



# 2023 WORKFORCE EXCELLENCE AWARD NOMINATION FORM

## NOMINATION FORM

APPLICANT:

**Workforce Solutions of Central Texas**

Name of Community or Workforce Board

**Linda Angel, Deputy Executive Director**

Contact Name and Title

[Linda.angel@workforcesolutionsctx.com](mailto:Linda.angel@workforcesolutionsctx.com)

Email Address

**254.742.4524**

Telephone Number

**Central Texas Workforce Area (Texas Counties: Bell, Coryell, Hamilton, Lampasas, Milam, Mills, and San Saba): 449,641**

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

**Cynthia Hernandez**

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, Monday, 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



## 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.**

The Central Texas Career Skills Program cohort-based training model reflects innovation through coordination. The program demonstrates the importance of partnerships in coordinating resources and sharing responsibility for developing a consistent, well-prepared workforce that meets the skills requirements of local employers.

At a time when most employers are struggling to identify and prepare employees to fill their many job openings, Central Texas has identified a steady pipeline of skilled workers. The targeted workers are Soldiers transitioning out of the military and military spouses of active duty Soldiers. Both of these priority groups have high levels of unemployment when Workforce intervention is not provided.

During the Gulf Wars, Central Texas community leaders recognized the importance of keeping skilled workers in Texas, and, similarly, military leadership on Fort Hood realized the need to rapidly employ transitioning military and active duty military spouses. To support their common goals, they began working together to design an employment-focused approach to retaining workers locally.

This perspective is particularly important because Fort Hood is one of only a few military installations with the capacity to support large transitions of Soldiers into civilian employment opportunities. Populations supporting Fort Hood's mission in March 2023 included: 34,540 Soldiers and airmen assigned to Fort Hood with approximately 5,545 currently deployed strategically around the world. Additionally, there are 48,496 military family members with 71.1% living in surrounding communities and 28.9% living on the installation. Fort Hood also has 2,824 federal civilian employees, 1,128 employees working at the AAFES and Commissaries, and 5,318 civilian employees working for contractors and the local school district. In addition, the North Fort Hood population includes 1,974 Soldiers (4 units) that assists in mobilizing and demobilizing National Guard and Reserves units.

With such a large population, it is not surprising to find that there is also a large turnover of Soldiers exiting the military at Fort Hood and military spouses coming to Fort Hood seeking employment. In 2022, Fort Hood transitioned an average of 822 Active-Duty, 348 Army Reserves, and 275 National Guard Soldiers every month (average total 1,445). In Fiscal Year 2022, Fort Hood transitioned a total of 17,358 Soldiers comprised of 9,871 Active-Duty, 4,179 Army Reserves, and 3,308 National Guard Soldiers.

To engage and retain this high priority workforce, a survey was created to determine the criteria that mattered to exiting Soldiers and family members who are seeking employment. The survey was distributed by Fort Hood's Transition Assistance Program as part of the exit process. The survey assessed Soldier

intentions, educational and skills levels, and employment desires. The results from the surveys were combined by the Heart of Texas Defense Alliance into quarterly Central Texas Veterans Inventories; 4<sup>th</sup> quarter 2022 results are available at <https://www.hotda.org/copy-of-2021>. The data are valuable for local economic development efforts because the information provides insight into the availability, skills, and interests of the local workforce. Additionally, the data helped to frame the plans for the Career Skills Programs used on Fort Hood today.

Using the survey data, Central Texas partnership recognized that all of these transitioning Soldiers are potential skilled employees who can fill local job openings. However, the Soldiers and military spouses may need local resources to compete successfully. Some need short-term training to develop the skills they learned in the military to meet the requirements of civilian employment. Others may need licensure and/or industry recognized certifications to compete successfully and meet employer requirements. Most need supportive services to compensate for the additional costs of going to a training site and for their lack of civilian work clothes, tools, etc. For the dislocated military spouses, resources are needed for vocational training, short term training, and supportive services.

Working jointly to develop a system that supported rapid employment, the following rolls and responsibilities were developed:

**Fort Hood** releases Soldiers to participate in training during their last months of military service. Fort Hood continues to pay the Soldier's salaries and benefits during the training period. In their effort to rapidly re-employ Soldiers and connect them with jobs that will make them successful, Fort Hood's leadership vets employers/training providers to identify those that have higher employment success rates. These vetted partners form Fort Hood's Career Skills Programs (CSPs).

**Vetted Employers**, as part of the CSPs, pay some or all of the costs associated with training tuition but others require additional resources. Career Skills programs are done in training cohorts with about 10-25 trainees per cohort and 2-4 cohorts per program per year. The goal of the short-term training cohorts is to ensure exiting the military and military spouses find employment and gain transportable industry-recognized certifications that make them competitive for local jobs.

**CSP Training Providers**, provide training that meets the specific needs of the employers who will hire after training. Generally, the training includes a hands-on component working directly for employers who are hiring; this strategy allows the Soldiers to get used to working in a civilian environment, to learn about the job and the workplace, and to make a connection with their potential new employers.

**Workforce Solutions of Central Texas** provides support for training and connection to employment. Additionally, WSCT closely monitors each CSP's employment rates to ensure individuals are attaining employment at an average rate of 80% or more per cohort. In addition to the training that is preferred by exiting military, military spouses are generally interested in support related to finding a job, receiving vocational training, and short-term training that includes industry recognized certificates that will also help them get jobs at future duty stations.

By using short-term training that meets the specific needs of employers that are vetted to be beneficial/attractive to exiting Soldiers and military spouses, Central Texas has developed a system that will connect and retain skilled workers for local hard-to-fill jobs and for employers who are expanding or being recruited by local economic development entities. It is a strategy that is designed to keep skilled workers in Texas and reduces the number who go to other states to seek employment.

## 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.**

Although one could argue that there are very few areas who have as great an abundance of skilled veterans and military spouses transitioning into new careers, the Central Texas model for supporting a consistent pipeline of workers has the potential to transfer to communities that are willing to join forces to better identify and prepare future employees. The key strategies and questions to ask when replicating this program are:

<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Questions</b>
Target Employers	Are there enough jobs to support a continuous training pipeline, are the jobs high-wage, are a substantial portion of training graduates hired after training?
Engage Targeted Employers	What skills are needed, what screening criteria is needed to identify potential applicants (as examples: what entry level skills are required, are there security clearance requirements, are ex-offenders acceptable, are individuals who have English as a Second Language acceptable, etc)?
Involve Training Providers	Is the training available locally, does the training lead to stackable credentials/industry-recognized certificates or a degree, does the employer have a training provider preference, will the training meet the skills requirements identified by the employer?
Consider Funding Options	Is the training Pell Grant or WIOA eligible, can the training be funded by military or community resources, are there grants or other programs that will support the training, will the hiring employer invest in the training?

Additionally, the above Workforce Solutions' strategies are based on quality principles promoted by the Baldrige Award for Performance Excellence criteria. Through the criteria, leaders document organizational knowledge and processes to be shared with others. Specific to Central Texas, the guidance means that efforts to share information are linked to activities that promote employment services, fill local jobs, and match job seekers to fill in-demand jobs ultimately improving local economies.

The partnerships and potential participants will vary in different Workforce Areas; however, the overarching goals and strategies will not change. To help others accomplish similar goals, Central Texas' approach is documented and replicable including Formal Agreements/MOUs, defined processes, and clearly developed roles and responsibilities. There are specific strategies that can be reinforced through workshops or similar training.

Demonstrating our ability to share our best practices, Central Texas has presented similar information at local, state, and national conferences. Central Texas has also been endorsed by the Texas Quality Foundation as a Texas Award for Performance Excellence recipient. This recognition is only given to organizations that have demonstrated and documented quality customer-driven approaches with fully deployed processes. As a Texas Quality recognized business, we are charged to be a role model quality-based organization and we have experience sharing our best practices and with other organizations across the state and nation.

Finally, demonstrating to apply this model to other populations, WSCT has begun replicating the Career Skills Program model for other job seeker groups. We have begun a non-military, employer-focused, cohort-based training for low-income adults. The short-term training was developed in 2022 and conducted in January 2023. This program prepared almost 30 Certified Medical Assistants to work in Baylor Scott and White clinics.

### 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.**

Fort Hood's Career Skills programs are supported through a partnership between:

- Workforce Solutions of Central Texas,
- III Corps and Fort Hood,
- Career Skills Programs Employers (listed below),
- Fort Hood Transition Assistance Program,
- Central Texas College
- Greater Killeen Chamber of Commerce,
- Heart of Texas Defense Alliance, and
- Texas Veterans Leadership Program.

The mutual goal of the partners is to develop a system for connecting transitioning Soldiers and spouses of active duty Soldiers to high-skill, high-wage jobs that would provide a family-sustaining wage. The partnership also focuses on ensuring that these potential workers had the resources necessary to start their new jobs without having to go into debt to pay for tools, uniforms, training, or other work-related expenses. To accomplish this, the partners focused on identifying resources such as the Montgomery G.I Bill, military tuition assistance, and even employer-sponsored assistance through Fort Hood's Career Skills Programs. Additionally, Workforce Solutions of Central Texas received a Department of Labor National Dislocated Worker two-year grant for \$7.9 million to support over 1,000 transitioning Soldiers and military spouses in their efforts to find employment.

In addition to participating in regular meetings to improve and expand Career Skill Program options, WSCT has dedicated staff who screen potential participants and enroll transitioning Soldiers and military spouses in Workforce services. Workforce staff work directly with Fort Hood's Transition Assistance Program to streamline the process for ensuring Soldiers are released to complete their selected Career Skills Program training during the last months of their service commitment. Additionally, Workforce staff coordinate assistance with the Career Skills Program trainers to ensure the individuals in training have the resources they need to complete training, connect with future employers, gain work experience, and begin their new jobs.

Specifically, Workforce Solutions of Central Texas supports eligible Soldiers in CSP programs by paying tuition when the CSP does not cover the cost, providing classroom-required supportive services such as books and uniforms, and paying lodging/travel expenses for individuals who are participating in a worksite internship in other parts of Texas. In addition to training-related supportive services, Workforce Solutions of Central Texas provides work-related expenses for individuals who are leaving the military and entering a civilian job. Examples of work-related expenses include but are not limited to a basic tool kit to start a technician job, uniforms or work clothes, and work-required equipment such as safety gear. Finally, supportive services also include emergency assistance that is sometimes needed to support participant's efforts to remain in training, accept a job, or retain employment. Emergency assistance includes, as examples, rental or utility assistance.

Employer partners supporting Fort Hood's Career Skills Programs including the Workforce Solutions of Central Texas (WSCT) contributions:

- Shifting Gears (GM/Rahtheon Automotive Technician Program): GM pays 100% of tuition, WSCT provides \$3,200 toolbox for graduates who receive an intent to hire letter from GM dealers.
- Heroes Make America (Advanced Manufacturing Skills and Computer Technology): WSCT pays \$2,750 for training and provides financial transportation assistance for travel to training; GI Bill pays \$1,750 tuition
- Hiring Our Heroes (Internships in High-Skill, High-Wage Jobs): Depending to the employer/job requirements, WSCT pays hotels, transportation, clothing, and job/training costs. For military spouses, WSCT pays \$5,000 to cover internship wages.
- Warrior Training Advancement Course: VA pays 100%
- Galvanize (Data Science Bootcamp): Employer Sponsored; Montgomery GI Bill
- Dallas/Fort Worth Airport Police Academy (Police Training): WSCT pays tuition, TCLOSE certification, and uniform costs
- Airstreams (Renewable Energy and Telecommunications Mechanics and Installers): GI Bill pays tuition, WSCT pays uniform, and boots
- Millwrights (Industrial Mechanics Trained in Conveyors, Turbines, Machinery, Pumps, and Motors, or Carpentry): WSCT pays tuition and provides \$1,000 tool sets for graduates who receive an intent to hire letter
- Veterans in Piping (Welding): Union pays tuition and fees
- Ford Technicians of Tomorrow (Ford Specialized Mechanics with Industry-Recognized Certifications): WSCT pays \$2,750 tuition and provides \$4,000 toolbox for graduates who receive an intent to hire letter.
- MasTec (Powerline Industry): MasTec pays tuition, WSCT provides \$4,300 tool set
- McLane Distribution (Supply Chain, Management, Inventory, Warehousing, Transportation): McLane Distribution sponsored
- Tokyo Electron Semi-Conductor (Semi-Conductor Maintenance): Tokyo Electron sponsored
- ForgeNow (HVAC): WSCT pays \$6,000 tuition, GI Bill pays \$6,000 tuition
- Home Builders Institute (Construction): HomeDepot sponsored

#### 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**

In the 2022 calendar year,

- 692 transitioning Soldiers and military spouses were enrolled in services sponsored by Workforce Solutions of Central Texas.
- \$3 million grant-sponsored services totaled just over \$3 million for the year.
- \$4,257 average total training, support, and placement costs per individual.

While many are still receiving training and services, following are the outcomes for those who began training in 2022 and completed in 2022:

- 306 Trainees Accepted Jobs in Texas
- 136 Trainees Accepted Jobs Outside of Texas
- 341 Trainees Received Industry Recognized Certificates
- \$55,259 Average Wage at Placement

#### V. SECONDARY BENEFITS

Produces ancillary benefits to other economic activities in the area.

To fully realize the secondary benefits of the Central Texas partnerships, it is important to note that Fort Hood is the largest economic contributor in Texas. Specifically, Fort Hood is the largest employer in Texas. The State Comptroller reported that the installation had a \$28.8 billion impact on Texas’ economy in 2021. There are a variety of factors regarding local and statewide support contracts as well as actual wages that result in this high-dollar impact. Specifically, working with the Texas Military Preparedness Commission, the Comptroller’s office collected data from each of the state’s 14 U.S. military installations using a survey designed to ensure consistency in determining the total direct and indirect contribution of the base’s populations to state-level employment, gross domestic product, output and disposable personal income.

The Comptroller’s economic impact analysis represents a conservative estimate of the economic importance of Fort Hood to Texas. Each installation’s distinctive characteristics contribute to the Texas economy in different ways. This analysis uses a consistent model to determine the economic impact of each of the state’s military installations to the state’s economic growth.

Estimated Total Contribution of Fort Hood to the Texas Economy, 2021	
<b>Total direct employment</b>	55,374
<b>Total employment (direct &amp; indirect)</b>	160,933
<b>Output</b>	\$28,886,145,000
<b>Gross domestic product</b>	\$16,967,542,000
<b>Disposable personal income</b>	\$11,224,637,000

Source: <https://www.hotda.org/copy-of-2021>; Source: *Regional Economic Models, Inc. (REMI) - model for Texas*

In addition to the overall importance of supporting efforts to stabilize employees supporting Fort Hood, Texas needs to retain the substantial number of Soldiers exiting the military from Fort Hood. Specifically, in 2022, 9,871 active duty Soldier, 4,179 Army Reserves, and 3,308 National Guards exited the military from Fort Hood (17,358 Soldiers in Total). To realize the secondary benefits for the Central Texas program, the economic impact for the 7 Texas Counties in the Central Texas Workforce Areas can also be reviewed. For the 7-County area, if these skilled workers were leave the economic impact would be

- Reduction in Earnings: -\$1,924,878,624;
- Reduction in Jobs: -32,474; and
- Reduction in Taxes: -\$76,637,718.

Source: Lightcast Economic Modeling

Finally, positive economic impact relates to replaced wages over Unemployment Insurance Payments. Military Unemployment Insurance is called “UCX.” In 2022, the UCX costs for the Army at Fort Hood dropped over \$16 million (close to \$17 million).

