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Based in FSG's San Francisco office, Jennifer has worked with clients on issues of strategy and evaluation in the fields of education, healthcare, and the environment. Recently, Jennifer has worked in Texas with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) and the E3 Alliance. Jennifer managed FSG's work with the THECB to create the state's *Accelerated Plan for Closing the Gaps*, draft a long term vision for Texas Higher education, and identify the organizational implications of the *Accelerated Plan*. Prior to joining FSG, Jennifer worked in the strategic projects group of the Oakland Unified School District where she designed a framework for the district's strategic plan for community accountability. Jennifer began her career as a consultant with Triage Consulting Group where she worked with hospitals across the United States to improve their revenue cycle management, business office processes, and managed care contract negotiations. Jennifer holds an M.B.A. from Northwestern's Kellogg School of Management and a B.A. in Human Biology from Stanford University.

2. FSG's recommendations related to the Coordinating Board's organizational effectiveness were organized into three categories: workload management, fine-tuning the organization, and supporting a culture of thought leadership and stakeholder leadership. The recommendations not only addressed the structure and functions of the organization, but also the culture, processes, and skills necessary to achieve the goals of *Closing the Gaps*.
  - a. FSG's recommendations were made with the knowledge of the potential budget cuts facing the agency. Any recommendations that would require additional resources were flagged as opportunities for philanthropic support.
3. First, FSG recommended that the Coordinating Board address workload management challenges. The agency's staff must be able to focus on its highest priorities – those critical to achieving the goals of *Closing the Gaps*. Staff would thus benefit from processes, tools, and resources that would improve workload management across the agency. I will highlight two concrete examples of how workload management could be improved within the agency.
  - a. There are opportunities to improve efficiency and prioritization across the agency.
    - i. FSG recommended hiring a productivity consultant to conduct an audit of activities and processes and make recommendations to enhance productivity and reduce workload in non-priority areas.
    - ii. At the division or department level, FSG recommended developing processes to differentiate timelines and resources based on relevance to agency priorities and ensure time is appropriately prioritized on highly relevant work.
    - iii. FSG also emphasized the importance of developing an ER/Planning & Accountability knowledge management system to catalog responses to stakeholder requests and more efficiently respond to repeat requests.
  - b. Second, FSG recommended that the Coordinating Board carefully review its reporting requirements and work to eliminate reports that do not advance agency goals. FSG is pleased to see that this topic will be discussed here later today.
4. Second, FSG made several specific recommendations for small but significant changes to the organization's structure and processes. The recommended changes will allow the Coordinating Board to more effectively use its resources to successfully pursue the strategies in the Accelerated Plan. I will highlight select recommendations from FSG's work.

- a. FSG recommended increasing the agency's focus on partnering with the workforce.
  - i. The agency would benefit from having a senior-level staff member with strategic oversight and responsibility for this area, as well as from assigning a specific member of the external relations team to this focus.
  - ii. This is intended to enable Texas higher education to be more aligned with and responsive to the needs of the workforce, and to better prepare students to successfully enter the workforce.
- b. Given the critical role that community colleges play in educating the students of Texas, and particularly in achieving the goals of *Closing the Gaps*, FSG made recommendations related to the agency's ability to work in partnership with community colleges in achieving the state's goals.
  - i. FSG recommended creating a community college inter-division team, to ensure staff working on critical issues related to community colleges are proactively communicating and planning with each other, and are more accessible and responsive to community college stakeholders.
  - ii. We also recommended adding a senior leader from the community college field, who has community college field experience. This could take the form of a 2 – 3 year rotating position supported by philanthropic funding, or could be a more permanent addition to the team.
  - iii. We also recommended strengthening the developmental education team at the Coordinating Board, a key component to achieving the goals of *Closing the Gaps* and long term higher education excellence in Texas. Given resource constraints, we recommended either shifting head count into this team, or pursuing philanthropic support to grow this team.
- c. Developmental education is one area where the coordinating board is overseeing pilot programs, and will rely on results from an evaluation to determine a process for scaling future programs. The Coordinating Board would benefit from improving its ability to use program evaluation data to identify what is working, and how to effectively scale promising practices.
- d. The Coordinating Board houses a wealth of data that it can use to inform policy recommendations, report on state and institutional progress, proactively educate stakeholders, highlight successes, and draw attention to institutional or statewide challenges.
  - i. While Coordinating Board staff effectively use data to inform their own analyses and recommendations, FSG recommended strengthening the agency's ability to use data to more assertively guide and influence change

across the state. The agency can more assertively recognize and promote best practices at institutions that are identified through the data and analysis. The agency can also use data to create transparency in areas where institutions may be struggling to make sufficient progress towards *Closing the Gaps*.

- ii. In addition, we recommended that the agency make its data more easily accessible on its website. Creating easier access to the data would also save time for staff, who would not need to fill as many requests if stakeholders could access the data and reports more easily on their own.
5. The third and final area of FSG's recommendations focus on creating a culture that enables the Coordinating Board to heighten its leadership role, working in close collaboration with partners, pushing innovative reform ideas, and using data to champion change. I will highlight one specific piece of this recommendation.
- a. The change that the Coordinating Board envisions for Texas relies on the collection and coordinated action of multiple stakeholders pursuing the vision outlined in *Closing the Gaps by 2015*. As a result, it is critical that the Coordinating Board continues to foster strong collaboration with its external partners.
    - i. To ensure such collaboration is pursued, FSG recommended several activities including building stakeholder engagement plans as a key component for project plans and budgets, and ensuring that feedback loops with stakeholders are closed in a timely manner. FSG worked with the external relations team to build a detailed stakeholder engagement plan to move forward on this recommendation.
    - ii. FSG also encouraged the agency to include key stakeholders in the development of recommendations early in the development process, and to recognize staff members that effectively engage external stakeholders.