

TEXAS WORKFORCE COMMISSION

WORKFORCE FORUM AGENDA

May 13–14, 2024

DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel Austin
6505 Interstate Highway 35 North
Austin, Texas 78752

Monday, May 13, 2024

Phoenix Ballroom

1:00–1:15 p.m.

Opening Remarks

Ed Serna, Executive Director, Texas Workforce Commission

1:15–1:30 p.m.

Chairman Remarks

Bryan Daniel, Chairman, Commissioner Representing the Public, Texas Workforce Commission

1:30–2:45 p.m.

Keynote Session

Preparing For Tomorrow, Today: Lessons Learned from 2020

Presenter: *Josh Davies, Director of Workforce, Aztec Software*

Everyone knows there is only one constant in this world—change—and nothing exemplified that better than 2020. The past four years have accelerated systemic shifts in the workforce, educational system, and in society. Rather than sit back and hope, now is the time to build a resilient and inclusive workforce with the skills needed to be successful today and in the future. Learn promising practices from best-in-class organizations to develop the skills that will make and keep any company relevant. Employers must evolve their practices and develop solutions that ensure everyone has an equal opportunity for success in an ever-changing world. Learn through case studies, examples, and success stories how other organizations evolved their practices to focus on the future, provide education, expand their talent pipelines, and build intentional inclusion. While it is often said that hindsight is 20/20, job seekers need employers to use 2020 as foresight.

Break: 2:45–3:00 p.m.

3:00–3:15 p.m.

Commissioner Remarks

Alberto Treviño III, Commissioner Representing Labor, Texas Workforce Commission

3:15–4:30 p.m.

Super Session

Artificial Intelligence Integration in Workforce Development: Strategies and Security

Presenters: *Heather Hall, Director, Information Technology Division, Texas Workforce Commission; Adam Leonard, Chief Analytics Officer, Information Innovation and Insight Division, Texas Workforce Commission; Zen Van Loan, Program Administrator, Texas Workforce Commission*

Facilitator: *Courtney Arbour, Director, Workforce Development Division, Texas Workforce Commission*



Discover the Texas Workforce Commission’s strategy to incorporate Artificial Intelligence (AI) in workforce development. Through expert contributions from our panel, this presentation will outline agency initiatives in AI adoption, emphasize skills-based hiring, and explore the impact of AI across the labor market. The session is structured to provide a comprehensive overview of AI’s role in streamlining Workforce Development Division (WDD) operations, enhancing service delivery, and offering insights into effective AI utilization for process improvement and job seeker support. Highlighting promising AI applications, this presentation is grounded in practicality and informed by current trends and security considerations.

Learning Objectives

- Grasp agency initiatives and security measures for AI adoption: Overview of current efforts and necessary security protocols for integrating AI within agencies.
- Understand the shift to skills-based hiring: Discussion on the transition toward skills-based hiring influenced by AI, with its consequential effects on industry and the labor market.
- Identify AI implementation strategies in WDD: Strategies for employing AI to refine operations, with a focus on enhancing efficiency and customer service.
- Learn the value of AI in streamlining processes: Insights into AI’s role in reducing administrative burdens for state and local staff.
- Explore AI support for job seekers: Examination of AI tools that facilitate employment searches, emphasizing efficiency and accessibility.
- Acquire knowledge on AI tools for employment strategies: Importance of workforce professionals being adept in AI technologies to guide employer adoption.
- Investigate AI use cases: Presentation of successful AI applications within the workforce, serving as models for future initiatives.

4:30–4:45 p.m.

Commissioner Remarks

Joe Esparza, Commissioner Representing Employers, Texas Workforce Commission

Tuesday, May 14, 2024

8:30–9:45 a.m.

Phoenix North

Building Digital Skills for a Modern Workforce

Presenters: *Julio Medina, Career Pathways Professional Development Specialist, Education Service Center, Region 6; Ann Savino, Program Specialist, Career Pathways, Texas Workforce Commission; Ashly Winkle, Associate Director, Distance Education Professional Development Center, Texas A&M University*

Through work-based learning and employer partnerships, Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) supports the effective use of digital tools and platforms to build technology skills needed at work. In 2023, AEL developed the Texas Digital Literacy Content Standards and unique curriculum for foundational skills and digital fluency for the construction industry. Learn how to connect with AEL partners in local Board areas and access public resources to build the digital resiliency of today’s workforce.

Learning Objectives

- Identify a framework for the skills needed to use digital technologies and excel in the global economy.
- Preview a construction curriculum to support industry workers on the job.
- Learn where to find AEL partners for Board staff to build the digital literacy skills of the modern workforce.

Phoenix South

Supporting the Child Care Workforce

Presenters: *Erin Doshier, Workforce Grants and Initiatives Manager, Workforce Solutions for the Heart of Texas; Tracy Anne Jones, EdD, Assistant Director, Texas School Ready, Children's Learning Institute, The University of Texas Health Science Center–Houston; Rhonda Leslie, Early Education Apprenticeship Mentor, Workforce Solutions for the Heart of Texas; Bethany McKee, MPP, Program Specialist, Child Care and Early Learning Division, Special Projects, Texas Workforce Commission*

The Texas Workforce Commission's Child Care and Early Learning Division (CC&EL) will provide information in this session on workforce initiatives and how Local Workforce Development Boards can use them to support child care providers. CC&EL will highlight local and statewide initiatives, including how the Texas Workforce Registry within the Texas Early Childhood Professional Development System can be used to support career pathways through the child care workforce pipeline as part of the Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five. Representatives from Workforce Solutions for the Heart of Texas will share how they work within their communities to support Early Childhood Registered Apprenticeship Programs.

Learning Objectives

- Identify local and statewide initiatives to support the child care workforce.
- Understand how to use the Texas Workforce Registry to support career pathways.
- Learn more about the Early Childhood Registered Apprenticeship Programs.

Phoenix Central

Maximizing Results with Student HireAbility Navigators within Local Workforce Development Boards

Presenters: *Jasmine Hernandez, Student HireAbility Navigator/Mentor, Workforce Solutions Lower Rio Grande Valley; Reba Nesmith, Transition Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor for Blind and Visually Impaired, Texas Workforce Solutions Vocational Rehabilitation Services; Amanda Rodriguez, Transition Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, Texas Workforce Solutions Vocational Rehabilitation Services; Imelda Trevino, Student HireAbility Navigator/Mentor, Workforce Solutions Coastal Bend; Sonia White, Student HireAbility Navigator/Mentor, East Texas Council of Governments*

Attendees will learn how Student HireAbility Navigators successfully coordinate with Boards, contractor staff, Texas Workforce Solutions Vocational Rehabilitation Services, and other community partners to create innovative and successful strategies that increase the inclusion of workforce services and facilitate access to Pre-Employment Transition Services for students with disabilities. Through sharing information and examples, presenters will address best practices that can be implemented in other local settings.

Learning Objectives

- Provide workforce leadership and attendees with best practices that Student HireAbility Navigators have used to achieve capacity building and systems development.
- Create state partnerships and collaborations that will strengthen communities and increase employability for students with disabilities.

Austin Room

Solving Health Care Shortages: Partnership Model

Presenters: *Ashley King, Director of Healthcare Partnerships, Workforce Solutions Capital Area; Jake McClelland, Director, Innovative Workforce Projects; Mark Sherry, Regional Vice President, Human Resources Strategic Business Services, Baylor Scott & White, Greater Austin Region; Amber Warne, Senior Director of Business Engagement, Workforce Solutions Capital Area*

Let's solve regional health care workforce shortages plaguing Texas together. Learn how the apprenticeship model can help fill employment gaps, upskill the local workforce, and offer earn-and-learn opportunities to

individuals interested in making a difference. Discover how to use an online training platform for competency-based learning and cohort-free recruitment. The best part is that this platform already exists.

Learning Objectives

- Discover US Department of Labor–approved health care apprenticeships to fill job shortages in regions across Texas.
- Learn tips, tricks, and best practices, such as starting and maintaining marketing efforts for apprenticeships.

Dovers Room

What is Tech? Understanding Technology-Related Economic Growth

Presenters: *Mark Lavergne, Labor Market Information, Economist, Texas Workforce Commission; Mariana Vega, Director, Labor Market Information, Texas Workforce Commission*

It is hard to open a newspaper without seeing something about high tech and its growing importance to Texas. But what is commonly called “tech” encompasses a variety of industries and its expansion varies in different portions of the state. Listen to a discussion about how to identify and analyze tech employment to understand the Texas economy and future trends better.

Learning Objectives

- Understand that employment commonly called “tech” appears in a variety of NAICS industry sectors.
- Identify key industries associated with high tech and be aware of projections, employment, and wage data associated with those industries.
- Discover regional differences in tech employment and how to find data specific to different regions of the state.

Break: 9:45–10:00 a.m.

10:00–11:15 a.m.

Phoenix North

The Great Workforce Alliance: The Economic Development Corporation and Workforce Board Partnership

Presenters: *Ashleigh Feuerbacher, Vice President, Stephenville Economic Development Authority; Jan Jungmann, Business Retention and Expansion Manager, Workforce Solutions for North Central Texas, and Board Member, Allen Economic Development Corporation; Stefanie Wagoner, AICP, EDFP, Director, Business Retention and Expansion, Frisco Economic Development Corporation; Angel Wygant, Business and Retention Director, Wylie Economic Development Corporation*

Facilitator: *Brandi H. Trotter M.M., CBEP, Industry Workforce Development Specialist and Apprenticeship Navigator, Workforce Solutions for North Central Texas*

This session will explore partnerships between Workforce Solutions for North Central Texas (WSNCT) and its economic development corporations (EDCs), which have resulted in high-impact workforce development initiatives. Attendees will hear from economic development partners that devised strategies and how they worked collaboratively with WSNCT to strengthen their local workforce.

Learning Objectives

- Understand the critical link between Boards and EDCs.
- Learn how economic development entities can further workforce development efforts.
- Hear from EDC partners about benefits to their communities and their partnerships with WSNCT.

Phoenix South

Apprenticeship in Texas

Presenter: *Traci Nolen, Program Specialist, Office of Apprenticeship, Texas Workforce Commission*

Come and hear new and innovative ways apprenticeship can work in Texas. Texas Industry Recognized Apprenticeship is a new initiative in Texas with \$20 million in funding approved by the Texas legislature for the Fiscal Year 2024/Fiscal Year 2025 biennium. Learn how this can address employer training with up to \$10,000 in cost per funding. Participants will learn about other apprenticeship-related programs and current funding opportunities.

Learning Objectives

- Identify training that supports employer needs.
- Discover funding that can support short-term job readiness.

Phoenix Central

Measuring What Matters: Performance Accountability and Storytelling in Texas

Presenter: *Adam Leonard, Chief Analytics Officer, Information Innovation and Insight Division, Texas Workforce Commission*

The Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) has a rich history of developing new ways to better understand its system performance and tell the story of its success. Twenty years ago, it introduced the “Claimant Reemployment within 10 Weeks” measure and saw the rapid return to work for unemployment insurance claimants, skyrocket. Then, 10 years ago, TWC shifted Choices participation to focus on what really matters—work, training, etc. Now, TWC is introducing a new suite of measures more aligned with the needs of both employer and job seekers and more meaningful for telling the story about this system and its benefits. This session will provide an in-depth discussion of the new measures, how they were developed, and how they are calculated.

Learning Objectives

- Understand why TWC needed to look for new ways to measure and tout its success.
- Discover how each of the new measures is calculated and what the measure means.

Austin Room

Texas Veterans Network in Partnership with Workforce Solution Offices

Presenters: *Mia Garcia, Executive Director, Texas Veterans Network, Combined Arms; Bobby Gear, Jr., Director, Texas Veterans Leadership Program, Texas Workforce Commission; Casey Wade, Regional Manager, West Texas, Texas Veterans Leadership Program, Texas Workforce Commission; Kimberly Wilkerson, Recruiter, Workforce Solutions Gulf Coast*

Learn the history, background, importance, and best practices of integrating the Texas Veterans Network with Workforce Solution Offices to better serve veterans in this breakout session. Presenters will demonstrate how the Texas Veterans Network connects veterans with community resource services that provide a holistic approach to veteran employment.

Learning Objectives

- Learn about the history and operations of the Texas Veterans Network.
- Identify best practices integrating the Texas Veterans Network with Workforce Solution Offices.
- Discover a more holistic approach to veteran employment.

Dovers Room

Improving Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment Performance: Communication, Training, Ownership, and Incentives

Presenter: *Suzette Robinson, Director, RESEA Program, Texas Workforce Commission*

The US Department of Labor (DOL) recently identified Improving Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) as one of its highest priority programs because of RESEA’s goals to improve employment outcomes and reduce improper unemployment insurance payments. Over the past six years in Texas, the program

grew from a staff of one to a department with 18 staff members, and funding increased from \$7 million to \$26 million during the same time period. The collaboration between the Texas Workforce Commission's RESEA department and Local Workforce Development Boards has resulted in both a marked increase in the number of customers receiving RESEA services and in Texas receiving performance outcome payments for two years straight for exceeding DOL reemployment targets.

Learning Objectives

- Increase participants' program awareness.
- Discover how to drive change through incentives.

Lunch Break: 11:15 a.m.–12:45 p.m.

12:45–2:00 p.m.

Phoenix North

Semiconductor Workforce: Building Skills for Industry Growth

Presenters: *Karen Campbell, Associate Dean, Grayson College; Marsha Lindsey, Deputy Director, EO Officer/504 Coordinator, Workforce Solutions Texoma*

“Semiconductor Workforce: Building Skills for Industry Growth” is a workshop that helps participants gain insights into the development of a skilled workforce to support the semiconductor industry's future. Tailored to support the expansion of industry leaders such as Texas Instruments and GlobalWafers, the presenters will help you understand how cross-organizational partnerships are shaping a skilled workforce for the growing semiconductor field.

Learning Objectives

- Learn how a collaborative effort among educators, employers, and economic developers is addressing the evolving demands of the sector.
- Explore the Workforce Solutions Texoma Manufacturing Committee's initiatives aimed at closing skills gaps, improving community engagement, and establishing educational pathways.

Phoenix South

Strategies for Effective Management of Texas Rising Star

Presenters: *Lindsay Hill, Manager, Child Care and Early Learning, Quality Initiatives, Texas Workforce Commission; Katie McConnell, Associate Director, Children's Learning Institute; Linda Morgan-Dorsey, Senior Manager, Education Outreach, Children's Learning Institute; Jasmine Wiggins, Senior Manager, Education Outreach, Children's Learning Institute*

The 2021 legislative mandate for Child Care Services (CCS) providers to participate in Texas Rising Star greatly impacted the support Texas Rising Star mentors needed to provide to both currently certified providers and those working toward certification. After one year of full implementation and some great lessons learned, best practices began to arise. In this session, presenters will discuss effective ways to manage a Local Workforce Development Board's Texas Rising Star mentor staff, while continuing to meet mentoring requirements set forth by the Texas Workforce Commission. The Gulf Coast CCS contractor, Children's Learning Institute (CLI), will provide insight on how it manages 45 mentors who support more than 1,400 CCS providers (a number which grows each month), while supporting each mentor's professional development and mentoring program requirements. Additionally, the CLI Statewide Initiatives team, which oversees the Statewide Mentoring Program, will provide reminders, supports, and resources available to mentors and their supervisors to ensure those mentors are successful at obtaining their mentor micro-credentials and providing effective mentoring to the providers they work with.

Learning Objectives

- Discover how to use the Texas Rising Star Reports available on Engage.
- Learn strategies for providing oversight of mentors—assignments/caseloads, micro-credentials.

Phoenix Central

Effective Strategies for Coenrollment and Service Coordination—True System Integration

Presenters: *Courtney Arbour, Director, Workforce Development Division, Texas Workforce Commission; LeAnne Baird, Student HireAbility Navigator, Workforce Solutions North Texas; Cheryl Fuller, Director, Vocational Rehabilitation Division, Texas Workforce Commission; Debbie Powell, Vocational Rehabilitation Manager, North Texas Management Unit, Texas Workforce Commission; Suzy Saenz, Student HireAbility Navigator, Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas; Harold Whitfield, Vocational Rehabilitation Manager, Deep East/Southeast Management Unit, Texas Workforce Commission*

What is the best way to provide outstanding customer service to Texas job seekers and employers? Presenters of this strategy session will equip both job seekers and employers with information and facilitate their access to the full array of workforce system services that will help them achieve their employment goals and attract and retain qualified employees. In this session, presenters will describe how to define true system integration. Hear from two local workforce areas about the partnerships and strategies they are developing to create the environment within which this collaborative approach to service delivery can flourish.

Learning Objectives

- Learn the definition of integrated (collaborative) service delivery within the Texas workforce system.
- Hear how two local workforce areas are working to develop partnerships and coordinate service delivery, setting the stage for further system collaboration.
- Develop strategies participants can implement to increase collaboration and service coordination to provide outstanding service to customers.

Austin Room

Workforce Solutions Rural Capital Area's Achievement with Federal Grants

Presenters: *Chris Myers, Director of Contracts, Workforce Solutions Rural Capital Area; Diane Tackett, Chief Operations Officer, Workforce Solutions Rural Capital Area*

For the past four years, Workforce Solutions Rural Capital Area has worked to diversify service delivery and expand its service offerings into rural communities. This session explores the reasons behind the expansion, the process Workforce Solutions Rural Capital Area undertook, and the outcomes to date.

Learning Objectives

- Understand how to prioritize community needs and explore grant opportunities.
- Discover how to build partnerships to strengthen grant applications.
- Learn about Workforce Solutions Rural Capital Area's successes to date.

Dovers Room

Expansion of Texas' Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training Third-Party Partnership Program

Presenters: *John Briscoe, Director, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training, Texas Health and Human Services Commission, HHSC Access and Eligibility Service—Office of Community Access; Lisa Medina, Policy Analyst, Workforce Policy, Texas Workforce Commission; Joel Mullins, Director, Workforce Policy, Texas Workforce Commission; Steph Smith, Program Specialist, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training, Texas Health and Human Services Commission*

The session will provide an overview of the planned expansion of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training (SNAP E&T) Third-Party Partnership (TPP) program that will begin in Federal Fiscal Year 2025.

Learning Objectives

- Understand the basics of the TPP program and its impacts on Boards.
- Learn the potential benefits of the TPP model.

Break: 2:00–2:15 p.m.

2:15–3:30 p.m.

Phoenix North

Using Labor Market Information for Workforce Planning and Alignment

Presenters: *William Lutz, Economist, Labor Market Information, Texas Workforce Commission; David Munoz, Economist, Labor Market Information, Texas Workforce Commission*

Are local workforce services aligned with the needs of the local labor market? Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) publishes extensive data on wage and employment trends that can help local leaders make wise decisions about how to focus their efforts. Come hear a discussion of key data used in workforce planning, along with live demonstrations of how to use key TWC websites.

Learning Objectives

- Find data on current employment trends in a particular region, including how the industry employment composition in an area has changed long-term.
- Identify in-demand jobs in specific industries.
- Discover the average wage for various occupations.
- Use Labor Market Information tools to find educational training assignments for an occupation.
- Explore the Lightcast Help Wanted Online data system available to Boards, as well as Texas Labor Analysis and TexasLMI.com and the uses of those tools.

Phoenix South

Partnering Across the Lines

Presenters: *Kristie Caviness, Manager, Employer Engagement and Community Outreach Initiatives, Texas Workforce Commission; Seth Green, Business Liaison, Employer Outreach Initiatives, Texas Workforce Commission*

This session will provide insight into the available workforce training grants from the Outreach and Employer Initiatives (OEI) Division, including the new Lone Star Workforce of the Future grant. Presenters will offer a high-level description of each grant, as well as how to determine “best fit” with just a few questions. Partnering across lines strategically shows employers how to connect with your Employer Engagement and Community Outreach (EECO) Outreach Team members to maximize employer engagement and help employers utilize grant funds.

Learning Objectives

- Learn what workforce training grants are available from the OEI Division.
- Learn how to identify which grants meet the needs of an employer based on a few key questions.
- Discover best practices for partnering with EECO teams.

Phoenix Central

Moving Targets: Accountability in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Age

Presenter: *Adam Leonard, Chief Analytics Officer, Information Innovation and Insight Division, Texas Workforce Commission*

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) was signed into law nearly 10 years ago and made significant changes to the performance accountability model used for the Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs. Despite entering the tenth year under this statute, WIOA’s performance accountability model continues to be challenging. This session will provide a very deep dive into the WIOA performance accountability process, including exactly where WIOA targets come from, how and why they move, and what workforce professionals can do to understand and adapt to them.

Learning Objectives

- Understand the conceptual model behind WIOA performance accountability.
- Explore how the statistical adjustment and negotiation processes work.
- Ascertain the negotiation and target adjustment processes and schedules.

Austin Room

Strategies for Success: Best Practices in Rural Job Training Partnerships with Texas State Technical College

Presenters: *Camea Dukes, Workforce Manager, Board Service Strategies, Texas Workforce Commission; Mikayla Fasl, Fidelity Bonding Coordinator, Texas Workforce Commission; Cledia Hernandez, Vice Chancellor and Chief External Relations Officer, Texas State Technical College; Flor Leal, Deputy Director, Contract Administration/EO Officer, Workforce Solutions Lower Grande Valley Rio; Sally Perez, Chief Program Officer/EO Officer/504 Coordinator, Workforce Solutions Cameron; Karla De la Riva, Director of Workforce and Business Development, Greater Brownsville Incentives Corporation.*

Explore best practices in establishing and maintaining effective job training partnerships between rural communities and Texas State Technical College (TSTC) in this breakout session. As rural areas face unique challenges in workforce development, collaboration with technical colleges like TSTC becomes crucial for bridging skill gaps and fostering economic growth. Through insightful discussions and the presentation of case studies, participants will gain valuable insights into successful models, strategies, and key considerations for optimizing rural job training partnerships with TSTC.

Learning Objectives

- Discover the foundational principles of effective rural job training partnerships with technical colleges like TSTC, including alignment of training programs with local workforce needs, leveraging resources, and fostering community engagement.
- Explore innovative strategies employed by rural communities successful in collaborating with TSTC, such as flexible training delivery methods, customized curriculum development, and ongoing support mechanisms for students and employers.

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