

The High-Skill, High-Growth Occupations

Adding and Dropping Occupations May 2021

Background

The Gulf Coast Workforce Board, through its operating affiliate Workforce Solutions, is committed to providing basic labor market information and services to all employers and residents across the 13-county region. The bulk of the resources available for employer service are, however, targeted to employers in industries most likely to contribute significantly to the region's economic future.

While these employers are likely to have needs ranging along the entire spectrum of occupations that make up their workforces, those with chronic labor shortages in high-skill occupations have top priority for service financed by Workforce Solutions or one of its partners in the regional workforce system. The Board believes that helping these employers solve their workforce problems will benefit both employers and residents of the region and ultimately yield the best return on the taxpayer's investment.

The Board targets the resources it controls – and influences those controlled by its partners in the regional workforce system – with its strategic plan and a series of supporting lists: 1) *The Targeted Industries*, 2) *Where the Jobs Are*, and 3) *The High-Skill, High-Growth Occupations*.

The High-Skill, High-Growth Occupations List

The High-Skill, High-Growth Occupations list is made up of high-skill, well-paying occupations critical to the Gulf Coast region's economic future. They offer the best job opportunities to area residents now and will likely continue doing so over the next 10 to 15 years. These occupations are found in many industries in the region, not just in those on the targeted industries list.

Qualifying Criteria

Occupations must meet the following criteria to be included on the High-Skill, High-Growth Occupations List:

- Occupation must be found in one or more of the Target Industries
- 50% or more of total occupational employment must be found in Targeted Industries as of 2028
- Projected employment in 2028 greater than or equal to the median for all occupations in the region (> 1,797)
- Projected growth rate greater than or equal to the average of all occupations in the region (> 14.2%)
- Minimum education requirements of a postsecondary degree or certificate, moderate on-the-job training, long-term on-the-job training, apprenticeship, internship/residency or work experience in a related occupation

- Median hourly wages greater than or equal to the OES 2019 median wage for all occupations in the region (> \$19.44)
- Occupations found on previous High-Skill, High-Growth Occupation list and which meet four of the five criteria immediately above are retained

Student Scholarships

Students preparing for employment or looking to advance their careers within occupations on the High-Skill, High-Growth Occupations list are eligible for – but not guaranteed – scholarships from Workforce Solutions or one of its partners.

Scholarship counseling is available to assist resident customers seeking education for employment in other occupations.

Functions of the Lists

The Where the Jobs Are List is a list of occupations likely to provide the largest number of job opportunities in the region over the next ten years. The High-Skill, High-Growth Occupations list focuses workforce investments on occupations most likely to have chronic labor shortages adversely affecting regional economic growth. High-Skill, High-Growth Occupations Supported by Scholarship identifies high-skill, high-growth occupations where Workforce Solutions or one of its partners may provide student scholarships to cover some or all costs of the education or training required for employment.

Modifying the Lists

Internal – We will review all lists every two years and update them as new labor market information (either statistical data or local labor market intelligence) becomes available. New information may result in fewer or more occupations qualifying for a list, a change in the mix of the targeted industries, or some combination thereof.

External – An employer or group of employers may petition the Gulf Coast Workforce Board at any time to add or drop occupations from either the High-Skill, High-Growth Occupations list or High-Skill, High-Growth Occupations Supported by Scholarship list. There are four steps to the process:

- 1) Contact the Workforce Board.
Employers wanting to petition the Gulf Coast Workforce Board to amend the High-Skill, High-Growth Occupations list should contact Board staff by email to GulfCoastHSHG@wrksolutions.com
- 2) Collect information.
Board staff will work with the petitioner(s) to clarify the nature of the request, and provide statistical and/or local labor market intelligence documenting the validity of the request. The Board may ask for the following kinds of information:
 - Why does the petitioner want to amend the High-Skill, High-Growth Occupations list?
 - What is the petitioner’s projected hiring needs?

- How many of those jobs are new?
- What is the estimated wage for new hires?
- Does the petitioner hire people from local education and training institutions, and if so, how many?
- What are the placement rates for education and training programs related to occupations in question?
- Is the petitioner experiencing hiring problems?
- Is the petitioner experiencing other workforce issues?

If a petitioner is requesting an occupation be added to or removed from the High-Skill, High-Growth Occupations list, the petition should clearly make a case for the occupation meeting or failing to meet the minimum criteria for inclusion on the list.

Additional questions the petitioner should consider are:

- Does the occupation have a labor-shortage?
- Are there enough people in the education pipeline?
- How would adding the occupation to the High-Skill, High-Growth Occupations list expand the educational pipeline?

Board staff will be available to collect information on unmet need for occupations based on informal surveys of employers in the region. Survey data in support of a petition will document demand well in excess of current or projected supply from the education pipeline, high employment rates for graduates from existing programs providing education and training for the occupation, and median wages of at least \$19.44 per hour.

Occupations added to either list as the result of an employer petition are identified on the High-Skill, High-Growth Occupations list with the letter “p” following their title.

3) Get a recommendation.

The Board’s staff will make a recommendation to Board staff management within 15 days of completing step 2.

4) Get a decision.

The Board’s chief executive officer will make a final decision within 30 days of getting a staff recommendation. Board staff will notify the petition by U.S. mail.