



2024 WORKFORCE EXCELLENCE AWARD NOMINATION FORM

NOMINATION FORM

APPLICANT:

Name of Community or Workforce Board

Contact Name and Title

Email Address

Telephone Number

Community Population (as of the most recent census or as officially marketed)

TEDC Member Name (must be individual TEDC member, not organization)

SUMMARY and INSTRUCTIONS:

Please attach a brief description of the workforce development initiative. Within this description, address the award criteria of Innovativeness, Transferability, Community Commitment and Leverage, Measured Objectives and Secondary Benefits. Please provide the start date of the project and completion date, if applicable.

The program or initiative is to be for the period of January 1 to December 31, 2023. Please provide measurable results for that 12-month period. The workforce development initiative can be a long-term project, however, it must show measurable results within the award year. **The submittal must be the application page and four conventionally formatted 8.5" x 11" pages. Therefore, no more than five (5) pages in total for the award submission. Any award submission that exceeds the five-page limit will be disqualified.**

Please submit this completed nomination form and your project summary via email to Amy Swank at amy@texasedc.org on or before 5:00 PM, Friday, April 26, 2024. You may also submit up to five (5) photographs of your workforce project as separate jpeg or png files.

Questions regarding the Workforce Excellence Award program or procedures should be directed to Amy Swank, Chief Operating Officer, Texas Economic Development Council, amy@texasedc.org, 512-480-8432.

Applications are to be submitted via email to Amy Swank amy@texasedc.org.

I. INNOVATIVENESS

The Development Corporation of Abilene (DCOA) has pioneered an innovative approach to workforce development to increase the retention of two primary talent pipelines in Abilene, Texas. The DCOA's **From Active Duty to Active Career** initiative provides U.S. Air Force airmen and their spouses who are preparing to transition into the civilian workforce the unique opportunity to connect directly with local business owners, empowering them to explore various career avenues. The DCOA's **NEXTU** program grows Abilene's workforce, enabling high school students to graduate with industry certifications and hands-on, job-ready experience through DCOA-funded scholarships. Utilizing the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS), the DCOA evaluates and funds each career and technical education programs of study based on its ability to lead into a primary job.

By synergizing the DCOA's **NEXTU** and **From Active Duty to Active Career** initiatives, the DCOA has created sustainable job opportunities for two significant talent pools to stay, grow, and prosper in Abilene, Texas.

II. TRANSFERABILITY

The DCOA's collaborative efforts with two local school districts, six local institutions of higher education, local businesses, and professional organizations (i.e., the Society for Human Resource Management) showcase a model transferable to communities nationwide. The DCOA's program serves as a blueprint for addressing skills shortages in the local market by bridging the gap between education, local existing industry, and Abilene's U.S. Air Force Base.

III. COMMUNITY COMMITMENT AND LEVERAGE

Our program exemplifies a steadfast commitment to building the future Abilene. Through strategic partnerships we have fostered public-private collaborations that amplify the impact of workforce development efforts. This multi-industry approach maximizes resources and facilitates broader community engagement, enabling stakeholders to achieve greater outcomes collectively.

Additionally, the DCOA's **NEXTU** program has been expanded and supported through a private scholarship fund. Community partners secure private funding for scholarships in programs of study that are outside of qualified NAICS codes (i.e., Nursing).

IV. MEASURED OBJECTIVES

The DCOA's initiatives focus on integrating veterans into the workforce and nurturing local high school talent to address skill gaps:

- Retaining Talent: The **From Active Duty to Active Career** initiative has connected 60 transitioning airmen and their spouses with over 10 employers in the past year, fostering their integration into Abilene's economy.
- Education and Training: The **NEXTU** program has experienced a 61% increase in dual credit enrollment from 2022 to 2023, demonstrating its effectiveness in providing students with industry certifications and hands-on experience.
- Career Pathways: The 2023 **NEXTU** graduating class reflects the program's impact in preparing students for their future careers, with 53% entering the workforce, 5% joining the U.S. Military, and 42% pursuing additional education locally, thereby fostering diverse career pathways and skill development opportunities.

V. SECONDARY BENEFITS

The **From Active Duty to Active Career** initiative and **NEXTU** program generate significant secondary benefits to the local economy and beyond. Retaining skilled talent and cultivating a robust workforce enhances the overall economic vitality of Abilene. This creates a culture of innovation and collaboration that extends beyond the realm of workforce development, enhancing the broader economic ecosystem.

NEXTU

POWERED BY THE DCOA



“I chose to do the internship because I thought it would be fun and I was hopeful that I could get a good job there because that was what I wanted my career to be in. I would recommend this for others. I think it was a great way for someone to get into what they want to do, and it'll help them better their knowledge and understanding of what they are getting into.”

Cesar Perez

NextU Student at Wylie High School
Intern at BWJ Metalworks



FROM ACTIVE DUTY TO ACTIVE CAREER

