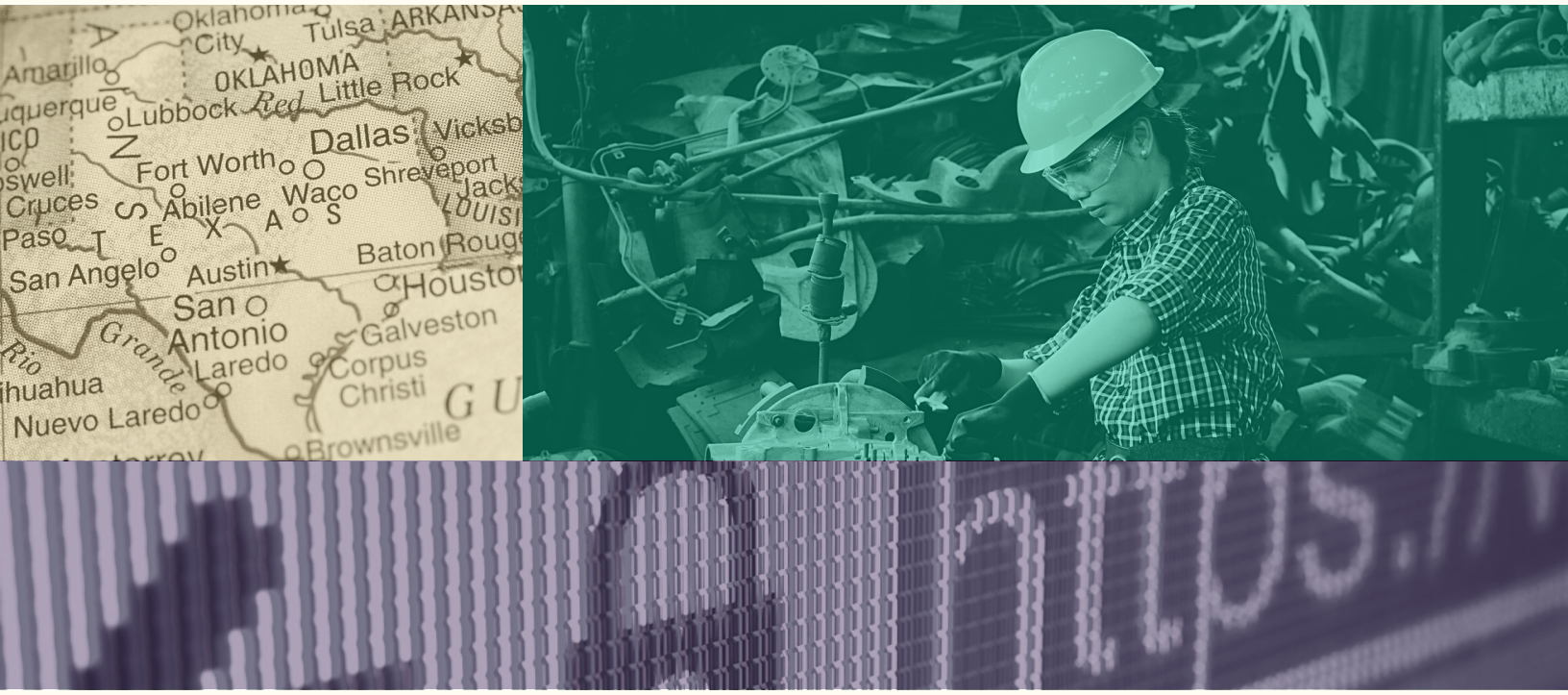

AN ANALYSIS OF WORKFORCE WEBSITES AND THEIR ABILITY TO DELIVER VALUE TO WORKERS THROUGHOUT TEXAS

REPORT SUPPORTED BY TEXAS 2036

WHEREWEGO

AN INTRODUCTION FROM THE RESEARCHERS

Whether fair or not, people often judge the real-world quality of an organization based on the quality of its website. Broken links, confusing page layouts, and outdated design send messages to visitors that the organization may not intend to send.

Websites and internet access have transformed access to resources, at their best acting as a welcome mat to an operationally effective and stress-relieving suite of services. At its worst, a website may repel those who need assistance most from the very places that provide services the best.

Nearly 1 in 2 residents of Texas is a "digital native," someone who has spent their lives immersed in digital experiences, many of which cater expertly to their complex needs. Though Generations Z and Alpha, to which 35 percent of Texans belong, will be most sharply concerned with website quality, this should not imply that this is a problem worth solving only for the young. Workers of all ages want simple, actionable information on their own time.

Without an in-house user experience and design team, deciding how to improve a workforce website is complex and risky. This report suggests a roadmap for Texas workforce agencies with recommendations for digital improvements to prioritize. We hope that Texans will increasingly find what they need on these online sites with good, accurate, and accessible links to the quality services available throughout the state.

LEAH LYKINS & BEN IFSHIN

Co-Founders of WhereWeGo

Learn more at WhereWeGo.org or view our training navigator at Explore.WhereWeGo.org.

OVERVIEW

Through interviews, focus group design sessions, the evaluation of 45 websites, and a survey of 270 Texans, we find some significant gaps and many opportunities to improve the numerous publicly-supported Texas workforce information websites.

The first gap is a lack of consistent, modern user experience, likely due to the unique and complex requirements and use cases that workforce websites must satisfy. The second gap is the inability to take the actions most desired by career seekers.

With such a welter of different sites in use across the state, we encourage Texas to consider providing a more effective and dynamic template as a model for agencies, institutions, and workforce regions. A model template is an opportunity to lower site development and maintenance costs, increase the quality of customer service and user empathy, and improve access to existing workforce data and resources. This report does not include an evaluation of the effectiveness of Texas regions to deliver quality in-person services.

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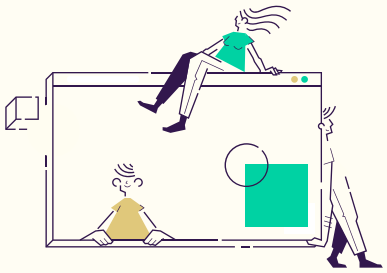
OBJECTIVE

Organizations that make workforce websites will be able to use the Workforce Website Rubric and recommendations of this report to deliver greater value to their constituents.



Q: Why conduct this research now?
A: The state's workforce is changing rapidly. Texas' population will grow by 10 million in less than 20 years. 8 million new jobs will be required to keep up with that growth. About half of Texas households do not earn a living wage. 71% of jobs will require some college, yet only 28% of Texan 8th graders will likely complete a postsecondary degree or certificate within 6 years of high school graduation. Websites are a tool for accessing the services related to these needs and changes.

Q: How does this report connect to funding opportunities?
A: Intermediary career counseling services, like workforce websites, are fundable from sources like WIOA (the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act) and the recent CAREERS Grant. This rubric may inform applications and the procurement processes for such grants and other opportunities, leading to increased funding for high-quality web development.

Q: Why WhereWeGo?
A: WhereWeGo is an EdTech and design thinking firm based in New Orleans that conducts worker-centered research about accessibility to postsecondary education. Its team uses human-centered design thinking to develop workforce resource websites. Its highly regarded flagship platform, the Training Navigator for New Orleans, has been a model since it launched in 2018.

METHODS

How did the researchers gather data and stakeholder input?

WhereWeGo embraced human-centered design thinking and product design practices through this project.

This report used the following methods:

INTERVIEWS WITH 10 STAKEHOLDERS

WhereWeGo conducted 10 one-on-one interviews with chambers of commerce representatives (Austin & Longview), talent pipeline representatives (Cisco & Dow Chemical), education & counseling providers (Educate Texas, Merit America, KIPP National, and Texas State Technical College), and researchers (Accenture).

DESIGN DAY WITH 10 STAKEHOLDERS

WhereWeGo facilitated a design-thinking retreat with members from Workforce Solutions, Dallas College, Prosper Waco, Texas State Technical College, T3 Partnership, and Texas 2036 that articulated guidance for what metrics this report could prioritize in its evaluation of workforce websites.

SURVEY OF 270 TEXAN CAREER SEEKERS

Equipped with information from its prior research and Texas stakeholders, WhereWeGo surveyed career seekers to validate assumptions and priorities for this report. WhereWeGo collected data for 270 residents of Texas, 18+, 80% of whom were actively seeking employment.

CREATION OF THE WORKFORCE WEBSITE EVALUATION RUBRIC

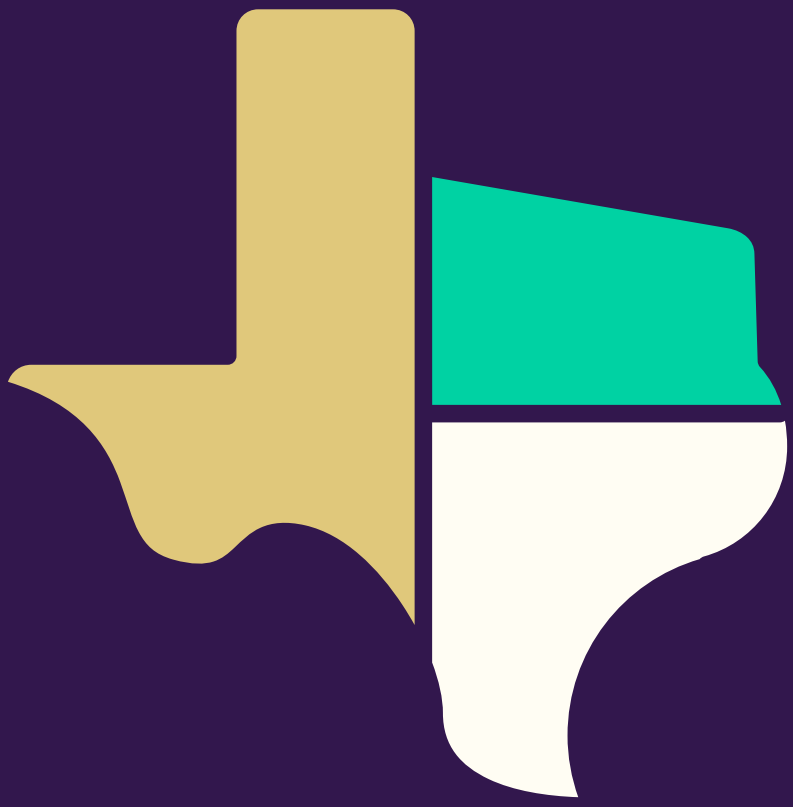
Based on these prior activities, WhereWeGo & Texas 2036 collaborated to make a rubric that reflects stakeholders' values.

EVALUATION OF 45 WORKFORCE WEBSITES

After a period of establishing inter-rater reliability, WhereWeGo evaluated 28 Workforce Solutions websites and 17 other workforce-related websites to gather trends and information relevant to this report's aims.

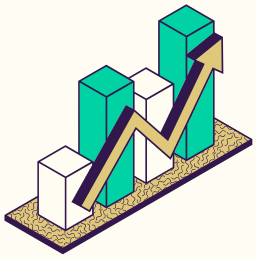
STAKEHOLDER CONCERNS

A collection of the needs, frustrations, and values of the stakeholders involved in this research



WHAT KEY NEEDS AND FRUSTRATIONS EMERGED FOR STAKEHOLDERS?

WhereWeGo questioned workforce representatives, educators, researchers, government employees in workforce development, and representatives from chambers of commerce throughout Texas. In these discussions, the researchers sought to uncover problem areas and pain points relevant to information barriers that workers commonly face. The following trends emerged:

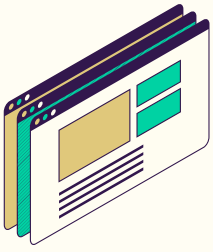


1) Workers need more details about their career education opportunities in order to make wise, informed decisions.

Workers want outcomes, family-sustaining wages, better conditions and support services, and a clearer career path. The inability to make sufficiently data-driven decisions about these factors drives down confidence and participation in career education opportunities.

2) Workers need better online tools to access the many available resources.

Modern offerings like eligibility quizzes, live chat functions, and other digital services could expand the reach of WIOA grant funding for dislocated workers, opportunity youth, and other career seekers across the state.



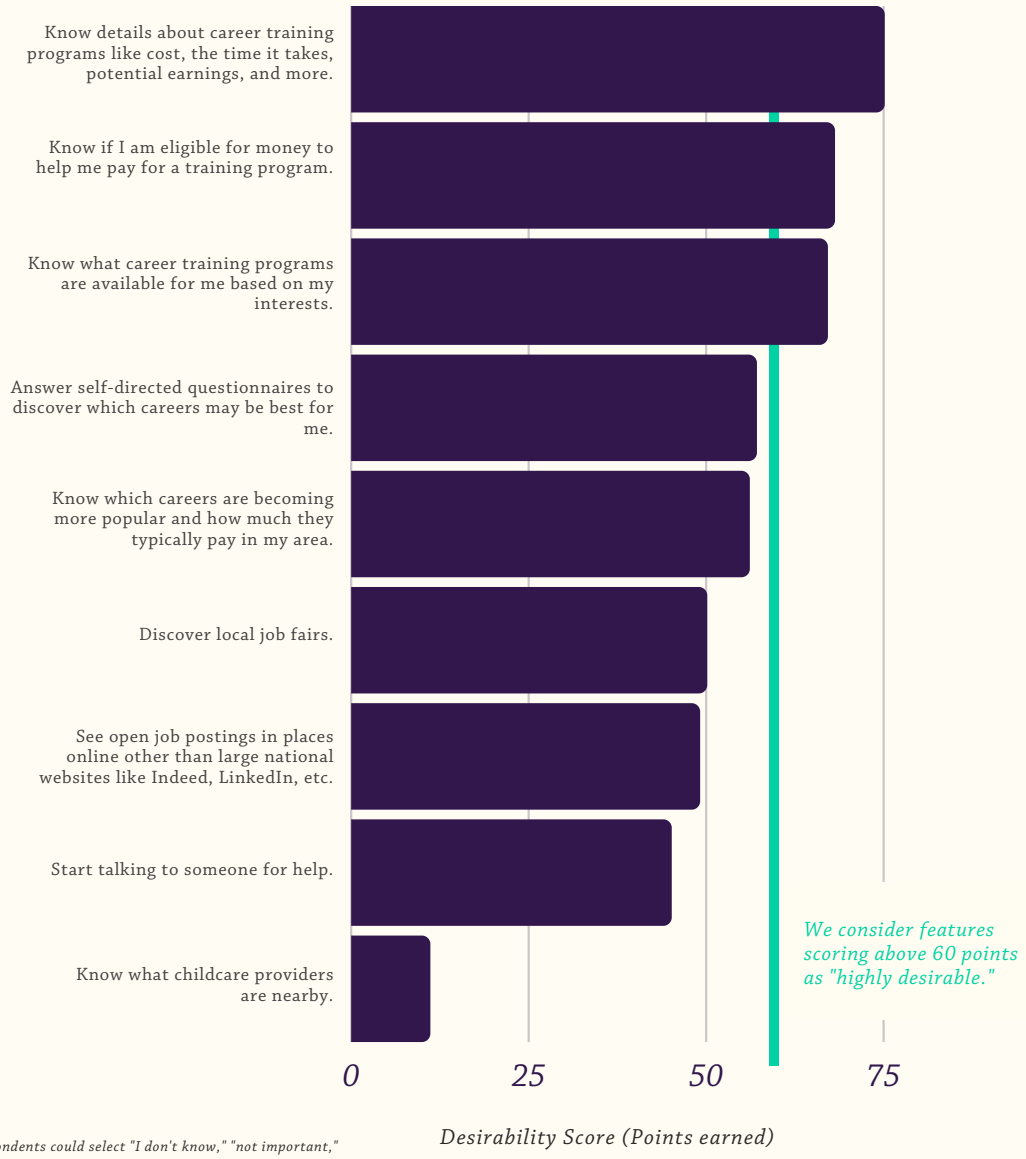
3) Workforce sites have very complicated UI/UX requirements.

As long as workforce websites juggle compliance, reporting, lead generation, and information delivery, best-in-class user interface and user experience methods will be crucial. Compliance-required disclosures must be easy to find and user-friendly or not in any way impeding the discovery of other valuable information.

WHAT FEATURES DO TEXANS VALUE MOST FROM WORKFORCE SITES?

Given a variety of different types of useful information, respondents found information relevant to career training programs most valuable. The question posed was: "If we were building a website to help job seekers, how important are the following functions to you or a job seeker you know?"

Workforce website functions by desirability



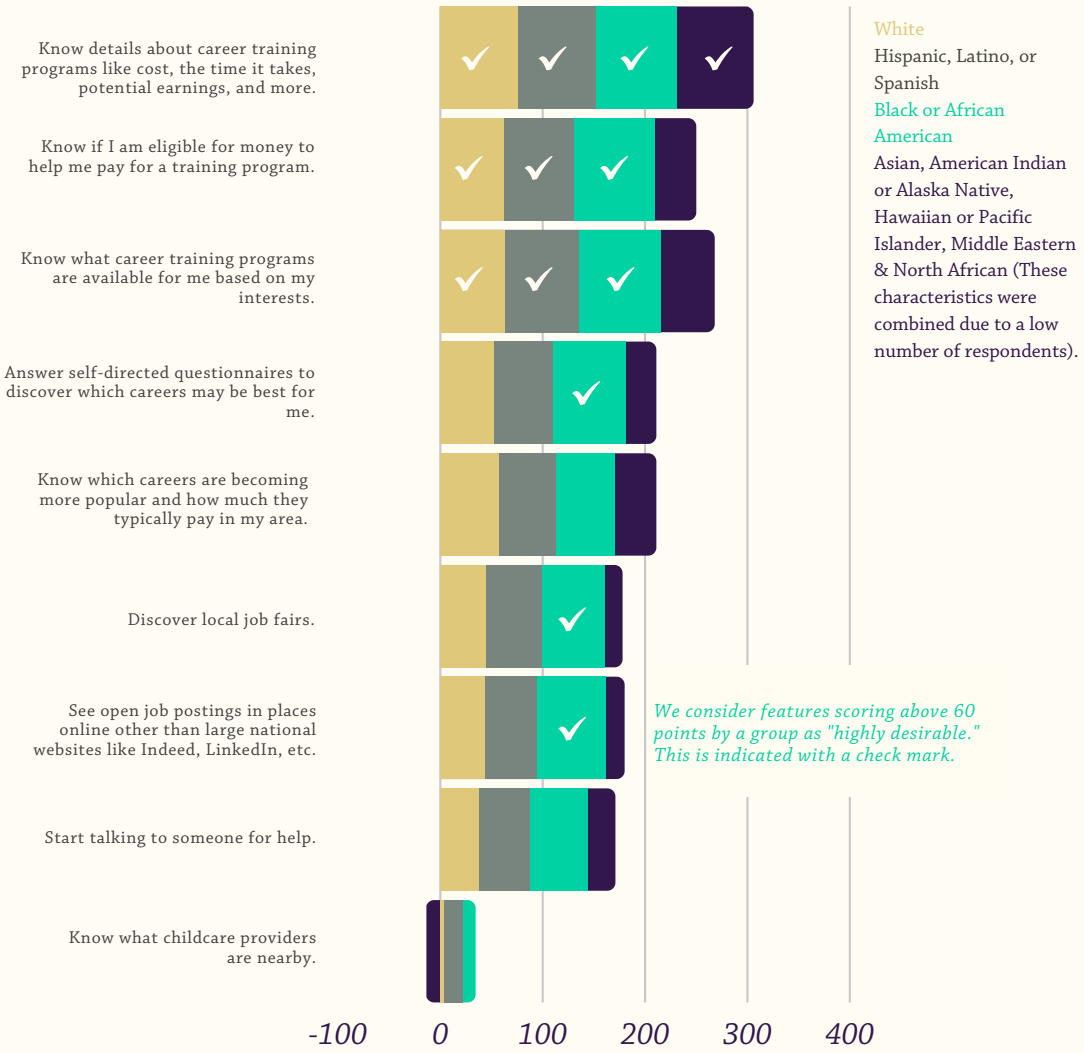
Respondents could select "I don't know," "not important," "somewhat important," or "very important."

I Don't Know = 0 points per percent
Not Important = -1 point per percent
Somewhat Important = +1/2 point per percent
Very Important = +1 point per percent

HOW DO RACE & ETHNICITY IMPACT THOSE RESULTS?

Information relevant to career training programs remained most valuable, after breaking data down by subgroup. African American respondents found other career planning tools nearly as valuable as well. Further investigation into these tools may be valuable to this vital constituency.

Workforce website functions by desirability and race or ethnicity



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I Don't Know = 0 points per percent
Not Important = -1 point per percent
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Very Important = +1 point per percent

THE RUBRIC

A Workforce Website Evaluation Rubric designed from the input of hundreds of career seekers and stakeholders

THE WORKFORCE WEBSITE EVALUATION RUBRIC

This model rubric is built on 3 performance categories, with a scale of 4 performance bands from Unsatisfactory to Exemplary, which is used to score the accomplishment of 12 service goals.

CATEGORIES

I. QUALITY OF INFORMATION

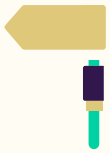
Can workers discover the information they've indicated as most valuable?

For example, details about specific training programs were favored above job postings data. The information selected for this category reflects what stakeholders found most desirable. Thus, the rubric values great detail about career training programs and more general details about other career services, like job postings, WIOA, and childcare.

II. USER EXPERIENCE

Are user-centered design choices increasing the likelihood of worker engagement and ease of use?

For example, smartphone dependency is an increasing phenomenon. Therefore, this rubric prioritized mobile responsiveness. Very often, great information is hidden behind a design barrier. It is recommended to prioritize this category of characteristics when deciding how to make improvements.



III. GOAL ACCOMPLISHMENT

Are workers driven towards action?

How does information cater beyond discovery and general knowledge and towards action and the ability to begin a new opportunity? The "last mile problem," or the lack of information that drives data-driven decision making and action, is a common pain point across stakeholders. This rubric seeks to address that.

PERFORMANCE BANDS

1 - Unsatisfactory
Improvement in this area will have a considerable effect on workers' ability to gain value from this digital tool.

2- Developing
The digital tool has already made some progress in this area, impacting workers' ability to gain value.

3 - Satisfactory
The digital tool has made significant progress in this area and is providing considerable value to workers.

4 - Exemplary
Other digital tools could look to this resource as a model of performance within this category.

QUALITY OF INFORMATION	1 - UNSATISFACTORY	2 - DEVELOPING	3 - SATISFACTORY	4 - EXEMPLARY
(1) COMMON CAREER SEEKER SERVICES *Can users learn specific and actionable details about common services in their region?*	Criteria of a 2 not yet met.	The website provides some, although incomplete or inaccurate, information about common job posting and support services resources, such as: • WIOA eligibility • Recent job postings • Resume & pre-hire services • Childcare • Transportation • Career fairs	The website provides current, comprehensive, and accurate information about common job posting and support services resources, such as: • WIOA eligibility • Recent job postings • Resume & pre-hire services • Childcare • Transportation • Career fairs	The website provides plentiful, current, comprehensive, and interactive information about common job posting and support services resources, such as: • WIOA eligibility • Recent job postings • Resume & pre-hire services • Childcare • Transportation • Career fairs
(2) COMPARING IN-DEMAND CAREER PATHWAYS *Are users able to discover in-demand and growing career pathways information based on regional trends?*	Criteria of a 2 not yet met.	The website provides information on 1 to 9 growing careers in the region, including 2 or more of the following: • Career description • Career outlook • Who the career may be best suited for • Regional wages data • Regional wages data in the context of cost of living data OR This information is discoverable via a link to a third party website such as O*Net or CareerOneStop, where the user must set their own search parameters to discover the above details.	The website provides information on 10+ growing careers in the region, including 3 or more of the following: • Compelling visuals like photography, graphics, or other design elements • Career description • Career outlook • Who the career may be best suited for • Regional wages data • Regional wages data in the context of cost of living data	Within 3 clicks, users can learn about 15+ growing careers in their region, including each of the following components for each career: • Compelling visuals like photography, graphics, or other design elements • Career description • Career outlook • Who the career may be best suited for • Regional wages data in the context of cost of living data

QUALITY OF INFORMATION (CONTINUED)	1 - UNSATISFACTORY	2 - DEVELOPING	3 - SATISFACTORY	4 - EXEMPLARY
(3) FINDING THE BEST CAREER PATHS AND JOB TRAINING PROGRAMS *Can career seekers discover the most commonly requested information about vocational and skills training providers?*	Criteria of a 2 not yet met.	The website provides some, although incomplete or inaccurate, information about vocational and skills training providers, including at least 1 of the following details for each: • Cost of program • Earning potential • Wraparound services • Useful dates • Contact and location information • Compelling photography • Compelling writing	The website provides current, comprehensive, and accurate information about vocational and skills training providers, including at least 3 of the following details for each: • Cost of program • Earning potential • Wraparound services • Useful dates • Contact and location information • Compelling photography • Compelling writing	The website provides plentiful, current, comprehensive, accurate, and interactive information about vocational and skills training providers, including at least 5 of the following details for each: • Cost of program • Earning potential • Wraparound services • Useful dates • Contact and location information • Compelling photography • Compelling writing

USER EXPERIENCE	1 - UNSATISFACTORY	2 - DEVELOPING	3 - SATISFACTORY	4 - EXEMPLARY
(4) MOBILE NAVIGATION *Does the website's navigation and structure empower the user to quickly and easily gain access to crucial resources when the user is on a mobile device?*	Navigation is very unclear, resulting in confusion and hard to find information for career or training seekers.	Some navigation is unclear, or not mobile responsive, not functioning, or has very slow load times, resulting in a few places where a career seeker is likely to become lost or unengaged.	The site is well-organized and easy to navigate. Career seekers can clearly understand the site's resources and where to go next for a wide range of needs.	The site employs navigation techniques commonly expected of sites built within the last 5 years. The site is well-organized and easy to navigate. Career seekers can clearly understand the site's resources and where to go next for a wide range of needs.

USER EXPERIENCE (CONTINUED)	1 - UNSATISFACTORY	2 - DEVELOPING	3 - SATISFACTORY	4 - EXEMPLARY
(5) MOBILE LAYOUT *Does the website's graphic and web design empower the user to quickly and easily gain access to crucial resources when the user is on a mobile device?*	There are few or no attractive graphic elements to notify a career seeker of resources, opportunities, jobs, or training, little or no variation in layout, and/or the colors and text interfere with the site's usability.	The site's layout needs significant adjustments to increase usability. Many pages may be incomplete, not working as intended, or overly reliant on text. Some graphic elements notify a career seeker of resources, opportunities, jobs or training, and there is a limited variation in layout. Design elements sometimes empower career seekers' to easily understand concepts and ideas about their search.	The site's layout needs minor adjustments to increase usability. Occasionally, pages may be incomplete, not working as intended, or overly reliant on text. There are multiple graphic elements and variations in layout that assist a career seeker to accomplish their goals and it is generally attractive and approachable. Design elements often assist seekers in understanding concepts and ideas.	There are multiple graphic elements and variations in layout that assist career seekers to accomplish their goals efficiently. No pages appear incomplete, malfunctioning, or overly reliant on text. Design elements assist seekers in understanding concepts and ideas. The site gives an impression of high-quality services by employing commonly expected design features of sites built within the last 5 years.
(6) DESKTOP NAVIGATION *Does the website's navigation and structure empower the user to quickly and easily gain access to crucial resources when the user is on a computer?*	Same requirements as mobile navigation, but for users on a desktop computer or laptop	Same requirements as mobile navigation, but for users on a desktop computer or laptop	Same requirements as mobile navigation, but for users on a desktop computer or laptop	Same requirements as mobile navigation, but for users on a desktop computer or laptop
(7) DESKTOP LAYOUT *Does the website's graphic and web design empower the user to quickly and easily gain access to crucial resources when the user is on a computer?*	Same requirements as mobile layout, but for users on a desktop computer or laptop	Same requirements as mobile layout, but for users on a desktop computer or laptop	Same requirements as mobile layout, but for users on a desktop computer or laptop	Same requirements as mobile layout, but for users on a desktop computer or laptop

USER EXPERIENCE (CONTINUED)	1 - UNSATISFACTORY	2 - DEVELOPING	3 - SATISFACTORY	4 - EXEMPLARY
(8) CAREER SEEKER PAGE *Do the website navigation and layout empower career seekers to locate a page specific to them?*	It takes multiple clicks to find a career seeker page, it does not exist, or it is not malfunctioning.	N/A	N/A	A career seeker page is one click away and easy to find.

GOAL ACCOMPLISHMENT	1 - UNSATISFACTORY	2 - DEVELOPING	3 - SATISFACTORY	4 - EXEMPLARY
(9) ACCESS TO SERVICES *Can a job seeker use the website to begin access to services for career seekers at any time of day?*	Criteria of a 2 not yet met or features did not behave as intended.	The website contains 1 or more functioning features from this list: • A form to submit a question. • A live chat function. • An intake application designed to be taken at home. • Enrollment steps or sign ups for events, wraparound services, or programming.	The website contains 2 or more functioning features from this list: • A form to submit a question that receives a response within 3 business days. • A live chat function. • An intake application designed to be taken at home. • Enrollment steps or sign ups for events, wraparound services, or programming.	The website contains 3 or more functioning features from this list: • A form to submit a question that receives a response within 3 business days. • A live chat function. • An intake application designed to be taken at home. • Enrollment steps or sign ups for events, wraparound services, or programming.
(10) STARTING JOB TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES *Can a user go from discovering the site to taking enrollment steps in job training?*	Criteria of a 2 not yet met or features did not behave as intended.	There is no way for a user to take actionable steps on this website to start a job training opportunity, but there are links to other websites with some context and instructions for how to use them. Mostly the links are either hidden behind multiple clicks or have little to no context of how a career seeker can use them to their benefit.	There are some ways for a user to take actionable steps on this website, and/or there are links to sites with actionable steps that include instructions for applying or enrolling in programs in a user-friendly way for a significant number of job training opportunities.	The website contains current information on actionable next steps for many job training programs and opportunities, such as application dates, enrollment requirements, application forms, and contact forms by program.

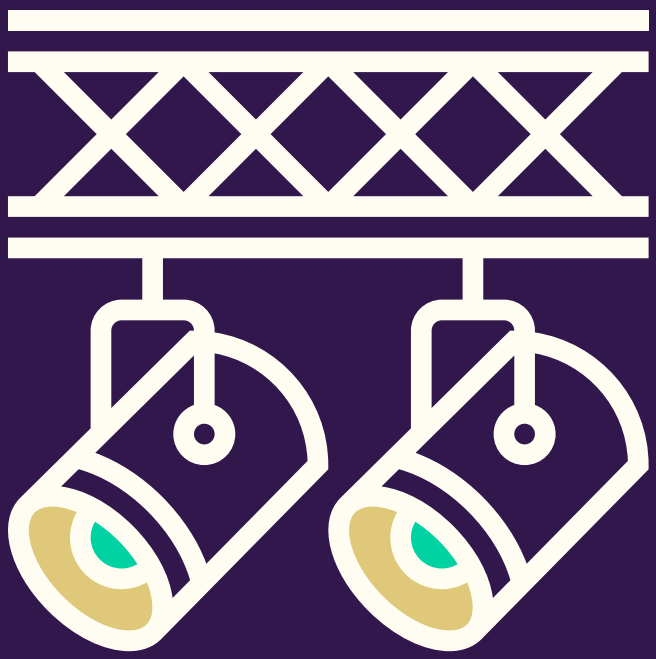
GOAL ACCOMPLISHMENT (CONTINUED)	1 - UNSATISFACTORY	2 - DEVELOPING	3 - SATISFACTORY	4 - EXEMPLARY
(11) PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES *Can a user be empowered to make informed decisions based on the past performance of certain workforce and training solutions?*	Criteria are not yet met. Performance outcomes may be present but do not equip users to make decisions informed by data.	At least one type of performance outcomes data about workforce programs is available, such as: • Number of jobs filled by provider • Average earnings of jobs filled by provider • Graduation or completion rates by program provider • Job placement rates by program provider • Reviews or testimonials from past participants	Two or more types of performance outcomes data about workforce programs are available, such as: • Number of jobs filled by provider • Average earnings of jobs filled by provider • Graduation or completion rates by program provider • Job placement rates by program provider • Reviews or testimonials from past participants	Three or more types of performance outcomes data about workforce programs are available, such as: • Number of jobs filled by provider • Average earnings of jobs filled by provider • Graduation or completion rates by program provider • Job placement rates by program provider • Reviews or testimonials from past participants
(12) INNOVATION & BEST PRACTICES *Does this website have exemplary components that other websites should take note of?*	The website does not have any examples of superlative features.	Yes, in 1-2 areas or more, which will be identified in the results. Examples include: • Effective use of CTAs (calls to action) to drive users towards goals. • Limiting text on the page. • Using interactive elements like drop downs. • Automating eligibility questionnaires. • New, useful approaches to site mapping. • Chatbots and other methods of connecting with users right away.	Yes, in 3-4 areas or more, which will be identified in the results. Examples include: • Effective use of CTAs (calls to action) to drive users towards goals. • Limiting text on the page. • Using interactive elements like drop downs. • Automating eligibility questionnaires. • New, useful approaches to site mapping. • Chatbots and other methods of connecting with users right away.	Yes, in 5 areas or more, which will be identified in the results. Examples include: • Effective use of CTAs (calls to action) to drive users towards goals. • Limiting text on the page. • Using interactive elements like drop downs. • Automating eligibility questionnaires. • New, useful approaches to site mapping. • Chatbots and other methods of connecting with users right away.

END OF RUBRIC

WhereWeGo & Texas 2036 would like to thank the 250+ Texan career seekers, workforce professionals, and educators whose contributions informed this rubric.

SPOTLIGHTS

In each of these 12 major service goals for a high performing website, we spotlight several Texas and National exemplars.



RUBRIC ROW DESCRIPTION

QUALITY OF INFORMATION

(1) COMMON CAREER SEEKER SERVICES

Can users learn specific and actionable details about common services in their region?

4- EXEMPLAR

The website provides plentiful, current, comprehensive, and interactive information about common job posting and support services resources, such as:

- WIOA eligibility
- Recent job postings
- Resume & pre-hire services
- Childcare
- Transportation
- Career fairs

TRENDS AND CONCLUSIONS

- The designers of many websites treat career seeker services as items to be mentioned but not services to provide or be engaged with online. There is an overreliance on providing one-sized fits-all information without actions. The best sites provided customized information, offered actionable steps like online applications or forms, and avoided burying important information behind several clicks.

Click the hand to visit website

TEXAS SPOTLIGHT
WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS SOUTHEAST TEXAS

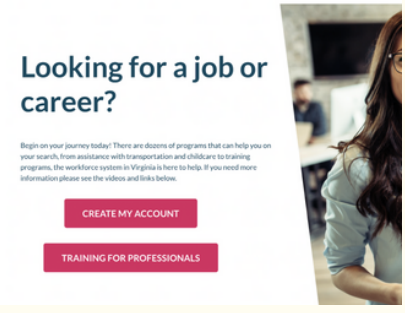
https://setworks.org

- Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas' WIOA Eligibility Application is an exemplary resource that we highly recommend. A career seeker can easily access key information about WIOA eligibility and apply directly online.
- They also include clear links for assistance—bulleted information vs. blocks of text, hyperlinks, and meaningful action on screen.

OTHER SPOTLIGHT
VIRGINIA CAREER WORKS

https://virginiacareerworks.com

- Virginia Career Works mixes modern and usable design with customizable and user-specific information. Actionable items were highlighted, and the site makes services likely to be engaged with quickly.



RUBRIC ROW DESCRIPTION

QUALITY OF INFORMATION

(2) COMPARING IN-DEMAND CAREER PATHWAYS

Are users able to discover in-demand and growing career pathways information based on regional trends?

4- EXEMPLAR

Within 3 clicks, users can learn about 15+ growing careers in their region, including each of the following components for each career:

- Compelling visuals like photography, graphics, or other design elements
- Career description
- Career outlook
- Who the career may be best suited for
- Regional wages data in the context of cost of living data

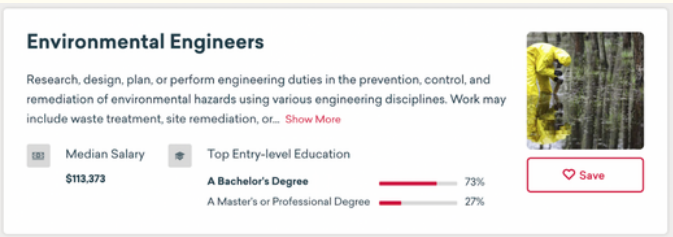
TRENDS AND CONCLUSIONS

- Labor market information can help career seekers target a pathway that will set them up for a lifetime of high-paying jobs. We found that most labor market information is not formatted in a user-friendly way, so it is usually unlikely that a career seeker will find and make an informed decision based on that information.

TEXAS SPOTLIGHT
WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS TARRANT COUNTY

https://workforcesolutions.net

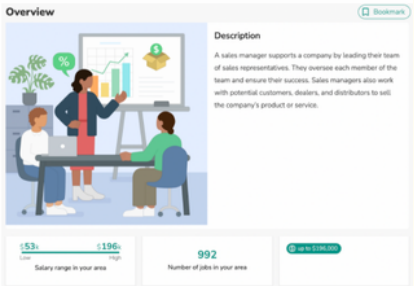
- By combining high-quality visuals, short, clear descriptions, salary information, and an expandable card of critical information, a career seeker in Tarrant county can take actions informed by some labor market information.



OTHER SPOTLIGHT
SKILLUP

https://www.skillup.org

- SkillUp uses a short quiz to get their users started with a list of recommended careers and then provides regionally specific salary information, who a career is for, the number of jobs available in an area, and even information about training programs.



RUBRIC ROW DESCRIPTION

QUALITY OF INFORMATION	4- EXEMPLAR
(3) FINDING THE BEST CAREER PATHS & JOB TRAINING PROGRAMS *Can career seekers discover the most commonly requested information about vocational and skills training providers?*	The website provides plentiful, current, comprehensive, accurate, and interactive information about vocational and skills training providers, including at least 5 of the following details for each: • Cost of program • Earning potential • Wraparound services • Useful dates • Contact and location information • Compelling photography • Compelling writing

TRENDS AND CONCLUSIONS

- Nearly every site has a dropdown or call to action about job training. However, very few provide the information in the rubric row above, which, according to our surveys and research, is the most valued by career seekers. It is often hard to know, as a user, what to do after clicking job training.

TEXAS SPOTLIGHT
METRIX

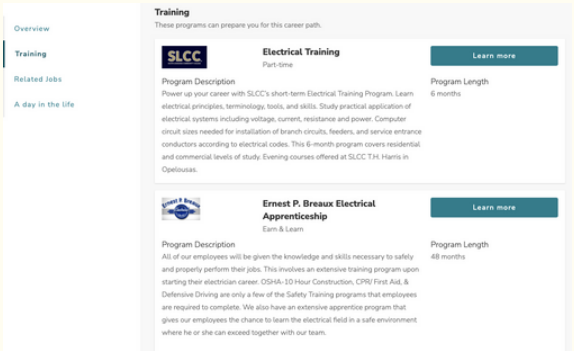
https://tx.metrixlearning.com

- The partnership with Metrix allows Texans to get meaningful training online. However, there were many points of friction between Workforce Solutions websites and on the Metrix user interface that are likely to prevent a user from enrolling or completing training. Once enrolled, the quality of the courses on Metrix is, at times, very good.

OTHER SPOTLIGHT
SKILLUP

https://www.skillup.org

- SkillUp provides friendly, introductory information about training programs and organizes those programs by career. WhereWeGo hopes to see the variety of programs and details about programs develop further as this new coalition grows.



RUBRIC ROW DESCRIPTION

USER EXPERIENCE	4- EXEMPLAR
(4) MOBILE & (6) DESKTOP NAVIGATION *Does the website's navigation and structure empower the user to quickly and easily gain access to crucial resources?*	The site employs navigation techniques commonly expected of sites built within the last 5 years. The site is well-organized and easy to navigate. Career seekers can clearly understand the site's resources and where to go next for a wide range of needs.
(5) MOBILE & (7) DESKTOP LAYOUT *Does the website's graphic and web design empower the user to quickly and easily gain access to crucial resources?*	There are multiple graphic elements and variations in layout that assist career seekers to accomplish their goals efficiently. No pages appear incomplete, malfunctioning, or overly reliant on text. Design elements assist seekers in understanding concepts and ideas. The site gives an impression of high-quality services by employing commonly expected design features of sites built within the last 5 years.

TRENDS AND CONCLUSIONS

- In the first quarter of 2021, mobile devices (excluding tablets) generated 54.8 percent of global website traffic. Many websites in the workforce space are designed primarily for desktop users. This design choice leads to high "bounce rates," or people who leave without action. Many websites built earlier in the 2010s were not built to optimize the mobile experience or rely on outdated designs.
- In addition, an overreliance on blocks of text makes the experience for users on many workforce websites quite tricky. It is common for good services to be buried in paragraphs or behind multiple clicks. Users, especially on mobile, are accustomed to scanning, not reading. While that behavior may make creating a website frustrating, it is critical to meet users where they are and select website providers and designers that can satisfy how most people browse and learn online.

TEXAS SPOTLIGHT
WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS SOUTHEAST TEXAS

https://setworks.org

- The homepage of Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas includes clear calls to action on the front page with high-quality images, making sure a user who arrives knows precisely where to go.

TEXAS SPOTLIGHT
CITY OF AMARILLO

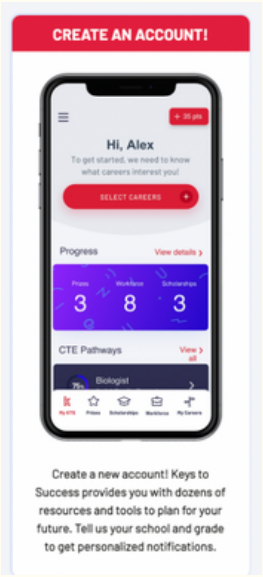
https://www.amarillo.gov/

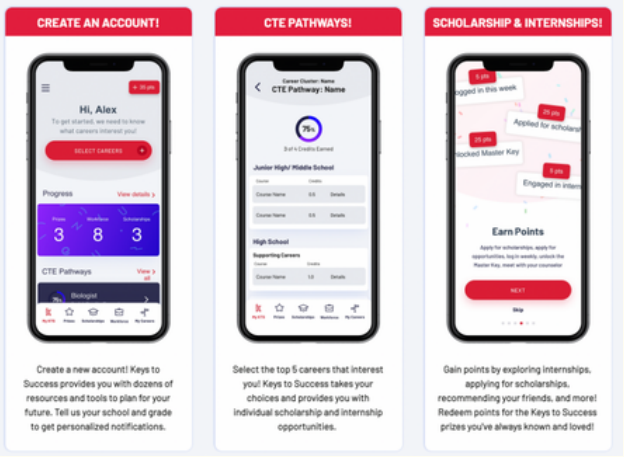
- The City of Amarillo put a drop-down on the most requested services on their homepage. While this seems like a minor feature, it helps avoid users' confusion about which departments to look for. Flexible drop-downs are an example of using site analytics to improve user experience.

OTHER SPOTLIGHT
KEYS TO SUCCESS UTAH

https://www.ktsutah.org

- Keys to Success Utah shows screenshots and has clear step-by-step instructions, so a user knows what's coming and how to get there.





9 GOAL ACCOMPLISHMENT ACCESS TO SERVICES

RUBRIC ROW DESCRIPTION

GOAL ACCOMPLISHMENT	4- EXEMPLAR
(9) ACCESS TO SERVICES *Can a job seeker use the website to begin access to services for career seekers at any time of day?*	The website contains 3 or more functioning features from this list: • A form to submit a question that receives a response within 3 business days. • A live chat function. • An intake application designed to be taken at home. • Enrollment steps or sign ups for events, wraparound services, or programming.

TRENDS AND CONCLUSIONS

- The best sites evaluated use chatbots or real humans to help users find what they were looking for. While the best-case scenario is that a user can navigate through a site without assistance, given some of the services and information complexity, it makes sense that some users may need help. If a career seeker keeps difficult hours and cannot make it into a job center, the website can be a place where they may access critical information and services.

TEXAS SPOTLIGHT
WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS BORDERPLEX

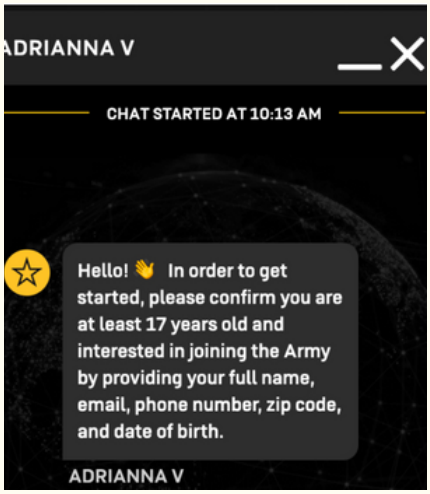
https://www.borderplexjobs.com

- Workforce Solutions Borderplex has a modern, easy-to-use chat function that is responsive and has accessible appointment booking services. In addition to a detailed, actionable services database, this website is likely to serve a population with a diverse set of needs.

OTHER SPOTLIGHT
GOARMY.COM

https://www.goarmy.com

- Many sites use chat functions to support their users. The US Army pairs a career quiz with a high-functioning chat to get users into their funnel. By collecting names and information about users, they can follow up with recruitment information.



10 GOAL ACCOMPLISHMENT
STARTING JOB TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

RUBRIC ROW DESCRIPTION

GOAL ACCOMPLISHMENT

(10) STARTING JOB TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Can a user go from discovering the site to taking enrollment steps in job training?

4- EXEMPLAR

The website contains current information on actionable next steps for many job training programs and opportunities, such as application dates, enrollment requirements, application forms, and contact forms by program.

TRENDS AND CONCLUSIONS

- Most of the links on workforce sites that reference “Job Training” have little information about what they may offer, and very rarely do they have actual content about how to start getting trained or what that means. Sites often present links to online or in-person training without deeper context.

TEXAS SPOTLIGHT
WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS TARRANT COUNTY

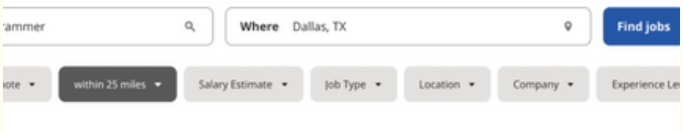
https://workforcesolutions.net

- Similar to the information they provided on the "Comparing In-Demand Career Pathways" rubric row, Tarrant County and their use of the Emsi Career Coach are the closest to an exemplary example of this rubric row of the sites we evaluated.

OTHER SPOTLIGHT
INDEED

https://www.indeed.com

- Job search websites have set a common standard and expectation for personalizable searching for career opportunities. It is modern and clean, and an interface like this for job training could be a helpful addition to the Texas Workforce online toolbox. For some training examples approaching this kind of user-friendliness, see Explore.WhereWeGo.org and SkillUp.org.



11 GOAL ACCOMPLISHMENT PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES

RUBRIC ROW DESCRIPTION

GOAL ACCOMPLISHMENT

(11) PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES

Can a user be empowered to make informed decisions based on the past performance of certain workforce and training solutions?

4- EXEMPLAR

Three or more types of performance outcomes data about workforce programs are available, such as:

- Number of jobs filled by provider
- Average earnings of jobs filled by provider
- Graduation or completion rates by program provider
- Job placement rates by program provider
- Reviews or testimonials from past participants

TRENDS AND CONCLUSIONS

- Performance outcomes is an area in need of improvement across the country. Reporting on performance outcomes is often required for access to WIOA funding and other federal financial aid. However, existing reporting mechanisms are rarely user-friendly enough to inform decision-making. Without state and federal mandates to further disseminate performance outcomes, WhereWeGo suggests establishing user-centered, regional Training Navigators where users learn outcomes and critical information, and programs gain increased awareness and enrollment.

TEXAS SPOTLIGHT
TEXAS HIGHER EDUCATION ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM

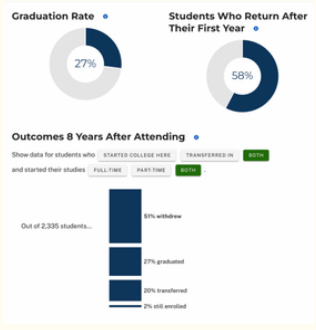
http://www.txhigheredaccountability.org/

- The Texas Higher Education Accountability System is an example of concerted efforts to gather completion and job placement data for four-year, technical, and other career institutions. Technology like this is an important starting place on the path towards user-friendly data visualizations for career seekers.

OTHER SPOTLIGHT
COLLEGE SCORECARD

https://collegescorecard.ed.gov

- College Scorecard is an example of friendly presentations of statistics that enable workers to make data-informed decisions. Many of their graphics and language choices model superb usability.



RUBRIC ROW DESCRIPTION

GOAL ACCOMPLISHMENT	**4- EXEMPLAR**
(12) INNOVATION & BEST PRACTICES *Does this website have exemplary components that other websites should take note of?*	Yes, in 5 areas or more, which will be identified in the results. Examples include: • Effective use of CTAs (calls to action) to drive users towards goals. • Limiting text on the page. • Using interactive elements like drop downs. • Automating eligibility questionnaires. • New, useful approaches to site mapping. • Chatbots and other methods of connecting with users right away.

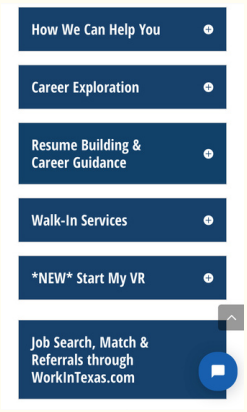
TRENDS AND CONCLUSIONS

- Three Workforce Solutions sites earned a 4.0 for innovation, and the researchers encourage readers to visit them. Each of them is highlighted at previous points in this report as well.

WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS HEART OF TEXAS

https://www.hotworkforce.com/

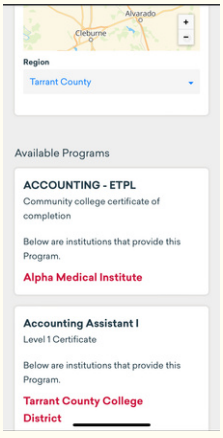
Intuitive, mobile-friendly drop downs keep a user from having to scroll through lots of text to find what they need.



WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS TARRANT COUNTY

https://workforcesolutions.net/

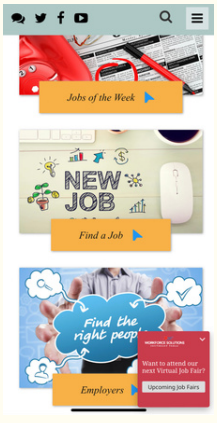
Easy to filter training programs to find career training in the user's area make this experience exemplary.



WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS SOUTHEAST TEXAS

https://setworks.org/

Clear CTAS, friendly design, mobile responsiveness, and key information pinned to the side.



FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

A summary of the findings from using the rubric to evaluate 45 workforce websites in and outside of Texas

KEY STRENGTHS
WHAT MAJOR STRENGTHS EMERGED?

(1) Nearly every website has an existing structure for adding new information to their platform.

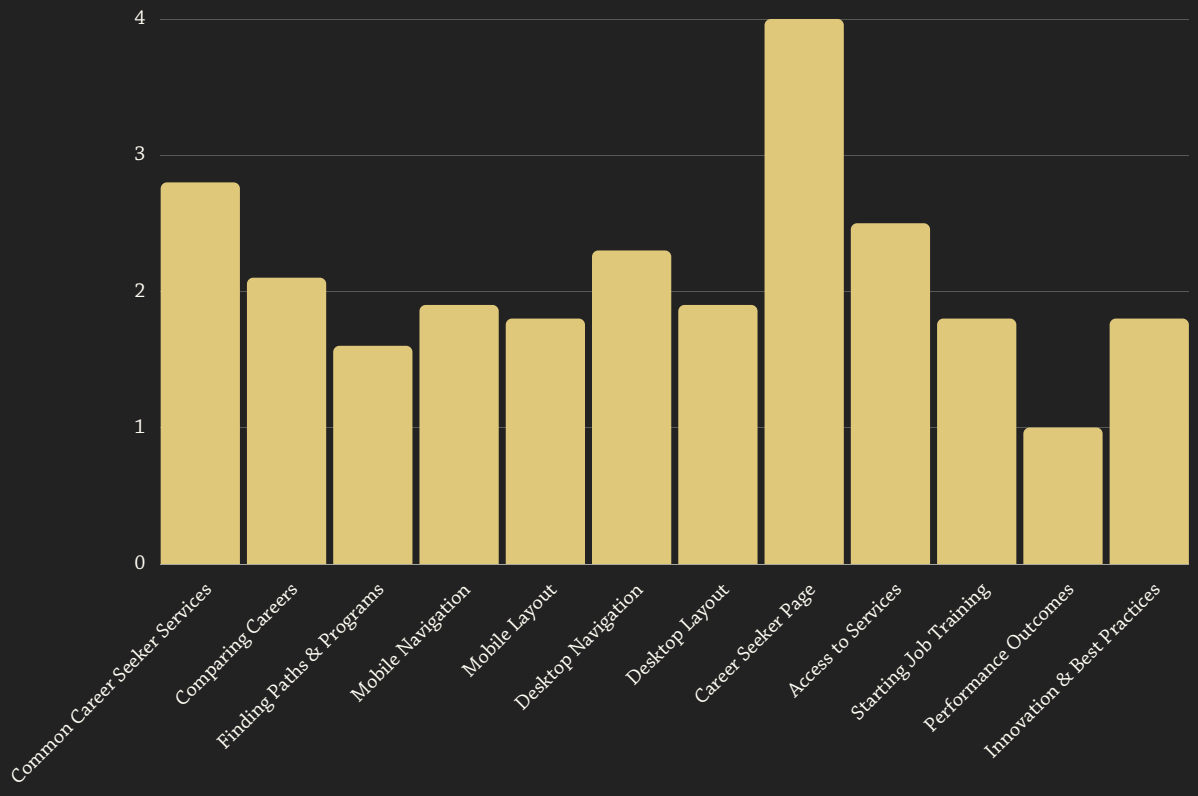
It was evident that each website has been updated with information from within the past year. From the perspective of a user, sites feel current and often well-tended. For example, there was plentiful information about upcoming events across the state. Suppose a website has an existing structure for who maintains informational updates, who maintains design, and who maintains incoming data from the website. In that case, this is an excellent starting point for further web development. Though not every website has this structure, it is clear that many sites have specific staff members selected to make website announcements.

(2) Websites are making a concerted effort to link to partnerships and other resources within the community.

Though stakeholders often feel that there are too many things to keep track of, such as various websites from partners or another resource announced by the state, most websites demonstrated the ability to recognize and celebrate other organizations in their region. Similar to the first positive trends, this is an excellent starting point for providing better ease of use and access to resources for workers.

STATEWIDE PERFORMANCE

Statewide average on each rubric row



NOTABLE POSITIVE TRENDS

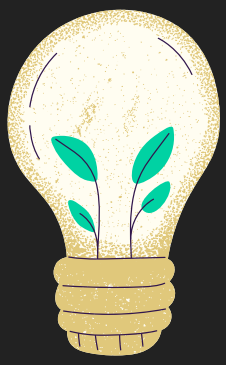
IN WHAT AREAS ARE THE STATE'S WORKFORCE WEBSITES PERFORMING BEST?

- Every site has a section specifically for career seekers.
- It is very common for a worker to discover a list of available services within 1 or 2 clicks.
- It is common for workers to learn of partnerships within the region or other organizations or websites to explore.

STATEWIDE PERFORMANCE

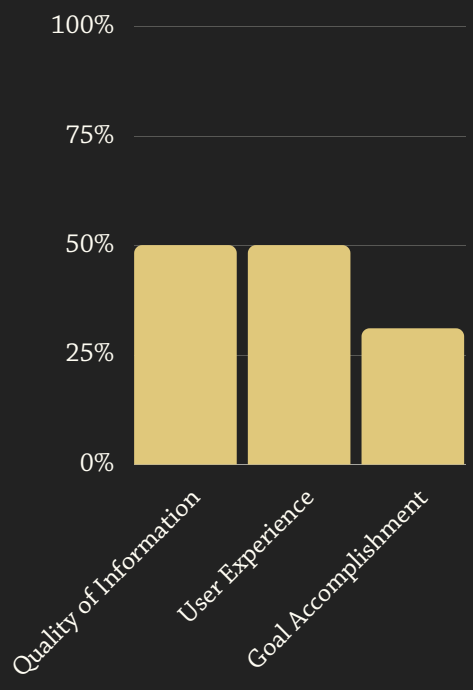
NOTABLE OPPORTUNITIES

WHAT MAJOR OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT EMERGED IN EVALUATING IN-STATE AND NATIONAL WORKFORCE WEBSITES?



- It is rare for a worker to take enrollment steps in career education due to a lack of information about training providers and the performance outcomes of those opportunities.
- It is very rare for a worker to determine their WIOA eligibility, and WIOA information was often made confusing by hiding crucial information behind too many clicks or walls of text.
- Compliance-required disclosures appear to be treated as the primary design constraint rather than usability. Though certainly a requirement, compliance disclosures need not drive user experience.
- The major barriers to scoring higher on mobile navigation and layout appear due to a common circumstance in website development: Upon launch, a website is clean, informative, and cohesive. However, as the website is used and updated over time, the organization and quantity of information create a confusing digital environment.

Statewide average on each rubric category



CONCLUSIONS

1) An exemplary template would be valuable for many workforce region websites.

There are many commonalities across workforce website requirements, yet a large variance in quality. A standard, optional template provided to regions could lower web design costs and leverage the many features worth spotlighting throughout the state. This template could include:

- Site map recommendations, including suggested URLs to simplify navigating across regions.
- A suggested list of requirements
- Sample layouts for common page types
- Iconography & style guide

2) Compliance and user-friendliness are not mutually exclusive.

Our conversations with stakeholders made it clear that many vendors are chosen and design decisions are made because of federal or other reporting requirements. We encourage technical buyers who are considering redesigning their websites to select providers with ample experience in both avenues. Technical buyers can use prior experience with components of the rubric as one of their methodologies for evaluating vendors.

RESULTS *1 of 2*

Four Texas sites rank within the top quartile of sites evaluated nationally.

	Website	*Combined Score (44 pts)*	*Quality of Info (12 pts)*	*User Experience (20 pts)*	*Goal Accomplishment (12 pts)*
	WS Tarrant County	**39**	11	20	8
	Idaho Launch	**34**	12	16	6
	Indeed	**32**	6	20	6
	Ohio Means Jobs	**31**	8	17	6
	WS Heart of Texas	**30**	9	13	8
	WS Southeast Texas	**30**	9	13	7
	Keys to Success	**29**	12	14	3
	SkillUp	**29**	7	16	6
	Virginia Career Works	**29**	7	16	6
	Army Career Quiz	**27**	6	17	4
75th Percentile	WS Borderplex	**27**	8	12	7
	Texas Reality Check	**26**	6	14	6
	WS North Texas	**26**	8	12	6
	Upskill Houston	**25**	6	14	5
	WS Alamo	**25**	7	13	5
	WS Deep East Texas	**25**	8	12	5
	WS East Texas	**25**	7	14	4
	WS Lower Rio Grande Valley	**25**	7	13	5
	WS Panhandle	**25**	8	13	4
	Alabama Works	**24**	7	13	4
	Employ Florida	**24**	7	13	4
	WS Central Texas	**24**	5	14	5
50th Percentile	WS Coastal Bend	**24**	8	10	6
	Career One Stop	**23**	5	12	6
	College Scorecard	**23**	7	9	7
	WS Gulf Coast	**23**	8	10	5
	WS South Plains	**23**	7	12	4
	Work in Texas	**22**	7	12	3
	AVERAGE	**24**	7	12	5

RESULTS *2 of 2*

	Website	*Combined Score (44 pts)*	*Quality of Info (12 pts)*	*User Experience (20 pts)*	*Goal Accomplishment (12 pts)*
	WS Capital Area	**22**	6	12	4
	WS Concho Valley	**22**	6	12	4
	WS North Central Texas	**22**	8	10	4
	My TX Career	**21**	6	10	5
	WS Rural Capital Area	**21**	5	11	5
	WS Cameron	**20**	5	12	3
25th Percentile	WS West Central Texas	**20**	4	12	4
	WS Brazos Valley	**19**	6	10	3
	WS Greater Dallas	**19**	4	12	3
	WS Northeast Texas	**19**	5	11	3
	WS Permian Basin	**19**	5	10	4
	WS South Texas	**19**	4	12	3
	MyNextMove	**17**	6	6	5
	WS Middle Rio Grande	**16**	4	9	3
	WS Texoma	**16**	5	8	3
	WS Golden Crescent	**15**	3	9	3
	Texas Career Check	**13**	5	5	3
	AVERAGE	**24**	7	12	5

THANK YOU!

For support on your next endeavor to create value for workers in your region, please do not hesitate to contact us.

info@wherewego.org
Leah Lykins & Ben Ifshin
Co-Founders of WhereWeGo

APPENDIX

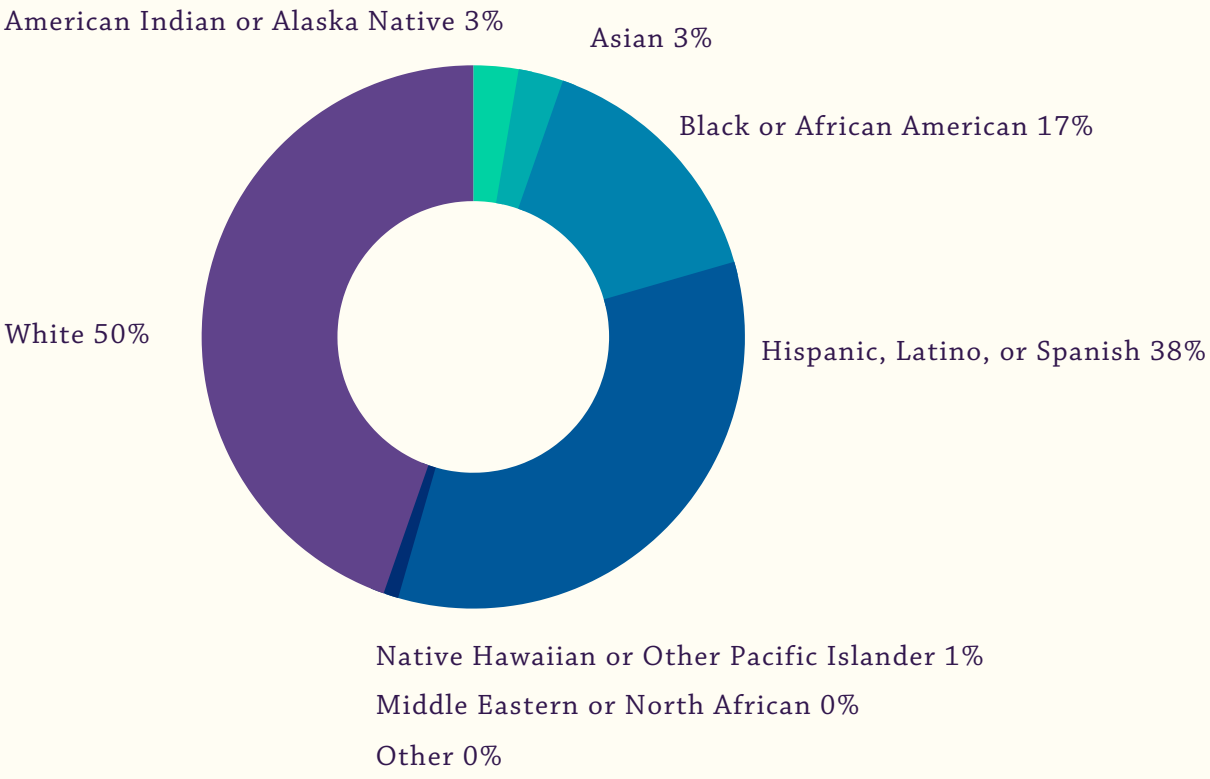
The rubric performance of each workforce website in Texas and further details about the respondents to the survey

WORKER SURVEY RESPONDENTS & RESPONSES

WhereWeGo also surveyed 270 Texans about what they value from workforce websites and their mindsets about their current career path. The respondents met the following requirements: (1) All respondents were between 18 and 54 years old. (2) Respondents were sourced from urban, suburban, and rural regions throughout Texas. (3) All respondents were currently or had been unemployed within the past year. (4) Respondents represented varying degrees of education, household income, and racial and ethnic background. (5) At least 80 percent of respondents actively sought new employment.

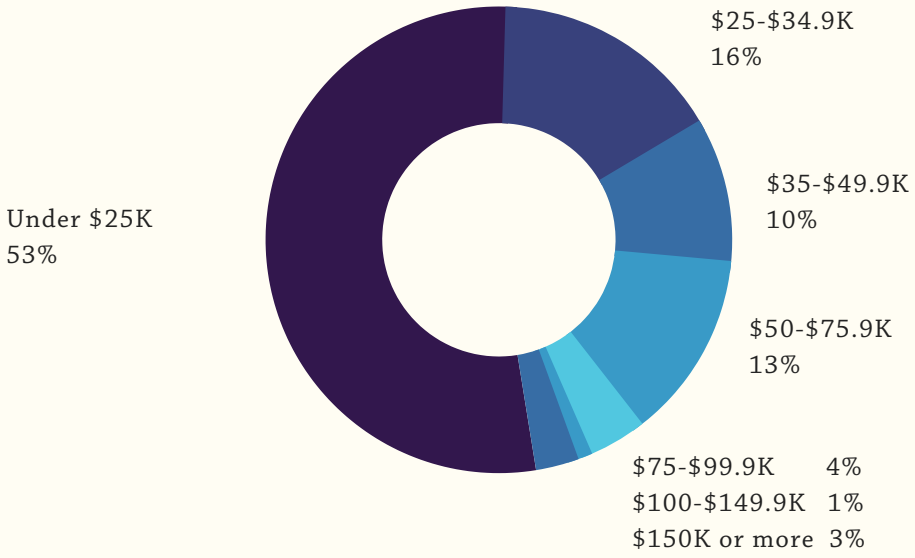
The survey respondents represented varying races and ethnicities, but some groups were underrepresented.

Distribution by race & ethnicity



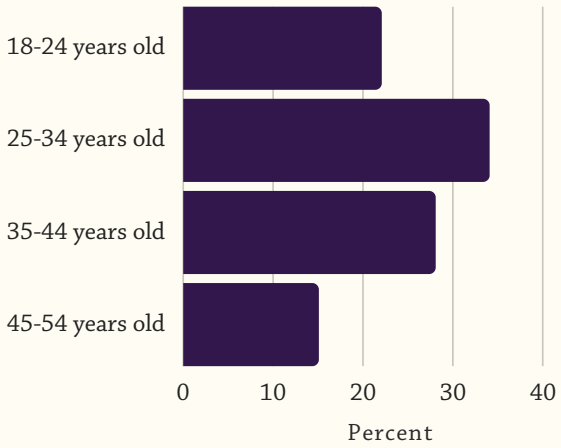
The survey respondents represented a variety of financial backgrounds.

Distribution by income

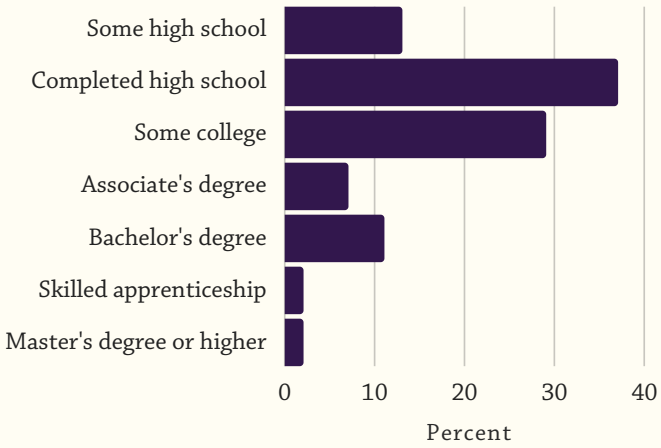


The survey respondents represented a diverse set of age and education characteristics.

Distribution by age



Distribution by education



Respondents found information about specific opportunities more useful than general tools.

49%
Wish they had a clearer career path ahead.

9%
Found career quizzes and assessments useful.

These responses only include respondents with a household income below $75K.

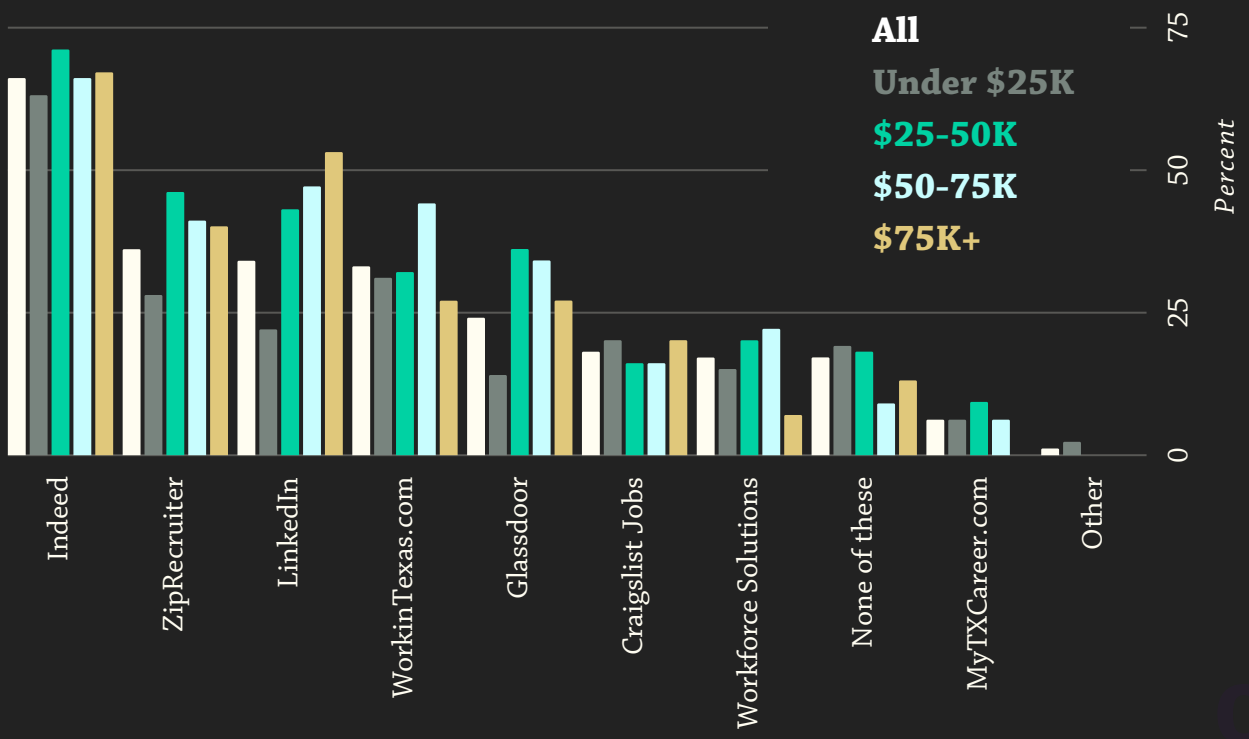
Responses from the survey indicated that workers are more eager to gain specific information about real opportunities than general information about services.

Although few career seekers desired more job postings on a government workforce website, most found information about education and costs for education highly desirable.

Similarly, workers generally did not find career matching quizzes as applicable as precise details about what training programs were available.

Most respondents did not use a local or regional workforce-related website in the past year.

"Which of the following websites, if any, have you used within the PAST YEAR?" by household income



WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS RESULTS

How did the Workforce Solutions websites perform on the Workforce Website Evaluation Rubric? How can one make these results actionable?

QUICK JUMP TO URL
Look for the click button to jump directly to a workforce website.

DECIDE WHERE TO DIRECT RESOURCES
The funnel shape serves as a visual representation of where users may get stuck, or where bottlenecks might be preventing access to resources. It is not a chronological representation of a user experience.

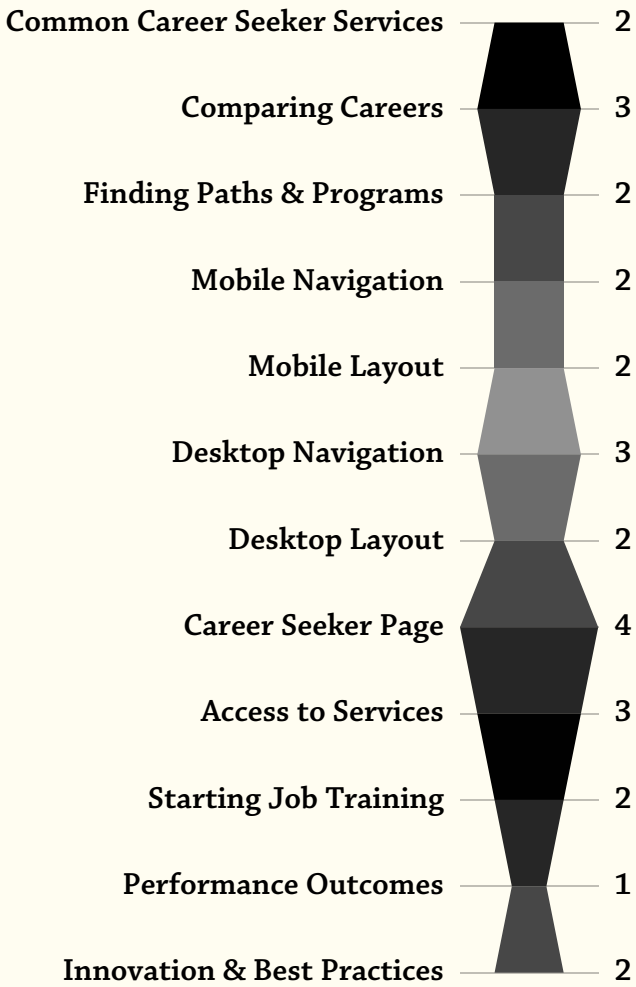
COMPARE BEST PRACTICES
Researchers noticed exemplary design choices and took specific notes on usability and potential impacts to the worker, when relevant.

WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS ALAMO

SCORE **25**

RANK **6th**

RUBRIC RESULTS



EXEMPLARY DESIGN CHOICES

- Pop-up for email updates allows the user to select their persona (employer, job seeker, etc).
- Information about targeted occupations is user-friendly and includes detailed fact sheets with a clear and compelling landing page.

OTHER NOTES

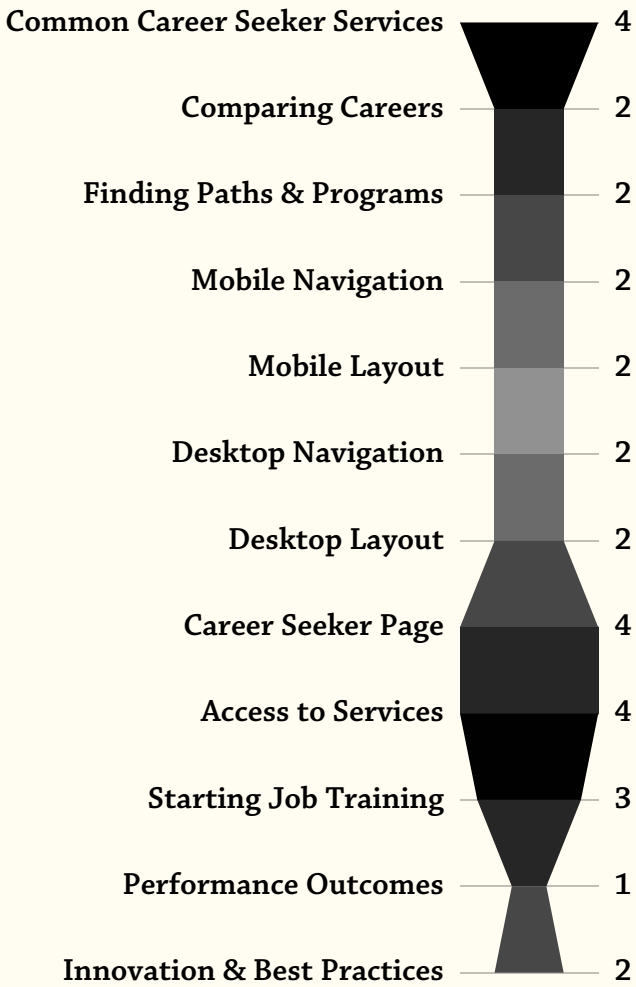
- The researcher could not find WIOA eligibility, resume services, transportation services, or career training programs information. There were, however, logos of educational institutions and lots of opportunities to go to a career center in person.

WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS BORDERPLEX

SCORE **27**

RANK **4th**

RUBRIC RESULTS



EXEMPLARY DESIGN CHOICES

- Live chat with a real person allows easy appointment booking.
- The services database is detailed and actionable.
- This is an exemplar for navigating services.

OTHER NOTES

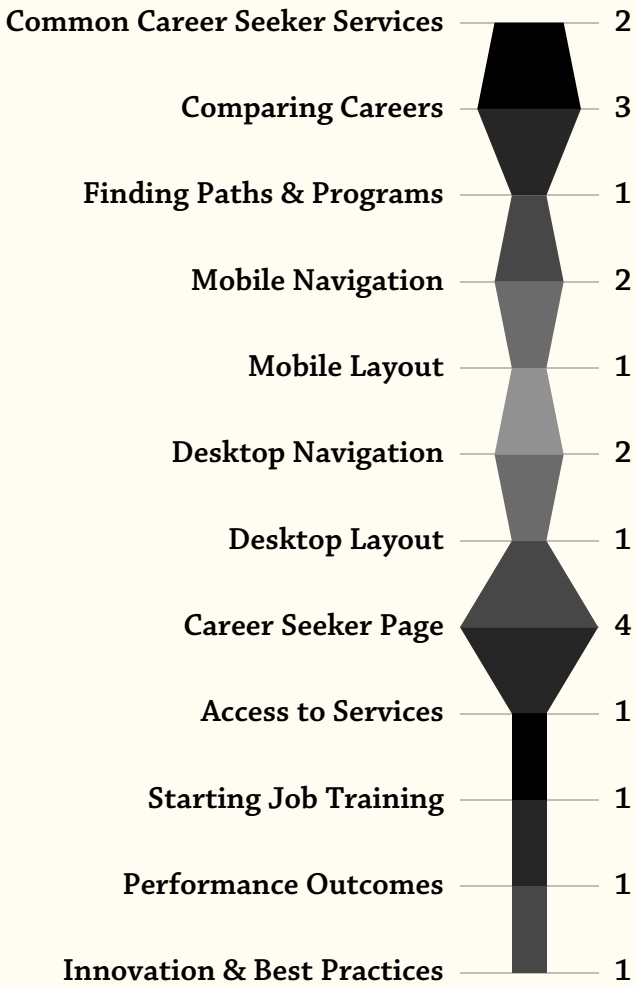
- Each service has a profile with general information, contacts, and links. Users can interact with this services database. This navigator is a promising direction and an exemplary tool amongst workforce websites.

WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS **BRAZOS VALLEY**

SCORE **19**

RANK **21st**

RUBRIC RESULTS



EXEMPLARY DESIGN CHOICES

- N/A

OTHER NOTES

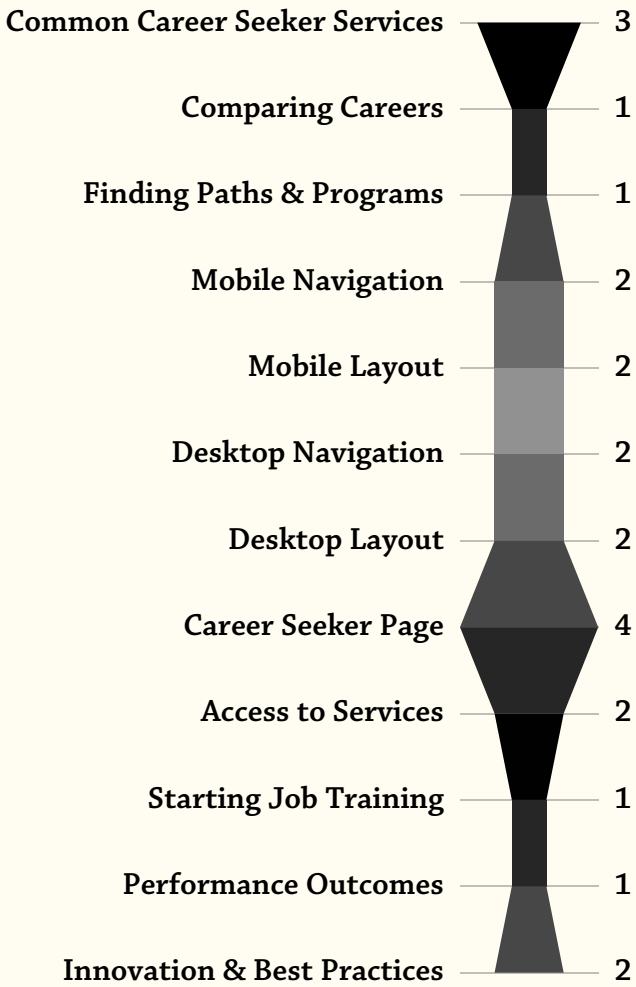
- Based on design choices, site appears to be built for employers more than job seekers.

WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS **CAMERON**

SCORE **20**

RANK **19th**

RUBRIC RESULTS



EXEMPLARY DESIGN CHOICES

- N/A

OTHER NOTES

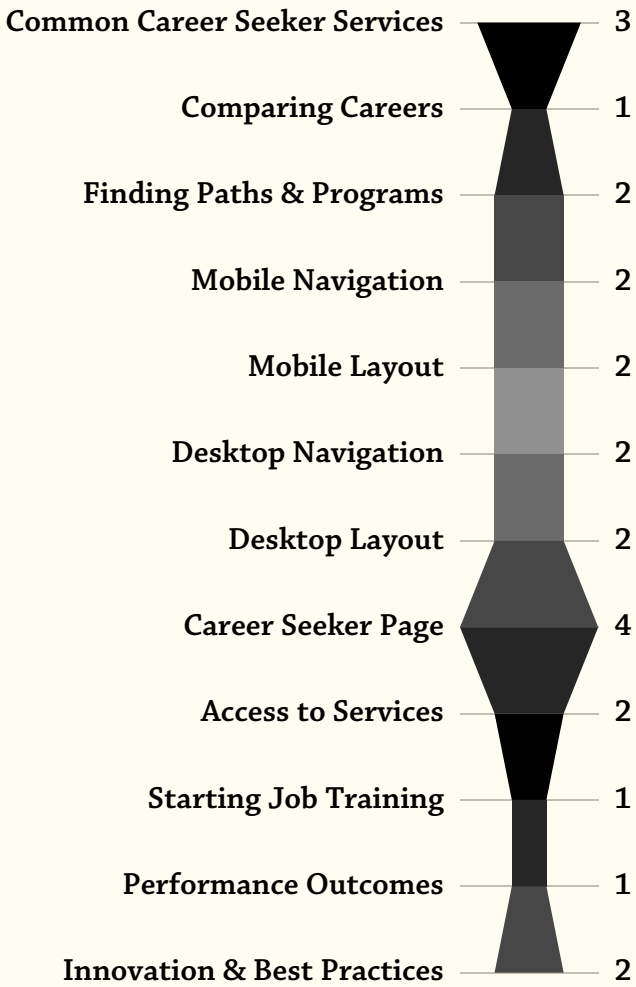
- N/A

WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS CAPITAL AREA

SCORE **22**

RANK **15th**

RUBRIC RESULTS



EXEMPLARY DESIGN CHOICES

- Upcoming events calendar view on the front page funnels users into meaningful engagement.

OTHER NOTES

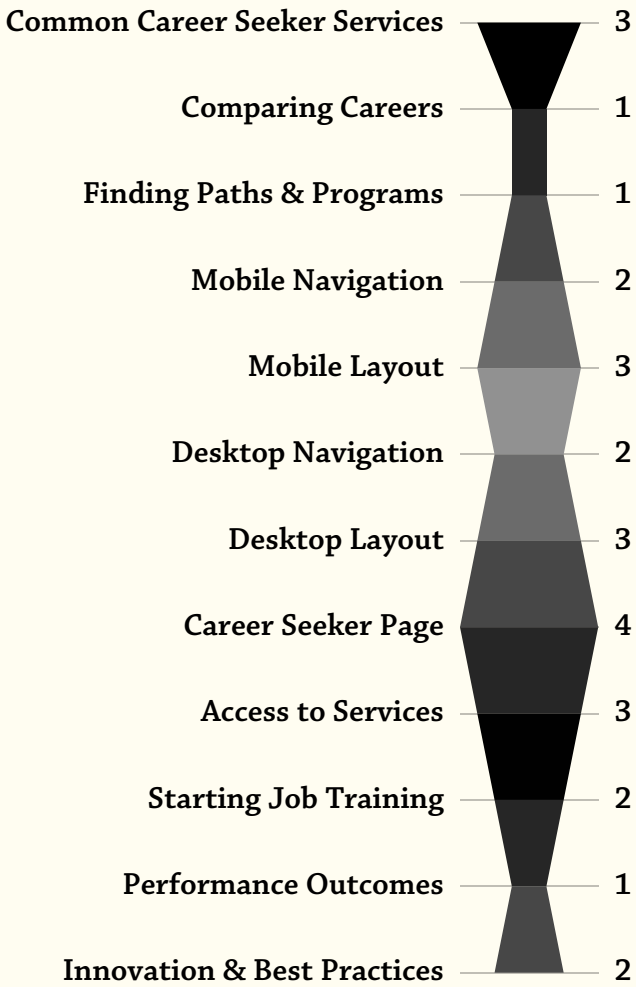
- There are helpful resources throughout this site, though many are 4 or more clicks from the homepage and are difficult for a user to find.

WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS CENTRAL TEXAS

SCORE **24**

RANK **11th**

RUBRIC RESULTS



EXEMPLARY DESIGN CHOICES

- A live chatbot can check eligibility.
- The site's design for "Training Grants" is approachable and actionable.
- The layout shows related resources with short, informative context statements.

OTHER NOTES

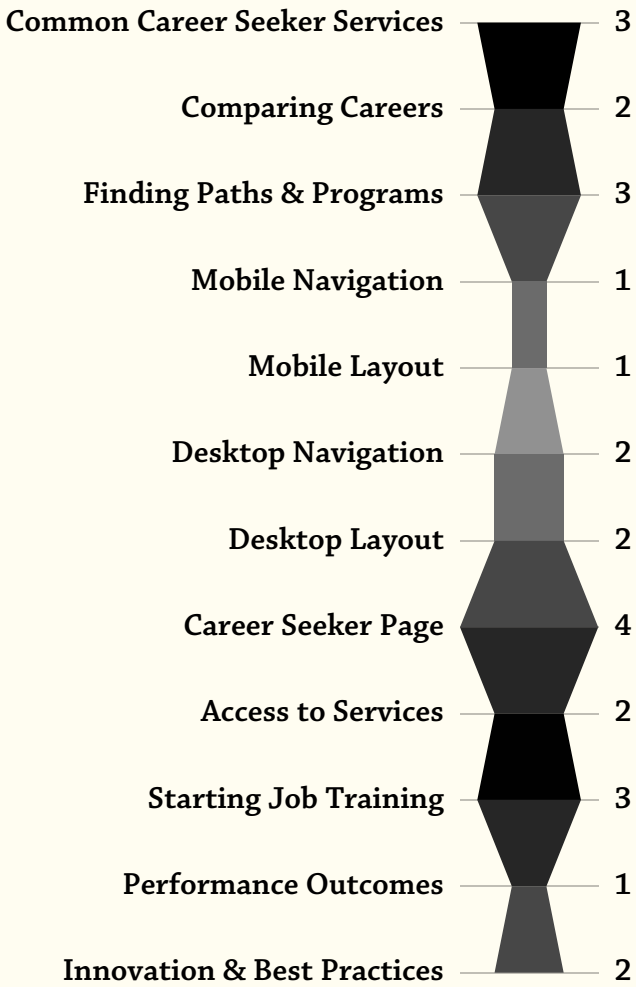
- Some links navigate back to the homepage and may create confusion for the user.

WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS COASTAL BEND

SCORE: 24

RANK: 7th

RUBRIC RESULTS



EXEMPLARY DESIGN CHOICES

- Intake form for "Training Scholarships" is clear.

OTHER NOTES

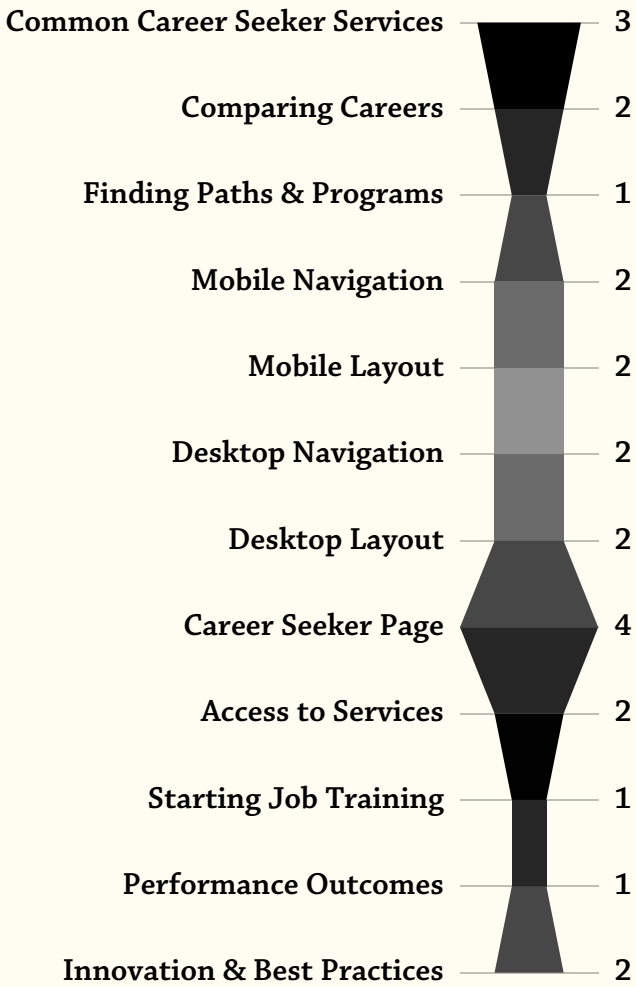
- N/A

WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS CONCHO VALLEY

SCORE: 22

RANK: 15th

RUBRIC RESULTS



EXEMPLARY DESIGN CHOICES

- Online orientation allows users to receive WIOA resources.
- High-demand career videos are a good start for providing up-to-date and comprehensive information.

OTHER NOTES

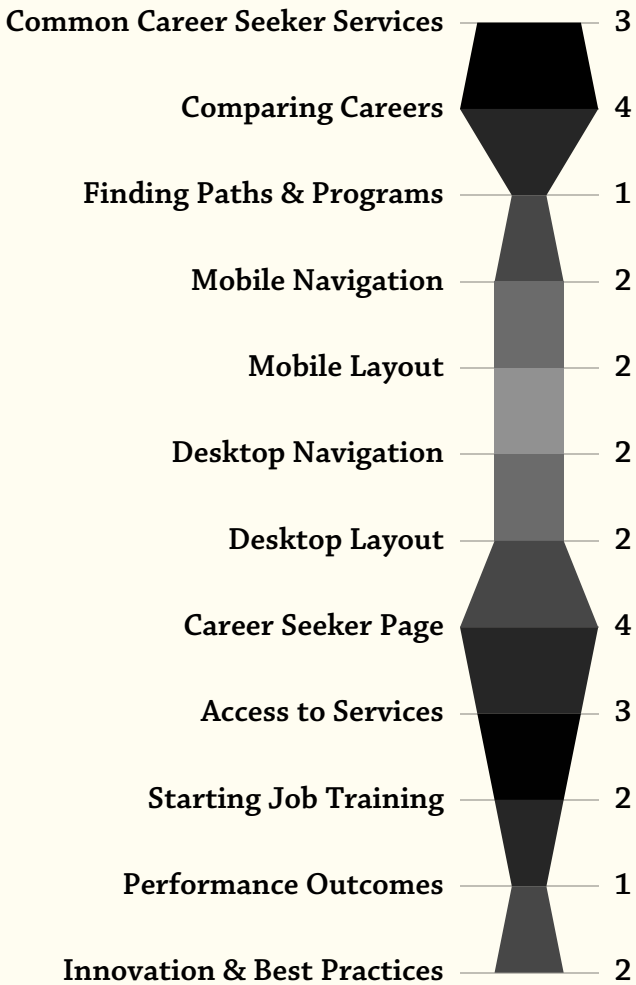
- N/A

WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS DEEP EAST TEXAS

SCORE **25**

RANK **6th**

RUBRIC RESULTS



EXEMPLARY DESIGN CHOICES

- The target occupation section has helpful information on each of the 2021 selected occupations.
- WIOA orientation can be completed entirely online, saving users a trip to an in-person job center.

OTHER NOTES

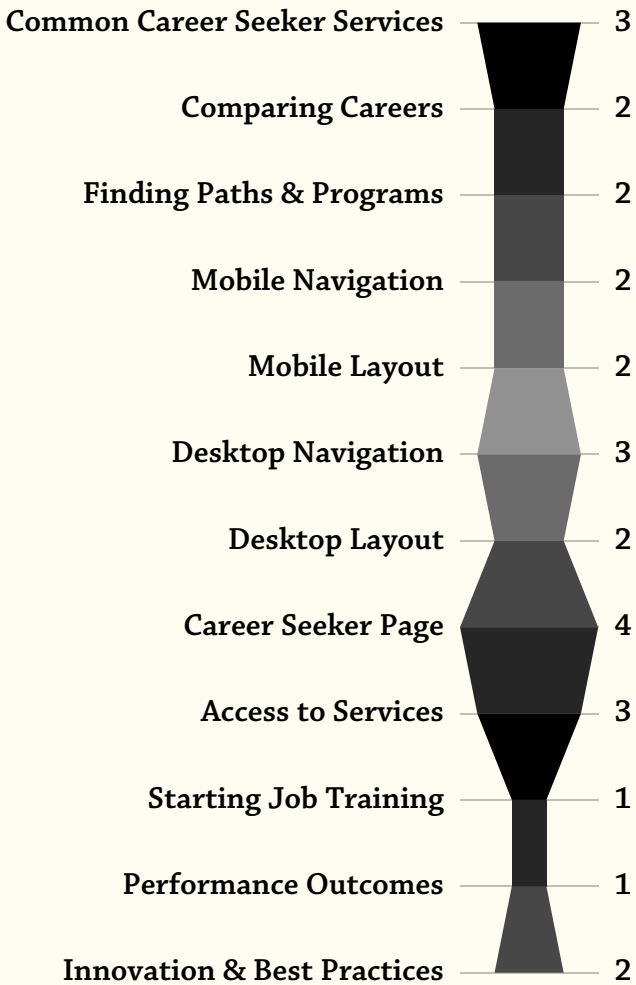
- The design of this website makes it challenging for users to discover many of the above-average and valuable resources for career or training seekers.

WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS EAST TEXAS

SCORE **25**

RANK **6th**

RUBRIC RESULTS



EXEMPLARY DESIGN CHOICES

- This site has many modern and high-quality design choices, including high-resolution photography, clear and short calls to action, and animations.

OTHER NOTES

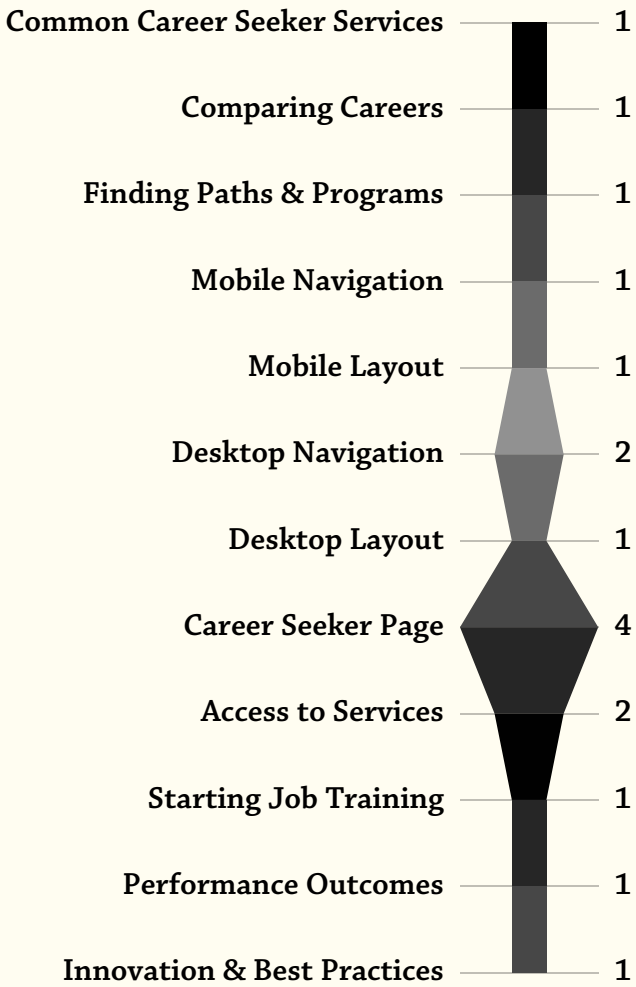
- For someone seeking career training, despite the site's usability, there are few places to take meaningful action on the website itself.

WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS GOLDEN CRESCENT

SCORE **15**

RANK **28th**

RUBRIC RESULTS



EXEMPLARY DESIGN CHOICES

- N/A

OTHER NOTES

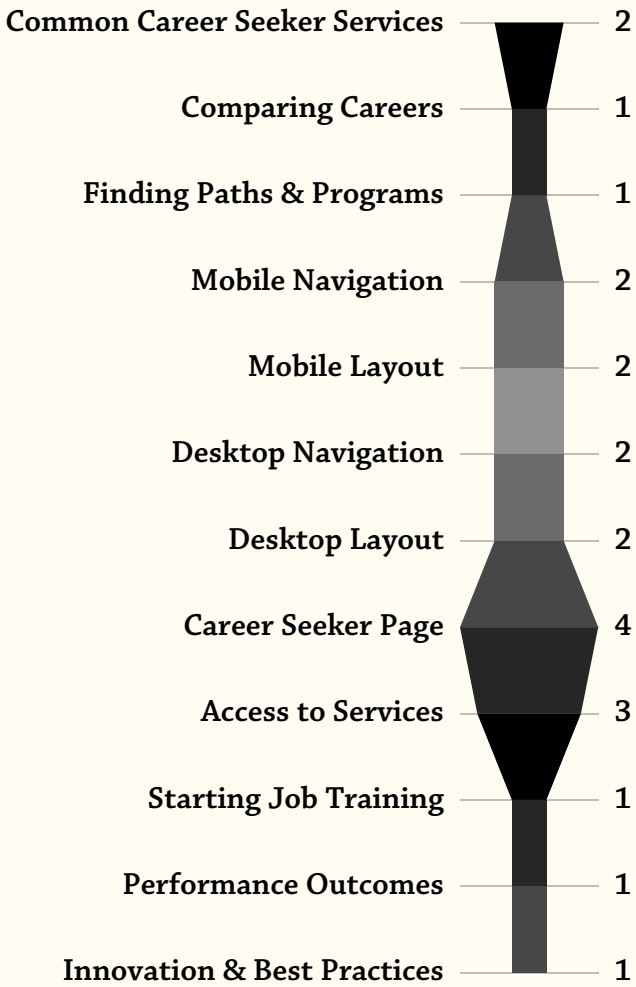
- We recommend this organization engage a redesign to help residents access some beneficial information they have prepared.

WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS GREATER DALLAS

SCORE **19**

RANK **21st**

RUBRIC RESULTS



EXEMPLARY DESIGN CHOICES

- N/A

OTHER NOTES

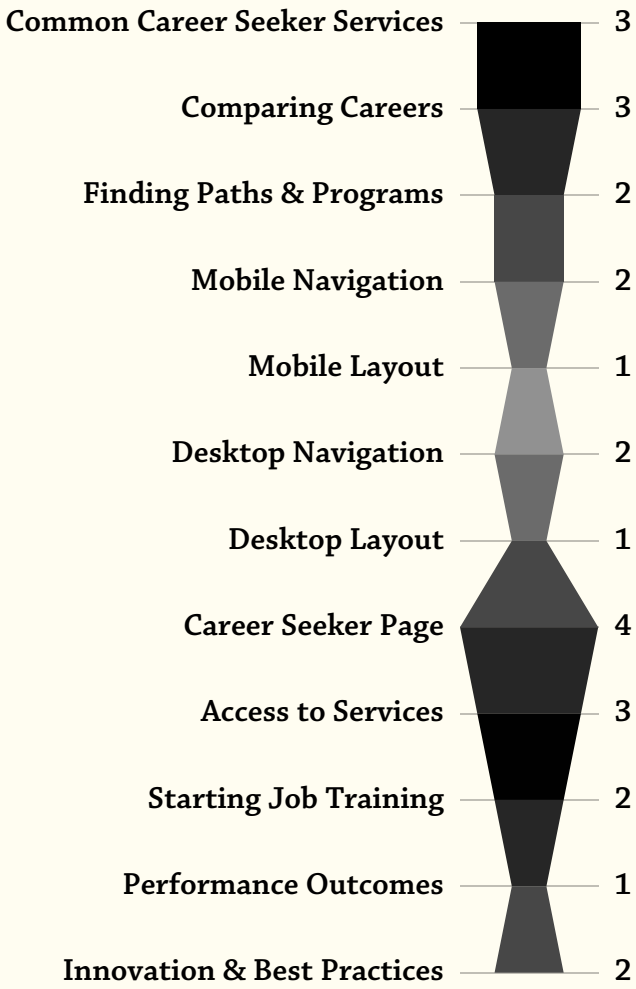
- N/A

WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS GULF COAST

SCORE: 23

RANK: 13th

RUBRIC RESULTS



EXEMPLARY DESIGN CHOICES

- N/A

OTHER NOTES

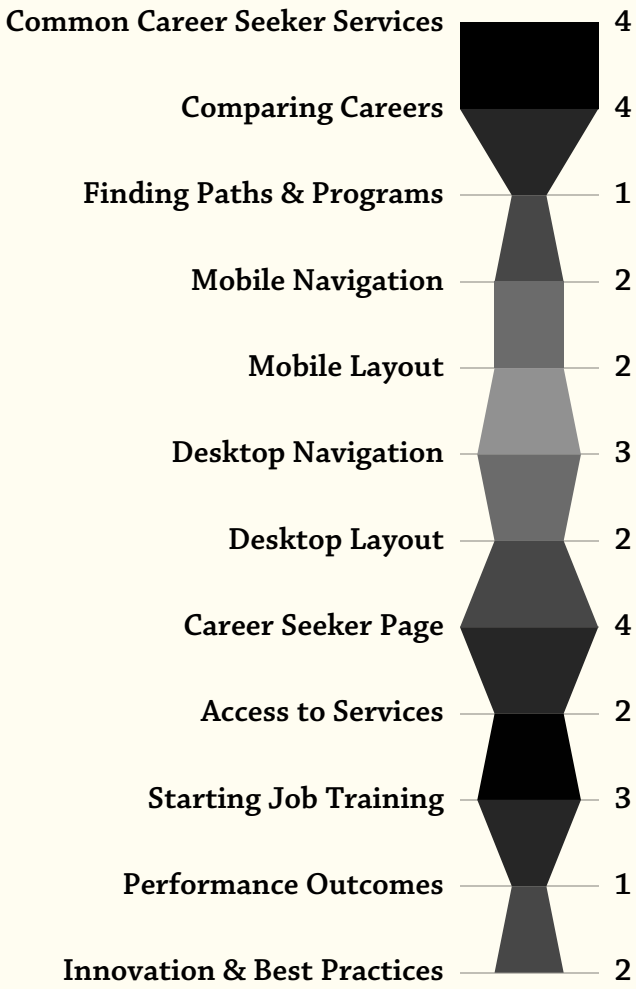
- N/A

WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS HEART OF TEXAS

SCORE: 30

RANK: 2nd

RUBRIC RESULTS



EXEMPLARY DESIGN CHOICES

- Dropdowns and well-thought-out categories create a user-friendly layout.
- Financial assistance information is detailed, actionable, and precise.
- Events cards drive career seekers towards events and enrollment.

OTHER NOTES

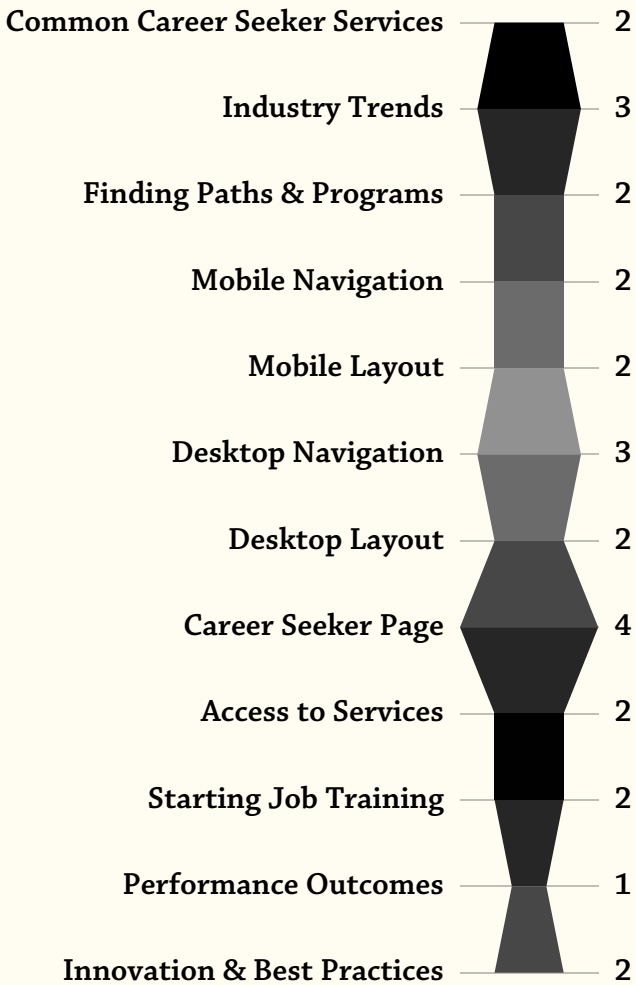
- There is a quick response in the live chat.

WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS LOWER RIO GRANDE VALLEY

SCORE **25**

RANK **6th**

RUBRIC RESULTS



EXEMPLARY DESIGN CHOICES

- The site has a good landing page design for multiple users, with quick links and a live chat function.

OTHER NOTES

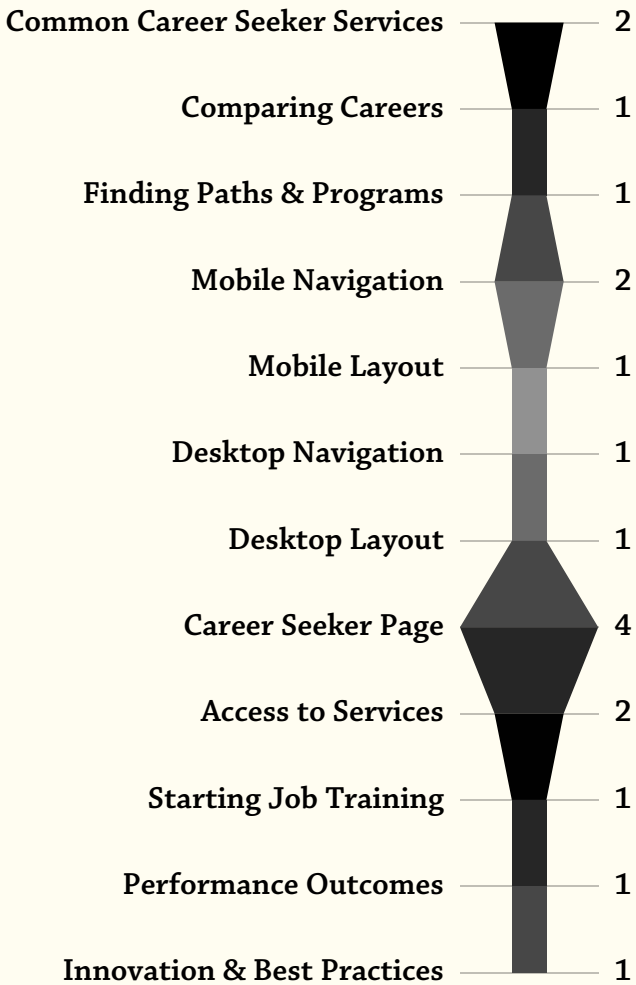
- The Approved Occupational Training List is an excellent start to gathering information that workers desire. Next is to present it in the format workers need to engage in an actionable, interactive way.

WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS MIDDLE RIO GRANDE

SCORE **16**

RANK **26th**

RUBRIC RESULTS



EXEMPLARY DESIGN CHOICES

- N/A

OTHER NOTES

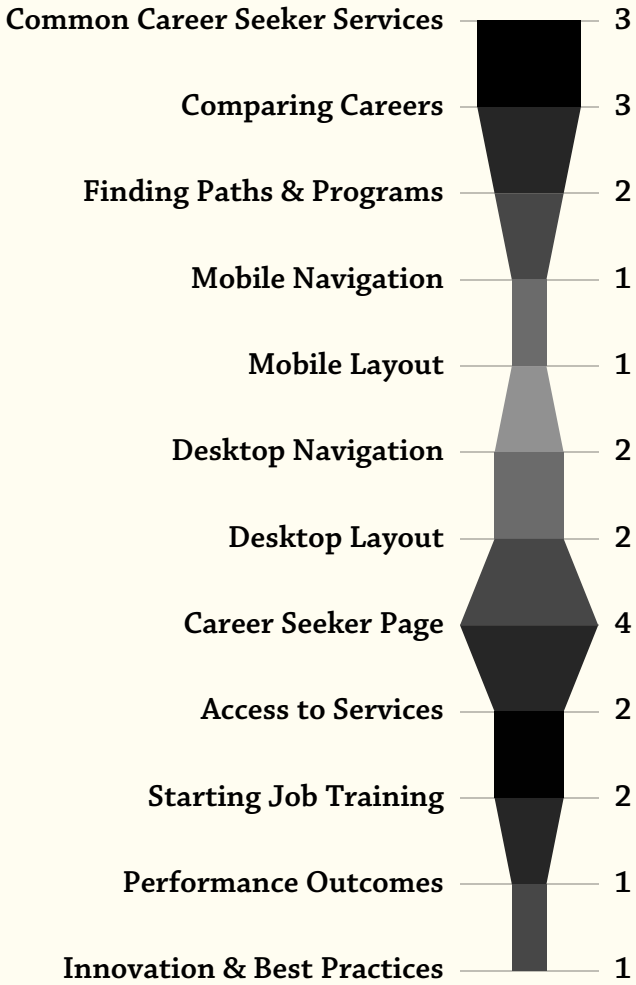
- Significant issues with layout and navigation made it extremely difficult to evaluate this site.

WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS NORTH CENTRAL TEXAS

SCORE: 22

RANK: 15th

RUBRIC RESULTS



EXEMPLARY DESIGN CHOICES

- N/A

OTHER NOTES

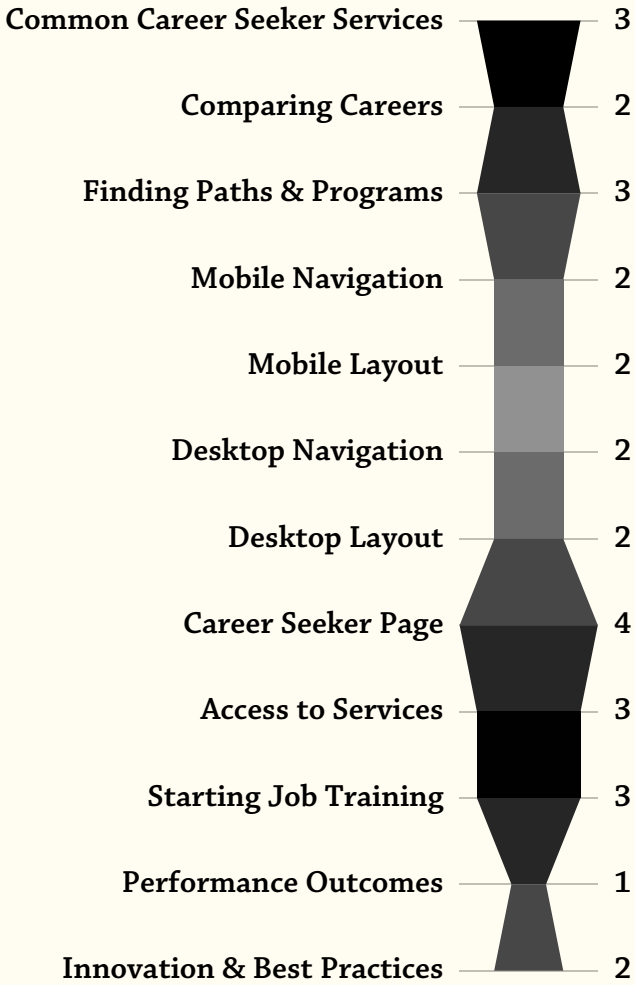
- N/A

WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS NORTH TEXAS

SCORE: 26

RANK: 5th

RUBRIC RESULTS



EXEMPLARY DESIGN CHOICES

- Information on the job seeker page is well-placed behind dropdowns. This makes navigation between different services interactive and straightforward for users. It keeps users from having to scroll through long blocks of texts to find what they are looking for.

OTHER NOTES

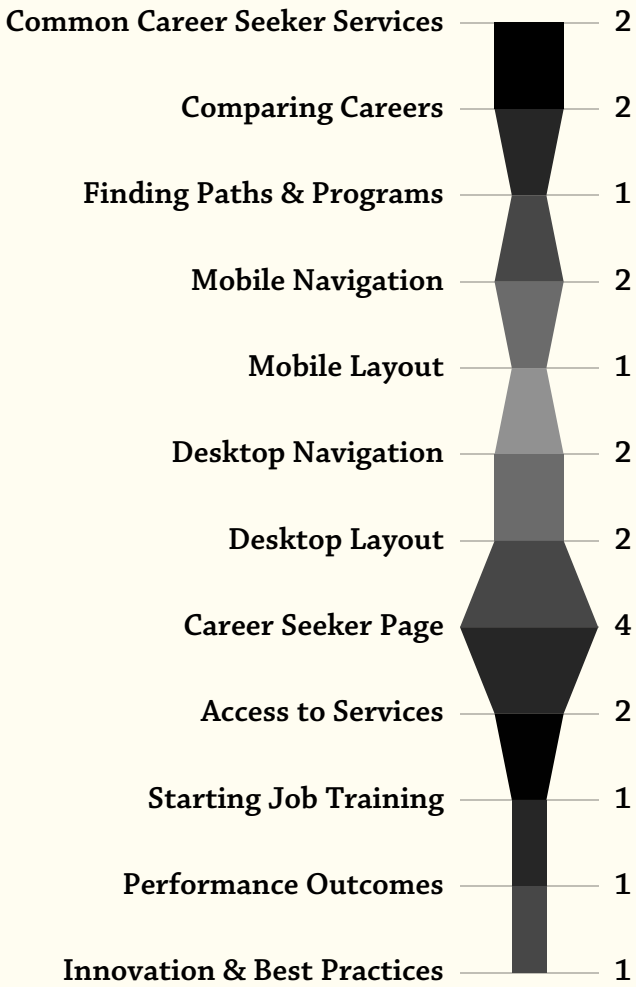
- N/A

WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS NORTHEAST TEXAS

SCORE: 19

RANK: 21st

RUBRIC RESULTS



EXEMPLARY DESIGN CHOICES

- N/A

OTHER NOTES

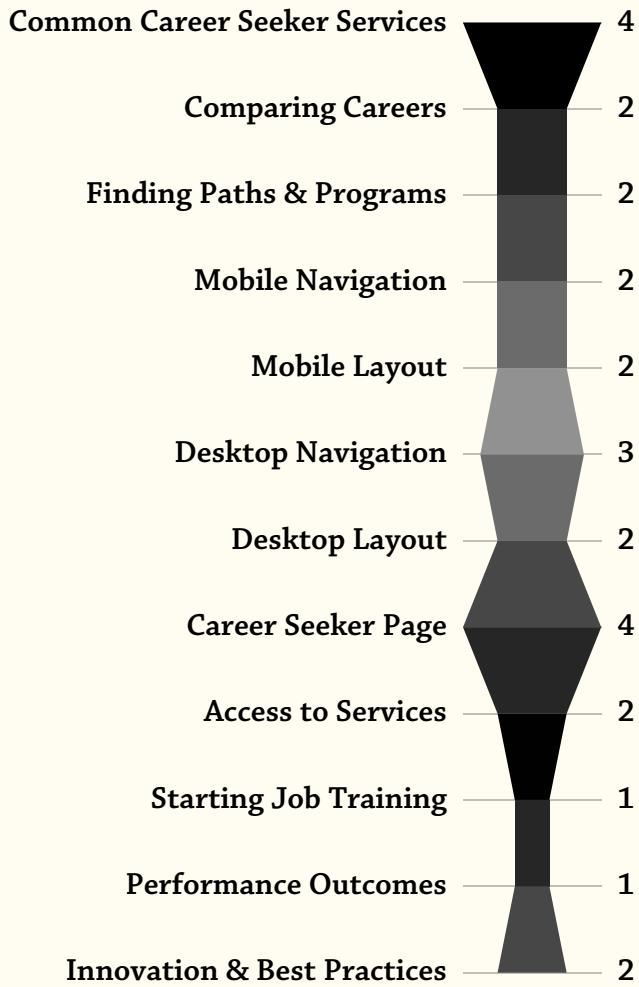
- N/A

WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS PANHANDLE

SCORE: 25

RANK: 6th

RUBRIC RESULTS



EXEMPLARY DESIGN CHOICES

- N/A

OTHER NOTES

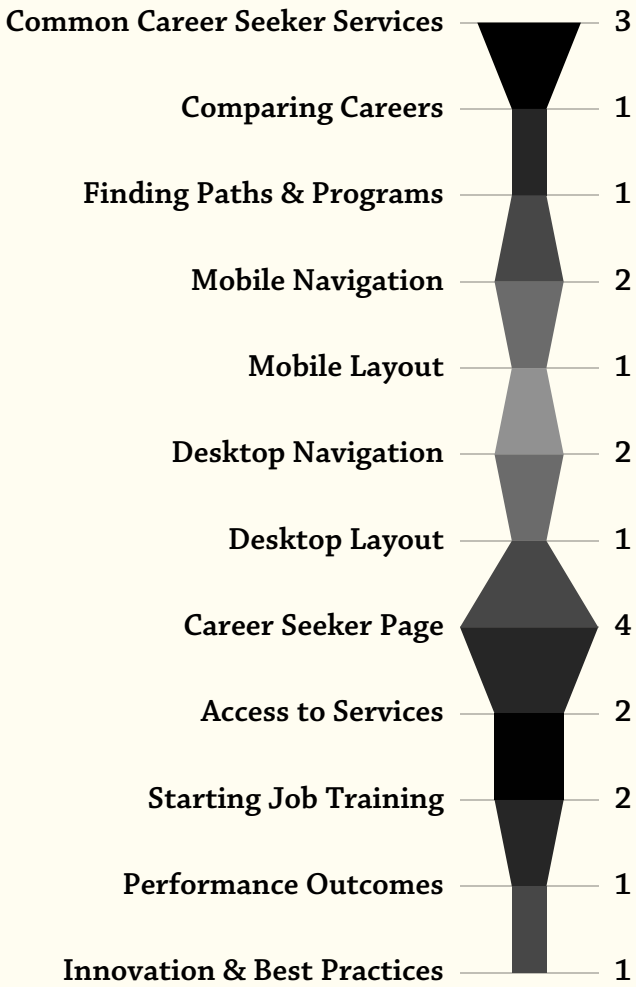
- N/A

WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS **PERMIAN BASIN**

SCORE **19**

RANK **21st**

RUBRIC RESULTS



EXEMPLARY DESIGN CHOICES

- N/A

OTHER NOTES

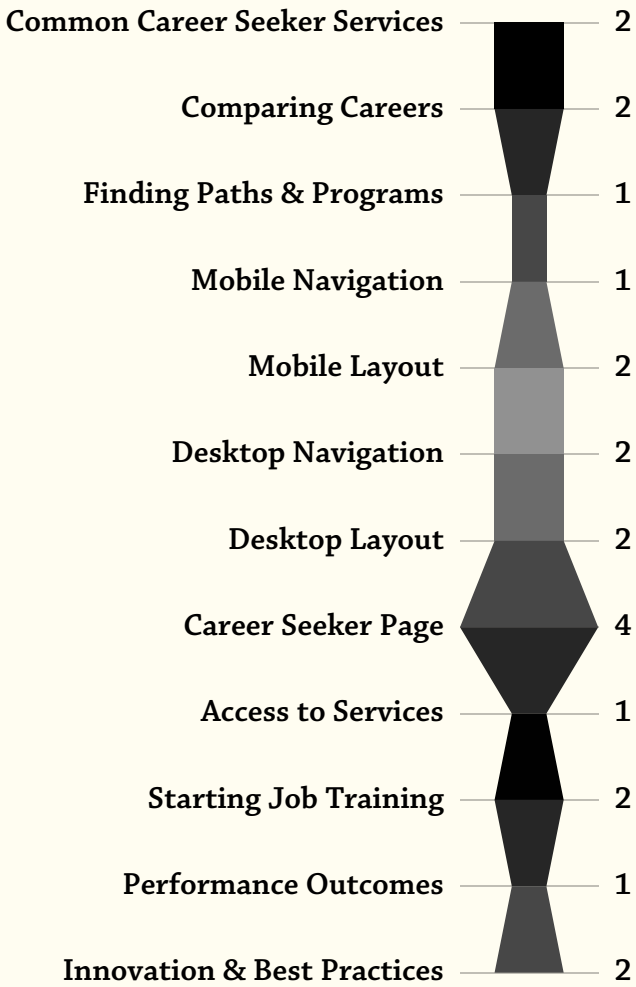
- N/A

WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS **RURAL CAPITAL AREA**

SCORE **21**

RANK **18th**

RUBRIC RESULTS



EXEMPLARY DESIGN CHOICES

- The finding a career center feature made it clear to a career seeker who is served.

OTHER NOTES

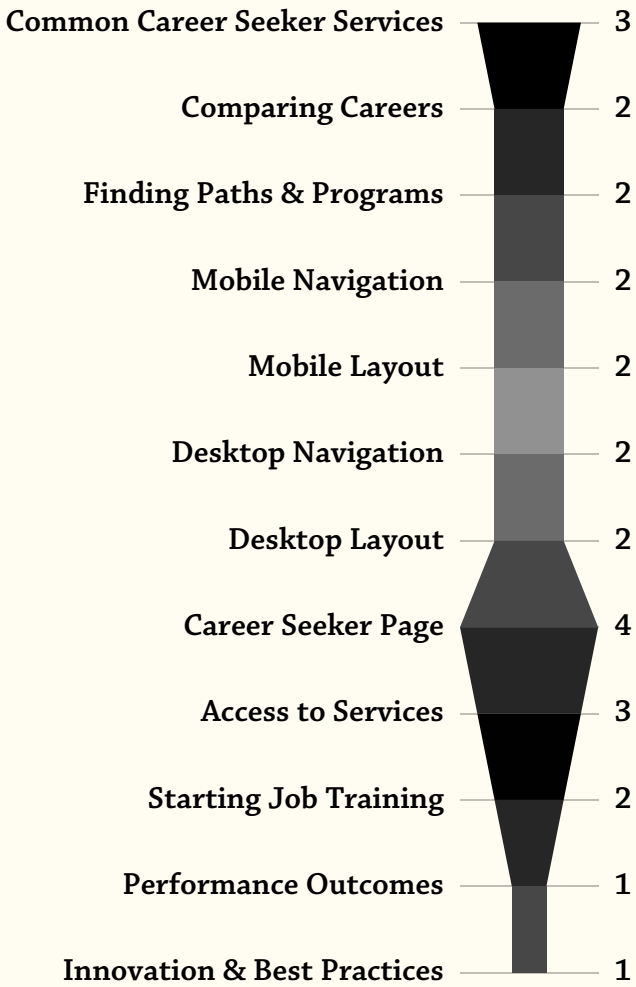
- N/A

WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS SOUTH PLAINS

SCORE **23**

RANK **13th**

RUBRIC RESULTS



EXEMPLARY DESIGN CHOICES

- Job outlooks include salaries so users can make informed choices about whether training lines up with real jobs.
- The calendar view of upcoming events is user-friendly and includes links to flyers and more info.

OTHER NOTES

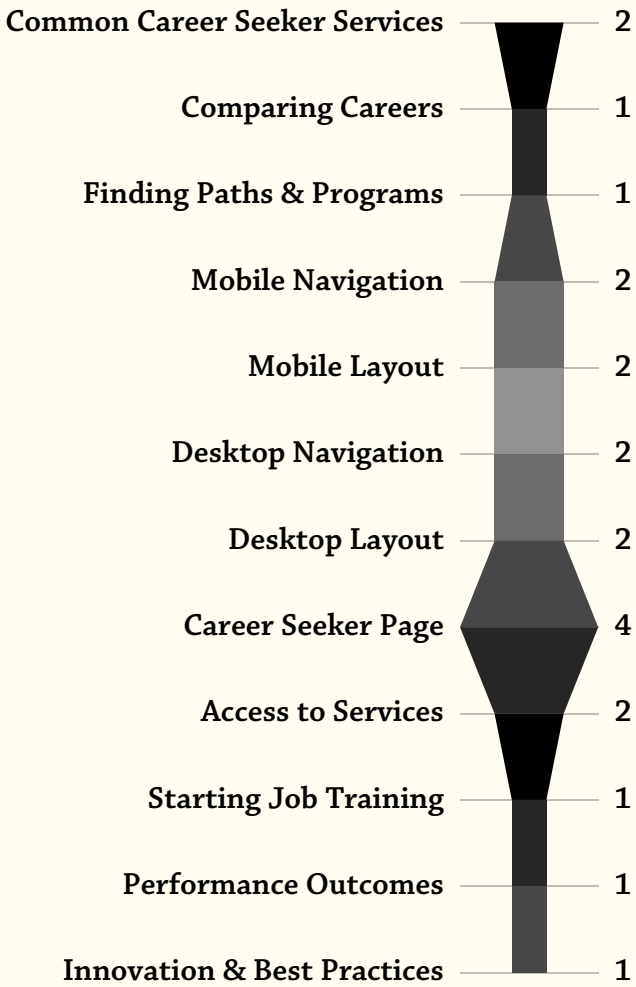
- N/A

WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS SOUTH TEXAS

SCORE **19**

RANK **21st**

RUBRIC RESULTS



EXEMPLARY DESIGN CHOICES

- The design is clean and there is a digestible amount of text on most pages.

OTHER NOTES

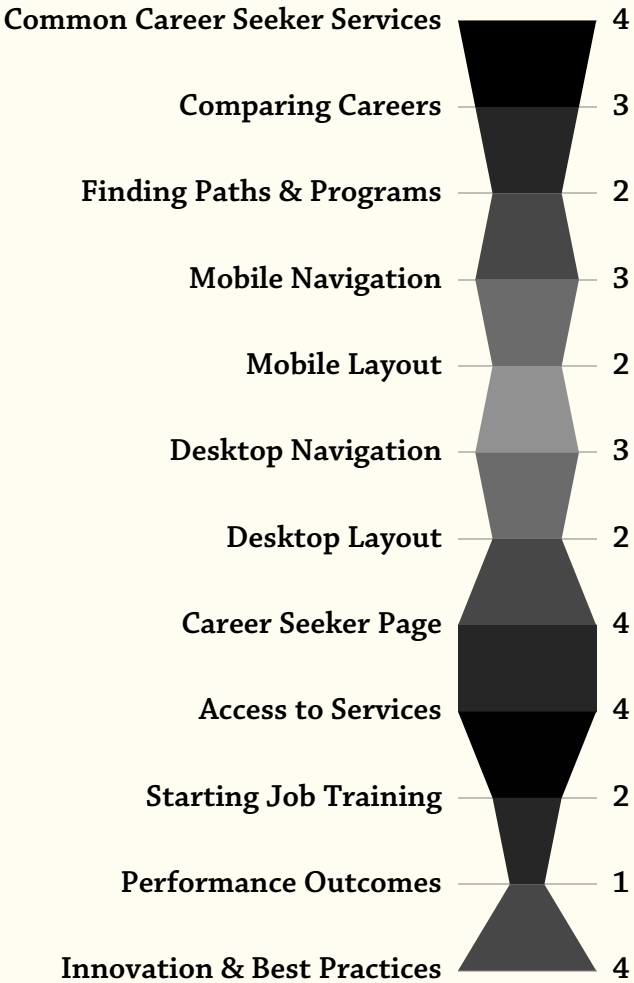
- N/A

WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS SOUTHEAST TEXAS

SCORE: 30

RANK: 2nd

RUBRIC RESULTS



EXEMPLARY DESIGN CHOICES

- This site's WIOA eligibility app is an exemplary resource.
- Virtual chat assistants can target specific opportunities.
- There are upcoming job fair alerts.
- Layout freezes essential information on the side of the screen.

OTHER NOTES

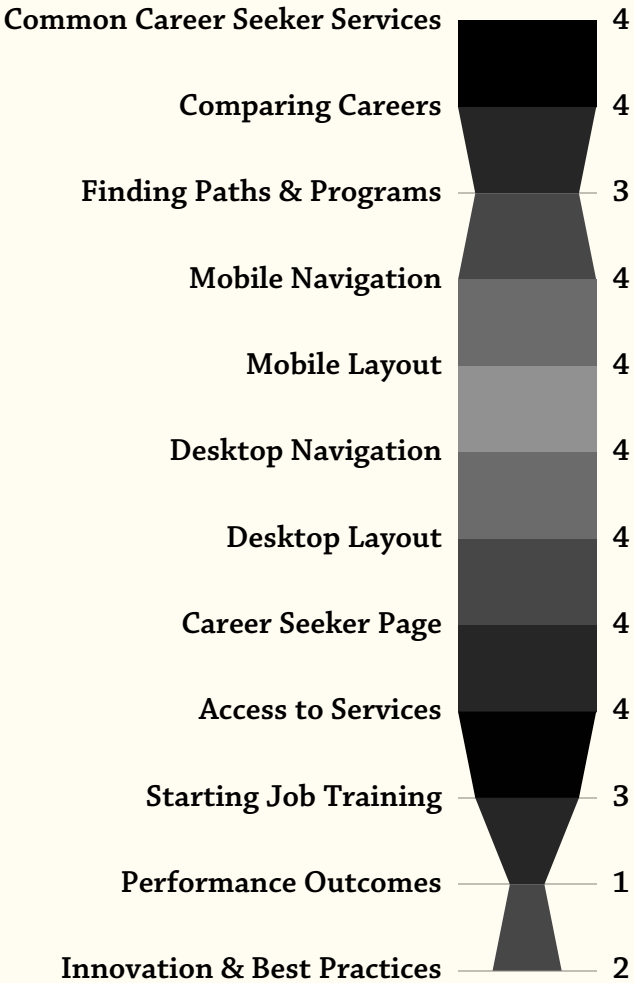
- N/A

WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS TARRANT COUNTY

SCORE: 39

RANK: 1st

RUBRIC RESULTS



EXEMPLARY DESIGN CHOICES

- An attractive variety of page layouts, graphics, buttons, and interactive forms with consistent user interface design makes for a reassuring experience.
- "Request for more information" forms are well-designed.
- Design is suited towards career seekers first.

OTHER NOTES

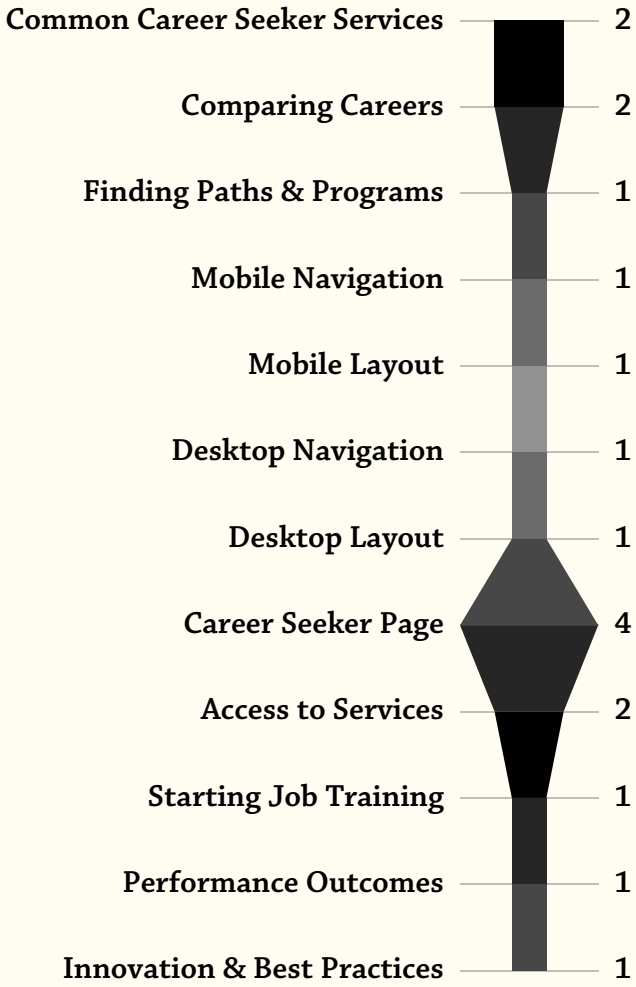
- When using the chat, the chat quickly told the researcher to call the office, and the host ended the conversation. Recommendation to have away messages or other valuable responses prepared.

WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS TEXOMA

SCORE **16**

RANK **26th**

RUBRIC RESULTS



EXEMPLARY DESIGN CHOICES

- N/A

OTHER NOTES

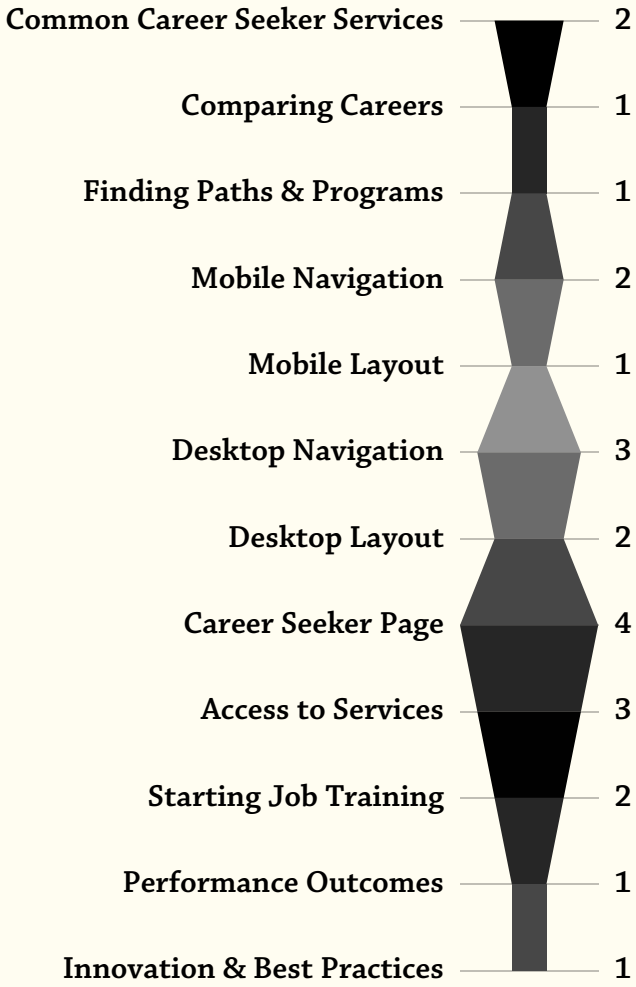
- N/A

WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS WEST CENTRAL TEXAS

SCORE **20**

RANK **19th**

RUBRIC RESULTS



EXEMPLARY DESIGN CHOICES

- N/A

OTHER NOTES

- The chat function was relatively responsive, but they could only get you to come into the office—no online facing opportunities.