

High-Skill, High-Growth Occupations

Petition Process to Add and/or Drop Occupations

February 2023

Background

The Gulf Coast Workforce Board, or Board, through its operating affiliate Workforce Solutions, is committed to providing basic labor market information and services to all employers and residents throughout the 13-county Houston-Galveston region. The bulk of the resources available target employers representing industries most likely to employ significant concentrations of workers and provide above average wages.

While these employers are likely to have employment needs along the entire spectrum of occupations that make up their workforces, employers with chronic labor shortages in high-skill occupations have top priority for services 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) *Targeted Industries*, 2) *Where the Jobs Are* and 3) *High-Skill, High-Growth Occupations*.

High-Skill, High-Growth Occupations

The *High-Skill, High-Growth Occupations* list is made up of high-skill, above-average 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 to do so over the next decade. These occupations are found in many industries throughout 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 industries included on the *Targeted Industries* list
- 50% or more of total occupational employment must be found in the *Targeted Industries* list as of 2030
- Projected employment in 2030 must be greater than or equal to the median for all occupations in the region ($\geq 1,802$)
- Projected growth rate must be greater than or equal to the average of all occupations in the region ($\geq 17.6\%$)

- Minimum education requirements of a high school diploma combined with moderate on-the-job training, long-term on-the-job training, apprenticeship, internship/residency or work experience in a related occupation
- Median hourly wages must be greater than or equal to the OES 2021 median wage for all occupations in the region (\geq \$21.32)
- Occupations found on previous *High-Skill, High-Growth Occupations* list and that meet four of the five criteria above are eligible to be retained

Student Scholarships

Students preparing for employment or looking to advance their careers into one of the 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 job candidates living within the 13-county Houston-Galveston region and who are seeking education for employment in other occupations.

Functions of the Lists

The *Where the Jobs Are* list is largely informational in nature and catalogues the occupations likely to provide the largest number of job opportunities in the region throughout the next 10 years regardless of education and training requirements, future growth or wages,

In contrast, the *High-Skill, High-Growth Occupations* list focuses Workforce Solutions' investments on occupations with the greatest potential for future demand by employers. Furthermore, many high-skill, high-growth occupations are designated as “scholarship eligible” whereby 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 and update each list every-other-year to reflect newly available/updated labor market information (either statistical or local labor market intelligence). New labor market information may result in fewer or more occupations qualifying for the list, a change in the mix of targeted industries or some combination thereof.

External – At any time, an employer or group of employers may petition the Gulf Coast Workforce Board to add and/or drop occupations from the High-Skill, High-Growth Occupations list and/or request a change to an occupation's scholarship eligibility.

There are four steps to the process:

- 1) **Contact the Board** – Employers that want 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 list of High-Skill, High-Growth Occupations?
- What are the petitioner’s projected hiring needs?
- How many of those jobs are newly created positions rather than backfills?
- What is the estimated wage for new hires?
- Has the petitioner hired 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 challenges in sourcing qualified talent?
- Is the petitioner experiencing other workforce issues such as retention or insufficient skills among incumbent workers?

If a petitioner requests 1) an occupation be added to or removed from the list of High-Skill, High-Growth Occupations and/or 2) a reevaluation of an occupation’s scholarship eligibility, the petition should clearly make a case for why the occupation warrants an exception to be made.

Additional questions the petitioner should consider:

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

Board staff are available to collect information on the unmet needs for occupations based on informal surveys of employers throughout the Houston-Galveston region, not limited to those making the petition. Survey data in support of a petition will document local employer 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 \$21.32 per hour.

The remaining steps to the petition process are as follows:

- 3) **Receive a Recommendation** – The Board’s staff will make a recommendation to Board staff management within 15 days of completing step 2.
- 4) **Obtain the 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 petitioner/s by U.S. postal mail.

Occupations added to the 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.