GULF COAST Workforce Board Workforce Solutions GULF COAST

ISSUE 11 | September 2026

GULF COAST WORKFORCE BOARD NEWSLETTER

SEG Solar Growth Highlights Changing Manufacturing Landscape

SEG Solar's expansion in the Houston region is bringing new manufacturing capacity and hundreds of potential jobs to the area, while offering a look at the technology, occupations, and skills shaping the industry today.

The company recently opened a $200 million manufacturing facility in Tomball, its second U.S. facility. The plant is expected to create up to 800 jobs and will produce up to 4 gigawatts of solar modules annually, bringing SEG Solar's total U.S. module manufacturing capacity to 6 gigawatts.

Workforce Solutions Gulf Coast recently brought that story to ABC13's *Who's Hiring*, filming at SEG Solar with company leaders and employees. Gulf Coast Workforce Board Executive Director Juliet Stipeche joined ABC13's Nick Natario to discuss the region's advanced manufacturing workforce, the opportunities available to workers, and the importance of staying connected to employers as their workforce needs change.

The conversations at SEG Solar also illustrated the range of occupations behind a modern manufacturing operation. In addition to production positions, manufacturers rely on technicians, maintenance workers, supply-chain professionals, quality specialists, engineers, trainers and supervisors. Many of those jobs are changing as employers incorporate automation, robotics, computer-controlled equipment and other advanced technologies into their operations.

KTRK/ABC13's Nick Natario with SEG Solar's Vanessa Ye, Director of Supply Chain, during Who's Hiring at the company's Tomball facility, where new workforce opportunities are taking shape across the Gulf Coast.

Manufacturing already supports roughly a quarter-million jobs across the Gulf Coast Workforce Board's 13-county region. Entry into the industry can take many forms, including employer training, technical certificates, apprenticeships, community college programs, and four-year degrees. Workers can also apply manufacturing skills across different employers and industries, an important advantage in a region with major concentrations in energy, petrochemicals, maritime, construction, and other industrial sectors.

Workforce Solutions Gulf Coast works with manufacturers and other employers to understand hiring needs, identify skill requirements and connect people with employment, education and training opportunities. That employer perspective also informs the Board's decisions about where workforce resources can have the greatest impact.

The Board's work also contributes to statewide conversations about the future of manufacturing. Workforce Solutions Gulf Coast's Lacy Wolfe serves on the Governor's Texas Jobs Council and the Task Force on Modernizing Manufacturing, bringing regional workforce experience to discussions about the skills and talent Texas manufacturers will need as technology changes the industry.

For Gulf Coast manufacturers, modernization will depend not only on new technology, but on having enough workers with the skills to use it. The Board's work is focused on that gap, helping connect changing employer needs with training and career pathways that prepare workers for increasingly technical manufacturing jobs.

Help Shape Our Newsletter What would you like to see in future Workforce Solutions newsletters? Please take 30 seconds to answer two quick questions! TAKE THE SURVEY →

Build Freedom Summit

The **Build Freedom Summit and Defense Industrial Base Workforce Conference** will come to Galveston October 21-22, 2026, as part of a national effort to strengthen the manufacturing workforce, support industrial readiness, and expand career pathways in defense-related sectors.

Supported by the U.S. Department of Defense and sponsored by Texas A&M Engineering, the Industrial Base Analysis and Sustainment Program, and IACMI, the two-day summit will bring together employers, workforce leaders, educators, and industry partners to focus on manufacturing innovation, workforce development, and regional talent pipelines.

The event will be followed by the **Build Freedom Career Expo**, hosted by the Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership with support from the Gulf Coast Workforce Board and Workforce Solutions. The expo will connect job seekers directly with employers in advanced manufacturing and the defense industry, with opportunities to explore career pathways, meet hiring managers, and participate in on-site interviews.

CTE and high school programs will take part in the morning, followed by an afternoon session open to the public. Active-duty military members, transitioning service members, and veterans are also being encouraged to attend.

Build Freedom Summit / Defense Industrial Base Workforce Conference

Date: October 20–21, 2026
Location: Galveston Island Convention Center
Address: 5600 Seawall Blvd., Galveston, TX 77551

Find more information and registration here!

Tashara Wiser

Eligibility Specialist - Workforce Solutions

Child Care Keeps Parents Working—and the Workforce Depends on It

For thousands of Gulf Coast families, dependable childcare can determine whether a parent is able to work, complete training, or pursue a better-paying career. Texas reflects that reality by making childcare assistance part of its workforce system. The Texas Workforce Commission distributes federal Child Care and Development Fund resources through 28 local workforce development boards, which oversee services in their communities and help connect working families with the support they need to remain in the labor force.

In 2025, the Gulf Coast Workforce Board invested $321.4 million to help families afford care, providing scholarships that served 47,428 children from 28,562 families. The connection between available childcare and employment is clear: statewide, 87% of low-income working families receiving assistance remained employed after one year, while average quarterly earnings increased by $1,871.

Employers have a stake in that stability as well. When parents cannot find dependable care for their children, the effects can include missed work, reduced hours, and turnover. Texas employers lose an estimated $7.59 billion each year to absenteeism and loss of employment associated with those challenges.

Demand continues to outpace available resources. More than 28,000 children are currently waiting for assistance in the Gulf Coast area, while an estimated 485,000 statewide are not receiving subsidies. That unmet need has consequences for both families and the workforce. Childcare assistance helps working parents remain connected to employment and training while giving employers access to a more stable workforce. Continued investment will determine how many more eligible families can receive that support, and how many more parents can remain fully engaged in Texas' economy.

Watch: How the Board Supports Child Care Quality

WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS PODCAST

New Podcasts Available: Careers, Services and the Changing Workforce

The Workforce Solutions Gulf Coast podcast is back with new conversations focused on the services, resources, and workforce issues that matter to people and employers in our region.

The latest episodes take listeners inside three very different areas of the workforce system. **Adult Education and Literacy: More Than a GED** looks at the range of education and skill-building opportunities available to adults and who can benefit. **Vocational Rehabilitation: From Goals to Careers** explores how VR helps people with disabilities identify career goals, address barriers, and access the support they need to pursue employment. **Child Care Quality: A Workforce Investment** examines the Workforce Board's role in child care quality, including how providers are supported through Texas Rising Star and why dependable, quality care matters for working families.

More episodes are on the way, including conversations about how artificial intelligence is changing jobs and skills, how to use WorkInTexas.com, employer workforce services, youth employment opportunities, and additional episodes in the AEL and VR series.

Listen to the newest podcast episodes featuring Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), Adult Education and Literacy (AEL), and Child Care to hear more about these services, the people they support, and how they connect to workforce success.

Honoring Our Retired Board Members

We're recognizing the women who have served on the Gulf Coast Workforce Board and recently concluded their service. Their leadership, experience, and commitment have helped shape the work we do and strengthen opportunities for people and employers throughout our region.

We're grateful for the time and perspective they shared during their service, and for the lasting impact they've made. **Thank you for your dedication and for being an important part of our story.**

Margaret Oser, Vice President, United Way of Greater Houston (Retired)

Susan Lindsey, Regional Director, Texas Workforce Solutions- Vocational Rehabilitation Services (Retired)

Labor Market Information

Houston added 50,300 jobs over the past year, a 1.5% increase and the largest annual gain since July 2025. Seven of the region's 11 major industries are now larger than they were a year ago, with strong growth in Professional and Business Services, Construction, and Private Education and Health Services. July employment declined by 25,000 jobs, but nearly all of that decrease came from government employment as public schools entered summer break. Private-sector employment declined by only 1,400 jobs, while Houston's unemployment rate edged down to 5.1%.

Want to keep up with Houston's job market? Visit the Workforce Solutions Gulf Coast Regional Economic Data page for the latest employment information and labor market reports.

October Events

In celebration of October's **National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM)**, Workforce Solutions Gulf Coast, in partnership with the **City of Houston Office for People with Disabilities (OPD)** and **Texas Workforce Solutions - Vocational Rehabilitation Services,** invites you to attend a **special event** dedicated to connecting job seekers with disabilities to employment opportunities, workforce resources, and career development information.

OCT
1

You're Invited: The 2026 NDEAM Business Symposium

Join us on **October 1, 2026**, for an exclusive gathering to learn how partnering with **TWC-VR can provide your business with a significant competitive advantage**. This isn't just about compliance; it's about connecting with capable, job-ready individuals who bring unique skills and perspectives to the table.

Hear Directly From Leaders Who Have Found Success. Our expert panel features organizations that have successfully integrated talent with disabilities into their workforce, gaining firsthand experience with the value and expertise they provide—often before making a hiring commitment.

2026 TWC-VRS NDEAM Business Symposium

📅 Thursday, October 1, 2026

📍 West End Multi-Service Center, 170 Heights Blvd, Houston, TX 77007

🕐 8:30 a.m. – 11:45 a.m.

Cost: Free for Houston-Galveston business partners

Click Here to Reserve Your Seat

OCT
8

Special Event

📅 Thursday, October 8, 2026

📍 Metropolitan Multi-Service Center 1475 West Gray Street, Houston, Texas 77019

🕐 8:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

Employer Participation

Employers attending the event will have the opportunity to:

- Connect directly with qualified job seekers with disabilities.
- Promote available employment opportunities.
- Learn about workforce programs and services available to support recruitment efforts.
- Network with employers and community partners committed to advancing employment for people with disabilities.

Whether you are a job seeker looking for new opportunities or an employer seeking qualified talent, we **invite you to register** and join us for this empowering event.

Register

Community Conversations: Your Voice Matters

The Houston Economic Mobility Coalition, formed by the Gulf Coast Workforce Board, the Greater Houston Partnership, United Way, and Greater Houston Community Foundation, is inviting community members to participate in a discussion surrounding jobs, training, career opportunities, and their connection to greater economic mobility. This is an opportunity for residents to share their experiences, barriers to opportunity, and offer ideas that can help inform future workforce and career development efforts.

Upcoming Community Conversations:

SEPT
17

📅 Thursday, September 17

📍 **Youth Development** Center 6050 Bretshire Dr., Houston, TX 77016

🕐 10 a.m.–12 p.m.

SEPT
22

📅 Tuesday, September 22

📍 **Small Steps Nurturing Center** 2902 Jensen Dr., Houston, TX 77026

🕐 5:30 – 7 p.m.

SEPT
24

📅 Tuesday, September 24

📍 **Volunteers of America** 4808 Yale St., Houston, TX 77018

🕐 12 – 1:30 p.m.

SEPT
29

📅 Tuesday, September 29

📍 **Chinese Community Center** 9800 Town Park Dr., Houston, TX 77036

🕐 10 a.m.–12 p.m.

SEPT
30

📅 Wednesday, September 30

📍 **Fifth Ward Multiservice Center** 4014 Market St., Houston, TX 77020

🕐 5:30 p.m. – 7 p.m.

OCT
1

📅 Tuesday, October 1

📍 **Connect YMCA** 6700 Bellaire Blvd., Houston, TX 77074

🕐 6:30 p.m. – 8 p.m.

OCT
6

📅 Tuesday, October 6

📍 **AVANCE** 4281 Dacoma St., Houston, TX 77092

🕐 5:30 p.m. – 7 p.m.

OCT
8

📅 Tuesday, October 8

📍 **Houston Area Urban League** 5260 Griggs Rd., Houston, TX 77021

🕐 11 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Register with this link!

Build Freedom Career Expo

Explore career pathways, connect with employers, and learn about opportunities in manufacturing, defense, and the skilled trades.

OCT
22

📅 Thursday, October 22, 2026

📍 **Galveston Island Convention** Center 5600 Seawall Blvd., Galveston, TX 77551

🕐 1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Find more information here!

Hiring Red, White & You! Annual Job Seeker Hiring Event

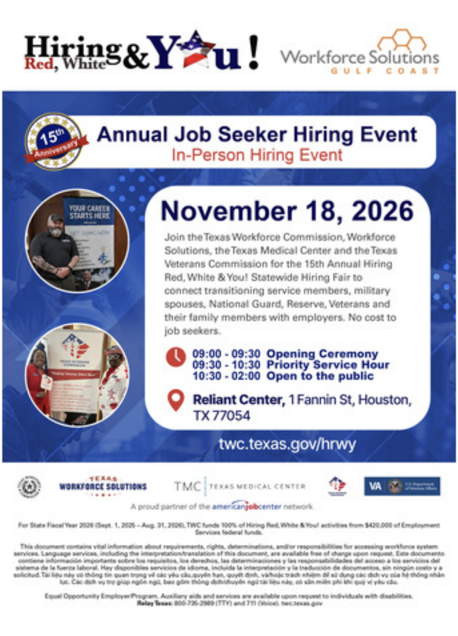
Workforce Solutions Gulf Coast is joining the Texas Workforce Commission, Texas Medical Center, and Texas Veterans Commission for the **15th Annual Hiring Red, White & You! Statewide Hiring Fair** on November 18. The in-person event will connect transitioning service members, military spouses, National Guard and Reserve members, veterans, and their families with employers. There is **no cost for job seekers**.

NOV
18

📅 Wednesday, November 18, 2026

📍 **Reliant Center** 1 Fannin St., Houston, TX 77054

🕐 1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.



Hiring Red, White & You!
Workforce Solutions GULF COAST
15th Anniversary
YOUR CAREER STARTS HERE
TEXAS WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS
TMC TEXAS MEDICAL CENTER
VA

Annual Job Seeker Hiring Event
In-Person Hiring Event

November 18, 2026

Join the Texas Workforce Commission, Workforce Solutions, the Texas Medical Center and the Texas Veterans Commission for the 15th Annual Hiring Red, White & You! Statewide Hiring Fair to connect transitioning service members, military spouses, National Guard, Reserve, Veterans and their family members with employers. No cost to job seekers.

09:00 - 09:30 Opening Ceremony
09:30 - 10:30 Priority Service Hour
10:30 - 02:00 Open to the public

Reliant Center, 1 Fannin St, Houston, TX 77054

twc.texas.gov/hrwy

A proud partner of the americanjobcenter network

Download the Gulf Coast Workforce Solutions App

App Store

Google Play

Visit Workforce Solutions News website for the latest stories, events, and regional updates.

☎

Contact Information

Main Career Office Line: 713-627-3200

Childcare Support: 713-334-5980 / Text: 346-249-7700

Email: jobs@wrksolutions.com

WorkInTexas Job Matching: WorkInTexas.com