

# STATE LEADER SPOTLIGHT

April 2026

## Jennifer K. Colehower, J.D.

### Division Director

Information Innovation & Insight (I|3)

Texas Workforce Commission (TWC)



Jennifer K. Colehower leads strategic modernization efforts and cross agency data initiatives that inform Texas' workforce programs. She recently sponsored collaborative work with the [Workforce IT Support Center](#) (Workforce ITSC) on federal reporting and data quality improvements.

### Key Takeaways for States

- ✓ **Integration requires a data-first approach**, with a focus on unifying metrics, visualizations, and customer information across programs.
- ✓ **Collaboration with higher education partners supports training initiatives for both the workforce and employers**, including aligning program definitions and exploring systems to track student outcomes and provider accountability.
- ✓ **Enhanced wage data will support better understanding of training investments and student outcomes**, including provider accountability and analysis of workforce talent supply and employer demand.
- ✓ **Successful system modernization starts with clear and detailed data requirements**, including well-established data dictionaries and defined reporting needs before procurement and implementation.
- ✓ **Leveraging partners like Workforce ITSC with both programmatic and technical expertise can accelerate progress**, while also enabling peer learning and shared solutions across states.

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Jennifer K.  
Colehower

*Read the full interview on the following pages.*

# FULL INTERVIEW

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## Vision & Role

### 1. In a sentence or two, how do you describe your responsibilities as Division Director of Information Innovation & Insight at TWC?

By providing critical data and analysis, this role guides both the daily operations and long-term strategic improvements of TWC programs. It promotes TWC's customer excellence strategy by ensuring program leaders can leverage key data to inform their decisions. This work aims to improve service outcomes for job seekers and workers and connect employers with skilled talent.

### 2. How are case management and reporting structured within TWC?

TWC has a unique case management and reporting structure because it is one of a few states with a single state agency responsible for administering a wide array of both federal and state workforce development programs. While this integrated, multi-service model presents a significant opportunity for holistic service delivery, it also creates the challenge of overcoming data silos between distinct programs.

Strategically, TWC's approach to case management has evolved from legacy systems to a combination of vendor-based and modernized, agency-designed systems. Despite this separation in operational platforms, the I | 3 division continues to move toward a single, integrated data information system in Tableau. To the greatest extent possible, the goal is to unify metrics, visualizations, and customer information in one place. This will create a holistic view across TWC's major programs and provide the data needed to seamlessly integrate services for customers, regardless of funding sources.

This centralized data system, managed by a dedicated performance reporting team, is essential for navigating the complexity of the agency's services. When achieved, the team's work would provide a unified perspective that cuts across key programs, including Child Care, Unemployment Insurance (UI), Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), Adult Education and Literacy, WIOA Title I (for adult, dislocated worker, and youth services), and WIOA Title III (Wagner-Peyser).

### 3. What workforce data alignments or reporting changes are TWC preparing to address next — and how is Texas approaching them?

Regarding Workforce Pell, teams at TWC are collaborating closely with our state's higher education counterparts to implement this new financial aid opportunity. The

program is designed to support training for both the workforce and employers, with a particular focus on high-skill, high-demand occupations. This collaboration involves aligning definitions and identifying occupational groups and programs that meet the parameters established in April 2026. We anticipate that this federal investment will empower workers to secure better jobs with higher skills and pay, and will be in high demand from students, training providers, and employers alike once they recognize the opportunities. We are also considering systems to manage provider accountability and track student outcomes.

In parallel with the Workforce Pell investments, the Texas Legislature mandated that TWC enhance UI wage records. These enhancements will allow us to better understand training investments and student outcomes, hold training providers accountable, and analyze the balance between the workforce's talent supply and employer demand for skilled workers. TWC is leveraging the modernization of the UI IT systems to incorporate new data elements into wage records. These will include occupation, county of primary employment, industry, full-time or part-time status, and remote work status. The system is expected to go live in December 2026, and we are taking steps to prepare employers for providing this new data, which we expect will improve over time. The data from the enhanced wage records will also be instrumental in evaluating student outcomes in programs supported by Workforce Pell investments.

## Strategy & Modernization Priorities

### **4. In the recent case management system change from a custom system to a vendor platform, what have been the biggest takeaways that you would share with other states?**

From a data perspective, the biggest takeaway I can share from transitioning to a new case management system is the necessity of being data-centric from the very beginning. This process starts long before procurement by being incredibly specific and granular about the data the new system must produce, taking into account the diverse needs of every department, team, and external user. Because context matters, a critical starting point is to have a well-established, ambitiously detailed data dictionary for your existing systems and build from there. This dictionary provides the foundation needed to demand well-developed data dictionaries and clear data delivery requirements from vendors for the new system, ensuring these are baked into every stage of the contracting process through implementation. It could also fall to you to be stubbornly demanding that no system should go live

without fully vetted, independently verified performance and operational reports that meet the specific needs of business users and your programs. A careful understanding of system configuration—and bringing in experts to assist with those decisions—directly impacts the resulting data and performance. It is probably the single most critical factor for success. Finally, acknowledge that this is far easier said than done, and figure out ways to resource support teams that venture into doing this work while also managing their day jobs administering programs. It is not for the faint of heart.

## Data Quality, Reporting & Interoperability

### 5. You sponsored a collaborative effort with NASWA/Workforce ITSC to review TWC's data and federal reporting processes. What were the benefits of contracting with Workforce ITSC vs other options?

The primary benefit of contracting with Workforce ITSC was the team's unique combination of programmatic experience and technical expertise. Their deep understanding of the federal workforce development system, especially the finer points of WIOA data and reporting, meant that our team could bypass the lengthy process of training external consultants about workforce data and performance policy.

This collaboration also proved to be an invaluable opportunity for our team to engage with the broader workforce development community. It allowed us to build new relationships in data analytics, find clear solutions for our most significant reporting challenges, and connect with peers in other states. This interstate connection was particularly helpful, fostering a sense of camaraderie as we worked on collaborative solutions. And it is great to now have them on speed dial.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

An overview Workforce ITSC's work with Texas to evaluate and improve federal workforce reporting processes, along with recommendations to support organizations seeking to modernize and streamline their workforce reporting practices can be found in the [WITSC Project Report: Workforce Reporting Data Analysis](#).

Workforce ITSC is committed to creating innovative, comprehensive, and tailored solutions that adapt to the evolving digital landscape. Workforce ITSC's team of experienced professionals offers an array of customizable strategic and project support designed to meet each state's unique needs. As a trusted partner, Workforce ITSC delivers best-in-class services focused on helping states address the distinct challenges that technology plays in addressing the public sector's needs and expectations.

Email: [witsc@naswa.org](mailto:witsc@naswa.org)

Visit: [www.naswa.org/witsc](http://www.naswa.org/witsc)