



Gulf Coast Workforce Board
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www.wrksolutions.com

To: Gulf Coast Workforce Board Members

From: Executive Director Juliet K. Stipeche

Date: August 3, 2024

Subject: Upcoming August 6, 2024, Board Meeting

I hope this message finds you safe and well in the aftermath of Hurricane Beryl. We are looking forward to gathering for our upcoming Gulf Coast Workforce Board meeting, scheduled for 10:00 a.m. on August 6, 2023. The meeting 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.

The session will begin 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 provide his update. The meeting's agenda includes reports from several committees, presented by their respective Chairs: Strategic Planning (Mr. Carl Bowles), Communication (Mr. Doug Karr), Career Services (Mr. Adrian Ozuna), and Audit and Monitoring (Mr. Guy Jackson).

Dr. Bobbie Henderson, Chair of the Procurement Committee, will brief us on the recent committee meeting and request possible action on the following items: Outreach and Communication, Career Office, Employer Engagement, Next Generation Youth Initiative, Financial Aid Support Center, Financial Aid Payment Office, Early Childhood Quality, and VR Payrolling and Employer of Record.

The meeting will also feature presentations on our system's performance metrics and expenditures report, delivered by Mr. Philip Garcia and Ms. Brandi Brown. Additionally, Mr. Parker Harvey will provide an update on the local economy, and Mr. Russell Tomlin will give a brief communication and media update.



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We look forward to seeing you on Tuesday, and please note that we are hosting a Board workshop at 8:30 a.m. at H-GAC prior to the Board meeting to review the draft of our Strategic Plan. Light breakfast items and refreshments will be offered. If you are unable to attend the 8:30 a.m. workshop, we will offer an abbreviated presentation after the board meeting.

Please enjoy a wonderful weekend. If you have any questions or comments, please contact me at your convenience. Be well and see you soon.



GULF COAST WORKFORCE BOARD

AGENDA

Tuesday, August 6, 2024, 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. Adopt Agenda**
- 4. Public Comment**
- 5. Review of the June 2024 Meeting Minutes**
- 6. Declare Conflicts of Interest**
- 7. Reports:**
 - a. Board Chair's Remarks: (Board Chair Mark Guthrie),
 - b. Executive Director's Report: (Juliet Stipeche),
 - c. H-GAC Executive Director's Report: (Chuck Wemple),
 - d. Strategic Planning Committee Report: (Committee Chair Carl Bowles),
 - e. Communications Committee Report: (Committee Chair Doug Karr),
 - f. Career Services Committee Report: (Committee Chair Adrian Ozuna), and
 - g. Audit and Monitoring Committee Report: (Committee Chair Guy Jackson).

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8. Action Items:

- a. Procurement Committee Report and Action Items: Briefing of the Procurement Committee meeting from Chair Dr. Bobbie Henderson including discussion, consideration, and possible action on the following:
 - i. Outreach and Communication,
 - ii. Career Office Renewals,
 - iii. Employer Engagement,
 - iv. Next Generation Youth Initiative Renewals,
 - v. Financial Aid Support Center,
 - vi. Financial Aid Payment Office,
 - vii. Early Childhood Quality, and
 - viii. VR Payrolling and Employer of Record.

9. Information:


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

10. Presentations:

- a. A Look at the Economy: Update on the Labor Market (Parker Harvey), and
- b. Communications and Media Update: (Russell Tomlin).

11. Other Business

12. Adjourn

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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, August 5, 2024**, to Maria Franco Cortes at maria.cortes@wrksolutions.net.

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

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

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**MINUTES OF MEETING OF
THE GULF COAST WORKFORCE BOARD
TUESDAY, JUNE 4, 2024**

MEMBERS PRESENT

Sofia Adroque	Mark Guthrie	Mou Sarkar
Willie Alexander	Bobbie Henderson	Danielle Scheiner
Anne Bartlett	Alan Heskamp	Keri Schmidt
Peter Beard	Guy Robert Jackson	Valerie Segovia
Shonda Below	Lavone Jones	Richard Shaw
Sara Bouse	Doug Karr	Gil Staley
Carl Bowles	Jeff LaBroski	Lizandra Vazquez
Helen Cavazos	Margaret Oser	Carolyn Watson
Melissa Gonzalez	Adrian Ozuna	Bin Yu
Cheryl Guido	Paul Puente	

H-GAC STAFF PRESENT

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

Chair Mark Guthrie called the in-person meeting of the Gulf Coast Workforce Board (GCWB) to order at approximately 10:00 a.m. on Tuesday, June 4, 2024. Deborah Duke called roll to determine a list of members present. Chair Guthrie determined a quorum was present.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

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

PUBLIC COMMENT

No one signed up for public comments.

MINUTES FROM APRIL 2, 2024, MEETING

Chair Guthrie asked for approval of the minutes of the last Board meeting. A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes of the April 2, 2024 meeting as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

DECLARE CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

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

CONSIDER REPORTS

a. Chair's Report.

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

Beginning with national updates, one week after our last board meeting, the House passed the ASWA, the WIOA reauthorization bill. Thank you to those who contacted your representatives prior to the vote. They largely ignored the input of Workforce Board Members. ASWA is now being considered in the Senate committee. Chair Guthrie circulated a template letter to Board Members last night asking members to consider sending a copy to your Senators to comment on some of the most troubling aspects of ASWA. NAWB, of course, is fighting against those provisions in as well. A Policy Committee meeting is scheduled to take place in Washington in two weeks and, at that meeting, a briefing will be provided by the lead staffers on the Senate Health Committee about the status of within the Senate.

Next, Chair Guthrie reported that, in April, he attended the directors meeting of the Texas Association of Workforce Boards which was held in Forney, Texas. Where they toured the Keep Bell Opportunity Center, which is an innovative High School, which includes CTE programs such as maker labs and auto shop. The center also includes outside retail offering coffee, sandwiches and more. They were also able to observe a meeting of the industry-based Certification Advisory Council, which Mike Webster serves on. This group makes recommendations to the Texas Employment Agency on industry-based certifications for high school and for inclusion in the ATF accountability program. Another noteworthy item is that Courtney Arbor, Director of the Workforce Division of the Texas Workforce Commission has announced her resignation. Mary York taking her place as the Workforce Division Director.

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

b. Executive Director's Report.

Executive Director Juliet Stipeche provided a series of updates.

Ms. Juliet Stipeche reported on the significant activities and events over the past two months. She highlighted the productive strategic planning retreat, which featured an engaging conversation led by Board Member Peter Beard with Ann Tanabe from BioHouston, Inc. Following the retreat, Ms. Stipeche celebrated Professor Tapia's 50th anniversary at Rice University. This summer, the board is collaborating with Rice University's Tapia Center, offering an immersion, residential experience for seventy-five students under the Texas Education Agency's Tri-Agency Convener grant.

She also discussed the Houston Area Apprenticeship Advisory Committee's spring meeting, held in partnership with San Jacinto College. Ms. Stipeche attended the Texas Workforce Commission's Mid-Year Forum in Austin, where she attended a presentation focused on the collaboration between the Texas Veterans Action Network, Combined Arms, and Workforce Solution – Gulf Coast. Ms. Kimberly Wilkerson, a recruiter at Workforce Solutions' Southeast Office, represented the system in this presentation. Additionally, Ms. Stipeche shared a photo from the "May the Jobs Be with You" job fair, hosted at our southeast career office, which was well-attended despite inclement weather.

Ms. Stipeche attended the U.S. Conference of Mayors' Workforce Committee meeting in Austin, Texas, where she engaged with other Executive Directors nationwide. The discussions included challenges related to the reauthorization of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), particularly the U.S. House of Representatives' version of the bill, A Strong Workforce for America (ASWA), and its implications for local workforce systems. Best practices and upcoming meetings in Kansas City and Las Vegas were also shared.

Expressing her gratitude, Ms. Stipeche acknowledged Houston Community College (HCC) for inviting her to speak at their high school equivalency graduation. She described it as one of the most powerful graduations she has experienced, especially noting the valedictorian's inspiring speech about overcoming obstacles to earn a diploma. She also received an academic scholarship to pursue a nursing degree at HCC. Ms. Stipeche attended Lone Star College's first all-Spanish graduation, a significant and necessary initiative led by the new Chancellor, Mario Castillo. The ceremony allowed Spanish-speaking families to fully participate and understand the proceedings, making it a vibrant and meaningful celebration.

Ms. Stipeche visited Humble with Chair Guthrie to meet State Representative Cummings, where they discussed the Gulf Coast Workforce Board's vital work. She

also attended an event hosted by Board Member Sofia Adroque with Theater Under the Stars (TUTS) for the Barbara Jordan Youth Leaders. Ms. Stipeche participated in a panel along with TUTS Executive Director Hilary Hart and Yaffa Fredrick, Houston Chronicle's Senior Director of Investigations and High-Impact Reporting. The event provided students with networking opportunities and exposure to the local arts scene.

She provided an update on the grand opening of the Northeast location, which strengthens the board's presence in the East Aldine district. The well-attended event included over fifty community members, employer partners, and representatives from State Representative Armando Walle, Harris County Commissioner Adrian Garcia, Harris County Commissioner Rodney Ellis, Congresswoman Sylvia Garcia, Texas State Senator Carol Alvarado, and Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee. Ms. Stipeche expressed her gratitude to all who contributed to the success of the event, including the Board Members who attended.

Ms. Stipeche announced the upcoming relaunch of the board's relationship with KTRK Channel 13. She shared photos from recent job fairs at World Harvest Church in Sunnyside, Houston, Texas, and San Jacinto College. Additionally, she appeared on the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce's television show to promote Workforce Solutions – Gulf Coast, continuing the board's outreach efforts. She concluded this portion of her report with a video recap of the San Jacinto College job fair, produced by William McQueen.

Lastly, Ms. Stipeche provided a brief update on summer opportunities, including the Jobs Y'all event in Pearland, supported by Board Member Mou Sarkar and Mayor Kevin Cole. She highlighted other opportunities such as the Summer Earn and Learn program and work-based learning initiatives for interested individuals.

Ms. Stipeche concluded her report, noting that no action was taken.

c. H-GAC Executive Director's Report.

H-GAC Executive Director Chuck Wemple provided a brief report on activities at the Houston Galveston area Council. He provided a brief update on the H-GAC budgeting process, reminding members that H-GAC begins its budget in September and October and makes any needed adjustments in June. He also noted that Juliet's two-year anniversary is approaching and congratulated her on the amount of energy and focus she has provided. Finally, Mr. Wemple thanked Juliet and her team on the innovative approach to the dislocated worker program which typically follows a natural disaster.

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

d. Strategic Planning Committee

Committee Chair Carl Bowles provided the following Strategic Planning Committee report:

The Gulf Coast Workforce Board's second strategic planning retreat was held on April 3, 2024, at the Houstonian Hotel, and the Strategic Planning Committee met on May 22, 2024, at the Houston-Galveston Area Council to solidify the GCWB's strategic goals that will drive our mission. Committee Chair Carl Bowles called the meeting to order at 2:10 p.m. and other Board members present included Board Chair Mark Guthrie, Peter Beard, Shonda Below, Cheryl Guido, Dr. Bobbie Henderson, Alan Heskamp, Guy Robert Jackson, Doug Karr, Jeff LaBroski, Shareen Larmond, Edward Melton, Adrian Ozuna, Paul Puente, Richard Shaw, Carolyn Watson, Dr. Michael Webster, and Bin Yu.

Overview

The GCWB has engaged in an extensive and collaborative process to establish its strategic goals and plans. Initiated nearly a year ago, this process was meticulously designed to gather insights, analyze data, and incorporate diverse perspectives. In June 2023, the process started with a series of detailed board surveys aimed at capturing initial input on priorities and areas of focus.

Our extensive stakeholder engagement sessions and one-on-one interviews highlighted the need for increased partnerships and awareness of Workforce Solutions' offerings. Nearly a thousand responses from surveys provided a robust foundation for our strategic goals, reflecting the diverse needs and priorities of our stakeholders.

These surveys highlighted critical areas such as service delivery, partnerships, employer engagement, and innovation. Following this, a thorough landscape analysis was conducted to identify existing gaps and opportunities. The Jobs for the Future (JFF) assessment further enriched our understanding, providing deep insights into workforce trends and pinpointing strategic areas for improvement.

Collaborative Workshops and Retreats

The October 2023 Board retreat was a pivotal moment, featuring strategic visioning exercises that engaged board members in envisioning future headlines about Workforce Solutions. This process laid the groundwork for our strategic priorities. Subsequent surveys and interviews with board members and stakeholders further refined our understanding of the workforce landscape. These activities were

instrumental in identifying key priorities and strategic directions, ensuring that our goals aligned with the collective vision of the board members.

The April 2024 Board Retreat, held at the Houstonian Hotel Club & Spa, was a well-attended, collaborative, and pivotal event in our strategic planning process. The primary objective was to refine and solidify the strategic goals that will guide the Board's efforts over the next five years.

The retreat commenced with a series of polling questions designed to gather initial insights and gauge the board members' priorities. The first significant session featured an insightful industry conversation led by Peter Beard and Ann Tanabe, CEO of BioHouston. Ann shared her extensive experience in the life sciences sector, emphasizing the importance of aligning workforce training with the evolving needs of high-growth industries. This session highlighted the critical role of strategic partnerships and innovative solutions in addressing workforce challenges. Ann emphasized the importance of developing "work-ready" pipelines of skilled talent and fostering strategic partnerships.

Juliet Stipeche later led a virtual conversation with Jaime Cruz, Executive Director of Workforce Connections in Southern Nevada, who shared insights on successful workforce development strategies, including the innovative use of technology and community-based service delivery models. Mr. Cruz explained how co-location opportunities led to collaborative opportunities, community building, and the development of strategic partners who are invested in the wellbeing of their local workforce board. Further, it supports his board's interest in meeting people where they are.

Strategic Goal Refinement

Interactive polling throughout the retreat consistently highlighted the need to focus on enhancing service delivery, increasing awareness, fostering innovation, and supporting business-forward strategies. These priorities were reinforced by the discussions and feedback from both the board members and external speakers. Discussions emphasized the need for actionable and practical strategies that can be implemented effectively within the existing framework. The April retreat provided a platform for collaborative discussion, innovative thinking, and consensus-building, ensuring that the Board's strategic goals are well-defined, aligned with stakeholder needs, and poised to drive positive economic and community impact in the Gulf Coast region.

Introduction of New Mission and Vision

The Gulf Coast Workforce Board's strategic planning process has culminated in a refined mission and vision, reflecting our commitment to addressing the evolving needs of our region. These statements embody our renewed focus and strategic direction in supporting economic growth and community development:

Mission: We help employers meet their workforce needs and individuals build careers so both can compete in the global economy.

Vision: To strengthen business and industry, drive the economic growth of our region, and create thriving, inclusive communities where everyone has opportunities to earn, learn, and prosper.

This new mission underscores our dual commitment to supporting both employers and individuals, ensuring that our efforts contribute to a competitive global economy. Our vision encapsulates our broader aspirations to not only bolster economic growth but also to foster inclusive, thriving communities where everyone can achieve their full potential. These guiding principles will steer our initiatives and strategies as we strive to make a meaningful impact on the Gulf Coast region.

Strategic Goals

The GCWB has identified four (4) overarching strategic goals, each designed to address critical areas in workforce development and support the economic growth of our region. These goals are informed by extensive stakeholder engagement, data analysis, and collaborative discussions during the board retreats.

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

To ensure that our region remains competitive and vibrant, we are committed to supporting business-forward strategies. This involves implementing a sector strategy approach to employer engagement, training, upskilling, and pathways efforts. By increasing apprenticeships and work-based learning opportunities, we aim to align training programs with the specific needs of employers, particularly in emerging industries. Engaging with small businesses and partnering to identify future skills needs are also crucial components of this goal. Chair Guthrie asked us to be as innovative as possible in achieving this goal with new ideas and strategies.

2. Improve Service Delivery Utilizing Technology and Innovative Solutions

Enhancing service delivery is at the core of our strategic goals. We plan to streamline processes by integrating process engineering to improve

efficiency and maximize impact. Bolstering our organizational infrastructure with advanced hardware and software will enable us to deliver services more effectively. We aim to reimagine service delivery through co-location, virtual platforms, and interactive assistance, ensuring we meet the diverse needs of our customers. Prioritizing customer satisfaction and regularly seeking feedback will help us continuously improve. Additionally, we are committed to creating innovative training programs that address new and evolving job requirements, ensuring our workforce is future ready.

3. Serve as a Convener and Forge Strategic Partnerships

Collaboration is key to addressing the multifaceted challenges in workforce development. We will create structured forums, such as industry sector councils and roundtable discussions, to engage and collaborate on specific needs and issues, such as skills gaps. By connecting education providers with employers, we aim to better align training programs with industry requirements. Hosting convenings focused on emerging industries and future skills will allow us to stay ahead of trends and prepare our workforce accordingly. Establishing collaborative partnerships with community organizations will provide comprehensive support services and leverage resources, enhancing the overall effectiveness of our initiatives.

4. Increase Awareness of Services and Opportunities

Raising awareness about the services and opportunities offered by Workforce Solutions is essential for maximizing our impact. We will establish Workforce Solutions as the primary source of valuable workforce data and research findings, disseminating this information widely. Designing career pathways in partnership with educational institutions and focusing on in-demand industries will provide clear, actionable guidance for job seekers. We will expand our presence in the community by co-locating offices in accessible locations such as colleges and libraries, ensuring we meet people where they are. Enhanced media partnerships and targeted outreach efforts will help us reach those with barriers to employment, while strategic use of social media will provide timely information and support.

These new strategic goals are designed to be ambitious yet achievable, driving significant impact and transformation in workforce development. They reflect our commitment to supporting business growth, enhancing service delivery, fostering strategic partnerships, and raising awareness about workforce opportunities, ensuring that everyone in our region can earn, learn, and prosper.

Implementation Considerations

Discussions on the implementation of the strategic goals emphasized the importance of involving stakeholders in developing actionable strategies. Board members stressed the need for ongoing refinement of the plan based on feedback and evolving needs, ensuring that our strategies remain relevant and effective.

Discussion

Board members provided valuable feedback and insights that helped shape the strategic goals and offered the following feedback regarding the four goals. There was a consistent emphasis on the importance of focusing on actionable strategies and the need for ongoing stakeholder engagement. Feedback also included the significance of aligning training with employer needs and the importance of work-ready skills for job seekers. There was also a discussion of the need to develop a strong and meaningful feedback loop with community-based organizations and educational institutions. The need for innovative approaches to service delivery and the potential use of AI and technology to enhance efficiency was discussed.

Suggestions also included involving small businesses in strategic discussions and exploring financial incentives for employers to engage in workforce development initiatives. Finally, Board members emphasized the importance of addressing immediate workforce needs, particularly for individuals affected by layoffs, and the need for targeted upskilling and retraining programs.

The discussion underscored the importance of concentrating on high-growth sectors and emerging industries. The Board emphasized the need to update our high-growth occupation list to incorporate skills pertinent to these emerging fields and explore the potential of leveraging existing skills to transition workers into new roles. There was also a consensus on the necessity of convening employers to gather input on future skills requirements and ensuring that training programs are tailored to meet both current and future demands. Board staff must develop a strategy to intentionally align training with employer needs while staying informed about industry changes and developments.

Next Steps

Board staff will continue to work with Outreach Strategists to finalize the strategic plan document, ensuring it reflects the GCWB's collective vision and goals. Once finalized, we will engage with stakeholders to promote the plan, gather additional feedback, and ensure broad support and alignment with community needs.

Conclusion

The meeting concluded with an open floor for additional business, during which Chair Carl Bowles highlighted the importance of ensuring our strategies are both visionary and practical. After a year of diligent data collection, extensive stakeholder engagement, and collaborative planning, this meeting represented a capstone moment in our strategic journey. As we advance, we remain unwavering in our dedication to addressing the workforce needs of the Gulf Coast region, empowered by our refined mission, vision, and strategic goals. We thank the GCWB and everyone who contributed and participated in the strategic planning process.

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

e. Career Services Committee

Committee Chair Adrian Ozuna provided the following Career Services Committee report.

The Career Services Committee met on April 11, 2024, at 10:00 a.m. at the Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC) offices located at 3555 Timmons Lane in Houston, Texas. In attendance were committee members – Adrian Ozuna (Committee Chair), Board Chair Mark Guthrie, Cheryl Guido, Doug Karr, Helen Cavazos, Mary York, Edward Melton, Mou Sarkar, Bin Yu and Dr. Michael Webster.

Executive Summary

Chair Adrian Ozuna commenced the inaugural official meeting by emphasizing the strategic assessment of career offices, focusing on both geographic distribution and service delivery efficiency. The primary objective is to maintain adaptability to optimize customer service delivery. The session highlighted pivotal discussions on H.R. 6655, A Stronger Workforce for America Act, its prospective funding ramifications for our region, regional analytics on career office utilization, and strategic future directions.

A Stronger Workforce for America Act

Juliet Stipeche provided an in-depth briefing on House Bill H.R. 6655, noting its passage in the House and its pending consideration in the Senate. Key elements likely to influence our operations include:

- Introduction of New Definitions: Incorporation of “Opportunity Youth” and “employer-directed skills development” into WIOA lexicon, broadening the scope of target demographics and skill development initiatives.

- Unified State Plan Amendments: Prioritizing the utilization of real-time labor market data for strategic planning and resource allocation, enhancing the alignment with current economic demands.

State Workforce Development Board:

- Diverse Expertise: Expansion of board composition to include a comprehensive representation from various sectors, including business leaders, labor organizations, adult education, vocational education providers, government representatives, and economic and community development agencies.
- Strategic Planning: Emphasis on leveraging labor market data to synchronize workforce development initiatives with high-demand sectors.
- Special Populations: Formulation of targeted strategies for opportunity youth, veterans, individuals with disabilities, and those requiring re-entry services.
- Performance Accountability: Augmentation of monitoring and evaluation responsibilities to ensure program efficacy.
- Innovation: Promotion of innovative practices and technologies to enhance training and employment services, facilitating statewide dissemination of successful models.

Local Workforce Development Boards:

- Adjustments focusing on digital literacy and foundational skills, influencing local program designs and offerings.
- Introduction of new performance indicators to assess work experience and employment outcomes, altering the metrics for program success that may affect funding and program continuation.
- Establishment of a Critical Industry Skill Fund to support training in essential industries, coupled with matching fund requirements to bolster targeted training initiatives.
- Advocacy for pay-for-performance contracts in service provision, potentially altering the contractual framework and evaluation of workforce board services.
- Introduction of specific provisions to aid the workforce reintegration of justice-involved individuals, potentially reshaping program offerings and partnerships.
- Mandate that 50% of funds be directly invested in training opportunities.

Future Funding Impact

The Gulf Coast Workforce Board receives an average annual WIOA Title I allotment of approximately \$45.6 million. Traditionally, around 60% of these funds support

career services for residents and foster robust employer engagement. Over 30% is strategically allocated to training and other critical financial aid activities, ensuring the continuation of vital services such as career counseling, job search assistance, follow-up support, and access to training and work-based learning opportunities.

The new mandate requires that a minimum of 50% of WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker funds be allocated towards training, which significantly restricts our flexibility to address specific local needs and conditions. This mandate adversely impacts both our employers and customers in two keyways. First, the funding restrictions will severely limit the availability of supportive and wraparound services essential for training enrollment and completion. Second, it will constrain the funds currently utilized for employer engagement, hindering our ability to effectively support and collaborate with local employers.

More specifically, the anticipated impacts include the closure of up to nine career offices, significant staffing reductions, and a 25% reduction in service reach, affecting approximately 7,800 employers and 12,100 individuals. This potential reduction underscores the substantial impact of the legislation on our ability to fulfill our mission effectively. ASWA also proposes increasing the allowable percentage for state set-asides by an additional 10%, potentially leading to the closure of up to five additional career offices.

Staffing and Leases

Jessica Smith presented the total number of front-line staff that potentially could be affected and provided a detailed list of all 28 career offices, monthly rent cost, square footage, and location. She outlined the potential impact on front-line staff, emphasizing the number of personnel who may be impacted. A list of all career offices, including specifics such as monthly rent costs, square footage, and lease expiration dates was provided for the committee's review. There was an additional discussion regarding the procurement or renewal options for various leases, emphasizing the necessity to evaluate each location's cost-effectiveness and strategic importance. This highlighted the importance of discussing the sunsetting, relocating, or consolidating certain Career Offices to optimize operational costs soon.

Regional Data on Career Services Office Utilization

Wen Zhen delivered a comprehensive analysis of annual monthly traffic and Wagner-Peyser services in correlation with monthly lease costs. The Committee was introduced to three critical metrics for evaluating career offices:

- Walk-in Customer Traffic: Evaluating the annual and monthly trends in customer visits, noting significant decreases in traffic post-pandemic.
- Number of Wagner-Peyser Services Rendered: Assessing both in-person and virtual service delivery metrics, highlighting shifts in service modalities due to the pandemic.
- Geographic Distribution Visualization: Utilizing third-party GIS software to map the distribution of career offices and customer engagement, identifying areas with potential service gaps.

A crucial component of the meeting was discussing the decrease in office traffic and the change in service delivery over the past several years, including a dramatic increase in virtual services due to the pandemic. The Committee discussed alternative operational models such as co-location with libraries, municipal offices, and chamber offices to enhance accessibility and reduce costs. The necessity of maintaining some version of a physical office system for in-person services, particularly for vulnerable and second-chance customers lacking digital resources, was underscored.

Where do we go from here?

Considerable funding and effort have been invested in establishing career office locations and relocating staff. A paradigm shift is needed in approaching our delivery of services, in successfully integrating with Vocational Rehabilitation, and in considering co-location opportunities in the community. Reducing the number of leases does not equate to a reduction in services as demonstrated by Southern Nevada's workforce board. Instead, it signifies the need to explore innovative methods of delivering services across our region. The focus should be on integrating and enhancing partnerships with chambers of commerce, community organizations, governmental entities, and sister agencies to better serve the population, rather than maintaining large buildings with decreasing foot traffic.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, our region successfully facilitated virtual service participation, revealing a significant digital divide, particularly in low-income and non-English speaking communities. These individuals could be disproportionately affected by the reduction of career offices due to the lack of resource rooms with computer access. However, there are potential opportunities to coordinate closely with community partners to pool resources and address the digital divide, but this will require a very intentional strategy.

The procurement process for our career offices will commence in January 2025. This timeline provides the board with an opportunity to refine our strategic vision for career service delivery, ensuring that these considerations are integrated into the Request for Proposal (RFP).

Conclusion

The meeting concluded with a collective commitment to developing a plan to navigate the challenges posed by funding reductions and potential office closures, ensuring the sustained delivery of essential career services to our community.

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

f. Audit and Monitoring Committee

Committee Chair Guy Robert Jackson provided the following Audit and Monitoring Committee report.

The Audit and Monitoring Committee convened on May 22, 2024, at the Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC) located at 3555 Timmons Lane, Houston, Texas. Committee Chair Guy Robert Jackson called the meeting to order, with Board Chair, Mark Guthrie, Vice Chair Carl Bowles, Shonda Below, Cheryl Guido, Alan Heskamp, Bobbie Henderson, Doug Karr, Jeff LaBroski, and Paul Puente in attendance.

System Review

In the staff's continuous effort to enhance system efficiency and effectiveness, this report provides an in-depth contractor-level review of performance, production, and expenditures for key service providers. This review includes technical program compliance assessments, financial monitoring, and customer experience evaluations, focusing on ensuring alignment with our strategic goals and addressing identified deficiencies through targeted interventions and technical assistance.

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.

Next Gen Service Providers: The Gulf Coast Workforce Board contracted with these two service providers to support opportunity youth aged 16 to 24 from March 2023 to February 2024. The review focused on performance, compliance, information security, customer satisfaction, and data validation.

Alliance of Community Assistance Ministries Association (ACAM): The review found notable improvements in WIOA eligibility, information security training, and timely submission of termination emails. However, it highlighted significant challenges in case management, specifically regarding monthly participant contact and the completion and updating of employment plans. Only 56% of employment plans were completed and updated appropriately, and just 38% of monthly participant contacts were documented in counselor notes. Additionally, performance metrics for work-based learning (WBL) were critically low, achieving only 11% of the annual target, and the number of youth customers served was 39.2% of the goal.

To address these issues, the review recommended comprehensive staff training and coaching, focusing on accurately documenting participant progress, and maintaining detailed counselor notes. ACAM plans to conduct a thorough review of relevant guidelines with staff, ensuring supervisors monitor and report their teams' active caseloads to comply with standards. The review also stressed the importance of accurate data entry in TWIST and maintaining all supporting documentation in DocuWare, as inaccuracies were found in educational level documentation and credential matching.

ACAM is already on a Performance Improvement Plan for its youth WBL targets, which will be discussed later in this report, and moving forward, Board staff recommends that ACAM enhance monitoring efforts through both onsite visits and desk audits to verify the accuracy of staff data entry and ensure participants' work locations and schedules are properly documented and updated.

SERJobs for Progress (SER): SERJobs has shown notable success in outreach efforts, resulting in a significant increase in the number of youth served over the past three years. It is on track to surpass the goal of serving 500 youth, having already served 405. However, the review also identified challenges in maintaining accurate documentation for work-based learning activities and case management, including document collection and data entry.

Performance metrics revealed that while some targets were met, others fell short. For instance, the organization achieved 78.2% of the target for employment in the first quarter after exit and 69.0% for employment/enrollment in the second quarter after exit for WIOA youth. However, metrics for exiters with earnings gains and measurable skills gains were significantly below target, with earnings gains at 50.0% and measurable skills gains at 50.3%.

To address these challenges, Board staff will continue to provide technical assistance, recommend enhanced staff training, and better coordination with program and contract management for technical assistance. Specific recommendations included ensuring accurate enrollment in services, updating employment plans as needed, and maintaining detailed counselor notes. Additionally, improvements in data entry accuracy in TWIST and maintaining all supporting documentation were emphasized.

SER demonstrated strong outreach efforts, with 405 youth served by mid-year PY24, on track to exceed the annual goal of 500. However, two performance measures were below 50% of the March 2024 targets. The review highlighted impressive outcomes in work experience, with seven out of 21 participants hired by their worksites.

Despite these successes, challenges in work-based learning and site visits were noted, including incomplete or outdated documentation in TWIST and insufficient emergency contact information. Desk reviews revealed deficiencies in case management, such as document collection and data entry, requiring additional oversight and improved documentation practices.

Key areas for improvement include ensuring accurate service enrollment, updating employment plans, and maintaining detailed counselor notes. Compliance with Financial Aid Standards and WIOA guidelines is necessary for processing cases and determining eligibility. Information security training completion and new hire orientation within 30 days are also critical for maintaining standards. Accurate data entry in TWIST and proper documentation in DocuWare are essential for data validation.

SER is expected to respond to these recommendations by May 21, 2024, to address the identified issues and enhance service delivery. Several areas, such as LISO reporting, termination emails, staff training, and customer satisfaction, showed high accuracy rates, reflecting SERJobs' commitment to quality and continuous improvement. We will offer SER technical assistance, and depending on their response, consider developing a performance improvement plan to support their improvement.

Career Office Service Providers: This annual review covers the period from July 2023 to April 2024. The assessment focused on performance and production, compliance testing, customer service, information security, and staff training.

BakerRipley: This review covered multiple offices, including the Tracking Unit, Astrodome, Baytown, Clear Lake, East End, Lake Jackson, Northeast, Northline, Northshore, Rosenberg, Southeast, Southwest, and Texas City.

Positive findings included BakerRipley's ability to meet or exceed most performance and production measures as of March 2024. Notable improvements were observed in maintaining notes for work experience participants, and several areas demonstrated high accuracy rates, including WIOA eligibility for dislocated workers and youth, information security training, and Global Cash Card management. Additionally, customer satisfaction surveys indicated a 79% overall satisfaction rate.

The review also identified persistent deficiencies in data entry and documenting counselor notes, particularly in case management and timely documentation for SNAP and TANF programs. Only 36% of records showed appropriate service enrollment based on counselor notes, and deficiencies were noted in the timely entry of cooperation hours and the documentation of good cause for SNAP and TANF participants. Incomplete data entry and inadequate documentation of counselor notes negatively impacted the quality of service and the achievement of organizational and customer-specific goals.

Performance metrics revealed mixed results, with some targets, such as exiters with earnings gains, being met or exceeded, while others, like unemployment claimants re-employed within 10 weeks, fell short. To address these challenges, the review recommended enhanced staff training and targeted process improvements. Ensuring staff follow the Workforce Solutions Service Matrix Desk Aid and appropriate standards and guidelines, accurate data entry in TWIST, and proper documentation of counselor notes are essential steps to rectify these recurring deficiencies.

BakerRipley will be providing a response regarding these findings on May 21, 2024.

Interfaith of the Woodlands: This review encompasses the Tracking Unit, Bay City, Columbus, Conroe, Cypress Station, Humble, Huntsville, Katy, Liberty, Missouri City, Sealy, Waller, Wharton, and Willowbrook, employing approximately 260 staff. Positive findings highlighted 100% accuracy in WIOA eligibility determination, significant improvements from the previous year, and the ability to meet or exceed most performance and production goals by March 2024. Additionally, high accuracy rates were noted in several areas, such as Choices Childcare Eligibility, WIOA Data Validation, and Information Security.

The review also identified recurring deficiencies in several critical areas. Case management showed inconsistencies, with only 52% of TWIST services opened and closed appropriately, and 48% of employment plans developed and updated as needed. In SNAP and TANF programs, issues included improper documentation of cooperation hours, non-compliance with

participation requirements, and untimely penalties. Financial Aid Cash Substitutes also revealed gaps, with only 44% of records documenting justification for support service awarded.

The review recommended enhanced staff training and adherence to established guidelines. Specifically, staff should follow the Workforce Solutions Service Matrix Desk Aid, Cooperation Rules and Procedures, and Financial Aid Standards and Guidelines when processing cases and documenting counselor notes. Additional recommendations included ensuring timely and accurate data entry in TWIST, properly documenting all elements in counselor notes, and maintaining regular customer contact and follow-up to support self-sufficiency.

Interfaith is expected to address these recommendations by May 21, 2024.

Equus: This review includes the Career Offices in Acres Home, Pearland, and Westheimer, with 83 staff. The review identified ongoing challenges with case management for the third consecutive year. Issues such as data entry errors, incomplete employment plans, and insufficient counselor notes were noted. Also, compliance with SNAP and TANF cooperation rules was lacking, impacting performance and customer service quality. These deficiencies directly affect Equus's ability to move customers towards self-sufficiency and achieving their employment and training goals.

Key areas needing improvement include ensuring accurate and complete data entry in TWIST, adhering to Financial Aid Standards and Guidelines, and documenting comprehensive assessments and employment plans. For SNAP and TANF programs, timely and proper documentation is essential. Recommendations also emphasize the need for regular and thorough staff training and adherence to the Workforce Solutions Service Matrix Desk Aid and Standards and Guidelines. Specific attention is needed for Global Cash handling, financial aid cash substitutes, and rapid re-employment (RESEA) documentation.

Equus is expected to address these recommendations by May 21, 2024. Further, Equus has consistently underperformed in the Raise Education Level performance metrics, specifically in the Credential Rate and Measurable Skills Gains for WIOA Youth. We have asked them to create a performance improvement plan, which we expect to receive by May 24, 2024.

Employer Engagement:

SERCO of Texas: The Gulf Coast Quality Assurance Monitoring Team conducted a thorough review of SERCO of Texas Inc. (SERCO) from October 2023 to February 2024. This review evaluated multiple facets, including

performance and production, eligibility and talent development, customer satisfaction, complaints, information, and data security, and staffing and training. As a new service provider to the Gulf Coast Workforce Board, SERCO was in a transition period, developing internal policies and aligning with the board's guidelines. The review aimed to ensure compliance with rules and regulations, contract terms, and objectives.

SERCO exhibited strong compliance in several areas, achieving 100% compliance with eligibility and case management policies. High accuracy rates were noted in apprenticeship and on-the-job training (OJT) eligibility, with 100% pass rates. The organization received positive feedback from employers, especially regarding the effective communication from individual SERCO staff members. Additionally, customer satisfaction surveys showed a 93% satisfaction rate, indicating a high level of service quality perceived by customers. These positive findings suggest SERCO's potential for delivering quality services and supporting employers and job seekers effectively.

The review identified several areas needing improvement. Notably, none of the new hires completed the required orientation within 30 days, and only 75% of staff completed the Veterans Triage training on time. Deficiencies were also noted in the timely submission of termination emails to Workforce Security, with only 33% submitted on time. In staff training records, 80% of training hours were supported by documentation, indicating a need for better record-keeping. Performance metrics revealed significant gaps, with no available information for several key indicators such as employment in the first and subsequent quarters after exit, exiters with earnings gains, and measurable skills gains. For instance, measurable skills gain for WIOA Adults were only at 34.4%, and for WIOA Youth, they were at 9.1%.

To address these issues, the review recommended several actions. SERCO should develop internal controls to ensure timely responses to service requests and improve the submission and maintenance of staff training and board documentation. Specifically, it was advised that new staff complete the required orientation within 30 days and all required training programs as outlined in their contracts. Ensuring that staff adhere to Workforce Solutions Information Security Standards and Guidelines, particularly regarding the timely submission of termination emails, was also emphasized. Additionally, improving the communication and oversight processes to ensure consistent service delivery and follow-through from Workforce Solutions and Board management staff was suggested.

In summary, while SERCO has shown strengths in compliance and customer satisfaction, it must focus on improving its staff training and documentation practices to enhance overall service delivery. Given that this is SERCO's first year of service, Board staff will work with SERCO to implement these recommendations, will continue to provide technical assistance, and will use

board staff and customer feedback to drive improvements in SERCO's service delivery.

Upcoming Reviews:

The entrance meeting with the Financial Aid Payment Office (FAPO) is scheduled. We have started the review for **the Children's Learning Institute (CLI)** and have begun third-quarter testing for the **Financial Aid Support Center**.

Financial Systems

The Board contracts with two CPA firms to conduct comprehensive financial monitoring of all Workforce Board subrecipient service providers. Seven reports have been received since the last update and nine reviews for FY24 contracts are still in progress.

Draft reports received since last update:

- College of the Mainland – No findings
- SER Jobs – No findings
- Boys and Girls Club – 1 finding
 - Billing reports not timely submitted.
- Harris County Department of Education – 1 finding
 - Personnel document not signed and dated.
- University of Texas Health Science Center (CLI) – 2 findings
 - Exceptions include expense/travel transactions not recorded in the appropriate period and one late billing report submission.
- Association for the Advancement of Mexican Americans – 2 findings
 - Exceptions include incomplete supporting documentation for non-personnel expenditures and transactions not being recorded in the appropriate period.
- Adult Education Center – 3 findings
 - Deficiencies noted in segregation of duties and approvals. Exceptions include classification of expenses, timely invoice payments, and inconsistencies between timesheets and time-study document.

The following reviews are still in progress:

- SERCO of Texas,
- Equus Career Office and Financial Aid Support Center,

- Lone Star College,
- Region 6,
- BakerRipley Adult Education, Career Office, & Payment Office,
- Interfaith of the Woodlands,
- Community Family Centers,
- Alliance for Multicultural Community Services, and
- Alliance of Community Assistance Ministries.

Accountability and Improvement Plans

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

TWC Interventions:

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

Adult Median Earnings Q2 Post-Exit (FY23): Staff continues to track enrollment efforts and work with the Texas Workforce Commission to show our progress on the Technical Assistance Plan (TAP) for FY23 WIOA Adult Median Earnings 2nd Quarter After Exit FY23. To address this, staff are implementing targeted enrollment efforts and policy adjustments to enhance our participants' median earnings.

GCWB Interventions:

Harris County Department of Education: On May 2, 2024, HCDE was notified that it had met all the requirements of its Corrective Action Plan (CAP), and the CAP was lifted.

Equus Career Offices: On May 2, 2024, Equus was asked to develop a Performance Improvement Plan for underperformance in the Raise Education Levels performance metrics, specifically in Credential Rate and Measurable Skills Gains for WIOA Youth. Board staff expects to receive its plan by May 24, 2024, and will commence regular check-in meetings to monitor progress and offer support.

Alliance of Community Assistance Ministries (ACAM): ACAM was placed on a Performance Improvement Plan due to being deficient in WIOA Youth Customers Served and WIOA Youth Work-Based Learning targets. It has faced ongoing issues with the quality of case management and record-keeping, which persist beyond the transition to the Next Gen centralized payroll vendor and the Financial Aid Payment

Office (FAPO). ACAM submitted a Performance Improvement Plan on February 1, 2024, including the following interventions:

- Implementing a scorecard to track individual, partner, and program performance.
- Holding weekly performance meetings to discuss progress with each subcontractor.
- Developing an outreach strategy to increase visibility and build partnerships with community-based organizations serving opportunity youth.

To support ACAM, board staff approved two temporary staff members to assist with outreach and work-based learning recruitment efforts. Additionally, technical assistance on Gazelle was provided on March 19, 2024, to address challenges with the transition to the FAPO systems.

Despite some progress in increasing the number of WIOA Youth Customers Served, ACAM continues to face challenges. As highlighted in the System Review report, ACAM requires enhanced monitoring in specific performance areas, particularly in record-keeping and case management documentation.

ACAM requested three new subcontractors, but the Board denied this request. The decision was based on the consideration that the time, support, and dedication required to fully integrate these subcontractors would detract from ACAM's ability to focus on and achieve successful performance outcomes in the critical areas needing improvement. Further, the recommended subcontractors were not experts in youth workforce programs.

Update on Service Provider Report Card

Following the March 2024 Audit and Monitoring Committee meeting, Board staff leadership met to discuss the development of key performance indicators (KPIs), Objective Key Results (OKRs), and new customer experience surveys for the Gulf Coast Workforce system. Given the Strategic Planning Committee's finalization of goals for our region, it is essential to align our KPIs with these objectives to ensure that our efforts are strategically directed and impactful.

Key Points from the Managers' Meeting:

- **Aligning KPIs with Strategic Goals:** Ensure KPIs align with our strategic goals to assess the impact of future process changes. This alignment helps ensure our performance metrics not only reflect past achievements but also predict future success.
- **Developing a Comprehensive Customer Feedback System:** Create a system that integrates feedback from service providers and customers across the

entire organization. This approach is essential for capturing a complete view of customer experiences and making informed improvements.

- **Updating Regional Messaging:** Ensure that new KPIs align with updated regional messaging and strategic planning goals. This alignment will enhance the relevance and coherence of our performance metrics.
- **Enhancing Customer Feedback Mechanisms:** Assess current systems, such as Ring Central, for gathering customer feedback and explore additional options from Work in Texas. Utilize kiosks to gather real-time information from customers at career offices or electronic surveys. These evaluations are crucial for improving our feedback mechanisms and making data-driven decisions.
- **Mapping Cause-and-Effect Relationships:** Utilize cause-and-effect diagrams to understand the relationships between KPIs. This assessment helps to identify how different metrics influence each other and contribute to overall performance.
- **Incorporating KPIs in Journey Mapping:** Integrate KPIs into journey mapping to track and analyze customer experiences at each touchpoint. This integration will provide deeper insights into customer interactions and help tailor strategies to improve satisfaction and outcomes.

Importance of KPIs and/or OKRs: The development of KPIs and/or OKRs is essential for tracking our system's success and predicting future performance. Properly constructed KPIs provide more than just a retrospective view; they are powerful tools for anticipating and managing future changes. By mapping the relationships between different KPIs and setting appropriate measurement intervals, staff can create a dynamic scorecard that accurately reflects the organization's health and progress. OKRs, when well-crafted, help teams focus on what matters most, prioritize effectively, and align their efforts with broader strategic goals. This strategic alignment ensures that our objectives are ambitious, measurable, and drive meaningful outcomes.

Proposal for Consultant Engagement: Staff's dialogue led us to conclude that staff needs additional support and expertise to design a new rating system that aligns with the best industry practices. We need a rating system that will ensure fairness and reliability while promoting continuous improvement among our service providers. Staff proposes working with Weaver to develop a robust framework for evaluating organizational performance and reporting progress within our workforce system. Their expertise will support the implementation of our strategic plan and the creation of meaningful performance indicators, culminating in a comprehensive service provider report card. This initiative is crucial for ensuring

that our performance metrics are dynamic, predictive, and aligned with our strategic goals.

Next Steps: As we move forward, we will continue to monitor the customer experience through program and financial monitoring and operational oversight as demonstrated in this report. However, we will engage Weaver to develop our new rating system with KPIs and/or OKRs to ensure alignment with our new strategic goals. This step is critical for achieving our strategic objectives and improving service delivery. We request approval to enlist Weaver to add this vital initiative to the scope of their work, ensuring that our performance metrics are robust, meaningful, and aligned with our strategic plan. We anticipate that this will not incur additional costs given the reduction in the number of Adult Education and Literacy providers in FY25.

Weaver Report

Weaver reported on its comprehensive efforts and findings of Phase 1 of the Process Mapping and Grant Management & Administration Manual Development project for the GCWB. The primary goal of this project is to identify and address policy, process, and procedural control gaps within our current systems to ensure a robust control structure. This will facilitate compliance with grant requirements and mitigate the risk of future findings from the Texas Workforce Commission. The project is structured into three phases: Current State Assessment and Future State Roadmap, Procedural Manual Development and KPI Sprints, and Management and Staff Training.

Phase 1: Approach and Findings:

Phase 1, conducted by Weaver, involved a thorough evaluation of our grant administration and management processes, including grant contracting and award, funding, monitoring, reporting, and contract closeout. Key activities included collecting documentation, conducting interviews, and facilitating collaboration sessions with management and key personnel. The evaluation identified several areas of improvement across 34 grant subprocesses within six primary grant areas.

Current to Future State Assessment:

Five key themes for improvement were identified:

- **Cross-Collaboration:** Enhanced collaboration between manager groups, including contract and program managers, is necessary to improve meeting effectiveness.
- **Risk Management:** Establishing a risk management function is essential to assess and manage various risks, including operational, financial, legal, programmatic, and cybersecurity.
- **Onboarding and Training:** Developing a comprehensive standard operating procedures (SOPs), clear responsibilities, training programs, an updated organizational chart, and consistent position titles.

- Quality Assurance and Compliance: Examining the subrecipient program monitoring reviews for potential updates.
- Robust Technology: Processes are decentralized, with limited process tracking and unreliable data, necessitating a more centralized approach.

Recommendations:

To address these gaps, Weaver recommends:

- Establishing an enhanced governance structure to enhance effectiveness.
- Creating a dedicated risk management function.
- Developing and implementing comprehensive SOPs, clear responsibilities, training programs, and an updated organizational chart.
- Conducting accurate and up to date subrecipient monitoring reviews that assess participant outcomes.
- Creating a centralized platform with process tracking capabilities and reliable data.

Technology and KPI Opportunities:

Staff identified several opportunities to leverage technology to streamline processes and enhance operational visibility. This includes automating standard reporting and review validation, optimizing existing technology such as SharePoint, and transitioning from data compilation to data analysis. Additionally, defining and standardizing operational processing metrics will help identify bottlenecks and streamline processes through automation.

Aligning Measures with Program Success:

As discussed above, aligning measures with program success is crucial. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) will focus on outcomes, utility, quantitative metrics, and ease of interpretation. These KPIs will help create measurable outcomes and evaluate their effectiveness.

Next Steps:

The next steps involve establishing a robust KPI framework (Sprint 1) and developing specific KPIs to measure and enhance program success (Sprint 2). Staff will also develop a detailed procedural manual outlining key processes and subprocesses for contract managers, quality assurance, and risk management. The findings and recommendations from Phase 1, conducted by Weaver, provide a path for Board staff to improve our grant management and administration processes in our operations.

Next Meeting

Staff proposes scheduling the next committee meeting for 1:00 p.m. on Tuesday, July 30, 2024, at Workforce Solutions – Westheimer, 8373 Westheimer Rd, Houston, Texas 77063.

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

g. Education Committee

Committee Chair Dr. Bobbie Henderson provided the following Education Committee report.

On Wednesday, May 23, 2024, at 2:00 pm, Education Committee met at the Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC) located at 3555 Timmons Ln #100, Houston, Texas. This gathering was marked by the presence of both in-person and virtual attendees, including Education Committee Chair Vice Chair Dr. Bobbie Henderson, Board Chair Mark Guthrie, and committee members Doug Karr (Committee Vice Chair), Shondra Below, Helen Cavazos, Melissa Gonzalez, Alan Heskamp, Margaret Oser, Valerie Segovia, Richard Shaw, Sandra Taylor, Mou Sarkar and Bin Yu.

Early Child Care Updates

Child Care Funding Allocation Changes

As of April 2024, there are 40,000 families receiving child care scholarships--approximately \$25 million in funding, each month. Board staff managed to move the waiting list to four months, by currently processing cases from December 2023. This reduced the waiting list to 7,300 applications, 11,700 children, and by a seven-month period. The net increase from October 2023 through April 2024 averages to 2,160 children added each month. However, with the funding distributed from the state in September 2023 and at the rate of children being enrolled, the GCWB's current budget can now only process redetermination and selective priority cases for the rest of the fiscal year, expending 98 percent of funds.

In response, the TWC advised that no additional funds would be provided, and the GCWB must develop a plan to reduce enrollments. On May 17, 2024, staff submitted our plan. As of May 2024, our year-to-date average stands at 35,600, with a slight increase expected due to pending cases. Our primary strategy focuses on a systematic reduction in enrollment through natural attrition, such as when families choose not to renew their enrollment or fail to meet program guidelines. Concurrently, staff are prioritizing the inclusion of children from the waiting list to maintain service continuity and efficiency.

After conducting a thorough analysis of family renewal frequencies and our data trends, staff found that approximately 60% of applications are approved monthly. If this trend continues, staff projects a reduction of around 3,700 children between

August and December. We have included the following chart below to provide a projection of the attrition based on our strategy over time:

Month	Recerts	Attrition
8/1/2024	1989	796
9/1/2024	1795	718
10/1/2024	1806	722
11/1/2024	1796	718
12/1/2024	1773	709

To effectively implement this reduction, staff has formulated a plan to halt the enrollment of Priority 3 children by August 2024, followed by the cessation of Priority 2 enrollments by September 2024. Additionally, outreach efforts targeting non-priority families were already suspended in April 2024 to ensure a smooth transition to TX3C. Staff tentatively plan to resume these outreach activities in early 2025, unless there are significant unexpected departures of currently enrolled families.

New Building

The Support Center will move into their new location the week of May 20th. The last day at the old location was May 10th. Staff is currently working from home while IT set up connections at the new location.

Texas Child Care Connection-TX3C

TX3C is scheduled to launch on July 1, 2024. Training for the new system started the week of May 13th. Staff has updated the website and the IVR at the Support Center regarding the system outage between June 1-30, 2024.

Texas Rising Star Discount

To encourage families to select a Texas Rising Star quality provider, staff offered a 30% discount off their Parent Share of Cost (PSoC). TWC now requires all providers to be a Texas Rising Star within 24-months of becoming a vendor. Additionally, the PSoC will decrease for most families as TWC moves from a sliding fee scale. The PSoC will cap at 13% this year and decrease to seven percent the following year. The 30% discount will be discontinued on July 1, 2024, with the rollout of TX3C. Families that are currently receiving the discount will continue receiving it until their recertification or if they request a reduction based on a lower PSoC.

Priority List Update

Staff are making three adjustments to the Priority List.

- Moving Pre-K Partnerships from First to Third Priority.
 - Currently Pre-K Partnerships are listed as a First Priority.
 - First Priority is now only for mandatory participants such as TANF and SNAP recipients.

- Removing '*e-Families who have lost financial aid for program violations...*' from the list.
 - Currently families that have a program violation need to wait 60 days before re-applying for services. Now after the 60-day wait period, these families need to go on the waitlist, allowing other families to receive care.

- Removing '*f-All other eligible parents/families*' from the list.

Waitlist Status

- As of May 13, 2024, we have 8,908 families and 14,287 children on our waitlist.
- The oldest families are from January 2024.

YTD Update

- We currently have over 39,500 children (about the seating capacity of Minute Maid Park) in child care.
- TWC YTD target is 33,620.
- As of April, we are at approximately 105% of TWC YTD goal.

Next Steps

Board staff will proceed with methodically ramping down enrollments and creating a plan to ensure that we do not over expend. Further, staff is conducting an analysis to determine the staffing needs at the Support Center for the upcoming year to strengthen our customer service. This analysis will also include a production impact report on the new system and the new requirements from TWC. Board staff will continue to meet with the Support Center monthly, review production reports weekly, and visit at least twice a month. Staff will keep the Education Committee updated with our progress.

Youth Services Updates

Jobs Y'all

Jobs Y'all is a Texas Workforce Commission career exploration campaign designed to raise awareness about our state's fast-growing industries, help students learn about occupations and related education options, and connect students with employers for career opportunities. On May 8, 2024, staff held a successful Jobs Y'all event in Brazoria County at the Pearland Recreation Center. There were 38 employers and 12 community resources in attendance to offer both career exploration and opportunities to the 271 youth in attendance. We had a very special visit from Pearland's Mayor Cole. Special thanks to GCWB member Mou Sakar for her unwavering support, the City of Pearland, and the Pearland Economic Development Corporation for their collaboration and support with this event. Board Staff will continue to host Jobs Y'all events across the region. Stay tuned for future dates!

Summer Jobs

Summer jobs for youth ages 16-24 hold significant importance, offering many benefits beyond the immediate financial rewards. Summer jobs are crucial for their personal, academic, and professional development. They provide a foundation of skills and experiences that are invaluable in shaping a young person's future, fostering growth, independence, and a sense of accomplishment. Youth Services Board Staff is working with the service providers to support youth ages 16-24 with summer jobs. Our Employer Engagement Board Staff and SERCO of Texas (SERCO) are working to identify both subsidized and unsubsidized summer opportunities across the region. Youth Services is working with schools and community-based organizations to outreach youth seeking assistance with summer employment.

Summer Earn and Learn

Summer Earn and Learn (SEAL) is an initiative by the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) designed to provide students with disabilities (ages 14-22) with work experience and vocational skills during the summer months. Vocational Rehabilitation Services has referred 674 students to the SEAL Program. The Gulf Coast Workforce Board has a target of placing 525 students with disabilities into a paid 5-week work experience and provide work readiness training to students as needed. Students will be placed into one of two 5-week cohorts for work experience beginning June 3, 2024. We are on track to hit the 525-placement target.

Youth Employment

The Gulf Coast Workforce Board is currently exceeding performance targets for Universal Youth, WIOA Youth Served and falling behind on Credential Rate and Measurable Skills Gains. Youth Services is working with each service provider on their respective deficient areas. Technical Assistance and Performance Improvement Plans are being put into place where necessary. Board Staff is hopeful that with the additional support, we will meet all measures by the end of the program year.

Measure	Board Target	Current Performance	Baker Ripley	Equus	Interfaith	ACAM	SER
Universal Youth	20000	11667	8372	1404	4664		
Youth Served	2627	1536	*	*	*	*	*
Work Based Learning	1782	553	151	61	242	51	48
Credential Rate	69.1%	40.9%	53.6%	33.3%	19.4%	45.5%	42.3%
Measurable Skills Gains	59.0%	35.0%	40.3%	28.9%	17.4%	51.0%	50.0%
Training		226	88	16	35	48	43

*Data not available for April due to the transition to the new Case Management System

Accountability and Improvement Plans

Equus Career Offices: Equus Career Offices has consistently underperformed in the Raise Education Levels performance metrics, specifically in Credential Rate and Measurable Skills Gains for WIOA Youth. A Performance Improvement Plan was requested on May 2, 2024. We expect to receive their plan by May 24, 2024, and will commence regular check-in meetings to monitor progress and offer the required support.

Alliance of Community Assistance Ministries (ACAM): After reviewing the first quarter performance for this program year, ACAM was placed on a performance improvement plan due to being deficient in WIOA Youth Customers Served and WIOA Youth Work-Based Learning targets. Additionally, ACAM has faced ongoing issues with the quality of case management and record-keeping, which persist beyond the transition to the Next Gen centralized payroll vendor and the Financial Aid Payment Office (FAPO).

On February 1, 2024, ACAM submitted a performance improvement plan that outlined strategies to enhance performance. The following have been implemented to support improvements:

- Implementing a scorecard to track individual, partner, and program performance.
- Holding weekly performance meetings to discuss progress with each subcontractor.
- Developing an outreach strategy to increase visibility and build partnerships with community-based organizations serving opportunity youth.

To support the program's success, the board staff approved the addition of two temporary staff members to assist with outreach and work-based learning recruitment efforts. Additionally, technical assistance on Gazelle was provided on March 19 to address challenges with the transition to the FAPO systems.

Despite some progress in increasing the number of WIOA Youth Customers Served, ACAM has not shown improvement in the deficient areas. Furthermore, findings from the System Review indicate a continued need for enhancement and monitoring in specific performance areas, particularly in record-keeping and case management documentation. Consequently, we cannot support ACAM's request to add and onboard three new subcontractors. The time, support, and dedication required to fully integrate these subcontractors would hinder ACAM's ability to focus on and achieve successful performance outcomes in the critical areas needing improvement. Furthermore, the three proposed subcontractors, while experts in their own areas, do not have strong expertise in workforce programs for youth.

Staff will continue to offer technical assistance and work closely with ACAM to identify process gaps and provide the necessary support and training to achieve successful outcomes by the end of the program year.

Regional Convener Updates

Work Based Learning Summer Program Overview

Individuals will have the opportunity to work for 6 weeks in one of the following industries: Health Care, Building & Construction, and Education. Individuals will have the opportunity to expand their knowledge, gain employability skills, and hands-on experience.

- On June 3, 2024, our summer work-based learning opportunity for 18–24-year-olds commences.

- Over 100 students applied for positions offered by the regional convener.
- Students will be working this summer as healthcare interns, building and construction interns and education consultants.
 - Companies include HCA Healthcare, AccessHealth, All Team Services, and the University of Houston.

Rice University Summer Career Exploration

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

- June 9, 2024, marks the start of our summer programming with Rice University. The Gulf Coast Workforce Board received over 300 applications to participate in our summer career exploration opportunity.
- 75 students will stay at Rice University for a week to explore careers in Healthcare, Education, Technology, and Building & Construction. Each student will receive \$500 for successfully completing the program.
- We have developed a rigorous programmatic schedule for our attendees.

Employer Services Work Based Learning Outreach

Our primary focus lies in fostering high-quality job placements for students throughout our expansive 13-county region. To achieve this, we have actively reached out to diverse university alumni networks, igniting interest among companies to engage in Work-Based Learning (WBL) opportunities. Our inaugural university pilot at TSU yielded promising results, with 20 companies from their Alumni Network expressing interest within the first month alone.

Additionally, we have forged a strategic partnership with The Ion Houston, where we had the opportunity to speak and network at their monthly procurement meetings.

Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) Updates

At present date for the program year, we have served over 14,000 individuals with Adult Education and Literacy services. Within the 14,000 we have provided over 8,500 with linguistic support, and 1,500 have received support in workforce training. 54% of our AEL students are employed or enrolled in post-secondary 2nd quarter after exit and 85% of our students are employed or enrolled in post-secondary 3rd and 4th quarter after exit.

On May 2nd, 2024, the Corrective Action Plan (CAP) for Harris County Department of Education (HCDE) for enhanced data integrity in the management of the Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) grant for the program year 2021-2022 was lifted. The HCDE AEL staff has been positive and cooperative in working with the H-GAC's

Adult Education and Literacy division staff to meet the Corrective Action Plan's requirements.

At the end of April, we received an update from the Texas Workforce Commission on the Request for Proposal (RFP) for AEL services for AEFLA grant and English Language Learner grant. On April 30th the AEL manager and board staff leadership participated in a negotiation meeting with TWC on the proposed award allocation. During this meeting, we were notified that we were awarded 9 of the 13 counties applied for the AEFLA grant. The counties that were awarded for 100% of the county service area are Austin, Colorado, Fort Bend, Matagorda, Montgomery, Walker, Waller, Wharton, and we were awarded 60% of Harris County. We were not awarded funds to support Brazoria, Chambers, Galveston, and Liberty. The state notified us that Brazoria was awarded to Brazosport College, Chambers and Galveston was awarded to College of the Mainland and Liberty and 40% of Harris County was awarded to HCDE. We were notified that our award funding will be 11 million with a service target of 7800 individuals. We were also notified that we were not awarded the English Language Learner grant for our board area, that award was granted to HCDE. We accepted the presented grant offer to continue to serve the counties allocated.

Following the grant negotiation meeting an AEL transition meeting was held with the TWC AEL director. This meeting was held at the TWC's request to discuss the transition plan to serve the counties allocated with the reduction of providers and funding. A breakdown in the provider service allocation and funding support was presented to the state. We presented our plan of providing quality service with leveraging the use of our partners to help serve individuals who would benefit from an on-ramp adult education and literacy program, this includes working with the City of Houston Adult Education Coalition and leveraging a reverse referral system with the 5 community based organizations that will be serving individuals with popular basic education through the use of Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), Title 1 fund support. Within our plan we presented that we will be adopting the new Work in Texas application as our AEL application to help streamline support and access to services across our workforce system, and that we will be standardizing our curriculum across our consortium to help individuals matriculate seamlessly in their educational journey to upskilling and advancement.

On May 7th Region 6 held our first AEL integration training session targeted at enhancing comprehension of adult education services and improving outcomes for system operators and program divisions with Board staff. The event was hosted by San Jacinto College, and we had over 30 of our systems staff in attendance and engaged in learning. Our next two sessions are scheduled to be held in June, with Lone Star College hosting the June 11th training session and San Jacinto College hosting the June 13th training session.

Moving Forward

Our AEL grant is set to sunset on June 30, 2024, on July 1, 2024, our service area coverage will change, and funding will be half of the amount we typically have access to for a program year. We believe in the value and impact of our work and how it is designed to equip individuals with the skills essential for success in today's workforce, family life, and civic engagement. Our consortium will continue to have a unique build of being comprised of Houston Community College (Fort Bend and Harris), Lone Star College (Harris and Montgomery), San Jacinto College (Harris), Region 6 Education Service Center (direct service for Waller, Walker, lead service provider), Adult Education Center (Austin, Colorado, Matagorda, Wharton) and BakerRipley (Harris). We will utilize a referral hand off to the allocated county AEL awardees for interested individuals in Brazoria, Chambers, Galveston, and Liberty. We will continue to build on standardization and will continue to act in the best interests of our customers and our region.

Chair Henderson concluded her report, and no action was taken.

h. Communications Committee

Committee Chair Doug Karr provided the following Communications Committee report.

The Communications Committee met on May 30, 2024, at 3:00 p.m. at the Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC) offices located at 3555 Timmons Lane in Houston, Texas. In attendance were committee members – Committee Chair Doug Karr, Board Chair Mark Guthrie, Dr. Bobbie Henderson, Paul Puente, Dr. Michael Webster, Richard Shaw. The meeting focused on the Board's ongoing commitment to enhancing communications and outreach efforts.

Website Update

AJ Dean presented a comprehensive update on the initiative to develop a new website for Workforce Solutions – Gulf Coast. The Board, in collaboration with H-GAC staff, launched a competitive, sealed solicitation process, which concluded on May 2, 2024. Eight (8) responsive submissions were received and evaluated by a dedicated committee of H-GAC representatives. Interviews with the top four candidates are scheduled for the week of June 3, 2024. Following these interviews, the Board will commence contract negotiations with the selected provider. Progress updates will be provided to the committee as the project advances.

Media and Outreach Update

Juliet Stipeche, Russell Tomlin, and Outreach Strategists provided an insightful update on recent media and outreach activities, emphasizing the relaunch of the

“Look Who’s Hiring Now” segment with Nick Natario on KTRK (Channel 13). This partnership, which began in April 2020 during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, was revitalized on April 18, 2024, with a job fair at World Harvest Outreach Church in Sunnyside, Houston, Texas.

Originally, the segment featured weekly interviews at job fairs hosted at Workforce Solutions’ career offices. However, the format has now evolved into a curated 30-minute monthly show. This new format focuses on targeted industries and includes various segments featuring industry experts, employers, career exploration, and preparedness activities. Each episode is strategically promoted with a live news story aired the day before, highlighting a specific feature to encourage registration for the upcoming job fair or event in the community, which serves as the location for the “Look Who’s Hiring Now” show.

Before the Sunnyside event, we broadcast a live segment on ABC13.com and the ABC13 app, spotlighting healthcare career opportunities, particularly those addressing skills gaps through the Upskills & Training to Address Skills Gap Initiative grant with the College of Healthcare Professions. This initiative offers at least 65 scholarships in medical billing and coding, medical assistant, and limited medical radiological technologist with medical assisting skills. Prior to the show, we faced challenges in recruiting individuals for the program. However, Cindy Harper, a recent graduate from the College of Healthcare Professions who had previously received a Workforce Solutions scholarship, was profiled to promote the event. Following the news story and job fair, we received a steady stream of applicants and are now on track to meet or exceed our goals. Additionally, the story promoted participation in the Sunnyside job fair, resulting in over 400 registrations.

While hosting the healthcare-focused career fair at World Harvest Outreach Church, we filmed the “Look Who’s Hiring Now” show, featuring Dr. Joanitt Montano, MD, CHCP, Gary Marsh from Harris Health System, and Erica Castro from HCA Houston. The event was covered live on ABC13.com and the ABC13 app. World Harvest Church was an exceptionally gracious partner, and we look forward to continuing our relationship with the Sunnyside community. The job fair garnered an Advertising Value Equivalency (AVE) of \$66,375 and reached an audience of 880,000 viewers. For more details, see [ABC13 Who's Hiring Job Fair has way for you to break in for free in medical field, where jobs are in high demand - ABC13 Houston.](#)

Subsequently, the second monthly job fair was held on May 16, 2024, at San Jacinto College in Pasadena, with a focus on career exploration and preparedness. This

event featured Dr. Allatia Harris, Amanda Fenwick from San Jacinto College, and Toni Rosario from BIC Recruiting. ABC13 significantly enhanced the event by using on-site cameras to capture interviews, a notable upgrade from the previous Zoom format.

The event also highlighted Oscar Gil, a graduate of both the University of Houston and San Jacinto College, who now works at Intuitive Machines on the lunar lander program. His inspiring story underscored the vital importance of networking, persistence, and resilience, leading to 600 individuals registering for our job fair. The event attracted a diverse and steady stream of visitors, and we continuously conduct reviews and make enhancements to better serve our employers and customers. *See [ABC13 Who's Hiring job fair focuses on what you can do to improve your career exploration - ABC13 Houston](#)*

The program, pre-taped for later broadcast on ABC13.com and their app, achieved an Advertising Value Equivalency (AVE) of \$26,250 and reached 412,500 viewers. The reach was somewhat limited, and the livestream's airing was delayed to Sunday, May 26, 2024, because of the Derecho that affected the region during the same week. Nonetheless, it was successful given the circumstances, and we are profoundly grateful for our partnership with Nick Natario and Channel 13 and eagerly look forward to preparing for our June 2024 show.

Social Media Report

Russell Tomlin provided a detailed history of the "Virtual Team," which has been instrumental in supporting social media efforts across the system. He outlined the development of a coordinated approach aimed at integrating our collective communication and outreach strategies with our service providers. Russell offered an overview of Workforce Solutions' media outreach initiatives, which strive to build a positive brand image, promote services, expand the audience, and highlight collaborative efforts with the local community. Key metrics include:

Total Followers: 27,215

Facebook: 11,246 (5.6% increase from 2023, 43.31% over two years);

Instagram: 4,694 (38.96% increase from 2023, 108.36% over two years);

Twitter (X): 1,817 (1.96% increase from 2023, 20.24% over two years); and

LinkedIn: 9,458 (38.10% increase from 2023, 142.62% over two years).

The social media strategy focuses on understanding audience interactions through metrics such as followers, reach, visits, and engagement. Despite some challenges,

including a decline in visitors but an increase in followers, the strategy indicates a growing interest in the Board's activities.

Regarding LinkedIn efforts, our top visitors came from HR, Sales, and Business Development sectors. There was a noted rise in followers, driven by increased job fair promotions and the relaunch of the "Look Who's Hiring Now" job fair. On Instagram and Facebook, while post reach increased, profile visits decreased, suggesting that although the content captures attention, it may not compel users to explore further. To address this, recommendations include diversifying content with more promotional videos to drive profile visits.

Most of the engagement on Facebook and Instagram stemmed from shared posts and flyers. The top post, featuring a TDCJ job fair, achieved 542 shares on Facebook and 438 on Instagram. The primary audience on Instagram and Facebook includes women aged 25-44 in the Harris County region, underscoring the need for inclusive strategies to engage the entire region.

To enhance our social media strategy, we are exploring several new efforts, including:

- **Diverse Content Mix:** 40% original and 60% curated content to ensure relevance and variety.
- **Scheduled Posts:** Maintaining consistency and quality by planning and scheduling posts.
- **Prompt Engagement:** Responding quickly to comments and messages to build community.
- **Interactive Features:** Utilizing polls, quizzes, and questions to boost engagement.
- **Platform-Specific Strategies:** Tailoring content for LinkedIn, Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter.
- **Content Optimization:** Using SEO principles to enhance discoverability.
- **AI Tools:** Leveraging AI for content creation and scheduling.
- **Analytics:** Continuously refining strategies based on performance metrics.
- **Collaborations:** Partnering with influencers and community leaders to extend reach.
- **Storytelling:** Creating emotional connections through storytelling.
- **Contests:** Increasing engagement through contests.
- **Cross-Promotion:** Collaborating with other organizations to reach a broader audience.

These strategic enhancements aim to amplify our social media presence, ensuring a broader and more engaged audience.

H-GAC Communication Update

Miguel Segura, Director of Communications for H-GAC, provided an update on ongoing communication initiatives. These include offering project management services for Savage Brands' contractual deliverables and supporting the development and redesign of the Gulf Coast Workforce Board's website, which is anticipated to relaunch in the first quarter of 2025. He also discussed current deliverables from Savage Brands including a refined color palette, PowerPoint template, employer engagement flyers, and LinkedIn social media posts. Current projects in progress include individual messaging, project managing InGeniux's audit of the GCWB's website (in current contract), an LMI report template, creation of the Employer Newsletter, and content gathering. Based on a request from Dr. Webster, we will prepare a report on the analytics of the current GCWB's website which will be shared at the next meeting.

Procurement Timeline

The Communication and Outreach Request for Proposal was released on May 30, 2024. The timeline includes:

July 30, 2024: GCWB Procurement Committee meeting,
August 6, 2024: GCWB Meeting,
August 20, 2024: H-GAC Meeting,
September 2024: Contract negotiation, and
October 1, 2024: New contract start date.

Other Business and Adjournment

Chair Doug Karr invited any additional business before adjourning the meeting. As no other business was had, the meeting adjourned at 3:56 pm.

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

ACTION ITEMS

a. Procurement Committee.

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

On May 23, 2024, Chair Dr. Bobbie Henderson convened the Procurement Committee to receive information and consider recommendations to award

contracts under the new Texas Workforce Commission's grant application for Adult Education services. The following Board members were present:

- **Chair:** Dr. Bobbie Henderson
- **Committee Members Present:** Doug Carr, Willie Alexander, Sara Bouse, Helen Cavazos, Cheryl Guido, Mark Guthrie, Alan Heskamp, Jeff LaBroski, Adrian Ozuna, Richard Shaw
- **Board Members:** Paul Puente, and Shonda Below

Adult Education & Literacy 2025

The Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) – which authorizes publicly funded adult education activities – is part of Title II of the Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act (WIOA). The Gulf Coast Workforce Board serves as the grantee and fiscal agent for the Gulf Coast Adult Education Consortium. This consortium comprises 8 community-based organizations, 6 community colleges, and 1 education service center, the latter acting as the lead agency providing technical assistance and support to our fourteen subrecipient contractors.

In the fourth quarter of 2024, the Texas Workforce Commission released a statewide request for applications (RFA) to solicit qualified providers for adult education services across Texas. This RFA introduced significant changes to the consortium operating parameters, specifically limiting consortia to a maximum of seven partners, inclusive of the Workforce Board. This restriction impacts our ability to contract with as many entities as currently included in our consortium. Additionally, the Texas Workforce Commission separated 243 activities, integrated English literacy and civics education, into a separate grant award.

The Texas Workforce Commission provided an update on the RFA for Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) services for the AEFLA grant and the English Language Learner grant. Following a negotiation meeting on April 30th, it was revealed that the board was awarded 9 out of the 13 counties applied for in the AEFLA grant. The awarded counties include Austin, Colorado, Fort Bend, Matagorda, Montgomery, Walker, Waller, and Wharton, with 60% coverage of Harris County. Funding was not granted for Brazoria, Chambers, Galveston, and Liberty. We did not receive the award for the English language learner grant.

The proposed grant funding totals \$11 million, with a service target of 7,800 individuals. Despite these changes, we propose accepting the grant offer to continue serving the allocated counties.

A transition meeting with the Texas Workforce Commission's Adult Education director was held to discuss plans for serving the allocated counties. During this meeting, it was revealed that additional carryover funding is planned to be released in September 2024, although no specific amount was provided. Our contract negotiations with TWC are ongoing, but based on our current budget submission,

we propose the following distributions within a range to accommodate an estimated \$1.1 million in carryover funding.

Provider	Proposed Range	
Adult Education Center	\$356,584	\$393,000
BakerRipley	\$356,584	\$393,000
Houston Community College	\$4,060,800	\$4,467,000
Lone Star College	\$2,292,938	\$2,523,000
San Jacinto College	\$1,296,000	\$1,426,000
Region 6 ESC	\$1,885,469	\$2,075,000
Subtotal	\$10,248,372	\$11,277,000
Board Administration	\$801,997	\$883,000
Total	\$11,050,372	\$12,160,000

Recommendation

We request board approval to negotiate contracts with adult education providers as shown above for the period July 1, 2024, through June 30, 2025, in total amount not to exceed \$11,227,000.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the action as requested. The motion was approved. Alan Heskamp and Melissa Gonzalez declared conflicts of interest and abstained from the vote.

Chair Henderson concluded her report, and no further action was taken.

INFORMATION

a. Performance and Production.

Philip Garcia provided a brief system update and presented Performance and Production measures from October 2023 through April 2024. Next Mr. Garcia reviewed a series of target updates from TWC which affect some of these measures. He provided details of these updates and stated that an action plan is in place to address these updates. Mr. Garcia also thanked board members who attended the Measures Training Session. A training video will be made available to members who were unable to attend.

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

b. Expenditures.

Brandi Brown, Manager of Finance, reviewed the Financial Status Report reflecting expenses for the four months ending in April 2024. She reported that we are 32% expended overall. Board Administration is slightly behind at 28%. Employer Service is at 16% and we expect expenditures to pick up with the onboarding of United Way and other activities over the next few months. Resident Service and Financial Aid are on target at 34 and 33%. Our overall revenue for the four-month period is approximately \$154 million and for our system expenses, 80% was spent on Financial Aid with 74% on early education and 6% on training and support. Ms. Brown reported that budget changes are expected in the final quarter of this year and that the Budget Committee will be convened when more information is available.

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

PRESENTATIONS

a. A Look at the Economy.

Board staff Parker Harvey presented an overview of job growth and benchmark revisions for the period ending in March 2024 including an over-the-month net change comparison for March over past years. He also looked at job growth and unemployment numbers for the period ending April 2024.

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

a. Communications Update.

Board staff Russell Tomlin presented an overview of media outreach activities. His report included a relaunch of ABC 13 “Who’s Hiring in Houston” job fairs as well as two video presentations and updates on the future of this series of events.

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

OTHER BUSINESS

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

ADJOURN

Chair Guthrie adjourned the meeting at approximately 11:37 a.m.

GULF COAST WORKFORCE BOARD

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211 Litchfield Lane
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(202) 517-3824

Category: Business

County: City of Houston

suzane.abedi@hcahealthcare.com

Term: January 1, 2023 thru December 31, 2024

BARTLETT, ANNE

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500 College Drive
Lake Jackson, TX 77566
(979) 480-7574

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County: Brazoria

anne.bartlett@brazosport.edu

Term: January 1, 2023 thru December 31, 2024

ADROGUE, SOFIA

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909 Fannin Street, 37th Floor
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County: City of Houston

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Term: January 1, 2023 thru December 31, 2024

BEARD, PETER

Greater Houston Partnership
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Term: January 1, 2023 thru December 31, 2024

ALEXANDER, WILLIE

Vice Chair

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Term: January 1, 2023 thru December 31, 2024

BELOW, SHONDA

Texas Gulf Coast Area Labor Federation
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Term: January 1, 2023 thru December 31, 2024

ARCOS, MARIE

YMCA of Greater Houston
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Term: January 1, 2023 thru December 31, 2024

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Term: January 1, 2023 thru December 31, 2024

CAVAZOS, MARY HELEN

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Term: January 1, 2023 thru December 31, 2024

COCKRELL, DORIAN

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Term: January 1, 2023 thru December 31, 2024

GAY, ANTHONY

FET

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Term: January 1, 2023 thru December 31, 2024

GONZALEZ, MELISSA

Lone Star College
20000 Kingwood Drive
Kingwood, TX 77339
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County: Harris

melissa.gonzalez@lonestar.edu

Term: January 1, 2023 thru December 31, 2024

GUIDO, CHERYL

Texas Workforce Solutions-VR Services
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Term: January 1, 2023 thru December 31, 2024

GUTHRIE, MARK

Board Chair

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County: City of Houston

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Term: January 1, 2023 thru December 31, 2024

HENDERSON, BOBBIE ALLEN

Vice Chair

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Term: January 1, 2024 thru December 31, 2025

HESKAMP, ALAN

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County: Wharton

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Term: January 1, 2024 thru December 31, 2025

JACKSON, GUY ROBERT

Chambers County Abstract Co. Inc.
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County: Chambers

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Term: January 1, 2023 thru December 31, 2024

JONES, LAVONE

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County: City of Houston

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Term: January 1, 2023 thru December 31, 2024

KARR, DOUG

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County: Montgomery

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Term: January 1, 2024 thru December 31, 2025

KERR, BRETT

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County: City of Houston

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Term: January 1, 2023 thru December 31, 2024

LaBROSKI, JEFFREY

Plumbers Local Union No. 68
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P.O. Box 8746
Houston, TX 77249
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Category: Labor
County: City of Houston

ski@plu68.com

Term: January 1, 2023 thru December 31, 2024

LARMOND, SHAREEN

West Gulf Maritime Association
1717 Turning Basin Drive, Suite 200
Houston, TX 77029

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County: Harris

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Term: January 1, 2023 thru December 31, 2024

LOVE, MICHAEL

Houston Independent School District
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Category: Education
County: Harris

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Term: January 1, 2023 thru December 31, 2024

LOWE, JONATHAN

International Alliance of Theatrical
Stage Employees
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Category: Labor
County: City of Houston

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Term: January 1, 2023 thru December 31, 2024

MAHAGAOKAR, RAJEN

Grid United
Chief Financial Officer
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Category: Business
County: Harris
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Term: January 1, 2023 thru December 31, 2024

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

MUYAN, EKIM CEM

Amazon.com Services LLC
6911 Fairbanks N Houston Rd
Houston, TX 77040
713-849-1981
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County: City of Houston
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Term: January 1, 2023 thru December 31, 2024

OSER, MARGARET

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

OZUNA, ADRIAN

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Category: Business
County: Harris
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Term: January 1, 2023 thru December 31, 2024

PUENTE, PAUL J.

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Construction Trades Council
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(713) 926-4433
Category: Labor
County: City of Houston
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Term: January 1, 2023 thru December 31, 2024

RILEY, MONICA

The Community Gatekeepers
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Missouri City, TX 77459
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County: Fort Bend
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Term: January 1, 2023 thru December 31, 2024

RODRIGUEZ, MELANIE

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Term: January 1, 2023 thru December 31, 2024

RUPANI, NASRUDDIN

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(713) 995-7033
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County: City of Houston
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Term: January 1, 2024 thru December 31, 2025

SARKAR, MOU

Pearland Economic Development
Corporation
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Pearland, TX 77581
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Category: Economic Development
County: Brazoria
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Term: January 1, 2024 thru December 31, 2025

SCHMIDT, KERI

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Term: January 1, 2023 thru December 31, 2024

SEGOVIA, VALERIE GARCIA

Director, Outreach & Education, TEES
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valeriegsegovia@gmail.com
Term: January 1, 2024 thru December 31, 2025

SHAW, RICHARD

Harris County Labor Assembly,
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(713) 240-2472
Category: Labor
County: City of Houston
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Term: January 1, 2023 thru December 31, 2024

STALEY, GIL

The Woodlands Area Economic
Development Partnership
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Category: Business
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Term: January 1, 2024 thru December 31, 2025

STREETER, NICOLE

Greater Houston Black Chamber
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County: City of Houston
astreeter35@hotmail.com
Term: January 1, 2024 thru December 31, 2025

TAYLOR, SANDRA

Tiny Toes Academy
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Fresno, TX 77545
(832) 630-6301
Category: Child Care
County: Fort Bend
tinytoesacademy@yahoo.com
Term: January 1, 2023 thru December 31, 2024

VAZQUEZ, LIZANDRA

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

Category: State Agency

lizandra.vazquez@wrksolutions.com

Term: January 1, 2023 thru December 31, 2024

WATSON, CAROLYN

William Stamps Farish Fund
1100 Louisiana, Suite 2200
Houston, TX 77002
(713) 757-7313

Category: CBO

County: City of Houston

carolyn17968@gmail.com

Term: January 1, 2023 thru December 31, 2024

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, 2023 thru December 31, 2024

YU, BIN

MedxSunshine LLC
6501 Wesline
Houston, TX 77036
(713) 818-9687

Category: Business

County: City of Houston

bin.yu@medxsunshine.com

Term: January 1, 2023 thru December 31, 2024

WORKFORCE BOARD KEY STAFF:

Juliet Stipeche, Director

Romana Paniagua, Director's Administrative Assistant

Kristi Rangel, Assistant Director of Workforce

AJ Dean, Senior Manager, Fiscal Administration and Contract Management

Russell Tomlin, Senior Manager, Career Services

Jenny Johnson, Quality Assurance Manager

Maria Franco Cortes, Senior Planner

Desmon Taylor, Program Administrator

Houston-Galveston Area Council

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GULF COAST WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD COMMITTEES

Audit/Monitoring

- Guy Robert Jackson – Chair
- Carl Bowles – Vice Chair
- Helen Cavazos
- Cheryl Guido
- Mark Guthrie
- Doug Karr

Budget

- Willie Alexander – Chair
- – Vice Chair
- Mark Guthrie
- Bobbie Henderson
- Guy Robert Jackson
- Doug Karr

By-Laws

- Michael Webster – Chair
- Adrian Ozuna – Vice Chair
- Peter Beard
- Mark Guthrie
- Alan Heskamp
- Guy Robert Jackson
- Carolyn Watson

Career Services

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

Communications

- Doug Karr – Chair
- – Vice Chair
- Willie Alexander
- Anthony Gay
- Mark Guthrie
- Bobbie Henderson
- Guy Robert Jackson
- Jonathan Lowe
- Richard Shawdanida
- Mike Webster

Education

- Bobbie Henderson – Chair
- Doug Karr – Vice Chair
- Willie Alexander
- Shonda Below
- Helen Cavazos
- Cheryl Guido
- Mark Guthrie
- Alan Heskamp
- Jeff LaBroski
- Michael Love
- Edward Melton
- Margaret Oser
- Paul Puente
- Monica Riley
- Valerie Segovia
- Richard Shaw
- Sandra Taylor
- Carolyn Watson

Employer Engagement

- – Chair
- Jeff LaBroski – Vice Chair
- Willie Alexander
- Helen Cavazos
- Cheryl Guido
- Alan Heskamp
- Mark Guthrie
- Bobbie Henderson
- Guy Robert Jackson
- Shareen Larmond
- Mou Sarkar
- Keri Schmidt
- Richard Shaw
- Gil Staley

Government Relations

- Guy Robert Jackson – Chair
- – Vice Chair
- Willie Alexander
- Mark Guthrie
- Bobbie Henderson
- Richard Shaw

Nominating

- Guy Robert Jackson – Chair
- Jeff LaBroski – Vice Chair
- Alan Heskamp

Procurement

- Bobbie Henderson – Chair
- Doug Karr – Vice Chair
- Willie Alexander
- Helen Cavazos
- Cheryl Guido
- Mark Guthrie
- Alan Heskamp
- Jeff LaBroski
- Adrian Ozuna
- Richard Shaw
- Gil Staley

Report Card

Appointed by Board Chair as needed

Strategic Planning

- Carl Bowles – Chair
- Paul Puente – Vice Chair
- Willie Alexander
- Peter Beard
- Anthony Gay
- Cheryl Guido
- Mark Guthrie
- Bobbie Henderson
- Doug Karr
- Michael Love
- Adrian Ozuna
- Richard Shaw
- Carolyn Watson

GULF COAST WORKFORCE BOARD ATTENDANCE

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

Strategic Planning Committee

June and July Update

The Strategic Planning Committee has been diligently working to finalize the Gulf Coast Workforce Board's new five-year strategic plan. Since our last Board meeting, the committee has convened twice to refine the plan's components, ensuring that it aligns with our long-term goals and objectives. These meetings have been crucial as we approach the final stretch of this comprehensive planning process. The committee's focus has been on gathering insights, analyzing data, and incorporating feedback from various stakeholders to craft a strategic plan that will effectively guide our efforts and initiatives over the next five years. Our aim is to create a roadmap that not only addresses the immediate needs of our community but also positions us to anticipate and adapt to future challenges and opportunities.

Strategic Planning Process and Key Milestones

The strategic planning process started in earnest with initial board surveys in last spring 2023, and the committee is targeting the finalized strategic plan's presentation and approval by the October 2024 Board meeting. This meticulous process involved multiple phases, including:

- **Board and Stakeholder Surveys:** Surveys initiated in June 2023 gathered insights from board members and a diverse array of stakeholders identifying key areas of focus such as service delivery, industry partnerships, training opportunities, and employer engagement.
- **Landscape Analysis and Stakeholder Engagement:** From August 2023 and January 2024, Outreach Strategists conducted in-depth discussions with Workforce Solutions staff, providers, community organizations, employers, and other workforce boards. Feedback from these engagements informed the strategic vision and goals.
- **Retreats and Strategy Development:** Board retreats, held in January and March 2024, focused on aligning goals with the board's mission and vision. Key strategies and tactics were developed to address identified priorities, including improving service delivery, forging strategic partnerships, and increasing awareness of services.
- **Drafting and Revising the Strategic Plan:** From April to July 2024, the draft strategic plan was refined, ensuring consistency with the established mission and vision. The plan incorporated feedback from stakeholders and aimed to address the most pressing workforce challenges.

June 21, 2024

The Strategic Planning Committee convened at 3555 Timmons Lane, 2nd Floor, Meeting Room 2D, and via Zoom. The meeting commenced promptly at noon, with Carl Bowles welcoming attendees. Board attendees included Board Chair Mark Guthrie, Paul Puente, Helen Cavazos, Adrian Ozuna, Dr. Michael Webster, Cheryl Guido, Jeff LaBroski, Edward Melton, and Dr. Bobbie Henderson. The meeting focused on further refinement of the Board's new strategic plan.

Overview

This session focused on the refinement of the strategies associated with the four key strategic goals:

- 1) **Technology and Innovation in Service Delivery:** The plan emphasizes leveraging technology to enhance service delivery. A notable initiative is the development of a mobile application and digital content platform, designed to improve accessibility and engagement with community members. This app aims to bridge communication gaps by delivering tailored content directly to users' smartphones.
- 2) **Serving as a Convener and Strategic Partner:** The board aims to strengthen its role as a convener, fostering partnerships with employers, educational institutions, and community organizations. This goal focuses on aligning workforce development efforts with regional economic needs and supporting targeted industry sectors.
- 3) **Increasing Awareness of Services and Opportunities:** Enhancing visibility and awareness of Workforce Solutions – Gulf Coast's services is a key priority. The strategic plan includes initiatives to improve communication and outreach, promote educational (upskilling) opportunities, and support career pathways that align with market demands.
- 4) **Supporting Business-Forward Strategies:** The board is committed to supporting business strategies that fuel regional economic growth. This includes advancing work-based learning opportunities, such as apprenticeships and customized training, and collaborating with small businesses to meet their workforce needs.

The committee learned about the potential of creating a mobile workforce application designed to streamline services and enhance user engagement. The presentation included a comparative analysis of similar applications used in other regions, emphasizing the importance of user-friendly design and robust cybersecurity measures. This led to a lively discussion among the committee members, underscoring the need for an app that meets the diverse needs of the

region while considering the time and budget requirements to create a comprehensive mobile app.

In a segment dedicated to stakeholder engagement, Jennifer Graves and Outreach Strategists shared strategies to deepen community involvement and raise awareness of the board's offerings. The committee explored the idea of an asset mapping tool, which would visually represent the available resources across the region. This tool aims to improve resource allocation and enhance community engagement.

As the meeting progressed, a discussion ensued concerning next steps for finalizing the strategic plan and the need to incorporate feedback from this session into the draft plan. Chair Bowles emphasized the importance of balancing visionary goals with practical implementation, ensuring that the board's initiatives are both ambitious and achievable.

July 19, 2024

The Strategic Planning Committee met again on July 19, 2024 to review the draft of the five-year strategic plan. The meeting was again held at the Houston-Galveston Area Council and chaired by Chair Carl Bowles. Other Board members in attendance included Board Chair Mark Guthrie, Peter Beard, Bin Yu, Marie Arcos, Helen Cavazos, and Adrian Ozuna.

Overview

A draft of the five-year strategic plan was shared with the Committee, and Board members in attendance provided valuable comments, suggestions, and input. Outreach Strategists carefully documented these insights to refine the draft further. The Committee decided to schedule a Board workshop on the draft plan before the August 2024 board meeting, allowing for more in-depth discussion and feedback.

The Committee also continued its exploration of leveraging technology and innovation to enhance service delivery. A key highlight of the presentation was the introduction of a proposed "first phase" mobile application for Workforce Solutions – Gulf Coast. This mobile app, envisioned as a digital content platform or "digital newspaper," aims to bridge communication gaps between the board and the community. The goal is to deliver tailored, accessible content directly to community members' smartphones, cutting through digital noise and ensuring that vital information reaches those who need it most.

This will be our first attempt at creating a mobile app and has the potential to revolutionize how the board engages with the community. It offers a user-friendly interface designed to accommodate diverse reading abilities, educational backgrounds, and linguistic preferences. This innovative approach aims to make the board's services more inclusive and accessible, aligning with the broader goal of enhancing community engagement.

Additionally, the presentation highlighted the board's commitment to providing wrap-around services, both in day-to-day operations and during natural disasters, to support residents in entering or remaining in the workforce. A key focus of the discussion was on community engagement efforts before and after Hurricane Beryl. Juliet Stipeche and Jennifer Graves introduced the concept of a comprehensive resource list and the development of a "Resilient Workforce Portal." This portal is designed to centralize resources, making it easier for staff to refer individuals to appropriate community-based organizations. The Combined Arms portal, which was funded by the Texas Workforce Commission and created by Combined Arms, was referenced as a model to replicate.

The initiative seeks to streamline the referral process, ensuring that everyone has access to the necessary support, regardless of their starting point. The goal is to create a system where individuals can seamlessly connect to supports, resources, and aid that can help them join or remain in the workforce. This integrated approach aims to provide comprehensive assistance, addressing various needs that may arise, from job placement and training to emergency aid and community services.

Furthermore, the portal is intended to provide vital support to customers in the aftermath of natural disasters, fostering a well-coordinated network of partners and resources. This approach not only enhances the board's capacity to meet the diverse needs of its customers but also strengthens the community's overall resilience. By providing a seamless and efficient way to connect individuals and employers with essential services, the board reaffirms its dedication to supporting the workforce and empowering families during challenging times.

Conclusion

The draft strategic plan will be presented at a Board workshop scheduled for 8:30 a.m. at the Houston-Galveston Area Council prior to the August 2024 Board meeting. For Board members who may have difficulty commuting to our office in the morning, a brief session will be offered immediately after the Board meeting to accommodate their schedules.

Communications Committee

The Communications Committee commenced on August 1, 2024 at 1:40 p.m. at the Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC) offices located at 3555 Timmons Lane in Houston, Texas. Chair Mark Guthrie first presided until Committee Chair Doug Karr joined after an unanticipated conflict. Other Board members in attendance included Paul Puente, Richard Shaw, Guy Robert Jackson, and Jeff LaBroski.

Overview

The committee convened to review and evaluate recent media outreach efforts, social media strategies, and various communication initiatives. The focus of the meeting was to assess the effectiveness of the board's current strategies and explore innovative ways to increase visibility and foster stronger community engagement.

Media Coverage

Juliet Stipeche and Outreach Strategists provided an overview of key media engagements in June and July 2024 that underscore our communication and outreach strategy:

- Fox 26 Interview (June 26, 2024): Edwin Ducos, a supervisor with Workforce Solutions – Northline, appeared live on Fox 26, engaging 33,773 viewers and generating an estimated advertising value equivalent (AVE) of \$15,558.27. This segment highlighted the board's ongoing initiatives and showcased its leadership.
- ABC 13 "Who's Hiring" Job Fair (June 27, 2024): This job fair, centered on skilled trades and construction jobs, attracted 279 attendees and 22 employers, leading to 115 interviews and 8 onsite hires. The event was covered extensively, with an AVE of \$74,868.87 and a viewership of 384,159, reinforcing the board's role in facilitating employment opportunities.
- Disaster Unemployment Assistance Coverage: Juliet Stipeche and Maria Franco provided essential updates on disaster unemployment assistance on ABC13 (July 12) and Telemundo Houston (July 16). These segments reached a combined audience of 106,687, with an AVE totaling \$40,122.67, demonstrating the board's responsiveness to community needs in times of crisis.

- ABC 13 "Who's Hiring" Job Fair (July 18, 2024): In partnership with Combined Arms, this event focused on veteran employment and was held at TXRX Labs. It saw a substantial turnout of 1,100 attendees, with extensive media coverage resulting in an AVE of \$104,020.48 and a viewership of 329,222.

Cumulative Impact:

- Total AVE: \$234,570.29
- Total Viewership: 853,841

These media engagements effectively maintained the board's public presence, highlighting its commitment to workforce development and community service.

Social Media Update

Our social media strategy is dedicated to fostering a positive brand image, promoting our services, expanding our audience, and highlighting our partnerships within the local community. To effectively measure our progress, we closely monitor key performance indicators such as follower growth, reach, website visits, and engagement metrics, including messages, shares, comments, and link clicks.

These data points are crucial for assessing our audience's engagement with our content and the overall success of our social media efforts. As of this reporting period, our primary social media platforms have collectively garnered 27,769 followers. The following table illustrates the year-over-year changes in these metrics:

Followers	August 2024	August 2023	August 2022	One Year Change	Two Year Change
Facebook	11,400	10,709	10,175	6.45%	12.04%
Instagram	5,060	3,896	2,797	29.84%	80.78%
X (Twitter)	1,800	1,784	1,760	.90%	2.27%
LinkedIn	9,809	8,091	4,978	21.26%	95.96%

You can find us on social media at:

- <https://www.facebook.com/advancemycareer/>
- <https://www.instagram.com/workforcesolutions/>
- <https://www.linkedin.com/company/advancemycareer>
- <https://twitter.com/GulfCoastWFS>
- <https://www.youtube.com/c/WorkforceSolutionsgulfcoast>

The committee was also informed about the efforts of the Community Engagement division in disseminating valuable information and resources across the region following Hurricane Beryl. Additionally, the division collaborated with H-GAC's Communications department to create a post-disaster resource portal on the H-GAC website, providing the region with essential support and information in the aftermath of the disaster.

Website Update

H-GAC's Communication Director, Miguel Segura, offered an update regarding progress on the Gulf Coast Workforce Board's new website. We are currently in contract negotiations with Planetarium and conducting a content audit of our current website. We anticipate our new website launching in eight to ten months or in the spring of 2025.

Procurement Update

AJ Dean provided an update on our communication and outreach procurement. Outreach Strategist received the highest score after a diligent evaluation and interview process. The procurement committee will be recommending that the Board approve a contract with Outreach Strategists at the August 2024 board meeting.

With no further business to conduct, Chair Karr adjourned the meeting at 2:19 p.m.

Career Services Committee

The Career Services Committee held two meetings since the June 2024 board meeting.

June 13, 2024

The Gulf Coast Workforce Board's Career Services Committee met on June 13, 2024, at 3555 Timmons Lane, 2nd Floor Meeting Room B/C, with a virtual option via Zoom. The meeting, chaired by Adrian Ozuna with Vice Chair Cheryl Guido, brought together key members, including Helen Cavazos, Melissa Gonzalez, Marie Arcos, Bobbie Henderson, Doug Karr, and Board Chair Mark Guthrie, alongside board staff. The focus was on assessing the current state of career services and planning strategic initiatives to address the region's workforce needs.

Overview

The session began with Chair Adrian Ozuna outlining the committee's objectives for the coming months. He emphasized the importance of strategic planning and the need to adapt to the rapidly changing workforce landscape. The meeting aimed to review critical issues, including the relationship between unemployment rates and career office traffic, the management of office leases, and the future direction of career services.

Wen Zheng presented an analysis showing no clear correlation between unemployment rates and traffic to career services. This finding suggested that traditional metrics might no longer accurately reflect service demand, highlighting the growing importance of virtual engagement. The committee recognized the need for more detailed data to understand why individuals visit career offices and how virtual services could be better integrated to serve the community.

Jessica Smith provided a comprehensive overview of current lease agreements, discussing the complexities of termination clauses and the challenges of managing office space efficiently. The committee considered the potential benefits of sunseting specific office locations, particularly those with high disruption costs or underutilization. Discussions also covered the strategic advantages of co-locating career services in county facilities, chambers of commerce, and libraries, leveraging these spaces' accessibility and community presence.

The conversation then shifted to the comparison between commercial and office spaces, with a focus on cost, accessibility, and suitability for delivering career

services. Chair Adrian Ozuna stressed the importance of justifying location closures and assessing their impact on the community. He called for additional demographic data to support these critical decisions, ensuring that the board's actions are data-driven and aligned with community needs.

Kristi Rangel updated the committee on the Career Office Workgroup's recent activities. The group has been actively evaluating various career offices, focusing on initiatives to enhance service delivery. Key observations included the importance of re-training staff and maintaining competitive compensation amidst economic changes. The committee discussed the concept of a mobile unit for career services, which was well received as a flexible solution to increase accessibility.

Russell Tomlin provided insights into the current state of career offices and outlined a vision for future development. Chair Guthrie recommended exploring ways to engage with local stakeholders, including judges, chambers of commerce, colleges, and libraries, to expand the board's outreach and collaboration efforts. He also thought it would be wise to convene a meeting of local stakeholders to discuss collaborative opportunities. These initiatives are part of a broader strategy to modernize career services to meet the evolving workforce development needs of the community.

The meeting adjourned with a collective agreement on the importance of continued innovation and responsiveness in the board's service delivery. This meeting underscored the committee's commitment to strategic planning and the effective allocation of resources.

July 24, 2024

The Career Services Committee met on July 24, 2024, at 10:00 a.m. at the Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC) offices located at 3555 Timmons Lane in Houston, Texas. In attendance were committee members – Committee Chair Adrian Ozuna, Board Chair Mark Guthrie, Helen Cavazos, Edward Melton, Bobbie Henderson, Doug Karr, Melissa Gonzalez, Paul Puente, and Lizandra Vasquez.

Overview

Chair Adrian Ozuna provided an update on a conversation with Congresswoman Lizzie Fletcher regarding the funding formula found in H.R. 6655, A Stronger Workforce for America Act. As previously discussed, the funding formula listed in the bill has adverse impacts to the Gulf Coast region. The U.S. Senate is not anticipated to take any action on the bill until after the November election. We will

need to monitor this bill on the Senate side, specifically regarding services and workforce operations.

Juliet Stipeche provided the committee with a Hurricane Beryl Update, detailing the impacts on career offices. Overall, a few of the offices sustained minor damage, including ceiling tiles, water penetration, power outages, and internet disconnections. She highlighted the restoration timeline, with half of the offices back to full capacity by July 12, and all locations operational by July 23. The State and various service providers were kept up to date on our progress to return to operational capacity.

Transforming Career Services

Russell Tomlin presented on the ongoing transformation of career services, emphasizing the integration of advanced IT solutions. Key initiatives included the implementation of the Ring Central phone system, the JNRI appointment system, and the VOS Greeter in-office customer tracking system. Russell also discussed collocated services, partner sites, and updates from the Work In Texas Conference. A significant highlight was the introduction of the Virtual Career Center (VCC), designed to provide a personalized experience with tools for self-discovery, career exploration, pathway and financial planning, job searching, and support services.

Budgets and Funding

AJ Dean presented a comprehensive analysis of WIOA expenses from October 2023 to May 2024, totaling \$34,937,922. He detailed expenditures across the WIOA Adult, Youth, and Dislocated Worker categories, including personnel costs, contracted services, facilities, equipment, communications, travel, insurance, office supplies, and other support services. This breakdown provided a clear view of the board's financial management and resource allocation.

Career Office Workgroup

The Career Office Workgroup embarked on a comprehensive tour of various career office locations to gain insights into staff experiences and observe daily operations. As of the time of the meeting, the Workgroup visited several key locations, including the Missouri City, Pearland, BakerRipley-Tracking Unit, Rosenberg, Conroe Career Office/Tracking Unit, and Lake Jackson offices.

During these visits, several key observations emerged. The Workgroup confirmed a noticeable decrease in walk-in traffic across the offices, which reflects broader trends in service delivery preferences and external factors affecting client engagement. Many recent staff members have tenures of less than three years,

indicating a relatively new workforce. This presents both challenges and opportunities in terms of training and institutional knowledge.

The Workgroup also observed that caseloads have become smaller, potentially allowing for more individualized attention to clients but also raising questions about service demand and resource allocation. We anticipate significant changes in staff structure, particularly with the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) staff restructuring. These insights are crucial for informing future strategies and ensuring that career offices continue to meet the needs of the community effectively. The Workgroup's findings will play a pivotal role in shaping the direction of the Gulf Coast Workforce Board's initiatives moving forward.

Career Office Models

Jessica Smith explored various career office models, such as traditional offices, storefronts, and virtual offices. She discussed each model's benefits, square footage requirements, setup, and facilities. The discussion highlighted the board's efforts to adapt its infrastructure to better serve the community's evolving needs and preferences.

Career Office Opportunities

After much discussion, the Committee voted to recommend that we sunset the Clear Lake Career Office and transfer its eight staff members to other career offices for operational efficiency and a reduction of facility cost. The lease for this facility expires on January 31, 2025. To continue servicing customers in this area, we are committed to working with the United Way, community stakeholders, and local elected officials to determine the best path forward.

Additionally, the Committee voted to consolidate the Westheimer and Astrodome career offices to reduce facility costs, enhance services, and seek a more viable location to better service our customers. The Westheimer facility has experienced several challenges with the HVAC system, exterior and interior repairs, and vermin. The lease for the Westheimer office expires on September 30, 2025. The Astrodome facility endured several challenges with the lessor not wanting to reduce our footprint, as well as being disinterested in renewing the lease. The lease for the Astrodome office expires on September 30, 2025.

The post-pandemic analysis indicates that renewing these two leases is not in the best interest of our system. However, we do not seek to lose staff but will work to reassign them to a new location or new assignments as needed as we re-envision the delivery of career services. Board staff will also develop a policy and procedure for opening and sunsetting offices, establishing a formalized process to ensure that areas do not lose access to our career services.

Conclusion

The meeting concluded with a commitment to developing a comprehensive plan to address the challenges and opportunities presented by post-pandemic engagement, funding reductions, technology disruption, and potential co-locations. The goal is to ensure the continued and effective delivery of essential career services to our customers and communities, adapting to the evolving landscape and maximizing our resources.

Audit and Monitoring Committee

System Review

The Audit and Monitoring Committee convened on July 30, 2024, at the Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC) located at 3555 Timmons Lane, Houston, Texas. Committee Chair Guy Robert Jackson called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. with Board Chair Mark Guthrie, Carl Bowles, Cheryl Guido, Dr. Bobbie Henderson, Helen Cavazos, and Gil Staley in attendance.

Technical Program Compliance

Board staff reported on the Technical Program Compliance reviews involving testing contract and policy requirements alongside customer experience evaluations conducted by the Quality Assurance Team. The scope of each review is determined by the specific terms and conditions outlined in the service provider's contract. Financial monitoring, discussed later in this report, is conducted independently to maintain objectivity.

Early Childhood Education Service Provider, Children's Learning Institute (CLI):

The review, spanning from June 2023 to April 2024, assessed performance, compliance, information security, customer satisfaction, scholarships, grants, incentives, local matches, and technical assistance. The second-quarter performance and production data indicate that CLI has significant ground to cover to meet our targets and support regional efforts within the Early Childhood Education community. Staffing shortages have notably impacted CLI's ability to meet production goals. Given that this is CLI's second contract year, it must develop robust plans and processes to address these challenges and fulfill its contractual obligations.

As of the second quarter, CLI has completed only 7,213 mentoring hours, with key targets for professional development to providers and providing materials, incentives, and stipends to providers falling below 50% of their annual goals. A compliance issue was identified with the late submission of email notifications by the Local Information Security Officer (LISO) on the day staff terminated employment. CLI has acknowledged these performance and production shortfalls, expressing confidence in meeting most targets by year-end, while attributing delays to staffing shortages.

Financial Aid Payment Office (FAPO):

Our annual review for FAPO covers the period from September 2023 to July 2024, focusing on compliance testing, customer service, information security, and staff

training. This review revealed consistency in FAPO's reporting of terminations to Workforce Security, customer recoupment, fact-finding/PIRTS, and vendor payments, in line with previous reviews. However, persistent second-year deficiencies were noted in the timely completion of "An Orientation to Workforce Solutions." We conducted an inventory of cash equivalent cards, reviewing the procedures for their distribution, tracking, and disposal upon malfunction. An issue was identified between Career Offices and the Financial Aid Payment Office regarding card responsibilities. While Career Offices manage on-site inventory, they do not control card reception, and FAPO oversees inventory management. Although verbal instructions for card return processes were given, no written guidelines were provided, contradicting one career office's account. To streamline the cash equivalent card process, the Board recommends FAPO develop internal controls and enhance communication protocols with career offices. FAPO will be provided with the necessary technical assistance and support.

Upcoming Reviews:

Fourth-quarter and annual staff testing for the Financial Aid Support Center have started, and Board staff is preparing for the PY2025 reviews of Adult Education and Literacy service providers.

Summer Earn and Learn Program Monitoring:

The Board is traveling to worksites and meeting with Summer Earn and Learn supervisors and participants. Between June 17, 2024, and July 23, our monitors traveled to 210 worksites and interviewed 292 participants.

Financial Systems

The Board engages two CPA firms to conduct comprehensive financial monitoring of all workforce board service providers. At the time of the committee meeting, Board staff had seven (7) draft reports, had transmitted three (3) reports to service providers, and have one (1) review for FY24 in progress.

Draft Reports Received Since the Last Update:

- SERCO of Texas:
 - Finding: Overstated personnel expenditures.
- Alliance for Multicultural Community Services:
 - Findings: Deficiencies in the procurement policy, transactions not recorded in the appropriate period, and timely invoice payments.
- Baker Ripley – AEL (Adult Education & Literacy), Career Office:
 - Findings: Personnel and non-personnel expenditures charged in error and interest expense costs.

- Interfaith of the Woodlands:
 - Findings: Missing timesheet approvals, personnel expenditures non-compliant with policy, and expenditures reported outside of the grant period.
- Equus Career Office:
 - Findings: Inconsistencies between timesheets and time-study documents, and incomplete supporting documentation for personnel and non-personnel expenditures.
- Equus Support Center:
 - Findings: Incomplete supporting documentation for personnel and non-personnel expenditures, as well as variances and misclassifications of personnel expenditures.
- Community Family Centers:
 - Findings: Overstated and understated allocation expenditures, lack of supporting documentation for non-personnel expenditures, travel expenditures more than GSA allowances, and transactions not recorded in the appropriate period.

Reports Transmitted to Service Providers:

- Alliance for Community Assistance Ministries:
 - No Findings
- Region 6:
 - Findings: Incomplete supporting documentation for non-personnel expenditures and overstated expenditures.
- Lone Star College:
 - Findings: Incomplete supporting documentation for personnel and non-personnel expenditures, unsigned personnel documents, and overstated indirect expenditures.

Review Still in Progress:

- Systemwide Financial Aid Payment Review.

These findings highlight areas for improvement and provide actionable insights to enhance the financial practices of our service providers. Board staff will continue to monitor and support these service providers in addressing these identified issues. They also clarified that none of these findings were significant or required immediate attention such as preventing a contract renewal.

In response to feedback from the Committee, future financial monitoring reports will clearly distinguish between significant findings requiring immediate intervention and minor issues that can be addressed through training and other support measures. To better align with the Audit and Monitoring Committee's

expectations, Board staff are committed to developing an enhanced reporting system. This system will provide greater clarity and precision in categorizing findings, ensuring that critical issues are promptly identified and addressed.

Accountability and Improvement Plans

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

Texas Workforce Commission Interventions:

Measurable Skills Gain (MSG) (FY23): The Texas Workforce Commission is still monitoring the performance improvement actions for measurable skills gain, and we are meeting with the state monthly. No updates from TWC since May 2024.

Adult Median Earnings Q2 Post-Exit (FY23): Board staff continues 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 board staff is implementing targeted enrollment efforts and policy adjustments to enhance our participants' median earnings.

SNAP E&T Corrective Action: In February 2024, the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) conducted a monitoring visit at the Workforce Solutions career office in Katy. The subsequent report identified two primary findings:

1. The participant's address in The Workforce Information System of Texas (TWIST) and the Texas Integrated Eligibility Redesign System (TIERS) did not match at the time of outreach, and;
2. Notification of a good cause request was not sent to the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) within the required three business days.

While the overall success rate was above 90%, HHSC required a corrective action plan. Board staff met with the service provider, Interfaith of the Woodlands, to review the report's findings and observations. We also updated our SNAP E&T guidance to clearly outline the steps and responsibilities of working with SNAP participants. Interfaith of the Woodlands identified the need for a new process to

ensure timely notification to HHSC. The following actions were taken to address this issue:

- Conducted training for career office and data management staff, and;
- Implemented a new process allowing career office staff to complete SNAP actions as they occur.

In response to the submitted plan, TWC requested that the Board staff take additional action to ensure that all customer addresses receive an outreach letter. Beginning in August 2024, Quality Assurance will conduct a 90-day desk review to confirm that outreach letters are sent to all customer addresses recorded in Work in Texas.

Gulf Coast Workforce Board Interventions:

Equus - Career Office: Equus is currently under performance improvement plans for Property Management, Choices, Credential Rate, and Measurable Skills Gains. Equus has reviewed property management guidance and received additional technical assistance from Board staff, leading to improved responsiveness and timely reporting of property issues. To address performance concerns, Equus has conducted staff training on MSGs, Credentials, and the Choices program. They have also implemented various tracking tools to better monitor performance and customer outreach.

However, the downtime of the reporting system has made it challenging to accurately monitor and evaluate their performance. Despite this, we have encouraged Equus to continue collaborating with staff and management to ensure proper customer outreach and data entry. Once the reporting system is operational again, we will review the data and take appropriate action based on the findings.

Alliance of Community Assistance Ministries (ACAM): ACAM was previously placed on a Performance Improvement Plan due to being deficient in WIOA Youth Customers Served and WIOA Youth Work-Based Learning targets. Due to ACAMs challenges with procuring new subcontractors, ACAM requested its enrollment target be adjusted from 500 to 385, which is connected to a reduction in funding. ACAM has assisted 360 customers as of June 2024. ACAM has signed a contract amendment reducing its target and related funding.

Compliance and Review Update:

Board staff provided an update on the pending compliance and reviews on the following:

- Texas Workforce Commission Annual Board Review;
- Texas Workforce Commission Pending Reports:
 - Adult Education and Literacy, and
 - Early Childhood Education; and
- Office of Inspector General, WIOA Subrecipient Review, Department of Labor.

Next Meeting

The next committee meeting is scheduled for 1:00 p.m. on Tuesday, September 24, 2024, at Workforce Solutions – Southwest, 13625 Beechnut St, Houston, Texas 77083.

Procurement Committee Report

On July 30, 2024, Chair Dr. Bobbie Henderson convened the Procurement Committee at 2:10 pm. to review information and consider recommendations to award the FY 2025 contracts. Other committee members in attendance included Chair Mark Guthrie, Guy Robert Jackson, Carl Bowles, Cheryl Guido, Helen Cavazos, Gil Staley, Adrian Ozuna, Richard Shaw, Jeff LaBroski, Doug Karr, and Alan Heskamp. Below is an overview of the 2025 contracts for service providers and the requested amounts.

Service Provider	2025 Contract Request Amount
<i>I. Outreach and Communication</i>	
Outreach Strategist	900,000
<i>II. Career Offices</i>	54,000,000
BakerRipley	27,000,000
Interfaith of the Woodlands	20,000,000
Equus	7,000,000
<i>III. Employer Engagement</i>	
SERCO	9,000,000
<i>IV. Next Generation Youth</i>	3,200,000
SER-Jobs	1,675,000
Alliance of Community Assistance Min. (ACAM)	1,525,000
<i>V. Financial Aid Support Office</i>	
Equus	10,500,000
<i>VI. Financial Aid Payment Office</i>	380,000,000
BakerRipley - Operations	5,500,000
BakerRipley - Financial Aid	374,500,000
<i>VII. Early Childhood Quality</i>	
UT Health Science Center	11,000,000
<i>VIII. VR Payrolling</i>	
ProSource Solutions	1,225,000
TOTAL	469,825,000

Procurement Committee

i. Outreach and Communication

The Gulf Coast Workforce Board currently contracts with two public engagement consultants who provide outreach strategy, branding strategy, and both print and virtual collateral to support our regional workforce system. These contracts are integral to our efforts to enhance stakeholder understanding of Workforce Solutions – Gulf Coast and improve service delivery across the region through strategic planning. One firm has been instrumental in supporting the creation of our new strategic plan and in working with local media and community stakeholders, while the other has contributed to the development of newsletters, branding strategy, and both print and virtual materials. Initially procured in 2020, these contracts do not offer any renewal options. Consequently, a new Request for Proposals (RFP) was issued in May 2024, and to streamline our operations and ensure a cohesive approach, a single RFP was issued for one service provider to deliver all these services. Having a single service provider will enhance consistency, improve communication, and enable a more integrated and effective public information and outreach strategy.

Four organizations submitted proposals and the evaluation team conducted a thorough review and scoring process to identify the best proposer for completing this work on behalf of the board. The following entities submitted proposals:

Proposer	Rank
Outreach Strategist	1
Versa Creative	2
Savage Brands	3
Strategic Government Solutions Alliance	4

During the final selection process, interviews were conducted with the top two proposers with the highest scores.

Outreach Strategists scored highest among the top two proposers, excelling in delivering impactful public relations and strategic communications within the Houston-Gulf Coast region. They have demonstrated expertise in public relations, digital and print media, multicultural marketing, and strategic communication, successfully navigating complex regulatory landscapes. Their comprehensive approach, bolstered by strong private and public sector relationships and extensive experience with clients like Workforce Solutions – Gulf Coast and the Texas Workforce Commission, ensures cohesive and impactful communication for our regional workforce system. Its commitment to meaningful engagement and

tailored solutions perfectly aligns with our goal to enhance public information and outreach strategies as we implement the Gulf Coast Workforce Board's new strategic plan.

Versa Creative ranked second in the scoring due to their background and established reputation in public relations and outreach. Founded in 2009, Versa Creative has successfully executed multi-year public relations and outreach campaign partnerships with prominent entities such as the City of Houston and the Harris County Department of Education. However, Versa Creative lacked specific experience in workforce development, which was a crucial factor in our decision-making process.

Action

We recommend the Board authorize staff to negotiate a contract with Outreach Strategist not to exceed \$900,000. We can renew this contract for three (3) additional years subject to satisfactory performance and Board approval.

Procurement Committee

ii. Career Offices

Workforce Solutions – Gulf Coast operates 28 career offices across a 13-county region, providing a comprehensive range of career services, resources, and support through a "one-stop-shop" delivery system aligned with federal guidelines to streamline access to employment and training services. Each office is equipped with staff, computers, copiers, phones, and fax machines to ensure employers and job seekers have the necessary tools.

Our career offices offer personalized guidance to help employers find qualified candidates and assist residents in identifying career goals, developing plans, and navigating transitions. Employers and customers can access job information, hiring events, supportive services, and financial aid. These offices serve as "hubs" for career service delivery, ensuring our community members receive the support and resources needed to succeed in today's job market.

In 2021, we conducted a competitive procurement process to secure service providers for our career offices, authorizing up to four years of annual contracts with BakerRipley, Interfaith of the Woodlands, and APM Equus Holdings Corporation. This renewal will serve as the final and fourth year of these contracts requiring a new procurement in 2025. Our relationship with these strategic partners enables us to deliver quality services while adapting to the evolving needs of our regional workforce system.

Our Career Office service providers are presently performing as follows:

- **BakerRipley:** On track to meet most targets for the current year.
- **Interfaith of the Woodlands:** On track to meet most targets for the current year.
- **Equus:** Placed on a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) in May 2024 to address deficiencies in Property Management, Choices, Credential Rate, and Measurable Skills gains.

As the Gulf Coast Workforce Board finalizes its new Strategic Plan, we are conducting a comprehensive review of our Career Offices to align with our updated mission, vision, and goals. This review focuses on the impact and "return on investment" of our 28 career offices, analyzing in-person vs. virtual service delivery and community utilization. With a noted decrease in walk-in traffic and an increase in virtual services, site visits and staff interviews are underway to better

understand these trends and identify more efficient, effective, and economical service delivery methods.

Furthermore, we are collaborating with service providers to review job descriptions and salaries to ensure we attract and retain top talent. Enhanced customer service aims to meet the educational and training needs of residents while building a strong talent pipeline for employers.

Our comprehensive review is informed by contemporary trends and analytics, including regional data on career services office utilization, revealing a shift towards virtual services post-pandemic. By optimizing our operational models, potentially through co-location with libraries, educational entities, municipal offices, or chambers of commerce, we aim to maintain physical office systems for vulnerable populations while enhancing accessibility and reducing costs.

Given the available funds, we recommend renewing contracts for BakerRipley, Interfaith of the Woodlands, and Equus for the fiscal year starting October 1, 2024. This will be the fourth and final year of the contract authorized in 2021. We propose setting contract ranges with minimum and maximum amounts to ensure flexibility and accountability.

Career Offices	2024	2025 Proposed Range	
BakerRipley	\$25,400,000	\$24,100,000	\$27,000,000
Interfaith of the Woodlands	\$18,900,000	\$18,000,000	\$20,000,000
Equus	\$6,937,452	\$6,500,000	\$7,000,000
Total	\$51,237,452	\$48,600,000	\$54,000,000

Action

We recommend the Board authorize staff to negotiate the 2024-2025 Career Office contracts with BakerRipley, Interfaith of the Woodlands, and Equus, incorporating the proposed ranges described above in amount not to exceed \$54,000,000. This will be the final renewal option available under the most recent procurement.

Procurement Committee

iii. Employer Engagement

In 2023, SERCO of Texas Inc. (SERCO) was contracted as our Employer Engagement provider for FY24. Over the past year, the Board's Employer Engagement Committee and staff have revisited the service delivery model for employers, looking to update and re-envision our current model. SERCO collaborates closely and regularly with our Employer Engagement Team, including principal industry specialists and subject matter experts, to spearhead initiatives with key industry sectors and economic development organizations. This partnership seeks to ensure that employers receive high-quality services to attract and grow their workforces effectively.

SERCO has met or is on track to meet all performance metrics for the year except for "Measurable Skills Gain" and "Staff Entered Positions for Youth in High-Skill, High-Growth Occupations" in WorkInTexas.com. Board staff are actively collaborating with SERCO to address these issues, providing technical assistance to strengthen the connection between our career offices and SERCO. This collaborative effort will continue into FY25 to ensure these metrics are achieved.

As a part of the re-imagining of employer service, Board staff plan to include the deliverables outlined below in the FY25 contract:

- **Building a Skilled Workforce:** Develop customized talent development services strategies, including education and technical skills training, essential workplace skills, adult education and literacy, sector partnership development, and work-based learning opportunities such as paid work experience, on-the-job training, pre-apprenticeship, and apprenticeship programs;
- **Job Placement Support:** Assisting employers in recruiting, screening, and referring qualified job seekers to fill job vacancies;
- **Job Seeker Assistance:** Helping job seekers find suitable employment to establish long-term stability and earning potential;
- **Youth Support:** Assisting youth, including opportunity youth, in gaining meaningful work experience to establish long-term careers;
- **Job Matching:** Facilitating job matching between employers and job seekers;
- **Labor Clearing:** Participating in interstate labor clearing using a standardized classification system;

- **Unemployment Compliance:** Ensuring unemployment claimants meet work-test requirements by registering with the state Employment Service system;
- **Labor Market Information:** Providing high-quality information on labor market conditions to employers and community partners;
- **Legal Compliance:** Addressing labor issues concerning state and federal laws; and
- **Partnership Development:** Assisting in building partnerships with educational institutions, economic development councils, chambers of commerce, government entities, employers, public and private partners, and community-based organizations.

Action

We recommend the Board authorizes staff to negotiate a one-year contract with SERCO in the amount not to exceed \$9,000,000. This is the first proposed renewal, and we will have the option to renew this contract two (2) additional years subject to satisfactory performance and approval from the Board.

Procurement Committee

iv. Next Generation Youth Initiative

In 2021, we procured service providers for the Next Generation Youth initiative (NextGen) funded by WIOA Youth funds from the Texas Workforce Commission. NextGen was established to address critical gaps in reaching out to out-of-school, opportunity, and at-risk youth, between the ages of 16 to 24, providing them with opportunities for personal and professional growth including training, work-based learning, and access to other supportive services. Service providers were asked to engage the community, connecting with the target population and bringing opportunity youth into our workforce system.

SERJobs for Progress and Alliance of Community Assistance Ministries (ACAM) presently provide these youth targeted services. The program has served over 760 customers and is anticipated to serve 900 youth by the end of the current program year.

- **SERJobs:** is on track to achieve its overall enrollment targets for FY24 and has assisted 403 customers as of June 2024. This includes:
 - recruiting 78 customers into work-based learning; and
 - enrolling 63 customers in training.
- **ACAM** requested its enrollment target be adjusted from 500 to 385 in this contract year and has assisted 360 customers as of June 2024. This includes:
 - recruiting 66 customers into work-based learning; and
 - enrolling 72 customers in training.

ACAM was placed on a Performance Improvement Plan due to low enrollments and challenges replacing subcontractors. The Board sent a contract amendment reducing its enrollment target to 385 with a corresponding reduction in funding, which was signed on July 29, 2024.

The Texas Workforce Commission's transition to the new "Work in Texas" case management system has caused significant challenges in validating TWC performance measures for individual service providers. As of March 2024, both service providers were experiencing challenges with achieving TWC contracted measures.

Board staff will continue to engage with NextGen providers, providing technical assistance and support to ensure the program's success. An example of this

collaboration includes training on Work in Texas, Gazelle, production and performance, and effective collaboration with other system providers and programs, such as early childhood education and adult education and literacy, to enhance overall customer service.

Action

We recommend the Board authorize staff to negotiate contracts with SERJobs and ACAM in an amount not to exceed \$3,200,000. This will be the third and final renewal option available under the most recent procurement.

Next Generation Youth (Next Gen)	2024	2025 Proposed
Total	\$3,197,703	\$3,200,000
SERJobs	\$1,674,254	\$1,675,000
Alliance of Community Assistance Ministries (ACAM)	\$1,523,449	\$1,525,000

Procurement Committee

v. Financial Aid Support Center

In 2022, Equus was contracted to manage the Financial Aid Support Center (FASC). This centralized support center processes customers' financial aid applications, addresses inquiries, arranges childcare, reviews appeals, and handles ongoing eligibility exceptions. Equus serves a broad population, including customers, career offices, the Financial Aid Payment Office, and Board staff, operating as a comprehensive service provider for childcare scholarships.

In 2023, due to longstanding performance issues with processing childcare applications and answering customer calls, Board staff initiated a comprehensive review and restructuring of the Support Center. This effort focused on enhancing operations and customer service through increased staffing and technological improvements. A Board-approved amendment provided additional funding to hire more staff and implement Ring Central as the new phone system, addressing identified issues and improving overall efficiency and responsiveness. These improvements allowed for greater effectiveness and efficiency in processing and awarding our childcare scholarships.

The Support Center encountered several challenges this year that impacted business operations. In May 2024, Equus relocated to a new facility to accommodate a growing staff, a move that began the previous year and required considerable effort from management and staff. Shortly thereafter, the region was hit by a "Derecho" or spring storm that caused some damage to the new office. Additionally, operations were planned around the launch of the new state Childcare Management System – TX3C, now expected to launch in September 2024 after multiple delays. In April 2024, a funding formula change required scaling back enrollments. Finally, in July 2024, the entire region was impacted by Hurricane Beryl and lingering power outages which delayed service for several days. Despite these challenges, Equus has navigated the transitions and challenges well. There is room for improvement in meeting deadlines and promptly answering calls, and Board staff will continue to support Equus in addressing these issues.

We recommend renewing the contract for APM Equus Holdings Corporation to continue operating the FASC for Fiscal Year 3, beginning October 1, 2024. This will be the third of four possible contracts, initially authorized by the Board in 2022, and the second of three possible renewals.

Action

We recommend the Board authorizes staff to negotiate a contract with APM Equus Holdings Corporation not to exceed \$10,500,000. This is the second proposed renewal, and we will have the option to renew this contract one (1) additional year subject to satisfactory performance and approval from the Board.

Procurement Committee

vi. Financial Aid Payment Office

BakerRipley's management of the Financial Aid Payment Office (FAPO) has been both effective and efficient. The office consistently ensures timely vendor payments and promptly addresses inquiries and reporting requests from Board staff and the Texas Workforce Commission.

FAPO has proactively facilitated the transition to the TX3C system, maintaining clear communication with childcare providers and ensuring accurate payments. In early 2024, FAPO engaged a payroll provider to streamline onboarding and payroll functions across the workforce system, supporting various work-based learning initiatives. The office remains on track to implement the new Financial Aid Management System by year-end.

Moving forward, a key focus will be expanding our network with high-quality training providers to enhance training opportunities and employment outcomes. We propose increasing its staff to strengthen vendor performance analysis and support these essential efforts. In coordination with Board staff, FAPO will play a pivotal role by:

1. **Establishing Clear Criteria:** Defining benchmarks focused on training quality, success rates, and program relevance to job market demands;
2. **Vendor Performance Monitoring:** Continuously assessing vendor performance through key indicators such as job placement rates and trainee satisfaction;
3. **Data Collection and Analysis:** Collecting and analyzing data to identify strengths and areas for improvement, ensuring the retention of high-performing vendors;
4. **Transparency and Communication:** Providing accessible information about training vendors through an online portal, enabling customers to review performance metrics and make informed decisions; and
5. **Feedback Mechanisms:** Implementing channels for customers to share their experiences, incorporating feedback into vendor performance assessments. By closely monitoring outcomes and maintaining open communication with customers, we aim to ensure training programs meet high standards and lead to meaningful employment opportunities.

We also propose increasing the allocation for financial aid. The Board was awarded nearly \$3.6 million in National Dislocated Worker funding under the Texas Storms (Derecho) Emergency Application, with the anticipation of further

disaster relief funding for Hurricane Beryl. This funding will support disaster relief employment opportunities and training to aid in recovery efforts.

Action

We recommend the Board authorize staff to negotiate a contract with BakerRipley not to exceed \$380,000,000. This is the second proposed renewal, and we will have the option to renew this contract for one (1) additional year subject to satisfactory performance and approval from the Board.

Financial Aid Payment Office			
Financial Aid	Operations Cost Range		Total
\$374,500,000	\$4,500,000	\$5,500,000	\$380,000,000

Procurement Committee

vii. Early Childhood Quality

In March 2023, the University of Texas Health Science Center-Houston, Children’s Learning Institute (CLI) became the Early Education Quality service provider for the Gulf Coast Workforce Board. CLI provides specific technical assistance, consulting, professional training, and best practice support for the largest group of our network vendors – early education and child care providers. CLI focuses on recruiting, assessing, reviewing, mentoring, and supporting vendors in the Texas Rising Star quality rating system, laying the foundation for a better-educated workforce for the Gulf Coast area.

The Children’s Learning Institute (CLI) has demonstrated satisfactory performance, though there are opportunities for improvement, particularly in efficiently delivering goods and services to customers and being responsive to Board staff inquiries. Board staff has been providing technical assistance on these issues, and CLI has been receptive, leading to performance improvements.

This year, CLI has progressed toward meeting production targets, including delivering live professional development training to over 1,800 providers. The training covers topics like infant and toddler care, working with children with disabilities, and Texas Rising Star information. In the upcoming year, we will collaborate with CLI on additional projects, including:

- Facilitating new Pre-K partnerships between Texas Rising Star providers and local public school districts and charters;
- Providing ongoing mentor support to eligible Entry Level providers seeking Texas Rising Star certification; and
- Increasing the number of providers serving children with disabilities who require additional services through the inclusion assistance rate.

Action

We recommend the Board authorize staff to negotiate a contract with the University of Texas Health Science Center-Houston, Children’s Learning Institute for an amount not to exceed \$11,000,000. This is the second proposed renewal, and we will have the option to renew this contract for one (1) additional year subject to satisfactory performance and approval from the Board.

Procurement Committee

viii. VR Payrolling and Employer of Record

In 2019, ProSource Solutions III, Inc. (ProSource) began serving as the payroll service provider for Texas Workforce Commission's Vocational Rehabilitation Services, supporting young customers in year-round part-time jobs. Vocational Rehabilitation staff identify job opportunities, while ProSource acts as the employer of record for the customer's work experience.

In 2023, we reprocured this contract, and ProSource was once again selected to provide these services. The contract can be renewed for up to three additional one-year periods. ProSource is currently meeting expectations as the employer of record for the Vocational Rehabilitation services program. From October 2023 through June 2024, ProSource received approximately 528 referrals from Vocational Rehabilitation. Individuals are receiving timely payments, and the number of customers served continues to increase annually.

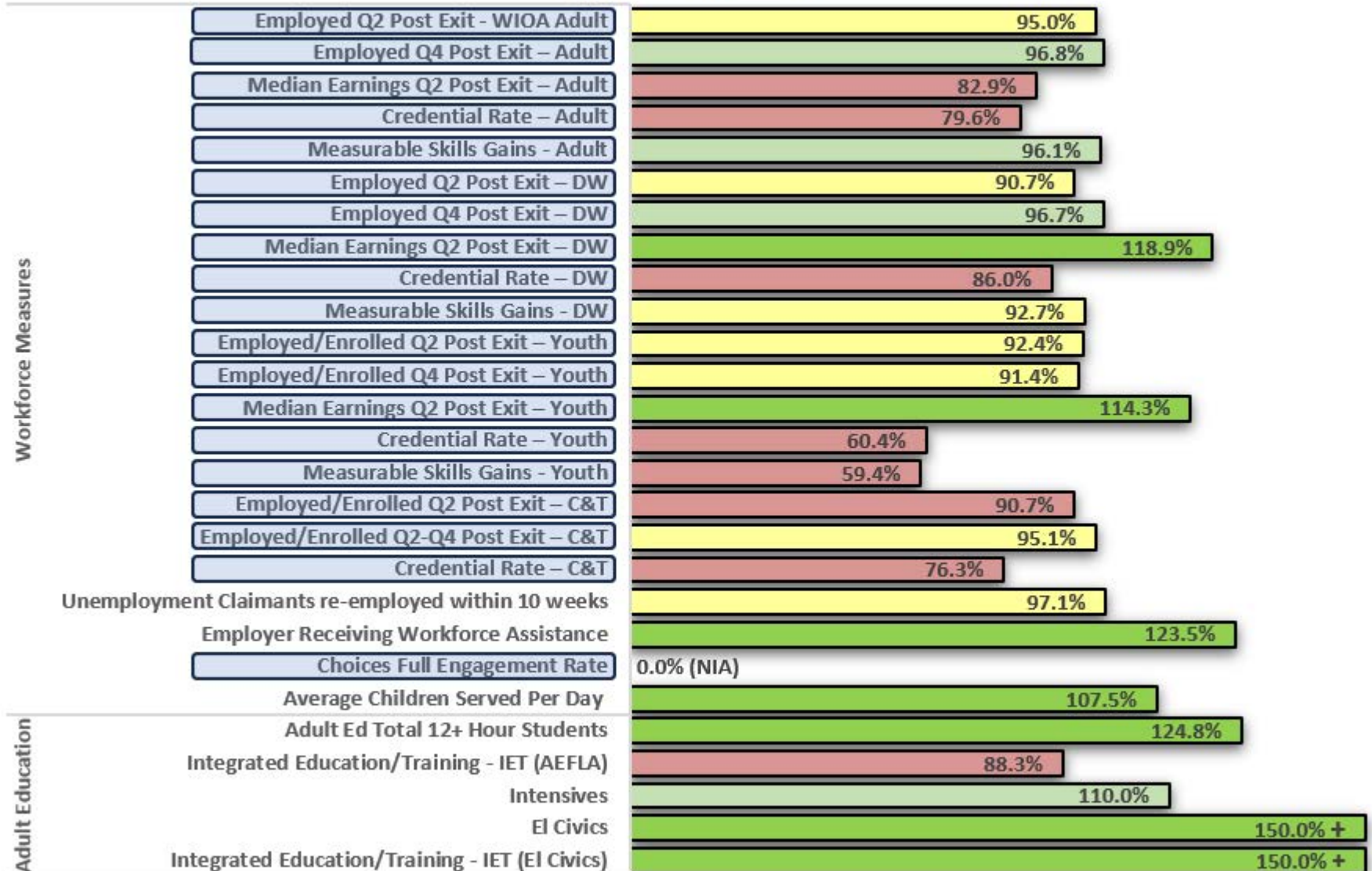
ProSource charges a percentage markup rate on payroll wages, ranging from 16% to 21%, which decreases as customer enrollment increases. This rate includes payroll taxes. We recommend continuing our partnership with ProSource to deliver this essential service.

Action

We recommend the Board authorizes staff to negotiate a one-year contract with ProSource Solutions III, Inc., in an amount not to exceed by \$1,225,000. This is the first proposed renewal, and we will have the option to renew this contract for two (2) additional years subject to satisfactory performance and approval from the Board.

Production Measures

October 2023 to June 2024



■ P-
 ■ MP (Lower)
 ■ MP
 ■ P+
 ■ Awaiting Report Update

% of current target

Last Reporting Updates

Employed Q2 Post Exit

- Adult / DW / Youth / C&T
- 5/8/24

Employed Q4 Post Exit

- Adult / DW / Youth / C&T
- 5/8/24

Credential Rate

- Adult / DW / Youth / C&T
- 4/31/24

Median Earnings Q2 Post Exit

- Adult / DW / Youth
- 4/8/24

Measurable Skills Gains

- Adult / DW / Youth
- 5/8/24

Employers Workforce Assistance

- Updated

Unemployment Claimants re-employed within 10 weeks

- Updated

TANF Full Work Rate

- 3/31/24

Average Children Served Per Day

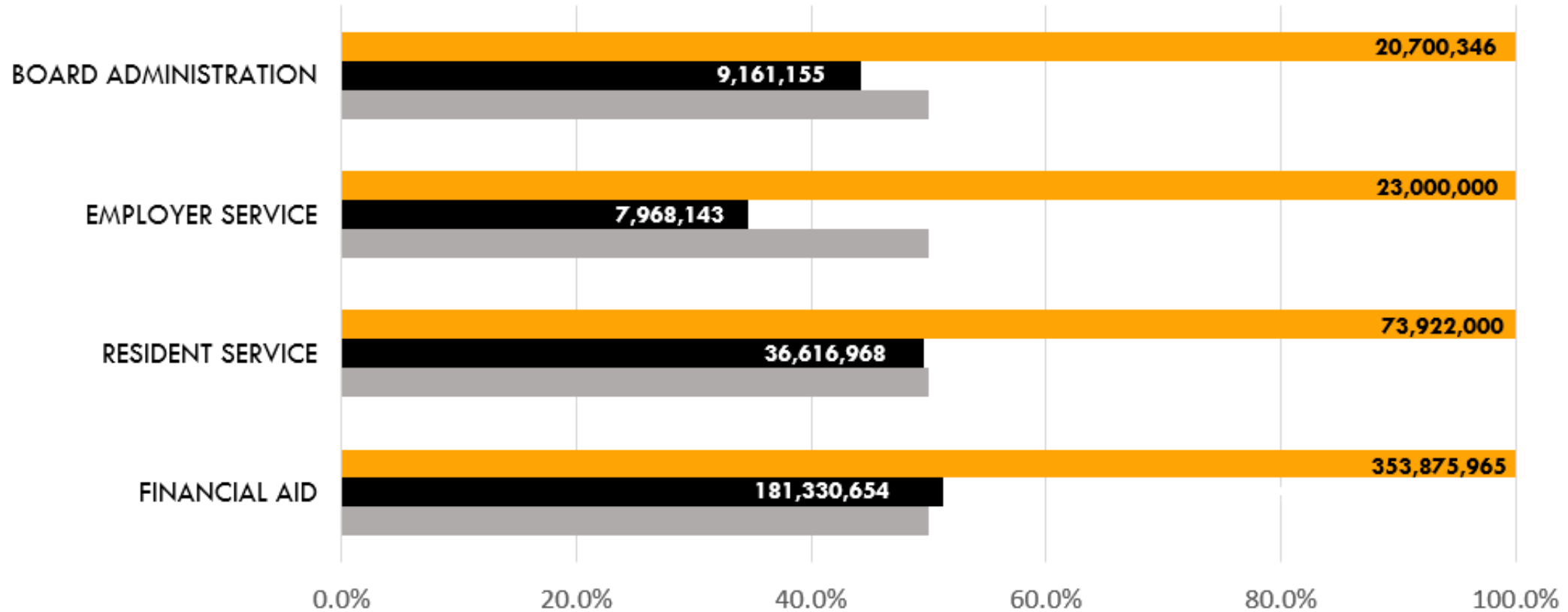
- Updated

Information: Expenditure Update

Gulf Coast Workforce Financial Status Report

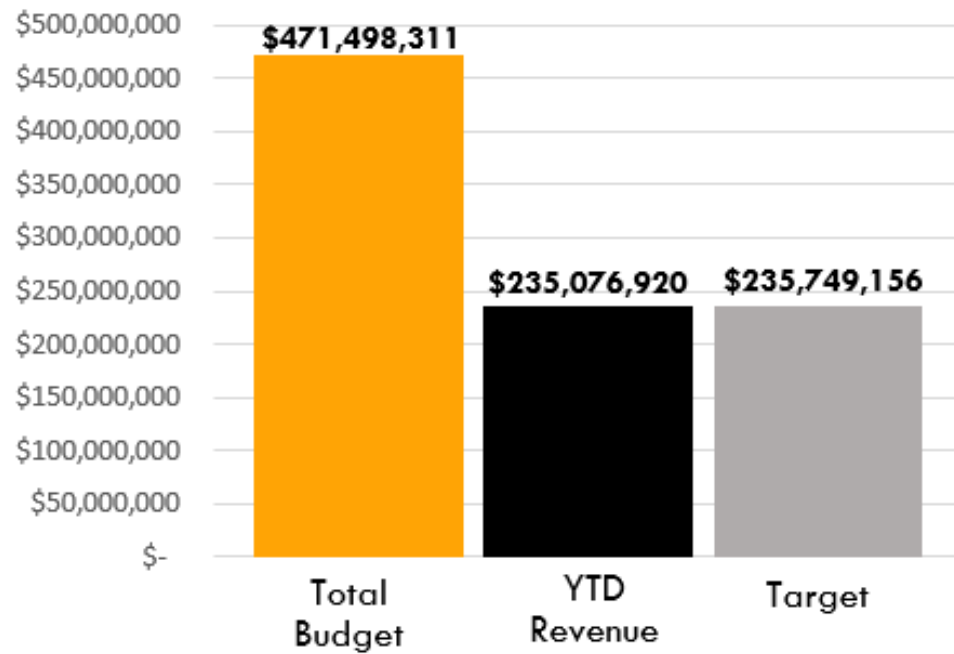
For the 6 months ending June 30, 2024

■ Budget ■ Expenses ■ Target



Information: Expenditure Update

Workforce Revenue



System Expenses

