I'm showing a little after 11:00 so let’s call this meeting to order. Matt, if you could just go ahead and call the roll for us and then we’ll move right into the meeting.

Yes, sir. Chairman Bryan Daniel.

Here.

Doctor Jay Killgo.

[Here]

Mario Lozoya.

Here.

Vanessa Malo.

[Here]

Scott Norman.

Here.

Robert Uhl.

Here.

We have a quorum.

All right. Thank you very much. Next on my agenda it says I'm supposed to give opening comments, which are welcome. Thanks everybody for coming. It’ll be a good meeting today. A lot on the agenda. Joining us is Commissioner Treviño. Commissioner Treviño, would you like to make any comments?

Sure. I appreciate it. I apologize in advance because I'm just here to give my comments and speak to you, but we have to go to another event after this. This is my start of my second year here as commissioner representing labor at Texas Workforce Commission. I apologize for not making it earlier but last year I had the idea to go visit all 28 Workforce Boards before the state conference, so it was pretty hectic. We were usually out of the office. I apologize for not introducing myself earlier but it also helped me get a chance to see what the boards, the educational institutions, and the employers were doing and using the funds that this advisory board provides to those areas, and how it benefits not just the employers but the community and the students and future workers as a whole to teach them and upskill them and get them the equipment that they need to learn. Technology is always changing and it’s very expensive so these funds really help those educational institutions get the equipment that they need. Let me tell you. They are very frugal and come up with great ways to use that fund. They don’t just spend it like somebody that—like say I get an extra thousand dollars and you just go blow it. No, they actually plan and think of how they're going to use those funds. So it was great for me to see that, and then to come and thank you for your leadership and dedication to take up this opportunity to be on the board and just to know that the funds that are issued out of this board do supply a great needed help for the citizens of Texas. I just wanted to say thank you and just a little bit about myself too. I'm originally from Harlingen, Texas. Spent my whole career in law enforcement, so this is brand new to me and it’s a blessing. It’s a chance for me to still continue to serve. I've met some of you all here, some I haven't, but whatever I can do, please don’t hesitate to reach out to my office and ask. I appreciate the time and thanks to Chairman Daniel for letting me come and speak to you. I’ll open it up if anybody has any questions of me and if not, I’ll let you all get back to your day.

Looks like you covered it all.

I appreciate it. Thank you all so much.

Thanks for stopping by. We really appreciate it. This committee does. They do great work. Got some new faces here. But the committee’s been in place for a while, and even today we’re going to be making some good decisions that will be seeing those here pretty soon.

All right. Thank you all.

Thanks, commissioner.

All right. Mr. Trobman, is there any public comment?

Yes, sir, we do.

Thank you.

Go ahead [inaudible].

Good morning. Good morning, Chairman Daniel and distinguished board members. My name is Dr. Sari McCoy, and I'm very honored to be here with you today. As a former recipient of a JET grant many years ago in Rockdale, Texas, I am just filled with joy to be able to be in person to say thank you. Truly, thank you. I'm going to take the liberty on behalf of all former or current recipients, especially the secondary education space, to let you know that the JET grant is so much more than workforce development for that community. That blessing of a JET grant is a lifeline for many of our communities that are resource droughts and so they are very focused just like commissioner said about making sure that the impact is cohorts after cohorts for a lifelong time period. So, thank you. Beyond my expression of gratitude to you today, we’re here to share a couple of insights and perspectives that I hope you’ll find meaningful as you continue the monumental task of awarding JET grants for years to come. I hold the privilege of serving as the CEO of Coherent Cyber Education. We are a cybersecurity workforce development at Department of Labor registered apprenticeship program. Our focused attention is on creating quality cybersecurity talent pipelines for the state to address the current and future workforce gap to provide the labor necessary to provide information and operational technology security, and to contribute to the Tri-Agency outcomes, like offering a high skilled, high waged living wage, high demand career in cybersecurity for those who choose to have one. As we collaborate with stakeholders across the state, Workforce Boards, economic development councils, small and large businesses, chambers, academic institutions, we have discovered that there is a misconception in multiple regions. We discovered that careers that are developing from emerging technology, innovative and advanced industries are only needed in select cities and in select regions or select industry, and that’s really not the case. So we found ourselves contributing to the increased awareness of these careers and sharing information with the regions and really connecting the dots that these careers are personal and they're for all individuals’ wellbeing, and community wellbeing and they're applicable to any industry. So my first consideration that I’d like to propose to the board is I wonder in a future iteration of a JET grant we might include an addition to the application criteria. Currently, one of the criteria is that the career focus of the application needs to be on the high-demand occupation list of that region. That’s very important. And I wonder if in the future iteration we could add the possibility of including an and/or career focus that’s coming from one of these fields of study from emerging technologies innovation and advanced careers. I think that that will be a powerful way to encourage regional workforce developers to consider supporting talent development to meet current workforce demand and have a future focus. We’re in a marketplace that has information exchange in real time, and industries must be agile enough to adjust quickly if they want to survive. The majority of the future focus jobs that are coming from emerging technologies and innovative and advanced careers require the talent to execute their roles in a digital environment. So workforce developers need digital resources to be able to mirror real-world marketplace while they're training high-quality workforce for those industries and their communities. So my second consideration to propose to you is that perhaps in the next iteration of the JET grant there’s an inclusion of a review of the acceptable expenditures list that might include the ability to purchase digital resources, platforms and things like that to be able to really give an authentic training experience for those who are going to be in a future-focused career. Our regional workforce experience has really driven us to allocate a heavier focus on the secondary education setting, the ISD setting. ISDs have the numbers. If we are going to address a workforce gap, we go to where the masses are. They also have the heavier lift of launching that workforce development pathway that leads from an ISD really K through 12 space into talent developers that are maybe in the military or in two years or four-year institutions, trade schools, things like that. ISDs really launch that process and to launch a career path in any industry is an expensive venture. I just thank you for keeping that in mind as you go through the process of distributing awards for many years to come, and it’s been my privilege to be able to be with you today to just share a couple of insights and considerations for you to think about as you continue this phenomenal work. I want you to know that you have a friend at Coherent Cyber Education that is rolling up their sleeves to make sure we’re doing our part to have a very secure, safe and successful future impact. Thank you for your time today.

Thank you. Any further comment? That’s it? All right, thank you again. All right. Well, Mario and Scott, we’ve got some new faces with us today.

I see that.

I wish I had probably thought to call ahead of time and tell them I was going to put them on the spot, but I'm about to put them on the spot. Let’s start here with Robert. Just tell us a little bit about yourself and if you have any particular interest on this that you’ve already discovered, let us know that. Otherwise, if you're here because you like the JET grant and you want to see Texas succeed, we’ll take that too.

I definitely want to see Texas succeed. My name is Robert Uhl. I'm a board member from Dallas. I am an attorney in Dallas who works on blockchain technology, so the cyberspace is particularly interesting to me. I got into this because I wanted to serve. I connected with some of the folks in Dallas and my wife was an educator for five years, a teacher, long been a passionate advocate for education. I think education is the golden ticket to any successful career and lifelong opportunity. So I'm excited to be here. I'm excited to learn. I know I'm a fresh face but I'm a quick study. I'm excited to help out where I can and looking forward to learning.

We’re definitely glad you're here.

Pleasure to be here today. My name is Vanessa Malo, and I'm the director of workforce education initiatives at the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. Thank you for the opportunity to be able to serve you. I started in the classroom. I used to teach Spanish back in the day and leadership courses sixth grade through high school, and eventually worked my way through higher education and have the honor and the privilege to be part of the Coordinating Board but to be able to be a part of these processes. Just very much what’s already been shared here early on. The opportunity for industry and education to work together collaboratively and to be able to provide access and resources to our students, secondary and postsecondary, is very critical, so very grateful for all the hard work that you’ve done so thank you for having me here today.

I'm Jay Killgo. I'm superintendent at Vidor ISD in southeast Texas. I'm finishing my twelfth year there. Prior to that I was a high school principal for seven years, so I'm especially aware of the impact of preparing students for future life, the importance of that holds for our young people and I'm excited to be a part of this process.

It is definitely one of my favorite programs here at TWC. I'm not supposed to say that. Mr. Trobman said not to say that, but it’s true. Just because the work we’re able to do at both the high schools and community colleges and Mario and Scott have been on the committee now for a little while and I think they’ll say whatever you guys said. Say a few words if you want to.

I’d love to. I'm glad to see the new faces and especially hearing where they come from, and I can already see the potential impact they bring based on you all’s experiences and I'm glad to see you here and always glad to see the staff. I'm always happy to come and see what’s possible through this board because I've had the opportunity to visit several grant presentations and to see the impact locally like was mentioned earlier is really huge and really satisfying to me to see it, and I hope the rest of you new members experienced it as well. Thanks.

Welcome aboard, for all the work [inaudible] I think is an area where you will see government stepping in. A lot of time [inaudible] and it’s a little hard [inaudible] helping school districts secondary really rewarding [inaudible] on interest in the program so I think it continues to go in the right direction. [Inaudible] every year seems like it’s been more and more known out there across the state [inaudible].

Let me just double down on that. We’re definitely looking forward to working with you. And like we tell all our volunteers, the pay is great and the hours are better, except we don’t actually demand an awful lot but we will take your input and commentary any time you're ready to give it. It does not have to be in this meeting. If you hear something, see something, think you have a good idea, please let us know. We work constantly behind the scenes. We meet a couple of times a year, three or four times a year. That’s it, but the conversation goes on the year around and my phone line’s always available. Call me. Let me know what’s going on particularly if you're hearing things out there. This is a great program and a lot of schools benefit from it. Scott, you said you liked hearing from staff. I think this is a good time for us to move right into that. Lori [SP] and Matt are here. Let’s move to Agenda Item 3. This would be our program update and a data presentation for fiscal year ’24. Take it away.

Perfect. Thank you. Before we dive into the data, I just wanted to give—I know many of us are looking at the board book for the first time, so I just wanted to give a quick overview of what we’re looking at in the board book, so you’ll obviously find the agenda on the cover sheet right there. Behind Tab 1, you’ll find the meeting minutes from last year’s meeting in case we need to reference anything or if you’d like to read that. You can find those meeting minutes there. Tab 2 is the data presentation printout. We’ll get to that in just a second. Behind Tabs 3 and 4 you will find the IHE master [SP] list. That’s the Institution of Higher Education master list, and behind Tab 4 is the school district that’s ISD and Windham master list. Behind Tab 5 you’ll find an overall summary that just covers all fiscal years from FY16 to now giving you a picture of the JET program in total, and then behind Tab 6 are the program parameters that we’ll look at for next year. I’ll have you flip back to Tab 2. We’ll go ahead and cover some of the data from this year. Just real quick, a helpful look at a tool that we created last year, and if you don’t mind, just quick turn up the monitor. This is actually a helpful tool on our JET home page that shows all of the JET grants that we’ve been able to award since FY16. You can actually come up here and sort by fiscal year so you can isolate it by different fiscal years, by different occupations, look for different areas of the state by Workforce Board, and then by different school type. You can sort by academic institution or school district there. Just a really neat tool to help break down all the different awards and where they're at all across the state. So for FY24 the program had $15,000,000 and based on the voting last year and the commission, that was split 60 percent, 40 percent, so 9,000,000 for school districts and open-enrollment charter schools, and 6,000,000 available for IHEs. On slide four, for IHEs, you can see we had 37 total applications. Ten of those were disqualified leaving us with 27 responsive. We are happy to report all 27 scored above the 55-point threshold and were eligible for award. By all means, stop me if you have any questions.

[Inaudible].

They typically do score well. I think that is one of the first that all of them met the minimum threshold.

I do have a question. Can you go back to the prior slide? I don’t know if that was a related question here. Those 10 that were disqualified, do you have a breakdown of why or what’s the prominent reason [inaudible]?

There were some new ones this year. We ran into several issues where applicants submitted last year’s budget document and part of the RFA states that you have to download the current documents and submit those in their entirety, so unfortunately, anyone who submitted last year’s budget document was automatically disqualified, and I think several of those are represented in that 10.

So then, are they informed of that?

Yes, sir.

OK. Thanks.

Of those 27 responsive, like I said, all of them met the minimum threshold. With the $6,000,000 we anticipate being able to award 25 awards for IHEs. Twenty-four of those will be full awards, and one of those will be a partial. Just to explain that a little bit, obviously, we worked down the list based on the score, so any leftover amount of funding will be offered to that next institution as a partial award. The breakdown is 12 rural districts, 15 urban districts, benefiting a little over 2,200 students. On slide six, you’ll see an IHE breakdown for the occupations potentially awarded. I would like to note, I know we typically see quite a few welding awards and on the school district side, it was still a prominent occupation, but there was only one welding occupation for the IHEs. And then one other I’ll note is the semiconductor processing technician. That’s an occupation that is obviously going to be much more popular moving forward and one that we haven't seen historically in the program. So it’s encouraging to see industry and the applications really aligning to meet new high-demand occupations emerging in these communities. That wasn’t the only application we received for semiconductor. I believe that is the only award for semiconductor. Moving on to school districts, we had a great turnout for school districts. We had 157 total applications. Fifty-four of those were disqualified, and to Mario’s question earlier and to my point, I think a significant amount of those, unfortunately, submitted budget documentation from last year and were automatically disqualified. But that did leave us with 103 responsive and of the 103, only 12 did not meet the minimum threshold. So that left us 91 applications eligible for award.

Hey, Matt. I want to insert something here. Specifically regarding those that met the point threshold both for IHEs and school districts, one of the updates that staff made to the process this year was to add a scoring worksheet where the applicant could track their score as they were developing their application, so in theory, even those that were the 12 that were under the 55 points should have been able to determine that they were going to be under the 55 points. And I think that that’s for like for IHEs, they made sure that they were submitting a quality application that scored hopefully well above the minimum point threshold and the vast majority of the school districts did as well.

So you're saying that even though—let’s say I'm in a school district and even though I know that I'm not meeting the threshold, still submitting [inaudible].

I’m not exactly sure what they said to themselves but they had a worksheet that they could track their score and calculate their score.

OK, got it. [inaudible].

Yes, the warmup round.

And you noted that the—you’re automatically disqualified if you don’t submit the correct budget. Is there any sort of curative process to that application or it’s just you don’t submit it correctly, your done for the year.

Yeah, unfortunately this budget workbook looks a little different than last year’s so that was an automatic indication that it wasn’t the correct document but unfortunately based on the language in the RFA, there isn’t much workaround to that.

And that isn’t the only reason. I mean, yes, there were several applicants that did that. There were other things like people don’t sign their application. Well, if they don’t sign their application, you know? And all of these things are listed as disqualification criteria in the RFA so there is a list and if you don’t complete one of those items on the list, it hurts you.

If you make that error even though it’s before the deadline, there’s no way to [inaudible].

They can resubmit their application with the completed documents and the corrected documents but that would have to have happened before the deadline.

So what you’re saying is perhaps some of these came in after the deadline when there was no time for them to fix.

Yeah, or they were missing components of the application altogether so there was not time for them to submit the whole thing.

But staff will work with you [inaudible].

They will be notified so this year they’ll be notified of the reason they were disqualified if it was a disqualification or they will receive a notification if they just weren’t funded during the process. Maybe, and as you will see, obviously they’re going to be still quite a few that go unfunded based upon the availability of funds so they will be notified. There are also times when we just have an ineligible applicant, and I think that this was true on the IHE side. We had universities apply even though they’re not allowed under the statute to apply so there are many factors that might contribute to that, some of which are out of their control like if you’re a university, there’s nothing you can do to your application to make it eligible. Some of them are well within their control like signing your application or using the correct application.

Understanding we’re dealing with limited bandwidth, is there any capacity to notify—maybe this is already happening—to notify applicants who do apply with two weeks, a month prior to the deadline that you submitted the wrong document, your document isn’t signed, you know, those kind of technical errors, is there any capacity to do that or is that already happening?

It is not happening because we don’t even open the applications until the deadline. Because there could be multiple applications submitted that overwrite their prior application, things like that, we look at all of them in their entirety after the deadline passes. Certainly something we could look at the process and see if there’s an opportunity to do that. I promise where we have had flexibility to allow for applications to be evaluated, we have exercised that. It’s really whenever the application process specifically says this will cause your application to be disqualified that there’s no flexibility there so unfortunately things like—

Working with limited funds, [inaudible] absolutely.

At the same time, that’s a huge number, 54, 50 percent of what is qualified. We don’t want to lose them. If there is some interest, we want to maintain that interest. For me it’s how do we keep growing the demand so in the future we have to present to the lege that there is demand, you know, we can't be asking for more money or be more impactful when there isn’t any demand so I think by showing some interest, we need to maintain that interest.

So how can staff follow up with that [inaudible] have a conversation as to why. [inaudible] follow the direct.

Yeah, I think that they would expect their students to follow the directions.

Of course but we want to keep that interest.

Technical assistance [inaudible]. We just can't do it during the application process.

To that point I think the program has grown so significantly over the past few years and we’ll kind of look at that on the overall summary but I think we had 196 applications so just the difficulty to review each application. Typically the RFA window is only open for 30 to 40 days so that would really put us in a bind to review everyone’s information and make sure it was correct and then get back to them in that amount of time as well.

Thank you.

Sticking with school districts and charter schools, of those 91 who met the threshold and were eligible for award, we anticipate 35 total awards for the full $9,000,000. That is 34 full awards and one partial award for $135,027. We did look at a little different community-type breakdown this year so we looked at the NCES breakdown so that broke out to 28 rural districts and you’ll see that breakdown right below, 10 town, 18 rural, and then seven urban districts and those are broken down by city and suburban, and those awards would benefit 5,025 students in the first year of the grant. Looking at an occupation breakdown for school districts, obviously we still see that welding was a popular one, not near as popular as previous years but still, to my point about IHEs, encouraged to see nursing and license practical and vocational nurses in such high demand and again such a high-demand occupation all across the state so again encouraged to see this aligning with the need all across Texas. Several others in the health care space, nursing assistant, medical dosimetrist, and medical assistants, and then a few in the engineering field, civil engineers, electronic engineers, and then some tractor trailer truck drivers as well. I will kind of gloss over this but that is just a more detailed breakdown of what those NCES community types, those are just the definitions.

This is really important in that we’ve made some strides to change. Remember we went from 50/50 to 60/40 and some of the comments at the time were that school districts are encouraged to partner with community colleges down the street but my point was that some are not even near those small towns, right? So it’s difficult for those small school districts to partner with a community college when they’re like way too far away to do that, right? So this kind of information is important from that point.

Yeah, we thought this was a truer breakdown instead of just classifying them as urban and rural. This gave us a little bit more detail about what the community type was. And then a WDA breakdown, I’m sorry that’s a little small on the printout. I will note we had an application, either an IHE or an ISD breakdown from all 28 Workforce Boards. I also think that is a first, that all of them were represented, and 24 of those 28 will be receiving a potential award so that breakdown is in front of you there. And then just some other program data that we found interesting. This could align with the number of disqualifications. Obviously, those folks aren’t represented in these numbers but we did have a lot of first-time applicants, and a lot of applicants who had not received a JET grant over the past three years. One of the criteria that we look at is whether they’ve received a JET grant, not just before but over the past three years. If you remember and for our new members, in FY22 we had a large increase in funding so we allowed applicants more than one opportunity at an award. School districts could receive three and IHEs could receive up to two awards so again just trying to keep the pie as even as possible and give folks as much access to these funds as possible.

That’s gone away now, that’s just because of a—

Yes, sir, so this year it was just one and one. So all responsive applicants, the 129 total, 75 of those had not received a JET grant in the past including 29 of the potential awardees, and then of all responsive applicants, 88 hadn’t received a JET grant in the past three years including 35 of the potential awardees so that could have been, and you know, having reviewed the lists, there were a lot of new names and new faces in the awards and that’s great. To Mario’s point, I think the marketing has worked and the fact that all 28 Workforce Boards were present with at least one award is certainly encouraging that the marketing and the statewide webinars that Lori and I hosted in the offseason, they had an impact, and then of those awards, 18 of those we do look at whether it’s a brand-new program, starting from fresh or if it’s something that they’re expanding. Eighteen of those are brand-new programs and 42 of those are expanding. Again, I’m happy to answer any other questions.

All right, any questions?

I have a question to the lady’s comments earlier. Where does software fall in our funding? Does it qualify?

If it’s connected to an equipment to help it operate.

It has to be connected to equipment?

So that was a change, right? I think initially it was not. Or it always has been?

I think it’s always been [inaudible] exception.

When you talk about equipment, are you talking about servers or computer monitor, you know, that kind of thing or other types of equipment?

Any equipment so if it’s a welding bay for example and they need the welder to figure out how to get them the measurements right or whatever, then they can—if it’s connected to that, right.

And if it doesn’t—to be clear, it has to be connected to equipment that you’re funding?

Yes, sir. It has to be necessary to the operation of the funded or requested equipment.

OK, it can't just be equipment they already have?

It cannot be equipment they already have because that would not really be expanding [inaudible].

What about other than equipment? So software is one. Is there anything like teacher development training for the new equipment, anything like that that’s allowable?

If it is—and many companies that sell the equipment do offer training if it is necessary for the operation of the equipment. As part of the equipment request, they can request installation. Those trainers can come out and provide some training but like dedicated courses to train CTE instructors for instance, that’s not allowable, just training per se, but actually how to use the equipment as a necessary cost, then that can be considered.

Thank you.

Any other questions? Let’s move then to Agenda Item 4, discussion, consideration and possible action regarding grants to public community colleges, public technical, public state colleges, open-enrollment charter schools and school districts.

That is Tab 3. You will find the IHE master list. Flip that over, you can see all 27 IHE applicants who met the minimum threshold are represented on this list, and then at the end just a little bit of a breakdown for the full funded. Again that’s 24 full awards, the one partial which falls at rank 25, again for the full $6,000,000.

So only two are [inaudible].

So just to clarify again for everybody here, so those two are not getting funded. They did meet the threshold but we ran out of money.

Yes, sir. Just to give the new board members, I referenced this earlier so we rank all applications by their score and their requested amount. Again, that can range from 40,000 to 350,000. Anything asked beyond those parameters is an automatic disqualifier so you’ll see the grant amount in the fourth column. Those numbers are going to vary, and then the column next to it is just a cumulative total and we total that all the way until we get to as close to the $6,000,000 as possible, and again that’s why we have that $86,000 left over as the partial.

And I want to add one thing I think is very important for the board members to know. We are in the process of closing out some of last year’s grants. If additional funds become available through that closeout process, so let’s just say we had a grant that was encumbered for 300,000 and the grantee comes back and only spent 275,000, the equipment cost less than they estimated to still serve the same number of students, that savings so to speak could be potentially applied to additional grantees on this list or applicants on this list so although you’ll be making recommendations based upon the list you see before you, we always ask that we have the flexibility to be able to move down the list as additional funds may become available.

So right now you require board approval to do that but you’re saying typically we ask for that flexibility to go ahead and make the call without calling any—

Yeah, so in the recommendation that you would be making to the commission today, we would ask that you recommend and that we would have that flexibility.

If you don’t have any additional questions for IHEs, we can go to Tab 4 where we’ll find the school district list. This list is a little bit more extensive obviously with the 91 applicants who met the minimum threshold. On that back page, just to recover the awards, 34 fully funded awards for 8,864,973 leaving with us one partially funded award for $135,027 for the full 35 funded. And if you wanted to see where those awards stop, that’s on page four of 10. Very competitive scoring all across the board this year, not only in IHEs but just to highlight that, the minimum score being funded on the potential list is a 70.

You guys know I'm going to say something, that’s why you’re looking at me. So wondering what the percent is, you know, because that’s my interest, not only this year but year after year, what’s the percent of those that meet the threshold but are not funded. I wonder if that’s something you can add to the presentation because that might be very helpful going forward if we should have that opportunity in front of the lege to say, look, [inaudible] percent is the number [inaudible] and we can't meet the demand, right?

I don’t have percentages. I know with some of the scoring tweaks we made this year, the IHE average went up from about 64.2 last year to 73.9 this year, and that was an average amongst all the responsive, and then the school district average really didn’t change that much, 67.3 to 65.8 this year.

And if we look at the summary over time, we could probably do some quick math for you either looking at the total number of applications received over the life of the program, 1,135, compared to the number that we have funded, 435, or if we were to only look at those that met, you know, that were considered responsive, 887, but only 435 so about half.

And a reminder that we moved the threshold number, right?

Yes.

And that creates another buffer, right? So maybe the number is even larger I’m guessing?

So there are some calculations that we can do and provide you with that information.

Trend lines are all very positive.

Any additional discussion? We do need to make a recommendation on these to the commission, is that correct?

Yes, sir.

So that’s the action we would need to take on these two lists. We can do it all at once.

Chairman, I’ll move that we set these recommendations with the flexibility to expend funds as they go down the list, further funds [inaudible].

I’d like to second that.

Right. Motion by Scott Norman, seconded by Robert Uhl. Any discussion on the motion?

I do want to point out that my school district did apply for one of these so I will recuse myself from anything associated with that.

All right. Just let the record show that Dr. Killgo will not be voting as his district was an applicant on this. All right, any other discussion on the motion? All right, with that, let’s put it to a vote. All in favor say aye, opposed same sign. I hear no dissenting votes, motion passes unanimously. Thank you. Moving then to Agenda Item 5, discussion, consideration, and possible action on program funding parameters for fiscal year ’25 JET grant for public junior colleges, public technical institutes, public state colleges, open-enrollment charter schools, and school districts.

So these are program parameters for next year’s RFA for FY25. The first category would be funding allocation. Historically we have split the funding 60 percent and 40 percent, and staff sees no reason to alter that at this time.

I’d like to comment on this. I personally would like to see it move to 70/30, maybe even 65/35 in favor of the ISDs based on the numbers but I wonder if it’s not the right time. I see the numbers showing that trend, right? That’s why I keep asking these questions about percents. I wonder if the staff here at the next meeting maybe recommend a trigger point like say once we get to this particular window, we should consider then adjusting the percent up or not, right, or maybe say no, we should just stay there based on your recommendation. I’d like to—Mr. Chairman, I don’t know if that requires a motion or not or just asking the staff to consider the numbers, the trends, like you mentioned.

Well, no, I don’t think we need a motion, just ask staff to bring a recommendation back to us at the next meeting but do think about it like this in terms of we saw almost all of your eligible higher education institutions that got funded, we saw about a third of the eligible public schools get funded. Now each public school is working with an IHE, if I'm not mistaken.

Correct.

So IHEs are represented on both lists, and we want that collaboration with the public schools, mostly high schools, and the community colleges. We like to see those connections in place. I would also—

[Inaudible] scoring, isn’t that a big point?

It is a point with scoring, yeah.

If they don’t actually—for an ISD, if they do not have a collaboration with an IHE, then that is also a disqualifier. The statute requires that they collaborate with a—

Where I was headed is, you know, when I’m out and about, I have seen some phenomenal collaborations where a higher education, in this case, community college, built a state-of-the-art chemical process unit. They have built a state-of-the-art chemical process unit working with local chemical companies, and easily a dozen high schools use this facility, and they teach their CTE courses there and they share that, the community college shares that willingly with the high schools because that’s a model that works in their area so that’s a good collaborative model. Another good collaborative model, if I was in southeast Texas for example, I think it’s viable to say—you could know better than I—you know, if Lamar wants to work on them, if the high schools want to work on them [inaudible] because Lamar can muster industry involvement, the high schools have ready access to a lot of capable young people that want to work on that and do that but if, for example, Dr. Killgo is sitting here so we’ll say if Vidor wants their own relationship with Lamar or TSTC or somebody who’s operating in that area, then he’s going to be able to do that as well. But you make a good point in the sense that I do appreciate the need for this advisory board to look at the percentages, what percentage of community colleges are accessing this versus what percentage of ISDs, and I think if staff brings you that data but even today, I think there is a discussion point. Whether or not you want to change your funding availability from 60/40 to something else, you can also think about the fact that is 55 points really enough to say that you’re an eligible application? I mean that’s a D, that’s not even a D plus.

We had that before. We adjusted that threshold.

Yes, sir.

I don’t remember, I think a year ago, 16 to 20.

It was 60 and then we lowered it just to allow more application.

[Inaudible] forward.

It was, yes, sir.

You solved your participation problem as an advisory board. We do not have that issue anymore. We now have the opposite issue. We’ve got great participation. More and more of the applications are phenomenally solid applications. Schools have really responded. They’re sending good stuff. There’s always going to be people who don’t get funded every year. The funding amount will probably never equal the demand because if it does, we’re not doing the right job and we’re going to step up our outreach efforts so you can always expect to see a lack but if 55 last year was acceptable, you know, maybe it’s 55 again. Maybe it’s 60, maybe it’s 70, I don’t know but you have multiple ways to make sure that you are getting what you want to get out of the program and be able to recommend that to the commission. I would say to you though, however we had it set this time, we covered 24 of 28 boards for the first time in a long time, and if you’ll look, rural schools really probably denominate the discussion. Now our definition of rural here is pretty loose. I mean you can still be the satellite and still be rural, I don’t know about that but that’s the—you know, if we were interested not so much in it going to downtown metropolis of Georgetown which I get, we wanted Jarrell or Salado or one of the other schools to get it, I’d say what we’re doing probably is giving those schools the kind of latitude they need to also apply which is important to me because I think when we’re forming these—I really detest the use of the word pipeline but I can't think of another word—when we form these pipelines of workers and we’re putting young people and students into these pipelines, it can't all just be Austin ISD, nor can it be Round Rock or Georgetown ISD. We’ve got to move out past that because the jobs are going to move up. Samsung has already built in Williamson County, then there’s Bell County, and then there’s Milam County and the list goes on, and that’s happening everywhere. Beaumont continues to grow. I think communities around Beaumont are growing along with Beaumont but they don’t grow at that rate. You can say that for Lubbock. You can say that for Allen. You can say that for Corpus Christi. You can say that for Kingsville. The valley is growing phenomenally. El Paso is quite the juggernaut these days. I mean let’s face facts. All of us who have been involved in economic development in Texas have 100 percent been doing our jobs because everywhere you look in the state, you’re seeing incredible amounts of job creation but we do know that 100 rural counties continue to lose population. They continue to lose jobs from their community. We’ve added 1.1 million jobs since May of 2020. At the same time a hundred of our counties have lost jobs, and we find ourselves today in a scenario where 90 percent of the 14.5 million jobs in the state are in 50 counties. That’s natural. That’s economics at work. That’s how the marketplace works but I think we have a vision or at least we have had a vision at this advisory board that we want to make sure that we’re including as many people as we can with success and I’d say that the numbers have succeeded. If we’re interested in making changes, that’s certainly a recommendation you can make to the commission and I think it’s well warranted off of what you’re seeing but manipulating the minimum score which is perfectly within your purview is a way to do that, changing the funding allocation is a way to do that. If you want the funding allocation to be trigger based, so be it. Staff can definitely bring us that but you’ve seen good geographic coverage based on what you did last time. You’ve seen really good coverage across industries like everything is not welding in this stuff. We’re actually addressing lots of different opportunities within the Texas workforce, and you’ll see a lot of health care which is our number one need statewide at this point so we—decisions you’ve made have yielded some phenomenal results. Remember the legislature doubled the funding for this the last time we had a chance to get that done, and so everything is trending in the right direction here.

The one I’m most interested in to have staff bring back is the minimum score threshold at 55. I mean based on the growth in the program since it started in ’16 [inaudible] here we are [inaudible] should we at least rate 60? That’s something. I mean do you all see any negative ramifications of that?

We don’t, and if you notice that category is no longer minimum point threshold. We called it minimum score threshold because we were actually interested in looking—right now everything is based off 100 points and when Lori and I broke down the scoring and made some of the tweaks, we actually had to remove several categories that we thought were vital or at least somewhat—should be included in the application process just because with only 100 points available, we felt like we were dicing all of these categories up so small that their point weight wasn’t really relevant at that point so we had to—

[Inaudible] might have been [inaudible].

Absolutely, so if we went based on a percentage of the points available, and I still think we can raise that because out of 100, we’re still dealing with 55 percent.

[Inaudible] 100-point scale this time?

Yes, sir.

All right, so if you raised it to 60 and you would have only eliminated two IHEs from consideration.

Yeah, the school district side would have gone from 91 to 69.

Even going from 55 points which was 55 percent through—you’re saying change the paradigm, we want to go to 60 percent or 55 percent, whatever it is, because we might have 200 points next time. You just need to get 60 percent of the [inaudible] but even if we—just making what Scott suggested that we go to 60, two universities, 12 ISDs is all that would have been impacted by that, and we don’t know that they wouldn’t have improved their point total using the tool once they knew what the new metric would be so it may not have even been that they would have been eliminated [inaudible].

Mr. Chairman, I think with limited funds it’s incumbent on us to try to encourage the best application we can get. I mean we want these districts in our area and everyone else to think outside the box and try to push forward to do the best that they can.

That’s definitely the role of this advisory board but your expertise is needed to maximize our performance and participation.

And even if the total point changed, just looking at this year, if we were basing it off 60 points, again the minimum point threshold that would have scored or been potentially awarded was 70 so we’re still 10 points out of that so I do think moving it up to a percentage and maybe a 60 percent of the total points available, I think that would be staff’s recommendation. And just to point out, 65 points just to go up even more, that would have left us with 21 IHEs and we would have had funding left over. We wouldn’t have had enough eligible applicants, we would have had approximately 1.8 million dollars left, and the school district amount would have dropped all the way to 55 from 91 at 55 points.

We definitely don’t want to [inaudible].

No, we don’t want to have any money left over but I think there’s some happy middle ground here. I will also say most people know both my parents are retired educators. My dad was a retired administrator. If you move the goal, they’ll move with it. I mean they’re not going to leave money on the table so I think what looks good today, perhaps look different tomorrow, will look different tomorrow but I don’t think—I think to your point I don’t think we make a sudden move here today. I think an incremental move is seemingly your intent. I think it’s what you want to do.

Agreed.

Let’s do this just for interest of process because I think we can wrap all this up in one motion. Let’s go ahead and talk about minimum, maximum grant amount and the number of applications per applicant, and I think we can wrap all this up in one.

My feeling is to expedite it unless you all have something different. It seems to be working so we wouldn’t need to upset the apple cart.

Just to Mario’s point, if we moved it to 65 percent, that would give school districts an extra 750,000, and for this year that would have led to approximately four more awards, three full and one partial. Obviously, the IHE side would have come down a little bit as the numbers are inverses of each other.

[Inaudible].

Yeah, and to the chairman’s point, that sends a message that we’re making adjustments based on the demand, and that’s a good thing.

[Inaudible].

I think because we have so many unique applicants this year, keeping the applicant count at one or applicant per eligible entity [inaudible].

So this would be for the following.

This would be for fiscal ’25 when it starts—

I think as a board we keep it at one [inaudible] for a whole lot of reasons.

I assume there’s no change in the recommendation for the 40,000, 350,000. I don’t think there needs to be but—

We did have internal conversations about whether equipment is getting more expensive or as we see some of these—

[Inaudible].

You might want to watch the upper end with that. I would encourage you to do that because any type of equipment where we would want to simulate a clean room like we would see in silicon chip manufacturing, that’s probably not achievable with 350,000. You’re not going to be able to do any kind of chemical process work where you have to really outfit a laboratory for 350,000. They’re going to have to partner so we probably do want to be cognizant of inflationary pressure on what is actually costing schools to put in the necessary equipment but you know the price of a simulated nursing mannikins that they use, the simulating equipment, I mean that’s up too so just to the extent of how much are we willing to pay for. We’ve always said we’re not probably going to do 100 percent of any one project because there will be other partners. You don’t need to change it today necessarily but do be thinking about that because the schools, the pressure on the school over prices, I mean that’s pretty real and we just need to be mindful of that.

So I think one of the things that we have seen to the point about the cost of equipment is perhaps a school would just buy fewer of the thing, whatever that is. So if it’s welding machines or a full welding booth, they might just have fewer which may equate to fewer students served in certain instances just based upon the available funding that they can apply for.

[Inaudible] 4,400 instead of 4,350, obviously we’re seeing inflation crossing every—

I support that, an incremental—every piece along the way except for the one applicant that, you know, if you go to 65, you get a 400, and then you give a 60 minimum score, it’s like—

Do you know, Matt, offhand how many projects were over 350,000?

They’re limited at 350.

Or who asked for 350?

Yeah, who asked for 350.

I don’t—typically they’re smart and they ask for—

All of it?

But if you look at the school districts, rank two, three, four, seven, nine and 10 so just out of the top 10, 70 percent asked for the full 350,000.

So you go up from 50,000 now, then that’s another 350,000 [inaudible].

Yeah, I will note when we had a higher threshold that was in 2022, again we were very fortunate to have some additional funding. For school districts we allowed up to 750,000. Even at that amount we had applications coming in at 700. I’m not suggesting that that’s—

You’re telling me [inaudible].

Be kind. There’s a school administrator sitting next to me.

Go for it.

[Inaudible] be careful and to [inaudible] 375, it’s still at 350. [Inaudible]. I think the chairman makes a good point. What we’re doing is potentially—

You’re shifting the numbers off the line.

And you’re cutting out—with limited funds, cutting out—

You’ll limit awards. Applications expand to—

I think it allows for the same point that the chairman made, we’re sending a message that we’re looking at it and we’re creating change, and we can see what it looks like next time around. Maybe we missed the mark and we’ve got to come back or move it again.

Feel comfortable with that?

Yeah, I did want to point out our graduation plans have moved more toward an emphasis on being career ready so we’ve got more students going to that path away from college ready to career ready. Of course we won't all—we won't vote, we want them to be prepared for either but items do cost more and funding has been a particular challenge for public schools the last couple years so all of those work in conjunction. Moving that limit up would be appreciated.

I think I’m accurate when I’m saying—I’ll caveat that I don’t know exactly all the ins and outs but I think for a school to do a significant CTE laboratory renovation, probably that’s going to have to [inaudible]. In most communities, bond elections, that’s not [inaudible]. There’s a lot of community debate and so I’m not saying we should [inaudible] the taxpayers, we should never do that but this program exists for schools to be able to make career education decisions more quickly so that’s something we can keep in mind too so you have a low point of $1,000 project, that’s probably even in a smaller school, that’s probably not something that runs to the top of the list in a bond election [inaudible]. By the same token, if they’re going to go much bigger than kind of what we’re doing, they’re going to find other partnerships to do that. There are other avenues to do that, it’s just what we’re trying to do is the legislature has entrusted us with some tax dollars. They think that TWC and this advisory board can make the decisions with this money and what we’re trying to do is make sure that the maximum number of kids get the opportunity to prepare themselves for a career, and like you said, I think as TEA continues to make refinements around what constitutes career ready on the list. College ready we can move to. Military, we can get a record of that. They do continue to make some changes and some finetuning on what constitutes career ready, and the way [inaudible] I think a lot of [inaudible] laboratories are going to have to make some incremental changes. This program I think presents a cost-effective and fairly efficient way for a school to go ahead and make a small renovation, upgrades [inaudible] do that.

I’ll move that we change the planning allocations 35 [inaudible] charter school districts, max amount change from 350,000 to 375,000, and no change in the number of applicants per district or school, change the minimum point threshold to 60.

Is there a second?

I second.

It’s been moved and seconded. Any discussion on that? OK, hearing no discussion, we’ll vote. All in favor say aye. All opposed same sign. Hearing no dissent to the vote, the motion passes unanimous. All right, next on our agenda is Agenda Item 6, discussion, consideration, possible action on any future board meetings.

No info on future board meetings but we will continue to stay in contact with you per those JET check presentations. Obviously, those are happening all across the state. I think we are down to our last number of them now. We actually had one today. That’s why Commissioner Esparza is not with us. He’s at Harris Junior College celebrating a JET grant there today but we’ll continue to notify you. I know Mario has traveled to several outside of the valley so if you’re willing and there are some that are in your area or just a little bit outside, we’d love to see you at those different events. That’s where it really highlights what these funds are being used for and the students it’s impacting. It’s pretty neat to see the students leading the demonstrations, whether it’s with the sim mannikins or the new welders, some of the welding equipment, you know, the chairman was working on the welders they were replacing, not to show his age by any means but just again highlight.

Let me just say, if the students are still working on the same welding equipment on which I learned to weld, that school needs an upgrade. Technology has far surpassed [inaudible]. We were still using—

[Inaudible] how you weld?

You know what? I’m glad they didn’t x-ray them. I’ve lost some technique, let’s just say that but they have—those [inaudible] welders are amazing. Just leave it at that. Matt makes a great point. Do come if you can. I know everybody has other responsibilities and this is a voluntary role. I had asked that they batch them up so I was doing 10, 12 checks at a time. We had a great one down in Beaumont at Lamar. We had schools from all over, and we had another great one in Corpus Christi where I think we had a dozen schools at that one. A lot of excitement in the room. I’ve actually done two in Corpus where we had at least four or five schools at each one.

Del Mar?

Yeah, [inaudible] we were at both that one and these teachers are excited. When they bring their students, they’re excited. One of the ones in Corpus, they brought their maritime students that are learning to be ship pilots and different things. That’s not a career we see a lot of here in Central Texas so it was fun to talk to students who’ve got their eye on the prize. The teachers are helping them get there. Schools doing their job, community college is involved. Like they used to say on that one TV show, I love it when the plan comes together because we were seeing it that day, and just the excitement for a little bit of work to get a grant, get the grant, make the changes at the school but be able to watch those students be able to put that immediately into action, I mean they were getting certificates, licenses, and other things and that’s why I’m in this business. I’m glad I got to be able to see that. All right, so we’ll let you know. We’ll probably poll the group on the next necessary board meeting. In the meantime, please don’t forget any good ideas, anything you think of as you’re driving home today, you thought of something you wish you’d said, call us back, let us know what that is. Is there anything else we want to discuss here today? Mario.

Yes, Mr. Chairman, before we leave but regarding the guest speaker and some of the comments made, I wonder if it’s appropriate for us to ask the staff to give us some information on some of these emerging markets, emerging industries that are gapped. I have the experience when we stood up Toyota in San Antonio. We literally asked the community for robot technicians and it was crickets, right? And so you have a lot of that happening around Texas where I can imagine Tesla here in the area asking for a certain skillsets that are not available and it’s very difficult for school districts and community colleges to rev up the programs in time for hiring and what happens then is these big companies are moving with or without that worker from the community. So they’ll bring people from the outside, which is what we don’t want, right? I saw it in SpaceX there in Brownsville. I've seen it in two different locations where we missed the mark, right? So I wonder if the staff can provide us with some information of what might be some of these emerging industries, emerging markets that are not on the typically high-demand list but are gapped in the community just for us to have that discussion. I'm not suggesting that we make a motion for a particular change or anything like that, just for us to kind of better understand what it looks like so that maybe we might consider going down that path in the future.

Let’s do this. For our next meeting, I'm going to ask staff to prepare a discussion of the high-demand list, how the process works, what’s on the board high-demand list, what we’re doing at TWC. It’s actually germane for working with the Coordinating Board right now. They have some needs resulting from House Bill 8 for our high-demand list. We are kind of looking at the process and understanding what that is. Understand, there are boards—the number one job vacancy in Texas right now is registered nurses. It has been for 10 years. It will be for the next 10 years as just sort of a natural order of that particular workforce. We’re hiring a lot more nurses in a lot more different jobs and then we have more vacancies. That’s just the way it works. Lot of people, the governor just stood up a new task force on that, colleges, community colleges, universities are doing a great job of turning out nurses. We just need to turn out nurses, but it won’t shock you to know that there are a number of boards for which nursing is not number one on their list, and it might not even make their top 10 list. Truck drivers may be a need in that board. Some of these boards are a few counties in a particular area of the state who may be very good on that, and I think looking at statewide lists, looking at the statewide vacancies, we know what’s in demand. We also know how we’re going to get there but balancing that out because we tend to think of a high school, or we tend to think of a community college as serving their area, and they do first, but those students have the option to live anywhere they want in the state, and while sure, the community doesn’t want them to pick up and move and take their skills elsewhere, and the community would like to make sure that a company creates jobs in that community. If in the intermediate time, if that student needs to go somewhere else and hone their skills if only they come back we can’t take those options away from students. So there’s a lot of things going on here. Let’s ask staff to bring those lists, talk to us about the process. We can discuss then whether or not we think that those particular lists are meeting our needs. If we want to make a different recommendation to the commission, we can do that as an advisory board anytime we want to. But I think we should come armed with the facts. I think you’ve raised a good point today and it’s one I think we definitely should look into.

The new face [inaudible]. That would be great.

Absolutely.

Excellent.

I ask that that also include a discussion of remote working possibilities. To your point earlier about rural versus urban, if possible, but those living in a rural community could work remotely in a software or digital emerging market capacity for another jurisdiction in Texas, another county, another state.

I tell you what. I agree with you. Add to your list. Let’s get somebody from Labor Market Information here to just talk through the broader term trend list and talk through what those trends that we’re [inaudible] bring a good slide show [inaudible]. [Inaudible] TV right here. I'm too old to be like [inaudible].

I hear you.

Mr. Chairman, I do want to make one point of clarification in terms of eligible occupations even right now. We’re certainly going to prepare the information that the board has requested. Currently, occupations could have been on sort of a pre-approved list, but an applicant had the ability to select an occupation outside of that list and have their local Workforce Development Board sign.

An affidavit.

Just saying that this is in demand in our area or it does not have to be on their list.

[Inaudible].

Yes, yes. So we provided kind of a backup of—

[Inaudible], yeah. Expansion or a [inaudible].

Exactly.

Semiconductor thing coming in or something. [Inaudible]—

We did want to make sure that it was clear that even if it wasn’t on the list right now, but we knew that this was an emerging area, that there was a way for that occupation to be included in this year’s application.

Just one more note. We did actually, we used the high-demand list and the target occupation list, but we added, TEA had a CTE occupation list and we also added those occupations this year. So, we’ll put together more of a presentation for the next meeting, but just kind of a general overview.

They're adding these lists, Vanessa. [Inaudible].

Yes.

[Inaudible].

[Inaudible]. Thank you, guys. Anything else? Is there a motion to adjourn?

I motion to adjourn.

[Inaudible] second. We’ve got it’s been moved and seconded to adjourn, and we’re adjourned. Thanks, guys.