

WorkQuest

FOCUS

on Jobs for People with Disabilities

WorkQuest Newsletter LXVI

March 2026

Link Labor and Construction: Creating pathways to purpose and self-sufficiency



Justin Smith, water technician with Link Labor and Construction, performs water meter installation as part of the team's City of Houston contract.

Since 2010, Link Labor and Construction has provided meaningful employment opportunities to individuals with disabilities across Houston.

As a certified Community Rehabilitation Program through the *WorksWonders* Program, Link Labor and Construction secures State Use contracts through WorkQuest, allowing the organization to grow its services and provide stable, skills-based jobs. Today, the team works on contracts with partners including the Army Reserve, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and the Houston airport system. Their services span water meter maintenance, plumbing support, light construction and pressure washing.

President Lesley Leigh founded Link Labor and Construction with a mission to offer more than just a paycheck—she set out to provide hands-on training and transferable skills that lead to long-term opportunities.

“We give people the opportunity to grow, to lead and to build a future,” said Leigh. “The resilience demonstrated by our crew members is a testament to their success.”

One of Link Labor and Construction's major contracts is a water meter installation contract with the City of Houston. The team begins each day by retrieving their assigned vehicle from the warehouse before traveling to the City of Houston where they checkout the laptops and tablets required for fieldwork.

From there, they proceed to the designated service site to update the water system. At each residence, technicians assess the property's water usage points (inpoints) and verify the amount of water being delivered. They determine whether adjustments are needed, such as changing inpoints, addressing stuck meters, or identifying other issues affecting performance.

Photos are taken to document the conditions and note any necessary repairs. Technicians then complete the required repairs on-site. Once the work is finished, all documentation and updates are submitted to the City of Houston through the cloud-based system.

Justin Smith, a water technician on the team, has become a standout team member. For the past two years, Smith has quickly become known for his reliability, work ethic and natural

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leadership. Today, he helps train new employees and is often called on to support other crews in the field.

“Somebody gave me a shot, an opportunity to do more and that means a lot,” said Smith. “Working here has improved my life. I’m solving problems, helping people and building something for myself.”

Link Labor and Construction fosters a team environment where employees are respected, supported and encouraged to grow. Supervisor Ira Duckworth says that shared sense of purpose is what makes the team strong.

“We work like a team out here, like a family,” said Duckworth. “If someone needs help, the others jump in. That’s just how we do it.”

Link Labor and Construction remains committed to providing meaningful employment opportunities, equipping workers with practical skills and helping individuals thrive as contributing members of their communities.

A message from the President and Chief Executive Officer **Fred M. Weber, Jr.**

As Spring begins, WorkQuest is encouraged by the continued growth and momentum of the *WorksWonders* Program. Thanks to the ongoing support of our customers and partners, we are expanding opportunities for Texans with disabilities to find meaningful employment and contribute their talents in communities across the state.



The program continues to evolve in important ways, as there is a growing emphasis on preparing individuals for long-term success through person-centered support. Opportunities that connect individuals with the broader workforce are increasing, and at the same time, the range of jobs available through the *WorksWonders* Program continues to expand, demonstrating that individuals with disabilities can succeed across many industries and fields of work.

This year, WorkQuest will continue to provide resources and support to our Community Rehabilitation Program partners through upcoming compliance and safety seminars. These sessions are designed to help ensure continued success within the program and provide valuable guidance on available tools and resources. Please visit the WorkQuest website for updates on seminar dates and locations.

We also look forward to connecting with many of you at this year’s Artie Lee Hinds Award Dinner and Products and Services Expo, which will once again highlight the outstanding work of program employees and the strong partnerships that make this program possible.

Thank you for your continued commitment to WorkQuest’s mission to expand employment opportunities for Texans with disabilities. We look forward to a strong and successful year ahead!

A stylized, handwritten signature in white ink, appearing to read 'F. Weber, Jr.'.

Fred M. Weber, Jr.
President/CEO

Mark Your Calendars for the 2026 Artie Lee Hinds Award Dinner & Products & Services Expo

WorkQuest invites you to the 19th annual Artie Lee Hinds Award Dinner and the 38th annual Products and Services Expo taking place on Wednesday, September 23rd and Thursday, September 24th**. Both events will be at the Doubletree Hotel Austin, which is located at 6505 N IH-35, Austin, Texas 78752.

Join us for an evening of celebration at the **Artie Lee Hinds Award Dinner** as we recognize participants and supporters of the *WorksWonders* Program, including the individuals and organizations who provide outstanding services.

Guests are also encouraged to return on Thursday for the **Products & Services Expo**, where Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP) partners and purchasing customers come together to showcase the wide range of products, services, and temporary employment services offered through the *WorksWonders* Program.

We look forward to seeing you at these exciting events and celebrating the incredible work being done through the *WorksWonders* Program.

*Please note this year's events will be held on a Wednesday and Thursday.

State Use Program Trainings Held Across Texas

Throughout the year, WorkQuest and certified Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs) are partnering to host State Use Program trainings for customers across Texas, offering attendees the opportunity to earn CEU credits while gaining valuable Program insights.

These trainings provide an overview of the Purchasing from People with Disabilities (PPD) Program and offer guidance on how customers can maximize the Program's benefits. Designed for both new and existing customers, each training serves as an informative refresher and a chance to deepen an understanding of the State Use Program.



WorkQuest Regional Marketing Managers Tricia Sullivan, Erynn Harrison, Taylor Pena, Madison Stark, and Chellby Taylor with State Use Program customers during the West Texas Lighthouse for the Blind State Use training and tour.

Following each training session, participants tour a local CRP to experience the positive impact of the Program. Trainings are hosted at provider locations across the state, including:

- Austin Lighthouse for the Blind (Central Texas)
- Horizon Industries (East Texas)
- West Texas Lighthouse for the Blind (West Texas)
- Envision Dallas (North Texas)

By connecting directly with CRPs across Texas, these trainings continue to strengthen partnerships and expand awareness of the State Use Program's effect statewide. Look for opportunities to visit a CRP in your community to experience the Program's positive impact firsthand.

WorkQuest Attends the 2026 ACCSES Winter Summit & America's 250th Birthday Celebration



Nadja Sailesman, Disability Inclusion at Relay Resources (left), Marie Richter, WorkQuest (middle), and Lisa Biggica, UniqueSource (right), gathered during America's 250th birthday party celebration hosted by ACCSES.

WorkQuest staff, Marie Richter and Kyle Radford, were proud to represent WorkQuest at the annual ACCSES Winter Summit in Arlington City, Virginia. WorkQuest is a member of ACCSES, the voice of disability service providers in Washington, DC, representing a national network of community-based organizations that provide services and employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities. The organization amplifies the voices of its members and the individuals they serve at the highest levels of government, advocating on a broad range of issues including employment, residential choice, day habilitation, home and community-based services, social security asset rules, education, and aging-related conditions such as Alzheimer's and dementia.

Throughout the event, speakers and panels addressed topics ranging from healthcare and caregiving resources for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) to emerging tools such as artificial intelligence (AI), employment initiatives, and federal policy updates affecting disability services nationwide. As part of the summit festivities, attendees were invited to celebrate America's 250th Birthday party, which included a musical salute to America. The evening captured the spirit of the summit itself: bringing people together to celebrate shared values, reflect on progress, and look ahead to the future.

To learn more about ACCSES or to become a member, please visit their website at www.Accses.org.

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**Thank you for supporting WorkQuest's mission
in helping to provide employment opportunities
for Texans with Disabilities.**

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