

Workforce-Aligned Instruction

Pathways Research Agenda
Strand 3



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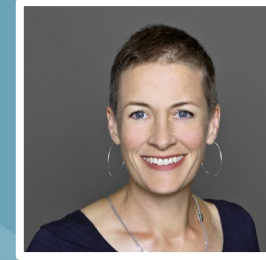
Research Collaborative



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Erin Doran, Ed.D.
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Social Science Research Associate V
Ray Marshall Center
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Collaboration Check-In: Welcome to New Partners, Thomas and Heath

- **Ray Marshall Center for the Study of Human Resources**
The University of Texas at Austin | LBJ School of Public Affairs



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6

Researchers



1

Including
a student
researcher



2

Universities



1

Non-profit
organization



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ACTION

Students in Texas have long had opportunities to graduate high school with more than just a diploma. Students can graduate with one or more industry-based certifications (IBCs). IBCs are certificates, certifications, and/or licensures granted by industries that certify students have certain skills. Texas has used IBCs to signal career readiness since 2017. What IBCs are students earning? Are these the same IBCs that employers need? How much are IBC-holders earning each year? Are the IBCs that students are earning aligned with the Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses they are taking? These are the questions this research collaborative will explore, with a special focus on Texas borderlands.

APPROACH

- ★ Interviews district leaders and local employers in two border communities to understand how IBCs are selected, how workforce needs are considered, and whether credentials outside the state-approved list are in demand.
- ★ Leverages regional partnerships—including El Paso Norte RPP, Pharr-San Juan-Alamo ISD, Brownsville ISD, Vanguard Academy, RGV Focus, Workforce Solutions Cameron, and ESC Region 19—to help ground the work in local context.
- ★ Analyzes ERC data on student course-taking, demographics, and outcomes to explore how well IBCs align with CTE programs—especially in Energy and STEM fields.
- ★ Connects IBCs to labor market trends by matching them to federal and state occupation codes—assessing how well high school certifications prepare students for in-demand careers.

AS A PARTNERSHIP, this team describes their experiences as a Research Collaborative as having deep connections built across disciplines and communities, emphasizing the value of learning from local voices and the unity of purpose.

“This partnership is a good fit for the topic. We have a shared passion. Our synergy manifests in natural and organic ways! There’s a kind of natural finesse and beauty to this group work and I’m excited to get started.”

—ISRAEL AGUILAR, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

ACTIVITIES



4

Research
questions



TX

Statewide
focus plus
border



20

Interview
participants



2

ERC users

WWW.LONESTAR3P3.ORG



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Research Questions

How well do Texas Industry-Based Certifications prepare students to enter the workforce?

Specifically:

- a. How do district leaders decide which IBCs to offer to students?
- b. What certifications are employers looking for, and how well are those certifications represented among IBCs offered by districts?
- c. How well do IBCs align with: CTE course-taking, statewide and local labor market needs, a living wage?



Why these Research Questions?

- **Grounded in Local Decision-Making.** District leaders play a key role in selecting which IBCs to offer, so understanding how those decisions are made is critical to connecting policy to practice.
 - **Responsive to Workforce Needs.** Employers often demand certifications that don't fully align with the TEA-approved list. These questions explore the gap between what's offered in schools and what's valued in the labor market.
 - **Regional Relevance.** The Texas borderlands face unique challenges and opportunities. Focusing on this context ensures the research addresses the realities of students and employers in underserved regions.
 - **Linking Education to Outcomes.** By examining alignment with CTE course-taking, labor market projections, and wages, the research tests whether IBCs actually prepare students for sustainable careers.
- 

Where We Are Now vs. Our Plan: On Schedule!!

Rio Grande Valley (Source 1)

- Interview with Large Urban School Counselor of 20 years at WISD
- Interview with ESC1 TAP
- Interview with specialized Large Employer from Port of Brownsville (LNG Plant)
- Interview with EDC Rep for “Space and Energy”
- 5 Events
- Consultants and Technology procurement is ongoing

El Paso (Source 2)

- ESC 19 + UTEP collaboration for regional coverage in both CTE and workforce/employer leadership
- Connections with El Paso Chamber Education and Workforce Committee and Workforce Solutions Borderplex to learn about regional workforce needs and priorities
- Seeking permissions from regional school districts to speak with staff involved in IBC decision-making



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Quantitative Data

**Texas Higher
Education**
COORDINATING BOARD

August 26, 2025

We are pleased to inform you that your research proposal has been accepted for one year by the Education Research Center (ERC) Advisory Board. Your request for remote access to ERC data for this research study has also been approved by the Advisory Board. The remote access has been approved for the three researchers on the project.

You have permission to begin work on your study at your selected ERC (UT-Dallas) within the confines and limits of your research proposal as approved by the Advisory Board. Researchers are required to provide briefs explaining their research and how their findings affect public policy or practice. You will need to contact the ERC representative below to set up data access. This includes completing federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) training along with other privacy and security protocols. In addition, you will need to abide by the rules and procedures set forth by the ERC and obtain correct entry procedures to the secure terminals or through VPN to start work on your project. If you have questions or concerns, please contact your ERC representative:

Dr. Holly Kosiewicz, Director
The University of Texas at Dallas
(972) 883-2964
hkosiewicz@utdallas.edu

Proposal Title: (UTD 233) The Alignment of Industry-Based Certifications to CTE Coursetaking and Occupational Needs



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Quantitative Research Roadmap

- Phase 1: Project Setup & Framework (Current phase)
- Phase 2: Initial Analysis/Typology Validation
- Phase 3: Expanded Analysis & District Profiles
- Phase 4: Deep-Dive Analysis & Equity Focus
- Phase 5: Final Reporting & Dissemination



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Timeline

ACTIVITY	2025 									
	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
IRB submission; Synthesize the current research from across the Network/ERC										
Status update; Facilitate feedback and check in with partners										
Data collection from Source 1										
Data collection from Source 2										
Invite RPPs/CIPs to contribute to project design and implementation										
Create graphics with help from technical assistance provider										
ACTIVITY	2026									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Analyze / interpret / describe data; Share findings with partners										
Create recommendations/toolkits for practitioners										
Promote RP3 research among other groups and communities for sustainability										



Timeline

Leads Kick Off Meeting

Define parameters for Collaboratives

Develop Submission Forms

Statement of Work and Budget templates complete

RP3 in Action -Winter

In-person convening to support Collabs (and do other stuff)

Status Update

Progress reports and upcoming activities

Process and Planning

RP3 Convenings

Reporting

Storytelling

Oct

Jan

Mar

Jun

Sep

Nov-Dec

Feb

Apr-May

Jul-Aug

Collaboratives Organize

Intro to Collabs at RP3 Virtual Meeting (11/14)

Member groups organize around strands

Collaboratives Approved

Member and Partner engagement confirmed
Partnership research begins!

Recruitment

ERC Application Review

Collaborative Stories

Publish initial insights



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Early Insights from Qualitative Inquiry

1. A-F Accountability is currently asking ISDs to rethink CCMR, CTE, IBCs: Some offering very limited POS
2. ISDs and ESCs are caught in the middle- TSI is a challenge and accountability is getting tighter; discretion is ending (i.e., Texas College Bridge).
3. TWC outreach is ongoing and resources are plenty
4. Students need application of skills and to “work with hands,” not IBC (critical thinking)
5. Specialized skills (i.e. Orbital Welding) is not yet taught in IHE, so employees are recruited internationally
6. Soft skills are important: safety/work ethic, mindset, resiliency, importance of knowing how crime/background checks can implicate one, financial literacy, bilingualism.



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Partner Influence in Action

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157 followers
1mo • 🌟

🌟 Celebrating Collaboration and Innovation! 🌟

During the recent August RGV FOCUS meeting, [Israel Aguilar, Ph.D.](#) (UTRGV)—co-lead of our Workforce-Aligned Instruction Pathways Research Agenda Collaborative—took the stage to share how the team is connecting research with real-world workforce needs.

Through this platform, Dr. Aguilar not only showcased the collaborative's progress, but also built valuable connections with local experts driving change in the Rio Grande Valley.

[RGV FOCUS](#), in partnership with [Educate Texas](#), is committed to transforming college readiness, access, and success across the region's four counties—work that aligns powerfully with our mission.

📅 Join us for the LONESTARP3 CONNECT virtual session on October 16 for updates on our Pathways Research Collaboratives. 📅 Register today! <https://lnkd.in/gS4Twdsl>

#LONESTARP3 #ResearchInAction #WorkforceDevelopment #CollegeSuccess #UTRGV #EducationPartnerships



 You and 16 others

1 repost

**Dr. Israel Aguilar**
Posted by Israel N Gloria Aguilar
Sep 25 • 🌐

Great event by [Texas Tribune](#) hosted today at [UTRGV - The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley](#) on Preparing the Next Generation of RGV Workers.

So glad to see my friends, Jennifer of Valley Baptist Medical Center and Richard from Texas Southmost College!



Dr. Israel Aguilar's post



 Like  Comment  Share



Looking Ahead

Travel for RC #3 Retreat for Spring 2026



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Discussion and Q&A



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Thank You

Our next update will be May 21, 2026.
See **LONESTARP3** Events Page to register.



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