



MEETING OF THE
TEXAS WORKFORCE COMMISSION

DATE

MAY 26, 2026

1 Tuesday, May 26, 2026

2 CHAIRMAN ESPARZA: Good morning, everybody.

3 This meeting is called to order. We can start talking to each
4 other now. Uh, Mr. Trobman, is there any public comment
5 scheduled? Nothing. No public comment. And, uh, here we are the
6 second most wonderful time of the year. We are getting into our
7 strategic plan. Everybody, thank you, all first for everything,
8 all the work that you've done to compile this and get
9 information up to us. Uh, we're on Agenda Item 3, Discussion,
10 Consideration, and Possible Action Regarding Development and
11 Adoption of the Workforce Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 27 and
12 23. Uh, we will give it to you guys, Jason, Jennifer.

13 JENNIFER COLEHOWER: Good morning, Chairman,
14 commissioners, Mr. Pier. For the record, Jennifer Colehower,
15 Information, Innovation, and Insight Division, and here with me
16 today is Jason Vaden, uh, who leads our strategy development in
17 I|3, and Jason will be presenting to you today for discussion,
18 consideration, approval, the TWC strategic plan for fiscal years
19 2027 to 2031 for submission to the Office of Governor and the
20 Legislative Budget Board. Jason.

21 CHAIRMAN ESPARZA: Very good.

22 JASON VADEN: Right. Thank you, Jennifer.

23 Good morning, Chairman, commissioners, uh, for the record, Jason
24 Vaden with the Information, Innovation, and Insight Division.
25 Uh, before you today, uh, as Jennifer noted for consideration is

1 the Workforce Commission's strategic plan for 2027 through 2031,
2 uh, as Jennifer also noted for submission to the Office of the
3 Governor and the Legislative Budget Board, uh, pending your
4 approval. Uh, Texas Government Code, Chapter 2056, sets forth
5 the strategic planning requirements for state agencies,
6 including a requirement for state agencies to develop a five-
7 year, uh, plan on a biannual basis, which aligns with our two-
8 year state budget cycle. Commissioners, Part 1 of the plan
9 contains TWC's mission, vision, and philosophy, uh, which are
10 unchanged from the current plan. Uh, it also includes a message
11 from TWC's executive director, uh, which includes an operational
12 focus on partnerships with the local Workforce Development
13 Boards, uh, further integration of our vocational rehabilitation
14 program into the broader workforce development ecosystem, a
15 continued focus on relentless program integrity, uh, in a
16 nutshell safeguarding those programs we're entrusted with from
17 fraud. Uh, and then providing an exception customer experience
18 to all customers that interact with us. Commissioners, Part 1,
19 uh, includes TWC goals and action items, which have been updated
20 from the current plan. Uh, it also includes an agency overview
21 and recent state and federal legislation impacting the agency.
22 Part 1 concludes with a section on Redundancies and Impediments,
23 uh, which reiterate the issues that the agency highlighted, uh,
24 in our Sunset self-evaluation report which was published last
25 August. Of note are updates to agency goals and supporting

1 action items for the upcoming planning cycle. Uh, these goals
2 were developed with a Blueprint For A Stronger Texas and the
3 Bigger, Better Texas Economic Development Plans, and reflect
4 alignment with the workforce development needs for the upcoming
5 five-year planning period. The goals and supporting agency
6 actions also reflect our commitments to the broader workforce
7 systems strategic plan which is coordinated by the Texas
8 Workforce Investment Council. Commissioners, I'll walk through
9 the goals and supporting action items briefly. Uh, Goal 1
10 focuses on powering Texas businesses, uh, ensuring that we're
11 delivering an agile industry-driven system that eliminates
12 barriers to growth. Supporting agency action items include
13 forging industry partnerships, building talent pipelines,
14 accelerating success with technology, eliminating growth
15 roadblocks, and strengthening workforce support. Goal 2 is
16 focused on cultivating Texas talent, building a skilled,
17 flexible, and resilient workforce ready for the high-demand
18 jobs, both of today and tomorrow. Supporting agency action items
19 include talent strategy mastery, bridging the skills gap,
20 developing the future workforce pipeline, empowering diverse
21 populations, and expanding early learning access. And then
22 finally, Goal 3 focuses on elevating customer experience,
23 redefining our system through integration, flexibility, and
24 responsiveness, uh, in order to create a seamless experience for
25 every Texan that interacts with us. Uh, supporting agency

1 actions include modernizing the customer journey, enhanced
2 collaboration with our partners, fortifying partnerships with
3 local Workforce Development Boards. As noted earlier, a
4 relentless focus on program integrity, and increased performance
5 accountability. Commissioners, Part 2 contains the required
6 supplemental schedules including TWC's budget structure and
7 performance measure definitions, our Historically Underutilized
8 Business plan, uh, our internal workforce plan, a section on
9 alignment with the Texas Workforce system's strategic plan, a
10 report on customer service, and a certification of compliance
11 with training requirements. Uh, before the meeting, you were
12 provided with a copy of staff-recommended modifications to Part
13 1 of the strategic plan. I'll walk through those, uh, here very
14 quickly. On page 12, uh, in the Agency Overview section, we have
15 added language reflecting our commitment to serving veterans as
16 well as language to support our ongoing, our ongoing collaboration
17 with the Department of Family and Protective Services to support
18 child care for vulnerable children. And also on page 20, a minor
19 revision to the VR case review item in the Redundancies and
20 Impediments section, quantifying the impact of the case reviews
21 that our staff are required to complete annually. In addition,
22 there are a couple of minor technical corrections that have been
23 proposed. Those include removing the word future at the end of
24 Goal 2 on page 6, removing a duplicative paragraph at the bottom
25 of page 16, and then a couple of other, uh, minor grammatical

1 co, corrections on pages 24 and 25. Uh, commissioners, before I
2 conclude I'd like to take a moment, uh, to acknowledge everyone
3 that's contributed, uh, and supported, uh, the development of
4 the, of the draft of this strategic planning cycle, uh,
5 including you and your staff. Uh, thank you for your
6 consideration. I pause here and, uh, take a moment for any, any
7 questions or comments or discussion that you all have.

8 CHAIRMAN ESPARZA: Jason, thank you very
9 much. Uh, great briefing and introduction to it. Uh, I will say
10 one thing for the general purpose of the strategic plan and the
11 goals it, it lays out. Goal 1 and 2 are, are very, very much
12 perfectly ordered but again like Goal 3 and what, uh, uh, Goal 3
13 basically is a you'll hear a lot about, uh, making sure
14 fundamental systems are efficient, uh, that are, uh, very
15 specific to data enhancement for customers is 1 and 2 are all
16 supported by Goal 3, so I very much appreciate that, uh, that
17 that was laid out and in the way it was. Uh, I have one, uh,
18 I've got one request and two items of feedback and, uh, before
19 I, I want to definitely offer to our commissioners, uh,
20 Commissioner Treviño, I'd send it to you if you have any
21 comments or questions, uh, on, on the strat plan.

22 COMMISSIONER TREVIÑO: Yeah, no, no
23 questions. I think, uh, thank you, Jason and your team for
24 answering most of our questions, uh, that we, uh, we proposed,
25 so I know it was a lot of work and, uh, a lot of time crunch to

1 get it done, but, uh, thank you for that, making it as easy and
2 seamless as possible.

3 CHAIRMAN ESPARZA: Commissioner Connett.

4 COMMISSIONER CONNETT: Yes, thank you,
5 Chairman. Uh, I want to start off, Jennifer, Jason, thank you
6 for your work on this. I had a number of questions and we had a
7 number of interactions leading up to this. You all were
8 incredibly thoughtful and responsive. Uh, thanks for your good
9 work. I particularly appreciate that this plan focuses on
10 program integration and program integrity, two critically
11 important themes that we have to get right. Also, modernization,
12 uh, but not just for modernization's sake but for the sake of
13 more efficiently and effectively serving our customers'
14 populations. Uh, really grateful for the way, uh, this report
15 has come out the way it's written and structured, so thank you
16 and kudos.

17 CHAIRMAN ESPARZA: Same with every response
18 our questions were, were met pretty, pretty quickly. I know you
19 were up early and, uh, here late to, to be working on it so
20 thanks for you. Uh, one item that I want to suggest, uh, that
21 I'll, we'll make a motion, I'll put to a motion, uh, concerning,
22 uh, Section 21.128, I think it's on page, it's on 21, uh, under
23 the impediments section, I think. Yeah, we're done—redundancy is
24 an impediment, Steve. Uh, you'll find it starts on page 19. Page
25 21, uh, under Item number 3, Texas Labor Code Section 21.128

1 concerning the scope of reasonable accommodations in employment
2 law. Uh, I want to, well, while I agree with the agency's goal
3 of streamlining processes, uh, before we want to commit it to
4 this plan, uh, I want this section to be looked and fully
5 analyzed, uh, for any regulatory burdens or any legal risks that
6 it provides. Uh, what it, what it states, uh, basically is that
7 this item being put into the strategic plan, it's already
8 covered by federal law. Uh, it's, uh, item, uh, let's see,
9 [inaudible] Labor Code 21.121 to include persons with sincerely
10 held religious beliefs, uh, and, uh, women affected by a
11 pregnancy, uh, would like to ask or remove to strike that item
12 of the strategic plan, uh, being so that it, it, uh, it's
13 already covered in federal, federal law, uh, and I guess I'd
14 probably have to make a motion to do that or we can discuss it.
15 Commissioners, is there anything to discuss on that?

16 COMMISSIONER TREVIÑO: Is it just going to
17 be that section, uh, that you referenced due to the fact that
18 it's already in federal labor, uh, law that you're stating?

19 CHAIRMAN ESPARZA: Yeah, that's correct.

20 COMMISSIONER CONNETT: Chairman, yeah, just
21 a question I guess for you or perhaps Jennifer or Jason. Uh, an
22 employee today who has a sincerely held religious belief or a,
23 a, a female employee who is pregnant, they have preexisting
24 protections today?

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1 CHAIRMAN ESPARZA: That's, that's my
2 understanding and I believe what this, uh, what this would do
3 is, uh, that federal law, it already mandates the protection,
4 uh, I believe it's in Title VII, uh, states are generally free
5 to keep their own state-level, uh, individual states are
6 generally free to keep their own state-level statutes separate.
7 Uh, Texas is not legally forced to comply or to copy federal
8 language exactly as is into its own Texas Labor Code and so for
9 that reason I'm asking that that, you know, that we maintain the
10 federal law, uh, and this is that employers are still obligated
11 to it by federal law and not in our, in our labor code. So,
12 [inaudible] Jason, anything?

13 JASON VADEN: Commissioner, I was just going
14 to ask, so we're talking about number three in the Redundancies
15 and Impediments section, uh, the reference to Texas Labor Code,
16 uh, Section 21.128, uh, Mr. Chairman, is your recommendation
17 that we would, uh, strike the reference to number 3 then, uh—

18 CHAIRMAN ESPARZA: Three bullet [inaudible].

19 JASON VADEN: Just bullet point 2.

20 CHAIRMAN ESPARZA: [Inaudible] that's
21 correct.

22 JASON VADEN: OK.

23 CHAIRMAN ESPARZA: Hang on one second.
24 [Inaudible].
25

1 COMMISSIONER TREVIÑO: So Jason while
2 they're discussing that, I think it would be, uh, Texas Labor
3 Code Section 21.108 and 21.106.

4 JASON VADEN: 106.

5 COMMISSIONER TREVIÑO: Those two
6 [inaudible].

7 JASON VADEN: Yes, sir. Both in bullet two
8 there.

9 CHAIRMAN ESPARZA: Thank you for that
10 correct--well, yeah, thank you for the correction there or
11 clarification.

12 COMMISSIONER CONNETT: Chairman, unless
13 there's other, uh, questions or discussion I'm inclined and
14 prepared to second the motion.

15 CHAIRMAN ESPARZA: Uh, I'll make a motion.
16 Let me just read it verbatim here. Uh, I move to strike item
17 number 3 on page 21 on the draft strategic plan, uh. This is
18 expanding Section 21.128 of the labor code that may carry
19 practical implications for employers. I'm going to, I'm going to
20 ask that we make a motion or I motion to strike that area.

21 COMMISSIONER CONNETT: Second.

22 UNIDENTIFIED: [Inaudible] bullet two only?

23 CHAIRMAN ESPARZA: Bullet two only.

24 JASON VADEN: Bullet two only, OK.
25

1 CHAIRMAN ESPARZA: Hang on a sec. Let me,
2 let me make another clarification here. I want to make sure we
3 get it right.

4 CHAIRMAN ESPARZA: OK, correction, it is
5 item number 3 so the full item 3, Texas Labor Code Section
6 21.128 concerning the scope of reasonable accommodations in
7 employment law. Uh, I'm asking that that item, excuse me, number
8 3 so all three bullet points under 3 be stricken.

9 COMMISSIONER CONNETT: And I'll second that
10 motion.

11 COMMISSIONER TREVIÑO: Just, uh, for point
12 of clarification, so striking that whole, uh, section, uh, it
13 covers also individuals with disabilities but we're just going
14 to be focusing on the disabilities of, uh, of, uh, the women
15 affected by pregnancy? Is that the—

16 CHAIRMAN ESPARZA: Pregnancy and sincerely
17 held religious beliefs as is said is 21.108 and 21.106 I
18 believe.

19 COMMISSIONER TREVIÑO: So really, we just
20 want eliminate bullet two [inaudible].

21 CHAIRMAN ESPARZA: The, yeah, I'm asking
22 that we strike three, entire [inaudible].

23 COMMISSIONER TREVIÑO: Just entirely.
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1 CHAIRMAN ESPARZA: But, yeah, it's not, it's
2 not, we're not pulling the, uh, full labor code out of that, or
3 out of that part.

4 COMMISSIONER TREVIÑO: And Jason, just for
5 clarification, this section is already in, uh, federal statute
6 that would cover employees that, uh, are subject to work here in
7 Texas?

8 JASON VADEN: We, we might need to bring in
9 an expert to talk about, uh—

10 MR. PIER: If you'd, yeah, if you'd like,
11 commissioner, Les Trobman is here as general counsel and he
12 could speak to, uh, to that, I think. That might be easiest. Uh,
13 so we don't have Jason.

14 COMMISSIONER TREVIÑO: OK, thank you.

15 MR. PIER: Yeah.

16 MR. TROBMAN: Les Trobman, general counsel.
17 Yes, uh, commissioners. So the current labor code Section 128
18 does provide, uh, you know, the, uh, the coverage, uh, that is
19 identified here individuals with disabilities. Uh, the, uh,
20 concept here was to extend in state statute to, to provide those
21 additional clarifications, uh, fill in some gaps for cases that
22 come in that need, uh, potentially could use those
23 clarifications on how to handle, uh. Certainly without seeking
24 these clarifications we would rely upon federal law and, and
25 current state law as it's currently constructed as well.

1 CHAIRMAN ESPARZA: It's my understanding. I
2 think that's our understanding when we put this up was that
3 Title VII covers this and we've made a motion which was seconded
4 but--

5 COMMISSIONER TREVIÑO: Yes, I'll, I'll agree
6 with the motion.

7 CHAIRMAN ESPARZA: OK. The motion is made
8 and all in favor, we've got three to strike item 3.

9 JASON VADEN: Chairman, any commissioners,
10 any other comments?

11 CHAIRMAN ESPARZA: No motions. Feedback on
12 number 7 on page 27 on the Redundancies again, uh, on page 23.
13 This, uh, kind of further, further strengthens, strengthens
14 flexibility through, uh, what, you know, when it comes to
15 dealing across the state, uh, with, with items, uh, [inaudible]
16 the consistent statewide objections important, uh, for tracking
17 potential funding decisions. A, any kind of centralized one-
18 size-fits-all mandate may be challenging for our local boards,
19 uh, and we want to make sure that they have more flexibility in
20 what we can have. This is just feedback, uh, to, to, to look at
21 that part, uh. I requested that the agency proposes any kind of
22 statutory or rule modifications to enforce statewide priorities,
23 that we would include a formal waiver process or some kind of
24 flexible alternative pathway or good cause exception. Uh, so
25 not, I'm not proposing any new language to be added to this one,

1 just feedback for the staff when it comes to some, uh, when it
2 comes to that item.

3 JASON VADEN: OK.

4 CHAIRMAN ESPARZA: Those, that basically,
5 just those two items I guess is what I wanted to make sure that
6 it really kind of sets a tone overall of where we want to see,
7 uh, partnerships and flexibility with, with, with boards in
8 different parts of the state, kind of what they're hearing is
9 also is what we're hearing, uh, on our taskforce and things
10 that, uh, we, when we meet with employers is, is the ability to,
11 to be flexible, to [inaudible] quickly changing economy in those
12 areas so the—I don't have a motion for that. I think that was,
13 uh, the only one I had was covered and appreciate that, and I
14 think if—I'll look to you guys if you all have any other
15 comments or anything you all want to bring up.

16 COMMISSIONER TREVIÑO: No, nothing at this
17 time. Thank you.

18 JASON VADEN: OK. With that then, Mr.
19 Chairman, we will, uh, uh, based on, based on the motion, uh,
20 and the vote, we will, we will strike item number 3 from the
21 Redundancies and Impediments section. Uh, with that in mind, uh,
22 staff requests approval of the strategic plan before you today.
23 We do also request, request the ability to make any additional
24 technical nonsubstantive edits as we move this forward, uh, into
25 the layout and design process, uh, before we publish, and then

1 ultimately submit to the Governor's Office and the Legislative
2 Budget Board.

3 CHAIRMAN ESPARZA: Thank you, Jason.
4 Appreciate it. Uh, is there a motion?

5 COMMISSIONER TREVIÑO: Chairman, I move that
6 we adopt the Texas Workforce Commission strategic plan for
7 fiscal years 2027 to 2031 with the changes presented today by
8 staff for submission to the Office of the Governor and the
9 Legislative Budget Board.

10 COMMISSIONER CONNETT: Second.

11 CHAIRMAN ESPARZA: The motion has been made
12 and seconded. I also vote yes. The motion passes. Good job you
13 all. Thank you all.

14 JASON VADEN: Thank you.

15 CHAIRMAN ESPARZA: And that was item 3. Item
16 4, anything? I guess we're looking next commission meeting is
17 set for June 2nd at 10. Before we adjourn, Steve, is there
18 anything?

19 MR. PIER: No, just to say thank you all for
20 your flexibility in all of this, uh, coming right down to the
21 wire. We appreciate it. It allowed us to be a little bit more,
22 uh, thoughtful in our approach with everything else that we're
23 saying and so we appreciate that. For Jason, Jennifer, you all's
24 teams, thank you very much for the hard work and, and for your
25 patience as well, specifically with me so thank you all.

1 JENNIFER COLEHOWER: I would also to
2 [inaudible] thank Jason for all his work, uh, towards this
3 process and this is actually the third iteration that he's, uh,
4 worked on our strategic plan for the agency, and also, uh,
5 wanted to let him know, uh, we want to congratulate him for his
6 20 years of service with the state of Texas.

7 CHAIRMAN ESPARZA: Twenty years.

8 JENNIFER COLEHOWER: Yes, yes.

9 CHAIRMAN ESPARZA: Where'd you bring that 20
10 years in from, Jason?

11 JASON VADEN: I started early.

12 CHAIRMAN ESPARZA: Started early, good. Uh,
13 we appreciate, yeah, huge thank you, Jason, for everything
14 you've done for the agency. Twenty years at the agency is very
15 remarkable. Uh, we appreciate that and, uh, want to make sure
16 that we, uh, continue to, uh, be a great home to you and all the
17 work that you're doing for, for us so we appreciate that. Uh,
18 with that we can move to Agenda Item 5 if everybody's OK with
19 that, and we can make a motion to adjourn.

20 COMMISSIONER TREVIÑO: Uh, Chairman, I move
21 to adjourn.

22 COMMISSIONER CONNETT: Second.

23 CHAIRMAN ESPARZA: The motion has been made
24 and seconded and I [inaudible] I also vote yes. We are
25 adjourned. Thank you everybody.

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