

Untapped Populations / Workforce Opportunity Subcommittee Meeting Agenda

September 17th, 2026, 3 pm

Microsoft Teams meeting Join:

<https://teams.microsoft.com/meet/227533071785334?p=cdGHUxWqw0Dbhb3pFC>

Meeting ID: 227 533 071 785 334

Passcode: ms6kX2QR

Committee Members:

Member	Attendance
Eben Riggs	X
Frank Leonardis	
Leslie Abbott	
Lisa Stewart	
Marco Cruz	
Paul Fletcher	X
Sean Miller	X
Rhonda Estelle	X
Nikki Stallings	X

1. Welcome and Opening Activity: The First 30 Days

The subcommittee participated in an interactive exercise examining the barriers faced by individuals returning to the workforce following incarceration. Members reviewed a scenario involving a justice-involved individual seeking employment within 30 days of release and identified the immediate challenges that could prevent a successful transition into employment.

2. Program Spotlight: PROWD

The subcommittee received an overview of Partners for Reentry Opportunities in Workforce Development (PROWD), a federally funded initiative supported by the U.S. Departments of Labor and Justice. The initiative provides career readiness, occupational training, and employment support to individuals transitioning from federal incarceration into the workforce.

The Texas Workforce Commission in partnership with 28 local workforce development boards forms Texas Workforce Solutions

Workforce Solutions Rural Capital Area is an Equal Opportunity Employer/Program

Auxiliary Aids and Services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities.

Relay TX: 711 or 1-800-735-2988 (Voice) or 1-800-735-2989 (TDD)

WSRCA - Public requests should be submitted at least 2 days prior to the meeting so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

The program uses a three-stage service delivery model designed to begin workforce preparation before release and continue support throughout the transition to community employment.

Stage 1 – Pre-Release Services: Participants engage in an 11-week career readiness program that addresses mindset, behavior, job readiness, and individualized reentry planning. Occupational training opportunities include plumbing and electrical pre-apprenticeships and commercial driver's license training. Current training activities include 15 plumbing pre-apprenticeship participants and 10 electrical pre-apprenticeship participants. One individual participating in CDL training has already obtained employment.

WSRCA is also working to establish an approved National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER) training site to support Level 1 and Level 2 plumbing and electrical apprenticeship instruction, with the correctional facility supporting the accumulation of required apprenticeship work hours.

Stage 2 – Residential Reentry: Participants transitioning to the residential reentry center in Del Valle continue receiving employment preparation and occupational training. Securing employment is an important requirement for progressing toward community supervision.

Stage 3 – Community Supervision: Services focus on occupational training, employment placement, retention, and tracking long-term employment outcomes to support successful reintegration.

The subcommittee discussed opportunities to build on the PROWD model by expanding workforce services to justice-involved individuals in state correctional facilities and exploring interventions that could begin before incarceration.

3. Employer Engagement and Second-Chance Hiring

Members explored strategies for increasing employer willingness and capacity to hire justice-involved individuals. Discussion focused on identifying what employers need to confidently consider second-chance applicants, including information about legal hiring restrictions, risk mitigation resources, and individualized assessments of applicants' qualifications.

The subcommittee identified an opportunity to strengthen the role of WSRCA Business Solutions staff in supporting second-chance employment. Providing staff with additional training and resources could help facilitate conversations with employers, address misconceptions regarding criminal backgrounds, and promote fair-chance hiring practices.

Members also discussed occupational licensing requirements that may prevent justice-involved individuals from entering certain skilled trades. WSRCA's ongoing work with the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation to facilitate electrical apprenticeship registration during incarceration was highlighted, along with discussions concerning potential preapproval opportunities for plumbing apprenticeship credentials. These efforts could reduce delays between release and employment while creating more direct pathways into high-demand, skilled occupations.

4. Building a Rural Capital Reentry Pathway

The subcommittee discussed the opportunity to build upon existing PROWD partnerships and lessons learned to establish a more comprehensive reentry employment pathway throughout the Rural Capital Area.

The discussion highlighted the importance of connecting pre-release preparation, occupational training, supportive services, employer engagement, and post-release employment retention into a coordinated service model.

Potential areas for continued development include expanding community partnerships, addressing licensing and credentialing barriers, strengthening employer education, and identifying opportunities to extend successful strategies to additional justice-involved populations.

5. Subcommittee Leadership

Pushed to November 2026 meeting.

6. Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Untapped Populations / Workforce Opportunity Subcommittee is scheduled for November 19, 2026, at 3:00 p.m.

