



Business Education Committee Meeting Minutes
09/14/2026 12:00 PM CDT to 1:00 PM CDT
Workforce Solutions Rural Capital Area

Members Present

Laura Lucas
Meranda Stanley
Mary Helen Martinez
Nikki Stallings
Christian Fletcher
Mike(Larry) Crane
Megan Gandy
Kelly Moreno

Members Absent

None

1. Call the meeting to order/roll call- Nikki Stallings - at 12:02 pm

2. Vote on meeting minutes from July meeting- Nikki Stallings

Due to a lack of quorum, the group was unable to vote on the approval of the Minutes, the minutes will be distributed for electronic voting.

3. Workforce update

The workforce team reported active development of new programming for employers, organization of job fairs, and support for companies relocating to Central Texas, with significant growth expected in the coming months. Notable developments include major projects by SpaceX and a surge in data center square footage, positioning Bastrop County for substantial expansion in the next 12 to 36 months.

- The workforce team has been actively developing new programming for employers, organizing job fairs, and supporting companies relocating to the area, with increased activity expected in the next two months.
- There is significant movement of companies from Korea, Taiwan, and other regions into Central Texas, contributing to a busy period for workforce and economic development efforts.
- Recent attendance at the Bastrop State of Bastrop event highlighted major developments, including large-scale projects by SpaceX, which are expected to impact the region.
- Based on building permits, Bastrop County may soon have the largest amount of data center square footage in Texas, despite not having the highest number of permits, indicating significant growth in this sector over the next 12 to 36 months.

4. Healthcare report

Kelly Moreno announced the release of a comprehensive healthcare report for a 10-county region, developed with Opportunity Austin and Capital Area, and available online. The report was presented at recent events, and ongoing efforts include addressing healthcare needs, expanding training opportunities, and seeking clinical placements, with Kelly Moreno committed to sharing the report link with the group.

- Kelly Moreno announced the release of the healthcare report, which covers a 10-county region and was developed in collaboration with Opportunity Austin and Capital Area. The report is available online and is 92 pages long.
- The report was presented at the State of Healthcare event and at ACC a few weeks prior, with participation from Capital Area representatives. The event was well attended.
- Discussion included ongoing efforts to address healthcare needs in Central Texas, including potential new hospital development and collaboration with Central Texas College in Llano to expand training opportunities.
- Laura Rosen leads rural healthcare initiatives and is actively seeking clinical placement opportunities, which remain a significant challenge in the healthcare field.
- Kelly Moreno requested that members inform them of any available clinical placement opportunities to help address shortages.
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5. K12 update

K12 initiatives are underway with staff back in schools, the Career Ready website launched, and new booklets and curriculum released to support student career exploration.

- Provided an update that K12 initiatives are underway, with staff back in schools and actively working with students.
- The Career Ready website has been launched and is live, with feedback being collected for improvements.
- Booklets organized by career clusters have been released to help students understand available study and career options.

- Career enrichment curriculum has been developed for ISDs implementing career training in 7th grade, along with additional resources.
- ISDs have expressed interest in having employers visit schools to showcase their companies, rather than always organizing student tours.
- A major career exploration event, the LEAP Career Fair, is scheduled at the Caldwell Evacuation Center, with 52 employers and over 500 students registered.
- There are plans to replicate the career fair throughout the 9-county region, with the next event likely in Bastrop in the spring.
- Feedback and company participation in these events are encouraged, and all events are free for participants.
- The regional convener grant is active, with JFF (Jobs for the Future) coaches visiting on the 16th for site visits and discussions.

6. Apprenticeship update and Manufacturing Tours

Stephanie Mora updated the group on apprenticeship programs, highlighting the start of the second Maintenance Tech Partnership cohort, ongoing efforts with SpaceX and automotive apprenticeships, and plans to expand manufacturing tours year-round. Career coaches are reaching out to schools and manufacturers, and Stephanie Mora committed to adding Megan Gandy's organization and Nov to the list of manufacturers for student tours.

- Stephanie Mora provided an update on the apprenticeship programs, noting that the second cohort of the Maintenance Tech Partnership program began on July 27th with five employers participating. She also mentioned ongoing efforts to establish a potential apprenticeship with SpaceX and work on an automotive apprenticeship program, which will feature virtual classroom instruction by ACC and on-the-job learning with employers, making it the first program of its kind in the nation.
- Plans are underway to expand manufacturing tours from being held only in October to being available year-round. Career coaches are currently reaching out to schools to determine student interest and availability for these tours, and efforts are ongoing to identify manufacturers willing to host student visits.
- Action Item - Stephanie Mora committed to adding Megan Gandy's organization and Nov to the list of manufacturers for student tours.

7. County level workforce meetings

A recent county-level workforce meeting in Llano was held alongside a ribbon cutting for the new office, with positive feedback and discussions on key issues like childcare, affordability, and workforce training. The new office includes a training facility, and future meetings are scheduled for other counties, with Kelly Moreno committed to keeping the group informed and scheduling remaining meetings, as well as sending materials for pre-review if a November meeting is needed.

- A recent county-level workforce meeting in Llano was held alongside a ribbon cutting for the new Llano office, which was well attended and received positive feedback.

- Action Item - Once the minutes from the Llano meeting are approved, Kelly Moreno will send them to the group.
- Key issues discussed at the meeting included childcare, affordability, transportation, and workforce training, which are common concerns across regions.
- Connections are being made with the child care team and the Chamber of Commerce to address local needs and improve marketing for the new office.
- Brian and Berenice are working with Tony from the Chamber to enhance outreach about the new office and its opportunities.
- The new Llano office includes a training facility, which Central Texas College is considering for local training sessions, reducing travel needs for participants.
- Future county-level workforce meetings for Fayette and Hayes will be scheduled after the election, likely in early spring 2027, while other counties' meetings are planned before the holidays.
- Action Item - Kelly Moreno will keep the group informed about upcoming county workforce meetings, especially those relevant to members' regions.
- Action Item - Kelly Moreno will schedule the remaining county-level workforce meetings.
- Action Item - Instead of the next meeting in January, a call or meeting may be scheduled in November to approve necessary items. Kelly Moreno will send materials for pre-review once finalized.

8. Schedule next meeting for January 18, 2027

9. Board Retreat – October 21st and 22nd Kalahari – Board of Directors and staff only

Discussion centered on presenting the business booklet and PowerPoint at the retreat, with flexibility for either a handout or formal presentation. Kelly Moreno and Stephanie will handle the presentation responsibilities.

Additional Discussion

Childcare Challenges

The group discussed the closure of a local daycare and the resulting impact on childcare shortages, noting long waitlists, high costs, and administrative burdens for providers. Training programs through the Texas Workforce Commission and local colleges were mentioned as potential solutions, and Kelly Moreno committed to informing Gwen about the closure.

- The group discussed the broader impact of childcare shortages on local businesses, with access to capital, labor, and childcare identified as the top three needs by employers.
- It was noted that waitlists for daycare placements are long, with one example being over six months, and that costs can exceed \$1,100 per month, creating financial strain for families.

- Training programs through the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) and local colleges were mentioned as potential solutions to increase childcare staffing, but these require a three to six month lead time to implement.
- It was highlighted that each funding or assistance program for childcare has its own requirements, causing administrative burdens for daycare providers as they try to qualify for support.
- <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/providers/child-care-regulation/become-a-provider/become-a-child-care-home-provider> (how to become a licensed CC provider)

<https://www.twc.texas.gov/employer-resources/texas-work-family-policies/child-care-resources-employers> (TWC Employer CC initiative)

Participants engaged in informal conversation about recent and upcoming conferences, including the TWC Apprenticeship conferences, discussing attendance, presentations, moderating roles, session times, and the number of people on the call.

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10. **Adjourn**

The meeting concluded with closing remarks and appreciation for the efforts of the committee members and organizers, followed by formal adjournment by Nikki Stallings at 12:34 pm.