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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 3, 2019

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BUILDING A FUTURE-READY WORKFORCE AMONG KEY RECOMMENDATIONS AIMED AT KEEPING THE GULF COAST REGION GLOBALLY COMPETITIVE

(HOUSTON) Structural changes in education, continued industrial diversification, and a commitment to constant skills development will enhance the region's future competitiveness according to a new report released by the Gulf Coast Workforce Board. The seventh edition of the regional *Workforce Report Card* compares the Gulf Coast to eight similarly situated metropolitan areas to gauge performance in six key indicators: Macro economy & industry dynamics, labor force composition, educational achievement & investment, quality of life, and income, wealth & poverty.

Tuesday, the Gulf Coast Workforce Board convened a stakeholder meeting in the Legacy Room at Houston City Hall to gather feedback and suggestions on implementing the report card's recommendations. "To maintain a long-term competitive edge we need to focus on building a workforce nimble enough to leverage disruptions caused by continuing advances in technology, employer-driven talent development strategies aimed at adapting to a rapidly changing workplace, and building on our region's existing strengths to diversify our industry base," said Gulf Coast Workforce Board Chair Mark Guthrie.

Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner attended the discussion, praising the recommendations made in the Report Card and saying that businesses and industries (and the jobs that come with them) will look elsewhere for expansion unless Houston and the Gulf Coast region have a workforce trained and ready to take advantage of the opportunities.

Much of the discussion centered around ways to get middle and high school students to consider career options that don't necessarily require a four-year degree. Skilled trades, such as electricians and construction workers, offer high pay and opportunities for advancement but "changing the minds of adults" about these careers will be key to getting students to consider them, said Fort Bend ISD Career and Technical Education Specialist Sharyn Hyatt.

Additional round table discussions are scheduled throughout September around the region. For a complete schedule and to obtain a copy of the Workforce Report Card, visit www.wrksolutions.com/reportcard.

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ABOUT WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS: Workforce Solutions is dedicated to keeping the Gulf Coast region a great place to do business, work, and live. Our employer-driven, people-focused approach elevates the economic and human potential of the region to attract and retain the best employers, afford everyone the dignity of a job, and remain indispensable to the global economy. As the public workforce system for 13 counties in Southeast Texas, we work in tandem with the Texas Workforce Commission and the statewide Workforce Solutions network to maintain the state's largest job-match database - WorkInTexas.com.

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