



# 2023 WORKFORCE EXCELLENCE AWARD NOMINATION FORM

## NOMINATION FORM

APPLICANT:

**Economic Development Corporation of Weslaco, Weslaco, TX**

Name of Community or Workforce Board

**April Castaneda, Director of Business Development**

Contact Name and Title

[acastaneda@weslacoedc.com](mailto:acastaneda@weslacoedc.com)

**956-969-0838**

Email Address

Telephone Number

**41,166**

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

**Steven M. Valdez**

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

### SUMMARY:

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, 2022.** 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 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](mailto:amy@texasedc.org) on or before 5:00 PM, Friday, May 8, 2023.** 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 2023 Workforce Development Committee Chair  
Chester Jenke, Seguin Chamber of Commerce

## **Economic Development Corporation of Weslaco Job Training Program**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Economic Development Corporation of Weslaco (EDCW) collaboratively partners with South Texas College, the local community college, to offer a variety of skill development trainings for currently employed workers within the jurisdictional boundaries of the City of Weslaco. The partnership provides an opportunity for these employees to gain general and advanced, relevant and highly-technical skills and to earn certifications, such as QuickBooks, Robotics, CPR Training, OSHA Certifications, and Forklift Operator certifications, to name a few.

The City of Weslaco has a population of just under 50,000 and a labor force of 17,680. Furthermore, there is a total of 1,571 established businesses, with the leading industries being health care and social services, education, retail, and accommodation & food services.

The EDCW awards \$75,000 annually to South Texas College for the purpose of providing training sessions. South Texas College will be administering these sessions as part of the partnership with the EDCW. Employees and employers are not required to pay for any trainings, coursework, supplies, or materials as they are provided at no cost. This ensures that all necessary resources for workforce skills development and/or professional development are accessible to everyone without any financial burden. This approach fosters a supportive and inclusive work environment where individuals of all backgrounds and economic status can advance their skills and knowledge, ultimately resulting in a more productive and satisfied workforce and a stronger organization overall.

The EDCW understands that there are other revenue of sources provided by Texas Workforce Solutions and other organizations to provide such training; however, those funds are limited. The partnership between the EDCW and South Texas College is unique in that the Job Training Program can be tailored to meet the specific needs of employers. This collaboration represents a win-win solution for all involved and highlights the importance of cooperation between sectors in building a stronger workforce.

### **I. INNOVATIVENESS**

With the growing demand to hire and retain highly skilled employees, from all business sectors, the EDCW saw this as an opportunity to partner with South Texas College to provide job training to new and incumbent workers and to invest in the human capital of the City of Weslaco. This will be our 4<sup>th</sup> year in partnering with South Texas College; however, in 2022, the Job Training Program underwent a revamp, and our new focus now includes small, independently-owned retail and service businesses and not just industrialized companies.

The Job Training Program provides employees and employers the ability to boost productivity, efficiency, and competitiveness within their respective industry. Moreover, it promotes overall job retention, possible wage increases, job promotion and/or career growth for the employee.

South Texas College offers businesses a comprehensive training catalog featuring over 500 courses to choose from. These courses can be customized to meet the specific needs of a business.

In addition, local businesses have the option to request the development of customized training programs tailored to address their unique needs and requirements. With a commitment to enhancing the workforce, the EDCW and South Texas College is a valuable partner for businesses looking to invest in employee development and professional growth. Depending on the type of training that is being offered, the courses can be held:

- at the South Texas College campus
- at the business location and/or
- online (self-paced module)

The three options for instruction each have their own benefits for the employee and the employer. Option one, courses held at the South Texas College campus, provides the employees the opportunity to set foot on a college campus, be instructed by a College professor, and utilize the College's resources and equipment. For courses held at the business location, which is option two, a College professor will deliver the instruction while utilizing the business's own equipment and software. The third option provides employees with flexibility as they can complete the trainings at their own pace, provided they complete the training by a set deadline. The third option only applies to computer-skilled trainings such as Excel, Quick Books, etc.

Through this partnership, the EDCW and South Texas College have been able to provide training to approximately six hundred and forty (640) employees within the 2022 calendar year. This Program has helped improve the quality of services and products provided by these businesses. The partnership's success demonstrates the value of collaboration between local governments and educational institutions in supporting businesses and their employees. This is truly a collaborative and innovative strategy.

## **II. TRANSFERABILITY**

The EDCW can attest that the Job Training Program is an advantage when attracting businesses, as it is often included as part of a recruitment tool. By offering the Job Training Program, the EDCW positions itself as a forward-thinking and attractive location for businesses to set up shop and invest in the local community. Additionally, by including the Program in the EDCW's pitch to potential businesses, it strengthens the value of investing in human capital within the community.

The Job Training Program has a flexible design that makes it highly transferable and adaptable to other economic development corporations. It is easy to adopt and implement, allowing others to benefit from its success. With its proven track record and ability to improve workforce readiness, the Job Training Program plays a vital role in strengthening the economy by upskilling and/or reskilling the current workforce. By adopting this type of program, economic development corporations can attract more businesses to the area, boost economic growth, and improve the quality of life for residents.

For others to successfully implement this type of training program in their community, an open dialogue between all factoring governing boards is required. Discussions with the local community college are key and necessary, as this will determine if the community college can undertake this type of program and identify courses that will meet the workforce needs. Governing boards may

initiate the necessary approval process; however, the Program's ultimate success requires gaining support from the business community.

### **III. COMMUNITY COMMITMENT AND LEVERAGE**

Through the Job Training Program, the EDCW and South Texas College have formed an intergovernmental relationship to ensure new and existing employees are provided with the necessary resources and a range of courses aimed at improving the skills of the city's workforce.

The EDCW has allocated \$75,000 annually to fund the Job Training Program. This funding is aimed at providing training at no cost to the employees and their employer. By providing access to training and skill development opportunities, the Job Training Program aims to support the development of a skilled workforce and increase employability in the local community. The funding allocation ensures that the Program can continue to successfully operate year after year.

The collaboration is designed to help employees develop the skills necessary to thrive in today's job market and to help businesses in Weslaco have a high retention rate. By providing accessible and affordable [free] training opportunities, the partnership is helping to support economic development and prosperity within the community.

In addition to the traditional methods of promotion via South Texas College, the EDCW has recognized the importance of utilizing social media to engage with potential candidates (employers) and highlight the benefits of the Program in a more efficient and effective manner. As well, through the Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) visits the EDCW has been able to increase awareness about the program and attract more candidates.

### **IV. MEASURED OBJECTIVES**

The EDCW and South Texas College successfully trained close to six hundred and forty (640) employees through the Job Training Program in 2022. Through this initiative, the EDCW was able to provide valuable training and upskilling opportunities to businesses seeking to enhance their employee's skills, ultimately supporting the growth and development of the workforce talent in the community.

Each training year the course offerings change to address the current workforce trends and demands which equips the employees with the necessary skill set to excel. Thus, the training is structured around these demands, ensuring that the workforce is prepared for the needs of the industry. This enables the Job Training Program to focus on the most relevant and necessary skills employees and businesses are needing.

In 2022, businesses and employees requested courses that focus on enhancing skills in occupational safety, excel spreadsheets, and accounting software. This is to improve efficiency and productivity in the workplace. Additionally, personal development courses are also in demand, such as leadership which sets out to provide skills to aspiring employees that want to take on leadership roles within the business. Through the Job Training Program, businesses seek to invest in employees' skills and well-being to remain competitive in the market, retain top talent, and promote a positive work environment.

Through this partnership and its success, the EDCW and South Texas College have been able to provide training to roughly six hundred and forty (640) employees within the calendar year of 2022. Below is the breakdown of the courses and number of employees upskilled and/or reskilled.

- Occupational Safety courses
  - Accident Prevention (418)
  - Workplace Safety (75)
  - First Aid-CPR (49)
  - Forklift Certification (11)
- Excel Spreadsheets (6)
- Accounting Software (10)
- Leadership (69)

## **V. SECONDARY BENEFITS**

A skilled and employed workforce contributes to the economy, providing benefits that extend beyond the individual employee. It attracts businesses to the area, increases sale tax revenue, and reduces the use of governmental assistance; all while promoting personal growth, financial independence, and well-being.

The Job Training Program provides opportunities for employees to receive additional skills and knowledge, leading to economic prosperity for themselves and their families. The Program enables upskilling or reskilling, empowering individuals to develop marketable skills that may improve their job prospects, increase their income, and support their career advancement. The investment in training and development translates to higher employee satisfaction, better retention rates, and a more competitive workforce.

Furthermore, the Job Training Program benefits not only the individuals but also contributes to the economic growth of the region by strengthening the labor force. Additionally, employees which are reskilled and/or upskilled can innovate and create new products and services [for the business], driving economic growth and adding further value to the community.

Another added benefit to the Job Training Program is economic prosperity, which brings numerous benefits to families, including increased buying power and the ability to move up the socioeconomic status ladder. With a higher income, families can afford to purchase assets such as a car, and a house, and have the means to eat out more frequently. In the end, economic prosperity provides families with greater financial security and access to a wider range of opportunities, which can improve their quality of life in meaningful ways.

By investing in workforce skills development, communities can position themselves for long-term economic success, creating a cycle of growth, and a better quality of life for all residents.