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

To: Gulf Coast Workforce Board Members

From: Executive Director Juliet K. Stipeche

Date: April 2, 2026

Subject: April 7, 2026, Board Meeting

As we enter the spring season, we are reminded that progress is not spontaneous. It is the product of deliberate choices, well-designed systems, and consistently upheld standards, reinforced by a disciplined focus on what lies ahead.

As John F. Kennedy observed, "Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future." In our context, this is not theoretical. The labor market is evolving. Employer demand is shifting. The needs of the communities we serve are becoming more complex and more urgent. The central question before us is not whether change will occur, but how we will lead through it with direction, clarity, and discipline.

Over the past year, Board staff has sharpened its focus on economic mobility, advancing the Gulf Coast Workforce Board's strategic plan and strengthening our role as a regional convener. This work reflects a system in transition, moving beyond compliance toward coordinated execution, intentional system design, and measurable economic impact.

I want to thank each of you for the leadership and sustained engagement you bring to this Board, and I look forward to seeing you at the upcoming Gulf Coast Workforce Board meeting on Tuesday, April 7, 2026, at 10:00 a.m. The meeting will be held in person at the Houston-Galveston Area Council, 3555 Timmons Lane, Conference Rooms A/B/C, and will be conducted in accordance with the Texas Open Meetings Act.

The meeting will open with remarks from Board Chair Mark Guthrie, followed by my Executive Director's Report and remarks from H-GAC Executive Director Chuck Wemple. Committee updates and related actions will proceed as follows:

GULF COAST
Workforce Board

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

- Guy Robert Jackson will present the Audit and Monitoring Committee report.
- Adrian Ozuna will present the Career Services Committee report.
- Alan Heskamp will present the Employer Engagement Committee report.
- Guy Robert Jackson will present the Government Relations update.
- Doug Karr will present the Communications Committee report.

Dr. Bobbie Henderson will present the Procurement Committee report, including discussion and possible action to amend the BakerRipley Financial Aid Payment Office (FAPO) contract to add $150,000 in operational funding and increase the financial aid maximum by $12,000,000, for a total contract amount not to exceed $393,250,000.

Board Chair Mark Guthrie will present the Executive Committee report, including discussion and possible action to approve the formation of an independent nonprofit corporation to support the Gulf Coast Workforce Board's mission. This includes authorization for me or my designee to take all necessary steps to establish the entity, develop governance and operating structures, and initiate the process to obtain federal tax-exempt status under Section 501(c)(3), consistent with applicable federal and state law.

The Board will also receive staff presentations from:

- Philip Garcia, System Performance and Production;
- Brandi Brown, Financial Overview and Expenditures; and
- Parker Harvey and Mohammad Ahmadizadeh, Labor Market Trends.

On March 24, 2026, we successfully launched our very first episode of the Workforce Solutions - Gulf Coast Podcast, an important step in expanding awareness of the Board's work and the full scope of our programs and services. The inaugural episode features a conversation with Board Chair Mark Guthrie, Communications Chair Doug Karr, and ABC13 reporter Nick Natario. The episode is available at the following links:

- Spotify: https://open.spotify.com/show/4xgZhvAezH7OPMnyfGmSov; and
- Apple Podcasts: https://podcasts.apple.com/.../workforce.../id1887614838.

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

I encourage you to listen and share the episode within your networks. Expanding visibility into the Board's work is a strategic lever that strengthens regional alignment, employer engagement, and public understanding of the system's value.

In that same spirit of regional convening and employer engagement, I am pleased to share that the Gulf Coast Workforce Board will host its first "Apprenticeship Week" forum, titled "Employers: Apprenticeships Work!":

> Friday, May 1, 2026
> 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
> Houston-Galveston Area Council, 2nd Floor Conference Rooms
> 3555 Timmons Lane, Houston, Texas 77027
> (Refreshments and lunch provided.)

This event will convene employers, workforce leaders, and partners to explore how apprenticeship models can strengthen talent pipelines, improve retention, and support long-term business growth. Participants will gain practical insight into tools, best practices, and hands-on support available through our Apprenticeships Work! campaign. We will share more details at the Board meeting, but please join us!

I also want to extend my appreciation to all the Board members who helped us make our very first Legislative Luncheon on March 30, 2026, a success. The event brought together representatives from city and county government, members of the Texas House, Senate staff, and community partners. It provided an important forum to communicate the scale and impact of our system across the 13-county region, while also grounding our legislative priorities in direct dialogue with policymakers.

As we move further into this season of renewal, the question before us returns to where we began. Change is constant. The needs of our communities will continue to evolve. Our responsibility is to ensure that renewal is not left to chance but deliberately designed. We are building a workforce system that is responsive, resilient, and aligned to the realities of a changing economy. One that does not merely adapt but anticipates. One that does not operate at the margins but drives economic mobility at scale.

I look forward to our discussion on April 7. Until then, have a peaceful holiday and enjoy time with your family, friends, and loved ones. As always, if you have any questions in advance of the meeting, please do not hesitate to reach out.

GULF COAST WORKFORCE BOARD

AGENDA

Tuesday, April 7, 2026, 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 (Board Chair Mark Guthrie)**

2. **Roll Call (Desmond Taylor)**

3. **Introduction of Newly Appointed Board Members (Board Chair Mark Guthrie)**

4. **Adopt Agenda (Board Chair Mark Guthrie)**

5. **Public Comment (Board Chair Mark Guthrie)**

6. **Review of February 3, 2026, Meeting Minutes (Board Chair Mark Guthrie)**

7. **Declare Conflicts of Interest (Board Chair Mark Guthrie)**

8. **Reports:**
   a. Board Chair's Remarks: (Board Chair Mark Guthrie),
   b. Executive Director's Report: (Juliet Stipeche),
   c. H-GAC Executive Director's Report: (Chuck Wemple),
   d. Audit and Monitoring Committee Report: (Committee Chair Guy Robert Jackson),
   e. Career Services Committee Report: (Committee Adrian Ozuna),
   f. Employer Engagement Committee Report: (Committee Chair Alan Heskamp),
   g. Government Relations Committee Report: (Committee Chair Guy Robert Jackson), and
   h. Communications Committee Report: (Committee Chair Doug Karr).

9. **Action Items:**
   a. Procurement Committee Report: Briefing of the Procurement Committee from Chair Dr. Bobbie Henderson including discussion and possible action regarding the following:
      i. Amend the current BakerRipley – Financial Aid Payment Office contract to add $150,000 in operational funding and $12,000,000 to the financial aid maximum, increasing the total contract amount not to exceed $393,250,000.
   b. Executive Committee: Briefing of the Executive Committee from Board Chair Mark Guthrie including discussion and possible action regarding the following:
      i. Authorize the formation of an independent nonprofit corporation to support the Gulf Coast Workforce Board's mission to advance workforce innovation, economic mobility, and strategic initiatives; and authorization for the Executive Director, or designee, to take all necessary actions to establish the nonprofit entity, including preparation and filing of formation documents, development of governance and operating structures, and initiation of the process to obtain federal tax-exempt status under Section 501(c)(3), consistent with applicable federal and state law.

10. **Presentations and Information:**
    a. Performance and Production: Report on the system's performance and production (Philip Garcia),
    b. Expenditures: Report on the Board's budget and expenditures (Brandi Brown), and
    c. A Look at the Economy: Update on the Labor Market (Parker Harvey and Mohammad Ahmadizadeh).

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, April 6, 2026,** to Dr. Maria Franco Cortes at maria.cortes@wrksolutions.net.

Meeting materials are available on our website at https://www.wrksolutions.com/events

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

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

Equal opportunity is the law.

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

6

GULF COAST WORKFORCE BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
FEBRUARY 3, 2026

1. **Call to Order**: The February 3, 2026, meeting of the Gulf Coast Workforce Board (GCWB) was called to order at 10:04 a.m. by Board Chair Mark Guthrie. The meeting was held on the 2nd Floor, A-C, 3555 Timmons Lane, Houston, TX 77027.

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

   Arcos, Marie
   Baker, Jennifer
   Below, Shonda
   Bowles, Carl
   Cevallos, Rachel
   Cockrell, Dorian
   Guido, Cheryl
   Guthrie, Mark
   Harris, Allatia
   Henderson, Bobbie
   Jackson, Guy R.
   Jones, Lavone
   Karr, Doug
   LaBroski, Jeff
   Larmond, Shareen
   Lowe, Jonathan
   Makany-Rivera, Tanya
   Melton, Edward
   Montelongo-Oyervidez, Sara
   Ozuna, Adrian
   Puente, Paul
   Rex, Glenn
   Riley, Monica
   Rodriguez, Melanie
   Sarkar, Mou
   Sorola-Pohlman, Lenora
   Taylor, Sandra
   Vazquez, Lizandra
   Webster, Michael
   Yu, Bin

   Board Chair Guthrie determined a quorum was present.

3. **Adopt Agenda:** Board Chair Guthrie presented the proposed February 3, 2026, meeting agenda. <u>A motion was made and seconded to adopt the agenda as presented. The motion passed.</u>

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

5. **Review of the December 9, 2025, Meeting Minutes**: The minutes of the December 9, 2025, GCWB meeting were distributed electronically to all members before the February 3, 2026, meeting. <u>A motion was made and seconded to adopt the minutes as presented. The motion passed.</u>

6. **Declare Conflicts of Interest:** Board Members Margaret Oser and Dr. Bobbie Henderson declared conflicts of interest on item 8c(i)- *Approve contract amendment with United Way of Greater Houston to increase funding by $200,868, for a revised total contract amount not to exceed $2,700,868*. Chair Guthrie reminded the members that they also could declare conflicts with items as they were taken up.

7. **Reports**:

   a. **Board Chair's Report**: Chair Guthrie opened his remarks on national activities and matters of interest. The short-term federal funding extension for FY 26 expired on January 30. Congress previously passed and the President has signed 6 of the 12 funding bills, resulting in a partial federal shut down starting January 31 which is not expected to be as bad as the previous shutdown and not expected to last too long.

      Before the House recessed in January, it passed the remaining 6 funding bills in a single package, including Labor, Education and HHS. Unlike its original budget proposal, the House approved level funding, more or less, for our primary funding streams. The Senate was expected to pass the remaining funding bills last week and the President was expected to sign them, concluding the FY 26 budget business. However, ICE funding is also a part of the package and last week the Senate Democrats, backed by some Republicans raised substantial objections to funding ICE without significant reforms to ICE as a result of the tragedies in Minnesota. The Senate and the President have agreed on a fix—passing the remaining FY 26 appropriations bills other than ICE and temporarily extending ICE funding for 2 weeks while the reforms to ICE are hammered out. The problem with that is that the House was on recess and just returned to Washington. Chair Guthrie is hopeful that the partial shutdown will not last long and the Labor Appropriation gets passed this week by the House and sent to the President for signature.

      Additionally, Chair Guthrie mentioned he attended the quarterly NAWB Board meeting the week before last in Washington DC and then returned to Washington DC last week to attend a meeting between some NAWB Directors and the Workforce Committee of the National Conference of Mayors. The meeting with the National Conference of Mayors also included a few Hill visits. At both meetings, the budgets and funding were topics of significance. At the National Conference of Mayors meeting last week, which was after the House initially passed the package of the remaining 6 appropriations, there was initially hope that the Senate would pass the appropriations bill passed by the House and when that did not occur, the discussion turned to the short term shutdown. Nick Moore, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Department of Education and one of the architects of the Administration's efforts to both shut down the Department of Education and significantly consolidate workforce programs, demonstrated in his remarks to the National Conference of Mayors group that neither he nor other Administration officials understand or appreciate the convening and employer service functions of local workforce boards and the fact that it takes staff (and therefore costs money) to perform those functions. Deputy Assistant Secretary Moore argued that there are 43 workforce programs over 9 federal agencies and that they increase administration costs because they require both state and local administrative efforts. This argument gives us insight into the thinking behind the President's consolidation and single state block grants proposals for workforce programs as well as the problematic components of the failed ASWA bill last year to reauthorize the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) -training mandate of 50% of WIOA Title 1 funds, ability to consolidate boards and the 10% increase in state set-aside for WIOA funds and the current effort to consolidate local workforce boards and to form single statewide boards. Mr. Moore's comments that the Administration wants more training from WIOA funding and to do away with unrestricted customer choice about that training again demonstrate a failure to understand that many local boards, like the GCWB restrict WIOA training dollars to high skills high growth jobs and that it takes staff time to counsel people into informed choices about training.

The U.S. Department of Labor also recently invited local boards and states to submit waiver requests from WIOA requirements—and these waivers are intended to facilitate formation or consolidation of local boards into single state boards. WIOA requires consultation with local elected officials and boards before such consolidation. The single state boards will likely be state run, in place of local boards with a majority of private business representatives. Last week, Oklahoma announced it was forming a single state board and Louisiana and Indiana are not far behind. Of course, both NAWB and the NCM oppose these consolidation efforts over the objections and without the consent of the local elected officials and local boards.

As part of the meetings with the National Conference of Mayors last week, a group of NAWB representatives including Chair Guthrie visited 4 congressional offices:

- Alma Adams, North Carolina 12th District
- Robert Onder, Missouri 3rd District
- Frederica Wilson, Florida 24th District
- Joe Wilson, South Carolina 6th District

Among other things, the group in each of those meetings explained the importance of local control of workforce investments and discussed the important and often-overlooked convening function of local workforce boards.

On Texas matters of interest, Chair Guthrie reported that Mr. Steve Pier was appointed as the new Executive Director of the Texas Workforce Commission, effective February 2, 2026. He succeeds Ed Serna and brings nearly 30 years of state policy experience, including previous roles as Director of the Texas Department of Information Resources.

Chair Guthrie concluded his report and no action was taken.

b. **Executive Director's Report**: Executive Director Juliet Stipeche opened her remarks by thanking Board members for their continued engagement and participation in the January committee meetings. She emphasized the importance of that work in advancing the Board's strategic direction and expressed appreciation for the collective commitment to aligning the system around shared goals.

She noted that, in February 2026, Workforce Solutions – Gulf Coast will convene its first all-staff meeting, bringing together managers and staff from across the system. This convening is intended to strengthen alignment around the strategic plan, reinforce Board priorities, and create a shared understanding of the system's direction and expectations moving forward.

Executive Director Stipeche also expressed her appreciation to Margaret Oser for the invitation to participate in the EMpact group and announced that Board staff will be actively engaged in the Harris County Early Childhood Commission, recently launched by Commissioners Lesley Briones and Adrian Garcia. She noted that participation in this effort reflects the Board's broader commitment to cross-sector collaboration and to strengthening the early childhood-to-workforce continuum.

Director Stipeche then announced key leadership promotions within Board staff. Kristi Rangel has been promoted to Director of Workforce, and AJ Dean has been promoted to Assistant Director. She recognized both leaders for their contributions and noted that these promotions reflect the Board's investment in strong internal leadership to support system transformation.

She also highlighted upcoming regional engagement opportunities, including the Fort Bend of the Future event scheduled for Tuesday, January 27, from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at the Fort Bend Chamber of Commerce, and encouraged Board members to attend and participate. Executive Director Stipeche concluded her report without action.

She noted that H-GAC Executive Director Chuck Wemple, who was unable to attend, requested that a brief video message be shared. In his remarks, Mr. Wemple announced his upcoming retirement and expressed his appreciation to the Gulf Coast Workforce Board for its partnership, particularly over the past year during the budget process and other significant agency efforts.

c. **Audit and Monitoring Committee Report (Committee Chair Guy Robert Jackson):** Chair Jackson reported that the Audit and Monitoring Committee met in a hybrid meeting on January 21, 2026, at H-GAC, 3555 Timmons Ln, Houston, TX, 77027 in conference room 2D and via Zoom at 1:00 pm. The following Committee members were present: Chair Guy Robert Jackson, Carl Bowles, Lenora Sorola Pohlman, Mark Guthrie, Cheryl Guido, Lizandra Vasquez, Mou Sarkar, Doug Karr, and Dr. Bobbie Henderson. Board staff present included: Cheryl Sheppard, Daysi Rojas, Shawanna Thompson, Danielle Knotts, Thomas Brown, Brandi Brown, Vanessa Salazar, Rebecca Valdez, Jenny Johnson, Maria Franco Cortes, Kimberly Lindolph, AJ Dean, Philip Garcia, Kevin Rodney, Russell Tomlin, Juliet Stipeche, Kristi Rangel, Roxana Najarro, Jennifer Graves, Janine Haynes, and Daniel Pritchett. Chair Jackson provided the following report of the meeting.

Key Performance Indicators

The Committee is currently conducting its annual review of Key Performance Indicators. This review allows us to refine existing measures and strengthen the KPI framework so it better captures outcomes and impact, not just activity. The KPIs remain aligned with the Board's four strategic priorities.

Support Business-Forward Strategies to Fuel the Regional Economy/Convener & Forge Strategic Partnerships

The first two goals presented relate to supporting business-forward strategies and serving as a convener. For Career Services, this includes measuring employment outcomes and wage quality to ensure job placements align with regional business needs. It also includes tracking the number of collaborative workforce convenings—such as hiring events and workforce forums—that link employers, partners, and job seekers.

Increase Awareness of Services & Opportunities/Improve Service Delivery with Technology & Innovation

These KPIs measure customer engagement in career services and service delivery innovation. Metrics measure customer engagement across core career service categories and track access points such as full-service offices, mobile locations, and virtual service models. These indicators help the Board assess whether services are accessible, equitable, and responsive to community needs.

Technical Program Compliance

Quality Assurance issued the final annual report for the Financial Aid Support Center, with 100% eligibility accuracy and no significant findings. All planned Adult Education reviews have been completed, with the Region 6 report currently in draft. The Adult Education Center had a limited question of costs.

Quality Assurance System-Wide Engagement

In December 2025, Quality Assurance launched the first system-wide QA Regional Meeting, establishing a recurring quarterly forum. The meeting introduced the 2026 monitoring framework and launched a centralized QA SharePoint hub to improve consistency, transparency, and provider alignment across the workforce system.

Financial Monitoring Updates

Since the last update, one financial monitoring report has been fully resolved. Several reviews are underway, and a quarterly training plan is in progress to reinforce audit-ready documentation practices and reduce repeat findings across providers.

TX3C Challenges

The Committee continues to monitor challenges with the TX3C system. TWC intervention since September has reduced error volumes and improved processing stability; however, many fixes remain temporary. Operations continue to experience strain, including processing delays, recertification backlogs, and enrollment impacts affecting families and providers.

Eligibility & Recertification Issues

Recertification functionality remains limited, requiring alternative manual processes. Outreach to approximately 5,000 customers has reduced the waitlist to under 50,000 children. The waitlist averages approximately 24 months for non-priority cases and 11 months for priority cases. While performance remains below the 95 percent target, approved overtime and mitigation efforts are underway to improve service levels.

Recoupment and Staffing Update
A July 2025 TX3C system patch resulted in a $3.6 million overpayment. Most funds have been recovered through payment plans and offsets. Of the remaining providers, some have been placed on warrant hold, while others are no longer operating and are not subject to recoupment under TWC guidance. Staffing within the Financial Aid Payment Office has improved, and funding needs continue to be monitored as TX3C system fixes progress.

Board Interventions & Accountability
The Committee received updates on active Board interventions. The Adult Education Center notified the Board of its intent to dissolve due to financial limitations. Staff coordinated immediately with TWC to ensure compliance and continuity of services. In addition, corrective actions under the Financial Aid Payment Office Performance Improvement Plan have progressed, with several items resolved.

Next Meeting
The next Audit and Monitoring Committee meeting is scheduled for March 26, 2026, at 1:00 p.m. at the Houston–Galveston Area Council, 3555 Timmons Ln. Houston, TX, 77027.

d. **Employer Engagement Committee Report (Committee Vice Chair Jeff LaBroski):** Vice Chair LaBroski reported that the Employer Engagement Committee met in a hybrid meeting on January 13, 2026, at H-GAC, 3555 Timmons Ln, Houston, TX, 77027 in conference room 2A and via Zoom at 11:00 am. The following committee members were present: Chair Alan Heskamp, Cheryl Guido, Dr. Bobbie Henderson, Guy Jackson, Mou Sarkar, Marie Arcos, Paul Puente, Susan Lindsey, Adrian Ozuna, Bin Yu, and Mike Ferdinand. Board staff and providers included: Juliet Stipeche, Kristi Rangel, Melissa Steinmetz, Lacy Wolf, Carl Salazar, Crosby Brito, Benjamina Covarrubias, Philip Garcia, Amber Jefferson, Dr. Maria Franco Cortes, Ron Borski, Gabrielle Gonzalez, Alexandra Mallet, Kevin Rodney, Shawanna Thompson, Alma Martinez, Neil Henson, Angela Mont, and Keishena Payne. Vice Chair LaBroski provided the following report of the meeting.

   The Committee’s work reflects a deliberate shift from transactional employer outreach toward a more structured, sector-based engagement model aligned with regional economic conditions and employer demand. The emphasis has been on strengthening pipelines, improving coordination, and ensuring the system is positioned to support employers at scale.

Healthcare and Life Sciences

In healthcare and life sciences, we are seeing both growth and complexity. The system expanded international employer connections through the Greater Houston Partnership's Belgian Life Sciences Trade Delegation, reinforcing Houston's role in a globally competitive biotech ecosystem. At the same time, the launch of a paid, work-based learning pipeline with San Jacinto College's Biotechnology Center, anchored by Immatics, represents a concrete step toward aligning education, employers, and paid experience.

The Committee also reviewed how labor market intelligence is being used to support regional planning as providers adjust to policy shifts related to ACA subsidies and Medicaid. At the state level, the recent $281 million investment to train 1,000 rural healthcare professionals points to sustained workforce demand that will continue to affect our region.

Building, Construction, and Infrastructure

In building, construction, and infrastructure, employer engagement is increasingly tied to major regional investments and project timelines. The system is preparing talent pipelines for World Cup 2026 venues and related infrastructure, while also expanding CTE-to-career pathways with St. Peter's High School. In Waller County, a Manufacturing Roundtable was convened to directly address operator and training gaps, and registered apprenticeships are advancing through the Buffalo Bayou Partnership to support long-term infrastructure and economic growth. The Committee's focus here has been on aligning workforce readiness with employer demand in a way that supports both near-term hiring and long-term capacity.

In energy and advanced manufacturing, the Gulf Coast continues to play a nationally significant role. The region remains a primary hub for refining and related engineering activity, and while short-term hiring impacts in 2026 are expected to be limited, employers are signaling strong multi-year demand in oilfield services, drilling technology, reservoir engineering, and infrastructure upgrades. A key example is Tinci Materials' $182 million lithium-ion manufacturing facility in Baytown, which is projected to generate approximately 1,900 construction jobs and 147 permanent positions by 2027. This investment reflects the region's growing importance in advanced manufacturing and clean energy supply chains.

Community Response and Public Sector Pathways
The Committee also reviewed how employer engagement is supporting community response and public-sector pathways. In Waller County, the system coordinated a rapid response to more than 200 layoffs, culminating in a large-scale job fair with strong employer and jobseeker participation. Additional efforts include strengthening the water and wastewater workforce pipeline through partnerships with Sam Houston State University and employers and developing paid internship-to-hire pathways with the City of Pearland and Harris County Precinct 4 to support municipal hiring and long-term talent development.

Finally, the Committee spent time on organizational readiness. Work is underway to formalize the employer engagement operating model through standardized processes, a committee charter, and expanded staff training. These efforts are intended to ensure consistency, accountability, and continuity as employer engagement activity continues to scale.

The Committee's discussions reinforced the importance of continuing to develop a strong, coordinated employer engagement system that helps local employers meet their talent needs while strengthening workforce pipelines and regional competitiveness. This work is central to the Board's strategic priorities and to the long-term performance of the workforce system.

Vice Chair LaBroski concluded the Employment Engagement Committee report, and no action was taken.

e. **Government Relations Committee Report (Committee Chair Guy Robert Jackson):** Chair Jackson reported that the Government Relations Committee met in a hybrid meeting on January 21 at H-GAC, 3555 Timmons Ln, Houston, TX, 77027, in conference room 2D and via Zoom at 2:00 pm. The following committee members were present: Chair Guy Jackson, Sara Oyervidez, Lenora Sorola-Pohlman, Doug Karr, Dr. Bobbie Henderson, Marie Arcos, Adrian Ozuna, Mike Ferdinand, Bin Yu, Cheryl Guido, Grace Rodriguez, Margaret Oser, Mark Guthrie, Shareen Larmond, and Mou Sarkar. Board staff and providers present included: Desmond Taylor, Juliet Stipeche, Dr. Maria Franco Cortes, Jennifer Roberts, AJ Dean, Russell Tomlin, Shawanna Thompson, Brandi Brown, Janine Haynes, Kristi Rangel, Jenny Johnson, Thomas Brown, Leigh

Ann Arnold, and Dr. Michelle Cantu. Chair Jackson provided the following report of the meeting.

Texas Workforce Commission Sunset Review

As previously reported, TWC is scheduled for review during the 2026–2027 Sunset cycle. This review will determine whether the agency should continue as currently structured, be restructured, or transfer certain duties to other entities. It will also assess how effectively TWC fulfills its statutory responsibilities and supports statewide workforce and child care goals.

Importantly, there is an opportunity for confidential input from Board members and regional stakeholders prior to the publication of the Sunset staff report in June of this year. To provide this input, Board members were asked to scan the QR code on the screens in the Board Room or refer to the email sent by Maria on January 21. Board members were told that their participation is a meaningful opportunity to shape the review process.

Governor's Directive Regarding Potential Child Care Funding Fraud

On January 5, 2026, Governor Abbott directed TWC and the Texas Health and Human Services Commission to strengthen oversight of the Child Care Services Program following alleged fraud uncovered in other states. While Texas already maintains a low improper payment rate, the directive emphasizes enhanced monitoring of high-risk providers, stronger data verification, uniform enforcement statewide, and increased fraud reporting and referrals.

From a local perspective, TWC has begun outreach to assess providers within workforce board networks. The Office of Child Care has conducted child care subsidy case file reviews throughout the state. On February 11th and 12th, eight Boards, including GCWB will present in Austin, four sample cases each to monitors from the Office of Child Care and TWC. The chosen cases will show how Boards across Texas meet the compliance criteria in the areas of eligibility, change reporting and proper payments.

Legislative Luncheon Update

Due to scheduling, the Legislative Breakfast will now be a Legislative Luncheon, scheduled for March 30, 2026, from 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., at the Junior League of Houston, located at 1811 Briar Oaks Ln. An updated calendar hold has been sent to all Board members and Board members were urged and encouraged to participate. This event is designed to introduce elected officials across our region to the Gulf Coast Workforce Board's 2024–2029 Strategic Plan, legislative priorities and key initiatives in workforce and child care.

The format will include an interactive gallery walk highlighting child care, adult education and literacy, employer engagement, and youth services. Outreach Strategists is supporting program design and materials.

Governor's Task Force on Early Childhood Education and Care
Launched on January 20, 2026, this task force is charged with improving the quality, access, and affordability of child care across Texas. The task force includes members from across the state representing education, business, and community leadership, and its work aligns closely with many of the Board's priorities.

Chair Jackson concluded the Government Relations Committee report, and no action was taken.

f. **Education Committee Report (Committee Chair Dr. Bobbie Henderson):** Chair Henderson reported that the Education Committee met in a hybrid meeting on January 8, 2026, at H-GAC, 3555 Timmons Ln, Houston, TX, 77027 in conference room 2A and via Zoom at 11:00 am. The following committee members were present: Dr. Bobbie Henderson, Mark Guthrie, Dr. Allatia Harris, Cheryl Guido, Dr. Melissa Gonzalez, Margaret Oser, Guy Robert Jackson, Doug Karr, Sandra Taylor, and Susan Lindsey. Board staff present included: Juliet Stipeche, AJ Dean, Jennifer Starling, Jacinth Chapman, Cheryl Sheppard, Dr. Maria Franco Cortes, Kristi Rangel, Russell Tomlin, LaToya Casimere, Danielle Knotts, Neil Hanson, Jennifer Graves, Kevin Rodney, Alexandra Mallet, Janine Haynes, Shawanna Thompson, Ashley Glenn, Crosby Brito, Vanessa Salazar, and Romana Paniagua. Chair Henderson provided the following report of the meeting.

Dr. Henderson announced the new year, 2026 gives us days of promise for employers, job-seekers, and partners as we assist our clients in transforming their lives. She encouraged Board members in the new year to read Board materials differently and thoroughly prior to the Board meetings, serve deeper by supporting Board activities, and believe bigger that our work changes lives.

Issues at the Financial Aid Payment Office around TX3C continue to ensue; however, Board staff is utilizing its workarounds to ensure timely payments and reporting as best they can.

Chair Henderson highlighted Senior Manager Chapman's updates to the Committee on how her team continues to remove barriers and increase awareness and access to available resources as well as early education expansions to maintain high quality care and services.

Additionally, Chair Henderson shared the importance of Board members contacting their contacts at participating colleges and ISDs regarding the Local Match Program. A one-pager and script was provided via email for all Board staff to utilize to increase participation.

Lastly, Chair Henderson said the Hire Gulf Coast Youth team has solidified its Youth Advisory Board participants and will be providing semi-annual reports from the youth board regarding their activities. Additionally, the Youth team shared with the Committee information regarding its innovation grant, year-round programs, summer jobs, summer earn and learn program, and six career exploration events during 2026.

Chair Henderson concluded the Education Committee report, and no action was taken.

g. **Communications Committee Report (Committee Chair Doug Karr):** Chair Karr reported that the Communications Committee met in a hybrid meeting on January 20, 2026, at H-GAC, 3555 Timmons Ln, Houston, TX, 77027 in conference room 2D and via Zoom at 3:00 pm. The following committee members were present: Chair Doug Karr, Tanya Makany-Rivera, Paul Puente, Lenora Sorola-Pohlman, Mark Guthrie, Dr. Melanie Rodriguez, Sara Montelogo-Oyervidez, Cheryl Guido, Guy Jackson, Dr. Bobbie Henderson, Dr. Melissa Gonzalez, Marie Arcos, Monica Riley, and Paul Puente. Board staff and providers present included: Juliet Stipeche, Desmond Taylor, AJ Dean, Dr. Maria Franco Cortes, Carl Salazar, Romana Paniagua, Kristi Rangel, Shawanna Thompson, Janine Haynes, Crosby Brito, Kevin Rodney, Philippe Anchondo, Amber Jefferson, Russell Tomlin, Rick Guerrero, Leigh Ann Arnold, Dr. Michelle Cantu, Alma Martinez, Lorena Campa, Neil Hanson, and Manuel Ugues. Chair Karr provided the following report of the meeting.

The Committee reviewed a year-end "2025 wrap" of communications performance across digital platforms, earned media, and outreach initiatives, and discussed system-level improvements underway to strengthen message consistency, employer reach, and service visibility heading into 2026. It received confirmation that Workforce Solutions–Gulf Coast experienced significant year-over-year growth in engagement across LinkedIn, Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, WorkforceSolutionsNews.com, and earned media placements.

<u>Social Media Report</u>

<u>Content Development and Centralizing Strategy</u>

From December 2024 through December 2025, Workforce Solutions–Gulf Coast continued to strengthen its social media presence through a more people-centered, and service-forward approach.

LinkedIn

LINKEDIN		LINKEDIN NEWSLETTER	
Metric	**Results**	**Metric**	**Result**
Total followers	13,118	Total Subscribers	3,327
Impressions	102,616	Impressions	5,086
Reactions	2,269	Engagements	133
Engagement Rate	10.8%		

Throughout 2025, **LinkedIn** remained a critical channel for professional visibility, employer engagement, and workforce leadership positioning. Over the year, LinkedIn generated 102,616 impressions, 2,269 reactions, 218 comments, and a strong 10.8% engagement rate, while growing the audience by 2,522 new followers for a total of 13,118. The **LinkedIn newsletter** emerged as a particularly effective gateway product in 2025. With 3,327 subscribers, 5,085 impressions, and 2,269 engagements,

Instagram

Metric	Result
Views	129,491
Reach	35,166
Content Interaction	1,268
Visits	6,400
Follows	1,510

Instagram continued to serve as a visual storytelling and audience-growth channel, particularly effective with younger users. The platform recorded 129,491 views, reached 35,166 accounts, generated 1,268 content interactions (more than double 2024), and added 1,510 new followers.

Facebook

Metric	Result
Views	388,179
Content Interaction	2,808
Visits	23,236
Follows	983

Facebook remained a high-visibility, community-facing channel and a key driver of traffic to services and events. From December 2024 through December 2025, Facebook generated 388,179 views, 2,808 content interactions, 23,236 visits, and 983 new followers, representing an increase of approximately 20% compared to 2024.

YouTube

Metric	Result
Views	18,909
Impressions	142,786
New Subscribers	143
Total Subscribers	1,495

YouTube expanded its role in 2025 to that of a strategic orientation tool rather than a promotional channel. The platform generated 142,786 impressions, 18,909 views, and added 143 new subscribers, bringing the total to 1,495.

Podcasts

Workforce Solutions Gulf Coast is developing a podcast initiative to support clear, accessible communication about workforce services, programs, and opportunities across the region. Rather than a single show, the effort includes a small set of short-form podcasts, each tailored to a specific audience while aligned through a shared editorial framework. Episodes will focus on hiring trends, employer perspectives, training pathways, and experiences from residents and partners engaged in workforce programs. A dedicated podcast logo has been designed and selected to support branding and promotion as the podcast moves toward launch.

<u>WorkforceSolutionsNews.com</u>
Launched on March 4, 2025, *WorkforceSolutionsNews.com* demonstrated strong early performance and consistent audience engagement throughout its first year. From launch through the end of 2025, the site published 203 original articles (an average of 16 per month), generating 22,000 total views from 8,000 unique users.

Engagement metrics indicate sustained user attention. Visitors averaged 2.87 pages per session and spent 6 minutes and 3 seconds on the site—well above typical benchmarks for public-sector and news-based platforms. Monthly traffic remained consistently above 2,000 views, establishing a stable baseline of readership, with a clear peak in October driven by interest in the *Economic Outlook: Workforce Solutions Gulf Coast 2025 Insights* article.

<u>Media Highlights and Outreach</u>
In 2025, Workforce Solutions - Gulf Coast (WFS-GC) strengthened its earned media presence as a trusted regional voice on workforce issues, labor-market conditions, and access to services. Media outreach centered on translating complex workforce topics into clear, timely, and locally relevant information for job seekers, employers, and families across the 13-county region.

Collectively, earned media efforts generated an estimated $1.4 million in advertising value equivalency and reached more than 6.5 million viewers. The Committee also confirmed that the ABC-13 "Who's Hiring" partnership will resume in February 2026 using a revised format that allows for pre-recorded segments and multiple touchpoints tied to job fairs and employer activity.

Waller Job Fair
Workforce Solutions Gulf Coast hosted a job fair in Waller on January 20, 2026, connecting local jobseekers with employers across multiple industries. The event was promoted through the Board's first donated out-of-home digital billboard placement, made possible by the Waller Civic Center and the Waller Economic Development Corporation, to increase visibility and participation. This outreach supports the Board's goal of expanding access to employment opportunities and strengthening connections between employers and the local workforce.

Buc-ee's Digital Signage
Workforce Solutions Gulf Coast is partnering with Buc-ee's to display digital signage at four high-traffic locations in Waller, Wharton, Texas

City, and Lake Jackson. Entrance-screen signage rotates brief messages highlighting Workforce Solutions services for job seekers, employers, and youth, providing high-visibility outreach across the region.

These Buc-ee's locations sit along major travel corridors including US-290, US-59 (I-69), I-45, and SH-332 and collectively attract thousands of daily vehicle stops and tens of thousands of visitors. The placement significantly expands awareness of workforce services among residents and workers across the communities the Board serves.

Website Update

Foundational work for the redesigned Workforce Solutions website is complete, including the Discover Phase, information architecture, design, and development of core content. The website is now live and operational, marking a major milestone in the project. Initial feedback from Board members has been positive, with particular emphasis on improved ease of navigation and usability. While the site is fully launched, it will continue to evolve as a dynamic platform rather than a static product. We are also processing issues that arise in real time to enhance performance and functionality.

Current efforts are focused on post-launch refinement and enablement, including staff training to support internal content management, integration of enhanced features such as dynamic homepage content and video, and continued improvements to functionality such as the public events calendar.

New GCWB Logo

As part of a broader effort to refresh and modernize the Board's visual identity, a new GCWB logo has been developed and presented for Board consideration. An initial electronic survey was conducted to gather input on proposed concepts; however, participation was limited and did not reflect full Board engagement.

Based on the survey results, the top two logo options were identified. To ensure transparency, broader participation, and formal Board ownership of the final selection, the Committee agreed to bring the two leading options forward for an in-person vote at an upcoming Board meeting. Following Board action, the selected logo will be prepared for phased implementation across communications, materials, and digital platforms to support clearer brand recognition and more consistent systemwide messaging.

Chair Karr concluded the Communications Committee report, and no action was taken.

8. **Action Items:**

a. **Career Services Committee Report (Committee Chair Adrian Ozuna):** Chair Ozuna reported that the Career Services Committee met in a hybrid meeting on January 22, 2026, at H-GAC, 3555 Timmons Ln, Houston, TX, 77027 in conference room 2D and via Zoom at 11:00 am. The following committee members were present: Chair Adrian Ozuna, Susan Lindsey, Mark Guthrie, Cheryl Guido, Alan Heskamp, Dr. Michael Webster, Joyce Johnson, Rachel Cevallos, Mou Sarkar, Bin Yu, Lizandra Vasquez, and Dr. Melanie Rodriguez. Board staff and providers in attendance included: Juliet Stipeche, Russell Tomlin, Jennifer Graves, Shawanna Thompson, Dr. Maria Franco Cortes, Desmond Taylor, Janine Haynes, Kevin Rodney, Crosby Brito, Amber Jefferson, Kristi Rangel, Jenny Johnson, Melissa Steinmetz, Romana Paniagua, Sabrina Uy, Jessica Smith, Alexandra Mallet, Jonathan Benjamin, Thomas Brown, Daisy Rojas, Benjamina Covarrubias, Lacy Wolf, Philip Garcia, Lorena Campa, Alma Martinez, Manuel Ungues, and Nicole Quintero. Chair Ozuna provided the following report of the meeting.

The Career Services Committee convened its first meeting of 2026 following the successful completion of the most significant system transition in more than a decade across the North, East, and West regions. With SERCO, EDSI, and BakerRipley delivering career services systemwide. This milestone strengthens service excellence, compliance, and stability for job seekers and employers.

Career Services Charter

The Career Services Committee is a standing committee of the Gulf Coast Workforce Board that provides strategic oversight and recommendations on the design, delivery, and continuous improvement of career services. In collaboration with the Board and Workforce Solutions staff, the Committee monitors performance, ensures compliance, and advances service quality, accountability, and alignment with the Board's strategic priorities.

A motion was made and second to adopt the Career Services Committee Charter as presented. The motion passed.

<u>Access Points</u>

At Workforce Solutions, we believe that opportunities should meet people where they are—geographically, digitally, and situationally—so every place our customers engage with us, whether physical or virtual, serves as a doorway to our full workforce ecosystem.

Co-locations

The Committee has taken a deeper look at co-location sites, specifically Sunnyside and Hiram Clarke, and is researching additional touchpoints with government entities to further expand reach, coordination, and system impact.

Virtual Touchpoints

Digital tools—online workshops, virtual coaching, phone support, webinars, and social platforms—ensure we can serve customers anytime, anywhere, on any device.

ROCC in Action

The Regional Operations Coordination Council (ROCC) serves as the GCWB's primary operational coordination forum, aligning day-to-day workforce operations with the Board's strategic direction through clear communication, cross-regional collaboration, and standardized practices. By regularly reviewing performance data and addressing issues in real time, the ROCC strengthens accountability, consistency, and high-quality service delivery across the Workforce Solutions–Gulf Coast system.

Advisory Council

The ROCC is supported by three advisory councils focused on systemwide coordination and performance. The **Access Point Council** expands equitable community access, while the **Job Description and Performance Council** standardizes roles and accountability, and the **Communications Council** ensures clear, consistent messaging across the system.

Mou Sarkar inquired about the process to determine or provide input to the ROCC. Chair Ozuna responded that the ROCC meets quarterly and will provide its recommendations and/or observations to the Career Services Committee where Board members will have an opportunity to provide input. This process is intended to be fluid.

There was no further discussion or action and Chair Ozuna concluded his report.

b. **Budget Committee Report (Committee Chair Carl Bowles):** Chair Bowles reported that the Budget Committee met in a hybrid meeting on January 20, 2026, at H-GAC, 3555 Timmons Ln. Houston, TX, 77027, in conference room 2D and via Zoom at 2:00 pm. The following committee members were present: Mark Guthrie, Doug Karr, Dr. Bobbie Henderson, Guy Robert Jackson, Paul Puente, Cheryl Guido, Adrian Ozuna, Lenora Sorola Pohlman, Melissa Gonzalez, and Alan Heskamp. Board staff were present, but names were unintentionally not recorded. Chair Bowles provided the following report of the meeting.

The Committee convened to determine whether, and at what level, the Workforce Board should approve the proposed FY26 indirect cost allocation of $1,180,309 for Outreach and Government Affairs (OGA), and to recommend a revised budget to the full Board. The deliberation focused on fiduciary duty, proportionality of benefit, operational feasibility, and the downstream consequences of each budget option on both Workforce Solutions operations and the broader H-GAC indirect cost structure.

OGA Presentation

Rick Guerrero, Chief Outreach and Government Affairs Officer, presented FY25 workforce-related accomplishments and FY26 proposed activities.

As the presentation progressed, Committee members repeatedly pressed for specificity regarding how much staff time, how many FTE equivalents, and what proportion of OGA activity was attributable directly to Workforce Board needs. Mr. Guerrero acknowledged that much of the work described is difficult to quantify precisely because it is performed across multiple staff and embedded within agency-wide functions. He further acknowledged that the original indirect allocation equated to roughly one-third of OGA's total effort on behalf of H-GAC, a proportion Committee members questioned given the lack of documented time allocation to the GCWB. Committee members also raised concerns about overlap between OGA communications activities and the GCWB's procured communications and outreach contract, noting potential redundancy and the absence of a clearly articulated division of labor between internal OGA functions and its external vendor.

A central point of debate was the indirect cost methodology itself. H-GAC staff explained that indirect costs are calculated based on direct salaries and benefits across the agency, meaning that increases in workforce staffing automatically increase the GCWB's share of indirect costs, regardless of whether OGA workload increases proportionally. Committee members challenged this outcome as misaligned with operational reality. Several Board members explicitly questioned why the GCWB should bear a substantially larger share of OGA indirect costs solely due to workforce program growth, particularly when OGA outputs did not demonstrably scale at the same rate. Comparisons were made to functions such as Human Resources, where increases in staffing clearly and directly drive workload increases, whereas OGA functions were described as not operating on a one-to-one or proportional basis.

During the discussion, Mr. Guerrero stated that failure to approve the proposed funding for OGA would have real operational impacts for H-GAC and could result in significant cuts, including potential personnel reductions. Committee members acknowledged the statement but emphasized that staffing decisions at H-GAC where H-GAC management decisions without involvement of the GCWB or Board staff and should not determine the GCWB's fiduciary judgment, particularly where the Board had not been provided a clear, detailed explanation of what workforce-specific services or outcomes were supported by the full OGA budget request.

Implications of Eliminating Indirect Costs Entirely

H-GAC Executive Director Chuck Wemple explained that eliminating all OGA indirect costs from the GCWB budget would have cascading consequences across H-GAC. Because OGA indirect costs are allocated across all agency programs, removing the GCWB share would require removing OGA indirect costs from other programs as well, creating an estimated $3 million agency-wide gap. Mr. Wemple therefore indicated that maintaining a partial indirect allocation, rather than zeroing it out entirely, was necessary to preserve essential agency functions and avoid immediate structural disruption.

Committee members acknowledged this constraint and made clear that avoiding agency disruption alone could not justify approval of the full $1.18 million. The Committee instead focused on identifying a defensible middle ground that preserved essential governance and compliance functions and payment for reasonable costs truly benefitting the

GCWB's efforts while avoiding obligating the workforce system to absorb indirect costs disproportionate to demonstrated GCWB benefit.

Budget Options

Brandi Brown, Workforce Fiscal Administration Manager, presented four options to reallocate the $1,180,309 in Indirect costs requested by/for OGA to revise the 2026 GCWB Budget. The options included:

- Option 1: Original request of $1,180,309 to Indirect for OGA;
- Option 2: Reduced amount of $180,275 to Indirect cost for OGA, with balance, $1,000,034 allocated to pass-through costs for Career Services to support staffing for the Career Office operators;
- Option 3: $99,444 for Direct Costs for OGA representing 0.6 FTEs as originally requested during the FY26 budget negotiation process, with balance, $1,080,865 allocated to pass-through costs for Career Services to support staffing for the Career Office operators; and
- Option 4: full amount, $1,180,309, allocated to pass-through costs for Career Services to support staffing for the Career Office operators.

Evaluation of Options

After deliberate discussions of each option, the Committee recommended that the Board approve Option 2 because it directly addressed the Committee's three core objectives simultaneously:

- Fiduciary alignment: Option 2 materially reduced the GCWB's share of OGA indirect costs from $1.18 million to $180,275, reflecting the Committee's determination that only a limited portion of OGA activity is reasonably attributable to workforce needs.
- Operational realism: By retaining a reduced indirect allocation rather than zeroing it out, Option 2 preserves funding for activities that are inherently difficult to direct-charge, including Public Information Act compliance, intergovernmental coordination, and governance support, without obligating the workforce system to subsidize agency-wide functions at scale.
- System protection and service prioritization: The reallocation of $1,000,034 to Career Services directly mitigates recent funding reductions affecting Career Office staffing. Committee members emphasized that preserving frontline service capacity was a

higher priority than maintaining prior indirect funding levels, particularly given current federal funding volatility.

Committee members made clear that Option 2 is intended as a temporary, bridging solution, not an endorsement of the existing indirect cost allocation model. The Committee viewed this option as a way to maintain continuity of essential governance and compliance functions in the near term, while allowing time for a more rigorous, future review of cost allocation methodology, the distinction between direct and indirect charges, and governance alignment between the GCWB and H-GAC.

A **motion was made and second to approve the revised proposed budget totaling $488,481,067 with $180,275 allocated for Indirect costs for H-GAC Outreach & Government Affairs services, with the $1,000,034 balance allocated to an increase in pass-through costs for Career Services to support staffing for the career offices. This approval to include in the GCWB budget the $180,275 allocated for Indirect costs for H-GAC Outreach & Government Affairs services is contingent upon and subject to H-GAC providing to the GCWB a clear and documented explanation of which Outreach and Government Affairs activities are classified and as indirect costs, and which activities, if any would be subject to additional direct charges to the GCWB including the basis for those classifications, to ensure transparency, compliance, and ongoing fiduciary oversight. The motion passed with objection from Tanya Makany-Rivera.**

Chair Bowles concluded the Budget Committee report with no further action.

c. **Procurement Committee Report (Committee Chair Dr. Bobbie Henderson):** Dr. Henderson reported that the Procurement Committee met in a hybrid meeting on January 21, 2026, at H-GAC, 3555 Timmons Ln. Houston, TX, 77027, in conference room 2D and via Zoom at 3:00 pm. The following committee members were present: Dr. Bobbie Henderson, Guy Robert Jackson, Doug Karr, Cheryl Guido, Mark Guthrie, Adrian Ozuna, and Guy Robert Jackson. Board staff and providers present included: Desmond Taylor, Juliet Stipeche, Thomas Brown, Kristi Rangel, Amber Jefferson, AJ Dean, Russell Tomlin, Esmeralda Mata, Vanessa Salazar, Brandi Brown, Sabrina Uy, Alexandra Mallet, Shawanna Thompson, Philip Garcia, Crosby Brito, Neil Hanson, Jacqueline Felix, Kate Birenbaum, Alma Orozco, and M. Jimenez Orozco. Chair Henderson provided the following report of the meeting.

Board staff discussed possible authorization for staff to execute a contract amendment in accordance with the funding amount below and provided information on upcoming system procurements.

Item	Amendment Amount	Amended Maximum Contract Amount (Not to Exceed)
I. United Way of Greater Houston	$200,868	$2,700,868

I. United Way of Greater Houston - Amendment

Background
The Board is dedicated to enhancing the quality of early childhood education by offering a diverse array of supportive services. These services are twofold: first, providing consumer education and support to families in need of child care solutions; and second, strengthening the capacity of home-based child care providers, who are often the primary source of child care for many families. Through these initiatives, the Board seeks to foster a nurturing and supportive early childhood education environment that benefits both providers and the families that they serve.

The Family Engagement and Home-Based Provider Initiative supports the following key elements:

1. Facilitate training events and activities to support home-based providers and the children in their care;
2. Create opportunities for home-based providers to enhance and develop sustainable business practices;
3. Collaborate and partner with existing entities that provide family engagement services to support families in their role as their child's primary caregiver; and
4. Connect families to community resources needed to strengthen the families' ability to support their children.

Since 2024, the Board has contracted with United Way of Greater Houston to deliver these services.

Current Situation
United Way of Greater Houston continues to perform effectively and meet contract expectations:

Performance Target	FY26 Goal	Year to Date	Percentage of Goal
Number of home-based providers engaged in and participating in in-person intensive mentoring/coaching	30	28	93%
Number of community partners maintained or established/events participating in to provide support and awareness to families	20	23	115%
Number of home-based providers receiving technical assistance from subject matter experts	100	43	43%
Number of home-based providers receiving intensive in-person coaching/mentoring	30	28	93%
Number of home-based providers receiving materials and/or equipment	30	18	60%
Number of families receiving information and resources in-person to support financial stability, education, and health safety	3,000	1,545	52%
Number of community events attended by Family Engagement Specialists	15	29	193%

This proposed amendment increases funding to support consumer education for approximately 6,000 families and professional development for 350 home-based child care providers. Based on demonstrated performance and continued programmatic alignment, Board staff recommended and the Committee recommends approval of this contract amendment.

A motion was made and second to amend the contract with United Way of Greater Houston to increase funding by $200,868, for a revised total contract amount not to exceed $2,700,868. The motion passed with abstentions from Dr. Bobbie Henderson and Margaret Oser.

II. Upcoming Procurements
The table below provides information on the status of the various components of our system, including when they will need to be reprocured:

System Component	Service Provider(s)	Last Procurement	Next Scheduled Procurement (Calendar Year)
Labor Market Platform	Chmura	In Progress	TBD
Grant Fund Management	New	In Progress	TBD
Family Engagement & Outreach	United Way of Greater Houston	2024	2026 – First Quarter
Financial Aid Payment Office	BakerRipley	2022	2026 – First Quarter
Financial Aid Support Center	Equus	2022	2026 – First Quarter

Dr. Henderson concluded the Procurement Committee report with no additional actions or discussion.

9. **Presentations and Information:**

   a. **Performance and Production: Report on the system's performance and production (Philip Garcia).** Board Staff Phillip Garcia presented the following report:

   Reporting Infrastructure Enhancements
   Workforce Solutions – Gulf Coast continues to work closely with the TWC as the state modernizes its reporting infrastructure. While several reporting modules have been updated, data completeness challenges remain. To improve accuracy and consistency, the Board has accelerated standardized reporting tools across all providers, improving the timeliness and reliability of performance data. The region also

continues to use predictive models aligned with TWC methodologies to monitor trends and make timely operational adjustments.

Provider Collaboration and Support
Strong provider partnerships remain central to performance improvement. Bi-monthly coordination sessions support alignment, reinforce best practices, and promote shared accountability. In addition, targeted training for providers and Board staff focuses on advanced interviewing, career assessment, and documentation practices to strengthen service delivery and performance outcomes.

What the Current Performance Data Shows (As of October 2025)
Early FY2026 data shows strong employment and earnings outcomes, with education-related measures building as expected over time. Performance is stronger across nearly all measures compared to the same point last year, reflecting recent system improvements and closer performance management.
In simple terms:

- Employment outcomes for Adults, Dislocated Workers, and Youth are meeting or near state targets.
- Median earnings after exit exceed state targets across all populations.
- Skills gains and credentials typically improve later in the program year as training milestones are completed.

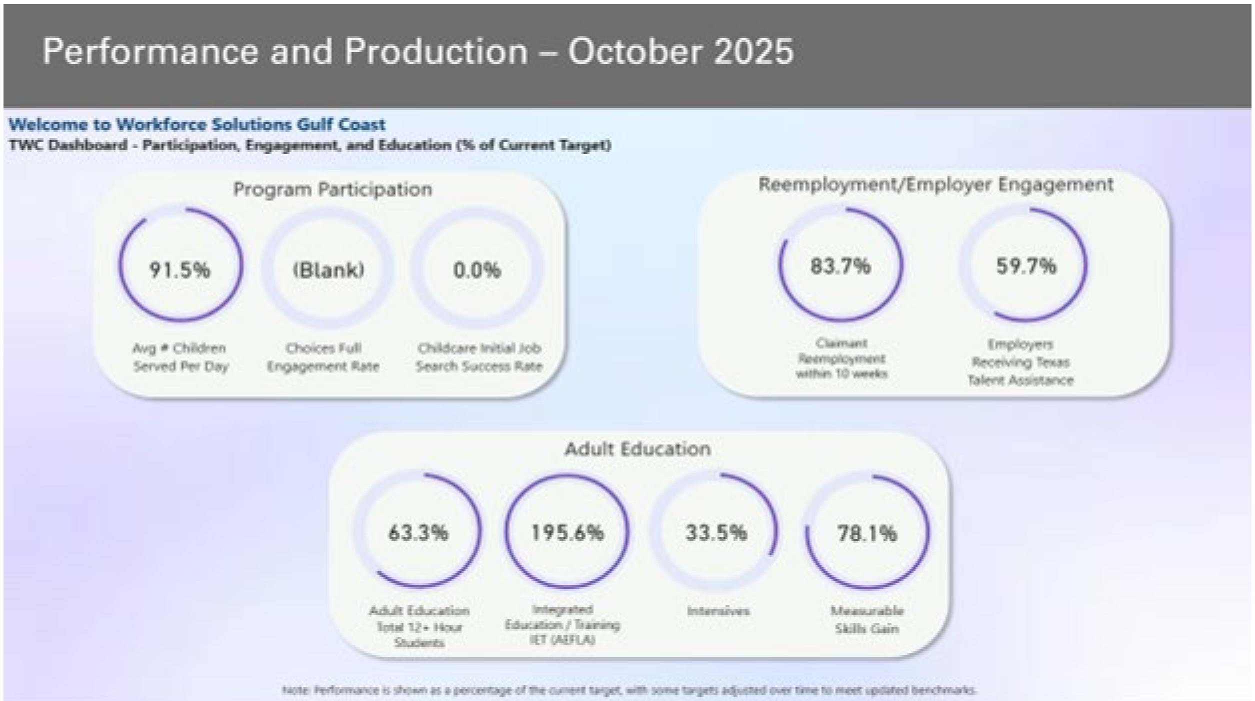
Overall, results are tracking as expected, with consistent strength in employment and earnings outcomes.

Key System Improvements Underway
To sustain positive trends, the Board has accelerated several system-wide improvements:

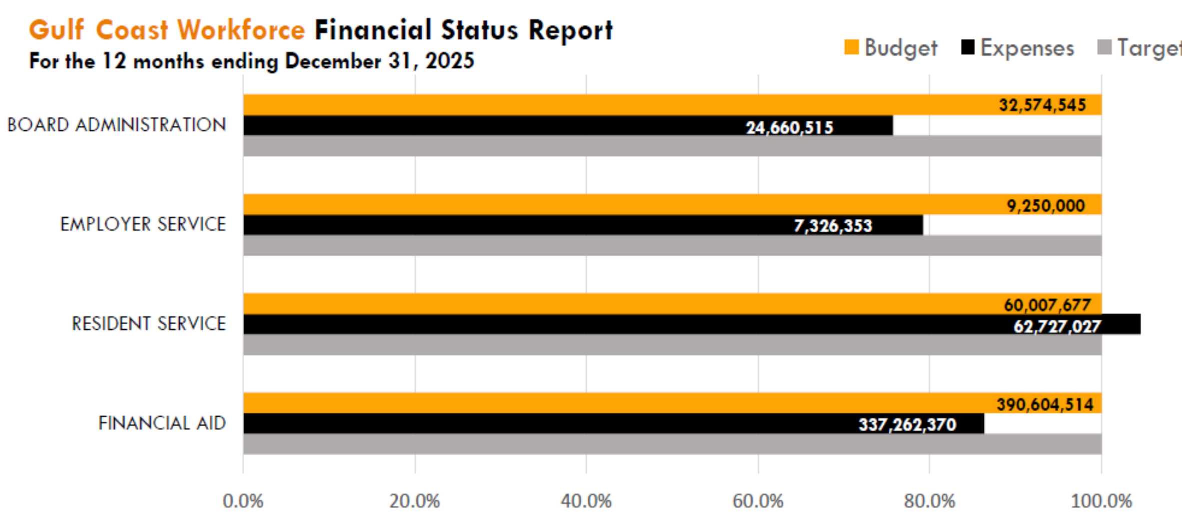
- Enhanced career and skills assessments to better align training with labor market demand.
- Increased focus on short-term, industry-recognized credentials.
- Expanded work-based learning, including on-the-job training and apprenticeships.
- Strengthened provider accountability through ETPL updates and routine performance reviews.
- Expanded year-round youth engagement and post-exit follow-up.

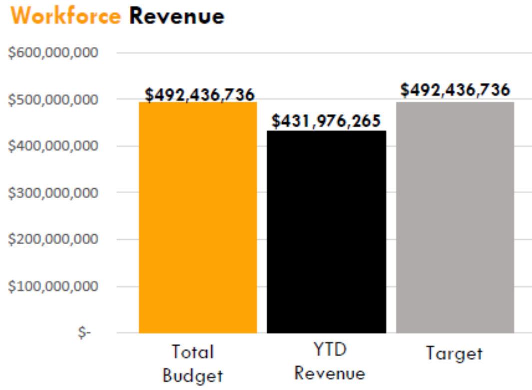
Summary

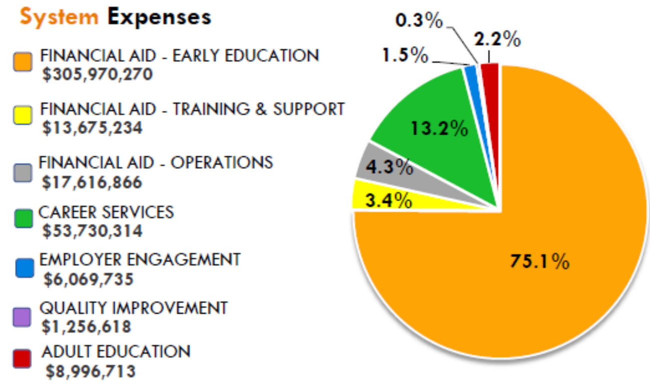
The overall performance picture is positive. Workforce Solutions – Gulf Coast continues to connect individuals to employment, increase earnings, and support employers across the region. With improved data systems, stronger provider oversight, and targeted system reforms in place, the Board is well positioned to sustain performance gains and meet or exceed future state performance expectations.



b. **Expenditures: Report on the Board's budget and expenditures (Brandi Brown) Board** Staff Brandi Brown presented the following report:







c. **A Look at the Economy: Update on the Labor Market (Parker Harvey and Mohammad Ahmadizadeh):** Slides to full presentation attached in Board packet.

10. **Other Business:** Board members voted on the GCWB logo that uniquely represents the Board, separate from the entire Workforce Solutions system. The results were as follows:

GULF COAST Workforce Board

Option 1: 16 votes

GULF COAST Workforce Board

Option 2: 7 votes

Additionally, Paul Puente shared that he participated in the Apprenticeship in Training Association of Texas in San Antonio, Texas for their annual ATAT conference, where the TWC Commissioner of Labor was present. Paul mentioned that he serves as the Chairman of the Apprenticeships & Training Advisory Committee and reported on the Chapter 133 funding at the conference. He also shared an opportunity that he witnessed at the conference from DeWalt, one of the sponsoring companies that created short interactive films for people in the community. He recommended Board staff look at these videos and see whether we can create something similar around our Apprenticeships Work! campaign for people in the community to earn swag by watching our videos and learning how they can begin their careers.

There was no further business discussed.

11. **Adjourn:** Board Chair Guthrie adjourned the meeting at 12:18 pm.

GULF COAST WORKFORCE BOARD

ARCOS, MARIE
Compudopt, Inc.
1602 Airline Drive
Houston, TX 77009
(713) 557-6575
Category: CBO
County: Harris
Mariearcos713@gmail.com
Term: January 1, 2025, thru December 31, 2026

BAKER, JENNIFER
Alief Independent School District
12160 Richmond Avenue,
Houston, TX 77082
(281) 796-7835
Category: Education
County: City of Houston
Jennifer.Baker@aliefisd.net
Term: January 1, 2025, thru December 31, 2026

BELOW, SHONDA
Northeast Houston American
Federation of Teachers
5310 E Sam Houston Pkwy N, Ste M
Houston, TX 7701
(713) 598-7144
Category: Labor
County: Harris
sbelow@nehouaft.org
Term: January 1, 2025, thru December 31, 2026

BOWLES, CARL
Bowles, Womack & Company, P.C.
24 Greenway Plaza, Suite 970
Houston, TX 77046
(713) 621-0050
Category: Private
County: Waller
carl@bowleswomack.com
Term: January 1, 2025, thru December 31, 2026

CEVALLOS, RACHEL
Identity Plus, LLC
3205 Harrisburg Blvd.
Houston, TX 77003
(832) 797-7402
Category: Private
County: Harris
Rachel@identityplusllc.com
Term: January 1, 2025, thru December 31, 2026

COCKRELL, DORIAN
JPMorgan Chase
712 Main St.so
Houston, TX 77002
(817) 707--5957
Category: Private
County: City of Houston
Dorian.cockrell@jpmchase.com
Term: January 1, 2025, thru December 31, 2026

DOBERT, MICHAEL
HR in Alignment, LLC
16331 Blossomwood Ln,
Sugar Land, TX 77498
(281) 889-9075
Category: Private
County: Fort Bend
mdobert@hrinalignment.com
Term: January 1, 2025, thru December 31, 2026

FERDINAND, MICHAEL
Matagorda County Economic
Development Corp
4000 Avenue F,
Bay City, TX 77414
(979) 476-4334
Category: Private
County: Matagorda
mferdinand@mcedc.net
Term: January 1, 2025, thru December 31, 2026

GONZALEZ, MELISSA
Lone Star College
20000 Kingwood Drive
Kingwood, TX 77339
(281) 312-1644
Category: Education
County: Harris
melissa.gonzalez@lonestar.edu
Term: January 1, 2025, thru December 31, 2026

GUIDO, CHERYL
Texas Workforce Solutions-VR Services
4424 North Freeway, Suite A
Houston, TX 77022
(713) 458-8593
Category: State Agency
cheryl.guido@twc.texas.gov
Term: January 1, 2025, thru December 31, 2026

GUTHRIE, MARK
Board Chair
Winstead PC
600 Travis Street, Suite 5200
Houston, TX 77002
(713) 650-2730
Category: Private
County: City of Houston
mguthriegu3@gmail.com
Term: January 1, 2025, thru December 31, 2026

HENDERSON, BOBBIE ALLEN
Vice Chair
Texas Southern University
4203 Charleston Street
Houston, TX 77021-1415
(713) 748-6508
Category: ABE
County: City of Houston
bobbieahenderson@gmail.com
Term: January 1, 2024, thru December 31, 2025

HARRIS, ALLATIA
San Jacinto College
8060 Spencer Hwy,
Pasadena, TX 77505
(281) 459-7140
Category: ABE
County: City of Houston
Allatia.Harris@sjcd.edu
Term: January 1, 2025, thru December 31, 2026

HESKAMP, ALAN
Heskamp & Associates LLC
311 Hoskins Broadway
El Campo, TX 77437
(979) 758-4521
Category: Private
County: Wharton
aheskamp@sbcglobal.net
Term: January 1, 2024, thru December 31, 2025

JACKSON, GUY ROBERT
Vice Chair
Chambers County Abstract Co. Inc.
P.O. Box 640
Anahuac, TX 77514
(409) 267-6262, ext. 35
Category: Private
County: Chambers
grj@ccac.net
Term: January 1, 2025, thru December 31, 2026

JOHNSON, JOYCE
Why Sales Network
1605 Milby Street B
Houston, TX 77003
(713) 542-5711
Category: Private
County: Harris
Iamjoycejohnson@gmail.com.
Term: October 1, 2024, thru December 31, 2026

JONES, LAVONE
Comcast
8590 Tidwell Road
Houston, TX 77040
(346) 306-4770
Category: Private
County: City of Houston
lavone.k.jones@gmail.com
Term: January 1, 2025, thru December 31, 2026

KARR, DOUG
Pro Staff/Atterro
27 Canoe Birch Place
The Woodlands, TX 77382
(832) 967-7684
Category: Private
County: Montgomery
raiderkarr@aol.com
Term: January 1, 2024, thru December 31, 2025

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

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

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

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

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

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

MONTELONGO-OYERVIDEZ, SARA
Valero Energy
2022 Snow Pine Ln,
Houston, TX 77089
(832) 726-6708
Category: Private
County: Harris County
saraoyervidez@gmail.com
Term: August 12, 2025, thru December 3, 2026

ORDONEZ, SINERIA
Charles Schwab Bank
2 Riverway Drive
Houston, TX 77056
(512) 203-5945
Category: Private
County: Harris
sineria.ordonez@schwab.com
Term: January 1, 2025, thru December 31, 2026

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

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

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

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

GLENN, REX
Mechanical Contractors Association of Houston
13810 Champion Forest Dr,
Suite 202, Houston, TX 77069
(281) 440-4380
Category: Private
County: City of Houston
glenn@rexassociationmanagement.com
Term: January 1, 2025, thru December 31, 2026

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

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

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

SOROLA-POHLMAN, LENORA
Sorola Consulting Services, Inc
2314 Tannehill Dr,
Houston, TX 77008
(713) 628-7500
Category: Private
County: City of Houston
lenora@navarroig.com
Term: January 1, 2025, thru December 31, 2026

TAYLOR, SANDRA
Tiny Toes Academy
1743 Trammel Fresno
Fresno, TX 77545
(832) 630-6301
Category: Child Care
County: Fort Bend
tinytoesacademy@yahoo.com
Term: January 1, 2025, thru December 31, 2026

VAZQUEZ, LIZANDRA
Texas Workforce Commission
3555 Timmons Lane, Suite 120
Houston, TX 77027
(713) 688-6890
Category: State Agency
Lizandra.Vazquez@twc.texas.gov
Term: January 1, 2025, thru December 31, 2026

WEBSTER, MICHAEL
Houston Community College
3100 Main Street
Houston, TX 77002
(713) 718-8030
Category: Education
County: City of Houston
michael.webster@hccs.edu
Term: January 1, 2025, thru December 31, 2026

YU, BIN
Asian Chamber of Commerce
3535 Briarpark Drive, Suite 108
Houston, TX 77036
(713) 818-9687
Category: Private
County: City of Houston
bin.yu@medxsunshine.com
Term: January 1, 2025, thru December 31, 2026

WORKFORCE BOARD KEY STAFF:

Juliet Stipeche, Executive Director
Desmond Taylor, Program Administrator, Board Relations
Dr. Maria Franco Cortes, Senior Planner, Board Relations
Kristi Rangel, Assistant Director of Workforce
AJ Dean, Senior Manager, Fiscal Administration and Contract Management
Russell Tomlin, Senior Manager, Career Services
Sabrina Uy, Senior Manager, Quality Assurance and Risk
Carl Salazar, Senior Manager, Strategy, and Innovation
Parker Harvey, Manager for Regional Economic Analysis
Alexandra Mallet, Executive Assistant

Houston-Galveston Area Council
3555 Timmons Lane, Suite 120
P.O. Box 22777
Houston, TX 77227-2777
(713) 627-3200
Fax: (713) 993-4578
http://www.wrksolutions.com

GULF COAST WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD COMMITTEES

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

Budget
- Carl Bowles – Chair
- Mark Guthrie– Vice Chair
- Bobbie Henderson
- Guy Robert Jackson
- Doug Karr
- Rachel Cevallos
- Paul Puente

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

Career Services
- Adrian Ozuna – Chair
- Cheryl Guido – Vice Chair
- Melissa Gonzalez
- Dorian Cockrell
- Michael Webster
- Bin Yu
- Edward Melton
- Michael Dobert
- Allatia Harris
- Susan Lindsey
- Paul Puente
- Lizandra Vasquez
- Joyce Johnson
- Mou Sarkar

Communications
- Doug Karr – Chair
- Monica Riley – Vice Chair
- Mark Guthrie
- Bobbie Henderson
- Guy Robert Jackson
- Jonathan Lowe
- Michael Webster
- Melanie Rodriguez
- Marie Arcos
- Rachel Cevallos
- Cheryl Guido
- Paul Puente
- Lizandra Vasquez
- Tanya Makany-Rivera

Education
- Bobbie Henderson – Chair
- Doug Karr – Vice Chair
- Shonda Below
- Cheryl Guido
- Mark Guthrie
- Alan Heskamp
- Jeff LaBroski
- Edward Melton
- Margaret Oser
- Monica Riley
- Sandra Taylor
- Grace Rodriguez
- Jennifer Baker
- Guy Robert Jackson
- Allatia Harris

- Joyce Johnson
- Susan Lindsey

Employer Engagement

- Alan Heskamp- Chair
- Jeff LaBroski – Vice Chair
- Cheryl Guido
- Mark Guthrie
- Bobbie Henderson
- Guy Robert Jackson
- Shareen Larmond
- Mou Sarkar
- Melanie Rodriguez
- Grace Rodriguez
- Marie Arcos
- Glenn Rex
- Michael Webster
- Allatia Harris
- Carl Bowles
- Paul Puente
- Lizandra Vasquez
- Susan Lindsey

Government Relations

- Guy Robert Jackson – Chair
- – Vice Chair
- Mark Guthrie
- Bobbie Henderson

Nominating

- Doug Karr – Chair
- Jeff LaBroski – Vice Chair
- Alan Heskamp

Procurement

- Bobbie Henderson – Chair
- Doug Karr – Vice Chair
- Cheryl Guido
- Mark Guthrie
- Alan Heskamp
- Jeff LaBroski
- Adrian Ozuna
- Paul Puente
- Guy Robert Jackson
- Rachel Cevallos

Report Card

Appointed by Board Chair as needed.

Strategic Planning

- Carl Bowles – Chair
- Paul Puente – Vice Chair
- Cheryl Guido
- Mark Guthrie
- Bobbie Henderson
- Doug Karr
- Adrian Ozuna
- Melanie Rodriguez
- Grace Rodriguez
- Michael Webster

GULF COAST WORKFORCE BOARD ATTENDANCE

	Board Member	02/03/26	04/07/26	06/02/26	08/04/26	10/06/26	12/01/26
1	Arcos, Marie	✓					
2	Baker, Jennifer	✓					
3	Below, Shonda	✓					
4	Bowles, Carl	✓					
5	Cevallos, Rachel	✓					
6	Cockrell, Dorian	✓					
7	Dobert, Michael						
8	Ferdinand, Mike						
9	Garcia, Mia						
10	Gonzalez, Melissa						
11	Guido, Cheryl	✓					
12	Guthrie, Mark	✓					
13	Harris, Allatia	✓					
14	Henderson, Bobbie Allen	✓					
15	Heskamp, Alan						
16	Jackson, Guy Robert	✓					
17	Johnson, Joyce						
18	Jones, Lavone	✓					
19	Karr, Doug	✓					
20	LaBroski, Jeff	✓					
21	Larmond, Shareen	✓					
22	Lindsey, Susan						
23	Lowe, Jonathan	✓					
24	Makany-Rivera, Tanya	✓					
25	Melton, Edward	✓					
26	Montelongo-Oyervidez, Sara	✓					
27	Ordonez, Sineria						
28	Oser, Margaret						
29	Ozuna, Adrian	✓					
30	Puente, Paul	✓					
31	Rex, Glenn	✓					
32	Riley, Monica	✓					
33	Rodriguez, Grace						
34	Rodriguez, Melanie	✓					
35	Sarkar, Mou	✓					
36	Segovia, Valerie	✓					
37	Sorola-Pohlman, Lenora	✓					
38	Taylor, Sandra	✓					
39	Vazquez, Lizandra	✓					
40	Webster, Michael	✓					
41	Yu, Bin	✓					

Audit and Monitoring Committee Update for March 2026

Executive Summary

The Audit and Monitoring Committee, chaired by Guy Robert Jackson, convened on March 26, 2026, at 1:00 p.m. at the Houston-Galveston Area Council. Members in attendance included Vice Chair Carl Bowles, Doug Karr, Dr. Bobbie Henderson, Shonda Below, Mike Ferdinand, Rachel Cevallos, Lenora Sorola-Pohlman, Jeff LaBroski, Dr. Melissa Gonzalez, Joyce Johnson, and Lizandra Vasquez.

This report provides the Committee's quarterly oversight update across key performance indicators (KPIs), system performance and production, expenditure trends, program compliance monitoring, financial monitoring activities, and external review readiness. These updates support the Board's governance and assurance responsibilities by highlighting performance trends, identifying risks, and summarizing ongoing corrective actions and system improvements.

Key items in this report include:

- Continued implementation and refinement of 2026 KPI metrics across Early Education, Career Services, and Employer Engagement, aligned with the Board's four strategic priorities.
- Mixed early-year performance trends, with several measures tracking below target and resulting in a TWC Technical Assistance Plan and Performance Improvement Actions, while other areas continue to be monitored as data matures over the program year.
- Targeted system improvement efforts are underway, including responses to TWS Performance Improvement Actions and the Technical Assistance Plan focused on strengthening case management, service consistency, and data quality.
- Program compliance and monitoring updates, including completion of Adult Education reviews, initiation of the Financial Aid Payment Office review, and continuation of Financial Aid Support Center and Career Services reviews for program year 2026.
- Financial monitoring activity and training, reinforcing documentation standards and compliance practices across subrecipients

The Committee also reviewed targeted improvement strategies for performance measures, including enhanced case management, early engagement models, employer alignment, and data-driven performance management, to address identified gaps.

Through this reporting, the Committee seeks to keep Board members informed of system performance, fiscal stewardship, compliance posture, and emerging risks, while demonstrating active oversight and continuous improvement across the Gulf Coast Workforce System. Regular reporting supports informed Board discussion, alignment with strategic priorities, and effective oversight across the Gulf Coast Workforce System.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) Update

During the fourth quarter of 2024 and early 2025, Workforce Board staff presented Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to the Audit and Monitoring Committee to help inform the development of future performance metrics for the Early Education Program. These KPIs were designed to align with the Workforce Board's four strategic priorities:

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

More than one year after the initial implementation of KPI metrics, we revisited the Early Education and Career Services KPIs and presented updated versions. We have begun collecting data under the new KPI metrics (2026 metrics) and will continue to collect data under the previous KPI metrics (2025 metrics). When data for the new 2026 metrics are insufficient or unavailable, we will develop the data collection processes and keep the Committee apprised of their progress. Below are the performance updates as of December 2025.

Since our last meeting, staff have focused on refining and strengthening KPIs for Employer Engagement, ensuring they closely align with the Workforce Board's four strategic priorities. We are pleased to present a draft of the updated KPIs for the Employer Engagement Department, which provides a clear roadmap for measuring performance, guiding program success, and maintaining alignment with the Board's strategic objectives.

Update of Employer Engagement KPIs ("2026 metrics")

We are pleased to present a draft of the updated KPIs for the Employer Engagement Department. This revised framework provides a clear roadmap for measuring performance, guiding program success, and ensuring alignment with the Board's strategic objectives.

1. **Support Business-Forward Strategies to Fuel the Regional Economy**
   - *Goal*: Enhance participation of employers in priority industries and occupations that drive regional economic growth.

Metric: Percentage of job postings aligned with regional priority industries; employer participation from targeted industries.

2. **Serve as a Convener & Forge Strategic Partnerships**
   - *Goal*: Foster collaboration among industry leaders, workforce partners, and economic development stakeholders to align workforce strategies with employer needs.
     Metric: Active participation in industry advisory committees, sector meetings, and workforce-related councils; number of meetings held; and growth in employer involvement.

3. **Increase Awareness of Services & Opportunities**
   - *Goal*: Expand regional apprenticeship programs and increase employer participation by supporting industry-aligned pathways that build workforce skills and careers.
     Metric: Number of newly registered apprenticeship programs created; number of employers sponsoring or participating in registered apprenticeship programs.

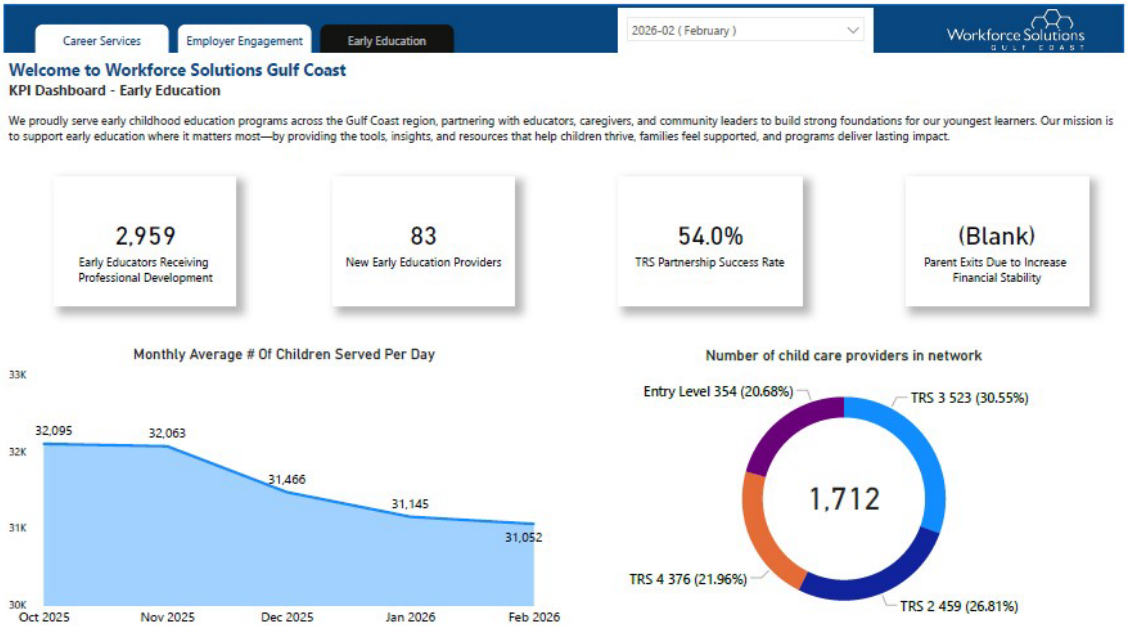
4. **Improve Service Delivery with Technology and Innovation**
   - *Goal*: Elevate the value of Workforce Solutions services to employers through efficient delivery and innovative tools.
     Metric: Count of employer-specific Workforce Solutions services provided; employer satisfaction score with services received.

Foundational Metrics: We will continue to monitor and report on these foundational metrics:

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

We will begin developing the data gathering process for these new 2026 Metrics. In the meantime, we will continue reporting using 2025 Metrics.

Early Education



Early Education – Key Performance Indicators

1. **Support Business-Forward Strategies to Fuel the Regional Economy**
   - *Goal (2025 metric):* Equip parents and guardians with resources to enhance family socioeconomic well-being. The TX3C system challenges are limiting our ability to report in this area. As of February 2026, we have 31,052 children enrolled in early education assistance and 1,712 early education providers.
   - *Goal (2026 metric):* Enhance the efficiency and accessibility of parent engagement and referral processes through technology-enabled service delivery. The process to measure the metric 'percentage of parents successfully connected to career services after digital or automated referrals' is under development.

2. **Serve as a Convener & Forge Strategic Partnerships**
   - *Goal (2025 and 2026 metric*): Develop and sustain partnerships with high-quality early learning providers. We have added 83 early education providers to this program year (PY26) to date.

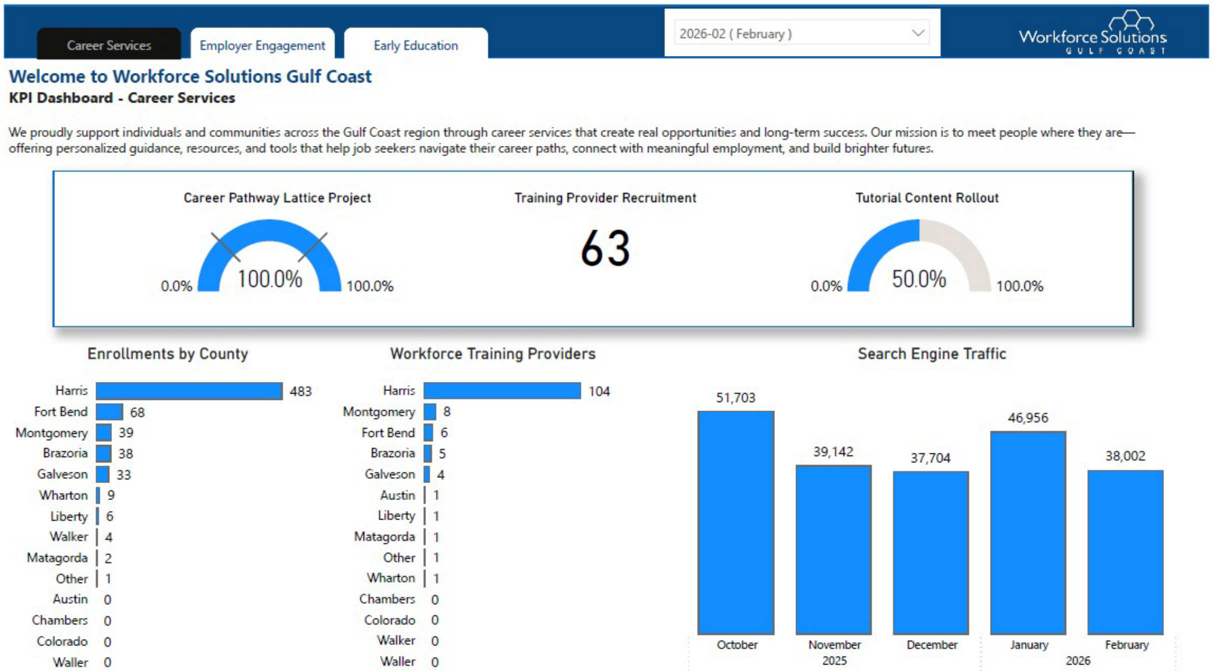
3. **Increase Awareness of Services & Opportunities**
   - *Goal (2025 metric):* Strengthen outreach and engagement with quality early learning centers. We are successfully partnering with 54% of the licensed childcare providers in our region.
   - *Goal (2026 metric):* Promote professional development opportunities that increase awareness of and access to child development credential programs. 224 early education professionals completed the Child

Development Associate (CDA) coursework since October 2025. They will be moving forward to completing the in-class assessment required to receive the CDA credentials within 15 months. Currently, there are 462 individuals enrolled in the class that began on March 3, 2026, and is scheduled to be completed in May 2026.

4. **Improve Service Delivery with Technology and Innovation**
   - *Goal (2025 metric):* Provide professional development for early education providers through virtual and in-person options. Since October 1, 2025, we have provided professional development support to 2,959 early education providers, up 1,076 from December 2025.
   - *Goal (2026 metric):* Strengthen family economic stability by supporting parents and guardians in achieving employment and income growth. The process for measuring the metric, number and percentage of parents and guardians who transition out of the program due to income growth exceeding eligibility thresholds, is under development.

Foundational Metrics: As of February 2026, we have 31,052 children enrolled in early education assistance and 1,712 early education providers.

Career Services



Career Services – Key Performance Indicators

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

- *Goal (2025 metric):* Create and expand opportunities for technical degrees and career pathways. Our Regional Economic Analysis team is currently conducting a career lattice research project.

  Stage 1, Validation of Theoretical Career Pathways, is 100% complete. Stage 2, the development of a web-based interactive tool using Tableau, has been underway since late July '25 and is now 100% complete. Stage 2 was completed in mid-October '25, and Phase 3 began immediately thereafter and is now 100% complete. Overall, the project is 100% complete and currently awaiting on professional development to finish procurement of the new LMS system and execute the curriculum.

- *Goal (2026 Metrics)*: Connect job seekers to employment opportunities aligned with regional business needs, supporting workforce advancement and economic growth.
  Metric under development: Employment outcomes and wage quality, measured by the number of customers placed in targeted and non-targeted industries and their median wages.

2. Serve as a Convener & Forge Strategic Partnerships

- *Goal (2025 metric):* Expand the training provider network to meet the demands of local employers, especially in underrepresented industries. We currently have 63 active training partners out of a total of 71 in our network, and 684 customers enrolled in training opportunities.

- *Goal (2026 Metrics)*: Increase collaboration among employers, community partners, and job seekers by convening strategic workforce events.
  Metric: Number of collaborative workforce convenings facilitated, including hiring events, career exploration workshops, community events, and workforce forums.

  Workforce Solutions facilitated 75 collaborative workforce convenings during this reporting period. These activities include:
  - 26 hiring events, such as job fairs and employer hiring events
  - 9 community events held to strengthen engagement with local partners and increase awareness of workforce services
  - 17 workshops which focused on skill development and job readiness for customers, and
  - 23 other convenings, including meetings and partner collaborations, facilitated.

3. Increase Awareness of Services & Opportunities

- *Goal (2025 metric):* Search Engine Optimization (SEO) to prioritize visibility of career opportunities. Our website received 38,002 visits in February 2026, driven by search engine traffic, demonstrating continuous strong online engagement with career-related content.

- *Goal (2026 Metrics)*: Increase customer awareness and participation in career services through ongoing support and outreach.
  Metric: Customer engagement in career services, measured by the number and type of services accessed across core service categories.
  During February 2026, for these measured services, there were 6,699 distinct services provided, spread out as such:
  (a) Job search (42%)
  (b) Resume preparation (27%)
  (c) Career guidance (23%)
  (d) Job application (6%), and
  (e) Interview preparation assistance (2%).

  Further analysis of these distinct services showed that 3,507 unique customers received these services, of which:
  - 1,623 customers received 1 service listed above,
  - 683 customers received 2 services listed above,

- 1,096 customers received 3 services listed above,
- 103 customers received 4 services listed above, and
- 2 customers received 5 services listed above.

4. Improve Service Delivery with Technology and Innovation

- *Goal (2025 metric):* Develop online tutorials to guide users in utilizing Workforce Solutions resources.

  We are currently procuring a Learning Management System (LMS) to provide external users with access to short, self-paced training modules. Negotiations with the top-ranked vendor, 360 Learning, have been terminated, and we are now moving forward with the next highest-ranked vendor, Absorb LMS. Discussions between the Legal and Contracts teams have been successfully completed. We will now begin obtaining signatures for execution and will soon move into the onboarding phase for implementation and user training.

- *Goal (2026 Metrics)*: Strengthen Workforce Solutions' presence by expanding access points across diverse locations and communities.

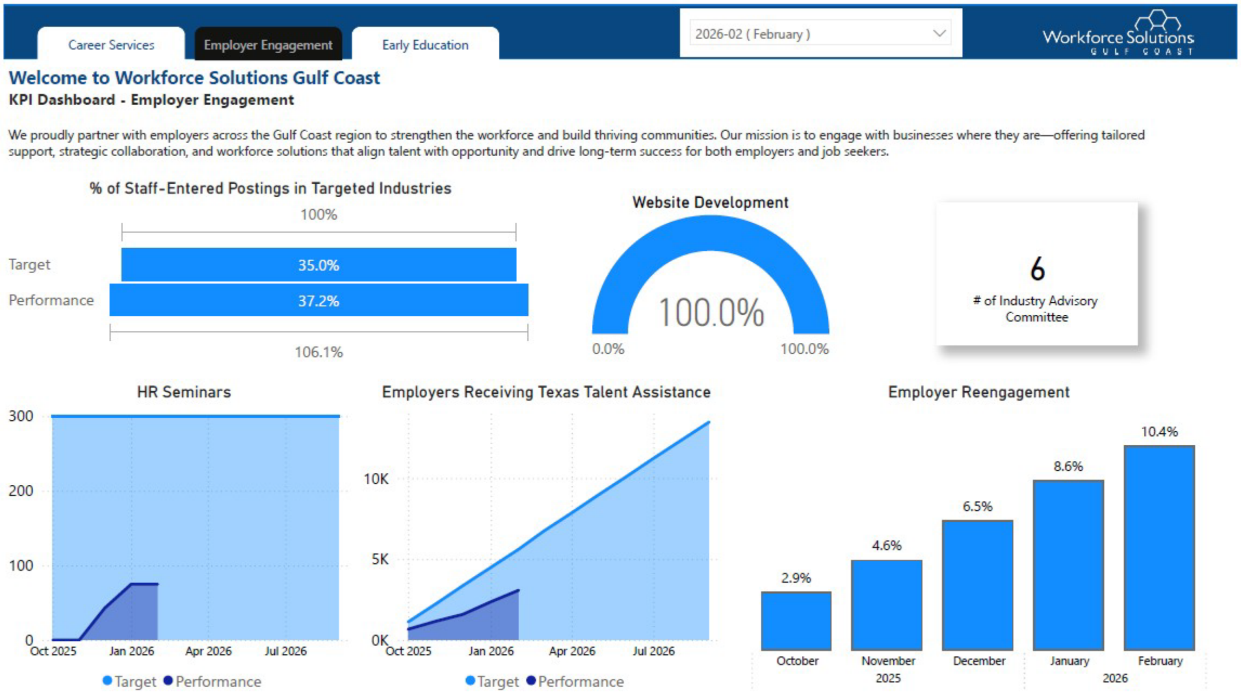
  Metric: Number and type of Workforce Solutions access points, including full-service offices, part-time or mobile locations, virtual stations, and other innovative service delivery models.

  The Workforce Solutions access network includes 24 Workforce Solutions offices and 11 other access points, such as pop-up events, Workforce on Wheels (WOW), and virtual service options, demonstrating a mix of traditional and innovative methods used to deliver workforce services.

Foundational Metrics

We have 684 customers enrolled in training opportunities. There are 71 training providers in the Workforce Solutions Network.

Employer Engagement



Employer Engagement Program – Key Performance Indicators (using "2025 metrics")

1. **Support Business-Forward Strategies to Fuel the Regional**
   Goal: Prioritizing employer outreach to demand industries and occupations that drive regional economic development. 37.2% of our staff entered job posting are currently in targeted industries. The performance method has been updated to exclude OJT/Youth Postings.

2. **Serve as a Convener & Forge Strategic Partnerships**
   Goal: Strengthen collaboration among industry leaders, workforce partners, and economic development stakeholders to align workforce strategies with employer needs.

   The Gulf Coast Workforce Board and Workforce Solutions hosted an Aerospace Career Exploration Workshop designed for individuals impacted by layoffs in aerospace to provide job search and career transition assistance.

3. **Increase Awareness of Services & Opportunities**
   Goal: Expand employer access to Workforce Solutions through a centralized, user-friendly digital hub and targeted outreach efforts.

   The redesign of the Workforce Solutions website is now 100% complete and was launched on January 20, 2026. We are currently finalizing a few minor updates and bug fixes before officially closing out the project. The new website is expected to significantly enhance the overall digital experience for employers.

4. **Improve Service Delivery with Technology and Innovation**
   Goal: Enhance employer service efficiency by leveraging technology to provide real-time support, training, and feedback mechanisms.

   We have conducted 6 HR-focused seminars, providing 75 unique employers with valuable education on a wide range of workforce-related topics.

Foundational Metrics: We have assisted 1,592 employers this Program year so far, of which 6.11% are returning employers who have reengaged with our services.

System Review

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

Performance and Production

Reporting Infrastructure Enhancements
Workforce Solutions – Gulf Coast continues to work closely with the Texas Workforce Commission as the state modernizes its reporting infrastructure. While several reporting modules have been updated, data completeness challenges remain. To improve accuracy and consistency, the Board has accelerated standardized reporting tools across all providers, improving the timeliness and reliability of performance data. The region also continues to use predictive models aligned with TWC methodologies to monitor trends and make timely operational adjustments.

Provider Collaboration and Support
Strong provider partnerships remain central to performance improvement. Bi-monthly coordination sessions support alignment, reinforce best practices, and

promote shared accountability. In addition, targeted training for providers and Board staff focuses on advanced interviewing, career assessment, and documentation practices to strengthen service delivery and performance outcomes.

What the Current Performance Data Shows
(as of January 2026)
Current FY2026 performance shows mixed results across workforce and program participation measures. While several employment and earnings outcomes are meeting or exceeding targets, a number of credentials, skills gain, and youth measures remain below expected performance levels at this point in the program year. Overall, employment outcomes remain comparatively strong, while education and training measures continue to develop as participants progress through programs. In simple terms:

- Employment outcomes for Adults and Dislocated Workers are largely meeting state targets, particularly in Q2 and Q4 post-exit measures.
- Median earnings after exit exceed state targets for Adults, Dislocated Workers, and Youth.
- Credential attainment and measurable skills gains are currently below target levels and may improve later as we collect credential milestones.
- Youth employment and enrollment Q4 outcomes are below targets at this point in the year.
- Reemployment and employer engagement measures are currently not meeting targets.

Overall, several core employment and earnings measures are performing well, while other indicators are currently below target and will continue to be monitored as the program year progresses. Many education and training outcomes are reported later in the program cycle as participants complete services, and additional credential milestones are recorded.

Key System Improvements Underway
To sustain positive trends, the Board has accelerated several system-wide improvements:

- Enhanced career and skills assessments to better align training with labor market demand.
- Increased focus on short-term, industry-recognized credentials.
- Expanded work-based learning, including on-the-job training and apprenticeships.
- Strengthened provider accountability through ETPL updates and routine performance reviews.
- Expanded year-round youth engagement and post-exit follow-up.

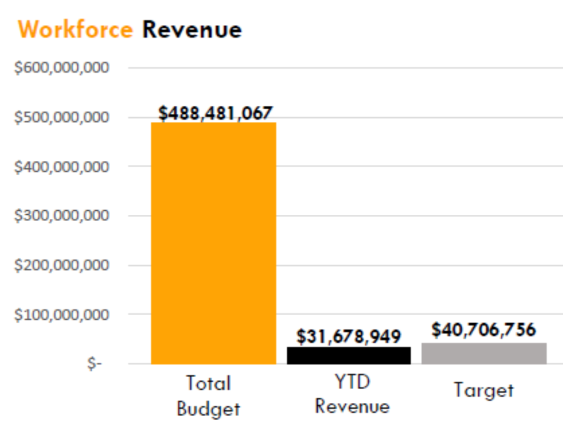
Summary
Overall performance shows strong employment and earnings outcomes, while several education, credential, youth, and reemployment measures remain below target and may improve as participants complete training and services later in the program year.

The Board continues to monitor these areas closely while implementing system improvements aimed at strengthening outcomes across all performance measures.

Expenditure Update

Background

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



Revenue Overview

The 2026 budgeted revenue totals over $488 million. The Year-to-Date revenue as of January 2026 is $32 million, behind target of $41 million.

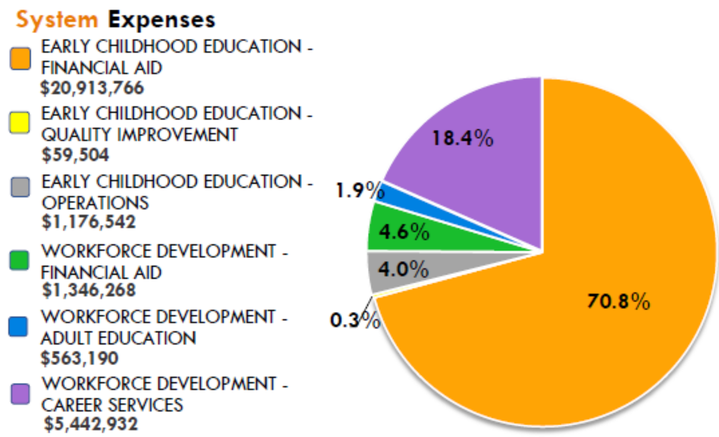
Expenditure Overview

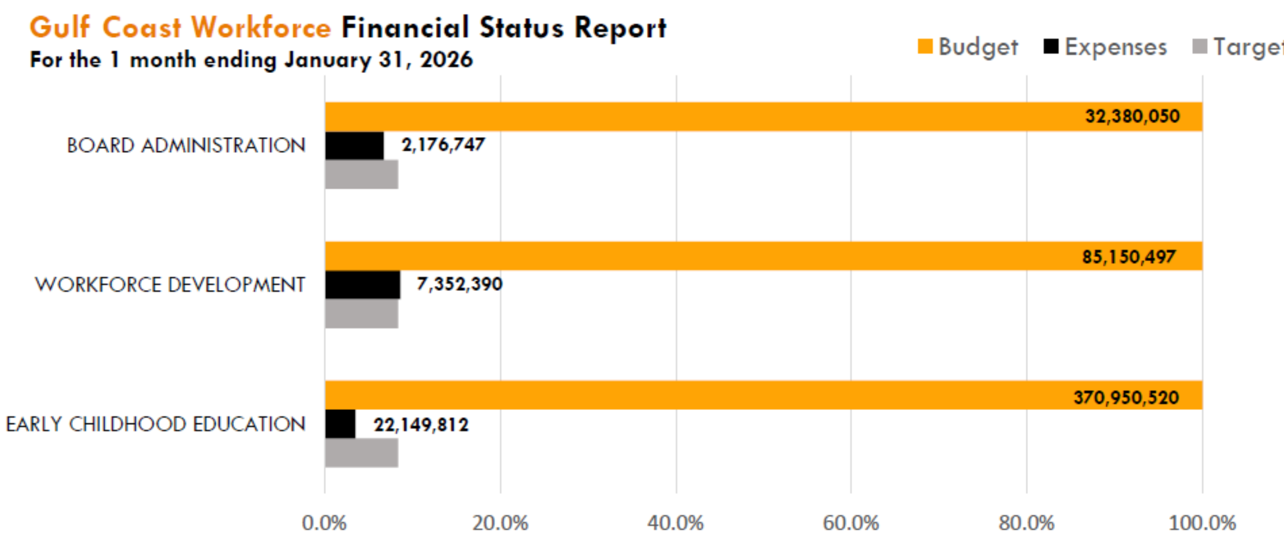
For the one month ending January, expenditures are 6%, which is behind target for being 8% throughout the year. The low expenditures are due to Early Childhood Education, specifically Financial Aid for Direct Care. The source of the delay in expenditures is due to low enrollments caused by TX3C system bottlenecks.

Early Childhood Education represents $22.2 million of expenditures, with $20.9 million for Financial Aid, $60,000 for Quality Improvement, and $1.2 million for Operations.

Workforce Development represents $7.4 million of expenditures, with $1.4 million for Financial Aid, $0.6 million for Adult Education, and $5.4 million for Career Services.

Board Administration is $2.2 million.





Technical Program Compliance

Technical Program Compliance reviews consist of compliance testing of contract and policy requirements, as well as customer experience testing, conducted by the Quality Assurance Team. The scope of each review is determined by the terms and conditions specified in the service provider's contract. Financial monitoring is conducted separately, which is discussed later in this report.

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

Current Reviews
Quality Assurance has issued final reports for all Adult Education providers for program year 2026. Since the last committee meeting, a final report has been issued for Region 6 – Direct Service, Region 6 – Consortium Lead, and San Jacinto College. There were no significant findings reported in either report.

The 2026 program year testing for the first-quarter Financial Aid Support Center desk review has been completed and reviewed with the Support Center and Board staff. We have started the review of the Financial Aid Payment Office for program year 2026, and testing is currently being conducted.

Continuous monitoring of career services is being conducted through desk reviews and field visits. We met with the Career Service providers to discuss SNAP and TANF. Over the next two months, Quality Assurance will complete desk reviews and on-site testing required prior to the TWC annual review.

Quality Assurance System-Wide Engagement
On February 24, 2026, the Quality Assurance team conducted the second system-wide Quality Assurance Monitoring Regional Meeting. The meeting was hosted by BakerRipley at Arena Towers.

During the meeting, the Quality Assurance team shared insights into developing a Risk Assessment, and attendees participated in an activity to strengthen their understanding. A detailed overview of the QA monitoring process was also provided.

Financial Systems

The Board engages three CPA firms to conduct comprehensive financial monitoring of all workforce board service providers. Since the last update, we have resolved one (1) final report, one (1) final and five (5) draft reports have been received, and seven (7) reviews are currently in progress. Board staff have also established a quarterly training plan to ensure subrecipients stay current on financial monitoring requirements.

Monitoring Update
We have resolved one (1) monitoring report with $1,450.68 in questioned costs.

Final Reports Received
- Baker Ripley (AEL)

Draft Reports Received
- Adult Education Center
- Lone Star College
- Houston City College
- Region VI
- San Jacinto College

Reviews in Progress
- Baker Ripley (FAPO, Career Office)
- EDSI (Career Office)
- Equus (Support Center)
- SERCO (Career Office)
- United Way
- Systemwide Financial Aid Payments

Training Update
We have continued to provide proactive technical assistance for board staff and subrecipients to support compliance and effective financial management. One of our Financial Monitors, Christine Nguyen, will host a Financial Monitoring training session at the beginning of April as part of our quarterly training plan.

The training will provide an overview of financial monitoring trends, travel insights, procurement procedures, and best practices to ensure compliance with applicable grant and administrative requirements. The travel portion will review allowable costs, documentation requirements, and policies governing per diem lodging and meal reimbursements. The information provided will help ensure all expenditures are reasonable, necessary, and supported by appropriate documentation.

Accountability and Improvement

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

Technical Assistance Plan (TAP)

The Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) placed the Gulf Coast Workforce Board on a Technical Assistance Plan to improve performance on the 10-Week Claimant Reemployment measure, which tracks how quickly unemployment insurance claimants return to work. This is not isolated to the Gulf Coast. 23 out of 28 Workforce Boards statewide are currently not meeting this measure, indicating a broader system-wide challenge.

Current performance trends remain below target, requiring focused intervention, consistent service delivery, and strengthened accountability.

Key Challenges Identified

- Delayed engagement with claimants following initial unemployment claims
- Inconsistent service delivery and documentation across providers
- Limited early connection to quality job opportunities
- Gaps in outcome tracking due to data/reporting limitations
- Variability in case management intensity and follow-through

In response, the Board is implementing a structured, data-driven approach focused on speed, consistency, and engagement:

1. **Early Engagement Model**
   - Contact claimants within 48–72 hours of registration
   - Provide immediate job search support an prioritize fast attachment to the labor market

2. **Career Clubs (Structured Job Search Model)**
   - Establish regular facilitated job search groups across career offices
   - Increase frequency of claimant engagement to accelerate reemployment

3. **Enhanced Case Management**
   - Increase frequency and quality of staff-to-customer interactions
   - Strengthen documentation in WorkInTexas (WIT)

4. **Employer Connection Strategy**
    - Expand direct referrals to active job orders
    - Strengthen alignment with high-demand industries
    - Leverage sector partnerships to improve placement speed

5. **Data-Driven Performance Management**
    - Monitor performance through dashboards and real-time reporting
    - Identify at-risk claimants and intervene early
    - Address data gaps impacting performance outcomes

These efforts will be carried out collaboratively by Board staff, TWC merit staff, and career office teams to improve the speed and effectiveness of reemployment services.

Performance Improvement Actions (PIAs)
The Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) placed Workforce Solutions Gulf Coast on Performance Improvement Actions (PIAs) based on WIOA performance measures identified in the December 2025 Monthly Performance Report. Key areas include Measurable Skills Gains, Credential Attainment, Youth Outcomes, and Post-Exit Employment.

It is important to note that a significant portion of the performance reflected in these measures is tied to prior program activity under previous service providers who are no longer operating in the system. Current providers are now responsible for both improving forward-looking performance and addressing legacy performance impacts.

The Board has implemented targeted strategies and strengthened oversight to improve outcomes and move performance toward negotiated levels in Program Year 2026.

Key Root Causes Identified
- **Training Misalignment:** Participants enrolled in programs not aligned with readiness or completion likelihood
- **Inconsistent Case Management:** Gaps in follow-up and milestone tracking
- **Documentation & Data Entry Delays:** Missed or late recording of outcomes
- **Operational Transition:** Provider transition created variability in practices and documentation continuity

Core Improvement Strategies
1. **Strengthened Customer Assessment**
    - Align training with participant readiness and career pathways

2. **Enhanced Case Management Structure**
   - Specialized staff roles focused on engagement, tracking, and documentation

3. **Training Provider Accountability**
   - Updated standards to improve credential verification and completion rates

4. **Data-Driven Performance Management**
   - Bi-weekly Data Management Workgroup to monitor trends and address gaps

5. **Transition Stabilization Efforts**
   - Comprehensive case review, data validation, and alignment under new providers

Oversight and Expected Outcomes
Service providers are responsible for implementing operational improvements, while Board staff provide policy guidance, monitoring, and technical assistance. Oversight includes monthly performance review meetings with service providers and targeted monitoring visits to career offices.

Through these actions, the Board expects the identified measures to move toward negotiated performance levels during Program Year 2026. Progress updates will be provided to the Audit Monitoring Committee at the May meeting.

GCWB Interventions
BakerRipley – Financial Aid Payment Office (FAPO): Since the last update, BakerRipley – Financial Aid Payment Office has continued to operate under the Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) while Board staff monitor the stability and functionality of the Financial Aid Management System (FAMS). Board staff continue to review system performance, processing reliability, and the implementation of internal controls to ensure that improvements observed during initial deployment are sustained over time.

In addition, FAPO has experienced recent staff turnover in senior leadership positions. Board staff are monitoring this transition to ensure operational continuity and that progress made under the PIP is maintained.

Board staff will continue to track FAMS functionality, financial processing accuracy, and overall program performance before determining readiness for full removal of the Performance Improvement Plan. An additional update will be provided at the next meeting in May.

Compliance and Review Updates

25.28.001 TWC Gulf Coast Monitoring Report Response:
We received the audit resolution report from TWC on March 16, which showed all findings resolved.

TWC Child Care Improper Payment Review:
The Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) began testing on February 17 and completed the FY26 Child Care Improper Payment (CCIP) Testing on March 9, 2026. The review required three Quality Assurance team members to coordinate requests and work with Board staff and service providers to respond to the TWC monitors. An Exit Conference Report will be issued once all Child Care Improper Payment Testing for the State has been completed.

The Office of Child Care Monitoring of Child Care Development Funds:
Board staff worked with the support center and payment office staff to prepare cases for the Office of Child Care Monitoring (OCC) Review. On February 11, Juliet Stipeche and Jennifer Starling represented the Board in Austin, while the team virtually walked the OCC monitors through four cases, demonstrating the TX3C system and how Gulf Coast processes childcare cases. We have not received a report or the review results.

Regional Operation & Coordinating Council Update

The Regional Operation & Coordination Council (ROCC) serves as the Gulf Coast Workforce Board's primary operational leadership and coordination forum. Acting in an advisory capacity, the ROCC connects day-to-day operations with the Board's strategic direction and priorities, helps ensure consistent, high-quality service delivery across the region's three contracted workforce areas—North, East, and West—operated by three service providers through the Workforce Solutions–Gulf Coast network.

To achieve this, the ROCC hosts brief monthly meetings and in-depth quarterly meetings to discuss strategies and priorities. The ROCC has met twice since the January 2026 Audit and Monitoring Meeting. During the brief monthly meeting in February, Juliet Stipeche presented a system map of our regionally integrated one-stop model and the 'North Star: Economic Mobility for Residents' as the 2026 theme for the Gulf Coast Workforce Board to aim for, as a guide for our strategic goals. We committed to incorporating feedback from our partners and providers and setting up a communications system for consistent branding and messaging. During the in-depth quarterly meeting in March, the ROCC took an introspective look by evaluating our communication styles and identified ways to collaborate with our providers more effectively. This will help us reduce redundancies in the future, such as with overlapping meetings and deadlines. We gathered feedback from our providers to help the Board create a system-wide employer engagement strategy that is clear and disciplined in its approach and aligned with the employer demand cycle.

Next Meeting

We propose scheduling the next committee meeting for 1:00 p.m. on Thursday, May 21, 2026, at Houston-Galveston Area Council, 3555 Timmons Lane, Houston, Texas 77027.

Career Services Committee

Executive Summary

The Career Services Committee met on March 9, 2026, at 11:08 a.m. at the San Felipe location in Houston, Texas, with hybrid participation, chaired by Adrian Ozuna. Committee members present included Vice Chair Cheryl Guido, Dr. Michael Webster, Bin Yu, Mou Sarkar, Susan Lindsey, Paul Puente, Lizandra Vasquez. Board members present include Board Chair Mark Guthrie, Dr. Bobbie Henderson, Alan Heskamp, and Guy Robert Jackson.

With the regional service delivery model now largely stabilized, the system is entering a more demanding phase defined not by structure, but by performance, capital allocation, and measurable impact. The discussion reflects a clear transition. The system is moving from coordination to accountability, from presence to performance, and from program administration to labor market intermediation.

Across all agenda items, a consistent insight emerged. The workforce system must operate as an integrated economic institution that allocates public resources with discipline, responds to employer demand with precision, and produces upward mobility at scale. This requires not incremental refinement, but a more rigorous alignment between how the system is organized, how it deploys capital, and how it measures success.

The strategic examination of the Pearland Career Office, coupled with the continued development of the Gulf Coast Provider Network, underscores this shift. Together, they illustrate the central challenge ahead: ensuring that every component of the system, from physical infrastructure to training investments, is calibrated to maximize return on public investment.

From Coordination to Performance: The Next Phase of the ROCC

The Regional Operations Coordination Council (ROCC) has successfully established baseline alignment across the North, East, and West regions. Its substructures have advanced consistency in job roles, operational expectations, and cross-regional communication. However, the Committee's discussion made clear that coordination alone is no longer sufficient.

As service delivery expands across offices, community-based access points, and virtual platforms, the system risks fragmentation absent a unifying performance framework. Variability in production, inconsistent reporting, and limited real-time visibility into outcomes create structural blind spots that undermine accountability.

The ROCC must now evolve into a performance architecture. This requires standardized production metrics, comparable reporting across regions and providers, and the routine use of data to inform operational decisions. The objective is not simply alignment, but execution at scale. In practical terms, the ROCC must function less as a convening body and more as the operating system of the regional workforce enterprise.

Redefining Access: A Networked Model of Service Delivery
The Access Points framework reflects a deeper redefinition of access within the workforce system. Historically, access was equated with proximity to a physical office. This model is increasingly misaligned with both customer behavior and fiscal reality. The system is now transitioning toward a networked model in which services are delivered through a combination of co-locations, community-based sites, targeted events, and virtual platforms. This approach allows the system to meet customers where they are while reducing reliance on high-cost, fixed infrastructure. This is not merely an operational adjustment. It is a structural redesign.

By decoupling service delivery from physical footprint, the system gains flexibility to deploy resources dynamically, expand reach into underserved communities, and increase the proportion of funding directed toward direct services rather than facilities. The Access Points framework, therefore, should be understood as the foundation of a more adaptive, efficient, and outcome-oriented service model.

Pearland as a Strategic Inflection Point: Infrastructure, Demand, and Capital Discipline
The Pearland Career Office represents a critical test of the system's ability to align infrastructure with demand and cost with impact. The data reveals a persistent and material imbalance:

- Average monthly service volume of approximately 218 services compared to a regional average near 900;
- Estimated cost per service of $231.62 versus $19.29 systemwide, exceeding the average by more than 1,100 percent;
- Monthly lease obligations of $13,871 for a 7,398 square foot facility; and
- Walk-in costs nearly three times the regional average.

These are not marginal inefficiencies. They reflect a structural misalignment between a fixed-cost asset and the demand characteristics of the surrounding labor market. Contributing factors are both geographic and behavioral. The location lacks public transit access, serves a population with relatively low utilization of in-person workforce services, and has experienced a sustained post-pandemic shift toward virtual engagement. Geospatial analysis further indicates that regional coverage can be maintained without reliance on this facility.

The strategic importance of Pearland remains intact. The surrounding communities, particularly across the southern corridor of the region, continue to exhibit population growth, economic expansion, and evolving workforce needs that warrant a sustained and intentional presence. The question is not whether to serve Pearland, but how to do so in a manner that reflects contemporary demand patterns, optimizes resource allocation, and maximizes public value.

Consistent with leading workforce system practices nationally, this requires a transition from fixed, facility-based service models to a more adaptive, demand-responsive approach. High-performing systems increasingly deploy hybrid service strategies that integrate community-based access points, co-locations, and virtual delivery to expand reach while reducing overhead. This model allows resources to be concentrated on direct services, employer engagement, and career pathway development rather than underutilized infrastructure.

In this context, the Committee emphasized the importance of identifying and securing low- or no-cost space through strategic partnerships. This includes leveraging trusted community institutions such as municipal facilities, libraries, educational institutions, and nonprofit service hubs to embed workforce services directly within the environments where residents already live, learn, and seek support. Such approaches are widely recognized as more effective in reaching underserved populations and increasing service utilization.

Equally important is the need to deepen collaboration with local governments and public entities to align physical presence with broader community development strategies. By coordinating with municipalities, counties, and regional partners, the system can identify high-impact locations that improve accessibility for both jobseekers and employers while advancing shared economic development goals. This approach reflects a broader shift in workforce strategy: from requiring customers to navigate the system, to designing a system that integrates seamlessly into the daily realities of the communities it serves.

The proposed transition to a co-location and hybrid access model represents a disciplined reallocation of capital. It preserves geographic presence while significantly reducing fixed costs and enabling reinvestment in higher-impact activities such as career advising, training, and employer engagement. Equally important, this decision establishes a broader principle. Facilities are strategic assets subject to continuous evaluation against performance, utilization, and cost.

Gulf Coast Provider Network (GCPN): Structuring the Training Market with Accountability and Choice

The continued evolution of the Gulf Coast Provider Network (GCPN) represents a defining advancement in the governance of the region’s workforce system. The GCPN is not merely a collection of approved vendors. It is the formal mechanism through which the Board, in coordination with Workforce Solutions – Gulf Coast and its Financial Aid Payment Office (FAPO), structures the regional training market to align with labor demand, enforce accountability, and support informed customer choice.

Consistent with the GCPN Agreement, participation in the GCPN is conditional, not guaranteed. Inclusion on the network does not ensure funding, referrals, or utilization. Rather, training providers are made eligible to be considered within a system in which Workforce Solutions retains sole authority to determine customer eligibility, training need, and scholarship awards based on individualized assessment and career planning.

This distinction is foundational. It preserves the integrity of a demand-driven system in which training decisions are governed by customer need and labor market alignment, not provider access. Entry into and continuation within the GCPN requires adherence to a comprehensive set of standards incorporated by reference into the Agreement, including the Gulf Coast Provider Network Standards and Guidelines. Providers must demonstrate appropriate licensure or accreditation, alignment with targeted and in-demand occupations, evidence of employer partnership, and the capacity to deliver measurable outcomes in employment, earnings, and credential attainment.

The Agreement establishes a clear delineation of responsibilities across system actors. Workforce Solutions – Gulf Coast is responsible for assessing customers, determining eligibility, issuing scholarships, and ensuring informed consumer choice through access to performance and cost information. FAPO serves as the administrative and financial intermediary, overseeing provider eligibility, processing payments, conducting monitoring and site visits, and ensuring compliance with program and fiscal requirements.

Educational and training providers, in turn, are responsible for delivering approved training programs, maintaining accurate and timely reporting, invoicing in accordance with scholarship authorization, and ensuring compliance with all applicable federal, state, and local requirements. They must also demonstrate financial stability, maintain transparent pricing, and adhere to strict refund, reporting, and data-sharing requirements, including FERPA compliance and protection of personally identifiable information.

The performance framework embedded within the GCPN reflects a deliberate shift toward outcome-based accountability. Providers must demonstrate that participants acquire measurable skills, earn recognized credentials, and obtain employment aligned with high-skill, high-growth occupations. These outcomes are not advisory. They are conditions of continued participation, with failure triggering corrective action, referral suspension, or removal from the network.

Importantly, the Agreement reinforces that Workforce Solutions – Gulf Coast retains control over the flow of participants through the system. Reverse referrals from providers do not influence eligibility determinations or training decisions, and providers may not use incentives or financial inducements to influence referrals. This protects the system from distortion and ensures that customer choice remains informed, unbiased, and aligned with workforce outcomes.

Financial controls further strengthen system integrity. Payments are tied to verified attendance and performance milestones, typically structured with partial payment upon confirmed participation and final payment upon completion and documented outcomes. Overpayments, noncompliance, or unauthorized services are subject to recoupment, and providers may face suspension of referrals or termination of agreement for violations.

Transparency is central to the model. Providers must publicly disclose costs, maintain consistent pricing between Workforce Solutions – Gulf Coast participants and other students, and coordinate funding sources so that WIOA funds supplement, rather than supplant, other available financial aid. This ensures that public investments are deployed efficiently and equitably.

The Agreement also embeds robust governance protections, including audit rights, records retention requirements, nondiscrimination obligations, and clearly defined complaint and appeals processes. These provisions reinforce the Board's role as steward of public funds and ensure accountability across all participants in the system.

Taken together, the GCPN establishes a structured, rules-based training market in which providers compete on performance, customers exercise informed choice, and public resources are allocated based on demonstrated impact. This is a critical evolution. It positions the Gulf Coast workforce system not as a passive funder of training, but as an active market designer, capable of shaping supply, enforcing quality, and aligning investments with the long-term economic interests of the region.

Career Navigation: Translating Labor Market Intelligence into Mobility
The Career Exploration Tool and Career Lattice Dashboard represent a critical layer of system infrastructure. They translate labor market intelligence into actionable pathways, enabling both staff and customers to make informed decisions. The strategic value lies in shifting the system's orientation from placement to progression. By making career pathways visible and aligning them with demand, these tools support long-term earnings growth rather than short-term job entry. The Committee emphasized that consistent integration of these tools into frontline service delivery is essential. Without operational adoption, their strategic potential remains unrealized.

Anticipating Demand: SNAP E&T Expansion
The anticipated expansion of SNAP Employment and Training requirements beginning in April 2026 introduces a near-term increase in system demand, particularly among Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents. This expansion will test system capacity, coordination, and responsiveness. It will require tighter alignment across state agencies, more efficient intake and referral processes, and stronger integration with employer demand and training pathways. The Committee noted that the system's ability to respond effectively will depend on the very capabilities currently under development: distributed access, performance visibility, and a disciplined training market.

Conclusion
The Career Services Committee's work reflects a system advancing into a more mature phase of institutional development. The central challenge is no longer the construction of the system, but the disciplined governance of it. This next phase requires a shift in posture. Success will be defined not by the breadth of services delivered, but by the precision with which resources are allocated and the consistency with which outcomes are achieved. Performance accountability must move from aspiration to operating standard, embedded in every level of decision-making across the system.

The implications are consequential. This will require sustained rigor, a willingness to confront structural inefficiencies, and the capacity to make difficult, data-informed decisions regarding where the system invests, where it adapts, and where it must recalibrate. It will also require maintaining alignment across a complex network of partners while holding firm to a clear, outcomes-driven strategy.

At its core, this is a question of stewardship. The Board is entrusted not merely with administering programs, but with deliberately shaping a regional labor market system that expands access to opportunity, responds with precision to employer demand, and delivers measurable, sustained economic advancement for residents. As the system continues to evolve through ongoing coordination, calibration, and alignment, the regional model now taking shape positions the Gulf Coast to move beyond traditional service delivery toward something far more consequential: a workforce system capable of driving economic mobility at scale while strengthening the region's long-term competitiveness and resilience.

Employer Engagement Committee Update for March 2026

Executive Summary

The Employer Engagement Committee convened on March 09, 2026, at 10:00 a.m. in a hybrid format at 5599 San Felipe, Suite 2000, Houston, Texas, and via Zoom, under the chairmanship of Alan Heskamp. In attendance were Board Members Adrian Ozuna, Doug Karr, Guy Robert Jackson, Mark Guthrie, Alan Heskamp, Dr. Bobbie Henderson, Lizandra Vazquez, Lenora Pohlman, Paul Puente, Bin Yu, Grace Rodriguez, Dr. Allatia Harris, Rachel Cevallos, Susan Lindsey, and Mou Sarkar. Under the leadership of Chair Alan Heskamp, the Committee is advancing a more disciplined, sector-driven approach to workforce strategy across the Gulf Coast region and reflects a continued shift toward aligning employer engagement, training investments, and workforce delivery with real-time labor market demand.

Discussions highlighted both opportunity and constraint. Significant regional activity across healthcare and life sciences, construction and infrastructure, energy, and manufacturing is driving sustained demand for skilled talent, while policy changes, labor supply pressures, and evolving hiring practices are introducing new complexity into the labor market. In response, the Committee is strengthening employer partnerships, expanding apprenticeship pathways, and aligning workforce pipelines with high-demand occupations across sectors.

A key focus of this convening was the integration of labor market intelligence into operational decision-making. The Board is advancing a more targeted, data-driven approach to hiring events and regional engagement, ensuring resources are deployed where demand is most acute and outcomes can be maximized for both employers and job seekers. Taken together, the Committee's work reflects a workforce system that is increasingly coordinated, employer-centered, and grounded in data, positioning the Gulf Coast region to meet critical workforce needs while building long-term pathways to economic mobility.

Sector and Industry Updates

Healthcare and Life Sciences

Melissa Steinmetz continues to maintain an active and visible presence within the healthcare and life sciences ecosystem through sustained engagement with regional stakeholders, education partners, and employer networks. She strengthened community partnerships by attending the Wharton Chamber County Job Fair and participating in ongoing Wharton Chamber Healthcare Roundtables, which remain critical forums for addressing regional workforce shortages and healthcare pipeline development.

Ms. Steinmetz led the organization of the February Healthcare and Biotechnology Job Fair hosted onsite with Lone Star College–Montgomery, building upon Workforce Solutions' established partnership with the college's Life Sciences and Health Occupations (LIFE) Division. The event received media coverage from Univision 45, which conducted interviews with college leadership, participating employers, and Workforce Solutions staff, highlighting the region's collaborative approach to healthcare workforce development.

Further expanding cross-sector collaboration, Ms. Steinmetz attended Houston Community College Coleman College's AI in Healthcare Symposium, reinforcing prior workforce partnerships and aligning workforce strategies with emerging technological trends in healthcare delivery. She was also invited to participate in Spring ISD's Career Connection Expo as both a representative of the Gulf Coast Workforce Board and a Spring High School alumnus, supporting early talent exposure and career awareness initiatives for students.

Looking ahead, the approval of the Dementia Prevention and Research Institute of Texas (DPRIT), funded with $3 billion over ten years, is expected to significantly influence the Houston-Galveston region's life sciences workforce landscape. Modeled after the Cancer Prevention and Research Institute of Texas (CPRIT), this investment is anticipated to attract world-class researchers, clinicians, and biotechnology firms, driving demand for highly skilled roles in biomedical research, neurotechnology, clinical trials, AI-driven health analytics, and medical device innovation. The initiative will also create indirect workforce opportunities in construction, project management, regulatory affairs, and facility development as new laboratories and specialized research infrastructure are established, further solidifying Houston's position as a national leader in healthcare and life sciences innovation.

Policy developments are also shaping healthcare workforce planning. The directive to halt new H-1B visa petitions for Texas state agencies and public universities through May 2027 is expected to constrain recruitment pipelines for specialized physicians, researchers, and clinicians, particularly within academic health systems that historically rely on international talent to fill hard-to-staff roles. Combined with existing nursing shortages and growing healthcare demand, this policy may intensify workforce strain across hospitals, research institutions, and underserved communities.

Healthcare employment continues to serve as a primary economic driver in the region; however, large healthcare systems are signaling more cautious hiring practices amid economic pressures related to expiring ACA subsidies, Medicaid funding changes, reimbursement adjustments, and rising operational costs. Memorial Hermann, one of the region's largest employers with approximately 34,000 employees across 360 locations, has indicated potential workforce reductions through non-clinical employee buyouts while maintaining recruitment for essential clinical roles. Similar budget considerations across healthcare organizations suggest a shifting hiring landscape that will require ongoing workforce coordination and targeted pipeline development.

Building and Construction Trades
Lacy Wolf discussed how the Building and Construction sector continues to experience steady momentum across the Gulf Coast region, driven by education partnerships, infrastructure investments, energy sector developments, and advanced manufacturing expansions. Principal Industry Liaison Lacy Wolf has remained actively engaged in aligning workforce development strategies with emerging employer needs and large-scale regional projects.

A key pipeline development opportunity is emerging through St. Peter's High School Career and Technical Education (CTE) program, which is anticipating a potential doubling of enrollment for the 2026–2027 school year. In response, the program is seeking expanded collaboration with Workforce Solutions – Gulf Coast to establish structured internship and apprenticeship opportunities that will support early career exposure and strengthen long-term talent pipelines into the skilled trades and construction sectors. This partnership aligns with the Board's continued emphasis on work-based learning and youth workforce development.

Significant industry activity is also taking place within the maritime and shipbuilding sectors. Davie Shipbuilding has finalized its purchase of Gulf Copper operations in Galveston and Port Arthur, a development expected to generate demand for more than 4,000 workers across building, construction, and related technical occupations. The company is actively working in partnership with the Workforce Board and the Governor's Office to support workforce planning, recruitment, and training strategies necessary to meet anticipated labor demand tied to shipbuilding and industrial expansion along the Gulf Coast.

At the county level, Harris County Commissioners Court has approved collaboration related to the Houston Texans training facilities located in the northwest portion of the county. These projects will incorporate strengthened workforce standards, including a minimum wage of $20.65 and enhanced safety requirements for construction workers. The Harris County Sports Authority is also exploring the implementation of similar workforce and safety standards across additional projects under its jurisdiction, reinforcing a regional commitment to quality jobs and safe working conditions within the construction industry.

Energy sector consolidation is expected to further influence workforce needs following Constellation's completed acquisition of Calpine. Planned operational and infrastructure changes across five cogeneration facilities in Wharton, Fort Bend, and Harris Counties may create new opportunities for skilled trades, maintenance, and energy-related technical roles as system upgrades and operational adjustments are implemented.

Manufacturing growth is also contributing to construction and facility-related workforce demand. PMC, a Canadian manufacturer of sheet metal products, has opened a new facility in Friendswood and has begun initial hiring, with plans to expand staffing needs to more than 20 employees in the coming months. This expansion reflects continued regional growth in advanced manufacturing and associated construction and installation occupations.

Additionally, strategic economic engagement efforts included a meeting with Board Member Bin Yu to strengthen connections between the Asian Chamber of Commerce, Baytown Economic Development, and the ongoing expansion of Tinci Materials in the Baytown area. This coordination supports broader regional investment attraction and ensures workforce alignment with high-value industrial and construction projects.

Through these partnerships and industry engagements, Mr. Wolf continues to support the development of a skilled construction and trades workforce, while positioning the Gulf Coast Workforce Board as a key partner in major infrastructure, energy, maritime, and manufacturing initiatives across the region.

Apprenticeships
Traci Nolen discussed how Gulf Coast Workforce Board continues to prioritize apprenticeship expansion as a core strategy for developing sustainable workforce pipelines aligned with employer demand. Planning is underway for the 12th Annual National Apprenticeship Week, scheduled for April 26 through May 2, 2026, under the national theme "America at Work: Making America Skilled Again through Registered Apprenticeship." As part of this initiative, the Gulf Coast Workforce Board will host an employer-driven Apprenticeship Convening to support the continued growth of Apprenticeship Works – Gulf Coast and strengthen employer participation in registered apprenticeship programs. The conference is tentatively scheduled for May 1, 2026 from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at H-GAC.

Apprenticeship development efforts are advancing across multiple sectors, reflecting the region's diverse workforce needs. Early-stage partnership opportunities include collaboration with Hanger Prosthetics to develop pathways for Fabrication Technicians and Prosthetic Aides, engagement with MD Anderson for HVAC and Maintenance Specialist apprenticeship models, and coordination with American Healthcare Apprenticeships, Memorial Hermann, and Renovo Solutions to support the development of Healthcare Technology Management apprentices.

Additional sector-based apprenticeship opportunities are being explored with the Association for Materials Protection and Performance (AMPP) for Pipeline Corrosion Technicians, the Texas Association of Community Health Centers for

Dental Assistant pathways, and the Fort Bend Boys & Girls Club to support pre-apprenticeship programming for Para Educators aligned with Brazosport ISD. These initiatives collectively strengthen middle-skill career pathways while addressing employer demand for technical, healthcare, and education-related occupations.

Labor Market Spotlight
Ron Borski's labor market analysis for Harris County Precinct 1 indicates a population of approximately 1.79 million residents across nearly 678,000 households, with a median household income of $70,979, median home value of $288,223, and a median age of 34.6. Demographic trends reflect a younger and highly diverse population compared to national averages, reinforcing the importance of long-term workforce pipeline development and targeted career pathway investments.

Industry employment data demonstrates that three of the five largest sectors are population-driven industries, including Health Care and Social Assistance, Educational Services, Accommodation and Food Services. While these sectors continue to generate significant employment demand, wage levels vary, with the highest-paying industries identified as Mining, Management of Companies and Enterprises, Utilities, and Finance and Insurance.

Forecasted labor market demand over the next five years is projected to grow modestly, with overall employment growth estimated at approximately 3.6 percent. Notably, a significant portion of job openings are expected to result from workforce exits and occupational transfers rather than net job creation, highlighting the need for reskilling, upskilling, and replacement workforce strategies.

Targeted industries authorized by the Gulf Coast Workforce Board represent approximately 563,000 jobs in the region, with the top 20 industries accounting for 72 percent of employment within these targeted sectors. Healthcare, skilled trades, and education-related industries continue to dominate forecasted demand, while Electric Power Generation and related infrastructure sectors show emerging growth potential despite smaller current employment bases.

Occupational projections further reinforce the region's workforce priorities, with the highest five-year demand expected for Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers and Registered Nurses among targeted occupations. Skilled trades roles - including welders, electricians, carpenters, HVAC technicians, and heavy equipment operators - remain essential to regional growth, particularly in construction, infrastructure, and energy sectors.

Middle-skill occupations are projected to experience continued growth, particularly Nurse Practitioners, Substance Abuse Counselors, Physical Therapist Assistants, and data-driven technical roles. Despite fluctuations in the IT sector, demand for software developers, computer systems analysts, and user support specialists remains steady. Overall findings indicate that healthcare, skilled trades, transportation, and technical occupations will continue to serve as the backbone of regional workforce demand, underscoring the importance of targeted training programs, apprenticeship expansion, and employer-aligned workforce strategies across the 13-county Gulf Coast region.

Regional Engagement
Mr. Brito continued to lead comprehensive regional engagement efforts across the Gulf Coast area, strengthening employer relationships, aligning workforce strategies with economic development priorities, and expanding customized workforce solutions across multiple counties. His work reflects a coordinated, county-by-county approach to employer engagement that supports both immediate hiring needs and long-term workforce pipeline development.

In Harris County, Mr. Brito has been actively meeting with the Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership and Aerospace Committee to provide customized employer solutions tailored to the aerospace industry, a critical and growing sector in the regional economy. Additionally, Workforce Solutions is in the process of finalizing an interlocal agreement with Harris County Precinct 4 to support the recruitment of skilled workers across various county departments. This agreement represents a first-of-its-kind partnership for Workforce Solutions and establishes a structured framework for ongoing public-sector workforce collaboration and targeted talent sourcing.

In Galveston County, Mr. Brito has convened meetings with the College of the Mainland, Galveston College, and the Galveston Economic Development Partnership to form a regional coalition with local colleges and ISDs. This coalition is focused on exploring apprenticeship pathways aligned with emerging industries expanding into the region while coordinating training initiatives that directly support high-demand sectors and future workforce needs.

In Chambers County, strategic introductions were facilitated between Gulf Copper/Davie and regional building trades and Joint Apprenticeship and Training Committees (JATCs) to assess workforce pipeline capacity and training alignment. Mr. Brito also connected local employers with workforce training programs to address immediate labor needs and coordinated engagement between the Baytown Chamber and the Asian Chamber of Commerce to increase awareness of incoming Asian manufacturers and associated workforce opportunities in the region.

In Liberty County, Mr. Brito collaborated with local school districts and municipalities to better align career and technical education programs with labor market demand while advancing plans for regional workforce councils focused on long-term workforce planning and employer engagement.

In Brazoria County, engagement with industry partners and the Brazoria County Petrochemical Council (BCPC) has centered on identifying funding opportunities, supporting apprenticeship program expansion, and strengthening education alignment for high-demand petrochemical and industrial occupations.

In Fort Bend County, Mr. Brito engaged with community colleges to support the development of targeted workforce training programs and facilitated partnerships between employers and education institutions to ensure sustainable, long-term workforce growth aligned with regional industry demand.

In Montgomery County, he maintained active involvement as a member of the East Montgomery Chamber and participated in industry council discussions to inform regional workforce strategies and employer engagement planning.

In Waller County, Mr. Brito continues to participate in monthly breakfasts with the Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development Corporation (EDC) to increase program awareness and connect regional employers with apprenticeship and training opportunities, particularly in response to workforce needs and economic activity in the area.

In Wharton County, Mr. Brito attended Healthcare Roundtable meetings to assess regional workforce challenges, share insights into employer partnerships, and support the coordination of training initiatives aligned with healthcare sector demand.

Through this multi-county engagement strategy, Mr. Brito is strengthening regional collaboration among employers, education partners, chambers, and economic development organizations, while positioning the Gulf Coast Workforce Board as a central partner in workforce planning, apprenticeship development, and customized employer solutions across the 13-county region.

Employer Engagement Committee Charter and Industry Council Strategy
The Employer Engagement Committee Charter has been formally completed and is attached at the conclusion of this report for review and consideration. The Charter establishes the committee's purpose, structure, guiding principles, and operational framework, ensuring alignment with the Gulf Coast Workforce Board's strategic objectives and governance standards.

This document provides clarity regarding committee roles, responsibilities, membership expectations, and decision-making processes, while reinforcing the Board's commitment to structured, data-driven employer engagement. In addition, the Charter outlines the strategic direction for strengthening Industry Councils as advisory bodies that inform workforce priorities, validate employer demand, and guide sector-based initiatives.

The completion of the Charter represents a significant milestone in formalizing the Employer Engagement Committee's role within the Board's broader governance and workforce strategy framework. It provides a sustainable foundation for future committee operations, supports transparency and accountability, and strengthens the alignment between employer engagement activities and regional economic development goals.

Hiring Event Strategy Discussion
The Gulf Coast Workforce Board will implement a more data-driven approach to the planning and execution of hiring events across the region. Moving forward, labor market information (LMI) data will serve as the foundation for determining when and where hiring events are scheduled, ensuring alignment with documented employer demand, occupational shortages, and regional economic trends.

This strategy will leverage real-time employment data, industry projections, demographic analysis, and targeted occupation demand to identify communities with the greatest workforce gaps and hiring needs. By analyzing employment concentrations, workforce exits, growth forecasts, and targeted industry priorities, the Board will more precisely match hiring event locations and employer participation with verified labor market demand.

This approach strengthens accountability and impact by shifting from reactive scheduling to strategic workforce deployment. It ensures hiring events are aligned with high-demand industries, support regional economic development goals, and maximize outcomes for both employers and job seekers across the Gulf Coast region.

Looking Ahead:
Chair Alan Heskamp emphasized continued collaboration with employers, education partners, and economic development organizations to sustain strong workforce pipelines and regional competitiveness. The next meeting still needs to be determined.

Government Relations Committee
Legislative Updates and Advocacy Outlook

Executive Summary

The Government Relations Committee convened on March 26, 2026, at 2:00 p.m. in a hybrid format at 3555 Timmons Ln, Houston, Texas, and via Zoom, under the chairmanship of Guy Robert Jackson. Board members present included: Paul Puente, Dr. Bobbie Henderson, Lenora Sorola-Pohlman, Adrian Ozuna, Rachel Cevallos, Dr. Melissa Gonzalez, Jeff LaBroski, Doug Karr, Joyce Johnson, Bin Yu, Marie Arcos, Grace Rodriguez, Dr. Michael Webster, and Shonda Below.

The highlights from the committee meeting included key federal and state policy developments shaping the workforce system in advance of the 90th Texas Legislative Session. The current environment reflects both stability and increased scrutiny. Federal actions maintain WIOA continuity, sustain adult education funding, and expand apprenticeship opportunities. At the state level, priorities are converging around accountability, regulatory alignment, and workforce readiness in high-demand industries.

House and Senate Interim Charges signal heightened oversight of human services programs, including child care, with implications for workforce system operations as well as increased investments in workforce and economic development opportunities. The Texas Jobs Council reflects the Governor's coordinated effort to align industry demand with workforce strategy ahead of the next session. Regionally, the GCWB Legislative Luncheon served as a platform to engage elected officials and elevate system impact and policy priorities.

GCWB's participation with the Harris County Coalition on Early Childhood Education and Care highlights a critical labor market constraint. Limited access to affordable, reliable childcare continues to restrict workforce participation, employer growth, and economic mobility, positioning this issue for state-level consideration.

Collectively, these developments point to a policy trajectory focused on preserving core system infrastructure while strengthening accountability, reducing barriers, and improving alignment across workforce, education, and economic development systems.

Legislative Luncheon Update

The Gulf Coast Workforce Board hosted its inaugural Legislative Luncheon on Monday, March 30 at the Junior League of Houston, 1811 Briar Oaks Lane, Houston, Texas 77027 at 11:30 am-1:00 pm. The program schedule was as follows:

11:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.	Registration and Networking
11:30 a.m.	Seated lunch begins *Program will begin promptly upon seating.*
11:40 a.m. - 12:15 p.m.	Remarks and Presentation Welcome & Introduction, Mark Guthrie, Board Chair System Discussion, Juliet Stipeche, GCWB Executive Director (Lunch service continues) • Peace Officer Erica Ramirez Success Story • Employer Success Story Policy Priorities and System Risks, Desmond Taylor, GCWB Program Administrator
12:15 p.m.	Roundtable Discussion with Elected Officials • Facilitated by Mustafa Tamez, CEO and Founder of Outreach Strategists
12:50 p.m.	Rollout of Annual Report • Mark Guthrie, Board Chair
1:00 p.m.	Adjourn

The event hosted 100 guests, including several State Representatives, County Judges, County Commissioners, City Council Members, and staff of the above-mentioned elected officials. Additionally, 23 Board members were present and engaged in the event.

The event highlighted opportunities for economic mobility, workforce services, and policy engagement across the Gulf Coast region. Moreover, it strengthened connections between Board leadership and legislative offices as well as encouraged ongoing outreach to policymakers shaping workforce funding and training in the upcoming 90th Legislative Session.

Senate and House 2026 Interim Legislative Charges

As we prepare for the 90th Texas Legislative Session in 2027, the Lieutenant Governor released the first round of Senate Interim Legislative Charges on January 30, 2026, followed by a second round on March 27, 2026. The House released its Interim Charges on March 26, 2026, prior to the Government Relations Committee meeting. These charges give foresight as to what the State leadership's goals and focus will be during the upcoming session.

A full list of Senate and House 2026 Interim Legislative Charges attached will be emailed to Board members.

Specific to local workforce boards, the Senate Interim Charges provide a directive to the Health and Human Services Committee regarding fraud prevention in public programs, particularly child care.

Key points:

- Emphasis on protecting taxpayer funds,
- Alignment with the Governor's directive to eliminate fraud and abuse,
- Review of programs including Medicaid and Child Care Services, and
- Exploration of policy recommendations to strengthen oversight and accountability.

Preparing the Texas Workforce for AI (Artificial Intelligence): Study the impact of AI on the Texas workforce and its implications for economic competitiveness. Identify opportunities for upskilling and the responsible adoption of emerging technologies to maximize employment opportunities.

These signals increased scrutiny and potential policy changes affecting workforce-related service delivery systems and workforce readiness investments.

In the House Interim Charges, the Appropriations Committee provides a directive to **Infrastructure, Technology, and Workforce for Economic Development**: Evaluate existing investment of state funds, as well as new opportunities, in programs that improve state infrastructure, promote critical areas of technology, and foster workforce and economic development, including: improvements to Texas ports, flood management, domestic semiconductor production, space commercialization, the moving image industry, and opportunities for public higher education institutions to forge federal partnerships on critical initiatives.

Specific to local workforce boards, the Trade, Workforce and Economic Development Committee is tasked with monitoring the implementation and associated rulemaking of all legislation passed by the Committee and enacted by the 89th Legislature to ensure that legislative purposes are properly implemented, including: HB 4903, relating to the establishment of the Quad-Agency Child Care Initiative and the Quad-Agency Child Care Initiative Commission.

Program Integrity and Fraud Prevention: Study the effectiveness of fraud prevention, detection, and accountability measures across workforce and economic development programs administered by state agencies under the jurisdiction of the committee.

Child Care Access and Workforce Participation: Study the accessibility, affordability, quality, and coordination of childcare and early childhood systems in Texas. Evaluate how the child care system affects workforce participation, labor force attachment, employee retention, and employer productivity across urban, suburban, and rural communities.

Subcommittee on Workforce: Workforce Development: Study workforce development and labor market conditions in Texas, including skills gaps, workforce participation, training and education, and alignment between workforce programs and employer demand. Identify challenges and best practices to maintain the competitiveness of regional labor markets and strengthen workforce readiness.

The House Charges signal a more coordinated, outcomes-driven approach to workforce and childcare—treating them not as separate issues, but as interconnected systems critical to economic growth and competitiveness. The state is prioritizing strategic investments in infrastructure, innovation, and talent pipelines while increasing accountability, oversight, and alignment across agencies and programs. At its core, the direction points toward strengthening workforce participation by improving childcare access, closing skills gaps, and ensuring public investments translate into measurable economic mobility and employer success.

Board staff will begin working closely with the committee to prepare our legislative and outreach strategy for the 90th Legislative Session as well as continue monitoring developments.

Texas Jobs Council

On March 16, 2026, Governor Greg Abbott announced the launch of the Texas Jobs Council, a new advisory body aimed at strengthening workforce development and ensuring Texans are prepared to meet growing demand in high-skill, high-demand industries (e.g., construction trades, energy, and transportation).

The Council brings together leaders from business, labor, and workforce systems to align efforts and maintain Texas' competitive edge in job creation and economic growth. The initiative emphasizes collaboration between industry and labor to address workforce shortages and expand training pathways.

The Council will focus on key priorities, including:

- Identifying immediate executive actions to reduce regulatory barriers in workforce development
- Developing policy and legislative recommendations for the 90th Texas Legislative Session
- Delivering a final report by November 2026 outlining actionable strategies to strengthen the state's workforce system

Appointed Members of the Texas Jobs Council include:

- **Co-Chair, Brent Taylor** VP South Teamsters Local 745 & Teamsters Joint Council 80
- **Co-Chair, Megan Mauro** Interim President Texas Association of Business
- **Tony Bennett** President Texas Association of Manufacturers
- **Todd Staples** President Texas Oil and Gas Association
- **Hector Rivero** President Texas Chemistry Council
- **Scott Norman** President Texas Association of Builders
- **Robert Mele** President Teamsters Local 988
- **Robert Wayne Lord** Business Manager Plumbers Local Union 68
- **Alan Robb** Assistant General International Longshoremen's Assoc.
- **Lacy Wolf** Local 22 President Heat and Frost Insulators Local Union 22
- **Mark Maher Jr.** Business Manager International Union of Operating Engineers 450
- **Bryan Edwards** Business Manager Pipefitters Local Union 211

Our very own Lacy Wolf was appointed to serve on the Jobs Council. With his guidance, our goal is to work collaboratively with the Council to ensure the Gulf Coast Workforce Board is proactively assisting the State in addressing workforce gaps while also serving as a resource leading into the 90th Legislative session.

Federal Funding Update

The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2026 (H.R. 7148), signed into law on February 3, 2026, establishes funding for workforce and adult education programs while resolving a brief partial federal shutdown. The legislation funds federal agencies through September 30, 2026, and maintains continuity for major workforce development initiatives.

A central feature of the law is the preservation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) structure. The Act maintains separate WIOA accounts with total funding of $2.9 billion and discards the proposed "Make America Skilled Again (MASA)" consolidation. This decision ensures that existing program structures remain intact, supporting stability for state and local workforce systems and allowing continued implementation without major structural disruption.

Adult Education and Family Literacy Act funding under Title II is also sustained and protected. The enacted package allocates $729 million in formula grant funding and ensures staffing levels within the Department of Education are sufficient to meet statutory responsibilities. Importantly, the agreement explicitly safeguards AEFLA programs and includes provisions to prevent administrative reorganizations that previously caused payment delays in 2025. As a result, Adult Education providers are expected to experience more predictable and timely funding disbursements in 2026.

In parallel, the Department of Labor has announced $145 million in funding to support the expansion of Registered Apprenticeship programs. Through the Employment and Training Administration, up to five cooperative agreements will be awarded for a four-year performance period. These investments are designed to expand newly developed apprenticeship programs while also scaling existing ones across industries, with particular emphasis on sectors that already have established apprenticeship infrastructures.

In late 2025 the Department of Labor released Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL) 05-25 as a mechanism for operational flexibility. For youth programs, waivers allow states to adjust the statutory requirement that approximately 75% of youth funds be directed toward out-of-school youth. For On-the-Job Training (OJT), waivers similarly provide flexibility by allowing states to exceed the standard employer reimbursement cap of up to 50% of wages. With approved waivers, reimbursement rates may increase to 75% or higher, enhancing employer incentives to participate in training programs and hire individuals facing barriers to employment.

Overall, the 2026 policy environment emphasizes continuity of WIOA structures, sustained investment in adult education, expansion of apprenticeship opportunities, and increased operational flexibility through waivers. These combined elements support workforce system stability while enabling targeted innovation and responsiveness at the state and local levels.

Harris County Coalition on Early Childhood Education and Care

The GCWB is actively engaged in the Harris County Coalition on Early Childhood Education and Care as part of its responsibility to align workforce, education, and economic development systems to drive economic mobility. Over the past two months, the coalition has convened a series of working sessions culminating in a report-out of key findings and priority actions.

The coalition's analysis reinforces what we are observing operationally across the workforce system. Early childhood education and care in Harris County remains structurally fragmented. Multiple systems operate in parallel with limited coordination, including childcare providers, public health, education, and workforce programs. This fragmentation results in constrained childcare supply, inconsistent definitions and signals of quality, and significant barriers to access for working families.

From a labor market perspective, the implications are immediate and measurable. When families cannot access reliable childcare, labor force participation declines, retention is destabilized, and wage progression is interrupted. For employers, particularly in high-demand sectors such as healthcare and logistics, this translates into persistent vacancies, reduces productivity, and increases turnover. For providers who largely operate small businesses, regulatory complexity, insufficient reimbursement structures, and limited access to business support constrain both capacity and long-term sustainability.

The coalition has organized its work around four core pillars, which are closely aligned with the GCWB's strategic framework: awareness and access, provider capacity, quality and data, and workforce development. Within these pillars, several near-term actions have emerged with both local and state policy relevance. These include reducing duplicative or burdensome local regulatory requirements, improving navigation and uptake of childcare subsidies, strengthening business support for providers through technical assistance and back-office capacity, and advancing data alignment to enable shared definitions of quality and performance across systems.

This work intersects directly with ongoing state-level policy activity, including the Quad Agency Review, the Sunset Advisory Commission process, and the Governor's Task Force on early childhood programs. These processes present a critical window to address systemic barriers related to regulatory alignment, funding structures, and cross-agency coordination. The coalition is positioned to provide coordinated, experience-based input into these efforts.

Within the coalition, GCWB is contributing a distinct workforce system perspective. We bring direct visibility into employer demand, hiring challenges, and barriers to labor force participation, and are consistently elevating childcare as a primary constraint on employment. This reframes childcare from a standalone social service to a core component of regional economic competitiveness.

We are also serving as a connector across systems that do not naturally align. By linking childcare access to workforce services and outcomes, we are identifying where subsidy gaps limit job placement and retention, and where provider capacity constraints directly impact employer hiring. This work lays the groundwork for stronger data integration over time, enabling childcare access and quality to be tied to measurable workforce outcomes.

The GCWB is translating operational challenges into policy-relevant insight. Through administration of childcare and workforce programs, we have direct visibility into where the system breaks down, including reimbursement structures, eligibility processes, and regulatory complexity. Our role is to ensure these constraints are clearly articulated and positioned for state-level consideration.

This engagement is critical because childcare remains one of the most immediate and persistent barriers to workforce participation in the region. For families, lack of access to affordable, reliable care prevents entry into the labor market and disrupts employment stability. For employers, it contributes directly to vacancies and turnover. For providers, system complexity and limited supports constrain their ability to expand and sustain operations. These are interconnected constraints that collectively limit regional economic performance.

We thank Harris County Commissioners Lesley Briones and Adrian Garcia for their leadership in this effort. By participating in the coalition, GCWB is helping shift the region from fragmented problem-solving to coordinated system alignment. This creates a pathway for more effective local action while positioning the Gulf Coast region to influence state policy in ways that reduce barriers, strengthen early child care provider capacity, and improve workforce outcomes.

Communications Committee
Program Area/Strategic Plan Priority

Executive Summary

The Communications Committee, chaired by Doug Karr, convened on April 1 at 11:03 a.m. at the Tanglewood Property, 5599 San Felipe Rd., 20th Floor, Meeting Room IRIS. Committee members present included Doug Karr (Chair), Monica Riley (Vice Chair), Mark Guthrie, Guy Robert Jackson, Paul Puente, Lizandra Vasquez, and Tanya Makany-Rivera. Board members in attendance included Paul Puente, Lenora Sorola Pohlman, Mark Guthrie, Susan Lindsey, Bin Yu, Guy Robert Jackson, Jeff LaBroski, Joyce Johnson, Lizandra Vasquez, Mike Ferdinand, Tanya Makany-Rivera, and Monica Riley.

During the first quarter of 2026, the Board continued to advance communications and outreach efforts that support its strategic priorities of increasing awareness, improving service delivery, and strengthening regional partnerships. Activity in the new year has included the launch of the Workforce Solutions podcast, publication of the Board’s first-ever Annual Report, creation of two important service guides, continued growth of WorkforceSolutionsNews.com, and expanded use of social and digital media to share workforce information across the region. Digital platforms remain central to this work. Social media channels continued promoting hiring events, workforce services, and labor market information, while WorkforceSolutionsNews.com maintained steady engagement as a platform for workforce news, resources, and regional updates.

Public outreach during this period also included media appearances discussing workforce trends and employment opportunities, as well as a convening in Fort Bend County that brought together elected officials, employers, educators, and community leaders to discuss workforce and economic development priorities in the county.

Other communications resources were updated during this period, including the addition of QR codes to the Complete Guide to Services, which directs users to the new website. Work also continued on Board member videos and the development of a success story video library highlighting individuals and job seekers who have benefited from the services we provide. These efforts reflect continued progress in strengthening the Board’s communications infrastructure and expanding awareness of our workforce services, initiatives, and opportunities across the Gulf Coast region.

Social Media Report

Workforce Solutions - Gulf Coast experienced strong overall growth across social media platforms during the first quarter of 2026, with notable increases in visibility, engagement, and audience growth, particularly on Facebook and LinkedIn. While Instagram performance showed some declines in reach and views, audience growth and profile activity remained steady. YouTube performance reflects early-stage channel development with opportunities for continued growth as video content expands.

Performance during this period is measured against the previous three-month period (late 2025). Overall, results show that more people are seeing content, interacting with it, and sharing it than in the prior quarter.

Across all platforms, content generated a combined 191,470 total views and impressions during Q1 2026. Facebook led with 134,527 views, followed by LinkedIn with 37,756 impressions, Instagram with 17,132 views, and YouTube with 2,055 views.

Facebook Performance

Facebook delivered the strongest performance during this period, with consistent growth compared to late 2025. Total views reached 134.5K, a 47.9% increase, meaning views increased by nearly 50% compared to the prior quarter. The platform reached 55.2K viewers (up 25.7%), indicating that content is reaching a broader audience. Engagement increased to 855 content interactions (up 55.2%), showing that more users are actively engaging with posts. Link clicks totaled 174, more than twice the number recorded in the previous period, meaning more than twice as many users are taking action to learn more about services and resources.

Page visits (4.9K, up 43.7%) and new followers (256, up 14.8%) also increased, reflecting continued audience growth and interest.

What this indicates: Facebook is effectively expanding both awareness and action, more people are seeing content and following through to learn more.

LinkedIn Performance

LinkedIn performance showed strong growth compared to the previous three-month period, particularly in visibility and content sharing. Content generated 37,756 impressions, which was a 57.7% increase. Engagement also increased, with 741 reactions (up 37.5%), indicating that more users are responding positively to content. Sharing activity saw the largest increase, with 23 re-posts (up 187.5%), meaning content is being redistributed by others at a higher rate.

This is especially important on LinkedIn, as reposts extend visibility beyond the organization's immediate network into new professional audiences. Comments totaled 42 (down 8.7%), reflecting a slight decline in direct conversation despite overall higher reach and engagement.

What this indicates: LinkedIn is effectively increasing visibility and expanding reach through shares, helping position Workforce Solutions content in front of a broader professional audience. While direct conversation is slightly lower, overall engagement and amplification are trending upward.

Instagram Performance

Instagram showed mixed results compared to late 2025, with declines in visibility but continued audience growth. Total views were 17.1K, a 59% decrease, meaning content was seen significantly less often than in the previous quarter. Reach also declined to 4.8K (down 11.7%), indicating fewer unique users were exposed to posts. Engagement followed a similar trend, with 356 content interactions (down 37.5%). Despite this, profile visits increased to 847 (up 13.2%), and the account gained 248 new followers (up 4.6%), showing that while fewer people are seeing content overall, those who do engage remain interested.

What this indicates: Instagram is reaching fewer people than before, but it continues to attract new followers and maintain interest among its audience.

YouTube Performance

YouTube performance reflects early-stage channel development, with results compared to late 2025. The channel generated 2,055 views. Watch time totaled 89 hours, and the channel gained 21 subscribers. The channel currently has approximately 1,500 subscribers, with 36 views in the last 48 hours, indicating modest but steady ongoing activity.

This indicates: The channel has an established audience and strong potential for growth as new video content, such as podcast episodes, is introduced.

LinkedIn and LinkedIn Newsletter

LINKEDIN		LINKEDIN NEWSLETTER	
Metric	Results	Metric	Result
Impressions	37,756	Article Views	1,617
Reactions	741	New Subscribers	250
Comments	42	Total Subscribers	3,624
Reposts	23		

Instagram

Metric	Result
Views	17,132
Content Interactions	356
Visits	4,754
Reach	174
Follows	248

Facebook

Metric	Result
Views	134,527
Content Interactions	855
Visits	4861
Link Clicks	174
Follows	256

YouTube

Metric	Result
Views	2,055
Watch Time (hours)	89
New Subscribers	21
Total Subscribers	1,508

Podcast Launch

The Gulf Coast Workforce Board completed the recording of the inaugural episode of its new podcast series on March 19, 2026. The episode, titled *"Connecting People to Opportunity: The Role of Workforce Solutions,"* is scheduled for release on March 24, 2026, with a target runtime of approximately 35–40 minutes.
The recording featured Executive Director Juliet Stipeche as host, who also delivered the introductory and closing remarks. The episode included participation from Board Chair Mark Guthrie and Board Member Doug Karr, as well as an interview with ABC13 reporter Nick Natario.

The discussion centered on the role of Workforce Solutions in aligning workforce strategy with the needs of employers and job seekers across the Gulf Coast region. Stipeche led a conversation with Guthrie and Karr focused on leadership perspectives, regional workforce priorities, and the importance of connecting education, training, and employment systems.

The dialogue highlighted how workforce services respond to employer demand, support economic growth, and expand access to opportunity, with particular emphasis on apprenticeships, middle-skill career pathways, and the evolving impact of technology, including AI, on the workforce.

Nick Natario's segment provided insights based on his experience covering workforce issues during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, including the development of the "Who's Hiring in Houston" initiative and the role of media partnerships in connecting individuals to job opportunities and resources.
This inaugural recording establishes the foundation for the podcast series as a platform to share workforce insights, highlight regional leadership, and promote the services and impact of the Gulf Coast Workforce Board.

Social Media Strategies for 2026 (Next Steps)

Leverage High-Performing Platforms to Expand Reach

Facebook and LinkedIn are driving the strongest results, particularly in visibility, engagement, and content sharing. Building on this momentum, content should be prioritized and amplified on these platforms, including cross-posting high-performing content and increasing frequency where appropriate. This will help us continue expanding reach and connecting more users to workforce resources.

Refine Instagram Content Strategy to Improve Visibility

While Instagram continues to grow its audience, declines in reach and engagement indicate that content is not being seen as widely as before. Adjustments will focus on improving content format and consistency, such as increasing use of short-form video, optimizing posting cadence, and strengthening calls to action, to ensure content reaches and engages a broader audience.

Expand Video Content to Strengthen YouTube Growth

YouTube remains in a development phase, but the launch of podcast and video content presents a key opportunity. Establishing a consistent video pipeline—including full podcast episodes, short clips, and service-focused content—will help increase views, watch time, and subscriber growth over time. Integrating video across all platforms will also reinforce overall engagement and visibility.

Media Highlights and Outreach

Who's Hiring on ABC 13 - February

We are grateful to Nick Natario and KRTK Channel 13 for renewing our news partnership in February. Nick and Juliet met at Outreach Strategists on February 12 to talk about the impact AI is having on job seekers and to promote the Biotech and Healthcare Job Fair held at Lone Star College Montgomery. Nick also interviewed Anna Crockett of the Federal Bank of Dallas and Omar Reid, Chief People Officer at Harris Health Systems. Anna discussed the jobs most impacted by artificial intelligence; Omar pointed out how large human resource offices are using AI to find top talent for their companies.

Total AVE:
$23,423.60

Total Viewership:
368,655

Dr. Maria Franco on Telemundo Houston

Dr. María Franco Cortes appeared on Telemundo on February 26 to discuss the current state of remote work and what it means for job seekers. During the interview, she explained that remote jobs remain available but are more competitive than in previous years, with employers placing greater emphasis on digital skills, communication, and job-ready training. The segment also highlighted industries where remote opportunities continue to be strong, including technology, customer service, finance, healthcare administration, and professional and business services. Dr. Franco also discussed how Workforce Solutions supports job seekers through career coaching, training programs, and connections to employers offering remote and hybrid roles.

Total AVE:
$4,092

Total Viewership:
140,084

Parker Harvey on Fox 26 News

Parker Harvey appeared in a live-streamed interview with FOX 26 Houston's Melissa Wilson on February 26 to discuss the region's 2025 job outlook and key workforce trends. During the conversation, he highlighted continued job growth across major sectors, noting strong demand in industries driving the regional economy. He also addressed recent changes in the unemployment rate, providing context on data signals for both job seekers and employers. Parker emphasized how Workforce Solutions is positioned to support both employers and job seekers in navigating these opportunities through targeted services, training programs, and strategic partnerships.

Total AVE:
This was a live-streamed segment. Traditional broadcast AVE is not available.

Moving forward, AVE for streaming segments will be estimated based on video views using a standard Cost Per Mile (CPM) method.

Total Viewership:
This was a live-streamed segment. Traditional viewership is not available. Moving forward, viewership for streaming segments will be estimated based on video views using a standard Cost Per Mile (CPM) method.

February 2026 Newsletter Issue

The February 2026 edition of the Workforce Solutions - Gulf Coast newsletter marked the first issue of the year and continued the publication's focus on connecting regional workforce activity with broader economic conditions across the Gulf Coast. Distributed on a regular cadence of approximately every 45 days, the newsletter serves as an ongoing channel for sharing workforce updates with employers, job seekers, and community partners across the region's 13-county area.

The February issue highlighted several recent workforce initiatives and regional activities. Among them was the Fort Bend of the Future workforce partnership convening, which brought together employers, educators, and county leadership to discuss workforce coordination, talent development, and economic growth in Fort Bend County. The newsletter also featured coverage of the Waller County Job Fair, an event that attracted more than 300 job seekers and created opportunities for employers and residents to connect directly about current hiring needs.
In addition to spotlighting these events, the issue shared updates on regional labor market conditions and ongoing outreach partnerships aimed at expanding awareness of workforce programs and services. Through these updates and event coverage, the February edition reinforced the newsletter's role as a consistent platform for highlighting workforce initiatives, strengthening regional partnerships, and keeping stakeholders informed about workforce trends and opportunities across the Gulf Coast.

The February distribution also showed solid reach, with 41 bulletins sent to more than 2.2 million recipients and a 98.5 percent delivery rate. The issue saw nearly 887,000 unique opens (40.3 percent open rate) and over 5,700 link clicks, indicating continued engagement from readers across the region.

Fort Bend County Convening

On January 26, 2026, the Board convened regional leaders in Fort Bend County for a luncheon and roundtable hosted at the Fort Bend Chamber of Commerce and co-hosted by Fort Bend County Commissioner Andy Meyers. The session brought together employers, educators, workforce partners, and community leaders for a focused discussion on workforce priorities and economic growth in one of the region's fastest-growing counties.

Juliet Stipeche opened the discussion with an overview of the Board's strategic plan and its focus on advancing economic mobility across the region. Senior Labor Market Analyst Ron Borski provided an overview of current labor market trends affecting the region, and participants took part in a visioning exercise focused on the future of Fort Bend County's workforce and economy. The roundtable highlighted the Board's role as a regional convener and workforce partner, strengthened relationships with county leadership, employers, and education partners, and laid the groundwork for continued collaboration on workforce and economic development efforts in Fort Bend County.

National Assessment Governing Board Panel

On March 4, 2026, Juliet Stipeche participated in a panel discussion hosted by the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB) titled *"Why NAEP Matters."* The event brought together education and workforce leaders to discuss the role of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), often referred to as the Nation's Report Card, in shaping education and workforce outcomes.
The Houston convening marked the first time NAGB has hosted this type of discussion locally. Other panelists included San Jacinto College Chancellor Brenda Hellyer, HISD Superintendent Mike Miles, Iris Tian of the Texas Education Agency, and David Troutman of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

Legislative Luncheon

On March 30, 2026, the Gulf Coast Workforce Board hosted a legislative luncheon and roundtable at the Junior League of Houston, bringing together elected officials, Board members, and regional partners. The event provided an opportunity for legislators and their staff to engage with Board leadership and learn more about the Board's work supporting economic mobility and workforce services across the region.

The event reflects the Board's ongoing efforts to engage with policymakers whose decisions shape workforce funding, training capacity, and access to services for residents and employers across the region. It also provided an opportunity to highlight workforce initiatives underway across the Gulf Coast region and to strengthen connections between the Board and legislative offices representing communities throughout the 13-county service area.

National Apprenticeship Week

Workforce Solutions Gulf Coast will participate in the 12th Annual National Apprenticeship Week, April 26 – May 2, joining workforce systems across the country under this year's theme: *America at Work: Making America Skilled Again through Registered Apprenticeship.* As part of the observance, WFS will host an employer-driven convening through its Apprenticeships Work! Initiative on May 1, 2026 at H-GAC.

HGCY Power of One, Join the Circle Digital Campaign

Staff are currently exploring opportunities to align upcoming outreach for the Hire Gulf Coast Youth (HGCY) summer employment initiative. Early planning has focused on employer engagement efforts through the development of a digital campaign, *The Power of One; Join the Circle,* encouraging businesses across the Gulf Coast region to commit to hiring at least one young person during the summer of 2026.

The initiative emphasizes the role of summer employment as an entry point into the workforce and a way for employers to begin building long-term talent pipelines. Outreach strategies include collaboration with chambers of commerce, economic development organizations, and regional business associations to promote employer participation and increase visibility of youth employment opportunities.

Proposed communications activities include informational sessions for employers, coordinated messaging through partner networks, and the distribution of digital and print materials supporting the campaign. If implemented, these efforts would complement the Board’s broader workforce initiatives by expanding employer engagement and supporting early workforce experiences for young people across the region.

Board Member Videos Update

Work continues on the Board Member video series designed to highlight the perspectives and expertise of Board leadership across the region. To date, 27 of the Board’s 40 members have completed recordings. Efforts are ongoing to coordinate with the remaining members so the series can reflect the full breadth of industry, education, and community representation across the Board.

Success Story Videos Library

The Board has begun developing a library of short success story videos highlighting individuals who have advanced through workforce programs and training opportunities across the region. Through a partnership with the College of Health Care Professions (CHCP), the Board has been able to identify participants willing to share their experiences and perspectives on how workforce services supported their career paths.

CHCP has served as a valuable partner in facilitating these connections and will also assist in connecting the Board with employers who can speak to the impact of workforce programs from the hiring side. A new success story video was shared at the March 30 Legislative Luncheon, providing attendees with a firsthand example of how workforce programs translate into real career advancement for residents in the region.

WorkforceSolutionsNews.com

During the first quarter of the year (January–March), WorkforceSolutionsNews.com continued to demonstrate steady audience engagement and growing visibility as a trusted workforce information platform. Over this period, the site generated *8,470 total views* from *3,802 unique users*, reflecting continued interest in workforce resources, regional updates, and employment opportunities.

User engagement remained consistent, with visitors averaging *2.24 views per user* and spending an average of *2 minutes and 25 seconds* per session. These metrics indicate that audiences are not only reaching the platform but actively exploring multiple pages and engaging with the available resources.

Traffic trends over the past six months also show sustained momentum. Monthly views increased from 2,600 in September 2025 to 3,800 in October, before stabilizing between 2,000 and 3,600 views through the end of the year and into early 2026. The most recent months—January (3,400 views) and February (3,600 views)—demonstrate renewed growth and a stronger baseline of consistent monthly readership compared to early fall levels.

Several key sections of the site continue to attract sustained traffic. The top pages during this reporting period included the *Workforce Solutions News homepage* (1.5K+ views), the *Resources section* (500+ views), and the *Opportunities page* (400+ views). These trends suggest that users are consistently navigating beyond news content to locate practical workforce information, including support services and employment pathways.

Content performance further highlights the types of information audiences find most valuable. The most viewed articles this quarter included *Rent Assistance and Financial Support in Texas: Programs You Need to Know* (400+ views), *Your January Guide to Houston-Area Job Fairs and Hiring Events* (350+ views), and *Harris County Celebrates National Apprenticeship Day with New Proclamation* (350+ views). These results reinforce the importance of publishing timely, service-oriented content that connects readers to immediate opportunities and community resources.

The Workforce Solutions News mobile app also continues to expand its reach. To date, the app has reached *1,282 total downloads*, with the highest single-day peak occurring on *March 28, 2025, when 602 downloads* were recorded. To support adoption and increase visibility of the platform, the team developed new promotional materials for distribution across workforce centers and events, including desk signs, flyers, and a pop-up banner.

These engagement trends and outreach efforts demonstrate the continued growth of Workforce Solutions News as a multi-channel communications tool that connects the public with workforce opportunities, highlights regional initiatives, and strengthens the Board's ability to share timely and accessible workforce information.

Workforce Solutions News Strategies for 2026

Expand high-performing content categories

Content focused on workforce resources and opportunities continues to perform strongly. During this reporting period, resource and event-related articles ranked among the top-performing pieces, including coverage of financial assistance programs, job fairs, and apprenticeship initiatives. Traffic performance in early 2026 already reflects progress toward the established KPI, with January (3,400 views) and February (3,600 views) both exceeding the target of 2,500 average monthly views.

Leverage flagship reports to stabilize traffic peaks

While no new flagship economic outlook report was released during this reporting period, traffic trends remain stable and demonstrate the potential impact of major analytical content. Previous performance shows that flagship reports can generate significant traffic spikes and extended engagement, supporting the KPI goal of generating 20–25% of annual views from report-driven content and increasing average session duration toward the 6:30+ benchmark. During this period, articles such as "Houston Jobs Report 2026: Tech & Healthcare Roles Set to Grow 40%+ by 2032" and "Texas Job Market 2026: Energy, Finance, and Construction Lead Hiring" have been published, contributing to this goal and highlighting ongoing efforts to produce data-driven, high-impact content.

Increase consistent social distribution to diversify traffic sources

Consistent distribution across social platforms remains a key strategy for expanding reach beyond existing site audiences. During this reporting period, 13% of published articles were shared across designated social channels (LinkedIn, Facebook, and Instagram), contributing to broader visibility and supporting the KPI goal of sharing at least 60% of all published articles through social amplification.

Workforce Solutions New Website Launch (Metrics)

Since its launch on January 17, 2026, the website has reached over 91,000 active users and 348,000 views, reflecting strong engagement and continued interest in Gulf Coast Workforce Solutions' programs and services.

The homepage remains the primary entry point, generating nearly a quarter of all site traffic (30,996 views), indicating that users are consistently starting their journey with general information about the GCWB.

Program-specific content continues to perform well, with the Childcare Financial Assistance page receiving over 17,000 views. This sustained traffic highlights the high demand for support services and the importance of maintaining clear, accessible information for families seeking assistance.

The Calendar page is also a key destination, with nearly 14,000 views and the highest average engagement time (1 minute 34 seconds), suggesting that users are actively seeking out events, workshops, and opportunities to engage with workforce programs.

Overall, user behavior indicates that visitors are not only accessing high-level information but are also engaging with specific programs and returning for actionable resources, demonstrating the website's effectiveness in connecting the community to services.

Communications Advisory Council

The Communications Advisory Council met for the first time on March 10, 2026, to establish a coordinated approach to communications across the Workforce Solutions Gulf Coast system. The council was formed to address the risks associated with fragmented messaging in a multi-provider, multi-region environment, where inconsistent terminology, branding, and outreach can create confusion for customers and employers.

The council serves in an advisory capacity to support alignment of system-wide communications with Board priorities, operational practices, and the needs of employers and jobseekers. Initial work has focused on establishing shared communication standards, messaging consistency, and a framework for centralized tools and templates to be used across regions and providers.

Manuals and Guidebooks

Annual Report

The Board published its 2025 Annual Report in late March. As the Board's first-ever public-facing report of its kind, it opens a new and important channel for communicating the Board's work, impact, and vision to the broader region. The report marks 2025 as the first full year of implementation of the Board's five-year strategic plan, *Innovate. Connect. Thrive. and* reflects meaningful progress across all four of the plan's strategic goals: supporting business-forward strategies, serving as a regional convener, improving service delivery, and increasing awareness of services.

The launch of Apprenticeships Work! and Hire Gulf Coast Youth, the integration of the one-stop service model, and the expansion of digital communications all reflect a year of substantial momentum toward those goals. The report also highlights the importance of accessible childcare as a foundational driver of economic mobility, connecting the Board's investment in working families directly to workforce participation and long-term upward mobility across the Gulf Coast. The report was completed in time to share with elected officials at the Legislative Luncheon and Roundtable on March 30 and represents an important milestone in strengthening regional awareness of the Board's work and impact.

Employer Engagement Guide

The Board has developed a new Employer Engagement Guide for Workforce Solutions Gulf Coast staff - the first guide of its kind and an important step in advancing the Board's strategic goal of improving service delivery across the region. It establishes a clear framework for how the workforce system approaches employer relationships, from initial outreach through long-term partnership.

The guide explains how the system works, how staff engage employers, the services available to businesses, and how employer engagement and career services teams work together to support both employers and job seekers. It also outlines how coordination occurs across Board staff and service providers, along with key operational considerations related to program requirements, compliance, and governance. The guide is designed to serve as a practical reference for staff across the system and will be updated as programs, policies, and priorities evolve.

Employer Engagement Policies and Procedures Manual

The Board is developing an Employer Engagement Policies and Procedures Manual as a companion to the Employer Engagement Guide. Where the guide establishes the framework for how we approach employer relationships, the manual will give staff the operational details they need to put that framework into practice.

The manual will cover employer intake and screening, the programs, and services we offer businesses, how training contracts and work-based learning placements work, job posting and recruiting support, and documentation and compliance requirements. It is written for Board employer engagement staff, Workforce Business Solutions career office staff, and TWC merit staff, and is designed to be a practical, everyday resource across the system.

Career Services Communications Guide
A Career Services Communications Guide is being created to establish clear, consistent standards for how career offices communicate with the public, employers, and partners across the WFS-GC system. The guide addresses a recognized gap: while career offices conduct meaningful outreach and engagement activity every day, the system has lacked a shared framework for how that activity is communicated, coordinated, and amplified at the regional level.

The guide will cover communications principles, roles and responsibilities, the full range of communications tools available across the system, step-by-step guidance for creating and printing materials, social media protocols, story submission processes, messaging standards, and a practical toolkit of templates for career office use. It is written primarily for frontline staff and service providers and is designed to be direct, accessible, and actionable.

The guide is intended to complement existing resources, including the Employer Engagement Guide and the Career Services Guidebook, and will support the Board's broader goals of strengthening public awareness, improving service delivery, and communicating with one brand, one voice, and one system across the region.

Complete Guide of Services (Update)
QR codes have now been added throughout the Complete Guide to Services, allowing readers to move directly from the guide to the corresponding pages on the new website for additional program information. The updated guide has also been posted to the WorkforceSolutionsNews.com site, where it is available as a resource for customers, employers, partners, and staff. The addition of QR codes strengthens the guide’s usefulness as a practical reference tool by connecting the printed content directly to the Board’s online service information.

9

Procurement Committee

Executive Summary

On March 31, 2026, at 10:00 a.m., Chair Dr. Bobbie Henderson convened a meeting of the Procurement Committee to review a contract amendment recommendation and receive informational updates regarding upcoming procurement activities. Other committee members in attendance included Chair Mark Guthrie, Doug Karr, Cheryl Guido, Jeff LaBroski, and Adrian Ozuna.

Board staff discussed possible authorization for staff to execute a contract amendment in accordance with the funding amount below and provided information on upcoming system procurements.

Item	Amendment Amount	Amended Maximum Contract Amount (Not to Exceed)
I. BakerRipley – Financial Aid Payment Office	$12,150,000	$393,250,000

BakerRipley Financial Aid Payment Office - Amendment

Background

The Gulf Coast Workforce Board contracts with BakerRipley to operate the Financial Aid Payment Office (FAPO) which administers financial aid and related payments that support workforce, education, and child care services across the region. These services include the processing and disbursement of education and training scholarships, participant support payments, and child care provider payments, in compliance with state and federal requirements.

This amendment reflects the availability of carryforward funds and additional state funding, enabling expanded investment in direct services for children, families, and workforce participants.

Current Situation

Board staff recommend amending the existing contract to increase the financial aid maximum by $12,000,000. These funds include carryforward dollars from the prior fiscal year, as well as new funding to support a teacher externship initiative, for which FAPO will administer stipend payments to participating teachers.

This investment will expand access to critical services by:

- Increasing the number of children served,

- Expanding education and training scholarships for individuals pursuing targeted, high-skill high growth occupations,
- Supporting implementation of the state-funded teacher externship program.

Most of the funding will be directed toward direct child care services for eligible children and families, with the remainder supporting scholarships and workforce initiatives.

Staff also requests an additional $150,000 in operational funding to support the administration and compliance with financial aid activities. This investment will support timely payment processing, maintain compliance, and strengthen overall service delivery. In early 2026, Governor Greg Abbott directed Texas state agencies, including the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC), to increase oversight and conduct reviews of the state's Child Care Services program. This request aligns with guidance from the Governor's Office and the Texas Workforce Commission to enhance review and oversight of child care provider activities.
To effectively manage the increased volume of financial aid activities and strengthen oversight of child care provider activities, the request includes four additional positions:

- Three Vendor Service Representatives to reduce provider caseloads, conduct initial provider visits, and strengthen ongoing engagement with child care providers.
- One Lead Compliance Specialist to enhance oversight through case review, staff coaching, and strengthened compliance processes.

The current operational funding request has been reduced from the original proposal to reflect lower funding needs due to existing staff vacancies. Despite this adjustment, these roles remain essential to maintaining service quality, strengthening provider relationships, and ensuring program integrity.

Action Requested: Board staff request authorization to amend the current BakerRipley – Financial Aid Payment Office contract to add $150,000 in operational funding and $12,000,000 to the financial aid maximum, increasing the total contract amount not to exceed $393,250,000.

II. Upcoming Procurements

The table below provides information on the status of the various components of our system, including when they will need to be reprocured:

System Component	Service Provider(s)	Procurement Status (Current Cycle)	Next Scheduled Procurement (Calendar Year)
Grant Fund Management	New	RFP Released – Closes 4/23/2026	2031
Family Engagement & Outreach	United Way of Greater Houston	RFP Scheduled for Release in Early April	2030
Financial Aid Payment Office	BakerRipley	RFP Released – Closes 5/7/2026	2030
Financial Aid Support Center	Equus	RFP Released – Closes 5/12/2026	2030

Executive Committee
Update for March 2026

Executive Summary

Chair Mark Guthrie called the Executive Committee to meet on March 9, 2026 at 5599 San Felipe, Suite 2000, Houston, Texas 77056. Board members present included Chair Guthrie, Guy Robert Jackson, Alan Heskamp, Lenora Sorola-Pohlman, Paul Puente and Carl Bowles.

The Committee focused on three key matters: the proposed H-GAC Local Funds Policy, the modernization of the GCWB Partnership Agreement, and the consideration of establishing an independent nonprofit. While distinct, these issues reflect a single imperative, ensuring that the Board's authority, financial stewardship, and operational capacity are aligned with its statutory responsibilities and the demands of the regional economy.

The Committee expressed clear concern that the proposed Local Funds Policy, as drafted, could undermine the Board's authority over funds incorporated into its approved budget. The discussion reaffirmed a foundational principle: the Board determines strategy and approves the use of funds, while the fiscal agent executes those decisions in accordance with applicable law. Preserving this distinction is essential to maintaining fiduciary control, transparency, and audit integrity.

The Committee also determined that the current Partnership Agreement no longer reflects the reality of how the system operates today. Over time, a misalignment between authority and execution has introduced inefficiencies, reduced transparency, and constrained the system's ability to act with clarity and speed. Modernizing the agreement is necessary to realign governance with statute, strengthen financial controls, and ensure that resources are deployed in direct support of the Board's strategic priorities.

Finally, the Committee advanced the establishment of an independent nonprofit corporation as a strategic extension of the Board's work. This entity would provide the flexibility to attract philanthropic investment, pilot innovative workforce strategies, and respond more nimbly to employer and industry needs, capabilities that are essential in a rapidly evolving economy. The Committee voted unanimously to move this item forward for full Board consideration.

Taken together, these actions represent a deliberate effort to strengthen the Board's ability to govern, steward resources, and lead the regional workforce system with greater clarity, efficiency, and impact.

H-GAC Local Funds Policy Draft

The Executive Committee discussed H-GAC's proposed Local Funds Policy, which is affixed as Attachment 1, to this report and incorporated by reference as if fully set forth herein. The policy, as drafted, defines "local funds" broadly and positions them as agency-wide resources subject to centralized control, including for purposes such as covering indirect costs, addressing budget shortfalls, and managing program deficits. The policy was presented at the February 2026 H-GAC Board meeting but tabled by H-GAC Board President Joe Garcia for further discussion and review.

The Committee expressed significant concern that, as drafted, the policy could be applied in a manner that permits H-GAC to use funds, including GCWB's locally generated funds, to cover costs that the Board has explicitly reviewed and declined. Such an application would undermine the Board's budgetary authority and introduce material governance and fiduciary risk. In response, Chair Guthrie issued a formal letter to H-GAC Executive Director Chuck Wemple on February 27, 2026, outlining the Board's concerns on both procedural and substantive grounds, including the lack of prior engagement and the policy's inconsistency with the statutory framework governing local workforce boards. This correspondence is attached hereto as Attachment 2.

Procedurally, the policy was advanced without prior notice or engagement with the H-GAC Chiefs including the Chief of Workforce. Further, the GCWB was unaware of the policy despite its direct implications for funds under Board governance. Substantively, the draft policy introduces a model of centralized fiscal control that is inconsistent with the statutory framework governing local workforce boards.

Under federal regulation, the local workforce board is responsible for developing the budget and overseeing the use of funds within the workforce area, while the fiscal agent is responsible for disbursement in accordance with the direction of the Board. This distinction is not technical but foundational. The Board determines strategy, allocation, and priorities; the fiscal agent ensures compliant execution. Any policy that permits unilateral reallocation or repurposing of funds incorporated into the Board's approved budget erodes that distinction and, in doing so, introduces material governance and audit risk.

Equally important is the nature of the funds at issue. The Board's local funds are not general-purpose revenues from H-GAC. They are generated through Board-directed activities, including fee-for-service arrangements, locally negotiated agreements, and philanthropic contributions, and are incorporated into the Board's adopted budget as part of an integrated financial strategy. They function, in many cases, as compliance safeguards, enabling the system to absorb disallowances, respond to programmatic needs, and maintain continuity in the administration of complex federal and state funding streams.

At its core, this issue is about fiduciary clarity. The Executive Committee affirms that all funds incorporated into the Board's approved budget, including local funds, remain under the authority of the Board, and that any use of those funds must be consistent with Board approval. The Committee further supports the Chair's request that the proposed policy be explicitly clarified to exclude Workforce Funds and GCWB-generated local funds from its scope.

GCWB Partnership Agreement
The Executive Committee also discussed the Partnership Agreement that defines the governance structure of the GCWB. The current agreement reflects a model established in 1996, at a time when the system was smaller, less complex, and still emerging from the consolidation of multiple federal and state programs.

In the decades since, the region has grown dramatically, the system has matured, and the expectations placed upon the Board have expanded, but the underlying governance structure has remained largely unchanged and indubitably vague. The result is a misalignment between formal authority and operational reality. GCWB staff now perform many of the functions historically assigned to the administrative entity, including program oversight, contract management, and day-to-day system operations, while accountability for performance, compliance, and outcomes rests squarely with the GCWB.

Workforce Attorney Jeanette Dela Cruz shared that this misalignment is rooted not only in practice but in structure. The GCWB does not exist as a separate legal or business entity independent of H-GAC, and all contracting authority, financial management, and fund oversight currently flow through the Partnership Agreement and fiscal agent designation. As a result, the entity responsible for creating strategy and approving budgets does not have direct control over the mechanisms required to execute them.

This structural condition creates inherent inefficiencies, compromises effectiveness, drives costs, and limits transparency. Under the current model, the GCWB is statutorily responsible for establishing priorities, approving budgets, and overseeing performance, while the fiscal and administrative infrastructure that executes those decisions operates through a separate entity, H-GAC. This separation has made it more difficult to ensure clear alignment between budget decisions, cost allocation, and actual expenditures, particularly with respect to indirect costs, administrative charges, and the allowability and allocability of expenses under federal and state requirements.

This misalignment also creates an inherent structural tension in the role of the Executive Director. The Executive Director is charged with executing the Board's policy direction, strategic priorities, and fiduciary responsibilities, while simultaneously operating within an administrative structure housed at H-GAC. In practice, this creates competing lines of accountability and places the Executive Director in a position of divided loyalty, where the legal and fiduciary duty to the Board must be reconciled with operational expectations of the administrative entity. This tension is not merely operational; it creates ambiguity in where ultimate authority resides and introduces risk in action and decision-making that should be governed solely by the Board's direction. It constrains the system's ability to act with clarity, speed, and consistency and exposes the organization to potential governance and compliance challenges. This is not a matter of individuals or intent, but of structure. The current model requires the Executive Director to navigate competing obligations that are fundamentally misaligned with the Board's statutory authority and the scale, complexity, and performance expectations of the system today.

Recent budget discussions have made these challenges more visible. The absence of clearly defined authority over cost allocation methodologies, indirect charges, and administrative expenditures has required a herculean effort to reconcile differences between Board-approved budgets and administrative execution. This has reduced efficiency, limited transparency, and diverted attention away from core priorities such as employer engagement, career services, and workforce outcomes. As reflected in prior discussions, these conditions create risk not only from a governance perspective but also in terms of audit exposure, cost allowability, and long-term fiscal sustainability, especially considering federal funding cuts and inflation.

Attorney Dela Cruz's analysis makes clear that this is not simply an operational concern; it is a structural instability. When authority, responsibility, and execution are distributed across entities without clear alignment, accountability becomes diffuse, financial controls weaken, and the system's ability to respond strategically is significantly constrained. The proposed path forward is not a departure from statute, but a realignment with it. Under Texas Government Code Chapter 2308 and implementing regulations, the Board is responsible for planning, prioritization, and oversight, and may serve as the administrative entity, while a fiscal agent is designated to receive and disburse funds in accordance with the Board's direction.

The Committee discussed creating a revised model where the GCWB formally assumes the role of administrative entity and one-stop operator, reflecting the work it is already performing, while H-GAC continues to serve as fiscal agent under a clearly defined interlocal agreement. This realignment will create greater efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability across the system. By aligning authority with execution, the Board will be able to streamline decision-making, eliminate duplicative administrative layers, and ensure that financial resources are deployed in direct support of strategic priorities. Clear cost allocation standards, transparent financial reporting, and defined fiscal roles will strengthen compliance with federal and state requirements, improve audit readiness, and reduce the need for retrospective corrections or protracted disputes.

Equally important, this structure restores clarity to the system. The fiscal agent's role is to ensure that funds are managed and disbursed in accordance with applicable law and the direction of the Board. It is not to set policy, determine programmatic priorities, or exercise independent control over resources. By clearly delineating these roles, the Board can fully exercise its statutory responsibilities while maintaining appropriate financial oversight and compliance safeguards.

This is, fundamentally, a governance modernization effort for greater responsiveness, innovation, and impact. It recognizes that the system we operate today is not the system that existed in 1996, and that the structures that govern it must evolve accordingly. By aligning governance, financial control, and operational responsibility, the GCWB will be better positioned to deliver on its vision, mission, and strategic plan, while ensuring that public resources are managed with the highest level of integrity, transparency, and impact.

Independent Nonprofit

The Executive Committee also considered the establishment of an independent nonprofit corporation to expand the GCWB's capacity to lead, innovate, and respond to the evolving needs of our regional economy. The proposed entity would be organized as a separate nonprofit corporation under Texas law and structured to qualify as a public charity under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. It would maintain independent governance, financial systems, and accountability structures, and would be explicitly prohibited from receiving or administering WIOA or other public workforce funds.

This is not a departure from the public system but a strategic extension of it. The Board's current model is highly effective at deploying public resources within a structured and compliance-driven framework. However, it is not designed to move at the speed of industry, to aggregate private and philanthropic capital, or to pilot new approaches that fall outside existing funding categories. The nonprofit creates this critical capacity. It allows the region to test new models, deepen employer partnerships, expand outreach, and bring additional resources to the table in service of economic mobility.

Legal analysis reinforces both the necessity and the opportunity of this approach. The Board does not currently exist as a standalone legal or tax entity and does not have an independent mechanism to receive donations, hold funds, or enter contracts outside of its relationship with H-GAC. Establishing a separate nonprofit provides a clear and compliant pathway to build that capacity while maintaining appropriate separation from public funds and responsibilities. It also positions the GCWB to access new funding streams, including philanthropic and grant opportunities that are limited to 501(c)(3) organizations.

Initial funding to support the formation of the nonprofit will be provided through the Houston Endowment's philanthropic Leadership and Resilience Grant. The nonprofit will be structured with independent governance, clear operational boundaries, and full compliance with state and federal requirements. It will be designed to complement, not complicate, the public system and to strengthen the Board's ability to deliver results for employers, workers, and communities across the region.

The Executive Committee voted unanimously to advance this concept for the full Board's discussion, consideration, and vote. The action before you today reflects the next step in that leadership, positioning the GCWB not only to manage the system we have, but to build the system we need.

Action
The Executive Committee recommends that the Board:

> Authorize the formation of an independent nonprofit corporation to support the Gulf Coast Workforce Board's mission to advance workforce innovation, economic mobility, and strategic initiatives; and authorize the Gulf Coast Workforce Board's Executive Director, or designee, to take all necessary actions to establish the nonprofit entity, including the preparation and filing of formation documents, development of governance and operating structures, and initiation of the process to obtain federal tax-exempt status under Section 501(c)(3), consistent with applicable federal and state law.

Attachment
9b-1

LOCAL FUNDS POLICY

Background

N/A

Current Situation

Review the local funds policy.

Funding Source

N/A

Budgeted

Not Applicable

Action Requested

Request approval of the Local Funds Policy. (Staff Contact: Christina Ordonez-Campos)

H-GAC LOCAL FUNDS POLICY

By Christina Ordóñez-Campos, CPA – Chief Financial Officer – January 2026

Overview:

Each year, H-GAC and its departments proactively seek out additional funding from local entities to supplement their budgets to meet specific needs.

Local funding may come from municipal and county governments within our region, ISDs within our region, or local non-profits. Funds received from these local entities are referred to as "local funds" & interlocal agreements must be used to document each relationship.

Funding may also come via transfers from the proprietary fund (H-GACBuy cooperative), workshop revenue, fee for service programs, or any interest revenue earned by the general fund; these funds will be treated as agency-wide unrestricted funds.

Request & Receipt of Local Funds:

The Chief Financial Officer and the Executive Director will approve local budgets via the annual and mid-year revision budget processes. Once approved, the accounting department will create local project codes that can be used by each requesting department for funding approved expenditures.

Local entities may reimburse H-GAC for local expenses incurred; they may also provide cash advances or payments for services/goods rendered. H-GAC accepts funds electronically or via check. Each approved project will be credited with the related revenue receipts.

Allowable Uses:

- Expenses approved by local entities in interlocal agreements.

- Grant matching funds.

- Grant unallowable direct expenditures and unallowable indirect expenditures.
- Agency-wide meetings/events/trainings.
- Revenue shortfalls due to temporary restrictions, program cancellations or unexpected events.
- Program overspending.
- Professional development not allowable by grant funding.
- Certain costs associated with peer exchanges as approved by the Executive Director

In all instances, the pertaining departments must submit a written request to the Chief Financial Officer for approval at least 60 days prior to the start of any applicable budget cycles or as soon as the need arises. Unanticipated urgent requests that develop within the 60-day timeframe may be considered on a case-by-case basis in coordination with the Executive Director.

Prohibited Expenditures:

- Donations to other agencies/organizations.
- Unapproved uses including grant matching commitments.

Reconciliation and Project Deficits & Surplus:

- All local funds will be reconciled at least quarterly to ensure sustainability and compliance with this policy.
- Any local projects found to be in a deficit situation during the reconciliation process will need to cover the overage with other applicable funding and/or via fund balance. The use of fund balance must be approved by the Chief Financial Officer. If deficits are not addressed within 30 days from the notification by the accounting department, the project will be deactivated, and no additional expenditures will be allowed to post. Exceptions for deactivation may be granted by the Executive Director if the project is essential to public safety, places the

agency in a situation of violating contract agreements, and/or has a reasonable, short-term plan for recovery of costs and local expenditures.

- Any local project surpluses must be handled as instructed by the related local entity. If specific instructions are not provided, the surplus will be kept in the local project and its use in future fiscal years must be approved by Chief Financial Officer.

Attachment 9b-2

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

February 27, 2026

Mr. Chuck Wemple
Via Email: Charles.wemple@h-gac.com
Executive Director
Houston-Galveston Council of Area Governments
3555 Timmons Lane
Houston, TX 77027

Re: H-GAC Proposed Local Funds Policy

Dear Chuck:

As Chair of the Gulf Coast Workforce Board (GCWB), I have significant concerns regarding the proposed H-GAC Local Funds Policy presented to the H-GAC Board on February 17, 2026. These concerns are both procedural and substantive.

Procedurally, the policy was advanced by H-GAC senior staff to the H-GAC Board without notice or engagement with the GCWB, among others. I first heard about it late last week, several days after it was presented at the H-GAC Board meeting. The GCWB also was unaware of the proposed Local Funds policy when it approved the FY26 GCWB budget. This is important since I understand that H-GAC management intends to rely on this policy, if approved by the H-GAC Board, to use "local funds" to cover the approximate $1,000,000 in H-GAC's proposed budgeted indirect cost receipts from the GCWB for Outreach and Government Affairs ("OGA") services that the GCWB declined to approve. Based on the discussions leading to approval of the reduced amount for OGA in GCWB's FY26 budget, it is clear that such a policy had been formulated before GCWB's budget approval.

Substantively, as discussed below, the proposed H-GAC Local Funds policy as written broadly defines "local funds" to include GCWB's "local funds" within the GCWB's approved budget ("Workforce Funds") and potentially interferes with GCWB's statutory budgetary authority and fiscal oversight responsibilities. Put another way, the proposed policy would cover GCWB's "local funds" and permit H-GAC's CEO and COO to spend them in their discretion, including on indirect charges the GCWB has rejected. The GCWB objects to both the policy in its current form, and its application to the Workforce Funds incorporated into the GCWB's approved budget.

As such, the GCWB requests the written clarification set forth in the last section of this letter be added in the policy to the effect that any such "local funds" policy will not apply to Workforce Funds or GCWB's "local funds," and directs H-GAC, as its fiscal agent and administrative entity to not apply the

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

proposed Local Funds policy or any similar policy, to reallocate, deactivate projects within, use, spend or otherwise control any Workforce Funds or "local funds" reflected in GCWB's approved budgets and any action that would impact the funds included in GCWB's approved budgets shall require prior approval by the GCWB Board.

I. Procedural Concerns and Lack of Notice

The draft Local Funds Policy was not provided to the GCWB or its Executive Director prior to its placement on the H-GAC Board agenda. The GCWB was not informed that the policy would be presented at the February 17, 2026 meeting and did not receive the draft for review or input before the HGAC Board materials were finalized.

The GCWB itself also was never notified that a policy purporting to materially affect funds incorporated into its approved FY26 budget would be considered by H-GAC's management or Board. The GCWB received no briefing, notice, or opportunity to engage before the presentation. We understand that the proposed Local Funds policy is intended to allow H-GAC's CEO or COO in their discretion to apply "local funds" as broadly defined in the proposed policy to cover the approximately $1 million of indirect charges for OGA that were rejected by the GCWB in connection with GCWB's FY26 budget. H-GAC's "local funds" are defined in the policy to include GCWB's "local funds," and the effect of this would allow H-GAC to use GCWB's local funds to pay a substantial amount of the $1 million of indirect charges for OGA that the GCWB declined to approve in the FY2026 budget. While the GWCB approved funding of H-GAC's OGA indirect costs in a much reduced amount in the FY26 budget, this proposed policy and H-GAC's intentions would have been relevant to that discussion and should have been presented at that time.

Irrespective of when the policy arose or was presented, to the extent H-GAC uses GCWB's "local funds" that are Workforce Funds subject to GCWB's approved budget to incur and pay costs rejected by the GCWB or costs not approved by the GCWB under the proposed policy, such use and payment of Workforce Funds would be an improper use of Workforce Funds without approval of the GCWB. In any event, the GCWB should certainly have been consulted in advance of potential adoption of this policy. Policies that potentially alter governance and control of funds by a statutorily designated local workforce development board require transparent engagement. Advancing such a policy without that engagement creates structural ambiguity and unnecessary institutional risk.

II. Statutory Authority of the GCWB

The GCWB operates pursuant to the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and its implementing regulations at 20 C.F.R. Part 679. Under 20 C.F.R. § 679.370, the local workforce development board is responsible for developing the local budget and overseeing the use of funds

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

allocated to the local workforce development area. Under 20 C.F.R. § 679.420 the fiscal agent is responsible for disbursing funds in accordance with applicable law and the direction of the local board. Texas Labor Code Chapter 2308 similarly assigns governance and oversight responsibilities to local workforce development boards with respect to funds allocated to the workforce development area. Consistent with this framework, the GCWB adopts its annual and revised budgets, including all funds incorporated into those budgets ("Workforce Funds"), whether derived from federal allocation, state allocation, local agreements, philanthropic sources, fee-for-service revenue, or other locally generated activities.

H-GAC serves as the GCWB's acting fiscal agent and administrative entity. The GCWB compensates H-GAC for certain administrative costs using these Workforce Funds. H-GAC's roles of fiscal agent and administrative entity for the GCWB includes in significant part ensuring accounting integrity, proper internal controls and compliance with applicable federal, state, and contractual requirements. These roles are essential but do not displace or supersede the GCWB's statutory authority to determine the allocation and strategic use of funds incorporated into its approved budgets.

III. Nature of GCWB Local Funds

The GCWB local funds incorporated into the Workforce Funds in GCWB's approved budgets are generated through GCWB activities, including fee-for-service arrangements, locally negotiated agreements, philanthropic donations and Board-driven initiatives. These funds are not agency-wide unrestricted revenue of H-GAC.

A portion of these GCWB local funds is committed to GCWB's FY26 budget pursuant to specific agreements. The majority are maintained as a reserve to address disallowable costs, unanticipated programmatic needs, allowable expenses not chargeable to federal awards, and other contingencies that arise in administering complex federal and state funding streams.

This reserve structure is a compliance safeguard consistent with 2 C.F.R. Part 200. It allows the GCWB to meet contractual obligations without jeopardizing program integrity.

These GCWB local funds are not H-GAC general funds available to offset H-GAC's budgetary gaps or to cover HGAC's indirect charges to GCWB where the GCWB has rejected those charges.

IV. Non-Applicability of the Proposed Policy to GCWB Funds

The proposed Local Funds Policy both broadly defines "local funds" and appears to treat such funds as H-GAC departmental-wide unrestricted revenue subject to centralized approval, reallocation, and project deactivation authority. However, the GCWB does not consent to application of this policy to Workforce

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

Funds, including GCWB's local funds incorporated into its approved budgets or created via GCWB activities.

Application of centralized approval authority, surplus control, or reallocation authority over GCWB-budgeted funds would conflict with the allocation of responsibilities established under WIOA, 20 C.F.R. Part 679, and Texas Labor Code Chapter 2308. Any use of GCWB-budgeted local funds for indirect costs, deficit coverage, or other purposes must be consistent with the GCWB's adopted budget and approved by the GCWB. The Board will not support any policy framework that permits unilateral recharacterization or reallocation of GCWB-generated funds without Board authorization.

The GCWB is not a member of the Houston-Galveston Council of Governments nor is it a "department" of H-GAC. The relationship between the GCWB and the Houston-Galveston Area Council of Governments is contractual as outlined in the 1996 Consortium Agreement and the 1997 Partnership Agreement. Thus any budgetary changes that impacts the GCWB's approved budget must first be approved and adopted by the GCWB Board.

V. Direction and Required Clarification

Based on the foregoing, the GCWB directs H-GAC, as its fiscal agent and administrative entity to not apply the proposed Local Funds policy or any similar policy to reallocate, deactivate projects within, use, spend or otherwise control any Workforce Funds or "local funds" reflected in GCWB's approved budgets.

If the policy is to be implemented for departments or functions of H-GAC other than its roles for the GCWB, the GCWB requests that the proposed written Local Funds policy be clarified by words making clear it does not apply to Workforce Funds or GCWB local funds, to the effect of:

Notwithstanding anything to the contrary in this Local Funds Policy, the Policy shall not apply to, and shall not authorize centralized approval, reallocation, project deactivation, use, spending or other control over, any Workforce Funds incorporated into the GCWB's approved budgets or generated through GCWB activities, including any GCWB local funds, and any action that would impact the funds included in GCWB's approved budgets shall require prior approval by the GCWB Board.

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

Clearly delineating roles preserves institutional integrity, reduces audit exposure, and ensures that fiscal agent administration remains consistent with statutory governance. The GCWB remains committed to collaboratively resolving these issues and maintaining a strong partnership with H-GAC consistent with the legal framework governing our respective roles. Please don't hesitate to contact me with any questions.

Respectfully,

Mark Guthrie

Mark Guthrie
Chair, Gulf Coast Workforce Board

Performance and Production

Update for March 2026

Reporting Infrastructure Enhancements
Workforce Solutions – Gulf Coast continues to work closely with the Texas Workforce Commission as the state modernizes its reporting infrastructure. While several reporting modules have been updated, data completeness challenges remain. To improve accuracy and consistency, the Board has accelerated standardized reporting tools across all providers, improving the timeliness and reliability of performance data. The region also continues to use predictive models aligned with TWC methodologies to monitor trends and make timely operational adjustments.

Provider Collaboration and Support
Strong provider partnerships remain central to performance improvement. Bi-monthly coordination sessions support alignment, reinforce best practices, and promote shared accountability. In addition, targeted training for provider and Board staff focuses on advanced interviewing, career assessment, and documentation practices to strengthen service delivery and performance outcomes.

What the Current Performance Data Shows

(as of January 2026)

Current FY2026 performance shows mixed results across workforce and program participation measures. While several employment and earnings outcomes are meeting or exceeding targets, a number of credential, skills gain, and youth measures remain below expected performance levels at this point in the program year. Overall, employment outcomes remain comparatively strong, while education and training measures continue to develop as participants progress through programs.

In simple terms:

- Employment outcomes for Adults and Dislocated Workers are largely meeting state targets, particularly in Q2 and Q4 post-exit measures.
- Median earnings after exit exceed state targets for Adults, Dislocated Workers, and Youth.
- Credential attainment and measurable skills gains are currently below target levels and may improve later as we collect credential milestones.

- Youth employment and enrollment Q4 outcomes are below targets at this point in the year.
- Reemployment and employer engagement measures are currently not meeting targets.

Overall, several core employment and earnings measures are performing well, while other indicators are currently below target and will continue to be monitored as the program year progresses. Many education and training outcomes are reported later in the program cycle as participants complete services and additional credential milestones are recorded.

Key System Improvements Underway
To sustain positive trends, the Board has accelerated several system-wide improvements:

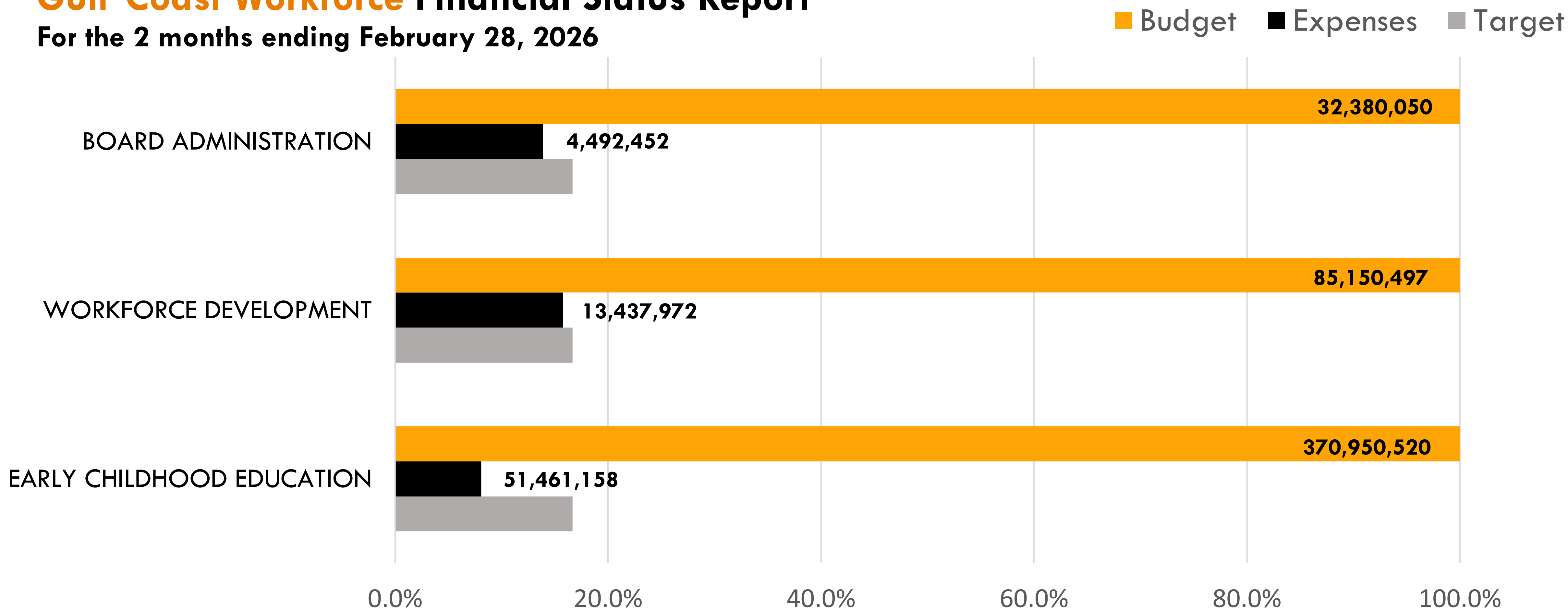
- Enhanced career and skills assessments to better align training with labor market demand.
- Increased focus on short-term, industry-recognized credentials.
- Expanded work-based learning, including on-the-job training and apprenticeships.
- Strengthened provider accountability through ETPL updates and routine performance reviews.
- Expanded year-round youth engagement and post-exit follow-up.

Summary
Overall performance shows strong employment and earnings outcomes, while several education, credential, youth, and reemployment measures remain below target and may improve as participants complete training and services later in the program year.

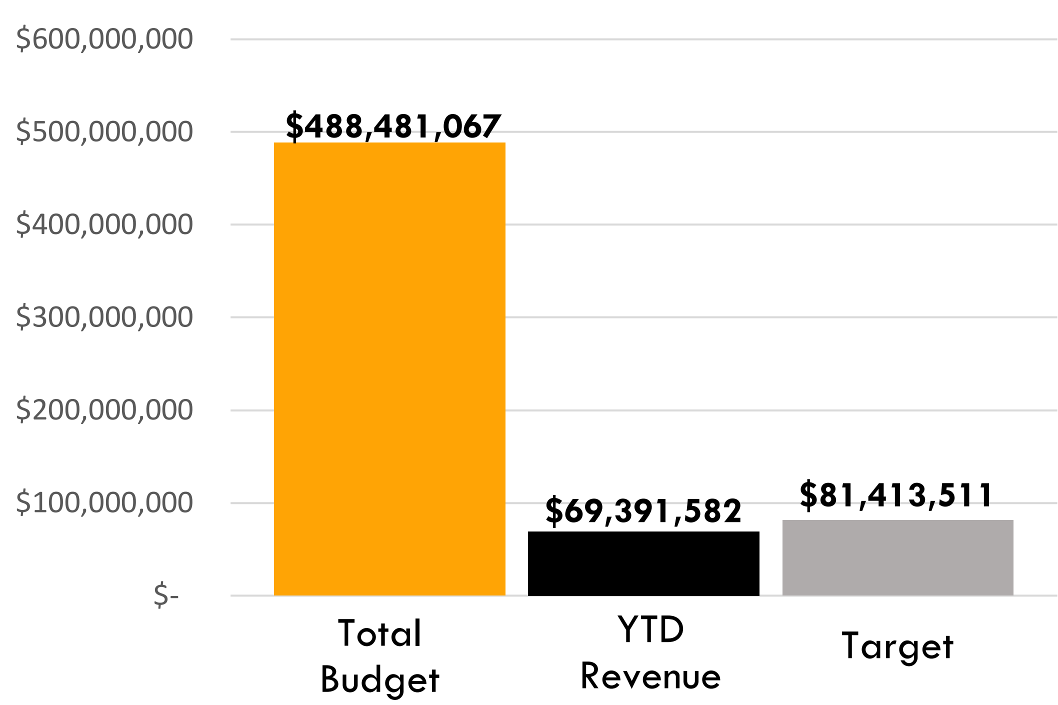
The Board continues to monitor these areas closely while implementing system improvements aimed at strengthening outcomes across all performance measures.

Gulf Coast Workforce Financial Status Report

For the 2 months ending February 28, 2026



Workforce Revenue



System Expenses