

**Project RIO  
2007-2008 Exit Cohort**

Each year, the federal and state criminal justice systems in the United States release over 650,000 prisoners back into society with the aim of successfully reintegrating them back into society and the labor market so they may become contributing members of both. The State of Texas accounts for over 10% of the returning ex-offenders, releasing over 70,000 inmates each year from Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) correctional facilities alone. These returning ex-offenders face multiple barriers to successful reintegration, including considerations such as housing, transportation, and health issues. Perhaps the most daunting of these barriers is securing employment. Project Reintegration of Offenders (Project RIO) is the State of Texas' effort to prepare for and facilitate the transition of ex-offenders and adjudicated youth into meaningful employment opportunities.

Project RIO is a collaborative partnership between three state agencies, the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ), the Texas Youth Commission (TYC), and the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC). It helps ex-offenders and adjudicated youth reenter the labor market by equipping them with the necessary skills, attitudes, and abilities, and guiding them toward post-release job opportunities.

Pre-release Project RIO services are provided by TDCJ and TYC within their respective correctional facilities to prepare offenders and adjudicated youth for their eventual return to the labor market. Services for adult offenders are prioritized based upon projected release date. TYC adjudicated youth are generally offered services six months from projected release. In the correctional environment, Project RIO promotes vocational, academic, and life skills preparation to releasees, refers participants to relevant correctional unit work assignments, develops reentry plans, and assists participants with obtaining the documents necessary to secure and retain employment after release.

Post-release Project RIO services are provided through cooperative agreements between TWC and the 28 Local Workforce Development Boards (Boards) serving Texas employers and job seekers. These services build upon the services provided to TDCJ offenders and TYC adjudicated youth during incarceration. Post-release services are offered to adult ex-offenders for a period up to one year following the discharge of their sentence. TYC adjudicated youth ages 16 through 21 are also targeted for post-release Project RIO services. Criminal justice parole partners play a critical role in referring unemployed and underemployed ex-offenders and adjudicated youth to the Texas workforce system for services.

The goal of post-release services is to help ex-offenders and adjudicated youth gain employment as quickly as possible through employment referral services. If the ex-offender requires more intensive services to compete in the labor market, Boards provide these services through such funding streams as the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training (SNAP E&T), and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Choices.

## Seed Records

The Labor Market and Career Information (LMCI) department received 54,888 duplicated records from The Workforce Information System of Texas (TWIST). The seed records consisted of persons with a record existing in TWIST with a TWC Project RIO flag in the record. This is an important point because it does not take into account additional ex-offenders who received a service funded by Project RIO during this report timeframe but who did not have a Project RIO flag in the TWIST databases. The records analyzed for this report by no means represent all individuals served by the many different partners in Project RIO; just those served by TWC with a RIO flag in TWIST who exited between the dates of October 1, 2007 to September 30, 2008.

Each seed record represents a unique combination of a client Social Security Number (SSN) and a program service they received. Because clients could receive more than one service, the input file included the same SSN multiple times. Seed records were grouped by SSN and by service category, resulting in 35,859 usable, duplicate records. After unduplicating the file by SSN, there were 12,246 unique records.

The seed records were then linked to the UI Wage Records database for the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of 2008 to determine employment and earnings. Earnings were summed across unique SSN and the 4-digit North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) code of the employer that paid the highest wages was retained for analysis. In the case where participants who were found working had earnings greater than or equal to \$25,000 in any target quarter were identified, these records were excluded from analysis based on the likelihood of inaccurate wage record data and to reduce the possibility of inappropriately skewing the data.

Supplemental employment linkages were performed with the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD), the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM), and the U.S. Postal Service (USPS), as well as the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) for linkage to the postsecondary master enrollment records for the fall semester of 2008.

Finally, the seed records were linked to the Texas Bureau of Vital Statistics (TBVS) in order to determine if any former program participants were deceased. All records with positive matches have been excluded from further analysis. After all exclusions, the final number of records retained for analysis was 12,179.

**Results**

Female RIO participants had the highest employment percentage during the 4th quarter of 2008 with 52.2 percent employed (Table 1). Each side of the table has been sorted independently of the other, with the overall cohort total included in the sort. This allows for the ranked display of two different pieces of information in the same table, and it also allows us to see how the groups compared to the total employment and earnings. Excluding participants whose gender was not identified in the seed records, males had the highest median earnings in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of 2008 at \$3,771. Overall, the cohort had employment of 50.3 percent, with median earnings of \$3,547.

**Table 1. Employment and Earnings by Gender**

<b>% Working</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Gender</b>		<b>N</b>	<b>Median Earnings</b>	
52.2	1,906	Female		Unknown	\$5,524	
<b>50.3</b>	<b>12,179</b>	<b>Total</b>		Male	10,203	\$3,771
50.0	10,203	Male		<b>Total</b>	<b>12,179</b>	<b>\$3,547</b>
42.9	70	Unknown		Female	1,906	\$2,614

Table 2 displays employment for the exit cohort by racial sub-group without regard for ethnicity. Hawaiian Native or Pacific Islanders had the highest employment with 61.1 percent. American Indians were second with 56.8 percent employed. Whites were the largest sub-group, with 51.5 percent employed. Asians had the highest median quarterly earnings with \$4,918, followed by American Indians with \$4,183.

**Table 2. Employment and Earnings by Race (without Regard to Ethnicity)**

<b>% Working</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Race</b>		<b>N</b>	<b>Median Earnings</b>	
61.1	18	Hawaiian Native or Pacific Islander		Asian	\$4,918	
56.8	132	American Indian		American Indian	132	\$4,183
52.9	2,374	Other/Unknown		Hawaiian Native or Pacific Islander	18	\$3,831
51.5	5,153	White		White	5,153	\$3,792
<b>50.3</b>	<b>12,179</b>	<b>Total</b>		Other/Unknown	2,374	\$3,687
49.1	57	Asian		<b>Total</b>	<b>12,179</b>	<b>\$3,547</b>
47.2	4,445	Black		Black	4,445	\$3,122

RIO exiters in the Work Against Recidivism (WAR) division had the highest employment in the target quarter with 57.9 percent employed (Table 3). The largest number of exiters came from the Institutional Division by far, and their post-exit employment was 50.1 percent. Exiters from the WAR division had the highest median quarterly earnings, \$5,452, followed by Institutional Division exiters with \$3,595.

**Table 3. Employment and Earnings by RIO Correctional Division**

<b>% Working</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>RIO Correctional Division</b>		<b>N</b>	<b>Median Earnings</b>	
57.9	19	WAR		WAR	19	\$5,452
52.3	1,414	State Jail Division		Institutional Division	10,605	\$3,595
<b>50.3</b>	<b>12,179</b>	<b>Total</b>		<b>Total</b>	<b>12,179</b>	<b>\$3,547</b>
50.1	10,605	Institutional Division		State Jail Division	1,414	\$3,103
44.7	141	TYC		TYC	141	\$2,793

Excluding services with an “N” less than 20, participants receiving EDP/IEP/ISS Development services had the highest employment in the target quarter at 61.9 percent (Table 4). Those receiving the WOTC Eligibility service had the second-highest employment at 58.6 percent. Job Search Assistance/Job Search was the service most received, and participants receiving that service had employment of 50.3 percent. Excluding services with cell sizes too small to display, RIO exiters receiving the Occupational/Vocational Training service had median quarterly earnings over the study period at \$5,880, while those receiving WOTC Eligibility services had earnings of \$5,586. Participants receiving Job Search Assistance had median quarterly earnings of \$3,533.

**Table 4. Employment and Earnings by Service Received**

<b>% Working</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Service</b>		<b>N</b>	<b>Median Earnings</b>	
100.0	n/a	Bonding Assistance		Prevocational Services	n/a	\$8,423
100.0	n/a	On-the-Job Training		Initial Assessment	n/a	\$7,795
100.0	n/a	Prevocational Services		GED Test Payment	n/a	\$5,946
100.0	n/a	Other		Occupational/Vocational Training	91	\$5,880
100.0	n/a	GED Test Payment		Labor Market Information	19	\$5,594
61.9	21	EDP/IEP/ISS Development		WOTC Eligibility	29	\$5,586
58.8	17	Work Experience/Skills Training		Job Development	n/a	\$4,964
58.6	29	WOTC Eligibility		Work Related Expense	7	\$4,413
57.1	91	Occupational/Vocational Training		Outreach/Intake/Orientation	65	\$4,271
57.1	7	Work Related Expense		Case Management	n/a	\$4,150
<b>50.3</b>	<b>12,179</b>	<b>Total</b>		Job Search Basic	12	\$4,139
50.3	11,852	Job Search Assistance/Job Search		Work Experience/Skills Training	17	\$3,791
50.0	n/a	Case Management		<b>Total</b>	<b>12,179</b>	<b>\$3,547</b>
46.2	13	Counseling		Job Search Assistance/Job Search	11,852	\$3,533
45.5	33	Transportation		Transportation	33	\$3,321
43.1	65	Outreach/Intake/Orientation		On-the-Job Training	n/a	\$3,257
42.1	19	Labor Market Information		EDP/IEP/ISS Development	21	\$3,245
41.7	12	Job Search Basic		Counseling	13	\$2,924
33.3	n/a	Job Development		Other	n/a	\$1,713
25.0	n/a	Initial Assessment		Bonding Assistance	n/a	\$799
n/a	n/a	Internal Support service	Internal Support service	n/a	n/a	
n/a	n/a	Training - Non-TWC	Training - Non-TWC	n/a	n/a	
n/a	n/a	Housing/Rental Assistance	Housing/Rental Assistance	n/a	n/a	

**Note:** Cells with values less than 5 are marked “n/a” to protect the privacy of cohort members.

Table 5 shows employment and earnings in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of 2008 for RIO participants by service group. Most participants received services from the Core Work Search Activity group, and that group had employment over the period at 50.3 percent. Participants receiving Marketing Incentives group services had the highest employment at 61.3 percent. Those receiving Marketing Incentives group services had the highest median earnings with \$5,526. Participants receiving the Core Work Search Activity service had median quarterly earnings of \$3,534 during the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of 2008.

**Table 5. Employment by Service Group**

<b>% Working</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Service Group</b>		<b>N</b>	<b>Median Earnings</b>
61.3	31	Marketing Incentives	Marketing Incentives	31	\$5,526
57.7	111	Employment & Training	Employment & Training	111	\$4,677
51.9	54	Support Activities to Work Search	Procedural	74	\$4,242
<b>50.3</b>	<b>12,179</b>	<b>Total</b>	Support Activities to Work Search	54	\$4,053
50.3	11,867	Core Work Search Activity	<b>Total</b>	<b>12,179</b>	<b>\$3,547</b>
45.2	42	Supportive Service	Core Work Search Activity	11,867	\$3,534
43.2	74	Procedural	Supportive Service	42	\$3,321

Heart of Texas Local Workforce Development Area (LWDA) had the highest employment in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of 2008 with 72.0 percent of RIO exiters employed (Table 6). Permian Basin LWDA had 63.0 percent of their exiters employed. Gulf Coast LWDA, which had the largest number of RIO participants, had an employment rate of 42.9 percent. Participants from Heart of Texas LWDA had the highest median earnings with \$4,958, followed by Permian Basin LWDA with \$4,899. Coastal Bend LWDA rounded out the top three with median earnings of \$4,471. Gulf Coast LWDA had median quarterly earnings of \$3,949 during the study period.

**Table 6. Employment by LWDA**

<b>% Working</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>LWDA</b>		<b>N</b>	<b>Median Earnings</b>
72.0	143	Heart of Texas	Heart of Texas	143	\$4,958
63.0	292	Permian Basin	Permian Basin	292	\$4,899
62.9	240	West Central	Coastal Bend	278	\$4,471
62.1	472	Panhandle	North Central	813	\$4,332
60.5	610	South Plains	South Texas	99	\$4,000
58.2	184	North Texas	Tarrant County	765	\$3,956
58.1	136	Texoma	Gulf Coast	1,484	\$3,949
57.1	378	Central Texas	North Texas	184	\$3,776
54.8	250	Rural Capital	East Texas	433	\$3,720
54.2	155	Concho Valley	West Central	240	\$3,576
53.8	433	East Texas	<b>Total</b>	<b>12,179</b>	<b>\$3,547</b>
53.2	419	Capital Area	Southeast Texas	734	\$3,461
50.8	813	North Central	Capital Area	419	\$3,442
50.7	310	Golden Crescent	Rural Capital	250	\$3,400
50.4	278	Coastal Bend	Dallas	1,204	\$3,365
<b>50.3</b>	<b>12,179</b>	<b>Total</b>	Upper Rio Grande	528	\$3,350
50.3	189	Cameron County	Brazos Valley	257	\$3,305
50.0	180	North East Texas	Panhandle	472	\$3,300
49.5	765	Tarrant County	Deep East Texas	81	\$3,259
48.3	1,254	Alamo	Central Texas	378	\$3,254
47.9	257	Brazos Valley	South Plains	610	\$3,252
47.8	245	Lower Rio Grande Valley	Concho Valley	155	\$3,156
46.6	528	Upper Rio Grande	Texoma	136	\$3,147
45.7	46	Middle Rio Grande	Alamo	1,254	\$3,137
44.4	99	South Texas	Lower Rio Grande Valley	245	\$3,136
44.3	734	Southeast Texas	North East Texas	180	\$3,131
43.9	1,204	Dallas	Middle Rio Grande	46	\$2,925
42.9	1,484	Gulf Coast	Golden Crescent	310	\$2,710
29.6	81	Deep East Texas	Cameron County	189	\$2,640

We see in Table 7 that the most prominent industry of employment for RIO participants during the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of 2008 was the Employment Services industry (Table 7). This industry typically includes temporary agencies and other “temp-to-hire” types of jobs. The Limited-Service Eating Places industry employed the next largest group of exiters, followed by Full-Service Restaurants. Program participants employed in the Support Activities for Mining industry had the highest median earnings at \$10,309 followed by Nonresidential Building Construction with median earnings of \$5,980. Median earnings for both of those industries were well above the overall median earnings for the cohort, \$3,547.

**Table 7. Top 10 Industries of Employment by 4-Digit NAICS Code**

<b>Industry of Employment</b>	<b>N Working</b>	<b>Median Earnings</b>	<b>NAICS Code</b>
Employment Services	1,015	\$2,266	5613
Limited-Service Eating Places	533	\$2,015	7222
Full-Service Restaurants	416	\$2,346	7221
Building Equipment Contractors	224	\$5,109	2382
Animal Slaughtering and Processing	215	\$4,123	3116
Support Activities for Mining	206	\$10,309	2131
Services to Buildings and Dwellings	155	\$2,944	5617
Automotive Repair and Maintenance	135	\$2,656	8111
Nonresidential Building Construction	122	\$5,980	2362
Foundation, Structure, and Building Exterior Contractors	116	\$3,568	2381



Table 8 shows the Classification of Instructional Programming (CIP) titles of the top 10 areas of enrollment for program participants who were found enrolled in postsecondary education during the fall semester of 2008. Participants who were found in the General Studies instructional area topped the list, followed by Welding Technology/Welder. Liberal Arts and Sciences/Liberal Studies was third.

**Table 8. Top 10 Areas of Enrollment, by 6-digit CIP Code, for All Participants Enrolled in Postsecondary Education in the Fall Semester 2008**

CIP Title	N
General Studies	23
Welding Technology/Welder	15
Liberal Arts and Sciences/Liberal Studies	13
Business/Commerce, General	11
Truck and Bus Driver/Commercial Vehicle Operation	8
Business Administration and Management, General	7
Undeclared	7
Automobile/Automotive Mechanics Technology/Technician	6
Substance Abuse/Addiction Counseling	6

Table 9 shows the ten postsecondary institutions with the largest number of program participants found enrolled in the fall semester of 2008. Houston Community College had the largest number of exiters enrolled, followed by Austin Community College.

**Table 9. Top 10 Postsecondary Institutions with the Highest Number of Participants Enrolled in the Fall Semester 2008**

Institution	N
Houston Community College	21
Austin Community College	16
Amarillo College	13
DCCCD El Centro College	11
Tyler Junior College	9
El Paso Community College District	8
San Antonio College	7
Paris Junior College	5
Texas State Technical College Harlingen	5
Coastal Bend College	n/a
<b>Note:</b> Cells with values less than 5 are marked "n/a" to protect the privacy of cohort members.	

### References

Project RIO Program Information. <http://www.twc.state.tx.us/svcs/rio.html>

Project RIO Strategic Plan Fiscal Years 2010 and 2011.  
[http://www.twc.state.tx.us/svcs/rio\\_plan\\_10.pdf](http://www.twc.state.tx.us/svcs/rio_plan_10.pdf)

Texas Workforce Commission Annual Report 2009. <http://www.twc.state.tx.us/news/ar09.pdf>

TRACER. <http://www.tracer2.com>