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>> We usually make this event live at 12:58, less that 50 seconds. Right now all of our attendees are looking at a blank screen as the live event has not started. We want them to know they're in the right place, so we make the opening presentation of our slides visible so that they can see that. So I am about to make the event live. I do want to warn you, when I do that, I will be muting all mics. While I have the capability of muting anyone's mic, I cannot unmute anyone's mics but my own. Keep it in mind that your microphone may be muted even if you didn't mute it yourself. It's a good practice to mute your mic after you have spoken. Subconsciously, it puts in your mind that you are muted.

>> Jarvis Brewer: Any last questions? I normally ask for a dad joke. But any questions or comments before we begin? All right. Thank you so much again for

your participation. Let's have a great event. I'm going to make the event live and mute all mics.

>> Jarvis Brewer: welcome everyone to the workforce in Texas webinar. We want to take a few minutes to give everyone a chance to get into their seats and prepare for the webinar. It will begin momentarily.

>> Jarvis Brewer: while we're waiting, if we could go to the next slide. I would like to let our deaf and hard of hearing know that we do have captioning service available. The link provided here will be put into the chat so that you can copy and paste it and receive this service.

Additionally, we'll be providing transcripts after the event. The transcripts will be available through our website and everyone will receive a copy of these slides, which contain

all of the links on the slides.

>> Jarvis Brewer: All right. It's two minutes after the hour. To be respectful with everyone's time, we'll go ahead and get this thing kicked off. Let's go to the next slide. To begin, we have a couple of interactive questions. This first question, there will be two statements posted into the chat and the chat you can find, there are two bubbles in the top right side of your screen. Click the bubbles and there will be two statements, like the question most applicable to you and your situation. The first statement is, I am a business owner facing challenges regarding retention and/or hiring. Like that question or like I am a business owner with a full staff. So which one of these statements apply to you. Like the one so we can get a better feel of our audience.

>> Jarvis Brewer: All right. Thank you so much for continuing to like these statements. we'll begin with some

welcoming remarks from our executive director, Adriana Cruz. Adriana, I'll hand it over to you.

>> Adriana Cruz: Thanks, Jarvis.

Good afternoon everybody. And thank you for joining us today. I'm Adriana Cruz, I'm the executive director of the Economic Development and Tourism Office in the office of Governor Greg Abbott. On behalf of the entire team, I want to thank you for joining us for today's Governor's Small Business webinar. Under Governor Abbott's Leadership, our office is committed to ensuring that Texas continues to be ranked as the top state in the country to start a business and to be an entrepreneur. Through these webinars, our goal has been to provide you with information and connect you with local resources that will help you to find success on your entrepreneurial journey. Today we're going to be focusing on a topic of that we have heard from you all is critically

important. To businesses, both large and small, across the state and that's workforce. And we'll be joined by a panel of experts to hear directly from them. Today, we've got the Texas Workforce Commission, Tarleton small business development center, workforce solutions, north central Texas and we're going to hear from a business owner directly, the director of special events for county line barbecue and the President of the Austin chapter of the Texas restaurant association.

Of course, we're so happy to continue to work closely with these partners and with the Texas Workforce Commission on these webinars. Texas small business owners and entrepreneurs are the backbone of our state's economy. Because of your hard work, Texas continues to be the economic engine of the nation. Thanks to our small business team for organizing today's event and please don't hesitate to reach out to us if

there's anything we can do to help you.  
Jarvis, back over to you.

>> Jarvis Brewer: Thank you so much, Adriana. And you are absolutely right, we are so thankful to have this exquisite panel, but also to have you, the attendees with us today. I know this has been a very hot topic and I've had many discussions with the panelists prior to this webinar. I know there's a ton of information we're going to cover as much as we can in an hour. But obviously, we won't be able to cover everything, because workforce can take way more than an hour to cover everything.

However,  
continue to submit your questions once we open up it up. We want to take what this audience wants to hear about. That will be vital throughout this event. Let's go to the next interactive question -- before I goat that, I want to introduce myself. I'm Jarvis Brewer in the Office of the

Governor. I serve to be both an advocate from the state of Texas to the business owners, as well as in the reverse. From you, the state of Texas, business owners to the state of Texas. So let's get to the second interactive question. Similar to the first one, we're going to be posting two statements, Michael is doing that right now. Like the one most applicable to you. I can provide my product or service virtually or while socially distanced or my products/services cannot be provided virtually or while socially distanced. This is important, again, because we're trying to see what demographics are in our audience. I know that now from the first set of questions we have a ton of business owners facing challenges regarding retention and/or hiring. We definitely will address that throughout this hour. Let's go forward to our next slide. I'd like to introduce our panelists for today. He

have Elsa Ramos who is the legal counsel for the commissioner representing employers at the -- at the Texas Workforce Commission. Elsa, good morning. How are you doing today?

>> Elsa Ramos: I think you mean afternoon, Jarvis. Good afternoon. But, I don't know, they could be listening to us somewhere, you know, in California. They have employees here, too. Anyway, good afternoon everybody. Thank you, Jarvis for inviting me. Yes, my name is Elsa Ramos.

I'm one of the staff attorneys for Commissioner Demerson, the commissioner who represents employers at the Texas Workforce Commission. Just for those who don't know, there are three commissioners at the commission. One represents the public, one represents labor and my commissioner represents employers. I am one of four attorneys. Our job is here to advocate for employers on appeals that come

before the commission, at the Texas Workforce Commission. As part of outreach, we take a lot of time to provide guidance on helping employers manage their employees while still staying in compliance with the applicable state and federal laws.

So thank you, Jarvis.

>> Jarvis Brewer: Absolutely. Thank you for the correction of the time of day. 2020/2021 has thrown us all off. Obviously, 1:00 p.m. is not in the morning. Thank you for that. Brandi, how are you doing this afternoon?

>> Brandi Trotter: I'm good, thank you. How are you?

>> Jarvis Brewer: Wonderful. Tell us a little bit about yourself.

>> Brandi Trotter: Certainly. My name is Brandi Harrison Trotter. I'm the business development supervisor for Workforce Solutions for North Central Texas. We are one of 28 workforce boards that are across the

state. And our board specifically oversees, the employers and career seeker services in the 14 counties that surround Dallas and Tarrant. We have an extensive territory. My role here at the board is to supervise our business developmentally a son team who works out in the community with employers to connect them to our various services and solicit their participation in our workforce initiative. Thanks for having me.

>> Jarvis Brewer: Thank you for joining us, Brandi. Bill, how are you doing up in north Texas? You may be muted.

>> Bill Leaverton: As many times as I try to remember it, I forget it almost every time.

Thanks for having me. It's great -- beginning the semester down here at Tarleton. Things are lively amid -- even though COVID seems to be having a rampage yet again with us, we're making the most of

it and the semester has kicked off. Things are going well.

>> Jarvis Brewer: Well, thank you, sir. We're glad to have you.

Vanessa, of course, we're so grateful to have you and your perspective. How are you doing this afternoon?

>> Vanessa Miller: I'm doing wonderful. I'm so glad to be here. I'm just thrilled to give my advice and experience. I'm the director of special events for the county line barbecue restaurant. I've been with the company for 13 years. But I've been in hospitality for over 24 years. We have six restaurants that span all of Texas, from San Antonio, Austin, El Paso, we even have one in Albuquerque, New Mexico. So we have a broad range of experience with the workforce. And I also am the President of the greater Austin chapter of the Texas restaurant association. I'll be presenting kind of two different angles today. I'm really glad to be here.

>> Jarvis Brewer: Absolutely. Let's get on to it. Let's utilize while we have each of you with our panel questions. Let's start with Elsa.

Elsa as an employer, can I require that my employees follow COVID-19 protocols while at work?

>> Elsa Ramos: Yes. Jarvis, this is a question that we get a lot at our office. One that employers ask a lot when it comes to requiring face coverings or potentially vaccinations and social distancing and that kind of thing. So basically, if you're a private sector employer, you are free to decide what COVID protocols you're going to follow and enforce for your employees. This comes because, for the most part, pretty much all of you are covered which OSHA. Whether you're a high-danger employer or have employees in high-danger occupations or not, because OSHA, the occupational safety -- I always forget that. Occupation safety and health

administration. Has the general duties clause that applies to all employers. All employers have an obligation to maintain a safe working environment for its employees.

Because of that, you may find that, yes, you need to implement certain COVID protocols to keep your employees safe. Like I said, private sector employees, you have a lot of freedom in what you can do when it comes to that. Just a quick word about vaccines, if you decide to have your employees have vaccines, note that you have -- if you're an employer with at least 15 or more employees, you may need to reasonably accommodate someone who cannot have a vaccine because of a religious reason or under the Americans with Disabilities Act. A disability or medical-related reason. So keep track of those two reasons or those two situations under which someone may say, I can't have the vaccine, if you choose to do that. Like I said, you have a lot

of freedom in keeping your employees safe.

>> Jarvis Brewer: Thank you for that, Elsa. I'm sure that it's something on the minds of many business owners right now. Thank you for covering that.

We'll move on to your second FAQ.

We've noticed that some of our employees have refused to return to -- I'm a business owner in this scenario. I've noticed that some of my employees refused to return to work when recalled. And that new hires are just not showing up to their first day of work. I'm wondering if it's because they are choosing to remain on unemployment benefits. What did I do? Do I have any options? Elsa?

>> Elsa Ramos: Yes, sir. This is a question that also our office gets a lot. Like I said, we do represent employers and advocate for employers. Let's recall to a year ago when COVID first hit and the first relief act that came from the federal government

included adding an extra \$600 per week to the state unemployment benefits. Really quickly so that we're on the same page, the state unemployment benefits, best case scenario, provide people who are out of work through no fault of their own about half of what the job paid them. The unemployment benefits do not replace lost wages. Best case scenario, about half. The maximum per week, no matter how much money your job paid you is \$535 a week. When the first relief act or those first couple of relief acts came from the federal government, if you were entitled to one dollar of unemployment benefits, everybody who was entitled to at least got an extra \$600. I have to say that at that time last year, because those benefits ended in July of 2020, we were getting a lot of complaints from employers who were having difficulty recalling employees back to work because the state unemployment benefit, plus the extra \$600, was a lot

of money that in some cases may have exceeded what the employees were -- who were working were getting paid at their job. We were seeing emails from employees and text messages from employees saying I'd rather keep my benefits than return to work.

To catch everybody up, this ended in July of last year. Then there were extra federal benefits and an extra \$300. But those also ended couple of months ago. Those ended at the end of June here.

Currently, if you're having employees that, you know, you're having trouble having your employees come back, recall, there may be other reasons besides the benefits. Because pretty much the only thing left right now if they're still on unemployment benefits is the state benefit. We're seeing that a lot of employees perhaps have COVID-related reasons or health-related reasons for not coming back or some other personal

reason, such as children in school again. Those are personal reasons. But we're finding that it's not so much now -- Vanessa may be able to speak to this as a business owner what she has seen or someone who represents businesses, what she has seen. We're seeing that it may be less related to unemployment benefits at this time. Having said that, we're still hearing a lot for employers, people are not showing up. We're hearing this a lot.

I'm spending a lot of my resources hiring new people or reaching out or interviewing them and they're not showing up to interviews or the first day of work, what can we do? If someone is on unemployment benefits and they refuse to return to work for an offer of suitable work, they could end up losing those benefits. We can only take action on that if we find out about it. Employers, you have a portal. You have a way to report that to us. I'm going

to tell you where it is. Report people who aren't showing up to their first day or who are not returning in recalled unless they give you satisfactory explanation. Report them to us. You go to our Texas workforce website. [TWC.Texas.gov](http://TWC.Texas.gov). You'll see a red banner and see the word employers. You click on that. Going to take you to a submenu and the third item on the submenu is a work refusal portal. Let us know so we can investigate and make sure that benefits are getting paid out according to the law. Thanks, Jarvis.

>> Jarvis Brewer: Absolutely. That was a ton of very useful information. So I just got to go to the first thing you mentioned, the unemployment itself. What you said is the COVID-related unemployment has ceased. Correct me if I'm wrong.

>> Elsa Ramos: That is correct.

>> Jarvis Brewer: Unemployment at this time is the standard unemployment from the state which existed long

before COVID. So it's not related to COVID. However, someone could have COVID issues.

>> Elsa Ramos: Someone could be at high risk for COVID, for example. The doctor says you can't return to work unless certain protocols are in place. For example, you know, those kinds of things. The federal dollars, the extra COVID, the additional money on top of the state benefits, Texas ended that in June of this year. So that is no longer paid out.

>> Jarvis Brewer: Thank you so much, Elsa. I'm sure we're going to revisit this item about unemployment. I'm sure later on in the event, Vanessa, potentially Bill and/or Brandi will have other things to add to this as well. Stay tuned. This is not all we're saying about unemployment. Let's move to our next panelist and next FAQ, if you would.

All right.

So I believe these next questions are

for Brandi. Brandi, how are you?  
What types of resources are available  
for me to assist me with workforce  
needs?

>> Brandi Trotter: This is definitely  
a question that we receive often.  
While I represent Workforce Solutions  
for North Central Texas, there are 28  
workforce boards across the state.  
Each of them provide workforce services  
to employers. We do a lot of work with  
hiring and recruitment assistance.  
The Work in Texas -- is a website for  
employers to post their available  
positions and it is accessed statewide  
by career seekers. There is a job  
matching opportunity within the  
platform, but also we have workforce  
center staff that are able to work with  
you directly to help match candidates  
to your open positions. So we are  
available to assist with that.

We also do  
customized hiring events and virtual  
career fairs, obviously given the

environment that we're in. A lot of workforce boards have utilized the virtual career fair option, which allows employers to come and interact with career seekers virtually and post their positions. We actually just had one a few weeks ago. That was well-attended. There is also the option for customized hiring events in work in Texas and your local workforce center can help set that up directly. Our workforce board also has a mobile workforce unit, which is a very large bus, for lack of a better word, with 13 computer station, equipped with Wi-Fi, it has printers. We are able to take this bus on site to employers if they want to have a hiring event. But they may not necessarily have the facility space and so this is something that we have started offering back to the public. We did have that shut down due to the pandemic. But we're slowly getting that back out there. So that is something that is available and can

be reverbed on the website.

In terms of hiring assistance, we have on-the-job training and subsidized work experience.

Again, all 28 workforce boards offer these services. The on-the-job training is a program for an employer to create a customized training plan for a new hire and workforce will cover up to 50% of the wages for up to six months. Now, the employer is not obligated to hire that individual, but it is a good opportunity for them to develop the plan and try them out to see if they fit within their culture and also have the desired skill set that they're looking for. The subsidized work experience is very, very similar, except for it is actually an employee of workforce solutions. We cover the wages and the benefits and the employer creates that customized training plan, again, to see if they're going to be a good fit for their organization.

Now, anyone that goes through either one of the programs, the OJT or the SWE, is a workforce center program candidate and so those referrals will come from the workforce centers and you would work with them directly to utilize those programs.

As a workforce board, we partner closely with the Texas Workforce Commission office of employer initiatives to promote the skills development fund and also the skills for small business. Both of those are training opportunities that are available to employers. Skills development fund is customized and the skills for small business is a little bit more streamlined in that it is developed specifically for employers with less than 100 employees to get funds for training their employees and you can utilize any of the courses in the college catalogs available in your area. That one is a little bit more

streamlined. But of course, I'll be happy to answer any questions as they come up. I don't want to go too much into detail. But there are lots of workforce services available to employers.

>> Jarvis Brewer: Yeah. Absolutely. You provided just now a ton of information. One thing that really stuck into my head is the hiring events and having a mobile hiring event. That's probably something that a lot of us small businesses haven't thought about having. So to know that's an option is wonderful. All of the information she just shared, although she's in the Dallas-Ft. Worth area, this is a segue to the next question. There are workforce solutions and offices across the state of Texas. Brandi, is there a local TWC office that I can partner with on a more regular basis?

>> Brandi Trotter: There is. As you just mentioned, there are workforce

centers available across the state. Specifically within our 14-county region, we have 12 centers. One of which we share with one of our sister boards, workforce solutions for Tarrant County and the alliance area here, we actually split that territory. So we cohabitate a workforce center. Those are the offices that you would be able to obtain these services from. The OJT, the SWE and also registering for the work in Texas.

And the workforce board and the centers work collaboratively to set up the hiring events that you were interested in.

>> Jarvis Brewer: Thank you again. We do have a link at the end of this presentation which has where you can find your local Texas -- excuse me. workforce solutions center. Again, that link, I believe Michael, you have that. Can you post that in the chat for us so that our attendees know where they can go and find their local workforce

commission.

Let's move forward. I'd like to say now, our live Q and A is now open. This is the time where we can hear from you. The attendees. We want to hear what's on your mind. We have a couple more, few more FAQs from our panelists. Now you can continue to submit or begin to submit your questions so that our panel can answer directly what you want to hear. Additionally, with the questions as you're submitting those questions, please pay attention. You know, maybe someone has submitted a question that you want to hear about. Like that question. That's how we will prioritize what questions will be asked and answered. Also, try not to duplicate. If there is a great question, like that question and we will be sure to answer that to our panel. All right.

So these next questions are coming to, I believe,

these are for you, Bill.

>> Bill Leaverton: Yes.

>> Jarvis Brewer: What can businesses do to innovate and become more flexible in today's working environment?

>> Bill Leaverton: Good question, Jarvis. Thank you so much. At the SBDC, our whole entire mission and life blood is small business. Helping them open the businesses and improve them once they are open. I think as a former small business owner myself, I think right now one of the more challenging times I've ever seen with hiring and retention of employees. It seems that, you know, the workforce and indeed our whole culture and practices have certainly changed because of COVID. I think that business as usual is difficult for us to continue forward with as business owners.

We have to find ways to innovate, become flexible so that we can accommodate the obvious shrinking workforce we have. We have

aging population, we have self-removal of individuals from the workforce, meaning they left the workforce voluntarily to stay home. And I think you know, that combined with COVID has certainly put even a tighter squeeze on small business owners. And I think back to delicatessens who had table service and they've changed to counter service to counteract the idea that they simply do not have enough staff to wait the tables, if you will. Or offering discounts for ordering online. Or retail shops having kiosks at their -- in their shop to help people pick out clothes and indeed buy clothes. That can be done 24/7 that way we don't actually have to be open. I think the melding, if you will, of the online environment with the physical environment is something that's a must. I think that the innovation of technology certainly can be used to the benefit of the small business owner as long as they will embrace it. I know

it's difficult and it is a stretch and many of those that have been in business for many years who are accustomed to doing things a certain way find it really difficult to, to use a fancy word, pivot. I think of a local shop that I have here that's a client. It's a western wear store. The woman lamented the idea of having to sell her stuff on Facebook. She embraced it and indeed, she's doing fabulously because she was able to be flexible and she was willing to innovate. Kudos to those people.

>> Jarvis Brewer: Yeah. So innovation and flexibility are things that are important to a business at any time. But I guess there's no more important time than right now where innovation and flexibility is key.

>> Bill Leaverton: Behavior has been turned on its ear. In many ways, it's going to be permanently changed.

Because like right now, we're on a Zoom instead of being in person. And it's

just -- these things, I think, that we're going to have to embrace and understand that it's a new way of life.

>> Jarvis Brewer: You're absolutely right. Bill, next question. How have hiring practices changed given today's working environment?

>> Bill Leaverton: Well, Jarvis, the one thing that I see with all of the clients I have, particularly with the startups is that the aging population, for instance, can be used to an advantage. You know, those that are entering the senior years and the latter years of their careers have a wealth of knowledge. They still want to work and be useful. They just may not want to work full-time. Finding those individuals and making two people where one used to be -- is one way that I can think of a couple clients that worked really, really well for. You know, someone who wants to work 20 hours a week has an amazing wealth of knowledge, has been in the industry,

whatever industry that is, for 20 or 30 years still wants to work, still has a lot of usefulness left on them, within them. However, they simply don't have the will to work a full schedule.

Some clients have gone out and found those individuals and piecemealed one or two of them together to culminate in one person. It's worked out better than the head long charge of trying to find one individual because of the knowledge base. It's just one example that the how the hiring practices that I see has changed. Another one is that, yes, technology can in some instances replace a warm body. But the communication and the customer service standards still has to be at a very high level. I think that embracing that technology and working it to your advantage has certainly also changed the environment.

>> Jarvis Brewer: Absolutely.

Absolutely. well, thank you Bill.

We'll move forward with Vanessa's questions. We're going to go through your questions rather quickly because I know we're going to want to hear as much from our audience as possible.

Vanessa,  
question number 7. What strategies can hospitality businesses implement to find new hires?

>> Vanessa Miller: Absolutely. So with our experience, in order to be ahead of all the issues, first of all, you need to be a part of a strong association that gives you the education and resources so you are ahead of all these issues. That is a fantastic strategy as county line we've been successful with. I really want to go through Texas restaurant association and the benefits of being a part of that association. You need to get involved. I do have a slide. I don't know if you want to go to that slide. It might help as we follow along. I'll go through really quick.

So in the slide, there's a link to the TRA membership. We have over 23 chapters in Texas with 5500 members. Now, if you look at members, one member might be McDonald's, but if you think about how many locations and the spread of McDonald's or chili's, the outreach of the Texas restaurant association and the pull of membership and intellectual minds is incredible.

Each chapter has direct involvement with over 7,000 pro-start students. What pro-start is, it's a culinary arts and restaurant management curriculum taught in the high schools. There's over 160 high schools in the state of Texas teaching this curriculum to the students. Why is that important to you? This is our future workforce or current workforce and so being a part of the association gives you direct access to these kids. For example, I'll be speaking at a high school soon about special events in the

hospitality industry and so you know I'm going to be recruiting as well.

But I just think that's super important. TRA provides education, critical resources, important partnerships and we have two of the important partnerships on the webinar right now with workforce Solutions and the Texas Workforce Commission. TRA has worked diligently to come up with solutions with both of these entities. And I'd like -- I provided a couple of links in there. One is providing three serve save and TBC certification for all of the workforce in the hospitality industry, which is absolutely incredible. We're so grateful for that and we thank you for that partnership.

So this is -- all of you hospitality people on here, you need to click through and this is saving all of us a lot of money. Also, another new thing. This just was

announced. Providing free child care to service industry employees that qualify. And that is one of the things I want to go back to, you know, what Elsa was talking about, yes, we did have a point in time where people were not returning to the workforce. But now they're not getting that supplemental income from the government and so now they need to get back, but maybe there are issues like child care. So we just had one of our moms come back who was able to get this. I'm really grateful for these partnerships. That's through the Texas restaurant association. Free job postings. That's something, getting the information out quickly and swiftly when we need to get those positions filled is really, really hard to do sometimes. But when we have the tools at our fingertips, it makes it so much easier to fill those positions.

And then -- so getting involved, just being a member

is not enough. Getting involved is very important. We do have a chapter, obviously, Texas restaurant association all over Texas. But I live in Austin. President of the Austin chapter. We're having a mix and mingle, a safe in-person event. It will be on a very nice patio at an awesome restaurant. The theme of the evening is workforce and working together.

So this is bringing like minds together, sharing best practices from all different parts of our industry. So I've put the date and time and then if you would email our director, David Waddell, he will send you details, the complete invitation. This is open for everyone. We would love for you all to attend and be a part of this conversation. It doesn't stop today. We have to continue the communication for all of us to be successful. And then, something that's really exciting that I wanted to

announce is future partnerships that TRA is working on right now -- includes the military and second-chance programs. These are two avenues that we are very excited to tap because these people would love to be a part of our industry. We just need to get the curriculum to them and then connect them to the jobs in the hospitality industry. So that's coming up winter of 2022. I tried to get through that fast. If we could go to the second question, I'll be faster.

>> Jarvis Brewer: No worries. I know there's a lot of information. Again, the information will be available to the attendees as both on our website as well as you'll send -- our attendees will be sent an email containing a link to the slides. Question number 8, how do you retain your current fans or your team members, employees? Vanessa?

>> Vanessa Miller: Yeah. So I'd like to -- back in the 2000s, we used the phrase a lot about retaining your

current fans. It was applied to the guests that come into the restaurants. And so we -- there was tons of brainstorming about, you know, how do you keep the guests coming back and how do you reward them. I thought it would be fun to call our team members fans as well. As you all know, your team is your biggest ingredient to the success of your business. If your team isn't happy and they're not fulfilled, healthy, then things fall apart quickly. So retention is so important.

So the first thing that I think with our county line experience, I wanted to share is transparency and communication. Our management tenure is 37 years. That's just an incredible testament to the leadership that we have at county line. It starts from the top. Skeeter Miller is the President and owner of the county line barbecue restaurant. I just wanted to first say that we retained all

of our managers through all of this. I think that's -- I know that not everyone has that testimony. But I think that is really important that to describe a couple of things that happened in our team, first from the top, there was complete observation from skeeter and fluid communication between all of our management team during this time and before COVID. He's constantly listening and he's taught his managers to listen to the staff members with boots on the ground who have direct communication with all of our guests at all times. Listening, understanding, asking the right questions. And then also, he shares what he is constantly doing on talking to the TABC. I'm working on the correct lens, the PPP lens to make sure we're whole as a company. Really sharing high level information, really. Broad picture with his management team that sometimes maybe some of it they understood it, but

sometimes they didn't. But they were so grateful for that transparency. Sharing financial information that he could.

So then that trickles down to your staff, your team. Your managers learn how to listen, communicate, be transparent. Share the big picture. The why. And so I think this is such a critical thing amongst our county line family of how we've been successful and how we've created this culture and the management tenure of 37 years.

Promises fulfilled. We did not know where we would stand financially. Christmas bonuses were not given. But there were promises of please stick with it, let's be a team together. This is what we're looking forward to in the future. You will be rewarded when we're whole as a company. And that promise was fulfilled. I've got one more. Do we have time? Or do you want me to wait?

>> Jarvis Brewer: Sure. Go ahead quickly.

>> Vanessa Miller: Also, just with that value and communication, one of the things we did was open up to our team and asked, hey guys, what would be great? What would be a reward and I'm talking this went from managers to our servers, bartenders, bussers. So we started -- any time we get a yelp review, the knot, which is a wedding website, our team takes so much effort and so much love into pouring affirmation into those team members. Personal call from management, the email posted amongst all their peers, free shift, uplifting celebration amongst the team. We post social media posts about our team members. Just sharing who they are, how long they've been with us, their favorite menu item. It's been such a hit.

We asked one of our hostesses said, you know what would be nice if I could get a

strawberry lemonade on a hot day once in a while. Oh, my gosh, absolutely. The open communication and just showing the value, this doesn't always mean to have the highest wage. It means showing value and respect amongst your team.

>> Jarvis Brewer: You're absolutely right. There's other ways other than the wage to show you care and value your employee. Just by calling them a team member and making them feel a part of a team as part of that. Thank you so much for that, Vanessa. Now, we turn to the portion of the event all of you have waited for. We're going to dedicate this solely to the questions that you, our audience, wants to hear. I'm going to jump right on into it. This first question, which was like the most comes from Tamara or Tamara. Elsa, I'm throwing this to you. It's about unemployment. We knew this would be a topic. So Tamara's question is, you spoke about unemployment ending

in June. But the state has extended unemployment benefits for many employees. This is a major factor in the unemployed not looking for work. Do you know if and when the extension will end for those who have been an unemployment? I'm going to start with the date that I believe. Correct me if I'm wrong. Elsa? September 11, 2021 which is ten days from now.

>> Elsa Ramos: Exactly. I never said the unemployment benefits stopped. So we're all on the same page. The state benefits continued. The extended benefits were in place before COVID. They're part of -- built into the Texas unemployment system and those extended benefits are paid out when the Texas seasonally adjusted unemployment rate exceeds 6.5%. It's automatically triggered. So that's what happened. Because of the rise in the unemployment. And yay, Texas, opened for business and people getting back to work. That now has fallen below that

trigger point of 6.5%. So those extended benefits are scheduled to stop September 11th, like Jarvis said, 2021. That is good news. Then that just leaves, again, unemployment benefits there for those out of work. It's not the extra 600 or extra 300 or again with the extended benefits triggered by that higher unemployment rate. That does end. Just leaves the regular state unemployment benefits moving forward.

>> Jarvis Brewer: Perfect. Thank you so much for that clarification, Elsa. This next question, actually before I ask this question, I will be directing these questions to our individual panelists. At any time, if any other panelist feels like they're better suited or have anything to add, feel free to provide your perspective on any question that -- even if it wasn't assigned to you. This next question, I believe is still suited for Elsa. Looks like you're going to be pretty busy here. The question from candy.

I have received many notices from TWC regarding unemployment claims but the employee is still employed with us. I reply promptly with the correct information. Should these employees be concerned about identify theft or is this isolated to the TWC? Sum up, I have an employee, they're still working for me. They could potentially be getting identity theft because we're getting these claims about you've applied for unemployment.

>> Elsa Ramos: Right.

>> Jarvis Brewer: What do I need to do or my employee needs to do?

>> Elsa Ramos: Of course, if you have a full-time employee working for you, the traditional full-time employment, then by all means, if you get notice of that claim, let us know. Because either the employee has filed a claim knowing he or she is full-time employed and that would not be a valid claim. That could be fraud. Committed by the employee. But more likely, if you have

a full-time employee and you get a notice of a claim for that employee, go out and ask, hey, Bob, I just got this notice, did you file? You know you're working extra overtime and everything. I just want to let you know, did you file for unemployment? It's okay to ask. Don't just wonder what's going on. If Bob tells you, I have no idea what's going on there, I never filed. Let us know. Respond to that claim because, unfortunately, Jarvis is right. There has been an amazing increase in fraudulent claims filed based on identity theft. So your employee may not be aware that somebody has filed a claim using his or her name and Social Security number. Because those third-party fraudster, the people violating the law filing claims on behalf of innocent victims, they can divert and change -- they can divert where payments are made and change addresses and information for the claimant, you know, claimant in air

quotes. What they can't do is change the wage records. If you're the last employer or reported wages, you'll be the first one to get notice under our system of that claim. If Bob is still working for you, never been unemployed, didn't file a claim, respond quickly. That's one of the best and fastest ways that we can find out that that's a fraudulent claim. So, yes, let us know it's fraudulent. Then let Bob know. Hey, Bob, I reported it. You need to report it too. The two-prong approach, reported by the employer and the claimant alerts us to the fastest to lock that claim down and make sure no benefits get paid out if it really is identity theft. We'll investigate that.

>> Jarvis Brewer: Thank you for, Elsa. Judging from the amount of likes, that comment received, this is probably an issue that many of our audience members and Texans in general are having. Is there a site, a number -- I know we'll

have the hotline number available.

>> Elsa Ramos: Yes.

Thank you. The employer should report it by saying still working for us, this is fraudulent and send it back via fax or mail or call us or do it online.

There is a fraud portal. We need one of those. There is a way to report the fraud on our website. Again,

TWC.Texas.gov and put in reporting fraud and you'll come up with the ways -- I don't have written down all the letters to actually click on the portal to report the fraud. But -- if not, just contact us at our email and I believe Jarvis, we have it at the last slide, the email to our office and we will send it to the unit that investigates the fraud, if that's easier for you. Report it straight to our office.

>> Jarvis Brewer: Correct. We do have that information at the end of these slides, which will be shortly. Michael may Post-it in the chat in case

someone wants to jot it down now.

Thank you, Elsa. I'm going to jump around a little bit.

We've got a question here, I'll relay to Vanessa. Although, I feel this is something that each of the panelist can provide insight on. The question came in anonymously. What two or three industries need the most help and cannot find qualified employees? Vanessa, before I throw that to you, the reason why I'm addressing that to you, obviously, you're in the hospitality service industry. I think that is the industry that is the most visible to all of us. We drive around or we go into a storefront and see the now hiring signs or see the shortage of staff in hospitality. So that may be something that is the most visible. However, maybe Bill or Brandi who have worked with individual businesses will have a difference of opinion or addition about other industries also feeling this.

Vanessa, can you tell me about your industry, how is this affecting finding qualified employees?

>> Vanessa Miller: Absolutely.

We've seen a big shift. You know once the restaurants were closed last year, you know, our people, their experience -- they couldn't go home and work. They couldn't telework. They had to go find a new job. We saw a shift. Yeah, we have fresh people who have not been in our industry at all who are applying and we're giving them an opportunity and we're saying, welcome. But it does take a lot more training. Definitely, our industry qualifications have changed a lot in our industry. Another one, I would say is the special events industry.

I would say, because live events, whether you like them or you don't like them or you know, the mandates that have been pressured on them, they're not able to keep their qualified staff on their teams

consistently. So it's just this roller coaster ride. I would say that they're stuck suffering because their team members have found new careers. So now that it's opening back up and things are changing, they're going back to their normal group of people saying, please, come back, we're ready. We're having these hybrid events, safe events, everything and they can't. They don't have anyone qualified to get back on -- so the events industry is suffering as well.

>> Jarvis Brewer: You're absolutely right. I'm not in the events industry, but obviously we're having an event now and Bill hit it on the head earlier by mentioning we're virtual at this moment. We would normally like to provide these resources and information in-person. But the world we're living in now -- Brandi, Bill, do you have --

>> Bill Leaverton: I'm going to interrupt about that.

>> Jarvis Brewer: Yes.

>> Bill Leaverton: I would say that the caller, the questioner person, the answer that I see is every industry. If you're in supply chain management, you have container ships stuck off the coast of Los Angeles. At one point in time there were 32 container ships moored out in the bay waiting to be unloaded. They couldn't get unloaded. There was no staff to help unload them. That just daisy chains its way to retail stores, to restaurants and every other faction there is. At one point I had a client who makes horse trailers, they had to completely stop because they couldn't get hinges. There was nobody in the hinge factory to make hinges. There was no materials. They had to lay people off because of COVID or unable to staff their facility.

I would say that I think Vanessa is exactly right. I would think those that are I would call hand-to-hand combat, if you will,

in terms of retail especially venues, bars, restaurants, the like, you know, firsthand, they feel it. In addition to that, many factories have been hit hard. Inability to produce product in a timely matter but at all. A shrinking workforce that we've experienced put lots and lots of pressure on accounts payable, on actually factory workers. I would say to you that this is a universal problem.

>> Jarvis Brewer: You're absolutely right. In our office, we receive inquiries from pretty much every industry. That's exactly why we're having this webinar. To basically say we're all feeling the impact of this, whether you want to call it a shortage, workforce challenge. I don't think there is not just a singular industry or sector. We're all feeling it in some manner. Brandi, did you have anything additional to add to this?

>> Brandi Trotter: No. I do agree that it's being seen across all

industries. You know, mainly your hospitality, retail, fast food and restaurant, you see it there. Very visible. I think it also kind of depends what area of the state you're into as you whether you see a differentiation between the industries. I know within our 14 counties, based on some of the information that BDLs have collected from employers, manufacturing is having a bit of a hard time getting people. I don't know if it's necessarily based on qualification or just having a hard time getting people to work in that environment. Also, distribution, some of our employers have had to get creative on how to, you know, entice workers to come back and/or stay there. Wages aren't always something that they're able to increase. So they've had to be creative with that. I do have to say, just as a whole, as Bill was saying, it is across all industries. But some

areas may see it in one industry over another just depending where they're located in the state.

>> Jarvis Brewer: Wonderful.

Thank you all for those comments on this issue. Moving right along, we want to get as many questions in as we can.

Elsa, again, another unemployment question. This one is more streamlined on the person does not know or how can I check I'm a business owner, how can I check to see if an employee has submitted a claim? Here's the question. I had my past employee file an unemployment claim even though she gave me a three-week notice. She said she didn't file it. I denied it. How can I confirm she or anyone else is not receiving payments? So I had an employee -- said she did not, denied it. How can I confirm it as a business owner can check?

>> Elsa Ramos: If the idea is -- TWC errs on the side of giving you a lot of information. If you've been on the

receiving end of an unemployment claim, you have possibly at some point said, oh, my gosh, please stop sending me papers. Because we sent you notice of the claim, once a decision is made, we send you a determination. If there's an appeal, we send you a lot of information. Nobody is hiding the ball at TWC. We give you kind of what we have. So just right off the bat, the person may have given you three weeks' notice. The fact that they quit doesn't mean they can't get benefits. Making sure we're all on the same page. Someone can quit and still get benefits depending on the circumstances. You will know or should know that somebody filed a claim if you received the notice. Unless the person is working and diverting your mail during this time, you will know. If you don't know and want to check, give our office a call with the claimant's social or full name and last four of the social. We can look it up for you. If you're an

employer that, you know, could be charged back or are involved in the claim, we can share certain information with you, such as hey, there was a claim filed. We sent you notice two weeks ago. Did you not get it? So we can give you that information. As far as confirming that it was filed by the individual, like I said, because of the multiple however -- exponential increase in identity theft, we can't always confirm that it was your actual employee who filed it if it was a case of identity theft.

>> Jarvis Brewer: Those are good points. Again, we'll have that contact information here in a couple slides. But the bottom line is, one, you actually educated me on something. One can quit, provide that notice and still receive the unemployment. That may have been a myth before?

>> Elsa Ramos: It is a misconception, Jarvis that a lot of employers -- employees hold if they

quit, they can't get benefits, but if they're fired automatically they do. Both of those are wrong.

>> Jarvis Brewer: There's certain circumstances for each.

>> Elsa Ramos: Yes.

>> Jarvis Brewer: Wonderful. Good to know. The other thing, of course, you can look and you can check certain information. So we'll have that number here in a second.

Moving right along, this is a great question from Jamie Haney. I work for a Chamber of Commerce. Would it be possible to do a citywide job fair with the Texas Workforce Commission? I'm going to throw this to Brandi. Could a city host a job fair, not just an individual business. Brandi, you spoke about job fairs and the mobile units you could do. Could that be something that a city or multiple businesses arrange?

>> Brandi Trotter: Absolutely. We actually just had two of our cities,

well one is in the planning stages and planning to do one this month in September, I can't believe we're already in September. That's crazy. And we also had one that hosted a citywide hiring event. Our workforce centers are available to assist with those, whether that be registration or just helping anywhere within the job fair. That is something that we are definitely happy to assist cities, multiple employers with. Sometimes our workforce centers will have those targeted hiring events for certain industries. That's also an option. So you are able to do something customized specifically for you or we can assist with a larger scale whether that be a city or a group of employers within the same industry.

>> Jarvis Brewer: Thank you so much for that information. I think that's going to help a lot of people just the knowledge that you can do that. I mean, again, that's something Elsie got

educated on today that that was an option. I'm going to end with --

>> Bill Leaverton: The city of Stephenville held a citywide one as well. The Chamber of Commerce of -- organized it. I think there were 15 or 16 employers that were there. And it was a citywide event held by the Chamber of Commerce themselves. If that individual wants to either reach out to you or me or whoever, I can certainly put them in touch with the Chamber of Commerce here locally who organized and hosted the event. In Texas workforce was a part of that. They were fantastic. For those people who aren't familiar with Texas workforce solutions, the two programs that Brandi mentioned earlier, phenomenal programs in which that the -- it helps small business owners defray costs of hiring, defray costs of labor in general. It is well worth your time to get involved with it. I learned today from Vanessa about the

Texas restaurant association. That's an amazing thing and idea to do. It's the gaps we need to do. Otherwise, I'm afraid that we're going to be short staffed for a long time otherwise.

>> Jarvis Brewer: Thank you, Bill. Thank you so much for that. Ton of information. I do want to ask one more question. We're at the 2:00 hour. This one received a lot of likes to it. I want to ask to our panel. Keep it short, just to be respectful of everyone's time. I am actually not going to assign this question to a specific panelist. Anyone who has information about this, please feel free to chime in.

The question is, comes from Mary. Are there any boilerplate guidelines for employee share programs between businesses? Multiple businesses having the same employee. If two businesses nearby have only one part-time positions available but most of the workforce are

Looking for full-time positions, is there a way to pair the businesses together efficiently to accommodate schedules and retain employees by sharing them? I've never heard of this scenario. That's why I'm opening it up to our panel to see if there's something like that, that exists. Anyone?

>> Bill Leaverton: I think Elsa probably best for that.

>> Vanessa Miller: I'll give you an example. We do have two locations in Austin. If you're sharing amongst your umbrella, your same company, you want to make sure that the employee is getting -- has two separate payrolls and that overtime is calculated. They can't work 35 hours over here and 35 hours over here. Total of 70 hours in one week and not get overtime. Make sure that you're doing your payroll correctly, okay? But, sharing with another entity is fantastic.

I just had a conversation with one of the partners

of Craig catering. She said that she's already talking to Hilton hotel in Georgetown and Austin to be creative with their employees because she has weddings on the weekend and they're dying for employees on weekdays. So they are really collaborating, working together. I think you have to listen to the needs of your employees, you know, what are they wanting. And then fill them in positions and present it that way rather than assuming that this employee wants to work at both locations. But that's just from my experience.

>> Jarvis Brewer: Thank you for that, Vanessa. Again, I'm learning so much. I feel like I'm in the audience right now and there's so many things I hadn't heard about before this hour started. We are over our time. There are a ton more things related to workforce related to this topic that we can and probably will revisit. It seems like this is still an ongoing hot topic.

We may eventually do another webinar for this -- for that reason. I do want to thank all of our panelists again. You all provided great information for our audience. Want to thank you, the attendees for being here today.

Continue to send -- actually I'm going to skip -- skip to the second to the last slide. Our contact information. Go back one more. Sorry. Here you'll see the Office of the Governor, our small business team information. That email address, small business business@gov .Texas.gov. If you have ideas of things to be done, send us the information. We want to be applicable and relevant to what our audience wants to hear about. Now go back one. Sorry.

This is our small business resource portal. Right here. This is a very useful resource where you can submit five questions and get tailored results specific to your needs. This is a great item that we

release in March. That's the website. You can find this resource portal and get customized results. Sorry, I'm making you jump around. Next slide, please.

Next. Here is the slide that contains all of our panelists and their organization's information. The hotline number for the TWC is there at the top. As well as that email address that Elsa referenced. Additionally, the workforce solutions for North Central Texas and the Tarleton state SBDC and their number. Also the TRA, Texas restaurant association website. And you can find your local organizations through these links. I know you can't copy and paste these from the slide right now. However, again, these links and slides will be available after this event. Next slide, please.

I will actually go ahead and close this out. Again, I want to thank you all for being

here today. This has been a wonderful and I know that we didn't go through or answer everyone's questions, but feel free to give us a call, contact us through the information provided here. We're available 24 hours a day. Let me correct that. We are not available 24 hours a day. Anyway, thank you for being here. You have a great rest of your day.