

BORDERPLEX 2025 ASCEND PLAN

Progress report, December 2024
Year 4 of Implementation

2024 AT A GLANCE



16%

**Of plan completed in
2024**

19

**Action items completed
by the Strategy Team in
2024**

50

**Action items completed
in 4 years of
implementation**

14

**Projects completed in
2024**

The sections below describe the specific activities that the Borderplex Alliance Strategy team took to achieve the 2025 Ascend Plan's action items in 2024.

Schneider Electric Internship – Environmental Health and Safety

Action Item 3.1

Highlights

5

Interns

\$22,770

Contributed

3

Partners

Project Summary

The Schneider Electric Internship program began in June and remains ongoing, with a structured timeline to support students throughout the academic year and into the summer months. The pilot officially launched on October 4th, and based on the initial successes, Schneider Electric plans to continue the internship for the foreseeable future.

In June, the Borderplex Alliance's strategy team launched an internship program tailored to the life sciences industry, concentrating on Occupational Health Science (OHS) and Environmental Health and Safety (EHS), an area showing high demand and high growth over the next 10 years. The program aims to develop a skilled talent pool prepared to meet industry standards in manufacturing and distribution sectors. Schneider Electric agreed to host five interns for the pilot program—a target that was met from a competitive applicant pool of 50 candidates. Workforce Solutions Borderplex allocated \$22,770 to fund these internships through its work-based learning program, providing financial support to ensure accessibility for participants.

By providing specific EHS and OHS training, this program seeks to address the gaps in workforce readiness and help build a consistent pipeline of local talent capable of meeting industry standards. The partnership between Schneider Electric, Workforce Solutions Borderplex, and UTEP ensures that the program remains relevant to industry needs and effective in delivering the required skill sets.

Action 3.1 Build a community-wide education and workforce development program for the Life Sciences Industry. Address issues as skills gaps identified by the industry, lack of in demand training programs, the need to form more articulation agreements between two - and four-year colleges, the need for clear education pathways to specific careers in emerging clusters, and the demand for high quality internship programs.

Biotech Industry Marketing

Action Item 12.1

Highlights

Use in

4

RFIs

Shared with

2

VCs

Showcased in

1

Conference

Project Summary

The strategy team completed a marketing brochure consisting of a comprehensive list of biomedical industry assets located in the Borderplex region. The material highlights educational resources, research and development capabilities, workforce availability, and roles within the supply chain.

The marketing material was developed through collaboration between several key partners, including the Medical Center of the Americas (MCA), the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP), New Mexico State University (NMSU), and hospitals across the region.

The material has been used in 4 RFIs, distributed to 2 venture capitalists, and used at one conference. Proactive marketing efforts for the biomedical sector are ongoing, with a current focus on promoting research and development (R&D) and clinical trials in oncology across regional hospitals, which aims to keep the content relevant and targeted.

By emphasizing existing resources in education, research and development, workforce availability, and healthcare infrastructure, the material aims to attract new businesses, investors, and partners.

Business Services Education Program Skills Gap Analysis

Action Item 13.1

Action Item 13.2

Highlights

65

Programs Reviewed

6

Companies Participated

6

Universities Participated

Project Summary

The Borderplex Alliance completed a business services industry program and certification skills gap analysis for the purpose of ensuring alignment of regional Finance and IT educational programs with industry needs. This was done to maintain the relevance of local education programming and ensure a strong talent pipeline for the business services industry.

Using an inventory of programs and certifications compiled and finalized in 2020, the strategy team conducted background research and worked with several institutions of higher learning to ensure that the inventory was complete and accurate. Participants included Southwest University, Western Tech, EPCC, UTEP, DACC, and NMSU.

Staff then engaged industry leaders in the IT and Finance industries (Business Services) to evaluate the relevancy of current educational programs and ensure high-demand skills are integrated.

Using various research tools, including surveys and round tables, an overarching report was created to outline the gaps in educational programming and certification, which will be distributed on an individual basis to the education institutions as a basis for modifying, adding, or removing programs and certifications as needed. Ultimately, 65 programs were reviewed by 6 companies and 6 universities. A report outlining the findings and recommendations is being completed and will be shared with the universities so that they can make the necessary adjustments to their programs.

Action 13.1 As a follow-up to the inventory of educational programs that was recently developed, work with industry leaders to evaluate the relevancy of current educational programs discovered and ensure high demand skills are integrated.

Action 13.2 Work with employers to update the in-demand certification list and share with educational institutions.

Business Financial Literacy Accelerator

Action Item 15.2

Action Item 18.5

Highlights

8

Startups

\$5,000

Pitch Competition
Award

9

Partners and
Instructors

Project Summary

The Borderplex Alliance partnered with Pioneers 21 to create a second iteration of the Business Financial Literacy Accelerator program to focus on IT Startups. This program first started in 2023 and focused on brick-and-mortar businesses. Later, realizing that IT startup companies usually cannot obtain traditional financing, and require an entirely different type of financial literacy education, Pioneers 21 and The Borderplex Alliance worked with area experts to develop a program tailored to fit the needs of local IT startup companies. Specifically, the program was designed to provide IT startup founders with the baseline financial knowledge needed to run their businesses, with a special focus on developing pitches fundable by angel investors or venture capitalists.

The Accelerator included 5 classes, and was conducted from August 29th to September 26th. Eight companies participated, receiving certificates of completion, and there were 10 instructors, presenters, and panelists. One health tech company winner of the pitch competition with \$5,000 prize.

The instructors included Pioneers 21, JEG Advisors, Sun Cruces Angels, No Border Ventures. On the final day, students heard a panel discussion with representatives from Joseph Advisory, Knomee, FinHabits. There was also a special presentation by representatives from the Securities Exchange Commission, who talked about the newly formed . Wells Fargo sponsored the pitch competition.

Action 15.2 Conduct workshops for SMEs to educate them on the financial products and services that are available from local companies as well as how to write a successful business loan application and how to become an exporting company.

Action 18.5 Conduct business retention and expansion efforts targeted at small firms in potential niche IT clusters such as cybersecurity, automated biomedical research, fintech, ag tech, and telehealth.

Borderplex Buyer - Supplier Program

Action Item 23.2

Highlights

6

Buyers

15

Supplier
Opportunities

21

Regional Suppliers
Promoted

Project Summary

The Borderplex Alliance launched the Buyer-Supplier Program, designed to act as a third-party broker by connecting buyers and regional suppliers based on specific needs and compatibility. The strategic planning process for the 2025 Ascend Plan highlighted that a relatively low percentage of regional suppliers were successfully securing contracts with local buyers. The Buyer-Supplier program was created to address this gap.

Through this initiative, we actively promote regional suppliers and foster partnerships with local chambers, including CANACINTRA in Ciudad Juarez, to identify suppliers that best align with buyer requirements.

For each supplier request, we provide buyers with two potential leads, offering multiple options that meet their needs. Our approach begins by examining our investor network for suitable matches. Next, we consult our supplier database, which includes over 40 contacts, and collaborate with our partners to source additional leads. This comprehensive process ensures that buyers have access to a range of qualified suppliers.

Supplier Roundtable & Buyer Interviews

Action Item 23.2

Highlights

18

Suppliers in attendance

3

buyers provided feedback on supply chain opportunities and challenges.

2

Key Projects improved

Project Summary

The strategy team coordinated a buyer-supplier roundtable with regional suppliers to better understand the challenges local suppliers face when working with local buyers. Moreover, the roundtable explored opportunities to create more meaningful connections with local buyers and identified the types of support companies need from the community to achieve this. Separately, the team interviewed regional buyers to understand their experiences with procuring supplies locally, to include their processes, and the challenges and benefits of using local suppliers.

The information was used to improve the buyer-supplier program. It will also be used to establish a more robust supply chain strategy that supports the specific needs of local buyers and suppliers, which will be included the 2030 strategic plan.

Aerospace Marketing Plan

Action Item 24.3

Highlights



Project Summary

The aerospace marketing document is a comprehensive asset list compiled to showcase the aerospace industry assets in the region. It highlights educational resources, research and development capabilities, workforce availability. The goal is to provide consultants, partners, and stakeholders with a clear view of all the region's capabilities and assets, facilitating the use of this document in various marketing efforts, including RFIs (Requests for Information), site visits, and grant applications.

The marketing material was developed through collaboration between several key partners, including Spaceport America, the UTEP Marketing Team, and the NMSU Physical Sciences Laboratory. The shared document is intended for use by these partners, as well as others, to ensure consistent messaging and effective promotion of the Borderplex region's aerospace capabilities.

Further, a strategic plan to pitch the region to site consultants and space company executives is underway. Industry niche opportunities have been identified, and companies and site consultants with complimentary needs and interests have also been identified. A communications plan that targets these entities is in development.

Pathway to the Stars Aerospace Skills Gap Initiative

Action Item 24.6

Action Item 29.8

Highlights

1

Survey
Completed

50+

Partners

1

Draft
Completed

Project Summary

The Borderplex Alliance strategy team is participating in NewSpace Nexus' "Pathway to the Stars" Workforce Leadership Committee, which aims to create a regional workforce skills gap analysis to determine the skills needs and gaps for growing the commercial space and defense sectors in Space Valley (Albuquerque, New Mexico to El Paso, Texas).

This Committee was launched in July and the skills gap analysis is expected to be completed in early 2025. The members of the committee meet every two months to listen to updates and participate in breakout sessions where the members answer specific questions and respond to research conducted for the skills gap initiative. The members also assisted in distributing the company survey, a key tool used to develop the analysis. Data from public labor market information systems, job postings databases, and Census demographics are being leveraged to gain perspective on the assets and opportunities facing the space industry.

The analysis primarily focuses on the needs and gaps in New Mexico, which will be valuable particularly for growing the industry in southern New Mexico; however, the lessons learned will be valuable for growing the industry in El Paso and Ciudad Juarez as well.

Action 24.6 Conduct a skills gap analysis by comparing skill availability in the Borderplex region with another region that has a well-established aerospace and defense industry.

Action 29.8 Form education-corporate partnerships with companies from both outside and inside the region to identify needed skillsets in emerging industries.

New SBA Grant for Building the Regional Space Ecosystem

Action Item 25.1

Highlights

8

Partners

\$150,000

Grant

4

Cities
Represented

Project Summary

The Borderplex Alliance partnered with NewSpace Nexus, a group based in Albuquerque, New Mexico, which has vast experience working with space industry startups to build and accelerate the growth of aerospace ecosystems. NewSpace Nexus convened various partners from El Paso, Las Cruces, Albuquerque, and Washington State to apply for a \$150,000 grant from the U.S. Small Business Administration that would enable the group to leverage each organization's strengths to collectively support space startups.

On September 26th, the SBA officially awarded NewSpace Nexus, The Borderplex Alliance, and the various partners, a grant of \$150,000. For The Borderplex Alliance's partners, this grant will significantly enhance the collective ability to support small businesses and startups in aerospace, fostering innovation and economic growth in the community.

The Growth Accelerator Fund Competition is highly competitive, with only 44 out of numerous applicants receiving awards ranging from \$50,000 to \$150,000.

Borderplex Supplier Brief

Action Item 25.3

Highlights

6

Publications of
Supplier Brief

415

People opened
the Supplier Brief

43

business opportunities,
programs, and events
promoted

Project Summary

The quarterly Borderplex Supplier Brief, now in its third year of publication, targets suppliers and buyers and communicates supplier customer opportunities, important news about regional industries, and relevant events and programs. Its purpose is to maintain engagement with local companies through a constant channel of communication, to keep readers informed about important news that can impact their business, and to have a platform for inviting suppliers and buyers to get involved in programs and opportunities coordinated by the Borderplex Alliance and its partners.

This year, the strategy team compiled six Supplier Briefs, 415 people opened and read the Briefs, and approximately 43 business opportunities, programs and events were promoted.

Binational Technology Council - AI for Educators Workshop

Action Item 29.5

Action Item 29.11

Action Item 29.9

Highlights

2

AI for Educators Trainings

49

Educators Trained towards Certification in AI Tools

3

Partners

Project Summary

In July 2024 the BTC in partnership with UTEP's College of Education provided a 4 - hour training for educators to equip them with AI tools to enhance their lessons and student engagement. The program was tailored to meet the specific needs of UTEP's College of Education. Some of the topics covered included the history of AI, generative AI tools, ChatGPT, Copilot, Khanmigo, effective prompting, and responsible AI usage. In November, the BTC provided a second, abbreviated training to a new group of educators.

This project was a result of previous work done by the BTC's Future of Work Committee. In 2022 and 2023, the Future of Work Committee engaged with industry experts across targeted sectors to gain insights into emerging workforce needs. A consistent theme emerged, emphasizing the importance for business leaders of cultivating a workforce equipped to manage a rapidly changing workplace integrating Industry 4.0 technology and automation. Three recommendations emerged from this research and were memorialized in the Future of Work Report (June 2023). In response, the Binational Technology Council expanded their offerings to provide customized digital transformation training to education institutions.

Action 29.5 Integrate basic knowledge of Industry 4.0 technology (beyond robotics) in high school curricula to share the responsibility of educating students on advanced technology.

Action 29.11 Prioritize integration of emerging technology and skillsets into teacher education programs to create sustainable talent pipelines.

Action 29.9 Create programs around both teacher development and curriculum development.

Binational Technology Council - CPRIT Education Seminar

Action Item 29.11

Highlights

20

Researchers
Trained

4

CPRIT Leaders
Visited

Project Summary

On April 11th, the Borderplex Binational Technology Council coordinated an educational seminar to raise awareness about the funding opportunities that The Cancer Prevention and Research Institute of Texas (CPRIT) has available and to provide guidelines on how to successfully submit an application. Regional biomedical researchers and biomedical companies from the El Paso and Las Cruces area were invited to the event. This education seminar was also an opportunity for researchers from across the region to meet other researchers doing similar research, across a variety of disciplines, from other universities or in other departments from within the same school.

CPRIT's Oversight Committee members led the meeting, including Dee Margo, CEO Wayne Roberts, Deputy Executive Officer Kristen Doyle, and Chief Product Development Officer Dr. Ken Smith. The participants learned about opportunities for El Paso start-up companies and collaborations working in the cancer space to receive CPRIT early-stage investment. CPRIT's leadership team discussed the region's unique features that promote CPRIT's mission to bring life-saving technologies to market.

To date, CPRIT has invested \$53 million in El Paso academic institutions and community organizations to support groundbreaking cancer research and evidence-based prevention projects. However, the area has lagged behind other communities in terms of number of applications and funding received. The goal of this workshop was to encourage local researchers to apply and to do so successfully, which would lead to commercialization and significant economic development.

Comp Science & Cybersecurity Marketing Materials

Action Item 32.2

Highlights

Used in
10
RFI

4
University
Partners

Showcased in
1
Conference

Project Summary

The Computer Science & Cybersecurity marketing document is a comprehensive asset list compiled to showcase the IT industry assets in the region. It highlights educational resources, research and development capabilities, workforce availability. The goal is to provide consultants, partners, and stakeholders with a clear view of all the region's capabilities and assets, facilitating the use of this document in various marketing efforts, including RFIs (Requests for Information), site visits, and grant applications.

The marketing plan is in development with the ED team to gain accurate and valid data.

The purpose of this new marketing material is to showcase the robust talent pipeline and the assets of computer science and cybersecurity in the Borderplex region.

Semiconductor Marketing Materials

Action Item 32.2

Highlights

3

RFIs

3

Site Visits

1

Multi-stakeholder
conference

Project Summary

The Semiconductor Industry marketing document is a comprehensive asset list compiled to showcase the semiconductor industry assets in the region. It highlights educational resources, research and development capabilities, workforce availability. The goal is to provide consultants, partners, and stakeholders with a clear view of all the region's capabilities and assets, facilitating the use of this document in various marketing efforts, including RFIs (Requests for Information), site visits, and grant applications.

The marketing materials have been utilized on 3 site visits, one international conference in Taiwan with a variety of companies present, and several RFIs.

The purpose of this new marketing material is to showcase the robust talent pipeline and the assets of semiconductors in the Borderplex region to attract companies to the area, particularly semiconductor suppliers.