

TEXAS WORKFORCE COMMISSION

WORKFORCE FORUM **DRAFT** AGENDA

May 11–12, 2026

DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel Austin

6505 Interstate Highway 35 North

Austin, Texas 78752

(512) 454-3737

This year's Workforce Forum will take place from 1:00 p.m. Monday, May 11, 2026, through 3:30 p.m. Tuesday, May 12, 2026. Workshops have been developed for Local Workforce Development Boards (Boards), contractors, Vocational Rehabilitation stakeholders, and Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) staff members, as well as a special audience of public community and technical college staff. The following is a draft.

Monday, May 11, 2026

10:00 a.m.

Forum Registration

1:00 p.m.

Opening Remarks

Steve Pier, Executive Director, **TWC**

Location: **Phoenix Ballroom**

1:15 p.m.

Chairman Remarks

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

Location: **Phoenix Ballroom**

Advance Draft

1:30 p.m.

Keynote Session

Winning is No Accident

Mike Staver

Location: **Phoenix Ballroom**

Every day, massive accomplishments are realized all over the world—diseases being cured, teams winning championships, innovative products going to market, and a host of other positive experiences. These events do not happen by accident. They are the direct results of certain fundamental principles. The good news is these principles aren't a secret; they aren't hidden in some far-off locale waiting to be unearthed. They are ready and available for you right now.

Although these life- and business-transforming principles are simple, they are not always simple to implement. Here is an opportunity to learn and apply exactly what you need to accomplish outstanding results.

2:45 p.m.

Break

3:00 p.m.

Commissioner Remarks

Alberto Treviño III, Commissioner Representing Labor, **TWC**

Location: **Phoenix Ballroom**

3:15 p.m.

Super Session

Enhancing Our Service for Texans: Introducing "Project No Wrong Door"

Michael Hamilton, Tom McCarty, Jonathan Wells, Shunta Williams, **TWC**

Location: **Phoenix Ballroom**

"Project No Wrong Door" is a strategic initiative aimed at fundamentally transforming and improving the customer experience with TWC. The core vision is to create a unified, seamless, and human-centric service delivery model. This means ensuring that no matter how a customer contacts us, they've come to the "right place."

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4:30 p.m.

Commissioner Remarks

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

Location: **Phoenix Ballroom**

4:45 p.m.

Closing Remarks

Mary York, Division Director, Workforce Development, **TWC**

Location: **Phoenix Ballroom**

5:00 p.m.

Adjourn Day One

Tuesday, May 12, 2026

8:30 a.m.

Breakout Sessions

TWC Performance Reporting and Virtual One Stop

Athena Burton, Jennifer Palmer-Lee, Rachel Slack, **TWC**

Location: **Phoenix Central**

Have you ever wondered why the reports produced by TWC and Virtual One Stop (VOS) do not always agree? This presentation will cover key differences between performance reporting from TWC and VOS along with a timeline of how we intend to align TWC performance reporting with the reporting in VOS. This session will cover the latest enhancements to TWC's performance reporting and the roadmap for future enhancements, as well as a brief demo of our new Mathematica Policy Research Report in Tableau.

Eligible Training Providers

Lisa Guzman, Taylor Mendez, Kalinda Smith, Kawasaii Smith, Paul Trupia, **TWC**

Location: **Phoenix North**

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This session offers an overview of Eligible Training Providers, student data reports, performance measures, and includes a Q&A.

Speaking the Same Language: Building a Unified Approach to Business Outreach

Brenda Martinez, **Workforce Solutions Lower Rio Grande Valley**; Ricardo Rendon, **TWC**

Location: **Phoenix South**

This session includes Business Outreach training designed to build confidence and consistency among workforce staff. By establishing a common language, shared goals, and clear expectations for business engagement, this model creates crucial alignment between workforce partners. Participants will learn how this unified approach advances a true “No Wrong Door” experience for employers. The session will highlight the training’s key components and outcomes and explore opportunities to expand these efforts across the Texas workforce system.

Agricultural Recruitment System: Fill Ag Jobs and Connect Texans

Vilma Castro, John DeLeon, Camille Goulding, Ruben Holguin, Russell Hunter, Horacio Lopez Montes, LeVita Ross, Stacey Wire, **TWC**

Location: **Dezavala**

Boost your employer services. Build capacity with the Agricultural Recruitment System (ARS) to fill local agriculture positions and connect Texans with premium statewide and national opportunities, such as paid travel/housing, guaranteed work, and more. Through real-world scenarios, see the ARS in action and gain skills to overcome labor shortages. Contribute, learn, and elevate your impact.

Evaluating Texas Industry Credentials: A Collaborative Review of Industry-Based Certifications

Lorena Knight, Christine Long, **TWC**

Location: **Austin**

Learn about TWC’s Industry-Based Certification (IBC) Advisory Council and its work developing an annual inventory of IBCs. This session will define the inventory development process, the council’s responsibilities, how to propose new credentials, and will address new legal requirements to solicit feedback from key stakeholders (including **you**). Through collaboration, attendees will learn how to provide insights into the inventory, share surveys with industry leaders in the field, and ensure Texas credentials meet employer needs.

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9:45 a.m.

Break

10:00 a.m.

Breakout Sessions

Best Practices for Local Child Care Committees

Nicole Allen, **Workforce Solutions for Tarrant County**; Ana De Hoyas O'Connor, **Workforce Solutions Alamo**; Allison Wilson, **TWC**

Location: **Phoenix Central**

Learn best practices for establishing and sustaining child care committees in your local workforce development area from Board and TWC child care staff. Topics include how to leverage data and committee member feedback to enhance the Child Care Services program impact, drive local quality improvement, and foster communication among Boards, Board child care contractors, and the child care sector. Attendees will leave the session with practical tools for engagement and lasting success.

From Trade to Entrepreneur: Building Small Businesses Successfully

Diane Cook, **Workforce Solutions Rural Capital Area**; Shannon Black, **SCORE Austin**

Location: **Phoenix North**

Professionals attending this workshop will learn how to design and implement a trades-focused entrepreneurship initiative that helps skilled workers transition to business ownership. Participants will leave with a replicable program framework, including a launch event model, 12-week entrepreneurship curriculum outline, mentorship structure, earn-and-learn integration strategies, measurable outcome targets, and scalability tools to support small business creation, job growth, and regional economic impact.

360 Degrees of Opportunity: Innovative Career Exploration

LeAnne Baird, Kendra Ball, **Workforce Solutions North Texas**

Location: **Phoenix South**

Discover innovative, cost-effective solutions for bridging educational gaps and breaking geographical barriers in career exploration. The aim is to provide scalable, sustainable content that is reusable and expandable across any educational system or workforce training module for employers of all sizes. By pairing local business partnerships with the use of 360° technology, students can explore local worksites on demand. Our innovative

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tool can be seamlessly integrated into various curricula, offering flexibility and adaptability.

Aligning Classrooms with Careers: The Return on Investment of Teacher Externships

Adrian Lopez, William Rafferty, Victoria Rodriguez, **Workforce Solutions Alamo**

Location: **Dezavala**

Workforce Solutions Alamo's Teacher Externship Program equips educators across their 13-county region with direct exposure to high-demand, high-growth industries, aligning with recent U.S. Department of Labor priorities and Texas Education Agency's strengthened focus on college, career, and military readiness. Through immersive experiences with local employers, teachers gain real-world insights that translate workforce expectations into classroom instruction—strengthening career pathways, improving student outcomes, and advancing measurable education-to-employment alignment across their regional talent pipeline.

Fast Track to Career Ready: A Pathway to Meeting Industry Demand with Innovative Training

Mark Durand, Kevin King, **Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas**

Location: **Austin**

This session shares how Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas developed a fast-track industrial training program that gives entry-level workers a credential advantage and a direct path to employment. Participants will learn how employer input guided the program, how partnerships support credential attainment, and how success is measured through completions and job connections. Attendees will leave with practical ideas to build employer-driven training that strengthens local workforce outcomes.

11:15 a.m.

Lunch (on your own)

12:45 p.m.

Breakout Sessions

Using Big Interview's AI Assist Tools to Land your Next Job

Adrian Alaniz, Angelica Armendariz, Tanya Gauthier, Niki Haynes, Matthew Jackson, Douglas Laxson, Byron Moore, Alexandria Papka, Alexis Peralta, Suzette Robinson, **TWC**

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Location: **Phoenix Central**

Your resume is your first impression and the first step to landing your dream job. But applicant-tracking systems filter out up to 75 percent of applicants before a human even sees them, and recruiters spend only six to eight seconds scanning a résumé. Learn how Big Interview can amplify an applicant's voice so their résumé and cover letter will get noticed, and their communication skills will be enhanced to ace the interview and land the job.

Libraries as Partners for Expanding Workforce Opportunities

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

Location: **Phoenix North**

Every day, Texas Workforce Solutions connects people to opportunities, but many job seekers still face barriers to access. They don't know where to go, or they're hesitant to walk into a Workforce Solutions Office for the first time. Public libraries already serve these individuals daily. They're trusted, accessible, and embedded in the community. Come learn about the workforce development resources offered at libraries and hear about successful workforce solutions/library collaborations that make opportunities easier to reach.

Crafting Quality Regional Economic Analyses

William Lutz, Nancy Moore, **TWC**

Location: **Phoenix South**

Local Workforce Development Boards (Boards) are required to base their local Board plans on an analysis of regional economic conditions, but what makes a good economic analysis? Come explore how Boards put labor market and other economic data to use through excerpts of 2025–2028 local plans across the state. Examine successful ways of highlighting work to advance designated occupations to meet high regional demand from employers.

Working with Redeploying Texas Military Forces Service Members and an Update to the Veterans Readiness and Employment Referral Process

Bob Gear, Gabriel Lopez, **TWC**

Location: **Dezavala**

Learn best practices working with Texas Military Forces service members as they redeploy from their various missions, including program briefings, career expos, and benefit resource fairs. Hear about the new state workforce system's Veterans Readiness and Employment referral process.

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Unlocking Economic Success: Expanding Partnerships for Community Impact

Rachael Berhe, **Greater Dallas Workforce Development Board**; Veronica Moore, **TWC**

Location: **Austin**

Join TWC Adult Education and Literacy, the Greater Dallas Workforce Development Board, and their dedicated local partners for a dynamic session that aligns with the 2026 Workforce Forum's priority of impact and highlights strategic partnerships that are instrumental in meeting and expanding the economic needs of Texans. This engaging session will provide actionable insights into leveraging critical resources and alliances, uncovering "hidden treasures" within local communities to drive positive change and measurable outcomes.

2:00 p.m.

Break

2:15 p.m.

Breakout Sessions

Advancing Intergenerational Economic Mobility Through Workforce Innovation

LaToya Casimere, Juliet Stipeche, **Gulf Coast Workforce Board**

Location: **Phoenix Central**

How can workforce systems advance intergenerational economic mobility? The Gulf Coast Workforce Board identified regional IT and healthcare talent gaps and designed a two-generation model that strengthens parents' earnings while accelerating children's educational outcomes. Learn how they aligned employer partnerships; dual enrollment across Choices, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, and Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act; and measurable impact metrics including credentials, placements, and family stability. Gain a scalable framework to drive lasting economic mobility in your own community.

Personal Safety and Awareness & De-Escalation Techniques in the Workplace

James Estrada, Scott Bradford, **TWC**

Location: **Phoenix North**

In this session, the Risk & Security Management department aims to equip staff with essential knowledge and skills to recognize, assess, and mitigate personal safety risks.

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Key topics will include situational awareness, understanding and managing potential threats, and best practices for maintaining personal safety.

Maximize Skills Development Fund Impact: Boards, Grants, and Collaboration

Kristie Caviness, **TWC**

Location: **Phoenix South**

Unlock community potential by strategically using the Skills Development Fund. This session will equip contract staff to build impactful employer partnerships, identify in-demand industries, and use grant funds to address community needs. Maximize grant dollars for lasting economic impact.

Building Brand Awareness from the Ground Up

Jennifer Purcell, Connie Rash, Brenda Saldana, **Workforce Solutions Greater Dallas**

Location: **Dezavala**

Workforce Solutions Greater Dallas built a small, yet mighty communications team that elevated an existing brand that lacked awareness and understanding. Through strategic communications, they developed brand guidelines, relaunched their website, expanded their social media presence, built an earned media program, and launched an annual report. In one year, they doubled daily website visits and increased their social following by 40 percent. Participants will learn about their approach, understand challenges they overcame, and come away with templates and actionable best practices.

Workforce Innovation Fund: Advancing Workforce Partnerships

Jeff Clapp, April Corbit, Emily Newsome, **Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas**

Location: **Austin**

This session will outline plans to strengthen regional workforce partnerships through two new initiatives: THRIVE (Turning Hiring Risks into Valued Employees) and Classrooms to Careers. Attendees will learn how THRIVE will connect employers and correctional partners to expand second-chance employment and how Classrooms to Careers strengthens educator-industry collaboration and grows work-based learning. The session will also highlight connections to the Board's Partners for Reentry Opportunities in Workforce Development grant, Regional Convener grant, and broader career pathway strategies.

3:30 p.m.

Adjourn Workforce Forum

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Request Accommodations

Requests may be made during the registration process for those 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.