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# GULF COAST WORKFORCE BOARD

## AGENDA

**Tuesday, April 2, 2024, at 10:00 a.m.  
2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, 3555 Timmons Lane  
Houston, Texas 77027**

This meeting will be in person only and open to the public.

- 1. Call to Order**
- 2. Roll Call**
- 3. Adopt Agenda**
- 4. Public Comment**
- 5. Review of the February 2024 Meeting Minutes**
- 6. Declare Conflicts of Interest**
- 7. Reports:**
  - a. Board Chair's Remarks: (Board Chair Mark Guthrie),
  - b. Executive Director's Report: (Juliet Stipeche),
  - c. H-GAC Executive Director's Report: (Chuck Wemple),
  - d. Audit and Monitoring Committee Report: (Committee Chair Guy Jackson),
  - e. Communications Committee Report: (Committee Chair Doug Karr),
  - f. Employer Engagement Committee Report: (Committee Chair Sara Bouse),
  - g. Education Committee Report: (Committee Chair Dr. Bobbie Henderson), and
  - h. Strategic Planning Committee Report: (Committee Chair Carl Bowles).

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## 8. Action Items:

- a. Procurement Committee Report: Briefing of the March committee meeting including discussion, consideration, and possible action on the following:
  - i. Early Education Professional Pathways Services (Committee Chair Dr. Bobbie Henderson), and
  - ii. Partners for Reentry Opportunities in Workforce Development (Committee Chair Dr. Bobbie Henderson).

## 9. Information:

- a. Performance and Production: Report on the system's performance and production (Philip Garcia), and
- b. Expenditures: Report on the Board's budget and expenditures (Brandi Brown).

## 10. Presentation

- a. A Look at the Economy (Parker Harvey)

## 11. Other Business

- a. Paving the Pathway Kick-Off Orientation (Cheryl Guido)

## 12. Adjourn

If you wish to make a public comment you may appear in person or do so by providing your comments in writing no later than 5:00 pm on **Monday, April 1, 2024**, to Deborah Duke at [deborah.duke@wrksolutions.net](mailto:deborah.duke@wrksolutions.net).

Meeting materials are available on our website at [www.wrksolutions.com/about-us/meetings](http://www.wrksolutions.com/about-us/meetings).

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**MINUTES OF MEETING OF  
THE GULF COAST WORKFORCE BOARD  
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2024**

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**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Sofia Adroque	Mark Guthrie	Melanie Rodriguez
Willie Alexander	Bobbie Henderson	Mou Sarkar
Anne Bartlett	Alan Heskamp	Danielle Scheiner
Peter Beard	Guy Robert Jackson	Keri Schmidt
Shonda Below	Doug Karr	Valerie Segovia
Sara Bouse	Jeff LaBroski	Richard Shaw
Carl Bowles	Shareen Larmond	Sandra Taylor
Helen Cavazos	Edward Melton	Lizandra Vazquez
Dorian Cockrell	Adrian Ozuna	Carolyn Watson
Melissa Gonzalez	Paul Puente	Michael Webster
Cheryl Guido	Monica Riley	Bin Yu

**H-GAC STAFF PRESENT**

AJ Dean	Parker Harvey	Russell Tomlin
Deborah Duke	Kristi Rangel	Chuck Wemple
Philip Garcia	Juliet Stipeche	

Chair Mark Guthrie called the in-person meeting of the Gulf Coast Workforce Board (GCWB) to order at approximately 10:00 a.m. on Tuesday, February 6, 2024. Deborah Duke called roll to determine a list of members present. Chair Guthrie determined a quorum was present.

**ADOPTION OF AGENDA**

Chair Guthrie presented the agenda and requested a motion to approve the agenda as presented. A motion was made and seconded to adopt the agenda. The motion carried, and the agenda was adopted as presented.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

No one signed up for public comments.

**MINUTES FROM DECEMBER 5, 2023, MEETING**

Chair Guthrie asked for approval of the minutes of the last Board meeting. A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes of the December 5, 2023 meeting as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

**DECLARE CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

Chair Guthrie invited Board members to disclose any conflicts of interest related to today's action items on the agenda, to ensure transparency and accountability throughout the decision-making process. No conflicts were reported. Chair Guthrie reminded members that they could also declare any conflicts with items as they were taken up.

**CONSIDER REPORTS***a. Chair's Report.*

Chair Guthrie provided a report on recent national, state and local developments, activities and conferences pertinent to workforce development.

Chair Guthrie first reported on national activities. The House and Senate passed and the President signed a third Continuing Resolution (CR) to continue to fund the federal government for fiscal year 2024 to avoid a partial government shutdown on January 19. The new CR extends the "laddered" approach from the previous CR, with the first set of appropriations bills expiring on March 1. The second set of bills will expire, on March 8. On January 7, congressional leaders announced a deal on topline appropriations for each of the appropriations bills. This means that FY24 workforce funding should be approximately level with FY23 when the budgets are approved. Chair Guthrie reported at the December meeting that he did not expect a proposal to reauthorize WIOA until an agreement on the federal budget was reached. However, a few days after that meeting, the House Education and Workforce Committee released a proposal to reauthorize WIOA, the Stronger Workforce for America Act (ASWA)—legislation that would reauthorize WIOA and make significant updates to it.

Chair Guthrie reported that, while ASWA as proposed contains some significant improvements to WIOA, it also includes components that threaten to detrimentally impact workforce boards across the nation. It mandates spending of at least 50% of all WIOA adult and dislocated workers on training. We currently spend approximately 25% of those funds on training. Possible impacts of this requirement include serving fewer people and employers, closing career offices, reducing employer services, reducing spending on support services and pushing people into training without adequate assessments or addressing their barriers and

impediments to successfully completing that training. ASWA also increases state level set asides to 25% of total WIOA allocations. Current levels are 15%. This additional 10% that a state can take off the top would further reduce the resources available to a local board under WIOA. Board staff is working on an estimate that projects the impact of ASWA on our local area. When that is done, we will furnish it to you and ask you to reach out to your federal House and Senate representatives to continue to highlight these significant areas of concern with ASWA as currently proposed.

Next, Chair Guthrie reported that he attended the quarterly NAWB board of directors' meetings in Washington last month. A lot of time at these meetings was spent discussing the WIOA reauthorization impacts.

Moving to Texas matters, Chair Guthrie reported that the Texas Legislature passed a bill the session before last that created an advisory council to advise the Workforce Commission and the Texas Education Agency (TEA) on certifications valued by industry for dual credit programs. TEA uses its approved certifications list to give accreditation ranking credit to schools and school districts offering courses that award these certifications. That bill created an Industry Based Certifications Advisory Council that Dr. Mike Webster serves on. According to that legislation, the IBC Advisory Committee advises TWC and TEA regarding the alignment of public high school career and technology education programs with current and future workforce needs across the state. It also develops an inventory of industry-recognized credentials and certificates that may be earned by a public high school student through career and technology education courses.

Last year, Chair Guthrie and others around the state wrote letters to the IBC Advisory Council supporting the additions of certain certifications sought by Texas employers, such as Lockheed Martin. The IBC Advisory Council approved these certifications and submitted them to the TEA for inclusion on TEA's approved Industry-Based Certification List which, again is used by TEA in calculating its accountability rankings of schools and school districts – meaning that schools and districts that offer courses leading to credits and certifications on the TEA's approved Industry-Based Certification List get accountability credits where offering credits and certifications that are not on TEA's approved Industry-Based Certification List do not get similar accountability credits. After receiving the IBC Advisory Council recommendations approving these additional certifications, the TEA then sought public comment, and Chair Guthrie wrote another public comment letter supporting these certifications. After receiving the public comments, TEA declined to include these certifications on TEA's Industry-Based Certification List, (though reportedly flower arranging is on the TEA's approved list and counts in TEA's accountability rankings) – essentially ignoring the IBC Advisory Council's recommendations. Chair Guthrie invited Dr. Mike Webster to comment. Dr. Webster confirmed the accuracy of the information provided by Chair Guthrie and agreed with his assessment.

Turning to local issues, Chair Guthrie reported that there have been a number of committee meetings since the December Board meeting. He also announced plans to revive the Career Services Committee and stated that he has asked Adrian Ozuna to serve as Chair and Cheryl Guido to serve as Vice Chair. He invited Board members who are interested in serving on that committee to let Juliet Stipeche or Deborah Duke know of their interest.

Chair Guthrie concluded his report, and no action was taken.

*b. Executive Director's Report.*

Executive Director Juliet Stipeche provided a series of updates.

Ms. Stipeche began by thanking everyone who participated in our new Board member orientation. She also thanked members who participated the various committee meetings.

Ms. Stipeche shared information about a middle skills initiative grant that Becca Herrera, Manager of our Community Engagement Division is spearheading. She stated that we are launching the Middle Skills Initiative that will focus on individuals who are not enrolled in our services but are currently receiving training in middle skills occupations and employment. This is technical education and training beyond high school, but not necessarily a four-year degree. This grant offers supportive services in areas such as vehicle repair, childcare, healthcare expenses, uniforms, and tools. We are partnering with community colleges as well as nonprofit organizations to be able to provide this opportunity to eligible individuals. She also noted that the cumulative amount of this grant is \$342,942 and stated that participants can receive up to \$3000 in supportive services or a slightly higher amount if they are receiving child care. She stated that there will be a virtual learning session on Wednesday, February 7<sup>th</sup> and invited members to participate and invited them to share the information with others who are interested.

Ms. Stipeche announced that the Texas Workforce Commission as well as the GCWB will host a feedback session regarding the 2025 to 2027 Childcare Development Fund State Plan and the Texas Rising Star four year review. The meeting will be at the H-GAC offices on February 21<sup>st</sup> at 6:00 PM and she encouraged participation from our providers as well as community members. She shared an RSVP link and also stated that there will be an opportunity to attend a virtual learning session on Wednesday, February 28<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 pm for those who are not able to attend the in person meeting.

Ms. Stipeche reported that, on January 31<sup>st</sup>, we hosted our first Regional Convener Conference at the ION with 11 school districts participating including LaPorte ISD, Galveston, Houston, Deer Park, Fort Bend, Sheldon, Spring, Pasadena, New Caney,



Alief and Brazosport. Community colleges participated as well including HCC, Alvin, Lone Star, San Jacinto, College of Healthcare Professions, Wharton, and Brazosport College. The students participated in a UnitedWay of Greater Houston ALICE (Assisted Limited Income Constrained Employee) Workshop session to learn more about financial literacy and about how far their income stretches depending on where they live. In addition, Parker Harvey, the Gulf Coast Workforce Board's regional economist, created a career exploration portal for students and teachers to have a better understanding of high skills, high growth and targeted industry careers. The conference also included was a career exploration and apprenticeship panel in which Board member Paul Puente participated representing the building and construction trades. The panel also included representatives from HCA Healthcare, who discussed healthcare professions, and Brazosport ISD, who shared information on the teaching profession and its teacher apprenticeship program.

Ms. Stipeche stated that the students were given a pre-survey and a post-survey and, while we do not yet have the post-survey results, she shared some information from the pre-survey. For the question "Do you plan on attending post-secondary?", 74.7% of the 95 respondents said yes, 20% said maybe. Statistics show that, in the state of Texas, approximately 49% of students that graduate end up pursuing a post-secondary opportunity. In our region the figure is 47%. Interestingly, the data shows that a group of engaged students participating in career and technology education still need information to further explore their future careers. Many students also express an interest to obtain post-secondary education, but challenges and barriers exist preventing them from successfully reaching further education and training in high skills, high growth careers. Additionally, 77.9% of the students said that they had not heard of Workforce Solutions or used our services; 42.1% said that they were not familiar with apprenticeship programs, and 20% said they were somewhat familiar. Finally, when asked, "Do you wish your school offered more information on career planning?", a resounding 76.8% said yes. The Gulf Coast Workforce Board stands to serve as a bridge for students making the transition from the K-12 system to post-secondary. Ms. Stipeche asked how are we going to be able to work together as a community to ensure that today's students are empowered with the right critical information that they need to be able to succeed in the careers of tomorrow.

Next, Ms. Stipeche introduced a brief video that our navigators put together from the Regional Convener Conference. She thanked William McQueen, the Navigator Supervisor who created the video. Following the short video presentation, Ms. Stipeche thanked her entire team including Luis Moreno, Regional Convener, who worked very hard to coordinate this event, the first of its kind with over 233 students and teachers and career counselors in attendance from over 11 school districts in the thirteen-county region.

Ms. Stipeche concluded her report, and no action was taken.

*c. H-GAC Executive Director's Report.*

H-GAC Executive Director Chuck Wemple began his report by stating that he and Rick Guerrero will attend the National Association of Regional Councils Policy Meeting in Washington soon. He stated that he would like to be helpful regarding Workforce issues. He is working on a few talking points with input from Juliet as well as Chair Guthrie.

He also reported that he had a chance to attend a convening in Arizona recently on an initiative called Local Government 2030 which is an initiative across the entire country to look at the future of public service and employment in the local government sector. It was decided that it would be great to have about 60 delegates from across the country including different parts of local government. That group worked for about a year and a half on three initiatives that they think are important for the future of local government. One thing they came up with is what they are calling fair chance hiring for promise pathways which is working directly with justice-impacted individuals to help them get jobs in the government and with other employers. H-GAC will be the first part of the country to have a conversation with this national group.

Mr. Wemple talked about County pop up events in which he and other members of the H-GAC team go out to the various counties around the region and talk about what we do. But he stated that we really want to listen to what the needs are, what they are excited about and what they are concerned about. He passed along compliments for the team stating that the local Workforce offices, especially in Austin County and Colorado County, provided great participation and input in these meetings. He also stated that he and Juliet have been a part of some good meetings with the Harris County Department of Education and expect to see improved performance.

Lastly, Mr. Wemple stated that he has been looking at the procurement process at H-GAC which is always a fine balance of compliance versus expediency. He and the team are looking to increase outreach, provide some analytics and how are inquiries are being handled.

Mr. Wemple concluded his report, and no action was taken.

*d. Employer Engagement Committee*

Committee Chair Sara Bouse provided the following Employer Engagement Committee report:

On Thursday, January 25, 2024, at 10:00 am, Employer Engagement Committee met at the Astrodome Career Office located at 9315 Stella Link, Houston, Texas. This

gathering had both in-person and virtual attendees, including Employer Engagement Committee Chair Sara Bouse, Board Chair Mark Guthrie, Vice Chair Dr. Bobbie Henderson, and committee members Cheryl Guido, Alan Heskamp, Guy Robert Jackson, Mou Sarkar, Richard Shaw and Gil Staley. The purposes of this meeting were to provide an in-depth overview of the re-design and re-envision of our Employer Engagement division, to examine strategies aimed at enhancing employer services in our region and to review performance measures that align with the Committee's objectives.

### Current Situation

The meeting was called to order by Committee Chair Sara Bouse at 10:01 am, setting the stage for a comprehensive discussion on the committee's existence, its challenges, and the ways to provide Board staff with the necessary tools to work more efficiently. Juliet Stipeche underscored the committee's role in setting the foundation for their work, aligning goals with the strategic plan, and addressing the critical "how," "what," and "why" of their activities. The emphasis was on partnering with employers to foster better community support, viewing them as both customers and partners in the engagement process.

Philip Garcia introduced a discussion on performance and production measures, highlighting the importance of state and Board measures in tracking information consistently over time and how these measures are integral to the strategic planning and operational efficiency of the Committee. The presentation also touched on the necessity of simplification in understanding complex acronyms and measures to enhance Board members' background knowledge of these various measures to enhance strategy and policy decisions.

The meeting further explored various performance measures for 2024, including the Employer Workforce Assistance and Measurable Skills Gains, underscoring the Committee's commitment to enhancing the average job posting wage and increasing diversity in job opportunities. Discussions also ensued involving the importance of real-time information gathering, with Juliet Stipeche and other members highlighting the ongoing development of structures to support this objective such as customer relationship management (CRM) technology.

As the meeting progressed, attendees reviewed the Employer Engagement timeline, detailing the journey from its inception in June 2022 through to the current date, noting significant milestones such as the partnership with SERCO of Texas and the unified approach to community and employer engagement in supporting both residents and employers.

The Committee also had discussions about career services, emphasizing the need for a customer-centered approach and the integration of employer engagement strategies. This included exploring ways to address major industry shifts and preparing for potential challenges such as layoffs and the mass exodus of teachers.

Next, the Committee discussed how best to serve the youth of the region. This discussion included a review of current and future strategies, partnerships, and opportunities, such as Summer Earn and Learn, Hire Houston Youth, paid Work-Based Learning opportunities, immersive learning experiences, and the potential expansion of services and programs. The Committee discussed casting a wide net with multiple access points to engage youth and involve employers from across the region.

In closing, the Committee addressed the vision and purpose of the Committee, the importance of maintaining intentional relationships of trust with our employers, workers and the other community stakeholders, and the need for creative use of resources to expand opportunities. The Committee also discussed the critical importance of engaging employers, developing key performance indicators of success, and reporting on activities and events involving employer engagement at the next meeting. The meeting adjourned at 12:50 pm, leaving behind several questions for follow-up related to employer engagement, audit and monitoring, employer training on equity, and strategies to prepare for industry changes. This meeting underscored the Committee's dedication to fostering employer engagement, addressing workforce challenges, and creating a strategic path forward to support both employers and the community at large.

Chair Bouse concluded her report and no action was taken.

*e. Audit and Monitoring Committee*

Committee Chair Guy Robert Jackson provided the following Employer Engagement Committee report.

The Audit and Monitoring Committee met on January 25, 2024, at 1:00 PM at the Workforce Solutions – Astrodome career office. Members - Guy Robert Jackson (Chair), Carl Bowles (Vice Chair), Sara Bouse, Cheryl Guido, Bobbie Henderson, Alan Heskamp, Doug Karr, and Board Chair Mark Guthrie.

**System Review**

This report includes a contractor-level review of performance, production, and expenditures.

**Customer Experience**

Staff is currently analyzing services and support provided to customers and employers to identify new areas to test to enhance the review of the customer experience. Staff anticipates resuming customer experience testing with an adjusted frequency in March 2024.

**Technical Program Compliance**

Technical Program Compliance reviews consist of compliance testing of contract and policy requirements and customer experience testing conducted by the Quality Assurance Team. The scope of each review is determined by the terms and conditions specified in the service provider's contract. Financial monitoring is conducted separately, which is discussed later in this report.

Staff issued the final reports for the following Adult Education providers:

- **Alliance for Multicultural Community Services** – Currently on target to meet or exceed English Language and Civics and Intensive Services performance targets, but not meeting targets for total students and total students with 12+ hours, Integrated Education and Training Program - Adult Education Family Literacy Act (IET-AEFLA); and Integrated Education and Training Program - EL Civics (IET-EL Civics). In all areas reviewed Alliance had no areas below a 98% accuracy rate.
- **BakerRipley Adult Education** – Currently exceeding the target for EI Civics and IET-EI Civics and on track to meet the targets for total students and total students with 12+ hours. BakerRipley is not meeting IET --AEFLA and Intensive Service targets. All compliance areas reviewed were at a 100% accuracy rate.
- **Chinese Community Center** – Currently on target to meet total enrollment target and has exceeded the targets for EI Civics and Intensive Services performance targets but is not on target to meet IET -EI Civics and Intensive Services targets. In the compliance areas reviewed, there were four areas with findings that were not significant based on the overall accuracy. These areas were Assessments, Intake and Eligibility, Test Administrators, and Measurable Skills Gained. Chinese Community Center resolved the finding associated with their test administrators, and all administrators are now compliant with testing requirements. The other areas noted had findings associated with data entry or the notation of an exception. There were no potential questioned costs noted. Chinese Community Center is working to resolve these findings.
- **Community Family Centers** – Currently on target to meet the total enrollment goals and is exceeding the goals for EI Civics, IET- -EI Civics, and Intensive Service. They are not on track to meet the IET- AEFLA target. In the compliance areas reviewed, we found one finding in Assessments regarding the accuracy of participant contact hours data entry in TEAMS. Additional oversight by service provider management and additional controls in this area will help ensure more accuracy. All other areas reviewed were at a 100% accuracy rate.

- **Brazosport College** – Currently on target to meet or exceed performance and production measures except for IET -EI Civics and Intensive Services. In the compliance areas reviewed, we found that Information Security training completion and notification to terminate TEAMS access no later than the day staff exited employment had several findings. In all compliance areas reviewed, there was no area below a 94% accuracy rate with a majority being at 100% accuracy.
- **Wharton County Junior College** – Currently on target to meet or exceed performance and production measures except for IET- -EI Civics and IET-AEFLA. In the compliance areas reviewed, no findings were noted for the third year of the program review. All compliance areas were at a 100% accuracy rate.

Draft reports have been issued for the **Association for the Advancement of Mexican Americans, Adult Education Center, Boys & Girls Club of Walker County, College of the Mainland, Harris County Department of Education, Houston Community College, Lone Star College, San Jacinto College, Region 6 and PY2023 Financial Aid Payment Office**. Staff will issue final reports after receiving the service providers' response.

Staff has started the review for the **Financial Aid Support Center** and are finalizing testing for the 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter of PY2024.

#### Proposed Changes to the Service Provider Rating

Staff has conducted a comprehensive review of the existing rating system for the previous program year and identified several challenges and inconsistencies, particularly in its application across different review areas. Staff also noticed that the current system does not effectively capture essential performance indicators for the programmatic activities of our service providers. Acknowledging these issues, staff have resolved to phase out the existing rating system and propose a new one.

Staff reports that the Quality Assurance team is diligently researching industry standards, with a specific focus on the principles outlined in the Government Accountability Office's Yellow Book. This involves understanding best practices in audit and monitoring reporting across various sectors, ensuring that our approach is grounded in independence, objectivity, and an evidence-based methodology.

Working closely with the Regional Economic Analysis staff, staff is tackling the intricacies of developing a multifaceted scoring system. The aim is to integrate critical components such as program compliance, performance and production targets, and financial audit results. The objective is to create a rating system that is

not only fair, accurate, and reliable, but also aligns with industry standards and meets the diverse needs of our comprehensive workforce system.

Moreover, staff intends for the new rating system to serve as a valuable tool for our Board and service providers, offering them clear and actionable insights. The system will be designed to foster continuous improvement, thereby elevating standards of service and efficiency.

#### Financial Systems

The Board contracts with procured CPA firms, Weaver and Christine Nguyen, to conduct comprehensive financial monitoring of all Board service providers. Most reviews for FY24 contracts are still in progress.

Staff received a draft report for the following provider:

- Wharton County Junior College – no findings

Staff currently has the following reviews in progress:

- San Jacinto College,
- University of Texas Health Science Center - Children's Learning Institute,
- Houston Community College System,
- Equus Career Office and Financial Aid Support Center,
- Brazosport College,
- Association for the Advancement of Mexican Americans,
- Alliance for Multicultural Community Services,
- Boys and Girls Club,
- Lone Star College,
- Harris County Department of Education,
- Region 6,
- College of the Mainland, and
- Adult Education Center.

The remaining reviews are scheduled to begin in February and March:

- Alliance of Community Assistance Ministries,
- SER Jobs,
- SERCO of Texas, and
- BakerRipley Adult Education, Career Office, and Payment Office.

#### Accountability and Improvement Plans

The Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) and the GCWB address performance and production issues with progressive intervention strategies to support improvement. This includes Performance Improvement Actions, formalized Technical Assistance



Plans (TAP), or Corrective Action Plans (CAP). The current interventions from the TWC and GCWB include the following:

**TWC Interventions:**

**Measurable Skills Gain (MSG) (FY23)** – TWC is still monitoring the Performance Improvement Actions for measurable skills gain, and we are meeting with the state monthly.

**GCWB Interventions:**

**Adult Education and Literacy, Harris County Department of Education:**

On December 5, 2023, the GCWB authorized staff to implement measures addressing the non-compliance of the Harris County Department of Education (HCDE) with respect to its Corrective Action Plan and observed performance deficiencies. These measures encompassed the potential termination of the contract, which H-GAC invoked. On December 15, 2023, HCDE appealed this decision based on the contract's provisions regarding notice requirements and the opportunity to cure. In response, H-GAC's Executive Director retracted the termination notice, thereby granting HCDE a chance to rectify the identified deficiencies.

On January 23, 2024, H-GAC's Executive Director, Board staff, and HCDE leadership met to thoroughly evaluate the performance issues, identify areas requiring improvement, and formulate a plan to ensure HCDE's full compliance with the requirements of the Corrective Action Plan. HCDE's Superintendent stated that he will do what is necessary to meet the TWC's and GCWB's expectations and asked for clarity and guidance on how HCDE can successfully meet the requirements of the Corrective Action Plan. Staff are encouraged by the meeting and are moving forward in a constructive manner that focuses on clear expectations and the need to improve. The next scheduled meeting between Board staff and HCDE representatives is set for January 30, 2024, where we will establish specific, actionable steps that HCDE must undertake for the revocation of the Corrective Action Plan.

**Equus, Financial Aid Support Center:**

The Support Center was removed from the Corrective Action Plan on December 11, 2023. Over the last nine months, the Support Center has demonstrated sufficient progress with enrolling children in care, answering calls, and creating a harmonious working environment. We ended the 2023 Fiscal Year at 102% of the Year-to-Date Average Daily Number of Children target set by the Texas Workforce Commission. We currently have over thirty-six thousand (36,000) children in care. Our wait time for childcare has decreased to eight months.



To ensure the continued success of the Support Center, Board staff will continue to meet with the Support Center monthly, review production reports weekly, and visit a minimum of twice a month.

Board staff met with TWC for Technical Assistance on December 12, 2023. TWC was informed of our intention to remove the Support Center from the Corrective Action Plan based on their progress. TWC did not express any additional concerns.

**Equus Career Office:**

On July 17, 2023, Equus Career Office was placed on a Corrective Action Plan to address deficiencies with WIOA Youth performance measures and continued programmatic and operational concerns. Additionally, GCWB staff observed issues concerning staff professional development, career office systems and processes, and effective community engagement.

In response, Equus developed desk aids and training plans for youth staff, supported staff with a series of professional development offerings, and established regular touchpoints to measure improvement and discuss/review deliverables and progress. Throughout the corrective action plan, GCWB staff met with Equus bi-weekly to support them with process improvement, discuss and measure progress, and identify areas for improvement. GCWB has confirmed Equus staff have completed training as required. Site visits were also conducted to monitor the utilization of established tools and processes.

Equus demonstrated improvement in all areas of concern, resulting in better performance and outcomes. Equus met youth deliverables for Program Year 2023 and is currently exceeding targets for the current program year. A dedicated youth team has been established, and the Equus leadership team understands expectations for delivering quality services to youth in our region. GCWB removed Equus from the corrective action plan, and we will continue to meet with the leadership team monthly to ensure the forward momentum is maintained.

**Next Meeting**

We propose scheduling the next committee meeting to be held at 1:00 p.m. on Wednesday, March 20, 2024, at Workforce Solutions - Willowbrook, 17725 Tomball Parkway, Houston, Texas 77064

Chair Jackson concluded his report and no action was taken.

## **ACTION ITEMS**

### *a. Procurement Committee.*

Committee Chair Dr. Bobbie Henderson presented the following Procurement Committee report.

On January 29, 2024, Chair Dr. Bobbie Henderson convened the Procurement Committee to consider recommendations to award to support various initiatives and contracted services.

#### **Family Engagement and Home-Based Provider Services**

The Board is dedicated to enhancing the quality of early childhood education by offering a diverse array of supportive services. These services are twofold: first, providing consumer education and support to families in need of child care solutions, and second, bolstering the capabilities of home-based child care providers. These providers are often the primary source of child care for many families. The Family Engagement and Home-Based Provider Initiative supports the following key elements:

- a) Facilitate training events and activities to support home-based providers and the children in their care;
- b) Create opportunities for home-based providers to enhance and develop sustainable business practices;
- c) Collaborate and partner with existing entities that provide various family engagement services to support families as their child's primary caregiver, and
- d) Connect families to community resources needed to strengthen the families' ability to support their children.

A Request for Proposal (RFP) was released in October 2023 to select a service provider capable of implementing this initiative. Seven (7) proposers responded to our request. The evaluation team reviewed and scored the proposals to determine the best candidate for implementing this work and ranked them as follows:

<b>Proposer</b>	<b>Rank</b>
United Way of Greater Houston	1
Emergent ED Child Care Consulting Inc.	2
Avilo Inc.	3
Upwards	4
WEB Strategic Enterprises	5
Craving for A Change Foundation	6
Mother Daughter ISH	7

Over the last 20 years, the United Way Bright Beginnings (UWBB) program has supported both center-based and home-based child care programs. Through this program, UWBB provides professional development to in-home providers to train, coach, and otherwise support home-based providers to deliver the same high-quality care provided to children and families in center-based child care facilities.

The procurement committee voted to recommend a contract with the United Way of Greater Houston for up to \$2,500,000 to develop and implement the Family Engagement and Home-Based Provider Services program.

#### Recommendation

We request Board approval to negotiate a contract with the United Way of Greater Houston for up to \$2,500,000 to develop and implement the Family Engagement and Home-Based Provider Services program.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the action as requested. The motion was approved unanimously.

#### Adult Education Professional Development

The GCWB is integral in elevating adult education in our region, serving as the grantee and fiscal agent for the region's adult education consortium. Our pivotal role encompasses effective oversight and management of allocated funds for adult education initiatives. A key component of this collaborative effort is our partnership with the Education Service Center (ESC) Region VI, which stands as the lead agency. ESC Region VI's responsibilities extend beyond providing technical assistance and support; it is also entrusted with the critical task of conducting professional development, which enhance the capabilities of our consortium partners and the overall Workforce Solutions – Gulf Coast system.

The increase in professional development efforts led by ESC Region VI is pivotal. It aims to ensure that all partners have a comprehensive understanding of their contractual responsibilities and the intentional integration of adult education and literacy services into the Workforce Solutions – Gulf Coast system, thereby promoting transparency, accountability, and efficiency in the delivery of adult education services. Through this enhanced focus on professional development, we are committed to building a stronger, more informed network of partners, thereby contributing to the collective success and impact of our adult education programs.

To improve outcomes and foster collaboration among system operators, program divisions, and Board staff, Board staff proposes targeted training opportunities aimed at enhancing the understanding and coordinated delivery of adult education services in the Workforce Solutions – Gulf Coast system.

The planned training sessions will include critical areas such as the fundamentals of Adult Education and Literacy (AEL), in-depth analysis of the populations served,

effective outreach strategies, achieving TWC's performance and production measures, and detailed approaches to testing and assessment. Additionally, we will explore the benefits for employers in participating in AEL programs and how to better design programs to meet employers' needs. This investment in the professional development of organizational leaders is crucial.

The Procurement Committee voted to authorize staff to increase the total amount of the Education Service Center (ESC) Region VI by up to \$100,000, not to exceed \$1,930,000.

#### Recommendation

Authorize staff to amend the contract with Education Service Center (ESC) Region VI by \$100,000, not to exceed \$1,930,000, for adult education professional development.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the action as requested. The motion was approved unanimously.

#### Workforce Attorney

The GCWB plays a pivotal role in orchestrating and guiding many workforce development initiatives and early education activities across a sprawling region encompassing 13 counties. This broad operational scope necessitates a complex network of contractual agreements with various partners, forming the backbone of a collaborative system that delivers a wide array of services. The GCWB also operates in a complex environment, intricately bound by an array of federal and state regulations. These regulations govern the diverse range of services we provide, including workforce development initiatives and early education activities.

To navigate this multifaceted legal landscape in workforce effectively, the Board requires specialized legal expertise, and staff proposed and the Committee recommends the retention of a qualified and experienced workforce attorney. The presence of a dedicated legal expert specializing in workforce law will provide invaluable insight and guidance, enhance our ability to manage legal risks, adhere to regulatory requirements, make informed decisions on contractual matters, and support improvements.

A dedicated workforce attorney, well-versed in the specificities of TWC regulations, state and federal laws, and funding intricacies, is essential. This expertise is not just a requirement for legal compliance but is vital for strategic decision-making and effective contract management. With numerous partnerships and collaborative agreements in place, each with its unique legal considerations, the role of a specialized attorney becomes indispensable.

The attorney's role would extend beyond mere legal oversight. It would involve proactive guidance in shaping policies, supporting the negotiation and

management of contracts, and ensuring that all Board activities are aligned with legal standards. This legal support is crucial to fortify our commitment to serving the community's diverse needs while safeguarding the Board's interests and maintaining the integrity of our programs.

Board staff, in coordination with H-GAC, released an RFP to find a suitable candidate. We received two proposals in response to our solicitation which were reviewed and scored by several staff.

Proposer	Rank
DC Legal PLLC	1
Husch Blackwell LLP	2

**DC Legal PLLC** scored the highest of the two proposals. Vera Jeanette Dela Cruz, the principal of DC Legal PLLC is a licensed attorney with over 35 years of experience in workforce, labor and employment law including unemployment insurance, payday law, civil rights, and fair housing. Her accomplishments include serving as the former Chief of Staff to the former TWC Commissioner of Labor, advising on a range of critical areas including legislation, budgeting, information technology, unemployment insurance, civil rights, and workforce policy, directly influencing the welfare of over 14 million workers in Texas.

The Committee voted to recommend that the Board approve staff to negotiate a contract with DC Legal PLLC for up to \$300,000 for legal services, but due to an oversight, it did not provide the time frame for services, which was included in the RFP solicitation. Therefore, the Committee further asked the Board to consider the term of this contract for a period of one year with the option to extend the contract for up to three (3) additional one-year terms.

#### Recommendation

Request Board approval to negotiate a contract with DC Legal PLLC for up to \$300,000 to provide legal services for one year with the option to extend the contract for up to three (3) additional one-year terms.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the action as requested. The motion was approved unanimously.

Chair Henderson concluded her report and no action was taken.

#### *b. Budget Committee.*

Committee Chair Willie Alexander presented the following Budget Committee report.

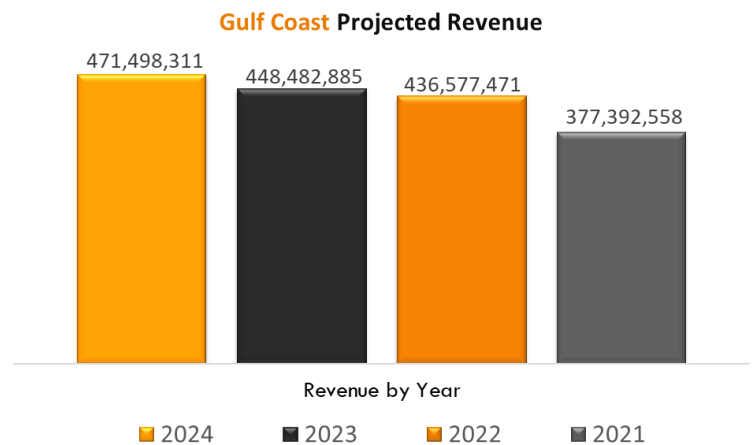
#### Background

The Budget Committee met on Monday, January 29, 2024, with Committee Chair Willie Alexander, Board Chair Mark Guthrie, Alan Heskamp, Guy Robert Jackson, Bobbie Henderson, and Sara Bouse attending.

Annually, the Board approves a budget outlining how it intends to utilize its revenue to realize the objectives outlined in the Board's strategic plan: Competitive Employers, An Educated Workforce, More and Better Jobs, and Higher Incomes. This budget details the allocation of resources to operate Workforce Solutions and generates positive outcomes in the region.

#### Revenue Overview

The proposed 2024 budget, totaling over \$471 million, represents a 5.1% increase from 2023. Funding is categorized as either general revenue, consisting mainly of formula-allocated dollars with expected continuity, or special revenue, encompassing competitive or one-time awards with limited assurances of continuation.



#### General Revenue Highlights:

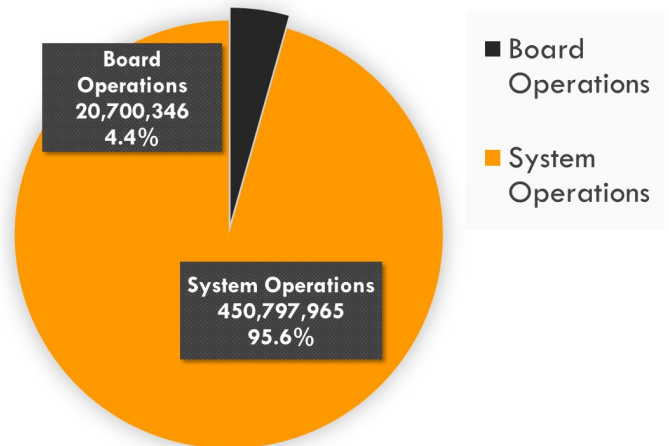
Significant increases in Child Care Services which increased from \$331.5 Million to over \$356.7 Million, Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) increased from over \$48.3 Million to over \$57.9 Million and Vocational Rehabilitation funding, increased from \$6.9 Million to over \$8.1 Million, have been observed, albeit partially offset by a notable percentage decrease in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance funding, \$5.4 Million to \$3.2 Million.

#### Special Revenue Highlights:

The conclusion of several special revenue sources in 2023 results in a 30% decrease in this category. Adult Education currently stands as the largest special revenue source, with anticipated funding beyond June 2024 contingent upon TWC's acceptance of our grant application.

### Proposed Distribution

The proposed 2024 Board budget designates 4.4% of total revenue for operations at H-GAC, while the remaining 95.6% is allocated to contracted service delivery. Board operations are suggested at \$20,700,346 for 2024, a 21.9% increase from 2023, with system operations increasing to \$450,797,965, reflecting a 4.5% rise from the previous year.



### System Operations Highlights:

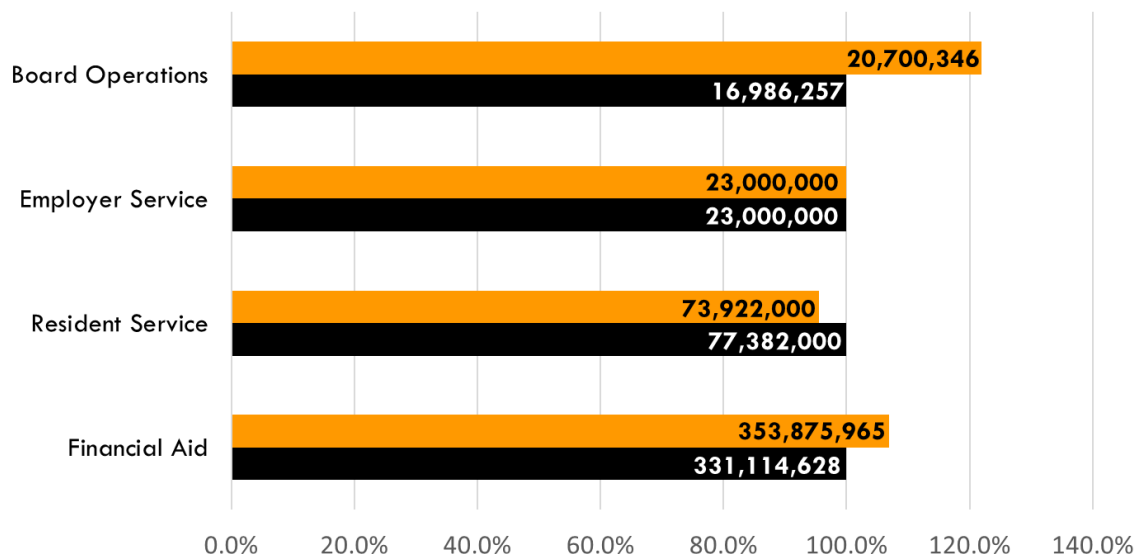
Financial aid is proposed to increase to just under \$354 million, addressing the substantial demand for early education, scholarships, work-based learning, and work support.

The overall budget for Employer Service remains the same, but we propose targeting a larger percentage of resources towards quality improvement for home-based early education providers.

A decrease is proposed under Resident Service impacting Career Services. This is primarily attributed to our Supplemental Nutrition Assistance funding reduction. We also anticipate further reductions with the proposed reauthorization requirements of WIOA which will necessitate a larger designation of resources towards financial aid.

### Gulf Coast Workforce 2024 Use Summary

■ 2024 ■ 2023



**Board Operations Highlights:**

The proposed budget will support 87 Workforce staff, reflecting expansions in the Early Childhood, Adult Education, and Employer Engagement teams, along with the creation of a new Community Engagement unit.

Shared costs provided by H-GAC show increases under indirect and internal & shared services line items, supporting shared agency operations.

Planned information technology improvements include network upgrades, website enhancements, assistive technology refreshes, and development of a customer management system.

**Results and Objectives**

In addition to meeting state and federal performance standards, the 2024 budget aims to achieve various outcomes, including:

- Career Services: Assisting over 48,300 individuals in entering employment.
- Employer Engagement: Serving over 32,270 employers.
- Quality Early Education: Providing child care scholarships for about 55,000 children.
- Adult Education and Literacy: Providing adult education services to over 18,500 students.
- Youth Services: Providing workforce services to over 20,000 young people.

2023 results are detailed below for comparison:

- Career Services: Assisted over 48,300 individuals in entering employment.
- Employer Engagement: Served over 31,000 employers.
- Quality Early Education: Provided child care scholarships for about 50,000 children.
- Adult Education and Literacy: Provided adult education services to over 17,900 students.
- Youth Services: Provided workforce services to over 19,600 young people.

**Requested Action**

Approve the proposed 2024 Board budget in the amount of \$471,498,311.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the action as requested. The motion was approved unanimously.

*c. Nominations Committee.*

Chair Guthrie turned the meeting over to Committee Chair Guy Robert Jackson to present the following Nominations Committee report.



## Background

The Board membership elects officers including the Board Chair and three Vice Chairs to serve two-year terms pursuant to its By-Laws.

## Current Situation

The Board's Nominating Committee met on January 29, 2024, and attendance included Committee Chair Guy Robert Jackson and Alan Heskamp. The members discussed individuals nominated and made recommendations for the Board's consideration as follows:

Mark Guthrie – Board Chair\*

Winstead PC

Category: Business

County: City of Houston

Willie Alexander – Vice Chair\*

W J Alexander Associates P.C.

Category: Business

County: City of Houston

Bobbie Henderson – Vice Chair\*

Texas Southern University

Category: Education

County: City of Houston

Sara Bouse – Vice Chair\*

Alvin Community College

Category: Education

County: Brazoria

\* Current Officer

## Action

Chair Jackson will present the Committee's recommendations to the Board for action.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the action as requested. The motion was approved unanimously. Mark Guthrie, Sara Bouse, Willie Alexander, Bobbie Henderson and Lizandra Vazquez abstained.

Following this vote, Mr. Jackson turned the meeting back over to Board Chair Mark Guthrie.

## **INFORMATION**

### *a. Performance and Production.*

Philip Garcia presented Performance and Production measures October 2023 through December 2023. Mr. Garcia stated that we have a firm start and are working with providers to ensure that we stay on track to achieve those targets and measures. Next, Mr. Garcia presented a view of the current measures from the state for the first quarter from October 2023 through December 2023. We are currently meeting twenty of the twenty-eight state measures. Sixteen of those are over 100%. The two measures we are currently focused on are Measurable Skills Gains and Credential Rate. We are working to identify areas of focus and ensure that we are continuously working with providers as we increase these measures.

Mr. Garcia concluded his report and no action was taken.

### *b. Expenditures.*

AJ Dean, Manager of Finance, reviewed the Financial Status Report representing expenses for the twelve months ending in December 2023. He reported that we are 88% expended overall. We are close to target for Board Admin, Service to Employers and Service to People. The System IT category jumped due to additional invoices but still has a gap due to rollout of our child care portal due to the implementation of the state wide system. Overall, our revenue for the twelve month period is just under \$394 million. We spent 69% of our Financial Aid towards early education and Financial Aid towards training and support was at 6%.

Mr. Dean concluded his report and no action was taken.

## **LOOK AT THE ECONOMY**

Board staff Parker Harvey presented an overview of job growth for the period ending in December 2023 including a breakdown by sector. He also provided a demonstration of the Convener Grant Career Exploration Tool which was very well received by the Board.

## **OTHER BUSINESS**

Ms. Stipeche advised the Board that the Communications Update usually provided was not included in the meeting because Michelle Castrow has moved on to become a consultant. Board staff are exploring new opportunities envision how we will share success stories and will work with our Communications Committee to continue to provide those services.

There was no other business to be brought before the Board.

**ADJOURN**

Chair Guthrie adjourned the meeting at approximately 11:50 a.m.

# GULF COAST WORKFORCE BOARD

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Term: January 1, 2023 thru December 31, 2024

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Term: January 1, 2023 thru December 31, 2024

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Term: January 1, 2023 thru December 31, 2024

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Term: January 1, 2023 thru December 31, 2024

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Term: January 1, 2023 thru December 31, 2024

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Term: January 1, 2023 thru December 31, 2024

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Term: January 1, 2024 thru December 31, 2025

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Term: January 1, 2024 thru December 31, 2025



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Term: January 1, 2023 thru December 31, 2024

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Term: January 1, 2023 thru December 31, 2024

**WORKFORCE BOARD KEY STAFF:**

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Romana Paniagua, Director's Administrative Assistant

Kristi Rangel, Assistant Director of Workforce

AJ Dean, Senior Manager, Fiscal Administration and Contract Management

Russell Tomlin, Senior Manager, Career Services

Jenny Johnson, Quality Assurance Manager

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# **GULF COAST WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD COMMITTEES**

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**Report Card**

Appointed by Board Chair as needed

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- Cheryl Guido
- Mark Guthrie
- Bobbie Henderson
- Doug Karr
- Michael Love
- Adrian Ozuna
- Richard Shaw
- Carolyn Watson

## GULF COAST WORKFORCE BOARD ATTENDANCE

Board Member	10/06/22	12/06/22	02/07/23	04/04/23	06/06/23	08/08/23	10/03/23	12/05/23	02/06/24	04/02/24	06/04/24	08/06/24	10/01/24	12/03/24
Abedi, Susan														
Adroque, Sofia								✓	✓					
Alexander, Willie	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓					
Arcos, Marie						✓	✓	✓						
Bartlett, Anne					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					
Beard, Peter	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					
Below, Shonda						✓	✓	✓	✓					
Bouse, Sara	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					
Bowles, Carl	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓					
Cavazos, Mary Helen	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓					
Cockrell, Dorian						✓			✓					
Gay, Anthony	✓		✓	✓										
Gonzalez, Melissa	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓					
Guido, Cheryl	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					
Guthrie, Mark	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					
Henderson, Bobbie Allen	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					
Heskamp, Alan		✓		✓	✓			✓	✓					
Jackson, Guy Robert	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					
Jones, Lavone						✓								
Karr, Doug	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓					
Kerr, Brett						✓								
LaBroski, Jeff	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓					
Larmond, Shareen	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓					
Love, Michael	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓						
Lowe, Jonathan	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓						
Mahagaokar, Rajen	✓			✓										
Melton, Edward	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓						
Muyan, Ekim														
Oser, Margaret	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓						
Ozuna, Adrian	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓					
Puente, Paul	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					
Riley, Monica	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					
Rodriguez, Melanie								✓	✓					
Rupani, Nasruddin						✓		✓						
Sarkar, Mou	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					
Scheiner, Danielle	✓		✓				✓	✓	✓					
Schmidt, Keri	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓					
Segovia, Valerie	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓					
Shaw, Richard	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					
Staley, Gil				✓		✓		✓						
Streeter, Nicole														
Taylor, Sandra								✓	✓					
Vazquez, Lizandra	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓					
Watson, Carolyn			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					
Webster, Michael			✓	✓	✓			✓	✓					
Yu, Bin							✓	✓	✓					



# Audit and Monitoring Committee

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## Update for March 2024

The Audit and Monitoring Committee met on March 20, 2024, at 1:00 p.m. at the Workforce Solutions – Willowbrook career office. In attendance were members - Guy Robert Jackson (Chair), Carl Bowles (Vice Chair), Cheryl Guido, Bobbie Henderson, Helen Cavazos, and Board Chair Mark Guthrie.

### System Review

This report includes a contractor-level review of performance, production, and expenditures.

### Customer Experience

#### Revamping Our Customer Satisfaction Reporting System:

In our quest to elevate customer satisfaction, we have conducted a comprehensive study of various metrics and methodologies for capturing customer feedback. Our strategy revolves around four pivotal elements:

- **Net Promoter Score (NPS):** Utilizes a scale-based email survey or interviews, asking customers to rate their likelihood of recommending our services.
- **Customer Satisfaction Score (CSAT):** Like NPS, CSAT measures immediate satisfaction through brief questions. It is akin to the approach of the ACSI Federal Government Report 2022, which derived insights from 2,126 randomly selected interviews, focusing on users' recent interactions with federal services.
- **Customer Effort Score (CES):** This assesses the ease with which customers can interact with our services, again leveraging scale-based queries.
- **Customer Journey Mapping:** Unlike the other metrics, this involves an in-depth process of user research, identifying pain points, and redesigning experiences to enhance customer satisfaction. A prime example is the Federal Acquisition Service's study, which included 150 interviews over two months to improve the General Services Administration (GSA) contracting officers' experiences.

## Proposed Initiatives:

To refine our understanding and tracking of customer satisfaction, we suggest implementing two distinct CSAT-based surveys:

- **In-Person and Remote Surveys:** Direct engagement with customers either face-to-face, over the phone, or via virtual means when they visit our offices.
- **Email Surveys:** Broad distribution to all recipients of services through Workforce Solutions, ensuring comprehensive feedback collection.

We would like to meet with senior managers and managers from the different divisions to further discuss the “in-person and remote surveys” and “email surveys” before launching the new methodology to gather input to ensure a more successful implementation. We will also collaboratively discuss the piloting of Customer Journey Testing within Workforce Solutions – Gulf Coast. This initiative aims to closely examine and enhance the experience of customers seeking our services, providing valuable insights into areas for improvement.

By adopting these measures, we anticipate not only a richer understanding of our customer satisfaction levels but also a significant enhancement in our service delivery, fostering a more loyal and satisfied customer base.

## Technical Program Compliance

Technical Program Compliance reviews consist of compliance testing of contract and policy requirements and customer experience testing conducted by the Quality Assurance Team. The scope of each review is determined by the terms and conditions specified in the service provider’s contract. Financial monitoring is conducted separately, which is discussed later in this report.

We issued the final reports for the Adult Education providers and the Financial Aid Payment Office. Based on performance data at the time of issuance and review findings, we concluded the following:

- **Association for the Advancement of Mexican Americans (AAMA)** – AAMA is exceeding the target for English Language and Civics (EL Civics) and Integrated Education and Training (IET) Program – EL Civics and is on track to meet the targets for total students, total students with 12+ hours and IET-Adult Education Family Literacy Act (AEFLA). AAMA is not meeting Intensive Service targets. In the compliance areas reviewed, we found two findings in Assessments regarding the accuracy of participant pre and post-

test data entry in TEAMS and additional credit hours on the attendance sheet with a note to explain the exception. Additional oversight by service provider management and additional controls will help ensure more accuracy. All other areas reviewed were not below a 98% accuracy rate.

- **Adult Education Center (AEC)** – AEC is exceeding the targets for EI Civics, IET Program (AEFLA), IET Program (EI Civics), and Intensive Service, but not meeting the targets for total students and total students with 12+ hours. In the compliance areas reviewed, there were four areas with findings. These areas were Assessments, New Hire Orientation, Staff Professional Development, and Test Administrators. AEC has started resolving the findings associated with their test administrators. The other areas noted had findings related to data entry or maintaining supporting documentation. There were no potential questioned costs noted. AEC is working to resolve these findings.
- **Boys and Girls Club of Walker County** – Boys and Girls Club of Walker County is exceeding the EI Civics, IET Program (AEFLA), and Intensive Service targets. They are on track to meet the targets for total students and total students with 12+ hours. Boys and Girls Club is not on track to meet the IET (EI Civics) target. In the compliance areas reviewed, we found a finding in Assessments regarding the data entry of participant contact hours in TEAMS. Additional oversight by service provider management and additional controls will help ensure more accuracy. There were no potential questioned costs noted. All other areas reviewed were not below a 97% accuracy rate.
- **College of the Mainland** – College of the Mainland is exceeding the target for EI Civics but is not meeting or on track to meet the targets for total students, total students with 12+ hours, IET (EI Civics), IET (AEFLA) and Intensive Service. In the compliance areas reviewed, there were four areas with findings. These areas were Assessments, New Hire Orientation, Information Security, and Termination Emails. The College of the Mainland has implemented measures to resolve all findings in these areas. Additional oversight by service provider management and additional controls in the areas will help ensure more accuracy and compliance with policy. There were no potential questioned costs noted. All other areas reviewed were not below a 100% accuracy rate.
- **Harris County Department of Education (HCDE)** – HCDE is exceeding the target for EI Civics and is on track to meet the targets for total students, total students with 12+ hours, IET (AEFLA) and Intensive Service. HCDE is not on track to meet the IET (EI Civics) target. In the compliance areas



reviewed, there were seven areas with findings. These areas were Assessments, Intake and Eligibility, Test Administrators, Staff Professional Development, New Hire Orientation, Information Security, and Termination Emails. HCDE has implemented new procedures to help resolve the findings in the above areas. Managers of each area are tasked with providing oversight to ensure all training is completed in a timely manner and appropriate documentation is maintained. Additional oversight by service provider management and additional controls will help ensure more accuracy. There were no potential questioned costs noted. All other areas reviewed were not below 99% accuracy rate.

- **Houston Community College (HCC)** – HCC is the target for EI Civics and Intensive Service. They are on track to meet the targets for IET (AEFLA) and IET (EI Civics) but are not on track to meet targets for total students and total students with 12+ hours. HCC has not met the total student targets for the past five program years. In the compliance areas reviewed, there were five areas with findings. These areas were Intake and Eligibility, Test Administrators, New Hire Orientation, Information Security, and Termination Emails. HCC has corrected the documentation to match the TEAMS data entry for Intake and Eligibility. They have also implemented new processes to help resolve the findings in the remaining areas. A potential cost was noted for a missing parent signature for an 18-year-old student. All other areas reviewed were not below a 93% accuracy rate.
- **Lone Star College** – Lone Star is exceeding the target for EI Civics and is on track to meet the targets for total students, total students with 12+ hours, and IET (EI Civics). They are not on track to meet the IET (AEFLA) and Intensive Service targets. In the compliance areas reviewed, we noted findings in two areas. These areas were Assessments and Information Security training. Additional oversight by service provider management and additional controls will help ensure more accuracy. Lone Star College is working to resolve all findings. There were no potential questioned costs noted. All other areas reviewed were not below a 100% accuracy rate.
- **San Jacinto College** – San Jacinto College is exceeding the EI Civics and IET Program (AEFLA) target and is on track to meet the targets for total students and total students with 12+ hours. San Jacinto College is not on track to meet the IET (EI Civics) and Intensive Service targets. In the compliance areas reviewed, we found four areas with findings. These areas were Assessments, Intake and Eligibility, Information Security training, and New Hire Orientation. Data entry errors in TEAMS were the cause for the findings noted in Assessments and Intake and Eligibility. Additional oversight by service provider management and additional controls will help

ensure more accuracy. There were no potential questioned costs noted. All other areas reviewed were not below a 100% accuracy rate.

- **Region 6** – The consortium is exceeding the target for EI Civics and IET (EI Civics) and is on track to meet the targets for total students, total students with 12+ hours, IET (AEFLA), and Intensive Service. In the compliance areas reviewed, termination email submission was the only area with a finding. Region 6 has worked with their TEAMS specialist to resolve the issue. Additional oversight by service provider management and additional controls will help ensure more accuracy. There were no potential questioned costs noted. All other areas reviewed were not below a 94% accuracy rate.
- **Financial Aid Payment Office (FAPO)** - During the compliance review, we found two areas with minor findings noted in Vendor Recoupment and New Hire Orientation. FAPO has implemented a process to ensure new hire orientation is completed timely and is currently working to resolve the limited findings in vendor recoupment. There were no potential questioned costs noted. All other areas reviewed were not below a 98% accuracy rate.

Exit meetings are scheduled for **the Alliance of Community Assistance Ministries** and **SER Jobs for Progress**. After meeting with the service providers and receiving their responses to the identified findings, we will issue draft reports. We have started the reviews for **SERCO** and the career office service providers, **BakerRipley, Equus, and Interfaith**. Second-quarter testing has also begun for the **Financial Aid Support Center**.

We plan to schedule the following two entrances in May and June:

- University of Texas Health Science Center - Children's Learning Institute
- Financial Aid Payment Office (PY24).

## Proposed Changes to the Service Provider Rating

The Gulf Coast Workforce Board requires comprehensive evaluative data to inform its decision-making processes regarding the service providers operating on its behalf. This need stems from a realization in January 2024 that our existing system falls short of capturing the critical performance metrics necessary for assessing our service providers effectively. To address this gap, we advocate for establishing a new, more holistic framework that seamlessly integrates reporting

on program compliance, performance metrics, production targets, and financial audit findings.

In our pursuit of a robust solution, we explored various auditing and monitoring practices prevalent in both the public sector and private industry. Our research included a detailed examination of the 2024 Government Auditing Standards and the Code of Federal Regulations. We discovered that Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are instrumental in tracking progress toward achieving strategic goals in the private sector. Furthermore, we identified a set of rating systems, quantifiable and linked to risk assessment methodologies that precede monitoring reviews and facilitate the evaluation of quality risks.

The rating classifications we propose, drawn from best practices in audit resolution, are as follows:

**Pass:** This rating indicates a service provider's operations and reporting are in full compliance with all contractual and financial standards.

**Satisfactory:** Awarded when a provider meets all contractual and compliance standards with commendable performance and financial probity. Any issues identified are promptly addressed.

**Pass with Deficiencies:** Granted when a provider meets standards but with specific, identified deficiencies that need attention.

**Needs Improvement:** Designated for providers with minor compliance issues or areas where performance could be enhanced. This includes financial reporting inaccuracies or documentation errors not fully resolved.

**Fail:** This severe rating is reserved for significant deficiencies that compromise the internal controls or organizational structure, undermining reasonable assurance of adherence to contractual and financial standards.

**Non-Satisfactory:** Represents serious failings in performance or compliance, such as major internal control weaknesses, financial mismanagement, chronic non-compliance, or failure to meet program objectives.

We wish to meet with the senior managers and managers of our divisions to discuss this proposed system to gather input and suggestions for improvement before a full launch. Further, to enhance oversight and improve outcomes, we propose working with our team to develop Key Performance Indicators encompassing a broad spectrum of metrics, including program and financial

monitoring results, customer experiences, and overall performance as part of the service provider report.

Our efforts aim to equip the Gulf Coast Workforce Board with the insights needed to foster excellence and accountability among its service providers.

## Financial Systems

The Board contracts with procured CPA firms Weaver and Christine Nguyen to conduct comprehensive financial monitoring of all Workforce Board service providers. Most reviews for FY24 contracts are still in progress.

We received draft reports for the following providers since our last meeting:

- San Jacinto College District – no findings,
- Houston Community College System – no findings, and
- Brazosport College – multiple findings, potential questioned costs of \$16,789.

We currently have the following reviews in progress:

- Equus Career Office and Financial Aid Support Center,
- University of Texas Health Science Center - Children's Learning Institute,
- Lone Star College,
- Association for the Advancement of Mexican Americans,
- Adult Education Center
- Alliance for Multicultural Community Services,
- Boys and Girls Club,
- Harris County Department of Education,
- Region 6,
- College of the Mainland
- Alliance of Community Assistance Ministries
- SER Jobs
- SERCO of Texas, and
- BakerRipley Adult Education, Career Office, and Payment Office.

The remaining reviews are scheduled to begin later in March and April:

- Interfaith of the Woodlands, and
- Community Family Centers.

## Accountability and Improvement Plans

The Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) and the Gulf Coast Workforce Board (GCWB) address performance and production issues with progressive intervention strategies to support improvement. This includes Performance Improvement Actions, formalized Technical Assistance Plans (TAP), or Corrective Action Plans (CAP). The current interventions from the TWC and GCWB include the following:

### **TWC Interventions:**

**Measurable Skills Gain (MSG) (FY23)** – The Texas Workforce Commission is still monitoring the Performance Improvement Actions for measurable skills gain, and we are meeting with the state monthly.

**Adult Median Earnings Q2 Post-Exit (FY23)** – For FY23, our WIOA Adult program fell short of the Median Earnings 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter After Exit target, achieving an end-of-year performance of \$6,598.13, which translates to 86.82% of the target. This shortfall occurred due to the adjustment of targets after the fiscal year ended, with targets being revised from \$6,500 to \$7,600. Consequently, the Texas Workforce Commission has placed us on a Technical Assistance Plan (TAP) until our performance improves. To address this, we are implementing targeted enrollment efforts and policy adjustments to enhance our participants' median earnings. These measures will support their progress toward securing stable and higher-paying employment opportunities.

### **GCWB Interventions:**

#### **Adult Education and Literacy, Harris County Department of Education:**

We continue to work with the Harris County Department of Education (HCDE) on the deliverables outlined in their CAP removal goals letter developed with the HCDE AEL leadership team on the 2nd of February. Within the planning meeting, an agreed-formulated plan with actionable steps was created to ensure HCDE's compliance with the requirements for removing the Corrective Action Plan. On March 7<sup>th</sup>, a progress meeting was held with the HCDE leadership team; HCDE has improved their efforts to meet the expectations of the agreed deliverables, communication has increased, aiding in improved collaboration efforts with board staff, data entry is improving, and feedback is openly welcomed with actionable adjustments taking place.

## Next Meeting

We propose scheduling the next committee meeting for 1:00 p.m. on Wednesday, May 22, 2024, at H-GAC, 3555 Timmons Lane, Houston, Texas 77027.

## Communications Committee

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### Update for March 2024

The Communications Committee met on March 21, 2024, at 3:00 p.m. at the Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC) offices located at 3555 Timmons Lane in Houston, Texas. In attendance were committee members – Doug Karr (Committee Chair), Board Chair Mark Guthrie, Willie Alexander, Guy Robert Jackson, and Dr. Michael Webster.

### Executive Summary

Chair Doug Karr started the meeting focusing on critical updates and strategic initiatives concerning communications and outreach. The session highlighted the Committee's dedication to enhancing engagement with employers and the community, honing outreach methodologies, advancing the 5-Year Strategic Plan when complete, strengthening relationships with media partners, and boosting the Board staff's ability to undertake specialized outreach efforts for both employers and residents. A notable feature of the meeting was a review of the timeline for forthcoming Requests for Proposals (RFPs).

### Employer and Community Engagement

Juliet Stipeche shared ongoing and future initiatives designed to strengthen connections with employers and community, including the posting of a staff position to support the Board's communication and outreach efforts. She shared that the Strategic Planning Committee's surveys of board staff, service providers, and customers demonstrates a significant need for a comprehensive communication strategy to effectively promote the services that the Gulf Coast Workforce Board offers in the thirteen-county region. These efforts are foundational to creating a robust workforce environment conducive to meeting the needs of job seekers and businesses alike.

### Outreach Strategies Update

Mustafa Tameez, Leigh Ann Arnold, and Tim Lankford presented an update on outreach strategies, highlighting the shift towards more innovative and engaging methods of community interaction. This pivot is expected to significantly enhance the Board's visibility and impact within the region.

## 5-Year Strategic Plan

A crucial component of the meeting was discussing the Strategic Plan for 2024-2029, developed in partnership with Outreach Strategists. The plan's development phases include:

- Initial Planning: Engagement with economic experts and affirmation of the Board's core principles.
- Stakeholder Engagement: A broad initiative to gather insights across and beyond the region, including feedback from analogous boards in Maryland and Southern Nevada.
- Goal Setting and Strategy Development: Defining clear objectives and crafting a roadmap for implementation.

We shared a thoughtfully assembled video compilation, featuring insights directly from educational institutions, businesses, and chambers of commerce. This video served as a powerful reminder of an essential area for improvement: enhancing community awareness about the role and offerings of our organization. This valuable feedback is a cornerstone of our ongoing strategic planning initiative, which is deeply informed by substantial contributions from the community.

The development of our new strategic plan is an intentional effort to sharpen and effectively communicate the vision, mission, and purpose of the Gulf Coast Workforce Board. It seeks to not only elevate the clarity and impact of our message to the community but also to enhance our service delivery mechanisms. In our latest committee meeting, we delved into the transformative potential of customer journey mapping and user experience improvements to elevate our customer service. Drawing inspiration from the Greater Houston Partnership's successful application of journey mapping in its UpSkills Houston initiative, we see a promising avenue for enhancing how we serve our community. By adopting this methodology, we aim to reimagine our career offices and the overall delivery of services, focusing on creating more intuitive, responsive, and user-centered interactions. This approach not only promises to refine our service delivery model but also aligns with our ongoing commitment to meet our customers' needs with greater effectiveness and empathy.

The Committee also discussed deepening our engagement with the community and establishing durable, trust-based relationships with those we serve. The Committee emphasized the importance of intensifying our connection with the community and forging strong, trust-based relationships with our clients. Our aim is to refine our system, so that it not only addresses the immediate needs of those we serve but also anticipates future demands, ensuring our services remain relevant and impactful.

## Media Partnerships

The committee reviewed the achievements of its media partnerships, notably with ABC13 and Fox 26. These collaborations have been instrumental in amplifying the Board's outreach, particularly through the successful relaunch of virtual job fairs and supporting the Houston Gulf Coast Building and Construction Trades Apprenticeship Readiness Program. Such initiatives have markedly increased engagement and participation, displaying the tangible benefits of strategic media engagement. We were also pleased to share KTRK Channel 13's interest in launching a new 30-minute on-air program highlighting workforce stories and the Gulf Coast Workforce Board's services.

## Introduction to H-GAC Communications

Miguel Segura, the new Director of Communications for H-GAC, introduced himself and shared an update regarding his support of the Gulf Coast Workforce Board by offering project management services for Savage Brands' contractual deliverables, including print, virtual materials, and branding items, and support for the development and redesign of the Gulf Coast Workforce Board's website, which we hope to relaunch by the first quarter of 2025.

## Existing Contracts and FY25 Procurements

Ms. Stipeche outlined a timeline for the Board's request for proposals related to communication including:

- Website: Issuance in April 2024, with a recommendation to the GCWB by June 2024, leading to contract execution in July 2024. The launch is anticipated in the first quarter of 2025.
- Communication and Outreach Services: A single consolidated RFP will be issued between April and May 2024, with contract execution targeted for September 2024 following recommendations and approvals in August 2024.

## Conclusion

The meeting adjourned with a continued commitment to the strategic initiatives that drive workforce development and economic growth across the Gulf Coast region and a special focus on an effective communication and outreach strategy that aligns with the new strategic plan.



# Employer Engagement Committee

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## Update for March 2024

On Thursday, March 12, 2024, at 2:00 pm, Employer Engagement Committee met at H-GAC located at 3555 Timmons Ln, Houston, Texas. This gathering was marked by the presence of both in-person and virtual attendees, including Employer Engagement Committee Chair Sara Bouse, Board Chair Mark Guthrie, Vice Chair Dr. Bobbie Henderson, and committee members Willie Alexander, Cheryl Guido, Alan Heskamp, Guy Robert Jackson, Mou Sarkar, Richard Shaw and Gil Staley. This assembly's purpose was to discuss various aspects of workforce development, employment trends within the region, and highlight collective expertise of the Employer Engagement team, including the new principal industry liaisons.

### Current Situation

The meeting was called to order by Committee Chair Sara Bouse at 2:15 pm, commencing with a discussion by Philip Garcia on employer workforce assistance, highlighting a current market share of 56.6%, which puts us on pace to meet our yearly target. It was reported that targets for talent development among employees and individuals were on track, with a slight lag observed in Talent Development individuals, expected to catch up during the summer months.

Ron Borski, Senior Economist, introduced county-covered employment reports, an often-overlooked resource providing detailed employment data for the region's 13 counties. These reports, sourced from employer tax data, offer valuable insights into unemployment rates, current quarter information, and notable changes. The presentation highlighted the format and content of these reports, emphasizing their utility for understanding local employment dynamics.

Crosby Brito, Employer Engagement Manager, provided updates on securing apprenticeship expansion grants totaling \$4.4 million. Successes included placing over 1800 apprentices across various occupations with previously reluctant employers. Examples highlighted innovative programs like teacher apprenticeships, wastewater operators, and a pharmacy technician apprenticeship developed in response to COVID-19.

Lacy Wolf, Principal Industry Liaison of Construction, underscored the collective expertise within the team, particularly in the construction industry, and how the industry is shifting its focus into recruiting a younger talent pool, and the need for apprenticeship programs and Workforce Solutions sponsored initiatives can support. Melissa Steinmetz, Principal Industry Liaison of Healthcare & Life

Sciences, discussed the broader healthcare and life sciences landscape beyond the Texas Medical Center, stressing the importance of aligning workforce development with emerging industry needs, including taking a closer look at the High Skill High Growth industries, and the impact it makes on the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL).

Amber Jefferson, Principal Industry Liaison of Information Technology, addressed challenges in Houston's information technology landscape and proposed a podcast initiative to bridge academia-industry gaps and deliver relevant content to employers. Luis Moreno, Principal Industry Liaison of Education, highlighted efforts to connect education with high-growth careers, including hosting a regional convener conference with various industry representatives.

Alexandra Mallett, Project Manager of Employer Engagement, discussed the High-Demand Job Training (HDJT) initiative and the Texas Industry Partnership (TIP) program, aimed at addressing workforce needs in key sectors.

Juliet Stipeche suggested the creation of an Employer Advisory Council to support the Employer Engagement Committee's efforts. She shared the New York Jobs CEO Council as an example. The Jobs Council's role includes: 1) uniting the ecosystem, 2) equipping residents with skills and experience, and 3) facilitating tangible employment outcomes. (*See [27 CEOs Launch New York Jobs CEO Council - New York Jobs CEO Council \(nyjobsceocouncil.org.\)](https://nyjobsceocouncil.org/)*)

The meeting adjourned at 3:31pm with a reminder of the importance of active involvement in committee work for board members, emphasizing the significance of ongoing engagement in addressing the region's workforce development needs, and supporting the development of an Employer Advisory Council.

## Education Committee

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### Update for March 2024

On Tuesday, March 12, 2024, at 1:00 pm, Education Committee met at the Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC) located at 3555 Timmons Ln #100, Houston, Texas. This gathering was marked by the presence of both in-person and virtual attendees, including Education Committee Chair Vice Chair Dr. Bobbie Henderson, Board Chair Mark Guthrie, and committee members Willie Alexander, Shonda Below, Sara Bouse, Cheryl Guido, Alan Heskamp, Margaret Oser, Paul Puente, Richard Shaw, and Sandra Taylor.

### Financial Aid Support Center

#### YTD Update

- We currently have over 38,000 children in care, which is almost the capacity of Minute Maid Park which has 40,950 seats;
- Texas Workforce Commission's Year to Date target is 33,620; and
- As of February 2024, we are at 100.82% of TWC YTD goal.

#### New Building

The Support Center is scheduled to move into its new location in June 2024. The new location offers more space for the increase in staff and a better working environment. The staff is prepared to work remotely if needed during the transition.

#### Texas Child Care Connection-TX3C

TX3C was scheduled to launch in February 2024. The Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) has postponed the launch until July 1, 2024. We delayed hiring the Subject Matter Experts due to the postponing of the system. We plan to have all SME hired by the end of March. TWC expressed they are confident TX3C will launch in July. Training for the new system is set to start in April.

To ensure the continued success of the Support Center, Board staff will continue to meet with the Support Center monthly, review production reports weekly, and visit a minimum of twice a month. We will continue to keep the Education Committee updated with our progress.

We anticipate adding over 12,000 new children to care this year. We have added over 7,000 so far. As we continue to enroll more families, we want to be sure all departments at the Support Center can adequately handle the increase. We are being proactive and conducting an analysis now to determine the staff

requirements needed per child in care for the upcoming year to keep and surpass our present pace.

## Early Education Quality

### **Child Care Non-Traditional Hours**

On February 15, 2024, the Workforce Solutions – Gulf Coast Early Education Quality team had the opportunity to collaborate with the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC), Child Care Regulations (CCR) and research agency, Mathematica, in the inaugural child care non-traditional hours “data walk”. We brought together parents, providers, contract, and board staff to explore data, with a focus on discussing the availability, gaps, and barriers of child care needs during non-traditional hours (nights and weekends).

As a result of this collaboration, TWC asked us to co-author a toolkit for Data Walk activities, incorporating our process for planning the event and reflections from the event to inform other Boards and agency partners on how to conduct a similar event.

### **Early Education Advisory Council**

Workforce Development (WD) 19-23 issued by TWC in October 2023, required Boards to establish a local child care committee representing child care centers, homes, community stakeholders, families, child care contract staff and Board staff. We issued an application for membership in December 2023 and selected twenty Early Education Advisory Council members to contribute ideas and make recommendation to the Board’s Education Committee to advance early child care services and support in the Gulf Coast region.

On February 20, 2024, we hosted our first virtual Early Education Advisory Council meeting. After the introductions, Board staff facilitated a reviewed the Council’s governing rules, objectives, code of ethics, conflict of interest as well as meeting format and schedule. The Council will have three additional meetings in May, August, and November 2024. Our May meeting will include an overview of the FY24 Child Care Quality plan, Texas Child Care Connection (TX3C), Child Care by the Numbers for Gulf Coast, along with discussion and recommendation to the Education Committee on paid closure days for Entry Level Designated and Texas Rising Star providers.

### **Child Care Stakeholder Meeting**

In collaboration with our Board, TWC hosted a public stakeholder’s meeting on February 21, 2024, to discuss and gather feedback regarding the 2025-2027 Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) State Plan and the Texas Rising Star Four Year Review proposed revisions. Over thirty stakeholders attended the meeting and provided feedback to TWC on the plan, including services for children with

disabilities, family child care network, pre-k partnerships, Texas Rising Star, and concerns over lack of funding to support the increasing need of child care resources for families, teachers, and providers.

### **Family Engagement & Home-based providers**

Board staff have begun the process of negotiating a contract with the United Way of Greater Houston to provide supportive resources to families and home-based child care providers. The family engagement initiative is designed to provide approximately 2,000 families with the tools, resources, and support they need to help their children reach their fullest potential. We anticipate reaching 370 home-based providers through networking events, professional development, curricula, and sustainable business practices to enhance the quality of care provided to families and children.

### **Professional Pathways: Teacher Preparation Program**

Board staff made a recommendation to the Procurement Committee to select a contractor to train and provide on-the-job learning to individuals willing to become entry level early childhood teachers. Successful candidates will earn the child development associate credential (CDA), get connected to employment post training, qualify for wage supports, and develop a career roadmap leading to upskilling and higher paying jobs in early education or other related fields.

## **Early Childcare Expansion (ECE)**

### **What We Are Doing**

The ECE board staff are working to build strategic partnerships across areas of the board and the business community. These partnerships are to advance the childcare ecosystem.

The COOGS team, with the support of ECE board staff is currently working on several activities that will impart data to develop strategies that will expand childcare. Activities include creating reading material for providers to utilize at their centers, convening the COOGS advisory board meetings and coordination of 2-hour training sessions with early childcare providers. The COOGS team is also providing in person business accelerator training to 15 providers through the SURE program. The research the COOGS team is conducting, surveying, along with the findings of the COOGS sessions and SURE will be used to create a playbook and website to support ongoing work to expand the early childcare industry. The COOGS team is working with the board staff to develop appropriate materials to market the industry.

### **Strategic Partnerships**

The ECE board staff are focusing on employer and childcare partnerships. Working with Employer Engagement has created leads to businesses and sectors where there is interest in building childcare partnerships. ECE board staff and Child Care Regulations are working with Elin Energy to establish an effective childcare model.

### **Next Steps**

- Completion of the University of Houston's work developing the Child Care Provider Bootcamp including the playbook and website.
- Continue to highlight the benefits of family centered employment and create synergy with internal processes to make sure everyone receiving services is asked about childcare.
- Work with Community Engagement to use the marketing materials to share the benefits of early childcare as a place to learn and work.
- Continue to build alliances with the career centers to highlight childcare as a high skill, high growth industry. We want to expose as many people as possible to the career lattice in childcare.
- Work with Employer Engagement to increase awareness of the benefits of employer provided childcare incentives.
- Work with Youth Services to introduce the childcare industry to youth by utilizing work-based learning.

## **Youth Services**

### **Youth Portal**

We are thrilled to introduce a system that will streamline the coordination of youth services in our region, enhancing efficiency and effectiveness. This will also enable us to gather comprehensive, actionable data on our customers and programs, which are currently unavailable with our existing data management systems. The Youth Portal will undergo a soft launch the week of March 18th, starting with the system's case management component. We are on schedule to fully unveil the customer-facing aspect of the system by the end of March.

### **Jobs Y'all**

TWC awarded the Gulf Coast Workforce Board (GCWB) a \$35,000 grant to support the TWC Jobs Y'all initiative. The goal of this grant is to inspire and attract young Texans to explore careers and understand the education and training needed to best position themselves for entering the workforce. GCWB aims to host one Jobs Y'all event per county in our region. The events will be held at various venues across our 13-county region, targeting middle, high, and post-secondary students, out-of-school youth ages 16-24, and their families. Past and upcoming events include:

- Wharton – February 13,
- Galveston – March 8,
- Brazoria – April 3, and
- Fort Bend – April 4.

#### WIOA Youth Programs

Board & Contractors	Universal Youth	WIOA Youth	WBL	HSBG (WBL)	Training
Board	8,435	792	332	5.1%	118
BAKER RIPLEY	4,495	236	141	9.9%	35
EQUUS	838	64	35	0.0%	2
INTERFAITH	2,953	186	98	2.0%	16
ACAM	-	95	22	4.5%	7
SER	-	227	36	0.0%	58

This data reflects the performance of youth measures from October 2023 to January 2024. As a system, we are exceeding our year-to-date target for both universal youth served and WIOA youth enrollments.

#### NextGen – ACAM

In the first quarter, ACAM faced challenges with only 51 enrollments, and less than 14% of these enrolled in an active WIOA youth service (2 work-based learning, 5 training). Fiscal management of services transitioned to the financial aid payment office this program year, aligning with other system providers to minimize overhead expenses and maximize funds for youth. Despite expected learning curves, the transition should not hinder ACAM's ability to engage and enroll customers. During the January 18, 2024, contract meeting, GCWB staff expressed performance concerns and requested a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP), received on February 1st. GCWB staff are monitoring performance and compliance. ACAM showed an increase in enrollments for January 2024. Performance will continue to be closely monitored with further interventions implemented if progress is not maintained.

Moreover, ACAM had an open request for proposal to secure two subcontractors for the NextGen initiative. ACAM submitted the top three ranked organizations along with their budgets for review and approval to GCWB staff on February 27, 2024. These proposals are currently under review. Initial concerns arise regarding the proposed vendors' alignment with the initiative's workforce-centered goals to support opportunity youth in obtaining full-time employment with sustainable wages.

## Regional Convener

In April 2023, the Tri-Agency launched a \$12 million dollar grant program focused on identifying, training, and designating a Tri-Agency Regional Convener in each of the state's 28 workforce development areas (WDAs) to develop a regional education-workforce partnership system.

Throughout the grant program, we will:

- Build infrastructure to support regional pathways and facilitate regional pathways implementation.
- Demonstrate their proficiency in the roles and responsibilities of a regional convener through completion of grant activities aligned to four leadership domains:
- Report outcomes and complete performance monitoring requirements.
- Become eligible to apply for designation at the end of the grant period.
- Asset Map and Gap Analysis
- Regional Strategic Plan
- Identify Cross sector Partnerships
- Regional Work-Based Learning
- Regional Data and Communications

### Gap Analysis

- On January 31, 2024 the Gulf Coast Workforce Board submitted its regional gap analysis to the Texas Education Agency highlighting gaps that prevent our region from accessing high skill high growth careers.
- The Gulf Coast Workforce Board interviewed 23 school districts, employers, and post-secondary institutions.

### Regional Convener Conference

- On January 31, 2024 the Gulf Coast Workforce Board hosted the first ever Regional Convener Conference at the ION Houston.
- Over 233 students, employers, teachers, and post-secondary institutions attended the convening focused on career exploration, financial literacy, and entrepreneurship.

### Next Steps

#### Career Exploration Summer Programming

In collaboration with The Texas Education Agency, Gulf Coast Workforce Board, and Rice Universities Tapia Center Workforce Solutions has created an immersive summer program dedicated to career exploration in the following sectors: Health Care, Building & Construction, and Education.

June 9th - June 14<sup>th</sup>, 75 students (ages 14-17) will participate and stay at Rice University to learn about high-skill high-growth career opportunities in our region. In collaboration with Rice University's Tapia Center for Excellence and Equity in



Education, students will be immersed through a combination of education, hands-on experience, site tours, and project-based learning experiences. Rice University will provide meals, room, and board. Additionally, students who successfully complete the program will be eligible for a \$500 stipend.

### **Work Based Learning Summer Program**

In collaboration with The Texas Education Agency, Gulf Coast Workforce Board, and industry partners, Workforce Solutions has created an immersive summer experience dedicated to career exploration and work-based learning in the following sectors: Health Care, Building & Construction, and Education.

June 3 – July 12, 2024 students (ages 17-24) will have the opportunity to work for 6-weeks in one of the following industries: Health Care, Building & Construction, and Education. Students will have the opportunity to expand their knowledge, gain employability skills, and hands-on experience. Students who complete the 6-week program will receive a stipend. This will be a competitive application process and will only interview 50 individuals and will select 33 individuals.

## **Adult Education and Literacy (AEL)**

The H-GAC Regional Consortium for Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) was established in 2014. Over the past 9 years we have learned and grown our services across our great region. We provide adult education and literacy instruction at more than 300 sites throughout the 13-county region. Adult education and literacy services are offered face to face, remotely, or through hybrid instruction. Service includes English language instruction, literacy classes, adult basic education, adult secondary education, integrated education, GED preparation, and joint basic education-skills training classes, college and career readiness, employability skills, services for internationally trained professionals, job search assistance, training, workplace literacy and digital literacy.

In comparison to last year, outcome measures for AEL continue to improve. At the September 11, 2023, the commission meeting individual grantee targets were approved. The approval included an increase adjustment to the targets for measurable skills gains, and aligned the three WIOA exit-based AEL outcome measures to the levels in the General Appropriations Act (GAA), as follows:

<b>Exit-Based Measure</b>	<b>Target PY 22-23</b>	<b>Target PY 23-24</b>	<b>% Increase</b>
Employed/Enrolled in Q2 Post-exit	46%	56%	10%
Employed/Enrolled in Q2–Q4 Post-exit	82.40%	84%	1.60%
Credential Rate	39%	45%	6%

In each area, our performance has improved compared to the same time last year, but with the target adjustments, the data gains are not as strong regarding meeting and exceeding the targets.

<b>MSG</b>	<b>July 1.22 - Jan. 31.23</b>	<b>July 1.23 - Jan. 31.24</b>
Current Performance	31.89%	33.96%
EOY Targets	43.32%	45.40%
% Current Performance	73.61%	74.80%

<b>Credential Achievement</b>	<b>July 1.22 - Jan. 31.23</b>	<b>July 1.23 - Jan. 31.24</b>
Current Performance	23.00%	33.84%
EOY Targets	39.00%	45.00%
% Current Performance	58.97%	75.20%

<b>Employed/Enrolled in 2nd Qtr. After Exit (Contracted)</b>	<b>July 1.22 - Jan. 31.23</b>	<b>July 1.23 - Jan. 31.24</b>
Current Performance	36.40%	55.51%
EOY Targets	46.00%	56.00%

<b>Employed/ Enrolled 2nd - 4th Qtr. After Exit (Contracted)</b>	<b>July 1.22 - Jan. 31.23</b>	<b>July 1.23 - Jan. 31.24</b>
Current Performance	84.95%	85.54%
EOY Targets	82.40%	84.00%

### **Moving Forward**

This year we have Incorporated Burlington English (BE) Curriculum across the 14 subrecipients ESL programs of study, serving over 6700 students within our consortium. This comprehensive, web-based, fully blended series of courses developed especially for adults learning English has been fully deployed with not only each regional gulf coast adult education and literacy provider but through our complementary licenses that were received with our licenses purchase has also been able to support our community partners with the City of Houston Adult Literacy Coalition with access to over 300 licenses for their language learners. With our new curriculum scope, we expected to see an increase in level gains from students receiving English language instruction and our data is confirming our hypothesis.

<b>Post Test Gains</b>	<b>July 1.22 - Jan. 31.23</b>	<b>July 1.23 - Jan. 31.24</b>
Current Performance	60.41%	64.98%
EOY Targets	65.00%	65.00%

In our last meeting it was shared that we were in the process of publishing an RFQ for a third-party consultant to review the current adult education and literacy consortium, but due to low applicant submittal of two applicants and one being disqualified due to failure to sign the application we have decided to rescind the RFQ solicitation. With the decision to shift focus of a review concentrating solely on the current adult education and literacy consortium to promoting collaboration training opportunities targeted at enhancing comprehension of adult education services and improving outcomes for system operators and program divisions with Board staff.

In late 2023, the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) issued a new Request for Proposal (RFP) for AEL services, introducing revised parameters and a new scope of work for the forthcoming grant period. Regrettably, due to these adjustments, H-GAC was unable to include five of community-based organizations in our application for the new funding cycle and these changes have resulted in the sunseting of these current programs with an official end date set for June 30, 2024. Despite this challenging development, we believe in the value and impact of our partnership with each of these community-based organizations. We are currently working with each of them to continue playing a crucial role in our shared mission, through our Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), Title 1 support in which is designed to equip individuals with the skills essential for success in today's workforce, family life, and civic engagement.

We are currently awaiting the state's publication on the adult education and literacy grant awards and hope to have an update on awarded county region before the sunset date of our grant.

## Strategic Planning Committee

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### Update for March 2024

The Strategic Planning Committee was held on March 15, 2024, at 12:00 p.m. at the Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC) offices located at 3555 Timmons Lane in Houston, Texas. Committee members in attendance included Chair Carl Bowles, Board Chair Mark Guthrie, Peter Beard, Richard Shaw, Dr. Bobbie Henderson, Adrian Ozuna, and Cheryl Guido.

#### Executive Summary:

Chair Carl Bowles called the meeting to order with a reaffirmation of our strategic planning framework, designed to guide the Gulf Coast Workforce Board towards realizing its long-term vision for the next five years. Our second board retreat on April 3, 2024, will focus on crystallizing goals, aligning strategies to each to foster a consensus-driven path forward.

#### Stakeholder Input: Customers

At the prior Strategic Planning Committee meeting, survey results from Board staff and frontline staff highlighted the dual challenges of heavy workloads and time constraints, significantly impacting capacity to deliver quality assistance. The surveys also revealed technology-related hurdles, procedural changes, and resource limitations as critical barriers to providing consistent, high-quality services. These insights underscore the need for enhancing our technological infrastructure, streamlining processes, and fostering stronger community and employer partnerships to address pivotal employment barriers.

At this meeting, customer survey results were highlighted. To gather this information from residents, we placed digital kiosks at eight Workforce Solutions – Gulf Coast Career Offices. Customer feedback revealed the essential role that technology plays in attracting individuals into our career offices. The data also showed that job search assistance, resume support, and job fairs are valued by our clients. Customers participating in our survey gave their overall experience at our career offices a high satisfaction rating of 4.8 out of 5.

#### Virtual Office Tour:

A video was presented showing the current appearance and utilization of services at Workforce Solutions – Gulf Coast Career Offices on Westheimer, Acres Homes, Conroe, Cypress Station, Wharton, and Rosenberg.

### Stakeholder Input:

Through our extensive engagement with a wide array of stakeholders—including community organizations, businesses, chambers of commerce, and educational institutions—a recurring theme has emerged: the imperative for improved collaboration, clarity in communication, and enhanced coordination of services. Stakeholder feedback consistently underscores the importance of tailoring services and training initiatives to meet the precise needs of local employers, pinpointing this as a crucial direction for strategic enhancement.

A pivotal piece of feedback, encapsulated in a video featuring insights from both educational and employer partners, reiterated the need for our system to elevate its engagement, responsiveness, and relevance to the diverse groups we serve. This calls for a proactive process to develop and maintain relationships and partnerships across our varied communities, ensuring our initiatives resonate effectively with the needs and aspirations of the stakeholders involved.

### Strategic Goals and Prioritization:

The insights gathered from these discussions and surveys have directly informed the focus of our upcoming board retreat, where we will engage in a thorough prioritization exercise to clearly define our strategic goals. There is a recognized need to upgrade our technological capabilities, deepen our partnerships across industries and the community, broaden access to quality training, and improve our outreach and recruitment strategies to bridge the gap between job seekers and employers more effectively.

### Board Retreat

The next strategic planning retreat is scheduled for April 3, 2024, at the Houstonian Hotel, 111 North Post Oak Lane, Houston, Texas 77024, from 9:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. We have prepared a comprehensive binder for Board members to review prior to the retreat that includes key summaries, reports, and a gap analysis to facilitate informed discussion and decision-making. A digital version of the binder is available at <https://bit.ly/4cwzsjt>.

### Conclusion

The stakeholder feedback and insights that we have collected are invaluable in informing our strategic planning process. As we move towards the board retreat, our goal is to transform these strategic objectives into actionable plans that resonate with our commitment to empowering the workforce in the Gulf Coast region. We are grateful for the thoughtful contributions from all participants and look forward to our collaborative efforts towards driving workforce innovation and excellence at the upcoming retreat.



## Procurement Committee

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On March 21, 2024, Chair Dr. Bobbie Henderson convened the Procurement Committee to receive information and consider recommendations to award contracts to support various initiatives. Board members present included Chair Henderson, Board Chair Mark Guthrie, Helen Cavazos, Cheryl Guido, Richard Shaw, and Gil Staley.

### Early Education Professional Pathways

The Committee received information regarding a teacher recruitment and preparation program as a pathway for entry level child care teachers to gain the training and experience needed to provide quality learning for young children. This initiative includes the following key elements:

- a) recruit eligible individuals interested in early care and education,
- b) provide professional development resulting in Child Development Associate (CDA) credential,
- c) provide in-classroom paid skills development and mentoring,
- d) develop a career roadmap to upskill individuals to higher paying jobs in early education or other related fields, and
- e) connect individuals with childcare programs for employment post training.

An Early Education Professional Pathways RFP (Request for Proposal) was issued late 2023 to select a qualified service provider to administer the child care teacher training and development program. Five entities submitted proposals and the evaluation team conducted a thorough review and scoring process to identify the best proposer for completing this work on behalf of the board. The following entities submitted proposals:

Proposer	Rank
ChildrenFlow LLC	1
TNTP	2
Avilo Inc.	3
Meagan Copelin Global Management Consultants	4
WEB Strategic Enterprises	5

ChildrenFlow LLC scored the highest of proposers. ChildrenFlow provides teacher preparation professional development and in-class teacher coaching in head start, child care and pre-kindergarten programs throughout the Gulf Coast region.

A motion was made and accepted by the Procurement Committee to bring a contract recommendation to the Board for approval.

Action Requested: We request Board approval to negotiate a contract with ChildrenFlow for up to \$600,000 to provide services under the Early Education Professional Pathways initiative.

## Partners for Reentry Opportunities in Workforce Development

The Committee received information regarding a grant initiative sponsored by the Department of Justice (DOJ) and the Department of Labor (DOL) to provide targeted employment services to federally incarcerated individuals as they approach community reentry. The Partners for Reentry Opportunities in Workforce Development (PROWD) grant program seeks to better align job training and skills development services provided to program participants to the specific labor market needs of the communities where they will live. In so doing, the program will improve both the employment outcomes of returning citizens and public safety of all community members while increasing the capacity of justice and workforce system partnerships.

The funding supports the delivery of pre- and post-release services to participants in three stages:

- Stage one: Training and supportive reentry services offered to people before their federal prison release to a residential reentry center (RRC) or home confinement.
- Stage two: Training and job placement services and supportive reentry services provided to people after their transition to a reentry center or home confinement.
- Stage three: Additional supportive reentry and employment services, including on-the-job-training, provided to participants once they transition into the community after their full release.

In 2023 the Texas Workforce Commission reached out to Workforce Development Boards interested in joining this project, successfully securing \$4.6 million in partnership with eight Workforce Development Boards. Gulf Coast received an



initial grant award of \$212,408 in February 2023 with an anticipated future allocation of \$200,000 later this year.

In our grant application we proposed partnering with Alvin Community College given their proven track record in this space. In 2021 Alvin Community College developed the New Beginnings Project to provide second-chance students classes leading to degree/certification in partnership with the Texas Department of Criminal Justice. The program matches regional employers with individuals possessing industry-required skillsets and connects second-chance individuals with support systems in local communities.

Through the PROWD grant we will serve individuals during their time with a reentry center or under home confinement and as they transition into the community after their full release. We plan to serve 105 people over a three-year period.

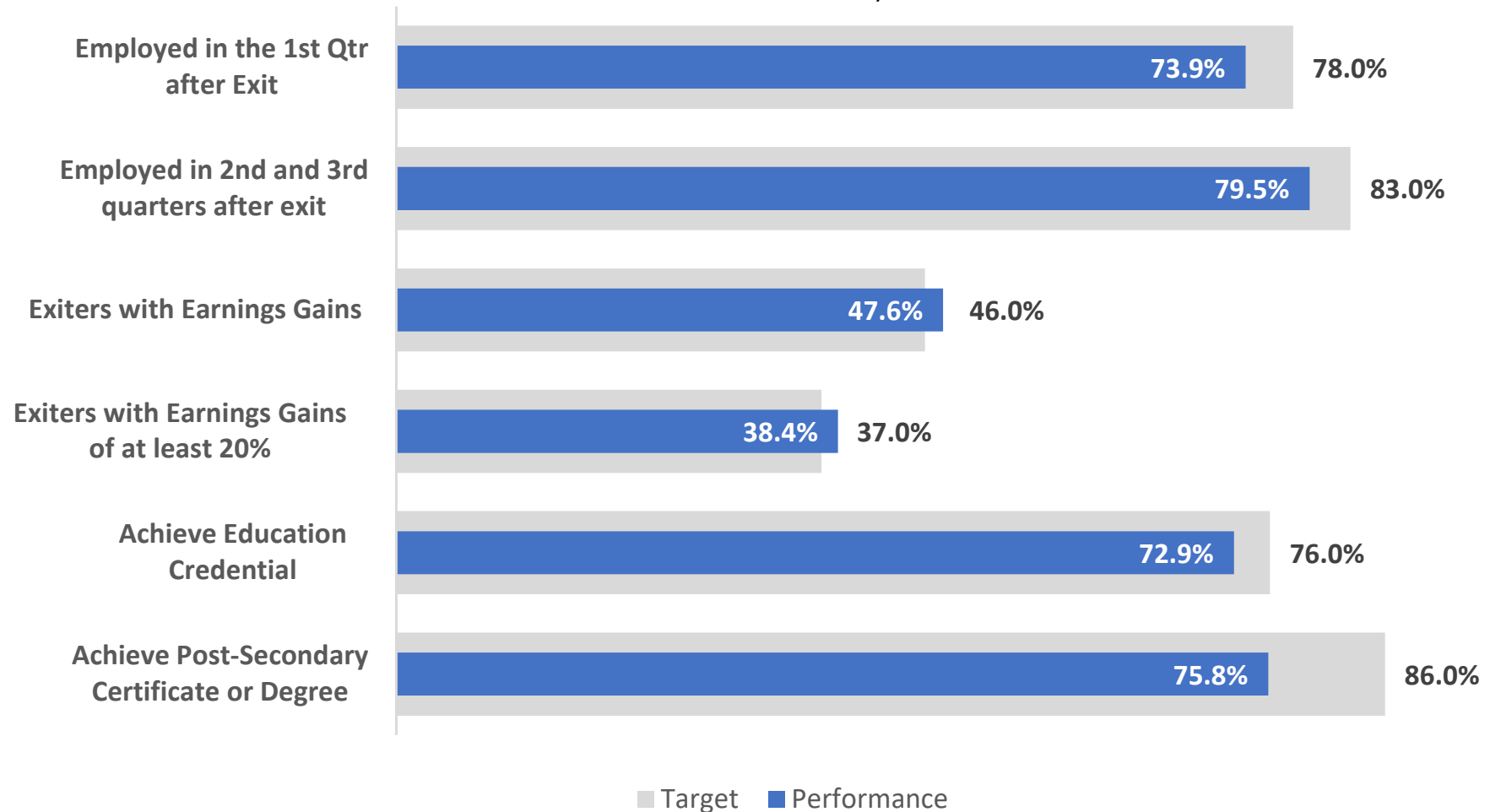
A motion was made and accepted by the Procurement Committee to bring a contract recommendation to the Board for approval.

Staff Update: Following the Procurement Committee, the Texas Workforce Commission provided further details concerning the programming requirements for the PROWD program, which unfortunately conflicts with the current proposal's structure. Board staff respectfully requests that the Board defer the consideration of this contract recommendation and allow staff additional time to develop an alternative strategy for the effective utilization of these funds. Board staff commits to presenting a revised plan at the upcoming Procurement Committee meeting for further discussion and approval.



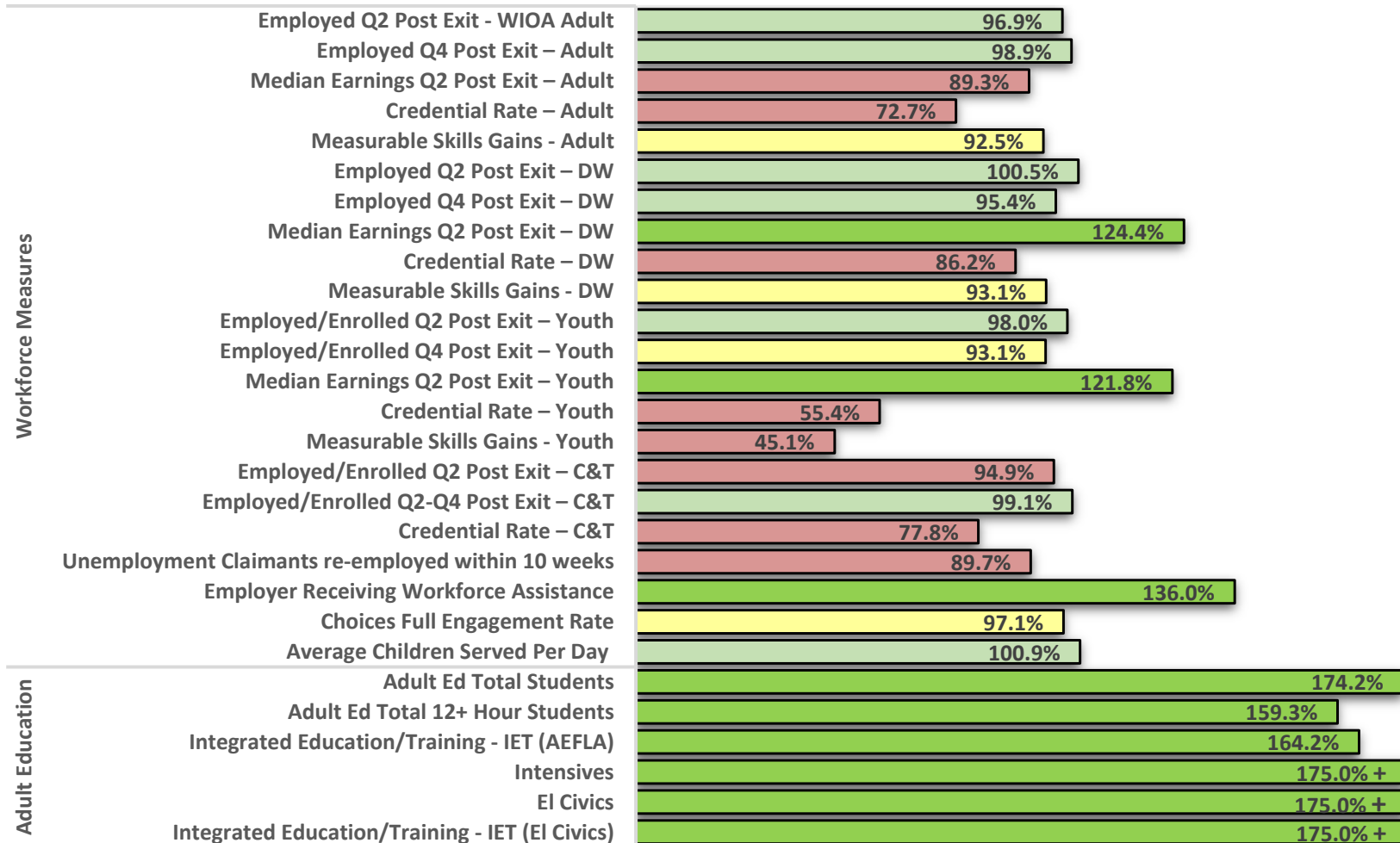
## Performance Measures

October 2023 to February 2024



## Production Measures

October 2023 to February 2024



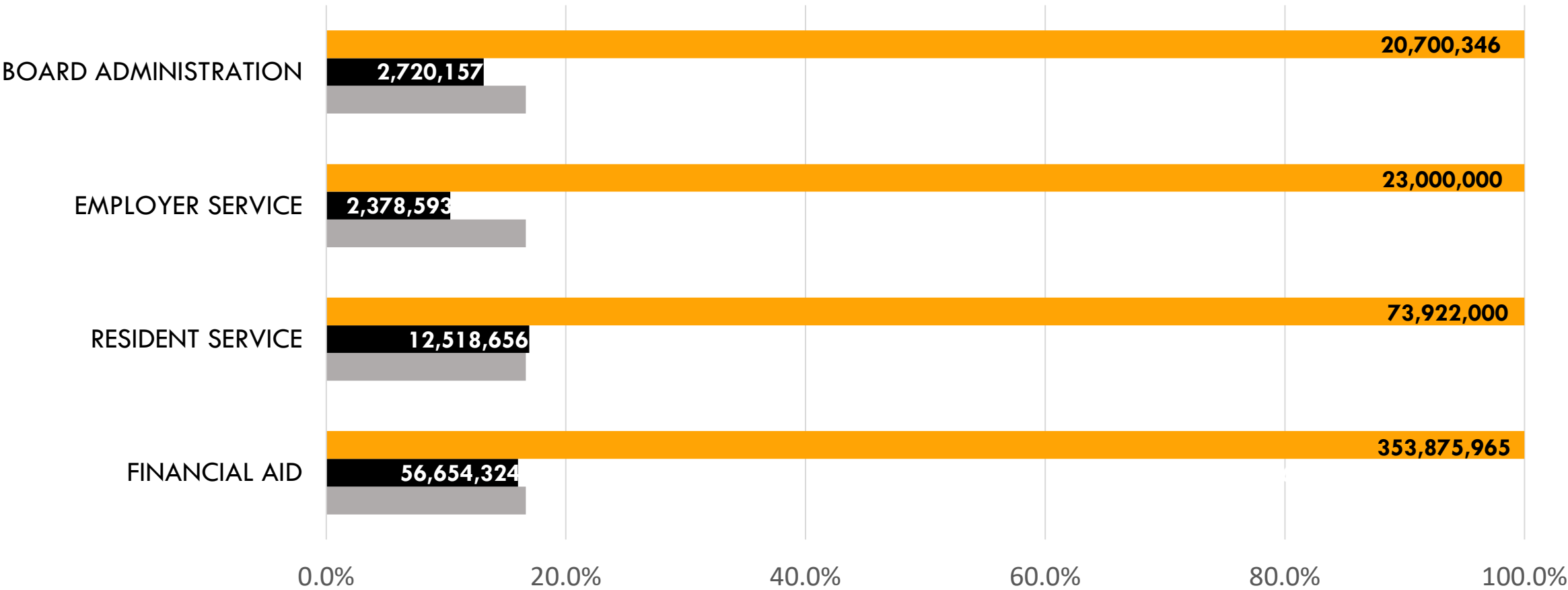
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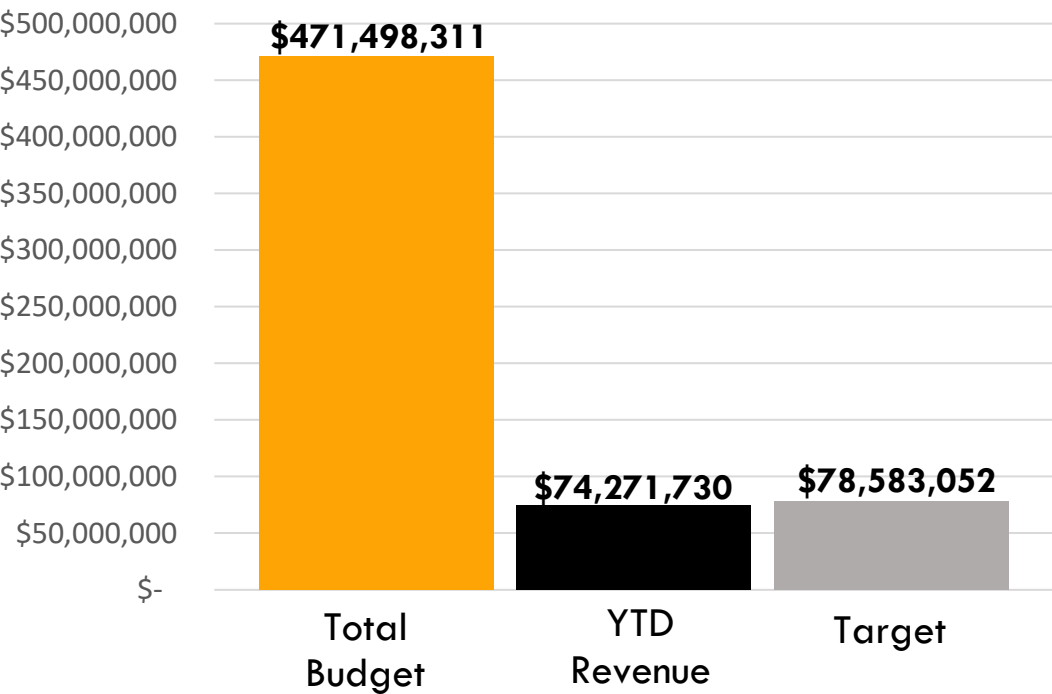
# Gulf Coast Workforce Financial Status Report

For the 2 months ending February 29, 2024

Budget Expenses Target



## Workforce Revenue



## System Expenses

- FINANCIAL AID - EARLY EDUCATION \$53,219,964
- FINANCIAL AID - TRAINING & SUPPORT \$3,434,360
- CAREER SERVICES \$9,230,450
- EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT \$1,027,153
- QUALITY IMPROVEMENT \$1,351,440
- ADULT EDUCATION \$3,288,206

