

1 **2023 Reentry Conference**  
2 Discussion Paper  
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4 **Background**  
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6 The Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) hosted the first-ever GRACE (Growth through Rentry to Advance Careers  
7 & Employment) Conference held on Friday, July 29, 2022, in San Antonio. It was a one-day event, funded through a  
8 donation to the agency by the IKEA Foundation. The conference's purpose was to offer Texas employers an  
9 opportunity to learn how to increase their workforce while helping formerly incarcerated individuals gain  
10 meaningful employment and the chance for a fresh start. The conference was well received, and there was  
11 excellent audience engagement after each panel and testimonial.  
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13 On August 9, 2022, Commissioner Alvarez requested staff draft a discussion paper to explore available funding to  
14 host a second reentry conference. After reviewing the costs for the 2022 conference, staff developed a budget of  
15 \$29,500 and presented the information to the Commission on September 13, 2022. A funding source for the full  
16 amount had not yet been identified, but \$7,000 remained from the 2022 event. Staff noted savings for the event  
17 could be realized by combining the conference with another TWC conference.  
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19 **Request**

20 At the September 13, 2022, meeting, the Commission requested staff explore the options of hosting the second  
21 reentry conference before or after another TWC event to save costs. Commissioner Demerson mentioned the  
22 Texas Conference for Employers (TCE) held at various locations throughout the state as a possible option, assuming  
23 the events remained separate and the agendas were not integrated.  
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25 TWC Executive Director Ed Serna asked for time to analyze the conference options and the opportunity to return  
26 to the Commission for review. Staff has reviewed all TWC employer-focused conferences in coordination with  
27 Conference Planning. The venue hosting the TCE in Arlington, Texas, has the capacity to hold a reentry conference  
28 on August 16, 2023, the day before the TCE Conference.  
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30 Meeting room rental and refreshments for 250 attendees are estimated at \$22,538. The food and beverage cost  
31 will be covered entirely with a \$70 registration fee. Assuming the unused IKEA funds from the 2022 conference can  
32 be applied to the 2023 conference, the total cost to TWC would be approximately \$5,500.  
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34 **Decision Point**  
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36 Staff seeks direction regarding the following:

- 37 • Holding the 2023 reentry conference on August 16 at the Arlington Expo;
- 38 • Charging a registration fee to cover costs associated with providing food and beverage during the meeting  
39 time; and
- 40 • Identifying and allocating funds to cover the estimated \$5,500 balance for the room and audio/visual  
41 needs.  
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