

# Youth at work



*Call To Action For North Central  
Texas Employers & Education*

**Work-Based Learning  
in North Central Texas**



# Youth at work

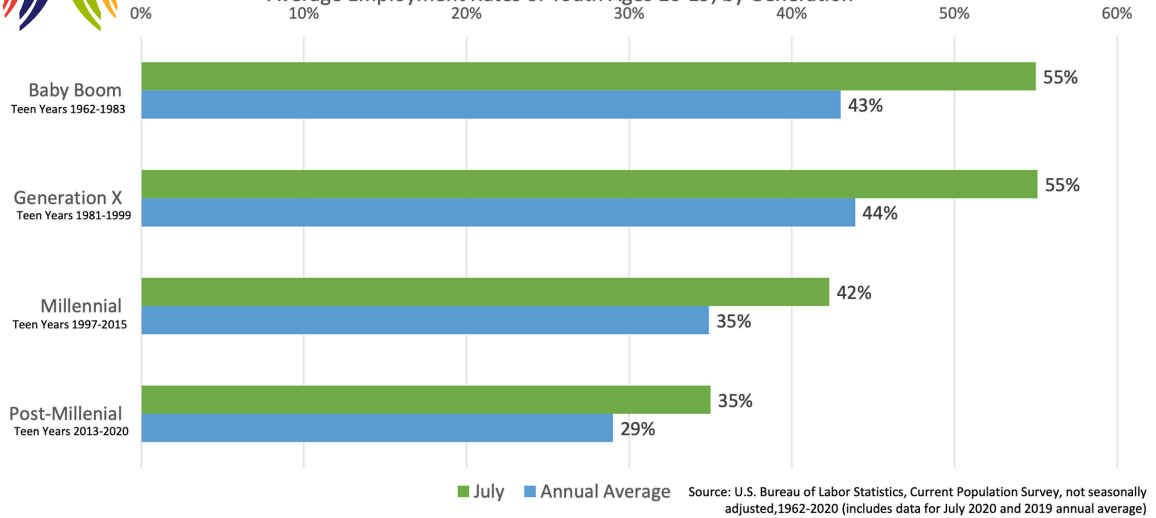


The number of youth at work is now the exception, not the rule.

While youth employment is not uncommon, it does not necessarily represent the majority experience for young people in the workforce. Youth face challenges such as lack of experience or difficulty in finding job opportunities that match their skills. In many regions, youth employment rates can be affected by various factors such as economic conditions, educational commitments, and availability of entry-level jobs. Additionally, structural barriers, such as lack of experience or skills mismatch, can impede youth employment opportunities.



Average Employment Rates of Youth Ages 16-19, by Generation



The number of youth (ages 16-19) at work, across all races and ethnicities, has dropped. Heading to work at the age of 16 is no longer the trend. This is concerning for many different reasons. When the number of youth who secure jobs declines, it has significant short- and long-term impacts on the workforce and economy. Here's how:



Figure 12: Number and Percentage of Texas Youth Labor Force Participation, 2013-2022

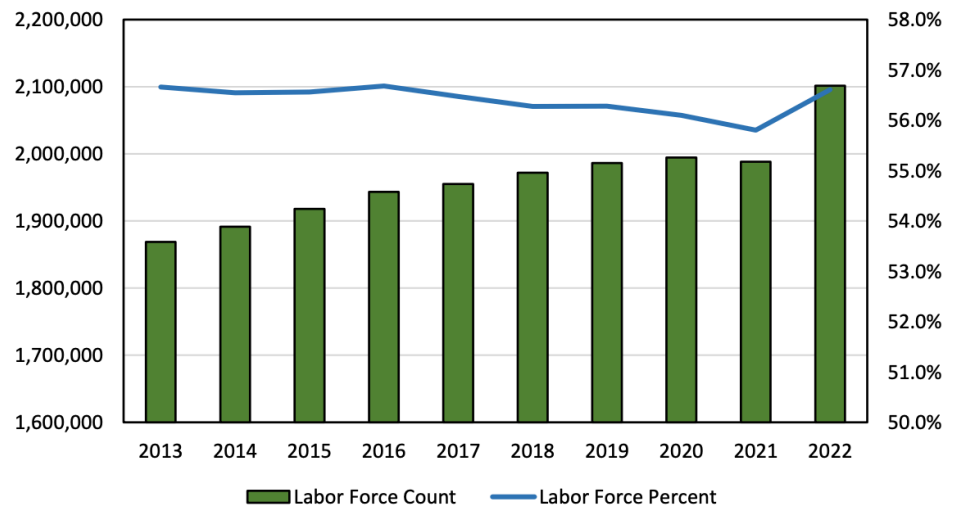


Figure Notes: The 2013 to 2022 data are from ACS PUMS (microdata). Texas youth labor force participation longitudinal data, 2013-2022.

Texas youth labor force participation have increased overtime from 1,868,683 in 2013 to 2,101,631 in 2022.

However, the rate of youth labor force participants has not significantly changed over this period of time as shown in Figure 12. This is due to the parallel growth of both the youth population and the youth labor force count.

Texas youth have consistently contributed an average of 14.5 percent to the Texas labor force from 2013 to 2022.

Skill Gap Worsens: Fewer youth in jobs means fewer opportunities to gain essential workplace skills, such as communication, teamwork, and problem-solving. This creates a skill deficit when they enter the workforce full-time, making it harder for employers to find qualified candidates.



Figure 13: Youth Labor Force Participation in Texas, 2013-2022

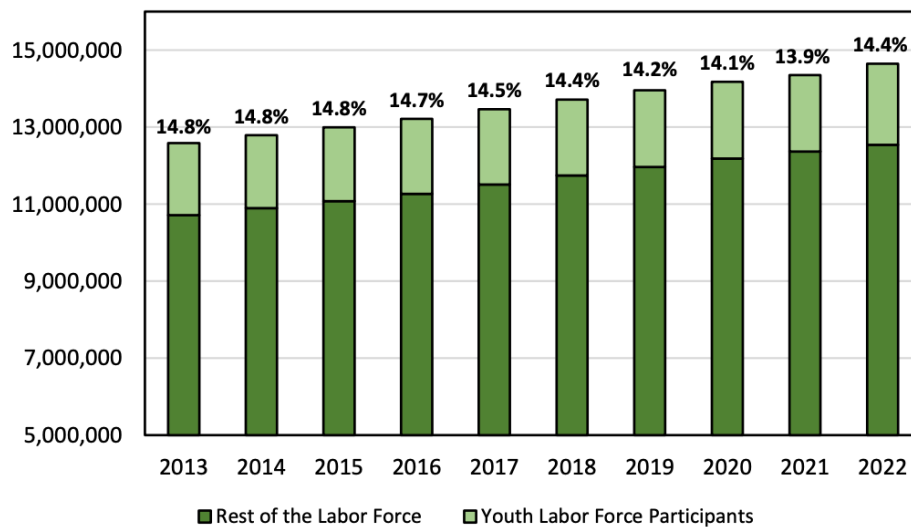


Figure Note: The 2013 to 2022 data are from ACS PUMS (microdata).

Figure 13 illustrates the Texas labor force participation presented in the sum of the stacked bars for each year. Generally, as the Texas population in the labor force increases, the youth participation in the labor force also continues to grow.

**Reduced Workforce Preparedness:** Work-based learning and early job experiences prepare youth for career expectations and workplace culture. Without these opportunities, young people may struggle to transition smoothly into professional roles, delaying their productivity.

**Long-term Economic Consequences:** A decline in youth employment weakens the talent pipeline. This can lead to workforce shortages, slower economic growth, and reduced innovation as businesses struggle to fill critical roles.

**Impact on Individual Earning Potential:** Youth who lack early work experience often earn less over their lifetimes because they miss the chance to build professional skills, networks, and work history at a formative age.

**Increased Unemployment Rates:** Without entry-level or part-time job opportunities, more young people remain unemployed or underemployed, placing additional strain on social and economic systems.

**Decline in Regional Economic Competitiveness:** Regions like North Central Texas rely on a skilled

and prepared workforce to drive economic growth. A decline in youth employment diminishes the ability to sustain innovation, attract businesses, and compete economically.



Figure 14: Youth Labor Force Participation in Texas and Four Largest States, 2022

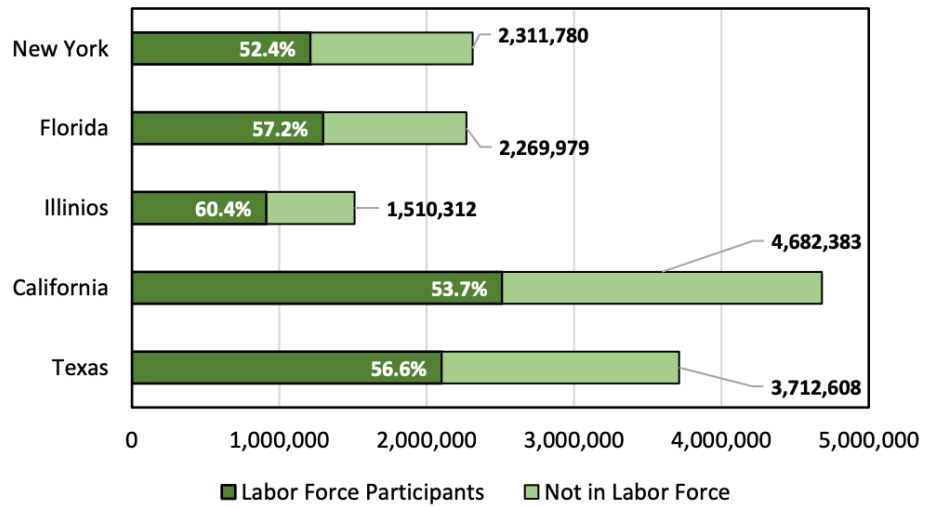


Figure Note: The 2013 to 2022 data are from ACS PUMS (microdata).

Figure 14 compares youth labor force participation in the top five states with the largest youth population. These five states have over half of the youth population in the labor force. Comparatively, Texas (56.6 percent) has more labor force participation than California (53.7 percent), the state with the largest youth population.

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Texas Opportunity Youth - by Gender, Race & Ethnicity, 2022

Race and Ethnicity	Youth Population	Total Opportunity Youth		Not in Labor Force		Labor Force Unemployed	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
White Male	634,052	57,459	9.1%	38,863	6.1%	18,596	2.9%
White Female	592,579	64,518	10.9%	50,058	8.4%	14,460	2.4%
African American Male	225,965	38,389	17.0%	23,864	10.6%	14,525	6.4%
African American Female	226,434	31,126	13.7%	20,591	9.1%	10,535	4.7%
Hispanic Male	914,099	114,011	12.5%	77,115	8.4%	36,896	4.0%
Hispanic Female	877,001	137,384	15.7%	110,496	12.6%	26,888	3.1%
Asian Male	82,060	4,811	5.9%	3,232	3.9%	1,579	1.9%
Asian Female	77,978	5,182	6.6%	4,406	5.7%	776	1.0%
Other Male	65,957	8,053	12.2%	5,427	8.2%	2,626	4.0%
Other Female	60,474	6,168	10.2%	4,577	7.6%	1,591	2.6%
<b>Youth Total</b>	<b>3,756,599</b>	<b>467,101</b>	<b>12.4%</b>	<b>338,629</b>	<b>9.0%</b>	<b>128,472</b>	<b>3.4%</b>

Table Note: 2022 ACS PUMS (microdata).

WIOA provides youth empowerment programs for out-of-school youth who are not attending school, not younger than age 16, or older than age 24 (U.S. Department of Labor, 2024). The Council’s strategic plan provides a succinct definition of “opportunity youth,” which guides the state agencies’ youth programs. According to the Council (2023) definition, “opportunity youth are individuals, aged 16 to 24, that are not currently engaged in school or the workforce.” This table illustrates the information about Texas opportunity youth by race and gender. A significantly high percentage of African American males (17 percent) falls within this category. Hispanic females account for the highest number (137,384) of opportunity youth in Texas, accounting for approximately 16 percent of this specific demographic segment. A total number of 467,101 (12.4 percent) youth in Texas were categorized as opportunity youth in 2022.



LWDA 4 North Central-Youth Labor Force Participation for Each County, 20222

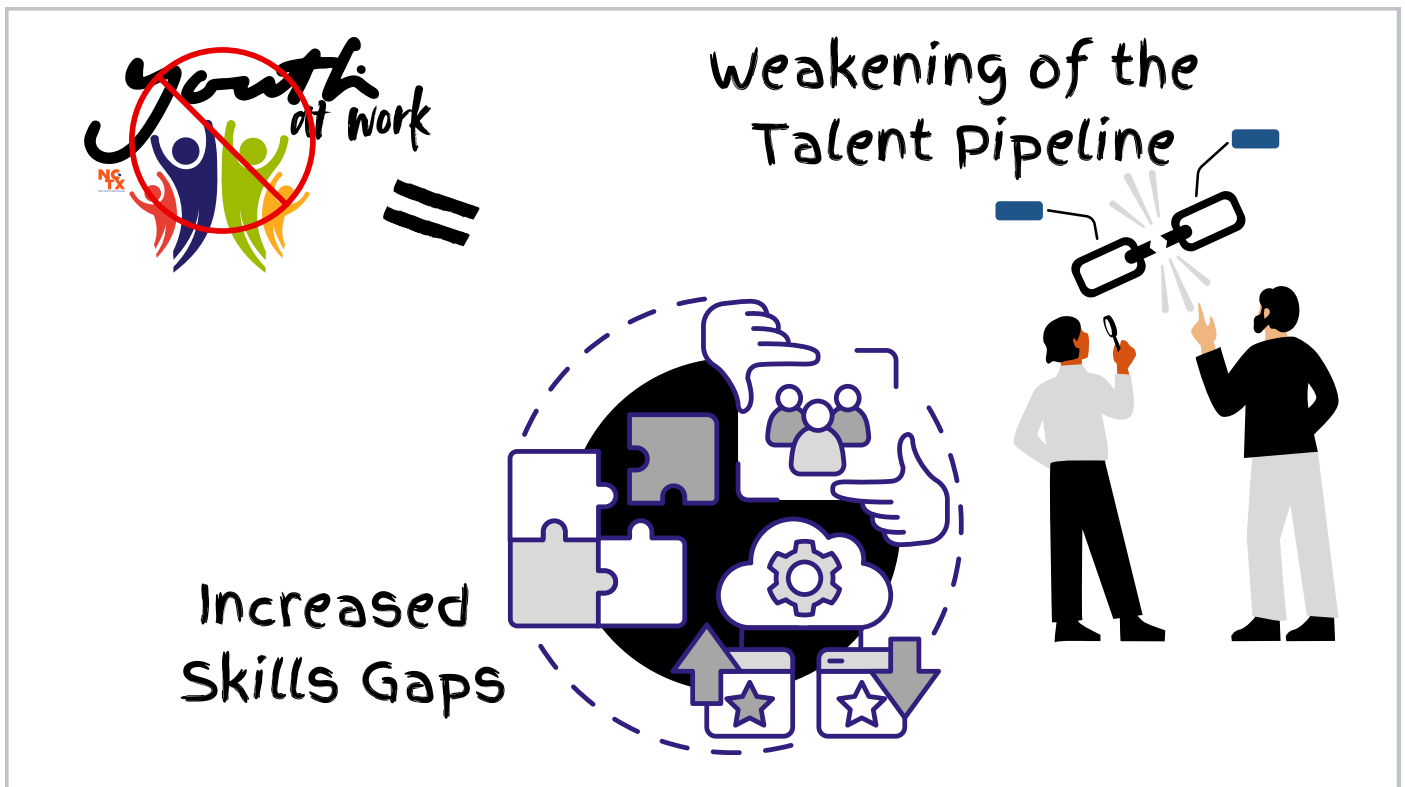
County	Labor Force Participants					Not in Labor Force	
	Total	Enrolled in School		Not Enrolled in School		Enrolled in School	Not Enrolled in School
		Employed	Unemployed	Employed	Unemployed		
Collin	71,377	31,932	3,414	33,061	2,969	47,769	9,834
Denton	66,574	32,085	3,143	28,934	2,409	38,815	5,727
Ellis	15,336	5,480	800	8,403	652	7,250	1,972
Erath	3,514	1,670	191	1,479	175	1,844	462
Hood	5,088	2,417	276	2,141	253	2,669	669
Hunt	7,260	2,756	315	3,640	549	4,368	734
Johnson	11,774	3,207	134	7,820	613	6,213	3,420
Kaufman	10,769	3,546	266	6,080	877	5,938	919
Navarro	3,305	896	123	2,095	191	1,691	796
Palo Pinto	2,347	1,114	127	987	117	1,231	309
Parker	10,076	4,057	358	5,206	455	4,616	1,650
Rockwall	7,831	2,973	340	3,927	591	4,710	797
Somervell	760	361	41	320	38	399	100
Wise	4,367	1,325	155	2,596	290	2,275	805
<b>North Central Texas</b>	<b>220,378</b>	<b>93,819</b>	<b>9,683</b>	<b>106,689</b>	<b>10,179</b>	<b>129,788</b>	<b>28,194</b>

This table illustrates the number of youth labor force participants in the North Central Texas WDA. The table detail the youth labor force participants, school enrollment, and employment status. Like the opportunity youth data in the previous table, this includes data on youth not in the labor force to help deduce opportunity youth by county in each LWDA. The estimates indicate civilian, noninstitutionalized labor force participants 16 and older.



## Challenges for the North Central Texas Economy when youth are **NOT AT WORK**

When youth are not working in North Central Texas, the regional economy faces several challenges, both immediately and long-term.



### Weakening of the Talent Pipeline

A lack of job opportunities for youth disrupts the development of the future workforce. Without early work experience, young people miss critical opportunities to learn workplace skills, gain professional habits, and explore career pathways. This reduces the pool of prepared and skilled workers needed to sustain the region's economic growth.

### Increased Skills Gaps

Employers rely on a steady flow of young workers to fill entry-level positions and develop into skilled professionals. When youth aren't employed, the workforce faces growing skills gaps, making it harder for businesses to find qualified employees and remain competitive.

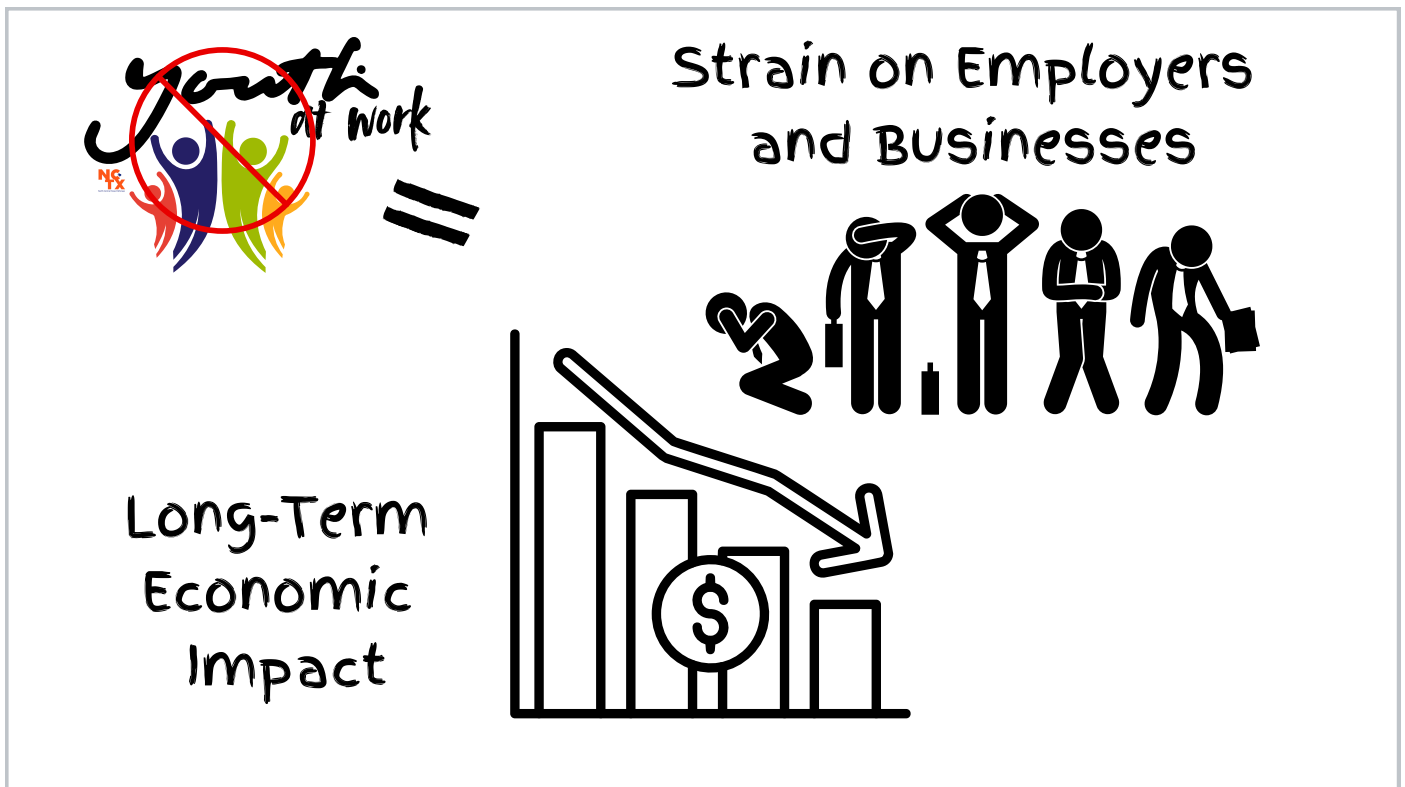


#### Reduced Economic Activity

Fewer working youth mean reduced spending power. Youth employment generates wages that flow back into the local economy through spending on goods, services, and education. A decline limits this economic circulation, weakening local businesses.

#### Delayed Workforce Participation

Youth who do not enter the workforce early are less likely to transition smoothly into full-time employment later. This can lead to higher unemployment rates, underemployment, and a less productive workforce, impacting the region's overall economic strength.



### Strain on Employers and Businesses

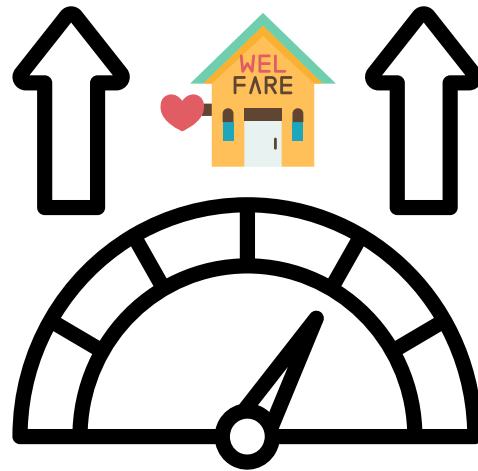
Businesses in North Central Texas rely on young talent for seasonal, part-time, and entry-level work. A decline in youth employment can result in labor shortages, decreased productivity, and higher costs as employers struggle to fill roles or invest in additional training.

### Long-Term Economic Impact

Over time, a decline in youth employment leads to a workforce that is less skilled, less experienced, and less adaptable to emerging industries. This hinders innovation, limits business growth, and reduces North Central Texas's ability to attract new industries and investments.

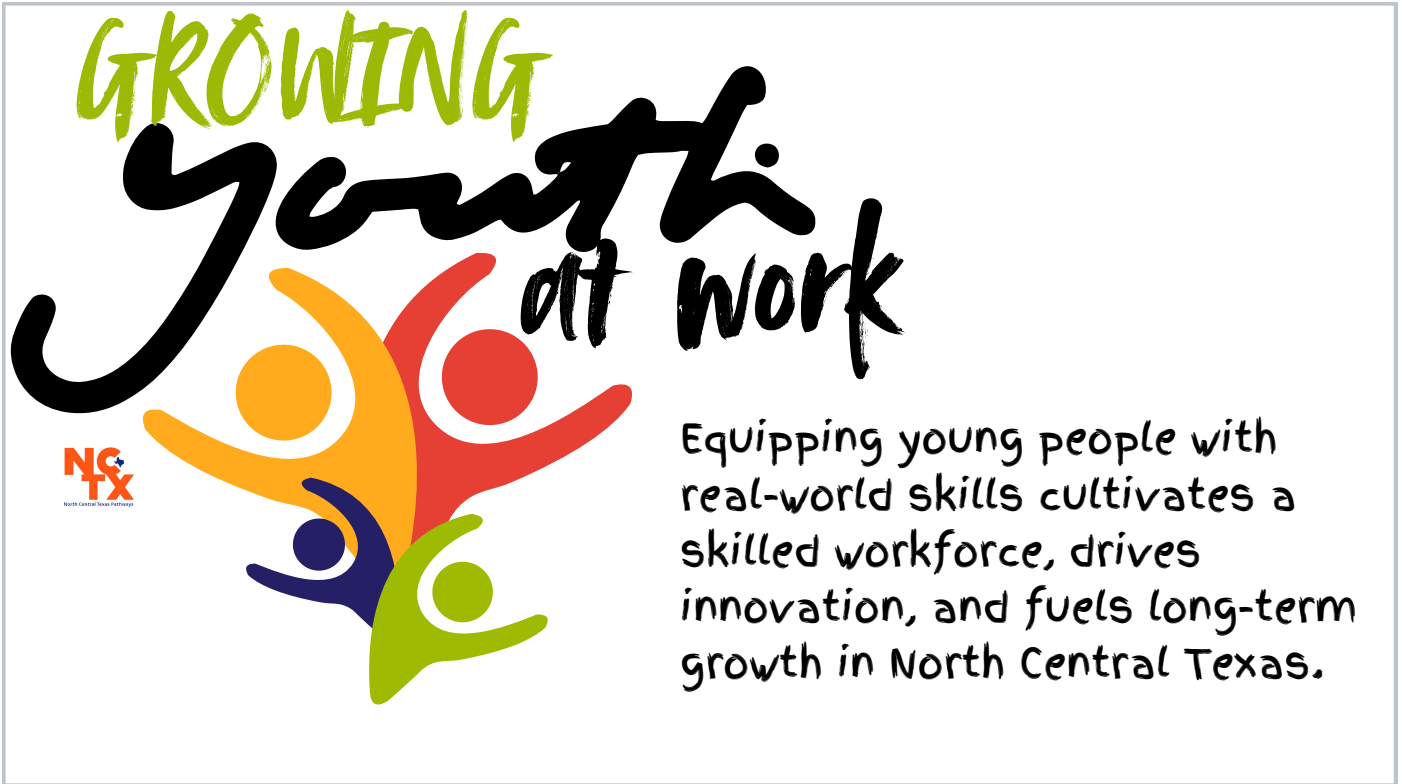


## Higher Dependency on Social Services



### Higher Dependency on Social Services

Without access to jobs, youth are at a higher risk of economic instability, which can increase reliance on public assistance programs, placing an additional financial burden on the local government and taxpayers.



Employers in North Central Texas can play a critical role in addressing youth employment challenges and strengthening the regional economy.

#### Offer Work-Based Learning Opportunities

Employers can create internships, apprenticeships, and job-shadowing programs that give youth hands-on experience and exposure to real-world work environments. These opportunities help young people build essential skills and explore career pathways.

#### Hire Youth for Entry-Level and Part-Time Positions

By offering entry-level or part-time roles to young people, businesses can provide valuable early work experience while meeting workforce needs. This also helps develop a pipeline of future talent for the company.





- Offer Work-Based Learning Opportunities
- Hire Youth for Entry-Level and Part-Time Positions
- Develop Mentorship Programs

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#### Develop Mentorship Programs

Pairing youth with experienced employees allows for skills transfer, career guidance, and professional development. Mentorship fosters confidence and readiness for long-term workforce participation.



- Partner with Schools and Training Programs
- Support Career and Technical Education (CTE)
- Provide Flexible Work Arrangements

#### Partner with Schools and Training Programs

Employers can collaborate with local schools, community colleges, and vocational training programs to align education with industry needs. Offering guest speaking, tours, and hands-on projects can bridge the gap between classroom learning and job requirements.

#### Support Career and Technical Education (CTE)

Employers can advocate for and invest in CTE programs that equip youth with industry-specific skills, such as cosmetology, business, or advanced technical trades. These programs prepare students for high-demand jobs in the local economy.

#### Provide Flexible Work Arrangements

Recognizing that students often juggle school commitments, employers can offer flexible hours, part-time shifts, or seasonal roles that accommodate their schedules.



- Promote Skills Development
- Create Inclusive Hiring Policies)
- Showcase the Value of Youth Employment

#### Promote Skills Development

Employers can offer training in areas like communication, time management, and digital literacy, helping youth develop transferable skills they can apply in any career.

#### Create Inclusive Hiring Policies

Employers can focus on inclusive practices that give all youth, including those from underserved communities, opportunities to enter the workforce and gain experience.

#### Showcase the Value of Youth Employment

Businesses can advocate for hiring youth as a strategy to build a sustainable workforce, reduce skills gaps, and contribute to the economic success of North Central Texas.



Employers have the **POWER** to inspire, train, and develop the next generation of workers. By investing in youth through jobs, training, and mentorship, businesses not only address their immediate workforce needs but also contribute to a thriving, resilient **North Central Texas** economy.

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To ensure a strong and thriving workforce in North Central Texas, it is vital that employers take proactive steps to engage and support youth employment. By offering work-based learning opportunities, hiring young talent, and collaborating with education and training partners, businesses can help bridge the skills gap, drive innovation, and contribute to regional economic growth.

Take the next step today—reach out to your Regional Convener to explore programs, partnerships, and resources that empower youth and strengthen the talent pipeline. Together, we can build a more prepared workforce and secure a prosperous future for North Central Texas.

# **EMPLOYER RESOURCES**

## **NCTX Work-Based Learning** **Employer Guide & Checklist**



# REFERENCES

Jobs for the Future. (2024). Center for apprenticeship and work-based learning. <https://www.jff.org/work/apprenticeship-work-based-learning/>

Texas Workforce Investment Council. (2024). Youth in Texas: a demographic study. <https://gov.texas.gov/organization/twic/demographics-youth>

US Department of Education. (nd.). Components of comprehensive work-based learning programs. <https://cte.ed.gov/wbltoolkit/>





FACT Education Inc. (Foundation for the Advancement of Career & Technical Education (FACT Ed) is a non-profit located in North Central Texas. FACT Ed. was honored to be named the Tri-Agency Grantee for the Texas Regional Pathways Network Regional Convener for North Central Texas. This role involves facilitating strategic planning, program development, and partnership enhancement to ensure the successful implementation of the pathways program. By bringing together key stakeholders from education, industry, and government, FACT Ed. aims to create seamless pathways that connect students to high-demand careers. Through innovative programs, strategic partnerships, and comprehensive support services, Fact Ed. is dedicated to advancing career and technical education, ensuring that all students in North Central Texas have access to the skills and opportunities needed to thrive in today's dynamic job market





[nctxpathways.org](http://nctxpathways.org)

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