

# Area's jobless rate falls to 3.5 percent

## Region's job growth stays healthy at 4.3 percent during March, agency says.

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The Central Texas job market is still hot, but a shrinking pool of talent could slow the healthy job growth rate, economists said.

**The unemployment rate in the five-county region fell to 3.5 percent in March from 4.3 percent a year earlier and 3.8 percent in February, according to a report Friday from the Texas Workforce Commission.**

**The region added jobs at a 4.3 percent rate, bringing the total local work force to 741,000.**

The strong job market is expected to continue for the near term, said Daniel Kah, director of research at Angelou Economics.

"Austin is likely to see employment growth for an extended period of time," Kah said. But he cautioned that "it's going to be difficult to continue to grow at 4 percent, given that our unemployment rate is so low."

The region's job growth has been broad-based, with two examples this week. Software pioneer Borland Software Corp. and the Jewelry Channel both said they are bringing new jobs here.

Borland, which makes software development tools for corporate customers, is moving its headquarters from Silicon Valley. The company, which has a small research and development operation in Austin, expects to add more than 150 jobs with the headquarters move.

On Wednesday, the Jewelry Channel, a cable television channel, said it has set up operations in Round Rock and expects to hire 135 people this year and up to 700 within five years.

For March, the region's strongest sectors include government, adding 5,700 jobs in the past year; retail trade, adding 5,500 jobs; and leisure and hospitality, which includes hotels and restaurants, with 4,200 new jobs.

Statewide, the jobless rate was 4.3 percent in March, down from 4.5 percent a month earlier and 5 percent a year earlier.

The state added 225,000 jobs over the past year, a 2.3 percent job growth rate.

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Courtesy of JB Goodwin