

Annual Report

Texas Skill Standards Board

AS REQUIRED BY HOUSE BILL 3431, 76TH LEGISLATURE

Annual Report September 2000 – August 2001 Texas Skill Standards Board

A Message from the Chair:

I invite you to read the FY2001 Annual Report of the Texas Skill Standards Board (TSSB). In partnership with industry groups and community and technical college (CTC) leaders, the TSSB has accomplished much toward its legislative mandate to develop a statewide system of industry-defined and industry-recognized skill standards. This report describes the major accomplishments, progress on system building and future challenges of the TSSB. Among the year's highlights, the TSSB has:

- Recognized eight sets of national skill standards.
- Revised the Guidelines for the Development, Recognition and Usage of Skill Standards (Guidelines for Development) to provide industry groups with more explicit guidance.
- Updated and enhanced the TSSB Web site.
- Conducted outreach and awareness presentations addressing nearly 400 community and technical college faculty and administrators.
- Piloted a process to facilitate the voluntary usage of skill standards in Texas technical and community college (CTC) course revision, with leadership from CTC administrators and funding from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.
- Approved an outreach and awareness plan to disseminate information regarding the TSSB, skill standards and their benefits to five stakeholder groups.

In addition, the TSSB continued its productive relationships with key stakeholder groups. Staff provided technical assistance on skill standards development to industry partners in several meetings and all-day

work sessions. TSSB representatives served on critical CTC curriculum development committees.

Finally, the TSSB accelerated development of industry skill standards. A preliminary labor market decision model provides a systematic, analytical process to target occupations for skill standards development as per the TSSB's legislative mandates. Technical assistance documents developed to accompany the Guidelines for Development provide more detailed instructions on the eight-step skill standards development process.

These skill standards initiatives are intended to improve the competitiveness of Texas industry by contributing to a more qualified workforce. The TSSB hopes you will find this report a source of useful information in understanding the system and the progress that has been made thus far.

Billie Pickard

Table of Contents

Legislative Background, Role and System Vision

- **Legislative Background**
- **TSSB Role: Leadership and System Building**
- **System Vision: Texas Skill Standards Infrastructure**

Major Accomplishments

- **Revised Guidelines for Development**
- **TSSB Web Site Enhanced**
- **Outreach and Awareness to Community and Technical Colleges**
- **Integration of Skill Standards into WECM**
- **Recognized Skill Standards**
- **Outreach and Awareness Plan Approved**

Progress on System Implementation:1999-2000

- **Skill Standards Development/Partnerships in Process**
- **LMI Decision Model**
- **Technical Assistance Documents Prepared for Implementation**

- **Participation on Key CTC Committees**
- **States and National Skill Standards Alignment**

Major Challenges Ahead

- **Transfer of WECM-Skill Standards Integration Process to CTC System**
- **Implementation of Technical Assistance Documents**
- **Accelerate Convening of Industry Groups**
- **Accelerate Validation of National, Industry-Endorsed Skill Standards**
- **Outreach and Awareness Plan Implementation**
- **Expansion of TSSB Web Site**

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Texas Skill Standards Board

Legislative Background, Role, and Major Accomplishments

Legislative Background

The Texas Legislature established the Texas Skill Standards Board (TSSB) as part of the workforce development system. It is an advisory body to the Governor and Legislature on the development of a statewide system of industry-defined and industry-recognized skill standards for all major skilled, subbaccalaureate occupations that provide strong employment and earnings opportunities. The TSSB was charged with four specific mandates.

In 1999, the 76th Legislature amended the TSSB mandates with the passage of House Bill 3431. This bill gave the TSSB explicit authority to recognize skill standards defined by industry. The TSSB's mandates are::

1. validate and recognize nationally-established skill standards to guide curriculum development, training, assessment, and certification of workforce skills;
2. convene industry groups to develop skill standards and certification procedures for industries and occupations in which standards have not been established or adopted and recognize the skill standards and certification procedures;
3. review standards developed by other states and nations and enter into agreements for mutual recognition of standards and credentials to enhance portability of skills; and
4. promote the use of standards and credentials among employers.

TSSB Role: Leadership and System Building

“To achieve its statutory charge, the TSSB plays a leadership and system-building role.”

“...skill standards become the tool for communicating industry skill requirements to education and training providers.”

To achieve its statutory charge, the TSSB plays a leadership and system-building role. Within that role are several functions.

Catalyst for Industry

The TSSB does not develop skill standards. The authorizing legislation explicitly states that the skill standards shall be defined and recognized by industry. The TSSB serves as a catalyst to convene industry groups for the purposes of voluntarily developing skill standards and certification procedures for industries and occupations in which none exist. As part of this role, the TSSB provides assistance and clarification to industry groups on technical requirements for the skill standards development process needed for TSSB recognition.

Quality Assurance Agent

The TSSB plays a quality assurance role, establishing the criteria to inform industry groups that are developing skill standards of the content and procedural validity requirements for TSSB recognition. The TSSB then evaluates the end product, the skill standards, against the criteria and grants statewide recognition of those standards. In other words, the TSSB determines the standards for the standards, whether they are newly-developed skill standards, already established national standards, or standards imported from other states and nations. In the latter case, the TSSB review and recognition of standards enables portability of credentials through reciprocity agreements, thereby building a national and even international system of skill standards.

Facilitation of Usage

An essential aspect of the TSSB's system-building role is to facilitate dissemination and usage of the state-recognized skill standards throughout the workforce development system. Without usage, development of skill standards would be a futile exercise. As stated in statute, the Legislature intended the skill standards to "guide curriculum development, training, assessment, and certification of workforce skills." Used in this way, the skill standards become the tool for communicating industry skill requirements to education and training providers. Thus, the TSSB's role includes a liaison function with the Texas system of community and technical colleges and

“Employers...drive the use of skill standards through the labor market.”

workforce education and training providers. At the same time, it is essential that employers hire graduates of programs that utilize skill standards as the basis for their curricula. In this way, employers can drive the use of skill standards through the labor market. Thus, the Legislature in its wisdom also mandated the TSSB, as part of its system-building role, to "promote the use of standards and credentials among employers."

System Vision: Texas Skill Standards Infrastructure

The Texas Skill Standards Board's (TSSB) vision of the Texas skill standards system is defined conceptually under the umbrella of the Texas Skill Standards Infrastructure (TSSI). The TSSI is the system to support and promote the creation and use of industry-defined and industry-recognized skill standards. The aim of the infrastructure is to assist the growth of the Texas economy through the recognition of skill standards and skill attainment to support workforce development efforts.

As illustrated in Figure 1, the TSSI is composed of two key functional areas, each supported by policy and procedural frameworks called guidelines. On the left, Guidelines for the Development, Recognition and Usage of Skill Standards define the processes and requirements to be undertaken by industry groups that seek recognition by the TSSB for skill standards. On the right, Guidelines for Certification and Credentialing of Skill Attainment define the policies and processes for education and training providers to assess and document the skill attainment of individuals to the standards specified by industry. In the middle, the stakeholders (employers and industry groups, public/private partnerships, education and training providers, and state agencies) implement and use skill standards within their workforce development realms. The two sets of guidelines support the collaboration of these implementation agents and partnerships by ensuring common understanding.

The purpose of this system is to provide a foundation to accelerate the capacity of business and industry in Texas to build high performance workplaces. Skill standards are key building blocks of high performance workplaces, which focus on building of individuals' competencies through private and public workforce development efforts and the leveraging of those competencies to build organization

strength. These workplaces will increase businesses' and industries' competitive capabilities and strategic market placement to ensure that Texas will be globally competitive in the future.

Figure 1

Major Accomplishments

The Texas Skill Standards Board continued to implement and refine the Texas skill standards system in FY01. Of particular focus in the TSSB's system building efforts was facilitation of the usage of skill standards in community and technical colleges. The TSSB made considerable progress in this area, which is critical in providing employers with the supply of workers trained to the skill standards they require. Without such an implementation framework, the development of skill standards would be a futile exercise. Skill standards development and outreach and awareness to community and technical colleges are two other areas the TSSB concentrated on in FY01. Specific accomplishments include the following:

“The TSSB enhanced features and added skill standards listings to its web site at www.tssb.org.”

Revised *Guidelines for Development*

In its commitment to continually evaluate and improve the Texas skill standards system, the TSSB revised the Guidelines for the Development, Recognition and Usage of Skill Standards. Consultations with industry groups developing skill standards indicated that additional detail would be helpful. The revisions enhanced the step-by-step instructions for skill standards development to provide industry groups with more explicit guidance, in particular, in the data collection phase of the job analysis, and in the information synthesis and validation strategy sections.

TSSB Web Site Enhanced

The TSSB enhanced features and added skill standards listings to its web site at www.tssb.org. The enhancements included: updating the “In the News” section with several articles; verifying and updating all links; adding nearly 250 links to national industry skill standards and industry certification sites; and starting new sections for colleges and proprietary schools and for expansion of information for local workforce development boards.

“The TSSB conducted outreach and awareness presentations, addressing nearly 400 community and technical college faculty and administrators”

Outreach and Awareness to Community and Technical Colleges

The TSSB applied for and received continued funding of its Perkins State Leadership project from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB). As part of the Skill Standards Awareness and Usage in Texas Technical and Community Colleges project, the TSSB continued to conduct a skill standards outreach and awareness campaign to community and technical colleges (CTC). The campaign emphasized skill standards usage in technical education program curricula.

The TSSB conducted outreach and awareness presentations, addressing nearly 400 community and technical college faculty and administrators at the following venues: WECM Course Review Workshops with faculty in information technology, retailing, communications/ speech, languages, paralegal, business, real estate, graphic design/commercial art, horticulture, plumber/pipefitter, and electrical/electronics installer in Dallas, Harlingen, San Antonio and McAllen; Texas Association of College Technical Educators (TACTE) Conference; WECM Campus Leaders Workshop (sponsored by THECB); Texas Association of Continuing Educators (TACE) Conference; Texas Community College Teachers’ Association (TCCTA) Conference; Perkins State Leadership Consortia for Curriculum Development; Texas State Technical College (TSTC) at Harlingen; and Midland, Howard and Odessa Colleges in the Permian Basin Region.

“...the TSSB Documented the WECM-skill standards integration process in a training handbook for

Integration of Skill Standards into WECM

Under its FY01 Perkins grant from the THECB, the TSSB piloted the process, designed in FY00, to integrate TSSB-recognized skill standards into workforce education courses and programs through the WECM (Work-force Education

future mentors, facilitators and instructional specialists.”

Course Manual) maintenance cycle. The WECM, the state inventory of common workforce education courses for public two-year colleges, is a tool that allows Texas colleges increased flexibility in re-ponding to business and industry needs. It is designed to contribute to the quality and consistency of learning outcomes in workforce courses across the state. Skill standards provide an industry-defined source of current workforce skill requirements and performance expectation to update WECM courses.

In FY01, the TSSB, working with the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) Taskforce, a committee of CTC workforce education leaders from across the state, tested the skill standards integration process in WECM workshops. In the workshops, the process was piloted with the Machinist skill standards and with the Hazardous Materials Management Technician (Haz-Mat) skill standards. Instructional specialists from around the state who teach in those occupations convened to incorporate skill standards into related WECM courses.

In both the Haz-Mat workshop and the Machinist workshop, the instructional specialists assigned skill standards elements to appropriate WECM courses. In the Machining pilot, which was convened in two meetings, instructional specialists had the time to take the process one step further. Under the guidance of experienced WECM mentors and facilitators, the faculty revised WECM course descriptions and learning outcomes to re-lect skill standards language, and wrote new courses to address skill standards content that was not covered in existing courses. The instructional specialists also designated a set of common technical courses that encompassed the skill standards. Designation of those courses signals to employers that their skill requirements and standards are being taught.

At the conclusion of the pilot workshops, the TSSB documented the WECM-skill standards integration process in a training handbook for future mentors, facilitators and instructional specialists. The Training Handbook for WECM-Skill Standards Integration Workshops outlines a protocol to enable the systematic incorporation of skill standards into a program of WECM courses. The Handbook will be further

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“...employer involvement is critical

to the success of a voluntary skill standards system that is demand driven.”

refined, formatted for publication, and posted on the TSSB’s web site.

Recognized Skill Standards

In FY01, the TSSB made significant progress in recognizing skill standards. The TSSB recognized Webmaster and Database Administrator skill standards that were originally validated nationally by Bellevue College’s Northwest Center for Emerging Technologies (NWCET) in Washington State. Subsequently, Texas A&M University validated the standards with Texas Information Technology employers and converted the data into the TSSB skill standards format and elements.

In accordance with its first mandate to validate and recognize nationally established skill standards, the TSSB granted conditional recognition to six skill standards. Those standards, developed by the Manufacturing Skill Standards Council (MSSC), were in manufacturing concentrations: Production; Quality Assurance; Logistics and Inventory Control; Health, Safety and Environmental Assurance; Maintenance, Installation and Repair; and Manufacturing Production Process Development. All eight skill standards were deposited in the public domain in the Texas Skill Standards Repository. The Repository is located on the TSSB web site at www.tssb.org.

Outreach and Awareness Plan Approved

The TSSB is charged by the Legislature with promoting the use of standards and credentials among employers. Thus far, the TSSB has concentrated on building the skill standards system, including facilitating the usage of skill standards in education and training programs. By providing employers with a market for their product, skill standards, the TSSB is poised to promote skill standards more widely among all stakeholder groups, including employers.

In FY01, the TSSB approved a broad outreach and awareness plan to disseminate information regarding the TSSB, skill standards and their benefits. The plan articulates the informational campaign to five stakeholder groups: community and technical colleges, employers, local workforce development boards, proprietary schools, and other interested parties.

The informational campaign outlined in the plan addresses several of the TSSB's mandates. Different messages are targeted to each stakeholder group. For education and training providers, the message focuses on the fact that the Legislature intended skill standards to "guide curriculum development, training, assessment and certification of workforce skills." For employers, the message focuses on the two-fold role they can play: 1) as members of an industry group to develop skill standards for meeting employers' workforce needs; and 2) as hiring agents of graduates of education and training programs that utilize skill standards. This employer involvement is critical to the success of a voluntary skill standards system that is demand driven.

Progress on System Implementation

In its leadership and system-building roles, the TSSB continues to implement the Texas skill standards system through a number of key initiatives, projects and partnerships. Progress made on these system initiatives is described below.

Skill Standards Development/Partnerships in Process

In its authorizing legislation, the TSSB is charged with convening industry groups to develop skill standards. In FY01, the TSSB continued to work in partnership with the Gulf Coast Process Technology Alliance (GCPTA) and the ARIES (Austin Regional Industry Education System) Alliance. The GCPTA, com-posed primarily of major petrochemical companies in southeast Texas and the surrounding region, is developing skill standards for process technicians. The ARIES Alliance is validating six national information technology skill standards developed by the Northwest Center for Emerging Technologies (NWCET) at Bellevue

“The TSSB created a preliminary labor market information (LMI) decision model to identify potential future standards

development efforts."

Community College in Washington State.

The TSSB provided technical assistance to the GCPTA and ARIES Alliance in several meetings and all-day work sessions. TSSB staff trained both partnerships in the data collection process for the Academic and Employability Knowledge and Skills (AEKS). The ARIES Alliance discussed with TSSB staff their project plan, standards development process and potential avenues for implementation of skill standards. GCPTA staff consulted with the TSSB on recognition requirements and potential job analysis methodologies for developing the skill standards. They presented TSSB staff with an opportunity to comment on their initial job analysis data. TSSB staff provided feedback on issues of data aggregation and approaches for converting the data into the TSSB elements.

"The LMI model provides a systematic, analytical approach to targeting occupations for skill standards development according to the Board's legislative mandates."

LMI Decision Model

The TSSB created a preliminary labor market information (LMI) decision model to identify potential future standards development efforts. The LMI model provides a systematic, analytical approach to targeting occupations for skill standards development according to the Board's legislative mandates. The Board is charged with "convening industry groups to develop skill standards and certification procedures for industries and occupations in which standards have not been established or adopted." In addition, the Legislature defined the skill standards system as encompassing "all major skilled occupations" at the subbaccalaureate level that provide "strong employment and earnings opportunities."

The decision model begins with quantitative labor market data as criteria to select occupations out of a list of all possible occupations. The labor market criteria used are annual wage (to correspond with the legislative criterion, strong earnings opportunities); educational attainment requirement (to correspond with the subbaccalaureate mandate); and actual change in employment (to address the strong earnings opportunities requirement).

Using the above criteria as data filters, a list of occupations is generated and then qualitatively evaluated to further refine the potential occupations for consideration. Occupations such as those that are licensed, regulated or for which skill standards have been established, are eliminated as not fitting the legislative criterion for "occupations in which standards have not been established or

adopted.” The remaining occupations are ranked according to their degree of established, active organizational structure as a potential base for skill standards development.

Technical Assistance Documents Prepared for Implementation

The TSSB developed technical assistance documents to accompany the Guidelines for Development, Recognition and Usage of Skill Standards. The technical assistance documents expand upon and provide more detailed instructions on the eightstep skill standards development process outlined for industry groups in the Guidelines for Development. The documents will be tested with industry groups in the coming year.

Participation on Key CTC Committees

The TSSB participated as a member of three critical community and technical college (CTC) curriculum development committees. The Texas State Leadership Consortium for Curriculum Development (Consortium) provides leadership and advises the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) on statewide curriculum development priorities. The Consortium also coordinates and communicates to all colleges the curriculum development projects led by individual colleges and funded by Perkins grants. The Consortium is a vehicle for statewide, systemic change in the content and process for curriculum development. The TSSB serves on the Consortium’s Steering Committee, which provides policy and programmatic leadership.

The TSSB was chosen to serve on the advisory committee for the Advanced Technology Core Curriculum Project. The goal of the project is to create a common, fully transferable set of high technology core courses. The project was established in part in response to recommendations of the THECB’s Taskforce on the Development of the Technology Workforce. The Taskforce, consisting of 20 business, civic, and higher education leaders from all areas of the state, convened as part of the Higher Education Planning Committee to develop a plan for Texas higher education during the period from 2000-2015. The Taskforce recommended that core curricula be developed in partnership with Texas’ community and technical colleges, the TSSB and Texas industry.

Finally, the TSSB continued to serve on the Workforce Education Course Manual (WECM) Maintenance Committee. The WECM, the state inventory of workforce education courses for public two-year

“The Consortium is a vehicle for statewide, systemic change in the content and process for curriculum development.”

“The TSSB continued to pursue several initiatives to align skill standards at the national and state levels.”

colleges, is a tool that contributes to the quality and consistency of technical courses while streamlining the program application and revision processes. Thus, it allows Texas colleges increased flexibility in responding to business and industry needs, as well as providing employers with some assurance of consistency in learning outcomes of technical programs across the state.

The WECM Maintenance Committee oversees and administers the process for ensuring the currency and relevancy of WECM courses. The TSSB participates on the Maintenance Committee to facilitate the usage of skill standards into workforce education program structure, course content and sequence, and learning outcomes.

States and National Skill Standards Alignment

The TSSB continued to pursue several initiatives to align skill standards at the national and state levels. These initiatives addressed its mandate to enter into agreements with other states and nations for review and mutual recognition of skill standards and credentials.

At the national level, the TSSB served as a member of the industry-driven voluntary partnerships funded by the National Skill Standards Board (NSSB) to develop skill standards and certification systems. The TSSB continued to serve on the Framework and System Building Committee of the Manufacturing Skill Standards Council (MSSC). In that capacity, the TSSB commented on drafts of the national manufacturing concentration standards and participated in the national meeting to release the standards. As a member of the Sales and Service Voluntary Partnership, the TSSB reviewed and commented on draft documents. As part of its efforts to align and coordinate the state and national skill standards systems, the TSSB reviewed and commented upon the NSSB's Criteria for Assessment.

The TSSB continued work to achieve alignment and coordination between the national core and concentration standards and the specialty skill standards being developed and validated in Texas and other states. The TSSB nominated two industry led partnerships, the GCPTA and the ARIES Alliance, as Texas demonstration sites for the MSSC newly released, core and concentration standards. These two partnerships, and seven others in states across the country, were selected by the MSSC as sites for demonstrations of standards implementation, alignment and use.

"The TSSB nominated two industry-led partnerships, the GCPTA and the ARIES Alliance, as Texas demonstration sites for the MSSC...standards."

The TSSB continued to participate as a member of the Skill Standards States Working Group (SSSWG), supported and funded by the NSSB, to define and establish consistency of standards development processes across states and to share implementation successes. The SSSWG provides state input to the NSSB regarding the national skill standards framework and system implementation, and issues regarding standards and certification alignment between states. At the SSSWG's November meeting in Seattle, members examined assessment issues. The TSSB plans to host the next meeting of the group in February in Texas.

Major Challenges Ahead

In FY01, the TSSB accomplished or made significant progress, as detailed in this document, on several challenges set forth in its 1999-00 Annual Report, including:

““In FY02, the challenge will be to fully incorporate the WECM-skill standards integration process into the WECM maintenance cycle”

- Revised the Guidelines for Development, Recognition and Usage of Skill Standards.
- Created technical assistance documents to accompany the eight-step skill standards development process outlined in the Guidelines for Development.
- Convened partnerships to validate and recognize industry-driven skill standards.
- Recognized eight sets of skill standards.
- Piloted a process to integrate skill standards into the WECM through its maintenance cycle.
- Approved an outreach and awareness plan for employers and other stakeholders.
- Developed a preliminary labor market decision model for targeting occupations for skill standards development.
- Conducted skill standards outreach and awareness to Texas technical and community colleges.
- Updated and enhanced the TSSB web site.

Major challenges still to address in FY02 and beyond include the

following:

Transfer of WECM-Skill Standards Integration Process to CTC System

In FY00, the TSSB piloted the process for integrating skill standards into the Workforce Education Course Manual (WECM) in two workshops. In the workshops, the process was field tested with the Machinist and Hazardous Materials Management Technician skill standards. The TSSB documented that process in a training handbook for WECM mentors, facilitators and instructional specialists. The training handbook provides instructions and tools on how to conduct the WECM integration process with any set of skill standards.

In FY02, the challenge will be to fully incorporate the WECM-skill standards integration process into the WECM maintenance cycle. The TSSB must train additional mentors and facilitators to conduct the WECM-Skill Standards Integration Workshops. A cadre of trained mentors and facilitators will sustain the skill standards in-tegration process as part of the regular WECM maintenance process. In addition, related functions of the process, which were performed by the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) Taskforce in FY00 and FY01, will need to be transferred to the WECM Maintenance leadership. The TSSB must train the WECM Maintenance leadership to perform these functions, which are documented in the WECM-Skill Standards Integration Train-ing Handbook.

Implementation of Technical Assistance Documents

In FY01, the TSSB produced technical assistance documents to help industry groups conduct the eight-step skill standards development process. These documents supplement and enhance the information in the TSSB's Guidelines for Development. In FY02 and beyond, as the TSSB convenes industry groups to develop skill standards, the application of these documents will be tested and improved upon as needed.

Accelerate Convening of Industry Groups

TSSB-industry partnerships resulted in the recognition of eight sets of skill standards in FY01. The TSSB pursued several initiatives to prepare the groundwork for establishing additional industry partnerships. A labor market decision model was created to prioritize the industry groups to approach for skill standards development. An outreach and awareness plan for employers was developed and approved by the TSSB for implementation. Finally, technical

“With these measures in place, the TSSB is poised to accelerate the convening of industry groups...”

“The TSSB will continue to establish partnerships with national industry

groups in FY02 and beyond to facilitate recognition of standards.”

assistance documents were prepared to provide industry groups with greater detail in conducting the eight-step development process outlined in the Guidelines for Development. With these measures in place, the TSSB is poised to accelerate the convening of industry groups for skill standards development in FY02.

Accelerate Validation of National, Industry-Endorsed Skill Standards

In FY01, the TSSB granted conditional recognition to six standards developed and validated nationally by an industry group, the Manufacturing Skill Standards Council (MSSC). These standards were recognized in accordance with the Board’s first mandate to validate and recognize nationally established skill standards. The TSSB has been working with two other industry groups, the Precision Metalforming Association (PMA) and the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Officer Standards and Education (TCLEOSE) to facilitate recognition of their established standards. In FY02, the TSSB anticipates that the PMA will submit for recognition three standards: Metal-forming Skills, Level I; Metalforming Skills-Stamping, Level II; and Metalforming Skills-Stamping Level III. TCLEOSE is expected to seek conditional recognition for their County Corrections Officer standards. The TSSB will continue to establish partnerships with national industry groups in FY02 and beyond to facilitate recognition of standards.

“The new design will enable the TSSB to customize the skill standards message to the audience...”

Outreach and Awareness Plan Implementation

The TSSB approved an Outreach and Awareness Plan for five major stakeholder groups. The Plan targets employers, the community and technical college system, the local workforce development board system, proprietary schools and other entities such as states’ skill standards authorities, Texas legislators and interested parties. The Plan addresses the Board’s mandate to promote the use of standards and credentials, both among employers and education and training providers. In FY02, the TSSB will develop and begin to implement work and strategy plans to address the goals and objectives for each of the five groups.

Expansion of TSSB Web Site

In FY01, the TSSB added numerous national industry skill standards, certification links and news articles to the web site, and updated all links. In FY02, the TSSB plans to modify the website’s design, with direct links to separate sections for each of the five stakeholder groups outlined in the outreach and awareness plan. The new design will

enable the TSSB to customize the skill standards message to the audience, including benefits, usage possibilities, and technical assistance for each type of stakeholder.
