



2024 WORKFORCE EXCELLENCE AWARD NOMINATION FORM

NOMINATION FORM

APPLICANT:

Name of Community or Workforce Board

Contact Name and Title

Email Address

Telephone Number

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

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, 512-480-8432.

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

Rally in the Valley stands as **South Texas' Premier Internship Expo.**

Rally In The Valley is an initiative created to bridge the gap between students and employers, offering invaluable insights into future job prospects.

Over the past two years, Rally In The Valley has connected **over 1,000 students with internship opportunities** and valuable resources for their professional development.

Positioned at the forefront of Brownsville and the Rio Grande Valley's workforce initiatives, Greater Brownsville plays a pivotal role in facilitating student engagement and a **seamless transition into the professional arena.**

Key innovations

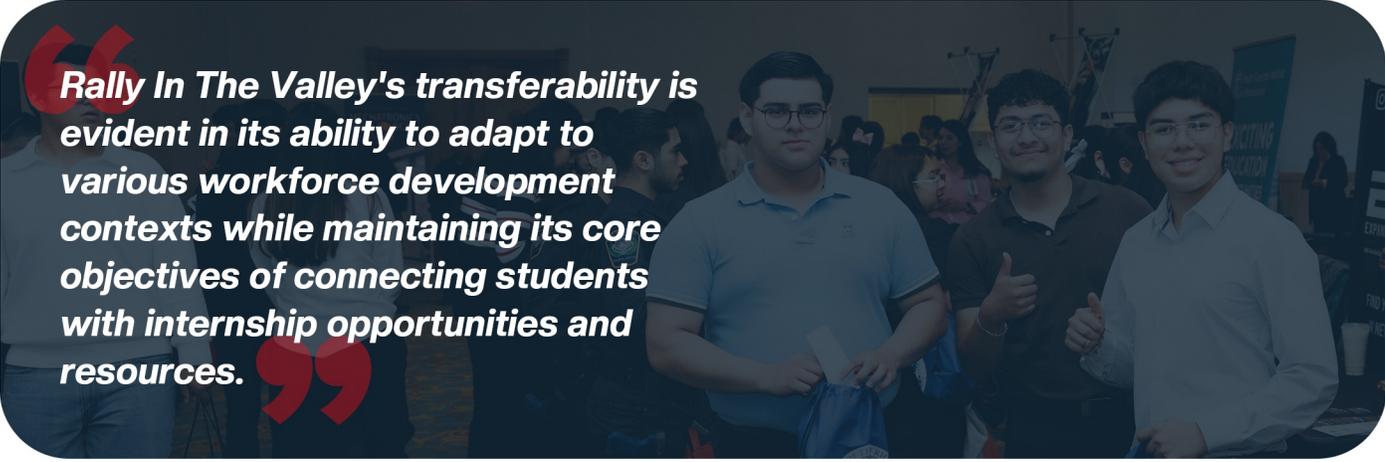
- 1. Mock Interviews:** Students participated in mock interviews across multiple industries, helping them refine their skills and gain confidence for future job interviews.
- 2. Interactive Sessions:** We included interactive sessions to engage participants actively, offering them a dynamic experience and meaningful connections with employers.
- 3. Career Path Insights:** Provided students with comprehensive insights into various career pathways, enhancing their understanding of different industries and job prospects.
- 4. Employer Fair:** Organized an employer fair where students could directly interact with industry professionals, explore internship opportunities, and network with +100 potential employers.

These innovations have played a significant role in enhancing the overall experience of Rally In The Valley and its effectiveness in connecting students with internship opportunities and career pathways.



> Transferability

The initiative has significantly increased employer engagement with local students in Greater Brownsville, encouraging more companies to open their doors for career exploration in their respective industries. Due to its overwhelming success, the decision has been made to host the event twice annually, further enhancing the connection between students, resources, and internship opportunities. By sharing its model, strategies, and outcomes with other communities, Rally In The Valley demonstrates how innovative approaches to workforce development can be applied and tailored to address local needs and priorities.



Rally In The Valley's transferability is evident in its ability to adapt to various workforce development contexts while maintaining its core objectives of connecting students with internship opportunities and resources.

Key factors for transferability

- 1. Scalability:** The event's modular and adaptable format allows for easy scalability to accommodate varying sizes and needs of different communities and regions. Organizers can customize the event to align with local workforce priorities, industries, and demographics, making it suitable for replication in diverse settings.
- 2. Collaboration:** Rally In The Valley emphasizes collaboration and partnership-building with stakeholders across sectors, including educational institutions, employers, government agencies, and community organizations. For example, Texas Workforce Commission, Workforce Solutions Cameron, Brownsville Independent School District, City of Brownsville, NextDecade, Bechtel, and others. This collaborative approach fosters a supportive ecosystem for workforce development and can be replicated in other regions to leverage local resources and expertise.
- 3. Continuous Improvement:** Rally In The Valley adopts a continuous improvement approach, regularly evaluating and refining program elements based on feedback and changing workforce trends. This commitment to ongoing learning and adaptation ensures that the event remains relevant and effective, serving as a model for other workforce development programs seeking to evolve and innovate.

Replication Success: Rallying in Houston

Partnering with organizations like the Texas Workforce Commission, Greater Brownsville has established a premier internship program in South Texas, a model that has continued for two years. Moreover, **the state has replicated this initiative in regions like the Woodlands in Houston, TX, where they organize events such as "Power in the Pines."** These initiatives, similar to Rally In The Valley, aim to connect students with resources and internship opportunities, showcasing the program's potential for adaptation and success in diverse communities.

Community Commitment & Leverage

The community's involvement and commitment to the success of Rally In The Valley have been impressive! For example, the event has attracted participation from over 100 employers, who attended and **actively engaged in the proceedings. These employers conducted practice interviews, provided coaching on professional skills, and participated in an employer/student job fair organized by Greater Brownsville,** offering students valuable insights into potential career paths. Community organizations have provided valuable support through sponsorship, participation in panel discussions, and offering internship opportunities for students.

Additionally, local leaders have played an important role in advocating for the program and encouraging participation from various stakeholders.

Greater Brownsville is dedicated to creating and nurturing a robust pipeline for workforce development. The increased involvement of employers in supporting students is pivotal to this initiative. Through Rally In The Valley, Greater Brownsville **facilitates connections between employers and state resources to offer internship opportunities**, fostering collaboration and resource-sharing to maximize the event's impact. **By bringing together public and private entities, the event creates a platform for collaboration and resource-sharing**, ultimately leading to more comprehensive and effective workforce development initiatives.

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➤ Measured Objectives

The success of Rally In The Valley has been measured through various key performance indicators (KPIs) and metrics tailored to assess its impact on both students and employers. One of the primary metrics used to gauge success is the **number of students who secure internship opportunities** as a result of participating in the event.

Additionally, the **level of employer engagement and satisfaction** serves as another important measure of success. This includes metrics such as the number of employers in attendance, the variety of industries represented, and feedback gathered from participating employers regarding their experience with the event.

Furthermore, the **long-term impact of Rally In The Valley** is assessed through tracking metrics related to student outcomes post-internship, such as retention rates, and career advancement opportunities.

Overall, the success of Rally In The Valley is measured holistically, taking into account its impact on students, employers, and the broader community.



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Secondary Benefits

The secondary benefits arising from Rally In The Valley extend beyond the event itself. **Employers have found value in the connections forged with TXWORKS**, an initiative supported by the Texas Workforce Commission. Through this partnership, **employers gain access to resources and funding opportunities, enabling them to subsidize the salaries of interns they intend to hire.** This collaboration not only supports the growth of businesses but also fosters economic development by **investing in the next generation of talent.**

Moreover, Rally In The Valley has played a pivotal role in **equipping students with practical experience**, thereby enhancing their readiness for interviews and improving their presentation skills. By providing students with hands-on opportunities to engage with employers, **the event bridges the gap between academia and the workforce**, preparing students for future career endeavors. This aspect of the event not only benefits individual students but also contributes to the overall talent pool in the region, bolstering its competitiveness in the job market.

Overall, the success of Rally In The Valley has contributed to the strengthening of **employer-student connections**, the promotion of workforce development initiatives, and the enhancement of community engagement.



**Investing in the
next generation
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