



# 2022 WORKFORCE EXCELLENCE AWARD NOMINATION FORM

## NOMINATION FORM

APPLICANT:

Marble Falls

Name of Community or Workforce Board

Christian Fletcher, CEcD, Executive Director - Marble Falls Economic Development Corporation

Contact Name and Title

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(830) 798-7079

Email Address

Telephone Number

7,500

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

Christian Fletcher

(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](mailto:amy@texasedc.org), 512-480-8432.

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

# Workforce Excellence Award Criteria

## I. INNOVATIVENESS

The program or project demonstrates innovative approaches to institutional, financial, technical or legal aspects of workforce development, talent attraction and economic development.

## II. TRANSFERABILITY

The program or project shows potential use by other economic development agencies, workforce groups or practitioners for similar opportunities or solutions.

The program or project should be readily transferable to comparable situations in other communities.

## III. COMMUNITY COMMITMENT AND LEVERAGE

The program or project makes it possible for others to achieve a greater impact by joining public/private participation or by intergovernmental or state/local involvement to leverage resources.

## IV. MEASURED OBJECTIVES

Results demonstrate a specific objective that the program or project was able to achieve. Measures of the program's value can include:

- jobs created
- jobs retained or improved
- additional monetary investment in the community
- additions to the tax base created by the program or project
- individuals or employee trained, reskilled or upskilled

## V. SECONDARY BENEFITS

Produces ancillary benefits to other economic activities in the area.

## **Marble Falls Economic Development Corporation Workforce Development Initiative**

The Marble Falls EDC's workforce development initiative is a collaborative program designed to address the shortage of workers and skills in three high demand occupations including electricians, plumbers and certified medical assistants. There are approximately 15,267 employees in Burnet County with total annual wages of \$752.6 million. Out of this total, roughly 1,643 construction sector employees earn \$88.6 million collectively, which is 11.8% of the total wages paid. There are about 2,170 healthcare workers in the county who earn \$120 million in total, which is 16% of the total wages paid. Specific to Marble Falls, of the \$1.1 billion in gross sales activity over the last 4 quarters, nearly \$300 million is directly related to the construction industry. Within our workforce development program, plumbing and electrical students are trained through two National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER) courses over a nine-month period. This standardized curriculum leads to an industry-recognized credential. The coursework, when combined with the state's required apprentice hours, prepares students to pass the state licensing exam for Plumbing Tradesman and Residential Electric Wireman. These plumbing and electrical credentials are meaningful proof of learned skills and knowledge to prospective employers. Students entering the Certified Medical Assistant (CNA) program are trained in Central Texas College's continuing education course over a six-month period. This coursework prepares the students to pass the National Health Careers Association's certification exam. Once certified, CNA graduates can work at any of the growing number of clinics and physician's offices to meet the demand of our ever-growing population. Along with providing the matching funds for the grant monies received by the Texas Workforce Commission and Workforce Solutions Rural Capital Area for this high demand job training initiative, the Marble Falls EDC also provides funding to cover the fiscal and programmatic costs to administer the grant. To remove the barrier of enrollment for many of our low-income/disadvantaged workers, grant funds are applied to tuition/fees, books and other direct student costs, as well as facility rental, supplies and equipment. All coursework, training and certification is provided at no cost to the students.

### **Innovativeness:**

Having no dedicated staff to devise and manage workforce development initiatives, the MFEDC first provided seed funding in 2015 to a local workforce intermediary to supplement our workforce development efforts. Through this partnership and the continued successes achieved in our workforce efforts, this intermediary, Mickey West Career Assets, has grown from operating via a small fund established with a local community foundation to becoming a viable, stand-alone nonprofit corporation – Workforce Network, Inc. (WNI). With our assistance, WNI facilitates partnerships with employers and other stakeholders to align training and services for workers to acquire the needed skills. WNI also writes grants, recruits adult students and oversees all classes.

Our training program for plumbers offers credentials that add value to employers and workers by utilizing incentives from the Department of Labor (DOL) and the Texas State Board of Plumbing Examiners. Since the majority of our area plumbing contractors' business is centered on residential work, we utilize a rarely-used and often overlooked interim credential from the DOL's Office of Apprenticeship Training. The purpose of the interim credential is to recognize the completion of two years of a four-year program to allow increasing responsibility at the mid-point on the path to Journeyman level (four years). Accordingly, the Texas State Board of Plumbing Examiners offers a Tradesman Limited plumbing license after two years of on-the-job experience that limits the scope of work to residential plumbing. The Plumbing board recognizes the DOL interim credential as proof of meeting the requirements to sit for the tradesman exam. In addition, the plumbing board offers credit of six months of on-the-job experience to applicants who have earned the interim credential. This means that apprentices who complete Level 1 and Level 2 of

our 4-level training can accelerate their timeline to licensing by six months. Subsequently, the plumbing contractor can expand their capacity to meet the market demand since a Tradesman can work independently, unsupervised in residential settings. This accelerated path to licensing attracts new talent to the trades and helps employers meet the demand.

### **Community Commitment and Leverage:**

Multiple entities have partnered with the MFEDC and WNI to leverage their resources to support and sustain this workforce development initiative. The program has grown to include additional funding from the EDO's in Burnet and Llano which enables students from outside of Marble Falls to participate in the program. Training facilities have been provided by Marble Falls ISD, Burnet ISD, Central Texas College and the Hill Country Builders Association (HCBA). Major retailers such as Home Depot, Lowes and local electric and plumbing supply houses have contributed needed materials and supplies. Due to the continued momentum and success of the program, the Burnet County Judge and Commissioners' Court is currently vetting a plan to allocate several million dollars from federal grants to build and maintain a multi-purpose facility that will include a dedicated, permanent space for a Workforce Training Center.

The MFEDC's monetary investment includes leveraging sales tax dollars with a matching grant through our local Texas Workforce Solutions Board. We have secured four (4) High Demand Job Training Grants totaling a \$293,380 investment to leverage \$152,690 in grant funding.

- 2017-2018: invested \$66,800 to leverage \$37,400 in grant funding
- 2018: invested \$23,000 to leverage \$11,500
- 2019-2020: invested \$115,800 to leverage \$61,900
- **2021:** invested \$87,780 to leverage \$43,890

For the 2021 High Demand Job Training Grant the MFEDC provided \$33,890 in matching funds while the Burnet and Llano EDC's added \$5,000 each to boost impact across the two counties. Additionally, the MFEDC paid WNI \$8,000 for grant administration, recruiting and management bringing MFEDC's total investment to \$87,780 to leverage \$41,890 in grant funding.

After committing funds based on individual applications for HDJT grants in years past, the Marble Falls EDC now has a standing line item in our budget dedicated to workforce development and training, including operational support. Also of note, with each HDJT grant award, the MFEDC has leveraged our social media presence to promote the grant-funded educational opportunities resulting in full enrollment in each trade for each grant cycle.

### **Measured Objectives:**

Our workforce initiative and high demand job training grant program is a multi-year program continuing through 2021 and beyond.

As of May 2021, Marble Falls is a registered Department of Labor Apprenticeship Program in electrical and plumbing trades under Winn's Career Education, an approved DOL sponsor. Before the start of this initiative, our workers had to travel 55 miles one-way to attend an apprenticeship training program.

In 2021, fifteen (15) electrical and plumbing contractors signed a DOL agreement to participate under a single sponsor for the apprenticeship training program. These contractors are small businesses, each with less than ten (10) employees. (Additional contractors are being added for the 2022 year.) Formal employer agreements are a key milestone in securing a shared ownership in the quality and sustainability of the program.

This initiative and accomplishment stand out as one of few trades training collaboratives in rural Texas that offer the same industry-approved credential as in urban areas. Our DOL apprenticeship training program is rural and community-driven in contrast to those established by unions, trade-specific associations, and trade schools in urban areas. In addition to the employers, multiple stakeholders take part in the implementation, such as WNI, HCBA, MFISD, Moore's Plumbing Supply and several master plumbers/electricians who attain certification to teach the courses. Individuals trained, reskilled or upskilled:

- From 2017 to 2021: 64 Trades (Plumbers: 38; Electrical: 26);
- From 2015-2021: 32 CMAs
- **In 2021:** Plumbers: 11; Electricians: 9; Certified Medical Assistants: 13

With the goal of adding new entrants to the trades as well as upskilling working apprentices, people not already working in the trade are recruited and enrolled, all with the end goal of preparing them for licensing. In 2021, four (4) of the nine (9) enrollees were new to the trade while five (5) were upskilling, already working in the trade. 100% of these students are employed by master electricians. Two (2) of the eleven (11) 2021 plumbing students were new to the trade while nine (9) were upskilling toward licensing. All enrollees are employed working with masters/contractors.

*"I'm 19. I was working for a landscape company. I got into the Electrical class and the people who run it helped me get a job with an electrical contractor. I had no experience but because of what I learned I got a raise. The teacher explains the trade terms and hands-on assignments that make sense in the real world. I know I've learned a lot because I know how and why to do things that guys who are not in the class don't know. My bosses notice. My goal is to get licensed and be a Master someday." - Gabriel Benitez, Electrical Apprentice at Centerline Services, current student in Electrical Level 2*

The thirteen (13) 2021 CMA students completed their classroom requirements in 2021 and are currently finishing the 80-hour clinical portion of the course. Each must then pass the certification exam to be ready for hire. At the time of this writing, four (4) CMAs have already finished clinicals, took their certification exam and passed. Two (2) of them are in the HR process of being hired by Baylor Scott & White while the other two (2) have applied. The remaining nine (9) are still in the last phases of this process. Upon certification, all will be hired. Of these thirteen (13) students, seven (7) are new to healthcare. The other six (6) are already working in assisted living/nursing homes or home health. As CMA's are in high demand, most students will have a wage increase when certified as a CMA. Of the thirteen (13), nine (9) have an ultimate career goal of becoming a nurse. They see CMA as a launching point for a nursing career. A CMA can work 8:00-5:00 in a physician's clinic which allows them to take pre-nursing classes at night. We will continue working with these students to help them enroll in pre-nursing classes and find funding for those who need it.

*"I tried college. The perfect storm of classes, study, and working two jobs to pay for school and expenses landed me back home with my parents in a matter of months. My dad told me about the CMA class. I wouldn't have to pay for it and could step right into a job in healthcare. I did it and I learned a lot of skills and medical terminology that prepared me for a job that I really like. The CMA class gave me a career and a community of a healthcare associates who I really enjoy working with. I've decided to stay with CMA for a while before taking the next step toward nursing school." - Abigail Jordan, CMA at Baylor, Scott & White Health, Marble Falls, Graduate of CMA class*

### **Transferability:**

Across our state, rural cities and counties with limited budgets struggle to develop, manage and fund workforce development programs. The Marble Falls EDC's workforce development initiative is a replicable

workforce program. Improving access to post-secondary workforce training for adults right where they live and work is key. By collaborating with community partners, intermediaries, local workforce development boards, county officials, school districts and other educational entities, partnerships can be forged to identify and target the skill gaps and high demand occupations within a geographic area. These collaborative partnerships enhance the employer-led and demand-driven workforce system and create stronger pathways to self-sufficient employment and career advancement allowing workers to succeed in the job market.

### **Secondary Benefits:**

A skilled, trained and employed labor pool provides many ancillary benefits to a local economy. Through gainful employment, an individual is better able to improve his quality of life, provide for himself and his family. This improved spending power not only benefits the individual but his dollar spent in the local economy has a ripple effect multiplying the gross economic output of the local community.

"I wanted to take the Plumbing class because I want a better life for my family. My daughter just turned two and I want to make sure she has a better life than I did. I want to be able to help put her through school if that's what she decides to do. This class changed my life and gave me a head start toward this goal. I want to be a Master plumber and work towards owning my own business in the future." - Kevin Moore, Plumbing Apprentice at Spicewood Plumbing, Graduate of Plumbing Level 2

Due to the momentum and success of the MFEDC's workforce development initiative with WNI's operational leadership, WNI has attracted workforce grants that are over and above those we directly manage. Workforce Solutions Rural Capital Area was awarded \$2.28 million specifically for Burnet, Llano, Blanco and Lampasas counties designated to train 200 front-line healthcare workers because of our rural characteristics that exacerbate shortages in healthcare occupations and because of their ability to build upon the successful education-to-workforce foundation already forged through the MFEDC and WNI's workforce initiative.

WNI also responded to Walmart Foundation's PATHS grant for customer service workers to ensure that Burnet and Llano counties are included, bringing no-cost customer service training to our hospitality, retail and healthcare employers. WNI is contracted (paid) to recruit and enroll employers and employees throughout our workforce region. As the hospitality and retail sectors represent 70% of Marble Falls' economy, customer service training with no cost to the participants is an extremely valuable resource to our community.

WNI is currently in the 5<sup>th</sup> week of facilitating a Ruby Payne's Bridges out of Poverty, 20-week program "Getting Ahead in a Just Getting by World" helping twelve (12) individuals impacted by poverty build the resources needed for a better life and move toward self-sufficiency. As this program is complimentary to WNI's initiatives, the MFEDC contributed \$5,000 toward the \$24,000 budget required for the maximum twelve (12) participant enrollment. WNI plans to make this Bridges out of Poverty a reoccurring opportunity.

WNI also recently submitted a Department of Commerce \$5M Good Jobs Challenge grant that requires subcontracts with "backbone organizations" to implement employer-designed training in specific industry sectors. If awarded, this grant will expand the trades offered to include HVAC, Information Technology, Accounting, Financial Analyst, Market Specialists, Nursing, Mental Health and USDOT-approved training for CDL licenses and include Burnet, Llano and Blanco Counties. WNI will fill the role of the "backbone organization." This grant would also provide for additional operational staffing to support WNI and provide for training facility expansion and upgrades. Grant awardees will be notified in September, 2022.