

GULF COAST WORKFORCE BOARD EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Agenda
Wednesday, September 7, 2022 AT 2:00 P.M.
By Hybrid Meeting
at 3555 Timmons Lane, 2nd Floor meeting room A
or via Zoom at https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_y6WlvR_uSrWweuU-NvnAbw

The presiding officer will be present at the meeting location listed above to convene this meeting.

1. Call to Order and Introductions

Chair, Bobbie Henderson
Vice Chair, Doug Karr

2. Child Care Status Updates

3. Child Care Financial Aid Priority List – Action Item

Update the priority list to include continuity of care for individuals receiving special child care funding

4. Work-based Learning Wage Increase – Action Item

Consider raising the maximum wage for work-based learning from \$10 to \$15

5. Update on Transition for the Support Center

6. Early Education Quality Request for Proposal (RFP) Timeline

7. Update on Youth Summer Employment Program

8. Other

9. Date and time for Future Meetings

10. Adjourn

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Workforce Board will provide for reasonable accommodations for persons attending meetings. Requests should be received 24 hours prior to the function by contacting Deborah Duke at 713.993.4522 or deborah.duke@wrksolutions.net.



Child Care Update

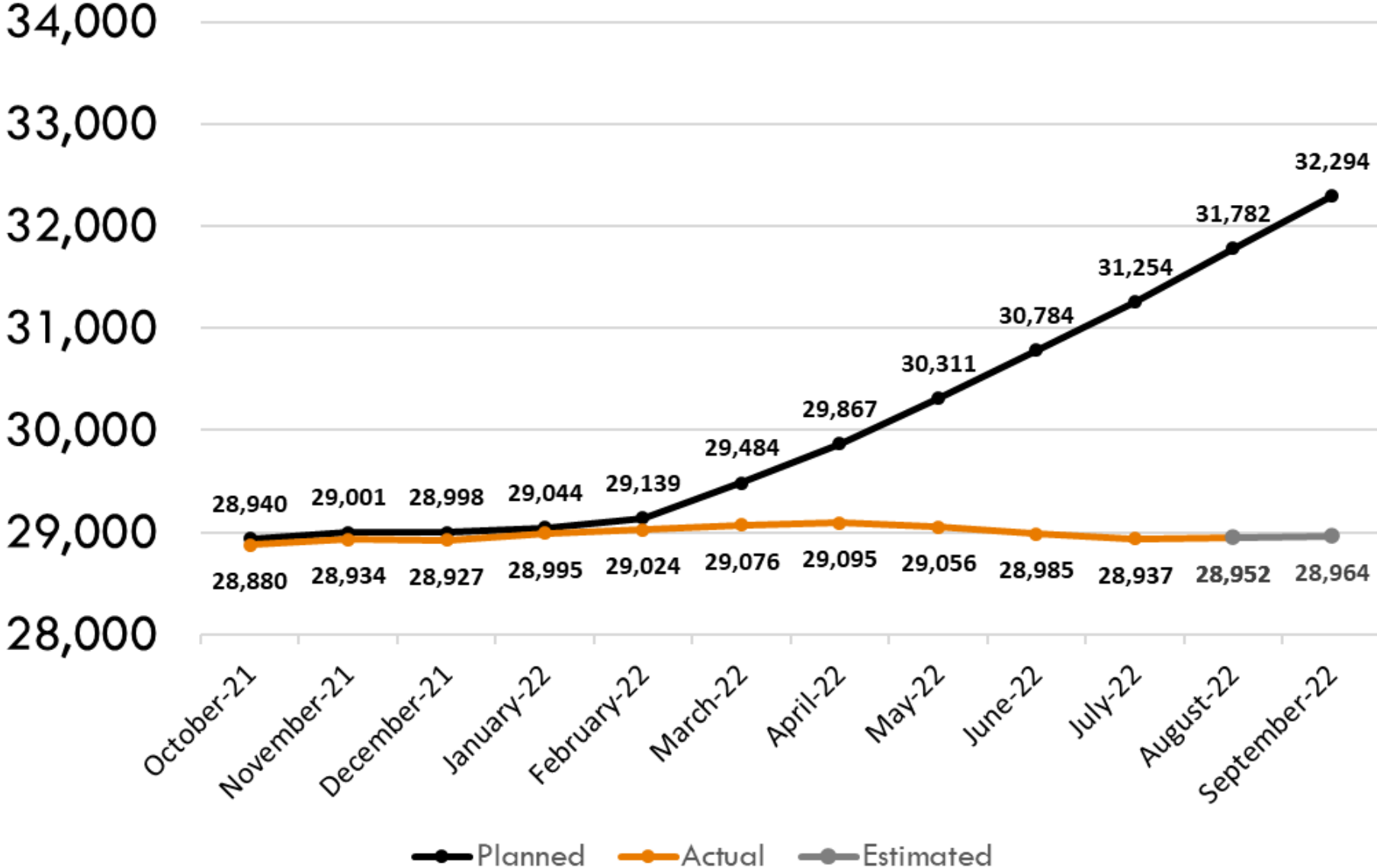
www.wrksolutions.com 1.888.469.JOBS (5627)

Workforce Solutions is an equal opportunity employer/program. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities. (Please request reasonable accommodations 48 hours in advance.)

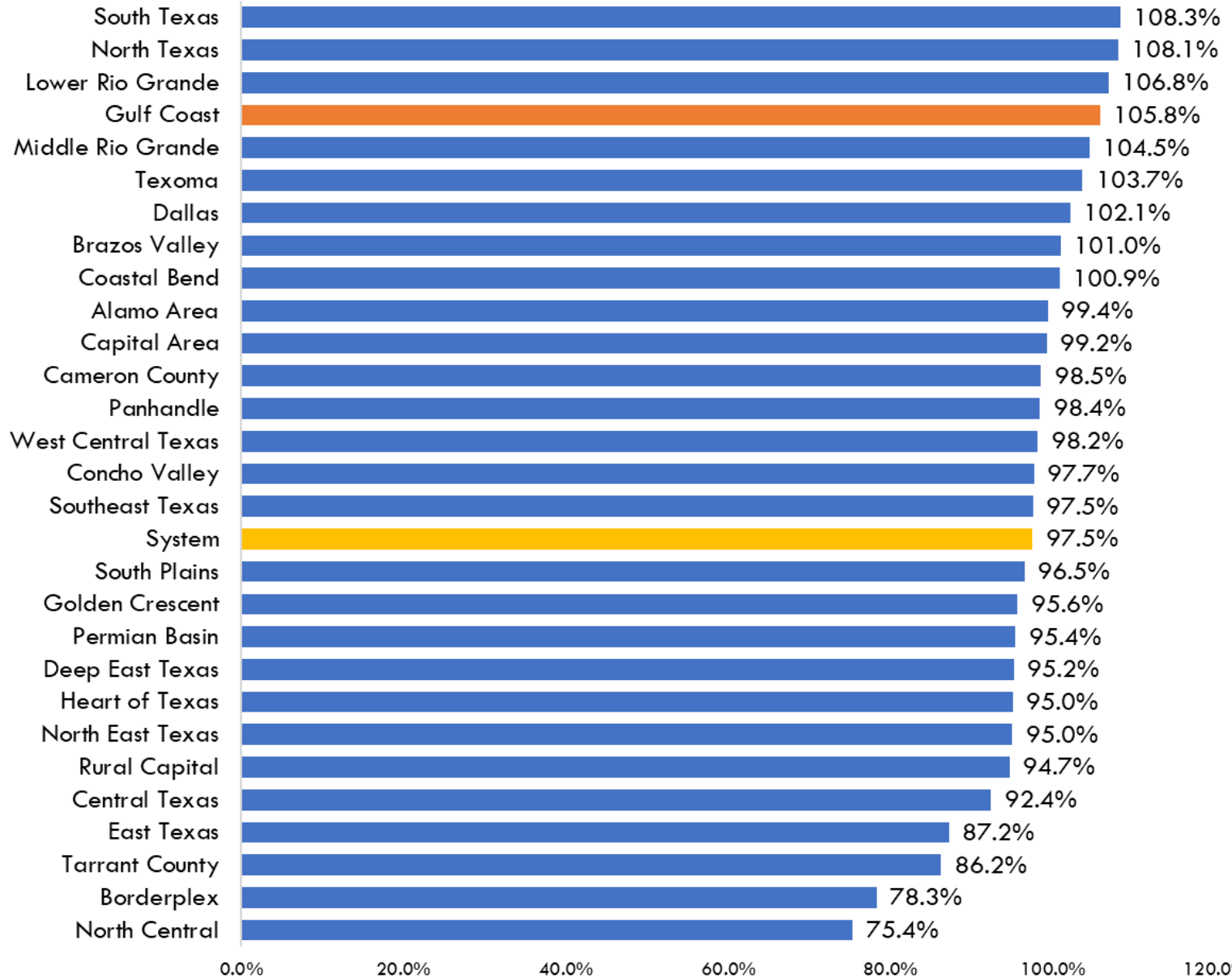
Relay Texas: 1.800.735.2989 (TDD) 1.800.735.2988 (voice) or 711

A proud partner of the  **americanjobcenter** network

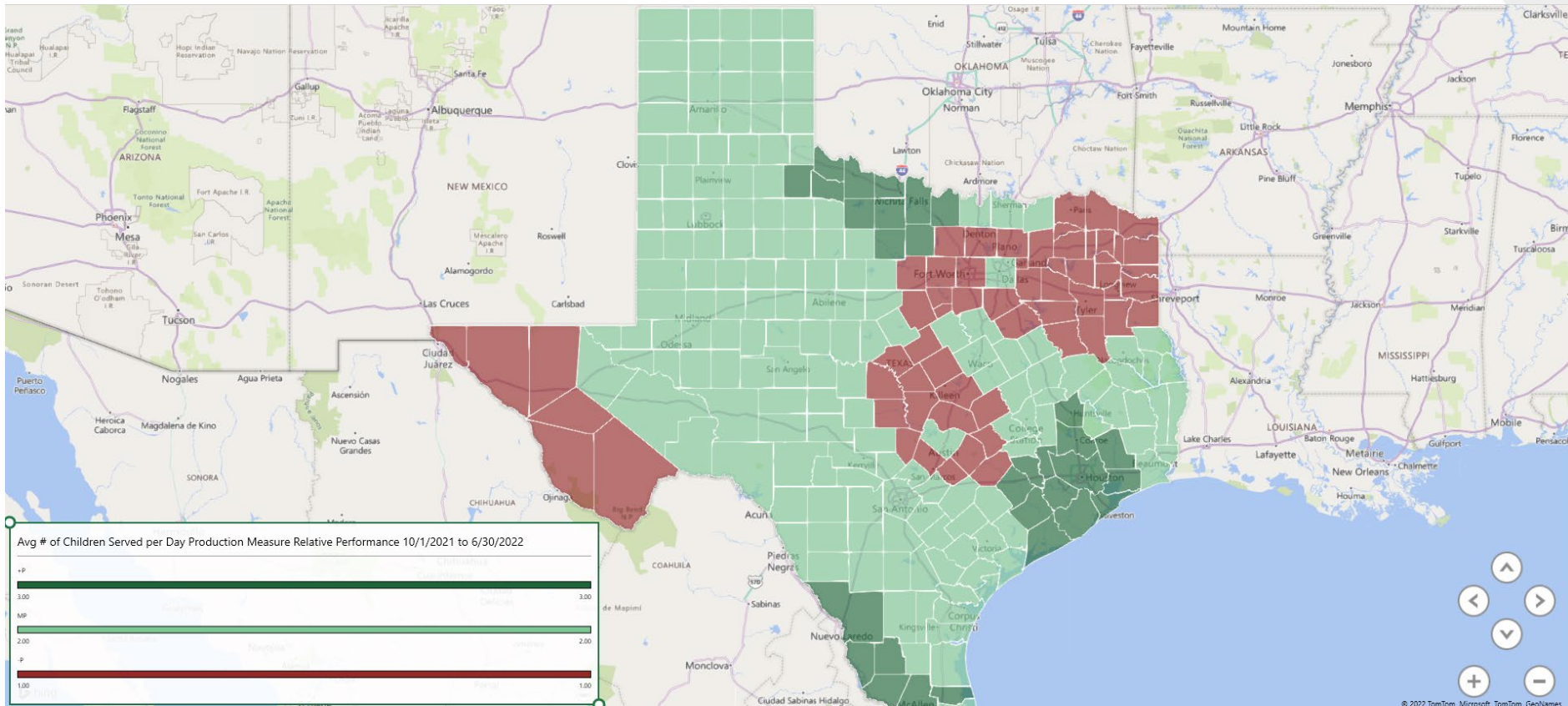
Monthly Average Year-to-Date Children in Care



Avg # Children Served Per Day - Combined % Current Target 10/1/2021 to 6/30/2022

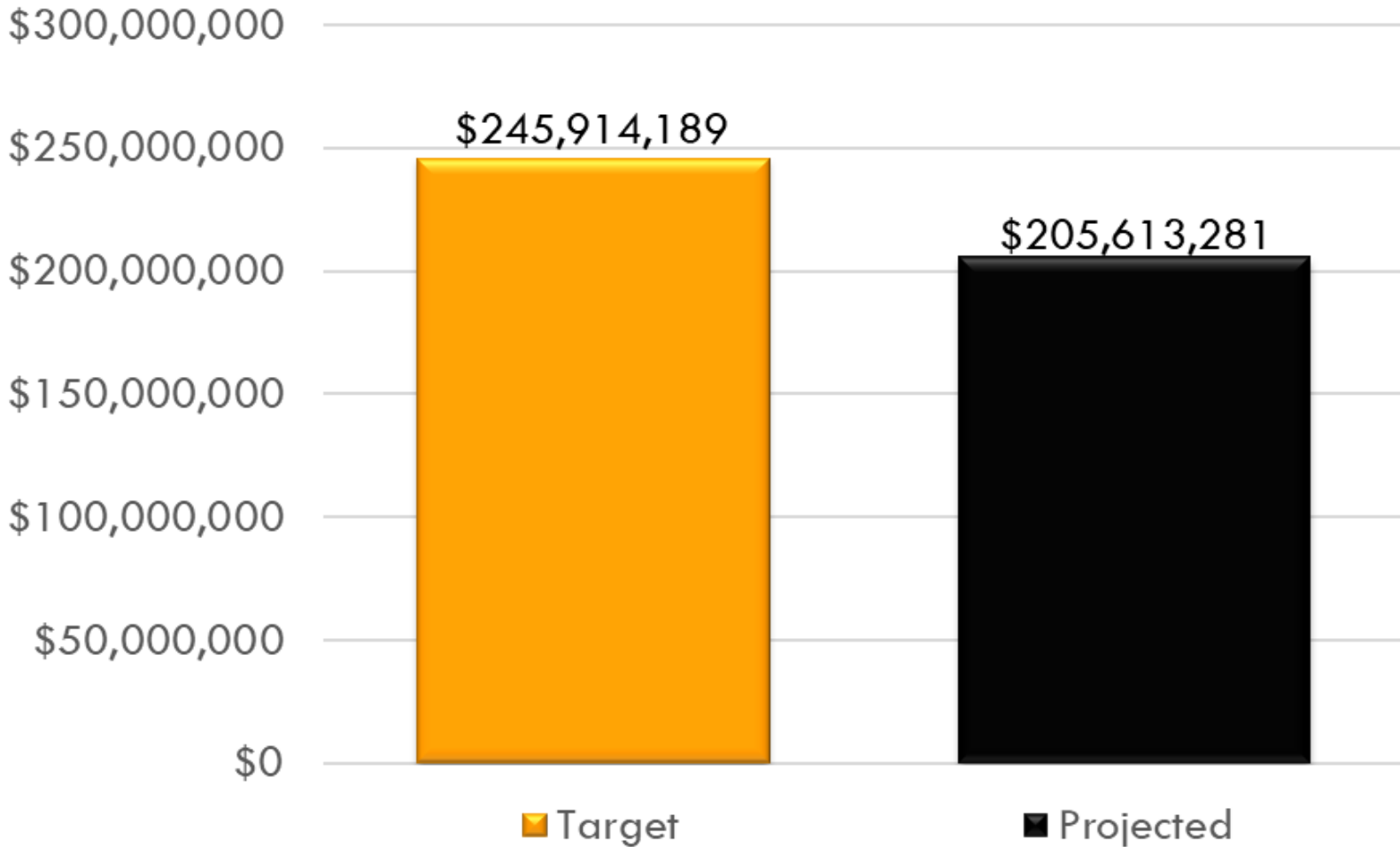


Average Number of Children Served per Day Relative Production Performance All 28 WDAs 10/1/2021 to 6/30/2022



Dark green: Exceeds Performance Target (+P)
Light green: Meets Performance Target (MP)
Red: Does Not Meet Performance Target (-P)

Financial Analysis



Summary

- Although our enrollments are not as high as we hoped, we are meeting our TWC performance measures.
- We will continue to work with our current service provider on increasing enrollments.
- We will attempt to use funding that rolls over into the next program cycle, but not all funding will be utilized before expiration.

Education Committee

Child Care Waiting List Status

Background

In mid-February, the Workforce Commission notified us that we would be placed on a corrective action plan (CAP) because of the large backlog in applications for childcare financial aid. Staff quickly addressed the concerns listed in the CAP, including the Board approval and implementation of the waiting list policy in March, and the Board was released from the CAP in June 2022. At the time we implemented the waiting list, we had approximately 11,000 families who were awaiting an eligibility determination. By the end of May, the list included 17,000 families and 28,000 children.

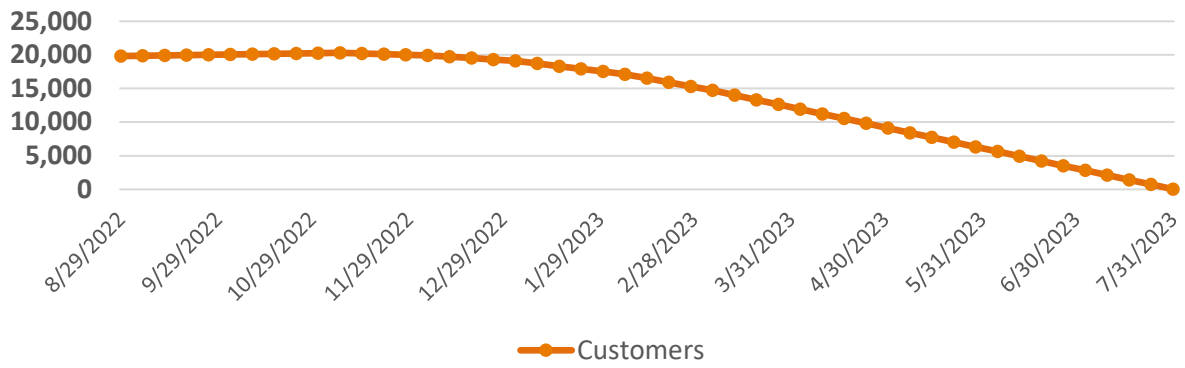
Current Situation

As of August 22, 2022, there were 19,024 families on the waiting list and 32,359 children. We currently have an average increase of 800 new families weekly. We have been pulling approximately 3000 each month. Customers falling into our Board priority groups are now being pulled daily. Historically, approximately 30% of those contacted are determined eligible for care. Further, our current online application system is antiquated and impedes efficient processing, and last month, the system failed for approximately ten (10) days. We are evaluating how new technology can be used to increase capacity and efficiency, as there is enough funding available to serve families.

What We Are Doing

We will continue to outreach at least 750 families per week through November. During this time, we will be transitioning to a new provider, and we have been engaged in multiple meetings and discussions regarding system improvements including new technology and processes to address the child care waiting list. We will increase the number of applications pulled from the waiting list to 1,500 per week. The chart below depicts a reduction of the waiting list monthly through July 2023 based on this activity.

Customer on Waiting List Estimates



Education Committee

Child Care Priorities

Background

The Board operates a waiting list when the number of families seeking child care scholarship assistance exceeds the number of families that we can serve. Acting on the recommendation of the Education Committee, the Board approved a waiting list policy during the June 7, 2022 meeting. The policy states that as funds become available, “clients will be offered assistance first in the order of their priority criteria and second in the order by the date of their application.” During the April 2022 Workforce Board meeting, the Education Committee told the Board that it would consider adding a new group or groups to the priority list.

Current Situation

We are asking that the Board adopt two new groups into the priority list.

The first group involves parents of children referred to contracted slots in pre-K, Head Start and Early HeadStart partnerships with child care providers. The Texas Workforce Commission is likely to mandate that we add this group at its upcoming meeting.

The second group involves our families and parents who are receiving time-limited scholarships for child care. During the last few years, the Texas Workforce Commission granted the Board funds to implement several special projects. The Service Industry Recovery (SIR) project, which provided funds for child care for workers in the service industry for a 12-month period, is one such example. Families receiving support stemming from time-limited special projects are in jeopardy of losing child care scholarships when funding ends. The loss of child care may in turn place parents at risk of losing employment. This change is intended to prevent these problems.

The proposed changes are delineated in red below:

The current policy with the proposed changes is shown below. The new language to add the two new proposed priority groups is shown underlined and in red.

1. There is a group of applicants who are never placed on a waiting list. When families from this group apply, as we certify their eligibility, we fund their financial aid for childcare. This group includes:
 - Parents receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families cash payments who are required to work with us to go to work;
 - Parents applying for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families cash payments;
 - Parents receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance (food stamps) who are working with us to go to work; and
 - Parents whose TANF cash payments were denied or voluntarily ended within that last 12 months
 - Parents with children who are directly referred from a recognized pre-K or Head Start/Early Head Start partnership to a child care provider to receive services in a contracted partnership program, subject to the availability of funding and the availability of slots at the partnership site.

2. The group that is initially pulled from the waiting list includes, in order:
 - Parents with children in protective services following discharge from a Family and Protective Services caseload
 - Qualified veterans or qualified spouse's children
 - Foster youth parents with children
 - Parents and their children who are experiencing homelessness
 - Parents on military deployment who are unable to enroll their children in military-funded childcare assistance programs
 - Teen parents with children
 - Parents who have children with disabilities

3. Applicant families then pulled from the waiting list after the 2nd group include, in order:
 - Parents/Families who have siblings in families already receiving our financial aid for one or more children
 - Parents/Families who are students at, or employees of, a match partner

- Parents/Families participating in career, employment or education activities that require financial aid to successfully complete their service.

Addition

- Parents/Families who have received child care financial aid based on eligibility for time-limited special projects (e.g., Service Industry Recovery or essential worker projects).
- Families who have lost financial aid for program violations including a child exceeding 40 unexplained absence days or failure to pay Parent Share of Cost, who have fulfilled their mandatory waiting period and have reapplied for aid.
- All other eligible parents/families.

Action requested

We recommend that the Board add two new groups to our priority list policy:

- Parents of children referred to contracted slots in pre-K, Early Head Start, and Head Start partnerships who will be included in the list of customers who are never added to the wait list, and
- Customers who have received child care scholarships through a special project and meet eligibility requirements who will be added to the third priority group of the waitlist.

Education Committee

Work-Based Learning Wage Increase

Background

One of the services we frequently provide to youth and adults with limited work experience is work-based learning. This activity gives customers the opportunity to gain workforce experience and develop skills, often as their first job, and obtain other supportive services. Youth, for example, may be involved in work-based learning and any of the other 13 service elements that can be funded with WIOA funds. Some work-based learning placements come with the possibility of a full-time job, which may be offered at the end of the experience.

We place customers with participating employers and pay their wages for a designated training period. We currently have a designated hourly wage of \$10 per hour for work-based learning. The wage level is intended to provide an attractive option for participants, but not pay significantly more than similar opportunities in the labor market.

Earlier this year, we received a relatively small allotment of funds that allowed us to do a pilot project for a short period of time with a work-based learning wage of \$13 per hour. The results of the pilot project were quite positive. Our career office operators reported that the higher wage resulted in more people participating in work-based learning.

Current Situation

In conversations with young people, our contractors found that youth did not find the current \$10 per hour wage to be competitive, and this lowered participation in summer work experience.

Because of this information and the pilot project, we compared our current wage for work-based learning to wages for typical entry-level jobs with significant numbers of people employed in our region. The latest available wage data is from 2021, so we ran the numbers both as they were in 2021, and with a conservative 5% cost of living adjustment. The results are shown below. (Inflation for the twelve months ending in June 2022 was 9.1%)

Occupation	Employment Estimate (Age 16-24)	Total Employment Estimate	25th Percentile Wages	50th Percentile Wages	25th Percentile 5% COLA	50th Percentile Wages 5% COLA
Construction Laborers	4,869	42,523	\$14.46	\$17.49	\$15.18	\$18.36
Food Preparation Workers	5,424	17,058	\$11.47	\$14.23	\$12.04	\$14.94
Hosts, Hostesses Restaurant, Lounge, and Coffee Shop	6,515	9,266	\$9.35	\$10.65	\$9.82	\$11.18
Office Clerks, General	6,844	60,882	\$13.83	\$17.11	\$14.52	\$17.97
Cooks, Restaurant	7,190	32,060	\$11.81	\$13.71	\$12.40	\$14.40
Laborers and Freight, Stock, and, Material Movers, Handlers	10,603	55,954	\$13.83	\$14.39	\$14.52	\$15.11
Customer Services Representative	11,479	61,497	\$13.98	\$17.44	\$14.68	\$18.31
Stockers and Order Fillers	15,259	55,001	\$13.60	\$14.79	\$14.28	\$15.53
Retail Salespersons	16,627	79,173	\$10.90	\$13.24	\$11.45	\$13.90
Waiters and Waitresses	20,035	47,770	\$8.89	\$10.12	\$9.33	\$10.63
Cashiers	26,962	72,828	\$10.43	\$11.16	\$10.95	\$11.72
Fast Food and Counter Workers	43,013	81,650	\$9.40	\$10.58	\$9.87	\$11.11
First Line Supervisors of Food Preparation and Serving Workers	4,601	27,445	\$13.18	\$14.58	\$13.84	\$15.31
Receptionists and Information Clerks	3,930	21,389	\$12.98	\$14.24	\$13.63	\$14.95
First Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers	2,198	34,672	\$15.89	\$20.51	\$16.68	\$21.54
Sales Rep., Wholesale & Manufacturing, Except Tech & Scientific Products	1,155	26,269	\$20.83	\$29.34	\$21.87	\$30.81
Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	1,607	23,141	\$11.09	\$12.99	\$11.64	\$13.64
Sales Reps of Svcs, Ex Advertising, Insurance, Financial Svcs, and Travel	1,647	24,300	\$18.84	\$28.85	\$19.78	\$30.29
Secretaries & Administrative Assistants, Except Legal, Medical, & Executive	2,319	44,437	\$14.13	\$17.86	\$14.84	\$18.75
Landscaping and Groundskeeping Workers	2,932	23,253	\$13.84	\$14.54	\$14.53	\$15.27
Security Guards	3,186	26,475	\$12.42	\$14.11	\$13.04	\$14.82

These results demonstrate that except for fast food and food server jobs, our work-based learning wage is no longer relevant in terms of wages available to entry-level workers.

Action requested

We ask that the Education Committee recommend to the full workforce board that we increase the work-based learning hourly wage to \$15 per hour effective immediately. It is our practice to not pay more than what other similar workers are earning at a worksite, so \$15 per hour will be a ceiling wage, and not necessarily the wage that all participants earn. We have adequate funding to support this change.

Education Committee

Financial Aid Support Center

Background

On August 2, 2022, the Gulf Coast Workforce Board approved the Procurement Committee's recommendation to award a contract for operations of the Financial Aid Support Center (FASC) to Equus Workforce Solutions. Additionally, Interfaith of the Woodlands received a contract extension to support the transition to Equus.

Current Situation

Equus has begun steps to prepare for the transition. They have interviewed staff and temporary staff with the intent to offer many jobs to support an increase in the number of customers removed from the waiting list and enrolled in care. They have identified major work teams for customer support, reporting, eligibility determination and fulfillment, and intake.

Equus is considering options for where the work will be performed. Options include assuming the current Interfaith lease, leasing alternative space, and/or hybrid or remote options.

Concurrently, Equus is exploring alternative call center technology for workers, specifically Ring Central, that could enhance productivity and reporting. Board staff have also told Equus that we are seeking better technology to help with eligibility determinations. Equus' corporate IT team has visited us in Houston, and we will continue to explore options with Equus in the weeks ahead.

Finally, Interfaith and Equus are working with H-GAC's IT department to discuss the migration of MIS used by the Support Center.

Next Steps

Board staff will continue to meet with leadership from Interfaith and Equus to discuss the facilitation of a smooth transition of operations. We will keep the Committee informed as decisions are made and the transition formally begins in October.

Education Committee

Early Education Quality RFP Timeline

A timeline of important dates related to the RFP for Early Education Quality has been provided for review.

July 15, 2022	Early Education Quality RFP Issued
August 10, 2022	Questions Deadline for Proposers
August 25, 2022	RFP Response Deadline, Scoring and Past Performance Review Begins
September 2, 2022	1st Evaluation Deadline -- Scores and Past Performance Review Due
September 13, 2022	Interviews with Top Three Proposers
September 14, 2022	2nd Round Evaluations Deadline
September 15, 2022	Final Scores Released
September 22, 2022 (tentative)	Workforce Procurement Committee Meeting
October 4, 2022	Gulf Coast Workforce Board Meeting
October 18, 2022	Houston-Galveston Area Council Board Meeting

Education Committee

Youth Summer Employment Update

Background

Workforce Solutions has the privilege of offering hundreds of meaningful job opportunities to youth to empower them with real world experiences. Via these programs, the region's youth gain meaningful knowledge of labor market information including various high-demand industries, local businesses, and potential high-growth career paths they can pursue in the future. Most importantly, they increase their social capital making meaningful connections to employers in our region.

Current Situation

Universal Youth

This year, we asked our career offices to contact school and universities in their service areas to assist us with outreach, sharing information about the various services that we offer. Career office staff contacted every school district in the region and were able to make presentations at 10 high schools and participate in career and college days at another seven (7). We want to recognize Baker Ripley for their enthusiastic outreach and support of this year's program.

This year we served 11,066 young adults, and to date we know 186 youth found a job in our region since May 1st using Work In Texas. As additional wage information becomes available, we will be able to provide updated information on the service provided and those entering employment.

WIOA Youth

We receive funding to serve WIOA youth, our career offices and Next Gen contractors work to outreach, engage, and serve eligible youth between the ages of 16-24 that fall into both the in school and out of school youth categories. Young adults served by WIOA are either connected with work-based learning opportunities or with direct employment at one of our employer partners. Work-based learning is one of 14 program elements that can be funded with WIOA youth funds, and we encourage our provider partners to link it to other elements.

This summer the system was able to serve more than 200 WIOA Youth.

ACAM	Baker Ripley	Career Team	EQUUS	ITEP	SER	Grand Total
27	84	10	12	73	18	224

8/16/22

Summer Earn and Learn (SEAL)

Summer Earn and Learn, commonly called SEAL, is a joint initiative between Workforce Solutions and Vocational Rehabilitation that helps young adults between the ages of 16 and 22 with disabilities gain valuable skills through work-based learning opportunities that pay \$10/hour. Before the youth participate in the work-based learning opportunity, they must complete a minimum of six hours of work readiness training to help prepare them for success in the workplace.

This summer we were excited to have more than 100 employers willing to participate as worksites, over 650 young adults that completed the work readiness training, and 521 young adults placed at a work site for a five-week work experience.

Amongst the employers that participated as worksites this year, we had several first-time partners as well as a good number of repeat partners. Some of the businesses that participated were CVS, Goodwill, Houston Museum of Natural Science, Houston Zoo, The Harris Center, Walgreens, the YMCA, multiple libraries, restaurants, hotels, medical facilities, childcare facilities, as well as many school districts including Houston, Friendswood, Aldine, Cleveland, and Hitchcock. We want to thank these outstanding partners for their participation.

SEAL had a positive impact on our community expressed through feedback from customers, parents, employers, Workforce Solutions Staff, and Vocational Rehabilitation partners.

What We Are Doing

While 2022 has produced amazing results and impact on the lives of hundreds of young adults, we know that there is always room for improvement.

Some of the steps we are taking to make an even bigger impact in 2023 include:

- Continuing to work with young people year-round,
- Soliciting system-wide feedback,
- Discussing the procurement of a customized youth portal, and
- Proposing a potential increase in the work-based learning wage.

By taking advantage of identified opportunities for improvement and solidifying a comprehensive strategic plan, we are confident we will be able to successfully execute future initiatives that support and provide opportunities to the youth we serve, therefore strengthening our Gulf Coast Region.