



**MEETING OF THE
TEXAS WORKFORCE COMMISSION**

May 5, 2020

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TUESDAY, MAY 5, 2020

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: I'm showing it's 9:00.

Good morning.

MALE: Good morning.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: This meeting is called to order. Mr. Trobman, has anyone signed up for public comment?

MALE: Good morning. We have no one signed up for public comment this morning.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Thank you very much. This brings us to the end of Agenda Items 3 through 7. Let's take a very brief break to reset for the rest of the meeting. We're ready.

MALE: Yes, sir.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: All right, we're back in session. This is Agenda Item 8, discussion for consideration of possible action regarding Jobs and Education for Texans Advisory Board recommendations concerning fiscal year 2020 applicants for community, technical, and state colleges and independent school districts.

EMILY CLODFELTER: Good morning, Chairman Daniel, Commissioner Alvarez, Commissioner Demerson, and Mr. Serna. For the record, my name is Emily Clodfelter from the Office of Employer Initiatives. I'm here this morning to give a brief update and summary from the JET Advisory Board meeting that was on April 16, 2020. The Advisory Board reviewed and

1 approved the mass list of ISEs and IHEs [unintelligible]
2 applications and directed staff to move forward with awarding
3 these grants with the ability to move down the list as
4 recaptured funds become available for the contracting phase, and
5 to utilize the remaining IH [unintelligible] funds to fund
6 additional ISE grants. [unintelligible] 19 the advisory board
7 did note that the occupations listed in this mass list are
8 essential services, and that these grants will help us
9 [unintelligible]. Advisory Board also took action to split the
10 funding 60 percent ISDs and 40 percent IHEs for future RFAs.
11 And I'm here to answer any questions.

12 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Comments or questions.

13 MALE: No questions. The only comment I
14 say is great work by the JET Advisory Committee.

15 GERALD BOOKER: And this is Gerald. I'd
16 also like to commend the Advisory Board on their
17 [unintelligible] for the work [unintelligible] also to
18 congratulate and commend Emily and Dale. And lastly, just to
19 commend Dr. Gardner, who is off the Advisory Board--I think he's
20 gonna be retiring--for the work that he's done over the years.
21 I had the opportunity, actually, to manage with Emily leading
22 the charge that program, and Dr. Gardner from the Texas
23 [unintelligible] station coordinating board was a very
24 instrumental part of that [unintelligible] since inception. So
25 I would like to thank him for his work on that committee.

1 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Thank you. Thank you,
2 Emily.

3 EMILY CLODFELTER: Thank you.

4 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Before moving to Agenda
5 Item 9, discussion, consideration, and possible action regarding
6 Purchasing from People with Disabilities, program temporary
7 suspension of Texas [unintelligible] 80641(f)(9), and Texas
8 Human Resources Code Section 122.013(c)(3), direct labor hour
9 ratio due to COVID-19 pandemic.

10 MICHAEL HOOKS: Good morning,
11 Commissioners, Mr. Serna. For the record, I'm Michael Hooks for
12 the vocational rehabilitation. Today I'm bringing for your
13 consideration and possible action a request regarding the
14 Purchase from People with Disabilities program, or PPD program,
15 for a temporary suspension of 40 TAC 806.41(f)(9), and Texas
16 Human Resources Code 122.013(c)(3), governing the PPD, direct
17 disabled labor hour ratio. This request is [unintelligible] the
18 COVID-19 pandemic. Texas state agencies that provide essential
19 services are served by the products and services offered by the
20 PPD community rehab [unintelligible] or CRPs. Because of the
21 COVID-19 emergency, the increased demand by some agencies is
22 resulting in additional production requirements on essential
23 product and service contracts. Additionally, CRPs are having
24 difficulty in finding enough employees with disabilities to
25 fulfill contract labor requirements.

1 Some of the reasons for these includes that
2 a number of these employees are sourced from group homes or
3 local rehab centers, and they're shut down. Also, we have a
4 number of employees that are from high-risk groups due to
5 chronic illnesses, such as diabetes. Because of the reduction
6 in availability of employees with disabilities, given the 75
7 percent direct labor hour ratio requirement, CRPs must currently
8 use internal staff and other individuals who do not have
9 disabilities to continue to successfully perform these contract
10 requirements at this important time. It's worthy to note that
11 the much larger federal version of our PPD program, titled
12 AbilityOne, is also experiencing disabled labor availability
13 challenges, and has taken actions similar to what we'll be
14 bringing to the commission today.

15 As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, staff
16 seeks direction in addressing the current challenges of CRPs in
17 the PPD program, and meeting the required 75 percent DOH direct
18 labor hour ratio performed by individuals with disabilities. A
19 request for temporary suspension of regulatory statute or rule
20 hindering action in coping with this disaster may be submitted
21 to the office of the government pursuant Texas Government Code
22 48--418.016. Staff proposes a request to the office of the
23 governor of 40 TAC 806.41(f)(9) and Texas Human Resources Code
24 Section 122.013(c)(3) be temporarily suspended, as follows.
25 Consistent with the AbilityOne Commission, establish a minimum

1 of 35 percent DOH ratio for each CRP contract that must be
2 performed by individuals with documented disabilities, beginning
3 March 1, 2020 through May 30, 2020. Retroactive application of
4 the temporary suspension is proposed to provide support to CRPs
5 that have already had fewer available employees with
6 disabilities, and this occurred shortly after the onset of the
7 pandemic in Texas.

8 After May 30, all CRPs that do not meet the
9 75 percent DOH ratio requirement and anticipate a continuing
10 shortage of employees with disabilities would be required to
11 submit to WorkQuest, the central nonprofit administering CRP for
12 the program, a request including a justification for adjusted
13 DOH ratio percentages for the next 90 days. That would be June
14 1 through August 31. The justification must include the
15 following: The DOH ratio achieved by the CRP for each month of
16 the previous quarter, March through June; the measures the CRP
17 has taken to ensure the safety of its employees; the measures
18 the CRP has taken to employ the individuals with disabilities at
19 the 75 percent ratio; the reasons the CRP anticipates it will be
20 unable to meet the 75 percent ratio in June through August; and
21 the DOH ratio that the CRP anticipates it will be able to
22 achieve from June through August.

23 WorkQuest will evaluate each request and
24 seek clarification from the CRP, if needed, before making a
25 recommendation to TWC that the request be approved, denied, or

1 approved with conditions. TWC staff will then evaluate each
2 request and approve or deny with conditions--approve, deny, or
3 approve with conditions. If approved, staff will seek direction
4 from a commission regarding continuation of the suspension or
5 other remedy, should the need for COVID-19 containment measures
6 extend into the fall of 2020, past August 31 and continue to
7 adversely impact the CRP compliance for the DOH ratio. That's
8 all I have. I'm certainly open to any questions you may have.

9 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Comments or questions?

10 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: No questions here.

11 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: None here.

12 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Do we have a motion?

13 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Yes, Chairman. I
14 move that we request that the governors temporarily suspend
15 Texas Human Resources Code Section 122.013(c)(3) and 40 Texas
16 Administrative Code Section 806.41.(f)(9), and substitute the
17 standards outlined in the discussion paper for considering CRP
18 compliance with the direct labor hour ratio.

19 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Second.

20 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: [Unintelligible]
21 seconded, we're unanimous. Thank you. I'm showing that staff
22 does not have anything to discuss for Agenda Item 10, so let's
23 move to Agenda Item 11, discussion, consideration and possible
24 action regarding guidance on resource utilization and
25 implementation of services and strategies to target disaster

1 relief efforts and public health emergencies, including those
2 funded with the Department of Labor's Disaster Dislocated Worker
3 Grant. The first item up is temporary TWC COVID-19 essential
4 worker childcare.

5 ED SERNA: That should be Reagan. Mr.
6 Chairman, maybe while Reagan is trying to figure out a technical
7 issue, we can move on to [unintelligible] and then after that
8 we [unintelligible] Cheryl [unintelligible].

9 REAGAN MILLER: Sorry, Ed, can you hear me
10 now?

11 ED SERNA: Yes.

12 REAGAN MILLER: I am unmuted. Thank you,
13 Julia. All right, Commissioners, for the record, Reagan Miller
14 with the Childcare and Early Learning Division. The first
15 [unintelligible] item we have today is a discussion paper on the
16 length of time families will receive COVID essential worker
17 childcare. We're seeking your direction on requesting that the
18 governor approve two waivers of TWC childcare rules. First, a
19 waiver of section 809.54(a) regarding the standard 12-month
20 minimum eligibility period; and second, a waiver of section
21 809.54(b) [unintelligible] regarding continuity of care. Boards
22 will be authorized to approve COVID essential worker childcare
23 for three months, and as this childcare is structured as a
24 three-month, temporary benefit, the continuity of care rule
25 would also not apply. Finally, we note that the three-month

1 eligibility period may not be extended by the boards. We will
2 continue to review and analyze COVID essential worker care and
3 will determine if we need to recommend any eligibility
4 extensions in the future. I'll be happy to answer any questions
5 on this.

6 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Comments or questions?

7 MALE: No, Chairman.

8 MALE: None here.

9 MALE: [unintelligible]

10 MALE: Chairman, I move that we waive the
11 continuity of child provisions of 40 Texas Administrative Code
12 Section 809.54(a) and 809.54(b) with respect to children of
13 COVID-19 essential workers, as discussed by staff. I further
14 move that we authorize a three-month eligibility period for
15 COVID-19 essential workers not subject to automatic
16 redetermination, and provide staff the authority to
17 [unintelligible] eligibility extensions based on ongoing needs
18 analysis, also as discussed by staff.

19 MALE: Second.

20 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: [Unintelligible] second
21 and we're unanimous, thank you.

22 REAGAN MILLER: Thank you, Commissioners.
23 Our second discussion paper concerns the definition of
24 "healthcare workers" as it relates to COVID essential worker
25 childcare. When you approved the prioritization of childcare

1 services on April 7, we classified healthcare workers within the
2 second priority. Since then, we've received questions about
3 which healthcare workers are covered under this definition. We
4 are seeking the commission's direction in how we prioritize
5 COVID funding, and clarify that the second priority for
6 healthcare workers covers those workers who are delivering
7 services to COVID patients, as described in the discussion
8 paper. All other healthcare workers included in the CISA
9 essential worker definition would fall under the fifth priority.
10 This clarification will ensure that we are prioritizing those
11 healthcare workers whose work involves the most risk for
12 occupational exposure. And I'd be happy to answer any
13 questions.

14 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Comments or questions?

15 MALE: No questions, Chairman.

16 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: None here, thank
17 you.

18 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Do we have a motion?

19 MALE: I move that we approve the
20 definition of COVID-19 healthcare worker and the prioritization
21 of childcare services, as discussed.

22 MALE: I second the motion.

23 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: [Unintelligible] moved
24 and seconded. We're unanimous. Thank you.

25

1 REAGAN MILLER: Thank you, Commissioners.
2 And our final discussion paper is focused on how we support our
3 childcare providers who previously served subsidized children,
4 but who have temporarily closed due to COVID. The federal CARES
5 Act explicitly authorizes the use of funds to support providers
6 who have experienced decreased enrollment [unintelligible] or
7 closures due to COVID. In addition, we can also some of our
8 [unintelligible] quality improvement funds for supply-building
9 grants in response to emergencies. Currently, we are continuing
10 to pay providers who have closed, and our payments are based on
11 the number of active childcare referrals that were in place at
12 the time the program closed. Right now, we're paying around
13 1,685 closed providers who have about 28,000 active referrals
14 for childcare, at a cost of approximately 23 to \$24 million per
15 month. Based on our existing payment structure, providers who
16 were previously serving a larger proportion of subsidized
17 children receive more than providers with smaller proportions.

18 We implemented this structure initially
19 because it was expedient and it provided a mechanism to quickly
20 implement a process whereby we could continue to provide this
21 critical financial support to the childcare industry. Since
22 then, we've had some time to review our payment structure, and
23 believe we now have an opportunity to make some revisions. So
24 our goal is to help defray the fixed facility costs that
25 providers have, so that they can continue to support those fixed

1 costs and eventually reopen. Our proposal would replace our
2 current mechanism of paying closed providers based on the number
3 of kids they were previously serving to creating an equitable
4 standard of payment through a new COVID childcare stabilization
5 grant. There will be some conditions placed on the receipt of
6 these funds, such as not paying providers who receive the
7 SBA/PPP loan funds, and also not providing funds to providers
8 who don't have fixed facility costs. For example, you have
9 providers that operate after-school programs in space that's
10 donated, where they're actually within a school.

11 We're also seeking your guidance on setting
12 this up as a three-month program, June through August. The
13 grant amounts are based on the size of the program, the average
14 cost of care from the market rate survey, based on the 75th
15 percentile for that type of provider, meaning a licensed center,
16 a licensed home, or registered home for each workforce area. We
17 also looked at a national study that was issued which noted that
18 childcare providers' typical costs for fixed facility costs are
19 about 9 percent of their budget. So based on this, we looked at
20 the license capacity of the program and then would use 9 percent
21 of the program's estimated operating costs based on full
22 enrollment, and would use that to calculate a monthly amount.
23 We estimated in attachment one that this methodology has a
24 fiscal impact of \$11 million per month. We would cap the grants
25 at \$10,000 per provider, but we would also provide a bonus to

1 Texas Rising Star programs. So they would be allowed to receive
2 up to 5 percent over and above that \$10,000 cap.

3 We also wanna make sure that providers get
4 a sense of how differently these funds would be implemented
5 based on the type of the program, the size of the program. So
6 on attachment two, we included some examples based on a licensed
7 center with a capacity of 50 and a capacity of 100 for how much
8 those providers of that size would receive. Obviously, we're
9 gonna customize this based upon a provider's actual capacity. I
10 also wanna emphasize that while this establishes a more
11 conservative approach to funding for closed providers, any
12 provider that chooses to reopen can revert back to the payment
13 structure that's in place for open providers. So they would
14 revert back to receiving payment for all active referrals that
15 were in place at the time they closed, plus the 25 percent
16 enhanced reimbursement rate that you previously approved. So we
17 want to ensure that there is still that same existing financial
18 incentive for providers to reopen to provide services to
19 essential workers.

20 This is a change, a big change, from our
21 current process for paying closed providers, so we're
22 recommending an implementation date of June 1, making sure that
23 we're working with the boards and notifying childcare programs
24 about this change so they can make determinations about whether
25 they want to consider reopening prior to that June 1

1 implementation date. We'll also need to work very closely with
2 the boards in the coming weeks on the actual application process
3 and how we're structuring those payments. So with that, I'd be
4 happy to answer any questions that you have.

5 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Comments or questions?

6 MALE: No, Chairman.

7 MALE: Chairman [unintelligible] thank
8 Reagan and the team [unintelligible] team for the work that
9 they're doing and continuing to do in this area. This is a very
10 important area.

11 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Okay. Reagan, I heard
12 you mention a three-month program beginning June 1. I'm
13 wondering if we should revisit this every 30 days or at the
14 first of every month to understand the effectiveness of it, and
15 decide if that's the path we need to continue down
16 [unintelligible] a three-month stretch. I'm concerned about,
17 you know, we had a change in [unintelligible] businesses
18 [unintelligible] reopen, schools are talking about their
19 reopening plans, including colleges and universities. I'm just-
20 -instead of doing [unintelligible] stage, we're pretty open-
21 ended now. I certainly like this particular approach because it
22 give us some parameters to our strategy. But I'm just a little
23 concerned about a 90-day block, and [unintelligible] every 30
24 days. What are your thoughts on that?

25

1 REAGAN MILLER: We can certainly structure
2 this in 30-day increments. We don't know exactly what's going
3 to happen over the summer, and certainly a 30-day program would
4 allow us to continue to review and monitor this, and make any
5 adjustments as needed.

6 MALE: So okay, I mean, my idea here would
7 be that it's definitely a 90-day program with 30-day
8 [unintelligible] all right, let's call it a [unintelligible]
9 program so we can get all the days [unintelligible] three
10 months. But a three-month program where we evaluate monthly the
11 effectiveness of it. That's in effect saying the same thing, I
12 think.

13 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: I want daycare providers,
14 I want them to understand, you know, we're not gonna go from
15 June 1 to the end of June and then just immediately scrap it and
16 go to something new. I need for them to have a little bit of
17 assurance for operation. At the same time, I just want us to
18 have more frequently monitoring of the situation.

19 REAGAN MILLER: Yes, sir, we can do that.

20 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Okay. Other questions or
21 comments?

22 MALE: [unintelligible] motion?

23 MALE: I move that we cease payments to
24 closed providers on June 1 that are based on the number of
25 active referrals in place at the time the provider closed, and

1 implement a COVID-19 childcare stabilization grant, initially
2 authorized for three months, June through August, authorizing
3 grant parameters and grant calculations as described by staff.

4 MALE: Second.

5 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: It's been moved and
6 seconded. We're unanimous.

7 REAGAN MILLER: Thank you.

8 MALE: Mr. Chairman, we have Clay Cole up
9 next to provide an update, and then after that will be Courtney
10 and Cheryl.

11 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Okay.

12 CLAY COLE: Good morning, Chairman Daniel,
13 Commissioner Alvarez, Commissioner Demerson, Mr. Serna. For the
14 record, Clay Cole, Unemployment Insurance Division. Record
15 claims, payouts, and UI continue. We've got a big couple weeks
16 ahead of us, too, with the deployment of the Pandemic Emergency
17 Unemployment Compensation program that will provide an
18 additional 13-week extension of federal benefits for individuals
19 that have exhausted regular state UI benefits dating back to
20 2019 [unintelligible] claim exhaustees. We continue to add
21 staff, increase system capacity as we can. Our partner call
22 centers continue to increase agents, and the skills of those
23 agents help and improve our customer deliveries. Yesterday they
24 handled almost double the number of calls compared to TWC
25 agents, which is really helping us on the back end, as our

1 experienced staff can focus more on some highly skilled
2 assignments.

3 UI continues to work closely with
4 communications, finance, and operational insights on messaging
5 outreach and data analytics for reducing and preventing
6 unnecessary calls to our call centers. This week we are
7 starting outbound calling of folks who we believe may require
8 some high-need services. We're also, UI, IT and others, are
9 working on deploying Larry the Bot 2.0, which will help us
10 collect some individual information that really ties into
11 identifying some of those high customer needs that will also
12 help with our outreach efforts. UI's actively working on plans
13 for Texas opening back up for business. UI and IT are
14 finalizing a website portal to capture information regarding job
15 refusals. And finally, we've just seen a big improvement in our
16 assignment productivity, which is enabling us to shift resources
17 to other needs, such as processing DUI and PUA [unintelligible]
18 and helping better organize some of our customer enquires that
19 are coming from all different directions. But again, just a big
20 thanks to all our volunteers at TWC and externally that are
21 really helping us make big strides in improvement and service
22 delivery. And this concludes my update, and I'll be happy to
23 answer any questions [unintelligible].

24 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Any questions?
25

1 MALE: No questions. I just have a
2 comment. I just wanted to thank Clay for the update and good
3 information that he's provided us.

4 MALE: No questions, Mr. Chair.

5 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: All right, thank you,
6 Clay. [unintelligible]

7 COURTNEY ARBOUR: Good morning,
8 Commissioners. Courtney Arbour, Workforce Division, making sure
9 you can hear me okay. Okay, good. I have an update for you
10 from what TWC Workforce Division, obviously in coordination with
11 a number of other divisions in the agency and the local
12 workforce boards are doing in the COVID response. I'll start
13 with TWC activities specifically. We have increased service
14 capacity working with the Department of Operational Insight and
15 IT to know what we think the capacity needs to be. And we're
16 working to make sure the capacity of WIT is adequate to handle
17 the workload that we know it is about to experience. We did
18 testing before implementing Work in Texas, but obviously, that
19 was under non-COVID circumstances, so we're really beefing that
20 up.

21 We continue to message to social media, so
22 the public understands how to reach Texas Workforce Commission
23 and Workforce Solutions offices, both employers and jobseekers.
24 We published a list of top jobs for each local workforce board
25 that have been published in the last 30 or so days, so that they

1 have a good idea of what employers are ramping up, they're
2 hiring right now. And we've instructed the boards to really dig
3 into those lists and make sure that they're helping employers
4 get registered in Work in Texas, get the help they need in
5 recruiting and hiring, and to also build some short-term
6 training programs. We've provided supply and demand information
7 with those lists of boards, and we've asked them to build or
8 procure some short-term training programs to really build up the
9 workforce in those areas, if our labor market data shows that we
10 have a shortage in any one of those areas.

11 We've developed checklists and provided
12 them to boards for reopening. When they decide to reopen their
13 office we've asked that they go through a checklist process that
14 assures the safety and health of the customers and the staff,
15 and that they share that with us before opening so that we can
16 take a look at it with our risk team, and make sure that we
17 provide feedback to them in areas where we think that they need
18 to take another look before opening their doors. We are guiding
19 strategies for service delivery with the boards, and
20 troubleshooting any issues that they've run into, both while
21 they're working virtually and in anticipation of possibly--you
22 know, returning to bricks and mortar offices. Regardless of
23 whether they are providing virtual services or returning to the
24 offices, we know that there is an influx of activity coming our
25 way as a workforce system as employers reopen their hiring and

1 the economy opens up. So we're providing guidance on strategies
2 and helping them troubleshoot.

3 We have posted applications, and we've
4 already received applications on the funding that you all
5 approved. I'll give you some highlights of that in just a
6 moment, but we quickly got that information out to the public,
7 or to our eligible applicants, so they could begin applying for
8 the WIOA, the skills development funding, and then we've got the
9 grants going out for the Department of Labor disaster grant.
10 That was the 12 million. So total, we've got 12 million in
11 WIOA, up to 10 million in skills, and 12 million in disaster
12 grant funding. We're heavily focusing on training in all of
13 those grant awards. There's some other required activities,
14 such as short-term employment and very valuable efforts such as
15 people can be hired and paid to do short-term work through these
16 disaster grants, where they're providing tracing activities in
17 local communities with public health. They can work at public
18 food--or food banks, and also provide driving--they can be paid
19 to drive and provide medication and food to people who are
20 homebound. So there's a lot of valuable activity happening, but
21 outside of that, we're really heavily focused on training to
22 make sure that people that need up-skilling are getting that.

23 The grant management staff at TWC are very
24 aggressively managing the grants that are COVID-related. We
25 have provided information to all the grantees boards, adult ed,

1 and all others about our interest in making sure their ramp-ups
2 happen very quickly in these grants. If they need to buy
3 supplies or equipment, that they do it quickly; if they need to
4 procure training, they do it in a much more compressed timeline
5 than maybe they're accustomed to doing. And we've made everyone
6 aware that if we see that a grant can't meet its original
7 deliverables timely or at all, we will quickly move--come to
8 you, Commissioners, to move that funding to grantees who have a
9 need and are able to meet that demand quickly. So that's a real
10 priority for us.

11 The boards are taking a number of steps, as
12 they have been doing, to outreach employers, sharing information
13 about job candidates in our system, are using our system or who
14 we know have the skill set the employers are looking for. They
15 are providing virtual hiring events for employers, other virtual
16 resources, since many, many offices and even our partners have
17 not yet returned to work, where they're continuing to expand
18 their virtual opportunities. Building those short-term training
19 programs that I mentioned earlier, and making the news of those
20 available to employers and job-seekers. And through the town
21 halls that you all have posted, and they are locally hosting,
22 with invites to you all. They're sharing information with small
23 businesses about the COVID supports that are available.

24 Quickly wrapping up, what the boards are
25 doing, it's all about training, it's all about outreaching

1 claimants and other jobseekers to make sure they have an
2 application ready and work in Texas. The message we are trying
3 to share with the public is just gear up, get your applications
4 ready, get your resumes ready, because as the economy opens,
5 employers really will be looking to you to bring you on board.
6 Boards are also highlighting repeatedly what they're doing on
7 social media, whether they're in the office or [unintelligible]
8 services virtually. All these services are still available, and
9 so they're continuing to highlight that on all the social media
10 and local media. They have listed Jobs Now is what they're
11 calling it on their workforce website, Workforce Solutions
12 websites, so that the public, when they first see that website,
13 can gather information about all the services available, but
14 particularly those where hiring is taking place right now.

15 We are working with Office of Employer
16 Initiatives. When an employer contacts Dale and his team, or
17 any of us, we link up with Dale's team and consider best ways
18 to link with that employer, whether it's through training
19 opportunities, through skills development, or other funding
20 source. And if they are just in need of hiring support, we link
21 them through a phone call with us to the board, and we have--we
22 help make that connection, and then have the board follow up
23 with us, and we follow up with the employer to make sure that
24 the employer's needs are being met. We wanna make sure that
25 those connections are strong, and that we're following through.

1 Cheryl will talk a little bit about what we're encouraging the
2 boards to do as far as what we're calling a "system check," sort
3 of a top-to-bottom look at their operations and how they're
4 engaging with all of their partners. I won't go into that,
5 since I know she will highlight it. We are also--in the
6 Workforce Division, looking at Work in Texas and seeing where
7 people tend to get hung up, whether it's in the initial part of
8 the registration or resumes, and helping boards to troubleshoot
9 that for people that might not have a lot of skills in resume-
10 building. We're helping to get through that, or give them some
11 tips on how to do that.

12 The COVID fund update, quickly--last week,
13 we put out the application for the WIOA funding, as I mentioned
14 earlier, and we have four applications in-house already. Those
15 are focused on training, layoff aversion, and some rapid
16 response activities for employers. These grants can help
17 employers with any number of expenses, to try to help offset
18 some of their costs related to PPE, providing incumbent worker
19 training, and also we've got at least one project in-house for
20 manufacturing and electronics. So we've got two skills
21 development funding applications in-house, also; those are
22 incumbent worker training programs. And these funds have been
23 made available, as you know, to try to help employers with their
24 up-skilling, or any organization that can provide training to
25 employers that we know have the need. And so we're gonna see

1 healthcare software development, other information technology
2 trainings come in with that. There's a number of other grant
3 activities underway right now, but I wanted to just give you a
4 highlight that the WIOA funding and the skills development
5 funding has been well received, and we've already got six
6 applications in-house, and many more in development. And that
7 was since it posted last week. Happy to answer any questions.

8 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Questions or comments?

9 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Great report,
10 Courtney. Thank you for the update.

11 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Courtney, thank you
12 for what you're doing with the update [unintelligible] I
13 appreciate you and [unintelligible] in that regard. I wanna
14 circle back with you eventually on the virtual--even in this
15 present time, we do have employers that are still
16 [unintelligible] possibly locating to Texas and finding
17 available labor, a pool of employees to work there
18 [unintelligible] most important. And so [unintelligible] job
19 fairs, things along that line, I wanna visit with some--
20 [unintelligible] about some of the best practices that might be
21 out there, so that we can share that with those digital
22 employers that are looking at [unintelligible] their home.
23 Thank you for your report.

24 MALE: Chairman, I have something--

25 FEMALE: [Unintelligible].

1 MALE: Chairman, if I could ask Courtney--I
2 received a notice from the mayor of Desoto, asking for a virtual
3 job fair. So I was wondering, Courtney, if you could--if I
4 could forward this to you, this request, and then if you could
5 just inform the local board. Apparently, they need some
6 assistance from our end, and so they're asking if we could reach
7 out.

8 COURTNEY ARBOUR: Yes, sir. Please send
9 that to me, and I'll contact you after the meeting.

10 MALE: Thank you.

11 ED SERNA: Hey, Courtney, this is Ed. Are
12 you gonna discuss the dislocated workers grant?

13 COURTNEY ARBOUR: The WIOA--oh, I did not
14 highlight that, did I? Those grants are in development. That
15 is a \$12 million grant that goes [unintelligible] 16 workforce
16 development boards. There are the--I talked a little bit about
17 the short-term job--paid train--excuse me, paid work positions,
18 with the tracing activity and the food bank work, and delivering
19 food and medications to the homebound. That is part of that
20 [unintelligible] grant. And in addition, the boards will be
21 providing short-term training through those grants. We are
22 still developing some of the specifics on that, but we're
23 encouraging boards, in addition to the short-term paid work that
24 the cities and counties and other organizations can benefit
25 from, that we build out short-term training programs based on

1 what they know about the supply and demand in their area, and
2 the local needs.

3 ED SERNA: And then are we bringing that
4 back to the commission after we get those plans from the board?

5 COURTNEY ARBOUR: Yes, sir. Yes, we are.
6 Jen's team is finalizing the plans with each of the 16, and will
7 bring that forward. Jen is on, Ed, if you need to--

8 ED SERNA: No, ma'am [unintelligible].

9 COURTNEY ARBOUR: Actually, Jen is on, and
10 I think she would like to make comments here.

11 ED SERNA: That's all I need right now.

12 COURTNEY ARBOUR: Okay.

13 ED SERNA: Mr. Chairman, unless there's
14 something that you need specifically on the dislocated worker
15 grant, we're gonna bring it [unintelligible] once we--a little
16 bit more detail [unintelligible] it's what [unintelligible].

17 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: So [unintelligible] we're
18 not gonna [unintelligible] public comments today.

19 FEMALE: [unintelligible]

20 MALE: No, sir.

21 COURTNEY ARBOUR: I believe--Jen has let me
22 know that she does have the amounts for you, and an over--a
23 [unintelligible] over--or a more specific overview, if you would
24 like to take action on it. And that will allow us to release
25 those awards.

1 MALE: Mr. Chairman, your choice.

2 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Let's do it.

3 MALE: All right, go ahead, Jen.

4 JEN: Good morning, this is Jen. Can you
5 guys hear me?

6 MALE: Yes, Jen, we can hear you.

7 JEN: Okay, excellent. Of the 28 workforce
8 boards, 16 have requested additional assistance through the
9 Disaster Dislocated Worker grant to serve individuals and
10 communities impacted by this pandemic. As Courtney noted,
11 Disaster Dislocated Worker grants provide disaster relief and
12 humanitarian assistance employment, as well as employment and
13 training services as appropriate, to minimize the employment and
14 economic impact of declared disasters and emergency situations.
15 Boards share their employment and training strategies with TWC
16 as well as the number of participants they anticipated serving
17 through this grant. Staff will bring regular updates to the
18 commission on the progress of these awards. Today, staff seeks
19 approval from the commission on the use of \$12 million in
20 Disaster Dislocated Worker grant funds for 16 boards. Any
21 questions?

22 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Questions or comments?

23 MALE: No, chairman.

24 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Jen, or staff's
25 been briefed on that, correct?

1 JEN: Yes, sir.

2 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Okay, thank you.

3 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: I appreciate regular
4 updates. When we come back next week, we would like to have an
5 update on how many of the temporary jobs were filled and a
6 discussion on any that [unintelligible] how we would
7 [unintelligible] those dollars to training.

8 JEN: Okay. So the grant awards will go
9 out today, as soon as we've gotten approval. And so the
10 temporary employment would likely start happening in the next
11 several weeks.

12 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: We'll go ahead and
13 revisit it next week and see where we are on those things.

14 JEN: Okay, yes, sir.

15 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Thank you. Okay, we will
16 need a motion here.

17 MALE: Chairman, I move that we approve the
18 distribution of 12 million in Disaster Dislocated Worker grant
19 funds for 16 boards outlined by staff, and in a manner
20 consistent with the intent of the grant.

21 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: I second the
22 motion.

23 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: It's been moved and
24 seconded, we're unanimous.

25 JEN: Thank you.

1 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Thank you.

2 ED SERNA: Thank you, sir. Sorry for the
3 confusion.

4 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Not at all.

5 ED SERNA: Last report from Cheryl, on the
6 [unintelligible] plan.

7 CHERYL FULLER: Good morning, this is
8 Cheryl Fuller, for the record, with the Vocational
9 Rehabilitation Division. And good morning, Mr. Chairman,
10 Commissioner Alvarez, Commissioner Demerson, and Mr. Serna. I'm
11 here this morning to give you an update on the next steps that
12 VR is planning to implement as we hopefully enter the recovery
13 phase from COVID-19. Our plan really has three broad
14 categories. One is communication and outreach to customers and
15 employers; another is system coordination; and a third is our
16 service delivery strategies. I've talked to you in past updates
17 about the communication and the outreach to our customers and
18 our providers to make sure they know we're still open and
19 providing services and available for them. What we plan to do
20 now and moving forward is in addition to keeping that
21 communication updated, have even more targeted outreach
22 strategies so that we can reach out to our new customers that
23 may not have participated in VR before, but may need it--current
24 customers as well as former customers. And a couple of ways
25 we're doing this is as we are talking to both applicants as well

1 as our current customers, we are specifically asking them if
2 they have had a COVID-19-related job loss, and if so, we're
3 identifying that in our system. It allows us to more rapidly
4 engage them when opportunities arise.

5 We're also working with DOI to see what
6 sort of information we can glean about those who have exited our
7 system in the last few years, who may have been laid off. And
8 so we can reach out to them and see if they need VR services to
9 reengage with employment. When it comes to employers, we also
10 plan to coordinate with communications and with you to update
11 our agency's hireability campaign, to focus on resources and
12 strategies that can support employers as they reopen and
13 rebuild, and encourage them to do so by engaging a diverse and
14 inclusive workforce. So we wanna make sure that that
15 information for employers is active and current and speaks to
16 the needs they may have, and this, we anticipate, will maintain
17 awareness about the [unintelligible] hireability recognition
18 program, and build momentum toward a revised launch date.

19 With regard to system coordination, it's
20 incredibly important that we as VR continue to be good partners
21 to the rest of the programs that are in the workforce centers.
22 So one of the things Courtney and I have partnered together to
23 do is ask both boards and VR staff to do what you heard Courtney
24 refer to as a systems check. And what we mean by this is that
25 as we see an increase in individuals that are looking for work,

1 to reengage in the workforce, it's very important that if they
2 need a particular service they can get to it timely and
3 efficiently. So we've asked boards and VR staff, as well as
4 other partners, to do a systems check. Make sure that there is
5 no problem getting customers to VR or other programs when they
6 call in. So are we in the board's call trees, in the center's
7 call trees, for example? Are receptionist staff fully prepared
8 with the information they need to smoothly refer? Is there
9 signage in the centers as we begin to see customers in the
10 centers again, to make sure they know what's there for them?
11 Also on-board websites--is information readily available so that
12 we can get folks that may be eligible for VR services, so that
13 we can help them reengage with the workforce as quickly as
14 possible. And then finally, looking at our referral processes--
15 making sure that from each of the programs, we are particularly--
16 -not only can we get those referrals and timely respond to them
17 from our other partners, but we can make them to other programs
18 that may benefit our customers.

19 Our third set of strategies is around
20 service delivery. One, we are talking to our staff to make sure
21 we are ready to proactively partner with the boards as they
22 begin to hold hiring events, or continue to hold hiring events,
23 like those virtual job fairs or other activities, to make sure
24 we're there to be a resource, and we're able to tell our
25 customers about those opportunities as well. We're looking at

1 other service delivery strategies, like paid work experience.
2 This may be particularly helpful for our customers as they
3 engage or reengage in work, and it can be an effective strategy
4 not only for youth but for adults who may need additional
5 supports, either due to the nature of their disability or due to
6 lack of work experience, or due to work experience in another
7 field, and now they're trying to go into a field that they don't
8 have as much experience in.

9 We're also looking at the job placement and
10 training activities that our providers deliver for our
11 customers. You are aware that several weeks ago we implemented
12 some temporary exceptions to our standards for providers and our
13 VR services manual to really support remote service delivery.
14 This has been an incredible learning experience for us, and some
15 of the things we learned is that maybe we need to take some of
16 what we're doing forward on an ongoing basis, because it is more
17 efficient. For example, remote service delivery for our
18 providers, where that makes sense for our customers. So we're
19 evaluating those exceptions to see what we've learned and what
20 may need to stay, because it actually opens up additional
21 opportunities which will be very important.

22 We're also looking at targeted training
23 services. Some of our customers, due to the nature of their
24 disability, may need some additional instruction on social
25 distancing, or how to engage in remote service delivery. And so

1 we are looking at how we might need to develop some specific
2 vocational adjustment training services that our providers can
3 deliver, to make sure our customers are as prepared as possible.
4 And lastly, I would just say with both remote work and remote
5 service delivery, we are learning so much. And we're learning
6 some things that probably we would love to have learned another
7 way, but certainly point us to how we can do a better job in the
8 future of being flexible and using technology to both work and
9 serve our customers. So we will continue to do that, and make
10 sure we are keeping what we have learned and is working well.
11 And I'd be happy to answer any questions.

12 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Comments or questions?

13 MALE: Great work.

14 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Cheryl, as always,
15 let me know how [unintelligible] on the employer side. Thank
16 you.

17 CHERYL FULLER: Will do, thank you.

18 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Thank you. Mr. Serna, do
19 we have anything else to report today?

20 ED SERNA: No, sir, not under this item.
21 I've got one little report under executive directors, but I
22 think that comes a little bit later.

23 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Okay. Actually, I'm
24 showing we're through with this Agenda Item. Let's just move to
25 the executive director report.

1 ED SERNA: The other thing I wanted to
2 report very quickly was that we did open our main building to
3 the public. We have had some people come to visit, to try to
4 [unintelligible] information concerning unemployment insurance
5 claims. We've set up the appropriate protocol for making sure
6 that they remain safe and our employees that are working with
7 them [unintelligible] contractor remain safe. It all seems to
8 be going very well. I also wanted to report that we'll continue
9 to encourage staff to telework, if possible, until we can get
10 the building--this is an older building, so it's kind of
11 difficult sometimes to get the right amount of social distancing
12 in certain common areas. But we'll continue to work on that,
13 and we'll slowly bring staff back in. But we continue to work
14 at full force, providing all the services that we normally have
15 been providing for the emergency, during the emergency, and
16 we'll continue to do that after the emergency, as you've heard
17 in these reports. That's all I have to report.

18 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Thank you very much. Any
19 questions for Ed, Commissioners?

20 MALE: No questions, sir.

21 MALE: None here.

22 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Is there any other order
23 of business that should come before the commission today? Is
24 there a motion to adjourn?

25 MALE: Chairman, I move that we adjourn.

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MALE: Second.

MALE: [Unintelligible].

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: [Unintelligible]. We're unanimous, and we are adjourned.

MALE: Aye.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Thank you.

MALE: Yes.