



About us

The Laredo Chamber of Commerce is the largest business organization in the city, representing the interests of businesses of all sizes and sectors in Laredo and the surrounding areas. Our membership includes over 700 businesses of all sizes and sectors, ranging from small entrepreneurial companies to large corporations. Our Chamber has been connecting businesses and members of our community since 1915.

We are dedicated to working with our local, state, and federal elected officials on promoting an environment where businesses can thrive; enhancing the skill set of our workforce; encouraging educational excellence; building positive relationships among area businesses; fostering collaboration with like-minded organizations; promoting tourism in South Texas; and recruiting new industry while assisting business retention efforts whenever possible.

We accomplish these things through our events, programs, and advocacy efforts. Whether you are thinking of visiting, moving yourself and your family, or relocating your business, our Chamber is here to help provide the guidance and resources necessary to make your process flawless.

The Laredo Chamber of Commerce is structured to serve the needs of its membership. Your Chamber, in fact, exists specifically to build a business-friendly environment and to improve the quality of life in the community.

The Laredo Chamber of Commerce is:

- a voluntary organization of business people working together to improve our community's economic and civic vitality.
- the voice of the Laredo business community.
- not a governmental entity (it is a private not-for-profit organization).
- an independent organization (it is not directed by any State or national affiliation, although it is an active member of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the American Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives, the Texas Association of Business, and the Texas Association of Mexican American Chambers of Commerce).
- fully accredited by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce with a five-star accreditation (only a small percentage of all chambers in the United States carry this seal of approval — 27 out of over 500 chambers in Texas, affiliated with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce are accredited.)

The Laredo Chamber of Commerce is a member-based non-profit association dedicated to serving the needs of our member businesses in a variety of ways: encouraging investment in Laredo, representing our members in the community, and improving the business climate for all member businesses. We are focused on providing services to help our

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members sell more, expand their operations, create jobs, and develop new products/services while partnering with many other organizations in Laredo's business community.

Our beliefs are founded on our core values of honesty, integrity, trust, and regard. At the Laredo Chamber of Commerce, we are dedicated to improving our community and stimulating our economy.

Develop

The Laredo Chamber of Commerce is dedicated to fostering economic development in our community.

Encourage

The Laredo Chamber of Commerce promotes a planned development of resources and infrastructure in our region.

Promote

The Laredo Chamber of Commerce will promote economic development and tourism in our region.

Vision

To be a trusted resource and partner for the business community by listening, educating, cultivating, and advancing our region through engaged leadership and advocacy.

Mission

We are a membership organization that provides leadership by connecting, building, and growing the economic interests of the business, tourism, and educational initiatives of the Laredo/Webb County Metropolitan area by being a politically proactive advocate, providing professional development, and serving as a catalyst for emerging trends.

Border Security and Immigration Reform

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The Laredo Chamber of Commerce Supports a Smart Wall Solution to address security along the United States/Mexico border.

A Smart Wall Solution combines a physical wall, fence, and bulkhead strategically located along the border. This wall type would encompass technology such as drones, sensors, radars, and cameras to track and intercede on incursions. This solution will preserve the valuable and cooperative relationship with our ally and partner, Mexico.

The Laredo Chamber opposes the construction of a continuous border wall, especially in the Laredo city region. At best, a wall would provide a partial solution to the problem of security, illegal immigration, and the smuggling of drugs, cash, and weapons. A wall is not the most effective solution, nor is it an efficient use of federal money. It could negatively impact the environment and will entirely disregard private property rights.

Foresight to use commonsense solutions – a Smart Wall Solution, clearing the riverbank’s fast-growing invasive plant species to increase security and visibility, hiring more customs agents to support and facilitate border crossings, upgrading the land ports of entry, and hiring more immigration judges – is appreciated.

Border security entails more than a Smart Solution Wall. The United States Customs and Border Protection (CBP) is tasked with enforcing American immigration policy at its borders. The CBP is the largest federal law enforcement agency in the country.

Every day, **\$2 billion** in economic activity passes through the U.S./Mexico border ports of entry. Current facilities cannot handle the traffic flow, therefore costing the country’s economy millions of dollars. Because of a lack of inspection personnel, technology, and infrastructure, these land ports have become the ideal passing point for international drug cartels to smuggle their contraband. CBP reports nearly 90 percent of drug seizures including cocaine, heroin, methamphetamine, and fentanyl are being smuggled into the United States through the ports.

Along with contraband, undocumented immigrants also cross our borders every day. As border security spending and staffing have multiplied, the number of undocumented immigrants coming into the U.S. has fallen. In 2009, it was estimated that 6.4 million undocumented immigrants from Mexico were living in the U.S., but by 2014 that number had fallen 9% to 5.8 million.

A review of existing immigration policy is necessary. The United States needs the labor of about half a million less-skilled workers every year to keep the economy growing. Americans are not filling these jobs – many are found in the agricultural sector.

Economic Development

For the local community and region to continue to move forward in an orderly fashion, a skilled labor force must be developed, and strategies that contribute to strong economic growth must be promoted.

The Laredo Chamber of Commerce advocates these strategies:

- Support continued use of a locally approved sales tax collected by cities to fund economic development efforts.
- Collaborations with local government to implement and/or modify existing Sports Venue 0.0025 tax for use as Type A Corporation or Type B Corporation Tax for economic development purposes.
- Support the ability of local taxing districts to phase in tax abatements and encourage the use of tax abatements to promote investment in developers.

The Laredo Economic Development Corporation

The Laredo Economic Development Corporation (LEDC) is a private non-profit corporation dedicated to the economic and industrial development of Laredo, Texas. The LEDC is an organization defined by its visionary leadership, recognized for its integrity and contributions towards the economic development and vitality of the Laredo Region.

The LEDC serves as the primary private sector point of contact providing assistance to new and expanding business prospects and provides a voice for the private sector in legislative, regulatory, and infrastructure matters to facilitate a positive business environment. Our members include key stakeholders in financial institutions, workforce solutions organizations, business owners and leaders in the international trade community, healthcare leaders, higher education, developers, and representatives from many diverse businesses.

The LEDC works with the Laredo Chamber of Commerce, other business and trade organizations in the region, and with our local, state, and federal elected officials on promoting an environment where businesses can thrive; enhancing the skill set of our workforce; encouraging educational excellence; building positive relationships among area businesses; fostering collaboration with like-minded organizations; promoting tourism in South Texas; and recruiting new industry while assisting business retention efforts whenever possible.



Laredo Economic Development Corporation policy, financial and strategic planning decisions are made by the twenty-eight-member Board of Directors. Sixteen of the twenty-eight Directors are elected by the LEDC dues-paying members. The remaining Directors are appointed each year from various local business and industrial organizations as well as the City of Laredo, Webb County, Laredo International Airport and the Laredo Chamber of Commerce.

Marketing and Promotion

A key component for business attraction and development is tied to marketing and promotion of the Laredo and Webb County region. The LEDC markets primarily through B2B meetings, social media platforms, direct advertising and online through the LEDC website. In addition, staff attends, participates, and hosts numerous conferences, meetings and trade shows to promote and keep Laredo at the forefront of business and industry networks, keep abreast of economic development trends, and build relationships within the trade industry that will highlight and further Laredo's interests. Through numerous collaborative endeavors, including joint marketing and promotion with our stakeholder partners at conferences, recruitment missions, networking mixers, transportation committee discussions, our annual symposium and meeting with prospects, we opened up lines of communication by means of proximity and opportunities for open discussion on shared interests, industry information and mutual goals. Direct advertising in trade journals and site selection magazines popular in the development industry is an effective marketing tool for both national and international markets.

The LaredoEDC website is a key source of online information for Laredo's economic indicators report, a monthly report on employment, building, permits and sales tax activity, north and southbound shipments for trucking, and rail, and air passenger and cargo activity that includes a yearly comparison. The website also includes community data, and an interactive map with property listings that is available as a marketing tool for all commercial and industrial property owners and realtors.

Industrial and Business Development

The Industrial and Business Development Division is a resource center focused entirely on assisting new businesses locate or expand in Laredo for the purpose of creating jobs and expanding our tax base through direct capital investments. In addition, this division showcases the opportunities and benefits that Laredo and Webb County offer businesses and corporations seeking new locations for their business. The industrial and business development team works closely with new prospects to deliver a wide range of services and information to facilitate the search process for site selectors. We conduct property site tours, presentations, and meetings with community stakeholders and provide the most current

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community data and economic indicators report for various sectors in our community. We also work with the City of Laredo and Webb County to provide economic incentives support.

Targeted industries to complement our region's global supply chain leadership and diversification efforts include light manufacturing / automotive, healthcare services and industry, cold-storage and produce distribution centers, destination retail / hospitality, government and homeland security, and Airport Expansion/Aerospace Industry (MRO, FBO).

Administration and Special Projects

The Administration Division oversees contracts, adheres to strict financial procedures, annual audits, preparing financial statements, board minutes and staff reports as well as performing special tasks assigned by the Board of Directors. Also, this division is responsible for staff training and maintaining membership in the International Economic Development Council, TexasEDConnection, NASCO, Chamber of Commerce, Texas Economic Development Council, TxEDC, Border Trade Alliance and the Ports to Plains Alliance. This division is also responsible for maintaining the organizations' accreditation from International Economic Development Council every 6 years. The Special Projects Division prepares and maintains up to date economic indicators reports, partners with community stakeholders for needed workforce and educational resources and infrastructure projects and assists trade industry alliances such as the Border Trade Alliance and other groups in promoting border interests. In addition, performs community initiatives such as the Binational Riverfront, collaborations with Laredo Day Legislative events in Austin, Texas and Washington, D.C., develops regional collaborations, most recent example Port of Victoria, conducts the annual Pathways of Trade symposium, Economic Development Industry Awards, monthly Business Conversation Meetings, 2 Membership Mixers and Economic Development Week.

MileOne – International Business Assistance Center

MileOne's mission is to address the economic challenges of the Laredo region by providing fertile ground for entrepreneurial growth, innovation, and business diversity. The MileOne program guides entrepreneurs through individualized mentorship and provides professional and modern workspaces at subsidized costs. MileOne also actively provides community education through workshops, webinars, and classes on topics such as: startup guidance, financial literacy, marketing, and professional development, as well as e-commerce and safety best practices. The International Business Assistance Center (IBAC) promotes entrepreneurship and international trade for the Laredo and Webb County South Texas region, encourages FDI by facilitating the process of establishing a business in the U.S., and assists U.S. companies who want to expand their business services into Mexico. As a support center, the IBAC assists and guides companies through the process of establishing or expanding their business in a foreign country.

Advocacy and Promotion

Participation and/or Representation on Boards, Committees, Working Groups:

- NASCO Board of Directors
- Workforce Solutions South Texas Board of Directors
- Laredo College Advisory Board Bachelor of Applied Science in Organizational Leadership
- City of Laredo Port of Entry Advisory Committee
- Laredo Chamber of Commerce
- Laredo Licensed U.S. Customs Brokers Association
- Binational Riverfront Working Group
- Breakfast with the Mayor
- City of Laredo EDAC
- The Laredo Rotary Club

Board volunteers to support the community through committees:

- Transportation
- Legislative
- Education
- Health Care
- Strategic Planning

Infrastructure Advocacy

- Texas-Mexico Border Transportation Master Plan
- CPKC Rail Bridge Expansion
- World Trade Bridge Expansion
- Columbia Bridge Expansion
- Bridge 4/5
- TxDOT & RMA Projects
 - IH 35 widening from Laredo to San Antonio
 - Laredo Outer Loop
 - Vallecillo Road
 - Hachar Reuthinger Road
 - FM 1472 Extension to Eagle Pass
 - IH 69, IH 27, IH 2
- Funding Calculation Revision beyond traditional factors based on population to recognize all port infrastructure needs that supports near-shoring, North American competitiveness, reduction of dependence on imports from China, and national security.

Business and Enterprise

The Laredo Chamber of Commerce stands by the notion that a climate conducive to the development of free enterprise will foster increased employment and a sound economy.

For this reason, it supports the following platform:

- Appropriation of funds into the Texas Enterprise Fund (TEF) to assist in the attraction of business to the State as well as implementation of additional transparency and oversight measures to the TEF.
- Support continuation of the annual “Free Sales Tax Weekend” for back-to-school purchases, with consideration for an increased inventory of allowable items.
- Oppose unfunded government mandates that shift the cost of financing programs to either the private sector or other levels of government.

For this reason, the Laredo Chamber of Commerce supports the following initiatives:

- A clear understanding that oversight and enforcement of immigration laws is the responsibility of federal agencies. It urges funding to ensure that the nation's ports of entry are properly staffed and provided the necessary resources.
- Supports reform of the immigration system to allow for speedier processing of green cards for individuals seeking legal residency in the U.S. and implementation of temporary worker programs for high-skilled and lesser-skilled workers.
- Opposition to any plan to resend the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) initiative, but rather support for the implementation of a program to ensure a path to earned citizenship for individuals residing in the country that arrived under a determined age level and that can prove of benefit to the country as productive residents and/or as members of the armed forces.
- Support for enforcement of legislation to protect the nation's borders while ensuring the efficient flow of trade and commerce is maintained.
- Support for the use of technology to speed up the flow of human and commercial traffic at the nation's inland ports of entry but opposition to the imposition of systems that will bring about congestion and cause increased wait times.
- Utilization of a Smart Wall Solution – a strategic combination of a physical wall, fence, and bulkhead encompassing drones, sensors, radars, and cameras.

The Laredo Chamber of Commerce and Laredo Economic Development Corporation support continued infrastructure expansion in Laredo. With over 3 million trucks and over 530,000 rail cars crossing the border to Mexico, the transportation of parts for the auto and electronics industries, foodstuffs, as well as finished goods has resulted in heavy truck and rail traffic. The outcome is an endless stream of 18-wheelers passing through Laredo, which has created a demand for infrastructure development in our international bridges as well as supporting structural arteries leading to Laredo.

Building and Expanding Bridges

Ask: Approval of Permits to Build and Expand International Border Crossings

Laredo has four bridges to Mexico. These bridges, among the busiest and most critical to USMCA trade, are under strain from heavy usage. Laredo has a need to build new and expand our existing bridges.

A new bridge of 10 lanes has been proposed and designed in south Laredo called Bridge 4/5. This bridge will be 10 lanes and be the nation's largest smart port connecting the US and Mexico. The World Trade Bridge is an existing bridge and the nation's busiest international crossing with over 20,000 trucks crossing daily. An expansion of this bridge has been planned and the permits filed.

Both bridge projects have been hampered by lengthy bureaucratic processes enacted in the last four years in the Executive Branch, and bipartisan support in both the House and Senate has called for expedited review of these projects. Our organizations support the expedited review not just for our community's benefit but for the nation's supply chain.

Our vision is to have immediate expansion of the World Trade Bridge, and the issuance of a Presidential Permit for Bridge 4/5, including surrounding infrastructure and personnel to sustain these viable projects. An increase in the capacity of the World Trade Bridge will have little added value without the improvements needed for international trade cargo to continue out of the Import Lot to staging areas (industrial parks and transportation terminals) and onto the interstate highway system. Additional cargo bridge capacity will require additional CP and PGA (Participating Government Agency) personnel to handle the additional workload. These are some of the things being worked on or completed that will help the WTB and the commercial traffic. Improvement in this trade lane would have effects throughout the state of Texas, and the United States. International trade does not cost American jobs but strengthens the economy and creates new jobs.

Highways Supporting Trade

We support the continued expansion of I-35 and the funding and construction of I-69, I-27, I-2. Laredo, being the largest port in the nation, hosts over 20,000 commercial trucks a day. The continued flow of trucks and trains in our community serves the nation and helps our community move tremendous amounts of traffic. The final vision is to have four interstate highways starting and ending in Laredo to serve the trade coming through our Port. Trade through Laredo is expected to rise 221% by 2050. The time is now to build the corresponding infrastructure.

The I-35 currently carries the majority of the trucks that enter the US from Mexico. The four-lane highway is inadequate to carry this trade. We support funding to expand this road to six lanes. In addition to the expansion of I-35, we support the expansion of the Border Patrol Checkpoint. A 10-minute improvement in trade time adds \$312 Million in additional commerce from Mexico to the US according to a 2023 Atlantic Council study.

We support the continued funding and expansion of I-69 which will connect the border to the Heartland to Detroit. This Interstate has been under construction for the last decade and we hope to improve the current US Highway 59 to the limited access I-69 highway sooner than later.

We support the Ports to Plains Initiative known as I-27. The recently designated I-27 will connect the border cities of Laredo, Eagle Pass, and Del Rio to the front range of Colorado and eventually Alberta, Canada. This Instate will service the fast growing front range areas of Denver and the heartland of Canada thereby improving trade abilities of the American west from not just an oceanic transcontinental footing but to a trinational USMCA footing.

Our organizations realize the importance that inland ports play in the interconnection with seaports, commercial airports, and manufacturing centers in the state. However, the key role they play as an integral part of the state's trade corridors is too often superseded by headline-grabbing issues involving immigration and law enforcement, which in turn put them in a secondary tier in terms of funding. Supporting trade improves border security by driving economic growth in both our nations.

The Laredo Chamber of Commerce supports the following initiatives:

- Funding to support the rebuilding and modernizing of Texas roads and highways, rail system, waterways, and airports.
- Funding the construction of I-69 and I-27
- Create a finance system to support various infrastructure projects with loans to be repaid through dedicated public or private funding streams.
- A dedicated funding structure to support the development of infrastructure of inland ports, particularly those at border crossings that facilitate cross-border commercial traffic vital to the manufacturing and transportation industries of Texas.
- Timely and effective Presidential Permitting Processes for International Crossings.

Manufacturing

Skilled Workforce Recruitment Program for Industrial Production (applicable to any industry)

ISSUE: Difficulty in finding skilled workers to fill factory jobs deflates productivity and stalls or altogether can curtail the development and growth of a needed and growing U.S. manufacturing industry and the general economy. With a worker program that targets needed skill sets, the U.S. can successfully address the current gap of experienced workers particularly in industries like manufacturing, construction, etc. Incorporating a recruitment process that taps into an abundant skilled base that exists outside of the U.S., workers eager to live/work in the U.S., will

- Fill the skilled labor gaps and expedite the growth of local manufacturing and targeted industries
- Integrate training and apprenticeship programs to provide the skilled labor lacking in smaller communities
- Attract and retain foreign talent
- Attract investment incentivized by the availability of a skilled labor force and a “MADE IN AMERICA” designation
- Generate job growth and economic stability through skills development in impoverished, low-skilled regions
- Provide a secure and productive pathway for immigration of a targeted talent pool

BACKGROUND: Some years ago a high-level dialogue between the US and Mexico proposed a binational solution to challenges faced by communities of the four border states with Mexico by addressing issues related to competitiveness, workforce development, and productivity. The **US-Mexico Bilateral Agenda** recommended “working in a coordinated manner to change the perception of the border to one of mutual and sustainable prosperity; and a **focus on high-impact strategic actions to increase competitiveness, connectivity, economic growth, and productivity**”.

Although border demographics provide a workforce that supports a competitive manufacturing industry, higher skilled, higher paid jobs such as engineers and trained technicians require time to develop and remain a career path that, while highly encouraged, still lags behind the industry's need. While this high-skills gap is most prevalent along the border, it is nonetheless a gap across much of the U.S. manufacturing industry. Alternatively, Mexico has an abundance of experienced engineers and technicians in the industry. A study on U.S. and Mexico workers by the SMU Texas-Mexico Center concluded that “ **encouraging and supporting integrated industries, rather than discouraging them, will boost the U.S. manufacturing sectors.**” 1. [‘Are Mexican and U.S. Workers Complements or Substitutes?’, Dr. Raymond Robertson, 2018] Likewise, targeting workers for industries in short supply of labor can be applied across any market.

REQUEST FOR CONSIDERATION: Creating a pilot program that targets workers with specialized skill sets such as engineering, production, and technology and research, will address the skills gaps currently faced across the U.S. and in border areas with plentiful, albeit primarily low-skilled, populations. Recruit and vet skilled talent from both within the U.S. and our neighboring countries through a program with guidelines for employers, regulations on minimum length of employment, etc. In partnership with existing programs such as the D.O.L.’s Office of Foreign Labor Certification and the American Apprenticeship Initiative, this program can deliver a high-impact solution toward U.S. productivity and serve to revitalize the U.S. manufacturing industry currently spurred by nearshoring advantages. In predominantly low-skilled areas like border regions, growing the high-skilled base will attract manufacturing and R&D facilities that generate jobs for more economically stable, sustainable, and secure border cities.

Healthcare

Laredo faces critical healthcare challenges, with a staggering 32% of its population uninsured—significantly higher than both Texas (20%) and the national average (10%). Recognized as a Medically Underserved Area (MUA), Laredo struggles with limited access to primary healthcare, specialized healthcare, high infant mortality, and extensive poverty. Its healthcare infrastructure is further strained by a severe shortage of both primary and specialty care physicians, ranking at the very bottom both nationally and within Texas for healthcare provider availability.

Particularly pressing is the prevalence of diabetes, affecting 23% of the county's population, leading to high rates of hospital admissions and amputations for uncontrolled diabetes—surpassing many other Texas counties. The financial burden of diabetes care, notably amputations, significantly exceeds state and local averages, highlighting the economic impact of healthcare deficiencies in the area.

This situation underscores an urgent need for targeted interventions and policies to improve insurance coverage, access to healthcare services, and management of chronic conditions like diabetes. Enhancing Webb County's healthcare services is crucial for improving the overall health and quality of life of its residents.

For this reason, the Laredo Chamber of Commerce endorses the following:

- Address the lack of health insurance among the uninsured population in South Texas and implement access, education, and promotional programs to combat this disparity. Increase funding for community health centers while conducting educational campaigns to raise awareness about available insurance options, and launching marketing initiatives to promote affordable plans to reduce strain on the healthcare system and health workers. By partnering with insurance providers and offering enrollment assistance, we believe that this will reduce reliance on state and federally-funded programs while improving access to healthcare for underserved populations.
- Support for physical plant and utilities, weighted (academic) programs, medical and clinical research, and Graduate Medical Education (GME) for medical resident accredited programs accessible to South Texas.
- Recover and sustain state funding and Laredo/Webb County and other South Texas/Middle Rio Grande counties along the border to support historically successful student academic programs, and research and clinical training opportunities provided by the University of Texas and Texas A&M systems.
- Support funding and resources for the Primary Care Residency Programs for Family Medicine and Internal Medicine established as a collaboration between the Laredo Medical Center, Gateway Community Health Center, and the University of the Incarnate Word School of Medicine which will ultimately serve as a medium for the relocation of physicians into the South Texas area.
- Support H.R. 4261, Amputation Reduction and Compassion Act of 2023, as this would reduce financial burden on local hospitals and the healthcare system as a whole. Laredo was ranked as having the highest cost per amputation in the State of Texas with an average amputation costing \$214,300 in Webb County vs the State average of \$123,857
- Support the 340B Act and allocate funding for tailored prescription drug programs. Legislation should be enacted to protect consumers from price gouging on life-saving medications, ensuring transparency and regulation of drug pricing. Additionally, outreach campaigns should be launched to inform residents about available resources for affordable prescriptions, empowering them to access necessary medications without financial burden.
- Curtail the shortage of healthcare professionals in South Texas by implementing recruitment initiatives offering incentives such as signing bonuses and relocation assistance. Additionally, expand student loan forgiveness programs specifically for those working in public health facilities like federally qualified health centers, aiming to

attract and retain doctors, specialists, dentists, and psychologists. Foster collaboration between healthcare organizations, educational institutions, and community stakeholders to create supportive environments and pathways for healthcare professionals to serve in underserved areas.

Skilled Workforce Recruitment Program for Industrial Production

ISSUE: Difficulty in finding skilled workers to fill factory jobs deflates productivity and stalls or altogether can curtail the development and growth of a needed and growing U.S. manufacturing industry. With a worker program that targets needed skill sets, the U.S. can successfully address the current gap of experienced workers particularly in the manufacturing industry. Tapping into an abundant talent base that exists outside of the U.S. and eager to live/work in the U.S., a process that includes a thoughtful immigration pathway, you will:

- Fill the skilled labor gaps and expedite the growth of local manufacturing
- Integrate training and apprenticeship programs to provide the necessary skills to local communities
- Attract and retain foreign talent
- Attract investment incentivized by the availability of a skilled labor force and a “MADE IN AMERICA” designation
- Generate job growth and economic stability through skills development in impoverished, low-skilled regions o Provide a secure and productive pathway to potential immigration of a targeted talent pool

Background: Some years ago, a high-level dialogue between the US. and Mexico proposed a binational solution to challenges faced by communities of the four border states with Mexico by addressing issues related to competitiveness, workforce development, and productivity. The US-Mexico Bilateral Agenda recommended working in a coordinated manner to change the perception of the border to one of mutual and sustainable prosperity; and a focus on high-impact strategic actions to increase competitiveness, connectivity, economic growth, and productivity”.

Although border demographics provide a workforce that supports a competitive manufacturing industry, higher skilled, higher paid jobs such as engineers and trained technicians require time to develop and remain a career path that, while highly encouraged, still lags behind the industry’s need. While this high-skills gap is most prevalent along the border, it is nonetheless a gap across much of the U.S. manufacturing industry. On the other hand, Mexico has an abundance of experienced engineers and technicians in the industry. A study on U.S. and Mexico workers by the SMU Texas-Mexico Center concluded that “encouraging and supporting integrated industries, rather than discouraging them, will boost the U.S. manufacturing sectors.” 1. [‘Are Mexican and U.S. Workers Complements or Substitutes?’, Dr. Raymond Robertson, 2018]

Request for Consideration: Create a productive industrial workforce by recruiting and vetting a pool of highly skilled, experienced talent from the abundant manufacturing base in our neighboring countries. Creating a pilot program that targets workers with specialized skill sets such as engineering, production, and technology and research, will address the



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skills gaps currently faced across the U.S. and in border areas with plentiful, albeit primarily low-skilled, populations. In partnership with existing programs such as the D.O.L.'s Office of Foreign Labor Certification and the American Apprenticeship Initiative, this program can deliver a high-impact solution toward U.S. productivity and serve to revitalize the U.S. manufacturing industry currently spurred by nearshoring advantages. In predominantly low-skilled areas like border regions, growing the high-skilled base will attract manufacturing and R&D facilities that generate jobs for more economically stable, sustainable, and secure border cities

