



## RESEARCH STUDY: Broadband and Water Workforce in Texas

### The Challenge

Texas faces a workforce shortage for broadband and water jobs. Access to essential infrastructure like high-speed internet and water utilities are critical to economic development. While new federal and state funding will generate more projects than ever before to connect Texans to high-speed internet and clean water, we do not have a strong pipeline to replace our aging broadband and water workforce as they retire.

Texas must take action to ensure that we make the most of this once-in-a-generation opportunity to expand our state's economic infrastructure, especially in rural communities.

### The Need

Texas needs a state-level understanding of our specific workforce needs in broadband and water *and* viable career pathways into them. These issues affect both urban and rural communities, and for Texas to build its broadband and water workforce as efficiently and effectively as possible, policymakers and stakeholders need data on:

- Existing broadband and water workforce trends
- Projected workforce needs
- Education-workforce pathways and programs that lead to broadband and water jobs

### The Solution

Texas Rural Funders and Texas Water Foundation are enlisting Jobs for the Future (JFF) to conduct a landscape analysis on workforce needs for broadband and water. This analysis will map existing initiatives, identify critical gaps, and provide recommendations for developing and retaining a skilled broadband and water workforce.

Research and analysis conducted by JFF will include:

1. *Desk-based research*, including analysis of: key labor market information; enrollment and attainment data on secondary, postsecondary, and training programs; and relevant reports, strategic plans, and other documents that provide background information on the education and training ecosystem
2. *Stakeholder interviews* and engagement
3. *Final report*, providing actionable information and recommendations to stakeholders

**The Goal**

To empower state agencies, education and workforce partners, employers, and philanthropy to develop and promote opportunities that support economic advancement for workers and families.

**Budget**

Texas Rural Funders and Texas Water Foundation are raising \$100,000 in support of this workforce research study.

**Outcomes**

This research study will produce actionable recommendations in advance of the 89<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislature in 2025.

Recommendations will be shared with state and regional partners to build awareness of existing workforce programs and initiatives, as well as gaps in the existing education and workforce ecosystem. These recommendations will be designed to catalyze more cross-sector collaboration between the education and workforce sectors.

Aligning our education-workforce ecosystem will ensure that transformational investments in our infrastructure support thriving rural communities and a thriving Texas.