

**Workforce Solutions - Deep East Texas**  
**415 S. First Street, Suite 110B**  
**Lufkin, TX 75901**  
**Operations Committee Minutes**  
**June 6, 2023**

**I. CHAIR ROBERT FITZPATRICK CALLED THE OPERATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING TO ORDER AT 2:07 P.M.**

**MR. FITZPATRICK 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 VIDEOCONFERENCING 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. HE 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. PRESIDING OFFICER, ROBERT FITZPATRICK, WAS PHYSICALLY PRESENT.**

**AFTER THE ROLL CALL, MR. FITZPATRICK CONFIRMED THAT A QUORUM WAS PRESENT:**

**Members Present:** Joe Clyde Adams, Rebekah Burkhalter, Robert Fitzpatrick, Ethan Herr, Malcolm Ifoezeh, Marisa Phillips

**Members Absent:** Phyllis Grandgeorge, Randy Roberts, Jessica Rogers, John White

**Board Staff Present:** Mark Durand, Jeff Eichman, Anna Holderberg, Debb Homman, Aubrey Jones, Sarah Milligan, Lauren Phipps, Maribel Soto-Mendoza, Karen Stubblefield

**Visitors:** Scott Amey, Jessica Blair, Kevin Bradford, LaTreaser Cartwright, Rhonda Cartwright, Mark Christie, Michelle Kennedy, Shakia Roberts

**CHAIR ROBERT FITZPATRICK REMINDED THE COMMITTEE MEMBERS OF THE CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATION.**

Chair Robert Fitzpatrick asked that all members sign a conflict of interest declaration regardless of whether they have a conflict and send it to the Board staff for recordkeeping.

**WELCOME OF GUESTS:**

Mark Durand introduced the Board's newest staff member, Jeff Eichman. As the Board's Regional Convener Coordinator, Mr. Eichman expressed his excitement to build partnerships through the Tri-Agency Regional Convener Grant.

**II. Public Comments**  
None

**III. Discussion/Action: Approval of Minutes – February 22, 2023**

Motion: Joe Clyde Adams made the motion to approve the minutes as presented.  
Second: Ethan Herr  
In Favor: All  
Oppose: None  
Abstain: None  
Motion: Passes

**IV. Information Items**

**A. Foster Youth Conference**

Board staff, Aubrey Jones and Sarah Milligan, along with two workforce contractor staff, attended the TWC Annual Foster Youth Conference. Ms. Jones and Ms. Milligan shared highlights and takeaways from the conference with the committee. A group of state judges spoke on how to improve coordination of services between the Justice System and Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) in transitioning youth out of foster care. The judges discussed how they help youth to increase VR referrals plus improve the post-secondary training and/or employment opportunities for youth in, and transitioning out of, foster care. Ms. Jones expressed the importance of outreaching foster youth, as most qualify for programs Workforce Solutions Deep East Texas (WSDet) offers. The earlier that connection is established, the more likely those youth are to be successful. Board member, Marisa Phillips, noted that Buckner Children & Family Services has a case worker that specifically works with foster youth aging out of care.

**B. Middle Skills Gap Guide**

Mr. Durand summarized the Middle Skills Gap guide regarding the Middle Skills Gap short-term grant the Board received. The Board will partner with training providers, non-profit entities, community programs, or other state agencies that provide training and certifications for middle skill occupations (occupations requiring some education beyond high school but less than a four-year degree) but have insufficient funds to purchase specific supplies required for those occupations. The grant will provide \$52,986.00 to the Board to assist individuals trained by partners to allow them to purchase specific items required by the employer and support services needed as a condition of employment. To be eligible to receive services under this grant, participants must meet WIOA basic eligibility requirements. The grant period is from March 8, 2023 to November 30, 2023.

**V. Discussion/Possible Action**

*No actions brought before the committee.*

**VI. Board Reports**

**A. Workforce Center Report**

Ms. LaTreasier Cartwright, Workforce Project Director, started the report by sharing a customer success story. Jessica Blair reported on the rural services strategies and outreach efforts for second quarter of FY23. Workforce staff continue to visit all counties including counties that do not have a workforce center. The strategies in place have been successful in increasing participation from customers in rural communities. Ms. Blair reviewed the Metrix Learning data, reporting 51 new users registered in the second quarter of FY23 for Metrix Learning courses, which are offered free of charge, and two (2) new customers registered for Metrix paid certification (Food Handler's Certification and Microsoft Office Specialist), which is paid for and sponsored by TWC. The courses offered through Metrix Learning cover a vast scope of topics from basic skills, to how to properly handle difficult situations, and other topics to increase employability knowledge and skills. As employers are becoming aware of Metrix Learning, they are looking at ways to utilize the courses with their staff. Ms. Blair reviewed the Greeter Report for Foot Traffic (7,116) and Job Seeker Services provided (14,962) for second quarter of FY23. Shakia Roberts reviewed the WIOA enrollment report, with a total 64 enrollments between Adult, Dislocated Worker, Out-of-School Youth, and In-School Youth for January through May 2023. Mark Christie summarized the Choices enrollment numbers and activities for second quarter of FY23. LaTreasier Cartwright reported

on performance measures, pointing out that five (5) measures were not met for March 2023 performance, but most of those measures are on target to be met for the program year.

**B. Child Care Services Report**

Michelle Kennedy reported on the Child Care Services (CCS) Performance Data, noting the target goal of 2,277 average children served per day was exceeded for March 2023 with 2,494 average served (109%). The FY23 target goal increased to 2,349 as of April 1, 2023. Mr. Durand stated over 600 children are on waitlist as of the date of this report. New children are being enrolled as children drop out of services. The Board has instructed the childcare contractor to maintain 2450 average per day. The board is monitoring enrollment and funding to maximize expenditures and enrollment, but also monitoring enrollment to ensure funds are not overspent. Ms. Kennedy reported a total of 101 Provider Agreements with 85 agreements in the Deep East Texas (DET) region and 16 agreements outside of the workforce delivery area. Agreements outside of the DET region typically occur due to parents living in DET region but may work in another region. Child Care Coordinator, Debb Homman, provided updates regarding the Texas Rising Star (TRS) program. There are currently 42 TRS providers, serving 1,229 children within these centers. Ms. Homman also reported that annual assessments for TRS centers are underway.

**VII. Adjourn**

Chair Robert Fitzpatrick adjourned the Operations Committee Meeting at 2:59 p.m.

Duly passed and approved on this 7<sup>th</sup> day of August 2023

  
Robert Fitzpatrick, Chair

Attest

  
Lauren Phipps, Planning and Policy Specialist