



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

To: Gulf Coast Workforce Board Members
From: Executive Director Juliet K. Stipeche
Date: September 27, 2024
Subject: Upcoming October 1, 2024, Board Meeting

With fall officially underway, here's to pumpkin spice lattes and hopes of cooler weather. In preparing for our Career Services Committee, I learned that September serves as Workforce Development Professionals Month, and while there are only a few days left in September, I encourage you to take a moment to personally thank a workforce development professional. I also want to express my gratitude for your leadership and service to the Gulf Coast Workforce Board.

Please note that our board meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, October 1, 2024, at 10:00 a.m. at the Houston-Galveston Area Council, 3555 Timmons Lane, Houston, Texas, 77027, in conference room A/B/C. Please be reminded that the meeting will be conducted in full compliance with the Texas Open Meetings Act.

Our session will commence with Board Chair, Mark Guthrie recognizing the contribution of local employers who participated in this year's Paving the Pathway program, followed by his Board Chair report. Afterward, I will offer my Executive Director's report, and Mr. Chuck Wemple, Executive Director of the Houston-Galveston Area Council, will provide an agency update. The agenda also includes the following committee reports:

Chair Guy Jackson's Audit and Monitoring report,
Chair Adrian Ozuna's Career Services report,
Chair Alan Heskamp's Employer Engagement report, and
Chair Doug Karr's Communication report.

We will also hear from Dr. Bobbie Henderson, Chair of the Education Committee, who will brief us on the committee's activities and present for your consideration a proposal to increase paid provider closure days. Chair Guthrie will present the



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proposed 2024-2029 Gulf Coast Workforce Board Strategic Plan for adoption in Chair Carl Bowles' absence, but we will share a pre-recorded audio message from Chair Bowles. I want to extend my heartfelt gratitude to Chair Bowles, the Strategic Planning Committee, and all Board members for your leadership and commitment in finalizing this ambitious plan. I also wish to recognize Outreach Strategists and Board staff for their exceptional work and contribution to this process.

Our meeting will also feature important presentations on our system's performance metrics and expenditure reports, led by Mr. Philip Garcia and Ms. Brandi Brown. We will also receive a local economic update from Mr. Parker Harvey and Mr. Mohammad Ahmadizadeh, followed by a brief communication and media update from Mr. Russell Tomlin.

Before the Board meeting, please join us at 9:00 a.m. for a SEAL-A-Bration of Summer and the Paving the Pathways Breakfast. This event is an opportunity to celebrate this year's accomplishments and honor the employers who participated in our programs and to hear firsthand from a few youth participants about their impactful experiences.

Thank you for your ongoing dedication to our mission, and I look forward to our time together on Tuesday. As always, please feel free to contact me with any questions or comments.

Wishing you a restful weekend.



GULF COAST WORKFORCE BOARD

AGENDA

**Tuesday, October 1, 2024, at 10:00 a.m.
2nd Floor, A/B/C, 3555 Timmons Lane
Houston, Texas 77027**

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

- 1. Call to Order**
- 2. Roll Call**
- 3. Adopt Agenda**
- 4. Public Comment**
- 5. Review of the August 2024 Meeting Minutes**
- 6. Declare Conflicts of Interest**
- 7. Reports:**
 - a. Paving the Pathway: Recognition of the contributions of local employers to this program which empowers disabled youth (Contact: Board Chair Mark Guthrie),
 - b. Board Chair's Remarks: (Board Chair Mark Guthrie),
 - c. Executive Director's Report: (Juliet Stipeche),
 - d. H-GAC Executive Director's Report: (Chuck Wemple),
 - e. Audit and Monitoring Committee Report: (Committee Chair Guy Jackson),
 - f. Career Services Committee Report: (Committee Chair Adrian Ozuna),
 - g. Employer Engagement Committee Report: (Committee Chair Alan Heskamp), and
 - h. Communications Committee Report: (Committee Chair Doug Karr).

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

8. Action Items:

- a. Education Committee Report and Action Item: Briefing of the Education Committee meeting from Chair Dr. Bobbie Henderson including discussion, consideration, and possible action on the following:
 - i. Increase Paid Provider Closure Days.
- b. Strategic Planning Committee Action Item: Briefing from Board Chair Mark Guthrie on the process to create the proposed 2024-2029 Strategic Plan including discussion, consideration, and possible action on the following:
 - i. Adoption of 2024-2029 Gulf Coast Workforce Board's Strategic Plan.

9. Information:

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

10. Presentations:

- a. A Look at the Economy: Update on the Labor Market (Parker Harvey and Mohammad Ahmadizadeh) and
- b. Communications and Media Update: (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, September 30, 2024**, to Dr. Maria Franco Cortes at maria.cortes@wrksolutions.net.

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

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

Equal opportunity is the law.

Gulf Coast Workforce Board – Workforce Solutions
3555 Timmons Lane, Suite 120, Houston, Texas 77027
P.O. Box 22777 Houston, Texas 77227-2777
713.627.3200
1.888.469.5627 toll-free
www.wrksolutions.com

**GULF COAST WORKFORCE BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, AUGUST 6, 2024**

- 1. Call to Order:** The Tuesday, August 6, 2024, meeting of the Gulf Coast Workforce Board (GCWB) called to order at 10:02 a.m. by Board Chair Mark Guthrie. The meeting was held on the 2nd Floor, A-C, 3555 Timmons Lane, Houston, TX 77027.
- 2. Roll Call:** Desmond Taylor, Program Administrator of the GCWB called the roll. The following members of the Gulf Coast Workforce Board were present:

| | | |
|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| Arcos, Marie | Jackson, Guy Robert | Riley, Monica |
| Bartlett, Anne | Jones, Lavone | Sarkar, Mou |
| Beard, Peter | Karr, Doug | Schmidt, Keri |
| Below, Shonda | LaBroski, Jeff | Shaw, Richard |
| Bowles, Carl | Larmond, Shareen | Staley, Gil |
| Cavazos, M. Helen | Love, Michael | Taylor, Sandra |
| Guido, Cheryl | Melton, Edward | Vazquez, Lizandra |
| Guthrie, Mark | Oser, Margaret | Watson, Carolyn |
| Henderson, Bobbie | Ozuna, Adrian | Yu, Bin |
| Heskamp, Alan | Puente, Paul | |

Board Chair Guthrie determined a quorum was present.

- 3. Adopt Agenda:** Board Chair Guthrie presented the August 6, 2024, agenda. A motion was made and seconded to adopt the agenda as presented. The motion passed.
- 4. Public Comment:** There were no public comments.
- 5. Review of the June 2024 Meeting Minutes:** The minutes of the June 4, 20024, GCWB meeting were distributed electronically to all members before the August 8, 2024, meeting. A motion was made and seconded to adopt the minutes as presented. The motion passed.
- 6. Declare Conflicts of Interest:** Chair Guthrie requested that members declare conflicts with any agenda item. Board Member Guy Jackson identified a conflict

of interest related to item 8a-2 and Board Member Carolyn Watson identified a conflict of interest related to item 8a-1. Chair Guthrie reminded Board Members that they could also declare conflicts with items as they were taken up.

7. Reports:

- a. **Board Chair's Report:** Board Chair Guthrie opened his remarks by asking that the Board pay tribute to the late Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee with a moment of silence in her honor.

Second, he announced the resignations of Sara Bouse and Danielle Scheiner from the Gulf Coast Workforce Board and thanked them for their service and contributions. He also announced the new Employer Engagement Committee Chair, Mr. Alan Heskamp and thanked him for his willingness to serve.

Third, Chair Guthrie thanked the members who attended the Strategic Plan Workshop prior to the August board meeting and requested that the Board review and provide edits, comments or feedback on the final draft of the new strategic plan by September 1 so that the Board could make a decisive vote on the plan during the October 1, 2024 meeting.

Fourth, he reported that the Senate HELP Committee was working on a WIOA reauthorization bill and considering ASWA, the WIOA reauthorization bill passed by the House. He informed the Board that he attended a National Association of Workforce Boards (NAWB) Policy Committee meeting in Washington on June 18, where participants heard directly from both the lead Republican and the lead Democrat staff of the Senate HELP Committee, who were very deferential to NAWB staff. Soon after the meeting, the Senate HELP Committee released a discussion draft of its WIOA reauthorization bill. Of importance, the Senate version does not include the 50 percent training requirement for spending WIOA adult funding that was contained in ASWA; however, it does include the increased statewide set-aside of an additional 10 percent from WIOA adult funding. Mr. Guthrie reported that he met with staff from Senator Cornyn's office about ASWA and WIOA reauthorization and personally delivered a letter and materials about ASWA and WIOA reauthorization to

the offices of 11 of the approximately 20 senators on the HELP Committee as well as with Senator Cruz's office. The Senate HELP committee has indicated there may be an appetite to continue negotiations and potentially bring up a new proposal for formal consideration when Congress returns from August recess, but Chair Guthrie noted that this might not happen until after the national elections. Additionally, of note, on August 1, the Senate Appropriations Committee passed a bill that would, if enacted, provide level funding for programs under the Department of Labor, including funds for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) for FY25. Chair Guthrie expressed optimism about the Senate's spending bill compared to the House's appropriations bill, which proposed deep cuts for and/or elimination of programs including WIOA Youth Job Training and a significant reduction of WIOA adult funding.

In response to the Board Chair's report, Board Member Peter Beard inquired if Chair Guthrie heard of the clause in the HELP draft that would bar participation in the workforce system by any employer with any record of any labor law violations, no matter how small. Mr. Guthrie responded that he had not heard of the provision but would report back.

On another note, Mr. Guthrie shared with the Board his attendance at the NAWB Board of Directors summer meeting in New Bern, North Carolina. The meeting included education and observations about rural workforce development, tours to the factories of Parker Boats and Veneer Technologies, and a community college's trade training facilities.

Lastly, Mr. Guthrie announced the Texas Association of Workforce Boards quarterly meeting will be held on August 15 at the Southeast Career Office. All board members are invited to attend.

Chair Guthrie concluded his report and no action was taken.

- b. **Executive Director's Report (Juliet Stipeche):** Executive Director Juliet Stipeche began her report by offering her condolences to the late Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee and community activist Mr. Felix Fraga.

She continued her report by highlighting her experience at the Governor's Healthcare Workforce Taskforce where she had the opportunity to share Houston's innovation and partnerships with leading healthcare providers such as MD Anderson, UTMB, HCA, specifically the HCA partnership with the tri-agency convener grant that has provided career opportunities to most, if not all the participants as a result of the "earn and learn" program. Many have now received scholarships to begin their career with HCA.

Additionally, Mrs. Stipeche highlighted the partnerships forged after Hurricane Beryl. For example, Workforce Solutions opened an office in collaboration with Lake Jackson-Bay City offices to service the City of Sargent, TX. This partnership ignited the idea of a W.O.W. (Workforce on Wheels). These mobile opportunities will allow us to travel the region with job fairs and other resources in a non-traditional yet effective means to service people in these communities during normal events and post disasters.

Executive Director Stipeche also highlighted several media engagements she and the Workforce Solutions team have been able to participate in, many of which are highlighted in the Communications Committee report. Moreover, she mentioned a panel discussion regarding Hispanics in Energy and how to properly prepare that demographic for jobs in the Energy sector, particularly the high velocity hydrogen hub. She also mentioned the Board's application for a Department of Energy's REDI grant in hopes of replicating the Tri-Agency convener work in transitional energy careers.

She expressed gratitude to County Judge KP George of Fort Bend for connecting members of her staff to engage Fort Bend's Office of Emergency Management to discuss the aftermath of Hurricane Beryl, to obtain relevant maps, and to enhance post disaster recovery efforts. Furthermore, an application was filed with the TWC for disaster recovery dislocated workers due to the spring storms and derecho; Gulf Coast Workforce Board was awarded \$3.6 million grant to be utilized for the derecho recovery but can also be used for Hurricane Beryl recovery efforts. She advised that we are awaiting notification regarding our disaster recovery dislocated worker grant associated with Hurricane Beryl.

Executive Director Stipeche concluded by thanking all the Board members who participated in the various committee meetings as well as the Strategic Planning committee meeting.

In response to Executive Director Stipeche's report, Board Member Alan Heskamp inquired on how disaster funds received by the Gulf Coast Workforce Board have been used in our 13-county region. Executive Director Stipeche responded, "Traditionally, we assist several cities and counties with debris pick-up or humanitarian assistance. However, after visiting the Fort Bend County Office of Emergency Management, recently, we have learned there is a need for training within Emergency Management Offices, specifically utilizing GIS and surveying. Additionally, we are looking for ways to assist several areas within the region on upskilling community health workers by leveraging FEMA, SBA, and other federal and state agencies that provide funding post disasters."

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

- c. **H-GAC Executive Director's Report (Chuck Wemple):** H-GAC Executive Director Chuck Wemple opened his remarks by thanking Juliet Stipeche and the Human Services team for their efforts on leading the agency's disaster recovery response, particularly by securing grant funding to assist displaced workers.

Additionally, Mr. Wemple expressed his appreciation to the Workforce Board staff that responded to the Community of Sargent, TX in Matagorda County with their relief efforts. He emphasized the importance of H-GAC's focus on working more closely with local governments, especially in preparation for and post disasters.

Mr. Wemple also discussed the agency's transportation initiatives. Over the next year, the agency will be partnering with local governments to assist with up to \$1.5 billion in construction projects throughout the 13-county region.

Lastly, he announced that the month of October kicks-off the H-GAC budget cycle. Of importance, there is a major procurement starting at the end of August or no later than September on new software, On Board, that will be monumental for the operations and efficiencies of the Gulf Coast Workforce Board.

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

- d. **Strategic Planning Committee Report (Committee Chair Carl Bowles):** Chair Bowles thanked the committee for its efforts on producing the draft Strategic Plan document. He reminded all Board members to review the

document in its entirety and submit comments/revisions by September 1 to Juliet Stipeche. Mr. Bowles looks forward to approving the final strategic plan document during the October 1 Board meeting.

Additionally, Mr. Bowles highlighted an overview of the document by focusing on the Executive Summary at length as well as the four goals of the strategic plan:

1. Support business-forward strategies to fuel the regional economy.
2. Improve service delivery utilizing technology and innovative solutions.
3. Serve as a convener and forge strategic partnerships.
4. Increase awareness of services and opportunities.

Chair Bowles concluded his report and no action was taken.

e. Communications Committee Report (Committee Chair Doug Karr):

Chair Doug Karr reported on the July 31 committee meeting. A few takeaways included key media engagement opportunities that occurred in the months of June and July:

1. Fox 26 Interview (June 26, 2024): Edwin Ducos, a supervisor with Workforce Solutions – Northline, appeared live on Fox 26, engaging 33,773 viewers and generating an estimated advertising value equivalent (AVE) of \$15,558.27. This segment highlighted the board's ongoing initiatives and showcased its leadership.
2. ABC 13 "Who's Hiring" Job Fair (June 27, 2024): This job fair, centered on skilled trades and construction jobs, attracted 279 attendees and 22 employers, leading to 115 interviews and 8 onsite hires. The event was covered extensively, with an AVE of \$74,868.87 and a viewership of 384,159, reinforcing the board's role in facilitating employment opportunities.
3. Disaster Unemployment Assistance Coverage: Juliet Stipeche and Maria Franco provided essential updates on disaster unemployment assistance on ABC13 (July 12) and Telemundo Houston (July 16). These segments reached a combined audience of 106,687, with an AVE totaling \$40,122.67, demonstrating the board's responsiveness to community needs in times of crisis.
4. ABC 13 "Who's Hiring" Job Fair (July 18, 2024): In partnership with Combined Arms, this event focused on veteran employment and was held at TXRX Labs. It saw a substantial turnout of 1,100 attendees, with extensive media coverage resulting in an AVE of \$104,020.48 and a viewership of 329,222.

Cumulative Impact:

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

Chair Karr emphasized these media engagements effectively maintained the board's public presence and highlighted its commitment to workforce development and community service.

Social Media Update: Additionally, Chair Karr highlighted the four main social media platforms the Board currently uses: Facebook, Instagram, X (Twitter), and LinkedIn. Of that, our primary social media platforms have garnered roughly 28,769 followers, with the largest audience coming from Facebook, but the largest increase in followers/activity being that of LinkedIn over the last two years with a +4,831. Chair Karr encouraged all Board members to visit the sites to see the interactions and positive news being shared. You can find us on social media at:

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

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

Website Update: He also highlighted the abbreviated presentation by H-GAC's Communications Director, Miguel Segura, regarding progress on the Gulf Coast Workforce Board's new website. We are currently in contract negotiations with Planetarium and conducting a content audit of our current website. We anticipate our new website launching in eight to ten months or in the spring of 2025.

Procurement Update: Lastly, Chair Karr reported on AJ Dean's update to the committee on its communication and outreach procurement process. Outreach Strategists received the highest score after a diligent evaluation and interview process. He mentioned the procurement committee will be

recommending that the Board approve a contract with Outreach Strategists during the August 2024 board meeting.

Chair Karr ended his report by commending Chairman Bowles and the Strategic Planning Committee in collaboration with Outreach Strategists for the hundreds of hours put into the thought and production of the strategic plan. He strongly encouraged all Board members to take seriously their responsibility to review the entire document and provide comments for the final product.

Chair Karr concluded his report and no action was taken.

f. Career Services Committee Report (Committee Chair Adrian Ozuna):

Chair Ozuna reported that the Career Services Committee met twice since the June Board meeting, June 13, and July 24. During the June 13 meeting, the committee began to look at a framework for career offices and the traffic patterns. It was recommended for the committee to consider virtual offices to increase the amount of traffic experienced in previous years and better manage the demands from customers. Additionally, during the June 13 meeting, staff presented an analysis showing no clear correlation between unemployment rates and traffic to career services. These findings suggested that traditional metrics might no longer accurately reflect service demand, highlighting the growing importance of virtual offices. Also, conversations ensued regarding the demographics, traffic patterns, and lease agreements existing for each career office, leading to the idea of commercial versus office spaces, with a focus on cost, accessibility, IT integration, staff needs, and sustainability for delivering career services.

During the July 24 meeting, Chair Ozuna requested Executive Director Stipeche to provide the committee with an update on the impact to the career offices because of Hurricane Beryl. Executive Director Stipeche noted all but one office was able to return to regular operations, roughly a week after the hurricane hit.

It was also reported that a Career Office Workgroup embarked on a comprehensive tour of various career office locations to measure what footprints are needed for offices moving forward. This includes square footage for people and staff to deliver and receive services. Again, he highlighted the difference between commercial versus office space as well as virtual spaces. Additionally, the GCWB staff recommended sunsetting the Clear Lake Office and consolidating the Astrodome and Westheimer offices due to foot traffic, cost-savings, and other efficiencies.

AJ Dean reported to the committee during the July 24 meeting a comprehensive analysis of WIOA expenses from October 2023 to May 2024, totaling \$34,937,922. He detailed expenditures across the WIOA Adult, Youth, and Dislocated Worker categories, including personnel costs, contracted services, facilities, equipment, communications, travel, insurance, office supplies, and other support services. This breakdown provided a clear view of the Board's financial management and resource allocation to determine how to best service the different areas across the 13-counties and their respective demographics.

A number of Board members asked questions of Chair Ozuna's report. Board Member Carolyn Watson inquired on the level of foot traffic and demographic composition of who is showing up to the career offices, particularly the ones being considered for sunset? Board staff Russell Tomlin responded by stating there has been a drop in foot traffic, specifically at the Clear Lake, Astrodome, and Westheimer offices. Most of the offices were built to accommodate 1,000 visits a day; unfortunately, we are not seeing this amount of traffic and are considering shifting to new models to better serve these communities. Chair Ozuna also added the importance of establishing data-driven parameters to determine how we do things at Career Offices. Board Member Watson followed up inquiring about the various models: traditional, storefront, and virtual office spaces and how attractive these options are to the different demographics Workforce Solutions seeks to serve? Chair Ozuna emphasized part of the reason for considering the shift is cost as well as not fully utilizing the spaces we currently occupy in their entirety; instead, we may be able to create cost-savings by renting office spaces where we will not be responsible for maintenance, security, and other operational costs.

Board Chair Guthrie informed the Board there would be no action taken today on whether to sunset the Clear Lake Office and consolidate the Astrodome and Westheimer Offices; rather, this was a point of information to the Board that the staff is seeking to move forward with considering changes in our Career Office models due to the efficiencies and cost-savings outlined in data analysis provided to the Board.

Board Member Anne Bartlett inquired of Chair Ozuna if there was an update on the pilot project at Alvin Community College hosting a Workforce Solutions effort, and if this model was being considered to scale to other applications? Executive Director Stipeche provided an update of a pilot program at Houston Community College. Director Stipeche reported that there had been conversations with Alvin

Community College, but no formal interlocal agreement has been signed, and the staff wanted to explore further the impacts of the HCC pilot at the Southwest campus. However, the staff continues to assess this model and is reviewing best practices in other parts of the country on the co-location idea as well as collaborating with community partners. Chair Ozuna stressed the importance of working with local elected officials to identify spaces within their jurisdictions such as community centers to co-locate and place staff to meet the needs of the community, while helping cut operational costs. Board staff Russell Tomlin added that one of the suggestions by the Career Office Committee was to bring together local stakeholders to discuss future partnerships and co-locations.

Board Member Peter Beard inquired on staff capacity, competencies, and skillsets needed to deliver the services that have been outlined in the Strategic Plan. Chair Ozuna and Russell Tomlin responded that there is a parallel path: investing in physical office locations as well as in a centralized function where staff perform at their highest capability and strengthen training for customer assessment and case management. All these plans will align with the Strategic Plan and will be outlined in the RFP being issued next year.

Board Member Mary Helen Cavazos recommended when and if all the above-mentioned occurs, the communication process to the community and clients we serve is vital to our organization's success.

Chair Ozuna added from his banking background, when sunsetting a location, there ought to be very specific protocols followed, particularly regarding outreach in the determination and notification processes. Board Member Beard emphasized the parallel between financial services and banking which have moved away from physical locations while doubling down on people. Therefore, this moment is critical for the organization as we assess the skills needed in our career offices centers. Executive Director Stipeche thanked the Board members for the healthy discussion around the importance of understanding the assessment of the staff at the Workforce Solutions offices as well as aligning it with the Strategic Plan in anticipation for the rollout of the career office RFPs and upscaling our staff to meet the evolving needs of the workforce.

Chair Ozuna raised a point of information based on the staff and committee's recommendation to sunset the Clear Lake Office due to traffic issues and no Saturday availability. Russell Tomlin added that while the team has attempted for months to make this location work, it's simply not a viable location for our customers and the majority of the customers in

that area are utilizing the virtual services. The staff will continue to look for innovative ways to continue servicing that community in collaboration with the United Way.

Chair Ozuna also raised a point of information regarding the proposed consolidation of the Astrodome and Westheimer offices in approximately 13 months due to lease concerns (Astrodome) and A/C and maintenance issues (Westheimer). Russell Tomlin added that like the Clear Lake Office, both locations were built for large numbers of foot traffic, daily, but over several months, the staff has seen a major decrease in foot traffic. The goal is to identify another location along the Southwest/Gulfton community to continue servicing those communities.

Board Chair Guthrie entertained questions regarding the consolidation of the Astrodome and Westheimer offices. Board Member Paul Puente commented that it is important that our footprint/offices need to evolve just as many of the communities we serve are evolving. He further emphasized the importance of being able to gravitate our services to the needs of the communities we serve. Board Member Beard supports the idea but wants to caution that we remain agile and adaptable to changing trends as staff sees fit. Board Chair Guthrie reminded the Board that sunsetting the Clear Lake Office will allow new opportunities to co-locate in areas across the region that don't currently have permanent career offices like Galveston Island as well as parts of Galveston County on the mainland. Board Member Cavazos interjected with a point of clarification: "Are we getting more online services in the areas that we are looking to sunset?" The response was yes. Board Member Monica Riley inquired if there is any data that shows why the foot traffic is lessening or is the employment rate improving in these areas that we are looking to sunset/consolidate? Board Chair Guthrie mentioned the sunset and consolidation decisions are mainly credited to lack of foot traffic at these offices, more customers taking advantage of the online services, the footprint of these offices being too large, and the leases and maintenance costs are becoming too expensive. Board Member Riley also inquired about hybrid options for career offices near colleges/universities including community colleges that students and community members can access. The idea is currently being considered. Board Chair Guthrie mentioned all co-location options are on the table, not just in schools but in municipal building, libraries, chamber of commerce/economic development organizations, and several others. Chair Ozuna emphasized the outreach with local elected officials and stakeholders to see what kind of traction we can get in identifying new places to rethink where we can place staff to ensure the entire region is staffed properly. Board Member

Bartlett suggested that the committee brainstorm ideas such as pop-ups, Workforce on Wheels (W.O.W) like what has been occurring at Brazosport Community College to service that community. The idea was received well by the committee chair.

Chair Ozuna concluded his report and no action was taken.

- g. Audit and Monitoring Committee Report (Committee Chair Guy Robert Jackson):** Chairman Guy Jackson reported that the Audit and Monitoring Committee met on July 30.

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

The committee learned from Board staff of the Technical Program Compliance review, outlining the Children’s Learning Institute (CLI) demonstrated strengths with 21 of the 41 targets achieved with 16 other targets to be achieved by the end of September 2024. Chairman Jackson acknowledged there are challenges, most notably, short staffing which has impacted mentor staff’s ability to meet childcare providers’ needs. However, Board staff is working with CLI to ensure adequate staffing to improve financial forecasting.

Financial Aid Payment Office (FAPO):

Chairman Jackson continued with updates about the FAPO remaining compliant with customer recruitment, fact finding reporting, and vendor payments. An inventory was conducted on the cash equivalent cards with no errors identified. However, the committee recommends FAPO develop internal controls and enhance communication protocols with career offices.

Upcoming Reviews:

The fourth-quarter and annual staff testing for the Financial Aid Support Center is in progress, and Board staff is preparing for the PY2025 reviews of Adult Education and Literacy service providers.

Summer Earn and Learn Program Monitoring:

The Monitoring team is wrapping up the Summer Earn and Learn visits. It was reported that between June 17, 2024, and July 23, our monitors traveled to 210 worksites and interviewed 292 participants. The remaining interviews will be completed by Friday, August 9.

Financial Systems

Chairman Jackson continued his report on the financial systems review. Since the last Board meeting, the Board staff received seven (7) draft reports, transmitted three (3) reports to service providers, and one (1) review in progress for FY24.

Draft Reports Received Since the Last Update:

- SERCO of Texas:
 - Finding: Overstated personnel expenditures.
- Alliance for Multicultural Community Services:
 - Findings: Deficiencies in the procurement policy, transactions not recorded in the appropriate period, and timely invoice payments.
- Baker Ripley – AEL (Adult Education & Literacy), Career Office:
 - Findings: Personnel and non-personnel expenditures charged in error and interest expense costs.
- Interfaith of the Woodlands:
 - Findings: Missing timesheet approvals, personnel expenditures non-compliant with policy, and expenditures reported outside of the grant period.
- Equus Career Office:
 - Findings: Inconsistencies between timesheets and time-study documents, and incomplete supporting documentation for personnel and non-personnel expenditures.
- Equus Support Center:
 - Findings: Incomplete supporting documentation for personnel and non-personnel expenditures, as well as variances and misclassifications of personnel expenditures.
- Community Family Centers:
 - Findings: Overstated and understated allocation expenditures, lack of supporting documentation for non-personnel expenditures, travel expenditures more than GSA allowances, and transactions not recorded in the appropriate period.

Reports Transmitted to Service Providers:

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

Review Still in Progress:

- Systemwide Financial Aid Payment Review will be reported during the next Audit and Monitoring Committee (date TBD).

In response to feedback from the Committee, future financial monitoring reports will clearly distinguish between significant findings requiring immediate intervention and minor issues that can be addressed through training and other support measures. To better align with the Audit and Monitoring Committee's expectations, Board staff are committed to developing an enhanced reporting system. This system will provide greater clarity and precision in categorizing findings, ensuring that critical issues are promptly identified and addressed.

Accountability and Improvement Plans

The staff continues to meet with the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) to discuss measurable skills gains and adult median earnings Q2 exit performance.

Texas Workforce Commission Interventions:

Measurable Skills Gain (MSG) (FY23): No updates from TWC since May 2024.

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

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

The overall SNAP E&T testing was above 90%, while two (2) groups were below 95%, which required corrective action plans. As a result, training was conducted for staff and new process was implemented to address these findings. As part of the plan, Chairman Jackson mentioned Quality Assurance will conduct a 90-day desk review to confirm that outreach letters are sent to all customer addresses recorded in Work in Texas.

Gulf Coast Workforce Board Interventions:

Equus - Career Office: Equus is currently under performance improvement plans for Property Management, Choices, Credential Rate, and Measurable Skills Gains. Board staff continues to provide technical assistance and Equus has provided staff training on MSGs, Credentials, and the Choices program.

The downtime of the reporting system has impacted monitoring and performance evaluation. However, Equus continues to ensure proper customer outreach and data entry.

Alliance of Community Assistance Ministries (ACAM): ACAM has signed a contract amendment reducing its enrollment target and related funding due to the challenges procuring new subcontractors.

Compliance and Review Update:

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

- 2024 Texas Workforce Commission Annual Board Review;
- Texas Workforce Commission Pending Reports:
 - Adult Education and Literacy, and
 - Early Childhood Education; and
- Office of Inspector General, WIOA Subrecipient Review, Department of Labor.

Next Meeting

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

Board Chair Guthrie entertained discussion on the Audit and Monitoring Committee.

Board Member Anne Bartlett thanked Chair Jackson and the Audit and Monitoring Committee for providing the map of the Summer Earn and Learn programs as it gave a clear indication to Board members as to where the services are being provided throughout the region.

Chair Jackson concluded his report and no action was taken.

8. Action Items:

a. Procurement Committee Report and Action Items (Committee Chair Dr. Bobbie Henderson): Chair Henderson reported on the Procurement Committee Meeting on July 30 and commended the Board staff, specifically AJ Dean and the program contract managers for their presentations, on the recommendations to award the FY 2025 contracts. Chair Henderson inquired of Board Chair Guthrie how he wanted to proceed with the contract recommendations, individually or collectively. Board Chair Guthrie suggested to vote on the contracts collectively, and if there were questions and/or concerns, Board Members could interject during the process. The response was received favorably.

- i. Outreach and Communication: The committee recommended the Board authorize staff to negotiate a contract with Outreach Strategist not to exceed \$900,000. We can renew this contract for three (3) additional years subject to satisfactory performance and Board approval.
- ii. Career Offices: The committee recommended the Board authorize staff to negotiate the 2024-2025 Career Office contracts with BakerRipley, Interfaith of the Woodlands, and Equus, incorporating and not to exceed the proposed ranges described in the table below and in total amount not to exceed \$54,000,000. This will be the final renewal option available under the most recent procurement.

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

- iii. Employer Engagement: The committee recommended the Board authorize staff to negotiate a one-year contract with SERCO in the amount not to exceed \$9,000,000. This is the first proposed renewal, and we will have the option to renew this contract two (2) additional years subject to satisfactory performance and approval from the Board.
- iv. Next Generation Youth Initiative: The committee recommended the Board authorize staff to negotiate contracts with SERJobs and ACAM in the amounts not to exceed those shown in the table below and in total not to exceed \$3,200,000. This will be the third and final renewal option available under the most recent procurement.

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

- v. Financial Aid Support Center: The committee recommended the Board authorize staff to negotiate a contract with APM Equus Holdings Corporation not to exceed \$10,500,000. This is the second proposed renewal, and we will have the option to renew this contract one (1) additional year subject to satisfactory performance and approval from the Board.
- vi. Financial Aid Payment Office: The committee recommended the Board authorize staff to negotiate a contract with BakerRipley not to exceed \$380,000,000. This is the second proposed renewal, and we will have the option to renew this contract for one (1) additional year subject to satisfactory performance and approval from the Board.

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

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

- viii. VR Payrolling and Employer of Record: The committee recommended the Board authorize staff to negotiate a one-year contract with ProSource Solutions III, Inc., in an amount not to exceed by \$1,225,000. This is the first proposed renewal, and we will have the option to renew this contract for two (2) additional years subject to satisfactory performance and approval from the Board.

Board Chair Guthrie reread each of the recommended contract awards for FY 2025. Board Member Helen Cavazos raised a question regarding service providers EQUUS and ACAM, which are under an improvement action plan, if the committee is still recommending providing the additional requested amounts? Board Chair Guthrie responded in the affirmative but assured the Board and Board staff will monitor these services providers, closely. Additionally, Board Member Carolyn Watson inquired as it relates to the Financial Aid Office Payment (\$380,000,000)— How is the organization managing risk by having one vendor providing this service. Board Chair Guthrie stated, “\$374,000,000 of this contract is essentially a pass-through. The funds go directly to persons receiving scholarships from us or to the institutions that provide the education or training or to childcare providers. The contractor is bonded, and the cash operations are monitored very closely by the Board staff.” Chair Guthrie asked Board staff AJ Dean for additional comments on the controls. AJ Dean informed the Board that the Financial Aid Payment Office’s largest portion of funding is early education dollars for childcare. Currently, staff processes close to \$5,000,000 a week for cash draws to distribute the funds. Moreover, controls and reviews are tested regularly by the internal CPA firms who ensure the dollars are going to the respective vendors according to our policies and eligibility guidelines. Additionally, the Audit and Monitoring Committee has guard rails in place for oversight and to ensure the funds are being spent and disbursed properly. Chair Henderson reassured the Board that the Procurement Committee spoke among themselves to encourage vendors to read the fine print, and only

agree to the terms if they are positive that they can carry out all the terms in the contract. However, if challenges arise, still, they are encouraged to ask for more help and training to carry out their commitment. Board Chair Guthrie added that the Board staff has been more proactive in their efforts, particularly with new contractors to ensure the contractors understand the reporting requirements. Additionally, he reminded the Board in addition to the Board staff's oversight, the Board, itself has oversight requirements.

A motion was made by Board Member Gil Staley and seconded by Board Member Guy Jackson to approve the recommended contract awards for FY 2025 as outlined by the Procurement Committee. Board Member Carolyn Watson abstained from the vote due to a stated conflict of interest. The motion passed.

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

9. Information:

- a. **Performance and Production:** Report on the system's performance and production (Phillip Garcia)

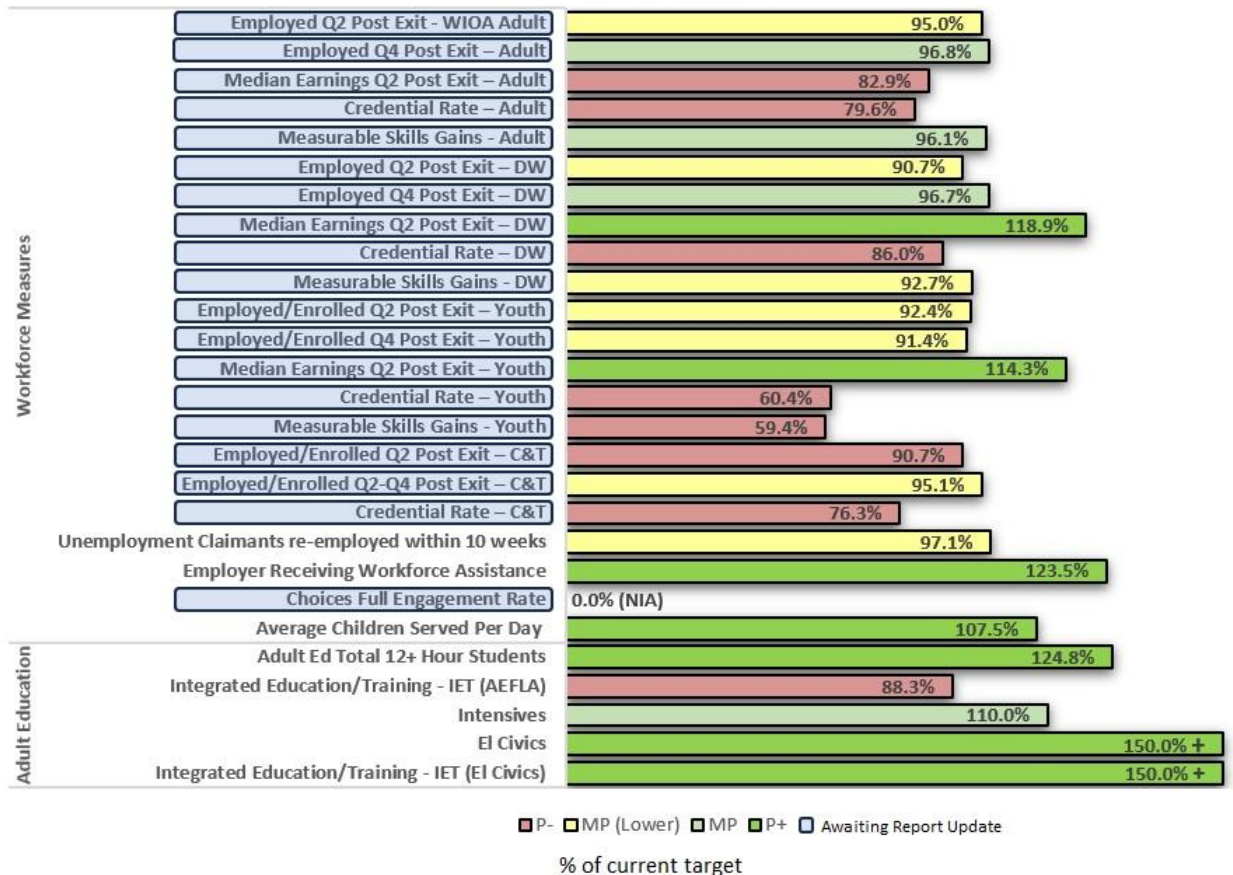
Phillip Garcia provided an update on reporting capability. Board staff have compiled a list of all the latest updates of the 'Performance and Production' reports. Unfortunately, most of the reports have not been updated in the past three (3) months, indicating, despite the collaboration with providers to ensure the latest data is included, there is still a need for further confirmation. The Board staff has been actively following up with TWC to inform them; however, they are still in process of developing the reports, without confirmation of the completion date at the time of the August 6 meeting.

Gulf Coast Workforce Board

System Performance

Production Measures

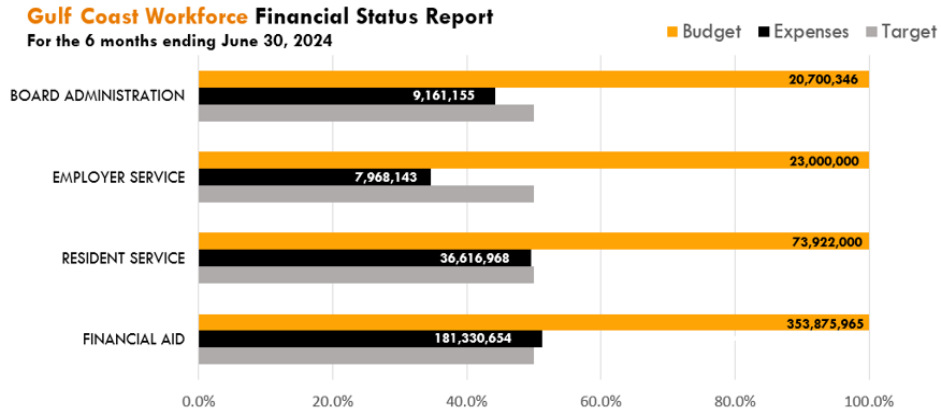
October 2023 to June 2024



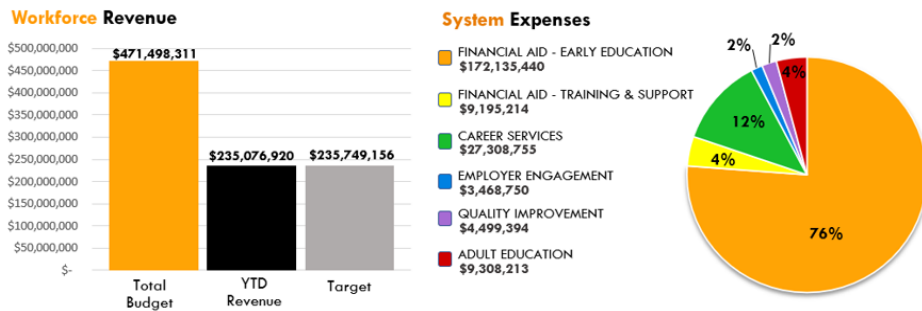
Disclaimer: The blue highlighted data indicates measures with data that has not been updated up to March 2024. Consequently, the information of these sections does not accurately represent our current performance. It only reflects customer counts without accounting for their successes. Board staff is working with providers and TWC to receive accurate data. The issue has been reported as a statewide issue impacting all 28 workforce boards.

b. **Expenditures Report:** Report on the Board’s budget and expenditures (Brandi Brown)

Information: Expenditure Update



Information: Expenditure Update



10. Presentations:

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

- First half of 2024 lower job growth compared to recent years.
- Driven by below average June due to combination of known Retail layoffs and possible underestimation of Leisure and Hospitality.

- Initial claims remain within range of past year excluding recent storms
- Unemployment rate and continuing claims now starting to approach 2021 levels.
- Collectively may suggest continuing moderation of labor market in 2024.

b. Communications and Media Update: (Russell Tomlin)

Russell Tomlin provided an abbreviated Communications and Media update by highlighting a few job fairs and media availabilities that aired on local news stations. Several Board staff have participated in televised interviews to increase awareness about Workforce Solutions and the good work that the Gulf Coast Workforce Board does in the community. A few of the media availabilities included:

- ABC 13: Job Fair for Construction Jobs, Opportunities for Pros and Apprentices
- ABC 13: Understanding What Employment Benefits are Available Due to Hurricane Beryl
- Telemundo: Ayuda Económica Por Desempleo Tras Beryl
- ABC 13: Job Fair to Help Veterans after the Storm
- U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Connecting Veterans: Houston Event Unites Over 1,000 Veterans with Virtual Resources
<https://abc13.com/post/600-veterans-turn-abc-hiring-job-fair-gearred/15068979/>

11. Other Business: Board Member Gil Staley was acknowledged for his recent retirement.

12. Adjourn: Board Chair Guthrie adjourned the meeting at 12:03 pm.

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

Vice Chair

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

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

Category: Labor

County: Harris

sbelow@nehouaft.org

Term: January 1, 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

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

Board Chair

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

Vice Chair

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

Southwest Schools
3333 Bering Drive
Houston, TX 77057
(713) 784-6345 Ext. 19

Category: Education

County: Harris

mlove@swwschools.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
rajmahagaokar@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

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

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

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

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

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

YU, BIN

Asian Chamber of Commerce
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

Desmond Taylor, Program Administrator, Board Relations

Dr. Maria Franco Cortes, Senior Planner, Board Relations

Kristi Rangel, Assistant Director of Workforce

AJ Dean, Senior Manager, Fiscal Administration and Contract Management

Russell Tomlin, Senior Manager, Career Services

Jenny Johnson, Quality Assurance Manager

Parker Harvey, Manager for Regional Economic Analysis

Houston-Galveston Area Council

3555 Timmons Lane, Suite 120

P.O. Box 22777

Houston, TX 77227-2777

(713) 627-3200

Fax: (713) 993-4578

<http://www.wrksolutions.com>

GULF COAST WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD COMMITTEES

Audit/Monitoring

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

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
- Edward Melton
- Carolyn Watson

Communications

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

Education

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

Employer Engagement

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

Government Relations

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

Nominating

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

Procurement

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

Report Card

Appointed by Board Chair as needed.

Strategic Planning

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

Audit and Monitoring Committee

Committee Report

The Audit and Monitoring Committee was called to order by Chair Guy Jackson at 1:13 p.m. on September 24, 2024 at the Workforce Solutions Southwest Office. Board Chair Mark Guthrie, Mary Helen Cavazos, Cheryl Guido, Douglas Karr, Shonda Below, and Jon Lowe attended.

Key Performance Indicators (KPI):

The Audit and Monitoring Committee remains committed to advancing Workforce Solutions' strategic goals through rigorous evaluation and data-driven decision-making. In alignment with this commitment, Weaver & Tidwell, L.L.P. (Weaver) recently provided a detailed presentation on the development and application of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) designed to enhance programmatic success and accountability.

Weaver's presentation focused on the foundational role of KPIs in aligning Workforce Solutions' operations with its strategic objectives. By setting clear, measurable goals, Workforce Solutions can ensure that its initiatives are effectively contributing to the organization's overall mission.

Weaver emphasized the establishment of KPIs that align with Workforce Solutions' strategic framework. This involves setting both programmatic and currently measurable KPIs that are essential for tracking progress and ensuring alignment with the organization's long-term goals.

Weaver stressed the need for strategic investment in technology to optimize programmatic success. This includes creating programmatic synergies through the new Workforce Solutions app and implementing follow-up programs to track participant success post-program. These technology-driven KPIs aim to enhance user experience and satisfaction. KPIs are also being developed to assess the effectiveness of outreach efforts and the success of partnerships.

Weaver's presentation concluded that the effective use of KPIs will allow Workforce Solutions to create a structured, data-driven approach to achieving its goals, thereby enhancing performance accountability and impact. Moving forward, the committee will continue to monitor the implementation and effectiveness of these KPIs, ensuring that they contribute to the long-term success and sustainability of Workforce Solutions' programs. Regular updates will be provided to the Board as these KPIs are integrated into the broader strategic framework, ensuring that all efforts are aligned with Workforce Solutions' mission of serving the community and driving regional economic success.

Performance and Production

The Committee received an update on performance and production, expenditures, and technical program compliance. TWC is experiencing difficulties collecting accurate data. The measures being affected the most are WIOA related. The state continues to work on fixing their reporting system.

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.

Equus - Financial Aid Support Center (FASC): The review, spanning from October 2023 to September 2024, assessed performance, compliance, information security, and customer satisfaction. The results of the review have led to second-year findings in multiple areas. These areas are:

- Eligibility Determination – inaccurate and incomplete counselor notes, TWIST data entry, and income calculations. Although there were findings, the overall accuracy rate for determining applicants eligible exceeded 98% during all four quarters.
- Financial Aid Fulfillment – the 2450 form, which notifies early education/care vendors that Workforce Solutions is placing an eligible family's child or children with that vendor, is a compliance requirement. We noted a decline throughout the four quarters of testing with an overall accuracy rate of 56% due to missing forms in DocuWare and inaccurate data entry.

Upcoming Reviews:

We have commenced PY2025 reviews of Adult Education and Literacy service providers.

Financial Systems

The Board engages two CPA firms to conduct comprehensive financial monitoring of all workforce board service providers. Since the last update, we have resolved eight (8) reports. One (1) review for FY24 is currently in progress.

Monitoring Update:

- Five reports (5) resulted in a combined total of \$15,706.04 for questioned

costs. The amounts have been received by H-GAC Finance.

- The Financial Aid Payment reviews will begin occurring quarterly.

Review Still in Progress:

Systemwide Financial Aid Payment Review

Technical Assistance:

Since our last Committee meeting, Board staff have met with the Workforce and AEL Subrecipients. Christine Nguyen and Weaver & Tidwell staff were present at this meeting and answered general questions. Also, a standard document request list and examples of satisfactory support documentation were reviewed.

The Subrecipients were reminded that monitoring report information is made available to the Committee and Board, and that it is considered at procurement and selection. Subrecipients were also instructed to respect the monitors and be responsive to their requests.

Board staff met with the monitors separately and expressed that they are to improve their process and timeline so that reports are more timely, accurate and final.

Risk Matrix:

In response to the feedback from the Audit & Monitoring Committee, we have designed a Risk Matrix aimed at evaluating overall financial risk with greater clarity and structure. The Risk Matrix is intended to provide a clear framework for assessing various risks, identifying potential problem areas, and prioritizing actions based on the severity and likelihood of the identified risks. Key Components include:

1. Categories of Findings: To ensure a thorough and systematic review, we have categorized the findings into four distinct groups:
 - Personnel: Issues related to staffing, time and effort, timesheet approvals, incomplete onboarding documentation, and inaccurate pay and merit increases.
 - Non-Personnel: Risks associated with misclassification of expenses, expenses charged in error, disbursements missing approvals and cost reasonableness documentation, non-compliant travel expenses, and billing reports not submitted timely.
 - Policy: This includes inconsistent or outdated policies that do not reflect the Board's policies or other State or Federal guidance.

- Compliance: Areas where regulatory, legal or contract requirements are not being fully adhered to, for example, inadequate procurement processes, no evidence of fidelity bonding and insurance, lack of internal controls and segregation of duties, and conflict of interest.
2. Risk/Impact Levels: Each finding within these categories is evaluated based on the potential impact it poses. We have assigned three levels of risk to each finding:
 - Low Risk: Minor issues that are unlikely to cause significant disruption but should be corrected. These are assigned a score of 1.
 - Moderate Risk: Findings that cause some operational inefficiencies or financial challenges if not addressed. These are given a score of 2.
 - High Risk: Critical issues that could cause major financial, operational, or reputational damage. These are assigned a score of 3.
 3. Frequency of Occurrence: We have incorporated a more detailed analysis of the frequency or likelihood of each finding occurring. This is designed to provide a more dynamic understanding of risk:
 - The lower the likelihood of an issue reoccurring, the lower the overall risk.
 - Conversely, findings that occur frequently or have the potential to repeat consistently are flagged as higher risk, even if their individual impact is moderate.
 4. Scoring Methodology: Each finding is assigned a score based on both its risk/impact level and its likelihood/frequency of occurrence. The scores are then tallied to generate an overall risk score for each category:
 - 1: Low overall risk
 - 2: Moderate overall risk
 - 3: High overall risk

We welcome any feedback or suggestions the committee may have.

Opportunities for Improvement

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

Texas Workforce Commission Interventions:

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

Adult Median Earnings Q2 Post-Exit (FY23): Board staff continues to track enrollment efforts and work with the TWC to show our progress on the Technical Assistance Plan (TAP) for FY23 WIOA (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act) Adult Median Earnings 2nd Quarter After Exit FY23. The board staff is implementing targeted enrollment efforts and policy adjustments to enhance our participants' median earnings.

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

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

We submitted our first of three-monthly desk reviews to TWC and have not received a response.

GCWB Interventions:

Equus - Career Office: Equus continues a performance improvement plans for Property Management, Choices, Credential Rate, and Measurable Skills Gains. The reporting system through TWC remains down. Once the reporting system is in operation again, we will review the data and take appropriate action based on the findings.

Regarding Property Management issues, we continue to find issues with Equus' performance. Since our last meeting, Equus Career Office leadership informed Board staff that three laptops were determined lost following an inventory review. These laptops were not insured and Equus will be issuing a check to the Board to cover the cost.

The property issues have extended to Equus - Financial Aid Support Center operations as well. The Support Center also reported three laptops either lost or stolen, along with an Ethernet Switch. Board staff have also requested

repayment for this equipment. Staff at the Support Center are also not meeting expectations related to tagging property and purchase approvals to remain compliant with state requirements.

In addition to requesting repayment, Board staff continue to provide technical assistance to Equus on all matters identified above. This assistance includes reminding Equus leadership of the requirements listed in the Financial Manual for Grants and Contracts, Equipment Approval Process, and Contract Management Standards and Guidelines – Property. Equus is to train staff in all policies and procedures impacting Property and inform Board staff when this has been completed.

Alliance of Community Assistance Ministries (ACAM): ACAM was previously placed on a Performance Improvement Plan due to being deficient in WIOA Youth Customers Served and WIOA Youth Work-Based Learning targets. ACAM requested its enrollment target be adjusted to align with capacity, which was connected to a reduction in funding. ACAM signed the amendment in July, and Board staff will be removing the Performance Improvement Plan.

Children’s Learning Institute (CLI): CLI has been the Board’s contracted Early Education Quality service provider since March of 2023. They focus on recruiting, assessing, reviewing, mentoring, and supporting vendors in the Texas Rising Star quality rating system. During the current fiscal year, CLI’s performance has consistently not met our expectations. Specifically, CLI has struggled to meet Board deadlines and implement Texas Rising Star program policies with accuracy and timeliness. CLI’s reports, both to the Board and to TWC, have contained errors despite numerous offers from Board staff to answer any outstanding questions from CLI staff. Board staff and Senior Management have met several times with CLI to discuss these issues, but performance continues to lag.

In response to these issues, Board staff attempted to place CLI on a Performance Improvement Plan. CLI responded by informing Board staff that they would not be renewing their contract set to begin October 1, 2024. Board staff have developed a plan to transition services and anticipate issuing a Request for Proposal to find a replacement service provider for this work.

State or Federal Program Reviews:

The Board received the initial Adult Education TWC report for a visit conducted in October 2023 which Board staff have responded to. The Office of Inspector General (OIG) as part of a larger Texas Workforce Commission and Department of Labor review has completed its fieldwork and held a Statement of Fact meeting in early September. We anticipate the final OIG report to be released in

early 2025 which will be a part of larger report.

Conclusion

No additional business was discussed. The next meeting will be held on November 21, 2024, at 1:00pm at Workforce Solutions Westheimer. The meeting was adjourned at 2:04pm.

Career Services Committee

Report

Executive Summary

Chair Adrian Ozuna called the Career Services Committee hybrid meeting to order on September 17, 2024 at 2:00 p.m. at Workforce Solutions – Pearland Office 5730 W. Broadway Ste. 122, Pearland, TX 77581. Board members in attendance included co-chair Cheryl Guido, Board Chair Mark Guthrie, Dr. Bobbie Henderson, Helen Cavazos, Bin-Yu, Dorian Cockrell, Guy Jackson, Mou Sarkar, Melanie Rodriguez, Edward Melton, Jeff LaBroski, and Nasruddin Rupani.

The meeting discuss significant developments, including the upcoming Clear Lake Townhall, strategic decisions on career office locations, lease expirations of critical offices, and essential technology updates. These discussions underscore the Board's dedication to community engagement, strategic resource management, and the continuous enhancement of workforce services across the Gulf Coast region.

Townhall Meetings on Career Services Opportunities

Board staff is finalizing preparations for the Clear Lake Townhall Meeting, now scheduled for October 28, 2024, at the Clear Lake City Community Center. This event is pivotal as the Clear Lake Career Office's lease expires in January 2025. Outreach efforts, led by the Committee in collaboration with the Outreach Strategists and H-GAC Communications Department, are focused on engaging local elected officials and community partners. Harris County Commissioner of Precinct 2, Adrian Garcia and his office have played a crucial role, offering logistical support, hosting potential virtual meetings, and assisting with event promotion. The townhall aims to reinforce the Board's presence in the community and the continuation of career services with materials provided in both English and Spanish to ensure accessibility for all attendees.

Career Service Policy on Office Locations

A draft policy concerning the management and strategic positioning of career office locations was presented for review and is affixed hereto as Attachment "A." This draft policy encompasses key aspects such as the delivery of career services, consolidation of office leases, decision-making frameworks for office closures, and active stakeholder engagement. The policy is currently under consideration, with the Committee set to finalize amendments before recommending approval at the December Board meeting. This policy is a critical component of the Board's

strategy to align office operations with the region's evolving needs, ensuring optimal resource allocation while maintaining high service standards.

Career Office Updates

Board staff provided in-depth updates on the impending lease expirations for the Northshore and Willowbrook offices, both of which are critical to the Board's operational footprint. The Northshore office, the oldest in the region, incurs significant operational costs of \$1 million annually while experiencing declining foot traffic. Leadership is considering a range of options, including reducing office space, transitioning to virtual services, and exploring partnerships with local community organizations to maintain service delivery. A decision on the Northshore office is required by April 2025.

Similarly, the Willowbrook office, with an annual operational cost of \$1.5 million, is well-positioned but may benefit from a reduction in square footage to optimize its operations. The Committee discussed potential staff redistribution and the feasibility of covering the Tomball area from Willowbrook, given its favorable location. Additionally, the possibility of co-locating services in Harris County Precinct 4 was explored. The Committee emphasized the importance of providing adequate notice to Vocational Rehabilitation services to ensure a smooth transition in office locations.

Technology Updates

The Committee discussed the status of the JRNI contract, which will not move forward due to an unresolved indemnification clause. As a result, negotiations will commence with QLESS Inc., the second bidder, for the appointment management software. This shift is part of a broader effort to enhance the technological infrastructure supporting career services. The Committee also reviewed the functionality of the Gov Delivery mass communication system, with plans to reassess its suitability for future use. These updates reflect the Board's commitment to leveraging technology to improve service delivery and operational efficiency.

Career Office Program Spotlight

The Committee highlighted several key initiatives aimed at enhancing service delivery and community engagement:

- A coordination pilot between Career Services staff and Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) will be implemented from November through March, focusing on the Willowbrook, Pearland, and Lake Jackson Career Offices. This pilot aims to improve service integration and outcomes for clients.

- September was recognized as National Workforce Professionals Month, with career offices acknowledging the contributions of their staff.
- October will focus on National Disability Awareness Month, featuring two significant events:
 - White Cane Safety Day on October 15, 10 AM to 2 PM at the University of Houston's Student Services Center South, celebrating the achievements of the blind and visually impaired with a march, guest speakers, and entertainment.
 - National Disability Employment Awareness Month Job Fair on October 24, 10 AM to 1 PM at the Deputy Darren Almendarez Community Center. This event is hosted by Workforce Solutions in partnership with the City of Houston Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities and Harris County Commissioner Precinct 2, Adrian Garcia. Board and Committee members are encouraged to support and participate in these critical events.

Next Steps

The Committee will continue to evaluate the lease expirations, particularly for the Northshore and Willowbrook offices, with an eye toward consolidation and relocation that aligns with the Strategic Plan. Additionally, the finalization and approval of the Career Service Policy on Office Locations will be prioritized for the December Board meeting. The Committee will also maintain its commitment to supporting and promoting upcoming community events, including the Resilience Resource Fair on October 18, 2024, at Houston Community College on West Loop.

Attachment A

Proposed Career Service Policy (DRAFT)

Purpose:

The Career Service Policy outlines the procedures for opening, relocating, and sunsetting career service locations within Workforce Solutions – Gulf Coast, ensuring alignment with organizational goals, efficient resource utilization, and effective stakeholder engagement. We are moving away from the use of the term “Career Offices” and toward the “Delivery of Career Services” as we examine new ways of providing career services via virtual options, co-location, and other means. This policy framework supports the process for providing career services within the region in a thoughtful, transparent, and inclusive way.

Objectives:

The policy objectives include:

- Ensuring that career service delivery is strategically located and managed to meet the needs of the community and workforce in our diverse region;
- Providing clear guidelines for the process of offering career services to our region to maintain service continuity and operational efficiency; and
- Engaging relevant stakeholders effectively throughout the process to gather input, address concerns, and develop an inclusive strategy that meets the community’s needs.

I. Delivery of Career Services:

1.1. Needs Assessment:

Annually (prior to release of the GCWB budget), Board staff will conduct a comprehensive needs and cost assessment to evaluate present leases and locations to determine utilization rates and to identify needs and demand for career services in current and potential locations. Location factors should include accessibility, visibility, proximity to public transportation, and opportunities for colocation with community partners, libraries, government offices, and schools. Additionally, the assessment should include employment statistics, demographic trends, and community feedback.

- 1.1.1. From this analysis, Board staff will prepare a formal report and will present it to the Career Services Committee, annually. The Career

Services Committee shall determine whether to proceed on any of the recommendations made in the formal report for action.

- 1.1.2. Recommendations will be shared with the Executive Committee who will have an opportunity to provide feedback and approval to proceed with community input sessions.

1.2. Proposal Development:

Board staff will develop a detailed proposal outlining the rationale for the opening, relocating, and/or sunseting of career service delivery at a particular location, including expected benefits, resource requirements, budget, and operational plan.

1.3. Stakeholder Engagement:

Board staff will engage key stakeholders, including local government officials, community organizations, business leaders, and the public, through town halls (community meetings), surveys, and other means, to gather input and support.

- The Career Services Committee is tasked with reviewing stakeholder feedback and incorporating it into a formal proposal for the Executive Committee's review as appropriate.

1.4. Approval Process:

The formal proposal will be submitted by the Career Services Committee to the Executive Committee for review and determination whether to share with the full Gulf Coast Workforce Board.

- Prior to the Board's approval, all legal and regulatory requirements shall be met.

1.5. Implementation:

Board staff will develop and execute an implementation plan that includes career services delivery including location, staffing, and training.

- Board staff will also communicate the opening of the new career service delivery location through appropriate channels, including press releases, social media, and community outreach.

II. Sunsetting a Career Office Lease:

2.1. Evaluation and Decision-Making:

The Gulf Coast Workforce Board in collaboration with the Career Services Committee shall regularly evaluate the performance and impact of career service delivery locations through data points and metrics such as service utilization (foot-traffic), client outcomes, cost-effectiveness, demographics, customer diversity, and socioeconomic indicators.

- Identify potential reasons for closure:
 - Low Foot Traffic/Demand and
 - High Operational Costs (lease agreement/utilities).
- Financial and Legal Considerations
 - Review and finalize all financial obligations, including lease termination and outstanding contracts with service providers.
 - Ensure compliance with any legal or regulatory requirements regarding the closure.

2.2. Proposal for Closure:

Based on Board staff proposal, the Career Services Committee will review a proposal for the closure of a career service location, including reasons for closure, impact assessment, and a transition plan for affected clients and staff.

- Alternative(s):
 - Co-Location Opportunity: the practice of situating multiple services or organizations within the same physical location (i.e. office building, multiservice/community center) to provide a centralized and accessible point for individuals seeking employment-related services including:
 - Parking areas including garages,
 - Lessor oversees facility related repairs outside of the office suite,
 - More turnkey solution opportunities,
 - House more backend staff.,
 - Lessor provides building security,
 - Backend staff workspace – tracking unit, virtual office, and
 - Less capital improvement challenges.
 - Consolidation of Offices: the practice of combining two or more office spaces to accommodate future changes in staff size to maintain foot traffic patterns, services offered, evolving needs of the clients and communities served. Considerations include:
 - Technology integration,
 - Cost efficiency,
 - Enhanced client experience, and
 - Stronger brand identity.
- Transition Plan for Customers and Staff
 - Develop a plan to transition current customers and staff to another career office or service provider, ensuring minimal disruption to workforce services.
- Asset Inventory and Reallocation

- Create an inventory of all assets (e.g., furniture, computers, office supplies) and determine whether they will be transferred to other offices or donated.
- Ensure that sensitive data and equipment are securely transferred, disposed of, or wiped in accordance with data retention and protection policies.

2.3. Stakeholder Engagement:

Board staff will notify and consult with key stakeholders, including employees, clients, local community groups and elected officials during a public meeting and/or townhall to discuss the potential impact and mitigation strategies.

- During this event, Board Staff will be required to provide a clear rationale for the closure and offer support to affected individuals, such as alternative service locations or job placement assistance.
- All input received from stakeholder engagement shall be documented and a formal stakeholder engagement report will be prepared for the Gulf Coast Workforce Board.
- The Career Services Committee shall review the stakeholder engagement report and will work with Board staff to incorporate suggestions and input into the formal proposal.

2.4. Approval Process:

Upon completion of the public stakeholder engagement event, the Career Services Committee will submit the formal proposal to the Executive Committee to review the recommendation(s), public input, and make any final recommendations before presenting the recommendation(s) to the Gulf Coast Workforce Board for information-purposes only.

- Prior to the Board's approval, all legal and regulatory requirements shall be met.
- The formal proposal shall then be deemed an action plan.

2.5. Implementation:

Board staff will execute the action plan, including the relocation of career services, the relocation or transfer of staff, and the management of office assets.

- Board staff shall also communicate the closure decision and transition plan to all stakeholders through appropriate channels, including direct notifications and public announcements.

III. Monitoring and Review:

3.1. Policy Updates:

The Career Services Committee shall regularly review and update this policy to ensure it remains relevant and effective.

3.2. Outcomes:

The Career Services Committee shall monitor and report to the Board, the outcomes of opening and closing career offices to assess the impact on service delivery and stakeholder satisfaction.

Employer Engagement Committee

Report of Activities

Overview

Chair Alan Heskamp called the Employer Engagement Committee meeting to order on September 19, 2024 at 9:00 a.m. at the Houston-Galveston Area Council. Board staff reported proactive efforts to engage regional employers and address workforce challenges across key sectors such as healthcare, construction, IT, and education. Through targeted outreach and strategic partnerships with chambers, economic development councils, and key stakeholders, Workforce Solutions – Gulf Coast is rebuilding essential relationships and achieving major milestones, including surpassing the Texas Workforce Commission’s Texas Talent Rate goal. These efforts are opening new opportunities for collaboration, strengthening our support for regional employers, and aligning with the Gulf Coast Workforce Board's new strategic plan to ensure long-term economic growth.

Moreover, insights from the Quarterly 13 County Reports and the Houston Area Jobs Report offer a clear view of local employment trends and market conditions. This data allows us to anticipate workforce needs and fine-tune our employer engagement strategies to stay ahead of emerging challenges. Together, these initiatives are positioning the Gulf Coast region for resilience, competitiveness, and alignment with the Board’s forward-looking vision.

Employer Engagement: Industry Updates

a. **Melissa Steinmetz, Healthcare and Life Sciences**

- Texas Children’s Hospital’s Layoffs:
Texas Children’s Hospital (TCH) announced layoffs of 5% of its staff on August 5, 2024. [Texas Children's Hospital laid off 997 employees in job cuts \(houstonchronicle.com\)](https://www.houstonchronicle.com/business/story/texas-childrens-hospital-laid-off-997-employees-in-job-cuts-2024-08-05/). Employees and Stakeholders did direct outreach prior to TCH filing the WARN Notice which is dated 6 August 2024. The layoffs impact 997 members of its staff, including those in patient facing roles in respiratory therapy, physical therapy, and the entire midwifery team in the Texas Medical Center and the incoming nursing class. TCH has a reputation for long tenured employees with some having 20-30-40 years of service with the organization. TCH is consistently ranked on various lists locally and nationally as “Best Places to Work.”

TCH cited financial difficulties as the reason for the layoffs, following the recent loss of its Medicaid/CHIP contract with the State of Texas, a challenge faced by many other providers as well. This contract had not

only been a reliable source of revenue and patients for the hospital, but it also supported a dedicated team that managed and promoted the TCH CHIP Program. Additionally, TCH expanded into the Austin market, constructing a new hospital that was scheduled to open in August. However, regulatory issues delayed the opening, resulting in an operating loss of \$200 million in 2024. Employees at the Austin campus are also expected to be laid off. The layoffs, which will occur in phases and continue through 2025, have prompted competitors HCA and Memorial Hermann to hold job fairs, with HCA reporting over one hundred hires. Although the staggered nature of the layoffs, along with severance packages and the seniority of some positions, may mean that not all affected employees will seek Workforce Solutions' services, there remains an opportunity to assist many of them.

- San Jacinto Community College and NSF Engine Grant
San Jacinto Community College (SJC) is applying for an innovation grant with the National Science Foundation (NSF) to create a biomanufacturing hub for industrial biotechnology in the Houston area. The **NSF Engine Biomanufacturing of Chemicals and Materials for Sustainability (BioMS)** will create a hub for research, development, technology commercialization, creation and growth of startups, and support for existing industries within this new industrial biotech ecosystem. This program is a federally funded grant initiative to train and develop the local workforce and grow regional ecosystems. SJC is in the second round of the grant submission process for BioMS. The Gulf Coast Workforce Board submitted a letter of support for Houston's initial round of interest in applying for this grant.

SJC is expanding its biomanufacturing programs at existing campuses but will focus this program at its new Generation Park campus. Training programs for laboratory technology and industrial manufacturing, and plant management will be key workforce needs. The grant application and future planning also include apprenticeship programs. The Hub will consist of partnerships with K-12, area universities, and other training providers. Key industry players include existing startups like Centiva and Solugen but also traditional chemical manufacturing companies entering the space like BASF, Goodyear, LyondellBasell, Indorama, and Koch Modular. Should Houston be invited to the next round of applications for BioMS, SJC has asked the Gulf Workforce Board to submit a letter of support.

- Lab Tech Certification

There is a regional push for the adoption of National Certification Standards for laboratory technicians in the State of Texas. We have been approached by training organizations and employers and have been notified that “we” are losing out on incoming biotech investment projects to other regions. Texas is also considering the adoption of its own lab tech certification standard and held a conference at Texas A&M to discuss it. Lab Tech is not presently on the High Skills/High Growth List/Targeted Industries list but given the growing need in the region based on current labor needs, projected company arrivals, and announced industry plans, we are considering its inclusion. Multiple community colleges have added training programs including Alvin Community College which received a recent Texas Workforce Commission High Demand Job Training Grant. Additional programs will be coming online in the future and are needed to support expected industry demands.

- Southwest Coalition

The Southwest Coalition is an employer-focused coalition led by Memorial Hermann and includes a variety of employers and community stakeholders in the Southwest region of Houston. The goal of the coalition is to create entry points with regional employers for entry-level jobs that can become careers but also working with employers to have those same entry-level jobs offer living wages, benefits, and career pathways. The initial focus is on the healthcare industry with a target for patient care technicians and similar entry-level allied healthcare positions. The primary ask from the Southwest Coalition to us is to expand our presence at the Baker Ripley Gulfton location from monthly for 2 hours to 4 times a month. However, we wish to take a stronger and more active leadership role in the development of cohort designed programs.

b. Lacy Wolf, Construction and Building Trades

Principal Industry Liaison of Building and Construction, Lacy Wolf was at a conference, so Crosby Brito presented the following update:

- Energy and Infrastructure Initiatives

We are actively involved in energy innovation, serving on advisory councils for the HyVelocity Hydrogen Hub, which focuses on advancing hydrogen technology as a key energy resource. We have been invited by the University of Texas’s Energy Institute to participate in an upcoming conference in Austin, Texas on October 7, 2024. [Hydrogen Workforce Summit and Hydrogen Day | Energy Institute \(utexas.edu\)](#).

Additionally, Lacy is working to expand the Wastewater Operator Apprenticeship Program, using the successful model developed with the City of Lake Jackson to address the growing demand for wastewater operators across other municipalities.

- Regional Workforce Development
Regionally, Lacy Wolf has met with Congressman Troy Nehls and the Wharton Chamber of Commerce to address the need for training, certifications, and workforce development, particularly in areas like construction and infrastructure, including a levy project near the Colorado River. He is also working with the City of Pasadena and the Bay City Chamber to encourage contractors to hire local workers for skilled industrial jobs and reduce reliance on out-of-state labor. His discussions with Pasadena Mayor Jeff Wagner have focused on promoting local hiring for construction projects. Mr. Wolf has also been collaborating with the Mayor of the City of Houston, the local building trades, and other stakeholders on the Responsible Bidder Ordinance. This initiative aims to help small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) build their workforce to compete more effectively with larger firms in the construction industry.
- Workforce and Career Pathways
We have partnered with Performance Contracting and Owens Corning to create an Internship-Apprenticeship program that guarantees participants a three-year career in the construction industry. Additionally, Mr. Wolf is in talks with the Harris County Sports Authority to create internship opportunities for college students interested in sports-related careers. These internships are geared towards preparing the workforce for the upcoming FIFA World Cup, addressing both workforce needs and providing valuable experience for students.

c. Amber Jefferson, Information Technology

Principal Industry Liaison in IT was at a conference, so Crosby Brito shared the following update:

- Houston East End Chamber of Commerce and Tri-County Regional Black Chamber of Commerce
We have been working closely with the Houston East End Chamber of Commerce and the Tri-County Regional Black Chamber of Commerce to enhance employer engagement efforts. Ms. Jefferson's outreach has included appearances on podcasts, YouTube, radio, and speaking at business luncheons, significantly expanding the organization's impact across 12 of 13 counties.

- Thought Leadership in Digital Equity and Inclusion in the Workforce
Ms. Jefferson has been a strong advocate for digital equity, literacy, and inclusion, leading a cross-functional initiative to promote these values. She recently spoke at the 2nd Annual Houston Black Tech Symposium, and her commitment to this cause earned her a speaking spot at the upcoming 25th Annual NAWDP Youth Conference in Phoenix, Arizona.
- Podcast on IT Industry and Workforce
In line with her focus on IT and workforce development, Ms. Jefferson is developing a podcast aimed at broadening outreach and providing insights into the IT industry. The podcast is set to launch soon, targeting a wider audience to explore workforce opportunities within the IT sector.
- Spring ISD and P-Tech Program
Ms. Jefferson has also been working with Spring ISD's P-Tech program, connecting junior and senior students with local employers offering internships in their IT departments. This initiative is designed to provide students with hands-on experience and build pathways into IT careers.
- STEM Festival at the Humble Civic Center
Recently, Ms. Jefferson spoke at the STEM Festival at the Humble Civic Center, where she contributed to youth engagement and education in technology, further solidifying her role in promoting STEM opportunities for the next generation.

d. Education, Juliet Stipeche

Juliet Stipeche provided the following education update, but she was proud to announce that a new principal industry liaison in education should be joining the team soon. Her update included the following:

- Texas Education Agency, Tri-Agency Regional Convener Grant, Summer Deliverables Report
The Tri-Agency Regional Convener grant, awarded to the Gulf Coast Workforce Board, focused on the successful delivery of immersive and work-based learning experiences for students in key sectors, including healthcare, building and construction, and education. This initiative was designed to bridge the gap between academic learning and practical application, equipping students with the skills and insights necessary for success in their future careers. The successful delivery of these important programmatic activities is key as we seek inclusion in the

Texas Regional Pathways Network. Students participated in paid work-based learning opportunities across three high-demand industries:

| | |
|----------------------------|---------------|
| Healthcare: | 12, |
| Building and Construction: | 4, and |
| Education: | <u>22</u> |
| Total: | 38 placements |

These 38 placements provided students with direct exposure to the demands, expectations, and opportunities of the workplace, allowing them to apply their academic knowledge in real-world settings while earning wages. Our goal was to design a real world “earn and learn” experience for participants.

Each participant received comprehensive pre-employment and job-readiness training delivered by Workforce Solutions – Gulf Coast. This training was integral to their success, ensuring that students entered their placements prepared to meet professional standards. The Board also covered all job-site entry costs, including background checks, medical requirements, and uniforms, further easing the transition into their roles.

Students participated in work-based learning for 6 to 12 weeks, earning a minimum of \$15 per hour. Those in the Education sector received a \$2,000 stipend to recognize their contributions and offset any financial barriers to participation. This structure ensured accessibility for students from diverse backgrounds while incentivizing full engagement in the program.

This initiative's success was possible through strong collaboration with leading employers in the healthcare, building and construction, and education sectors. These partners played a crucial role by providing work-based learning environments, mentorship, and industry insights, helping students develop both technical and soft skills necessary for long-term career success. The program was structured around clear objectives aimed at maximizing student development, including:

- Gaining hands-on experience in a professional setting;
- Acquiring industry-specific skills and knowledge;
- Improving employability through targeted job-readiness training; and
- Building professional networks and gaining mentorship.

Outcomes from the program exceeded expectations. Students reported enhanced understanding of their chosen industries, practical skills development, and an overall increase in confidence about their career prospects. Some participants were hired as full-time employees with the opportunity to receive employer-funded scholarships for additional training. Feedback from both participants and industry partners highlighted the value of this initiative in preparing students for meaningful employment.

The Tri-Agency Regional Convener grant program has proven to be an effective mechanism for bridging education and industry, ensuring that students are well-prepared for the workforce. By integrating work-based learning into career preparation, the Gulf Coast Workforce Board has enhanced the employability and career readiness of our region's youth. Looking forward, we plan to expand this initiative, increasing both the number of participants and industry partnerships to broaden its impact on the Gulf Coast region's future workforce.

- Teacher Apprenticeship Program

The Gulf Coast Workforce Board has been awarded a \$200,000 planning grant from the Houston Endowment to develop a Regional Teacher Apprenticeship Program aimed at addressing the teacher shortage in Education Service Center Region 4 and Montgomery County. This initiative will create a sustainable pipeline of certified educators by aligning with local district needs. The planning phase, concluding in June 2025, will focus on identifying funding sources, engaging stakeholders, and forming strategic partnerships with educational leaders and community organizations.

Key activities include researching funding streams, forming a diverse working group, drafting policies, and developing a data tracking system to measure program progress. Targeted recruitment strategies and a community involvement plan will also be designed to ensure broad engagement and program success. The final proposal, built on extensive collaboration and research, will be presented to the Houston Endowment to secure resources for the program's launch. We are grateful for this opportunity to address the region's critical teacher shortage.

Economic Highlights, Ron Borski

Ron Borski shared his most recent quarterly reports for all thirteen counties, and these reports highlight critical information including:

- The latest civilian labor force data;
- Recently released employment data for first quarter 2024:
 - Quarter and annual change in covered employment by major industry, and
 - Average weekly wages by major industry;
- Historical charts for major industries showing employment level as well as quarter and annual changes;
- Long-term annual growth charts showing changes from 1983 forward;
- All-time highs and lows by major industry updated; and
- Sample occupational wages updated with recently released 2023 data.

In sum, first quarter data reflected mostly declines as it does every year, but over-the-year growth rates have been declining in most counties with only three indicating stronger growth than a year earlier: Brazoria County, Liberty County, and Walker County. Growth rates ranged from a loss of 2.1 percent in Colorado County, the first over-the-year loss reported in three years, to a high of 4.5 percent in Waller County. The largest county, Harris, reflected a growth rate of 1.4 percent, down from 2.0 percent in fourth quarter 2023 and 4.4 percent a year earlier. Please find Mr. Borski's reports on all 13 counties in our region here: <https://bit.ly/ReportsbyCounty>.

Employer Engagement Updates, Crosby Brito

The Employer Engagement Team has undertaken strategic efforts to reengage with chambers of commerce, economic development corporations (EDCs), and other organizations across the Houston Gulf Coast region in collaboration with SERCO of Texas. This initiative specifically targeted entities that, in the past, expressed frustration with Workforce Solutions, due to communication challenges or unmet service expectations. Through a deliberate and methodical approach, we have been able to rebuild relationships and forge new partnerships, laying the groundwork for sustained collaboration and mutual success.

a) Community Engagement Activities

A key focus of the Employer Engagement Team's efforts has been reestablishing trust with organizations that had previously encountered issues with Workforce Solutions. Feedback from employers and surveys revealed that negative perceptions were often rooted in cases of communication breakdowns or unmet expectations. In response, the team prioritized outreach to these groups, proactively offering to reengage, resolve past concerns, and establish new, productive relationships.

Notable community engagements in the past quarter include meetings with chambers and EDCs in Texas City, Bay City, Wharton, Dayton, Sealy, and Cleveland. In many cases, these organizations have experienced leadership changes, allowing us to introduce Workforce Solutions with a fresh perspective and renewed focus. The positive outcomes of these efforts are already evident as several organizations have expressed interest in partnering with us without requiring membership fees, signaling a significant shift in the dynamics of our relationships. This reengagement is a testament to the team's strategic approach, which is restoring confidence in Workforce Solutions and creating new opportunities for collaboration.

b) SERCO Strategic Partnership

The Employer Engagement Team has worked closely with SERCO to align their tasks with the Gulf Coast Workforce Board's Strategic Plan, which centers on four key goals: 1) Improving Service Delivery Using Technology and Innovative Solutions; 2) Serving as a Convener and Forging Strategic Partnerships; 3)

Increasing Awareness of Services and Opportunities; 4) Supporting Business-Forward Strategies to Fuel the Regional Economy. The Employer Engagement Team's focus on reengagement and relationship-building has resulted in a significant increase in performance and production metrics. The strategic prioritization of outreach efforts has not only helped rebuild trust with regional organizations but has also opened doors for future collaboration that aligns with the Gulf Coast Workforce Board's broader goals.

c) Performance and Production

SERCO has achieved a significant milestone by surpassing their Texas Talent Rate (formerly known as EWA) target, reaching 119% of the goal. This marks the first time a contractor has exceeded this benchmark at such a significant level, providing a strong foundation for the team to focus on additional initiatives. SERCO's ability to outperform this key metric reflects their commitment to the Strategic Plan and sets a new standard for service delivery.

While SERCO's progress in some areas has been remarkable, there remain challenges in other metrics, specifically Measurable Skills Gains (MSGs), where they are currently at 75%, below the 94% target. These inherited metrics highlight areas where continued improvement is necessary. Shortfalls were due to cases being closed by the previous provider before activity reporting, which impacted performance data and presents an ongoing challenge for accurate tracking.

Programs such as Workforce 101 and industry-specific workshops are addressing workforce development needs in targeted areas, helping local employers navigate challenges and access the resources necessary for growth. The team's ability to provide tailored services and develop solutions that meet the unique demands of regional employers has significantly improved both engagement and service outcomes.

d) Success Story: A Winning Partnership

The Employer Engagement Team's collaboration with Openwork LLC and the Workforce Solutions Career Center at Westheimer serves as an exemplary success story of how strategic partnerships can yield positive outcomes. Through this partnership, Workforce Solutions successfully placed workers in high-demand industries, directly addressing the employment needs of a regional employer who was initially doubtful of our services and abilities. In the end, we exceeded their expectations, and Openwork LLC is excited to continue the collaboration.

This success story underscores the Employer Engagement Team's ability to deliver results that benefit both employers and the workforce. It reflects the team's commitment to providing customized solutions that address specific employer needs, reinforcing the value of Workforce Solutions in driving regional workforce development.

Houston Area Employment Situation, Parker Harvey

Parker Harvey's Houston Area Jobs Report provides an essential overview of the regional employment landscape, highlighting significant trends across various sectors and shedding light on key economic indicators that impact the workforce. This report serves as a critical resource for Workforce Solutions and regional employers to make informed decisions based on up-to-date labor market data.

Key Components of the Report:

- **Employment Trends:** The report captures the latest changes in employment for the 9-county Houston metropolitan statistical area (MSA). It offers insights into how different industry sectors are performing month-over-month and year-over-year, allowing businesses to adjust strategies based on sector growth or contraction.
- **Unemployment Metrics:** This section tracks unemployment rates for the U.S., Texas, and the 13-county Gulf Coast region. It highlights how unemployment rates are evolving, providing valuable context for employers and policymakers as they assess labor availability and economic health.
- **Workforce Solutions Index (WSI):** The report also introduces the Workforce Solutions Index, which measures labor market "tightness." This index gives

employers a clear picture of how competitive the job market is and where they may face challenges in hiring.

- **Data Availability:** The Houston Area Jobs Report is published on the third Friday of each month and is available through Workforce Solutions' website. It is distributed to local media and employers, ensuring timely access to relevant workforce data.

Practical Implications:

For employers, this report is a key tool in understanding labor trends and planning recruitment efforts. The detailed industry sector analysis provides a granular look at which sectors are expanding or contracting, allowing businesses to anticipate workforce needs and adjust accordingly. Additionally, unemployment trends and the Workforce Solutions Index offer context for hiring challenges and opportunities, helping employers stay competitive in a dynamic labor market.

Recommendations for Enhancing Employer Engagement

Chair Heskamp expressed his appreciation for the Board staff's update and emphasized the critical need to amplify our outreach and engagement with employers. He proposed three strategic recommendations aimed at strengthening the Gulf Coast Workforce Board's connection with regional employers:

- **Deepen Engagement with Regional Trade Associations:**

Chair Heskamp recommended that the Board actively join and engage with key regional trade associations, such as the Houston Contractors' Association. These associations provide valuable opportunities to stay informed about industry trends, network with incoming employers, and foster partnerships.

Collaborating with the leadership of these associations will allow us to distribute information more effectively across various industry sectors. This approach will not only increase our visibility but also establish the Board as a trusted partner within the industry, fostering long-term relationships and ensuring that employers are well-informed about the services we offer.

- **Adopt Best Practices from Leading Workforce Development Boards:**

Chair Heskamp advised that we proactively connect with other successful workforce development boards across the state and country. By studying their proven strategies for employer engagement, we can adopt and customize these best practices to

better serve our regional needs. This includes researching effective communication methods, digital outreach strategies, and innovative partnership models that have been successful in other regions. Leveraging these insights will allow us to enhance our employer engagement efforts without reinventing the wheel, accelerating our ability to deliver impactful services.

- **Establish an Employer Advisory Board:**

To gain direct and actionable insights from employers, Chair Heskamp recommended the creation of an Employer Advisory Board. This board should include representatives from small, medium, and large businesses across our key industries, ensuring that we receive diverse and comprehensive feedback.

Convening on a quarterly basis, the Employer Advisory Board will provide critical input on how our services are perceived and what improvements can be made. This feedback loop will be instrumental in refining our offerings and ensuring that we remain responsive to the evolving needs of the regional business community.

Board staff appreciated the Chair's recommendations and will work on implementing them to enhance the Gulf Coast Workforce Board's ability to engage with regional employers, positioning us as a proactive and valued partner in workforce development. These strategic steps are essential for driving economic growth and ensuring that our services meet the needs of the businesses we serve.

Communications Committee

Executive Summary

Chair Doug Karr called the hybrid meeting to order on September 25, 2024 at 10:00 a.m. at the Houston-Galveston Area Council. Other Board members in attendance included Chair Mark Guthrie, Richard Shaw, Bobbie Henderson, and Paul Puente. Board staff reported continuing to make substantial progress in enhancing our media presence, community engagement, and digital strategy to support our mission of connecting employers with job seekers across the 13-county region. Through strategic collaborations with media partners, such as the KTRK "Who's Hiring Now" segments, and the preparation for key community events like the upcoming "White Cane Safety Day" and "Hiring Red, White, and You", we have significantly bolstered our public outreach efforts.

Additionally, our social media strategy has been instrumental in driving engagement, with a focus on content optimization and targeted audience growth. Despite recent challenges in reach, the steady growth in our follower base across platforms like Facebook and Instagram reflects a more engaged and focused audience. Looking ahead, we remain committed to refining our strategies and ensuring that our communications efforts continue to align with the evolving needs of our community and stakeholders.

Media Report

The Gulf Coast Workforce Board has been actively engaging with media and community engagement events to promote its regional workforce development initiatives. Notable mentions include:

a. KTRK "Look Who's Hiring Now" Segments

- "Avenues of Opportunity" Job Fair, Wheeler Avenue Baptist Church and KTRK's "Look Who's Hiring Now" with a special focus on Aviation and Aerospace on August 22, 2024:
 - Job Fair Statistics
 - Attendees: 365
 - Employers: 39
 - Interviews: 172
 - Onsite Hires: 6
 - Media Coverage
 - Total AVE: \$85,063.80
 - Viewership: 214,114

- “Work in Pearland” Job Fair, Pearland Economic Development Council on September 18, 2024:
 - Job Fair Statistics
 - Attendees: 523
 - Employers: 81
 - Media Coverage
 - Total AVE: \$57,625.80
 - Viewership: 152,162

b. Upcoming Events

- i. **Town Hall for Clear Lake Career Office:** Scheduled for October 28, 2024, at 6:30 p.m. at Clear Lake City Community Center, 16511 Diana Lane, Houston, TX 77062. This event aims to engage the local community and enhance public perception;
- ii. **18th Annual White Cane Safety Day:** October 15, 2024, at the University of Houston, Student Services Center South from 10AM to 2PM. This event celebrates the accomplishments of the blind and visually impaired individuals which begins with an awareness march, and transitions into an exciting program with mayoral proclamation and guest speakers. ;
- iii. **National Disability Employment Awareness Month Job Fair:** October 24, 2024, at the Darren Almendarez Community Center, 10918 ½ Bentley Street, Houston, TX 77093 and will feature a KTRK’s “Who’s Hiring Now” segment;
- iv. **Hiring Red, White, and You:** November 1, 2024, at NRG Center, 8600 Kirby Drive, Houston, TX 77054. A significant event aimed at veterans and employers.

Digital Community Engagement

We greatly value the ongoing support from Workforce Solutions’ “Virtual Team” in enhancing our communication strategy through the creation of impactful and original content. Their contributions have been instrumental in telling our story and highlighting the successes within our community:

a. Digitally Capturing Customer Journeys

Through our YouTube feature on Officer Erica Ramirez, we’ve effectively showcased the transformative impact of Workforce Solutions’ services on individual career journeys. This narrative not only highlights personal success but also demonstrates the broader value of our programs to the community.

b. Capturing Employer Engagement Activities

Our team has meticulously documented recent hiring events through video and photography, capturing the dynamic interactions between employers and job seekers. These visual stories are powerful tools for illustrating the tangible outcomes of our efforts, fostering deeper community engagement, and reinforcing our role as a vital resource in workforce development.

These digital engagement efforts are critical to our mission of making Workforce Solutions more than just a service provider, but a well-known and trusted partner within our community. By sharing these compelling stories and visual content, we are not only raising awareness of our programs but also building stronger, more meaningful connections with the individuals and businesses we serve. This approach ensures that Workforce Solutions, once the community's best-kept secret, becomes a widely recognized and valued resource, known for its positive impact on the lives of countless individuals and the overall economic health of the Gulf Coast region.

Social Media Strategy and Performance Overview

The Gulf Coast Workforce Board's social media strategy plays a vital role in supporting our mission to connect employers with job seekers, promote workforce services, and reinforce community engagement across the Gulf Coast region. As a multifaceted organization with 28 career offices serving 13 counties, it is critical that our social media presence reflects the diversity of our region and the scope of our services. By strategically leveraging our digital platforms, we aim to not only communicate key messages but also strengthen relationships with stakeholders, including job seekers, employers, community organizations, and local partners.

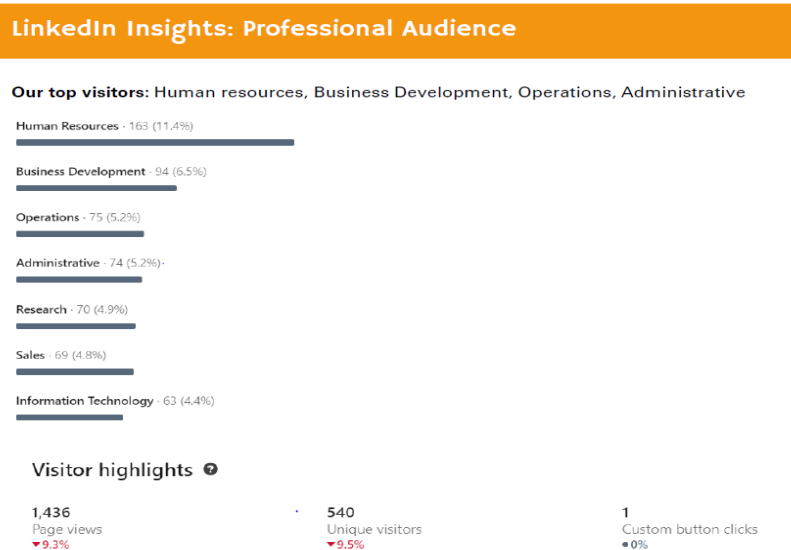
Our overarching goal is to enhance our online presence by increasing visibility and brand awareness, fostering a positive and inclusive brand image, and expanding our audience reach to ensure that the Gulf Coast Workforce Board is recognized as a leading resource for workforce solutions. In doing so, we aim to showcase partnerships that are crucial in driving economic development and community well-being throughout the Gulf Coast region. By highlighting success stories, sharing job opportunities, and engaging directly with our audience, we ensure that our messaging remains relevant and impactful.

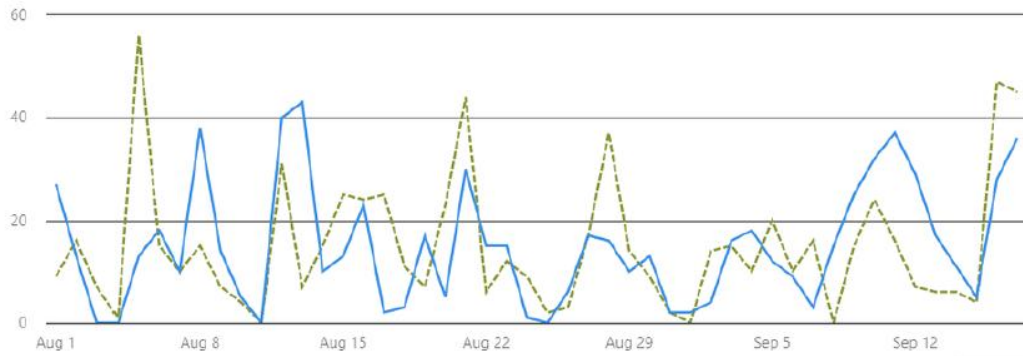
To assess the effectiveness of our social media efforts, we consistently track and evaluate key performance indicators (KPIs). These metrics not only provide a clear picture of our current standing but also guide us in making informed decisions to optimize our strategy. Our KPIs include:

- **Follower Growth:** Tracking the growth of our audience across platforms (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Twitter). This helps us measure how well we are attracting new users and expanding our reach.
- **Reach and Impressions:** Monitoring the number of users who view our content allows us to understand the extent of our visibility in the digital space. Impressions give insight into how often our posts are being seen, whether through organic reach or paid promotion.
- **Website Visits:** Social media platforms act as gateways to our official website, where users can explore workforce services, job postings, and more. By tracking website traffic from social platforms, we can gauge the effectiveness of our content in driving users to take action and seek out our services.
- **Engagement Metrics:** Engagement is one of the most telling indicators of content success. By analyzing the number of interactions—such as likes, shares, comments, messages, and link clicks—we can determine which content resonates the most with our audience. This data helps us understand not just how many people are viewing our content, but how deeply they are interacting with it.

Through continuous monitoring of these metrics, we are able to refine our strategy, ensuring that our content aligns with the evolving needs of our community and the broader workforce landscape. These insights are integral to fulfilling our goal of providing accessible and relevant workforce services across the Gulf Coast region, while also maintaining a vibrant and engaging online presence.

What We Are Doing

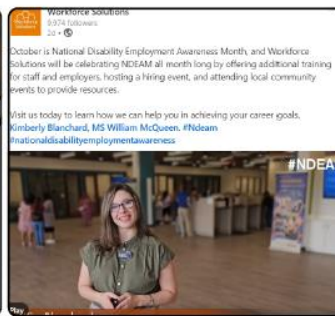




Top LinkedIn Post



Engagement Rate: 7.88%
Click : 65
Repost: 7
Impressions:1,129



Engagement Rate: 10.42%
Click: 41
Repost: 12
Impressions:740



Engagement Rate:5.69%
Click: 29
Repost: 4
Impressions: 756

Key Social Media Metrics: Facebook and Instagram Performance

For the reporting period covering August and early September 2024, the performance on our key platforms—Facebook and Instagram—has revealed both challenges and successes.

Facebook:

- **Reach:** 23.4K, which reflects a 14.5% decline in comparison to previous periods. Despite this drop in reach, there were notable spikes in engagement during mid-August and early September. These spikes suggest that certain posts, likely those with local relevance or engaging content, gained traction and engaged a more targeted audience.
- **Follower Growth:** 162 new followers were added during this period, despite the decline in reach. This signals that while fewer people are viewing our content, those who do see it are more likely to engage meaningfully and

follow the page. This trend indicates the potential for developing a more loyal and engaged follower base.

Instagram:

- **Reach:** 10.2K, reflecting a 4.8% decrease in overall reach. However, similar to Facebook, we observed peaks in engagement on August 21 and September 10. These engagement peaks correlate with specific posts that likely resonated with our target audience, indicating an opportunity to refine content strategies based on these successful posts.

Despite the lower reach on both platforms, the growth in followers demonstrates the strength of our content in attracting new users. While fewer individuals are seeing our content initially, those who do are engaging more deeply, pointing to a potential shift towards a more engaged and focused audience.

Facebook reach ⓘ
23.4K ↓ 14.5%



Instagram reach ⓘ
10.2K ↓ 4.8%



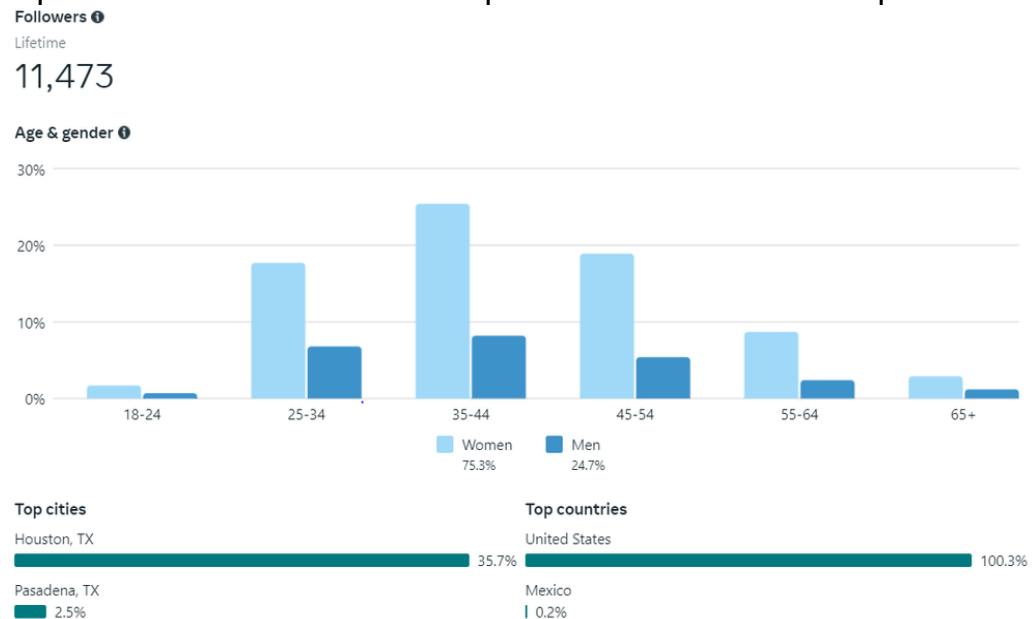
Audience Demographics: Understanding Our Followers

A deeper understanding of our audience demographics helps us tailor our content to better meet the needs and interests of our followers.

Facebook Audience Breakdown:

- **Gender:** 75.3% of our Facebook followers are women, while men represent 24.7%.
- **Top Age Groups:**
 - **35-44 years:** This age group is the largest segment of our followers, both men and women, and shows consistent engagement across various posts.
 - **45-54 years:** Another significant group, which also shows strong engagement, particularly with content related to workforce development and community programs.

- **25-34 years:** While slightly smaller, this age bracket remains an active and important demographic, with women leading the engagement.
- **Top Cities:**
 - **Houston, TX:** As expected, Houston represents 35.7% of our Facebook audience, reflecting a strong local presence and engagement with our community-focused content.
 - **Pasadena, TX:** With 2.5% of our followers, Pasadena remains an important area where we can expand our outreach and impact.



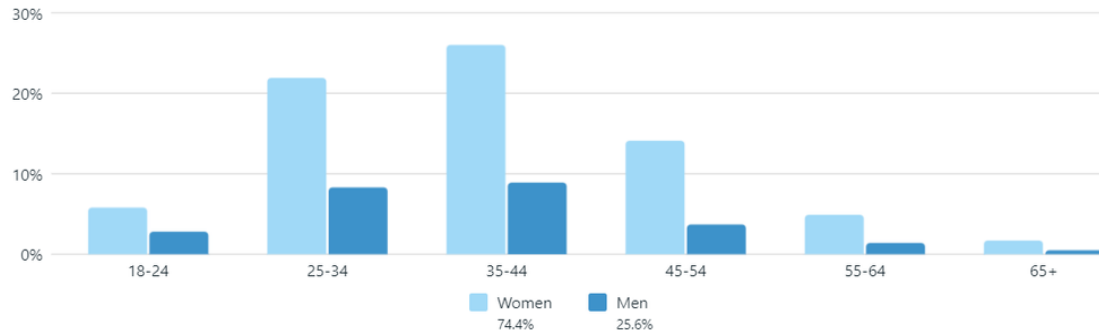
Instagram Audience Breakdown:

- **Gender:** 74.4% of our Instagram followers are women, while men account for 25.6%.
- **Top Age Groups:**
 - **35-44 years:** Similar to Facebook, this age group leads in terms of both following and engagement on Instagram.
 - **25-34 years:** This demographic is highly active on Instagram, with a strong interest in visual and interactive content related to job opportunities, career development, and community services.
 - **45-54 years:** This segment, though smaller on Instagram compared to Facebook, still plays a vital role in engaging with content related to local events and services.
- **Top Cities:**
 - **Houston, TX:** 46.1% of our Instagram audience is based in Houston, underscoring the importance of maintaining our focus on localized content that resonates with this community.

Followers

Lifetime
5,265

Age & gender



Top cities

Houston, TX
New York, NY
1.9%

Top countries

United States
Nigeria
0.9%

Top Post Facebook & Instagram

Across both Facebook and Instagram, we receive an average of 20 direct messages per month. These messages often stem from our posts and reflect an active and engaged community. The nature of these interactions includes inquiries about our services, responses to workforce-related content, and questions about upcoming events and programs. This ongoing engagement is a critical component of our strategy, as it offers direct feedback from the community and an opportunity to provide personalized responses.

The collage features several promotional materials from Workforce Solutions:

- Facebook Post 1:** "Join Us at the Rosenberg Hiring Event!" dated Wednesday, August 26, 10:21 AM. It has 9.4K reach, 12 reactions, 0 comments, and 16 shares.
- Facebook Post 2:** "Westheimer Hiring Event When: Wednesday, August..." dated Thursday, August 6, 8:00 AM. It has 2.6K reach, 6 reactions, 0 comments, and 11 shares.
- Facebook Post 3:** "The City of Houston Airport System is hiring custodia..." dated Monday, August 12, 2:54 PM. It has 1.8K reach, 47 likes, 0 comments, and 63 shares.
- Flyer 1:** "HIRING EVENT Wednesday, August 28 | 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM Workforce Solutions - Rosenberg, 28000 SW Freeway, Suite D, Rosenberg, TX 77471". Lists employers like Express Procs and Pride Staffing, and positions like Cook Assistants and Installation technicians.
- Flyer 2:** "Hiring Event City of Houston Houston Airport System 9.00am - 12.00pm Tuesday, August 13, 2024". Focuses on hiring custodians for Bush Airport.
- Flyer 3:** "Now Hiring! ALLIED UNIVERSAL Wednesday, August 14th, 2024 | 10 AM - 2 PM 9608 FM 1950 Bypass Road West Humble, TX 77355". Lists requirements like professional dress and a workintexas.com account.

Data Summary: Growth in Followers and Year-Over-Year Comparison

As of this reporting period, the Gulf Coast Workforce Board's primary social media platforms have accumulated 28,535 followers. This growth highlights the continued interest in our services and content, even amid fluctuations in reach and engagement.

| Platform | Followers 2024 | Reach | Followers 2023 | Year-Over-Year Change |
|-----------------------------|----------------|--------|----------------|-----------------------|
| Facebook | 11,473 | 23,400 | 10,709 | 7.13% |
| Instagram | 5,265 | 10,200 | 3,896 | 35.14% |
| LinkedIn | 9,971 | 5,727 | 8,091 | 23.24% |
| X (Twitter) | 1,826 | N/a | 1,784 | 2.35% |

Career Office Social Media Account Data

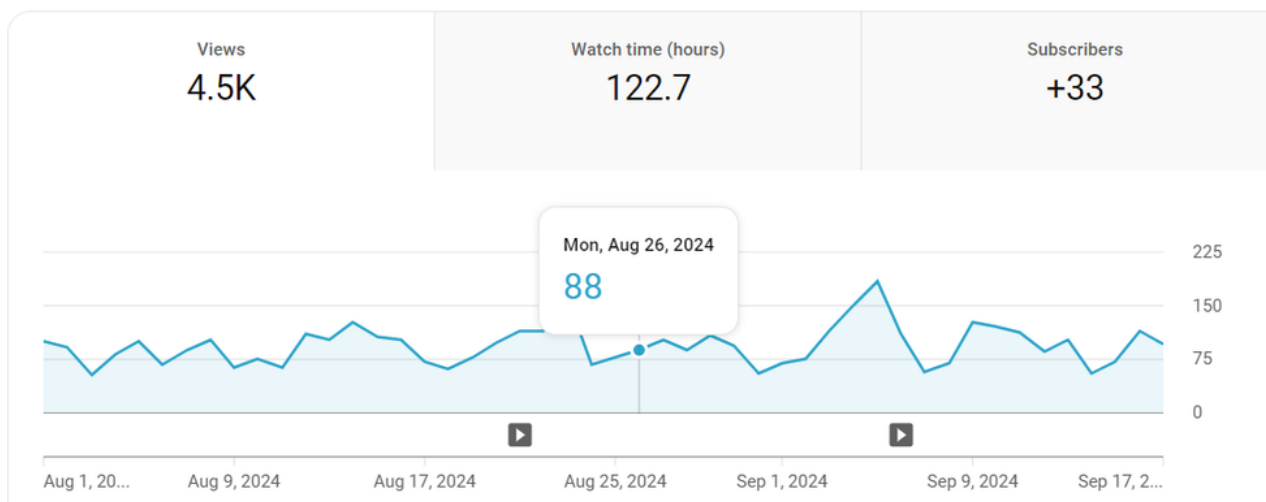
Facebook:

| Account Name | Followers # | Reach Insight | Facebook Visits |
|--|-------------|---------------|-----------------|
| @texascityworkforcesolutions | 4,625 | 77,000 | 3,400 |
| @workforcesolutionslj | 2,381 | 4,000 | 312 |
| @WFSBaytown | 2,567 | 656 | 420 |
| @wfs.southeast | 3,155 | 876 | 814 |
| @WFSClearLake | 776 | 277 | 293 |
| @wfs.astrodome | 513 | 91 | 57 |
| Rosenberg | 125 | 4,000 | 74 |
| @WFSNorthshore | 577 | 94 | 13 |
| @WorkforceSolutionsSouthwest | 1,211 | 102 | 9 |
| @wfsne | 54 | 3,300 | 190 |
| @wfseastendoffice | 17 | 12 | 1 |
| @northline | 23 | 11 | 11 |

YouTube:

| Account | Subscribers | Views | Watch time | Top Audience |
|---|-------------|-------|-------------|--------------|
| @workforcesolution sgulfcoast | 1284 | 4,538 | 122.7 Hours | 18-34 |

In the selected period, your channel got 4,538 views



Strategic Recommendations

Based on the analysis of social media performance and engagement metrics, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance our strategy moving forward:

1. Content Optimization:

We recommend focusing on replicating the success of posts that generated peaks in engagement across the region. By analyzing which types of content (e.g., community events, success stories from various offices, or service announcements) have driven the most interaction, we can fine-tune our content calendar to prioritize these topics. Tailoring content to highlight achievements and services from each of the 13 counties can further engage local communities, fostering a deeper connection to our services.

2. Targeted Audience Growth:

Although overall reach has declined, the rise in follower numbers suggests that our content is resonating with a more specific, engaged audience across multiple counties. We recommend further exploring targeted

advertising and promotion strategies that focus on the unique needs and demographics of each county. By leveraging data from individual career offices, we can craft more localized campaigns that speak directly to the communities we serve, thereby continuing to grow an engaged and regionally diverse audience.

3. Strengthen Local Engagement:

Houston remains our strongest market, representing a significant portion of our audience on both platforms. However, it is critical to deepen our engagement across all 13 counties. By continuing to create content that emphasizes partnerships with local businesses, community-driven initiatives, and events specific to each county, we can strengthen our connection with these communities. Special attention should be given to highlighting the unique workforce needs of each region, ensuring that our content reflects the diverse economic and employment landscapes across the Gulf Coast area.

H-GAC Communications Update

Since our last meeting, H-GAC Communications has been advancing key initiatives essential to the workforce board's strategic objectives. We are currently working with Outreach Strategists to coordinate the upcoming Clear Lake Town Hall.

Together, we've initiated a strategy aimed at effectively engaging the community, ensuring that the event facilitates meaningful participation, input, transparency, and positive public perception for our brand. The team is managing the H-GAC Board announcement and will execute a communications plan that includes emails, flyers, social media posts, and a public notice to maximize outreach and ensure public awareness.

In support of the National Disaster Dislocated Worker Grant, the Communications team is conducting a targeted survey among H-GAC elected officials and member governments. This survey is designed to gather essential data on recovery and rebuilding efforts, and to identify potential worksites and job opportunities that can be filled using the grant funds.

In response to Career Office requests, Communications updated our collateral to align with current branding and messaging. We also streamlined internal coordination by organizing and disseminating insights from recent meetings. Regarding our expiring contractor agreement, the team has completed the offboarding of Savage, while systematically updating and archiving branding files. New Canva design templates were developed to ensure efficiency and consistency in future design work.

Lastly, with our ongoing website development project with Planeteria, the team finalized a detailed questionnaire and outline, ensuring the project aligns with our Workforce Solutions 2024-2029 Strategic Vision. They are now scheduling kickoff meetings to move the project forward. Project remains on timeline.

Education Committee

Update for October 2024

Executive Summary:

Board Members in attendance included Chair Dr. Bobbie Henderson, Paul Puente, Bin Yu, Douglas Karr, Mary Helen Cavazos, Cheryl Guido, Esmeralda Mata, Sandra, Taylor, Edward Melton, and Board Chair Mark Guthrie. The Gulf Coast Workforce Board's Education Committee reported key staffing changes. Notable achievements include the successful implementation of work-based learning programs and a new \$200,000 grant from the Houston Endowment to address regional teacher shortages. Additionally, the Board is adapting to new challenges in Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) due to changes in Texas Workforce Commission guidelines, while also recommending an increase in paid closure days for child care providers to enhance professional development and support.

Staffing Updates

The Gulf Coast Workforce Board's Education Division is undergoing key transitions:

- Luis Moreno, the inaugural Tri-Agency Regional Convener, recently resigned to relocate to Austin, Texas. His leadership significantly shaped the regional collaboration efforts. The Board is actively recruiting a new Education Industry Liaison to advance employer engagement initiatives in education and lead the Tri-Agency Regional Convener efforts.
- Jalil Cantarero has been reassigned as the Hire Gulf Coast Youth Program Coordinator. With his expertise in community engagement, Cantarero will drive the successful launch of this critical program in fall 2024, aimed at empowering the region's youth.
- Jennifer Starling has been promoted to Manager of Early Childhood Education. Starling has transformed the Support Center, streamlining operations and significantly improving the distribution of child care scholarships in the \$300 million program.

Tri-Agency Regional Convener Grant: Summer Deliverables

Board staff reported on the successful implementation of the Tri-Agency Regional Convener grant, which facilitated work-based learning experiences in key sectors:

- 38 students participated in paid placements across healthcare (12), construction (4), and education (22), gaining hands-on experience.

Comprehensive job-readiness training was provided to all participants, with the Board covering job-site entry costs. The program offered wages and stipends, ensuring accessibility and full engagement, leading to enhanced industry insights and career prospects for the students.

“Unlock Your Summer” Career Exploration Camp at Rice University

The Gulf Coast Workforce Board, in collaboration with Rice University’s Tapia Center, hosted the “Unlock Your Summer” camp, providing immersive career exploration:

- 75 students from across the 13-county region were selected from over 300 applicants for this residential program, focusing on careers in healthcare, education, and construction.

The program featured site visits, project-based learning, and expert lectures, including from Professor Richard A. Tapia. Participants received a \$500 stipend, gaining valuable exposure to career pathways in high-demand industries.

Houston Endowment Teacher Apprenticeship Grant

The Gulf Coast Workforce Board received a \$200,000 planning grant from the Houston Endowment to address the teacher shortage in Region 4 and Montgomery County. The grant will support the development of a Regional Teacher Apprenticeship Program, aligned with local school district needs. The planning phase includes researching funding sources, forming strategic partnerships, and creating a sustainable apprenticeship model. A comprehensive proposal is expected to be presented in June 2025. The Board expressed appreciation for the Houston Endowment’s support in addressing this critical issue.

Adult Education and Literacy (AEL)

The Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, part of the Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act (WIOA, Title II), governs activities for publicly funded adult education. The Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC) serves as the fiscal agent, while the Gulf Coast Workforce Board (GCWB) is the grantee for the Gulf Coast Adult Education Consortium. This consortium includes two community-based organizations, three community colleges, the workforce board, and Region 6 Education Service Center. Region 6 operates two divisions within the AEL consortium: one provides direct services to Waller and Walker counties, and the other serves as the lead agency offering technical assistance and support to six direct subrecipient contractor divisions.

The consortium delivers adult education and literacy services through face-to-face, remote, and hybrid formats across nine counties in our 13-county region. These services include English language instruction, literacy classes, adult basic and secondary education, integrated education, GED (General Education Development) preparation,

joint basic education-skills training, college and career readiness, employability skills, services for internationally trained professionals, job search assistance, training, workplace literacy, digital literacy, and high school diploma credentialing.

Current Situation

Established in 2014, the H-GAC Regional Consortium for Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) has significantly expanded its services across the 13-county region. Through robust partnerships with AEL providers, the consortium has empowered the community by offering essential skills acquisition and upskilling opportunities, funded by the Texas Workforce Commission's Adult Education and Literacy grant.

Performance for service providers is reviewed in three key areas:

- **12+ Hour Students:** This includes participants in adult education classes who have completed 12 or more clock hours. These students represent the foundational tier of the consortium's service delivery, ensuring that initial educational engagement is tracked and supported.
- **Integrated Education and Training (IET):** This category includes students enrolled concurrently in AEL classes and workforce preparation activities. These activities are contextualized with specific in-demand or targeted occupations, fostering educational and career advancement. The category also encompasses students co-enrolled in civics classes, formally classified as integrated English language/civics/training.
- **Intensive Services:** This includes participants who receive a variety of college and career-focused adult education options, such as workplace AEL activities, services for internationally trained English language learners, and transition assistance for offenders re-entering society.

To address community needs and support educational and career goals, the AEL Consortium offers a comprehensive array of programs:

- **English as a Second Language (ESL):** Builds critical communication skills for individuals who test at or above Low Beginning ESL, providing foundational language abilities necessary for workplace and daily interactions.
- **Adult Basic Education:** Offers a solid foundation in mathematics, reading, writing, and science, preparing individuals for the GED exam. This program targets those at the functioning level at or above Beginning Basic Education, ensuring they have the skills to progress educationally and professionally.
- **Integrated Education and Training (IET):** Guides students into job training and career pathways, particularly for those at or above Low Intermediate Basic Education or High Beginning ESL, aligning their educational attainment with workforce needs.

- **Digital Literacy:** Introduces students to essential software and contemporary digital skills, equipping them with the tools necessary to succeed in a technology-driven economy.
- **Family Literacy:** Encourages reading and writing as a family activity, bringing literacy into the home and fostering a culture of learning across generations.
- **Financial Literacy:** Provides participants with a foundational understanding of personal financial management, budgeting, and investing, empowering them to make informed financial decisions and build economic resilience.

AEL Grant History and Strategic Adjustments

The transition of Adult Education and Literacy from the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) in 2014 marked a significant shift in service delivery, with H-GAC awarded the AEL grant in all three iterations since then. Initially, the consortium included 15 providers covering all 13 Gulf Coast counties, focusing on meeting performance goals while delivering high-quality, flexible services to a diverse population.

The first two iterations of the AEL grant offered considerable flexibility, allowing the consortium to serve a broad spectrum of customers at various stages of their educational journeys. This flexibility enabled the consortium to gain deeper insights into customer needs, improving assessments and tailoring prescriptive plans that proactively addressed barriers. The "No Wrong Door" approach, which allows customers to access a range of services in a single visit, enhanced workflow, personalized care, and case management efficiency, all while contributing to the consortium's success in helping TWC meet its production and performance goals.

During the second grant iteration, the consortium continued to implement strategic recruitment, outreach, and branded communication efforts across the region. Collaborative initiatives were launched to meet local workforce needs and create new employment and training opportunities. These efforts involved key partners such as elected officials, the business community, industry organizations, economic development groups, labor organizations, educational institutions, and community and faith-based organizations.

Through close collaboration with GCWB's Employer Engagement, Education, and Community Engagement divisions, the consortium coordinated outreach strategies, gathering real-time data on community issues and workforce challenges. This collaborative approach also focused on internal development, training Career Offices and service providers to fully leverage AEL offerings and ensure residents were aware of available opportunities.

As a result, the consortium exceeded its enrollment target. However, it narrowly missed the Accelerated Measurable Skill Gains (MSG) Performance-Based Funding measure,

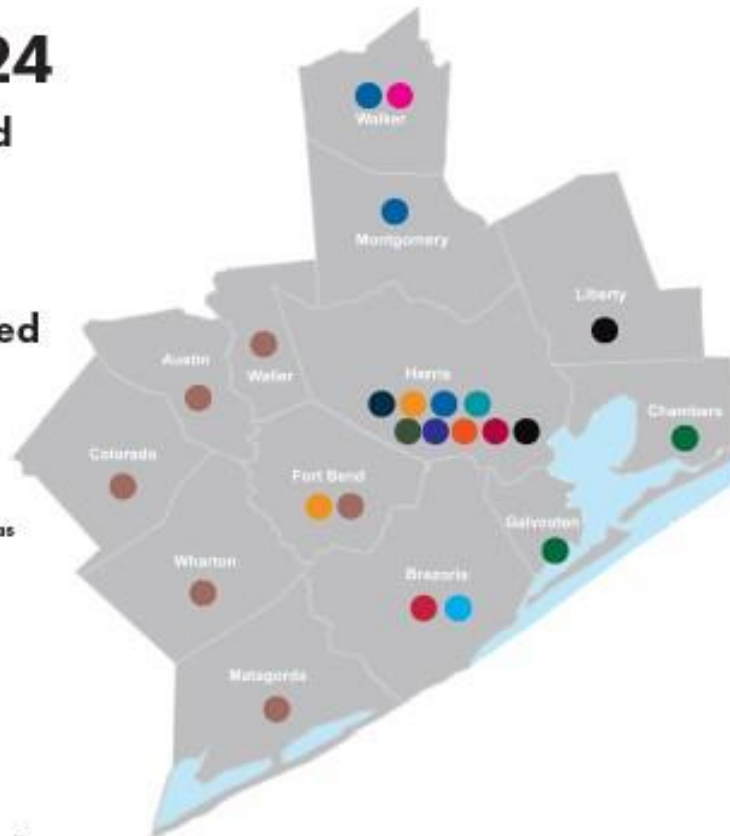
achieving 45% of the target by March 31, 2024—falling short by just 7%. Despite this, Year 6 of the AEL grant cycle was the strongest yet for the Gulf Coast Consortium.

2023/2024

Funding Received
\$20,161,749*
All Services
All 13 Counties

Funding Requested
All Services
All 13 Counties

*Includes \$2.2 million for English as a Second Language service.



Historic Funding

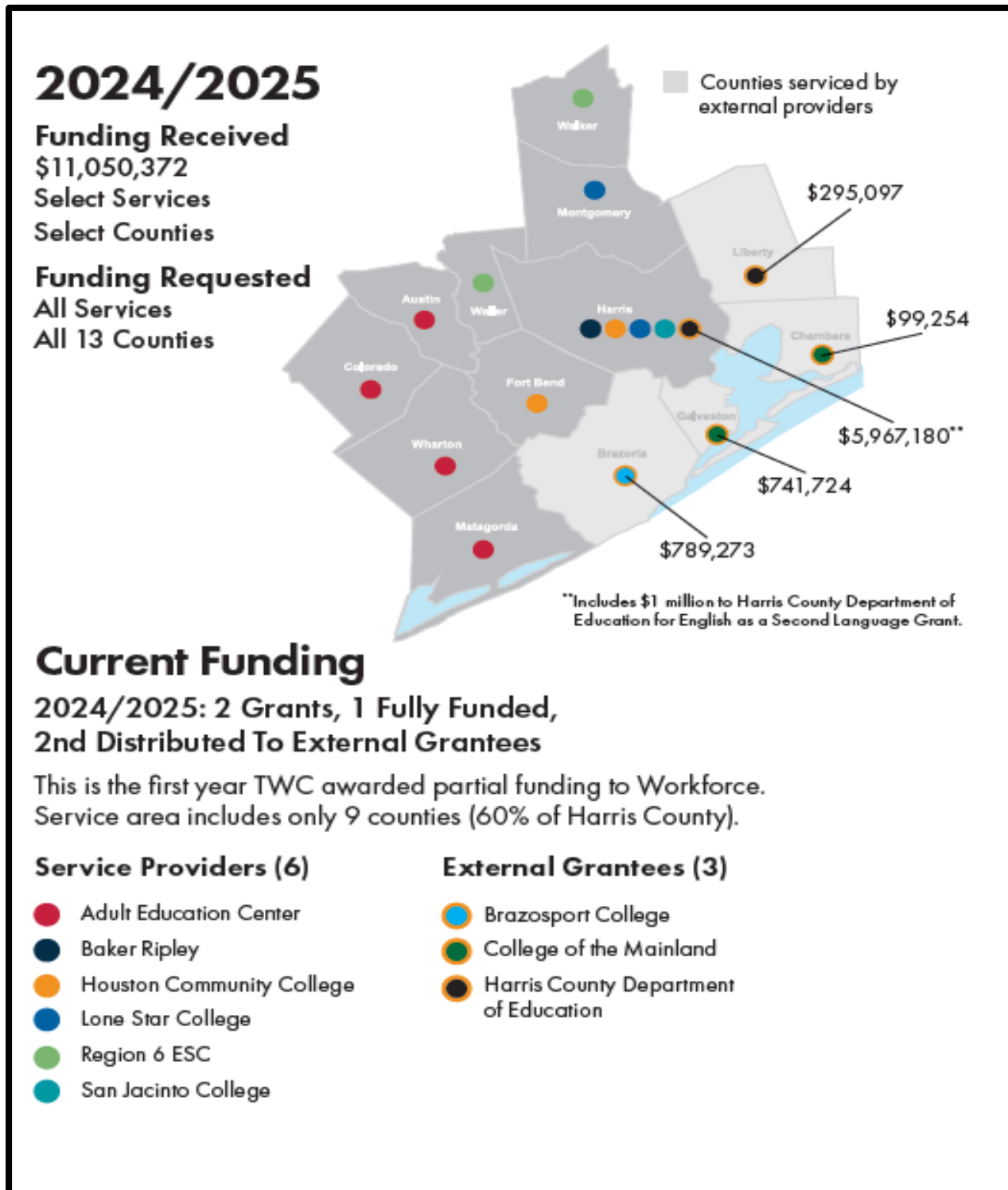
2014-2024: 1 Grant, Fully Funded, 2 Terms

Beginning in 2014, TWC awarded 100% funding to Workforce. Service area included all 13 counties.

Service Providers (15)

- | | |
|--|---|
| ● Adult Education Center, Pearland | ● Community Family Center |
| ● Alliance for Multicultural Community Services | ● Harris County Department of Education |
| ● Association for the Advancement of Mexican Americans | ● Houston Community College |
| ● Baker Ripley | ● Lone Star College |
| ● Boys/Girls Club Walker | ● San Jacinto College |
| ● Brazosport College | ● Wharton County Junior College |
| ● Chinese Community Center | ● Region 6 ESC |
| ● College of the Mainland | |

Challenges and Adaptations in the Third Grant Iteration



The third iteration of the AEL grant brought significant changes, primarily due to updated terms and conditions from TWC. These changes included stricter eligibility criteria, limiting service to customers with goals of attaining employment in the U.S. or enrolling in post-secondary education and training. Also, the consortium was required to reduce the number of service providers to only seven members, including the GCWB, which presented a considerable challenge.

Funding allocations also changed, with counties receiving less than \$750,000 requiring 100% service coverage. Counties with allocations above \$750,000 could split services, but only in specific increments. Four counties—Brazoria, Fort Bend, Harris, and Montgomery—were eligible for this service split. The region was awarded \$11 million, significantly less than the \$20 million requested, exacerbating the challenges in maintaining service delivery.

Despite these challenges, the AEL Consortium remains positioned at the forefront of workforce development. The consortium has continued to form strategic partnerships with key businesses and industries, ensuring that integrated education, training, and workplace literacy services align with regional workforce demands. The consortium is an integral part of the GCWB and its affiliate, Workforce Solutions – Gulf Coast, which provides access to up-to-date career and labor market data specific to the Gulf Coast region.

Strategic Response to New Challenges

The consortium's objectives remain fully aligned with the GCWB's Local and Strategic Plans, reinforcing its commitment to economic growth and workforce excellence. The consortium is uniquely structured, comprising Houston Community College (serving Fort Bend and Harris counties), Lone Star College (serving Harris and Montgomery counties), San Jacinto College (serving Harris County), Region 6 Education Service Center (serving Waller and Walker counties), Adult Education Center (serving Austin, Colorado, Matagorda, and Wharton counties), BakerRipley (serving Harris County), and the H-GAC/GCWB.

The transition to the updated grant structure has been challenging, especially in outlying counties like Walker, Austin, Colorado, Matagorda, and Wharton. To address these difficulties, the consortium has added extra layers of support, ensuring a smooth transition for all involved. The shift in service providers from Wharton County Junior College (WCJC) to the Adult Education Center for Austin, Colorado, Matagorda, and Wharton counties, and from Boys and Girls Club of Walker County (BGCW) to Region 6 Education Service Center for Waller and Walker counties, has required careful management.

While these changes have presented unexpected challenges, including issues with new partners and access to service locations, the consortium remains deeply committed to serving all counties. By the end of August, the consortium successfully secured physical spaces for classes across all nine counties covered under the AEL grant.

Commitment to Success

Although the consortium is only two months into the new grant cycle, it has already made significant strides, underscoring the value and impact of its work. The "No Wrong Door" approach continues to be a cornerstone, ensuring that individuals facing barriers can connect to both internal services and essential community-based organizations. This approach fosters a cohesive network that reduces obstacles and enhances access to necessary resources.

The consortium's focus extends beyond immediate skill gaps, with a commitment to supporting long-term economic resilience and personal prosperity for its customers. These early stages are critical, and the consortium is dedicated to ensuring that its efforts not only meet immediate needs but also lay the groundwork for lasting success across the Gulf Coast region.

Youth Services

Career Services Youth Teams

This program year, we established dedicated youth staff teams to enhance our support for youth customers. This new approach allowed us to evaluate our service delivery and identify areas for improvement.

Key Improvement Areas

We have identified several system-level areas for enhancement, including credentialing, measurable skills acquisition, worksite development workflows, case management, and partnerships with employers and community organizations.

Addressing Challenges

Board staff is collaborating with Career Services providers to develop workflows and training to address these challenges. Also, we are finalizing a Youth Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) guide to ensure that Workforce Solutions staff understand expectations, roles and responsibilities, and policies related to serving youth customers. This SOP will be implemented system-wide with the upcoming program year contracts.

Focus Areas for Next Year

Our primary focus for next year will be on service quality, program effectiveness, and fostering strong partnerships with employers, community partners, and Independent

School Districts (ISDs). We will closely monitor the following program targets and performance measures:

- Youth Employment Numbers (WIOA Programs and Universal Youth),
- Subsidized Internship Completion Percentage,
- Subsidized Internship Placement in High-Skill, High-Wage (HSHG) Industries,
- Training Completion Percentage,
- Comprehensive Services, and
- End-of-Program Surveys.

Performance Data

Please note that performance measures have been excluded from this report due to the unavailability of current data from the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC).

| Service Provider | Youth Enrollments | WBL Youth | Youth Training |
|------------------|-------------------|-----------|----------------|
| BR | 537 | 271 | 108 |
| EQUUS | 182 | 89 | 26 |
| Interfaith | 678 | 381 | 96 |

Accountability and Interventions

Equus remains under a Performance Improvement Plan due to concerns regarding Credentials and Measurable Skills Gain. The agency has submitted an action plan to address these issues and prevent future noncompliance. While we have been unable to verify their progress due to the lack of updated TWC reports, we are committed to working closely with Equus to ensure they are taking proactive steps to comply with performance measures.

Next Gen Youth

SERJobs and ACAM

Both SERJobs and ACAM are facing challenges in developing worksites for work experience opportunities, significantly lagging in their targets. To address this issue, both service providers have hired additional staff to support worksite development for work-based learning opportunities.

System-Wide Challenge

Worksite development is a common challenge across the system. To address this issue, a workgroup coordinated by Youth Services Board Staff is developing a systematic approach to worksites, with support from SERCO and aiming to maximize utilization across all system partners. The goal is to implement this strategy for the upcoming program year.

Performance Measures for NextGen

| Service Providers | Youth Enrollments | WBL Youth | Youth Training |
|-------------------|-------------------|-----------|----------------|
| ACAM | 455 | 83 | 98 |
| SERJobs | 456 | 106 | 73 |

The performance measures outlined for Career Services will also be implemented for NextGen.

ACAM's Corrective Action

ACAM was placed on corrective action due to low enrollments and quality concerns. The loss of two sub-contractors contributed to these issues. Board Staff worked with ACAM to modify their contract and budget to address this gap, and they are now on track to meet enrollment targets for this program year.

ACAM has implemented trainings, dashboards, and accountability measures to improve sub-contractor performance. As of August, their internal reporting indicates improved quality measures in most areas. Board Staff will continue to support ACAM to ensure their success in the upcoming program year.

Youth Portal

The GCWB encountered challenges with its contracted vendor, Launchpad, during the development of the Youth Portal. To address these issues, multiple meetings were held with Launchpad's CEO to establish an action plan for delivering on the contracted scope of work.

Oversight and Project Management

Launchpad failed to provide adequate oversight and project management for their subcontractor, Abelian, leading to delays. To accommodate these delays, a sixty-day no-cost contract extension was granted.

Additional Resources and Oversight

To ensure timely and appropriate service delivery, additional resources from the contractor and board staff were allocated to the project. A detailed timeline with daily meetings was implemented to facilitate accountability and prompt interventions.

Progress and Timeline

Since implementing the action plan, Launchpad has become more actively engaged in the project, resulting in significant progress. We are on track to meet the revised timeline, with a goal of a soft launch in October 2024.

Summer Earn and Learn

The Summer Earn and Learn program, a joint initiative between Vocational Rehabilitation Services and Workforce Solutions, aimed to provide work experience opportunities to 525 students with disabilities.

Challenges and Achievements

This program year faced numerous challenges, including a malfunctioning youth portal, Hurricane Beryl, limited worksite availability, and communication issues. Despite these obstacles, staff successfully placed 446 of the 667 referred students into paid work experience opportunities, maintaining a consistent placement ratio of 66.8% compared to previous years.

Continuous Improvement

While significant improvements have been made over the past two years, we remain committed to ongoing enhancement. Debrief sessions will be held with all partners to identify gaps and opportunities.

Addressing Non-Participation

Many students opted not to participate in the program. We are analyzing case notes and data to develop strategies for reducing this number in the future.

Future Goals

A comprehensive plan, combined with a functional youth portal, is expected to yield better results in the upcoming program year. A project plan will be distributed to all system partners by the end of 2024 for implementation in the next program year.

Early Education Quality

Background

Workforce Solutions Early Education values the importance of stakeholder feedback in guiding efforts to support families, providers, and children in the Gulf Coast region. The Early Education Advisory Council was established to contribute ideas and make recommendations to the Board. Additionally, a child care provider needs assessment survey was conducted earlier this quarter to gain insights on how to better support quality initiatives in early care and education.

Provider – Paid Closure Days

- Current: All child care providers with Workforce Solutions agreements receive nine (9) paid closure days annually, which can be used for professional development,

observed holidays, and other planned closures. Providers must submit these nine closure days to the Financial Aid Payment Office each November for the upcoming year.

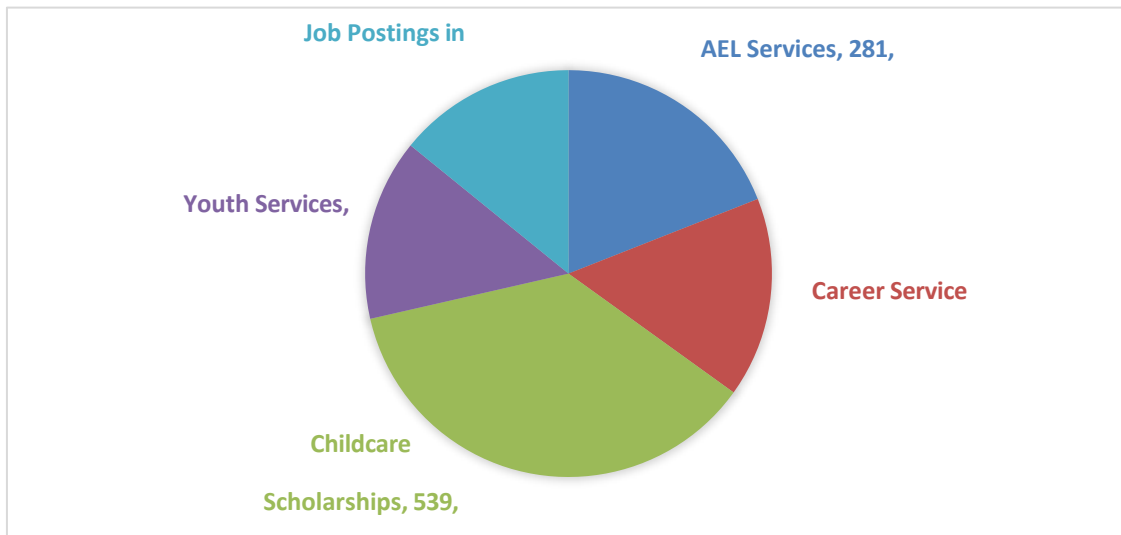
- Proposed: The Early Education Advisory Council recommends increasing the number of paid closure days to twelve (12) for all providers with an active Workforce Solutions agreement, effective January 2025.
- Discussion: With the new requirement for all providers with agreements to become Texas Rising Star certified, the additional three paid closure days would offer providers the flexibility to increase professional development in-service days for teaching staff and to observe additional holidays as a staff benefit.

Recommendation: It is recommended that the Education Committee adopt the proposed changes to provider paid closure days as outlined above.

Provider Survey Feedback

The Early Childhood Education Quality team launched a survey in early July to understand the needs of providers and to inform and improve services and supports for child care programs. Six hundred and thirty-three (633) owners/directors responded, providing valuable feedback to guide efforts for FY25.

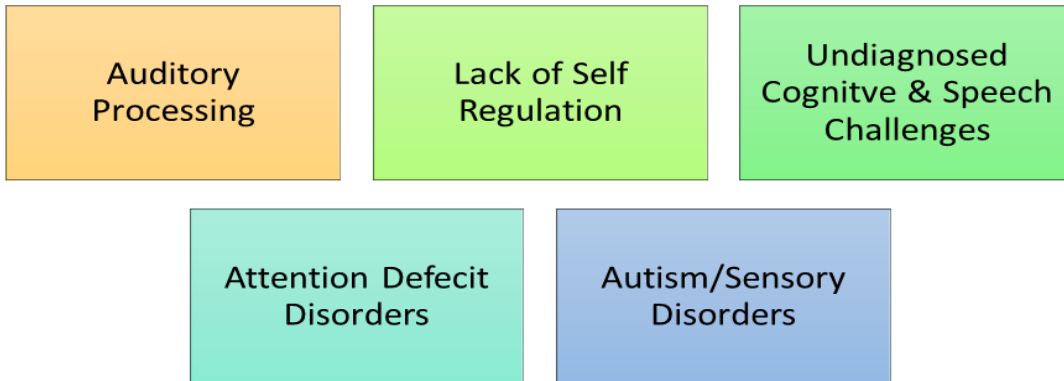
1. **Workforce Solutions services providers are interested in learning more about the following services:**



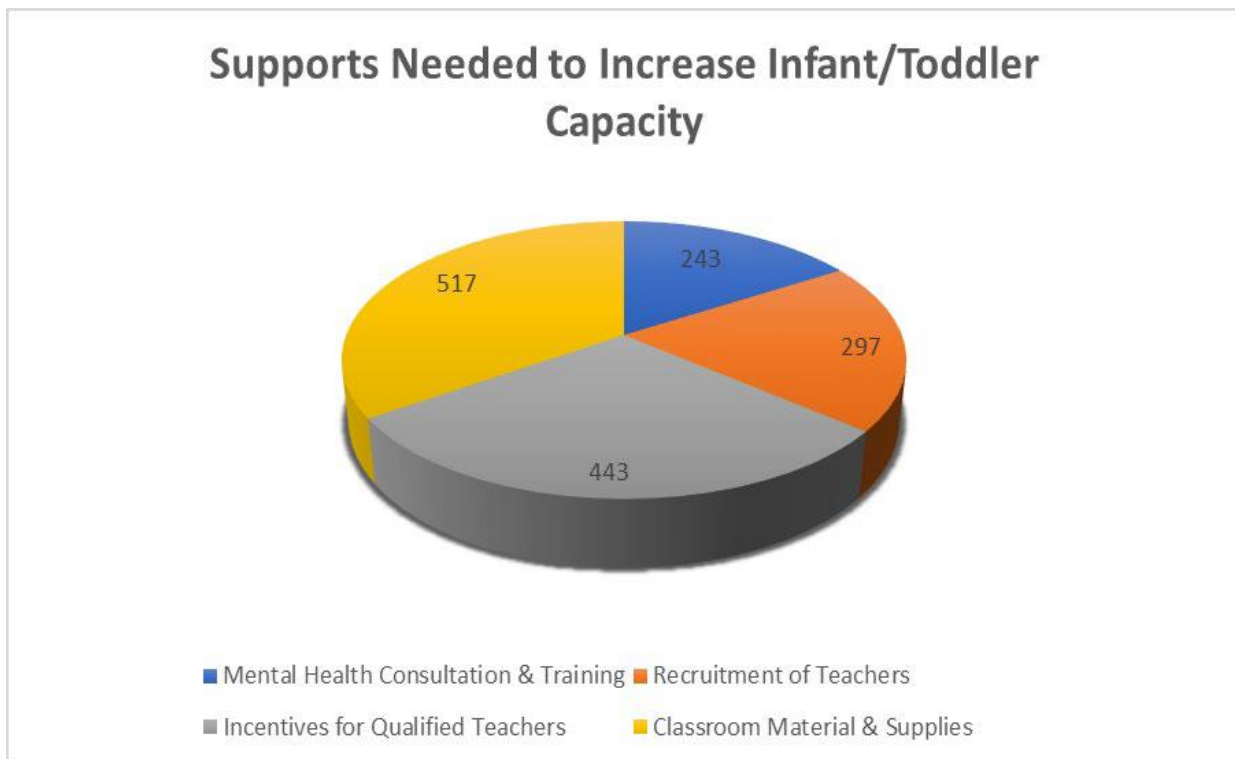
2. **Service Provider's Greatest Challenges:**



3. Primary Conditions

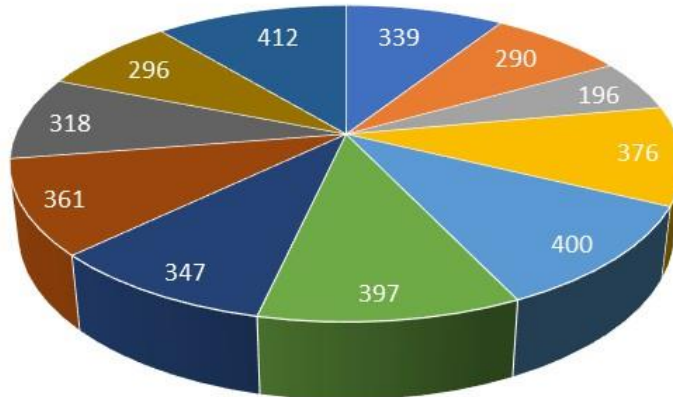


4. Infant and Toddler Capacity Supports



5. Professional Development for Administrators and Teaching Staff

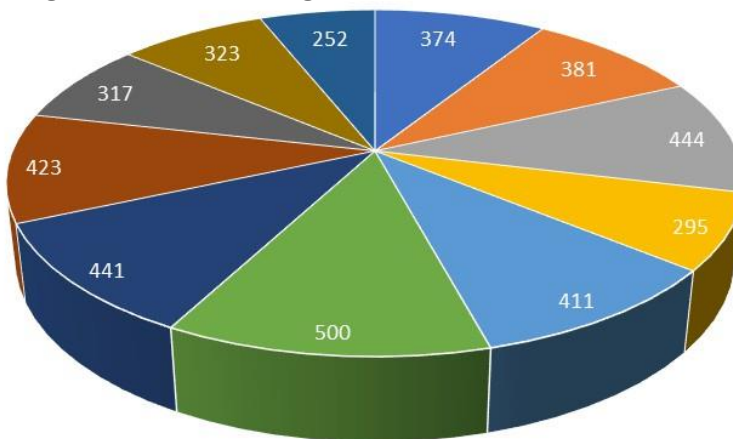
Professional Development Topics Directors/Owners Need



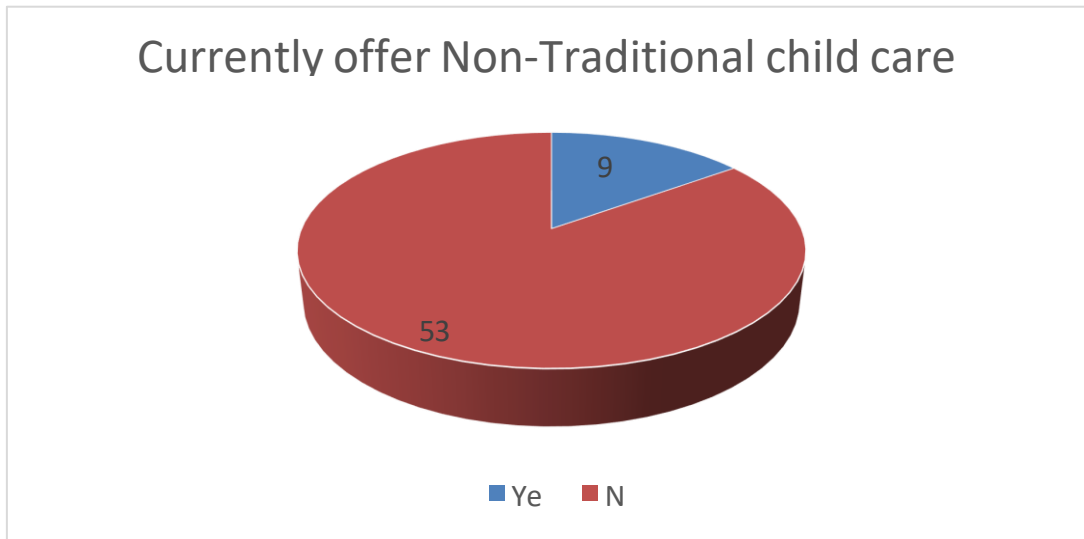
- Community Resources/Events
- Shared Services
- Teacher Training/Recruitment
- Parenting Resources
- Business Mgmt
- Services for Children w/ Special Needs
- Mental Health Supports
- Pre-K Partnerships
- Leadership/Mgmt Skills
- Parenting & Family Supports
- I/T Mental Health Resources
- *Law/Policy Changes

Professional Development Topics of Interest for Teachers

6. Supporting families needing non-traditional hours for child care



- CDA Course & Assessment
- Child Assessments
- Guidance & Discipline
- Parent/Community Involvement
- Behavior Management
- Teacher-Child Interactions
- Children w/ Special Needs
- Curriculum/Lesson Planning
- Health & Safety
- Infant/Toddler Childcare
- Trauma Informed Care



Next Steps

Board staff will incorporate this feedback from providers and those from the Early Education Advisory Council to provide more in-depth communication and collaboration with the Workforce Solutions system to integrated programs that benefit providers and families receiving child care services. Several of the needs expressed by providers will be included in performance and production requirements for child care quality contractors for FY25. Program supports and activities will include professional development, expanding infant and toddler care, and support to reduce challenging behaviors.

Child Care Scholarship

Overview

Over the past year, the Support Center has achieved significant milestones in enhancing its operations for the delivery of child care scholarships to our region. Board staff has successfully completed the enrollment ramp-up, reaching our target capacity of approximately 38,000 children. While Hurricane Beryl shut down services for several days, operations resumed as soon as possible.

Our current focus has shifted to maintaining our enrollment levels while ensuring all deliverables are met. To support these goals, Board staff continues to work closely with the Support Center, overseeing monthly production, conducting bi-weekly site visits, and holding additional meetings focused on KinderTrack.

Support Center Update

Texas Child Care Connection (TX3C)

On August 29, 2024, the Texas Workforce Commission advised us that the launch of the Texas Child Care Connection (TX3C), initially planned for July 1, 2024, has been postponed indefinitely, with no go-live date expected before October 1, 2024. In response, contract amendments have been made to shift prospective payments to the next budget cycle, beginning in fiscal year 2025.

The TWC reported that several critical system issues have been addressed, including missing children and schedules within the KinderConnect system. Approximately 85% of these issues have been resolved, with further analysis needed to address the remaining 15%. Configuration updates have also been completed, allowing staff to upload family documents, create attendance codes for better payment tracking, and streamline family file management.

Corrections are underway for the Parent Share of Cost (PSOC) data and other entries required to determine eligibility for services. Additionally, updates have been made to staff resources, including a new Desk Aid dashboard on SharePoint and a revised FAQ that incorporates new questions and better-organized content.

Board staff continues to receive regular training and attends the weekly TWC updates to ensure we are fully prepared for the eventual system launch.

Early Childhood Education Scholarship Figures

Our present statistics include the following:

- We currently provide care for over 38,000 children.
- TWC's year-to-date (YTD) target was set at 33,620.

As of April, we surpassed expectations, achieving 105% of the TWC YTD goal.

Waitlist

As of August 26th, 11,351 families representing 18,440 children remain on our waitlist. Families with the longest wait time entered the system in January 2024.

Next Steps

As we navigate the challenges of limited enrollment capacity in the new year, the Board staff is placing increased emphasis on enhancing the Quality Assurance and Training functions at the Support Center. Ensuring that our team is well-prepared to assist families, even those currently on the waitlist, is a top priority. This strategic shift reflects the evolving needs of our operations, as we must continue supporting our customers, even in the face of enrollment constraints.

Moving forward, Board staff will maintain monthly meetings with the Support Center, conduct weekly production reviews, and visit the facility at least twice per month. We will keep the Education Committee regularly updated on our progress as we work toward these goals.

Open House: New Support Center

On May 27, 2024, the Support Center transitioned to its new location, and the staff is energized by the upgraded space. We are excited to extend an invitation to an Open House on October 8, 2024 from 9:00 to 11:00 a.m. to explore the new facility.

8a. Action Item:

Child Care Provider – Paid Closure Days

The Education Committee recommends increasing the total number of paid closure days to twelve (12) for all providers with an active Workforce Solutions agreement, effective January 2025. With the new requirement for all providers to achieve Texas Rising Star certification, the inclusion of an additional three (3) paid closure days will provide the necessary flexibility for providers to enhance professional development in-service days for teaching staff and to observe additional holidays as a staff benefit.

Action: We ask the Board to increase the number of paid closure days to twelve (12) for all providers with an active Workforce Solutions agreement, effective January 2025.

Strategic Planning Committee

Adoption of the 2024-2029 Strategic Plan

The Strategic Planning Committee has invested substantial effort over the past year to meticulously craft the Gulf Coast Workforce Board's new five-year strategic plan for 2024 to 2029. This plan stands as a testament to the GCWB's commitment to excellence, drawing upon extensive collaboration, comprehensive stakeholder engagement, and rigorous analysis. Our objective has been clear: to create a strategic roadmap that not only addresses the immediate needs of our community but also anticipates and adapts to the evolving challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

As part of the finalization process, the Board hosted a comprehensive workshop both before and after the last Board meeting, providing every Board member with ample opportunity to review the draft strategic plan. These sessions were designed to be inclusive, inviting Board members to review, suggest edits, and provide comments. The final version of the proposed plan thoughtfully integrates the valuable feedback received from our Board members, ensuring it is inclusive, forward-thinking, and reflective of our collective vision for the future.

Strategic Planning Process and Key Milestones

The strategic planning process started in earnest with initial board surveys last spring 2023, and the committee provides this proposed strategic plan for adoption at the October 2024 Board meeting. The strategic planning process involved multiple phases, including:

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

- **Drafting and Revising the Strategic Plan:** From April to July 2024, the draft strategic plan was refined, ensuring consistency with the established mission and vision. The plan incorporated feedback from stakeholders and aimed to address the most pressing workforce challenges.
- Two workshops at the last Board meeting, one before and one after, to allow Board members an opportunity to review the plan and offer input, suggestions, comments, or raise questions.
- An opportunity for Board members to submit any suggestions, changes, edits, or additions on or before September 1, 2024.

Key Highlights of the Strategic Plan:

The plan is structured around four strategic goals that will guide the Board's efforts over the next five years:

1. **Technology and Innovation in Service Delivery:** The plan emphasizes leveraging technology to enhance service delivery. A key initiative is the development of a mobile application and digital content platform to improve accessibility and engagement with community members.
2. **Serving as a Convener and Strategic Partner:** The Board aims to strengthen its role as a convener, fostering partnerships with employers, educational institutions, and community organizations to align workforce development efforts with regional economic needs.
3. **Increasing Awareness of Services and Opportunities:** The strategic plan includes initiatives to enhance communication, promote upskilling opportunities, and support career pathways aligned with market demands.
4. **Supporting Business-Forward Strategies:** The Board is committed to advancing work-based learning opportunities, such as apprenticeships and customized training, and collaborating with small businesses to meet their workforce needs.

Final Revisions

In preparation for the final approval, the Board hosted workshops before and after the last Board meeting, ensuring thorough review and discussion of the draft strategic plan. These sessions were instrumental in refining the document, integrating the collective input of our Board members. The Strategic Planning Committee has now incorporated all feedback into the final version, ensuring the plan reflects our shared vision and strategic priorities.

Next Steps

The Strategic Planning Committee is proud to present the final proposed version of the 2025-2029 Strategic Plan for adoption. This meticulously refined plan, born

from extensive stakeholder engagement and thoughtful Board feedback, serves as a comprehensive roadmap for our Board's efforts over the next five years.

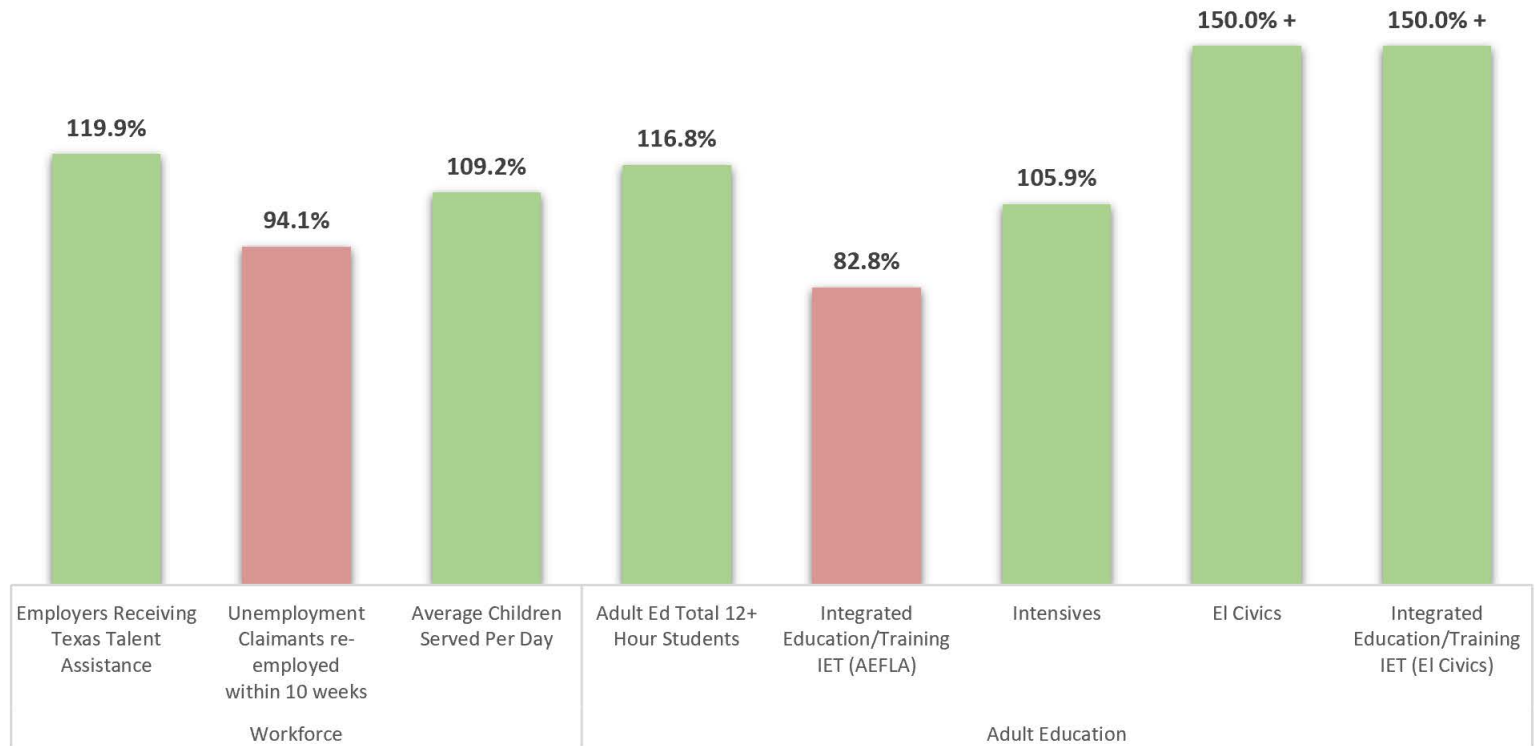
Action:

The Strategic Planning Committee recommends that the Gulf Coast Workforce Board adopt the proposed 2025-2029 Strategic Plan.

Production Measures

October 2023 to August 2024

% of Target



Employed Q2 Post Exit
Employed Q4 Post Exit
Credential Rate
Median Earnings Q2 Post Exit

- **Current Update:** Information up to April 12, 2024
- **Year-End:** Include information after April 12, 2024

Measurable Skills Gains

- **Current Update:** Information up to March 2024
- **Year-End:** Include full year information

Employers Workforce Assistance

- **Current Update:** Replaced by "# Employers Receiving Texas Talent Assistance"

TANF Full Work Rate

- **Next Update:** September (features new reporting tool)

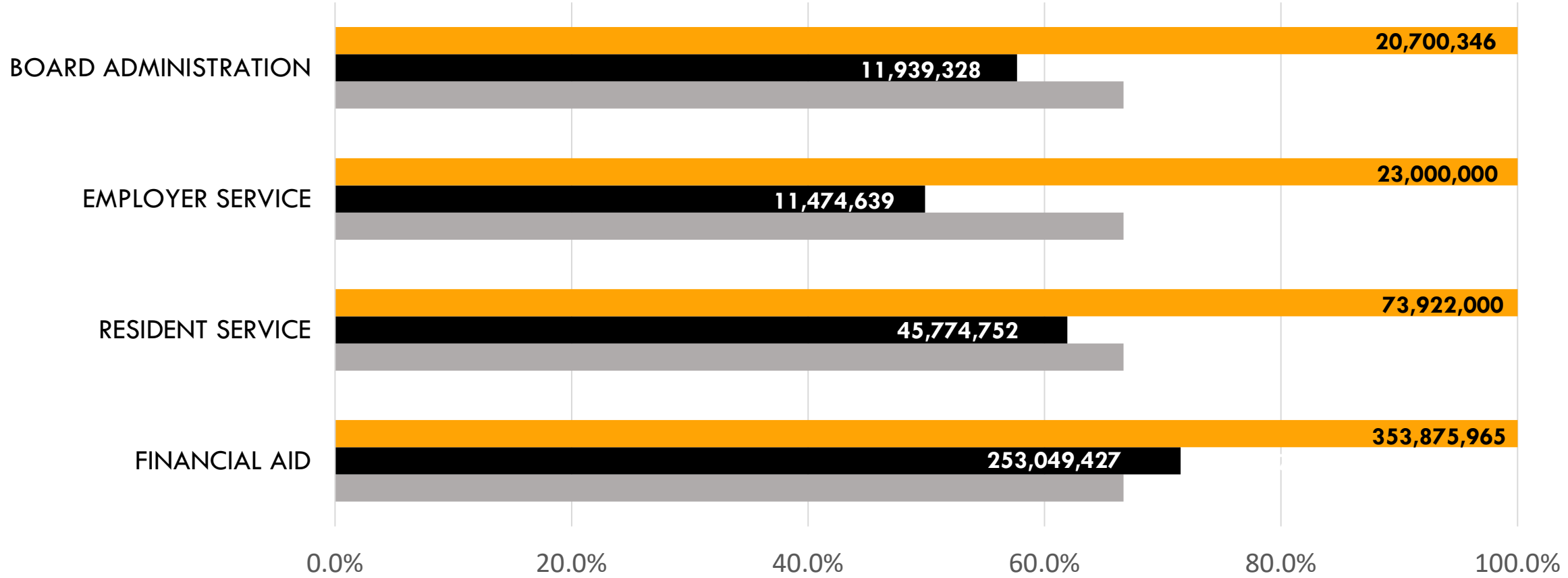
Unemployment Claimants re-employed within 10 weeks
Average Children Served Per Day

- Updated

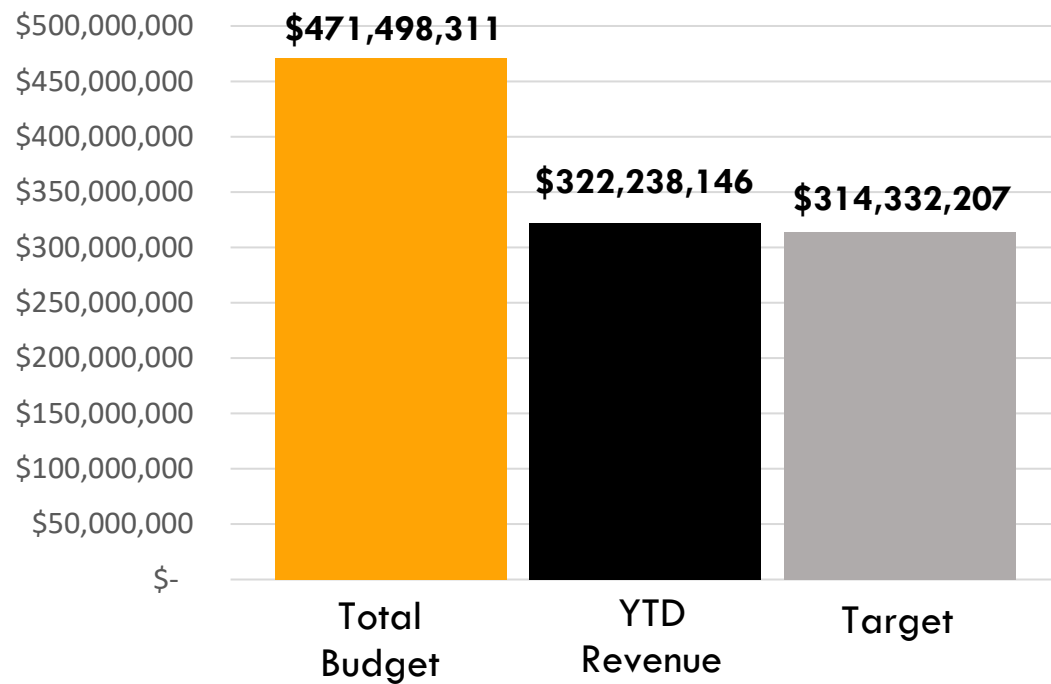
Gulf Coast Workforce Financial Status Report

For the 8 months ending August 31, 2024

■ Budget ■ Expenses ■ Target



Workforce Revenue



System Expenses

- FINANCIAL AID - EARLY EDUCATION \$240,349,563
- FINANCIAL AID - TRAINING & SUPPORT \$12,699,864
- CAREER SERVICES \$36,354,471
- EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT \$4,780,538
- QUALITY IMPROVEMENT \$6,694,100
- ADULT EDUCATION \$9,420,282

