

1 **2023 Reentry Conference**
2 Discussion Paper
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4 **Background**

5 The Texas Workforce Commission hosted the first-ever GRACE (Growth through Reentry to Advance Careers &
6 Employment) Conference held on Friday, July 29, 2022, in San Antonio. It was a one-day event, funded through a
7 donation to the agency by the IKEA Foundation. Two hundred sixty-six (266) people registered for the event, and
8 approximately 145 were in attendance.
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10 The conference's purpose was to offer Texas employers an opportunity to learn how to increase their workforce
11 while helping the formerly incarcerated individuals gain meaningful employment and the chance for a fresh start.
12 TWC promoted the event to businesses around the state interested in developing a new talent pipeline with
13 second chance individuals. In addition to the various speakers and panel discussions, there were also 10 booths
14 featuring partnering organizations available to answer questions about working with this population. The
15 conference was very well received and there was excellent audience engagement after each panel and testimonial.
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17 **Request**

18 On August 9, 2022, Commissioner Alvarez requested staff draft a discussion paper to explore available funding to
19 host a second reentry conference. After reviewing the costs for the 2022 conference, staff developed a budget of
20 \$29,500 to host approximately 200 people, although a source of funding has not yet been identified. This budget
21 would not include lunch but there would not be a registration fee. The budget includes the venue, audio/visual
22 needs, signage and TWC staff travel. Staff also considered charging an \$80 registration fee to cover on-site lunch so
23 the program can continue through the lunch hour.
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25 The second event could follow a similar format as the first one, with moderated panel discussions, testimonials,
26 and booths to provide opportunities for businesses to get specific information related to hiring second chance
27 individuals. However, since a funding source has not yet been identified, a savings could be realized by aligning the
28 event with another TWC event, such as the Annual Conference. It is expected that by doing so the agency would
29 reduce the costs for the venue and related expenses by at least one-third, with the total cost estimated between
30 \$15,000 and \$20,000.
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32 **Decision Point**

33 Staff seeks Commission direction on how to proceed regarding future GRACE Conferences and funding.
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