



# 2024 WORKFORCE EXCELLENCE AWARD NOMINATION FORM

## NOMINATION FORM

APPLICANT:

**Kilgore Economic Development Corporation**

Name of Community or Workforce Board

**Kilgore**

Contact Name and Title

**Lisa Denton, Executive Director**

**903.983.3522**

Email Address

Telephone Number

**ldenton@kilgore-edc.com**

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

**13,376**

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

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



## EQUIPPING & EMPOWERING PROGRESS

Economic development is a dynamic landscape, and Kilgore EDC is committed to driving growth in a myriad of ways, including populating the local environment with a workforce primed for progress. While Kilgore is a community of not quite 13,500 people, the city's daytime population swells significantly through a commuter workforce from Longview (12 miles south), Tyler (25 miles east) and many other areas (large and small) in easy reach via Interstate 20 and local highways.

Numerous and varied companies call Kilgore home and need a diverse workforce to succeed. At KEDC, workforce training and development has been an ongoing priority across more than three decades, and the last year in particular saw the organization utilize strategic partnerships to channel local resources toward forward-thinking initiatives in its efforts to meet the current and ever-evolving personnel needs of industries. A concerted effort in 2023 to engage a variety of methods and to incorporate multiple sectors has resulted in still-developing, measurable results, a bolstered workforce, and a model other communities can emulate.

### SUMMARY

Kilgore EDC continues fueling a series of workforce development and training initiatives spanning advanced manufacturing, transportation, and technology – key targets for KEDC as we solve current employers' needs and prepare for the future. Another initiative focuses on healthcare; as quality of place ticks higher and higher on the list for companies and site selectors, the EDC continues to improve Kilgore's scorecard for retention and attraction. The past year's endeavors – made possible through strategic collaboration with a variety of partners alongside substantial investment – aim to cultivate an ever-more skilled workforce equipped to meet the demands of modern industries, including training tailored to various companies' requests. Through new and expanded training programs, facility expansions, and industry partnerships, KEDC is not only fostering economic growth in Kilgore, it's also helping position the community as a hub for talent and innovation.

### INITIATIVES

*During the past year, Kilgore EDC has steered, sustained, supported, and spearheaded initiatives to expand and enhance the local workforce. From tailored programs in advanced manufacturing to strategic partnerships in healthcare and technology, KEDC's endeavors are manifesting opportunities for businesses and residents.*

#### **Kilgore College Advanced Manufacturing & Industrial Technologies Program (AMIT)**

When industry leaders asked for help in 'upskilling' and 'reskilling' workers, Kilgore College responded by refining curriculum and cultivating customization. **KEDC partnered in the program's formation, and our industry partners can now tailor training to specific areas, with flexibility to evolve as needs change.** KC is providing resources for individuals to enhance base skillsets, and a still-new regional pathway of study exposes students (new and seasoned) to a full range of opportunities and the skills to seize them – in addition to AMIT's primary focus, machining, the 'technical core' of the program covers everything from safety blueprint reading to basic electrical theory, analog controls, industrial maintenance, corrosion technology instrumentation and more, all within a flexible scheduling apparatus with repeating options to ensure trainees can check all the necessary boxes across a timeframe tailored to their availability.

Likewise, the college's Professional and Career Education (PACE) programs are shoring up the workforce pipeline and plugging holes in 'soft skills' and other areas, producing candidates ready-made for individual companies' rosters. Working with KC, an enterprise can cherry-pick coursework from an array of options like communication, conflict resolution, time management, employability skills, problem

solving, and critical thinking. The customized curriculum can be delivered in a traditional, face-to-face classroom environment, it can be facilitated online, or a hybrid model can combine both in-person and online components. **To date, more than \$1 million has been invested in the venture by KC and its industry partners.** Following dialogue between the college, Kilgore EDC, and Longview EDC, key next steps include developing an apprenticeship structure based on the European model – funded in part by KEDC, industry and education are working hand-in-hand to develop a robust workforce pipeline by actively engaging students still in high school.

Kilgore College also maintains a strong partnership with the University of Texas at Tyler, which offers a Bachelor's degree in Industrial Technology. The program has been relocated and is now housed at KC – with UT Tyler becoming part of the AMIT program, students can pursue a certificate of completion, an Associates of Applied Science, and a Bachelor's degree – all at the same location, Kilgore College.

### **Kilgore College Transportation Institute**

Always seeking to meet the needs of industrial partners, the working population, and the broader Texas economic community, **Kilgore EDC has entered into a long-term, low-cost lease with KC for the construction of a new CDL, forklift, and logistics training hub.** Construction on the Kilgore College Transportation Institute centered on land leased from KEDC for three decades. With one building dedicated to training in both forklift and warehousing skills, the overall site – located adjacent to Kilgore's Department of Motor Vehicles – provides easy highway access for Over the Road training, and the primary facility's covered outdoor bays, large oval drive track, and classroom building underscore KC's designation as an approved practical testing partner, once again helping Kilgore EDC move the needle for primary employers. In addition to enhanced CDL and logistics training for industry partners, key local entities can immediately benefit from the venture.

**More than \$3 million has already been invested by KC in the transportation HQ,** and the facility's current footprint has adequate space for future expansion on KEDC's lease. All told, there's great potential for a wide range of beneficiaries locally and beyond Kilgore. Meanwhile, a steady stream of forklift trainees are primed to serve a variety of warehousing operations across multiple industries. Secondary benefits are valuable to local school districts as well as East Texas Council of Governments that need bus drivers along with a variety of area electric co-ops needing CDL-carrying technologists.

### **Cutting Edge Health Science Complex**

After breaking ground in Spring 2022, the combined efforts of the City of Kilgore, Christus Good Shepherd Health, and Kilgore College transformed a rapidly-aging 70-year-old hospital hulk on Kilgore's South Henderson Boulevard. **Now, the state-of-the-art Roy H. Laird Regional Medical Health Sciences Education Center is a first-of-its-kind community college education facility for new and established professionals, serving patients in Kilgore and surrounding East Texas communities,** enhancing Kilgore's quality of life and quality of place. The center is crafted as an environment utilizing clinical students in a variety of programs – nursing, physical therapy assistant, occupational therapy, and medical imaging – following construction funded in part by a \$2.5 million Economic Development Assistance Grant in addition to revenues from the center and funding from the hospital foundation. Overall, **more than \$25 million was invested by the city, Christus, and KC** toward the creation of a cutting edge health sciences complex, eight Christus provider clinics, and a full service emergency room. Kilgore EDC's in-kind contribution includes marketing and ongoing promotion of the program.

### **Big Techs Industry Tours Event**

Kilgore EDC and local industry partners joined forces with Longview Economic Development Corporation to enable area residents to explore the innovation and advanced manufacturing that's happening right here at home. **Easily replicated elsewhere, this low-cost initiative simultaneously spotlights local career opportunities and showcases locally-produced products exported around the world.** In 2023, the first year the event was expanded to include Kilgore industry, almost 70 people toured Merritt Preferred Components, a longtime partner with KEDC. Building on the inaugural endeavor's success, as many as five Kilgore employers are expected to participate in 2024. Drawing from an even larger registration base, it's estimated twice as many participants will get a behind-the-scenes glimpse of local industry.

## Kilgore College Partnership with Amazon Web Services

Fortune Business Insights reports large companies' use of cloud services increased 67 percent in 2022 alongside a 38 percent increase for smaller operations. While that boom is attached to the expansion of remote work due to COVID-19, a higher rate of growth is projected for the future, and Kilgore College is connecting trainees with the skills they need to thrive in the field, collaborating with technologists from Amazon Web Services (AWS) to craft coursework tailored for tech through IT/cloud support, software development, data analysis, and more. The venture is a boon for Kilgore EDC and its partners, ready to utilize professionals equipped with the in-demand skills that will continue to streamline operations at-home and around an ever-shrinking globe. KEDC once again is aiding in the marketing and promotion of the program as an in-kind contribution.

### I. INNOVATIVENESS

Kilgore EDC is continuously striving to engineer practical gains for our industry partners and our wider community – during the preparation of KEDC's mid-year report, we put a close eye to the organization's program of work, surveying local industry on their current needs, challenges, and opportunities. Collaborating with a roster of partners, KEDC aligns efforts to address any targets within our scope. Across decades, Kilgore EDC has measured great results in classic endeavors, but ongoing success in the years and decades to come demands ongoing investment in new ideas and evolving methods. The past year's training initiatives go beyond the time-tested mold, ensuring workforce development that embraces and exemplifies innovation as well as evolution. **From meeting the individual demands of employers through customization to expanding the number of ready-hires available to industries, the key is finding better ways to provide more of what's needed for future success.** KEDC and its partners' efforts are re-crafting Kilgore as a hub for ready-made, adaptable progress, developing not only the pipeline but also the raw materials across multiple sectors. A forward-thinking approach to addressing the skills gap ensures this blend of tailored training, strategic alliances, and future-focused training positions Kilgore at the forefront and sets a precedent for sustainable economic empowerment.

### II. TRANSFERABILITY

The past year's workforce development initiatives innovate forward, fueling healthy momentum by utilizing a new, fresh blueprint – one that can be effectively replicated not just by economic development operations but in a range of workforce advocacy organization as well as public and private organizations. **The design of flexible coursework, the transformation and revitalization of outdated properties and facilities, the integration of widely available technological resources, and capitalization on both human and practical resources are by no means limited to Kilgore – they're available to any individual or collective effort.** Kilgore EDC has benefited from its broad base of willing partners who have, in turn, benefited on their side of the endeavors. With the right mix of contributors and collaborators in workforce development, the past year's success translates to a scalable framework for fostering talent ecosystems, empowering communities to nurture a skilled workforce and drive economic prosperity through strategic investments and partnerships.

### III. COMMUNITY COMMITMENT AND LEVERAGE

Our initiatives in 2023 epitomize the value of intergovernmental collaboration and public-private partnerships to maximize impact. Kilgore EDC leverages resources from industry stakeholders, educational institutions, and governmental agencies while amplifying the efforts with its own investments, directly enhancing and advancing workforce training and economic development. Rallying KEDC resources and industry partners' participation alongside the commitment of local entities, such as Kilgore College and others, underscores collective dedication to drive positive change and foster sustainable growth. Through shared objectives and pooled resources, KEDC is catalyzing holistic development for greater outcomes.

## IV. MEASURED OBJECTIVES

Kilgore's workforce development initiatives have yielded tangible outcomes in new jobs created, skills enhanced, and resources invested in the community. Through strategic investment of millions of dollars across various projects, KEDC has funded and assisted in the creation and retention of employment opportunities while bolstering the region's economic resilience and its capacity for future growth. The expansion of educational facilities and specialized training programs has empowered individuals to acquire industry-relevant skills, including those tailored specifically to local enterprises, as we continue enhancing workforce productivity and regional competitiveness.

- **Kilgore College's Advanced Manufacturing & Industrial Technologies Program** currently boasts 15 key employer partners on the AMIT committee. There are almost 100 students on the AMIT pathway taking the technical core in addition to a handful of trainees who have progressed to the machining portion of the program.
- At present, **KC's Transportation Institute** has about 100 students completing the program every year through the current setup. The addition of third party testing for school bus drivers and Class A CDLs will increase that number by an estimated 50 percent. The college will soon offer a one-day class for students who have completed training and only lack the requisite test, drastically reducing the 4- to 6-week wait in the DMV queue and enabling the institute to add eight completions per week above and beyond enrolled students. At full capacity, the institute could produce as many as 500 CDL licenses per year, professionals poised to shore up the employee rosters for Kilgore EDC's industry partners and representing an even more attractive workforce for expanded businesses and site selectors.
- The latest enrollment in the **Health Sciences Education Center** includes more than 230 students between 28 students in the Physical Therapy Assistant program, 33 in Surgical Technology, 68 in Nursing (ADN/RN), 28 in Nursing (VN), 44 for Radiology Technician, as well as two cohorts (totaling 33 students) training for Substance Abuse assistance.
- For **AWS Certification**, there are currently about 120 KC students enrolled in related Computer Science programs; promotion of their success in the program is aimed at enticing additional students to participate.

## V. SECONDARY BENEFITS

Beyond their primary objectives, Kilgore's workforce development activities yield ancillary benefits that ripple throughout the local economy. Beyond construction and local material acquisition to support it, the establishment of new advanced manufacturing, transportation and healthcare hubs not only enhances workforce capabilities but also stimulates ancillary industries, such as hospitality, retail, and real estate. By attracting (and cultivating) skilled professionals and fostering innovation, these initiatives are already contributing to a vibrant ecosystem conducive to business expansion and entrepreneurship. Practically, the Health Science Center is elevating quality of life while the Transportation Institute is making roads safer for all ages. Additionally, increased employment opportunities and skill development initiatives elevate living standards and enhance community well-being, fostering a virtuous cycle of economic prosperity and social advancement.

## CONCLUSION

Kilgore EDC's workforce development initiatives in 2023 represent a renewed focus on utilizing collaborative efforts to fuel innovation and economic growth, investing resources for a broad, tangible impact. Through tailored training alongside new and revitalized skill enhancement, KEDC continues to position its local and extended community for progress. Last year's initiatives have already yielded measurable results and laid a foundation for further development, both primary and ancillary benefits, driving economic growth and enrich the fabric of the community, equipping and empowering individuals and businesses to thrive in an ever-evolving landscape.