



**MEETING OF THE
TEXAS WORKFORCE COMMISSION**

DATE

JULY 7, 2021

1 WEDNESDAY, JULY 7, 2021

2 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Good afternoon. The work
3 session is called to order. Let's start with Agenda Item 1.
4 Discussion, Consideration and Possible Action Regarding
5 Statewide Initiatives Funded with Workforce Innovation and
6 Opportunity Act, TANF, AEL, and Other State Level Funds. We
7 initially approved funding for statewide initiatives in July of
8 2020 during the LAR process. But, what we now have up for
9 consideration are any considerations for changes to these
10 initiatives or amounts. Do you guys have a presentation before
11 we start, or do we charge right in? What's your preference?

12 COURTNEY ARBOUR: We have the summary of
13 recommendations that have been briefed with your offices. We're
14 happy to go over those one by one with you, or take feedback.
15 Whatever approach you'd prefer?

16 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Do you--do we need a
17 summary from staff?

18 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: I think we're okay
19 with summary. I mean, I've been summarized?

20 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Uh-huh. Commissioner
21 Demerson, you okay?

22 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: I'm fine.

23 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: All right. So, from my
24 understanding, we have about 23 statewide initiatives or so on
25 the agenda for today. Some needing--all needing revisions.

1 There's others besides that. Those changes would be different
2 from what we approved last July. But, I think the changes to
3 these fall into a few general categories. And I put together a
4 little summary so we can just all be on the same page about what
5 those different categories are. If I understand everything
6 correctly, the recommended revisions are for one of five
7 reasons. One, we didn't fund anything when we voted out the LAR
8 Documents either. Because we didn't exactly know what the amount
9 was going to be, or we were waiting on the AEL long-term
10 planning document to be finished. Either way, we didn't put a
11 dollar amount in there 'cause we didn't have to. It's not
12 required. Now, we need to come back and assign a dollar amount
13 to that. The second reason something might be up for
14 consideration today is because staff has identified a specific
15 need for increased funding. Third reason, staff has a general
16 sense that there might be more demand after various impacts over
17 the last year or so. So, they're contemplating changing funding
18 levels based on some sense. Rather than a specific need. The
19 fourth reason, there's a decrease in funding over last July. And
20 then the fifth reason is, is that we were going to shift funding
21 sources 'cause we found a better way to do it. So, I think all
22 the things we're going to talk about today fall into one of
23 those categories. Just to put everything kind of out there, I am
24 okay with all of these categories except for one. And that's the
25 Category 3, which is a general sense. I do want to talk through

1 some of those for that third category. Where you suspect there
2 might be demand, but we haven't proven that demand. I want to
3 introduce an alternative mechanism for us to consider that
4 rather than just vote a dollar amount today. Everything else
5 we're going to talk about is not going to be a problem for me.
6 Obviously, we're gonna have a discussion up here today. So, I do
7 have some other comments. But, let me just stop right there,
8 Commissioner Alvarez, and see if you have any comments that
9 you'd like to make.

10 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Chairman, where were
11 you referencing? I'm just looking just at what you were saying.
12 Just so I can kind of get an idea.

13 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: This is my notes to
14 myself.

15 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Okay. So, I also--I
16 appreciate the time that you and staff have come by to visit
17 with us regarding this particular important issue to all of us.
18 I do have really no problem with the recommendations that you
19 all made regarding the amount that you were moving over as the
20 Chairman said. Some programs that may not be needed anymore, or
21 some programs that we were adding, or decreasing funding. What I
22 would like to say, though, is I do have some ideas that I would
23 like to, as we did earlier this week, and just maybe some fine
24 tuning on some of these programs that we have. Maybe an
25 implementation, or when we write out the RFA if we could include

1 it. But, other than that to the team that's up here today, I'm
2 okay with the amounts that were awarded in which you guys have
3 laid forth before us. I'll wait until Commissioner Demerson has
4 any remarks. And then I can share with you some of the things
5 that I would like to do, not very many. But, just maybe an
6 implementation or when we write out the description of these
7 grants that maybe we can incorporate them. Commissioner
8 Demerson?

9 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Thanks to the team
10 for the work that you guys have put into these efforts. I too am
11 in agreement with what's been issued here in terms of increases
12 and the like. And look forward to hearing the Chairman's
13 comments on an alternative way of doing things. I may have a few
14 things that I'd like to add as well. Some of those things could
15 be probably taken care of under some of the initiatives that are
16 already here. But, we'll wait if we're going to be laying out
17 new proposals of something along those lines. I'll do that at
18 that time.

19 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Well, my concerns are with
20 these specific programs. Governors Summer Merit, Youth Robotics,
21 Camp Code, Careers in Texas Industries, Texas Internship
22 Initiative, and Entrepreneurship Bootcamp. Staff has requested
23 additional money for these. But, the rationale for that is, is
24 we think there might be increased participation, but we're not
25 exactly sure if there's gonna be increased participation. My

1 personal preference would be not to tie up those dollars waiting
2 to see if there's increased participation. My preference would
3 be to just vote those out exactly like they were last July of
4 2020 in terms of the LAR Process. But, give staff the ability
5 and sort of preset the discussion for if something comes back
6 with just a huge amount of applications, to bring that back to
7 us and ask for additional funds to deal with those specific
8 increase in applications. I can see how we might possibly see an
9 increase in some of these programs. I don't necessarily see the
10 data that would tell me that it's gonna be across the board the
11 way we've kind of asked for it. I know we've typically had kind
12 of a--we get one chance at setting these funding levels. And we
13 don't like to bring things back, but I'm a little uncomfortable
14 setting aside what actually ends up adding up to a fairly large
15 amount of money. And then only at the end of the thing just
16 letting that money go back to be used for something else. I'd
17 kind of rather hold it close at the beginning and move it
18 forward if we need to make those increases later. Other than
19 that, I would leave everything the same. So, that's really my
20 only concern about the list of funds that have been set out for
21 staff. If I were to--and I would just leave it kind of open-
22 ended for staff as well, in terms of let's just say that Youth
23 Robotics does come back with twice the number of applications.
24 That you would just simply make us aware of that and bring a
25 revised funding total for us to do that. The total amount of

1 funds I don't think is going to impact the total number of
2 applications that we could potentially get. It certainly has an
3 impact on the total number of awards that we make. And I don't
4 want to stand in the way of something. My purpose here is really
5 just not to tie up money on speculation. Everything else had a
6 good rationale. I went in and looked at these specifically. And
7 I looked at year's '17, '18, and '19, or years that we had data
8 for. Which was sometimes just '18 and '19. And I wasn't seeing a
9 huge climb in participation. I wasn't seeing a huge climb in the
10 total number. But, I do see a little bit of evidence of some
11 increasing interest. And so that's kind of my position here
12 today.

13 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Chairman, I
14 appreciate your comments. Staff is very well aware of how
15 popular these programs are that were just stated by the
16 Chairman. Especially, one's like Camp Code and anything having
17 to do with robotics. I've been very fortunate enough to attend
18 some of these workshops where we've heard not only from the
19 instructors, the teachers, the folks that are running the
20 programs, but the students themselves. Sixth, seventh, and
21 eighth graders that have stated they wish they had something
22 like this in their schools. University of Houston clearly gives
23 a perfect example of one of the schools that we visited that was
24 awarded the contract back in 2019. Where the young girls were
25 saying, I wish we did this during the schoolyear. We have to

1 wait 'til the summer to participate in something like this. I
2 think it's a very popular initiative. I know you would agree
3 with me, Chairman, that we have provided support for Camp Code.
4 I know you and I both reference Paris Community College and the
5 success of Camp Code for the young girls and young men that were
6 in that program. So, I am going to lay out some parameters and
7 if it requires that we put in some more money, I would ask staff
8 to look at that. I do think that this is a worthwhile
9 initiative that requires us to--and I think I want to thank
10 staff for making the recommendations on increasing the amounts
11 on some of the various programs that were just laid out.
12 Especially that one of Camp Code and some of the other one's
13 dealing with STEM. Which is certainly one of the Tri-Agencies
14 efforts back in 2016. We know that this particular issue with
15 Camp Code was referenced in the 60x30 report back in 2016. So, I
16 have no doubt that it's important and I think we all know that.
17 What I'd like to do, though, is lay out my parameters regarding
18 some of the initiatives that we have laid forth--that you all
19 have laid forth. Again, I agree with the amounts that staff has
20 recommended. And so my only concern here is when we write up the
21 RFA if we can just include some of these specifics. If we go to
22 75024 Camp Code; 75024 you're asking for an additional \$400,000.
23 Here is the change I would like to make to the description. I
24 would like to embed a micro credential or badge. If that cannot
25 be done, then would like campers to receive a certificate from

1 the Texas Workforce and Workforce Board recognizing the camp
2 completion. Bottom line, these young men and women when they
3 graduate from the program do not receive anything except, thank
4 you for attending. What I would like to see is something similar
5 to what we have here, and that is a certificate that would say,
6 we completed the camp. Would have the Texas Workforce logo, a
7 way of branding and marketing what we do. And then on the side,
8 whatever board was awarded the contract to be next to it as a
9 certificate reminding everyone when we participated in UIL
10 competitions early on, young kids received some type of
11 credential. And so if it required additional money, this would
12 be appropriate. I would also like staff to ensure that the
13 development and delivery of curriculum be accessible for
14 students with disability. Staff should be charged with
15 leveraging Vocational Rehabilitation dollars to promote access
16 to these camps for students with a disability. Staff is charged
17 in figuring out how to do this in one procurement. That was page
18 six of the 75024 Camp Code. 75025 Careers in Texas Industries.
19 The money amount that you requested, the \$280,000, I'm fine with
20 that. What I would like is the boards ahead of the event to have
21 an educational outreach team have a discussion, workshop on
22 career assessments, exploration, and regional demand. And how to
23 leverage access to employers or career information. Students
24 would complete an assessment to determine three or four
25 occupation titles they are interested in, compare those job

1 titles against a list of vendors who will be participating in
2 the event to predetermine the five booths they must seek out to
3 conduct their interviews. This would provide more strategic
4 approach rather than just having students wander from vendor to
5 vendor. We've been to some of these. Kids are just given a sheet
6 to sign up with three or four vendors that they've seen. And
7 lots of times that's all they've done. What I'd like to see if
8 the outreach specialist team go out there meet with the
9 instructors, with possible employers; come up with some type of
10 career assessment as I stated. Have a plan in place and make
11 sure that those students visit the vendor that was on their
12 occupational list. So, be more strategic on how we do this,
13 rather than just have children or our young adults go from
14 vendor to vendor. Entrepreneur Bootcamp 75028. We're moving over
15 \$150,000. Moving it over from WIOA. What I'd like to see if to
16 make sure that the information at camps to be made available in
17 Spanish. And maybe other languages depending on where these are
18 taking place, like in Houston in Vietnamese for our Vietnamese
19 population. So, we have these camps that take place,
20 entrepreneur camps, and they're predominately done in English.
21 We do have many vendors around the state that are predominately
22 Spanish speakers, or speak another language like Vietnamese.
23 TANF 79024, page 9. 79024 my understanding is that preliminary
24 numbers will be coming soon to these amounts and may not be
25 sufficient. We won't know until next week. So, I may at some

1 point ask to request for additional funding. 79024 is the
2 Apprenticeship Chapter 133. So, it's hard for me to put a dollar
3 amount on this and I don't think was recommended by staff. So,
4 it's my understanding these numbers will be out sometime this
5 week. And then lastly, on page 19 of what you all handed out to
6 us. Statewide High School Equivalency Virtual Provider for
7 Consideration. BY2021 Proposed Initiatives, both of these deal
8 with Alaynia--I mean, Mahalia. I said Mahalia and Alayna at the
9 same time. There was no dollar amount, so I was just curious if
10 you had something that you would like to present to the
11 Commission at this time, or at a later time. But, I think when
12 we were briefed there was no money amount. Other than that,
13 those were the proposed. So, my recommendation would be to keep
14 what you have recommended to the Commission. Keep the dollar
15 amount because of the popularity. And I know it's hard to
16 measure sometimes the numbers. And we're big on that. We're very
17 big on numbers and we use a lot of data. But, as Adam Leonard
18 has mentioned, sometimes it's really hard to measure success.
19 And so Camp Code is certainly one of those. And so how do you
20 really measure it. And so my recommendation is to keep the
21 funding amounts as presented by staff as you laid out. And with
22 the additions of what I asked and hopefully approved by the
23 Commissioners today including the parameters that were laid out
24 before you. That's all I have to say at this time.

25

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Commissioner Demerson?

1 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Commissioner

2 Alvarez, your initiatives don't increase the dollar amount at
3 all. I think they're basically just--I'm of the opinion I agree
4 with Commissioner Alvarez. I think staff's proposals that you've
5 pushed forward are things that have been looked into. One
6 problem, Chairman, that I have and, Commissioner Alvarez, with
7 the goal when you're setting a budget. You know, whatever we
8 decide upon we want to make sure that we're giving them a
9 budget, the amount, where they can set goals according to that.
10 And up to amount afterwards are if they run up to, say, a
11 million dollars and then there was an opportunity to bring back
12 additional funds or so. It doesn't allow a group, I don't think
13 in my opinion, I'd be curious to see what staff thinks about
14 that. I'm not sure if I were on the receiving end of a grant I
15 would want to know the dollar amount period. If it's gonna be
16 1.3 I would want to operate under 1.3 so that I could create a
17 program around that. If it's one million I'm set on that amount.
18 And so I want to make sure that whatever we're--so, I'm fine
19 with the rationale behind the staff's increased numbers here.
20 But, I would definitely want us to be hard set on a final number
21 and we're going out at that point. Always have the ability to
22 bring back something, but you really don't set a program
23 afterwards. You set a program based on the budget that you
24 receive up front. Those are my thoughts. And curious in regards
25 to these programs that are here. I know the \$50,000 that's tied

1 to the Foster Youth Workforce Transition Centers that's
2 something utilized so that boards and individuals can plan if
3 they're going to attend an event in the future. And so I'd want
4 to have that. Otherwise, they don't begin to plan because
5 there's not money set aside to do those things. And so the
6 others might fall into place with that same rationale. I'm not
7 sure, but if you guys have any comments around that I'd be
8 curious to hear any input.

9 COURTNEY ARBOUR: Courtney Arbour, Workforce
10 Division. On the initiative that I believe the Chairman was
11 referencing where we didn't have specific demand driving it, it
12 was due to summer events primarily that were cancelled last
13 year. And so staff anticipated that maybe we would have a higher
14 demand. If the increase is not approved, we would need to bring
15 back a discussion paper to the Commission at the time that the
16 scoring is complete to request more money. If we had--let's say
17 we could afford to fund six of the nine. And we had an
18 additional three strong applications with high scores, we would
19 bring a paper back at that point asking for additional funding
20 is the way I envisioned what--the process working. But, that was
21 our thinking, Commissioner, is that because the--mostly camps or
22 summer events were cancelled last year that we might see a
23 greater demand for more students this year.

24 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Okay. So, we might
25 see a greater demand. So, if budgets are set and we go with the

1 higher amount would the marketing be different towards those
2 initiatives? Are there other opportunities at that point?

3 COURTNEY ARBOUR: I'm gonna speak generally.
4 I believe this is true for all, but let me just say that I'm
5 gonna speak generally. We would publish the RFP with the same
6 language about what the funds could be used for. But, it would
7 be capped at the amount that you all approved today.

8 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Okay. Okay.

9 COURTNEY ARBOUR: And then if we had strong
10 applications exceeding that amount, we would need to come back
11 for another vote to add another however much. And we would ask
12 at that point to fund two or three more projects. But, it
13 doesn't change the content other than the dollar amount. And
14 then we would need to decide whether to bring it to you, or
15 bring it to you for more funding.

16 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Okay. Yeah. You're
17 almost trying to get to an up to amount. Because if you have a
18 budget set at a million dollars and your RFA goes out. You know,
19 we're stopping it there even if you have an additional three or
20 four applications that are there. We don't have the budget set
21 for that. That would be my thought. You know, I wouldn't want to
22 see it coming back before the board because then you can go from
23 that amount to an even an additional amount.

24 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Courtney, I have an
25 additional question? The parameters that I laid out, the

1 implementation of a certificate of completion, some type of
2 digital badge; do you anticipate that that would cost us
3 anything to do?

4 COURTNEY ARBOUR: I'm a little out of my
5 depth in answering that.

6 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Mm-hmm.

7 COURTNEY ARBOUR: I would think that
8 printing a certificate with a feel like that would not be
9 extremely expensive. But, I have not priced them.

10 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Okay.

11 COURTNEY ARBOUR: I know that when we've
12 worked with, We Hire Vets, and projects like that the costs are
13 fairly minimal on the printing of a certificate.

14 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: So, my first thought
15 was when we did these programs, FIRST Robotics, that was
16 rewarded this past week with the press release. We saw that Camp
17 Code. My original idea and we're still working on this, was that
18 those recipients of these programs would receive a credential of
19 some sort. Now, I wasn't thinking of an industry recognized
20 credential. But, we do know that CompTIA offers a fundamental
21 A+. There's an intro to Python. If anything it was just to kind
22 of create, as again brought forth in the past regarding
23 stackable credentials, where we would allow individuals at an
24 early age to receive some type of recognition. My goal, of
25 course I'm not going to get into somebody else's sandbox, but my

1 goal would be that TEA someday would recognize this credential
2 as they did House Bill 276, or 278 by Representative Gera
3 allowing coding to be now counted as a course in the core
4 curriculum. My goal would be that these types of badges or
5 credentials would be recognized by TEA. And this would be a good
6 way to start that. At the very least, we could at least now, we
7 know that Amazon web service with the Cloud is now looking at
8 implementing some type of credential in middle school.
9 Conversations we had with them back in Dallas in 2019. And you
10 were part of those discussions. They're looking at doing that
11 seriously. And this is a good way for us to get on board. So,
12 the additional money that you laid out was a way to supplement.
13 Maybe if there was a cost to the certifications, I thought it
14 might be a good way to pay for it if we needed to. Maybe not the
15 whole amount, but certainly some of the amount. And then, of
16 course, last week I was in San Antonio where at FIRST Robotics
17 they had their UIL competition. The competition was viewed, for
18 those that weren't aware of this, by 100 countries. Every one of
19 those participants, I thought, would have been cool if they had
20 received some type of certification from the agency for every
21 participant that participated. That said, we participated in
22 this event. The only thing that was given to them was first,
23 second and third received a medal from UIL. When I delivered my
24 remarks 100 countries listened to remarks that I said that Texas
25 Workforce was very grateful to be a part of this robotics

1 competition. So, it wasn't just Texas, 100 countries. And this
2 is the second time we've been able to go to these and they have
3 the World's Championships coming up in Houston soon. So, that
4 was the reasoning for my certifications. And, again, I just
5 wanted to see if there was a cost associated with that.

6 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Mr. Chairman, back
7 to the side about the budget. Those are my comments that I'm
8 thinking, an up to amount, or a set budget amount bodes well for
9 the organization either submitting an RFA or applying. And I'm
10 not sure if we want to start going outside of it if we have a
11 million dollars and there's higher demand that we come back and
12 place that forward. I'm not sure if that's a good process for
13 it. So, just kind of thoughts about that.

14 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Mm-hmm. The other
15 thing that scares me if we come back is we may not be able to
16 fund these. We may not be able to allocate the additional
17 funding. And so that's a reason if it was possible I would like
18 to get, you know, some type of agreement today that we do this.
19 So, that we don't have to come back at a later date for
20 additional funding.

21 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: So, do we have any data
22 supporting the increases on Governor's Summer Merit, Youth
23 Robotics, Camp Code, Careers in Texas Industries, Texas
24 Internship Initiative, and Entrepreneur Bootcamp; or, is it just
25 a hunch?

1 COURTNEY ARBOUR: Courtney Arbour, Workforce
2 Division. We do not have data to support the request. It was
3 more about the events being cancelled last year and anticipated
4 demand for the events.

5 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Were any of those offered
6 at all in 2020?

7 COURTNEY ARBOUR: Chairman, give me just a
8 moment to look through the notes. They were awarded in several
9 instances, but we had to cancel almost everything. I believe one
10 had some limited participation. And if you'll give me just a
11 second, I'll let you know.

12 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Mr. Chairman, while
13 Courtney's looking, so factual data behind the increases are
14 necessary. We definitely want to know what the dollar amounts
15 are, what the increases are attributed towards. So, that's
16 important to know.

17 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Well, I mean, staff's
18 included the dollar amount. I'm just curious about what supports
19 that increase.

20 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Yeah.

21 COURTNEY ARBOUR: I don't know if I'm going
22 to be able to answer you as quickly as I'd hoped. At the Summer
23 Merit, 17 awards were made; but all were canceled. Youth
24 Robotics, was awarded and did take place. And I need to get back
25 to you on the others.

1 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: That's fair. Similarly,
2 are all of them happening in the summer of '21? This would be
3 for summer of '22 funding. But, are any of these happening in
4 '21?

5 COURTNEY ARBOUR: These are for next summer.

6 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: I understand this money is
7 for next summer, but was there money for Fiscal '21 set aside
8 for this purpose? So, I'm asking about Fiscal '20? Now, I'm
9 asking about Fiscal '21, understanding that what we're doing
10 today is for Fiscal '22.

11 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Courtney, if I'm not
12 mistaken, is it do we have programs that are going on right now?

13 COURTNEY ARBOUR: Yes, we--

14 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: University of
15 Houston-Clear Lake, Paris Community College, Incarnate Word,
16 University of Texas, all have programs?

17 COURTNEY ARBOUR: That is correct. Some of
18 the events are taking place this year.

19 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: So, bits and pieces in
20 '20. Some greater concentration of events taking place in '21?

21 COURTNEY ARBOUR: Yes. As you would expect,
22 in '20 almost everything was cancelled, '21 we're seeing some
23 demand. And this was with anticipation of greater demand next
24 year.

25

1 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Yeah. I know some things
2 did happen in '20 'cause I did a couple of them virtually. Where
3 I participated with the groups. But, understanding there was a
4 lot of cancellation in '20. And I think we all know about that.

5 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Mm-hmm.

6 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Was the participation for
7 '21, was there a noticeable pandemic impact on participation for
8 '21? What's going on right now?

9 COURTNEY ARBOUR: I don't know that I've
10 heard anything. I'm looking to my subject matter expert there.
11 Ben, have you heard anything recently to let us know if anything
12 will be cancelled for this summer that we haven't yet
13 anticipated on the youth events? Ben Holquist, in the Workforce
14 Grants Division is coming up.

15 BEN HOLQUIST: Ben Holquist, Workforce
16 Division. No. We don't expect any cancellations at this point
17 that have not already been taken into consideration.

18 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Was the participation this
19 summer, is it less than it was in the summer of '19?

20 BEN HOLQUIST: I don't know with certainty
21 for all of them. I do know that for several of the proposed ones
22 we had more quality applicants than we awarded this year.

23 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: So, we awarded more in '19
24 than we did in '21, or the other way around?

25

1 COURTNEY ARBOUR: I think what Ben is saying
2 is for this year, we had more applicants than we were able to
3 fund. Which made us anticipate a higher demand.

4 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Is that typically the
5 case?

6 COURTNEY ARBOUR: Depending on the
7 initiative, yes. We often have a demand for these youth--

8 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: So, some have higher
9 demand than others?

10 COURTNEY ARBOUR: Right.

11 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Yeah. Which would be
12 typical.

13 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Courtney, I have a
14 question. How many applicants were not funded in 2019 total
15 amount versus total amount of applicants; would you know?

16 COURTNEY ARBOUR: For which initiative?

17 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: So, how many
18 applicants were not funded in 2019, versus the total amounts of
19 applications, I should say?

20 COURTNEY ARBOUR: Commissioner, are you
21 asking about Camp Code specifically, or another initiative? Or,
22 all of them? We need to get--

23 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: I mean, it could be
24 almost all of them. I mean, if we're gonna look at some of
25 these, there were other programs that didn't do well as a result

1 of Covid. And we could go in through other programs as well. I
2 do know that we did have, as referenced right now, we did have a
3 demand. But, let's keep in mind that these individuals that go
4 to the camp, sometimes they implement certain specifics that
5 they want to put in the camp. So, the cost per individual is a
6 little more. So, the number of participants may not be as high.
7 Because they may just say, we're gonna limit the number. And I
8 know that the courses that I have been--I have had access to of
9 those individuals that I've been able to go and see the schools,
10 they pretty much have a cutoff limit of ten students. Some had
11 20, some had 15. Like I referenced earlier, Paris Community
12 College had three cohorts and they were all full. And so some
13 only did one. Some did one week, some did two weeks. And so I
14 know it's hard. And, again, my question earlier and I guess we
15 could discuss that, but again because of the additional money
16 that you had brought forth was the reasoning for the
17 credentialing, or the certificate. The cost of that. Not that
18 it's gonna cost \$400,000, right; but I also considered how
19 popular this was and the number of applicants. Very similar to
20 the JET Program. Where JET had \$49 million of requests and only
21 \$6 million is awarded for the record. So, Chairman, if I--I
22 like--so, we're concentrating on these items here and the Foster
23 Youth Workforce Training Center is a \$50,000, I think we're okay
24 there. Governor's Summer Merit Program, let's talk through those
25 if at all possible at a high level. Just so that we can get a

1 firm understanding in regards to the increase that's here. And
2 so, Courtney, I'm just gonna go down the five that are here and
3 ask you guys to kind of state your rationale behind it. I know
4 the Chairman asked about numbers behind that and what they're
5 tied to. And we may not have the specifics broken down line item
6 by line item. Kind of some generalities might help us frame, or
7 shape our decision. So, Foster Youth Workforce Training Centers
8 that was the first one at \$50,000. I don't think that was
9 mentioned in this program. I think we're all on board there. I
10 think. The Governor's Summer Merit Program and just kind of take
11 it from that standpoint with the rationale behind the increases
12 if possible.

13 COURTNEY ARBOUR: Okay. I have some notes
14 here that I think might be helpful to your question. In 2020, 17
15 awards were made, but all 17 were cancelled. The plan was to
16 have 48 summer camps, so serving a total of 1,552 students. But,
17 again, those were cancelled. The 2021 procurement resulted in 14
18 grant awards. And four of them withdrew prior to the grant being
19 executed because of pandemic related reasons. So, for this
20 summer, to answer your question more directly, there were 14
21 winners and four have withdrawn. And we don't yet know the
22 attendance numbers or what will materialize from those remaining
23 grants. But, that's the plan on the number of events that will
24 be held.

25

1 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: And then more
2 particular, so the Governor's Summer Merit Program, were you
3 speaking to that one? There was a \$300,000 increase there. The
4 Youth Robotics initiative, we're looking at \$700,000 increase;
5 what's the rationale there?

6 COURTNEY ARBOUR: On both of these,
7 Commissioner, because we've just seen some fallout in the number
8 of events and the number of grants both years because of the
9 pandemic. We were just--really was a staff assumption that if we
10 clear this thing completely for next summer that we would have
11 more requests for funding and more students.

12 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Okay. So, increased
13 demand there. Camp Code, \$400,000 increase is the same
14 rationale?

15 COURTNEY ARBOUR: Same rationale.

16 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Okay. And then
17 Careers in Texas Industries?

18 COURTNEY ARBOUR: The Careers in Texas
19 Industries the change that we were requesting there is a little
20 different. Let me--

21 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Page 59.

22 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: It's a \$280,000
23 increase.

24

25

1 COURTNEY ARBOUR: Yes. Sorry. That is going
2 back to in-person and assuming that they may continue to have
3 virtual and in-person services for next year.

4 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Okay. Has this been
5 a positive event for the boards, this Careers in Texas
6 Industries?

7 COURTNEY ARBOUR: It's well-loved in areas
8 where we're providing funding to bring the youth together for
9 kind of the day in the life of, experiences, and introducing
10 them to careers. We do serve a number of youth in those
11 initiatives and I can tell you that number if you'd like. Let me
12 find the page.

13 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: I know Mr. Billings
14 does a really good job of putting this together in Waco.

15 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Yeah. For the
16 employers, this is good for the employers. I mean I love this
17 program. And then, Courtney, don't worry about that number. And
18 so the last one, Texas Internship Initiative, the TII that we're
19 familiar with.

20 COURTNEY ARBOUR: The same concept,
21 Commissioner. In '20 we were prepared to award four grants and
22 all of those were cancelled. So, it was procured again in 2021.
23 Five awards were granted. And at this point, I believe those
24 number are firm.

25 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Okay.

1 COURTNEY ARBOUR: Those awards are firm.

2 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: And these are
3 internship opportunities. I think that's something that's
4 really--I'm really interested in that initiative as well. So,
5 basically, most of the increases that are recommended are based
6 on the anticipated. I think that's been mentioned, speculation.
7 But, the anticipated increase based on cancellations last year
8 and the like.

9 COURTNEY ARBOUR: Yes.

10 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Okay. Thank you.

11 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: I've got four more things
12 I want to talk about that's very similar in vein to (inaudible).
13 They're not specific to the funding levels today. But, there's
14 some things I want us to do in the future. First of those is
15 outcomes data. I would really like for us to start putting
16 outcomes data. That includes a crawl backward to get outcomes
17 data. But, we really cannot just eat--Just an anchor about the--
18 do you want me to turn my mic on, Mr. Trobman? First of these is
19 outcomes data. We really need to start including outcomes data
20 on all of these programs that we're running. We've been talking
21 about it on and off for the last year or so. But, I think we're
22 at a point where we just really need to get serious about what's
23 happening with the money, how the money's being used. Again, I
24 know that's getting repetitive for me. But, we have a great
25 story to tell. It would be wonderful if we could get those

1 numbers in one place to tell that story. We have very
2 superficial data. It's mostly all positive. I would love to have
3 data points that we could use to really support this program. I
4 think today if we'd had that kind of outcomes data, we wouldn't
5 have staff assumptions for program dollar increases. We would
6 know that we need money. Or, less or more. Hopefully, more money
7 for our programs. So, more outcomes data. What I'd ask today is,
8 is that you bring forward in the future your best shot at how we
9 would get that outcomes data and what that data would look like
10 And so I'm asking specifically for you to bring ideas forward on
11 outcomes data. Second item, last year, last July, we talked
12 about rolling up youth and Veterans programs into individual
13 youth, Veterans programs into a large pot of money. And I see
14 that you did that. I want to continue that conversation and
15 start talking about an overarching strategy for both of these
16 pools of money. For Veterans and for youth programs. And I'm
17 asking you to identify any obstacles for success that we're
18 still seeing with these populations. And recommend ways we can
19 leverage our resources to improve outcomes for both populations.
20 And to include those in some overarching strategies for each of
21 those pots of money. The third thing, last week we took action
22 on a major strategy to end the middle skills gap in Texas. As we
23 move through that working on these programs and others I'm
24 asking you to identify additional ideas to help solve the middle
25 skills gap issue in Texas. And to orient outcomes data and other

1 overarching strategies toward that goal. And then the last one
2 is last year during the LAR discussion, we discussed the
3 potential for change to small board allocation methodology. I'm
4 just wondering where we are with that; and sort of how that
5 needs to progress if we can progress that?

6 CHRIS NELSON: Chairman, for the record,
7 Chris Nelson, Chief Financial Officer. So, we've been looking at
8 that. I think I may have briefed you before. That we've starting
9 looking at that. And we've had at least one scheduled meeting
10 with OGC to see what--you know, can we do what you're looking
11 for within the current rule structure? Or, is it gonna take, you
12 know, a possible rule change to kind of roll that into the rules
13 that govern how the allocations work themselves. So, we have
14 started, but we're not complete yet on our assessment.

15 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: All right. Anything else,
16 gentleman?

17 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: No. I appreciate the
18 comments you've made, Chairman, regarding data. We've asked
19 staff for data on a couple of items. And we have yet to receive
20 them. So, for the record, if we've asked staff to provide us
21 with data that would have been important for today's meeting, or
22 any other things that we bring forth when we bring out of a
23 statewide initiative, I could see the Chairman's concern on
24 having this data available to us. And so with that said, I just
25 wanted to make sure that you all were aware that when we, at

1 least my office, asks for data it's because of initiatives that
2 we want to roll out. We want to make sure that we can justify
3 the money, the initiative, and the amount that we are
4 requesting. Not just because we're thinking about it, but just
5 because we think it would make sense to do it. So, agree with
6 the Chairman on I think data's important. I'd also like to make
7 a reference that there are some things that is really tough to
8 put a number to. It's really tough in some instances 'cause
9 we've looked. And people know that I'm data driven as well. I'm
10 very data driven. And so I look at that stuff. I look at trends.
11 I look at, you know, not just because something's popular. I
12 look at trends and data. And so I will tell you that that's
13 important. It is important to us to have that. I appreciate the
14 staff coming to the office and sharing this multiple times. I
15 know you guys have spent a lot of time on this, as we have spent
16 a lot of time on the last couple of weeks, preparing for our
17 remarks and our comments regarding the various work sessions
18 that we've had. Courtney, the reason that I mentioned the
19 badging or the certificates was because of the additional
20 funding we had. I thought it would only make sense to do it.
21 Where we get the money, you know, we have it now to do it. I'm
22 not saying it's gonna cost all \$400,000 to do it. But, at a
23 later date, I'd be willing to negotiate, you know, maybe even
24 lessening that. But, again, because of the popularity and
25 because, again, sometimes it's just really difficult for us to

1 measure success. Success to me would be the gratification or the
2 remarks that a young lady or a young man makes following a
3 competition. Or, maybe not so much anything else other than
4 that. But, I do appreciate the work that you guys have laid
5 forth.

6 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Along the lines of
7 outcomes data, there's something that our Childcare Division
8 uses, evaluators. That's something that's new. And so I think
9 the evaluation of our programs down the line is something that
10 we want to look at. Outcomes data can be looked at two ways. You
11 know, one's performance based, and then you have return on
12 investment type of data. But, I'd love to have incorporated into
13 some of these evaluators as well that can come back and really
14 tell the story of how we performed and how we've not. And I
15 think we're beginning to do that in the childcare space. I've
16 seen that a couple of times. So, something that's of interest. A
17 couple of things that I'm going to be interested in, or ask
18 staff to work with me on, I don't have any budget amount set to
19 it; and so that's why I'd like to work with you guys on some of
20 those. But, E-Sports, STEM, STEAM, Gaming Initiatives. That's
21 something that's kind of becoming popular. Similar to our Texas
22 Science Fair in our Robotics Competition. This E-Sports gaming
23 initiative is something that's picking up and I kind of want to
24 have some discussions there. Along the lines of internships, the
25 Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, I think they have a

1 TXWorks Program if I'm not mistaken, TXWorks. And it's a nice
2 program where they're able to assist with the payment of
3 internship opportunities. And if the internship is paying
4 \$20.00, they're paying \$10.00 and then the employer is paying
5 the \$10.00. And so I want to look at if there is any leveraging
6 opportunities for us to work with that organization, that agency
7 rather with that program. I want to look into that. Other
8 initiatives are the high school internship programs. And then
9 lastly, an initiative that I'm working on right now this Texas
10 Interns Unite. I want to really tie the interns together across
11 the state that are working in both the public and private sector
12 spaces. And I think there's a play there for our employers. This
13 talented pipeline down the line. Making sure that we're taking
14 advantage of the students that are in these respective
15 organizations and businesses. And bringing them together to
16 network and really show the importance of what they're doing and
17 that leads to a good employee at the end of the day for the
18 Texas employers that are out there. And so a lot of work on the
19 internship side. I'd like to just work with the staff to see if
20 there's anything there from that standpoint of budgets and
21 setting budgets along those lines.

22 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: All right. Is there any
23 further discussion?

24 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: No more. Not from
25 here, Chairman.

1 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Do we have a motion?

2 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Chairman, I move that
3 we accept staff's recommended changes for Fiscal Year 2022
4 Statewide Initiatives as discussed.

5 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: I second.

6 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: All right. It's been moved
7 and seconded.

8 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Oh, and then I have
9 the other one. Sorry--I'm sorry, Chairman. 'Cause the other one
10 would require the parameters that you and I just put in there.

11 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Let's pick it up after
12 this one.

13 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Okay.

14 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: So, I'm still extremely
15 uncomfortable with voting increases to programs because we think
16 something might happen without any kind of underlying rationale
17 or data. But, I understand--I do, in fact, support all of these
18 programs. And I think they're useful to people. I think this is
19 more about our administration of it and why we need to do a
20 better job of really supporting decisions that we want to make.
21 With that said, I assume you're both voting I on this one.

22 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Correct.

23 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: I'll vote I as well.

24 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Chairman, I also move
25 that change program parameters of Fiscal Year 2022 Statewide

1 Initiatives as discussed by staff--I mean, by the Commission.
2 Sorry. The parameters that myself, Chairman Daniel, and
3 Commissioner Demerson laid out.

4 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Second.

5 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Yeah. It's been moved and
6 second. I think we're (inaudible)

7 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: And, Chairman, if I'm
8 not mistaken there were no new statewide initiatives?

9 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: That's correct.

10 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Great. So, no motion
11 on that.

12 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: All right. Let's move to
13 Agenda Item 2, which is Discussion, Consideration and Possible
14 Action Regarding Adult Education and Literacy Initiatives Funded
15 with WIOA, Section 223 State Leadership Funds.

16 COURTNEY ARBOUR: Courtney Arbour, Workforce
17 Division. Would you like for us to lay out the staff recommended
18 changes here, or?

19 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: I think that's probably a
20 good idea.

21 COURTNEY ARBOUR: Mahalia, would you like to
22 do it?

23 MAHALIA BALDINI: Good afternoon,
24 Commissioners. For the record, Mahalia Baldini, Adult Education
25 and Literacy. As you've been talking about today in terms of

1 Fiscal Year 2022 Initiatives, what you have is \$3.8 million that
2 is left over after we continue to fund the current initiatives
3 in the planning document at their regular funding. We're not
4 requesting any increase on those amounts. What is left over is
5 3.8 million dollars of our Fiscal Year '22 Statewide Initiative
6 budget. Staff is recommending that we spend that full amount on
7 a high school equivalency virtual provider for the State of
8 Texas. And really what this would be is a virtual provider that
9 would serve the entire State of Texas. No one geographical area.
10 I'll kind of preface this with saying that if you can kind of
11 imagine a student from Abilene in a class with a student from
12 Dallas, in a class with a student from Brownsville. What we
13 would like to do is create an opportunity for students and the
14 Texans that we have that lack a high school equivalency to be
15 able to have this option virtually from wherever they are in the
16 State. And I'm happy to answer any specific questions that you
17 may have about either the dollar amount, or the initiative
18 itself.

19 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Do you consider this to be
20 an innovative approach to this?

21 MAHALIA BALDINI: Absolutely. And this
22 approach, we would like to put it out there as a pilot or a
23 demonstration grant. Something that would be scalable and
24 potentially sustainable in the future using out general
25 allocation and not state leadership dollars in the future.

1 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Well, I read your paper.
2 And I gotta tell you, this is exactly the direction we need to
3 start taking ourselves in. It's innovative. It is statewide in
4 nature. It is scalable. It will allow us to break it into parts
5 and farm it out to boards, or keep it statewide. It just depends
6 on how we want to run it. And I really commend you on your
7 efforts there. I think that we saw some innovation going on
8 during Covid. Particularly, where it concerns AEL. This is a
9 particular emphasis point for me. I think there's a lot we can
10 be doing here to help. You're gonna hear me say this next part a
11 lot. We're gonna end the middle skills gap in Texas. I think
12 there's a lot of AEL things that have to happen for a lot of
13 people before we can really do that. And I think when we talk
14 about encouraging innovation, this is exactly the kind of
15 program that I think really cuts to the heart of that. And so I
16 think it addresses critical challenges. I think it's good for
17 Texas workers. I think it's good for Texas employers. And
18 obviously I'm in favor of it. But, let's hear what the other
19 Commissioners have to say.

20 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: I agree with you,
21 Chairman. Great work, Mahalia. I love it.

22 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Tell me the name of
23 the program again? The High School Equivalent Virtual--
24
25

1 MAHALIA BALDINI: We'll have to come up with
2 something a little more flashy, I think. But, yeah. That's the
3 general purpose.

4 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: So, Mahalia, you
5 talked about a person in Dallas, a person in Houston--

6 MAHALIA BALDINI: Yeah.

7 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Talk about that
8 again and how that works?

9 MAHALIA BALDINI: Yeah. Something that we
10 kind of, I think, struggle with just in our general core
11 initiative is the fact that, you know, we are an open door
12 service. So, people come in the door, we're gonna serve them.
13 That's what we're there for. Sometimes it's very difficult, I
14 think, at the local levels when you think about individuals that
15 are coming in. They're at very different educational levels. And
16 it's hard to get a big enough classroom that can just really
17 intensely focus on a specific level. What I'm really envisioning
18 is that we'll have an opportunity to take individuals from all
19 across Texas. And regardless of where they are in terms of
20 completing their high school equivalency, they're gonna be in
21 classrooms with others that are at the exact same level. So,
22 hopefully we can get that rigor and that intensity and get them
23 there a little quicker.

24

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1 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Utilization of
2 technology, very innovative. And I commend you guys on your
3 efforts there. Thank you.

4 MAHALIA BALDINI: Thank you.

5 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Thank you.

6 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: All right. Any further
7 discussion?

8 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: None here, Chairman.

9 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Is there a motion?

10 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Chairman, I move that
11 we add the new statewide initiative as discussed by staff for
12 Fiscal Year 2022.

13 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Second that motion.

14 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: It's been moved and
15 seconded. I think we're unanimous here.

16 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Good job, Mahalia.

17 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Yes. All right. Is there
18 any other order of business to come before the Commission?

19 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: None here, Chairman.

20 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: I see Reagan--no.
21 None other.

22 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Well, you know, I do
23 want to thank you, Chairman, for putting these work sessions
24 together. It was certainly an opportunity for us to get a little
25 bit more engaged in some of the programs that we have. I know

1 we've done this in the past, but not to this extent. So,
2 appreciate the opportunity to be able to discuss with staff some
3 of the ideas that we have and some of the thoughts that we may
4 have as well. So, thank you for the opportunity to do that. And
5 I'd also like to acknowledge our Captain in the back. It's his
6 birthday today. So, I just want to wish him happy birthday in
7 the back. Thank you for keeping us safe.

8 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Happy birthday. No
9 other comments.

10 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: You didn't want--you don't
11 have questions for Reagan?

12 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: No. I let her off.
13 I thought you might have some for her since she's there today.

14 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Oh, I've got a whole list
15 of questions here. But, before I get to that, Commissioner
16 Alvarez, thank you so much--

17 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: You're welcome.

18 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: --for your comments. It is
19 truly a joy to work with both of you. We sort through a lot of
20 heavy issues. And I love the way we are able to do this with a
21 very collegial atmosphere. Even when we don't agree, I think
22 we're able to get to agreement. And I can't tell you how much I
23 appreciate our ability to do that. I'm going to declare a point
24 of personal privilege and hold my questions for Reagan until a
25 later date. Do we have a motion to adjourn today?

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COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Chairman, I move that we adjourn. Everybody enjoy the rest of your day.

COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: I second that motion.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: It's moved and seconded to adjourn. We're adjourned. Thank you.