

Supplemental Schedule F. Agency Workforce Plan

Texas Commission on Jail Standards



Workforce Plan FY 2025-2029

**Texas Commission on Jail Standards
Workforce Plan 2025-2029**

Agency Overview

The Texas Legislature created the Commission on Jail Standards in 1975 to implement a declared state policy that all county jail facilities conform to minimum standards of construction, maintenance, and operation. In 1983, the Texas Legislature expanded the jurisdiction of the commission to include county and municipal jails operated under vendor contract. In 1991, the Texas Legislature added the requirement for count, payment, and transfer of inmates when precipitated by crowded conditions as well as expanding the commission's role of consultation and technical assistance. In 1993, the legislative function expanded the role of the commission again by requiring that it provide consultation and technical assistance for the State Jail program. In 1997, the Texas legislature affirmed that counties, municipalities and private vendors housing out-of-state inmates are within the commission's jurisdiction. It is the duty of the commission to promulgate reasonable written rules and procedures establishing minimum standards, inspection procedures, enforcement policies and technical assistance for:

- 1. The construction, equipment, maintenance, and operation of jail facilities under its jurisdiction;**
- 2. The custody, care and treatment of inmates;**
- 3. Programs of rehabilitation, education, and recreation for inmates confined in county and municipal jail facilities under its jurisdiction.**

The Commission's office is in downtown Austin, Texas, and there are currently 25 FTE's and 28 are appropriated and budgeted. One new inspector is scheduled to begin in June and a support specialist shortly afterwards.

Agency Mission

The mission of the Texas Commission on Jail Standards is to empower local government to provide safe, secure and suitable local jail facilities through proper rules and procedures while promoting innovative programs and ideas. During its regular session of 1975, the 64th Legislature enacted House Bill 272 creating the Texas Commission on Jail Standards in an effort to end federal court intervention into county jail matters and return jail control to state and local jurisdictions. Formerly through Title 81 of the Civil Statutes and currently through Chapters 499 and 511 of the Government Code, the state has evinced a strong commitment to improving conditions in the jails by granting us the authority and responsibility to promulgate and enforce minimum standards for jail construction, equipment, maintenance, and operation. Related duties and rules are set forth in Chapters 351 and 361 of the Local Government Code, Title 37 of the Administrative Code, and our own Minimum Jail Standards.

Strategic Goals, Objectives, and Related Functions

Goal 1 - Inspection and Enforcement: Develop and implement a uniform process to inspect, monitor compliance and ensure due process in enforcement of standards for local jails.

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Objective: Monitor local facilities and enforce standards Strategy: Perform inspection of facilities and enforce standards

Goal 2 - Construction Plan Review: Develop and implement a comprehensive facility needs analysis program and review and comment on construction documents for construction projects.

Objective: Provide consultation and training for jail construction/operation. Strategy: Assist with facility need analysis and construction document review.

Goal 3 - Management Consultation: Review and approve jail operation plans, provide needed jail management training and consultation and perform objective jail staffing analyses.

Objective: Provide consultation and training for jail construction/operation Strategy: Assist with staffing analysis, operating plans and program development.

Goal 4 - Auditing Population and Costs: Collect, analyze and disseminate data concerning inmate population, felony backlog and jail operational costs.

Objective: Implement process to relieve crowding or ensure accurate compensation Strategy: Collect and analyze data concerning inmate population, backlogs and costs.

Through Chapters 499 and 511 of the *Government Code*, the Commission on Jail Standards is given the authority and responsibility to promulgate and enforce minimum standards for jail construction, equipment, maintenance, and operations. Texas Minimum Jail Standards are contained in Title 37, Part IX, and Chapters 251 – 301 of the Texas Administrative Code. Related duties and rules are set forth in Chapters 351 and 361 of the *Local Government Code*.

Most of our activities are oriented toward county functions; however, we retain the responsibility to regulate privately operated county and municipal facilities. Our principal operations include on-site inspections of jails to verify compliance with standards, review of proposed construction and renovation plans to assess conformity to standards, provision of jail management technical assistance and training, administration of inmate population reports and audits, resolution of inmate grievances, providing counties with objective staffing and facility needs analyses, and various other activities relating to policy development and enforcement.

Primary relationships exist with county judges, commissioners, and sheriffs. Secondary relationships are maintained with architectural firms, private operators, criminal justice professional associations and regulatory agencies concerned with issues such as fire safety, legal matters, and civil liberties. Jail inmates awaiting trial, serving sentences, or awaiting transfer to the Texas Department of Criminal Justice Institutional Division, jail staff and the public are served by the enforcement of standards that are based on safety, security, and sanitation.

While on-site inspections remain the most visible activity, awareness of our ability to provide technical assistance has increased due mostly to a strong effort to provide quality regional training and a greater emphasis on providing assistance by all staff, including the Inspectors.

Administrative staff provide internal administrative support to the agency, including human resources, accounting, budgeting, information technology, reporting and other staff services functions.

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Anticipated Changes in Strategies

Though the mission of the agency has not changed, the passage of HB1545(87R) has required the agency to slightly modify portions of our strategies and goals in order to comply. The most drastic of these changes revolve around the migration from an annual inspection cycle to one that is risk-based. In addition, a focus on inmate complaints was evident in the Sunset Staff report which the agency is attempting to address.

Due to the continued growth in state population and inflationary concerns, the agency is anticipating an increase in the number of non-compliant county jails. This can partly be attributed to the enhanced enforcement and inspection process recommended by the Sunset Commission. Due to the increased number of complaints and the additional staff to process them, the number of founded complaints will potentially rise along with noncompliance. The environment in which these regulated entities operate has been severely impacted and the current workforce is reluctant to consider a career in corrections at the salaries most counties offer. Despite a recent increase in court activity, the intake rate to the state prison system has slowed, thus increasing county jail population.

While the Commission does not anticipate significant change to the agency's mission or strategies, our goals may have to change due to the new risk-based inspection process over the next five years. The Commission is and will remain committed to providing high quality service and advice to county jails and ensure that counties are working to maintain safe, healthy, and secure jails in their communities. With time, of course, adjustments are often necessary in the strategies used to meet these goals. The emphasis on information technology in the agency will be a major driver in the future of the Commission; however, a small yet dedicated workforce of professional and administrative personnel will continue to keep the agency on course toward achieving its goals and stated mission.

Current Workforce Profile

a) Skills

Every Commission employee is valuable to the success of agency operations. A majority of the 28 employees have more than one critical function. Some of the critical skills required to complete our mission include customer service, auditing, communication, problem solving, accounting, project management, and information analysis.

b) Demographics

The following data reflect the current profile of the agency's workforce as of May 2024. As of May 2024, the Commission's workforce is comprised of 56% male and 44% female. 8% are African American, 8% are Hispanic and 84% are Caucasian. The agency has over 20% of veterans employed, far higher than the latest statewide average of 5.9%. The average age for the Agency staff is approximately 47 and staff have an average of 3 years with the agency. The Agency's positions are as follows:

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Occupational Category	Headcount
Accounting, Auditing, and Finance	1
Administrative Support	2
Information Technology	1
Inspectors and Investigators	8
Planning, Research, and Statistics	1
Program Management	12

(Source: Internal data and State Auditor’s Office/E-Class system)

c) Employee Turnover

In FY 2023, there were five separations from the agency including interagency transfers. The Agency hired a new Assistant Director in FY23. The longest tenured employee has been with the agency for 25 years. 72% of staff members have been with the agency for less than 5 years.

d) Employee Attrition

Just over twelve percent or three staff members of the Agency’s employees will be eligible to retire within the next 5 years. Replacements for these positions may be difficult to find due to the loss of institutional knowledge, key positions, and the combination of numerous years of experience. When long-term experienced individuals vacate positions, it is our practice to fill those positions at a lower level until the individual gains experience in that position and then promote or provide merit increases. The issue of attrition is further addressed later in this report in section “IV Gap Analysis.”

Future Workforce

e) Expected Workforce Changes

The Commission on Jail Standards will likely be affected by state-wide workforce factors primarily driven by competition for employees and cost of living increases which will influence being able to recruit and retain staff. Due to agency salaries falling below statewide agency and market average salaries, the agency implemented a flex schedule to incentivize employment and retention. A work from home option was offered for office staff, an option already utilized by field staff. These arrangements are critical and no longer viewed as options by existing and potential employees. The issue and impact of inflation has placed a further strain on recruitment efforts as well. With rising fuel prices, employees that did not live in the Austin metro area and surrounding communities now find it difficult to justify even two days of travel to the office and often seek employment in closer proximity to their residence. Only 5 agency home office employees live within 20 miles of headquarters. Unless a concerted effort is undertaken and achieved to increase the salaries of our staff, we will continue to experience high turnover and loss of knowledge and capability.

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f) Future Workforce Skills Needed

Communication and interpersonal skills will continue to be critical, as the agency staff has daily contact with the public and with county officials. Computer skills are also vital, as the agency continues to upgrade information resources, dependent on available funding.

g) Number of Employees Needed

Currently the agency has three vacancies. After the Sunset Review that resulted in HB1545, the agency undertook a review of how its FTEs were allocated. After the study, several FTEs were repurposed to meet the most urgent demands. The largest shift has occurred in the Inspection & Enforcement Strategy, which has been increased, specifically in the area of Complaint Investigations. Prior to HB1545, there was one FTE assigned, but the workload became untenable, and was a major contributing factor to continuous turnover. This in turn led to an increased backlog as the agency would temporarily assign other staff until the position could be filled. Even after the position was filled, it is estimated that it required at a minimum six months to become proficient in this task. The decision to reassign FTEs was only possible due to the conclusion of a statutorily mandated training program. Two of the three FTEs assigned to that program were shifted to complaints, but the workload has only continued to increase. To operate at a level that is acceptable to complainants and counties (who are required to respond then await a ruling), a fourth Inspector, a dedicated administrative support FTE and a first level supervisor were added to the division. In the upcoming LAR for FY25-26, we are requesting a quality control specialist to assist with all aspects of internal auditing.

In addition to the complaints increase, the agency has moved to a risk-based inspection program which was envisioned to reduce the workload of the field inspectors and eliminate the attrition we have experienced in that section. While retention has improved, the requirement to conduct a random percentage of all re-inspections as full, comprehensive inspections as mandated by HB1545 has reduced the envisioned efficiency. Management is continuing to review this conflict and has implemented changes to address this concern.

The agency was named by the Governor to the Border Security Task Force. Previously, the additional duties associated with advising and assisting with Operation Lone Star were undertaken by the Executive Director and two existing staff members. After HB9 87(2) was passed, the monies that the agency was appropriated were used to backfill the cost of any time that existing employees expended on Operation Lone Star rather than attempting to recruit and retain one FTE that possessed all the required skills. During the 88th legislative session sufficient funding was provided to employ sufficient staff and accomplish the required tasks.

h) Critical Functions that must be performed

The performance of all agency functions is critical to achieving the agency's goals and objectives which are directly tied to statutorily mandated duties. The agency is not carrying out any function that is not directly related to our reason for being.

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Gap Analysis

Anticipated Surplus or Shortage of Staffing Levels or Skills:

The agency has a concern that its ability to attract future employees and retain current employees who possess the needed skills may be impaired by a disparity in salaries between state employees and employees in private industry or other governmental entities. In addition to the disparity, the high cost of living in the Austin metro area makes it difficult to attract qualified individuals. This often results in the hiring of individuals that reside in excess of 30 miles from our headquarters in downtown Austin. This in turn results in excessive commutes that impact employee morale and is exacerbated by the complete lack of infrastructure planning and congested roadways that exemplify the Austin-metro area. To mitigate the traffic and commute employment downside, the agency implemented a “telecommute” program, to assist with retention. It is very difficult to attract quality professional candidates that possess the skill sets necessary to advance into management and leadership roles with current pay levels and the agency must explore other flexible benefits. The agency has a small and dedicated team of professionals, but an honest assessment of the challenges faced by management concerning vacancies that occur periodically, is necessary to retain them.

Over the past two years, the agency has lost key employees to Texas counties or to retirement. As a smaller agency, employees are exposed to multiple disciplines that makes them very attractive to other entities that can offer higher salaries. In addition, they are also able to offer them positions that allow them to focus on a single subject area and become experts in that area as part of their own professional development. Unless the agency can offer competitive salaries and offer other flexibility, this issue will only continue to grow and will determinately impact the agency’s ability to carry out its mission and statutorily mandated duties.

Strategy Development

a) Retention Programs

Historically, the agency has supported its employees by awarding merit increases and utilized retention bonus programs. These have been given to employees who perform above satisfactory levels. Additionally, the agency continually strives to promote from within and maintain a work environment that allows flexibility without compromising productivity. The agency implemented an alternate work schedule to address needs and to reduce the physical and financial burden of long-distance commutes to the office. All agency employees are enrolled in this program and have had the opportunity to telecommute. The agency believes that this assists in retaining valuable, qualified personnel.

However, even by utilizing this approach and even if additional FTEs are appropriated, there will continue to be turnover that is unacceptable unless salaries are raised to a level that is seen as competitive.

b) Recruitment Plans

To the fullest extent possible, the agency will strive to recruit the number of qualified individuals

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required to carry out the agency's mission without regards to ethnicity, disability, religion or gender.

c) Employee Training and Career Development

The agency provides specific subject and organizational training. This includes equal employment opportunity, sexual harassment, cybersecurity, and procedural training. The transition to CAPPS HR allows the agency to track employee training more effectively. The agency utilizes cross training to enhance the knowledge and skill levels of all employees and prepare for retirements and attrition. The agency provides for the cost of training when in the best interest of the agency, and where funding permits. The agency transitioned September 1, 2019 to CAPPS Financials as part of the statewide mandate and later transitioned to CAPPS Human Resources in June of 2022. The agency managed these transitions without additional financial resources.

d) Leadership Development

Cross training is essential in leadership development for a small agency. Division managers share their experience and knowledge with staff. The agency provides leadership training for professional staff, subject to budgetary constraints.

e) Succession Planning

All the factors indicated for organizational training, employee, leadership and career development are essential in planning for succession. Additionally, the agency will maintain awareness of qualified sources outside of the agency.