TEDC 2018 WORKFORCE EXCELLENCE AWARD NOMINATION FORM

The 2018 TEDC Workforce Excellence Awards will be presented at the TEDC's 2018 Mid-Year Conference in Galveston, Texas, on June 14, 2018. Awards in each of the five categories will be presented to the community or region that has demonstrated the most significant contribution to workforce development in their community/region and in the State of Texas.

Applicant
Name of Community or Region/Workforce Board:

BLINN COLLEGE

Contact Name: JAY ANDERSON  Title: DEAN TECHNICAL & COMMUN-

Mailing Address: BRYAN CAMPUS  [m programs]

Telephone: 9898544939  Email Address: jay.anderson@blinn.edu

Community Population: 215,087  (as of most recent census or as officially marketed)

Summary Review
Please attach a brief description of the workforce development initiative. Within this description, address the awards criteria of innovativeness, transferability, community commitment, measured objectives and secondary benefits. Please provide the start date of the project and completion date, if applicable. Provide measurable results from the project in the past 12 months. The workforce development initiative can be a long-term project, but must show measurable results in the award year. The nomination can be no longer than five conventionally formatted 8.5" x 11" pages.

Nomination Submitted by:

Member Name: MATTHEW PRECHASKA  (individual, not organization)

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Please return nomination forms and supporting documents by Friday, May 4, 2018 to Amy Swank, amy@texasedc.org, or by fax to 512-472-7907.
The Blinn College District National Center for Construction Education & Research (NCCER) Construction Trades Training Program

INTRODUCTION

In 2017, the Bryan/College Station, Texas region, commonly referred to as the Brazos Valley, recognized that it faced a shortage of skilled construction workers to support the region’s historic growth.

As recently as 2011, the cities of Bryan and College Station issued 619 building permits for single-family, 2-4 family, and 5+ family units. By 2016, this figure had increased more than 95% to 1,218, as illustrated in the accompanying table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>BUILDING PERMITS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>619</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>784</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>824</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>1,014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>1,209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>1,218</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As a result of the region’s fast-growing demand for housing, it also faced increased demand for highly trained skilled trade workers. The Blinn College District discussed the situation with representatives from the Home Builders Association of Bryan-College Station and with local homebuilders such as Vaughn Construction, Blackstone Handcrafted Homes, and Stylecraft Builders. Each local building company indicated that they had been forced to use contractors from as far away as Houston, Austin, and Waco due to the lack of local skilled trade workers, and the continuously increasing demand was exacerbating the construction work shortage.

To address the shortfall, Blinn applied for and was awarded a $195,000 Building and Construction Trades Grant through the Texas Workforce Commission to expand its existing electrical technician and HVAC (heating, ventilation, and air conditioning) programs, and to establish new plumbing and carpentry programs. Each training program was designed following National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER) curriculum, which was developed by NCCER with the cooperation of more than 125 construction CEOs, trade association officials, and academic leaders.

Students who successfully complete these skilled trade courses earn four stackable credentials: the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) 10-Hour Construction Certificate, the NCCER Core Construction Certificate, the NCCER Level I Certificate for their specific trade specialty, and the Blinn College District Certificate of Completion. Each course runs from 200 to 240 contact hours, allowing students to complete the course in approximately six months.

I. Innovativeness

This project required several innovations for successful execution, including the implementation of two new construction trades courses (carpentry and plumbing). The Blinn College District did not have capacity in its current facilities to offer these new courses. However, Blinn partnered with Texas A&M University to share a building on the Texas A&M University System’s RELLIS Campus located in west Bryan, Texas.
Blinn also recognized that its $195,000 Building and Construction Trades Grant could be used for more than course development and equipment purchases. To that end, Blinn applied $65,000 of grant funds (approximately 1/3 of the total award) toward student scholarships to minimize financial hardship and economic barriers. The scholarship pays 50% of the tuition costs for students at least 18 years old who are legally eligible to work in the United States. Male students are required to have registered with Selective Service.

The NCCER curriculum used in the skills trade courses provides an innovative approach to breaking down content into modules that address skill areas associated with each trade. After completing each module, students must pass a written test on each module and complete a hands-on skills assessment with the instructor. Students who do not pass a module are provided additional training until they can successfully complete the skills associated with the module.

Blinn also took steps to connect students and potential employers. As students near the end of their training, local employers are invited to speak to the class and encouraged to recruit students for local employment. At the time of this application (April 2018), three local employers already have spoken to students, with a goal of at least 10 employers speaking to the classes by August 2018.

II. Transferability

Using the nationally recognized NCCER curriculum will allow the Blinn College District to transfer this coursework seamlessly into credit-bearing certificates and degrees. Students who successfully complete these skilled trade courses earn four stackable credentials: the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) 10-Hour Construction Certificate, the NCCER Core Construction Certificate, the NCCER Level I Certificate for their specific trade specialty, and the Blinn College District Certificate of Completion. Each course runs from 200 to 240 contact hours, allowing students to complete the course in approximately six months.

It is Blinn’s goal to develop a model with this program that can be packaged seamlessly and used in other community college, technical schools, and industry settings. The model of using NCCER carpentry coursework will leverage the opportunity to launch into a credit-bearing pathway leading towards degree completion. An example of this is the rigor and relevance, and the outcomes and objectives from the NCCER course aligning with Classification Instructional Programming (CIP) code 46.0201 Introduction to Carpentry. This training is also a direct pathway into a Department of Labor Sponsored Apprenticeship.

III. Community Commitment and Leverage

The Research Valley Partnership (RVP) has served as a catalyst in promoting growth in this program. The RVP’s first commitment in assisting in making this program a success included revamping its Talent Pipeline Steering Committee – which a Blinn representative chairs, and a second Blinn representative serves as an active board member. This committee of twelve members and its subcommittees are currently focused on building trades and ensuring there are enough skilled laborers to meet the needs of the various construction trades in the Brazos Valley. Members of the Talent Pipeline Steering Committee are made up of industry professionals, Texas A&M
University System faculty, Texas A&M Engineering Extension Services (TEEX), Blinn College faculty, and Brazos Valley Council of Governments.

The Blinn College District has also collaborated with local school districts to help meet the community’s long-term need for skilled trades’ employees. Snook ISD, Caldwell ISD, and Somerville ISD have partnered with Blinn to provide their students the opportunity to receive skilled trades training despite the combined ISD districts' lack of facilities and equipment.

The Blinn College District currently is involved in a collaborative effort including Snook ISD, Caldwell ISD, and Somerville ISD. These K-12 school districts have built a relationship with Blinn in response to the lack of facilities and equipment within their respective ISDs. Through this partnership, twelve high school students are transported daily to the RELLIS Campus, where they complete their NCCER training and are awarded industry-recognized credentials. In the future, it is Blinn’s goal to expand this partnership with local ISDs by utilizing a shared facility at the Texas A&M University – RELLIS Campus and begin offering advanced NCCER Courses. These include enhanced safety training and high quality NCCER Level I, II, III, IV courses.

As a partner in the acquisition of the Texas Workforce Commission Grant, Workforce Solutions Brazos Valley has worked quickly to add carpentry and plumbing to the Eligible Training Provider System, which allows Workforce Solutions to provide supportive services such as childcare and transportation assistance to qualified students. In addition to breaking down barriers for students, Workforce Solutions actively recruits participants to enroll in the trades courses.

This project also has received support from the Blinn College District Trades Advisory Board, which is comprised of owners and managers from local trades related companies. The 14 members of this advisory board take an active interest in the development and continuous improvement of Blinn’s trades programs. This Advisory Board provides important insights into current trends within the construction trades industry, and serves as a source of potential employers for program graduates. This direct connection to industry partners allows Blinn to market the employment opportunities available to program graduates.

Blinn is committed to sustaining this program after the grant period ends, and has reached an agreement with Blackstone Handcrafted Homes, which will provide up to $5,000 in scholarship funding for the trades classes after the grant is finished. In addition, each year Blinn College seeks funding through the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Education Act to seek funding for equipment to enhance the workforce programs of Blinn College. The Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 is a principal source of federal funding to states and discretionary grantees for the improvement of secondary and postsecondary career and technical education programs across the nation. The purpose of the Act is to develop more fully the academic, career, and technical skills of secondary and postsecondary students who elect to enroll in career and technical education programs. Annually, Blinn College receives roughly $27,000 to enhance equipment for its workforce programs.
IV. Measured Objectives

To date, the NCCER Construction Trades project has enrolled 54 students in its carpentry, plumbing, electrical, and HVAC courses. Of these students, 52 are enrolled in classes scheduled to end between May 2018 and August 2018. Blinn plans to enroll at least 15 additional students in the carpentry and plumbing classes that will be hosted at the A.W. Hodde, Jr. Technical Education Center in Brenham, Texas in May 2018. This will bring the total number of students to 69.

Blinn has documented 25 outreach events to recruit students for these classes. These events include eight television interviews or news stories, three newspaper stories, one radio interview, and seven in-person presentations to local stakeholder groups. These efforts have led to positive publicity for this project, which in turn has encouraged enrollment.

V. Secondary Benefits

As a result of these skilled trades courses, graduates will gain employment in high-demand, high-wage fields. According to the Texas Workforce Commission’s occupational profiles for the Brazos Valley, electricians in this region earn an average wage of $19.50 per hour. HVAC technicians are paid $19.10 per hour, carpenters are paid $15.53 per hour, and plumbers are paid $23.01 per hour. With the extremely high construction growth rate and the huge increase in residential home building to come in 2018, these hourly wages will increase dramatically as demand for all four occupations spikes.

Additionally, local construction companies benefit from adding quality skilled workers to their staffs, and can increase their capacity for additional projects. The community benefits from faster construction development, improved economic activity, and decreased unemployment.

Through Blinn’s partnerships with local ISDs, high school students can obtain dual credit that they can apply toward associate and bachelor’s degrees. At Blinn, students’ experience in the skilled trades’ courses can be applied towards an Associate’s Degree in Industrial Technology that is currently in the prospective stage.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Blinn’s Skilled Trades Program features the innovativeness, transferability, community commitment, measured objectives, and secondary benefits that make it a strong candidate for the Texas Economic Development Council’s 2018 Workforce Excellence Award.

To ensure the success of this program, Blinn applied innovative techniques, including applying 1/3 of the grant funding awarded to support the project toward student scholarships. Through these scholarships, Blinn helps to minimize barriers to entry and helps local companies attract as many potential employees as possible. Blinn also uses an NCCER curriculum that breaks the content down into modules that allow students to build skills consecutively through written and hands-on examinations. To help connect students and potential employers, the program also creates in-class interaction opportunities by inviting potential employers to the classroom to speak to students.
By utilizing NCCER’s nationally recognized curriculum, Blinn can award program graduates experience credit v.a industry certification. These transferable credits can be applied toward degrees from Blinn and other colleges and universities.

This program truly has been a success for the entire community, requiring Blinn’s workforce training expertise, funding from the Texas Workforce Commission, supportive services from Workforce Solutions Brazos Valley, and financial support and recommendations from the members of Blinn’s Trades Advisory Board. The Research Valley Partnership (RVP) Talent Pipeline Steering Committee comprised of twelve members and its subcommittees continue to focus on building trades and ensure there are enough skilled laborers to meet the needs of the various construction trades in the Brazos Valley. Members of the Talent Pipeline Steering Committee made up of industry professionals, Texas A&M University System faculty, Texas A&M Engineering Extension Services (TEEX), Blinn College faculty, and Brazos Valley Council of Governments meet regularly to strategize and continually improve the sequential stackable pathways this training provides.

Because of these collaborative partnerships, Blinn will have enrolled 69 students in the program by May 2018. Through the Carl D. Perkins Grant, Blinn has committed to purchase equipment that expands the College district’s training capabilities and helps to ensure that it can continue to train future generations of Brazos Valley skilled trades professionals for years to come.

Through this program, Brazos Valley businesses will have expanded capacity to meet community demand for additional construction services, and local job seekers have access to a career pathway that offers quality salary and job security, with expectations for significant future growth. Additionally, this program provides local high school students the opportunity to gain dual credit that applies toward both their high school and college degrees.

As a result, Brazos Valley businesses, job seekers, and students all benefit from the development of the skilled trades courses marketed, and offered by the Blinn College District and its community partners, in an area where this training previously did not exist. Indeed, the collaborative efforts of the Blinn College District, the Texas Workforce Commission, Texas A&M University and its system entities, Brazos Valley Workforce Solutions, and the Research Valley Talent Pipeline Committee have formed the foundation for what is, and will be, an exceptional contribution to workforce development in the region for the future. As Henry Ford once said, “Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success.” Indeed, the foundation for successful workforce development has been established in Bryan, Texas with the NCCER Construction Trades Training Program initiative.