



2022 WORKFORCE EXCELLENCE AWARD NOMINATION FORM

NOMINATION FORM

APPLICANT:

Amarillo Economic Development Corporation

Name of Community or Workforce Board

Sabrina Meck Perez, Director Workforce Attraction & Retention

Contact Name and Title

sabrina@amarilloedc.com

806-379-6411

Email Address

Telephone Number

200,000

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

Sabrina Meck Perez (must be individual TEDC member, not organization)

TEDC Member Name

SUMMARY:

Please attach a brief description of the workforce development initiative. Within this description, address the awards criteria of innovativeness, transferability, community commitment, 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, 2021. 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 in the award year. The nomination can be no longer than five conventionally formatted 8.5" x 11" pages (including the one-page nomination form).

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, May 6, 2022. You may also submit up to five (5) photographs of your workforce project as separate jpeg files.

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

TEDC 2022 Workforce Development Committee Chair
Christine Allen, Lubbock Economic Development Alliance



Overview

The Uncover Amarillo Intern Experience is a product resulting from numerous conversations with local employers and their challenge to retain young talent, particularly college interns and recent graduates. There are multiple large employers as well as medium and small businesses and firms that not only employ local college interns but also bring in college students from across the nation. Because Amarillo is in a more rural setting and the city is more spaced out than a dense metroplex, many interns end up in a routine of going to work and going back to their apartment. Not being as walkable as large cities, Amarillo can be difficult for students sometimes to find community and connect with other people their age. Some of the local employers have multiple locations around the state of Texas as well as the U.S. and the goal of the Amarillo Economic Development Corporation is to remain a competitive location for young talent in which to choose to live and work. Even companies who are only based in Amarillo still need to get their young talent plugged in in order to remain competitive to popular large metroplexes. The Amarillo EDC created the Uncover Amarillo Intern Experience in the summer of 2019 with a pilot program of six local companies with 23 interns. The program gathers interns for three to four social events in order to meet other interns outside of their organization, explore different parts of the city, and connect with Amarillo area young professionals. Since then, the program has grown to 16 participating organizations with 52 interns. The Amarillo EDC also provides a list of temporary housing (always requested), a summer calendar of events from other organizations, and a list of local restaurants. The 2021 program hosted three events:

June 22nd – The Amarillo EDC provided a kickoff event in a newer section of town at the rooftop bar of Cask & Cork in Town Square. Interns enjoyed food, drinks, meeting other interns, ice breakers and connecting with Elevate Amarillo young professionals.

June 26th – The Amarillo EDC hosted a brunch and morning of shopping at From 6th Collective. Interns were invited to a “Taste of Brunch” expo from local Chef Aaron Adamson and specialty cocktails from Still Austin Whiskey Co. From 6th Collective is a retail facility that spotlights various retailers throughout the Panhandle region. Interns got to hear from the owner of the facility on how she started her enterprise as well as learned from Chef Aaron about brunch styles in Europe. Still Austin also presented on their whiskey distillery that is owned and operated by an Amarillo native.

July 8th – The Amarillo EDC organized an exclusive Downtown Restaurant Crawl with tastings from Sunday’s Kitchen, Six Car Pub & Brewery, and Crush (all locally owned). This is by far the most engaging and successful quality of life event for the interns.



INNOVATIVENESS

- a. As quality of life continues to grow in rank when talent is deciding where to live and work, traditional methods of talent attraction and retention need to advance and provide innovative pathways to success. Uncover Amarillo is a unique talent retention tool by focusing on quality of life and providing firsthand experiences with a location that are intentionally crafted to highlight the best aspects of the Amarillo community. “Most talent will not relocate without a job opportunity and when evaluating these opportunities, salary will be a top deciding factor. However, talent placing the location of the job opportunity on the same level of importance as meaningful work and company benefits supports the theory that talent is increasingly prioritizing quality of place when considering their careers” (Talent Wars, DCI 2021). The Uncover Amarillo Intern Experience focuses on this continuously rising need to get young talent rooted in a location in order to foster a talent pipeline for Amarillo.

2. TRANSFERABILITY

- a. Transferable across employers and industry – Uncover Amarillo is transferable amongst local employers from every industry. From aerospace manufacturing to banking and finance to education to government administration to non-profit, any organization who employs college interns during the summer can utilize this program in order to keep their young talent engaged in the community and ultimately be more likely to stay employed by the organization.
- b. Transferable to other workforce groups, economic development agencies and communities – Other communities can follow an identical model to showcase why living and working in their location is desirable for young talent. By focusing on the authentic local values and assets and connecting interns to young professionals who already choose to live and work in their perspective location, communities can easily implement this talent retention program.

3. COMMUNITY COMMITMENT AND LEVERAGE

- a. Uncover Amarillo achieves a greater impact by joining public/private/non-profit participation amongst local employers from every industry. From aerospace manufacturing to banking and finance to education to government administration, any organization who employs college interns during the summer can utilize (and have utilized) this program in order to keep their young talent engaged in the community and ultimately be more likely to stay employed by the organization.
- b. For the Uncover Amarillo events, the Amarillo EDC utilizes local businesses, events, and venues in order to provide an authentic experience to Amarillo culture and lifestyle. Some organizations actually provide their interns with trips and experiences in different cities. The Amarillo EDC decided to commit to utilizing only local experiences with entertainment, food and happenings that are unique to our area. Bringing in outside sources of entertainment can jeopardize the mission of focusing on the Amarillo community as well as damage talent retention in the long run because they don't experience true Amarillo on the front end. Showcasing the best of the community helps on the recruitment side of workforce, but staying within the limitations of the community helps on the retention side so that talent doesn't have a false sense of the community's lifestyle and ends up leaving after a short period of time.
- c. Another way the Uncover Amarillo Intern Experience achieves a greater impact is through a partnership with Elevate Amarillo, the city's young professionals' group. By collaborating



with this local non-profit, interns have the chance to connect with people in their twenties and thirties and ask why they chose to live and work in the area. Elevate Amarillo subsequently benefits from the collaboration with future young leaders and encourages them to get involved in different way throughout the community.

- d. Uncover Amarillo interns also receive a list of summer events from multiple community organizations including the Amarillo Chamber of Commerce, Center City Amarillo, the Amarillo Sod Poodles, live music at local restaurants and bars, and more.
4. MEASURED OBJECTIVES – The numbers for 2019 and 2020 are important to show to compare it to the growth of the 2021 year. The 2019 pilot program was limited to six employers in order to test the value and impact of the intern experience. The 2020 launch was greatly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and impacted the numbers. Even though there were restrictions, Uncover Amarillo allowed interns to gain a positive experience of Amarillo during a time when quality of life was limited. The 2021 year truly showcases why the Uncover Amarillo Intern Experience is an influential and innovate workforce program.
- a. 2019
 - i. 6 companies
 - ii. 23 interns
 - iii. 4 events
 - iv. Feedback:
 1. “Knowing that the population of young people is growing makes a job here look more possible.”
 2. “I’m from the Amarillo area, and just in this internship alone, I’ve learned more about the city: places to eat, things to do, people around town. I really enjoyed the interaction between the different intern groups.”
 - b. 2020 (Amidst the onset of the pandemic, events were limited to outdoors. Many internships were virtual.)
 - i. 9 companies
 - ii. 27 interns
 - iii. 3 events
 - iv. Feedback:
 1. “There's pretty much everything you could ever want nearby and accessible! I've had a great experience with my internship (Bell) and honestly would jump at the chance post-graduation to live here and start my career here. Plus, from what I've seen, the cost of living and housing is super appealing!!”
 2. “I really enjoyed it! Everyone was very friendly and I think it was a good way to get to know other people my age in the area. I enjoyed getting to experience Amarillo in a new way as well.”
 - c. 2021
 - i. 16 companies
 - ii. 52 interns
 - iii. 3 events
 - iv. Feedback from interns:



1. "I have enjoyed it a lot here. There are a lot of cute restaurants/stores that I didn't know about before. I like the atmosphere and the people. This is my second year here, and I hope to eventually be here full time."
2. "I enjoyed eating good food and drinking awesome drinks, but I also enjoyed connecting with other interns and young professionals in the area!"
3. "Meeting other people our age in Amarillo! I liked meeting the other interns- we've hung out with them again several times, so it was a great opportunity to meet them."
4. "I discovered that Amarillo has more options and places than I had expected."
5. "I found some new places to eat and learned that Amarillo is more diverse of a city than I originally thought."
6. "I enjoyed getting to meet other interns that worked for various companies across Amarillo."

5. SECONDARY BENEFITS

- a. An ancillary benefit to promoting quality of life to interns is the civic pride of businesses and young professionals that participate. The opportunity to show off their city to these interns is always a great benefit and wonderful collaboration.
- b. An even greater benefit (as you can read by some of the intern comments above) is the new or changed perspectives of local college students. This program is primarily intended for interns from out of the area to get to know Amarillo. However, local students are making more professional and positive connections to the city when they are shown unique locations and events and get to meet other young professionals who choose to live and work in Amarillo. This is a phenomenal and much-needed crossing of paths so that even local students can realize that working in their hometowns can be much more exciting than originally thought.

Conclusion

The Uncover Amarillo Intern Experience is an effective and beneficial workforce program because it engages public and private partnerships within the community, can be utilized across industries, can be transferred to other cities and locations, and assists our local employers with young talent retention. This Amarillo EDC is excited to watch the program grow and invite young talent to take root in Amarillo so that they can grow both their personal lives and careers.