (382) through apprenticeships.

---

<sup>1</sup> For detailed information about ACI, their provided services, and other details please see Appendix B.



**Table A. MCWP Progress to Date**

<u>Strategy</u>	Baseline FY16	Year 1 FY18	Year 2 FY19	Year 3 FY20	Year 4 FY21	<u>GOAL</u>
Enrollment	6,750	6,027	5,986			30,000
Completion	931	1,679	1,650			12,000
Employment						8,000
<i>1 Qtr</i>	687	1,217	1,267			
<i>1 Year</i>	799	1,413				
Out of Poverty						6,920
<i>1 Qtr</i>	256	517	595			
<i>1 Year</i>	362	652				
Advancement		269	382			2,000

Year Two furthered the goals of the MCWP; using both Year One, revised to include full year outcomes, and Year Two, the region enrolled 12,013 low-income participants, graduated 3,329 completers, of whom 2,680 (80%) found employment, bringing 1,247 individuals (46% of those employed) into jobs that brought them above 200% of FPGs. Apprenticeships also brought a minimum of 651 participants out of poverty during the two years.

## INTRODUCTION

In many ways, writing this report six months into the coronavirus pandemic begs the question of its own relevance. The Year Two report focuses on outcomes for individuals enrolled in and completing programs between October 2018 and the end of September 2019. Those who completed education and workforce training during this time graduated into a labor market eager to hire them, with a local unemployment rate at the end of 2019 of 2.4% with 30,000 unemployed individuals.<sup>2</sup> For those seeking employment as that year ended and 2020 began, the region possessed 61,000 job openings, including 500 internships.<sup>3</sup> The regional workforce effort focused in part on ensuring that those who complete training possessed the appropriate skills at the sufficient level to find the best employment; the jobs existed with employers eager to hire those completing qualified training.

After the spread of the coronavirus across the world, Austin's quarantine in March, and Texas' reopening in May, the local economic portrait shifted considerably. As of July 2020, the unemployment rate in Austin was 6.7% with 81,900 unemployed workers.<sup>4</sup> Though this is considerably lower than the 12.2% local unemployment rate's pandemic peak during March of 2020, the continuing, seemingly endless extension of the coronavirus recession provides only uncertainty about the near- and middle-term economic outlook of our country and our local economy. Individuals participating now in local education and workforce training in Year Three contend with the sudden and unexpected implementation of online learning, with some needing clinicals to complete their licensure finding themselves unable to access much of the traditional healthcare systems due to coronavirus precautions and demand shifts, and nearly all participants graduating into an uncertain labor market.

In addition to the immediate concerns related to the pandemic, American awareness of long-existing racial inequalities in our society has grown substantially. Though the impetus for this recent wide-ranging awakening focuses on disparities within our justice system, healthcare inequities related to the pandemic and its economic aftershocks belie the wide-ranging disparate impact of these events on members of our community and expose existing disparities in health and economic opportunities. Any project, including the MCWP, intending to bring low-income

---

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.twc.texas.gov/news/texas-unemployment-rate-35-percent>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.austinchamber.com/blog/austin-job-postings-report-january-2020>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.twc.texas.gov/news/texas-unemployment-rate-falls-80-percent-july>

individuals out of poverty touches on the fabric of the long-term economic and social divisions that Black and Hispanic individuals and families face every day.

This Year Two report serves as a reminder of the success of the MCWP in the first two years of this multi-year project prior to unexpected impact of the pandemic, but it also affords an opportunity to think clearly through the mechanisms of change of the MCWP, to consider how and why the MCWP continues to expand by including additional training programs and colleges, the regional role of upskilling employees and why it fits so firmly within the scope of work of the MCWP, and to reflect on progress the MCWP has addressed in racial and ethnic disparities.

This report is organized into four sections. The first section describes the ongoing work of the implementation of the MCWP. The following section discusses the outcomes of the workforce system portion of the MCWP, first overall, by demographic characteristics, and then by agency. The next section discusses the role of upskilling in the region, its role in the MCWP, and outcomes for Year Two upskilling completers. The final section provides conclusions and recommendations, assessing the extent to whether set goals are being met while also thinking through the implications of meeting or not meeting these goals.

## IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES, SERVICES AND PARTNERSHIPS

This section of the report presents the four MCWP primary strategies, highlighting some of the innovative opportunities created by workforce development partners in the Austin metro area during FY 2019 in support of each strategy, including challenges faced and practical next steps. The discussion of primary strategies is followed by the description of a few (out of the many) Austin area organizations partnering to support the mission of the workforce development organizations contributing data for this report. The last section illustrates an example of the many partnerships maintained to support the mission of one workforce development organization.

### MCWP PRIMARY STRATEGIES

#### ***Awareness and Enrollment: Cultivate Interest in High-demand, Middle-skill Careers***

Workforce development organizations and their partners coordinate a variety of efforts to cultivate interest in high-demand middle-skill careers: information campaigns, career fairs, opportunities for job shadowing and workplace tours, career navigation services, as well as other innovative efforts to increase local awareness of available opportunities. To increase the awareness of high-demand middle-skill careers, two general awareness information campaigns were launched during FY 2019, Trade Up Texas and American Graduate: Getting to Work.

*Trade Up Texas:* Workforce Solutions Capital Area (WFSCA) partnered with Texas Mutual Insurance Company and KVUE-TV to launch Trade Up Texas: an awareness and career exploration campaign to promote training and employment in the skilled trades. Between December 2018 and May 2019, the campaign created six videos to showcase local skilled trade workers talking about their jobs and demonstrating their work. The campaign included KVUE-TV on-air and online ads, as well as news coverage. All Trade Up Texas promotional content provided a link to the Trade up Texas webpage where individuals could provide contact information and indicate their interest in the skilled trades (<https://www.tradeuptexas.org/>). WFSCA experienced an overwhelming response from more than 2,000 interested individuals. WFSCA staff emailed respondents information regarding various training and employment opportunities. In addition, Texas Mutual Insurance sponsored a two day Apprenticeship Showcase at the end of May 2019: a venue where training programs and employers could meet prospective participants and employees. The event showcased 40 employers and training

programs and was attended by over 200 Austin area residents. To identify the impact of the Trade Up Texas campaign, WFSCA will compare apprenticeship enrollment for a period prior to the Trade Up Texas campaign, with the number of individuals entering registered apprenticeships throughout the duration of the Trade Up Texas campaign and a time period following the Apprenticeship Showcase.

*American Graduate: Getting to Work:* KLRU-TV (Austin Public Broadcasting Service) received a grant from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) to advance local education and career readiness. KLRU-TV partnered with WFSCA, and other area workforce development organizations and leaders, to create 29 videos to raise awareness of local workforce issues: highlighting area residents telling stories of their experience receiving training and services from local workforce development training providers to enter high-demand jobs that pay livable wages. The campaign (similar to the KVUE-TV effort) included KLRU-TV on-air and online content, providing links to WFSCA, Workforce Solutions Rural Capital Area (WSRCA), and ACC.

Other local efforts to raise awareness of middle-skill training and employment opportunities include community wide career fairs such as: The City of Austin annual Career Expo typically attended by over 100 employers; the WFSCA coordinated Working in Austin Career Exploration and Job Shadow Event targeting opportunity youth; and the annual Hiring Red White and You job fairs targeting veteran job and training seekers sponsored in three metro area communities by WFSCA and WFSRCA.

In addition to information campaigns and job fairs, WFSCA coordinated an effort with local ISD's and employers to invite area teachers to increase their knowledge of local employment opportunities and the skills employers are looking for. In June 2019, WFSCA placed more than 50 teachers from Austin and Pflugerville ISDs, and IDEA Public Schools with 24 businesses around the Austin metro area to participate in a three-day externship. The teachers had the opportunity to learn firsthand what skills local employers need and what career opportunities their students may have in various industries including healthcare, information technology, manufacturing, and others. At the conclusion of the program, each teacher created a lesson plan to share what they had learned with their students and colleagues in the upcoming academic year.

Many workforce development organizations offer career exploration opportunities by

incorporating into their curriculum career navigation assistance, worksite visits, job shadowing opportunities, and invite area workers and employers to act as mentors to meet with program participants, and cohorts of students, to share meaningful information about working in their prospective fields. Career navigation involves assisting individuals to self-assess and identify a career path aligned with their strengths and interests; understand the training and education requirements for the job they seek; and provide information on accessing the education and training needed to achieve the goal. Two examples of area programs providing career navigation services include the WFSCA Workforce Career and Education Outreach Specialist Pilot Program and the Goodwill of Central Texas Fast Track upskilling opportunity.

Goodwill of Central Texas provides services to individuals with significant barriers to employment. Individuals seeking services who are interested in employment assistance only, are often referred to Goodwill Human Resources through the Fast Track upskilling program. Approximately 25 percent of referred individuals are hired by Goodwill to work in Goodwill stores or placed in temporary employment through the Goodwill Staffing Group (GSG): GSG provides temporary and temporary-to-permanent staffing services for local industries. Supervisors and managers then support staff in accessing Goodwill case management services, which includes career navigation and occupational training.

Efforts to assist area youth to explore career options were expanded through TWC Workforce Career and Education Outreach Specialist Grants. TWC awarded funding to WFSCA to provide career and education outreach services to five area title one high schools and middle schools. Outreach services provided by four specialists include one-on-one career navigation assistance for students, career awareness presentations to groups, and access to online career profiles that deliver information on the education/skills required for various occupations as well as information on future opportunities and salary expectations. In addition to providing services directly to students, the team offers support and training for educators, administrators, and parents as they prepare students for their future careers.

Austin metro area workforce development partners have invested time, talent and money in a number of initiatives to increase awareness of high-demand middle-skill careers, yet few systems are in place to track the effectiveness of these efforts. The Trade Up Texas and American Graduate: Getting to Work campaigns created impressive products; however, researchers are unable to estimate the return on these investments. To guide future awareness

strategies, it is imperative to gain an understanding of the effectiveness of awareness campaigns and other initiatives. Future project implementation plans must include a systematic tracking of individuals who enter training programs and/or benefit from employment services as an effect of information learned as a result of the awareness initiatives. For example, including on all initial applications a question regarding how the individual learned of the program, and entering this information into a data system. Further, tracking for each program participant, in a manner that is easily accessible for evaluation, the types of services received that promote their awareness of career options.

### ***Training: Equip Workers with the Skills They Need to Succeed***

Efforts to meet the needs of middle-skill employers in the career areas of focus identified in the MCWP include engaging employers to advise curriculum development to ensure skills training aligns with their needs; expanding program training capacity while increasing access to training for economically disadvantaged residents; as well as creating systems and procedures to encourage training participants to persist and complete training. Local efforts to align training program curriculum with employer's current needs are represented here by the Skillpoint Alliance (Skillpoint) mentorship program, and Austin Community College's (ACC) ongoing work with the Plumbers and Pipefitters Local Union 286 to institute an associate's degree in construction management for union apprentices.

In FY 2018, Skillpoint received support from the Michael and Susan Dell Foundation to develop and implement a mentorship program. Skillpoint staff with experience in high school and secondary education mentorship programs designed the local model. The goal of the program is to strengthen industry employer partnerships and help participants navigate their initial entrance into the industry. The mentorship model relies upon industry employers to participate as mentors to inform curriculum and provide relevant conversations with participants about the industry and the culture of the industry. Mentors for the pre-apprentice plumbing and electrical programs are invited to classes throughout the four weeks of instruction and to attend the graduation skills challenge, where program graduates have an opportunity to demonstrate the skills they have learned to prospective employers.

The Plumbers & Pipefitters Local Union 286 identified an industry need for journeymen to be prepared to enter foreman positions. The Union worked with ACC to establish a pathway for apprentices to learn management skills and earn an associate's degree in construction



management. The program includes an articulation agreement that provides credit for prior learning for skills learned through the apprenticeship program and identifies five ACC management courses apprentices will enroll in during their apprenticeship training to complete their associate's degree.

Increasing enrollment within established training providers to meet the demand for middle-skill workers is a function of two elements: 1) enrolling current classes to full capacity, and 2) increasing the number of class and/or slots available. Organizations apply a variety of strategies to enroll classes/slots to full capacity, including outreach to other programs and social service organizations, attending career and job fairs, working with high school program coordinators, and online/social media announcements to mention a few. Presented here are programs developed in FY 2019 that created new training opportunities increasing enrollment capacity in middle-skill training: Certified Production Technician (CPT) training, Advanced Manufacturing Program (CPT+) and two training opportunities created through TWC High Demand Job Training partnership grants.

The formation of a new ACC Certified Production Technician (CPT) training program was funded by Texas Mutual Insurance Company and the Michael and Susan Dell Foundation. The full-time, five-week program is offered by WFSCA in partnership with ACC and the Austin Regional Manufacturers Association. Eleven people participated in the inaugural cohort in February 2019. A second cohort entered training in August 26, 2019. Also, Skillpoint received funding from Samsung Austin Semiconductor to support the development of curriculum and equipment purchase for an Advanced Manufacturing Program (CPT+). The first Skillpoint CPT+ class enrolled Spring 2020.

Both of these new training programs, CPT and CPT+, are offered at no charge to eligible participants creating opportunities for economically disadvantaged area residents. One source of funding available to participants who are economically disadvantaged and/or have significant barriers to employment is the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) fund. WIOA funding is accessible through training providers certified by TWC and are included on the Eligible Training Providers List (ETPL). WFSCA has been working to expand access to WIOA funding for area training providers. For example, WFSCA worked with TWC to establish Skillpoint as an eligible training provider so that referring organizations can access WIOA funding for participants. Literacy Coalition of Central Texas (LCCT) has been referring

participants to Skillpoint training programs using Workforce and Education Readiness Continuum (WERC) funds, now LCCT participants and other eligible individuals, can access Skillpoint training using WIOA funding as well. Also, the WFSCA and ACC service integration team has been collaborating to establish a referral process for prospective ACC continuing education students to access WIOA and WERC funding (continuing ed. courses are not Pell grant eligible).

In addition, few Austin metro area apprenticeship programs are currently on the ETPL. Recent legislative changes to the ETPL enrollment process identifies registered apprenticeship programs to be automatically eligible and requires apprenticeship programs to work with local workforce boards to access funding. WFSCA is planning to offer workshops to introduce local apprenticeship programs to the benefits of being on the ETPL. During the workshop programs will learn of the benefits of accessing WIOA funds and provide WFSCA with the necessary program information to access the funding. Typically, for most union apprenticeship programs, the dues structure pays for the cost of the apprenticeship, WIOA funds can provide funding for tools, clothing and shoes needed to do the job, and gas cards.

This section highlights a number of collaborations between area workforce boards, training providers and local businesses. Area Economic Development Corporations (EDC) are also collaborating with workforce boards to create area training capacity in middle-skill occupations. Both WFSCA and Workforce Solutions Rural Capital Area (WFSRCA) were awarded TWC High Demand Job Training (HDJT) grants to match funds provided by area EDCs. The Marble Falls, Burnet, and Llano Economic Development Corporations provided funding matched by the HDJT grant to support the training partnership between the EDC, WFSRCA, and Central Texas College to train 46 students in the following high demand occupations: licensed plumbers and electricians; certified medical assistants; bookkeeping and accounting. Central Texas College will host the courses with all books, tuition, workshop equipment and supplies, and facility rental paid by the grant. Also, the Pflugerville Community Development Corporation (PCDC) partnered with WFSCA and the Travis County Emergency Services District No. 2, to expand the EMT Academy at the Pflugerville Independent School District. PCDC provided funding matched with a HDJT grant to purchase equipment and training supplies.

Increasing capacity and ensuring that all classes are fully enrolled must be supported by

systems and services that encourage students to persist in their training program to achieve their goal. During program orientation, organizations introduce participants to support staff and provide information on available services. Case managers, career coaches, tutors and other staff are available to provide ongoing support and assist with the resolution of the barriers that arise that may influence success. Following are a few examples of recent program enhancements that may contribute to participant success.

Skillpoint staff determined that some Nurse Aide program completers who failed their first certification exam were not returning to test a second time. In response, staff redesigned some program components centered on one key element: The integration of the normalization of failure of the first certification test. The program curriculum was altered to schedule more time for certification exam preparation; the waiting period between program completion and certification testing was reduced; staff stressed the availability of test tutoring services and reinforced second, and if needed, third re-testing (Skillpoint will pay for three test efforts).

Another local training provider, Capital IDEA, is developing a needs assessment algorithm to calculate and objectively identify the areas in which each participant may face challenges, and need more focused support and assistance. Staff are evaluating and refining the use of a participant needs assessment survey, distributed at the beginning of each semester, to assess and categorize participant needs (situational, personal or academic) to efficiently respond to each participant's unique situation. The first participant survey was piloted in August 2019. The student assessment information is intended to identify areas of need for service delivery and guide the equitable assignment of caseloads among Capital IDEA career navigators. Career navigators are also evaluating alternative means of communicating with participants that will be more amenable with participant's busy schedules, such as texting and the use of video conferencing platforms in lieu of face-to-face meetings.

Creating systems to identify and address the barriers potential participants experience, as well as creating systems and procedures to encourage training participants to persist and complete training, are ongoing challenges for all area training providers. Systematic program assessment can generate insights to guide innovative recruitment and retention strategies to support the unique needs of specific populations within the larger group of economically disadvantaged residents programs recruit, enroll and work to retain.

### ***Placement: Connect Employers with Local Talent to Fill Middle-skill Jobs***

Earn and learn program pathways to apprenticeships, internships, and on-the-job training (OJT), as well as mentorship programs, are some of the effective means of introducing employers to local talent to fill middle-skill jobs. A number of area training organizations offer pre-apprenticeship programs that work closely with apprenticeship programs and employers to align curriculum with industry needs and offer venues for participants to meet prospective employers. Though few of these relationships are formal agreements, WFSCA recently provided assistance to establish a formal articulation agreement creating a pathway from the Skillpoint pre-apprentice plumbing program, into the Plumbers and Pipefitters Local Union 286 apprenticeship program.

ACC continues to expand Earn-and-Learn pathways that provide paid work experience for students while they complete their college programs. In 2019, ACC received support from JPMorgan Chase & Co. to expand the Career ACCelerator Program to include IT, healthcare, and manufacturing tracks for low-income students. The Career Accelerator Program offers a self-paced training schedule that allows students to be job-ready in as little as one year. Students receive financial assistance, paid internships, and an opportunity to earn a certificate that counts toward a college degree. ACC partners with the following area employers to expanded Earn and Learn opportunities: Honda, Toyota, Samsung Semiconductor, City of Austin; Baylor, Scott & White, the Austin Regional Manufacturers Association (ARMA), and Ascension Seton.

Some training providers are funded to target services to individuals with significant barriers to employment, such as a history of judicial involvement, and youth who are disconnected from both education and employment (opportunity youth). Significant barriers to employment require policy responses from state regulatory agencies, local government and employers to ensure that qualified individuals are offered opportunities in the middle-skill job market.

Staff working with individuals with a history of judicial involvement refer eligible participants to partner organizations that assist with expunging criminal records and case managers/career coaches work with participants to present judicial involvement history to employers; further, community based training organizations have developed relationships with a number of area fair-chance employers, including the City of Austin and Travis County.

Continuing efforts to work with area employers and regulatory agencies can create

opportunities to connect those with a history of judicial involvement to employment and benefits employers. For example, Johns Hopkins Hospital located in Baltimore, Maryland, found that after “banning the box” on applications and making hiring decisions based on merit and the relevance of prior convictions to particular jobs, hired applicants with a history of judicial involvement had a lower turnover rate than those with no judicial involvement.

Opportunity youth often have little or no prior work experience. American YouthWorks employs a full-time mentor coordinator to work with area employers to implement the Professional Networking Partnership (PNP) program. Through the PNP employers have an opportunity to meet students, assist in developing interview skills, and offer job shadowing opportunities. Further, WFSCA can partner with area employers to financially support on-the-job training for eligible individuals through funding up to 50 percent of eligible new hire’s salary for up to three months. This funding is an opportunity for organizations working with opportunity youth to create partnerships with area employers to encourage employers to take a chance on individuals with little or no prior work experience.

### ***Upskilling: Assist Frontline Workers in Acquiring Skills to Advance into Middle-skill Jobs***

Upskilling is employer sponsored training assistance that provides a path for incumbent workers to acquire skills to advance into middle-skill jobs, particularly those in high demand by employers. Upskilling practices include employer sponsored tuition assistance, onsite training to build employer valued skills, and employer sponsored apprenticeships that allow employees to earn while they learn. Apprenticeship programs combine paid on-the-job training under the supervision of experienced workers with related classroom instruction.

As the Austin metro area workforce development organizations and partners create strategies to encourage workers to obtain additional training that will increase their employment options and wages, a career lattice illustrating various career pathways may assist workers to understand the opportunities available to them. WFSRCA has developed 39 Skill-Based Career Progression Lattices designed to illustrate the various paths that can be taken to advance a career. Each career lattice presents various occupations along a career pathway, including the training required and the resulting typical wage. The WFSRCA career progression lattices flow from an anchor or entry-level occupation to one of the targeted in demand occupations paying a wage of at least \$18.00 per hour.

In FY 2019, TWC awarded WFSCA a Texas Apprenticeship Expansion Grant. The overall goal of this two-year grant is to develop and implement comprehensive strategies to support apprenticeship expansion; engage industry and workforce intermediaries, employers, and other partners to expand and market apprenticeship to new sectors and underserved populations. Two of the initiatives sponsored through this grant included the creation and distribution of the Grow your Talent: The Upskilling Toolkit; and one upskilling effort.

The Grow your Talent: The Upskilling Toolkit, designed to engage area employers in upskilling efforts, is a thoughtful, practical guide. The Toolkit can be used as a roadmap for issues to consider and questions to ask when assessing an organization's upskilling capacity and options. In addition, the toolkit presents different upskilling methods and explains the value for employers in partnering with WFSCA in the assessment, design and implementation of upskilling opportunities for incumbent workers.

In partnership, WFSCA, Baylor Scott and White Health (BS&W) and ACC created a Certified Medical Assistant apprenticeship program. BS&W have identified a critical need at their facilities for trained workers in this job. The first cohort of 20 BS&W incumbent workers enrolled in September, 2019. This rapid training model condensed 9 months of training into 9 ½ weeks. BS&W incumbent workers received 1,000 hours of credit for prior learning toward the 2,000 required hours of the apprenticeship program and attended training full-time while receiving a \$10/hour wage. Following the ACC training, BS&W provided a BS&W onsite 600 hours preceptorship that included training on the institutions medical record software.

Another upskilling initiative, using funds provided by MSDF and Google is the Capital Idea & St. David's Upskilling ATX program. These two partners recently entered into an agreement with WFSCA to implement a two-year pilot program to upskill selected low-income incumbent works. The program will prepare workers for an in-demand, middle-skill healthcare career designated for expansion within the St. David's HealthCare system. Participants are required to continue full-time employment while working toward an associate's degree at ACC. Participants will receive free tuition and books, as well as Capital IDEA's wraparound student support services. The pilot program will serve 15 employees, the first cohort entered the program in the Fall 2019, and the second cohort entered in Spring 2020.

Participants achieved a 100% pass rate for the National Medical Assistant exam with scores 90% or higher. Additional funding has been secured and a second cohort of 10 individuals

will enter the program in May 2020.

Challenges for programs to overcome when implementing a similar apprenticeship and other upskilling opportunities in the health care field include: limited access to a medical simulation lab (labs can be in short supply), limited availability of clinical training sites; institutions may have a limited capacity to pay participants an hourly wage, or be unable to provide needed full-time work relief by paying full salaries while reducing hours worked for participants pursue training; also the cost to the training institution may be greater than the cost per participant allowed by the TWC grant (TWC allows \$4,500).

## **DISCUSSION**

In FY 2019, in support of the MCWP, the Austin metro area workforce development organizations worked with a number of partners to increase the community's awareness of high-demand, middle-skill careers. Training programs developed new partnerships and existing partnerships were strengthened; challenges were resolved to implement new pathways to increase the options for area residents to enter training. This report highlights a few of these initiatives that challenge and inspire the Austin metro community to consider the next steps to advance opportunities for economically disadvantaged families while meeting the needs of area employers to hire qualified Austin area residents to fill middle-skill jobs. Presented here is a list of options for consideration.

As the Austin metro workforce development community expands efforts to increase the number of residents earning middle-skill credentials to increase their earning capacity, collaborations between training partners, local businesses, economic development entities, and support services are expanding to create new and strengthen existing partnerships. Indeed, collaborations and strong partnerships are the web that supports program creation, flexibility, and success. The descriptions of the collaborations and partnerships presented in this report do not adequately represent the hours, days, weeks and sometimes years of hard work that may be involved in building trusting relationships, nor has this report adequately described the various barriers overcome to create opportunities. Organizations need to identify dedicated staff who will devote the time required to pursue strong, enduring partnerships: relationships that can create fresh approaches and address the barriers often encountered in developing collaborations.

Best practices demonstrate the importance of including in the implementation plans for



awareness campaigns and other recruitment efforts strategies for measuring the effect of the effort. Ideally these would include a tracking referral sources for all individuals seeking training or employment assistance. Identifying and implementing a system for tracking referral sources would improve researchers' ability for detailed referral analysis.

In an effort to ensure enrollment capacity is met for all training cohorts, researchers recommend the following:

- Creating an online system for training programs to alert area organizations, case managers, career navigators and other individuals working with economically disadvantaged residents of the availability of training slots and program eligibility requirements. For example: an organization could send an email alert to a group of specific individuals working with potential participants when seeking to fill the remaining two slots for a training that begins in a few days.
- Seek funding to launch a pilot training program that pays a stipend to unemployed individuals who enter full-time, short-term (4-8 week) training programs to evaluate if stipends increase enrollment and retention.
- Offer training in the language best suited for potential participants. Some area residents learn best in a language other than English. The Literacy Coalition of Central Texas English at Work model, can assist programs to effectively provide training while preparing participants to thrive in an English language dominant workplace.

The relationships that training program staff forge with individuals representing employers are often personal and exist overtime, built on open communication and mutual trust. To strengthen connections between employers and training participants, training organizations can work with WFSCA to institute these options.

- Continue to add programs to the ETPL so participants can access WIOA funding,
- Develop on-the-job training opportunities, and
- Develop articulation agreements between community-based training providers, employers and ACC to create pathways for continued training and education.

## OUTCOMES: WORKFORCE TRAINING AND EDUCATION

Outcomes presented include all low-income participants who enrolled in or completed occupational skills training or an Associate Degree program within MCWP target sectors.<sup>5,i</sup> A list of relevant definitions is included in Appendix A.

### OVERALL RESULTS

MCWP focuses on completing, and finding higher earning employment toward specific numeric targets, which are the focus on this section. Though the number of enrollees and completers declined in Year Two from Year One, more Year Two completers found employment at higher wages in the first quarter after completing their program than either those in Year One or in the Baseline year (Table 1). In Year One, 72% of completers found employment in the first quarter after completing a program and 31% of completers earned above 200% FPG wages. In Year Two, 77% of completers found employment in the first quarter after completing a program and 36% of completers earned above 200% FPG wages.

**Table 1. Enrollment, Completion, and One Quarter Outcome Numbers, by Year**

Year	Enrollees	Completers	Employed (1 Qtr)	Above 200% FPG (1 Qtr)
Baseline	6,750	931	687	256
Year 1	6,027	1,679	1,217	517
Year 2 (current)	5,986	1,650	1,267	595

Initial outcomes do not reflect the pathways of individuals on their journey to secure well-paying employment, an important aspect of lifting individuals out of poverty. Year One completers, a full year after completing their program, found employment at higher rates and earned more than their initial quarter of earnings suggested, lifting additional completers out of poverty. A larger number of Year One completers, one year out, found employment and earned wages above poverty compared to the Baseline year completers (Table 2). For these longer-frame outcomes, 84% of Year One completers found employment and 39% of completers earned above 200% FPG.

---

<sup>5</sup> Occupational skills training includes training that results in a non-degree credential such as a certificate, industry certification, and licenses. Future regional work will also include apprenticeship certifications.

**Table 2. One Year Outcome Numbers, by Year**

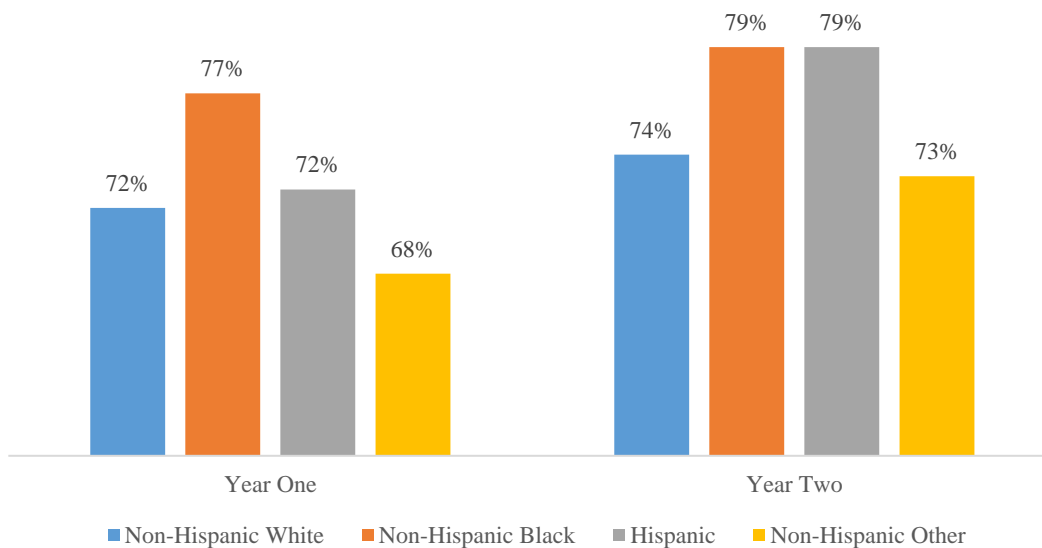
	Employed (1 Yr)	Above 200% FPG (1 Yr)
Baseline	799	362
Year 1	1,413	652

## DEMOGRAPHIC-LEVEL RESULTS

By attempting to lift individuals and their families out of poverty, the MCWP inherently focuses working to resolve employment racial and ethnic divides in our community. In Year Two, just over 60% (64%) of enrollees came from communities of color (Non-Hispanic Black, Hispanic, or Non-Hispanic Other) and just under two-thirds (68%) of completers were from communities of color. Though a slightly smaller share of enrollees and completers were from communities of color in Year One, these individuals reflect a large portion of the population served by the MCWP.

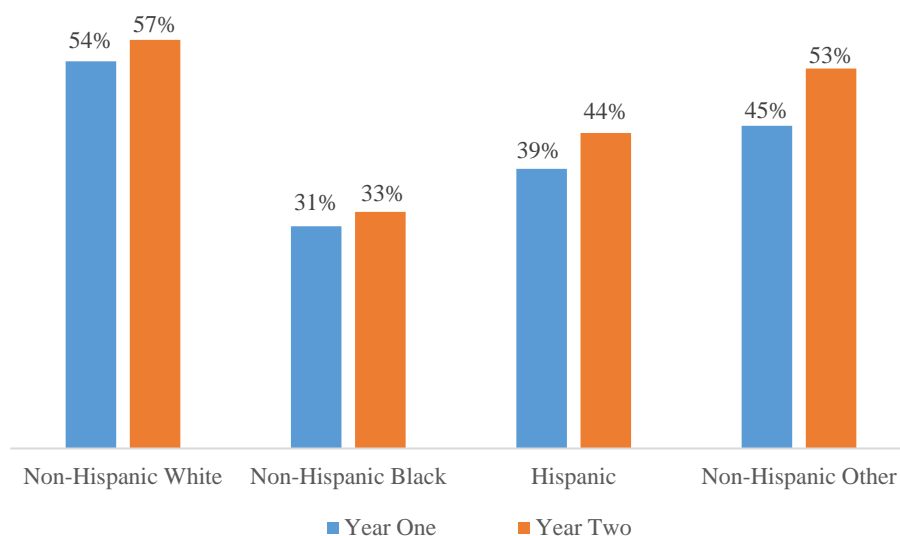
The share of completers finding employment varied by year completed and race/ethnicity, with non-Hispanic Black completers finding immediate employment at higher rates (77%) than their counterparts for Year One and similar rates (79%) as Hispanic completers in Year Two (Figure 1).

**Figure 1. Share of Employed Completers (1Qtr), by Race/Ethnicity and Year**



Though finding employment at higher rates than their contemporaries, non-Hispanic Black completers were much less likely than other completers to earn above 200% FPG wages (Figure 2). This gap in earnings persists across both Year One and Year Two completers. If every race/ethnicity found immediate employment with earnings above poverty at the same rates as non-Hispanic Whites, roughly an additional 130 employed completers in each year could have been moved above poverty.

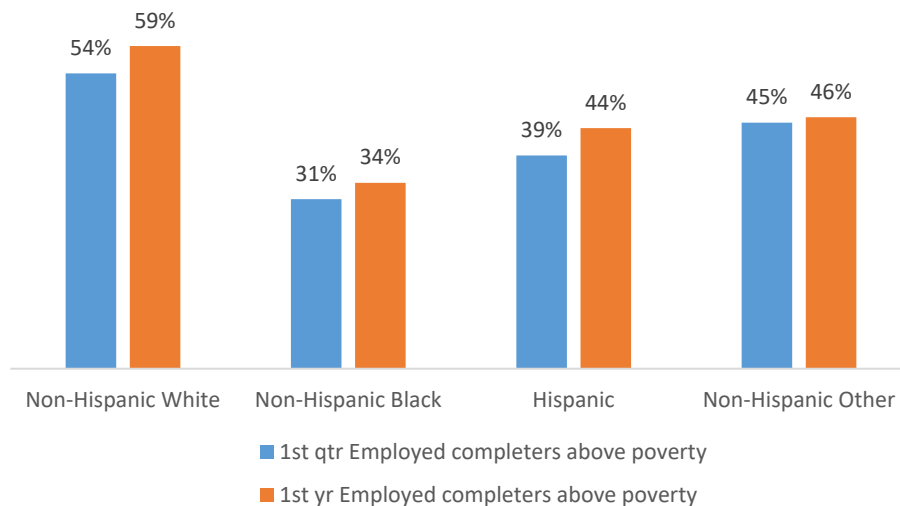
**Figure 2. Share of Employed Completers Earning Above Poverty, by Race/Ethnicity**



Note: All other poverty graphics refer to the share of completers who earned above 200% FPG wages. For this demographic breakdown, researchers seek to highlight earnings differences across groups specifically for those whom we know found employment.

Unfortunately, this earnings gap persisted or expanded for Year One completers, with nearly 60% of non-Hispanic White employed completers earning above 200% FPG, but just barely over a third of non-Hispanic Black and just over two-fifths of Hispanic employed completers earning above poverty (Figure 3).

**Figure 3. Year One Share of Completers Employed and Earning Above 200% FPG Over Time, by Race/Ethnicity**



These poverty gaps reflect some industry-specific and gender differences. Men are more likely to complete skilled trades and information technology programs than women, who are more likely to enter the healthcare industry. Breaking down median earnings for Year One employed completers by industry, race/ethnicity, and gender demonstrates that non-Hispanic Black and Hispanic men and women in their most common fields of education and training earn less than their same-gendered non-Hispanic White counterparts (Table 3). The largest earnings differences for men occur in the skilled trades industry, with the median difference in one-year post-completion earnings between non-Hispanic White males and non-Hispanic Black males of \$9,320. The second largest earnings difference for men was in the IT industry, with the median difference between Hispanic males and non-Hispanic White males of more than \$8,207 in the year after completing training. The largest earnings differences for women occur also in the skilled trades industry, with the median difference between Hispanic females and non-Hispanic White females of \$10,965 in the year after completing training. The second largest earnings differences for women occur in the healthcare industry, with the median difference between non-Hispanic Black females and non-Hispanic White females of \$10,351 in the year after completing training. The smallest gender race/ethnicity difference is \$975 between Hispanic and non-Hispanic White females in the IT industry.

**Table 3. Median Annual Earnings for Employed Year One Completers  
One Year Post-Completion<sup>6</sup>**

	Healthcare	Information Technology	Skilled Trades
Male White	\$31,771	\$29,550	\$32,669
Male Black			\$23,349
Male Hispanic	\$29,958	\$21,343	\$28,785
Female White	\$30,841	\$27,033	\$27,221
Female Black	\$20,491		
Female Hispanic	\$23,654	\$26,058	\$16,256

Note: Shaded areas indicate 15 or fewer individuals.

While these differences in earnings are most likely related to the type of program individuals complete, the MCWP continues its commitment to delve deeply into data, disaggregate it for consideration, develop plans to address access to programs, and work on changes to address these gaps.

## AGENCY-LEVEL RESULTS

### *Enrollment*

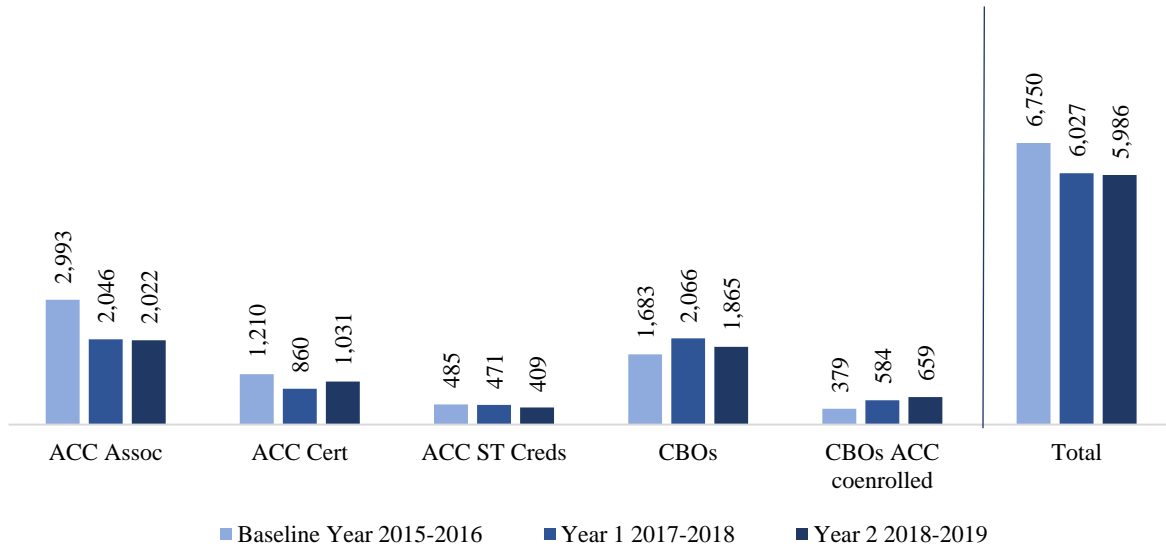
Enrollment between Year One and Year Two saw a slight decline. (Figure 5). In Year Two, the region enrolled 5,986, or 41 fewer enrollees than Year One.<sup>7</sup> While the overall numbers remained relatively steady, enrollment in ACC increased by 160 while enrollment in CBOs decreased by 126.<sup>8</sup> Enrollment for individuals in both an ACC and a CBO program increased by 13%, or an additional 75 participants.

<sup>6</sup> Readers should note that, though the 200% FPG threshold for individual Year One completers is roughly \$24,000, wherever possible, researchers used household size to determine the FPG, and so many of these individuals would require higher earnings to account for larger household size in order to earn above 200% FPG. It's also true that some individuals completed a program outside these three sectors (e.g., in a Business-related field) and their information, while not represented in this chart, is included in the overall outcomes.

<sup>7</sup> ACC enrolled 11,758 individuals not co-enrolled in a CBO program in MCWP-focused educational programs during Year One. In Year Two, ACC enrolled 13,257 individuals. Presented numbers include only those classified as low-income. For more information on this classification, please see the Definitions section or the Baseline Report.

<sup>8</sup> The Year Two report includes a change in methodology related to how individuals participating in WFSCA and WFSRC are pulled from The Workforce Information System of Texas (TWIST).

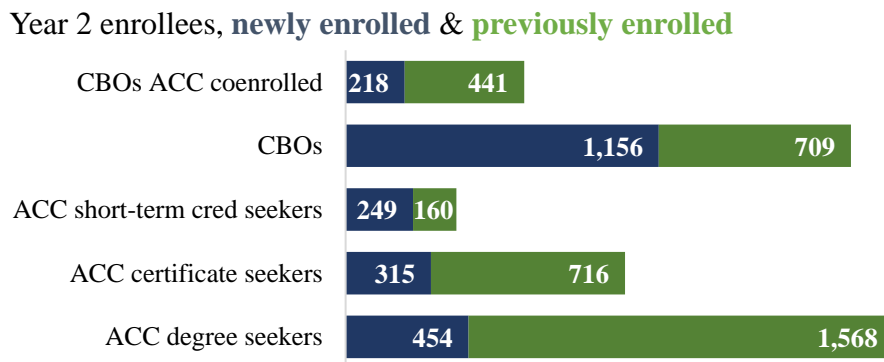
**Figure 4. Enrollment by Year and Organization**



### ***Enrollment Status***

Program enrollees include those who newly enrolled (those who enrolled for the first time during Year Two) and those previously enrolled (those who enrolled in a prior period but have neither completed nor withdrawn from a program). For enrollees in CBO programs or ACC’s short-term credential seekers, both of which generally provide shorter length education and training programs, the majority (roughly 60%) newly enrolled in Year Two (Figure 6). For longer length programs at ACC (their certificate and degree seekers) and individuals participating in a CBO program that co-enrolls at ACC, most participants in Year Two were previously enrolled (between 78% and 67%).

**Figure 5. Year Two Enrollment Status**

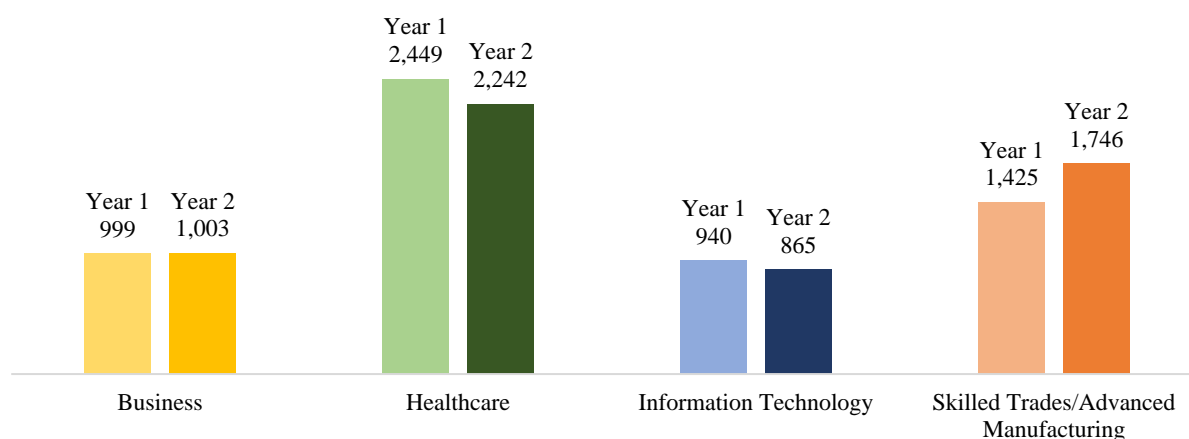




## Sector of Enrollment

The most popular program sector participants enrolled in during both Year One and Year Two was Healthcare (roughly 40% of enrollments), followed by Skilled Trades/Advanced Manufacturing which increased from 24% to 29% of enrollment between the two years (Figure 7). Enrollment in Business and Information Technology each comprising approximately 15% of program enrollment.<sup>9</sup>

**Figure 6. Sector of Program Enrollment<sup>10</sup>**



## Completion

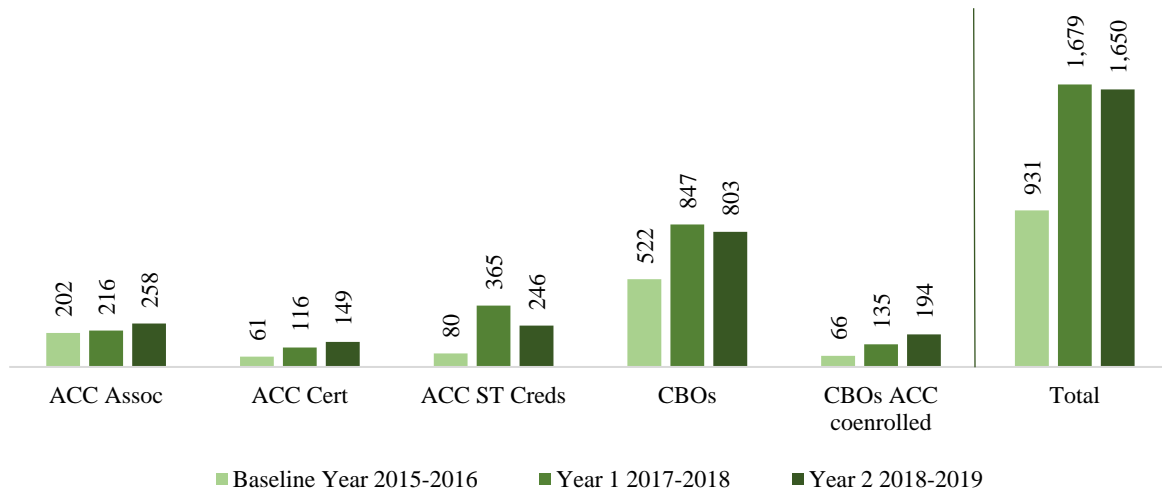
The region graduated 1,650 participants in the Year Two representing relatively stable completion numbers (Figure 8).<sup>11</sup> Though total numbers declined an increase in the number of individuals completing both an ACC and a CBO program means that both ACC and CBOs increased the number of completed by 15 between Year One and Year Two.

<sup>9</sup> Individuals select a program at entry but note they may complete in another program or another sector. This change is unlikely for those enrolled in a CBO program but does occur more often for those enrolled in an ACC program.

<sup>10</sup> As a small number of individuals enrolled in other sectors, totals will not equal all enrollees.

<sup>11</sup> ACC completed 2,392 individuals not co-enrolled in a CBO program in MCWP-focused educational programs during Year One; presented numbers include only those classified as low-income. For more information on this classification, please see the Baseline Report.

**Figure 7. Year One Completers, by Organization Type**



Note: Variation in the number of completers of ACC short-term credentials from year to year may be the result of irregularities in the timing of official reporting of completions due to issues with staffing and tracking systems.

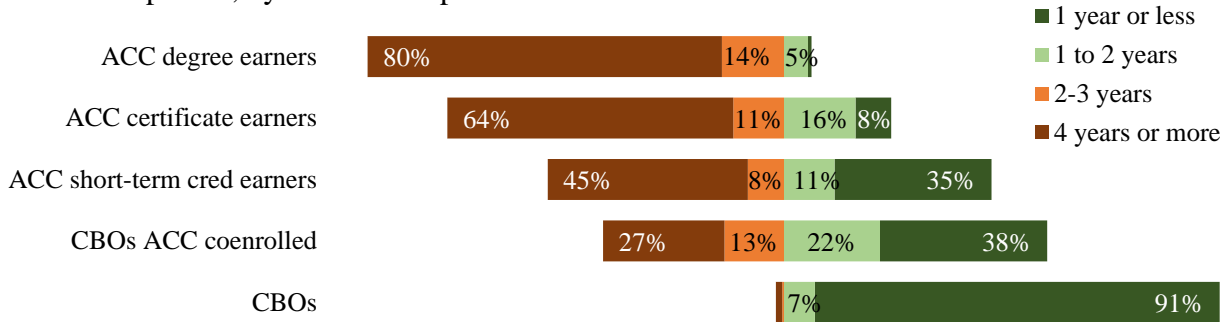
### *Time to Completion*

Year Two completers took varying amounts of time to complete, though this varied substantially by which type of program they completed, with 80% of low-income ACC completers taking 4 or more years to complete an Associate's Degree, while 91% of those who completed a CBO program took 1 year or less to complete (Figure 9). Time to completion does not denote the length of time to complete a program if attending a program full-time, but rather for those who completed in Year Two how long they took to complete. For example, Associate's degrees at ACC typically require that students complete 60 semester credit hours in their program of study. College-ready students attending full-time may complete their program in two years. However, many students will take longer to complete the degree because they are enrolled part-time, or because they are not yet college-ready. On average over the last five years, 78% of credit students were enrolled part-time during the fall semester. Between 10% and 32% of first time students enrolled in the fall were not college-ready in at least one subject (reading, writing, math).<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Information provided by ACC staff.

**Figure 8. Year Two Time to Completion**

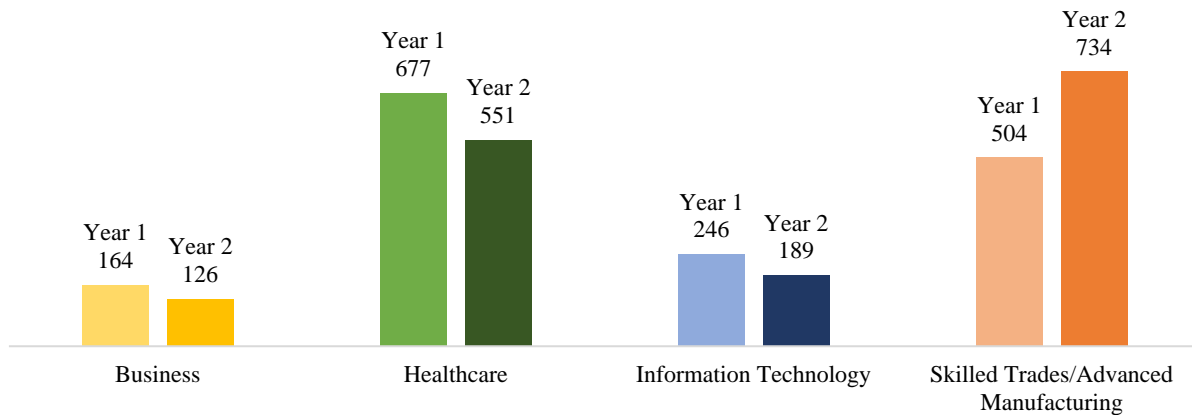
Year 2 completers, by time to completion



### ***Sector of Completion***

An increase in the number of Skilled Trades/Advanced Manufacturing completers between Year One and Year Two made that sector the largest (44%) for regional completers, followed by the Healthcare sector at 33% (Figure 10). Enrollment in Business and Information Technology each comprise the smallest share of completers, approximately 10%.<sup>13</sup>

**Figure 9. Sector of Program Completion<sup>14</sup>**



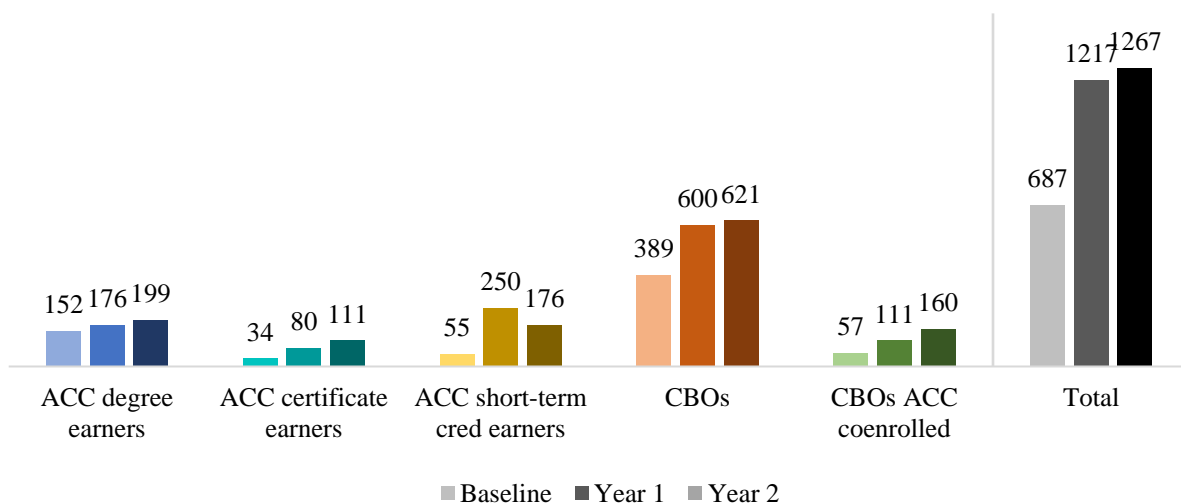
<sup>13</sup> Individuals select a program at entry and for a few CBO participants and all ACC enrollees they may complete in another program or another sector.

<sup>14</sup> A small share of students completed in a sector outside these four, so totals across sector will not equal all completers presented in other charts.

## Employment

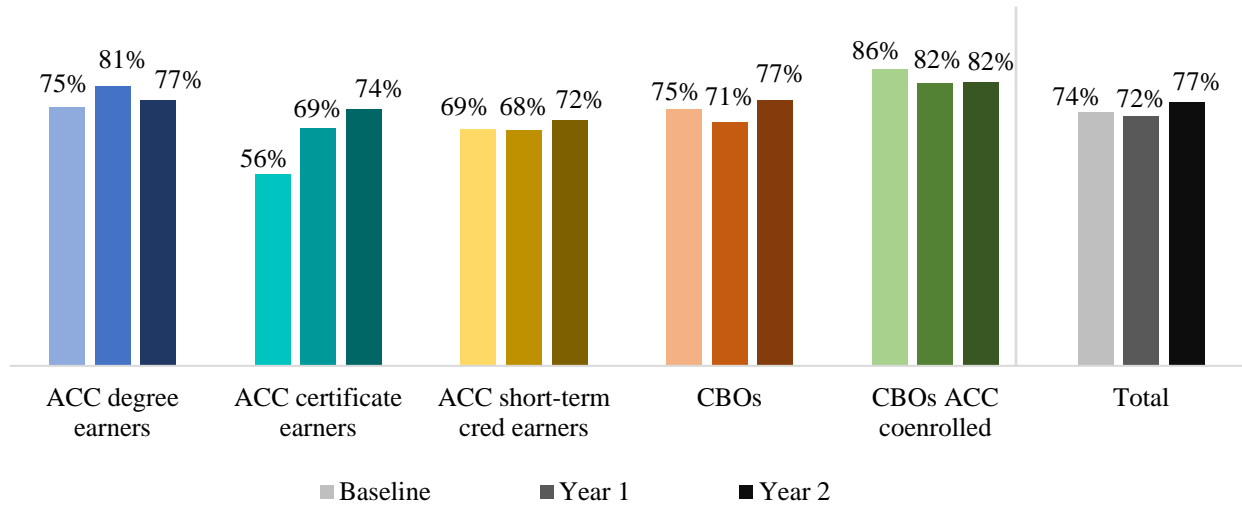
Researchers linked Year Two completers to Texas employment records to determine employment status and earnings (Figure 11). Completer outcomes presented here measure their employment and earnings the quarter following their completion. Despite a decline in regional program enrollment and completion, the number of completers finding employment increased from Year One to Year Two.

**Figure 10. Employment Numbers, 1<sup>st</sup> Qtr After Program Completion**



The share of completers finding employment also increased for Year Two completers compared to Year One, with 77% of completers finding employment after completing a program (Figure 12).

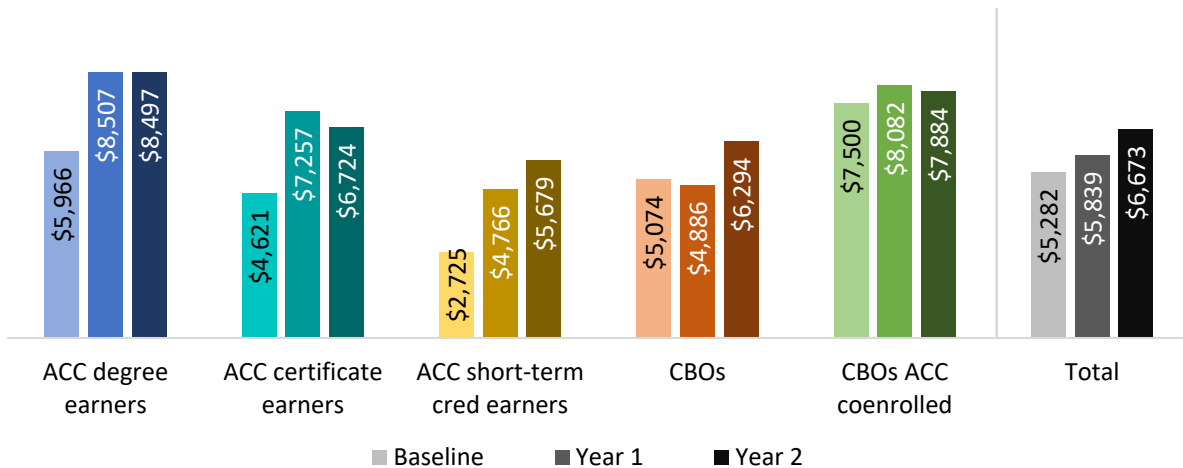
**Figure 11. Share of Employed Completers, 1<sup>st</sup> Qtr Post Completion**



## Earnings

Median quarterly earnings for the first quarter after completing a program also increased between Year One and Year Two (Figure 13).

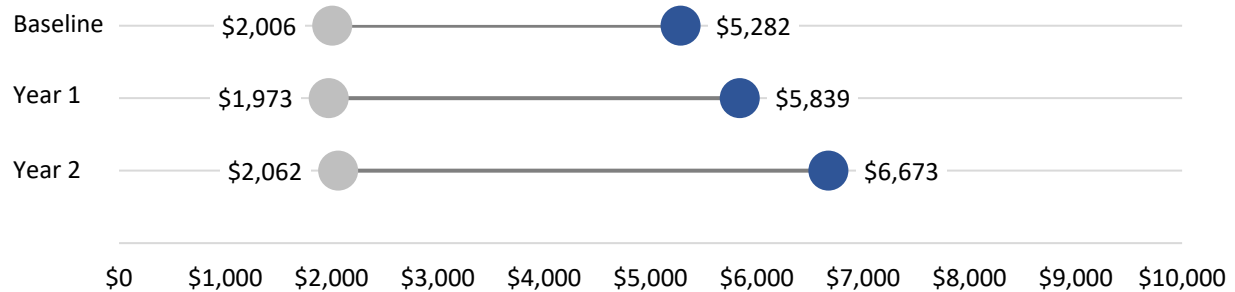
**Figure 12. Median Quarterly Earnings for Employed Completers 1<sup>st</sup> Qtr Post Completion**



These earnings increases are also reflected across years when considering income prior to enrolling in a program (Figure 14).

**Figure 13. Median Earnings Pre/Post Program**

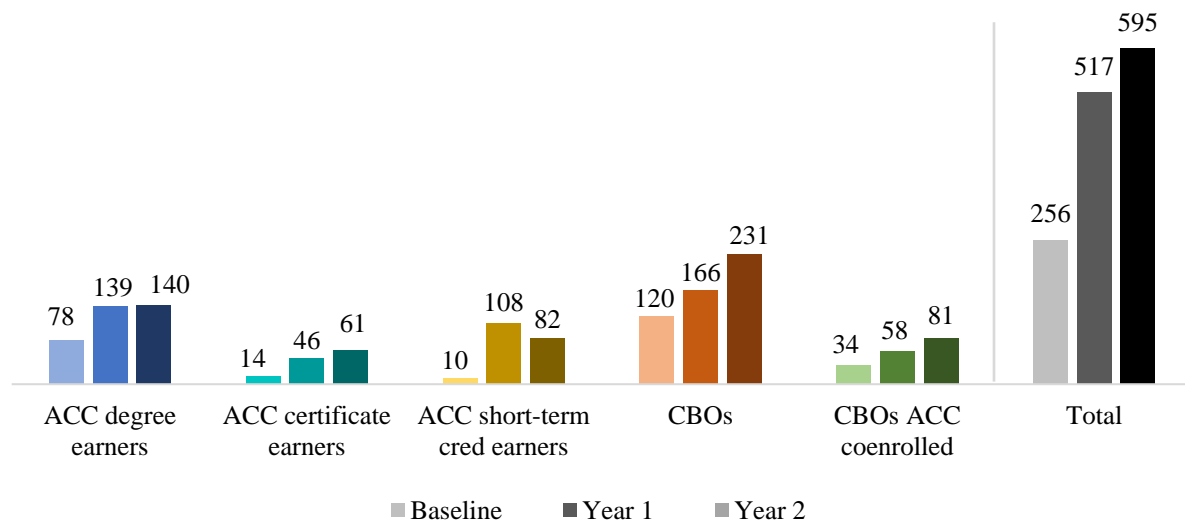
1 year prior to program entry to 1 quarter post program completion



### Poverty

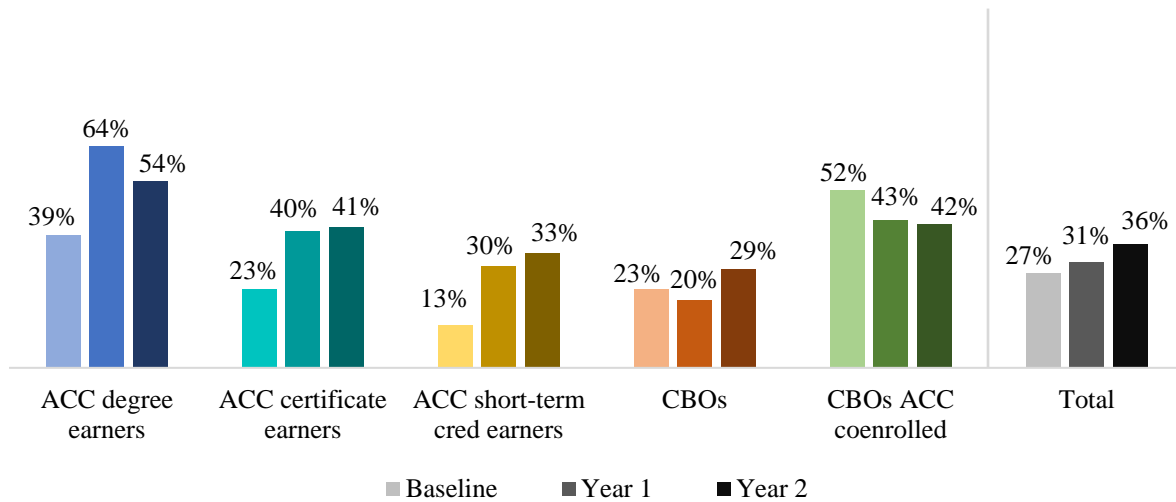
More completers found jobs paying above poverty in Year Two than in Year One (Figure 15). These increases were mostly led by CBO programs, either independently or in collaboration with an ACC program.

**Figure 14. Number of Completers Earning Above 200% FPG, 1<sup>st</sup> Qtr Post Completion**



A higher share of Year Two completers (36%) found employment earning above poverty wages than their Year One counterparts (31%) initially did (Figure 16).

**Figure 15. Share of Completers Earning Above 200% FPG, 1<sup>st</sup> Qtr Post Completion**

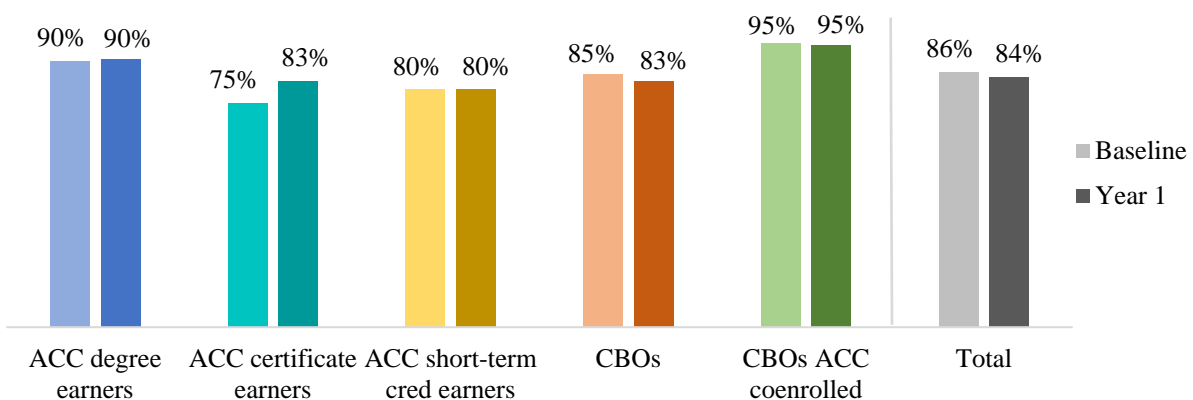


## YEAR ONE UPDATE

### *Employment*

Though the share of low-income program graduates finding employment declined slightly between the Baseline Year and Year One, the larger number of completers in Year One results in an increase of those finding employment (799 vs. 1,413) (Figure 17).

**Figure 16. Share of Employed Completers One Year Post Exit, By Completion Year**

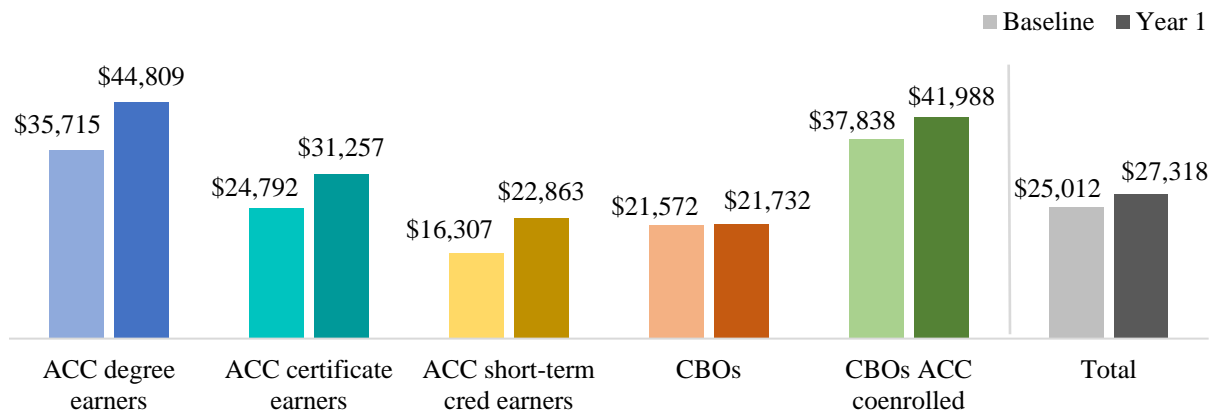




## Earnings

Employed completers' yearlong median earnings increased between the Baseline Year and Year One by \$2,306, despite the large increase in the number of individuals finding employment (Figure 18).

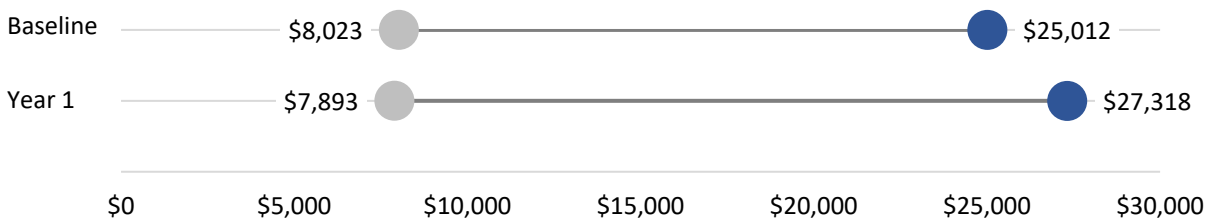
**Figure 17. Median Annual Earnings 1 Year Post Exit**



Employed completers experience significant increases in their yearly earnings compared to earnings the year prior to program entry (Figure 19). Year One employed completers experienced greater increases than Baseline year completers.

**Figure 18. Increase in Annual Earnings for Employed Completters**

1 year prior to program entry to 1 year post program completion

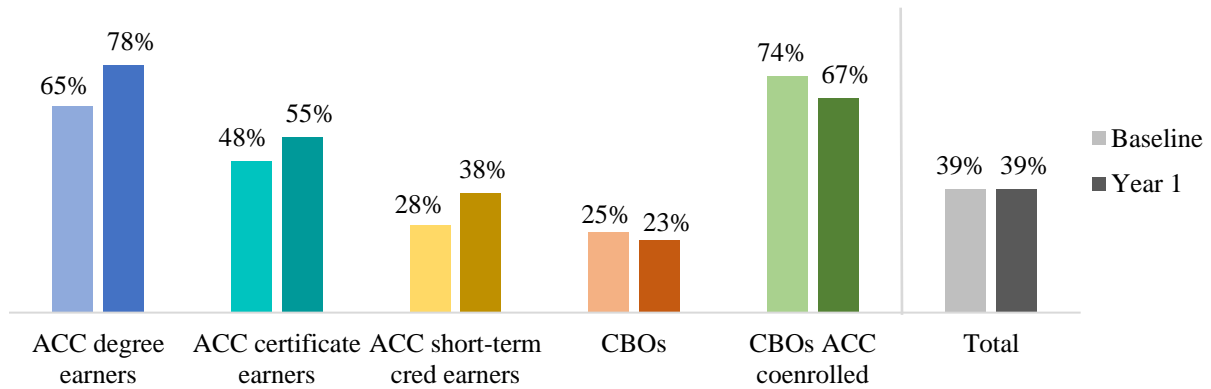


## Poverty

Despite a significant rise in the number of completers between the Baseline Year (931) and Year One (1,679), nearly 40% of completers found employment above poverty (Figure 20). Thus, in the Baseline Year 362 completers found employment above 200% of FPG while in Year

One that figure increased to 652.

**Figure 19. Share of Completers Above Poverty, 1 Year Post Completion**



## OUTCOMES: UPSKILLING

### OVERVIEW

Upskilling is assisting incumbent workers in acquiring skills to advance into middle-skill jobs, particularly those in high demand for their employers. Upskilling includes efforts such as employee tuition assistance, onsite training, and apprenticeships. Upskilling individuals typically remain employed while they engage in training and education with the prospect of higher earnings and responsibility from their current employer upon completion. Upskilling makes sense for employers, particularly those in need of employees possessing high demand skills. According to a Career Builder survey, during 2016-2017 over 60% of employers posted positions that remained vacant for 12 weeks, adding extra costs to the companies in lost productivity estimated at roughly \$800,000 per year.<sup>15</sup> While utilizing employer resources to develop and coordinate training, controlling the pipeline of workers within a company offers the advantage of tailoring learning to employer-specific circumstances and specifications. But employers do not have to approach upskilling pipelines alone. Incumbent Worker Training grants and the Skills Development Fund are all public-sector grants intended to provide support to employers seeking to upskill their employees.

While we know some of how employers develop and maintain upskilling programs, with or without public-sector support, little to no effort has been made nationwide to examine upskilling efforts across multiple sectors within a single community as the MCWP does. This unprecedented effort involves collecting or laying the groundwork to eventually collect information from apprenticeships, the public sector, private sector publicly-funded initiative, and private sector efforts to upskill employees.

### SKILLS DEVELOPMENT FUND

The Skills Development Fund (SDF) provides employers the opportunity to support training for their staff. When this training occurs through Austin Community College, this evaluation can tally who received training in which sectors. The SDF provided financial support

---

<sup>15</sup> US Chamber of Commerce, Center for Education and Workforce. Upskilling & Reskilling to Remain Competitive. (2020). Available at: <https://www.uschamberfoundation.org/blog/post/upskilling-reskilling-remain-competitive>

to 1,479 enrollees during Year Two, of which 1,465 (99%) passed their related course. Most enrollees (68%) focused on skilled trades/advanced manufacturing while the remaining third (32%) took a course related to healthcare. Though these courses are not usually intended to end with a specific credential, seven participants received a credential, primarily in healthcare.

Of those participating in the SDF, just under a tenth of enrollees (132) were low-income prior to enrollment, all of whom completed their course and earned above 200% FPG the quarter following completion. These individuals are currently tallied in the workforce section of this report and not included in advancement numbers later in this report.

## **APPRENTICESHIPS**

Apprenticeships are a specific type of on-the-job training that combine training with classroom instruction to prepare workers for highly-skilled careers. In the apprenticeship model, workers benefit by receiving targeted contextual work-specific learnings that prepare them for well-paying secure employment. There are typically two types of apprenticeship programs, U.S. Department of Labor registered apprenticeships and employer-led and managed apprenticeships. The focus of this section is on the former, as DOL registered apprenticeship programs place specific requirements on the training organization, including reporting on the number actively in training and the number completed. According to TWC's website, the DOL registered apprenticeship programs perform the following functions:

“Apprenticeship programs deliver training to eligible apprentices who are registered with the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) Office of Apprenticeship and who are full-time, paid employees of partnering private-sector employers. Training programs identify training needs, deliver training, assess apprentices’ achievement of skills, and upon successful completion of apprenticeship training classes DOL Office of Apprenticeship issue certificates that are recognized nationally and often globally.”<sup>16</sup>

Local DOL apprenticeship programs contribute to workforce training in our region, enabling participating individuals the opportunity to earn above 200% FPG while still engaged in

---

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.twc.texas.gov/partners/apprenticeship-training-program-administrators-local-education-agencies#:~:text=Registration%20and%20Standards&text=The%20standards%20require%20that%20an,from%20a%20qualified%20training%20program>.

training. While these programs guarantee a specific level of income, they serve individuals over many years, with programs lasting from four to five years which limits their ability to rapidly scale or increase the numbers of individuals served.

Nineteen organizations provide DOL-registered programs in the region. The annual report of DOL registered apprenticeships show that the region has the capacity to serve 2,496 individuals based on total active approved count, with an average intake of 836 new participants. In Year Two, these programs served 903 new participants, with an additional 186 completing their apprenticeship training. The industries served by these programs include healthcare, IT, as well as skilled trades, but are overwhelming weighted toward skilled trades, which served 89% of Year Two apprentices. The skilled trades include plumbing and pipefitting, electrical, water quality, fire safety, carpentry, sheet metal work, and auto mechanics. All completers in Year Two finished a program in the skilled trades.

A chief advantage of those participating in apprenticeship programs is that individuals do not need to complete the entire program in order to experience earnings increases. Four apprenticeships programs in the skilled trades voluntarily provided their wage tables and apprenticeship numbers by apprenticeship year. This level of detail allowed researchers to determine the number of individuals earning above 200% FPG wages and when in the apprenticeship program they passed that threshold.

For the four programs that provided specific wage tables and apprenticeship progression numbers a total of 1,261 individuals were at any stage of the apprenticeship program (from the first year to the fifth year) with 902 earning above 200% FPG for a household of 2 (at \$15.83/hr or just over \$15/hr), while 359 earned under this amount, but over the 200% FPG for a household of 1 (at \$11.67/hr). For those in the first year of apprenticeship, 21% earned above 200% FPG. For each represented program, all individuals in the second year of apprenticeship earned above 200% FPG for a household of 2. By the fourth year of apprenticeship, all participants earned above 200% FPG for a household of three.

For Year Two participants, 382 newly and previously enrolled participants were moved out of poverty through their apprenticeship program, by either earning above 200% FPG for a household of two during their first year or entered the second year of their apprenticeship program and passed that income threshold. A singular advantage of collected enrollment

numbers and apprenticeship wage scales is that it allows us to also calculate how many individuals would have been brought out of poverty in Year One; assuming those in their second or third year during Year Two were in their first or second year of their apprenticeship during Year One, these four programs moved 269 individuals out of poverty during Year One.

Since apprentices work while engaged in training, these programs add to the skilled workforce pool. Of the four programs with detailed information 1,261 apprentices contributed to the skilled workforce pool. Within those numbers were a total of 166 individuals in their last year of apprenticeship, with 157 completing their apprenticeships to become journeymen.

## MCWP PROJECT ATTAINMENT AND ASSESSMENT

After two years of the MCWP, it makes sense to take a step back and examine how the project has progressed and how it has continued to work toward its goals. However, before discussing the number of individuals in this effort, it is important to note that a large part of the project isn't represented specifically in numbers of individuals served or brought out of poverty, as demonstrated in the Implementation section of this report. The MCWP continues to expand its effort to understand programs and initiatives already underway in the region, lead or collaborate on multiple new initiatives and proposals, continue to respond to the ongoing shifting needs of employers, seek alignment and collaboration across participating MCWP organizations, continue to ask deeper questions about the data collected, as well as seek funding to continue the project and expand efforts. The goal of the MCWP is to develop a deeply collaborative workforce ecosystem out of an often fragmented and diverse workforce education system. Future evaluation reports will continue to develop frameworks through which to evaluate the effectiveness of MCWP in aligning our community's workforce system.

Year Two numbers continued to offer some surprise. As the goals hint, the initial large-scale strategy of the MCWP focused on increasing program enrollment which would in turn lead to higher completion numbers which would then lead to higher numbers of individuals finding employment and eventually earning above 200% FPG. Viewing the project solely as a pipeline through which individuals need simply to be inserted with results coming out the other side appears to offer advantages, but the Year One report demonstrated the importance of maximizing outcomes from those already either already engaged in and recently completed education and training.

In many ways, the goals by themselves describe a desired workforce system rather than simply a tally of numbers. As the MCWP is building toward a more efficient system, rather than look at the total numbers themselves, one manner of examining progress might be to measure whether the systems themselves are approaching the 'ideal' conditions implied by the final goals of the project. Stated goals describe a workforce system where the share of individuals who complete a program and find employment is set at 66.66%, while the share of completers who earn above poverty is set at 57.66%. Even if the project does not meet the numeric goals initially set, reforming the workforce ecosystem so that earnings above poverty remain a continual

community focus such that more than half who complete find high paying employment is a worthy cause.

Using this alternate means of measuring progress, the region already surpasses the percentage goal set for initial employment, with the share of completers finding employment in all years (Baseline, Year One, and Year Two) at higher rates than that implied by project goals, because initial employment exceeds 66.66% of those who completed a program. The starkest regional change occurred with share of completers who earned above poverty wages in the first quarter after completing a program. In the baseline period, just over a quarter (27%) of those who found employment earned above 200% FPG in their initial quarter after completing, less than half the regional goal of 57.66%. By Year One, 31% of completers were successfully linked to above poverty jobs and by Year Two more than a third (36%), an improvement of over 8 percentage points from the Baseline year, significant and important progress for a two year period.

Unfortunately, the economic conditions during the long aftermath of the declaration of the pandemic will likely negatively impact Year Three employment and earnings.



## APPENDIX A: DEFINITIONS

To help clarify the meaning of specific terms in the report, this definition section outlines the key pieces of information once.

Enrollments and outcomes for participants in the community-based workforce training programs are reported collectively under the banner of Community-Based Organizations (CBOs).ii College enrollees in Austin Community College identified as likely to be low-income may enroll in or complete three types of programs: an Associate Degree, a Certificate program, or a short-term credential.<sup>17</sup> Since each of these programs through ACC result in substantially different types of credentials, enrollments and outcomes for students at ACC are broken out for each wherever possible.

Cohorts: This report follows multiple cohorts of workforce system participants over time:

- Baseline participants include individuals who enrolled between the early fall of 2015 through to the end of summer 2016, prior to the implementation of the MCWP;
- Year One participants include individuals who enrolled between the early fall of 2017 through to the end of summer 2018; and,
- Year Two participants include individuals who enrolled between the early fall of 2018 through to the end of summer 2019.

Except where otherwise noted, program participants are low-income. This definition differs slightly based on the source of participants:

- Low-income CBO participants must provide proof of income prior to enrolling in a workforce training program. The threshold for providing services varies slightly (does it) but generally is roughly 200% of Federal Poverty Guidelines.
- ACC enrollees are not required to provide income at time of enrollment and so low-income ACC participants are determined by examining their income the year

---

<sup>17</sup> ACC program types includes those who are seeking and Associates degree, students seeking a specific certificate, and, those in the short-term credential category seeking a continuing education certificate, marketable skills achievement, or field of study credential.

prior to enrolling at ACC. If their income is below 100% of FPG that year then they are classified as low-income. Individuals with no income the previous two years prior to enrolling at ACC are excluded from the analyses.

Participants included in this study are either enrollees or completers:

*Enrollment* represents all individuals in the measured local workforce system during that year. Enrollment represents any individual enrolled in a program during that year, regardless of whether the individual was newly enrolled in that year or whether the individual had previously enrolled in a prior year but had not completed.

*Completers* include anyone who completed a program in that year, regardless of their entry period. So, an individual who started and completed a short-term training program is counted in completion numbers for that year as well as any individual who started a program prior to their completion year is counted in that year's completion numbers.

**NO COMPLETION RATE:** The snapshot approach to enrollment and completion acknowledges that individuals participating in these programs may take time to complete them; the number of completers in relation to the number of enrollees in any given year does not represent a completion rate, since enrollees might be engaged in longer term training. Completers in any year might have entered a program prior to that year.

## APPENDIX B: AUSTIN CAREER INSTITUTE

### Program Description and Eligibility Criteria

Austin Career Institute (ACI) integrates industry-specific English language and literacy instruction with hands-on, living-wage skill training to prepare participants for employment as Heating and Air Conditioning Technicians, and Medical Assistants. ACI is an approved vender by Texas Workforce Commission

#### Austin Career Institute Mission

To lift low income individuals, veterans, displaced or laid off workers and New Americans into better paying, in demand careers through quality, short term education while simultaneously filling industry labor shortages, reducing the amount of government dependency, and strengthening the US economy.

and the US Department of Veterans Affairs. ACI is also an approved testing organization for the EPA refrigeration technician and the medical assistant certifications. Recent facility renovations have expanded the program capacity to serve up to 150 participants.

Eligible participants must be at least 18 years old, have a HSD or GED or take and pass an entrance exam, and speak English or Spanish, or take and pass an English literacy entrance exam. Students interested in completing some course content online are required to complete a Distance Learning Assessment to confirm they are well suited for online coursework. Target populations served include veterans, refugees and limited English speakers.<sup>18</sup>

HVAC training is cohort based serving a maximum of 20 participants in each cohort. Cohorts of students are multilingual with basic English proficiency.<sup>19</sup> When space is available, participants can enter an HVAC class on a rolling basis. ACI collaborates with the *English @ Work* program to develop a curriculum contextualizing and customizing for HVAC employment, providing participants the English skills necessary to be successful in the workplace.<sup>20</sup> Training is also offered in Spanish for cohorts of Spanish proficient participants.<sup>21</sup> HVAC training participants attend 24 hours of instruction each week with evening and weekend instruction available to accommodate employed participants. Instructors are also area employers and act as

<sup>18</sup> Private foundation funding allows the program to offer services to individuals with income up to 250% of FPG.

<sup>19</sup> As needed, ACI offers an intensive four month ESL class for emerging English speakers proficient in a variety of native languages. These students transfer as a cohort into HVAC training.

<sup>20</sup> *English @ Work* is one of the programs offered through the Literacy Coalition of Central Texas.

<sup>21</sup> The EPA refrigeration technician certification exam is available in Spanish.

mentors to provide integrated job readiness training. ACI strives to recruit bilingual and bicultural instructors.<sup>22</sup>

Medical assistance training is designed to accommodate a rolling enrollment process and can serve up to 20 participants. All participants must be English proficient.

### Support Services

ACI has a designated staff person to assist Veterans entering the program and coordinates support services for Veterans and their families with Easterseals Central Texas.<sup>23</sup> ACI career counselors provide career placement assistance and coordinate support services from a number of area organizations, primarily WFSCA. ACI has worked with WFSCA to streamline the participant funding process and to assist participants with a number of supports, including child care subsidies, job placement, interview clothing, work clothing, steel-toed shoes, and subsidized employment up to three months. Participants with job offers can request assistance from WFSCA with the purchase of necessary tools.

ACI job placement services are available indefinitely for program completers.

Table # provides information on the training programs offered, the length of the programs, the employment options for program completers, the diploma or certification earned and the license or certification completing participants are qualified to test for.

---

<sup>22</sup> Information for this description was obtained from the conversations with Shahram Jamali, PE, ME, HVACRC, Director and Amanda Pincock, Director of Career Services at Austin Career Institute, May & June 2019; and the ACI website: <https://www.austincareerinstitute.edu>.

<sup>23</sup> Easterseals Central Texas is a recipient of a Texas Veterans Commission Fund for Veterans' Assistance grant.

**Table B-4. Austin Career Institute Training Programs**

<b>TRAINING PROGRAM</b>	<b>Length of Program</b>	<b>Employment</b>	<b>Nationally Accredited Diploma or Certificate*</b>	<b>Qualified to Pursue License or Certification</b>
Residential and Commercial HVAC Commercial Refrigeration	9 mos.	Residential and Commercial HVAC Technician, Commercial Refrigeration Technician or Maintenance Technician	HVAC-R Technician Diploma	Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation Certified ACR Technician** EPA License training and testing
Residential Heating and Air Conditioning	4.5-mos.	Residential HVAC Technician or Maintenance Technician	HVAC Technician Diploma	Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation ACR Technician** EPA License training and testing
Medical Assistant	10 mos.	Medical Assistant	Medical Assistant Certificate	Medical Assistant EKG Technician Phlebotomy Technical Electronic Health Records Specialist

Note: \*Austin Career Institute is accredited by the Commission of the Council on Occupational Education since February 2018. Participates earning the HVAC-R and HVAC Technician diplomas receiving assistance from ACI to register with the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulations. \*\*To be eligible for the certified ACR technician exam, candidates must have two years on-the-job experience. Source: Austin Career Institute, LLC: School Catalog. Available at: <https://www.austincareerinstitute.edu/Catalog%20Austin%20Career%20Institute.pdf#page=22>

## Endnotes

---

- <sup>i</sup> Each organization, in coordination with WFSCA and RMC, determined which programs to include in the baseline report, including which programs engaged in occupational skills training. Information on the process for identifying low-income individuals is included in the technical appendix.
- <sup>ii</sup> Researchers acknowledge that including participations from additional organizations changes both the numerator and denominator when looking at results across years. Throughout this report totals include all participants from all organizations for whom researchers obtained data.