

**Workforce Solutions Deep East Texas  
Board Meeting Minutes  
415 S. First Street, Suite 110B, Lufkin, TX 75901  
October 8, 2024**

**I. VICE-CHAIR ELLEN MILLS CALLED THE BOARD MEETING TO ORDER AT 2:32 P.M.**

**MS. MILLS ANNOUNCED IN ACCORDANCE WITH GUIDANCE FROM THE TEXAS WORKFORCE COMMISSION (WD LETTER 28-19) DATED NOVEMBER 19, 2019, REGARDING THE TEXAS OPEN MEETINGS ACT GOVERNMENT CODE CHAPTER 551 ALLOWING THE USE OF VIDEO-CONFERENCING AS A METHOD FOR CONDUCTING BOARD MEETINGS, THE BOARD IS PROVIDING FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN ITS BOARD MEETING AT THE ADDRESS LISTED ABOVE AND VIA VIRTUAL MEETING WEB LINK. SHE ALSO SAID THE MEETING IS BEING RECORDED AND THE OPEN SESSION PORTION OF THE MEETING IS AVAILABLE TO THE PUBLIC UPON REQUEST. THE BOARD SERVES TWELVE (12) COUNTIES AND LISTED THE HOST LOCATION; AND PRESIDING OFFICER, ELLEN MILLS, WAS PHYSICALLY PRESENT.**

**AFTER THE ROLL CALL, MS. MILLS CONFIRMED THAT A QUORUM WAS PRESENT:**

**Members Present:** Joe Clyde Adams, Kerry Ballast, Rebekah Burkhalter, Ashley Courtney, Tyane Dietz, Tim Ditoro, Phyllis Grandgeorge, Eddie Hopkins, Garvey Jackson, Melody Jenkins, Dan Kern, Matthew Lowery, Robert McLeod, Ellen Mills, Marisa Phillips, Rich Scott, John Allen Slocumb, John White

**Members Absent:** Lisa Balty, Anita Humphreys, Kotosha Jeffery, Gene Lee, Kelli Marshall, Quincy Martindale, Benjamin Mott, Jessica Rogers

**Board Staff Present:** Mark Durand, Jeff Eichman Dara Harmon, Debb Homman, Maribel Soto-Mendoza, Lauren Phipps, Karen Stubblefield

**Visitors:** Scott Amey, Jessica Blair, LaTreaser Cartwright, Rhonda Cartwright, Michelle Kennedy, Monica Peters-Clark, Shakia Roberts

**ELLEN MILLS REMINDED THE BOARD MEMBERS OF THE CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATION.**

Ms. Mills asked that all members sign a conflict of interest declaration regardless of whether they have a conflict and return the form to Board staff.

**WELCOME OF GUESTS:**

None.

**II. Public Comments**

None.

**III. Discussion/Action: Approval of Minutes – September 10, 2024**

**Motion:** Joe Clyde Adams made the motion to approve the minutes.

**Second:** Eddie Hopkins

**In Favor:** All

**Oppose:** None

**Abstain:** None

Motion: Passes

**IV. Board Members Comments on Activity in their Respective Areas**

Ms. Balty mentioned there will be a new Tractor Supply store on Stallings Drive in Nacogdoches. Dillas Quesadillas will open soon in the building that was previously occupied by Shipley Do-Nuts prior to its closing in Nacogdoches. Ms. Jenkins recommended Board members tour the Smithsonian exhibit in San Augustine.

**V. PY'25-28 Strategic Plan Ad Hoc Committee Appointments**

No one volunteered, no appointments made.

**VI. Executive Director's Report**

**A. Contracts/Agreements**

Contract executed between the Board and Dynamic Workforce Solutions for Operations and Management of the Deep East Texas Workforce Centers and services.

Contract executed between the Board and Goodwill Industries of Central East Texas for the operation and management of child care services.

Contract executed with Alexander, Lankford & Hiers, Inc. to perform and fil annual audit and financial statements.

Contract executed with Diaz, Smith, and Associates for compliance monitoring of fiscal and program monitoring of contractors.

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) renewed with Newton County Public Library to keep one computer kiosk in the library for public access to services provided by workforce including job search and labor market information.

MOU renewed with Legacy Institute of Financial Education (LIFE) to keep one computer kiosk at LIFE for public access to services provided by workforce including job search and labor market information.

MOU with the Office of the Attorney General of Texas to accept and provide services for Non-Custodial Parents (NCP) participants.

MOU with Nacogdoches ISD to provide electrician pre-apprenticeships partnering with TRIO Education to enroll 20 high school students with funding provided by the 1724BSA Apprenticeship Grant.

**B. Performance**

**Child Care:**

The Board's current YTD average per day is 2,689 and performance as of August Monthly Performance Report is 100.22% YTD. There are currently 1,119 children on the waiting list as of July 31, 2024.

**Workforce:**

The Board was placed on a Technical Assistance Plan (TAP) for missing two end-of-year Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act (WIOA) measures in 2023. The Board and contractor have developed an action plan and as of July are meeting both measures.

As of June MPR, three performance measures are being missed. Action to meet those measures are in place: Dislocated Worker Employed Q2 Post Exit – August expected meet date; Career and Training Employed/Enrolled Q2 – August expected meet date; Youth Employed/Enrolled Q4 Post Exit – Not expected to meet this PY – missed the measure by one participant.

**C. Contacts and Coordination Efforts**

Board Staff attended Bridging Education and Business hosted at Angelina College by the Lufkin Chamber of Commerce.

We hosted the Texas Rising Star Child Care Annual Banquet.

Executive Director and Business Analyst presented workforce information to the Men's Fieldhouse Group.

Several Board staff attended the Nacogdoches Chamber of Commerce Annual Banquet.



Executive Director and Regional Convener Coordinator attended the SFASU CARRI tri-county follow-up meeting and included Houston, Polk and Trinity Counties.

Three Board staff, three Education Partners and three employers attended the TWC Apprenticeship Conference.

The Board partnered with the Manufacturing Alliance and Angelina College to present the 2024 Manufacturing Day.

**D. Rules and Legislation Update**

Nothing to report.

**E. Funding**

The Wagner-Peyser Grant Amendment #1 will add to operational expenses through December 31, 2024.

Child Care Formula Funds Amendment #4 will add funds to meet program targets and fund prospective payments.

RESEA Grant Amendment #2 will extend that grant period from September 30, 2024 to February 28, 2025.

**F. Other Activity and Administrative Matters not requiring action by the Board**

Mr. Durand reported the August 2024 unemployment rate stands at 5.3%.

**VII. Committee Reports**

**A. Business Services Committee**

**1. 2024 Teacher Externship**

On June 10-14, 2024, Workforce Solutions Deep East Texas partnered with 13 local businesses, 15 teachers and 11 independent school districts to link classrooms with the workplace and help shape tomorrow's workforce for industry needs. Through this program, high school teachers were matched with businesses across the region for a week of learning, observing and job-shadowing. The employers emphasized the need to address the skills gap in manufacturing, health care, construction and IT industries. Based on evaluations, 100% of teachers and employers would recommend this externship to their peers. To read more and view a video summary, visit <https://detwork.org/blog/2024-teacher-externship>.

**2. Business Relations Report**

Business Analyst, Emily Harmon has been fostering relationships with employers and building loyalty to increase their utilization of workforce services. Available by request are market data reports which include: Wage Data, Regional Job Demand Analysis, Employment Trends, Economic Overview Reports, Educational Institution Data, Community Partner Workforce Data, Internal Staff Support and Stakeholder Data for Local Government. She also assists with Rapid Response events that are designed to respond to layoffs and business closings, quickly coordinating workforce services to affected workers and providing companies access to services and information.

Mrs. Harmon also supports industry efforts like Manufacturing Day, Jobs & Education Forums, as well as engaging with regional chambers increasing awareness, building relationships and compiling the Workforce Development News that is emailed monthly.

**B. Executive/Finance Committee**

**1. Information and Briefing Items**

**a. Apprenticeship Board Service Award**

The Texas Workforce Commission awarded Workforce Solutions Deep East Texas with a Third Place Board Service Award (BSA) and \$50,000 BSA grant for increasing the availability of registered apprenticeships in the region for the grant period of January 1 - December 31, 2024. Pre-apprenticeships (\$33,700). Form partnerships and implement pre-apprenticeship programs related to high demand occupations for high school students starting in the Fall of 2024. Pre-apprenticeships are successful in high schools because they offer hands-on learning opportunities for students on a career pathway and lead to certifications, employment and further training:



**Diboll ISD - Electronic Assembler** - 30 students. Training with employer partner IPC International and Lockheed Martin. Through P-TECH (Pathways in Technology Early College High School), Diboll students begin working on workforce ready college courses their freshman year of high school. The goal is for students to graduate high school with an Associate in Applied Science degree as well as level-1 certifications in Electronics Assembler and in Computer Maintenance. Graduates of this apprenticeship program will gain valuable field experience and classroom knowledge to better equip them to be successful Electronics Assemblers;

**Nacogdoches ISD - Electrician** - 20 students. Training and employer partner: TRIO Education and Stiles Electric. In partnership with TRIO Education, NISD is launching an electrical pre-apprenticeship training program as part of its Construction Technology Program of Study. This two-year program allows high school students to complete the TRIO Electrical Pre-Apprenticeship, earning 540 transferable hours toward a four-year electrical apprenticeship. This comprehensive approach provides students with a well-rounded foundation, equipping them for success in the skilled trades industry;

**Apprenticeship Success Story Video** to highlight the experiences of an apprentice from the Legacy Institute's IT Registered Apprenticeship Program and their employer;

**Texas Workforce Commission Apprenticeship** Conference (October 3-4, 2024, Dallas) Hosted high demand industry employers for the Apprenticeship Texas Conference and enable to them to learn more about registered apprenticeships and how other employers are using the tool to equip their workforce with advanced skills. Funds will provide complimentary registration, travel and hotel expenses.

**b. Tri-Agency Regional Convener Grant Information**

Since our last update, the Board's Regional Conveners staff, along with SPEAR Team members completed and submitted the 2024-2029 WSDet DRAFT Regional Strategic Plan. We also submitted our DRAFT 2-Year Implementation Plan, Data Infrastructure Update, and DRAFT Data Dashboard report. We were asked for our 2-Year Implementation Plan to include defining our SPEAR team members' roles and regional stakeholder roles, sustainability strategies, decision matrix and timeline for updating our targeted industries and occupations, regional work-based learning strategy, regional data management strategy, regional communication strategy, and our regional employer engagement strategies. Board staff has recently met with our Jobs For the Future (JFF) coach to receive feedback about all the recently submitted deliverables. Our team will be working on the final deliverable, Regional Strategic Plan, with 2-year Implementation Plan, that is to be submitted by December 31, 2024. Board staff and SFASU Center for Applied Research & Rural Innovation (CARRI) have recently hosted two Jobs and Education Forums (JEF). The purpose of the forums is to assemble all regional stakeholder groups together for collaboration opportunities. The focus of these collaborations is to initiate purposeful conversations and gather invaluable feedback about the employer/employee relationship mindset. We have two more Jobs & Education Forums planned, October 15, 2024, in Jasper, TX and on November 6, 2024, in Crockett, TX. Everyone's support is appreciated.

There was discussion on how to track post-graduate student and if they're working in the field they studied.

**c. Student HireAbility Update**



Since our last board informational update, the Student HireAbility Navigator, Lisa Crawford, along with the Texas Workforce Commission's Vocational Rehabilitation staff, Partners for Rural Impact and Partners Resource Network held a disabled youth employment and resource fair on September 18, 2024, at the Stephen F. Austin State University Baker Pattillo Student Center in Nacogdoches. In attendance were 104 students and adults, along with 43 exhibit tables and guest speakers. We received a lot of very positive feedback about the event and plan to host another similar event next year in Lufkin.

October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM), and the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) encourages businesses and organizations across the country to participate. Therefore, the Student HireAbility Navigator, in partnership with the Texas Workforce Commission's Vocational Rehabilitation staff, is hosting an event for National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) on October 10, 2024, at the C.L. Simon Recreation Center in Nacogdoches from 8:30 am to 1:00 pm. We hope to have up to 100 regional employers of all sizes and representing a variety of industries in attendance. Employers will learn how we can assist their businesses through workforce programs, incentives when hiring people with disabilities and customizable employment services. They will also hear employment success stories from people with disabilities. The event will feature 8 presentations from Workforce Solutions Deep East Texas staff members, TWC Vocational Rehabilitation staff members and outside participants.

**2. Discussion/Possible Action**

**a. Action Item 24-25 Equal Opportunity Policy Update**

Motion: The Executive/Finance Committee recommended acceptance of this policy update as presented.  
Second: Tim Ditoro  
In Favor: All  
Oppose: None  
Abstain: None  
Motion: Passes

**VIII. Discussion and Acceptance of Financial Reports**

**a. Financial Reports for August 2024**

- Statement of Financial Position
- Budget vs. Actual
- Grant Report

Chief Financial Officer, Maribel Soto-Mendoza, provided financial updates for August of 2024, stating no concerns.

**IX. Adjourn**

Ellen Mills adjourned the Board Meeting at 3:37 p.m.

Duly passed and approved on this 12 day of November 2024

  
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Kelli Marshall, Chair

Attest

*Dara Harmon*

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*Dara Harmon, Exec. Administrative Assistant*