



**MEETING OF THE
TEXAS WORKFORCE COMMISSION**

DATE

AUGUST 17, 2021

1 TUESDAY, AUGUST 17, 2021

2 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Good morning, everyone,
3 this meeting is called to order. Mr. Trobman, has anyone signed
4 up for public comment?

5 MR. TROBMAN: [Inaudible]

6 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Thank you very much. Good
7 morning, Ms. Miller.

8 MS. MILLER: Good morning, sir.

9 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: How are we today?

10 MS. MILLER: Very well, thank you.

11 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Thank you. Let's take a
12 brief recess to prepare for the rest of the meeting. All right,
13 let's come back with Agenda Item 8, acknowledgement of gifts and
14 donations.

15 CALLIE EICHNER: Good morning. For the
16 record, Callie Eichner, on behalf of the Office of General
17 Counsel. Under relevant legal authority, the commission must
18 accept gifts and donations with a value of \$500 or more in an
19 open meeting. So, today we're presenting two donations. The
20 first is a donation from Justin Sherburne [SP]. It has a value
21 of \$16,000. It is a non-exclusive license to the recordings and
22 compositions contained in an album entitled "Texas Workforce
23 Commission Hold Music," by the recording artist Montopolis. This
24 album has eight recordings on it, and the purpose of the
25 donation is for the lawful objectives of TWC. The second item

1 for today is the donation from Microsoft Corporation. That one
2 has a value of \$35,000. It is a donation of funds to support the
3 development of a virtual assistant bot. It's also going to the
4 maintenance of a data warehouse, and the data that will be being
5 used is data for adult education and literacy. That's the pilot.
6 And the purpose of this donation is to further the lawful
7 objectives of TWC. So, OGC has conducted our review and
8 determined that the donation meets relevant legal requirements.
9 Accordingly, staff recommends acceptance of the donation. I'm
10 available to answer any questions.

11 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Any comments or questions?

12 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Chairman, I have a
13 [inaudible]. Excuse me. Great report. Thank you, Chairman, I do
14 have a comment. First of all, I wanna say that I understand and
15 appreciate the gesture behind the music donation. I personally
16 feel that with regard to the music donation, the agency should
17 have a policy not to accept these types of donations. I
18 therefore will abstain from the vote with respect to his
19 particular donation.

20 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Other comments or
21 questions?

22 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: I agree with
23 Commissioner Alvarez, to a certain extent. Not the policy of the
24 agency, but with this particular issue--procedures, making sure
25 we have procedures in place so that if anyone else wants to do

1 this, that we actually have something in place that allows for
2 it to happen. So, that's my only comment.

3 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Okay. In light of your
4 abstention, Commissioner, would it be okay if I just made a
5 motion here, so that we can--

6 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: That's fine,
7 Chairman.

8 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: I move we accept donations
9 from Justin Sherburne and Microsoft, as discussed by staff.

10 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: I second.

11 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Is there any further
12 discussion?

13 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: I second the motion,
14 except for those--I second the motion to accept as the donation
15 from Microsoft, but wish to abstain, again, as I referenced, the
16 motion as to the music donation.

17 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Okay. I'm a yes on both.
18 You're abstaining on Sherburne and you're for Microsoft.

19 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: That's correct.

20 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Commissioner Demerson?

21 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: And I'm yes on both.

22 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Okay. Thank you very much,
23 thank you.

24 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Mm-hmm.

25 CALLIE EICHNER: Thank you.

1 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: This is Agenda Item 9,
2 2021 report on the transition from military service to
3 employment.

4 BOB GEAR: Good morning, Chair Daniel,
5 Commissioner Alvarez, Commissioner Demerson, Mr. Serna. I'm Bob
6 Gear, director of the Texas [inaudible] program with workforce
7 division. Texas Labor Code chapter 302.02 requires the Texas
8 Workforce Commission to submit an annual report on the
9 transition from military service to employment to the Texas
10 legislature by September 1. For this year's report, I'm gonna
11 highlight a couple of the following sections. We talk about the
12 legislation overview, and then we go into our community partners
13 and our workforce boards, and then we have two graphs, two
14 tables that demonstrate the unemployment rate for veterans of
15 all eras, and non-veterans. And the first chart captures from
16 2019 [inaudible] May of 2019 or 2020 to May '21. We could
17 definitely see the effects of COVID. And then we also took a
18 rolling average of the 12-month period. It is showing that
19 veterans overall have a lower employment rate than the non-
20 veterans. The second graph concentrates on our most hard-to-
21 serve, our 18 to 24, our Gulf War II era veterans, the ones that
22 are currently getting out of service. We know since 2009 that
23 they've had a very high unemployment rate, and we're talking
24 over 12 percent. The work that DOD's done, the work that the
25 Department of Labor's done, and of course the Workforce

1 Commission, the Veterans Commission, with the installations,
2 over time, you can see that that has dropped all the way under 4
3 percent for 2017, 2018, 2019. And of course, that chart does
4 have an uptick for 2020. We cover the rest of the veteran's
5 programs in the numbers that Texas Workforce Commission runs,
6 and then finally at the end of the report we come to the top
7 five transitioning MOS's. They're industry-based certifications,
8 and align with the civilian occupations. And of course, number
9 one, will probably always be number one--infantrymen and
10 riflemen. That'll always be there. Number two [inaudible]
11 logistics, material management, acquisition, maintenance
12 management specialist, and a host of others under that for all
13 the branches of service. Wheeled vehicle mechanic is number
14 three, and then number four are healthcare specialists, hospital
15 corpsmen, and [inaudible] medical services. And then the last
16 one covers communication specialist, which has a lot to do in
17 the military now with IT and IT-related fields. Staff is seeking
18 the commission's approval of this year's annual report for
19 submission to the Texas legislature. Please let me know if you
20 have any questions or comments.

21 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Comments or questions?

22 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: None here, Chairman.

23 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Chairman, a comment.

24 Bob, we continue to appreciate the work that you guys are doing
25 for our veterans, and at the pleasure of being able to go to two

1 We Hire Vets ceremonies this year--Chairman and Commissioner
2 Alvarez, as you know, that's an initiative where we recognize
3 employers that have 10 percent of their population, employees,
4 that are veteran-related. And so, Suburban Propane in Ft. Worth,
5 and then three businesses here in Austin, in the Georgetown
6 area, and one was the Texas Department of License and
7 Regulations, a state agency, that had over 10 percent of their
8 employers [sic] being veterans. So, thank you guys for the work
9 that you're doing day-in and day-out, and we'll utilize this
10 report in addition to or with the veteran activities that we
11 have ongoing from this office.

12 BOB GEAR: Thank you, Commissioner Demerson.

13 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Thank you.

14 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Is there a motion?

15 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Yes, sir. I move that
16 we approve the 2021 report on the transition from military
17 service to employment, to be submitted in accordance with
18 section 302.020 of the Texas Labor Code, as discussed by staff.

19 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Second.

20 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: It's been moved and
21 seconded. We're unanimous.

22 BOB GEAR: Thank you.

23 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Thank you. This is Agenda
24 Item 10, certifications for Metrix users.

25 BOB GEAR: I didn't hear you, Mr. Chairman.

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CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Hm?

BOB GEAR: I didn't--

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Oh, I was calling the next item.

BOB GEAR: Oh, okay.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: You're good.

COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Thank you, Bob.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: This is Agenda Item 10, certification for Metrix users.

BENJAMIN HOLQUIST: Good morning. For the record, Benjamin Holquist with Workforce Development Division. We're presenting a discussion paper on an expansion to the Metrix contract that is already in existence. This contract would add the opportunity for 1,250 people to get certifications through the Metrix system in over 130 different certification types. This expansion would cost 1.1 million. I'm happy to answer any questions.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Are there any comments or questions?

COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: None here, Chairman.

COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Just a quick question--are you guys, are these things aligned in with what industry actually needs, the certifications that are out there? Anybody did any homework in regards to these courses? Are these

1 certifications that we're actually allowing, does it tie in with
2 industry needs?

3 BENJAMIN HOLQUIST: These certifications are
4 provided through industry-based. We did not do a specific one-
5 to-one review of each certification, but they are commonly
6 needed certifications within several industries, including the
7 high-tech sector.

8 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Okay. Because I
9 think the initiative is a good one, and in the future, as we're
10 going on lining those up with our high-demand occupations or the
11 board areas, and making sure that the certifications that
12 employers need tie in to the certifications that we're actually
13 placing out there. I have reason to think that most of them do,
14 but I don't wanna take that for granted. Make sure that we're
15 looking at that.

16 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: So, this was resulting
17 from action the commission took on June 30 in a work session.
18 But in that work session, we had asked staff to bring back all
19 of the items that we addressed that day in one item, but we've
20 advanced this one ahead of the others. Can you help me
21 understand why we've moved this one out before the others when
22 we really asked for that to be brought all in one package?

23 BENJAMIN HOLQUIST: Mr. Chairman, I think
24 what we were trying to do with this is not delay in taking
25 advantage of this opportunity. We've already got an existing

1 contract with Metrix. Later in the--under the executive
2 director's report, you'll get an update, the commission will get
3 an update on the status of all of our activity with regard to
4 that commission instruction, that commission initiative. We felt
5 that this one in particular we could advance, so that we could
6 begin to provide these services sooner, than waiting until we
7 got everything all bundled up and bringing it to the commission
8 in a couple of weeks, so [inaudible].

9 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Is there any particular
10 hurry on the metrics end? Is this contract ending or something?

11 COURTNEY ARBOUR: Courtney Arbour, workforce
12 division, for the record. We have an existing contract with
13 Metrix, and we were able, through the original scope of work, to
14 expand that to include these certifications, which is part of
15 the reason that we brought this forward first, just to get it
16 out there as quickly as we could, commissioners.

17 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Okay. So, a little later
18 we're gonna learn about the status of the other items that were
19 on the June 30 list?

20 BENJAMIN HOLQUIST: Yes, sir, everything.

21 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: All right. Are there any
22 additional questions or comments?

23 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: None here, Chairman.

24 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: None.

25 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Is there a motion?

1 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Chairman, I move that
2 we amend the existing contract with Metrix Learning to add
3 additional training courses and certifications, as recommended
4 by staff.

5 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Second.

6 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: It's been moved and
7 seconded, the motion carries. Let's see, this is Agenda Item 11,
8 pre-apprenticeship and employer engagement AEL.

9 MAHALIA BALDINI: Hi, good morning, Chair
10 Daniel, Commissioner Alvarez, Commissioner Demerson, and Mr.
11 Serna. For the record, Mahalia Baldini with adult education and
12 literacy. Sorry I couldn't be there in person today. On June 30,
13 2021, the commission held a work session on statewide
14 initiatives and earmarked funding for a series of comprehensive
15 statewide strategies. For the commission's consideration today
16 are two initiatives proposed to be funded with AEL state
17 leadership funds from budget year 2021. The first initiative, in
18 the amount of \$500,000, is a pre-apprenticeship bridge program
19 for building trades. Through a request for applications,
20 eligible AEL providers awarded these funds will be required to
21 provide reading and math support, along with workforce
22 preparation activities, for participants preparing for a
23 registered apprenticeship program and building trades. The
24 second initiative, in the amount of \$1.2 million, is an employer
25 engagement initiative. Grants will be awarded to three eligible

1 AEL providers through an RFA process. Grantees will work with
2 employers to provide workplace literacy activities for eligible
3 employees, or employee that are eligible for AEL services. At
4 this time, staff seeks direction on implementing these two
5 initiatives, as outlined in your notebook materials. I thank you
6 so much for your time today, and I'm happy to answer any
7 questions.

8 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Any comments or questions?

9 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: None here, Chairman.

10 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: None.

11 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Is there a motion?

12 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Chairman, I move that
13 we approve using 500,000 of AEL state leadership funds for the
14 pre-apprenticeship bridge program, and 1.2 million for the
15 employer engagement program, as presented by staff.

16 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: I second.

17 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: It's been moved and
18 seconded, motion carries.

19 MAHALIA BALDINI: Thank you, commissioners.

20 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: This is Agenda Item 12,
21 IKEA funds. Do we have anything under Agenda Item 12?

22 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Yeah, do you have
23 anything, Commissioner Alvarez?

24 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: I do.

25 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Okay.

1 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: So, I handed out a
2 discussion paper, and I'd like--to the chiefs of staff and to
3 one for you, Chairman, one for Commissioner Demerson,
4 particularly for this Agenda Item. I'll give you the opportunity
5 to read it. We had a brief discussion on this a couple of weeks
6 ago, while I was at the meeting via Zoom. And so, I was asked to
7 prepare a discussion paper on the remaining balance that we had
8 available. Before I take any--make any other comments, I would
9 like an opportunity--Commissioner Demerson, if you'd like to--or
10 Commissioner Daniel--I mean, Chairman Daniel, if you'd like to
11 add anything to what I just gave you just now, regarding the
12 discussion paper and my plans on the remaining balance of \$2.2
13 million that's available from IKEA funds.

14 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Let me read this to
15 make sure I'm clear. Mr. Chairman, I will defer to you, and then
16 I'll have comments, unless you [inaudible].

17 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: I have [inaudible].

18 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Okay. So, my
19 comment, basically, Commissioner Alvarez, I agree with the
20 [sounds like] seventh application, that we require an additional
21 \$50,000. I do have three initiatives that I would like to bring
22 forward as well from that standpoint, and if we take action on
23 the item that you have here, it pretty much wipes out that
24 ability. But I'm--the ability to do that, if the other--the
25 remaining balances are used all towards pre-apprentice pilot

1 program. But I am in agreement with to fund the seven and
2 [inaudible] applicant, we're requiring an additional \$50,000,
3 approximate amount. I'm in agreement with that.

4 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Commissioner
5 Demerson, I wouldn't mind listening to what those three
6 initiatives that you have in mind, and see if we can negotiate
7 maybe a price--

8 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Okay.

9 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: --for the remaining
10 balance. If I'm not correct--if I'm not mistaken, I have in
11 front of me the remaining balance; also the top six that were
12 awarded when we did the [inaudible] initiative. And so at this
13 time, I'd love an opportunity to hear that.

14 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Okay.

15 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: I wanna hear his
16 proposals. Commissioner, do you know, or does somebody know what
17 that seventh application--it just--about 200,000 for it, is that
18 right?

19 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: I have it here,
20 Chairman. So, the seventh--there was a tie. On the last six,
21 there were two ties on number six, and we were short a little
22 funding to award one of those six that was a tie. And so it
23 actually left with a balance of one point--I mean, correction,
24 1,500--one--correction, let me see. I had left over \$150,747.

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1 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: So--just so I can make
2 some intelligent decisions here--

3 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Yes, sir.

4 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: So, you just need another
5 50,000 to get that to 200,000. That's not your proposal; I'm
6 just trying to [inaudible]--

7 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: That's correct.

8 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: --how the seventh proposal
9 gets [inaudible]--

10 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: That's correct, sir.

11 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: So, roughly \$200,000.

12 Okay.

13 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: That's correct, sir.

14 We were short \$50,000 to award that tie on number six.

15 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: So, Demerson, I--
16 Commissioner Demerson, I wouldn't mind listening to the three
17 initiatives you have in mind.

18 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Okay.

19 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: And if you have
20 anything you'd like to--

21 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Okay, good.

22 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: --present to us.

23 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: I'll do that, let me
24 share this with you guys.

25

1 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: No, that's okay, you
2 do it by memory.

3 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: [Inaudible] And I've
4 shared this with the chief of staffs as well, so I think we
5 passed it out. So, my first initiative is dealing with a
6 marketing campaign, a marketing video, and this is basically
7 Texas, the best state in the world for business. Right now,
8 we're quite often known as the best state in the nation to do
9 business, but--and I'm gonna read some of this. "--continues to
10 be the best state in the nation for business. However, we want
11 to be the best state in the world for business." In the
12 marketing video, our campaign would be an excellent way to
13 further showcase and inform both domestic and international
14 markets about the benefits and resources available in our great
15 state. Two years of not-normal activity in the state, and at
16 this moment in time, this provides us with an opportunity to
17 lead, as we usually do. We can shape the discussion and share
18 directly where Texas stands today, what Texas is doing today,
19 and why Texas today should be the choice of locations for an
20 employer looking to grow and expand their business. A marketing
21 campaign that highlights the success we've had in Texas, and how
22 we are continuing to bring the world's workforce, economic
23 development, and education together would move us closer to that
24 goal of actually marketing Texas as the best state in the world
25 to do business. The issue here, you know, the pandemic has

1 altered the way that folks actually market their various states.
2 In Texas, we've been very creative in our concepts of marketing/
3 Without a general revenue marketing budget, we've been able to
4 do some things in major ways. So, this initiative I wanna push
5 forward for the agency to work with a state economic development
6 membership organization that's actually involved in marketing
7 the state. And the \$600,000 that I'm proposing actually would
8 allow them to maybe leverage that, or be a starting point for a
9 foundation of activities to move forward. The situation we're
10 dealing in right now, where you can't go out to visit as much,
11 it's a new way of doing business, and this is an attempt to make
12 sure that we're marketing and talking about Texas. There was
13 something that came out yesterday, Ray Perryman, I believe,
14 where we slipped to number four, and that would be nice for some
15 people, but in Texas, we don't do even second well. We like to
16 be number one in a lot of ways, and I'd love for us to continue
17 with those efforts. But this is an attempt to assist in the
18 marketing of our state that ties in workforce, economic
19 development, and education, and doing that to both domestic and
20 international markets. And so, that's--expenses to be covered
21 include research, filming, photography, and it's kind of listed
22 down there, video content, and all those other aspects
23 associated with developing a plan and a campaign. This amount,
24 by no way does it get us to a point of a super-duper marketing
25 campaign, but it gives us a start, and it allows an organization

1 to look at maybe leveraging opportunities to pushing things
2 forward. So, we're looking at about \$600,000 out of the IKEA
3 fund, and to utilize that to market Texas, and get us there as
4 the best state in the world for doing business. I'll entertain
5 any questions, thoughts, comments.

6 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: The only thing I'd
7 like to add, great initiative. I see that the asking is 600,000?

8 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: That's correct.

9 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: So, can I ask
10 Courtney--Les?

11 MR. TROBMAN: Since you're talking about
12 balances, I just wanted to let you know, we're looking over here
13 and doing some math on the staff side. We think that there's
14 some adjustments that we wanna provide on the numbers reflected
15 here as to balances. So, we're just doing some math.

16 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: All right, hold that
17 thought, Mr. Trobman, right there for just a second.
18 Commissioner Demerson, do you have additional proposals?

19 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Yes, I'm gonna get
20 those too.

21 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: We're gonna take a recess
22 as soon as Commissioner Demerson lays out his proposals, so we
23 can get a balance, so that staff can have all the time that they
24 need. You guys don't ever get to see my point of view. The
25 frenzy that's occurring over here on that side of the room is

1 more than it usually is. So, Commissioner Demerson, if you'd be
2 so kind as to lay out the rest of your proposals. But we're not
3 gonna cut off debate. I'm gonna give a chance to staff to do
4 some math, and then Commissioner Alvarez, you and I can ask all
5 the questions that we have after that.

6 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Great.

7 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Is that acceptable to
8 everybody?

9 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Okay.

10 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: All right.

11 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: All right, thank
12 you. The second item that we pulled is basically a succession
13 planning mentorship matching program. We've talked extensively
14 about the agency and mentoring and providing opportunities for
15 staff to grow, and so in 2017, the state auditor's office issued
16 a workforce planning guide for state agencies to manage
17 succession planning and knowledge management. This pandemic has
18 caused a lot of folks to reevaluate the workspace. Some are
19 retiring early, some are leaving the workforce altogether,
20 looking for hybrid-type employment opportunities, and this new
21 phase or change in perception of work can have dire consequences
22 if not addressed timely and strategically. The workforce
23 commission is a longstanding agency that has a lot of talent, a
24 lot of knowledge, by a lot of individuals, long-time employees,
25 that have been working for quite some time. And I know Ed and

1 the team are working on changes, they're working on planning and
2 the like, and so this is an initiative that I wanted to push
3 forward to address some of those areas about succession
4 planning, and providing opportunities for individuals through
5 mentorship-type programs. We'll see that done in the private
6 sector quite often, and people are really raising their game in
7 regards to how they're providing succession planning and
8 mentoring opportunities for staff. It's as simple as someone
9 that may be working in my division that has an opportunity to
10 spend with Ed or somebody within Chris' division that has
11 opportunity to spend with somebody in Les' division. It allows a
12 senior-level manager to maybe deal and interact with someone at
13 a lower level that may aspire to be at those other levels. So,
14 this type of mentoring, especially in light of this pandemic,
15 where a lot of things are being done virtually, you tend to lose
16 the culture of the organization. You can, if that's not given,
17 or you need to find different ways to make that happen. And I
18 think individuals being able to talk along lines, and coming up
19 with program to do that works. And so, I'm looking at proposing
20 up to \$250,000 to be allocated from this funding source, to be
21 used to assist the Texas Workforce Commission in developing a
22 succession mentorship match program to meet and/or exceed the
23 parameters mentioned in the state auditors office workforce
24 planning guide for state agencies. Expenses to be covered
25 include supporting the cost, maintenance, and technical support

1 required for the success of the program, as well as the strategy
2 assistance for rollout. So, it's basically up to \$250,000,
3 allowing Ed and the team to kind of work together to pull
4 together something for a succession plan long after he's gone,
5 long after we're gone, a lot of individuals here. We wanna make
6 sure that the agency is standing, and also this may be utilized
7 as a platform for other workforce systems. It may be the boards
8 and/or other state agencies that may take the lead from the
9 Texas Workforce Commission, similar to what we did with the RPI
10 process early on, taking a bold step to do some things that were
11 out-of-the-box thinking. And so this is a succession planning
12 mentorship matching program opportunity. And lastly, I'll start
13 by saying thank you again--and I've said this probably and
14 publicly I'll mention it for you guys, the participation that
15 you had with our stage agency Interns Unite program. So, this is
16 a discussion paper on interns, and Chairman [inaudible] from
17 your office did a phenomenal job. And Commissioner Alvarez,
18 thank you for persevering, even though the technical difficult--
19 technology wasn't there, you [inaudible] through and made it
20 work for us in a big way. So, this--Texas Interns Unite have
21 created this initiative that's really bringing all interns
22 together at the state, and it may be public sector, private
23 sector, nonprofit, county--all the different areas that are in
24 the space of interns, creating a platform or an event for a
25 future pipeline of talent that benefits both future employees

1 and employers as well. Texas Interns Unite will harness the
2 power of interns in Texas, working at all levels of industry.
3 This event, likely to be scheduled in early summer of 2022, will
4 bring interns, potential interns, employers together, in person
5 and virtually, for a one or two-day conference that allows for
6 the beginning stage of even greater things to come. You can
7 imagine having connections with all the interns, the employers,
8 dealing in that space. And really, with this labor shortage that
9 we're experiencing right now, you're seeing more and more and
10 more attention being given towards internship opportunities, and
11 employers are pulling the trigger even quicker on these intern
12 opportunities. The students at their junior year, they may be
13 making an offer towards them based on internship opportunities,
14 and I think this is something that is the start--the beginning
15 stages of something that will create, and that may be taken on
16 by another agency, another organization or so. But these are the
17 beginning stages of something that I think could be truly big
18 here in Texas. So, I'm proposing \$50,000 for this initiative, to
19 be used towards items such as venue [inaudible] for events and
20 the like. So, 600,000, up to 250,000, and then lastly 50,000.
21 Those are the requests that I've laid out--600,000, up to
22 250,000, and 50,000. Up to 250,000, yeah, so 600, 250, and 50.

23 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: All right. When we come
24 back from this recess, I think we can ask questions of--

25 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Mm-hmm.

1 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: I mean, the commission can
2 certainly can ask questions. The staff, everything, I think, is
3 laid out pretty well. Let's recess. Let's give staff a chance to
4 get us a hyper-accurate figure on what the remaining balance is.
5 When we come back from that recess, I'll ask staff to tell us
6 what that balance is, and then I'll also ask staff to tell us if
7 there are any additional needs. We're proposing spending all of
8 the money here today; just make sure there's not anything else
9 that's floating around out there. And then I think we should
10 take action on these four things. Does that sound [inaudible]?

11 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: [Inaudible]

12 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: I'm okay with that,
13 Chairman.

14 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: We're gonna stand in
15 recess.

16 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: All right, we're back in
17 session. Let's hear from staff on what our pending balance is.

18 COURTNEY ARBOUR: All right. Commissioners,
19 Courtney Arbour, workforce division, for the record. Wanted to
20 make a quick clarification that the balance after the vote that
21 you took at the August 3 meeting, where the project was approved
22 with the three boards and members of TWC staff and economic
23 development, which totaled 500,000, brings the new IKEA balance
24 to \$1,738,233. So, \$1,738,233. So, what I believe we were
25 hearing today, Commissioner Alvarez, you were laying out some

1 ideas for use of the remaining dollars based on the number of
2 applications that were not funded for the pre-apprenticeship
3 RFA, and we have some logical break points and scoring that I'd
4 be happy to go over with you. And then Commissioner Demerson, if
5 I understood your points earlier, there were three initiatives
6 totaling up to 900,000--600,000, up to 250, and then one for 50.
7 Is that correct?

8 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: That's correct.

9 COURTNEY ARBOUR: For a total of up to 900.

10 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Mm-hmm.

11 COURTNEY ARBOUR: Okay. So, if that were
12 funded, we'd have the 1,738,233 minus the nine--I'm just talking
13 through the math, or you all can lead with questions, however
14 you'd like to do this.

15 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Courtney, what's
16 that balance? So, you've got 1.738 minus 900--what would that
17 leave us? I don't have my calculator.

18 COURTNEY ARBOUR: Wait, let me get my
19 calculator.

20 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Sorry. About 800,000
21 or so?

22 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Yeah.

23 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Approximately about
24 800,000, Courtney.

25 COURTNEY ARBOUR: Yes.

1 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Mm-hmm. Okay.

2 COURTNEY ARBOUR: Eight hundred thirty-eight
3 thousand, two hundred and thirty-three dollars.

4 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: --and \$33.

5 COURTNEY ARBOUR: And so, Commissioner
6 Alvarez, if you'd like for me to share a little bit about some
7 of the break points and the scoring, would that be helpful?

8 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: I have these in front
9 of me, Courtney, what you gave us.

10 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: It would be helpful for
11 me. So, there's 24 total applications.

12 COURTNEY ARBOUR: Yes.

13 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: One thing I would like to
14 know is were all the--did all the applications score, say, over
15 50 percent, or something along those lines?

16 COURTNEY ARBOUR: There were 11 that were
17 above 70 points, and let me pull up the email [inaudible]--

18 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Is it a 100-point scale?

19 COURTNEY ARBOUR: Yes.

20 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Yeah, okay.

21 COURTNEY ARBOUR: So, if--with six
22 additional--beyond what was brought forward for your approval,
23 if another six were funded, that would total \$760,000, roughly,
24 and those applicants all scored 80 points or higher. With 17
25

1 funded at 70 points or higher, the total would be 1.59 million.
2 So, an additional--

3 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: You said 1.59?

4 COURTNEY ARBOUR: Yes.

5 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: [Inaudible]

6 COURTNEY ARBOUR: So, our review shows that
7 six scored 80 points or higher, totaling \$760,000.

8 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Is that the next six?

9 COURTNEY ARBOUR: Yes.

10 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: So, the first six were
11 funded.

12 COURTNEY ARBOUR: That's correct.

13 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Then the next six, taking
14 us to 12 of 24 applications, would be how much?

15 COURTNEY ARBOUR: You all--we--the 949 plus
16 the 760. If you funded a total of 12, you would be at 949 plus
17 760 times--

18 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: One point seven-oh-
19 six.

20 COURTNEY ARBOUR: Seven-sixty additional,
21 past what was previously approved for the RFA. But that would
22 bring you to a total of 1.7 million for this RFA.

23 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: So, there was originally
24 1.1 million funded. We need an additional 760, you say?

25 COURTNEY ARBOUR: Yes.

1 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: So, it's 1.860, is that
2 right?

3 COURTNEY ARBOUR: One point seven would
4 allow you to fund the six that were fundable with the original
5 RFA, and then an additional six, taking you down to a break
6 point of 80 points. Okay, can you clarify, Ben? I would like Ben
7 Holquist to assist here.

8 BENJAMIN HOLQUIST: Sure. Ben Holquist,
9 workforce division. So, yes, it is 760 on top of the 1.1
10 original amount. So, it would be 1.86 million to fund the 12
11 highest scores.

12 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: So, an additional 760,000
13 on top of the 1.1 million gets us to half the class, half of the
14 applicants.

15 BENJAMIN HOLQUIST: Yes.

16 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: All right.

17 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: And that 760, if we
18 were going with six, that's moving up to 12, then that's within
19 the realm of the 800,000-plus that's remaining, correct?

20 COURTNEY ARBOUR: Sorry, Commissioner, would
21 you mind repeating that?

22 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: So, we if we were
23 looking at the 1.738, that's the starting point. If my
24 initiatives were successful, that's 900,000, which leaves us
25 about 800 and--I forget the number that was mentioned; 800,000.

1 And so that's all we have available, if my initiatives were
2 successful, is 800,000, and the 760 would get us six additional.
3 And if we went to 17, that [inaudible] 1.5, and so then there's
4 some jockeying that would have to take place, because obviously,
5 we don't have that much, we only have 800 and something
6 thousand, so--okay.

7 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Hold tight for just a
8 second. So, on your succession planning--

9 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Mm-hmm.

10 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: --mentorship matching,
11 you've obviously identified IKEA funds. Is there a particular
12 reason you identified IKEA funds? Are there other--this seems
13 like something we could do with our agency administrative
14 dollars. This seems like a very legitimate management function
15 that we would do administratively. And I guess my question is is
16 there a limitation on administrative funds that we already have
17 available that would prevent us from using those to fully
18 implement certain initiatives that we would need these
19 unrestricted IKEA funds to implement this initiative?

20 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: The answer is no. If
21 the agency does it and they have the administrative dollars to
22 do it, then we don't need the IKEA funding for that. If the
23 agency does not do it or it's not important, or they don't have
24 the funding to do it, then I would need--we would need the IKEA
25 dollars to do it.

1 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Okay. If you don't mind,
2 Commissioner--Ms. Arbour, this might actually be out of your pay
3 grade, so I'm gonna ask Mr. Serna a question. Is--could the
4 agency implement Commissioner Demerson's succession planning
5 proposal using administrative dollars that the agency has from
6 other sources?

7 MR. SERNA: Yes, sir, we would issue a
8 request for proposals, get responses, and we would--we could
9 identify internal funds, administrative funds.

10 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: And Mr. Chairman,
11 yeah, so if that commitment is there, and they actually are in a
12 position to do it, then there's no need for it to come out of
13 IKEA funding. But I wanna make sure that that is a fact, and
14 I'll be--

15 MR. SERNA: We will do that.

16 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: --looking into that
17 seriously.

18 MR. SERNA: We will do that in fiscal year
19 '22, which is in a couple of weeks. It sounds like it's a long
20 time off, but fiscal '22 starts in September--September 1. I
21 will identify, have our CFO identify funds that we can use. I'll
22 have HR work with staff directors to craft a request for
23 proposal, and we'll go through the normal procurement process to
24 do that.

25 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: I'm A-OK.

1 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Okay. So, relative to the
2 IKEA funds, I think we can do this, unless Mr. Trobman just says
3 I can't. I think we should take up your proposal, we should
4 assign this--we should vote on this at some point today, make
5 this particular action for staff, and then let them do the
6 funding on that. Mr. Serna sounds pretty certain that this can
7 be done. Otherwise, I do think the commission needs to take
8 action on this. So, that 250,000 is kinda now available--

9 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Mm-hmm.

10 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: --based on Mr. Serna's
11 assertion here, and Ms. Arbour. Just so I can do a good job as a
12 commissioner, the open meetings act serves a valuable purpose
13 for the people of Texas in the sense that they can see what
14 their government's doing. I like the sunshine. However, when
15 you're managing a meeting or you have the responsibility for the
16 agency, it's an unwieldy forum for a discussion on topics like
17 this one. So, we don't always have the--we certainly can't
18 discuss among the commissioners ideas that we have, except in
19 this format. So, open meetings act does its job for the people
20 of Texas. We face some challenges in having, I think, kind of a
21 good discussion about things. So, we're gonna do our best here
22 today, and I know we're gonna get there. I wanna make sure I
23 know, before I take action on these things--because these are
24 all--I think all have some merit. I have some additional
25 questions about the marketing video, which is not gonna

1 necessarily fall under your portfolio. But are there other items
2 that staff wants to make sure are in this discussion, while
3 we're talking about these dollars? Even if it's just a concept.
4 Because I feel like I don't wanna find out in two or three weeks
5 that there was a great idea that was just sitting there sort of
6 waiting for something and we could have discussed it today and
7 at least have known about it and strategized on it. So, are you
8 aware of any ideas, concepts, projects that--particularly
9 anything that would solve the middle skills gap which is our
10 focus right now, or anything else that the IKEA funds would be
11 the perfect solution for?

12 COURTNEY ARBOUR: Commissioners, I am
13 looking around the room at my peers. I am not aware of anything
14 at this time. We've been working on a number of middle skills
15 initiatives which you referenced earlier, and we've been able to
16 identify allowable uses of funds through TANF and WIOA dollars
17 for everything that we've looked at so far. So, I'm not aware of
18 anything that would--that we might wanna bring forward to you.
19 Clearly, these are the most flexible dollars that our agency
20 works with, but I haven't heard anything very recently that
21 would make me--that would have--that I could bring forward to
22 you right now.

23 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: All right. While I've got
24 you, back to Commissioner Alvarez's proposal. So, after the 12th
25

1 application, beginning with the 13th application, is that when
2 the scores drop below 70 percent?

3 COURTNEY ARBOUR: That's correct.

4 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Like, I went to public
5 school, so 70 percent for me is passing, but I don't think
6 necessarily here we have passing or failing applications. This
7 is just a number we've selected.

8 COURTNEY ARBOUR: Okay, 12--

9 BENJAMIN HOLQUIST: [Inaudible] 12.

10 COURTNEY ARBOUR: Chairman, excuse me, 12 is
11 when we drop below 80, and then--

12 BENJAMIN HOLQUIST: [Inaudible]

13 COURTNEY ARBOUR: --70--we're trying to
14 catch the 70 cutoff.

15 BENJAMIN HOLQUIST: Yeah, the 70 is the--
16 when it goes--the additional 11 on top of that. So, it's 17
17 total.

18 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: And that was 1.59 million
19 was the price tag to get to 70 percentile?

20 BENJAMIN HOLQUIST: Correct.

21 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: So, 80 is at 12, and then
22 if you add the additional five, that takes you to the 70th
23 percentile. Okay.

24 COURTNEY ARBOUR: So with the change
25 Commissioner Demerson referenced and Mr. Serna discussed, that

1 would leave the balance at just over one million for pre-
2 apprenticeship and other projects. Taking the 1.738 and reducing
3 it by--if yours were approved, Commissioner--

4 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Mm-hmm.

5 COURTNEY ARBOUR: --without the succession
6 planning, you'd be looking at a reduction of 650--

7 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Six-fifty, yeah.

8 COURTNEY ARBOUR: --from the 1.7, leaving
9 \$1,088,233.

10 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: So--does anybody have more
11 questions for Ms. Arbour right now? I don't want her to have to
12 stand there awkwardly while I talk about some other stuff. Be
13 available, in case there's additional questions, but.
14 Commissioner Demerson, on your marketing video, what are you
15 thinking is the audience for this video?

16 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Actually, the
17 audience would be other employers that are out there looking at
18 making decisions, both domestically and internationally, keeping
19 the Texas name and brand out there in a big way, especially
20 during this pandemic, when you're not able to market with
21 traditional sources and the like.

22 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: And so, I'm--so on and off
23 in my career I've done a lot of marketing work. What channels
24 are you envisioning for this video? The budget would suggest
25 social media channels.

1 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Mm-hmm.

2 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Are you thinking some sort
3 of direct marketing effort, or have you--is that something you
4 would leave to whoever implements this?

5 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Yeah, in the brief
6 experience that I've had on the marketing side, you can go your
7 social media outlets, or you can go the venues that are popular
8 and in high demand. But we would leave that up to the experts in
9 that field to determine the best uses of funding towards
10 marketing. If it's publications, if it's Internet, if it's--
11 whatever the methods for creating that attention, we would leave
12 that up to them to determine.

13 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: But your intent would--
14 your intended audience would be employers who might wish to come
15 to Texas and create more jobs.

16 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: That's correct,
17 employers, and with that you're gonna have the site selection
18 community--

19 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Yeah.

20 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: --and you have all
21 of those individuals that typically touch the state. You know,
22 there was a time when Texas was not at the top of the list in a
23 lot of ways. So, this would ensure that we're staying there
24 [inaudible] one way in addition to what they're doing at the
25 local level as well. But it ensures that we stay there and keep

1 that name out there in a big, big way, showcasing the best of
2 what we have to offer.

3 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: So, beyond CEOs, you would
4 also be thinking about various consultants and site selection
5 organizations?

6 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Yeah, site-selection
7 organizations, and again, the marketing plan, based on what
8 they're determining the audiences are. I mean, that's gonna come
9 out of that traditionally. You're looking at making sure
10 employers are aware, making sure that consultants are aware, and
11 just getting the word out as best you can from that standpoint.
12 But if there are other avenues that have come up where there's a
13 new way to market or a new audience to market to, then that
14 would be ferreted out through the organization that's hired to
15 do it.

16 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Other questions?

17 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Chairman, the only
18 question I have is Commissioner Demerson--

19 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Uh-huh?

20 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: --great initiatives
21 that you've laid out.

22 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Thank you.

23 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: And so, I certainly
24 am all in favor of the initiatives. I do have--the only concern
25 I have is as referenced by the chairman, if there is an

1 opportunity or if there's a guarantee that working closely with
2 Commissioner Demerson's office, we'd get these initiatives
3 rolled out [inaudible] funding is available, so that we don't
4 tape into the IKEA. The initiatives are good. They're good.

5 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Mm-hmm.

6 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: And so, I'm swayed
7 either way to support this. The only thing I do have, and I just
8 wanna make it clear, as you know, representing the interests of
9 employees, just that the interns would get compensated, that we
10 pay them.

11 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Mm-hmm.

12 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: And I'm sure that's
13 what we have here, listed on the discussion paper. And I also
14 wanna make sure that we don't cause any confusion with what we
15 already have in place--the internship challenge that has
16 [inaudible] under your office has been very successful, and it's
17 a true testament to the good work that you've done, especially
18 what we acknowledged last week with the help of your interns. I
19 thought they did a great job, and I appreciate the fact that
20 you're acknowledging not just here at the agency but all state
21 agencies, and the interns that are involved in the daily
22 operation of our agency. They serve a value, and I see a value
23 in all this.

24 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Yeah.

25

1 basically these are IKEA dollars, and that the workforce
2 commission would actually look at a statewide membership
3 organization such as the Texas Economic Development Corporation,
4 or the Texas Economic Development Council. These organizations
5 are involved in economic development, and they're the marketing
6 arm--I think the corporation even more so--the marketing arm for
7 the state of Texas. And so, there would be a handoff to that
8 organization to procure services for the marketing video and the
9 like, and pretty much allowing them to run. We would be
10 involved, our office would always have an opportunity to be
11 involved, as we always are, on the workforce side. They'll be
12 showcasing the best of workforce economic development and
13 education, but let them take care of business from that
14 standpoint. That's my thought behind this.

15 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Yeah, so, I mean, the
16 concept is intriguing to me. I don't know that I would be
17 entirely comfortable to just hand off the money and let them
18 take the ball and run with it. Both organizations that you speak
19 of have exceptional leadership, and I certainly have confidence
20 that they're representing Texas very well. I don't know that we
21 would wanna be in the day-to-day planning of that, I agree with
22 you there. I think we would just want some kind of final
23 approval for the final product before it goes out. I mean, any
24 time before--you know, by the time they rough it out, any time

25

1 before color correction, you can make edits fairly inexpensively
2 in post-production, so--

3 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: [Inaudible]

4 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: --I would just wanna know
5 that at some point, somebody would come to us and show us a
6 rough cut and say, okay, this is what's going out, yes or no.

7 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Yeah, I think that's
8 a good observation, and that's something that the contract team
9 could write into the contract, making sure that we're tied in so
10 that you don't have something that's produced, and you look at
11 it, and there's nothing tied to workforce from that standpoint.
12 So, that's a good point, and one that should be written into
13 whatever contractual obligation we take.

14 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: So, the 600,000--are you
15 intending that to be a matching award? In other words, they
16 would need to match that dollar-for-dollar?

17 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Yeah, not a need
18 that they would have to do that. I would strongly suggest that,
19 but not to the point--I don't wanna tie them down to you have to
20 match it before it goes out. I think it's a good starting point,
21 and I would try to leverage it, if I were the organizations. But
22 they may leverage it up to 200,000 or 300,000, and they may
23 over-leverage it as well. So, I don't--but I don't wanna put
24 parameters around that.

25

1 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: How are you envisioning
2 making the dollars available? Obviously, we have more than one
3 statewide economic development organization. Is this is a
4 competitive process you're thinking about?

5 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: I was gonna pretty
6 much--my thoughts are the staff dealing with it and making a
7 decision from that standpoint. I would let them look at the
8 organizations. There may be some organizations that--there's two
9 that I mentioned, and that's the only two that I'm aware of. One
10 may not wanna do it; one may just be the one to do it. So, I
11 think by default, that you may find your answer there.

12 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Well, I think you are
13 right about that. I sat on the board of the Texas Economic
14 Development Corporation. I have some experience over the last 20
15 years or so with Texas Economic Development Council. I think
16 that the Texas Association of Business has shown an interest in
17 this area over the last several months. I think there are some
18 exceptional statewide organizations that are doing good work out
19 there. I'm not opposed to us sort of directing the money to the
20 one that we think could do the best job. I think there's
21 strengths to any of the groups that we've been talking about. I
22 think in terms of an organization who's solely dedicated to
23 marketing the state, that would be the TXEDC, the economic
24 development corporation, in the sense that that's sort of how
25 their enacting statute lays them out, and that seems to be their

1 purpose. You know, so that makes a lot of sense. I just--can
2 staff make a freeform decision like that, or would they have to
3 do it on a competitive process?

4 MR. SERNA: That's one of the things that
5 I've asked Les, and we'll have to look into that.

6 MR. TROBMAN: Les Trobman. Yeah, we were
7 just discussing that. We would look at different options,
8 including whether or not we have, on the horizon, and
9 opportunity to do a procurement already for other projects that
10 we would just fold this into, or whether or not the pandemic
11 relief that the governor has offered would offer us the
12 opportunity to direct contracts. So, those are a couple of the
13 options we would be analyzing.

14 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Mr. Chairman, with--
15 you know, and I'm not sure if you've laid out--I know those
16 organizations that you mentioned, I've been members of all of
17 those as well. The corporation is the marketing arm for the
18 state, and probably would be best fit. I don't think I'd want to
19 go through an RFP process to determine that. I think it's--if
20 staff can't make a decision without going through an RFP
21 process, I would almost name that entity in this proposal, but
22 [sounds like] I was giving it the opportunity to look at it both
23 ways. But I don't wanna go through an RFP process.

24 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Well, I mean, yeah. I
25 mean, given the nature and the source of the IKEA funds, if we

1 wanted to name an entity today, this commission, I think, has
2 the power to do that. It's just sort of a sense of how we wanna-
3 -the perception of that, I think.

4 MR. TROBMAN: Yeah, I think that's correct,
5 that we could certainly direct funds. You know, it's a gifted
6 donation that's coming in. It's a matter of how you would want
7 to afford the opportunities for other potential partners.

8 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: So, Mr. Chairman, I
9 think, you know, with that being addressed, I think that if we
10 moved the motion forward, with the ability for staff to circle
11 back with the best process for the allocation of funds, if
12 that's--we're able to do it by going direct, or if they see that
13 there's an RFP process, I think this is different, in the sense
14 that we're--what you'd be asking for would be somewhat a
15 different RFP. It shouldn't take that long, or the process
16 shouldn't be outside of the normal days that are allocated for
17 an RFP. I don't think it should drag on or anything. It sounds
18 like it's a pretty simple ask.

19 MR. SERNA: First off, nothing is simple. I
20 mean that half tongue-in-cheek. I do agree, Commissioner
21 Demerson, if the commission directs us to use--to identify a
22 mechanism for using this 600,000 for this purpose, and then we
23 come back to the commission, say, in a week with alternatives,
24 that would be the most expeditious.

25 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Mm-hmm.

1 MR. SERNA: I did hear part of the
2 conversation, talking about us having sort of a right of last
3 review, which would imply that there would be some contract or
4 some grant terms, if it were a grant.

5 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Mm-hmm.

6 MR. SERNA: So, we'll have to keep that in
7 mind, because the more flexible we get with the awarding the
8 funds, then we need to make sure that we don't lose any of the
9 requirements that I heard in conversation at the dais about
10 right of final review, things like that.

11 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Yeah.

12 MR. SERNA: So, this would give us time,
13 instead of trying to scramble very quickly here, this would give
14 us time, a week, to come back, if you're inclined to do that. I
15 know the chairman expressed earlier--I believe I heard a desire
16 to have a decision made on all the IKEA funds in this meeting. I
17 don't wanna delay that, but it'd give us a good opportunity to
18 come back with some alternatives on how [inaudible].

19 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Yeah. Yeah, I would
20 want to definitely take action on the funding, and then the
21 mechanisms for doing it, then we take action on that when it
22 comes. But I wouldn't wanna delay the actual decision on the
23 allocation of funds.

24 MR. SERNA: Right. Right.

25 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Okay, thanks.

1 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Okay. Any other questions
2 or comments?

3 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: None here, Chairman.
4 Except--so again, I appreciate the fact that Commissioner
5 Demerson has rolled out three initiatives that he's very
6 passionate about, and I feel that there's a need on all of these
7 to be addressed, whether it's through the IKEA funding here
8 presented today or a mechanism as referenced by our executive
9 director on how we could fund these. I think these are good
10 initiatives. I'd also like to remind staff that when we rolled
11 out these initiatives in the first place, when we talked to
12 general counsel and staff when they worked on this, to keep in
13 mind that we got these initiatives approved by the folks that
14 represented IKEA at the same time. And we put a lot of thought
15 into the initiatives that we rolled out. We did have a remaining
16 balance, and I appreciate that. And I think we were given some
17 type of an opportunity here to be a little bit more creative
18 with that. Commissioner Demerson has displayed that. My only ask
19 today is if we have any remaining funding, and if we can find a
20 mechanism to support his, and approved by my fellow
21 commissioners, I'd like to continue to award. And I agree with
22 Chairman Daniel about talking about the tops in the 70
23 percentile that did well. We would be able to fund an additional
24 12 applicants. And again, the pre-apprenticeship program, the
25 RFA 32021-00165, keep in mind that was part of the original plan

1 when we discussed that with the folks with IKEA. So, all I'm
2 asking here, if we take action, for some leniency to actually
3 fund some additional boards that are from all different parts of
4 the state. Certainly, I would be in favor of that. That's the
5 only comment that I have.

6 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Yeah, no other
7 questions.

8 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: So, we need to get some
9 motions--

10 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Mm-hmm.

11 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: --so we can take some
12 action here.

13 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: So, Mr. Chairman,
14 so, Commissioner Alvarez, Mr. Chair, I'll move on the items that
15 I have here, and then--because I think what we've talked about
16 is any remaining funds may deal with what you're talking about.
17 And so with that, I'd like to move that we allocate \$600,000
18 towards the best state in the world for business marketing
19 campaign, marketing plan, marketing video, to be done utilizing
20 the IKEA funding source towards the development of such a plan.
21 And in that motion, I also wanted to have the workforce
22 commission would implement the best structure method for working
23 with the statewide economic development membership organization
24 for the development of a marketing plan campaign that could be
25 used at the state and local level.

1 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: So again, I'm a
2 little confused. Are we asking that that money be coming out of
3 the IKEA funding?

4 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Out of the IKEA
5 funding, yes, that's correct.

6 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Could you--would it
7 be appropriate at this time to say with the additional funding,
8 or any additional funding that's left over would fund some of
9 the boards that didn't get funded?

10 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Yeah, I think that's
11 gonna come at the end of the second initiative that I'll
12 mention, and then--

13 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: How do you wanna
14 handle this, Chairman?

15 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: We can do this--we can do
16 this one motion at a time. Let me summarize what I've heard--

17 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Mm-hmm.

18 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: --and see if we can bring
19 all this together. We can make the motions individually, but I
20 just wanna make sure we're all tracking on the same page. We
21 have a commitment from Mr. Serna that the \$250,000 for the
22 succession planning can come from other sources, so we're gonna
23 take action on that at the end, and we're gonna have staff
24 locate a source of funding for that. So, that leaves a \$600,000
25 proposal from Commissioner Demerson and a \$50,000 proposal from

1 Commissioner Demerson. An additional \$760,000, roughly,
2 Commissioner Alvarez, gets additional pre-apprenticeship
3 applications funded through half of the pool. It funds an
4 additional six, based on what's there. The next logical break is
5 at 17, or at the 17th application, because that goes to the 70th
6 percentile, but it takes another \$800,000 to get the next five.
7 Yeah, that's right. So, we can get six for 760,000-ish, roughly.
8 That gets us through half the pool. If we wanna go to the 70th
9 percentile, we need another eight. So, we have more wishes than
10 we have money here, so we've gotta make some decisions. So, if
11 we funded--if we funded Commissioner Demerson's video project at
12 his requested amount, 600,000, and we put money available to get
13 us through half the applicants, that takes us to, like, 1.3
14 million, at least about 400--a little under 400,000 still in an
15 IKEA balance. The other way we could do this is if we're in
16 agreement that 600,000 is the right amount for Commissioner
17 Demerson's video project--and I don't know. I mean, 600,000 can
18 buy a lot or a little, just depends on what kind of video you
19 make and how you do it. I could do the project for 100,000; I
20 could do the project for two million. It just--depending on how
21 I wanted to shoot it and what we wanna do with it, right? If we
22 funded it at 600,000, and we funded the--and I hope we fund the
23 internship, Interns Unite, I like that one--if we funded it at
24 50 and we funded the other at 650, we could just direct that the
25 rest of the money go to fund applications till the money runs

1 out. But you're gonna hit a weird break point if you do that.
2 You will get past the 80th percentile, you won't get all the way
3 to all the 70th percentile. And I don't know the breakdowns
4 after--between 80 and 70. I don't know who's at 79, 78, et
5 cetera. So, I mean, it makes sense to me, if we're trying to get
6 the most done here, sort of the most kinda--get the most number
7 of initiatives done, I'd almost say we at least take the bite to
8 get half of the pre-apprenticeships done, that 760-odd thousand.
9 And then, you know, let's say that we like the video and it gets
10 funded at 600,000, that's 1.3; 50,000 for the interns, which I
11 like. You know, you're still gonna have a balance, and I could
12 be comfortable walking away with a balance. But Commissioner
13 Alvarez, this is your proposal, and I don't wanna put words in
14 your mouth. These are the things I'm hearing, and this seems
15 like a logical kind of way to allocate the funds and make sure
16 that we're helping as many people kind of in different areas
17 that we can. So, that's how I heard it and kind of processed it
18 in my own mental process here. But you probably need to be very
19 comfortable with kind of how this gets laid out, and how this
20 gets executed.

21 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: So, I understand
22 exactly--

23 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Mm-hmm.

24 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: --what you've laid
25 out, and so basically 600,000, 50,000, and then if we were going

1 up to 12, whatever is remaining, 760,000 funds that. We're
2 placing an additional 250,000 back on the table. And so it's
3 either we go with the 12 or we go with--until the money's
4 exhausted. So, that [inaudible]--that's, yeah [inaudible] up to
5 70 percent and whatever that breakdown is. But once the money's
6 exhausted, then it's exhausted. And so, Commissioner Alvarez,
7 that gets you to the point if you want the 12, then 760,000 for
8 that, and then anything remaining, if we're taking that, then it
9 funds other initiatives.

10 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: So, I agree with the
11 chairman; we'll take these initiatives one by one. So, if you
12 wanna restate your motion again, Chairman?

13 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Motion--okay.

14 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: I mean, Commissioner
15 Demerson.

16 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: So, my motion was to
17 move that we allocate up to \$600,000 from the IKEA funding
18 source to be used towards the development of a marketing
19 campaign or plan that would be utilized by local and state
20 organizations as they showcase what Texas has to offer, in
21 addition to their local and/or regional outreach efforts. And
22 that in that, the workforce commission would implement the best
23 structure method for working with the statewide economic
24 development membership organization for the development of a

25

1 marketing plan/campaign that could be used at the state and
2 local level.

3 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: I'll second that.

4 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: It's been moved and
5 seconded. So, commissioners, is it your intent that in whatever
6 mechanism we select, that we would retain the right of final
7 approval for the product that would come out?

8 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: That's correct.

9 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Okay. Let's vote.

10 Commissioner Alvarez?

11 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: So, I still--so--

12 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: You wanna lay 'em all out?

13 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Yeah, I wanna lay 'em
14 all out [inaudible].

15 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: All right, next motion,
16 please.

17 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Okay. So, the next
18 motion, I move that we allocate up to \$50,000, to be allocated
19 from the IKEA funding source, to be used towards items such as
20 venue costs for the event, marketing talent costs, website
21 design, social media, and travel expenses towards a platform
22 that allows us to bring Texas interns together at the state
23 level.

24 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: I'll second that.

25

1 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: All right. Let's get your
2 motion on the table also.

3 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Chairman, I move that
4 we fund additional applications six through 12 at an additional
5 \$759,253, including the 150,747 balance from the RFA.

6 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: I second.

7 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: All right. Any additional
8 discussion?

9 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: None here, Chairman.

10 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: None.

11 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: All right. Commissioner
12 Demerson, would you also move for your succession planning, but
13 noting that staff has an alternative source of funding for that?

14 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Yeah, so I move that
15 we proposing up to \$250,000--and Mr. Chairman, before I make the
16 motion, if staff's already looking at doing that, do we really--
17 do I need--I mean--

18 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: We need to take action on
19 it, so it's a commission action.

20 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: [Inaudible]

21 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: That this is going--we
22 don't need to do that?

23 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: [Inaudible]

24 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Yeah.

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: [Inaudible]

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COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Mm-hmm.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Wow, that just became the highlight of my day. Thank you, Commissioner Demerson.

COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Right, mm-hmm, thank you.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: All right, so we have three motions on the table. Commissioner Demerson, 600,000 for the video, 50,000 for the interns. Commissioner Alvarez, you have a motion that's been seconded to spend approximately 760,000 in addition to the 1.1 million that has already been allocated, including the balance left in the RFA to fund through the 12th application. Did I characterize that correctly?

COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: That's correct, right.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Is there any objection to any of these motion?

COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: None here, Chairman.

COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: None.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Hearing no objection, all three motions pass. Statewide initiatives, Agenda Item 13.

MR. SERNA: We have nothing on that.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Agenda Item 14, COVID report.

MR. SERNA: We have nothing on that.

1 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Board nominations, Agenda
2 Item 15.

3 MR. SERNA: Yes, sir, we do.

4 SHUNTA WILLIAMS: Good morning, Chairman,
5 commissioners, and Mr. Serna. For the record, Shunta Williams
6 with the Workforce Development Division. And before you for
7 consideration are workforce board nominations for Workforce
8 Solutions Brazos Valley, Middle Rio Grande, and Coastal Bend.
9 I'm here to answer any questions that you have. Staff recommends
10 that all nominees be approved.

11 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Comments or questions?

12 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: None here, Chairman.

13 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: My only comment--is
14 that Shunta we see, or is that [inaudible]?

15 SHUNTA WILLIAMS: Yes.

16 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Okay.

17 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Is there a motion?

18 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Chairman, I move that
19 we approve the board nominees for Brazos Valley, Middle Rio
20 Grande, and the Coastal Bend.

21 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Second.

22 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: It's been moved and
23 seconded, motion carries. I'm showing we do not have a
24 legislative report today.

25 MR. SERNA: No, sir, we do not.

1 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Yep. So, let's move to the
2 executive director's report. Mr. Serna.

3 MR. SERNA: Mr. Chairman, commissioners,
4 we'd like to provide you a brief update on staff's activities
5 with regard to the middle skills initiative that the commission
6 established here recently. All we wanna do is do this on a
7 regular basis. This is just an update on the activities. And
8 since this is our first one, I'll have two individuals, Courtney
9 Arbour and Mary York, come up and present our status, and then
10 in the future, we'll have one or other or another staff member
11 present just our status.

12 COURTNEY ARBOUR: All right, good morning,
13 commissioners. Again, Courtney Arbour, for the record. A slide
14 is on the screen that is visible to you and the audience that
15 will accompany what we wanted to share with you today. Mary and
16 I have been working with a number of agency staff and Mr. Serna
17 and Mr. Townsend to kind of get our arms around the topic of
18 middle skills and some of the things that we do and can do to
19 help end the middle skills gap, as we've been charged with
20 doing. As you know, 52 percent of U.S. jobs require skills
21 training beyond high school level, but less than a four-year
22 degree. But a study--a publication by the National Skills
23 Coalition in 2020 says that only 43 percent of workers have that
24 level of training, so this gap, as you all discussed in a recent
25 meeting, really threatens our ability to keep creating jobs and

1 be the strong state that we are. As we continue to lead in
2 having a strong industry, we've acknowledged that there are a
3 lot of things that TWC already provides, and the workforce
4 solution system already does provide to support middle skills
5 workers. We have a network of more than 180 workforce solutions
6 offices, more than 60 providers of apprenticeship and adult
7 education and literacy programs like voc rehab, are in place in
8 multiple offices around the state. And much of what they do,
9 whether it's labeled this way or not, is intended to help with
10 these highly skilled middle skill type positions. So, staff
11 first wanted to take an opportunity to try to define this gap
12 that we are looking at. As I mentioned earlier, middle skills
13 occupations are defined as those jobs that require more than a
14 high school diploma or equivalent, but less than a four-year
15 degree. This might mean successful of an associate degree, some
16 other post-secondary award, some college, but without the
17 degree, on-the-job training programs; apprenticeships fall in
18 this category very often, and then long-term moderate or short-
19 term on-the-job training. We looked at the data, and about 400
20 of the 876 occupations in the SOC system, as per the 2018
21 report, meet this definition. And as of August, there are
22 217,000 open middle skills jobs and work in Texas. So, let me
23 just briefly, before handing off to Mary, I just wanted to let
24 you know that we did have a lot of thought about how this might
25 be defined, how we can--the data we have on-hand and at our

1 fingertips, to take a study, an ongoing look, at what these
2 middle skills look like. So, Mary will talk a little bit about
3 some of the existing expertise and resources we have.

4 MARY YORK: Thanks, Courtney. Mary York,
5 Office of Employer Initiatives. Good morning, Mr. Chairman and
6 Commissioner Alvarez, Commissioner Demerson. So, in terms of
7 existing expertise and resources, you all know that our entire
8 workforce system is laser-focused on making connections between
9 employers and job-seekers, providing training where appropriate,
10 and, as Courtney mentioned, a lot of the work that we do already
11 touches middle skill occupations. So, some information and
12 resources are developed or provided to build awareness and
13 provide direction. In other cases, direct services, such as
14 training, are provided, or case management or support services.
15 And some of the things that we do already include our labor
16 market and career information tools, Work in Texas, several of
17 our training programs. Our local workforce boards are highly
18 involved, again, through occupational training, on-the-job
19 training, our subsidized employment. And then certainly,
20 vocational rehabilitation plays a critical role in up-skilling
21 and providing educational resources to their clients. And then
22 we also more recently have added Metrix online, and we also have
23 the Texas internship challenge. But as we're looking forward and
24 looking specifically at those roughly 400 occupations, what we
25 wanna do as an agency across the agency is begin to look at kind

1 of everything that we do through a middle skills lens, and see
2 how what we're doing is really benefitting employers and job-
3 seekers that might be looking for their next career, and how we
4 can begin to close that gap or end that gap through either
5 existing services or through the implementation of some new
6 programs. Because we realize that the future of our Texas
7 economy depends on making those connections. So, as we started
8 to look at how we were gonna strategize, we broke it into four
9 kind of buckets, categories, those being career information,
10 career preparedness, career connection, and career progression.
11 And we made a very deliberate choice to use the term "career,"
12 because these are more than jobs to these individuals. This
13 provides their pathway, their career, to support their families
14 and be productive in their communities.

15 COURTNEY ARBOUR: Okay. I'll highlight the
16 first couple of strategy areas that Mary was referencing, and
17 the slide that you're looking at will help with this. Career
18 information is, we think, probably one of the most common ways
19 that we impact the state, through our labor market information
20 and the many offices we have, and the job search assistance that
21 people receive, and the help that employers have in
22 understanding what the workforce in their areas look like. And
23 so as staff, we are looking at a number of upgrades to existing
24 systems and processes, or improvements where we can really call
25 out these jobs and provide career information specific to these,

1 so that we can begin to narrow this gap. You all are familiar
2 with all of the labor market tools that are available with TWC.
3 We've been looking at some of those, and as those are refreshed,
4 that will be done in a way that calls out some of these
5 occupations specifically. Jobs Y'all is a good example. When the
6 refresh takes place in the next few months for Jobs Y'all, some
7 of these middle skill jobs will be in focus. Texas Career Check
8 and Texas Reality Check are other LMI tools that through Jobs
9 Y'all, young people are pointed to to learn more about these
10 middle skill jobs when they're exploring--doing career
11 exploration. The virtual reality is another piece that you all
12 have shown interest in recently. We have the workforce education
13 specialist, Commissioner Alvarez, who will be receiving virtual
14 reality goggles to use with the youth for their career
15 exploration. The voc rehab program here at TWC is also planning
16 a purchase of some of this software and goggles when working
17 with customers through career exploration to really give them a
18 true look at what that looks like, and middle skills will
19 certainly be a part of that. We have offices around the state,
20 as both Mary and I have mentioned, and what we will be asking is
21 that grantees who have orientations for different programs or
22 just introductions to services also begin to pull from these
23 listings of middle skills jobs to highlight that for the
24 attendees, so that they can see what is available to them and
25 how to get help from that office in connecting to those jobs.

1 Career pathways is something that the tri-agency legislation has
2 encouraged us to look at, and you all have shown a lot of
3 interest in that in the middle skills discussion. We're working
4 with our tri-agency partners to determine how best to roll this
5 out, but there's a lot of interest among us and you in showing a
6 visualization for what the pathways look like in different
7 industries. And so we have that on the short list of projects to
8 define and bring forward to you to see--to allow the young and
9 old to be able to look at an industry and see the different
10 rungs on the ladder within that industry or the path that they
11 can take, and the educational requirements along the way.
12 Informational campaigns, you talked this morning about some
13 marketing. We know that as an agency and at the grantee level,
14 we can do a--have a very focused effort on calling out these
15 jobs in our social media, in our TV spots, or whatever the local
16 offices are using to bring awareness. Career information is the
17 second category. We have a number of funding streams that you
18 all are very familiar with, the statewide dollars that staff
19 will use this data, or present you with the data so that we can
20 make recommendations for specific training and other initiatives
21 with specific services provided to try to boost the number of
22 people who are trained in specific jobs. I know that we've heard
23 you talk a lot about manufacturing and IT and healthcare, among
24 many other industries, so the statewide dollars will be very
25 helpful. Middle skills programs such as apprenticeship is going

1 strong at the workforce commission. As you know, we have
2 millions of dollars at any given time, where we're really
3 focused on apprenticeship, JET being another. We can, in our
4 procurement of dollars in these and other programs, in our
5 scoring or in our language, in the statements of work, add
6 emphasis to certain jobs that we find, or occupations that we
7 would like to see focused efforts on. The eligible training
8 provider lists that are maintained at the local level, we have
9 identified a way to take those lists and compare it to the jobs
10 that are in Work in Texas by region, to see where we might have
11 a shortage of the number of providers in an area that are
12 training for the specific occupations, and we'll begin to do a
13 cross-match of those annually, and then alert the board in that
14 area so that they can increase outreach to providers to fill
15 those gaps, if we don't have enough training available. And then
16 focused outreach, all of the different arms of the agency that
17 conduct outreach in one way or another will begin to add this to
18 their lists of information to share, to make sure that we're
19 bringing awareness. And we'll talk with our multiple grantees,
20 particularly our boards, adult ed and apprenticeship, to the
21 degree that we can, about making this part of their discussions.

22 MARY YORK: So then the next category,
23 career connection, I--you know, maybe there's somebody who would
24 disagree, but I think the most important role that we play is
25 making those connections between employers and job-seekers.

1 Unfortunately, when we have a gap like we're seeing right now,
2 neither the employers are winning, nor are our job-seekers; you
3 know are Texans winning. So, that's really the whole purpose,
4 right, of this initiative, is to bring those two together. And
5 we have some existing tools that we can do, we can use to make
6 that happen, but I think it's really gonna be taking it to a
7 whole nother level, working with employers to really provide the
8 targeted assistance that they need. And that can continue
9 through job fairs, maybe some job fairs that are specifically
10 focused on middle skill occupations and helping those employers
11 come to the table, understand that there are resources available
12 to them. As well as, you know, providing some additional job-
13 matching and then recruitment of individuals into the system to
14 help them understand what the Texas workforce system can do to
15 help prepare them for some of these existing job opportunities.
16 We wanna work on an enhanced supply/demand analysis, to really
17 not just look at the gap that we have right now, but look at
18 projections for what careers are gonna be in demand five, 10
19 years from now. And we have some fantastic folks on the team
20 that are ready to work on that and do that data analysis piece,
21 to help us ensure that we're not relevant at the moment. This
22 initiative is relevant as we move forward. And certainly some of
23 the specific programs that we have as part of our toolkit, as
24 Courtney was referencing; for instance, JET, that really is
25 talking about, you know, sort of the employers--or the employees

1 of the future, and preparing them and having them ready. So, as
2 Courtney mentioned, you know, collaborations, I think, are gonna
3 be key as part of this. We will be working with the higher
4 education coordinating board on a reengagement portal, to ensure
5 that all of the individuals that are moving through their system
6 have information on educational opportunities, labor market
7 tools, and work in Texas. And we're going to be also promoting
8 those middle skill internships, and ensuring that internship has
9 an important role in the career connection piece. And then
10 lastly, career progression--and I'm gonna skip around on the
11 order on that. So, we have this fantastic tool, skills
12 development fund. I think everybody agrees it is a premier tool
13 for training your incumbent workers, and up-skilling them to
14 additional--to other careers within your business, as well as
15 training new employees for your business. And I think that we
16 have some potential to leverage it further, and we can adjust
17 program parameters, maybe, as needed, to further incentivize
18 training through that program for middle skill occupations. So,
19 I think there's some great opportunities there. And then, you
20 know, along with that up-skilling, we should continue to
21 leverage metrics learning and figure out additional ways to
22 outreach that platform, so people are receiving the skills
23 training that they need. We also have transitioning workers, and
24 we wanna make sure that we're fully targeting those individuals,
25 looking at career pathways and transition visualization tools to

1 provide them with ways to navigate paths to the next-level jobs
2 and higher-paying and higher-growth middle-skill jobs. So, you
3 know, that's definitely something that we will be exploring and
4 sharing more information on. So, with that, I think that those
5 were our updates for today, and we are certainly open to any
6 questions that the commission may have.

7 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Any comments or questions?

8 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Chairman, I have a
9 question for both Courtney and Mary. One, Courtney, one thing
10 that we've noticed when people are interested in the
11 apprenticeship programs around the state of Texas, there's not
12 one website that actually has all the schools from around the
13 state of Texas. Not even the department of labor has something
14 that's comprehensive. And we understand--is there an opportunity
15 for us to include that on our website, or if somebody could help
16 us establish where all these schools are? We've had multiple
17 folks, when we talk about apprenticeship, say, "Is there one in
18 the Gulf Coast area," and it would be easy for us to say if you
19 could just go to our website, we have one here, and all that.
20 So, it's unfortunate, but not even the department of labor has
21 that. And I know that that's something they'll be working on,
22 but if maybe you could help me with that. For Mary, I think in
23 the last couple of months we've discussed how we could promote
24 some of the great things that this agency does, and I agree with
25 you. For those individuals that have been incarcerated, I

1 referenced to staff sometime back that I'd like to see
2 literature, you working closely with the boards to ensure that
3 those prisons behind or in various board areas have the adequate
4 information. As we continue to travel this great state of ours,
5 many of the folks are not aware of these perks. Just yesterday,
6 we met with somebody, an employer who was looking at
7 electricians. They're interested in hiring individuals that are
8 incarcerated, but the messaging doesn't get out that we provide
9 the fidelity bonding and the tax credits. And so, it's kind of
10 like the commissioners are having to tell these folks that. And
11 so I love what you're saying, I think there's a value in the
12 presentation that both of you laid out. Just some minor tweaks.
13 One of them would be if we could somehow establish some type of
14 website or something that would gear applicants or anyone
15 interested in the apprenticeship programs to actually make
16 contact with them from around the state. You know, if it's in
17 Houston, and all that. Because we know them, but not everybody
18 does. And then the other thing would be the promotion or the
19 encouraging of our boards to be a little bit more proactive when
20 it comes to some of these populations that are underserved. The
21 folks in public housing, Courtney, your folks do a really good
22 job with those individuals that are farm workers. That's good,
23 and so I appreciate that. And then, of course, always having the
24 literature in both English and Spanish, and in some cases,
25 Vietnamese, in the Houston area. So, other than that, great

1 report. I think we're on track. We had an opportunity to visit
2 with the commissioner of higher ed, Commissioner Keller. I just
3 wanna make sure that what we do is in alignment with the tri-
4 agency report. Middle skills, highly skilled--regardless of how
5 you wanna word that, I think it's important for people to know
6 that we have a tool there, this bridge, and a lot of people
7 don't know that. I don't understand. Even his people don't know
8 that. And I also wanna make it clear that industry needs to be a
9 part of those discussions when we talk about the tri-agency. For
10 anyone to even acknowledge that industry doesn't play a role in
11 what takes place between K through 12 and post-secondary is
12 mistaken. We handle folks that are--the pandemic certainly
13 educated me on one thing, and that is that a 16, 17, 18-year-old
14 kid can receive unemployment insurance benefits. So yeah, we are
15 in that world, and so appreciate what you've laid out. I think
16 the--what you've laid out here is encouraging to know that the
17 information and the great work that this agency does is gonna be
18 distributed around the state. And so I congratulate both of you
19 on the report.

20 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Three quick points.
21 Thanks for the presentation. I think eliminating the middle
22 skills gap is very, very, very important, so on the first career
23 information, middle skill jobs by region, as the commissioner
24 representing employers, those jobs are employers that have jobs
25 available, and I can't over-emphasize the need to outreach to

1 really get the message out that we have jobs available. Because
2 we're putting together programs and processes in place that you
3 get this skill, you get this certification, you can actually
4 have that job. And so we get to the point where you don't have
5 800,000 jobs posted, a million folks unemployed. You know, we're
6 eliminating that, in a sense. And so just outreach is huge under
7 that particular area. And so the second, on promoting middle
8 skills internships, there's also something called minternships
9 as well. And so just a number of different "ships" that are out
10 there that I encourage you guys to really look at all of the
11 opportunities that are there. Because what that does is it
12 provides individuals with opportunities to go fill some of those
13 jobs that we're going to be making known in a big way. And then
14 lastly, Mary, on the skills development fund workforce, I like
15 the fact that you're talking about being nimble, being flexible,
16 being creative, and that's what it's going to take in order for
17 us to continue to eliminate the skills gap. And so I encourage
18 work in that area wherever we can move the needle or do
19 something that's conducive to and that's relevant. Then we take
20 every advantage and opportunity to do just that. But good work,
21 good report, and fueling the Texas economy--I love it.

22 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Thank you. Great stuff,
23 glad this is gonna be a regular feature at our commission
24 meetings. I think it adds a lot to the conversation on the
25 middle skills gap. If I could get you guys to do me a huge

1 favor, though--schedule some time in my office. I wanna talk
2 about two things. I wanna talk about kind of the roadmap for
3 what you've got here, relative to what the commission asked for
4 on June 30, and then I also need an update on when that funding
5 package is gonna get brought forward in its entirety, so we can
6 get moving on some things that were in there that are touched on
7 in your chart here. I just wanna see how those all mesh up. So
8 if you'd be so kind as to schedule some time for me to do that,
9 we can explore this in a little further detail. And I won't do
10 it today and belabor what was a really good presentation. So, if
11 we could do that, that would be awesome, and I think we can get
12 a lot done in that regard. Other questions or comments?

13 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: None here, Chairman.

14 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: None.

15 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Is there any other order
16 of business to come before the commission?

17 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: I have a few items,
18 real quick. Virtual reality was mentioned, and that's not for
19 the--you guys [inaudible] or whatever. But Commissioner Alvarez,
20 just congratulations on moving that. I know years ago we were
21 talking about virtual reality and making that happen, and so
22 seeing that take place is huge. Chairman, I love your commercial
23 this week, or the [sounds like] talking deals that are out
24 there. So, I mean, it's good work in that regard. As it gets the
25 word out [inaudible] share with you it's in my mind or whatever-

1 -childcare, we have childcare. We have all these things that are
2 available. And so just appreciate what you guys continue to do
3 to really push the word out there. I have a new employee on
4 board, Jikku John [SP]. He's a new attorney. Jikku, if you'd
5 stand. He's our new attorney, UNT law school, and actually has
6 worked on some cases before and the like. And so we're glad to
7 have him as a part of the team. He replaces Velissa Chapa, who's
8 gone--Les stole away. Les and Suzanna, I'll blame them forever
9 with that. But glad to have Jikku here. We have a childcare
10 virtual town hall meeting this afternoon, over 300, and it may
11 be higher, individuals that'll be participating in that.
12 Employment law essentials, and so any questions that those in
13 the childcare space have, they'll be in a position to answer
14 those questions, and we'll be doing that at 2:00. And if you are
15 interested in attending that, make sure you get with the team to
16 let you guys know that that's happening. And I think with that,
17 I thank you guys again for the state agency interns deal, where
18 Governor Abbott had an opportunity to recognize state agencies
19 that are actually hiring interns during this pandemic. It's so
20 important that employers on the state agency side and the
21 private sector are actually taking advantage of utilizing those
22 interns to fill their talent pipelines. So, thank you guys for
23 the participation.

24 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Thank you.

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COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Thank you,

Commissioner.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Anything else? Is there a

motion to adjourn?

COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Chairman, I move that

we adjourn.

COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Second.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: So moved and seconded to

adjourn. We're adjourned.