



**WORK SESSION OF THE  
TEXAS WORKFORCE COMMISSION**

**DATE**

**AUGUST 22, 2023**

1 Commissioner Work Session, August 22, 2023

2 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Good afternoon, everyone.  
3 This work session is called to order. Mr. Trobman, has anyone  
4 signed up for public comment?

5 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: All right. This brings us  
6 to a discussion of Texas Workforce Commission strategic plan,  
7 goals, and priorities for the fiscal year.

8 MR. TOWNSEND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good  
9 afternoon, I'm Randy Townsend. I wanted to take this  
10 opportunity. I appreciate your taking the time to do this, have  
11 this work session so we could have just a little pause and  
12 discuss our strategic plan that we have developed over a year  
13 ago, but then a few things that have happened since then, give  
14 each of you a chance to have some discussion about some  
15 priorities that have been presented almost two years ago now as  
16 part of the—the original intent of those priorities was for one  
17 of our local Workforce Boards to have a retreat, and each of you  
18 shared your priorities at the time. We developed our strategic  
19 plan. We've since had some, a legislative session. We've also  
20 had some work that's been done with our Workforce Investment  
21 Council on some of their strategic plan initiatives and so I  
22 thought it would be good just to have that discussion as we kind  
23 of head into our upcoming fiscal 24-25 biennium. I've put  
24 together some materials as a starting point. Obviously, this is  
25 mostly I think an opportunity for each of the three of you to

1 have some conversation with each other, with staff about your  
2 priorities that you see for the upcoming year, next couple of  
3 years and what have you as we move forward. What I had prepared  
4 for this afternoon just at a real high level was take a look  
5 back at our goals that we had developed as part of our strategic  
6 plan with the idea being that we would not just set that  
7 strategic plan on the shelf and not follow up with it and follow  
8 through with it. I also took a look at our, just to make sure we  
9 were still aligned with our statutory provisions that lay out  
10 the purpose of this agency. When you do that, there's three  
11 goals that we have identified as part of our strategic plan—did  
12 you need a copy [inaudible]? So there was three goals, basically  
13 one focusing on employers, one on our skilled workforce, and  
14 then the third one was what I call the quality customer service.  
15 Each of those we expanded out a little bit more beyond that as  
16 far as explaining each of those three goal areas. Then when you  
17 break that down to our statutory provisions, we have obviously  
18 still the goal area that deals with businesses, employers, and  
19 then within the worker category, skilled workforce, you have  
20 workers who essentially are currently employed looking at how  
21 you might enhance their employability, earnings, etc., and then  
22 those folks that are making that transition into the workforce.  
23 There's quite a few programs and services who provide in that  
24 regard, obviously. The third goal area kind of has two areas.  
25 One was dealing with communities and I think this one is

1 important as far as our statutory areas that talk about those  
2 communities of this state that provide economic incentive  
3 programs for job creation, attraction, and expansion, so what  
4 can we do from the standpoint of supporting the local  
5 communities. Finally, under that efficient/effective operations  
6 is just making sure we're good stewards of the taxpayers'  
7 dollars. That's the three goal areas that we identified broken  
8 into the five as you look at the statutory provisions. Then what  
9 I did in the document there just to kind of begin to summarize  
10 the priorities again that was done a couple of years ago and  
11 just how those fall out. There were 11 priorities identified by  
12 each of the three of you, three commissioners here, and then we  
13 have since added to those priorities from the staff perspective,  
14 there's several areas that Mr. Serna has identified as we look  
15 forward from a staff perspective to operations that we want to  
16 make sure we stay focused on as an agency and just kind at a  
17 high level those are cybersecurity. It always talks about what  
18 keeps one up at night, and cybersecurity is certainly one of  
19 those. That's a common theme across the United States,  
20 obviously, not just Texas, and not just the Workforce  
21 Commission. Cybersecurity protection, obviously, still focusing  
22 on prevention of fraud, particularly identity fraud in our  
23 unemployment insurance program but anywhere else in our  
24 programs. Customer service improvements, and then the  
25 procurement/contracting areas so that once we get our grant

1 programs out efficiently, and that sort of thing. Just looking  
2 at our staffing within TWC and how we can, from a human  
3 resources standpoint, make sure we're getting the resources we  
4 need, the talent we need, the skilled workforce, to carry out  
5 our programs and our services. So we kind of lumped that under  
6 HR revamp within TWC. Finally, was the outreach of TWC programs  
7 and services. That's kind of what we lined out as far as the  
8 priorities there, and made that connection back to the different  
9 I think a hundred different activities and initiatives that have  
10 been identified and then this afternoon we have Mary, Courtney,  
11 Reagan, and Cheryl here at the table with some discussion you  
12 want to get into, some services, what have you, but really, at  
13 this point, I think the idea was to give you a chance to, if you  
14 want to have some discussion about your current priorities, want  
15 to think about if there's different direction each have had or  
16 different direction we should receive, and that sort of thing.  
17 I'll just see if you have any questions about the materials or  
18 [inaudible].

19 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Commissioner Demerson.

20 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Not a lot of  
21 questions or anything at all in that regard. So, Randy, the  
22 first document that you presented had three items from the  
23 employer side. I think that was the language that we had  
24 provided to someone at some point that came back in the form of  
25 a public document. I hadn't seen that document but wanted an

1 opportunity to really expand on that, and so we've done that and  
2 I'll share with you a copy of that document, chair, and pass  
3 that around to the team as well. I think it fits in line with  
4 what we're looking at or what I'm looking at on the employer  
5 side with input from the stakeholders that I serve as well as  
6 those industry organizations and the like. I think the items  
7 that are mentioned here will fall into the categories that  
8 you've outlined already, those goals, one, two or three. It's  
9 one, two, three, four, five, six items that are there, if any  
10 can be merged, you know, you can take liberty to do that as  
11 well. I'll just highlight, Mr. Chair, real quick and get that  
12 out there but expanding internships and other work-based  
13 learning programs that allow employers to train workers  
14 according to their specific needs, fostering a direct pipeline  
15 of skilled talent, that's goal number one that kinds of fits in  
16 that area. Expanding enhanced collaborations between workforce  
17 development agencies, education institutions, and industries to  
18 ensure that training and education align with the needs of  
19 employers. I would add economic development organizations to  
20 this list as well to make sure that we're hitting workforce  
21 economic development and education agencies, and goal number  
22 three that may fit into that category, continue to study and  
23 utilize data and analytics to identify trends, skills, gaps, and  
24 emerging industries allowing policymakers to better align  
25 initiatives with industry and allow employers to make informed

1 decisions about hiring, training, and talent management. One and  
2 two may fit into those categories. Then the other three I'll  
3 highlight quickly, continue to support development of new and  
4 innovative initiatives, again one along the areas of training,  
5 career connection opportunities to veterans transitioning,  
6 foster youth and people with disabilities, kind of covering all  
7 of our areas that way that are important to employers as well. I  
8 think goal number two may fit into that category, and then  
9 prioritizing efficient and responsive customer service kind of  
10 speaks to the customer service side of things, making sure that  
11 we're not losing their communication, using [inaudible]  
12 resources to ensure a smooth and hassle-free experience for  
13 employers navigating the UI system. I think we're making  
14 progress towards that but for employers in our state it's very  
15 important and so we want to make sure that that's identified.  
16 That's number three I think in that category, customer service  
17 and the like. And then lastly support strategies that work to  
18 minimize unemployment insurance tax rates for employers  
19 fostering a business-friendly environment that supports job  
20 creation, and that goes back to goal number one where we're  
21 making sure that businesses, employers in our state are able to  
22 thrive, and this is the way to make sure that we're doing what  
23 we can as we have been doing to make sure that we're impactful  
24 in that area. Those are some items, commissioners, that we've  
25 lined out from an employer standpoint again with input from

1 stakeholders as well as important items for that group. That's  
2 all I have, Mr. Chair, on our side.

3 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Thank you. Commissioner  
4 Treviño.

5 COMMISSIONER TREVIÑO: The only thing that I  
6 would have is I think when we got this on Friday, it's the first  
7 time I had seen it so it's kind of hard to understand where it  
8 was going so like on that first page on the goals for goal  
9 three, I don't know if I'm reading it right but if we don't have  
10 really anything to do with quality customer service, right? On  
11 the very first page.

12 MR. TOWNSEND: I think maybe one explanation  
13 or one clarification here, we had tried to do on the different  
14 activities and initiatives, just trying to make that fall to one  
15 priority. Looking back, I think we had that conversation—

16 COMMISSIONER TREVIÑO: Right.

17 MR. TOWNSEND: Commissioner, with you and  
18 some of your staff, there's clearly those activities that fall  
19 into multiple priorities. I don't think there's any [inaudible]  
20 probably in each of the priorities that were identified for each  
21 of you as commissioners so one of the things we can for this  
22 next—as we go back now and learn from that, we can certainly  
23 match that up a little bit better.

24 COMMISSIONER TREVIÑO: OK.

25



1 MR. TOWNSEND: But we have been trying to  
2 maintain that one-to-one relationship and obviously that's not  
3 how things actually in reality kind of work out so that  
4 observation was something we need to take into account for the  
5 next iteration here.

6 COMMISSIONER TREVIÑO: If I heard  
7 Commissioner Demerson right, I think like in response to how the  
8 activities are sorted and counted, I would like the chart to  
9 show that the activities and each priority description that it  
10 meets, and that is if it's possible for one of the activities to  
11 have multiple priority descriptions so like all three offices  
12 can kind of bounce back if that's OK with my fellow  
13 commissioners. Also, to do the same with each activity as it  
14 relates to the goals, an activity may meet multiple goals  
15 according to this so that if we could do that as well. And then  
16 to determine the structure for prioritizing the activities based  
17 on a number of priority descriptions and goals that it meets,  
18 and then I don't know if this is the right time but I'm going to  
19 give a shot to it. This is kind of like what [inaudible] we  
20 wanted to kind of add to L.1. I would like to amend the current  
21 priority description listed in L.1 to say expand apprenticeship  
22 and pre-apprenticeship especially to in-demand occupations. And  
23 then I would like to also add the following, do an L.4 to  
24 utilize career pathways as a holistic approach to serving our  
25 customers as an ongoing mechanism to enhance skills and

1 knowledge for those in every stage of the workforce system. And  
2 then the last one would be L.5, to encourage programs and  
3 initiatives that help veterans, people with disabilities, foster  
4 youth, interns, and justice-impacted individuals to prepare for  
5 the workforce and obtain job placement. So I guess my whole hope  
6 is that these additional priorities and descriptions complement  
7 the other offices as well, and that we can all work on that  
8 together. That's all I have.

9 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Mr. Chairman, that  
10 makes sense to me, Commissioner Treviño, in the sense of adding  
11 where we can. I wanted to ask a real quick question on your L.1,  
12 expand apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship especially to in-  
13 demand occupations, do you want to include in-demand and  
14 nontraditional occupations? Will you get both of them or is it  
15 one or the [inaudible].

16 COMMISSIONER TREVIÑO: No, just the way it  
17 is because the way it has it, it has IT, HR, and child—I mean  
18 it's in-demand services. That way the Workforce Boards can use  
19 those in-demand jobs and put those in as they see fit.

20 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: OK. Just so it  
21 doesn't limit anything really, it's all in-demand occupations.

22 COMMISSIONER TREVIÑO: Right.

23 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: All right.

24 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: So, you've said all you  
25 wanted to say?

1 COMMISSIONER TREVIÑO: Yes, thank you.

2 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: I don't want to cut you  
3 off. A couple things. The first thing is I hope we can quickly  
4 move past these labels that says public, employer, or labor.  
5 Once the commission's decided something, that's a TWC  
6 initiative. It doesn't matter who suggested it. It doesn't  
7 matter who seconded it. It doesn't matter who wrote it up. If  
8 the commission has taken some sort of affirmative action on that  
9 and said, yes, we're doing it, then that's a TWC initiative.  
10 That is neither a labor nor employer nor public commissioner  
11 initiative, and we need to take those labels off of those  
12 things. The apprenticeship programs no more belong to the public  
13 commissioner's office than they do the employer commissioner's  
14 office than they do the labor commissioner's office. That's just  
15 something that TWC does and it's a thing, and so I fear in some  
16 ways these particular labels, I think they're in some ways  
17 misleading because everybody is kind of working in space. Now  
18 that's not to say, I mean offices do things kind of singularly  
19 and not necessarily coordinated entirely with TWC. The employer  
20 office has a series of employer conferences that they do, and  
21 they should be doing that. The labor office I think in the past  
22 has done some specific newsletters relative to some things, and  
23 things that are very much oriented toward labor, labor groups,  
24 those types of settings for the state. I guess I'm the lucky  
25 one, the public is everybody so it's like if that's what it is,

1 that's what it is, right? But I'm not going to not help a guy  
2 that's just looking for a job, he just wants a better job  
3 because that's labor. That's for Commissioner Treviño to deal  
4 with. That's not going to happen. I'm just going to help the  
5 guy. Same, you know, an employer doesn't like the way we do  
6 something in commission appeals, I'm not going to not help that  
7 person. I'm not just going to refer him to the employer office  
8 and do that but, you know, there's going to be times I'm going  
9 to have a meeting that's just going to be something that I'm  
10 going to do as a singular commissioner. The law provides for  
11 that in 301, and so we should definitely be doing these things  
12 but when I look at a chart like this, you know, for our  
13 discussion today, OK, fine. We've kind of identified some  
14 things. Honestly, I don't even remember the chart that's—I don't  
15 remember commenting on the chart that you used to fill this out.  
16 You showed it to me and I saw it. I'm sure I said those things.  
17 I probably meant them, still do in a lot of cases but, you know,  
18 that was something that happened during the passing of time and  
19 I think for us as an agency, the more we can kind of nail down  
20 large concepts, understand statutorily the five areas that we're  
21 really asked to work in which you did reference that, and I  
22 think that's important. The more we can do that and really kind  
23 of talk in terms of TWC, I think the better off we are. I don't  
24 think it serves the agency well when we decide that a particular  
25 initiative is the sort of project for one commissioner over the

1 other. That doesn't help anybody. Apprenticeship is big enough,  
2 if all three commissioners aren't piling on to that, then it's  
3 not going to work. Plenty of employers are using it, plenty of  
4 labor organizations are using it, frankly the public benefits  
5 from it, and that's a great example of that. Same for  
6 apprenticeship, same for foster youth, same for veterans  
7 programs. I mean these are like large, overreaching things that  
8 not only kind of encompass everything that's happening across  
9 all three commission offices but also there's a VR component to  
10 all of those. There's an employer component to all of those, a  
11 workforce component to all of those, child care [inaudible] and  
12 everything so it's like we probably want to see our strategic  
13 plan and the things that we're doing really be grouped more  
14 toward our statutory responsibilities over time. This is a great  
15 starting point. I think as the conversation moves forward, I'd  
16 like to see us move toward how are we really kind of dealing  
17 with 301.001(b) and addressing the five components. Those are  
18 the pillars that TWC has to operate by, and I'm looking down  
19 this chart. On skilled workforce account of activity initiatives  
20 supposedly the public commissioner contributed 28 of those but  
21 it's like I understand how you counted it. I don't dispute the  
22 way you counted it. I'd just feel more comfortable if we sort of  
23 talked about those in terms of the commission has made a policy  
24 decision, this is how we're moving forward, and this is a  
25 commission thing. You know, if Courtney has a good idea, I'll

1 probably take credit for it at the next chamber banquet where I  
2 give a speech, that's just how it works. And if I have a bad  
3 idea, Courtney has to take responsibility for that at some  
4 point. That's just sort of how teams work but it's—I want to  
5 continue to see us kind of moving toward this time that even if  
6 it's a staff-originated initiative, once the commission checks  
7 off on it, that's my initiative now. I own that in its entirety.  
8 If it goes wrong, they're going to call me for comment. If it  
9 goes right, we're going to talk about how great a job staff did  
10 in making sure that they brought that to our attention. That's  
11 ultimately where I'd like to get to. This document I think  
12 fairly well kind of encapsulates where we are. The good news in  
13 this document is we seem to be kind of touching on everything  
14 statutorily that we're responsible for and that the legislature  
15 has asked us to focus on. More importantly, when we boil that  
16 down to our strategic plan, we actually seem to be working on  
17 all elements of our strategic plan. Everybody seems to be  
18 focused on that. This is a lot of good news kind of contained in  
19 this document that I think we can work on but I think getting  
20 toward this agency-level, this TWC-level thinking where once  
21 we've agreed to do it, then we're all in on that and we all do  
22 it. However, the document evolves into that, that's what I'm  
23 looking for too. I think we end up with a really good document  
24 at that point.

25

1 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Chairman, I agree  
2 with that wholeheartedly. I look at this in my opinion as a  
3 foundation public employer, labor, staff or whatever but at the  
4 end of the day, it's a TWC-driven document or program and that's  
5 probably where you were headed because an overall agency  
6 strategic plan is what we're doing for 2024.

7 COMMISSIONER TREVIÑO: I follow those  
8 sentiments exactly too. I think it's one bucket instead of three  
9 different ones [inaudible] get it all done.

10 MR. TOWNSEND: From my perspective that's  
11 obviously great feedback, and we can make those things. I think  
12 that's a fairly easy thing to do. Obviously, we were working  
13 with a document that got produced a couple years ago that—and I  
14 think this has clarified kind of what our direction is on that  
15 very clearly so that's been helpful from my perspective at  
16 least, and so we'll just continue to work and make sure we stay  
17 focused on the priorities.

18 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Glad I wasn't the  
19 only one that didn't recognize the document or didn't remember  
20 the document.

21 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: When I saw it, I'm like, I  
22 vaguely remember.

23 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: I could have said  
24 that

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1                   CHAIRMAN DANIEL: You did like me. It sounds  
2 like something I'd say. Mary?

3                   MARY YORK: May I ask a clarifying question?  
4 I know in each of your remarks you kind of—in addition to  
5 emphasizing some maybe additional things that weren't listed  
6 here, I think I heard you say that we really need to look at  
7 where there's overlap between things, and especially I guess on  
8 this last comment in terms of there not necessarily being  
9 individual commissioner priorities but things being overall  
10 commission priorities, would it be appropriate to see where  
11 there is overlap amongst some of these items and look and make  
12 sure that—and I'm going to use an example that maybe isn't the  
13 best example but if internships are mentioned in two to three of  
14 those, look and see where and how we can consolidate into two  
15 internship items or one internship item.

16                   CHAIRMAN DANIEL: My perspective would be if  
17 internships are important to us and they are, we've already—  
18 we're all well on record on that one, then it's how ever many it  
19 takes. If like one great big one is good, fine, do that. If it  
20 needs to be three individual ones, but you also, I mean like,  
21 once you talk about internships, what else is there to say? If  
22 it's good for employers and it is, I'll let Commissioner  
23 Demerson make the case for that, but if it's good for employers,  
24 then maybe it goes in the employer section. Certainly, good for  
25 people who are entering the workforce which is actually numbers



1 two and three from the statute in terms of what we're supposed  
2 to be focusing on so you can cover that. Everything we do needs  
3 to be quality customer service so you do the list at one time,  
4 you can talk about it through the three goals of the strategic  
5 plan or you can classify it under the five pillars that the  
6 legislature put on us when they passed the law but, yeah, by all  
7 means I think reducing them to kind of the necessary—we don't  
8 need to use more words than we need to make ourselves plain  
9 here. More explanation generally doesn't result in more  
10 understanding. We just need to be clear from the outset.

11                   COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: I think that's what  
12 I said in the initial comments, is basically this is a document  
13 that if it's being done elsewhere can be consolidated and then  
14 go forward, feel free, take the liberties to do that. At the end  
15 of the day, we'll each three commissioners have an opportunity  
16 to see the final verbiage and we'll make sure there's nothing  
17 lacking that might be of interest to each one of us but to  
18 narrow it down from some issues like foster care, I've worked in  
19 that space heavy. Commissioner Treviño has worked heavy in that  
20 space now, and it's going to merge somewhere but as the chairman  
21 stated, it doesn't mean that it resides with one office, and so  
22 from that standpoint we'll all be participating in those  
23 activities so consolidation where necessary, less words,  
24 strategic approaches to it is the direction that we should be  
25 taking. I'll be advocating on behalf of the employers and that's

1 pretty much it from that standpoint but I think we'll all get a  
2 chance to see the verbiage and go from there so consolidate  
3 where you can and how you can.

4 COMMISSIONER TREVIÑO: Just like I had said  
5 earlier about the activities relating to the goals, an activity  
6 may meet multiple goals for the different offices so that's what  
7 I think my point was, and just looking at this for like fresh  
8 eyes I guess if you will, just kind of seeing that we'll all  
9 work together and fill in where it needs to be.

10 MARY YORK: Thank you.

11 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Let's do this. I'm going  
12 to have a motion here that will state that we want staff to take  
13 the information that was distributed by commissioners here  
14 today, incorporate those into the plan as described, to take the  
15 rest of the commentary that you heard from commissioners today  
16 about this, make the necessary revisions to start to resemble  
17 that and bring that back to a regularly scheduled commission  
18 meeting at a date in the future that's appropriate for this  
19 giving you enough time to do your work so I move what I just  
20 said. If there's a second, we can move forward on that  
21 [inaudible].

22 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Mr. Chairman, can we  
23 add to that that the document that comes back to the commission  
24 is the document that lays out whatever those plans or those  
25 goals or whatever it is that we've laid out here under one

1 umbrella missing—without the employer, commissioner, workforce,  
2 labor, and [inaudible], just one document.

3 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: I accept that amendment as  
4 well.

5 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: I second the motion.

6 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: All right, it's been moved  
7 and seconded.

8 COMMISSIONER TREVIÑO: Yes, I agree.

9 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: One, two, three, we're  
10 unanimous.

11 MR. TOWNSEND: Thank you.

12 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Anything else that we need  
13 to discuss here today?

14 MR. SERNA: [inaudible] Regarding this?

15 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: No. There's just so much  
16 more, Mr. Serna, so much more.

17 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Oh, oh, is this not  
18 the end of the meeting? [inaudible] I was ready to mention ice  
19 cream, we're going upstairs. Let me get back on track here.

20 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Is there any other  
21 business to come before the commission?

22 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: There is no other  
23 business. Are you getting ready to adjourn this meeting?

24 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: I am.

25

1 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: All right, there's  
2 ice cream on the third floor. I mean thank you.

3 MARY YORK: We still have lots of ice cream.

4 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Melted ice cream is  
5 good.

6 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: [inaudible]

7 MARY YORK: No, we have a freezer. It's  
8 hopefully been frozen.

9 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: I like melted ice  
10 cream.

11 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Stick it in the freezer.

12 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: [Inaudible].

13 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: If there's no other  
14 business, is there a motion to adjourn?

15 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: There is a motion to  
16 adjourn.

17 COMMISSIONER TREVIÑO: I second the motion.

18 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: It's been moved and  
19 seconded to adjourn, and we are unanimously adjourned.

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