

Texas Workforce Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Second Chances Offered: Texas Workforce Commission Partners with Workforce Solutions Cameron, Workforce Solutions and the U.S. Department of Labor for \$1,225,502 Reentry Project

AUSTIN – The Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) was recently awarded a \$1,225,502 grant from the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) for the "Texas Pathways to Reentry" project to offer career pathway options for former offenders in high demand sectors in South Texas using a combination of basic skills, technical skills, and post-secondary opportunities toward successful employment. The project, a partnership alongside two regional Boards: [Workforce Solutions Cameron](#) and [Workforce Solutions](#), kicked off with an announcement event (and tour) in Weslaco attended by TWC Commissioner of Labor Julian Alvarez.

“Everybody makes mistakes. Meanwhile, every Texan deserves the opportunity to provide for their family regardless of any past mistakes,” said TWC Commissioner Representing Labor Julian Alvarez. “We are honored to be part of this incredible partnership, providing individuals with the skills and confidence to excel in high-demand industries in South Texas. I applaud each and every individual striving for a second chance.”

The “Texas Pathways to Reentry” project will serve a minimum of 153 individuals, with a cost per individual not to exceed \$8,000. The beneficiaries of the grant are current and former offenders living in or returning to Cameron, Hidalgo and Willacy Counties. Participants will be individually assessed to determine risks, needs, and barriers related to employment. Case managers will use the assessments together to develop an overall career pathway and service strategy. Services will also be structured to address the specific barriers identified during the assessment process.

The program seeks to address our nation’s elevated recidivism rate through skills training and self-supporting employment. The program will focus on training and apprenticeship programs that lead to an industry recognized credential in high-demand occupations in the local workforce. The goal for all program participants is unsubsidized employment or placement in a training program or an apprenticeship program that leads to a credential and related employment.

Registered Apprenticeship combines on-the-job paid employment and related classroom training with a career pathway identified at the point of entering the program. Each apprentice is assigned to a journey worker, who will mentor the apprentice on the job, and to an instructor during the related classroom training. In 2018, the apprenticeship programs TWC has funded showed first-year completion rates of 75 percent.

The TWC will be able to coordinate with local boards to apply these federal funds to help at-risk job applicants, such as ex-offenders, get and keep jobs. Through free [fidelity bonding](#), a type of insurance policy that protects the employer against employee acts of dishonesty such as larceny, embezzlement, and theft, the TWC and the

Workforce Development Boards can reduce employers' concerns about hiring at-risk job applicants who cannot be bonded through other sources.

One of the goals of this grant initiative is to continue building on the renewed interest in reentry programs and demonstrate the effectiveness of providing evidence-based dedicated services in improving outcomes for this population. TWC has identified the high-crime, high-poverty communities in the contiguous tri-county area consisting of Cameron, Willacy, and Hidalgo Counties as the target area for this initiative. The program will serve violent and non-violent adult offenders age 25 years and older, who reside in or are returning to the target area. Participants must be currently incarcerated with a release date that is within six months from the enrollment date, previously incarcerated and released within two years of enrollment, or residing in a residential reentry center.

This project will be fully financed with Federal money.

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The Texas Workforce Commission is a state agency dedicated to helping Texas employers, workers and communities prosper economically. For details on TWC and the services it offers in coordination with its network of local workforce development boards, call 512-463-8942 or visit www.texasworkforce.org. To receive notifications about TWC programs and services subscribe to our [email updates](#).