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GULF COAST WORKFORCE BOARD

AGENDA

Tuesday, June 4, 2024, at 10:00 a.m.
2nd Floor, 3555 Timmons Lane
Houston, Texas 77027

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

- 1. Call to Order**
- 2. Roll Call**
- 3. Adopt Agenda**
- 4. Public Comment**
- 5. Review of the April 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. Career Services Committee Report: (Committee Chair Adrian Ozuna),
 - f. Audit and Monitoring Committee Report: (Committee Chair Guy Jackson),
 - g. Education Committee Report: (Committee Chair Dr. Bobbie Henderson), and
 - h. Communications Committee Report: (Committee Chair Doug Karr).

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8. Action Items:

- a. Procurement Committee Report: Briefing of the May 2024 committee meeting including discussion, consideration, and possible action on the following:
 - i. Negotiate contracts with adult education and literacy providers for the period July 1, 2024 through June 30, 2025 (Committee Chair Dr. Bobbie Henderson).

9. Information:

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

10. Presentations

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

11. Other Business

12. Adjourn

If you wish to make a public comment you may appear in person or do so by providing your comments in writing no later than 5:00 pm on **Monday, June 3, 2024**, to Deborah Duke at deborah.duke@wrksolutions.net.

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

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**MINUTES OF MEETING OF
THE GULF COAST WORKFORCE BOARD
TUESDAY, APRIL 2, 2024**

MEMBERS PRESENT

Suzane Abedi	Bobbie Henderson	Mou Sarkar
Sofia Adroque	Alan Heskamp	Danielle Scheiner
Willie Alexander	Guy Robert Jackson	Keri Schmidt
Peter Beard	Lavone Jones	Valerie Segovia
Shonda Below	Jeff LaBroski	Richard Shaw
Sara Bouse	Shareen Larmond	Gil Staley
Carl Bowles	Jonathan Lowe	Nicole Streeter
Helen Cavazos	Margaret Oser	Sandra Taylor
Dorian Cockrell	Adrian Ozuna	Lizandra Vazquez
Melissa Gonzalez	Paul Puente	Carolyn Watson
Cheryl Guido	Melanie Rodriguez	Bin Yu
Mark Guthrie	Nasruddin Rupani	

H-GAC STAFF PRESENT

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

Chair Mark Guthrie called the in-person meeting of the Gulf Coast Workforce Board (GCWB) to order at approximately 10:10 a.m. on Tuesday, April 2, 2024. Deborah Duke called roll to determine a list of members present. Chair Guthrie determined a quorum was present.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Prior to adopting the agenda, Chair Guthrie welcomed new Board members Suzane Abedi and Nicole Streeter and invited them to introduce themselves to the Board. Each provided a brief introduction and was warmly welcomed by the Board.

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

Rene Solis of BakerRipley thanked the Board and expressed appreciation for the Board's support. He announced the upcoming grand opening ceremony for the new location of the Workforce Solutions Northeast office and invited all of those present to attend. He especially thanked Board Staff Jessica Smith and AJ Dean for their help through the leasing and building out process. Mr. Solis' was welcomed by the Board and thanked for his comments.

MINUTES FROM FEBRUARY 6, 2023, MEETING

Chair Guthrie asked for approval of the minutes of the last Board meeting. A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes of the February 6, 2023 meeting as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

DECLARE CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

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

CONSIDER REPORTS

a. Chair's Report.

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

Beginning with national updates, Chair Guthrie reported that a federal 2024 fiscal year budget is in place providing for relatively level funding for workforce programs, with a couple of minor exceptions. One exception relates to WIOA programs. There is \$5 million cut to Employment Service state grants and a \$25 million cut to Dislocated Worker national activities. Taken together, WIOA programs will see about a 1.5% increase in funding over FY23 levels. Another exception relates to vocation rehabilitation state grants, which receives a roughly \$300 million increase over FY23 levels. Outside of WIOA and vocational rehabilitation, there is a 9% increase in funding for childcare development block grant funding as well as a reshuffling of funding within Career and Technical Education funding accounts in favor of state grants.

Next, Chair Guthrie reported that in late March he attended the National Association of Workforce Boards (NAWB) Board of Director meetings, a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion class and the NAWB Forum in Washington, DC. The Forum was attended

by 1350 people and included remarks from Julie Su, acting Secretary of Labor and Governor Wes Moore of Maryland. Unlike many states, Maryland is putting state funds into workforce development in a number of unique ways. Maryland funds career education in its public school system and Governor Moore said that he intended to place a career coach in every Maryland high school. Governor Moore also said that Maryland offers a one year public service option to every High School graduate in the state which includes paid work for a year at a rate of at least \$15.00 per hour, followed by a \$6000 stipend at the end of the year for successful completion. This stipend can be used in any way the person wants.

The primary keynote speaker at the Forum was a futurist named Eric Termeunde on the topic of "Preparing for the Future of Work. Distilled, to prepare for the future of work, Mr. Termeunde said that Employers/Supervisors/Team Leaders need to build a deep sense of trust among team members (including by sharing the four H's – heros, heartbreak, hopes and history); isolate and remove friction, including by looking look at a 1 degree shift – just a small change in the way things are done or handled; and by asking what should we start doing, what should we stop doing and what should we continue doing?

There was also a public policy session at the NAWB Forum which included a discussion of the status of WIOA reauthorization and President Biden's 2025 budget. President Biden's proposed FY25 budget also generally provides workforce programs with level funding, with certain exceptions. It provides reentry opportunities and Job Corp programs with modest proposed increases over the FY23 and FY24 levels. Another exception is \$50 million less funding for the Dislocated Worker national activities account, but the \$277 million requested for DW national activities would fund a slight increase of \$5 million for strengthening Community Colleges Training Grants programs and set aside \$50 million to launch a new sector grant program to support sector partnerships among other things. There is also a newly proposed career training fund funded at \$8 billion over the next 10 years that would be jointly administered by the departments of Labor, Commerce and Education, which according to the Department of Labor would provide grants of up to \$10,000 per worker to support the cost of high-quality, evidence-based training with additional funding for wrap-around supports. Other than this information, the details of this fund are relatively vague – described by one commentator as an "easter egg, because nobody knows what is inside." The National Association of Workforce Boards is working to make sure that Workforce has a seat the table for this proposed fund - unlike some of the recent infrastructure funding efforts in which Workforce was largely not mentioned. The President's proposed FY25 budget also includes an additional \$50 million toward Department of Labor apprenticeship expansion activities.

Turning to the effort to reauthorize WIOA, at the last meeting Chair Guthrie reported that the House Education and Workforce Committee had proposed a reauthorization bill, H.R. 6655,- The Stronger Workforce for America Act, known by

its acronym ASWA. They marked it up and released it within a week and there were some significant issues with some of the proposals. Even though a lot of the other provisions contained within ASWA would improve WIOA funding, among other issues it would create a Federal one-size-fits-all requirement for local Workforce Boards to spend 50% of their WIOA Title 1 Adult and Dislocated Worker funding on training, which is narrowly defined as essentially tuition costs, and does not include support services often necessary to enable completion of that training. Another issue is that ASWA would allow states to retain an additional 10% of the Title 1 Adult and Dislocated Worker funding, which would further reduce the funding available for boards to cover activities other than training as well as erode the ability of WIOA to leverage additional state funding for training and employment opportunities for employers and workers. Chair Guthrie said that as proposed, ASWA would not allow local workforce boards to tailor funded activities and services to meet local needs and wider conditions, the 50% training requirement would not count supportive or wraparound supports that help job seekers enroll in, and successfully complete, training towards the mandate, will lead to significant reductions in other critical services delivered to job seekers and employers and that possible impacts to our Board include serving fewer people and employers, closing career offices, reducing employer services and pushing people into training without adequate assessments or addressing their barriers and impediments to completing their training. The current status of ASWA is that it is pending before the House and the Senate HELP Committee is asking a lot of questions about it. More to follow on ASWA.

Turning to local matters, Chair Guthrie reported that he and Juliet are working to schedule a meeting with Houston Mayor John Whitmire. A meeting was scheduled a few weeks ago but was cancelled. When a meeting takes place, he will bring a report to the Board. He stated that we look forward to supporting the Mayor's efforts with our resources.

Finally, Chair Guthrie encouraged Board Members to attend the upcoming Strategic Planning Retreat to make their voices heard on the future strategic direction of this board.

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

b. Executive Director's Report.

Executive Director Juliet Stipeche provided a series of updates.

Juliet thanked the team for their hard work and stated that there are six committee meeting reports which will be covered during today's meeting. She also thanked the Board members who participated and assisted during those meetings.

Ms. Stipeche reported that, in February, she had an opportunity to go to the Northern Brazoria County Educational Alliance business luncheon in Pearland ISD and had an opportunity to meeting Mayor Cole. The Robert Turner school in Pearland has an amazing CTE program and she had an opportunity to hear from teachers and student participants about the diverse opportunities that are available on this campus. Ms. Stipeche expressed a desire to connect the team with the efforts that are taking place in Pearland ISD and expressed a special thanks to Mou Sarkar for the invitation.

Ms. Stipeche also received an invitation from Senator Cornyn to present as part of the Workforce Reentry Act roundtable discussion. There are efforts to make reentry funding a permanent part of WIOA and we are hopeful that those efforts are passed. She thanked Sara Bouse and the other participants who shared information about the New Beginnings Program at Alvin Community College which was of particular interest for those that were in attendance to see a program that has been funded by the Texas Workforce Commission successful in serving as the bridge for persons who are in the system and about to be reentering into society and who have an opportunity to maintain connections to both education as well as workforce opportunities. It's a great example of how our Workforce Solutions Career Offices can also provide support to persons in the community.

Ms. Stipeche also reported that the Workforce Solutions Early Education Advisory Committee met for the first time and that the Texas Workforce Commission also hosted a Childcare Regional Stakeholder meeting. This provided two events closely tied one another. Jamie Diamond from New York, also visited to learn more about the Resilient Workforce Collaborative which Dorian Cockrell of JP Morgan Chase leads along with Dr. Michael Webster of Houston Community College. It has grown from 17 to 38 different community organizations.

Next, Ms. Stipeche reported on an opportunity to meet with Aaron Demerson who is a former Commissioner of the Texas Workforce Commission and now serves as the Texas Economic Development and Tourism CEO to discuss collaboration between the GCWB and those state initiatives and efforts.

Ms. Stipeche reported that the National Association of Workforce Boards provided an opportunity to hear from different Workforce Boards from across the nation as well as an opportunity to learn more about family centered employment which the Board staff has been exploring as a methodology for the delivery of our services. She reported on an opportunity to attend the Texas Regional Pathways Network meeting in Austin hosted by Jobs for the Future to learn more about the Tri-Agency efforts and initiatives. She was pleased to report that the GCWB is one of the one of the first to submit our gap analysis, and it is being used as a best practice example across the state to demonstrate the opportunity of using Tri-Agency data to create a gap analysis to prepare strategic career pathways for our workforce system.

Lastly, Ms. Stipeche also thanked Mr. Rupani for an invitation he extended to visit the Rupani Foundation and for the opportunity to learn more about the early childhood efforts that they are conducting.

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

c. H-GAC Executive Director's Report.

Juliet Stipeche provided an update on behalf of H-GAC Executive Director Chuck Wemple who was unable to attend this meeting. Chuck extended his well wishes for the meeting and wished to inform the Board that he has been initiating changes in the procurement process to increase efficiency and effectiveness. The Request for Proposal for the Workforce Solutions website has just been released.

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

d. Audit and Monitoring Committee

Committee Chair Guy Jackson provided the following Employer Engagement Committee report:

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

System Review

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

Customer Experience

Revamping Our Customer Satisfaction Reporting System:

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

- **Net Promoter Score (NPS):** Utilizes a scale-based email survey or interviews, asking customers to rate their likelihood of recommending our services.
- **Customer Satisfaction Score (CSAT):** Like NPS, CSAT measures immediate satisfaction through brief questions. It is akin to the approach of the ACSI Federal Government Report 2022, which derived insights from 2,126 randomly selected interviews, focusing on users' recent interactions with federal services.

- **Customer Effort Score (CES):** This assesses the ease with which customers can interact with our services, again leveraging scale-based queries.
- **Customer Journey Mapping:** Unlike the other metrics, this involves an in-depth process of user research, identifying pain points, and redesigning experiences to enhance customer satisfaction. A prime example is the Federal Acquisition Service’s study, which included 150 interviews over two months to improve the General Services Administration (GSA) contracting officers' experiences.

Proposed Initiatives:

To refine our understanding and tracking of customer satisfaction, Board staff suggests implementing two distinct CSAT-based surveys:

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

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

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

Technical Program Compliance

Technical Program Compliance reviews consist of compliance testing of contract and policy requirements and customer experience testing conducted by the Board staff’s 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.

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

- **Association for the Advancement of Mexican Americans (AAMA)** – AAMA is exceeding the target for English Language and Civics (EI Civics) and Integrated Education and Training Program – EL Civics (IET-EI Civics) and is on track to meet the targets for total students, total students with 12+ hours and IET-Adult Education Family Literacy Act (IET_AEFLA). AAMA is not meeting Intensive Service targets. In the compliance areas reviewed, we found two findings in Assessments regarding the accuracy of participant pre and post-test data entry in TEAMS and additional credit hours on the attendance sheet with a note to explain the exception. Additional oversight by service provider management and additional controls will help ensure more accuracy. All other areas reviewed were not below a 98% accuracy rate.
- **Adult Education Center (AEC)** – AEC is exceeding the targets for EI Civics, IET-AEFLA), IET-EI Civics, and Intensive Service, but not meeting the targets for total students and total students with 12+ hours. In the compliance areas reviewed, there were four areas with findings. These areas were Assessments, New Hire Orientation, Staff Professional Development, and Test Administrators. AEC has started resolving the findings associated with their test administrators. The other areas noted had findings related to data entry or maintaining supporting documentation. There were no potential questioned costs noted. AEC is working to resolve these findings.
- **Boys and Girls Club of Walker County** – Boys and Girls Club of Walker County is exceeding the EI Civics, IET-AEFLA, and Intensive Service targets. They are on track to meet the targets for total students and total students with 12+ hours. Boys and Girls Club is not on track to meet the IET-EI Civics target. In the compliance areas reviewed, Board staff made a finding in Assessments regarding the data entry of participant contact hours in TEAMS. Additional oversight by service provider management and additional controls will help ensure more accuracy. There were no potential questioned costs noted. All other areas reviewed were not below a 97% accuracy rate.
- **College of the Mainland** – College of the Mainland is exceeding the target for EI Civics but is not meeting or on track to meet the targets for total students, total students with 12+ hours, IET-EI Civics, IET-AEFLA and Intensive Service. In the compliance areas reviewed, there were four areas with findings. These areas were Assessments, New Hire Orientation, Information Security, and Termination Emails. The College of the Mainland has implemented measures to resolve all findings in these areas. Additional oversight by service provider management and additional controls in the areas will help ensure more accuracy and compliance with policy. There were no potential questioned costs noted. All other areas reviewed were not below a 100% accuracy rate.
- **Harris County Department of Education (HCDE)** – HCDE is exceeding the target for EI Civics and is on track to meet the targets for total students, total

students with 12+ hours, IET-AEFLA and Intensive Service. HCDE is not on track to meet the IET-EI Civics target. In the compliance areas reviewed, there were seven areas with findings. These areas were Assessments, Intake and Eligibility, Test Administrators, Staff Professional Development, New Hire Orientation, Information Security, and Termination Emails. HCDE has implemented new procedures to help resolve the findings in the above areas. Managers of each area are tasked with providing oversight to ensure all training is completed in a timely manner and appropriate documentation is maintained. Additional oversight by service provider management and additional controls will help ensure more accuracy. There were no potential questioned costs noted. All other areas reviewed were not below 99% accuracy rate.

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

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

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

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

Board staff plans to schedule the following two entrances in May and June:

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

Proposed Changes to the Service Provider Rating

The GCWB requires comprehensive evaluative data to inform its decision-making processes regarding the service providers operating on its behalf. This need stems from a realization in January 2024 that our existing rating system falls short of reflecting the critical performance metrics necessary for assessing our service providers effectively. To address this short-coming, we advocate for establishing a new, more holistic framework that seamlessly integrates reporting on program compliance, performance metrics, production targets, and financial audit findings. While Board staff captures and communicates these critical performance metrics, the summary rating system on its own does not present a true picture.

In our pursuit of a robust solution, Board staff explored various auditing and monitoring practices prevalent in both the public sector and private industry. Our research included a detailed examination of the 2024 Government Auditing

Standards and the Code of Federal Regulations. Board staff discovered that Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are instrumental in tracking progress toward achieving strategic goals in the private sector. Furthermore, Board staff identified a set of rating systems, quantifiable and linked to risk assessment methodologies that precede monitoring reviews and facilitate the evaluation of quality risks.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Board staff wishes to meet with the senior managers and managers of our divisions to discuss this proposed system to gather input and suggestions for improvement before a full launch. Further, to enhance oversight and improve outcomes, Board staff proposes working with our team to develop Key Performance Indicators encompassing a broad spectrum of metrics, including program and financial monitoring results, customer experiences, and overall performance as part of the service provider report.

Board staff's efforts aim to equip the GCWB with the insights needed to foster excellence and accountability among its service providers.

Financial Systems

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

Board staff received draft reports for the following providers since the last Committee meeting:

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

Board staff currently have the following reviews in progress:

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

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

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

Accountability and Improvement Plans

The Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) and the 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 TWC is still monitoring the Performance Improvement Actions for measurable skills gain, and we are meeting with the state monthly.

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

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

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

Next Meeting

Board staff proposes scheduling the next Committee meeting for 1:00 p.m. on Wednesday, May 22, 2024, at H-GAC, 3555 Timmons Lane, Houston, Texas 77027.

Chair Jackson concluded his report and no action was taken.

e. Communications Committee

Committee Chair Doug Karr provided the following Communications Committee report.

The Communications Committee met on March 21, 2024, at 3:00 p.m. at the Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC) offices located at 3555 Timmons Lane in Houston, Texas. In attendance were Committee members – Doug Karr (Committee

Chair), Board Chair Mark Guthrie, Willie Alexander, Guy Robert Jackson, and Dr. Michael Webster.

Executive Summary

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

Employer and Community Engagement

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

Outreach Strategies Update

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

5-Year Strategic Plan

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

- Initial Planning: Engagement with economic experts and affirmation of the Board's core principles.

- **Stakeholder Engagement:** A broad initiative to gather insights across and beyond the region, including feedback from analogous boards in Maryland and Southern Nevada.
- **Goal Setting and Strategy Development:** Defining clear objectives and crafting a roadmap for implementation.

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

The development of our new strategic plan is an intentional effort to sharpen and effectively communicate the vision, mission, and purpose of the Gulf Coast Workforce Board. It seeks to not only elevate the clarity and impact of our message to the community but also to enhance our service delivery mechanisms.

In our latest Committee meeting, we delved into the transformative potential of customer journey mapping and user experience improvements to elevate our customer service. Drawing inspiration from the Greater Houston Partnership's successful application of journey mapping in its UpSkills Houston initiative, we see a promising avenue for enhancing how we serve our community. By adopting this methodology, we aim to reimagine our career offices and the overall delivery of services, focusing on creating more intuitive, responsive, and user-centered interactions. This approach not only promises to refine our service delivery model but also aligns with our ongoing commitment to meet our customers' needs with greater effectiveness and empathy.

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

Media Partnerships

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

Introduction to H-GAC Communications

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

Existing Contracts and FY25 Procurements

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

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

Conclusion

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

Chair Karr concluded his report and no action was taken.

f. Employer Engagement Committee

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

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

Current Situation

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

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

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

Lacy Wolf, Board staff Principal Industry Liaison of Construction, underscored the collective expertise within the team, particularly in the construction industry, and

how the industry is shifting its focus into recruiting a younger talent pool, and the need for apprenticeship programs and Workforce Solutions sponsored initiatives can support. Melissa Steinmetz, Board staff Principal Industry Liaison of Healthcare & Life Sciences, discussed the broader healthcare and life sciences landscape beyond the Texas Medical Center, stressing the importance of aligning workforce development with emerging industry needs, including taking a closer look at the High Skill High Growth industries, and the impact it makes on the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL).

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

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

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

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

Chair Bouse concluded her report and no action was taken.

g. Education Committee

Committee Chair Bobbie Henderson provided the following Education Committee report.

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

Financial Aid Support Center

YTD Update

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

New Building

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

Texas Child Care Connection-TX3C

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

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

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

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

Early Education Quality

Child Care Non-Traditional Hours

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

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

Early Education Advisory Council

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

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

Child Care Stakeholder Meeting

In collaboration with our Board, TWC hosted a public stakeholder's meeting on February 21, 2024, to discuss and gather feedback regarding the 2025-2027 Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) State Plan and the Texas Rising Star Four Year Review proposed revisions. Over thirty stakeholders attended the meeting and provided feedback to TWC on the plan, including services for children with disabilities, family child care network, pre-k partnerships, Texas Rising Star, and concerns over lack of funding to support the increasing need of child care resources for families, teachers, and providers.

Family Engagement & Home-based providers

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

Professional Pathways: Teacher Preparation Program

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

Early Childcare Expansion (ECE)**What We Are Doing**

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

The Childcare, Opportunity, Outreach, and Growth Systems (COOGS) team, with the support of ECE Board staff is currently working on several activities that will impart data to develop strategies that will expand childcare. Activities include creating reading material for providers to utilize at their centers, convening the COOGS advisory board meetings and coordination of 2-hour training sessions with

early childcare providers. The COOGS team is also providing in person business accelerator training to 15 providers through the Stimulating Urban Renewal Through Entrepreneurship (SURE) program. The research the COOGS team is conducting, surveying, along with the findings of the COOGS sessions and SURE will be used to create a playbook and website to support ongoing work to expand the early childcare industry. The COOGS team is working with the Board staff to develop appropriate materials to market the industry.

Strategic Partnerships

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

Next Steps

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

Youth Services

Youth Portal

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

Jobs Y'all

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

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

WIOA Youth Programs

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

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

NextGen – ACAM

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

continue to be closely monitored with further interventions implemented if progress is not maintained.

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

Regional Convener

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

Throughout the grant program, we will:

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

Gap Analysis

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

Regional Convener Conference

- On January 31, 2024 the GCWB hosted the first ever Regional Convener Conference at the ION Houston.

- Over 233 students, employers, teachers, and post-secondary institutions attended the convening focused on career exploration, financial literacy, and entrepreneurship.

Next Steps

Career Exploration Summer Programming

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

June 9th - June 14th, 75 students (ages 14-17) will participate and stay at Rice University to learn about high-skill high-growth career opportunities in our region. In collaboration with Rice University's Tapia Center for Excellence and Equity in Education, students will be immersed through a combination of education, hands-on experience, site tours, and project-based learning experiences. Rice University will provide meals, room, and board. Additionally, students who successfully complete the program will be eligible for a \$500 stipend.

Work Based Learning Summer Program

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

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

Adult Education and Literacy (AEL)

The H-GAC Regional Consortium for Adult Education and Literacy (H-GAC AEL) was established in 2014. Over the past 9 years it has learned and grown its services across our great region. It provides adult education and literacy instruction at more than 300 sites throughout the 13-county region. Adult education and literacy services are offered face to face, remotely, or through hybrid instruction. Service includes English language instruction, literacy classes, adult basic education, adult secondary education, integrated education, GED preparation, and joint basic

education-skills training classes, college and career readiness, employability skills, services for internationally trained professionals, job search assistance, training, workplace literacy and digital literacy.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Moving Forward

This year, the Burlington English (BE) Curriculum was incorporated into the H-GAC AEL Consortium across the 14 subrecipients for ESL programs of study, serving over 6700 students within our consortium. This comprehensive, web-based, fully blended series of courses developed especially for adults learning English has been fully deployed with not only each regional AEL provider but through the complementary licenses that were received with the H-GAC AEL licenses purchase has also been able to support regional community partners with the City of Houston's Adult Literacy Coalition with access to over 300 licenses for their language learners.

With the new curriculum scope, H-GAC AEL expected to see an increase in level gains from students receiving English language instruction, and the data is confirming our hypothesis.

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

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

In late 2023, the TWC issued a new Request for Proposal (RFP) for AEL services, introducing revised parameters and a new scope of work for the forthcoming grant period. Regrettably, due to these adjustments, H-GAC was unable to include five of community-based organizations in our application for the new funding cycle and

these changes have resulted in the sunseting of these current programs with an official end date set for June 30, 2024. Despite this challenging development, H-GAC believes in the value and impact of our partnership with each of these community-based organizations. Staff is currently working with each of them to continue playing a crucial role in our shared mission, through our Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), Title 1 support in which is designed to equip individuals with the skills essential for success in today's workforce, family life, and civic engagement.

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

Chair Henderson concluded her report and no action was taken.

h. Strategic Planning Committee

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

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

Executive Summary:

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

Stakeholder Input: Customers

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

infrastructure, streamlining processes, and fostering stronger community and employer partnerships to address pivotal employment barriers.

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

Virtual Office Tour:

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

Stakeholder Input:

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

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

Strategic Goals and Prioritization:

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

outreach and recruitment strategies to bridge the gap between job seekers and employers more effectively.

Board Retreat

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

Conclusion

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

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

Early Education Professional Pathways

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Partners for Reentry Opportunities in Workforce Development

The Committee received information regarding a grant initiative sponsored by the Department of Justice (DOJ) and the Department of Labor (DOL) to provide targeted employment services to federally incarcerated individuals as they approach

community reentry. The Partners for Reentry Opportunities in Workforce Development (PROWD) grant program seeks to better align job training and skills development services provided to program participants to the specific labor market needs of the communities where they will live. In so doing, the program will improve both the employment outcomes of returning citizens and public safety of all community members while increasing the capacity of justice and workforce system partnerships.

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

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

In 2023 the TWC reached out to Workforce Development Boards interested in joining this project, successfully securing \$4.6 million in partnership with eight Workforce Development Boards. The GCWB received an initial grant award of \$212,408 in February 2023 with an anticipated future allocation of \$200,000 later this year.

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

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

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

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

A motion was made and seconded to table this item for possible future consideration. The motion was approved unanimously.

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

INFORMATION

a. Performance and Production.

Philip Garcia presented Performance and Production measures October 2023 through February 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 stated plans for a Performance and Production workshop scheduled in May, prior to the June board meeting.

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

b. Expenditures.

Brandi Brown, Manager of Finance, reviewed the Financial Status Report representing expenses for the two months ending in February 2024. She reported that we are 16% expended overall. Board Administration, is slightly behind at 13%. Employer Service is at 10% and we expect expenditures to pick up with the onboarding of United Way. Resident Service and Financial Aid are on target at 17 and 16%. Our overall revenue for the two month period is a little over \$74 million and for our system expenses, 79% was spent on Financial Aid with 74% on early education and 5% on training and support.

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

LOOK AT THE ECONOMY

Board staff Parker Harvey presented an overview of job growth and annual benchmark revisions for the period ending in December 2023 including a breakdown by sector. He also provided a look at job growth and unemployment numbers for the period ending in February 2024.

OTHER BUSINESS

Cheryl Guido presented an update and a short video of the kickoff event for Paving the Pathways for 2024.

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

ADJOURN

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

GULF COAST WORKFORCE BOARD

ABEDI, SUZANE

HCA Healthcare
211 Litchfield Lane
Houston, TX 77024
(202) 517-3824

Category: Business

County: City of Houston

suzane.abedi@hcahealthcare.com

Term: January 1, 2023 thru December 31, 2024

BARTLETT, ANNE

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

Category: Education

County: Brazoria

anne.bartlett@brazosport.edu

Term: January 1, 2023 thru December 31, 2024

ADROGUE, SOFIA

Diamond McCarthy, LLP
909 Fannin Street, 37th Floor
Houston, TX 77010
F(713) 333-5122

Category: Business

County: City of Houston

sadrogue@diamondmccarthy.com

Term: January 1, 2023 thru December 31, 2024

BEARD, PETER

Greater Houston Partnership
701 Avenida de las Americas, Suite 900
Houston, TX 77010
(713) 844-3602 – office

Category: Business

County: City of Houston

pbeard@houston.org

Term: January 1, 2023 thru December 31, 2024

ALEXANDER, WILLIE

W J Alexander Associates P.C.
1770 St. James Place, Suite 407
Houston, TX 77056
(713) 802-0900, ext. 12

Category: Business

County: City of Houston

walex@wjalexander.com

Term: January 1, 2023 thru December 31, 2024

BELOW, SHONDA

Texas Gulf Coast Area Labor Federation
5310 E Sam Houston Pkwy N, Ste M
Houston, TX 7701
(713) 598-7144 mike

Category: Labor

County: Harris

sbelow@nehouaft.org

Term: January 1, 2023 thru December 31, 2024

ARCOS, MARIE

YMCA of Greater Houston
318 Sydnor St
Houston, TX 77020
(713) 557-6575

Category: CBO

County: Harris

mariea@ymcahouston.org

Term: January 1, 2023 thru December 31, 2024

BOUSE, SARA

Alvin Community College
3110 Mustang Road
Alvin, TX 77511
(281) 732-8389 – cell

Category: Education

County: Brazoria

sbouse@alvincollege.edu

Term: January 1, 2023 thru December 31, 2024

BOWLES, CARL

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

Category: Business

County: Waller

carl@bowleswomack.com

Term: January 1, 2023 thru December 31, 2024

CAVAZOS, MARY HELEN

M.H. Cavazos & Associates
1124 W. Clay Street
Houston, TX 77019
(713) 807-1115

Category: Business

County: Harris

mhcavazos@aol.com

Term: January 1, 2023 thru December 31, 2024

COCKRELL, DORIAN

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

Category: Business

County: City of Houston

Dorian.cockrell@jpmchase.com

Term: January 1, 2023 thru December 31, 2024

GAY, ANTHONY

FET
12735 Dairy Ashford
Stafford, TX 77477
(713) 478-8504

Category: Business

County: Harris

anthonymg@gmail.com

Term: January 1, 2023 thru December 31, 2024

GONZALEZ, MELISSA

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

Category: Education

County: Harris

melissa.gonzalez@lonestar.edu

Term: January 1, 2023 thru December 31, 2024

GUIDO, CHERYL

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

Category: State Agency

cheryl.guido@twc.texas.gov

Term: January 1, 2023 thru December 31, 2024

GUTHRIE, MARK

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

Category: Business

County: City of Houston

mguthrie@winstead.com

Term: January 1, 2023 thru December 31, 2024

HENDERSON, BOBBIE ALLEN

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

Category: ABE

County: City of Houston

bobbie.henderson@att.net

Term: January 1, 2024 thru December 31, 2025

HESKAMP, ALAN

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

Category: Business

County: Wharton

aheskamp@sbcglobal.net

Term: January 1, 2024 thru December 31, 2025

JACKSON, GUY ROBERT

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

Category: Business

County: Chambers

grj@ccac.net

Term: January 1, 2023 thru December 31, 2024

JONES, LAVONE

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

Category: Business

County: City of Houston

Lavone_jones@comcast.com

Term: January 1, 2023 thru December 31, 2024

KARR, DOUG

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

Category: Business

County: Montgomery

raiderkarr@aol.com

Term: January 1, 2024 thru December 31, 2025

KERR, BRETT

Calpine
23915 Travis Trail
Katy, TX 77494
(713) 858-1036

Category: Business

County: City of Houston

bkerr@calpine.com

Term: January 1, 2023 thru December 31, 2024

LaBROSKI, JEFFREY

Plumbers Local Union No. 68
502 Link Road
P.O. Box 8746
Houston, TX 77249
(713) 869-3592

Category: Labor

County: City of Houston

ski@plu68.com

Term: January 1, 2023 thru December 31, 2024

LARMOND, SHAREEN

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

Category: Business

County: Harris

shareen@wgma.org

Term: January 1, 2023 thru December 31, 2024

LOVE, MICHAEL

Houston Independent School District
4400 West 18th Street
Houston, TX 77092
(713) 556-6715

Category: Education

County: Harris

mlove@houstonisd.org

Term: January 1, 2023 thru December 31, 2024

LOWE, JONATHAN

International Alliance of Theatrical
Stage Employees
3030 North Freeway
Houston, TX 77009
(713) 697-3999
Category: Labor
County: City of Houston
jonrlowe@yahoo.com
Term: January 1, 2023 thru December 31, 2024

MAHAGAOKAR, RAJEN

Grid United
Chief Financial Officer
(281) 300-3926
Category: Business
County: Harris
rajenmahagaokar@gmail.com
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
Category: Business
County: City of Houston
ekimcmuyan@gmail.com
Term: January 1, 2023 thru December 31, 2024

OSER, MARGARET

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

OZUNA, ADRIAN

Prosperity Bank
80 Sugar Creek Center Blvd
Sugar Land, TX 77478
(832) 259-7692
Category: Business
County: Harris
adrian.ozuna@prosperitybankusa.com
Term: January 1, 2023 thru December 31, 2024

PUENTE, PAUL J.

Houston Gulf Coast Building and
Construction Trades Council
1301 West 13th St, Suite D
Deer Park, TX 77536
(713) 926-4433
Category: Labor
County: City of Houston
paul@hgcbctc.org
Term: January 1, 2023 thru December 31, 2024

RILEY, MONICA

The Community Gatekeepers
P.O. Box 2082
Missouri City, TX 77459
(281) 235-3933
Category: CBO
County: Fort Bend
monicacriley7@gmail.com
Term: January 1, 2023 thru December 31, 2024

RODRIGUEZ, MELANIE

Elevate Latinas, LLC
444 N Everton St
Houston, TX 77033
(713) 899-6559

Category: Business

County: City of Houston

melanie@elevatelatinas.com

Term: January 1, 2023 thru December 31, 2024

RUPANI, NASRUDDIN

Worlds Gold & Diamonds, Inc.
7500 Bellaire Blvd #900
Houston, TX 77036
(713) 995-7033

Category: Public Assistance

County: City of Houston

rupani@locostleader.com

Term: January 1, 2024 thru December 31, 2025

SARKAR, MOU

Pearland Economic Development
Corporation
3519 Liberty Drive, Suite 350
Pearland, TX 77581
(281) 997-3007

Category: Economic Development

County: Brazoria

msarkar@pearlandedc.com

Term: January 1, 2024 thru December 31, 2025

SCHEINER, DANIELLE

Conroe Economic Development Council
300 W Davis Street
Conroe, TX 77301
(936) 522-3529

Category: Economic Development

County: Montgomery

scheiner@conroeedc.org

Term: January 1, 2024 thru December 31, 2025

SCHMIDT, KERI

Fort Bend Chamber of Commerce
445 Commerce Green Boulevard
Sugar Land, TX 77478
(281) 491-0216

Fax: (281) 491-0112

Category: Business

County: Fort Bend

keri@fortbendcc.org

Term: January 1, 2023 thru December 31, 2024

SEGOVIA, VALERIE GARCIA

Director, Outreach & Education, TEES
Nuclear Engineering & Science Center
1095 Nuclear Science Road
College Station, TX 77843
(979) 240-5005

Category: Education

County: Matagorda

vsegovia@tamu.edu

valeriegsegovia@gmail.com

Term: January 1, 2024 thru December 31, 2025

SHAW, RICHARD

Harris County Labor Assembly,
AFL-CIO Council
1707 Prism Lane
Houston, TX 77043-3344
(713) 240-2472

Category: Labor

County: City of Houston

shawtrek@aol.com

Term: January 1, 2023 thru December 31, 2024

STALEY, GIL

The Woodlands Area Economic
Development Partnership
2107 Research Forest Drive, Suite 150
The Woodlands, TX 77380
(281) 363-8130

Category: Business

County: Montgomery

gil.staley@edpartnership.net

Term: January 1, 2024 thru December 31, 2025

STREETER, NICOLE

Greater Houston Black Chamber
 12002 Linden Walk Lane
 Pearland, TX 77584
 (713) 514-6899

Category: Business

County: City of Houston

astreeter35@hotmail.com

Term: January 1, 2024 thru December 31, 2025

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

TAYLOR, SANDRA

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

Category: Child Care

County: Fort Bend

tinytoesacademy@yahoo.com

Term: January 1, 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

VAZQUEZ, LIZANDRA

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

Category: State Agency

lizandra.vazquez@wrksolutions.com

Term: January 1, 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

Deborah Duke, Administrative Coordinator

Houston-Galveston Area Council

3555 Timmons Lane, Suite 120

P.O. Box 22777

Houston, TX 77227-2777

(713) 627-3200

Fax: (713) 993-4578

<http://www.wrksolutions.com>

GULF COAST WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD COMMITTEES

Audit/Monitoring

- Guy Robert Jackson – Chair
- Carl Bowles – Vice Chair
- Sara Bouse
- 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 Shaw
- Mike Webster

Education

- Bobbie Henderson – Chair
- Doug Karr – Vice Chair
- Willie Alexander
- Shonda Below
- Sara Bouse
- 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

- Sara Bouse – Chair
- Jeff LaBroski – Vice Chair
- Willie Alexander
- Helen Cavazos
- Cheryl Guido
- Alan Heskamp
- Mark Guthrie
- Bobbie Henderson
- Guy Robert Jackson
- Shareen Larmond
- Mou Sarkar
- Danielle Scheiner
- 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
- Sara Bouse
- 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
- Sara Bouse
- 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	08/06/24	10/01/24	12/03/24
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

Update for June 2024

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.

Career Services Committee

Update for April 2024

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.

Audit and Monitoring Committee

Update for May 2024

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 our continuous effort to enhance our system's 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 at 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 gains 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): We continue 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, we 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, we can create a dynamic scorecard that accurately reflects our 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: Our dialogue led us to conclude that we need 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. We propose 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:

We identified several opportunities to leverage technology to streamline our 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 our measures with program success is crucial. Our 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). We 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

We propose 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.

Education Committee

Update for June 2024

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, we 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, we are prioritizing the inclusion of children from our waiting list to maintain service continuity and efficiency.

After conducting a thorough analysis of family renewal frequencies and our data trends, we found that approximately 60% of applications are approved monthly. If this trend continues, we project 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, we have 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. We 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. We have updated our 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, we 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

We 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, we are conducting an analysis to determine the staffing needs at the Support Center for the upcoming year to strengthen our customer service. Our 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. We 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, we 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.

We 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.

Communications Committee

Update for May 2024

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.

Procurement Committee

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.

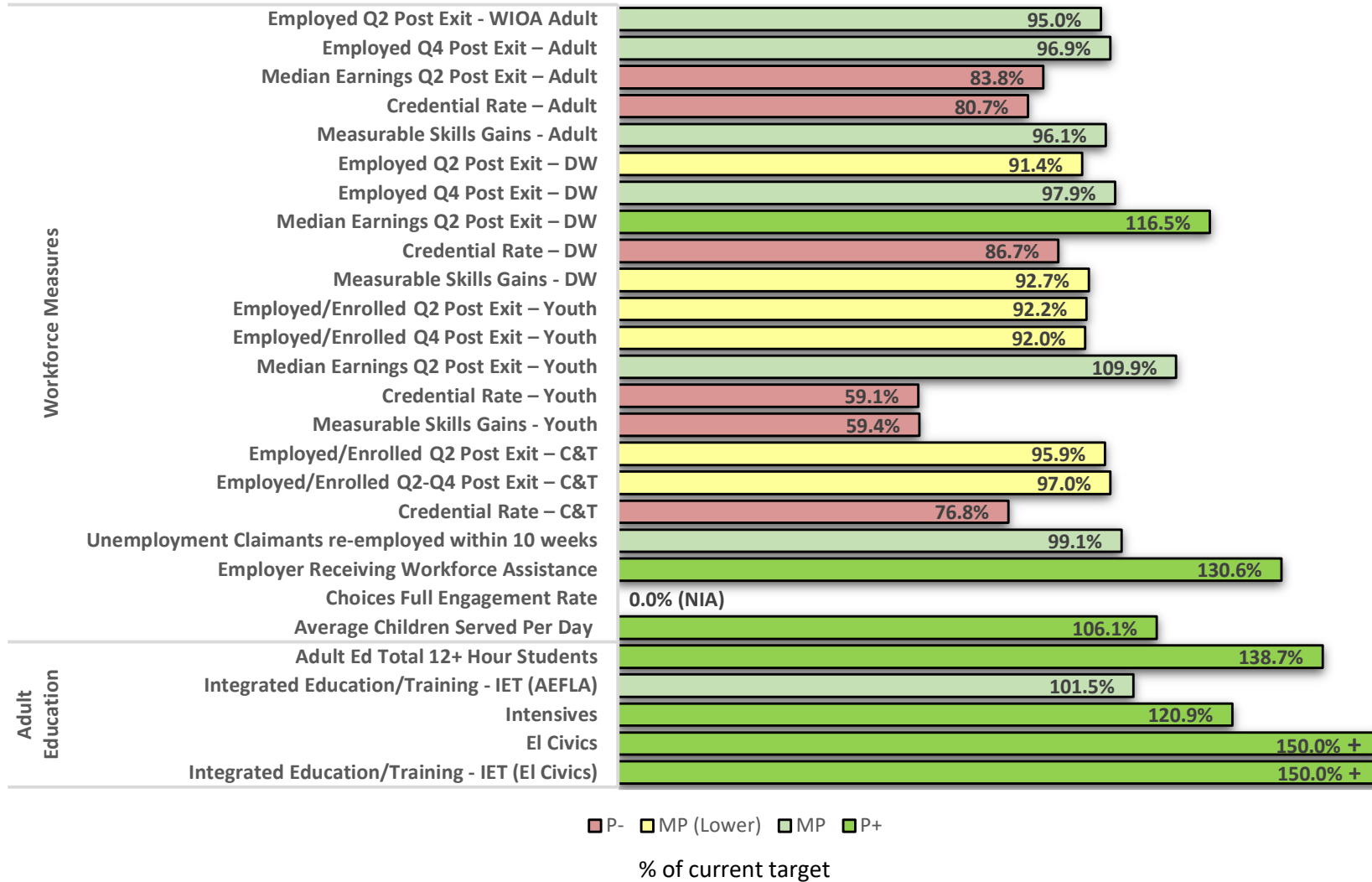
<u>Provider</u>	<u>Proposed Range</u>	
Adult Education Center	\$356,584	\$393,000
BakerRipley	\$356,584	\$393,000
Houston Community College	\$4,060,800	\$4,467,000
Lone Star College	\$2,292,938	\$2,523,000
San Jacinto College	\$1,296,000	\$1,426,000
Region 6 ESC	\$1,885,469	\$2,075,000
Subtotal	\$10,248,372	\$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.

Production Measures

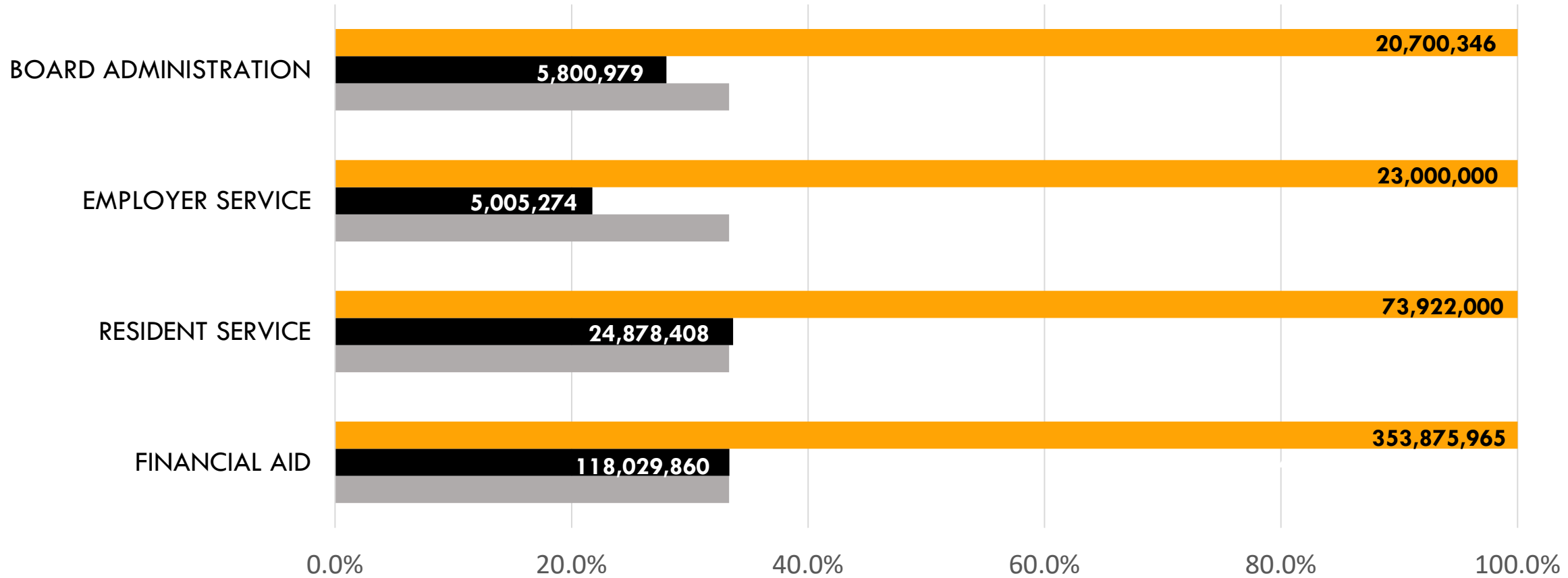
October 2023 to April 2024



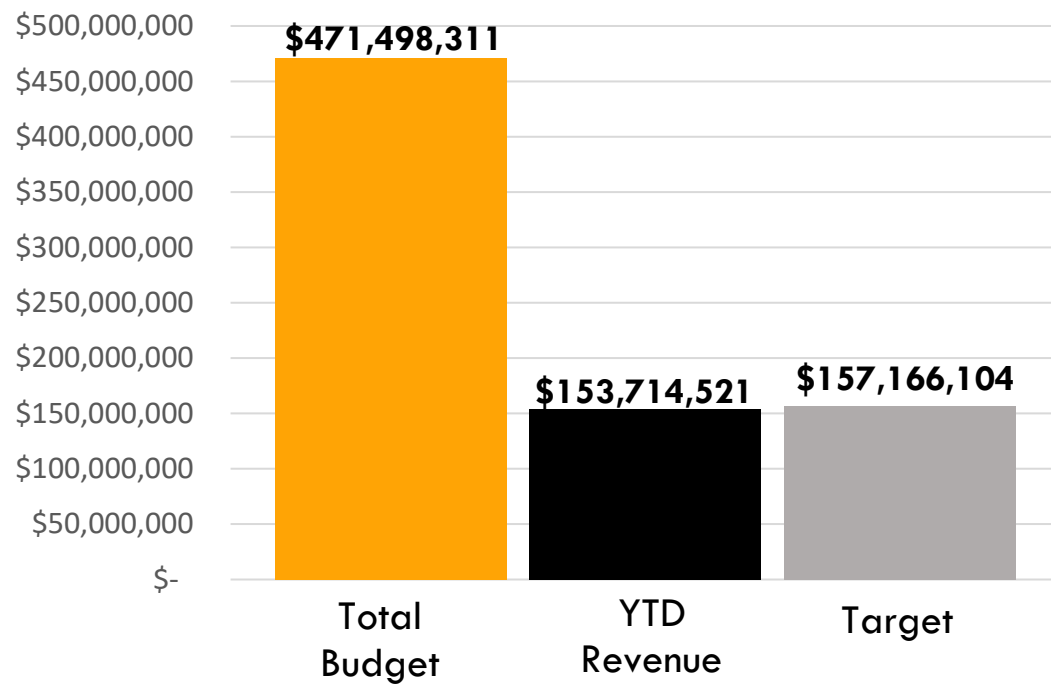
Gulf Coast Workforce Financial Status Report

For the 4 months ending April 30, 2024

■ Budget ■ Expenses ■ Target



Workforce Revenue



System Expenses

- FINANCIAL AID - EARLY EDUCATION \$109,600,619
- FINANCIAL AID - TRAINING & SUPPORT \$8,429,241
- CAREER SERVICES \$18,409,149
- EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT \$2,191,684
- QUALITY IMPROVEMENT \$2,813,590
- ADULT EDUCATION \$6,469,259

