



Gulf Coast Workforce Board
3555 Timmons Lane, Suite 120, Houston, Texas 77027
PO Box 22777 Houston, Texas 77227-2777
MAIN: 713.627.3200 FAX: 713.993.4578
www.wrksolutions.com

To: Gulf Coast Workforce Board Members

From: Executive Director Juliet K. Stipeche

Date: April 2, 2025

Subject: Upcoming April 8, 2025, Board Meeting

With spring underway, I am pleased to share a preview of our upcoming Board meeting and invite you to several key events. The Board meeting will begin at 10:00 a.m. on April 8, 2025, and will be held in person at the Houston-Galveston Area Council, located at 3555 Timmons Lane, Houston, Texas, 77027, in Conference Room A/B/C. Please note that the meeting will be conducted in compliance with the Texas Open Meetings Act.

As we prepare for our upcoming Gulf Coast Workforce Board meeting on Tuesday, April 8, 2025, I want to take a moment to recognize and honor the life and legacy of Congressman Sylvester Turner. His recent passing is a profound loss for our region, our state, and all who were touched by his unwavering commitment to public service. Congressman Turner devoted his life to uplifting communities, educational opportunity, and standing firmly for a better life for everyone.

A true son of Houston, he exemplified resilience, intellect, and compassion throughout his decades of service. He carried with him the wisdom of his mother, Ruby Mae Turner, who instilled in him a grounding belief that shaped his life and leadership: "Tomorrow will be better than today." This guiding principle became a touchstone of his character and a reflection of the hope he inspired in others. We will begin our meeting with a moment of silence to reflect on his tremendous contributions and enduring spirit. May his legacy continue to inspire our work and remind us of why we serve.

Our Board is privileged to welcome several new members. We are excited about their commitment, expertise, and future contributions that will help build a stronger workforce in our region. We look forward to the energy, insight, and dedication they bring.



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The session will commence with a report from our Board Chair, Mr. Mark Guthrie, followed by my Executive Director's report. Mr. Chuck Wemple, the Executive Director of the Houston-Galveston Area Council, will then share his update. The meeting's agenda includes reports from several committees, led by their respective Chairs: Audit and Monitoring (Mr. Guy Jackson), Career Services (Mr. Adrian Ozuna), Education (Dr. Bobbie Henderson), Employer Engagement (Alan Heskamp), and Communications (Mr. Doug Karr).

Dr. Bobbie Henderson, Chair of the Procurement, will offer a briefing of the Procurement Committee meeting and will ask for possible action on an item concerning the "Procurement and Contract Approval Process." Board Chair Guthrie will also ask the Board to discuss and consider the possible acceptance of a \$50,000 grant from San Jacinto College for the advancement of registered apprenticeship programs in our region. The Board meeting will also feature:

- System Performance & Financial Overview: Reports on performance metrics and expenditures by Mr. Philip Garcia and Ms. Brandi Brown;
- Legislative Update: An overview of the 89th Texas Legislative Session by Mr. Desmond Taylor;
- Labor Market Trends: Economic insights from Mr. Mohammad Ahmadizadeh; and
- Communications & Media Update: A briefing from Mr. Russell Tomlin.

I want to extend my sincere thanks to Board Chair Mark Guthrie for his leadership as the National Association of Workforce Board's Public Policy Chair at The Forum 2025 in Washington, D.C., March 29 –April 1, 2025 and for leading a successful Advocacy Day on Capitol Hill on April 2. He was joined by Vice Chair Dr. Bobbie Henderson and Board staff: Mr. Russell Tomlin, Mr. Crosby Brito, Mr. Desmond Taylor, and me. The experience offered valuable insights and promising practices that will enhance our work here at home. We were also fortunate to be in D.C. during the height of this year's cherry blossom season—an annual reminder of renewal, beauty, and the enduring promise of growth.

After our Board meeting, we are hosting a series of community meetings to engage and inform stakeholders across our region about the Board's new strategic plan. Please join us and help spread the word:



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Matagorda and Wharton Counties

In partnership with the Mid Coast Education and Industry Alliance
Thursday, April 10, 2025
11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
Bay City Civic Center
201 7th Street, Bay City, TX 77414

Greater Houston Area

Houston-Galveston Area Council
Thursday, April 24, 2025
11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
3355 Timmons Lane, 2nd Floor
Houston, TX 77027

Fort Bend County

Ft. Bend Chamber of Commerce
Hybrid meeting, including 60+ area Chambers of Commerce
Wednesday, May 14, 2025
11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.
445 Commerce Green Blvd
Sugar Land, TX 77478

We are deeply grateful to our community partners for their generous support in helping us secure venues and extend outreach to local stakeholders.

Additionally, we are pleased to invite Board members to a special visit to the International Union of Operating Engineers (IUOE) International Training and Education Center:

IUOE International Training and Education Center Visit

Date & Time: Friday, April 11, 2025 | 9:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
Location: 905 Foley Road, Crosby, TX 77532

This event presents a unique opportunity to tour IUOE's state-of-the-art training facility, gain a deeper understanding of its workforce development programs, and explore how we can align efforts to strengthen career pathways across the Gulf



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Coast region. We look forward to engaging conversations about high-demand skills, hands-on learning models, and meaningful partnership opportunities. To preview what the center offers, we encourage you to view this short video: [IUOE Local 101: Join Our Program Today - YouTube](#).

I look forward to continuing our important work together and to seeing you soon. Until then, please let me know if you have any questions or issues.



GULF COAST WORKFORCE BOARD

AGENDA

Tuesday, April 8, 2025, at 10:00 a.m.
2nd Floor, A/B/C, 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. Moment of Silence for the Late Congressman Sylvester Turner**
- 4. Introduction of Newly Appointed Board Members**
- 5. Adopt Agenda**
- 6. Public Comment**
- 7. Review of the February 2025 Meeting Minutes**
- 8. Declare Conflicts of Interest**
- 9. 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. Career Services Committee Report: (Committee Chair Adrian Ozuna),
 - f. Education Committee Report: (Committee Chair Dr. Bobbie Henderson),

- g. Employer Engagement Committee Report: (Committee Chair Alan Heskamp), and
- h. Communications Committee Report: (Committee Chair Doug Karr).

10. Action Items:


- a. Procurement Committee Report: Briefing of the Procurement Committee meeting from Chair Dr. Bobbie Henderson including discussion and possible action regarding the following:
 - i. Procurement and Contract Approval Process.
- b. San Jacinto College Award for the Advancement of Apprenticeships: Discussion and possible action regarding the acceptance of a \$50,000 grant from San Jacinto College related to the advancement of registered apprenticeship programs as part of the Board's regional outreach and strategic plan implementation (Board Chair Mark Guthrie).

11. Presentations and Information:

- a. Performance and Production: Report on the system's performance and production (Philip Garcia),
- b. Expenditures: Report on the Board's budget and expenditures (Brandi Brown),
- c. Legislative Update: Update on the 89th Texas Legislative Session (Desmond Taylor),
- d. A Look at the Economy: Update on the Labor Market (Mohammad Ahmadizadeh), and
- e. Communications and Outreach Update: Report on relevant stories (Russell Tomlin).

12. Other Business

13. Adjourn

A decorative graphic on the left side of the page, consisting of several blue hexagons of various sizes and orientations, some overlapping, creating a cluster-like pattern.

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 7, 2025**, to Dr. Maria Franco Cortes at maria.cortes@wrksolutions.net.

Meeting materials are available on our website at www.wrksolutions.com/about-us/meetings.

Workforce Solutions is an equal opportunity employer/program. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities. Please contact us at 713.627.3200 at least 48-hours in advance to request accommodations.

Deaf, hard-of-hearing or speech-impaired customers contact: Relay Texas 1-800-735-2989 (TTY) or 1-800-735-2988 (Voice) or 711.

Equal opportunity is the law.

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P.O. Box 22777 Houston, Texas 77227-2777
713.627.3200
1.888.469.5627 toll-free
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**GULF COAST WORKFORCE BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 2025**

1. **Call to Order:** The Tuesday, February 4, 2025, meeting of the Gulf Coast Workforce Board (GCWB) called to order at 10:03 a.m. by Board Chair Mark Guthrie. The meeting was held on the 2nd Floor, A-C, 3555 Timmons Lane, Houston, TX 77027.

2. **Roll Call:** Desmond Taylor, Program Administrator of the GCWB called the roll. The following members of the GCWB were present:

Arcos, Marie	Heskamp, Alan	Puente, Paul
Bartlett, Anne	Jackson, Guy R.	Rodriguez, Grace
Below, Shonda	Johnson, Joyce	Rupani, Nasruddin
Bowles, Carl	Karr, Doug	Sarkar, Mou
Cockrell, Dorian	LaBroski, Jeff	Taylor, Sandra
Gonzalez, Melissa	Larmond, Shareen	Vazquez, Lizandra
Guido, Cheryl	Lowe, Jonathan	Webster, Michael
Guthrie, Mark	Melton, Edward	Yu, Bin
Henderson, Bobbie	Oser, Margaret	

Board Chair Guthrie determined a quorum was present.

3. **Adopt Agenda:** Board Chair Guthrie presented the proposed February 4, 2025, meeting agenda. A motion was made and seconded to adopt the agenda as presented. The motion passed.

4. **Public Comment:** There was no public comment.

5. **Review of the December 10, 2024, Meeting Minutes:** The minutes of the December 10, 2024, GCWB meeting were distributed electronically to all members before the February 4, 2025, meeting. A motion was made and seconded to adopt the minutes as presented. The motion passed.

6. Declare Conflicts of Interest: No conflicts were declared. Chair Guthrie reminded the members that they could declare conflicts with items as they were taken up.

7. Reports:

- a. **Board Chair's Report:** Chair Guthrie opened his remarks by reporting on WIOA updates, particularly the Senate's attempt in the previous Congress to pass a compromise WIOA reauthorization bill utilizing a hotline process which required unanimity from all senators. However, that effort failed after several senators placed holds on the bill and did not release them. The bill died in the Senate. Then, the WIOA reauthorization bill (along with the Farm bill and a disaster relief bill) was attached to the Continuing Resolution (CR) being negotiated to continue to fund the federal government beyond December 20. Following that, the CR was met with objections from President-elect Trump and Elon Musk due to its length. As a result, the WIOA Reauthorization, the Farm bill, and disaster relief were removed at the last minute and the CR passed to continue to fund the government open until March 20, 2025. The WIOA Reauthorization process will start over during the new Congress.

Chair Guthrie also reported that in the past week, a memo from the White House Office of Management and Budget was circulated that somewhat ambiguously purported to require that all federal grants and program payments were going to be immediately frozen, and it was later rescinded after a number of lawsuits were filed and several courts entered temporary restraining orders against the memo becoming effective. Had this memo become effective it may have impacted our cash draws to TWC to cover our obligations.

In Texas affairs, Chair Guthrie reported to there have been several notable personnel changes at TWC, including a longtime staffer, Adam Leonard who oversaw board performance and performance measures.

On local matters Chair Guthrie reported that there has been a lot of committee activity since our last meeting, which would be covered during the individual committee reports. He thanked the committees and Board staff for all of their hard work in connection with those efforts. Lastly, he

encouraged Board members to attend the Board's local WIOA Plan workshop on February 26 at 1:00 pm.

Chair Guthrie concluded his report and no action was taken.

- b. **Executive Director's Report (Juliet Stipeche):** Executive Director Juliet Stipeche started her remarks by thanking all of the Board members who have actively participated in the committee meetings held in January. Additionally, she thanked the career offices staff for inviting her to attend their holiday socials where she was able to share important updates as well as discuss the newly passed strategic plan. Moreover, she had an opportunity to attend the Texas Economic Development Corporation's holiday celebration in Austin where she was able to connect with great folks and bring home new information that will support our efforts locally.

Recently, we were able to host a successful job fair in partnership with the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo at NRG Park. More details will be shared during the Communications Committee report.

Executive Director Stipeche thanked Board member Paul Puente for inviting Desmond Taylor and herself to the Texas Workforce Investment Council meeting in Austin, where Chairman Daniels presented to the group. Additionally, she reported on the 2nd Tri-Agency Regional Convener Conference at the ION with over 300 students and staff to learn about High Skills High Growth career opportunities, scholarships, and earnings as well as the official launch of the Higher Gulf Coast Youth initiative.

Executive Director Stipeche concluded her report and no action was taken.

- c. **H-GAC Executive Director's Report (Chuck Wemple):** H-GAC Executive Director Wemple began his remarks by thanking the Board for an opportunity to provide updates on behalf of the H-GAC organization. First, he discussed the multiple executive orders put forth by the Trump Administration, particularly the attempted freeze on all federal grants and programs. H-GAC is poised to adapt to any changes from the new Administration.

At the State level, leadership has also introduced a special committee on government efficiency. While these potential changes may be unsettling, Mr. Wemple reminded the Board of its great work on workforce issues and encouraged everyone to remain focused on the successes.

Mr. Wemple discussed briefly H-GAC's progress with the GCWB on the budget as well as the Governor's priority on water supply in the region and the possible workforce opportunities that may arise in the near future.

Executive Director Wemple concluded his report and no action was taken.

- d. **Audit and Monitoring Committee (Committee Chair Guy R. Jackson):** Chair Jackson reported that the Audit and Monitoring Committee met in a hybrid meeting on January 14, 2025, at 3555 Timmons Ln, Houston, TX 77027, Room 2B/C at 1:00 p.m.

Board Members present in person or on video included Paul Puente, Doug Karr, Jonathan Lowe, Board Chair Mark Guthrie, Carl Bowles, Cheryl Guido, Dr. Bobbie Henderson, and Anne Bartlett.

Staff members present in person or on video included Romana Paniagua, Dr. Maria Franco Cortes, Vanessa Salazar, Thomas Brown, Philip Garcia, Brandi Brown, Kristi Rangel, Russell Tomlin, AJ Dean, Sable Harris-Buck, Juliet K Stipeche, Abdul Kargbo, Kevin Rodney, Janine Haynes, Kimberly Landolph, Jeanette De La Cruz, Jennifer Starling, Desmond Taylor, and Rebecca Valdez.

The GCWB continues to enhance its Key Performance Indicators (KPI) framework to drive data-informed decision-making and program performance measurement. Progress has been made in expanding KPIs for the Career Services Division, aligning with the Board's strategic priorities. The Audit and Monitoring Committee will continue reviewing KPI development to refine measurement strategies and improve program effectiveness. System-wide performance and financial monitoring remain a priority, with a comprehensive review of contractor performance, program compliance, and fiscal accountability. While transitioning from TWIST to the new Workforce Information Tracking (WIT) system has delayed some reporting updates, critical performance indicators such as Texas Talent Assistance, claimant reemployment, and early education enrollment continue to be tracked effectively. End-of-year data highlights strong performance, with 17 of 22 targets met or exceeded.

Chair Jackson continued with 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.

San Jacinto College: Staff reviewed data and operations from July 2023 to October 2024 and assessed performance, compliance, information security, customer satisfaction, and class observations. The review resulted in a significant increase in findings from previous reviews. Areas that need improvement are:

- Assessments
- Intake and Eligibility & Data Validation
- Information Security
- Professional Development
- New Hire Orientation

Adult Education Center (AEC): Staff reviewed data and operations from July 2023 to October 2024 and assessed performance, compliance, information security, customer satisfaction, and class observations. The review found recurring findings in data management and entry, document collection, and staff training. While earlier reviews noted minimal improvements, progress has been inconsistent.

Areas that need improvement are:

- Assessments
- Intake and Eligibility & Data Validation
- Measurable Skills Gained
- Information Security
- New Hire Orientation
- Staff Qualifications
- Professional Development
- Test Administrators
- Required Posters

Financial Monitoring: Staff have reviewed Houston Community College which has resulted in a low risk, and there are an additional 9 reviews in progress.

Procurement Training: As part of our ongoing commitment to providing technical assistance and strengthening the capabilities of our area service providers, Board staff delivered a comprehensive Procurement Training session on November 19, 2024, for members of the Adult Education Consortium. Representatives from the Adult Reading Center, BakerRipley, Houston Community College, Lone Star College, Region 6, and San Jacinto College participated in this critical training.

Chair Jackson concluded his report. No action was taken.

- e. **Communications Committee Report (Committee Chair Doug Karr):** Chair Doug Karr reported that the Communications Committee met in a hybrid meeting on January 23, 2025, at 10:00 a.m. at 3555 Timmons Ln, Houston, TX 77027 (Room 2D).

Board members present in person or on video included Chair Mark Guthrie, Cheryl Guido, Dr. Melanie Rodriguez, Bin Yu, Jeff Labroski, Lizandra Vasquez, Melissa Gonzalez, Mou Sarkar, and Dr. Bobbie Henderson.

Board staff present in person or on video included Juliet Stipeche, Jennifer Graves, Desmond Taylor, Dr. Maria Franco Cortes, Romana Paniagua, Philip Garcia, Danielle Knotts, Sabrina Parras, Jennifer Starling, Shawanna Thompson, LaToya Casimere, and Sable Harris. Also present were Tim Lankford, Dr. Michelle Cantú, and Leigh Ann Arnold from Outreach Strategists, the Board's public engagement contractor.

Chair Karr reported on **Strengthening Public Engagement & Media Presence** by highlighting the following:

- Fox26 Childcare Resources Feature (Aired January 6, 2025) – Provided critical insights into childcare assistance programs, reaching 118,593 viewers with an earned media value (AVE) of \$57,171.
- ABC13 Job Fair with Houston Livestock Show & Rodeo (January 16, 2025) – Served as the soft launch for Hire Gulf Coast Youth, reaching 279,555 viewers with an AVE of \$70,800.
- Fox26 Pre-Apprenticeship Program Interview (Pending as of January 14, 2025) – Focused on emerging workforce pathways and the role of pre-apprenticeships in talent development.
- **Total Earned Media Value: \$127,971.00.**

Beyond media engagements, the Board also participated in the following conference:

- Texas Workforce Conference Presentation (December 4, 2024) – Director Juliet Stipeche, Leigh Ann Arnold, and Michelle Cantú-Wilson presented on the Gulf Coast Workforce Board's strategic plan, highlighting innovative approaches to addressing regional workforce challenges.

Additionally, **branding and outreach collateral** have been refined to ensure a cohesive and impactful presence, including:

- An updated Workforce Solutions – Gulf Coast logo, reinforcing the region’s workforce identity.
- 2025 Legislative Outreach materials and “Save the Date” notifications for upcoming policy discussions.
- Design work for Hire Gulf Coast Youth.

Expanding Community Engagement & Strategic Partnerships:

We are proud of the 2025 Technical Industry Career Fair with Houston Livestock Show & Rodeo (HLSR). This is the Board’s first-ever collaborative job fair with HLSR at NRG Park successfully connected youth and job seekers with employers, showcasing a model for future regional workforce engagement efforts. Key outcomes from this event include:

- Total Registered Job Seekers: 940 (402 youth participants)
- Employers Registered: 45
- Employers Attended: 30
- **Total Job Seekers Attended: 492 (216 youth participants)**

In December 2024, we presented at the OST/South Union Community Partnership in collaboration with the Houston Business Development, Inc. The Board presented a “One Voice” briefing to 18 prospective employers, highlighting key workforce services including:

- Employer Services
- Career Services
- Adult Education & Literacy
- Childcare Scholarships
- Strategic Partnerships

Launching Hire Gulf Coast Youth:

The Hire Gulf Coast Youth (HGKY) initiative serves as a comprehensive, regional workforce campaign designed to connect young job seekers with career exploration opportunities and high-growth industries. With a multi-phase rollout, HGKY is structured around:

- Awareness & Outreach: Multi-platform engagement to inform youth and families;

- Employer & Partner Engagement: Securing hiring commitments from businesses; and
- Youth Digital Engagement: Leveraging social media to drive participation.

Key Milestones:

- January 16, 2025 – Soft launch at ABC13 “Who’s Hiring” Job Fair;
- January 29, 2025 – Official launch at the Tri-Agency Regional Convenor Conference at the Ion;
- March 24, 2025 – Employer matching process begins; and
- June 16 – August 8, 2025 – HGCV Summer Jobs Program.

Elevating Digital Presence & Technology Integration:

To ensure Workforce Solutions remains at the forefront of digital engagement, the Board continues to optimize its social media strategy and modernize its digital platforms.

Social Media Performance (Nov–Dec 2024)

Platform	Followers	Reach	Profile Visits
Facebook	11,618	88,235	3,515
Instagram	5,645	10,362	2,200
LinkedIn	10,852	9,989	2,249
X Twitter)	1,790	N/A	N/A

Strategic Enhancements:

- Content Strategy: Storytelling-driven posts featuring success stories, workforce trends, and hiring events.
- SEO Optimization: Enhancing discoverability for Workforce Solutions programs.
- Platform Optimization: Tailoring content to employer engagement (LinkedIn, Facebook) and youth outreach (Instagram, YouTube).

Technology & Digital Transformation Initiatives:

- Quell Board Management Software: The contract is being finalized, with implementation expected in Spring 2025, enhancing Board operations and administrative efficiency.
- Website Redevelopment: In collaboration with H-GAC Communications, Planetarium, and Outreach Strategists,

the Board is developing a modern, mobile-responsive website designed to enhance accessibility, user experience, and workforce resource integration. The project is currently in the wireframing phase, focusing on intuitive navigation, streamlined content delivery, and seamless access to workforce services.

Conclusion: Driving Workforce Innovation Through Strategic Communication:

As the workforce landscape continues to evolve, Workforce Solutions – Gulf Coast is committed to leveraging communication, technology, and strategic outreach to drive regional workforce success. By embracing merging digital trends, reinforcing regional branding, and expanding public engagement efforts, the Board is setting a new standard for workforce development. These efforts ensure that employers, job seekers, and partners remain engaged, informed, and connected to resources that drive economic growth and opportunity. Through innovation and strategic foresight, Workforce Solutions is poised to shape the future of workforce engagement across the region.

Chair Jackson concluded his report. No action was taken.

Mr. Paul Puente inquired if there is a survey or feedback gathering mechanism that Board staff has utilized to socialize the new strategic plan? Executive Director Stipeche responded that Board staff is working with Outreach Strategists to rollout a strategic plan socialization calendar. Dates and locations will be shared with the Board.

- f. Career Services Committee Report (Mr. Russell Tomlin and Crosby Brito):** The Career Services Committee report was delivered by Mr. Russell Tomlin and Crosby Brito in Chair Adrian Ozuna’s absence. The Career Services Committee met in a hybrid meeting on January 30, 2025, at 3555 Timmons Ln, Houston, TX 77027, Room 2D at 1:00 p.m.

Board Members present in person or on video included Board Chair Mark Guthrie, Adrian Ozuna, Jonathan Lowe, Cheryl Guido, Guy Jackson, Alan Haskamp, Bin Yu, Dr. Melanie Rodriguez, Dr. Melissa Gonzalez, Mou Sarkar, Edward Melton, Doug Karr, Jeff Labroski, and Paul Puente.

Board staff present in person or on video included Juliet Stipeche, Desmond Taylor, Russell Tomlin, Crosby Brito, Sabrina Parras, Brittany

Eaton, Kevin Rodney, Philip Garcia, Jennifer Graves, Thomas Brown, Kristi Rangel, Dr. Maria Franco Cortes, Jeanette De La Cruz, Brandi Brown, Jenny Johnson, Shawanna Thompson, Sable Harris, Jennifer Starling, and were joined by Leigh Ann Arnold from Outreach Strategists.

The Career Services Committee convened to address a critical challenge: the fragmented structure of career services and employer engagement. The Committee discussed the pressing need to fully integrate these services to create a seamless, data-driven, and employer-responsive workforce system. The Committee explored best practices from other workforce boards, including Dallas, North Texas, and Coastal Bend, highlighting successful models that link career services directly to employer needs. A fully integrated system will reduce inefficiencies, accelerate job placements, and provide a more cohesive experience for both job seekers and businesses. Key steps toward this transformation include aligning workforce services under a One-Stop Model, leveraging technology-driven job matching and workforce analytics, and expanding industry-informed career pathways. The transition will eliminate redundant processes, improve employer access to skilled talent, and ensure job seekers receive targeted training that leads to meaningful employment.

The Benefits of a Unified Workforce System:

Under the WIOA, a "One-Stop Shop" refers to a comprehensive American Job Center (AJC) that provides a wide range of workforce development, education, and support services to job seekers and employers in one location or through a coordinated service delivery system. These services include:

- Career Services
- Job Search Assistance
- Training Services
- Supportive Services
- Youth Services
- Employer Services (locally Employer Engagement)
- Recruitment Assistance
- Training and Development Programs
- Labor Market Information
- Support for individuals with disabilities
- Apprenticeship Programs
- Sector Partnerships and Career Pathways

These centers aim to streamline access to resources and ensure all customers receive high-quality assistance. A "True One-Stop" reflects the goal of WIOA to create a comprehensive, employer-focused service delivery system that helps individuals obtain sustainable employment and assists employers in finding skilled workers.

Seamless Alignment Between Job Seekers and Employers:

One of the fundamental purposes of workforce development is to create a symbiotic relationship between those seeking employment and the businesses that drive our regional economy. By integrating career services and employer engagement, we ensure job seekers receive training and support that is directly informed by employer needs, equipping them with skills that are not just in demand but are actively sought after in the labor market. At the same time, employers gain access to a well-prepared, job-ready talent pipeline— not just a pool of applicants, but individuals whose training and qualifications align precisely with industry expectations.

The Path Forward: Implementing the Transformation:

The transition to a fully integrated workforce system will require careful planning, strong leadership, and strategic execution. The implementation process will focus on:

- Aligning workforce services with industry-driven career pathways.
- Deploying technology-driven job matching and workforce analytics tools.
- Building stronger partnerships with employers, educators, and community organizations.
- Ensuring staff are trained to deliver seamless, high-quality services.
- Tracking performance through data-driven decision-making.

This transition represents a bold shift, but it is a necessary one. By modernizing career services, integrating business engagement, and leveraging data-driven strategies, we will create a resilient, future-ready workforce system that delivers meaningful results.

Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA)

The RESEA program is a federally funded initiative designed to help individuals who are receiving unemployment insurance (UI) benefits

return to work as quickly as possible. It combines job search assistance with a review of the individual's ongoing eligibility for UI benefits, ensuring they meet program requirements while providing personalized support to secure employment. Key components of the RESEA program include:

- **Personalized Services:** Claimants meet one-on-one with workforce staff to create a tailored reemployment plan.
- **Job Search Assistance:** Services include resume reviews, interview preparation, labor market information, and referrals to job opportunities.
- **Eligibility Review:** Staff assess whether claimants continue to meet UI eligibility requirements, ensuring program integrity.
- **Workforce Resources:** Claimants are connected to training programs, workshops, and other resources to enhance their skills and improve employability.

RESEA focuses on early intervention for UI recipients who are most likely to exhaust their benefits without finding work, helping them transition back into the workforce more efficiently. This proactive approach benefits both claimants and the broader economy by reducing the duration of unemployment and strengthening the workforce.

Performance Expectations

Performance	Target
Meet or exceed completion of Initial RESEA Appointment for claimants in their profile pool	77%
Meet failure to report (no-show) Scheduled Appointment benchmark	23%

We developed a regional Reemployment Team consisting of three supervisors and twenty full-time staff from BakerRipley, Equus, and Interfaith to work with UI customers who have received a RESEA outreach notice. Our Reemployment Team provides service to UI customers in response to our RESEA outreach letters.

The Re-Employment Team works primarily as a regional call center, communicating with customers virtually and in-person. The team is responsible for:

- Efficiently organizing and overseeing RESEA appointments to ensure timely service delivery.
- Delivering informative and engaging sessions for all customers receiving the RESEA outreach notice.
- Offering personalized job search support assistance such as customized labor market information, employment planning, resume reviews, interview preparation, and job referrals to help customers secure employment.
- Identifying the need for additional services like training or talent development to enhance employability.
- Enrolling eligible RESEA customers into WIOA Dislocated Statewide Initiatives and/or Dislocated Worker funds to access additional resources and support services.

During the 2024 TWC Pre-Conference, GCWB was recognized as the most improved board for RESEA completions with a year-over-year improvement of 26.3%.

Mr. Dorian Cockrell inquired if the career assessment is for job seekers or internal controls? The response provided was that it is for any person seeking scholarships for career assessment/education.

Ms. Shareen Larmond inquired if we have seen impact on our services due to the political/social climate? The response provided was not as of now.

Ms. Mou Sakar commented that there is tremendous engagement on the ground on the EDC side. If a trainee does not qualify for a specific career path that they desire, do we work to redirect them? The response provided was yes, our goal is to integrate AEL services in a more successful way by utilizing the Career Lattice.

Mr. Paul Puente commented that we need to increase outreach/communications to not only employers but persons that are trained in certain industries looking for work.

No further questions were raised and, Mr. Tomlin concluded the report. No action was taken.

8. Action Items:

- a. Budget Committee Report and Action Item (Board Chair Mark Guthrie):**
Board Chair Guthrie reported that the Budget Committee met in a hybrid

meeting on January 30, 2025, at 3:00 PM at 3555 Timmons Lane, Houston, TX, 2D.

Board Members present in person or on video included Board Chair Mark Guthrie, Paul Puente, Douglas Karr, Dr. Bobbie Henderson, Adrian Ozuna, Guy R. Jackson, Dorian Cockrell, and Mou Sarkar.

Board Chair Guthrie continued his report by referring to a series of attachments that were produced during the budget season, including:

- Memo from H-GAC Executive Director Chuck Wemple to Board Chair Mark Guthrie with responses to recommendations made by the Budget Committee on work processes and approvals in December 2024.
- Full list of 116 H-GAC support positions that charge time directly/indirectly to the Workforce division funding.
- Report on H-GAC Outreach and Governmental Affairs Division positions that are charged directly/indirectly to the Workforce division funding.
- January 10, 2025, letter from Whitney Penn Auditor to H-GAC's CFO that outlined guidelines that originated from 2 CFR 200 (the Uniform Guidance) on the administration of federal grants.
- January 9, 2025, memo from Robert M. Lloyd, H-GAC consultant on indirect charges.

The Budget Committee met on November 7, 2024, November 16, 2024, and January 30, 2025, to finalize recommendations to the Board for the PY2025 operating budget.

The proposed 2025 Board budget designates 5.6% of total revenue for Administrative operations at H-GAC, while the remaining 94.4% is allocated to contracted services delivery. Board operations are budgeted at \$27,651,962 for 2025, a 33.6% increase from 2024 due to the transition of child care quality activities to the Board, with system operations increasing to \$468,187,031, reflecting a 3.9% rise from the previous year.

System Operations Highlights:

The proposed financial aid budget will increase to just over \$386 million to meet the growing demand for early education, scholarships, work-based learning, and work support. The Employer Services budget has decreased overall, as funding previously allocated for child care quality initiatives for providers is now reflected within Financial Aid.

Additionally, oversight of child care quality activities has transitioned to the Board. A reduction is also proposed in the Resident Services budget, particularly affecting Career Services, due primarily to changes in our Adult Education consortium. In response to anticipated changes in WIOA reauthorization, we have strategically aligned our allocation of WIOA resources to ensure compliance with potential new requirements.

Board Operations Highlights:

The proposed budget supports 100 Workforce Division staff, reflecting expansions in the Child Care Quality team. Board staff are currently directly managing Child Care Quality activities as we procure a new service provider. This corresponds to the large increase in contracted services (temporary staffing) as well as travel costs to support these individuals.

Planned information technology improvements include network upgrades, website enhancements, assistive technology refreshes, and development of a mobile app.

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

- Indirect is increasing to \$1,458,776, up 13.4% from 2024.
- Internal and Shared Services is proposed at \$4,444,536¹, a 18.2% increase from the previous year.
 - Internal Services is increasing to \$1,327,567
 - Network Services is increasing to \$1,268,974
 - Data Services is increasing to \$734,808
 - Internal Audit is increasing to \$445,389

- Finance is decreasing to \$379,375
- Communications is increasing to \$288,424

¹New and Vacant personnel costs allocated to Workforce total \$722,884.

Results and Objectives

In addition to meeting state and federal performance standards, the 2025 budget aims to achieve various outcomes, including:

- Career Services: Assisting over 48,300 individuals in entering employment.
- Employer Engagement: Serving over 30,000 employers.
- Quality Early Education: Providing child care scholarships for about 55,000 children.
- Adult Education and Literacy: Providing adult education services to over 7,800 students.
- Youth Services: Providing workforce services to over 20,000 young people.

2024 results are detailed below for comparison:

- Career Services: Assisted over 48,700 individuals in entering employment.
- Employer Engagement: Served over 38,000 employers.
- Quality Early Education: Provided child care scholarships for about 55,500 children.
- Adult Education and Literacy: Provided adult education services to over 16,000 students.
- Youth Services: Provided workforce services to over 24,800 young people.

**Gulf Coast Workforce Board
2025 Budget
Source and Use**

Source		Use	
General Revenue	453,946,030	Board Operations	27,651,962
Special Revenue	41,892,963	Employer Service	13,600,332
		Resident Service	68,200,000
		Financial Aid	386,386,699
Total	\$495,838,993	Total	\$495,838,993

**Gulf Coast Workforce
2025 Budget
Source Summary**

	2025	2024	Dollar Change	% Change
General Federal & State Revenue	453,946,030	447,575,009	6,371,021	1.4%
Child Care Services	362,763,396	356,733,421	6,029,975	1.7%
Workforce Innovation and Opportunity	55,779,934	57,954,890 -	2,174,956	-3.8%
Temporary Assistance for Needy Families	16,843,059	15,171,087	1,671,972	11.0%
Vocational Rehabilitation	8,196,064	8,194,679	1,385	0.0%
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance	3,755,645	3,214,520	541,125	16.8%
Reemployment Services & Eligibility Assessment	3,821,879	3,392,480	429,399	12.7%
Wagner-Peyser Employment Services	2,215,453	2,215,453	-	0.0%
Veterans Employment and Training	565,600	581,479 -	15,879	-2.7%
Trade Act	5,000	117,000 -	112,000	-95.7%
Special Federal & State Revenue	41,692,963	23,923,302	17,769,661	74.3%
Child Care Quality Enhancement	13,600,345	906,830	12,693,515	1399.8%
Adult Education	12,250,372	21,050,028 -	8,799,656	-41.8%
NDW Disaster Relief Employment	15,423,420	-	15,423,420	100.0%
JOBS Plus	120,000	120,000	-	0.0%
Texas Education Agency - Regional Convener	100,000	600,000 -	500,000	-83.3%
Texas Industry Partnership	100,000	-	100,000	100.0%
High Demand Job Training	98,826	-	98,826	100.0%
WIOA Statewide - Upskilling	-	503,502 -	503,502	-100.0%
Apprenticeship Grants	-	400,000 -	400,000	-100.0%
Middle Skills Initiative	-	342,942 -	342,942	-100.0%
Other Sources	200,000	-	200,000	100.0%
Houston Endowment	200,000	-	200,000	100.0%
Total Revenue	495,838,993	471,498,311	24,340,682	5.2%

**Gulf Coast Workforce Board
2025 Budget
Use Summary**

	2025	2024	% of Total 2025 Budget	Dollar Variance from 2024	% Variance from 2024
Board Operations	27,651,962	20,700,346	5.6%	6,951,616	33.6%
Salaries and Benefits	11,854,545	9,593,889	2.4%	2,260,655	23.6%
Consultants & Contracts	7,394,850	3,080,000	1.5%	4,314,850	140.1%
Travel	268,000	127,000	0.1%	141,000	111.0%
Other	999,800	528,070	0.2%	471,730	89.3%
Information Technology	1,325,534	1,769,065	0.3%	(443,531)	-25.1%
Rent	628,805	554,726	0.1%	74,079	13.4%
Indirect	1,458,776	1,286,176	0.3%	172,600	13.4%
Internal & Shared Services	4,444,536	3,761,420	0.9%	683,116	18.2%
New & Vacant Personnel Costs ¹	(722,884)				
System Operations	468,187,031	450,797,965	94.4%	17,389,066	3.9%
Employer Service					
Employer Engagement	9,000,000	9,000,000	1.8%	-	0.0%
Quality Improvement	4,600,332	14,000,000	0.9%	(9,399,668)	-67.1%
Resident Service					
Career Services	55,200,000	54,240,000	11.1%	960,000	1.8%
Adult Education	13,000,000	19,682,000	2.6%	(6,682,000)	-33.9%
Financial Aid					
Early Educational Care	341,386,699	313,775,965	68.9%	27,610,734	8.8%
Training & Support	29,000,000	24,000,000	5.8%	5,000,000	20.8%
Operations	16,000,000	16,100,000	3.2%	(100,000)	-0.6%
Total	495,838,993	471,498,311	100.0%	24,340,682	5.2%

¹New and Vacant personnel costs allocated to Workforce total \$722,884. These positions are pending a review and approval by the Gulf Coast Workforce Board Executive Director.

**Gulf Coast Workforce Board
2025 Budget
Budget Detail**

	Board Operations			
	2025	2024	Dollar Variance	Percent Variance
Consultants & Contracts	7,394,850	3,080,000	4,314,850	140%
Legal Services	315,000	315,000	-	0%
Audit	51,000	54,000	- 3,000	-6%
Financial Monitoring	1,012,000	1,096,000	- 84,000	-8%
Public Information & Outreach	948,500	900,000	48,500	5%
Temporary Staffing	4,268,350	300,000	3,968,350	1323%
External Consultants	550,000	415,000	135,000	33%
Contracted Services	250,000	-	250,000	100%
Other	999,800	528,070	471,730	89%
Employee Development	196,000	125,000	71,000	57%
Expendable Equipment	140,000	107,500	32,500	30%
Software	156,700	106,700	50,000	47%
Communications	227,000	52,920	174,080	329%
Subscriptions & Dues	75,000	47,050	27,950	59%
Outside Printing	80,000	30,000	50,000	167%
Meeting Expenses	24,000	14,000	10,000	71%
Postage & Delivery	12,800	12,800	-	0%
Legal Notices	12,000	12,000	-	0%
Supplies	38,000	10,000	28,000	280%
Maintenance & Repair	6,000	6,000	-	0%
Employee Recruitment	20,000	1,800	18,200	1011%
Books & Publications	1,500	1,500	-	0%
Licenses & Permits	800	800	-	0%
Food & Beverage	10,000	-	10,000	100%
H-GAC Internal & Shared Services	4,444,536	3,761,420	683,116	18%
Internal Services	1,327,567	1,027,081	300,486	29%
Network Services	1,268,974	975,958	293,016	30%
Data Services	734,808	691,549	43,259	6%
Internal Audit	445,389	363,685	81,704	22%
Finance	379,375	440,076	- 60,701	-14%
Communications	288,424	263,072	25,352	10%
Information Technology & Network Support	1,325,534	1,769,065	- 443,531	-25%
Software	482,740	502,071	- 19,331	-4%
Wide Area Network	250,000	215,000	35,000	16%
Website	80,000	200,000	- 120,000	-60%
Technology Improvements	430,000	777,000	- 347,000	-45%
Capital Equipment	50,000	40,000	10,000	100%
Operating Expenses	32,794	34,994	- 2,200	-6%

A motion was made and seconded to adopt the PY 2025-2026 budget, excluding the new and vacant positions referenced in the H-GAC support schedule and based on the representation from H-GAC that H-GAC follows all applicable state/federal requirements and laws pertaining to

these funds, and in an amount not to exceed \$495,838,993 as proposed by the Budget Committee.

Ms. Mou Sarkar inquired on which part of the budget does contracts fall under? Mr. AJ Dean responded: System operations.

The motion passed and PY2025-2026 budget was approved as stated above with no further discussion.

- b. Employer Engagement Committee Report and Action Item (Committee Chair Alan Heskamp):** Chair Heskamp reported on the hybrid meeting on January 22, 2025, of the Employer Engagement Committee at 3555 Timmons Lane, Houston, TX 77051, 2D.

Board Members present in person or online included Board Chair Mark Guthrie, Mou Sarkar, Alan Heskamp, Bin Yu, Dr. Bobbie Henderson, Cheryl Guido, Dr. Melanie Rodriguez, Joyce Johnson, Lizandra Vasquez, Margaret Oser, Anne Bartlett, Dr. Michael Webster, Paul Puente, Marie Arcos, and Edward Melton.

Two major highlights from the meeting were the discussion around integrating Career Services and Employer Engagement into a comprehensive, one-stop shop service as well as the creation of an Employer Engagement Advisory Group focused on targeted industries in the region.

Chair Heskamp called up Parker Harvey, manager of Regional Economic Analysis, to provide a comprehensive review of the Board's existing High Skills High Growth framework, evaluated key changes from the 2023 list, and introduced proposed refinements for 2025. These updates are driven by labor market intelligence, employer needs, and an evolving economic landscape, ensuring that we continue to connect job seekers with viable career pathways and strengthen our regional economy. Juliet Stipeche and Leigh Ann Arnold discussed the Local WIOA Plan which needs to be submitted to the Texas Workforce Commission by March 21, 2025, and includes the updated HSHG list in addition to other required deliverables.

The meeting focused on refining industry selection criteria, balancing educational access, addressing workforce investment imbalances, and ensuring the HSHG list remains responsive to high-demand occupations. Board members were active and involved in providing critical feedback and recommendations.

Refinements to the High-Skill, High-Growth List

Updated Industry & Occupation Selection Criteria:

The 2025 Targeted Industry List will include 52 industries, adding Scientific Research & Development Services to support biotechnology, nanotechnology, and engineering. It is also reduced from 147 to 138 occupations to focus on middle-skill and technical careers. The 2023 HSHG list was dominated by bachelor's degree occupations (65%), which limited accessibility to training for middle-skill jobs. The revised 2025 list lowers this percentage to 51%, ensuring more equitable access to two-year degree and vocational training programs.

Parker Harvey reviewed and adjusted the 2025 HSHG List to incorporate the Board's input. The Board agreed to adjust workforce training allocations to ensure more balanced investment strategies. Board members also expressed a desire to expand employer engagement efforts by collaborating with new and existing companies to better align training programs with workforce needs.

Ms. Shareen Larmond discussed the importance of ensuring we focus on scholarship eligible industries. That comment was followed by Ms. Joyce Johnson who spoke on the demand for certain occupations and how these occupations are determined. Dr. Bobbie Henderson expressed her concerns about academia careers weren't represented in the HSHG lists; however, expressed there is a high need within our region. Mr. Dorian Cockrell encouraged the Board staff to work with community partners to ensure that the HSHG list is shared and referenced among partners. Ms. Mou Sarkar inquired on what occupations were scholarship eligible versus non-scholarship eligible and what are the best ways to list that out to employers and job seekers. Ms. Anne Bartlett inquired how the HSHG list compares to the Coordinating Council's list of high demand occupations? Ms. Shareen Larmond added that Board staff ensure we create criteria for scholarships and there are measures in place to track persons who

utilize our funds. Doug Karr inquired if there are scholarships for certifications?

A motion was made and seconded to adopt the 2025 High Skills, High Growth Plan. The motion passed.

- c. Procurement Committee Report and Action Item (Committee Chair Dr. Bobbie Henderson):** Dr. Bobbie Henderson reported on the Procurement Committee that met on January 30, 2025, at 2:07pm at H-GAC Office, 3555 Timmons Lane, Houston, TX 77027 in Room 2D to review information and consider recommendations to award FY2025 contracts.

Board members present included Chair Mark Guthrie, Adrian Ozuna, Doug Karr, Guy Jackson, Alan Heskamp, Paul Puente, and Cheryl Guido.

Board staff in attendance included Juliet Stipeche, Desmond Taylor, AJ Dean, Thomas Brown, Russell Tomlin, Vanessa Salazar, Abdul Kargbo, Kristi Rangel, Dr. Maria Franco Cortes, Jessica Smith, Brandi Brown, Jennifer Roberts, Jenny Johnson, Parker Harvey, and Sabrina Uy.

The following contract recommendation and requested amounts were considered:

Service Provider	2025 Contract Request Amount
I. Career Lattice	
Chmura Economics & Analytics LLC	\$200,000
II. Regional Teacher Apprenticeship Program	
TNTP, Inc.	\$100,000
III. Legal Services	
DC Legal PLLC	\$300,000
TOTAL	\$600,000

The Procurement Committee recommended to the Board that the Board authorize staff to negotiate a contract with Chmura Economics & Analytics LLC for up to \$200,000 to develop and implement all three stages of the Career Lattice initiative.

A motion was made and seconded to authorize staff to negotiate a contract with Chmura Economics & Analytics LLC for up to \$200,000 to develop and implement all three stages of the Career Lattice initiative. The motion passed.

The Procurement Committee recommended to the Board that the Board authorize staff to negotiate a contract with TNTP, Inc. not to exceed \$100,000, conditioned on the receipt of required certifications related to insurance and bonding requirements. The documentation provided by TNTP; Inc. will be reviewed to confirm compliance with our standards before the contract is finalized.

A motion was made and seconded to that the Board authorize staff to negotiate a contract with TNTP, Inc. not to exceed \$100,000, for the Regional Teacher Apprenticeship Program contract conditioned on the receipt of required certifications related to insurance and bonding requirements. The documentation provided by TNTP; Inc. will be reviewed to confirm compliance with our standards before the contract is finalized. The motion passed.

The Procurement Committee recommended to the Board that the Board authorize staff to negotiate a contract for legal services with DC Legal PLLC with a one-year term and two optional one-year extensions. Each year, this contract will be funded at \$300,000 with renewal contingent upon staff approval of performance. The total contract amount over three years will not exceed \$900,000. DC Legal PLLC will bill on an hourly basis at a rate of \$360 per hour for actual services rendered.

A motion was made and seconded to that the Board authorize staff to negotiate a contract for legal services with DC Legal PLLC with a one-year term and two optional one-year extensions. Each year, this contract will be funded at \$300,000 with renewal contingent upon staff approval of performance. The total contract amount over three years will not

exceed \$900,000. DC Legal PLLC will bill on an hourly basis at a rate of \$360 per hour for actual services rendered. The motion passed.

- d. Nominations Committee Report (Chair Doug Karr):** Chair Doug Karr reported that the Nominations Committee met on January 30, 2025, at 4:00 p.m. at 3555 Timmons Lane, Houston, TX 77027 (Room 2D).

This committee is closed to members of the Nominations Committee only. The following committee members were present: Chair Doug Karr, Alan Heskamp, and Dr. Bobbie Henderson.

Board staff in attendance included Juliet Stipeche, Desmond Taylor, and Dr. Maria Franco Cortes.

Chair Heskamp continued with his report by mentioning that the Board's By-Laws require a Board Chair, from private industry, and three Vice Chairs. Last year, Sara Bouse and Willie Alexander stepped down from the GCWB leaving two Vice Chair vacancies. Chair Mark Guthrie and Vice Chair Dr. Bobbie Henderson continue to serve as Board officers. Nominations were opened to the Board, and the members discussed nominated individuals.

Based on the open call for nominations to fill the Gulf Coast Workforce Board's two (2) vacant Vice Chair positions, the Nominations Committee recommended and request the Board's approval of the following Board members to fill the two vacant Vice Chair positions:

- Guy Robert Jackson, and
- Paul Puente.

A motion was made and seconded to accept the nominations of Guy Robert Jackson and Paul Puente as GCWB Vice Chairs for the remainder of the two-year terms of Willie Alexander and Sara Bouse. The motion passed.

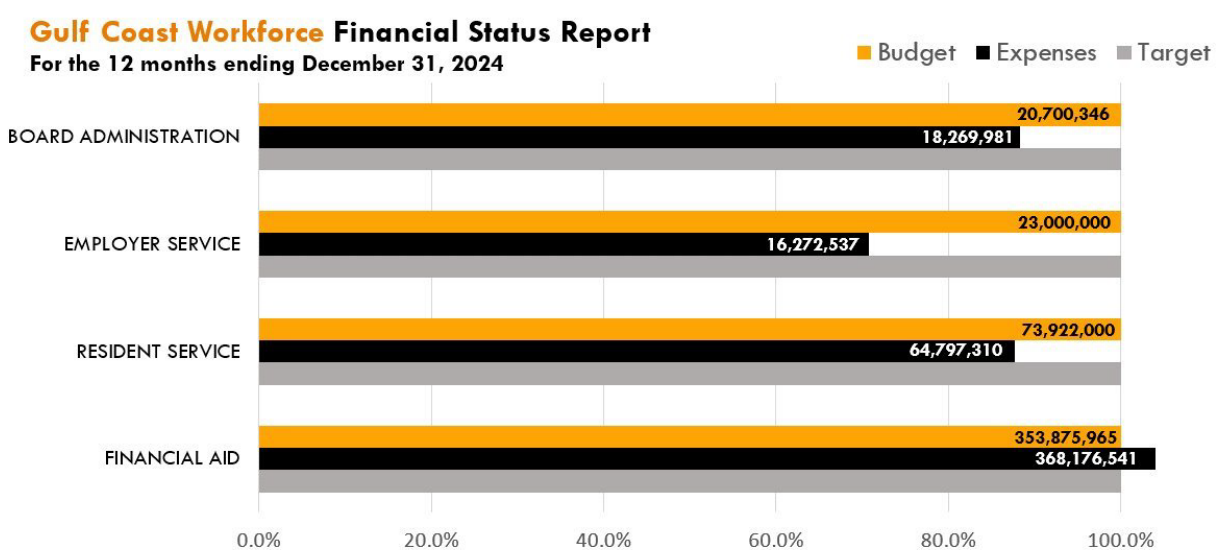
9. Information:

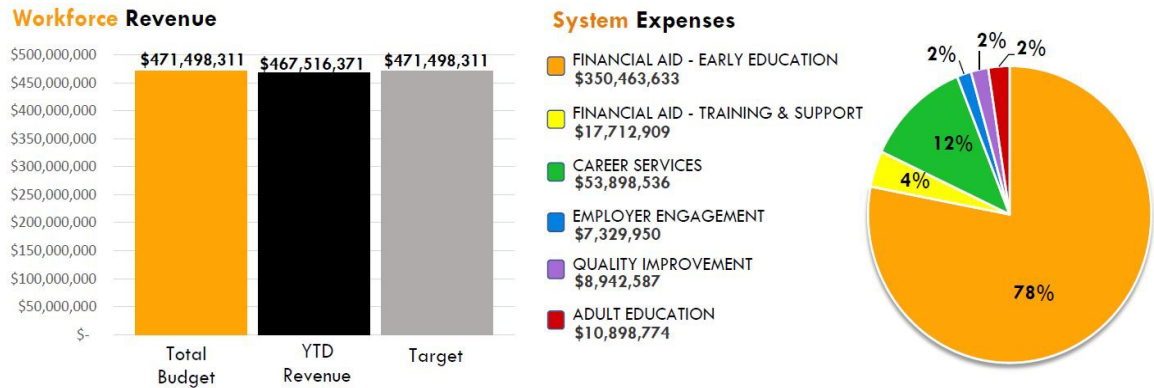
- a. Performance and Production Report (Philip Garcia):**

Workforce Solutions Gulf Coast Year 2024 Year End Report

TWC Contracted Measures	Target	Performance	% of Target	TWC Contracted Measures	Target	Performance	% of Target
Employed Q2 Post Exit - Adult	75.60%	77.12%	102.02%	Employed/Enrolled Q2 Post Exit - Youth	73.90%	66.48%	89.96%
Employed Q4 Post Exit - Adult	72.60%	71.75%	98.82%	Employed/Enrolled Q4 Post Exit - Youth	70.60%	66.95%	94.82%
Median Earnings Q2 Post Exit - Adult	\$6,500.00	\$6,536.16	100.56%	Median Earnings Q2 Post Exit - Youth	\$3,780.00	\$4,956.78	131.13%
Credential Rate - Adult	68.90%	56.44%	81.92%	Credential Rate - Youth	55.70%	42.78%	76.80%
Measurable Skills Gains - Adult	66.00%	73.03%	110.65%	Measurable Skills Gains - Youth	53.40%	55.62%	104.15%
Employed Q2 Post Exit - DW	83.10%	85.63%	103.04%	Employed/Enrolled Q2 Post Exit - C&T	66.00%	63.70%	96.51%
Employed Q4 Post Exit - DW	79.50%	74.93%	94.26%	Employed/Enrolled Q2-Q4 Post Exit - C&T	84.00%	82.09%	97.73%
Median Earnings Q2 Post Exit - DW	\$9,400.00	\$12,134.81	129.09%	Credential Rate - C&T	71.00%	55.54%	78.22%
Credential Rate - DW	82.50%	68.12%	82.57%	Claimant Reemployment within 10 Weeks	60.00%	57.47%	95.79%
Measurable Skills Gains - DW	75.10%	74.16%	98.75%	Texas Talent Assistance	28,174	37,309	132.42%
				Choices Full Engagement Rate - All Family	50.00%	57.27%	114.55%
				Average Children Served Per Day	33,620	36,877	109.69%

b. Expenditures Report (Brandi Brown):





c. Legislative Update (Desmond Taylor):

The 89th Texas Legislature convened its regular session on January 14, 2025, at noon, with adjournment scheduled for June 2, 2025.

Approximately 5,000 bills have been filed, with only 10 directly related to childcare and workforce development.

A handful of Vocational Rehabilitation and general operations bills are being monitored by the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC).

Bill filing period opened on November 11, 2024, and will conclude on March 14, 2025.

The GCWB has produced push-cards that outline the Board’s legislative priorities during the 89th Legislative Session. These items include:

- Fuel Economic Growth by Enhancing Workforce Excellence
- Expand Apprenticeships and Career Pathways
- Ensure Affordable, High-Quality Child Care

10. Presentations:

a. A Look at the Economy Update on the Labor Market (Parker Harvey and Mohammad Ahmadizadeh):

Slides to full presentation attached in board packet.

b. Communications and Media Update (Russell Tomlin):

11. Other Business: There was no other business.

12. Adjourn: Board Chair Guthrie adjourned the meeting at 12:13 pm.

GULF COAST WORKFORCE BOARD

ARCOS, MARIE

Compudopt, Inc.
1602 Airline Drive
Houston, TX 77009
(713) 557-6575

Category: CBO

County: Harris

Marie.arcos@compudopt.org

Term: January 1, 2025, thru December 31, 2026

BELOW, SHONDA

Northeast Houston American
Federation of Teachers
5310 E Sam Houston Pkwy N, Ste M
Houston, TX 7701
(713) 598-7144

Category: Labor

County: Harris

sbelow@nehouaft.org

Term: January 1, 2025, thru December 31, 2026

BOWLES, CARL

Bowles, Womack & Company, P.C.
24 Greenway Plaza, Suite 970
Houston, TX 77046
(713) 621-0050

Category: Private

County: Waller

carl@bowleswomack.com

Term: January 1, 2025, thru December 31, 2026

CEVALLOS, RACHEL

Identity Plus, LLC
3205 Harrisburg Blvd.
Houston, TX 77003
(832) 797-7402

Category: Private

County: Harris

Rachel@identityplusllc.com

Term: January 1, 2025, thru December 31, 2026

COCKRELL, DORIAN

JPMorgan Chase
712 Main St.
Houston, TX 77002
(817) 707--5957

Category: Private

County: City of Houston

Dorian.cockrell@jpmchase.com

Term: January 1, 2025, thru December 31, 2026

DOBERT, MICHAEL

HR in Alignment, LLC
16331 Blossomwood Ln,
Sugar Land, TX 77498
(281) 889-9075

Category: Private

County: Fort Bend

mdobert@hrinalignment.com

Term: January 1, 2025, thru December 31, 2026

GONZALEZ, MELISSA

Lone Star College
20000 Kingwood Drive
Kingwood, TX 77339
(281) 312-1644

Category: Education

County: Harris

melissa.gonzalez@lonestar.edu

Term: January 1, 2025, thru December 31, 2026

GUIDO, CHERYL

Texas Workforce Solutions-VR Services
4424 North Freeway, Suite A
Houston, TX 77022
(713) 458-8593

Category: State Agency

cheryl.guido@twc.texas.gov

Term: January 1, 2025, thru December 31, 2026

GUTHRIE, MARK

Board Chair

Winstead PC
600 Travis Street, Suite 5200
Houston, TX 77002
(713) 650-2730

Category: Private

County: City of Houston

mguthrie@winstead.com

Term: January 1, 2025, thru December 31, 2026

HENDERSON, BOBBIE ALLEN

Vice Chair

Texas Southern University
4203 Charleston Street
Houston, TX 77021-1415
(713) 748-6508

Category: ABE

County: City of Houston

bobbieahenderson@gmail.com

Term: January 1, 2024, thru December 31, 2025

HARRIS, ALLATIA

San Jacinto College
8060 Spencer Hwy,
Pasadena, TX 77505
(281) 459-7140

Category: ABE

County: City of Houston

Allatia.Harris@sjcd.edu

Term: January 1, 2025, thru December 31, 2026

HESKAMP, ALAN

Heskamp & Associates LLC
311 Hoskins Broadway
El Campo, TX 77437
(979) 758-4521

Category: Private

County: Wharton

aheskamp@sbcglobal.net

Term: January 1, 2024, thru December 31, 2025

JACKSON, GUY ROBERT

Vice Chair

Chambers County Abstract Co. Inc.
P.O. Box 640
Anahuac, TX 77514
(409) 267-6262, ext. 35

Category: Private

County: Chambers

grj@ccac.net

Term: January 1, 2025, thru December 31, 2026

JONES, LAVONE

Comcast

8590 Tidwell Road
Houston, TX 77040
(346) 306-4770

Category: Private

County: City of Houston

Lavone.jones@comcast.com

Term: January 1, 2025, thru December 31, 2026

JOHNSON, JOYCE

Why Sales Network
1605 Milby Street B
Houston, TX 77003
(713) 542-5711

Category: Private

County: Harris

joyce@whysalesnetwork.com

Term: October 1, 2024, thru December 31, 2026

KARR, DOUG

Pro Staff/Atterro
27 Canoe Birch Place
The Woodlands, TX 77382
(832) 967-7684

Category: Private

County: Montgomery

raiderkarr@aol.com

Term: January 1, 2024, thru December 31, 2025

LABROSKI, JEFFREY

Plumbers Local Union No. 68
502 Link Road
P.O. Box 8746
Houston, TX 77249
(713) 869-3592
Category: Labor
County: City of Houston
ski@plu68.com
Term: January 1, 2025, thru December 31, 2026

LARMOND, SHAREEN

West Gulf Maritime Association
1717 Turning Basin Drive, Suite 200
Houston, TX 77029
(713) 715-6430
Category: Private
County: Harris
shareen@wgma.org
Term: January 1, 2025, thru December 31, 2026

LINDSEY, SUSAN

Texas Workforce Solutions-VR Services
3555 Timmons Lane, Suite 790
Houston, TX 77027
(713) 503-4364
Category: State Agency
County:
Susan.Lindsey@twc.texas.gov
Term: January 1, 2025, thru December 31, 2026

MAKANY RIVERA, TANYA

AT&T
6500 W Loop South
Bellaire, TX 77401
(832) 389-0902
Category: Private
County: Harris
tm457x@att.com
Term: January 1, 2025, thru December 31, 2026

LOWE, JONATHAN

International Alliance of Theatrical
Stage Employees
3030 North Freeway
Houston, TX 77009
(713) 697-3999
Category: Labor
County: City of Houston
jonrlowe@yahoo.com
Term: January 1, 2025, thru December 31, 2026

MELTON, EDWARD

Texas Library Association
5749 South Loop East
Houston, TX 77033
(713) 274-6600
Category: Literacy
County: Harris County
edward.melton@hcpl.net
Term: January 1, 2024, thru December 31, 2025

ORDONEZ, SINERIA

Comerica Bank
2 Riverway Drive
Houston, TX 77056
(512) 203-5945
Category: Private
County: Harris
serdonez@comerica.com
Term: January 1, 2025, thru December 31, 2026

OSER, MARGARET

United Way of Greater Houston
50 Waugh Drive
Houston, TX 77007
(713) 685-2788
Category: CBO
County: City of Houston
moser@unitedwayhouston.org
Term: January 1, 2024, thru December 31, 2025

OZUNA, ADRIAN

Prosperity Bank
80 Sugar Creek Center Blvd
Sugar Land, TX 77478
(832) 259-7692
Category: Private
County: Harris
adrian.ozuna@prosperitybankusa.com
Term: January 1, 2025, thru December 31, 2026

PUENTE, PAUL J.

Vice-Chair
Houston Gulf Coast Building and
Construction Trades Council
1301 West 13th St, Suite D
Deer Park, TX 77536
(713) 926-4433
Category: Labor
County: City of Houston
paul@hgcbctc.org
Term: January 1, 2025, thru December 31, 2026

RILEY, MONICA

The Community Gatekeepers
P.O. Box 2082
Missouri City, TX 77459
(281) 235-3933
Category: CBO
County: Fort Bend
monicacriley7@gmail.com
Term: January 1, 2025, thru December 31, 2026

RODRIGUEZ, GRACE

Impact Hub Houston
808 Travis Street, Suite 102
Houston, TX 77002
(713) 568-6835
Category: Economic Development
County: Harris
Grace.rodriguez@impacthub.net
Term: January 1, 2025, thru December 31, 2026

RODRIGUEZ, MELANIE

Elevate Latinas, LLC
444 N Everton St
Houston, TX 77033
(713) 899-6559
Category: Private
County: City of Houston
melanie@elevatelatinas.com
Term: January 1, 2025, thru December 31, 2026

RUPANI, NASRUDDIN

Worlds Gold & Diamonds, Inc.
7500 Bellaire Blvd #900
Houston, TX 77036
(713) 995-7033
Category: Public Assistance
County: City of Houston
rupani@locostleader.com
Term: January 1, 2024, thru December 31, 2025

SARKAR, MOU

Pearland Economic Development
Corporation
3519 Liberty Drive, Suite 350
Pearland, TX 77581
(281) 997-3007
Category: Economic Development
County: Brazoria
msarkar@pearlandedc.com
Term: January 1, 2024, thru December 31, 2025

SEGOVIA, VALERIE GARCIA

Director, Outreach & Education, TEES
Nuclear Engineering & Science Center
1095 Nuclear Science Road
College Station, TX 77843
(979) 240-5005
Category: Education
County: Matagorda
vsegovia@tamu.edu
valeriegsegovia@gmail.com
Term: January 1, 2024, thru December 31, 2025

LENORA SOROLA-POHLMAN

Sorola Consulting Services, Inc
2314 Tannehill Dr,
Houston, TX 77008
(713) 628-7500

Category: Private

County: City of Houston

lenora@navarroig.com

Term: January 1, 2025, thru December 31, 2026

TAYLOR, SANDRA

Tiny Toes Academy
1743 Trammel Fresno
Fresno, TX 77545
(832) 630-6301

Category: Child Care

County: Fort Bend

tinytoesacademy@yahoo.com

Term: January 1, 2025, thru December 31, 2026

VAZQUEZ, LIZANDRA

Texas Workforce Commission
3555 Timmons Lane, Suite 120
Houston, TX 77027
(713) 688-6890

Category: State Agency

lizandra.vazquez@wrksolutions.com

Term: January 1, 2025, thru December 31, 2026

WEBSTER, MICHAEL

Houston Community College
3100 Main Street
Houston, TX 77002
(713) 718-8030

Category: Education

County: City of Houston

michael.webster@hccs.edu

Term: January 1, 2025, thru December 31, 2026

YU, BIN

Asian Chamber of Commerce
3535 Briarpark Drive, Suite 108
Houston, TX 77036
(713) 818-9687

Category: Private

County: City of Houston

bin.yu@medxsunshine.com

Term: January 1, 2025, thru December 31, 2026

WORKFORCE BOARD KEY STAFF:

Juliet Stipeche, Director

Desmond Taylor, Program Administrator, Board Relations

Dr. Maria Franco Cortes, Senior Planner, Board Relations

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

Parker Harvey, Manager for Regional Economic Analysis

Houston-Galveston Area Council

3555 Timmons Lane, Suite 120

P.O. Box 22777

Houston, TX 77227-2777

(713) 627-3200

Fax: (713) 993-4578

<http://www.wrksolutions.com>

GULF COAST WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD COMMITTEES

Audit/Monitoring

- Guy Robert Jackson – Chair
- Carl Bowles – Vice Chair
- Cheryl Guido
- Mark Guthrie
- Doug Karr
- Paul Puente

Budget

- Carl Bowles – Chair
- Mark Guthrie – Vice Chair
- Bobbie Henderson
- Guy Robert Jackson
- Doug Karr

By-Laws

- Michael Webster – Chair
- Adrian Ozuna – Vice Chair
- Mark Guthrie
- Alan Heskamp
- Guy Robert Jackson

Career Services

- Adrian Ozuna – Chair
- Cheryl Guido – Vice Chair
- Melissa Gonzalez
- Dorian Cockrell
- Michael Webster
- Bin Yu
- Edward Melton
- Rupani Nasruddin

Communications

- Doug Karr – Chair
- – Vice Chair
- Mark Guthrie
- Bobbie Henderson
- Guy Robert Jackson
- Jonathan Lowe
- Mike Webster
- Melanie Rodriguez

Education

- Bobbie Henderson – Chair
- Doug Karr – Vice Chair
- Shonda Below
- Cheryl Guido
- Mark Guthrie
- Alan Heskamp
- Jeff LaBroski
- Edward Melton
- Margaret Oser
- Paul Puente
- Monica Riley
- Valerie Segovia
- Sandra Taylor
- Rupani Nasruddin

GULF COAST WORKFORCE BOARD ATTENDANCE

Board Member	02/04/25	3/4/25 (S/C)	04/08/25	06/03/25	08/05/25	10/07/25
1 Arcos, Marie	✓					
2 Bartlett, Anne	✓					
3 Below, Shonda	✓					
4 Bowles, Carl	✓	✓				
5 Cevallos, Rachel		✓				
6 Cockrell, Dorian	✓					
7 Gonzalez, Melissa	✓	✓				
8 Guido, Cheryl	✓	✓				
9 Guthrie, Mark	✓	✓				
10 Henderson, Bobbie Allen	✓	✓				
11 Heskamp, Alan	✓					
12 Jackson, Guy Robert	✓	✓				
13 Johnson, Joyce	✓					
14 Jones, Lavone						
15 Karr, Doug	✓	✓				
16 Kerr, Brett						
17 LaBroski, Jeff	✓	✓				
18 Larmond, Shareen	✓					
19 Lindsey, Susan		✓				
20 Love, Michael	✓	✓				
21 Lowe, Jonathan	✓	✓				
22 Melton, Edward		✓				
23 Ordonez, Sineria		✓				
24 Oser, Margaret		✓				
25 Ozuna, Adrian	✓	✓				
26 Puente, Paul	✓	✓				
27 Riley, Monica						
28 Rodriguez, Grace	✓	✓				
29 Rodriguez, Melanie		✓				
30 Rupani, Nasruddin	✓	✓				
31 Sarkar, Mou		✓				
32 Segovia, Valerie		✓				
33 Taylor, Sandra	✓	✓				
34 Vazquez, Lizandra	✓	✓				
36 Webster, Michael		✓				
36 Yu, Bin	✓	✓				

Audit and Monitoring Committee

Update for March 2025

Executive Summary

The Audit and Monitoring Committee, chaired by Mr. Guy R. Jackson, met on March 25, 2025, at 3555 Timmons Ln, Houston, TX 77027, Room 2B/C at 1:00 p.m. Other board members present included Board Chair Mark Guthrie, Committee Vice Chair Carl Bowles, Shonda Below, Cheryl Guido, Dr. Bobbie Henderson, Joyce Johnson, Douglas Karr, Jeff LaBroski, Jonathan Lowe, Sineria Ordonez, Paul Puente, and Mou Sarkar. Staff members present included Crosby Brito, Brandi Brown, Thomas Brown, LaToya Casimere, Dr. Maria Franco Cortes, AJ Dean, Althea Edwards, Pamela Fanniel, Philip Garcia, Jennifer Graves, Sable Harris-Buck, Janine Haynes, Jenny Johnson, Abdul Kargo, Danielle Knotts, Kimberly Lindolph, Romana Paniagua, Kristi Rangel, Kevin Rodney, Vanessa Salazar, Juliet K Stipeche, Desmond Taylor, Shawanna Thompson, John Tran, Russell Tomlin, Sabrina Uy, and Rebecca Valdez.

The Committee received an update from Board staff on Key Performance Indicators. The KPIs are designed to align with the Board's strategic goals. Measures developed for the Employer Engagement Division focused on four goals. The four goals are supporting business forward strategies to fuel the regional economy, serving as a convener, forging strategic partnerships, increasing awareness of service and opportunities, and improving service delivery with technology and innovation.

An update on system-wide performance was presented, and data was reported using a predictive tool to address the delays with TWC data reporting. Using this data, we project that the Board has met or will exceed 16 of 22 targets. The Committee received information from Internal Audit and Data Services explaining the guidance and standards they comply with when conducting their reviews. Internal Audit conducts Desk Reviews, Pre-Awards, Post-Award monitoring, Contract Reviews, Complaints, and Investigations, as well as special projects and advisory requests. Data Services works alongside Internal Audit conducting IT/Cybersecurity Assessments.

Board staff shared updates on Texas Workforce Commission and Gulf Coast Workforce Board interventions. We have met the Median Earnings performance targets and expect to be taken off the Performance Improvement Plan. Information

was provided on the Adult Education Center as reported in quality assurance and financial monitoring reviews. Numerous issues with internal controls, missing documentation, and repeated failures to respond to requests for information have resulted in a performance improvement plan. An update will be provided to the committee at the next meeting

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) Framework Update

We continue to move forward with our Key Performance Indicators (KPI) framework to guide future program performance measurement development. The framework defines KPIs across four levels:

- **Level 0:** Compliance-driven KPIs
- **Level 1:** KPIs based on currently available data.
- **Level 2:** KPIs requiring small investments such as development of new partnerships or information sharing arrangements.
- **Level 3:** KPIs that require significant technology or other resource investment.

In January 2025, the Audit and Monitoring Committee received proposed measures for the Career Services program. Since that time, the team has worked on measures for our Employer Engagement Division. We focused our efforts on level 0 and level 1 KPIs as they are opportunities we can measure immediately. All KPIs are designed to align with the Workforce Board's strategic priorities:

1. Support Business-Forward Strategies to Fuel the Regional Economy
2. Serve as a Convener & Forge Strategic Partnerships
3. Increase Awareness of Services & Opportunities
4. Improve Service Delivery with Technology and Innovation

Employer Engagement Program – Key Performance Indicators

1. Support Business-Forward Strategies to Fuel the Regional Economy

- *Goal:* Prioritizing employer outreach to demand industries and occupations that drive regional economic development.
- *Metric:* Percentage of employer outreach efforts focused on demand industries. Percent increase in employer participation from targeted industries.

2. Serve as a Convener & Forge Strategic Partnerships

- *Goal:* Strengthen collaboration among industry leaders, workforce partners, and economic development stakeholders to align workforce strategies with employer needs.

- *Metric:* Number of industry advisory committees established and actively engaged. Number of meetings held annually per industry sector.

3. Increase Awareness of Services & Opportunities

- *Goal:* Expand employer access to workforce solutions through a centralized, user-friendly digital hub and targeted outreach efforts.
- *Metric:* Launch and maintain a digital employer hub with real-time workforce resources. Percentage increase in website traffic.

4. Improve Service Delivery with Technology and Innovation

- *Goal:* Enhance employer service efficiency by leveraging technology to provide real-time support, training, and feedback mechanisms.
- *Metric:* Number of webinars and training sessions hosted for employers. Percent of employers utilizing online tools for job postings and hiring assistance. Percent of employers reporting high satisfaction with services via post-service surveys.

Additionally, we will monitor and report on these foundational metrics:

- *Number of employers receiving Texas Talent Assistance*
- *Percentage of employers returning for service*

Progress on KPI development will be reviewed at upcoming Audit and Monitoring Committee meetings to provide Board members with opportunities for feedback.

System Review

In our ongoing effort to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our system, this report offers a comprehensive review of performance, production, and expenditures at the contractor level for key service providers. This review encompasses assessments of technical program compliance, financial monitoring, and evaluations of customer experience. It prioritizes alignment with our strategic goals and tackles identified deficiencies through targeted interventions and technical assistance.

Performance and Production

Reporting Infrastructure Enhancements

We continue to maintain strong communication with the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) as it works on substantial enhancements to its reporting infrastructure. While some reports have been updated, there remain instances where data is still incomplete. To address these discrepancies, efforts are underway to implement standardized tools across all providers. This will ensure more consistent and efficient data collection and reporting across the system.

These updates are pivotal in improving the quality and reliability of our data for decision-making and service delivery.

Additionally, board staff are actively engaged in developing an Education Service Workflow. This workflow aims to create a report-driven tracking system that monitors key milestones throughout the education service lifecycle. Alongside this, we are conducting a thorough analysis of records in collaboration with providers to identify areas of inefficiency and failure. This continuous review and improvement process will help us overcome challenges and enhance our services and support to individuals seeking meaningful employment opportunities.

Provider Collaboration & Support

We have prioritized close collaboration with our service providers to address reporting gaps and drive sustained, high-quality performance outcomes. In addition to ongoing meetings and one-on-one consultations, we have launched bi-monthly sessions with the data management teams across all providers. These sessions serve as a critical forum for sharing updates, exchanging best practices, and aligning strategies to improve performance. This proactive engagement fosters stronger partnerships and cultivates a culture of continuous improvement, ensuring we remain united in our pursuit of optimal outcomes.

In parallel, we have implemented a comprehensive new training series for both service providers and Board staff. This training equips teams with enhanced tools—such as career assessments and personalized interviews—to better support job seekers. By focusing on tailored guidance, we aim to improve the likelihood of individuals securing meaningful employment. This initiative underscores our commitment to ensuring staff are well-prepared to serve our communities.

End-of-Year FY2024 Performance

The revised end-of-year performance data for FY2024 has been reviewed. Workforce Solutions – Gulf Coast successfully met or exceeded 16 of the 22 performance targets established by the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). These results affirm the continued effectiveness and impact of workforce services provided throughout the 13-county Gulf Coast region, but six targets did not fully meet expectations, specifically those related to:

- Credential attainment for Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, and Career & Technical (C&T) participants;
- Employed Q2 Post-Exit – Dislocated Worker; and
- Employed/Enrolled Q2 Post-Exit – Youth

While these areas fell short of their respective benchmarks, the broader performance landscape underscores significant operational progress and regional success. It is important to note that the reported outcomes reflect individuals who exited WIOA-funded programs in Program Year 2022, and while historical in nature, they expose structural weaknesses that must be addressed today to ensure stronger results in future years.

Performance Improvement Actions and Technical Assistance Milestone

In response to the identified areas of underperformance, Workforce Solutions – Gulf Coast has implemented four Performance Improvement Actions (PIAs) targeting the following:

- Credential Rate – Adults;
- Credential Rate – Dislocated Workers;
- Credential Rate – Youth; and
- Employed/Enrolled Q2 Post-Exit – Youth.

These PIAs are designed to close performance gaps by enhancing case management strategies, strengthening training program alignment, increasing participant follow-up and support, and expanding employer and education partnerships. All actions are data-informed and incorporate targeted interventions tailored to population-specific needs.

Additionally, the region has successfully resolved the Texas Workforce Commission’s Technical Assistance Plan (TAP) for Median Earnings Q2 – Adult, which has now been officially lifted. This demonstrates clear progress in connecting adult participants to higher-wage opportunities and affirms the effectiveness of the Board’s performance-focused strategies.

Strategic Reforms to Improve Credentialing and Employment Outcomes

To reinforce and sustain these improvements, the Board has enacted and accelerated several major system reforms, all of which align with WIOA Section 116(b) and the 2025–2028 WIOA Local Plan. Key reforms include:

1. Enhanced Participant Assessments

Career office staff now conduct skills, interest, and aptitude assessments for all participants. These assessments guide individuals toward appropriate training opportunities based on their existing abilities, readiness, and career interests. The improved alignment is expected to significantly increase training completion and credential attainment rates.

2. Targeted, Stackable Training Investments

Participants are increasingly enrolled in short-term, stackable, industry-recognized credential programs tied to the Gulf Coast Target Occupations List. These programs are designed to quickly connect individuals to in-demand occupations that offer long-term earning potential and career advancement.

3. Expanded Work-Based Learning Models

Apprenticeships, internships, on-the-job training (OJT), and customized training initiatives are being deployed across programs. These models support skill acquisition while strengthening participant-employer connections that facilitate long-term job placement.

4. Performance-Driven ETPL Policy Reform

The Board is in the process of implementing a comprehensive update to its Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) policy. Key features of this policy reform include:

- Updated minimum performance standards for employment, credentialing, and completion;
- Requirements for financial stability of training vendors;
- Prohibitions on excessive reliance on Board-funded participants or reverse referrals;
- Mandatory affiliation agreements for online healthcare programs to ensure clinical components are delivered locally;
- Increased oversight of third-party and subcontracted vendors; and
- A strong emphasis on informed customer choice, transparency, and data-driven decisions.

This policy update strengthens provider accountability and is designed to increase the number of high-performing training options available to participants.

5. Improved Youth Transition and Engagement

Youth-focused programming—including Hire Gulf Coast Youth and Summer Earn and Learn (SEAL)—has been expanded to offer year-round services, including job coaching, career exploration, and post-exit mentoring. These strategies will improve both credential rates and post-exit employment outcomes.

6. Sustained Post-Exit Support

Workforce Solutions career offices have expanded post-exit services for all populations, with a focus on the second quarter after exit. Services include follow-up case management, retention coaching, and continued support for those pursuing education or training.

7. Enhanced Data Monitoring and Provider Accountability

Credential attainment and employment outcomes are now reviewed quarterly at the provider level. Training vendors that fail to meet performance expectations are flagged for technical assistance and may be removed from the ETPL if corrective actions are not implemented.

While six performance measures were not achieved in FY2024, these outcomes reflect a previous program year cohort and serve as an important call to action. Workforce Solutions – Gulf Coast has launched a comprehensive, proactive strategy to address current gaps and future-proof the system. With updated policies, improved participant assessments, enhanced training partnerships, and stronger accountability, the Board is well-positioned to meet or exceed all WIOA performance targets in future cycles. Regular progress reports on the impact of the four PIAs, ETPL reforms, and other strategic initiatives will be provided to the Audit and Monitoring Committee.

Expenditure Update

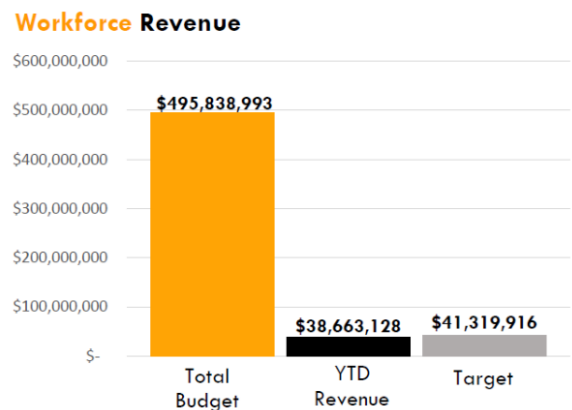
The Gulf Coast Workforce Board budget outlines how it intends to utilize its revenue to realize the objectives outlined in the Board's strategic plan. The budget details the allocation of resources to operate Workforce Solutions and generate positive outcomes in the region.

Revenue Overview

The 2025 budgeted revenue totals over \$495 million. The Year-to-Date revenue as of January 2025 is \$38.7 million, slightly behind the target of \$41.3 million.

Expenditure Overview

Financial aid represents \$29.3 million of expenditures with \$25.1 million for Early Education, \$2.5 million for Training & Support, and \$1.7 million for Operations.



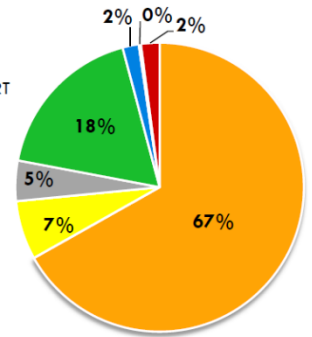
Career Services represents \$6.7 million, and Adult Education represents \$0.8 million of the Resident Service expenditures.

Employer Engagement and Quality Improvement represent \$0.7 million and \$0.09 million, respectively for Employer Services.

Board Administration is \$1.1 million.

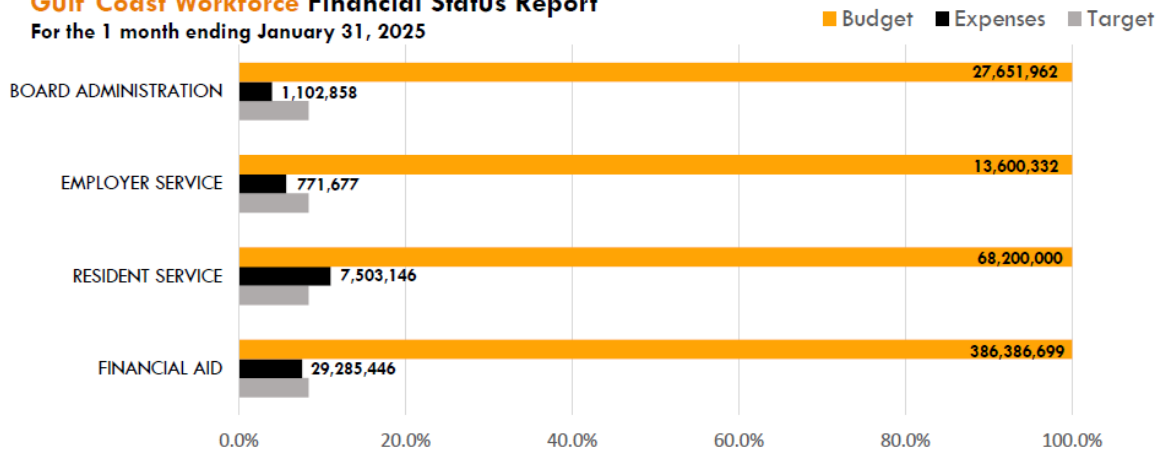
System Expenses

- FINANCIAL AID - EARLY EDUCATION \$25,107,143
- FINANCIAL AID - TRAINING & SUPPORT \$2,482,482
- FINANCIAL AID - OPERATIONS \$1,695,822
- CAREER SERVICES \$6,721,144
- EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT \$681,050
- QUALITY IMPROVEMENT \$90,627
- ADULT EDUCATION \$782,003



Gulf Coast Workforce Financial Status Report

For the 1 month ending January 31, 2025



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.

In addition to conducting program monitoring reviews, Quality Assurance facilitates document collection for Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) monitoring visits and responses. Quality Assurance conducts additional desk reviews when requested by TWC Audit Resolution.

Alliance of Community Assistance Ministries (ACAM): We reviewed data and operations from March 2024 to February 2025 and assessed performance,

compliance, information security, customer satisfaction, and work experience worksites. The review identified recurring findings in case management, data validation entry, and maintaining supporting documentation in multiple areas. The recurrence of findings indicates a need for additional oversight, staff training, and coaching while working with Board staff to receive technical assistance and address concerns. Areas that need improvement are:

- **Case Management**—Services were not opened and closed appropriately, assessments, and monthly contact or updating of employment plan not updated in Work in Texas (WIT) case notes.
- **Data Validation** — Staff did not maintain credential or approved documentation in file and documentation did not match WIT data entry.
- **LISO Reporting** — Staff did not submit monthly reports as required.
- **Work Experience** – Monitors attempted to visit 15 participants at worksites and were able to interview six due to participants ending the assignment prior to the expected date reported. Worksite supervisors did not maintain emergency contact information.

We are awaiting ACAM’s response to the draft report and should have the final report issued by the beginning of April 2025.

SERJobs: We reviewed data and operations from March 2024 to February 2025 and assessed performance, compliance, information security, customer satisfaction, and Work Experience worksites. The review identified recurring findings in case management, the maintenance of supporting documentation in multiple areas, and data entry. At the time of the draft report, the lack of supporting documentation led to potentially questioned eligibility and support services costs. The recurrence of findings indicates a need for additional oversight, staff training, and coaching while working with Board staff to receive technical assistance and address concerns. Areas that need improvement are:

- **WIOA Eligibility** – Staff did not maintain all supporting documentation, resulting in potential questioned costs for 10 participants.
- **Case Management**—Services were not opened and closed appropriately, or service provided not supported by case notes, monthly contact or updating of employment plan as needed and actions noted in Work in Texas (WIT) case notes and case notes did not contain all required information.
- **Support Services** – Staff did not maintain documentation; cost justification was not noted in case notes and did not request recoupment of funds, not supported by receipts, or receipts were received late, resulting in potential questioned cost currently totaling \$2,782.77.
- **Data Validation** — Staff did not maintain credential or approved documentation in file, and documentation did not match WIT data entry.

- **Information Security** – Staff did not complete Veterans Triage training as required.
- **Conflict of Interest** – The documentation could not be provided.
- **Monthly Progress Reports** – Staff did not submit monthly reports timely.
- **Youth Incentives** – Staff did not document incentives in the participant’s Individual Service Strategy (ISS) or maintain supporting documentation.
- **Work Experience** – Monitors attempted to visit 12 participants at worksites and were able to interview seven because participants ended their assignment before the date reported.

We are awaiting SERJobs’ response to the draft report and will issue the final report by the beginning of April 2025.

Current Reviews:

Quality Assurance has completed 10 of 18 reviews scheduled for PY2025. We will finish the career office program monitoring reviews and begin desk reviews for the Financial Aid Payment office and SERCO by the end of April.

Financial Systems

The Board engages two CPA firms to conduct comprehensive financial monitoring of all workforce board service providers. Since the last update, we have received four (4) final reports. Nine (9) reviews are currently in progress, and three (3) reviews are scheduled to begin later in the year.

We have resolved (1) PY report that resulted in no questioned costs.

Final Reports Received Since the Last Update:

- Adult Education Center - High Overall Risk
- Lone Star College - Low Overall Risk
- Region 6 - Low Overall Risk
- United Way - Low Overall Risk

Reviews in Progress:

- Alliance of Community Assistance Ministries
- Baker Ripley (FAPO, Career Office, AEL)
- Children’s Learning Institute
- Equus (Career Office)
- Equus (Support Center)
- Interfaith of the Woodlands
- SERCO
- SERJobs
- Systemwide Financial Aid Payment Review (Q1)

Upcoming in 2025:

- Systemwide Financial Aid Payment Review (Q2)
- Systemwide Financial Aid Payment Review (Q3)
- Systemwide Financial Aid Payment Review (Q4)

Spotlight

Internal Audit and Data Services

Sabrina Uy, CPA, CIA, is an Audit Supervisor of H-GAC's Internal Audit Department (IA). John Tran is a Senior Manager of H-GAC's IT and Data Services Department (IT). They will present on the compliance services provided to Gulf Coast Workforce Solutions. A brief highlight of the services are as follows:

Desk Reviews

IA issues the acceptance letters to subrecipients if we accept their Annual Comprehensive Financial Report or Single Audit as filed, after evaluating the Audit Report, Supplemental reports on Internal Controls and Major programs, checking our grant inclusion in the SEFA and SESA, look to see if findings and recommendations relate to our grant, and take monitoring actions if it did. If rejecting the ACFR or Single Audit, we will inform them of the reasons why.

Pre-Awards Site Visit

Before onboarding new subrecipients, IA and IT perform controls testing, bank account and reconciliation testing, cybersecurity and IT system review, evaluate their management of existing state or federal grants for record keeping, proper timekeeping, incorporation of grant policies into their existing policies and procedures, any findings in recent monitoring, and if they are generally in compliance with the existing grant. This also serves as an overall readiness evaluation of a new subrecipient to effectively implement regulatory and grant requirements.

Agiloft Pre-Award Review

Pre-Award Review of contracts before approval in the contract management system. We anticipate building a more robust checklist and procedures for pre-awards soon.

Cybersecurity and IT review

IT interviews the subrecipient's head of IT to evaluate their information system and cybersecurity readiness based on five functions listed in the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) SP 800-53; identify, protect, detect, respond, and recover. IT also reviews the subrecipient's backup and recovery plans and

incident response plans and makes recommendations to strengthen the IT systems.

Post-Award Monitoring

This is a joint monitoring effort between IT, the Workforce contract manager, monitors, and IA. These subcategories of tests are meant to cover gaps between monitoring periods and do not overtake or overlap the time periods covered, or the monitoring performed by QA or external financial monitors. The goal is to gather most of the evidence in 1 day and finish off outstanding requests virtually. The test period is normally the last 3 months before the visit. The surprise element is that we ask for samples to be produced on the spot. We follow up on past monitor's reports and have the ability to expand testing in areas with findings.

Complaints Investigations & Whistleblower Hotline

Stakeholders and residents of our 13 counties may report suspected illegal or unethical behaviors and may do so anonymously. IA and Human Resources assign investigators; they follow the policy developed and approved by the Executive Director of H-GAC to conduct the investigation and report back. Workforce senior management are apprised of the incidents reported when proper.

Special Projects & Advisory

Past service includes review of formal appeals by subrecipients of monitoring reports and anonymous requests by board or senior management of specific issues. IA supports Workforce board staff's formal and informal requests for assistance. Opportunities in the past related more to resolutions of the financial monitors' findings.

We welcome requests for advice and support in the performance measurement area of monitoring and compliance aspect of the Workforce system.

Accountability and Improvement

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:

Texas Workforce Commission Interventions:

Adult Median Earnings Q2 Post-Exit (FY23): The Board staff continue to track enrollment efforts and work with the TWC to show our progress on the Technical Assistance Plan (TAP) for FY23 WIOA (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act) Adult Median Earnings 2nd Quarter After Exit FY23. The 2024 year-end report showed we met the adult median earnings target, and we continue to meet the target for 2025. We expect the TAP will be lifted.

GCWB Interventions:

Adult Education Center: In response to documented issues with internal controls, quality issues, and responsiveness, Board staff will place the Adult Education Center (AEC) on a Performance Improvement Plan. During the Board's financial monitoring review, multiple findings related to internal controls and disbursements were seen. Additionally, Board staff have observed consistently missed deadlines and a lack of communication related to contract deliverables, financial monitoring documents, Board Quality Assurance requests, and required property control tasks. More information on the issues noted in this section are included below.

Board staff will request a detailed plan from AEC detailing how the issues with internal controls, quality issues, and responsiveness will be corrected. This plan will include the findings in the financial monitoring review and the response from AEC to those findings, due to the Board on April 1, 2025. We hope that through this plan, AEC will develop controls and policies that improve financial management and streamline communication to Board staff. We will provide additional information at the May 2025 Audit Monitoring Committee meeting.

Financial Monitoring

On behalf of the Gulf Coast Workforce Board, Weaver and Tidwell, LLP, CPAs performed a financial monitoring review on AEC from September 11, 2024, through March 4, 2025. Numerous findings, summarized below, were observed:

Expense and Travel

The review found documentation and compliance issues, including missing receipts, unallowable food purchases, and instances where reimbursement dates could not be verified due to missing or incorrect documentation. Additionally, three cases lacked proof of management-approved payments, and in two instances, insufficient documentation failed to confirm compliance with grant requirements.

Non-payroll Expenses

The review identified multiple compliance issues, including unallowable purchases, transactions lacking sufficient documentation, and instances without proper management approval. Additionally, in five cases, timely payment verification was not possible due to missing supporting documentation.

Payroll

In certain instances, testing procedures could not be performed as AEC failed to provide requested supporting documentation. Weaver was unable to validate if an employee was included in the staffing chart for the current contract year.

Financial Reporting

The review identified several compliance issues, including the lack of supporting documentation for the A-133 Single Audit for fiscal years 2023 and 2024, missing general ledger reports for requested billing months, and insufficient documentation to verify management approval of billing reports. Monthly billing reports were submitted late for multiple periods, and no support was provided for August 2023, preventing required procedures. Additionally, Weaver could not perform walk-backward testing for August 2024 due to missing documentation. The close-out report was not submitted within the required timeframe.

Contract Deliverables

- In the current contract year, Board staff observed at least 20 instances of late submission of contract deliverables. These deliverables include monthly reports, procedures, performance plans, and more.

Board Quality Assurance

- In response to a Texas Workforce Commission review, Board staff requested additional documentation from AEC. Board staff received inconsistent and inaccurate responses from AEC. Most of the documentation was provided over a week after the due date, with the remainder provided nearly a month after the due date.

Inventory Control

- Board subrecipients are required to perform a Biannual Inventory Review. AEC was notified of this requirement multiple times before the deadline but provided no response or findings until two weeks after the deadline.

Compliance and Review Updates

Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) Report Updates: We received reimbursement from the Adult Education Center and the Harris County Department of Education for the disallowed costs in the PY24 TWC Adult Education report. We met with TWC Audit Resolution on Wednesday morning to discuss our response to the Adult Education report. H-GAC Accounts Payable will submit repayment to TWC by March 28, and we have additional documentation and a testing sample due to TWC by April 9.

We also discussed the PY24 TWC Monitoring report and future plans for Acres Homes and Westheimer. We agreed to provide an updated response with a timeline showing our planned actions before the end of the current leases.

Next Meeting

We propose scheduling the next committee meeting for 1:00 p.m. on Thursday, May 15, 2025, at Houston-Galveston Area Council, 3555 Timmons Lane, Houston, Texas 77027.

Career Services Committee

Update

Executive Summary

The Career Services Committee of the Gulf Coast Workforce Board met on March 18, 2025, at the Northline Workforce Solutions Career Office. Chaired by Adrian Ozuna, the meeting focused on implementing systemic changes that reflect the Board's commitment to strategic alignment, operational efficiency, and inclusive economic growth. The committee was joined by Board members, including Cheryl Guido, Jonathan Lowe, Mark Guthrie, Guy Jackson, Marie Arcos, Mou Sarkar, Lizandra Vasquez, Rachel Cevallos, Dr. Melanie Rodriguez, Dr. Melissa Gonzalez, Edward Melton, Doug Karr, Dr. Bobbie Henderson, and Sineria Ordonez.

This committee meeting focused on transformation, accountability, and meaningful results. The forthcoming Career Services Request for Proposal (RFP) marks a decisive move toward integration and responsiveness in service delivery. Professional development efforts are sharpening staff capacity to engage jobseekers with insight and rigor. The updated Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) policy raises the bar for training quality and financial integrity, reinforcing the Board's role as both an economic driver and a responsible steward of public resources. These initiatives underscore a clear priority: building a workforce system that is agile, equitable, and designed to meet the complex needs of our region.

Request for Proposal for Career Services

The Gulf Coast Workforce Board is evolving its business model to meet current Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) standards by adopting a comprehensive, fully integrated one-stop shop approach for career services, which now strategically incorporates employer engagement directly into the service delivery system. This new approach represents a significant transformation, moving away from the previous decentralized service model toward regionalized, collaborative management across the Gulf Coast's 13-county area.

This shift aims to ensure seamless integration and collaboration among multiple partners, streamlining service delivery for both employers and residents to meet their diverse and evolving workforce needs. By consolidating services into unified, regionally coordinated operations, we will reduce duplication, increase efficiency, and better align our efforts with local economic conditions and industry demands.

Our enhanced one-stop model emphasizes employer-centric strategies, including targeted workforce solutions such as customized training programs, apprenticeships, and innovative recruitment efforts. These activities are integrated into career services to effectively address both employer talent needs and job seeker career development in a coordinated and responsive manner.

Furthermore, technology and innovation play critical roles in our transformation. The RFP specifically encourages leveraging virtual and mobile service delivery, ensuring accessibility for all individuals, including those in underserved or rural communities. Through robust data management and analytics, our system will support informed decision-making, optimize resource allocation, and continuously improve customer outcomes.

Ultimately, by aligning our practices with WIOA's vision for integrated, collaborative workforce services, the Gulf Coast Workforce Board aims to deliver seamless, high-quality support to employers and job seekers alike, fostering economic growth and enhancing employment opportunities throughout our diverse 13-county region. The request for Proposals timeline includes the anticipated release for early April 2025. The expected proposal due date, and evaluation period to be in June 2025, with procurement expected to be in July 2025 and will then bring for full board review in August of 2025.

Career Services Team Update

Senior Manager Russell Tomlin provided an update to the Career Services team who gathered for its first Quarterly All Staff Meeting in March 2025. The meeting focused on setting direction and aligning team processes with the Strategic Plan.

Professional Development

The Professional Development Team remains dedicated to strengthening Workforce Solutions (WFS) staff by enriching their skills and knowledge, enabling them to provide impactful, high-quality services. Our recent initiatives have concentrated on deepening staff expertise in career assessments, industry trends, and job readiness. Recent activities include:

1. **Mastering the Career Assessment Process:**

This innovative training equips staff with comprehensive skills to conduct effective career assessments, align client career objectives with regional labor market data, and enhance overall job preparedness. Recent sessions have been extraordinarily successful, including a Train-the-Trainer (T3) event held at Willowbrook and Missouri City, attended by over 25 staff members. Service provider trainers have subsequently delivered this

course to approximately 100 team members, encompassing supervisors, managers, and quality assurance personnel. Two additional sessions for support staff are scheduled, projected to involve 30 more participants.

2. Building Connections Course:

In partnership with key service providers, we continue offering foundational training for new hires. Participant assessment scores have notably improved, with averages rising significantly from 76 to 97, clearly indicating the initiative's effectiveness and positive impact.

3. Ongoing Career Assessment Rollout:

Implementation of the new career assessment training is advancing steadily across multiple service providers, emphasizing our Youth Services teams. Given the distinct processes and specialized programs within Youth Services, we have identified opportunities for further improvement. Consequently, targeted follow-up sessions will occur in the next 2-3 weeks to assess adoption and provide additional practical training, including hands-on exercises such as role-playing and real-world scenarios, to strengthen practical application.

4. Collaboration & Engagement:

The team actively collaborates with both internal and external stakeholders, continually refining strategies to maximize training effectiveness. Notable collaborations include joint cross-training sessions with Vocational Rehabilitation, contributions to the Career Services All-Staff Meeting, and ongoing updates to training materials across platforms like the LMS and Workforce Hub.

Looking Ahead:

The Professional Development Team remains committed to enhancing workforce services by broadening our training programs, particularly focusing on integrating innovative tools and industry-specific content. Our goal is to continually empower staff, fostering exceptional outcomes for individuals and employers across the Gulf Coast region.

Policy and Guidance

RESEA Update

At the January 30, 2025, Career Services Committee meeting, members requested an overview of the industries where RESEA participants have been placed. In response, staff reviewed hiring data from October 2023 to February 2024.

The analysis revealed strong placement activity in food service, sales, administrative support, protective services, and construction—reflecting both ongoing employer demand and the adaptability of our job seekers. The average wage across all placements was \$14.69 per hour. These insights not only highlight current labor market trends but also inform our efforts to strengthen employer engagement and better align services with high-opportunity sectors. Updates will continue as additional data becomes available.

Workforce Solutions – Digital Transformation through WAVE Implementation

Board staff remains focused on delivering faster, smarter, and more responsive services. At the heart of this transformation is the Workforce Access Virtual Experience (WAVE) system—a technological step forward in how we serve our customers. Launched in January 2025, WAVE was designed to modernize how we manage customer flow and deliver services. By reducing wait times, enhancing virtual access, and integrating digital tools into our daily operations, WAVE sets the foundation for a more streamlined and user-friendly experience.

Guided by staff feedback and data, the implementation has followed a thoughtful, phased approach—from early planning and testing to targeted training and real-world piloting with the RESEA team. These initial efforts have already revealed gains in efficiency and customer engagement. In April 2025, we will begin the full rollout of WAVE across all locations, marking a major milestone in our commitment to innovation and continuous improvement. WAVE will deliver:

- A virtual queue that saves customers time and enhances access;
- Smarter workflows that allow staff to focus on meaningful service;
- Real-time analytics to guide operational decisions; and
- Seamless integration with our existing systems for greater efficiency.

As we move forward, Board staff will continue to monitor, adapt, and improve—ensuring that WAVE not only meets today’s needs but sets the stage for a more connected and responsive future across the Gulf Coast region.

Community Engagement

Community engagement remains a cornerstone of the Board’s strategy to expand access to workforce services. Through targeted outreach, hiring events, and strategic partnerships, we are connecting more individuals—particularly those in underserved communities—with opportunities for meaningful employment.

A recent example is the Lone Star College Kingwood Healthcare Career Fair, which successfully connected nearly 400 job seekers with a range of healthcare

employers, highlighting the power of collaboration in driving regional talent development. Later, we connected residents in Rosenberg and Richmond, Texas to employment opportunities in business and finance and had over 400 participants.

Our Workforce on Wheels (WOW) initiative further demonstrates our commitment to accessibility and innovation. By delivering core career services directly to remote and underserved areas, we are breaking down barriers to employment and strengthening community trust. At a recent mobile event, Workforce on Wheels provided career guidance to 24 individuals, including assistance with WorkInTexas registrations, resume development, and job search strategies.

Through these and other efforts—including enhanced training, digital transformation, and robust partnerships—the Board continues to advance workforce excellence and fuel economic growth across the Gulf Coast region. We are not only reaching more people—we are meeting them where they are, with the tools and support they need to thrive.

Education and Training Provider List Policy

The Gulf Coast Workforce Board (GCWB) is committed to ensuring that individuals seeking education and training have access to high-quality programs that lead to sustainable employment in high-demand industries. Recognizing the need for higher standards and stronger alignment between training programs and labor market demands, the Gulf Coast Workforce Board has taken a proactive approach to enhance the evaluation and selection of training providers.

Our strategic objective is to elevate the Education and Training Vendor Standards and Guidelines to reinforce quality assurance and accountability in workforce training. To achieve this, we have implemented the following policy enhancements:

- **Stronger Performance Benchmarks** – Programs must meet or exceed both TWC and GCWB performance standards, ensuring measurable success in employment and earnings outcomes.
- **Enhanced Financial Transparency** – Training providers are now required to demonstrate financial stability by submitting Balance Sheets and Profit and Loss Statements as part of the application and renewal process.
- **Annual Review and Renewal Process** – Provider agreements will transition to an annual evaluation model, ensuring continuous compliance and quality improvement.

- Comprehensive Career Assessment Requirement – Before referral to a training provider, individuals will undergo a structured career assessment to ensure alignment with their skills, interests, and market demand.
- Targeted Investment in High-Skill, High-Growth (HSHG) Occupations – Funding allocations will prioritize scholarship-eligible programs that align with industry demand and economic growth projections.

A draft of the revised ETPL policy was provided to the committee for a first reading, and we are requesting input, comments, and recommendations from Board members and staff, so a final version can be considered at the June 2025 Board meeting.

Strategic Initiatives

Refining Community Engagement: Lessons from the Northshore Convening

On February 25, 2025, Workforce Solutions partnered with the Anderson Center for the Arts to host a community convening in the Northshore area. While the event was supported by broad outreach efforts—including targeted GovDelivery communications to customers, elected officials, and community stakeholders—attendance fell short of expectations.

Despite the lower turnout, the convening served as a valuable platform to present Workforce Solutions' reimagining plan, which aligns with both the Board's Strategic Plan and the Local WIOA Plan. More importantly, it revealed key areas for growth in our approach to community engagement, particularly around meeting times, outreach methods, and the importance of deeper partnerships with trusted community leaders.

Valuable contributions from Board Member Sandra Below, Reverend Jacques Denkins, and Anderson Center Community Engagement and Operations Manager Kristina Zatopek played a pivotal role in reshaping our strategy. Their insights have helped inform a more responsive and inclusive approach to community outreach. Our future engagement efforts will focus on expanding collaboration with service providers, educational institutions, and business leaders to strengthen connections and drive broader community participation. These lessons are shaping a more strategic and community-driven approach to workforce development—ensuring that our services remain relevant, accessible, and impactful across the region.

Customer Experience Dashboard

The Career Services division has also made major advancements by implementing a new tracking system (IssueTrak - FACS), allowing for better

response times and service consistency. As a result, the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) has recognized the Board as one of the most responsive in Texas.

Humble Office Location Update

We are actively exploring options for a new Humble Career Office location as the lease for our current site at 9668 FM 1960 Bypass Rd. W., Humble, TX 77338, is set to expire on November 30, 2025. Thus far, we have toured two potential locations, though construction timelines remain a key concern. However, the broker will reengage the current lessor to assess the feasibility of a tenant improvement allowance to update the existing space, which could potentially eliminate the need for relocation. Should this not be a viable option, we will proceed with our contingency plan—extending the lease for one additional year to allow adequate time to secure a suitable location and complete the necessary buildout. This strategic approach ensures minimal disruption to services while prioritizing long-term stability and operational efficiency.

Highlight Success Stories:

Seth and James: Advancing Together in a High-Demand Industry

Workforce Solutions is proud to highlight the success of Seth and James—two motivated young adults who secured full-time employment in the skilled trades with support from our Huntsville team.

On January 10, Seth, a resident of Trinity, Texas, and his friend James visited the Huntsville career office in search of employment. Career Advisor Paulina worked closely with Seth to develop a professional resume and explore job opportunities with local employers, including Texas Pride, Monterrey Mushroom, and Gardner Glass. Recognizing his potential, she reached out directly to Texas Pride to recommend Seth as a strong candidate.

The following day, Seth returned to share that he had been hired for a full-time role at Texas Pride, earning \$18 per hour and gaining hands-on welding experience. Paulina encouraged him to pursue further advancement by working toward welding certification—offering Workforce Solutions' continued support as he builds his career.

At the same time, Career Advisor LaTonnia supported James through the job search process and referred him to Texas Pride as well. James was soon hired and now works alongside Seth. Their shared success illustrates the power of timely guidance, tailored support, and strong employer partnerships in connecting individuals to meaningful work.

Jose's Welding Career: From Training to Economic Mobility

Jose's story exemplifies how targeted training, and determination can lead to upward mobility in high-demand sectors. After enrolling in the Shielded Metal Arc Welding (SMAW) program at Industrial Welding Academy, Jose successfully completed his training and quickly secured full-time employment as a welder. Equipped with in-demand skills, he took the initiative to seek greater opportunity—and was hired by S&B as a professional welder, earning \$1,000 per week.

This new position not only provides financial stability but also positions Jose for long-term advancement in the construction industry, where the demand for skilled tradespeople continues to grow. Jose's success reflects the core mission of Workforce Solutions: to empower individuals with the skills, resources, and support they need to achieve sustainable careers and contribute to the region's economic strength.

Policy Title:	Education and Training Vendor Network- Eligible Training Provider List		
Policy Number:	[insert policy number]	Effective Date:	[insert effective date of adoption]
Purpose:	This policy establishes the procedures for Education and Training Vendors wishing to be listed as Eligible Training Providers and offer services to eligible Workforce Solutions customers. It also details the requirements for initial and ongoing eligibility, as well as performance standards.		
Keywords:	Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL)		

Policy:

Workforce Solutions – Gulf Coast, hereinafter referred to as Workforce Solutions, assists employers in meeting their staffing needs and supports individuals in building their careers enabling both to compete in the global economy. To develop a skilled workforce, Workforce Solutions provides scholarships to help individuals gain the necessary skills and credentials for job placement, retention, or advancement.

Eligibility for training and scholarships is determined through a comprehensive assessment of individual needs and available funding. Workforce Solutions professionals assist individuals in selecting the most suitable program from the approved vendor network.

Under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) federal and state rules, Local Workforce Development Boards are required to identify and maintain lists of in-demand occupations, target occupations, and in-demand industries. Customers that receive scholarships through Individual Training Accounts can select from training providers on the TWC Statewide List of Eligible Training Providers or in limited circumstances utilize contracted vendors.

The Board has adopted the general guiding principles contained in the Education and Training Vendor Standards and Guidelines.

WIOA Training Funds

- 1) The Gulf Coast Workforce Board, hereinafter referred to as the Board or GCWB, through the Workforce Solutions network, not training providers, determine an individual’s eligibility and need for training scholarships.
- 2) WIOA training funds are only available to training and educational programs listed on the statewide Eligible Training Provider List.

- 3) The Board facilitates informed Consumer Choice in the selection of an Eligible Training Provider or training service by ensuring that Workforce Solutions Office staff provide customers with:
 - a. The statewide Eligible Training Provider List including a description of approved programs.
 - b. Performance and cost information relating to the approved training programs offered by ETPs and
 - c. Information on available local work-based training providers, on the job training (OJT), customized training, internships, registered apprenticeships, or incumbent worker training.
 - d. Maximize informed customer choice with the support of Workforce Solutions Career Advisors. Career Advisors are responsible for determining training eligibility. To make informed training choices, customers must be provided with high-quality performance information.

Reverse Referrals from Training Providers Do Not Dictate or Control Customer Choice.

Qualifying for the Eligible Training Provider List and Continuing Eligibility

- 1) A provider must submit the required program and student information requested by TWC as specified in the ETP Reporting Requirements.
- 2) Program Performance Standards must meet or exceed TWC and Board required standards shown in the tables below.

Performance Standards for All Former Students	2025 ETP Reporting Period	2026 ETP Reporting Period	2027 ETP Reporting Period
Employed Quarter 2 Post Exit*	70%	70%	70%
Employed Quarter 4 Post Exit*	70%	70%	70%
Median Earnings Quarter 2 Post Exit**	\$7,800	\$7,800	\$7,800
Credential Rate	50%	55%	60%
Completion Rate	60%	60%	60%

- 3) Evidence of Financial Stability- Vendors should ensure that they are not solely reliant on funding from the Board, Workforce Solutions, or the Texas Workforce Commission to operate their business. Except for institutions of higher education, vendors must submit a financial analysis indicating the percentage of income derived from Board, Workforce Solutions, and/or Texas Workforce Commission funding.
- 4) Workforce Solutions- Financial Aid Payment Office will not renew existing vendors where:
 - a. More than 30% of their total revenue comes from workforce funding i.e., Texas Workforce Commission or Gulf Coast Workforce Board; or
 - b. Approve new vendors where the anticipated number of enrollments of Workforce Solutions customers would result in Texas Workforce Commission or Gulf Coast Workforce Board comprising 30% or more of total revenue for a given academic semester or the duration of a program if not adhering to a standard academic calendar.
- 5) Any concerns or discrepancies found during the financial review will be reported to the vendor, allowing them the opportunity to clarify before any further action is taken.
- 6) Workforce Solutions will not approve vendors that have any of the following findings:
 - a. have more than 30% of enrollments pending or receiving Workforce Solutions funds,
 - b. use funds to pay commission or brokerage fees to individuals referring to Workforce Solutions, or
 - c. have signed payment agreements with students or other sources for the cost of the training program.
- 7) Placement on the statewide eligible training provider list does not guarantee funding or constitute an agreement or commitment to refer any Workforce Solutions customer to the training provider (vendor).

Renewal Process

Training vendors must submit their annual Student Data Report (SDR) to the TWC ETP Helpdesk to keep their program active on the ETPL.

Site Visits

The Financial Aid Payment Office (FAPO) and Workforce Solutions' Career Office will conduct an initial and ongoing site visits to the campus(es) of

training providers to assess quality of instruction and verify student attendance.

DOL Registered Apprenticeship Programs

DOL Registered Apprenticeship programs are vetted and approved by the US Department of Labor (DOL), making them automatically eligible for inclusion on the statewide Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL). Registered Apprenticeship Programs (RAPs) do not need to submit student-level data or meet additional state or local criteria to be listed on the statewide ETPL. Boards must recognize all RAPs on the statewide ETPL as linked to local targeted occupations.

Industry Recognized Apprenticeship Programs (IRAPs)

Industry Recognized Apprenticeship Programs or IRAPs are not registered programs with DOL and are not recognized at the national level. IRAPs continue under Texas state law and do not undergo the same vetting process as a DOL RAP. Vendors identifying themselves as offering an Industry Recognized Apprenticeship Program must follow the same process as all other vendors and submit the required eligibility and performance data.

Non-Local Training Vendors

Training providers in Texas who are not assigned to a specific Board area and wish to submit new programs for eligibility consideration must ensure their school is physically located within the thirteen-county Gulf Coast Workforce Board area.

Workforce Solutions does NOT provide support to vendors outside of Texas.

Healthcare and other Online Training Programs

Providers offering exclusively online training for healthcare occupations that require direct or experiential clinical experience before certification must provide Workforce Solutions with proof of an affiliation agreement with a local hospital or healthcare system that will facilitate the hands-on portion of their studies. This ensures that participants can complete their program of study and become eligible for the certification exam.

Training providers for other occupations that require direct or experiential experience before certification must provide Workforce Solutions with proof of affiliation agreements that facilitate the hands-on portion of the participant's studies. This ensures that participants can complete their program of study and become eligible for the certification exam.

Third Party Providers or Indirect Service Providers

Vendors with subcontracted service providers are vendors who rely on a third party to deliver training services, i.e., the actual training is subcontracted. Workforce Solutions Financial Aid Payment Office (FAPO) will not approve vendors with subcontracted service providers without express written consent of the Gulf Coast Workforce Board Executive Director or designee. Vendors will be asked to verify whether they are direct training providers or if training is subcontracted to a third party.

Non-ETP Programs

The following training services are permitted under WIOA and do not require inclusion on the ETPL:

- 1) Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) Participants are not limited to programs on the ETPL and may access training from any private or public schools regulated by a state agency. However, costs must be reasonable and necessary.
- 2) Pre-Apprenticeships are programs designed to prepare individuals for entry into Registered Apprenticeship Programs (RAP) or other job opportunities. Depending on the agreement with a Registered Apprenticeship program, the graduating student from a Pre-Apprenticeship program may either have direct entry into a RAP upon graduation or given additional consideration upon application with a Registered Apprenticeship program.
Funding preference is given to Pre-Apprenticeship programs that provide direct entry into a Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP) and/or results in a certificate or credential that is recognized by industry, as these outcomes are linked to the performance of the Board and Vendor. Pre-Apprenticeships are not vetted nor regulated by DOL and therefore must follow the same eligibility criteria as other vendors.
- 3) Contract for Services-with prior approval from the Board (see Guidance for additional information).
- 4) On the Job Training (OJT)-provided by an employer to a paid participant while engaged in productive work in a job that provides knowledge or skills essential to the full and adequate performance of the job. The employer may be reimbursed up to 50% of the participant's wage rate. Enhanced reimbursement rates of 75% are only available in limited circumstances (see Guidance for additional information). Workforce staff must document in the case file or in WorkinTexas.com case notes the factors used when deciding to increase the wage reimbursement levels above 50% to 75%.
- 5) Incumbent Worker Training.
- 6) Customized Training.

Pricing Information

- 1) Vendors must not charge Workforce Solutions more than the publicly advertised price or an amount that would be charged to a student who is not awarded a Workforce Solutions' scholarship. All scholarships are subject to Workforce Solutions' funding limits and are based on a comprehensive assessment by Workforce Solutions staff.
- 2) Vendors must coordinate funding from other federal, state, and local sources or private job training programs to assist the individual in obtaining training services, in accordance with WIOA guidelines.

Scholarship eligible, High Skill-High Growth Occupations-Training Allotments
Due to increasingly limited federal and state funding, the Gulf Coast Workforce Board has established a cap system. This system restricts the number of individuals that can be trained in a specific industry within a given funding year. The purpose is to ensure support for employers and growth industries that contribute to the economic prosperity of customers. Requests for training exceeding these caps will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

Training caps will be established yearly. For an illustrative example please see Appendix D of the guidance document.

Customer Eligibility

Workforce Solutions is solely responsible for determining an individual's eligibility for WIOA including the need for training.

Customer Assessments

Workforce Solutions will assess the customer's need for career services. Career services consist of Basic Career Services, Individualized Career Services, and follow-up services.

Quality assessments guide the customer to the most suitable training options. Aligning goals with abilities will lead to successful outcomes for both customer and vendor performance.

Reverse customer referrals from training vendors or third parties do not absolve Workforce Solutions from conducting the necessary assessments to determine whether the customer possesses the requisite knowledge, skills, and abilities to engage in and progress satisfactorily through a training program. Each participant's file will incorporate assessment results, labor market information and counseling records. Results will be reviewed with customers to drive informed decision-making.

Customer Choice

Reverse referrals from training providers do not dictate or control customer choice. Workforce Solutions ensures customer choices are “informed” choices.

Pell Grants and Other Funding

Boards must ensure that WIOA funds are not used to pay training costs:

- For any portion or term of training for which the participant has signed a loan as part of financial aid; or
- That were paid by the participant (or another source) before WIOA program registration.

Before receiving training services under WIOA:

- Eligibility for specific services must be determined; and
- A needs assessment must be conducted through an employment plan.

Workforce Solutions must ensure that a training justification is completed in WorkInTexas.com for WIOA participants before training services are approved.

Americans with Disabilities Compliance

Approved vendors must have ADA-compliant facilities including equipment, textbooks, and software that provide reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities, where applicable. After approval, vendors may undergo a site visit for compliance with ADA.

Vendor Code of Conduct

Vendors must avoid any conflicts of interest or situations that may appear to create a potential conflict of interest in their interactions with Workforce Solutions or the Board. Vendors must notify Workforce Solutions or the Board of any situations of potential or apparent conflicts between their personnel, business interests and the interests of Workforce Solutions and the Gulf Coast Workforce Board.

Vendors have a responsibility to make ethical decisions and report any unethical conduct. Vendors must notify Workforce Solutions if they become aware of any conditions that would cause the vendor to become ineligible to provide Services.

Vendors must comply with all applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations pertaining to their business operations. Violation of the Vendor Code of Conduct may be grounds for removal.

Education Committee

Executive Summary

The Education Committee of the Gulf Coast Workforce Board convened on March 13, 2025, at 11:00 a.m. in Room 2D at the Houston-Galveston Area Council. Chaired by Dr. Bobbie Henderson, the meeting brought together Vice Chair Doug Karr, Marie Arcos, Rachel Cevallos, Dr. Melissa Gonzalez, and Guy Jackson, alongside Board staff members Brandi Brown, Thomas Brown, Jacinth Chapman, Dr. Maria Franco Cortes, Johnnie Flores, Ashley Glenn, Erica Jefferson, Danielle Knotts, Roderick Peoples, Leni Quick, Kristi Rangel, Cheryl Sheppard, Jennifer Starling, Juliet Stipeche, and Russell Tomlin. The meeting was adjourned at 12:06 p.m.

At a time of considerable transition across early childhood education, workforce development, and financial aid systems, the Board remains committed to ensuring quality, continuity, and strategic responsiveness. From addressing significant technological implementation issues with the state's new Texas Child Care Connection (TX3C) system to launching direct mentoring services under Texas Rising Star (TRS), the Board is actively engaging with partners to deliver robust, high-impact programming.

Strategic initiatives such as the creation of the Career Pathways division and the expansion of Hire Gulf Coast Youth (HGKY) further reinforce our long-term vision to equip Gulf Coast residents—youth and adults alike—with the tools to thrive in an evolving economy. The Committee also discussed the creation of a non-profit foundation to support and sustain innovative workforce and education initiatives, attract philanthropic investment, and provide flexible resources to pilot, expand, and evaluate programs aligned with the Board's strategic goals.

Early Child Care Financial Aid

Launched on January 13, 2025, the Texas Workforce Commission's TX3C system introduced a comprehensive case management model for child care financial aid. While its objective is to modernize the application, recertification, and provider payment process, its rollout has been challenged by systemic errors—including inaccurate enrollments, provider payments, and parent fee calculations—which have disrupted operations and delayed services for families and providers.

The Support Center is transitioning from a task-based model to a caseworker model, requiring strategic adjustments in staffing and workflows. The Board is in ongoing, high-frequency communication with TWC to resolve system flaws and mitigate operational impact. As of this report, the waitlist has grown to an

estimated 27,000 children, with priority cases experiencing a four-month delay and non-priority cases exceeding 14 months. Outreach to a limited number of priority families will resume once data reporting becomes reliable.

Next Steps

We continue to work diligently with TWC to navigate all the challenges related to the launch. We have several meetings weekly with TWC and other Board areas and meetings with just Gulf Coast for technical assistance. Our Support Center and Payment Office are working together to fix any authorization errors causing an impact to payments.

Early Childhood Education Quality

Overview

In September of 2024, the University of Texas Health Science Center – Children’s Learning Institute (CLI) notified Board staff that they will not renew their child care quality contract for Fiscal Year 2025. We immediately transitioned the mentoring staff from CLI to H-GAC and issued a new Request for Proposal (RFP) in November of 2024.

Transition of Services to Board Staff

Thirty-two (32) mentors formally with CLI became temporary mentoring staff with H-GAC at the beginning of the transition, with an additional 4 mentors joining the team through the beginning of March 2025. Mentors are responsible for providing in-person and virtual support to child care providers seeking initial certification and to providers wanting to increase their Texas Rising Star (TRS) star level. We also hired nine (9) full-time support staff to assist us with onboarding new child care programs to TRS, and track changes throughout the certification process. Support staff also assist with compliance checks, provider trainings, training validations, reports, provider incentives, waiver extension reviews/requests, and provider overview sessions.

Request for Proposal (RFP) Update

We issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) seeking a contractor to manage the Texas Rising Star (TRS) quality rating program and to hire the mentoring staff needed to support over 1,800 child care programs participating in our programs. We received four (4) responses to the RFP, with only one (1) proposer advancing after a thorough financial review. The final proposer had limited experience implementing this type of specialized child care quality improvement work needed to administer the program in accordance with the requirements of Board and the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC).

Recommendation

In mid-February 2025, we met with the child care leadership team at TWC to discuss the option of moving this work in-house for direct implementation by Board staff. We also met and discussed this option with H-GAC's executive director and several of H-GAC's department directors and their teams. At the conclusion of these discussions, we feel confident that the execution and oversight of this important work should remain at the Board level and not be a part of our external delivery of services.

Proposed Staffing

Hire sixty-six (66) full-time mentors to provide in-person and virtual mentoring support to over 1,800 child care programs across the 13-county region. This will include:

- Fifty-five (55) mentors will focus on mentoring child care program directors and teachers working towards Texas Rising Star certification and those working towards higher star levels or maintaining their current star levels.
- Five (5) mentors will support teachers serving the growing number of children with disabilities who need additional classroom support, professional development, and implementation of inclusion plans.
- Six (6) mentor supervisors to provide guidance and support to mentor teams.

Proposed Timeline:

- Interview and onboard most of the thirty-six (36) mentor staff we currently have in temporary roles – April 2025.
- Hire fifteen (15) additional mentors – May 2025.
- Hire remaining fifteen to nineteen (15-19) mentors – June 2025.

Space Allocation Proposed Strategy:

Given the highly specialized roles of our mentors, we are currently exploring the following options for space allocation:

- **Identify temporary lease spaces** as part of the onboarding process. This fully furnished space will be leased for one year. The space will be near the HGAC – Timmons office.
- **Space allocation** will include private office spaces, dedicated conference rooms and a shared training room for professional development.
- **Explore co-located spaces** with partners and stakeholders, including but not limited to the Support Center and career offices.
- **Identify lease space** that can be shared with other departments within Human Services.

Career Pathways

The Career Pathways division was formed in January of 2025. Our career pathways programs provide the foundation for our structured education and training programs that are designed to help individuals, particularly those facing barriers to employment, progress in their careers. Through the support of the Gulf Coast Workforce Board, we are partnering with key stakeholders in developing and implementing career pathways by aligning education, training, and employment services with regional labor market demands. Our division is built with a strategic and sustainable approach to workforce development that includes three tailored career pathways programs; adult education and literacy program, Teacher apprenticeship program and the Tri-Agency Workforce Initiative, all aiding in the work of providing opportunities to help community members access meaningful career opportunities while strengthening the regional economy.

Teacher Apprenticeship

Houston Endowment and GCWB have been meeting regularly to discuss expectations, progress, and finalize the details of our first charrette/working (group). Our partnership aims to develop a blueprint that will provide opportunities to build financial sustainability, accessibility, and long-term success. The first phase of this work is driven by the development of a Teacher Apprenticeship Playbook to serve as a foundation for our work. The playbook being written will assume a four-tier apprenticeship structure, including:

1. Pre-Apprenticeship - Individuals interested in entering the teaching profession, have zero credit hours towards certification, should be seeking general education & training courses OR an AAT (high school students or recent high school graduates, can serve as an office aide or educational aide).
2. Level 1 Apprentice - Participants actively engaged in the apprenticeship program, completed 0-60 credit hours towards certification, should be seeking education & training courses OR an AAT with hopes to be certified as an Educational Aide or Paraprofessional by completion of Level 1 (typically high school graduates or adult learners and have some college credit, can serve as office aide, tutor, or educational aide).
3. Level 2 Apprentice – Participants have 61-90 hours towards certification, they should enroll in an approved EPP, seeking a bachelor’s degree AND teacher certification (typically have an AAT and/or a Junior in college, can serve as an educational aide or paraprofessional).
4. Level 3 Apprentice – Participants have between 91-120 hours of coursework, they should enroll in an approved EPP, they should be seeking a bachelor’s degree and/or they are only seeking certification (typically they are college

seniors or career changers, can serve as educational aide, paraprofessional, resident teacher, or substitute teacher).

Apprentice Level	Credit Hours Required for Entry	Coursework Required	Employment Recommendations	Degree, Certificate or Licensure after Completion
Pre-Apprentice (High School Students)	0	Education and Training Courses and/or AAT Curricula and/or any locally determined curricula	Office Aide, Tutor, Educational Aide 1 (or any role providing hands-on training and does not displace paid employees)	Up to 60 credit hours
Level 1 (High School Diploma or GED, Some college credit, Adult learners with no college)	0-60	Education and Training Courses and/or AAT Curricula and/or any locally determined curricula	Office Aide, Tutor, Educational Aide 1, 2 or 3 (or other roles determined locally)	AAT and/or Educational Aide 2 or 3 Certificate and/or Title 1, Part A Paraprofessional AND enrollment in an approved EPP
Level 2 (Candidates with AAT, community college graduates, college juniors)	61-90	Approved EPP Curricula	Educational Aide 3, Title 1 Part A Paraprofessional (or other roles determined locally)	Bachelor's Degree
Level 3 (College seniors, Careers changers with a Bachelors)	91-120+	Approved EPP Curricula	Educational Aide 3, Title 1 Part A Paraprofessional, Teacher Resident, Substitute Teacher (or other roles determined locally)	Bachelor's Degree and/or Standard Teacher Certificate

**Wage at each apprentice level is locally determined and must include progression alongside Apprentice levels. Pre-Apprentices can be unpaid or paid but should not displace paid employees.*

Our collaboration efforts focus on identifying and closing the gaps in key areas of need. This includes gathering data on why individuals are not completing certification programs, identifying how we can prioritize certain education pathways, and developing a template/structure that aids in the development and progression of a teacher apprentice both during the program and after exiting the program.

Consultant Information

We have engaged The New Teacher Project (TNTP), an education non-profit committed to transforming schools across the country. Leveraging their experience with teacher development programs and teacher certification, their role will be to formalize the details of creating a Registered Teacher Apprenticeship so that apprenticeship partners will be equipped with the knowledge needed to launch their own teacher apprenticeship program.

Charrette

A critical charrette is scheduled for March 24, 2025, at the Houston Endowment, to engage key stakeholders in a collaborative discussion on the financial framework of the teacher apprenticeship model. This session will focus on identifying and analyzing costs associated with each phase of the apprenticeship, ensuring that funding and resources are leveraged effectively. Stakeholders with relevant expertise will be invited to contribute their insights and experiences, helping to shape a sustainable and well-structured model that supports the long-term success of aspiring educators.

Consultant Information

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Tri-Agency Workforce Initiative

The Tri-Agency Workforce Initiative grant concluded in February 2025, but through its support, the Board has significantly strengthened the regional workforce development system. This initiative enabled the Board to enhance career pathway programs, increase credential attainment, and broaden access to high-impact workforce training for youth. It provided a critical foundation for expanding opportunities centered on readiness, completion, transitions, and upskilling—ensuring Gulf Coast students and workers are equipped for high-demand, high-wage careers aligned with the evolving economic needs of our region.

Following the conclusion of Phase One, the Board formally applied for Phase Two of the Tri-Agency Workforce Initiative. This next phase continues to be an essential strategy for advancing regional talent pipelines, particularly by expanding career and technical education (CTE), improving workforce-aligned academic advising, and reversing declines in postsecondary credential attainment.

Through this initiative, the Board has contributed to the growth of dual credit opportunities, increased rates of direct college enrollment, and expanded access to workforce training that supports seamless transitions into careers—avoiding unnecessary coursework and reducing student debt burdens. We have also played a key role in aligning postsecondary education with labor market demands, while fostering a culture of lifelong learning, reskilling, and workforce reintegration.

Since the March 13, 2025, Committee meeting, the Board has received notice of a preliminary award for Phase Two of the Tri-Agency Workforce Initiative. This promising development affirms our strategy and underscores the value of our work. As we await formal confirmation, we remain focused on maintaining momentum and building upon the substantial progress achieved over the past two years. Our goal remains clear: to drive lasting, systemic change that expands opportunity, supports economic mobility, and strengthens the Gulf Coast region's long-term economic vitality.

Hire Gulf Coast Youth

Overview

Hire Gulf Coast Youth (HGKY) is thriving as an inclusive and dynamic campaign, uniting all youth-focused workforce initiatives under a single, impactful banner. Designed to bridge young job seekers with meaningful career exploration and employment opportunities, the program prioritizes high-skill, high-growth industries in the region. The official launch on January 29, 2025, at the Tri-Agency Regional Convenor Conference at the Ion marked a significant milestone, following the successful soft launch during ABC13's "Who's Hiring" Job Fair on January 16, 2025, in partnership with the Houston Livestock Show & Rodeo.

Strategic Social Media Engagement

The HGKY initiative employs a robust digital strategy to enhance visibility and engagement. Workforce Solutions leverages targeted campaigns to maximize outreach, ensuring young job seekers can seamlessly connect with employment opportunities, employers, and essential career development resources. Through this strategy, we aim to drive program awareness, increase applications, and celebrate success stories that inspire further participation.

Current Initiatives

Summer Jobs Program

The Summer Jobs Program is a key initiative of HGCY, equipping youth with invaluable work experience, skill development, and career exploration opportunities. This year, Workforce Solutions has set an ambitious target to connect 2,000 youth with summer employment. Employers can utilize the HGCY Portal to post opportunities, review resumes, schedule interviews, and hire candidates directly. Additionally, they can participate in on-the-spot hiring events scheduled from April through June 2025.

Youth participants can create accounts on the HGCY Portal to access available job opportunities, resources on resume writing and interview skills, and register for Work Readiness Seminars. Enhanced outreach efforts will further amplify both youth engagement and employer participation, ensuring the program's continued success.

Key programmatic deadlines and milestones for 2025 include:

- February 19, 2025 – Open application period for youth participants;
- March 14, 2025 – Employer commitment deadline for summer hiring;
- March 22, 2025 – Youth application period closes;
- March 24, 2025 – Employer matching begins;
- April – June 2025 – Job and Resource Fairs;
- April 18, 2025 – Award notices to youth for job opportunities;
- Late April – May 2025 – Job Readiness Training;
- June 16 – August 8, 2025 – HGCY Summer Jobs Program; and
- September 2025 – Program evaluation and impact report.

Summer Earn and Learn (SEAL)

The Summer Earn and Learn (SEAL) initiative continues to build momentum, enhancing service delivery year after year. The SEAL Kickoff on February 11, 2025, successfully brought together Workforce Solutions and Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) staff. With a contractual goal of providing 525 students with a five-week paid work experience, VRS anticipates referring 600 participants this year, reflecting the program's growing impact and reach.

Key programmatic deadlines and milestones for SEAL include:

- February 11, 2025 – Program kickoff for WFS and VRS staff;
- March 15, 2025 – VRS referral deadline;
- March 17, 2025 – Employer matching begins;
- April – May 2025 – Onboarding and Work Readiness sessions;

- May 30, 2025 – Worksite confirmations sent to students; intern rosters sent to employers;
- June 9 – August 9, 2025 – HGCY SEAL Internships;
- August 2025 – HGCY SEAL Celebration; and
- September 2025 – Program evaluation and impact report.

Jobs Y'all

Jobs Y'all is TWC's initiative to support Young Texans in exploring well-paying and meaningful careers in growing industries in Texas. The target audience is middle, high, and post-secondary students. To date, we have hosted two career fairs, supporting over six hundred (600) youth in gaining exposure to various industries, including building construction and trades, manufacturing, aerospace, life sciences and healthcare, transportation and logistics, and petroleum refining and chemical products. The next event is scheduled for April 2, 2025, in partnership with the Pearland Economic Development Center.

Optimistic Outlook & Continued Growth

With growing enthusiasm from both employers and youth participants, HGCY is positioned for a successful program year. Our strategic efforts in outreach, employer engagement, and digital connectivity continue to strengthen participation rates and overall impact. By fostering strong partnerships and leveraging data-driven strategies, we anticipate an increase in enrollments, ensuring that more young individuals gain access to career-building opportunities that will shape their futures and contribute to the economic vitality of our region. Together, we are igniting possibilities, launching careers, and landing success for Gulf Coast youth.

Exploring a Nonprofit Foundation to Advance Strategic Priorities

As the Gulf Coast Workforce Board continues to evolve and lead with innovation, the Committee discussed the formation of a nonprofit organization or foundation to support and amplify Board-aligned initiatives. This conversation was catalyzed by the recent philanthropic investment from the Houston Endowment in support of the Board's teacher apprenticeship strategy—a clear signal of the growing interest from the philanthropic sector in workforce innovation.

The Committee acknowledged that the establishment of a nonprofit affiliate could serve as a transformative mechanism to attract and manage private and philanthropic funding in ways that are not always feasible through traditional public funding streams. Such an entity would provide the Board with an agile and strategic platform to test new models, scale evidence-based practices, and invest in high-impact solutions aligned with our mission to equip individuals and families for economic success.

By operating in tandem with the Board, the nonprofit foundation could also enhance our capacity to respond swiftly to emerging workforce needs, address funding gaps, and foster deeper partnerships with education institutions, employers, and community-based organizations. Most importantly, it would serve as a strategic lever for advancing the Board's long-term vision: building a resilient, inclusive, and opportunity-rich Gulf Coast economy.

Establishing a nonprofit foundation represents not just an administrative tool, but a strategic investment in the future of the Gulf Coast region—one that can help unlock new opportunities, extend the Board's impact, and sustain our shared mission for generations to come. To ensure proper governance, accountability, and alignment with state and federal regulations, the Committee recommended a formal consultation with the Board's legal counsel to examine viable organizational structures, IRS compliance requirements, and potential governance models. A detailed report with recommendations and options will be prepared and presented at the next Committee meeting for further consideration and Board guidance.

Employer Engagement Committee

Overview

The Employer Engagement Committee convened at 11:02 a.m. at the Workforce Solutions offices under the leadership of Chair Alan Heskamp. Board Members in attendance included Paul Puente, Guy Jackson, Mark Guthrie, Shareen Larmond, Cheryl Guido, Bin Yu, Lizandra Vasquez, Mou Sarkar, and Sineria Ordonez.

The Committee's discussions were framed by the imperative to align workforce development strategies with evolving economic realities and sector-specific trends. With a focus on advancing employer engagement and navigating workforce transition challenges, the Committee reinforced Workforce Solutions – Gulf Coast's role as a premier convener of employer-driven, high-impact workforce strategies.

Strategic Focus on Workforce Development

Alexandra Mallett delivered an update the TWC's TIP, High Demand Job Training, and Skills Development grants. She emphasized the Board's success in cultivating robust partnerships with employers—collaborations that have been essential in designing and implementing workforce training programs aligned with the evolving needs of local industries. These grant-funded initiatives have significantly strengthened the connection between regional employers and training providers, ensuring workforce development remains responsive to real-time market demands.

Ms. Mallett also highlighted the Board's active collaboration with local Chambers of Commerce and trade associations, which has been vital in broadening the impact of workforce programs across the region. Among the standout initiatives is Workforce 101, a program designed to educate employers about available resources and how to effectively leverage them to strengthen their workforce. In addition, Workforce Wednesdays—an ongoing educational series—continues to grow in popularity, particularly among small and mid-sized businesses. To deepen employer engagement further, the Board is developing targeted educational materials to increase small business awareness of workforce development programs and tools tailored to support their growth and success.

Strategic Update on Employer Engagement

The Committee reviewed key initiatives across construction, education, and information technology. These efforts aim to elevate workforce readiness, deepen partnerships, and enhance alignment with regional economic development goals.

Building and Construction Sector: Advancing Innovation and Access

The 3D Construction Printing initiative, a collaborative effort involving Young Enterprises, the City of Pasadena, Houston Community College, and Harris County Precinct 2, continues to expand. Notably, the project's equipment supplier is exploring relocation of manufacturing operations from China to the Gulf Coast—a strategic move that could spur regional economic development, bolster domestic supply chains, and generate new manufacturing jobs across the construction and advanced manufacturing sectors.

The Performance Contracting pilot program, funded by a Texas Education Agency (TEA) grant, has broadened its reach to include a dedicated summer session in partnership with Pasadena Independent School District and San Jacinto College. This expansion not only deepens student engagement but also strengthens career awareness and access to high-demand occupations in construction and infrastructure development.

Workforce Solutions' active participation in events such as St. Peter's CTE High School Career Day continues to promote awareness of skilled trade careers. These engagements help inspire and inform the next generation of workers while reinforcing the value of career and technical education.

Finally, recent strategic coordination with Union Pacific Rail and Constellation Energy demonstrates the Board's proactive approach to cultivating targeted talent pipelines in the transportation and energy sectors. These partnerships signal a commitment to employer-responsive training solutions and long-term industry alignment.

Education Sector: Scaling Teacher Apprenticeships

The Board is collaborating with the Houston Endowment and TNTF to implement the Registered Teacher Apprenticeship Program (RTAP). This initiative addresses barriers to certification, prioritizes high-need teaching fields, and supports apprentices through structured, sustainable pathways. Key efforts include:

- The development of a four-tiered Teacher Apprenticeship Playbook, a resource to support scalable implementation across the region.
- A 10-month roadmap, beginning with a March 24, 2025, charrette focused on cost modeling, stakeholder alignment, and funding strategies.

These initiatives are aimed at establishing a durable, equity-focused talent pipeline for the education workforce.

Information Technology Sector: Bridging Talent and Industry

Principal Industry Liaison Amber Jefferson has engaged in a series of targeted actions to close the skills gap in technology including:

- Moderated a workforce development panel at Tech Fest Live with the Houston Rockets, enhancing awareness of career opportunities.
- Designed a region-wide internship framework connecting students to high-growth tech employers.
- Delivered a keynote speech on adaptability and continuous learning at a major career fair.
- Launched the inaugural IT webinar series for the Board, addressing emerging themes in workforce innovation such as AI integration and resilience.

These efforts position Workforce Solutions – Gulf Coast as a catalyst for employer-led training models that meet the needs of a dynamic and competitive tech industry.

Rapid Response Activity: Mitigating Economic Disruption

Gabi Gonzalez provided an overview of layoff trends and Rapid Response engagement. Between 2024 and early 2025, 64 employers reported layoffs affecting 4,490 employees across sectors. Major dislocations included:

- 780 layoffs at 99 Cents Only Store LLC,
- 997 layoffs at Texas Children’s Hospital, and
- 500 layoffs at Marathon Oil Corporation.

Rapid Response, authorized under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and administered by the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC), is a proactive strategy designed to help both employers and workers during times of significant layoffs or business closures. These services are intended to minimize the disruptions associated with job loss and facilitate quick reemployment through coordinated services.

For employers, Rapid Response offers confidential, customized support to manage workforce reductions effectively. Services include strategic planning to minimize the impact on business operations, communication support to engage with employees, and information on potential alternatives to layoffs—such as shared work programs or upskilling grants.

For workers, Rapid Response teams deliver timely on-site services, including:

- Orientation sessions on available workforce programs,
- Access to job search and placement services,
- Information about unemployment insurance benefits, and
- Referrals to training and education resources.

In the Gulf Coast region, Workforce Solutions, and partner agencies, such as SERCO of Texas, have rapidly deployed these services in response to WARN notices. The coordinated outreach reflects the Board’s commitment to reducing

unemployment duration, strengthening worker resiliency, and ensuring businesses can adapt without long-term operational setbacks.

Statewide Healthcare Workforce Strategy

Gulf Coast Workforce Board's Role in Strengthening the Healthcare Workforce
In October 2024, Governor Abbott and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board released the Healthcare Workforce Task Force Report to address critical staffing shortages across Texas. The Task Force, led by Victoria Ford of the Texas Healthcare and Bioscience Institute, convened over 70 experts, 50 stakeholders, and seven state agencies. The Gulf Coast Workforce Board was invited to testify at the State Capitol in July 2024, offering regional insight into workforce challenges and opportunities to expand healthcare training and employment pathways.

The report identifies the Gulf Coast Workforce Board as a key regional partner in driving employer engagement, developing healthcare training programs, and advancing workforce pipeline efforts. Local projections show our 13-county region faces an estimated shortfall of nearly 9,800 allied healthcare workers over the next decade. Addressing this demand requires coordinated, employer-driven solutions. To that end, the Board continues to build and strengthen partnerships with institutions such as Houston Community College, Dwyer Workforce Development, HCA Healthcare, MD Anderson Cancer Center, and the College of Health Care Professions to deliver high-impact training and upskilling programs.

Despite our progress, the Task Force outlined several persistent challenges—many of which our Board has already identified and begun addressing:

Barrier 1: Administrative Complexity

Lengthy processes for establishing program partnerships slow down implementation.

Our Response: Develop standardized templates, offer technical workshops, and distribute a comprehensive funding and incentive guide for healthcare providers.

Barrier 2: Limited Work-Based Learning Opportunities

Apprenticeships and internships remain underutilized.

Our Response: Expand regional apprenticeship models, and work with school and employer partners to increase internship and externship access.

Barrier 3: Disconnect Between Education and Industry

Training programs often don't align with employer needs.

Our Response: Launch an annual Healthcare Workforce Roundtable and enhance career pathway alignment with K–12 and postsecondary partners, building on our Tri-Agency Regional Convener role.

Upcoming Medical Education Leadership Summit

On April 3, 2025, we will co-host the Medical Education Leadership Summit in partnership with the Ibn Sina Foundation and Sam Houston State University at the St. Regis Hotel. This summit will focus on expanding physician training and will serve as a platform for cross-sector collaboration to address broader workforce development across the healthcare industry.

Looking Ahead

The Board is well positioned to lead the region in building a sustainable, high-quality healthcare workforce. The Task Force report reinforces what we already know: regional collaboration, employer engagement, and streamlined processes are essential to closing the workforce gap. We will continue aligning education, training, and industry to meet both current and future needs—ensuring our region is prepared, competitive, and resilient.

Healthcare and Life Sciences Employment Outlook

Ron Borski and Melissa Steinmetz delivered a comprehensive analysis of the region's healthcare and life sciences sectors, highlighting both recent gains and emerging challenges.

The Health Care and Social Assistance industry added 9,200 jobs in 2024, representing a 2.4% increase. Ambulatory healthcare services rebounded swiftly from the pandemic, regaining pre-COVID employment levels within six months, while hospital employment required 30 months to fully recover. These trends underscore the differential recovery rates and resilience across sub-sectors within healthcare.

Houston's biotechnology and life sciences landscape is poised for expansion, with an estimated 10,136 new jobs expected over the next five years. Growth will be concentrated in research and development—particularly in the physical, engineering, and biological sciences—as well as in pharmaceutical preparation and medical manufacturing. The Texas Medical Center's global reputation, coupled with the region's research infrastructure and academic institutions, positions Houston as a national leader in life sciences innovation.

However, Borski and Steinmetz also noted significant headwinds that could temper growth:

- The National Institutes of Health (NIH) recently implemented a 15% cap on indirect cost reimbursement, which may significantly reduce research budgets at institutions such as Baylor College of Medicine—Texas' largest NIH funding recipient.

- Trade policy changes, including reinstated tariffs and foreign investment restrictions, are affecting the viability and expansion plans of biotech firms, particularly those with international ties or operations.
- The expiration of Medicare pandemic-era waivers for telehealth services and ongoing FDA regulatory changes threatens staffing levels in digital health, remote monitoring, and compounding pharmacy sectors.

Despite these uncertainties, the Greater Houston Partnership reports sustained economic momentum in the life sciences. In 2024 alone, over \$1.14 billion in capital investment was secured across 36 company expansions, with five additional life sciences firms entering the region in early 2025. Meanwhile, Houston is actively pursuing major opportunities such as the NSF BIOMS Innovation Grant and site bids from global pharmaceutical companies, including Eli Lilly. Taken together, the outlook for healthcare and life sciences remains promising—though highly contingent on federal policy, funding stability, and workforce readiness. Workforce Solutions – Gulf Coast will continue to play a critical role in bridging talent pipelines to emerging opportunities, ensuring the region remains competitive on a national and global scale.

Strategic Employer Engagement and Regional Alignment

Juliet Stipeche, Kristi Rangel, and Crosby Brito outlined a multi-tiered strategy to strengthen employer engagement and improve alignment with regional economic entities:

- Launched the "Workforce 101" standardized presentation to ensure consistent messaging in employer-facing efforts.
- Initiated a structured reassignment of Board staff to economic development organizations and chambers to sustain a regular presence and deepen insight into employer needs.
- Developing the Board's Employer Engagement Advisory Council as a standing body for industry feedback and workforce planning.

Draft bylaws for the Employer Engagement Advisory Council were distributed to the Committee for review. (Item 8g. Attachment.) Members were invited to offer feedback on the proposed governance structure and identify priority organizations for targeted engagement. To ensure the bylaws reflect the diverse needs and strategic priorities of the region, Chair Alan Heskamp recommended the formation of a dedicated subcommittee to refine the bylaws, integrating best practices and ensuring that the Advisory Council is positioned to serve as a high-functioning, employer-informed body that guides the Board's business-forward workforce strategy and alignment.

Looking Ahead

Chair Alan Heskamp closed the meeting by emphasizing the importance of maintaining strong engagement with industry leaders, economic development groups, and community organizations. He reiterated that continued collaboration is critical to refining workforce strategies and ensuring that the region's workforce remains adaptable and competitive. Looking ahead, the Committee will prioritize the progress of the Employer Engagement Advisory Council and examine promising practices from high-performing workforce boards across the country. The next meeting will focus on evaluating the development of the Employer Engagement Advisory Council and exploring innovative strategies to strengthen workforce engagement across the region.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:21 p.m.



GULF COAST WORKFORCE BOARD EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT ADVISORY COUNCIL

INTRODUCTION

The Gulf Coast Workforce Board (GCWB) serves as the strategic workforce leadership body for the 13-county Houston-Galveston region, one of the most economically dynamic areas in Texas. Covering a population of over 7.6 million people, GCWB drives economic growth by ensuring that businesses have access to a highly skilled workforce while empowering individuals with meaningful employment opportunities.

GCWB is committed to helping employers meet their workforce needs and individuals build sustainable careers, ensuring that both can thrive in an evolving global economy. Through strategic collaboration, innovation, and engagement, GCWB enhances the economic vitality of our region.

As part of its commitment to fostering business-forward workforce strategies, the Gulf Coast Workforce Board has established the Employer Engagement Advisory Council (Council). This Council serves as a key advisory body to the Board's Employer Engagement Committee, providing strategic insights, industry-driven recommendations, and employer perspectives on talent needs, workforce trends, and economic development initiatives.

ARTICLE I – ESTABLISHMENT OF THE COUNCIL

The Employer Engagement Advisory Council is a voluntary advisory body within the Gulf Coast Workforce Board structure that reports to the Employer Engagement Committee. It functions as a strategic partner in aligning workforce development efforts with employer needs, ensuring that the workforce system remains responsive and competitive.

ARTICLE II – MISSION

The Council’s mission is to engage employers, industry leaders, educators, and workforce stakeholders in shaping policies and initiatives that address regional labor market challenges, close skills gaps, and develop a talent pipeline that supports sustainable economic growth.

ARTICLE III – PURPOSE

The Council’s key objectives include:

- Providing employer-driven insights on workforce challenges, trends, and training needs.
- Strengthening partnerships between industry, educational institutions, and workforce organizations.
- Developing recommendations to enhance workforce development programs and initiatives.
- Serving as a collaborative forum for employers and workforce stakeholders to identify opportunities for skills development and innovation.
- Supporting the Board in developing quantifiable goals and key performance indicators to track progress and ensure impactful workforce outcomes for the region’s employers.

ARTICLE IV – SCOPE OF WORK

The scope of work for the Council includes:

1. Industry Expertise to the Gulf Coast Workforce Board
 - Offering real-time, key industry insight regarding the region's high-skill, high-growth, and targeted industries to ensure the Gulf Coast Workforce Board’s services and programs align with industry needs.
 - Forge strategic alliances with employers, chambers of commerce, economic development corporations, and trade/industry councils to ensure active communication and collaboration.
 - Enlist employer’s vision, voice to design, and develop customized work-based learning opportunities, internships, apprenticeships, and on-the-job training programs.

2. Educational Alignment and Curriculum Development

- **Curriculum Co-Design:** Collaborate with educational institutions to develop and update curricula that reflect current industry standards and future workforce requirements.
- **Micro-Credentials and Certifications:** Advocate for the creation of short-term, industry-recognized credentials that enhance employability and meet specific employer needs.
- **Faculty-Industry Exchanges:** Facilitate partnerships where industry professionals contribute to academic settings, ensuring that educational content remains relevant and applied.
- **Educational Alignment:** Offer recommendations on curriculum development, upskilling programs, and career pathways to meet industry demands.

3. Data-Driven Insights and Labor Market Analysis

- **Real-Time Labor Market Information:** Utilize up-to-date labor market data to identify emerging job trends, skills gaps, and opportunities for workforce development.
- **Outcome Tracking:** Implement systems to monitor the success of training programs and employment initiatives, using this data to inform continuous improvement.
- **Employer Feedback Loops:** Establish regular channels for employers to provide insights on workforce challenges and the effectiveness of training programs.

4. Expanding Workforce Access and Opportunity

- **Workforce Access Strategies:** Develop initiatives to ensure all job seekers have access to opportunities in high-demand industries, addressing barriers to employment through training, mentorship, and employer partnerships.
- **Regional Workforce Engagement:** Partner with community organizations and employers to expand awareness of career pathways, skills training, and available resources to support job seekers and businesses.
- **Career Growth Initiatives:** Support strategies that enhance employee retention and advancement, including mentorship, leadership training, and skill-building programs that help individuals progress in their careers.

5. Public-Private Engagement and Policy Advocacy

- **Workforce Policy Recommendations:** Provide insights and recommendations to the Gulf Coast Workforce Board and Employer Engagement Committee to enhance workforce policies.

- Government and Economic Development Partnerships: Collaborate with local and state government agencies, chambers of commerce, and economic development organizations to align workforce strategies with regional economic goals.
 - Employer-Led Initiatives: Encourage industry leaders to take an active role in shaping workforce development policies and best practices.
6. Strategic Partnerships: Facilitate collaborations between employers, educational institutions, and economic development entities.
 7. Other activities related to employer engagement that the Employer Engagement Committee or Gulf Coast Workforce Board's Chair assign related to the mission of the Council.

ARTICLE V – MEMBERSHIP

This Council shall be comprised of at least one private sector member from each of the following targeted industries:

1. Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction,
2. Construction,
3. Manufacturing,
4. Wholesale Trade and Retail Trade,
5. Transportation, Warehousing, and Logistics,
6. Utilities,
7. Finance and Insurance,
8. Information and Technology,
9. Real Estate and Rental and Leasing,
10. Professional, Scientific, and Technical Service,
11. Educational Services,
12. Health Care and Social Assistance Services, and
13. Life Sciences.

The Council shall also include at least two (2) representatives from the following organizations to provide regulatory, economic, and community insights:

14. Chamber of Commerce,
15. Economic Development Corporation, and
16. Industry/Trade Organizations.

The Council may include one representative from the Texas Workforce Commission, Department of Labor, Gulf Coast Workforce Board, and Board staff

to serve as ex-officio members. These members do not have a right to vote but may offer input and support.

Subcommittees: The Advisory Council may establish subcommittees as necessary to address specific industry sectors or areas of focus, or emerging issues that align with the Council's objectives. Subcommittees will operate as specialized working groups, tasked with gathering data, conducting analysis, and providing targeted advice and recommendations to the full Advisory Council.

Subcommittees Membership will be comprised of external industry-specific experts, stakeholders, or industry professionals whose expertise is relevant to the subcommittee's focus area. Members will be selected based on their qualifications and experience, as approved by the Advisory Council. Subcommittee members are non-voting members that serve at the discretion of the Advisory Council.

Geographic Representation: The Council's composition should include a private sector member from each of the 13 counties to ensure adequate regional representation.

Employer Size & Sector Diversity: The Council will seek to balance participation from small, medium, and large employers, ensuring that recommendations address the full spectrum of regional workforce needs.

Membership Tenure: Two-year terms, renewable once, to balance continuity with fresh industry perspectives.

Application Process: Membership is open to candidates with strong professional backgrounds and experience who serve as leaders in their industry with expertise and a demonstrated commitment to the Council's mission. The application will ask for a statement of interest explaining their commitment to workforce development.

Selection Process: Candidates will be selected through an open application and a transparent process developed by Board staff. The Employer Engagement Committee will advance recommended candidates to the Gulf Coast Workforce Board for discussion and final approval.

Vacancy Management: If a vacancy arises, a mid-year application process may be opened to fill critical gaps. Additionally, members will be encouraged to participate in succession planning, identifying potential successors within their organizations or industry networks to ensure continuity, should an interim appointment be necessary.

Rights and Responsibilities:

- Each member shall have one vote on the Council.
- Ex-officio members shall participate but not have a right to vote.
- Attendance Requirement: Members must attend at least three (3) of the four quarterly meetings.
- Inactive Membership: Members missing three consecutive meetings without prior notice may be removed from the Council by the Employer Engagement Committee.
- All members shall comply with the Council's Code of Conduct and Ethics.

ARTICLE VI – MEETINGS

- Quarterly Meetings: The Council shall meet on the first Wednesday of February, May, August, and November.
- Virtual Participation: Meetings will be held in a hybrid fashion to accommodate members across the region.
- Special Meetings: May be called as needed by Board staff.
- Meeting Notifications: Members shall receive meeting notices at least 7 business days in advance.
- Agenda & Minutes: Board staff will develop the agenda and maintain meeting minutes, which shall be distributed within 30 business days post-meeting.

ARTICLE VII – CODE OF CONDUCT & ETHICS

Each member shall:

- Act in a professional, respectful, and ethical manner.
- Maintain confidentiality regarding proprietary business and workforce-related discussions.
- Disclose any conflicts of interest and sign a conflict-of-interest form.
- Abstain from making decisions that directly impact Board operations, funding, or staffing.
- Not speak on behalf of the organization or disclose confidential information without prior authorization.

ARTICLE VIII – GOVERNANCE & REPORTING

The Council reports to the Employer Engagement Committee, which in turn reports to the Gulf Coast Workforce Board.

Recommendations: The Council's recommendations are advisory in nature only and subject to approval by the Gulf Coast Workforce Board.

Annual Review: The Council shall conduct an annual self-assessment to evaluate effectiveness and identify areas for improvement and provide a written report to Board staff.

ARTICLE IX – AMENDMENTS

Amendments to these bylaws may be proposed by the Council and must be approved by the Employer Engagement Committee before adoption by the Gulf Coast Workforce Board.

ARTICLE X – DISSOLUTION

The Employer Engagement Advisory Council may be dissolved by a majority vote of the Gulf Coast Workforce Board, should it be determined that the Council has fulfilled its purpose or is no longer necessary.

Adopted by the Gulf Coast Workforce Board on [Date]

Communications Committee

Executive Summary

The Communications Committee, chaired by Mr. Doug Karr, convened on March 26, 2025, at 1:01 p.m. at 3555 Timmons Ln, Houston, TX 77027 (Room 2D). Attending Board members included Guy Robert Jackson, Dr. Melanie Rodriguez, Lizandra Vasquez, and Sineria Ordonez. Board staff in attendance included Juliet Stipeche, Kristi Rangel, AJ Dean, Russell Tomlin, Desmond Taylor, Dr. Maria Franco Cortes, Romana Paniagua, Philip Garcia, Sabrina Parras, LaToya Casimere, Sable Harris-Buck, Jennifer Starling, Kevin Rodney, Janine Haynes, and Jenny Johnson. Also present were Tim Lankford and Dr. Michelle Cantú from Outreach Strategists.

The Gulf Coast Workforce Board's Communications Committee continues to guide the strategic modernization of our outreach and engagement efforts. This quarter, Workforce Solutions – Gulf Coast has made measurable progress in aligning our communications strategy with evolving digital practices, deepening regional engagement, and building a cohesive, bilingual, and community-centered approach to public-facing content. Key initiatives include enhanced social media outreach, the launch of WorkforceSolutionsNews.com, strengthened media relations, and expanded use of data-driven engagement tools.

Social Media & Outreach Report

In today's workforce landscape, digital engagement is not just a tool for visibility—it is a vital infrastructure for outreach, equity, and strategic alignment. Over the past quarter, Workforce Solutions – Gulf Coast has reimagined its digital communications strategy to reflect best practices seen in the most effective mission-driven organizations. With focused investments in social media, the launch of a curated news platform, and an integrated promotional strategy around key initiatives like Hire Gulf Coast Youth (HGKY), our communications efforts are now more than ever driving action, deepening partnerships, and reaching the community in meaningful ways.

LinkedIn

This transformation began with the recognition that each platform—LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram—serves a distinct purpose. LinkedIn has been cultivated as a space for professional storytelling and thought leadership, helping Workforce Solutions speak directly to employers, policymakers, and institutional partners. Over the past 30 days, our LinkedIn presence grew by 222 new followers—a significant and telling increase. One high-performing post reached 265 members

and achieved a 15.3% click-through rate, far exceeding typical engagement benchmarks. These results are not anecdotal; they signal that our voice is resonating with the right audience—those who influence and implement workforce policy, hiring decisions, and partnerships.

Facebook

Meanwhile, Facebook continues to be our most effective tool for community-level outreach. With a follower base of more than 10,000, we have focused our efforts on mobilizing engagement around programs that matter most to families and jobseekers—chief among them, HGCY. A single campaign promoting the HGCY Portal received 5,000 views and 64 direct clicks, demonstrating that our strategy is not just building awareness, but also generating real traffic to our services. A follow-up post saw an additional 1,700 views and 27 click-throughs. These are not passive metrics; they represent real people actively seeking out opportunity and accessing our support through the channels we have optimized for their use.

Instagram

Instagram, often considered the most youth-centric of platforms, has also shown promise. While we are still expanding our presence there, early indicators tied to HGCY-related visual content are encouraging. Pre-launch posts have outperformed traditional content, revealing that young audiences are responding to the vibrant, authentic, and accessible messaging formats we have embraced. By using motion, visuals, and faces they can identify with, we are starting to build a relationship with the emerging generation of workers who consume information in real time, on mobile devices, and through storytelling, not text-heavy posts.

These successes are best embodied in our work around Hire Gulf Coast Youth—our flagship youth employment initiative designed to connect individuals ages 16–24 with paid summer jobs, internships, and career exploration opportunities. In many ways, HGCY has become a case study in integrated digital outreach. Through a combination of Facebook engagement, Instagram storytelling, and LinkedIn amplification, we have driven awareness and direct traffic to the HGCY Portal, helping ensure that the program reaches its intended audience efficiently and effectively. More importantly, by incorporating youth-centered visuals, real testimonials, and targeted language, our strategy has emphasized trust and relevance—two crucial factors for connecting with younger jobseekers.

WorkforceSolutionsNews.com

As the largest workforce board in Texas, Workforce Solutions – Gulf Coast must lead not only in service delivery, but in how we communicate our value to the communities and employers we serve. To strengthen our presence, broaden our reach, and drive traffic to Workforce Solutions News, we are launching a focused

digital communications strategy built around purposeful content, platform engagement, and measurable outcomes.

The mission is simple: ensure that Workforce Solutions News becomes the go-to resource for career information, job opportunities, and employer solutions across our 13-county region. But the path forward requires more than regular posts—it requires strategy, storytelling, and precision. At the heart of this initiative is a content framework designed to consistently deliver value. Our communications will center on four key themes:

- Career Opportunities – We will feature high-demand jobs by education level, helping people better understand what is available and what is attainable based on their background.
- Employer Solutions – We will share practical tools and insights that support businesses in attracting, hiring, and retaining qualified talent.
- Labor Market Insights – Through timely data and analysis, we will break down economic and industry trends so that individuals and employers alike can make informed decisions.
- Real Stories – We will highlight the journeys of job seekers and businesses who have partnered with Workforce Solutions—bringing our impact to life through stories that resonate.

To ensure these messages reach a broad audience, our strategy includes a bilingual communications approach. All Facebook and LinkedIn posts will be shared in both English and Spanish. Instagram carousels will include Spanish captions, and all videos and Reels will feature subtitles in both languages. This dual-language model allows us to serve more residents across our region and reinforces our commitment to clear, inclusive communication.

In addition to content, our strategy includes active engagement. We will amplify our visibility by commenting on workforce-related posts, following key industry leaders and organizations, and participating in relevant conversations across platforms. Every post will feature direct and effective calls to action—such as “Explore now” and “Partner with us”—to invite users to dive deeper into Workforce Solutions News and the support it offers.

Maintaining a professional and consistent brand presence will be key. Our tone will be informative and accessible, supported by strong visuals that reflect the credibility of our organization and the reliability of our services. To ensure we are making meaningful progress, we will measure our success through clear performance indicators:

- Awareness through follower growth and post impressions,
- Engagement through likes, comments, and shares, and
- Conversions through click-through rates and visits to Workforce Solutions News.

This is not simply about building a digital audience—it is about strengthening our role as a workforce leader, delivering timely and relevant information, and creating a platform that connects people to opportunity. Through strategic storytelling and smart engagement, we will ensure Workforce Solutions News is not just another channel—it is a trusted resource that reflects the impact and mission of Workforce Solutions – Gulf Coast.

Our ad hoc communications team has implemented weekly editorial meetings that bring together outreach strategists and Workforce Solutions staff. These meetings ensure alignment across platforms, elevate timely opportunities, and allow us to quickly adapt based on performance data and audience feedback. This is not simply about content creation—it is about building a dynamic, responsive, and intentional communications system.

Together, our social media presence and digital platform have generated measurable results. We are seeing increased engagement, consistent audience growth, and, most importantly, a clear path from content to conversion—especially when it comes to high-priority initiatives like our HSHG career opportunities to HGCV. Our content is being read, shared, and acted upon. And our audiences—whether young people seeking a first job, employers looking for talent, or community partners navigating services—are increasingly turning to us as a trusted, responsive, and modern voice.

Looking ahead, we will continue to expand our capacity for visual storytelling, deepen our metrics and analysis capabilities, and build out multilingual and inclusive content that reflects the diversity of our region. We are committed to ensuring that all content—whether delivered on LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, or our news site—is accessible, strategic, and mission-aligned.

What we have built is more than a collection of platforms. It is a cohesive, community-powered communications ecosystem that aligns with the Gulf Coast Workforce Board's priorities and helps position our region as a national model for digital engagement in workforce development.

Media Highlights

Workforce Solutions has continued to strengthen its media presence while proactively managing our brand in response to public inquiries and regional developments. Over the past several weeks, we have fielded multiple high-profile media requests and earned significant coverage that reinforces our role as a trusted resource for job seekers and employers alike.

Media Requests and Responses

ABC13 (KTRK): Reporter Jessica Willey reached out regarding issues with payments to child care vendors. The issue was traced to the transition to the new TXC3 system which shifted payments from once a week to every two weeks and other data transition challenges. Board staff quickly responded, notifying TWC media relations and referring the inquiry to them.

Houston Public Media (KUHF 88.7 – “Houston Matters”): Three media requests were received: Two inquiries—one related to employee benefits and another concerning DEI in hiring—were outside our organizational scope. A third request, received March 10, focuses on the impact of online education and certification programs on job seeker outcomes. Juliet Stipeche participated as a guest on “Houston Matters” on March 20, 2025.

Houston Chronicle: Reporter Taylor Goldenstein contacted us on March 7, 2025, regarding the Board’s child care waitlist. This is a follow-up to a public information request submitted in January 2025. On March 17, 2025, Jennifer Starling was interviewed, but the story has not yet been published.

Proactive Media Pitches: We pitched feature opportunities on the MC3 Pre-Apprenticeship Training Program to FOX 26 (KRIV-TV) and CW39 (KIAH-TV). While neither outlet accepted at this time, our proactive approach lays the groundwork for future engagement in workforce training initiatives.

Earned Media Performance

Our February 2025 ABC13 “Who’s Hiring” Job Fair, focused on healthcare and allied professions, yielded strong results:

February 5, 2025, Fox26 segment on the Houston Gulf Coast Building and Construction Council’s ARP/MC3 program.

Advertising Value Equivalent (AVE): \$56,042

Estimated Viewership: 245,869

February 20, 2025, Preview Segment: Featured Community Health Choice, a Houston-based managed care organization under Harris Health.

Live Interview Guests: Dr. Christina A. Hagerty, Interim Chief Academic Officer at Lone Star College and member of Governor Abbott's Healthcare Task Force and Melissa Steinmetz, Principal Industry Liaison – Healthcare

Advertising Value Equivalent (AVE): \$56,995.24

Estimated Viewership: 280,215

March 20, 2025, Preview Segment: A Review of Workforce Solutions' Resources including the Workforce of Wheels at our Texas City Office.

Advertising Value Equivalent (AVE): \$101,405

Estimated Viewership: 367,441

Total Advertising Value Equivalent (AVE): \$214,442

Total Estimated Viewership: 893,525

This level of exposure helps elevate the visibility of our services and partnerships, highlighting the breadth of the Workforce Solutions mission.

Other Innovation and Technology:

Mobile App Launch: The Workforce Solutions News app is now live in the Apple App Store and Google Play, offering convenient access to job matching, resources, and system information for users on the go.

Collateral & Messaging Development

Hire Gulf Coast Youth: We completed updated materials for the HG CY campaign, including printed collateral featuring QR codes that link directly to youth services, and a simplified web link: wrksolutions.com/hgcy.

Employer Services Push Card: A new card is being developed for use during employer meetings, showcasing how Workforce Solutions supports business needs.

WIOA Reauthorization Advocacy: At the request of Chair Mark Guthrie, we are producing a one-pager and push card to support federal advocacy for the reauthorization of WIOA, positioning the Board as a thought leader in national workforce policy.

Branding & Identity Update

Outreach Strategists has reviewed and approved new design collateral. Updated materials are now being integrated into ImageSet and SharePoint, including refreshed PowerPoint and Word templates.

Community Engagement

Workforce Solutions is reimagining how we connect with the communities we serve—shifting toward a model that emphasizes strategic, place-based engagement, equity, and systems alignment.

A recent example is the February 25 Northshore Community Meeting held at the Anderson Center for the Arts. This event served as the starting point for reimagining service delivery in Northeast Harris County and reflects our commitment to engage authentically and collaboratively.

We are now embedding a community-focused mindset across all engagement efforts. This includes:

- Stronger collaboration with Career and Technical Education (CTE) schools and training providers;
- Deepened relationships with employers, community leaders, and neighborhood organizations; and
- Clearer and more consistent messaging and branding that reflects our shared identity across all Workforce Solutions locations.

By focusing on relationship-building and consistent communication, we are enhancing both the visibility and effectiveness of our services throughout the region.

Events, Activities, & Tools

Our focus this quarter has been on refining how we plan, promote, and evaluate events and system-wide engagement. We are also building out infrastructure that supports a more data-driven, coordinated approach across departments and service providers.

Recent Hiring Events:

February 20, 2025 – Healthcare & Allied Professions, Lone Star College – Kingwood:

Job Seekers Registered: 399

Job Seekers Attended: 325

Employers Registered & Attended: 36

Outreach Channels: Social media, email (GovDelivery), text messaging, and Career Advisor outreach

March 20, 2025 – Business and Finance Hiring Event, Richmond Public Library:

Job Seekers Registered: 1,148

Job Seekers in Attendance: 442

Employers Registered: 38

Employers Attended: 25

Outreach Channels: Social media, GovDelivery, Career Advisors (targeted by industry), recruiters, George Memorial Library staff.

(Final job seeker attendance is pending.)

Collaborative Communication Structures

We have established new recurring meetings to strengthen alignment and communication across the system:

- Editorial Meetings (Weekly): Coordinating upcoming content, social posts, and event planning with program and service provider liaisons;
- Community Engagement Network (Monthly): In-person best practice sharing, alignment on messaging, and upcoming calendar coordination; and
- Supervisors/Managers Meetings (Quarterly): Strengthening team accountability, strategy implementation, and engagement metrics tracking.

Tools in Development

The current technological tools are in development:

- Power BI Dashboards: In development with consultant support to provide real-time, visual reporting of community engagement and outreach efforts;
- Central Events Calendar: Tracks upcoming and past events systemwide to reduce duplication, improve visibility, and enhance planning; and
- Pre/Post Event Surveys: Implemented via Eventbrite (pre-registration) and paper/QR codes (post-event) to better capture employer and job seeker feedback, assess satisfaction, and gather improvement ideas.

These tools are foundational to improving our system's responsiveness, scalability, and quality of engagement across all 13 counties.

Conclusion

This quarter's achievements reflect more than operational progress—they mark a pivotal evolution in how Workforce Solutions – Gulf Coast positions itself as a trusted, dynamic, and equity-focused voice in regional workforce development. Through investments in digital strategy, authentic storytelling, and platform

innovation, we are not merely enhancing communication—we are redefining it as a cornerstone of service delivery, partnership, and public trust. From measurable social media engagement to the successful launch of WorkforceSolutionsNews.com, from proactive media relationships to a community-first approach to outreach, our efforts are establishing a comprehensive, bilingual, and data-informed communications ecosystem.

These initiatives are not isolated tactics—they are deeply interwoven strategies that reflect the complexity and diversity of the communities we serve. Looking forward, our focus remains steadfast: to build a communications system that is agile, intentional, and inclusive—one that empowers job seekers, supports employers, and strengthens the Gulf Coast region. By continuing to refine our tools, elevate our narrative, and expand access across digital and physical spaces, we are shaping a future in which Workforce Solutions is not only visible—but vital.

With the Communications Committee's ongoing leadership, we are poised to become a model for how workforce organizations leverage strategic communication to inspire action, drive equity, and transform opportunity into impact. Further, we wish to continue to improve how we use communications effectively to amplify our mission, support access, and deliver measurable impact. With the Board's continued guidance and support, our communications strategy will only grow in effectiveness, precision, and reach.

Procurement Committee Report

On March 25, 2025, Chair Dr. Bobbie Henderson convened the Procurement Committee at 2:11pm to review information and consider a recommendation to the Board's contract awarding process. Other committee members in attendance included Chair Mark Guthrie, Adrian Ozuna, Cheryl Guido, Jeff LaBroski, Paul Puento, and Doug Karr.

The committee received recommendation for establishing a dollar approval threshold for contract awards. The committee voted to recommend Option 1 - which authorizes staff to negotiate contracts establishments, renewals, and amendments at or below \$249,999.99 per year with no approval from the Procurement Committee or Gulf Coast Workforce Board.

If the Board approves Option 1, Board staff will provide regular updates to the Procurement Committee on contracts below this amount.

Current Policy Overview

The current policy for Procurement & Contract Awards is found in the Gulf Coast Workforce Board By-Laws, amended in June 2023:

"Approve award of contracts for workforce development service providers, and approve the termination, modification or amendment of such contracts."

This policy does not specify a dollar threshold, nor does it define who qualifies as a "service provider." The Workforce Board has contracts with subrecipients, contractors, and consultants for a wide-ranging dollar amounts and activities. The Procurement Committee and Gulf Coast Workforce Board meet once every two months to approve contract recommendations.

Additionally, all contracts exceeding \$50,000 per year must be reviewed and approved by the H-GAC Board, as H-GAC serves as the fiscal agent for the Gulf Coast Workforce Board. This additional layer of oversight ensures fiscal accountability and compliance while aligning contract approvals with regional governance standards.

Proposed Changes

In the interest of greater clarity, Board staff present two possible options for how contract awards, renewals, and amendments are handled in the future:

a. Option 1 (preferred)

This option authorizes staff to negotiate contracts establishments, renewals, and amendments at or below **\$249,999.99** per year with no approval from the Procurement Committee or Gulf Coast Workforce Board. All contracts over that amount will be presented for approval both to the Procurement Committee and Gulf Coast Workforce Board.

b. Option 2

This option authorizes staff to negotiate contracts establishments, renewals, and amendments at or below **\$49,999.99** per year with no approval from the Procurement Committee or Gulf Coast Workforce Board. All contracts over that amount will be presented for approval both to the Procurement Committee and Gulf Coast Workforce Board.

The chart below identifies the approval thresholds of both options:

	Option 1 Threshold	Option 2 Threshold
Procurement Committee Approval	>\$249,999.99	>\$49,999.99
Gulf Coast Workforce Board Approval	>\$249,999.99	>\$49,999.99
H-GAC Board Approval	>\$49,999.99	>\$49,999.99

Comparison of Options

Option 1 reduces the time commitment for Procurement Committee members by requiring their review and approval only for contracts exceeding \$250,000. This approach streamlines the approval process while maintaining oversight of higher-value contracts.

Option 2 lowers the approval threshold, requiring the Procurement Committee and Workforce Board to review a greater number of contracts, thereby increasing their workload, and extending approval timelines.

The key difference between the two options is the number of contracts that would require committee review. Currently, the Board manages 37 active contracts:

- Option 1: 21 contracts would require approval from the Procurement Committee and Gulf Coast Workforce Board.
- Option 2: 30 contracts would require approval from the Procurement Committee and Gulf Coast Workforce Board.

Approving Option 1 would streamline the contract approval process while preserving oversight for high-value contracts. Regular updates on contracts below the threshold would ensure accountability and transparency, allowing the Board to operate efficiently while continuing to support essential services.

Additional Considerations

The Procurement Committee and Gulf Coast Workforce Board meet six times per year, whereas the H-GAC Board convenes monthly. This less frequent meeting schedule limits opportunities for contract approvals, making a higher approval threshold for the Workforce Board a more efficient approach.

By establishing a higher approval threshold, the Board can expedite contract processing, reduce administrative delays, and ensure timely execution of essential services while maintaining oversight through regular updates. Regular updates on contracts below the threshold would ensure accountability and transparency, allowing the Board to operate efficiently while continuing to support essential services.

Contracts in the \$50,000–\$250,000 range primarily fund technology-related services (e.g., software solutions, website development, system maintenance), but also support operational needs such as printing services and consulting for workforce and education initiatives.

After vigorous discussion, the Procurement Committee voted to advance the recommendation of adopting option one to the full board.

Action

We request that the Board authorize staff to negotiate contracts establishments, renewals, and amendments at or below \$249,999.99 per year with no approval from the Procurement Committee or Gulf Coast Workforce Board. All contracts over this amount will be presented for approval both to the Procurement Committee and Gulf Coast Workforce Board.

San Jacinto College Award for the Advancement of Apprenticeships

Background

San Jacinto College, serving as the lead applicant for a statewide apprenticeship initiative supported by the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC), has awarded \$50,000 to each of the six participating workforce boards: Cameron, Capital Area, Gulf Coast, North Central, Northeast Texas, and West Central. This funding acknowledges the time, effort, and resources each board committed to the development and coordination of the initiative and supports ongoing implementation efforts.

The Gulf Coast Workforce Board will utilize the grant to supplement personnel and related costs associated with the promotion and expansion of registered apprenticeship programs in the region. This investment directly aligns with the Board's strategic plan and broader mission to promote work-based learning and high-quality career pathways across the 13-county Gulf Coast region.

TWC has provided flexibility in how each board allocates the funding, allowing local discretion in aligning expenditures with operational and strategic priorities. All expenditures will be documented through fully itemized receipts and submitted with an invoice that details personnel, labor, expenses, and travel costs, particularly those related to apprenticeship-focused conferences and other reasonable activities. All funds must be expended by June 15, 2025, with final reporting submitted to San Jacinto College by June 30, 2025.

Action

Request Board approval to accept the \$50,000 grant award from San Jacinto College and authorize staff to take the necessary steps to enter into an interlocal agreement with San Jacinto College to execute the grant, complete required documentation, and strategically apply the funds to advance registered apprenticeship programs as part of the Board's regional outreach and strategic plan implementation.

Performance and Production

Reporting Infrastructure Enhancements

We continue to maintain strong communication with the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) as it works on substantial enhancements to its reporting infrastructure. While some reports have been updated, there remain instances where data is still incomplete. To address these discrepancies, efforts are underway to implement standardized tools across all providers. This will ensure more consistent and efficient data collection and reporting across the system. These updates are pivotal in improving the quality and reliability of our data for decision-making and service delivery.

Additionally, board staff are actively engaged in developing an Education Service Workflow. This workflow aims to create a report-driven tracking system that monitors key milestones throughout the education service lifecycle. Alongside this, we are conducting a thorough analysis of records in collaboration with providers to identify areas of inefficiency and failure. This continuous review and improvement process will help us overcome challenges and enhance our services and support to individuals seeking meaningful employment opportunities.

Provider Collaboration & Support

We have prioritized close collaboration with our service providers to address reporting gaps and drive sustained, high-quality performance outcomes. In addition to ongoing meetings and one-on-one consultations, we have launched bi-monthly sessions with the data management teams across all providers. These sessions serve as a critical forum for sharing updates, exchanging best practices, and aligning strategies to improve performance. This proactive engagement fosters stronger partnerships and cultivates a culture of continuous improvement, ensuring we remain united in our pursuit of optimal outcomes.

In parallel, we have implemented a comprehensive new training series for both service providers and Board staff. This training equips teams with enhanced tools—such as career assessments and personalized interviews—to better support job seekers. By focusing on tailored guidance, we aim to improve the likelihood of individuals securing meaningful employment. This initiative underscores our commitment to ensuring staff are well-prepared to serve our communities.

End-of-Year FY2024 Performance

The revised end-of-year performance data for FY2024 has been reviewed. Workforce Solutions – Gulf Coast successfully met or exceeded 16 of the 22 performance targets established by the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC)

under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). These results affirm the continued effectiveness and impact of workforce services provided throughout the 13-county Gulf Coast region, but six targets did not fully meet expectations, specifically those related to:

- Credential attainment for Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, and Career & Technical (C&T) participants;
- Employed Q2 Post-Exit – Dislocated Worker; and
- Employed/Enrolled Q2 Post-Exit – Youth

While these areas fell short of their respective benchmarks, the broader performance landscape underscores significant operational progress and regional success. It is important to note that the reported outcomes reflect individuals who exited WIOA-funded programs in Program Year 2022, and while historical in nature, they expose structural weaknesses that must be addressed today to ensure stronger results in future years.

Performance Improvement Actions and Technical Assistance Milestone
In response to the identified areas of underperformance, Workforce Solutions – Gulf Coast has implemented four Performance Improvement Actions (PIAs) targeting the following:

- Credential Rate – Adults;
- Credential Rate – Dislocated Workers;
- Credential Rate – Youth; and
- Employed/Enrolled Q2 Post-Exit – Youth.

These PIAs are designed to close performance gaps by enhancing case management strategies, strengthening training program alignment, increasing participant follow-up and support, and expanding employer and education partnerships. All actions are data-informed and incorporate targeted interventions tailored to population-specific needs.

Additionally, the region has successfully resolved the Texas Workforce Commission's Technical Assistance Plan (TAP) for Median Earnings Q2 – Adult, which has now been officially lifted. This demonstrates clear progress in connecting adult participants to higher-wage opportunities and affirms the effectiveness of the Board's performance-focused strategies.

Strategic Reforms to Improve Credentialing and Employment Outcomes
To reinforce and sustain these improvements, the Board has enacted and accelerated several major system reforms, all of which align with WIOA Section 116(b) and the 2025–2028 WIOA Local Plan. Key reforms include:

1. Enhanced Participant Assessments

Career office staff now conduct skills, interest, and aptitude assessments for all participants. These assessments guide individuals toward appropriate training opportunities based on their existing abilities, readiness, and career interests. The improved alignment is expected to significantly increase training completion and credential attainment rates.

2. Targeted, Stackable Training Investments

Participants are increasingly enrolled in short-term, stackable, industry-recognized credential programs tied to the Gulf Coast Target Occupations List. These programs are designed to quickly connect individuals to in-demand occupations that offer long-term earning potential and career advancement.

3. Expanded Work-Based Learning Models

Apprenticeships, internships, on-the-job training (OJT), and customized training initiatives are being deployed across programs. These models support skill acquisition while strengthening participant-employer connections that facilitate long-term job placement.

4. Performance-Driven ETPL Policy Reform

The Board is in the process of implementing a comprehensive update to its Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) policy. Key features of this policy reform include:

- Updated minimum performance standards for employment, credentialing, and completion;
- Requirements for financial stability of training vendors;
- Prohibitions on excessive reliance on Board-funded participants or reverse referrals;
- Mandatory affiliation agreements for online healthcare programs to ensure clinical components are delivered locally;
- Increased oversight of third-party and subcontracted vendors; and
- A strong emphasis on informed customer choice, transparency, and data-driven decisions.

This policy update strengthens provider accountability and is designed to increase the number of high-performing training options available to participants.

5. Improved Youth Transition and Engagement

Youth-focused programming—including Hire Gulf Coast Youth and Summer Earn and Learn (SEAL)—has been expanded to offer year-round services, including job coaching, career exploration, and post-exit mentoring. These strategies will improve both credential rates and post-exit employment outcomes.

6. Sustained Post-Exit Support

Workforce Solutions career offices have expanded post-exit services for all populations, with a focus on the second quarter after exit. Services include follow-up case management, retention coaching, and continued support for those pursuing education or training.

7. Enhanced Data Monitoring and Provider Accountability

Credential attainment and employment outcomes are now reviewed quarterly at the provider level. Training vendors that fail to meet performance expectations are flagged for technical assistance and may be removed from the ETPL if corrective actions are not implemented.

While six performance measures were not achieved in FY2024, these outcomes reflect a previous program year cohort and serve as an important call to action. Workforce Solutions – Gulf Coast has launched a comprehensive, proactive strategy to address current gaps and future-proof the system. With updated policies, improved participant assessments, enhanced training partnerships, and stronger accountability, the Board is well-positioned to meet or exceed all WIOA performance targets in future cycles. Regular progress reports on the impact of the four PIAs, ETPL reforms, and other strategic initiatives will be provided to the Audit and Monitoring Committee.

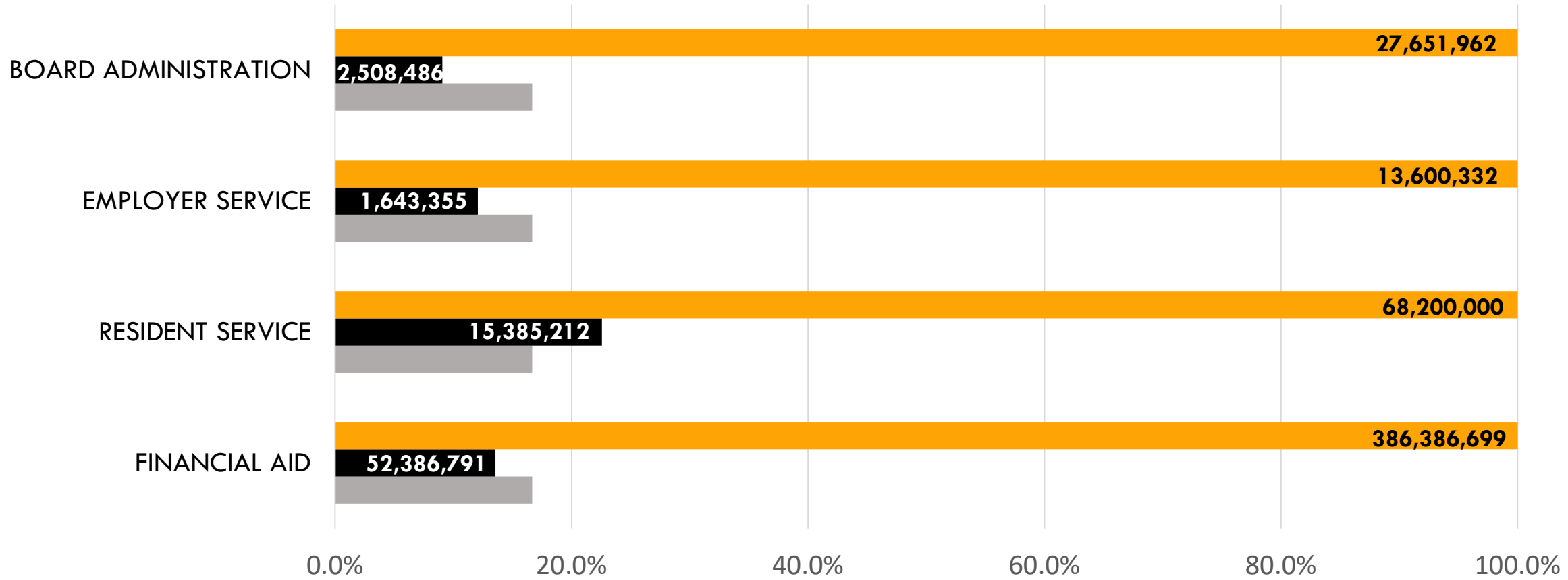
Workforce Solutions Gulf Coast Year 2024 Year End Report (Revised)

TWC Contracted Measures	Timeframe	Target	Performance	% of Target
Employed Q2 Post Exit - Adult	Exited: 7/22 - 6/23	75.60%	74.76%	98.89%
Employed Q4 Post Exit - Adult	Exited: 1/22 - 12/22	72.60%	71.72%	98.79%
Median Earnings Q2 Post Exit - Adult	Exited: 7/22 - 6/23	\$6,500.00	\$6,536.16	100.56%
Credential Rate - Adult	Exited: 1/22 - 12/22	68.90%	56.17%	81.52%
Measurable Skills Gains - Adult	Served: 7/23 - 6/24	66.00%	73.05%	110.68%
Employed Q2 Post Exit - DW	Exited: 7/22 - 6/23	83.10%	73.00%	87.84%
Employed Q4 Post Exit - DW	Exited: 1/22 - 12/22	79.50%	74.87%	94.18%
Median Earnings Q2 Post Exit - DW	Exited: 7/22 - 6/23	\$9,400.00	\$12,064.51	128.35%
Credential Rate - DW	Exited: 1/22 - 12/22	82.50%	68.02%	82.45%
Measurable Skills Gains - DW	Served: 7/23 - 6/24	75.10%	74.16%	98.75%
Employed/Enrolled Q2 Post Exit - Youth	Exited: 7/22 - 6/23	73.90%	66.28%	89.69%
Employed/Enrolled Q4 Post Exit - Youth	Exited: 1/22 - 12/22	70.60%	66.89%	94.74%
Median Earnings Q2 Post Exit - Youth	Exited: 7/22 - 6/23	\$3,780.00	\$4,955.90	131.11%
Credential Rate - Youth	Exited: 1/22 - 12/22	55.70%	41.80%	75.05%
Measurable Skills Gains - Youth	Served: 7/23 - 6/24	53.40%	55.13%	103.24%
Employed/Enrolled Q2 Post Exit - C&T	Exited: 7/22 - 6/23	66.00%	63.10%	95.61%
Employed/Enrolled Q2-Q4 Post Exit - C&T	Exited: 1/22 - 12/22	84.00%	82.90%	98.69%
Credential Rate - C&T	Exited: 1/22 - 12/22	71.00%	54.90%	77.33%
Claimant Reemployment within 10 Weeks	Served: 7/23 - 6/24	60.00%	57.47%	95.79%
Texas Talent Assistance	Served: 10/23 - 9/24	28,174	37,309	132.42%
Choices Full Engagement Rate - All Family	Served: 10/23 - 9/24	50.00%	57.27%	114.55%
Average Children Served Per Day	Served: 10/23 - 9/24	33,620	36,877	109.69%

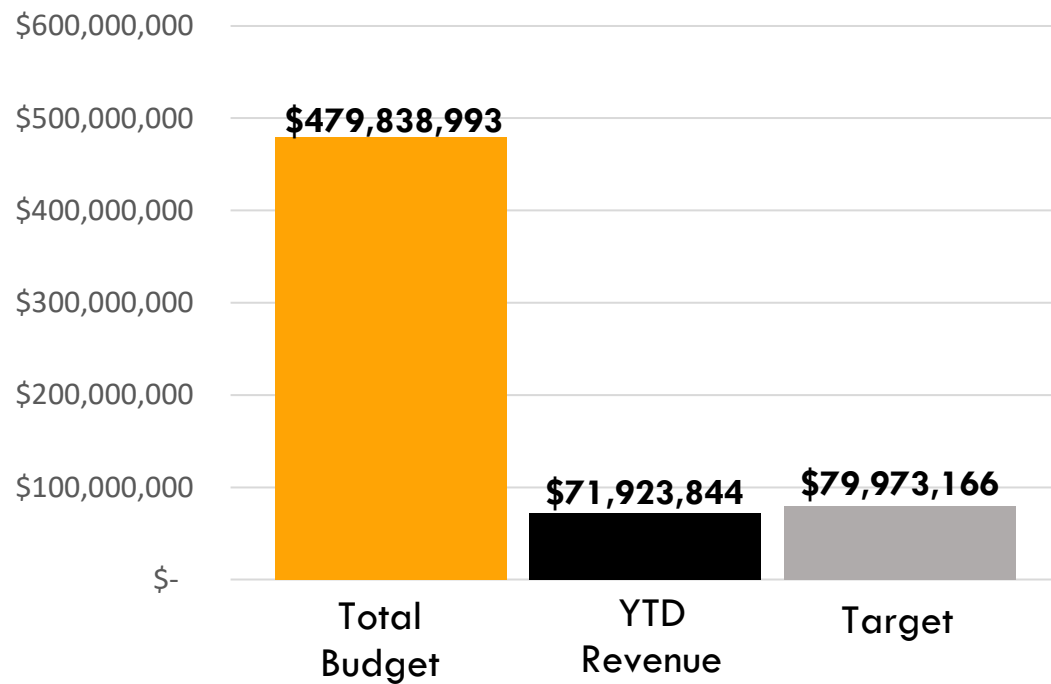
Gulf Coast Workforce Financial Status Report

For the 2 months ending February 28, 2025

■ Budget ■ Expenses ■ Target

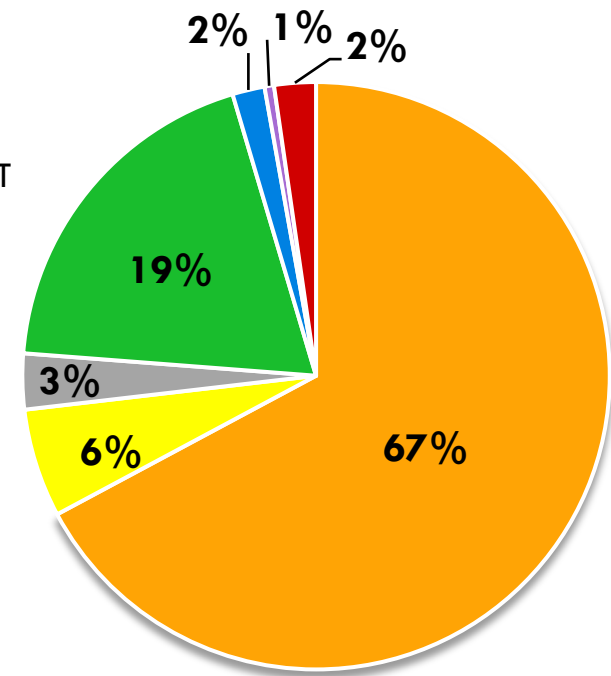


Workforce Revenue



System Expenses

- FINANCIAL AID - EARLY EDUCATION \$48,107,143
- FINANCIAL AID - TRAINING & SUPPORT \$4,279,648
- FINANCIAL AID - OPERATIONS \$2,196,353
- CAREER SERVICES \$13,743,021
- EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT \$1,271,660
- QUALITY IMPROVEMENT \$371,695
- ADULT EDUCATION \$1,642,191



89th Texas Legislature

Update

Executive Summary

The 89th Texas Legislature convened its regular session on January 14, 2025, at noon and is scheduled to adjourn on June 2, 2025. Approximately 5,000 bills were filed, including forty-four specifically related to child care and/or workforce development. In addition to proposed legislation, several budget riders have been introduced addressing key priorities such as apprenticeships, skills development—particularly within health care workforce pipelines—and child care services.

Now well underway, the 89th Legislature is actively considering a range of policies with significant implications for workforce development and child care across the state. This update offers a high-level narrative overview of major legislative activity as of April 2, 2025, most relevant to the Gulf Coast Workforce Board’s mission. It highlights our visits and proposed workforce initiatives, child care legislation, and state budget provisions affecting the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC), as well as significant education proposals—such as school vouchers and early education funding—that may indirectly impact workforce and child care systems. The goal is to provide clear, professional insights that equip Board members with timely and strategic awareness of developments without delving into excessive detail.

Legislative Visits

Senate Committee on Economic Development (formerly Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Economic Development):

Executive Director Juliet Stipeche and Board staffer Desmond Taylor made several visits with key staffers of Members serving on the Senate Committee on Economic Development during their March 13, 2025 Capitol visits, specifically, the offices of Senator Carol Alvarado and Senator Senator Phil King (chair). The emphasis of these meetings was sharing Gulf Coast Workforce Board’s challenges with child care waitlists but also sharing innovative methods to decrease these lists as well as methods to enhance the region’s workforce productivity and investments, such as partnerships with local EDCs and Chambers of Commerce as well as apprenticeship opportunities.

House Committee on International Relations and Economic Development:

Executive Director Juliet Stipeche and Board staffer Desmond Taylor also met with key staffers of Members serving on the House Trade, Workforce, and Economic Development Committee, including the offices of Rep. Angie Chen Button (chair) and Rep. Armando Walle to discuss the Board’s strategic plan, our legislative priorities, and child care challenges and opportunities.

Workforce and Child Care Bill Tracking

Board staff has been monitoring all pertinent bills relating to workforce and child care. Please find attached a list of bill numbers, author(s), description, and status as well as relevant budgetary riders for your file and review.

Workforce Development Initiatives

Workforce has emerged as a priority area this session, with an emphasis on expanding training opportunities, apprenticeships, and talent pipelines for high-demand industries. The Texas House even restructured its committees to elevate these issues – for example, it created a new Trade, Workforce and Economic Development Committee (absorbing duties from the former Business & Industry Committee) to specifically oversee workforce-related legislation.

Several significant bills with bipartisan support are moving forward to strengthen the state's workforce programs and address labor shortages:

- **Rural Workforce Training Grants:** Legislation has been introduced to establish a grant program supporting job training and apprenticeship expansion in rural areas. HB 5194, for instance, would create a Rural Workforce Training Grant Program administered by TWC to fund job-specific training, apprenticeships, and workforce education in counties under 200,000 population. This aims to ensure smaller communities can develop the skilled workers their local employers need, helping close urban-rural workforce gaps. The same bill also proposes a new State IT Apprenticeship Credential program, allowing state agencies to partner with community colleges to train IT apprentices. Notably, participants who complete a one-year apprenticeship and earn this credential (along with an associate degree) could qualify for state IT jobs in lieu of a four-year degree – a move intended to broaden hiring pathways and rapidly fill tech talent needs in the public sector.
- **Targeted Industry Workforce Programs:** Lawmakers are looking at ways to build talent pipelines in specific high-growth industries. A clear example is SB 1535, which seeks to create an Advanced Nuclear Energy Workforce Development Program at the TWC. This program would coordinate with higher education institutions and industry regulators to train workers for the emerging advanced nuclear energy sector. The bill directs TWC to develop a strategic plan to fill labor gaps and provide incentives (like grants and public-private partnerships) for colleges to offer specialized degrees and certificates in nuclear technology. By integrating workforce needs with educational programs, Texas aims to position itself as a leader in this field while preparing students for high-wage jobs. This kind of targeted approach is indicative of the Legislature's broader strategy to tie workforce development closely to economic growth sectors.

- **Expanding Apprenticeships:** Strengthening apprenticeship pathways is another focal point. SB 1593 (and its House companion HB 3287) would bolster the State's Industry-Recognized Apprenticeship Programs Grant Program, overseen by TWC. The goal is to broaden support for apprenticeship training programs that are recognized by industry and address skilled labor needs. These proposals would update state labor code definitions to allow TWC to certify apprenticeship programs and reimburse training costs more flexibly, thereby encouraging more employers and training providers to participate. By expanding grant eligibility and easing administrative hurdles, Texas hopes to scale up apprenticeship as a viable workforce development tool, not only in traditional trades but also in fields like healthcare and technology.
- **Workforce Program Accountability and Youth Employment:** Ensuring that workforce programs deliver results – especially for young Texans – is also on the agenda. SB 1143, for example, would introduce new planning and reporting requirements to improve workforce program efficiency. The bill calls for state workforce planners to set specific performance goals for serving young adults (ages 16–24) and to annually evaluate how well programs are helping this cohort. It also requires that whenever a government economic incentive creates 100+ new jobs, local workforce boards and TWC must be notified with details on the jobs and required skills. Additionally, SB 1143 mandates TWC to conduct a comprehensive yearly evaluation of all workforce development activities, with metrics like how many youth participants gain employment or pursue further education, and to report these outcomes to the Legislature biennially along with recommendations. By tightening oversight and focusing on youth employment outcomes, the Legislature aims to make workforce programs more data-driven and responsive, ensuring that public investments result in tangible improvements in employment rates and skills for Texans entering the workforce.

In sum, the legislative momentum around workforce development is strong this session. From rural training grants to high-tech apprenticeships and industry-specific talent pipelines, lawmakers are crafting solutions to meet employers' calls for a more skilled workforce. These efforts align with what workforce experts have been saying: Texas must connect more people to training and credentials to sustain economic growth. The emphasis on apprenticeships and partnerships with industry suggests a recognition of "earn and learn" opportunities and that multiple pathways – not just four-year degrees – are critical for building a robust workforce. The Gulf Coast region, with its diverse economy, stands to benefit from these statewide initiatives as they potentially bring new funding and programs to local workforce boards and training providers.

Child Care Legislation and Initiatives

Access to affordable, quality child care is increasingly seen as integral to workforce development, since working parents rely on child care to stay employed or pursue training. Recognizing this, the 89th Legislature has a wide array of child care bills

under consideration – in fact, observers have noted a dozen or more bills aimed at addressing gaps in the child care system. This flurry of legislative activity comes as advocates point out that over 500,000 Texas children under age 6 lack access to child care – roughly 25% of the state’s young children – and most of those children have working parents who need reliable care to work. Lawmakers are approaching the child care challenge from multiple angles, including increasing capacity, improving affordability, and streamlining oversight. Below are key child care proposals being considered, which could directly or indirectly impact workforce boards:

- **Employer Incentives for Child Care Support:** Several bills encourage employers to help expand child care availability for their employees. For instance, SB 2164 in the Senate (with a similar proposal, HB 3191, in the House) would create an employer child care contribution partnership program and offer franchise tax credits to companies that contribute to employee child care costs. This approach uses tax incentives to spur businesses to either provide on-site child care or partner with local child care providers, thereby increasing the supply of slots for working families. By leveraging the private sector, the Legislature hopes to ease the burden on public funding while making workplaces more family friendly.
- **Employer Contribution Mandate:** In addition to voluntary incentives, one proposal would require broader employer participation in child care funding. HB 4598 (filed by Rep. Goodwin) would establish an employer contribution requirement to support TWC’s subsidized child care program. Employers above a certain size would have to pay into a fund for child care, unless they already provide equivalent child care services for their employees (those providing on-site or subsidized care would be exempt). This idea, though likely to prompt debate, underscores the point that child care is a workforce necessity. Its supporters argue that just as employers contribute to social security or unemployment insurance, contributing to child care infrastructure will benefit the economy by enabling more parents to participate in the workforce.
- **Coordinating State Child Care Agencies (Quad-Agency Initiative):** To tackle regulatory complexity, SB 2049 (with companion HB 4903) proposes creating a Quad-Agency Child Care Initiative Commission. This commission would bring together the heads of the four key agencies involved in early childhood care – TWC, the Texas Education Agency (TEA), the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC), and the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) – with a mandate to align and improve child care regulations across agencies. The commission would review existing rules to resolve conflicts, recommend improvements, and streamline oversight of child care programs. By having all relevant agencies at one table, the state can better address issues like duplicative regulations or gaps between workforce-aligned child care programs and educational pre-K programs. This is about improving efficiency and consistency in how child care is regulated and funded, which could help

providers and families navigate the system more easily.

- **Increasing Child Care Data Transparency:** A practical issue for many parents is simply finding available child care. HB 2271 (by Rep. Armando Walle of Houston) seeks to improve transparency by requiring licensed day care centers to report their capacity and enrollment data to TWC, which in turn would maintain a public website showing where child care slots are available. This would function as a centralized child care availability portal for parents. Such real-time data could help working parents locate open child care slots in their area more efficiently, and it would also give policymakers better information on where shortages exist (for example, identifying “child care deserts”). For the Gulf Coast region, which includes a large urban center (Houston) as well as suburban and rural areas, this kind of data tool could be valuable in matching supply with demand.
- **Innovative Child Care Pilot Programs:** There is interest in piloting new models to expand the supply of quality child care. HB 5068 (by Rep. Claudia Ordaz Perez) with companion SB 3007 (Sen. César Blanco) would create a Child Care Innovation Pilot Program administered by TWC. The idea is to enable local workforce development boards (like the Gulf Coast Workforce Board) to partner with employers and high-quality child care providers in selected regions. These partnerships could receive grants to implement innovative projects – for example, employer-sponsored child care centers, cooperatives, or after-hours care programs – that increase the availability of affordable child care aligned with local workforce needs. By targeting pilot funds to regions and strategies that show promise, the state can evaluate what works best before scaling up successful models. This approach directly involves workforce boards in crafting local solutions, recognizing that child care challenges and workforce needs vary across communities.
- **Expanding Child Care Scholarships and Assistance:** To help more low-income families afford care, HB 4024 (Rep. Walle) would establish a new child care scholarship fund within the state treasury, administered by TWC. The fund would draw from legislative appropriations as well as any gifts or grants, and it would be used to provide additional child care scholarships through TWC’s existing Child Care Services program (which subsidizes care for eligible working parents).

This would create a dedicated stream of state funding to augment the federal Child Care and Development Block Grant dollars. Such a fund could reduce waitlists and serve more families or offer longer periods of assistance. Coupled with other bills that attempt to reduce child care costs (for instance, a proposed study of child care affordability, SB 2391, would examine the gap between child care costs and family incomes in Texas), the Legislature is acknowledging that financial access to child care is a major barrier for many working families. Any expansion of subsidies or scholarships would directly affect the workload

and resources of local workforce boards, which determine eligibility and connect families to providers.

In summary, Texas lawmakers are tackling child care from multiple directions this session – improving data and transparency, incentivizing, or requiring employer involvement, boosting funding, and coordinating state oversight. This comprehensive approach reflects the understanding that accessible child care is a cornerstone of a strong workforce. Supports like child care and transportation are “paramount to Texas’ workforce development” because they enable workers to take advantage of training and job opportunities.

For the Gulf Coast Workforce Board, these developments are noteworthy: proposals like the innovation pilot and scholarship fund could bring novel resources to our region, while data-sharing and inter-agency coordination may improve how we serve our constituents. We will need to monitor which of these proposals gain traction as the session progresses.

State Budget Impacts on Workforce and Child Care Programs

A crucial backdrop to all these policy proposals is the state budget. The Legislature’s only constitutional obligation is to pass a balanced two-year budget, and both the House and Senate have put forward budget plans for the 2026–2027 biennium approaching \$336 billion in total spending– the largest budget in Texas history, thanks in part to a substantial revenue surplus. By late March, the Senate unanimously approved its budget draft (31–0 vote) totaling about \$336 billion, and the House is expected to debate and pass its version in early April. After that, negotiators will reconcile any differences in a conference committee. For context, these proposed spending levels are a 4.5% increase over the last biennium’s budget, though strict constitutional spending limits prevent using the entire surplus.

Below we highlight key budget items and funding decisions that specifically affect the Texas Workforce Commission and workforce/child care programs:

- **Texas Workforce Commission Funding:** The TWC is primarily funded through federal dollars (*e.g.*, Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act funds, child care block grants) combined with state general revenue for certain programs. In the initial budget proposals, TWC’s core workforce development funding is maintained at current levels, ensuring that programs like workforce training grants, adult education, and employment services continue.

Notably, there is legislation (such as the apprenticeship and training initiatives described earlier) that, if passed, would come with dedicated funding or grant programs administered by TWC, but those are addressed through separate bills rather than the base budget. The agency did not receive a major new infusion of state General Revenue in the draft budgets for expanding workforce programs beyond existing commitments. In other words, the legislature continues to rely on federal funds rather than dramatically increasing TWC’s

state funding this cycle.

- **Child Care Subsidy Funding:** One point of concern for child care advocates has been whether the state will increase funding to offset the end of federal pandemic relief dollars that had temporarily expanded child care assistance. Initial budget drafts did not include additional state funds to increase the number of subsidized child care slots for low-income families, a fact noted by advocacy groups with disappointment. Texas historically uses federal Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) monies to fund the Child Care Services (CCS) program via TWC, with limited state general revenue supplementation. As of early budget versions, lawmakers have not earmarked new state dollars to replace expiring federal funds or to serve more families, meaning tens of thousands of eligible children could remain on waitlists absent further action. However, it is possible that as the session progresses, amendments or supplemental spending could address this gap – especially with multiple bills in play (like HB 4024’s proposed scholarship fund) that recognize the need for greater child care investment. The Gulf Coast Workforce Board should be aware that without additional appropriations, our region’s child care assistance capacity may remain constrained at current levels, even as demand remains high. This, of course, is frustrating given our extensive waitlist.
- **Workforce Program Initiatives and Apprenticeships:** While the broad budget does not show a line-item jump for workforce programs, there are important set-asides and contingent appropriations worth noting. For example, both chambers’ budgets include funding for any new programs that might be established by this legislature. If a bill like the rural workforce grant program or the IT apprenticeship credential (HB 5194) is enacted, the final appropriations act is expected to authorize the necessary funds (often through riders or contingent budget authority). Additionally, Texas typically funds its Apprenticeship Training Program (which subsidizes the classroom instruction portion of registered apprenticeships) through a mix of state dollars – we anticipate that funding to continue and modestly increase to accommodate growth, though exact figures await the budget’s finalization. So far, no major disputes have arisen regarding TWC’s budget – a sign that workforce programs enjoy broad support, even if they are not in the headline-grabbing funding categories.
- **Early Childhood Programs in the Budget:** Outside of TWC, it is worth mentioning that the budget does prioritize some early childhood needs. Both the House and Senate plans add about \$18 million for Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) services for infants and toddlers with disabilities, an acknowledgment of rising demand in that program. ECI is managed by HHSC, but improvements there complement the state’s overall strategy for early childhood development. Also, the base public education funding formula (discussed more in the next section) indirectly affects early education and pre-kindergarten offerings. If lawmakers increase the per-student funding

allotment for schools, districts might have more resources to devote to pre-K and partnerships with child care providers. However, the dedicated early education allotment created in 2019 remains the primary mechanism for funding public pre-K, and as noted below, it currently only funds half-day programs. The budget bills have set aside \$5 billion in additional funding for public schools generally— how that translates into early education support will depend on accompanying policy bills (for instance, one could imagine a portion being used to fully fund full-day pre-K if legislation required it).

Overall, the state budget outlook is positive: Texas is in a strong fiscal position to fund priorities, and the Legislature is aligning on a sizable spending plan without much controversy on workforce-related items. The main takeaway for the Board is that while there is not a large new pot of money solely for workforce development or child care in the base budget, the Legislature’s financial choices so far do no harm to our existing programs (indeed, they preserve and slightly bolster them), for which we are extraordinarily grateful. The door is also open for targeted improvements via specific bills and potential late-session budget adjustments. We will continue to track the budget negotiations, especially any last-minute riders or dedicated appropriations for initiatives that would impact workforce training or child care services in our region.

Education Measures with Indirect Workforce Impact

Education policy is a dominant theme this session, and several high-profile education proposals could have indirect effects on the workforce and child care landscape. Board members should be aware of these, as changes in the education system often reverberate into the labor market and family support systems:

- **School Vouchers / Education Savings Accounts:** The Legislature is revisiting the idea of school vouchers in the form of Education Savings Accounts (ESAs), a policy strongly backed by the Governor. Both the House and Senate’s budget proposals notably set aside \$1 billion for a voucher-like ESA program, double the amount that was considered two years ago. This funding is contingent on separate legislation passing to create the program. The ESA proposal would allow parents to use public funds to pay for private school tuition or other educational expenses. If enacted, such a program could indirectly affect the workforce system in several ways. In the near term, it might shift enrollment from public to private schools, which has implications for public school funding and potentially for programs like career and technical education (CTE) that public schools provide as workforce preparation. Over the longer term, any change in educational outcomes could impact the skill level of the future workforce.
- **Public School Funding and Teacher Pay:** In tandem with the voucher discussion, lawmakers are planning substantial investments in public education. Roughly \$5 billion in additional funding for public schools is included in both chambers’ budgets, reflecting efforts to update the school

finance formulas (which could include raising the basic per-student allotment). The Senate has prioritized teacher pay raises – its budget reserves more than \$4.3 billion for targeted pay increases for teachers and other school staff, as outlined in a Senate bill that ties raise to experience and potentially high-need subjects.

From a workforce perspective, improving teacher salaries addresses the talent pipeline for educators (the teacher workforce) and aims to reduce turnover, which can improve educational quality. Better-funded schools and better-paid teachers can lead to stronger educational outcomes for students, who eventually become part of the labor force. Moreover, if teacher raises reduce teacher attrition, there could be less disruption in early grade classrooms and more stable learning environments for young children – indirectly benefiting early childhood development which feeds into later workforce readiness. In short, the Legislature’s school finance actions this session will help determine how well Texas educates its future workers.

- **Early Education Funding (Pre-K):** Early childhood education continues to be a focal point, especially since it overlaps with child care and school readiness. Back in 2019, Texas mandated full-day pre-kindergarten for eligible 4-year-olds through House Bill 3 and created an early education allotment to help fund it. However, that mandate came with a catch: the state only funds those pre-K students at the rate of half-day attendance, leaving school districts to cover the rest of the cost with other funds. This session, there is renewed discussion about fully funding full-day pre-K. Education advocates are urging lawmakers to close the funding gap so that districts are not penalized for offering full-day programs.

If the Legislature were to act on this (for example, by increasing the early education allotment or changing the funding formula to count full-day pre-K attendance), it would directly benefit working parents of young children. More school districts might expand or start full-day pre-K, often in collaboration with childcare providers, which would increase the availability of early learning opportunities.

This would complement the workforce system’s child care services by providing another avenue for four-year-olds to receive care and education during the workday. As of now, the budget does not explicitly designate funds to fully finance full-day pre-K, but the \$5 billion in new school funding mentioned earlier could provide the flexibility for such an initiative if agreed upon.

We are watching bills and amendments related to pre-K eligibility and funding. Any progress in this area would be a win-win: preparing children better for kindergarten (which improves their long-term educational trajectory and eventual productivity in the workforce) and simultaneously easing child care

burdens on families with four-year-olds.

In summary, the major education-related legislation – from vouchers to teacher pay to early education funding – could shape the context in which the workforce system operates. A new voucher program could change where and how future workers are educated; increased school funding and teacher salaries should improve educational quality; and fully funded pre-K would strengthen the foundation for children before they enter the K-12 system, with positive ripples for the child care sector and future workforce quality. While these issues are primarily being debated for their education merits, the Gulf Coast Workforce Board recognizes that education and workforce form a continuum. We will thus stay attuned to these education policy outcomes, as they will inform our strategies in supporting the region’s talent pipeline from early childhood all the way to adult workforce retraining.

Conclusion

As of this early April update, the 89th Texas Legislature is at the midpoint of its 140-day session. Workforce development and child care have featured prominently, supported by a strong economy and unprecedented state revenues that give lawmakers the means to invest in Texas’ human capital. Numerous bills are under deliberation to enhance job training programs, expand apprenticeships, improve child care access, and better integrate services – many of which align with the Gulf Coast Workforce Board’s mission to equip workers and support families in our region.

The state budget process is advancing in parallel, with lawmakers aligning on a fiscally robust plan that undergirds these policy efforts, even as details (like specific program funding levels and allocations) are being finalized. Major education reforms are also in play, carrying implications for the future workforce. Going forward, the Gulf Coast Workforce Board will continue to monitor the progress of relevant legislation – especially the items summarized in this report – and will assess the impact of any new laws or funding streams that emerge. By early June, we expect clarity on which initiatives become law. In the meantime, Board members can take confidence that workforce and child care needs are front-and-center in Austin. The astute engagement of our legislators in these areas, from Houston-area lawmakers championing child care improvements to statewide efforts targeting skills gaps, is a positive sign. We will provide a final legislative summary after the session concludes, detailing enacted measures and their effects on our Board’s programs. Until then, this narrative update should serve as a guide to the key developments and trends shaping workforce policy in Texas during the 89th Legislature.

Workforce Bills- 89th Legislative Session (as of 04/01/2025)

HB= House Bill

SB= Senate Bill

Bill No.	Author(s)	Description	Companion	Status
HB 2	Rep. Buckle	Relating to public education and public school finance.		In committee- Public Education
SB 59	Sen. Zaffirini, Judith	Relating to the use of funds awarded under the Jobs and Education for Texans (JET) Grant Program.	HB 322 by Guillen, Identical	In committee- K-16
HB 120	Rep. Bell, Keith	Relating to career and technology education programs in public schools, the Rural Pathway Excellence Partnership (R-PEP) program, and a high school advising program, including funding for those programs.		In committee- Public Education, s/c on Academics and Career-Oriented Education. Sent to Calendars on 3/28.
SB 232	Sen. Johnson, Nathan	Relating to the development and implementation of the Live Well Texas program and the expansion of Medicaid eligibility to provide health benefit coverage to certain individuals.	HB 895 by Lalani, Similar	In committee- Health and Human Services.
HB 322	Rep. Guillen, Ryan	Relating to the use of funds awarded under the Jobs and Education for Texans (JET) Grant program.	SB 59 by Zaffirini, Identical	In committee- Trade, Workforce & Economic Development, s/c on Workforce. Left pending as of 3/25.
Bill No.	Author(s)	Description	Companion	Status
HB 406	Rep. Ordaz, Claudia	Relating to notification of the execution of certain local economic development agreements by a municipality or county to local workforce development boards.		In committee- Trade, Workforce & Economic Development
HB 801	Rep. Gervin-Hawkins,	Relating to the application for funding for certain		Referred to Trade,

	Barbara	workforce development programs.		Workforce & Eco Dev, s/c on Workforce.
SB 856	Sen. Flores	Relating to the use of the skills development fund by certain entities.	HB 5008 by Bell, Keith, Identical	In committee- Economic Development. Placed on intent calendar 4/01.
SB 1143	Sen. Blanco	Relating to certain planning, notification, and evaluation requirements with respect to workforce development programs in this state.	HB 3173 by Talarico, Very Similar	In committee- Economic Development
HB 1147	Rep. Gamez, Erin	Relating to the establishment by the Texas Workforce Commission of a workplace soft skills training pilot program.		In committee- Trade, Workforce & Economic Development, s/c on Workforce.
Bill No.	Author(s)	Description	Companion	Status
HB 1154	Rep. Gamez, Erin	Relating to the establishment of a skilled labor task force by certain local workforce development boards.		In committee- Trade, Workforce & Economic Development, s/c on Workforce.
SB 1535	Sen. Zaffirini	Relating to the establishment by the Texas Workforce Commission of an advanced nuclear energy workforce development program.		In committee- Economic Development. Placed on intent calendar 3/31.
SB 1593	Sen. Hancock, Kelly	Relating to the Texas Industry-Recognized Apprenticeship Programs Grant Program.	HB 3260 by Bell, Keith, Identical	In committee- Economic Development
SB 1620	Sen. Huffman, Joan, co-author Sen. Eckhardt, Sarah	Relating to the establishment of the Texas forensic analyst apprenticeship pilot program.	HB 5293 by Bonnen, Identical	In committee- Finance. Public hearing on 4/02

SB 1631	Sen. Campbell, Donna	Relating to the establishment by the Texas Workforce Commission of an advanced nuclear energy workforce development program.		In committee- Economic Development
HB 2189	Rep. Donna Howard	Relating to methods to improve health profession-related career and technology education and dual credit programs offered by school districts.		In committee- Public Education, s/c on Academic & Career-Oriented Education. Public hearing on 4/03
Bill No.	Author(s)	Description	Companion	Status
HB 2545	Rep. Gerdes	Relating to the establishment of the Rural Workforce Training Grant Program.		Referred to s/c on Workforce by Speaker
SB 2603	Sen. Blanco	Relating to cooperation by economic development program participants with local workforce development boards.	HB 5390 by Ordaz, Identical	Filed.
HB 2627	Rep. Garcia Hernandez, Casandra	Relating to the development and implementation of the Live Well Texas program and the expansion of Medicaid eligibility to provide health benefit coverage to certain individuals.	HB 895 by Lalani, Duplicate)	In committee- Public Health, s/c on Disease Prevention & Women's and Children's Health
HB 2689	Rep. Guillen	Relating to the establishment of an intensive workforce readiness adult education pilot program.		In committee- Public Education, s/c on Academic & Career Oriented Education
HB 2958	Rep. Slawson	Relating to the drug testing of certain persons seeking benefits under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program.		In committee- Human Services
HB 3173	Rep. Talarico	Relating to certain planning, notification, and evaluation requirements with respect to workforce development programs in this state.	SB 1143 by Blanco, Very Similar	In committee- Trade, Workforce, and Eco. Dev. s/c on Workforce
HB 3260	Rep. Bell, Keith	Relating to the Texas Industry-Recognized	SB 1593 by Sen.	In committee- Trade,

Bill No.	Author(s)	Description	Companion	Status
		Apprenticeship Programs Grant Program.	Hancock, Kelly, Identical	Workforce, and Eco. Dev. s/c on Workforce
HB 3799	Rep. Orr, Angelia	Relating to the establishment of the Apprenticeship Training Program Sponsorship Fund.		In committee- Trade, Workforce, and Eco. Dev. s/c on Workforce
HB 3800	Rep. Orr, Angelia	Relating to an advisory board established to develop a resource guide that facilitates collaboration in identifying and addressing local health care workforce needs.		In committee- Public Health
HB 3947	Rep. Davis, Yvonne	Relating to transportation planning by metropolitan planning organizations.		In committee- Transportation
HB 5008	Rep. Bell, Keith	Relating to the use of the skills development fund by certain entities.	SB 856 by Flores, Identical	Filed.
HB 5194	Rep. Capriglione, Giovanni	Relating to improving the efficiency of state workforce development programs and apprenticeship pathways to address workforce shortages.		Filed.
HB 5293	Rep. Bonnen, Greg	Relating to the establishment of the Texas forensic analyst apprenticeship pilot program.	SB 1620 by Huffman, Identical	Filed.
HB 5390	Rep. Ordaz, Claudia	Relating to cooperation by economic development program participants with local workforce development boards.	SB 2603 by Blanco, Identical	Filed.

Child Care & Early Learning Bills- 89th Legislative Session (as of 04/01/2025)

Bill No.	Author(s)	Description	Companion	Status
SB 42	Sen. Zaffirini, Judith	Relating to providing free full-day prekindergarten for certain children	HB 358 by Bucy, Identical	In committee- K-16

HB 358	Rep. Bucy, John	Relating to providing free full-day prekindergarten for certain children.	SB 42 by Zaffirini, Identical	In committee- Public Education
SB 786	Sen. Alvarado, Carol	Relating to authorizing school districts to provide funding using money received under the Foundation School Program to community-based organizations for purposes of reimbursing private employers for paid internships provided to certain students in career and technology education programs in the district.	SB 2282 by Miles, Duplicate	In committee- K-16
SB 972	Sen. Zaffirini, Judith	Relating to reimbursement rates for child-care providers participating in the Texas Rising Star Program.		In committee- Economic Development
SB 1249	Sen. Blanco	Relating to establishing a certified caregiver pilot program in the Borderplex workforce development area.	HB 2652 by Ordaz, Identical	In committee- Economic Development
SB 1265	Sen. Alvarado, Carol	Relating to certain duties of the Texas Workforce Commission with respect to child-care resources.	HB 5122 by Harris Davila, Identical	In committee- Economic Development
Bill No.	Author(s)	Description	Companion	Status
SB 1803	Sen. Alvarado, Carol	Relating to a franchise tax credit for taxable entities that subsidize child-care costs of the entities' employees.		In committee- Finance
HB 2395	Rep. Dutton, Harold	Relating to a grant program to provide free public school prekindergarten programs to certain children who are eligible for the subsidized child-care program administered by the Texas Workforce Commission.		In committee- Public Education

HB 2652	Rep. Ordaz	Relating to establishing a certified caregiver pilot program in the Borderplex workforce development area.	SB 1249 by Blanco, Identical	In committee- Trade, Workforce & Economic Development, s/c Workforce
SB 2282	Sen. Miles, Borris	Relating to authorizing school districts to provide funding using money received under the Foundation School Program to community-based organizations for purposes of reimbursing private employers for paid internships provided to certain students in career and technology education programs in the district.	SB 786 by Alvarado, Duplicate	In committee- Education K-16
Bill No.	Author(s)	Description	Companion	Status
SB 3007	Sen. Blanco	Relating to establishing a pilot program to increase the supply of child-care services and encourage employer partnerships to meet strategic workforce needs in certain regions of the state.	HB 5086 by Ordaz, Identical	Filed.
HB 2271	Rep. Armando Walle	Requires child care providers to report capacity/enrollment to TWC; TWC to create a public child care slot availability portal.		Filed.
HB 4024	Rep. Armando Walle	Relating to the establishment of a child care scholarship fund administered by the Texas.		Filed.
HB 5068	Rep. Ordaz, Claudia	Creates a child care innovation pilot program to fund employer-provider partnerships that expand access to quality, affordable care.	May overlap with HB 5086 / SB 3007	Filed.
HB 5086	Rep. Ordaz	Relating to establishing a pilot program to increase the supply of child-care services and encourage employer partnerships to meet strategic workforce needs in certain regions of the state.	SB 3007 by Blanco, Identical	Filed.

HB 5122	Rep. Harris Davila	Relating to certain duties of the Texas Workforce Commission with respect to child-care resources.	SB 1265 by Alvarado, Identical	Filed.
HB 5529	Rep. Bumgarner	Relating to establishing a child-care innovation pilot program.		Filed.

Riders:

- Rider by Rep. Lujan increasing General Revenue (GR) funding for Skills Development by \$15M to increase the number of emergency medical technicians - Adopted at 5M total.
- Rider by Rep. Walle increasing child care funding by \$181M GR to move 10,000 children off the state waiting list - Moved to Article XI.
- Rider by Rep. Wu increasing GR funding for Skills Development by \$1M to develop Houston-based partnerships seeking employees with skills in technical and industrial textiles - Moved to Article XI.
- Rider by Rep. Hernandez increasing GR funding for Apprenticeship by \$1M to fund Houston-based programs supporting hands on training and tool lending - Moved to Article XI.

- Rider by Rep. Simmons directing \$200,000 in GR funding for Labor Market and Career Information to study the education and retention of obstetricians and gynecologists - Moved to Article XI.
- Rider by Rep. Walle increasing GR Funding for Apprenticeship by \$20M to serve additional participants in the Chapter 133 Apprentice Training Program - Adopted at \$5M total.
- Rider by Rep. Plesa increasing GR funding for Skills Development by \$2M to create a pilot program using artificial intelligence by Direct Support Professionals in the care of individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities - Not Adopted
- Rider by Rep. Leach to create a new budget strategy for a Mobile Statewide Workforce Development Pilot Program funded at \$2M - Moved to Article XI.
- Rider by Rep. Barry increasing GR funding for Local Child Care Solutions by \$3M to support Vision Modernization and Data System Implementation programs - Moved to Art. XI.
- Rider by Rep. Ordaz increasing GR funding for Local Child Care Solutions by \$450,000 to create a certified caregiver pilot in the Workforce Borderplex Solutions area - Adopted
- Rider by an unnamed member to increase GR funding for Skills Development by \$5M to support health care workforce nursing pipeline programs - Moved to Article XI.
- Rider by Rep. Bernal increasing GR funding for Vocational Rehabilitation by \$6M to partner with certain local providers to offer comprehensive VR services for individuals who are blind or visually impaired - Moved to Article XI.
- Rider by Rep. Guillen appropriating an unnamed amount contingent upon passage of HB 1843, relating to a shared work UI program - Moved to Article XI.

- Rider by Rep. Thompson appropriating \$1M GR contingent upon passage of HB 2294, relating to Texas Rising Star Reimbursement Rates - Moved to Article XI
- Rider by Rep. Morales Shaw appropriating an unnamed amount contingent upon passage of HB 3059, relating to paid parental leave - Moved to Article XI
- Rider by Rep. Button appropriating \$5M GR contingent upon passage of HB 3191, relating to Child Care Contribution Partnerships - Moved to Article XI
- Rider by Rep. Orr appropriating \$8M GR contingent upon passage of unnamed legislation, relating to establishing an Apprenticeship Training Program Sponsorship Fund - Moved to Article XI.
- Rider by an unnamed member increasing funding for Child Care Services by \$5.8B GR to serve all children age 0-4 with an income below 250% of the federal poverty level - Moved to Article XI.
- Rider by Rep. Hinojosa appropriating an unknown amount contingent on unnamed legislation, relating to a Texas company using a H1B visa - Moved to Article XI.
- Rider by Rep. Raymond to use \$1.5M in current funds to support vocational education partnerships between the City of Laredo and community colleges - Moved to Article XI.
- Rider by Rep. Walle to use \$1.6M in current funds to implement Enhanced Workforce Data Systems - Adopted
- Rider by Rep. Richardson to create a new budget strategy for a Mobile Statewide Workforce Development Pilot Program funded at \$2M - Not Adopted.
- Rider by Rep. Hernandez to use \$500,000 in current funds for creation of leadership development programs - Adopted.

- Rider by Rep. Raymond to use \$750,000 in current funds to support training programs aligning with the industry needs of Laredo - Moved to Article XI.
- Rider by Rep. Harrison prohibiting all Article VII funding from being used for programs not complying with biological realities - Not Adopted.
- Rider by Rep. Harrison prohibiting all Article VII funding from being used for Diversity, Equity, or Inclusion programs - Not Adopted.