

Texas Workforce Commission

Workforce Texas Draft Agenda

December 9–11, 2026

Sheraton Dallas Hotel

400 Olive Street

Dallas, Texas 75201

(512) 454-3737

Wednesday, December 9, 2026

1:00 p.m. – Opening Remarks

Steve Pier, Executive Director, **TWC**

Location: **Lonestar Ballroom**

1:15 p.m. – Opening Keynote

John Register

Location: **Lonestar Ballroom**

2:15 p.m. – Break

2:30 p.m. – Breakout Sessions

From Barriers to Breakthroughs: Elevating Adult Learner Voices to Strengthen Texas' Workforce

Elizabeth Moya, **Texas Career Pathways Professional Development Center**; Kathy Zarate, **TWC**

Location: **Dallas A**

Adult learners are a vital part of Texas' current and future workforce, bringing resilience, untapped talent, and lived experience to meet industry demand. Yet their pathways to

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employment are often shaped by barriers in access, navigation, and alignment across workforce, education, and support systems.

Moderated by TWC's Adult Education and Literacy Division and the Career Pathways Professional Development Center, this panel will bring together workforce and industry leaders to hear directly from adult learners about their journeys through integrated education and training and employment systems and the moments that turned barriers into breakthroughs. Learner insights will be paired with system perspectives to highlight how cross-sector partnerships among employers, Boards, adult education, and community organizations can better align services with workforce needs.

This session will reveal how integrated strategies, such as work-based learning, coordinated supports, and clear career pathways, strengthen talent pipelines and expand workforce participation. Participants will gain practical insights to improve outcomes, enhance the job-seeker experience, and support a stronger, more competitive Texas economy.

Building Texas' Skilled Workforce: Innovative Licensing Strategies Supporting the Texas Jobs Council

Courtney Arbour, **TDLR**; Joe Esparza, Steve Pier, **TWC**

Location: **Dallas D**

As Texas continues to lead the nation in economic growth, strategic partnerships between workforce, education, and licensing agencies are essential to meeting employer demand for skilled workers. This panel, featuring leadership from the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation (TDLR) and the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC), will highlight innovative workforce initiatives that support Texas Jobs Council priorities.

Panelists will discuss TDLR's pilot with San Jacinto College to administer licensure exams on campus, enabling students to graduate with both their credential and professional license. The session will also explore TDLR's approval of Texas State Technical College's electrician curriculum, allowing graduates to earn up to 4,000 hours of credit toward Electrician licensure. Additional topics include efforts to establish occupational licensing reciprocity with other states to attract qualified professionals to Texas on using existing statutory authority and regulatory flexibility to remove barriers, strengthen the skilled trades pipeline, and accelerate workforce entry.

Attendees will gain practical insights into how cross-agency collaboration is creating innovative licensing pathways that support employers, expand opportunity for Texans, and keep the state's workforce strong and competitive.

Identifying Demand: An Overview of Employment Trends Across Texas

Gabriel Guzman, Sergio Luna, William Lutz, Chase Winters, **TWC**

Location: **San Antonio Ballroom**

What will the Texas economy look like in 2034? This session moves beyond historical data to explore the future Texas labor market. Designed to aid workforce professionals and local officials to prepare for employers' labor needs for tomorrow, this session will take a dive into long-term labor market information projections.

Breaking Silos and Piloting Win-Win-Win Solutions: How TWC Used Cross-Functional Teams to Improve the Customer Experience and Maximize Reemployment

Jeremy Cervantes, Anita Smith, **TWC**

Location: **Houston AB**

This panel will share the journey and results of the Business Transformation and Rapid Process Improvement's "Maximizing Reemployment" project completed in 2026. Participants will learn how to break down silos and build cross-functional teams for collaboration and pilot ideas about how these simple, collaborative changes can make a huge difference in our customer's experience.

3:30 p.m. – Exhibitor Break

Location: **The Grand Hall**

4:00 p.m. – Awards: Workforce Innovation Fund

Location: **Lonestar Ballroom**

4:15 p.m. – Super Session: Chairman and Commissioner Representing Employers

Joe Esparza, Chairman and Commissioner Representing Employers, **TWC**

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Location: **Lonestar Ballroom**

5:15 p.m. – Exhibitor Reception

Location: **The Great Hall**

6:45 p.m. – Adjourn Day One

Thursday, December 10, 2026

8:00 a.m. – Exhibitor Breakfast

Location: **The Great Hall**

9:00 a.m. – Opening Remarks

Steve Pier, Executive Director, **TWC**

Location: **Lonestar Ballroom**

9:15 a.m. – Super Session: Commissioner Representing Labor

Alberto Treviño III, Commissioner Representing Labor, **TWC**; Nicole Allen, **Workforce Solutions for Tarrant County**; Dr. Linda Angel, **Workforce Solutions of Central Texas**; Paul J. Puente, **Houston Gulf Coast Building and Construction Trades Council**

Location: **Lonestar Ballroom**

10:15 a.m. – Break

10:30 a.m. – Breakout Sessions

From Obstacle to Opportunity: How Boards and Employers are Solving the Child Care Crisis

Cathi Arwood, **TWC**

Location: **Dallas A**

In today's competitive labor market, child care is no longer just a "family issue," it is a critical economic driver. For many Texans, the lack of accessible, affordable care remains the single greatest barrier to entering and staying in the workforce. However, forward-thinking leaders are turning this challenge into a strategic advantage for recruitment and retention.

This session features a panel of Texas employers who are pioneering child care solutions for their staff alongside Workforce Development Boards that are providing the essential roadmap and resources to make these solutions possible. Attendees will explore the TWC Employer Child Care Solutions initiative, a comprehensive framework designed to help businesses navigate and implement child care support. From subsidies and on-site care to innovative community partnerships, participants will hear first-hand accounts of how these models improve the bottom line and stabilize the talent pipeline.

Whether you are a Board member seeking to deepen industry engagement or an employer looking for a competitive edge, this session provides the roadmap, resources, and real-world examples needed to transform child care from a workforce obstacle into an economic opportunity.

Best Practices in Developing and Executing the Military to Civilian Employment Program

Bob Gear, Gabriel Lopez, **TWC**; Dr. Linda Angel, Brittany Ramirez, Alan Wedding, **Workforce Solutions of Central Texas**

Location: **Dallas D**

This session will provide information on developing and executing all facets of the Military to Civilian Employment Program. Attendees will learn best practices in establishing relationships with key staff on military installations, critical practices in developing the Military to Civilian Employment Program, and how to run the Adult Dislocated Worker Program. Most importantly, participants will receive tools and best methods for tracking and recording information in WorkInTexas.com. There will also be updates on veteran programs and benefits that impact veterans using the Texas workforce system.

The Compliance Advantage: Turning Complaints into Competitive Wins

John DeLeon, Camille Goulding, Ruben Holguin, Russell Hunter, Horacio Lopez Montes **TWC**

Location: **San Antonio Ballroom**

Is the Wagner-Peyser complaint system a bureaucratic burden or a secret weapon for market fairness? Proponents argue it's the latter. This high-energy, slide-free session ditches the traditional panel for a live simulation of the complaint lifecycle. Through real-

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world scenarios, presenters will role-play the process from initial intake to informal local resolutions and state-level escalations. This demonstration will show how a high-functioning complaint system protects the integrity of the Texas workforce and how ensuring that all employers play by the same rules creates a truly level playing field. Board members, operators, and TWC staff alike will learn how “resolution over red tape” improves customer satisfaction and system accountability. Come for the drama, stay for the tool kit, and leave with a fresh perspective on driving excellence through accountability.

CRASE Crash Course

James Estrada, Christopher Teske, **TWC**

Location: **Houston AB**

The Civilian Response to Active Shooter Events (CRASE) course, designed and built on the Avoid, Deny, Defend strategy developed by Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training, provides strategies and guidance for surviving an active-shooter event.

Open Meetings Act Basic Training

TBD, **TWC**

Location: **Houston C**

The Open Meetings Act requires new members of governmental bodies subject to the Act—including new Board members—to participate in education training sessions within 90 days of taking the oath (or otherwise assuming the responsibilities) of office. This training session has been approved by the Office of the Attorney General to meet this requirement. Attendees will obtain the required certificate of completion, allowing both Board members and their Boards to meet the Open Meetings Act training requirements.

11:30 a.m. – Break

11:45 a.m. – Awards Luncheon

Location: **Lonestar Ballroom**

1:00 p.m. – Exhibitor Meet and Sweet

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Location: **The Great Hall**

1:45 p.m. – Breakout Sessions

Every Career Coach is a Labor Market Analyst: Building an AI-Powered Career Navigator at Minimal Cost

Lynn Hoffman, Will Weidner, **Workforce Solutions Greater Dallas**

Location: **Dallas A**

Every employment coaching session ends with guidance that shapes a livelihood, but the occupation intelligence behind it is scattered across dozens of sites or sold by vendors for tens of thousands of dollars a year.

The Dallas Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics (TDL) Career Navigator puts it in one place. Built in-house with AI assistance from free public data (O*NET, Bureau of Labor Statistics, TWC) in a single offline file, there is no server, no license, no recurring cost, auditable provenance, and no participant personally identifiable information. The Prologis TDL grant is our proving ground, but the tool isn't the point. The **method** is a low-cost, replicable way any Board can modernize its own coaching and labor market intelligence. Early pilot findings suggest coaches were able to deliver more individualized guidance within the same session, pairing training and job leads while grounding career recommendations in objective skill-fit rankings. Session participants will receive a live demonstration, explore the replication playbook and adaptable templates, and leave with practical resources they can use to begin building or adapting similar tools for their own Boards.

Capturing Impact: Stories, Testimonials, and Community Voices

Brian Hernandez, Berenice Lopez, David Olson, **Workforce Solutions Capital Area;**
Marcus Sloan, **TWC**

Location: **Dallas D**

Learn how to advocate a Board's work and tell its story in a human way by using the voices of the people and organizations that Board is serving. This session will cover processes for collecting, editing, and sharing testimonials from the people served, including job seekers, parents, employers, Board members, and community leaders. Learn how to amplify these voices with videos, podcasts, internal messaging, and more.

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We'll also share best practices, provide examples of our most emotional storytelling, and offer resources to help Boards strengthen the process of collecting testimonials.

Not the Same Old "Shhh!": Public Libraries as Partners for Expanding Workforce Opportunity

Emily Hersh, **Texas State Library and Archive Commission**

Location: **San Antonio Ballroom**

Every day, Texas Workforce Solutions works to connect people to opportunity, but many job seekers still face barriers to access. Some do not know where to go, and others are hesitant to walk into a workforce office for the first time.

Public libraries already serve these individuals daily. Libraries are trusted, accessible, and embedded in their communities. Their mission extends far beyond lending books: libraries provide the resources, services, and connections their communities need. Visitors are often surprised by the vibrant community hubs they have become.

Learn about the wealth of workforce development resources available through libraries, both on-site and online with a free library card and the successful job and career programs hosted by Texas libraries—some self-created and others developed in partnership with Workforce Solutions Offices. Explore how Texas Workforce Solutions and public libraries can work together, rather than parallel, to better serve job seekers. Attendees will leave with a clearer understanding of how these collaborations can expand access to resources, strengthen community support networks, and make opportunities easier to reach for all Texans.

Cruising the New Enhanced Wage Records and TxUS Tax System Highway

Sergio Lopez, Mariana Vega, **TWC**

Location: **Houston AB**

This workshop will educate Workforce Solutions Offices' staff, employers and agents on the ins and outs of the new enhanced wage records reporting process in the modernized TxUS tax system. Workforce Solutions staff will learn how they can answer basic questions from employers or their agents, and employers/agents in attendance can pick up tips on how more rapidly get up to speed in the new system.

2:45 p.m. – Break

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3:00 p.m. – Breakout Sessions

Reaching Young Texans

Dalton Courtney, Lori Knight, Amy Landrum, **TWC**; Caden Moran, **Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas**

Location: **Dallas A**

This session will highlight TWC's career exploration tools, Workforce Board Youth Career Exploration events, alignment with Texas Jobs Council priorities and the governor's Career and Technical Education initiatives, and success stories about outreach to students with disabilities and students transitioning out of foster care.

Beyond the Safety Net: Forging Workforce and Higher Ed Partnerships for SNAP E&T

Rachel Hirsch, Mohona Siddique, **Council for Adult and Experiential Learning**

Location: **Dallas D**

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training (SNAP E&T) program is a powerful, underutilized lever for advancing economic mobility. Although SNAP is often viewed through a social services lens, SNAP E&T is a critical tool for workforce development and higher education leaders to increase postsecondary enrollment, provide essential supports, and scale career-focused pathways. In Texas, SNAP E&T represents a unique federal-state partnership that bridges the gap between workforce needs and educational attainment for students facing systemic barriers. Despite its potential, SNAP E&T remains an untapped funding stream for many public institutions, especially four-year colleges and universities.

Drawing from recent path-breaking work led by the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning and its partners, and SNAP E&T efforts that will be breaking ground in Texas, this session will equip workforce development and higher education leaders with the policy context, strategic insights, and partnership frameworks necessary to position Texas' workforce and higher ed institutions as pivotal SNAP E&T partners.

Apprenticeship: Building on the Past, Expanding Opportunities for the Future

Tara Cole, Desi Holmes, **TWC**

Location: **San Antonio Ballroom**

Apprenticeship is becoming one of Texas' most powerful strategies for helping businesses outperform competitors and secure their place in the global economy. Texas is elevating its competitive edge by expanding modern apprenticeship pathways that blend the proven rigor of Registered Apprenticeship with the agility of Texas Industry-Recognized Apprenticeships. This dual-system approach gives employers a customizable, future-ready talent pipeline built to keep pace with real-time business needs, rapid industry shifts, and emerging technologies. By investing in apprenticeship, companies don't just fill roles, they grow their own skilled workforce, strengthen retention, boost productivity, and accelerate innovation.

Breaking Barriers, Building Bridges: VR and Your Workforce Solutions Tool Kit

Daniel Clark, Dawn Natalino-White, **TWC**

Location: **Houston AB**

Discover how partnering with Texas Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) can enhance community workforce development efforts. This session will explore actionable strategies for optimizing resources, creating seamless referral processes, and empowering Texans with disabilities to achieve their full career potential while meeting the hiring needs of local employers.

4:00 p.m. – Break

4:15 p.m. – Super Session: Commissioner Representing the Public

Brent Connett, Commissioner Representing the Public, **TWC**

Location: **Lonestar Ballroom**

5:15 p.m. – Exhibitor Reception

Location: **The Grand Hall**

6:15 p.m. – Adjourn Day Two

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Friday, December 11, 2026

7:30 a.m. – Exhibitor Breakfast

8:30 a.m. – Breakout Sessions

From Statewide Models to Local Impact: A Framework for WIOA Performance Evaluation

Jon Beaubien, **TWC**

Location: **Dallas A**

Performance evaluation can often feel out of reach for local workforce development areas due to complex data structures and limited technical staffing. This session bridges the gap between state-level data science and local implementation by demystifying statistical modeling for Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) programs.

Drawing on the development of TWC's Performance Assessment Models (PAMs), this presentation provides an accessible tool kit for local performance evaluation. The session begins with an overview of the statistical modeling process, using the statewide PAMs as a real-world case study to demonstrate how WIOA targets are set and evaluated.

The second half of the session pivots from state-level methodology to local action. Recognizing the technical constraints many local Boards face, the presentation will outline scalable, practical approaches that workforce areas can implement to evaluate their own performance at a granular level. Participants will leave equipped with actionable strategies to better understand their existing data, bypass technical limitations, and drive continuous, measurable improvement within their local programs.

Fueling the Talent Pipeline: TxDOT's K-12 Workforce Strategy

Michael Bryant, Caryn Cavanagh, Allison Hinojosa, Jennifer Keller, LaShaundra Shaw, Kate Stanford, **Texas Department of Transportation**

Location: **Dallas D**

The Texas Department of Transportation's (TxDOT) Connecting Career Pathways (CCP) program is building a sustainable, future-ready transportation workforce by engaging students early and aligning education with industry needs. This session will highlight

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how TxDOT is advancing a statewide approach to workforce development through innovative K–12 career awareness, exploration, and readiness initiatives.

Participants will learn how CCP connects students to high-skill, high-wage transportation careers through hands-on programming, strategic partnerships, and scalable outreach models.

The session will showcase key program elements, including summer transportation camps, cross-sector collaborations, and targeted communications strategies that increase awareness and participation across diverse student populations. Attendees will gain insight into how TxDOT integrates education, workforce, and industry partners to create meaningful career pathways while addressing long-term workforce gaps.

Additionally, the session will share lessons learned, measurable outcomes, and practical strategies that can be applied by other agencies and organizations seeking to strengthen their workforce pipelines. By focusing on early engagement, partnership development, and data-driven performance tracking, TxDOT is creating a model that not only prepares students for future careers but also supports economic growth across Texas.

Bridging Customized Training to Drive Economic Development in Your Service Area

Kristie Caviness, Seth Green, Leigh Heath, **TWC**

Location: **San Antonio Ballroom**

The Texas economic powerhouse cannot exist without strong local economies. Although workforce and educational institutions are tempted to work in their own vacuums, successful economic development requires synergy from all stakeholders. This session will give workforce, economic development, and education leaders ideas on how to pool efforts to attract businesses to their areas and provide an upskilled, ready workforce to integrate their specialties into a viable engine for continued economic development.

Stronger Together: A Blueprint for Board, Training Provider, and Employer Partnerships to Deliver Results

Paloma Castro, Marisol Chavez, John Hershey, Brenda Martinez, David Ortiz, **Workforce Solutions Lower Rio Grande Valley**; Nestor Lopez, **TWC**

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Location: **Houston AB**

What does it take to turn workforce partnerships into real, lasting results? Workforce Solutions Lower Rio Grande Valley has been asking that question for years, and the answers have led to significant recognition, including multiple High Demand and Texas Industry Partnership grant awards and a National Association of Workforce Board College Partnership Award in 2026.

This session brings together the partners behind those results—Workforce Solutions Lower Rio Grande Valley, South Texas College, Texas Manufacturing Assistance Center, and TWC. They will share how genuine collaboration produced outcomes no single organization could have achieved alone: such as a first-of-its-kind water operator and wastewater treatment certification program, a sector-based Skills Development Fund grant, the upskilling of workers across six manufacturing and logistics companies, and the implementation of training initiatives built around real employer demand in the Rio Grande Valley.

Participants will leave with a replicable framework to help them cultivate employer relationships, align training provider capacity with industry need, and structure partnerships that sustain well beyond a single grant cycle. Whether Boards are just beginning to build a regional ecosystem or looking to deepen existing relationships, this session delivers concrete, field-tested strategies grounded in award-winning work from South Texas.

9:30 a.m. – Break

9:45 a.m. – Closing Keynote

Robyn Benincasa

Location: **Lonestar Ballroom**

10:45 a.m. – Closing Remarks

Steve Pier, Executive Director, **TWC**

Location: **Lonestar Ballroom**

11:00 a.m. – Adjourn Day Three

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Request Accommodations

Requests may be made during the registration process for persons who need auxiliary aids, services, or special accommodations. Please register your request **at least two weeks prior to the meeting** so appropriate arrangements can be made.