



2025 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 (TEDC membership is held by the individual, not the 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, 2024. 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.

Important Information:

- 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 submissions that exceeds the five-page limit will be disqualified.
- The project or program may not have been submitted previously for a TEDC Workforce Excellence Award.

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 9, 2025. You may also submit up to five (5) photographs of your workforce project as separate jpeg or png files.

Application Fee: There is a \$100 fee to apply for the TEDC's Workforce Excellence Award. An invoice will be generated upon receipt of the application.

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 Borderplex Future of Work Initiative represents a cutting-edge approach to workforce innovation in Texas, driven by employer input, educational partnerships, and rapid integration of emerging technologies. Launched by The Borderplex Alliance in 2021 and delivering measurable outcomes in 2024, the initiative created a durable, demand-led training model focused on preparing workers for automation, AI, and advanced manufacturing.

At the heart of this effort is the Binational Technology Council (BTC)—a Texas-based governance framework for sustained collaboration between industry, K–12, higher education, and workforce partners. BTC was designed to align workforce systems across El Paso County and engage Texas employers in shaping talent development pipelines.

In 2024, the initiative delivered:

- Training for 49 Texas educators in generative AI and Industry 4.0 technologies.
- Deployment of AI-enhanced instruction, impacting over 5,000 students in school districts across El Paso County.
- Launch of a Product Development Certificate co-created by the Texas Manufacturing Assistance Center (TMAC) and the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) to upskill engineers in prototyping and research and development (R&D).

This was also the first initiative in Texas to formally integrate tools like ChatGPT and Khanmigo into structured educator training—well ahead of broader statewide adoption.

Rather than rely on traditional top-down models, this initiative built a demand-led system where Texas employers co-developed curriculum priorities, helping close the feedback loop between training systems and industry need.

“Taking a systems approach with industry in the lead, The Binational Technology Council enabled us to flip the script on how we prepare for the future of work, which was necessary for preparing our region to compete on a global scale.”

— Natalie Littlefield, Senior Vice President, Strategy and Business 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.

The Future of Work Initiative offers a scalable model for communities across Texas facing workforce shifts driven by automation and emerging technologies. While originally developed to support the needs of El Paso, its strategies are designed for statewide relevance.

The model rests on three core pillars:

- Employer-led curriculum design: Texas employers directly shaped coursework and certifications to match evolving needs in AI and advanced manufacturing.
- Cross-sector collaboration: The initiative engaged workforce boards, public school districts, the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP), the Texas Manufacturing Assistance Center (TMAC), and regional businesses in co-developing training pathways.
- Future-ready educator training: The phased introduction of AI tools into K–12 instruction provides a replicable method for preparing educators to deliver 21st-century skills.

Other Texas regions such as Laredo, McAllen, and Brownsville—which share manufacturing capacity and labor force profiles—are well positioned to replicate this model.

- Laredo: Labor force of 123,676 and 4.2% unemployment rate (2024); economy driven by trade and logistics.
- Brownsville-Harlingen: 7,700 manufacturing jobs with 2.7% annual growth (June 2024).
- McAllen-Edinburg-Mission: 7,000 manufacturing jobs with 2.9% annual growth (April 2024).

By embedding employer feedback into curriculum development and leveraging existing education and workforce infrastructure, the model supports rapid deployment in any Texas market prioritizing talent development.

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 statelocal involvement to leverage resources.

The initiative mobilized a broad coalition of Texas-based partners who shared responsibility for design, execution, and outcomes. It was built on long-standing trust and shared ownership rather than transactional partnerships.

Core Texas collaborators included:

- University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP): Co-developed two engineering courses and supported curriculum design.
- Texas Manufacturing Assistance Center (TMAC): Co-created the Product Development Certificate aligned with prototyping and research and development (R&D).
- Microsoft TechSpark: Supported digital equity training focused on AI integration.
- Boost Human Network: Delivered AI and mixed reality training content.
- Internet of Things Company (IoTCo) and Mechatronics Automation: Provided industry-specific instruction in smart manufacturing systems.
- UTEP College of Education: Trained 49 educators and deployed instruction in classrooms.
- Workforce Solutions Borderplex: Delivered labor market insights and workforce alignment.
- The Borderplex Alliance: Convened partners and managed execution.

“The Binational Technology Council is playing a critical role in strengthening partnerships between El Paso stakeholders, fostering innovation and economic growth. This collaboration is directly enhancing digital skills and creating new opportunities for Texas talent.”

— Omar Saucedo, U.S. Philanthropies EAST Lead, Microsoft TechSpark

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***

Results demonstrate a specific objective that the program or project was able to achieve.

In 2024, the Borderplex Future of Work Initiative transitioned from strategy to implementation—delivering outcomes that measurably strengthened the regional workforce pipeline and talent ecosystem.

Key accomplishments include:

- 19 Texas teachers trained in Industry 4.0 and generative AI tools.
- Over 5,000 students reached through AI-integrated instruction in El Paso County school districts.
- 2 master’s-level engineering courses launched at the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP).
- 1 Product Development Certificate delivered in partnership with TMAC and UTEP, graduating its first cohort.
- 48 professionals from education and industry sectors completed advanced training in smart manufacturing and digital transformation.
- 10 workforce policy recommendations were adopted into The Borderplex Alliance’s strategic plan, and 6 projects are now fully implemented.

These results reflect not just alignment with industry demand, but a structural shift in how workforce development is delivered across the region. Classrooms in Title I districts now feature instruction in prompt engineering and generative reasoning—skills that were previously out of reach. Teachers aren’t just trained—they’re actively deploying AI-driven instruction as part of the core curriculum.

Institutionally, the initiative formalized policy into practice. By embedding six employer-informed workforce priorities into its organizational strategy, The Borderplex Alliance ensured that implementation wasn’t a pilot—it was operational change.

In terms of investment, the project leveraged approximately \$20,000 in public-private contributions, including AI education software, instructional design support, and donated employer time. These investments expanded reach without requiring additional public subsidy—demonstrating the initiative’s cost-efficiency and replicability.

“In partnership with Borderplex Alliance, we are pioneering a bold vision for manufacturing. This initiative unites innovation with collaboration, positioning Texas as a hub for resilient, tech-enabled workforce development.”

— Dr. Mo Abuali, Managing Partner, Internet of Things Company (IoTCo)

V. SECONDARY BENEFITS

Produces ancillary benefits to other economic activities in the area.

Sustaining Governance Structure

The initiative formalized the Binational Technology Council (BTC) as a permanent Texas-based body, enabling long-term coordination among education, workforce, and industry partners. BTC now ensures continuity in talent development and technology integration beyond any single program.

Visibility & Recognition

The initiative has raised El Paso’s profile in Workforce Board briefings, regional economic development panels, and AI workforce planning conversations—strengthening the region’s position in future talent-focused investment efforts.

Cross-Sector Trust

By breaking down silos, the initiative created a shared language and rhythm for collaboration across education, workforce, and industry—enabling faster response to shifting demands.

Catalyst for Investment

New employer-led and philanthropic projects are underway, including two grant-funded initiatives and expanded AI curriculum pilots—all modeled after BTC’s structure and co-designed with industry input.