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:
Workforce Solutions of Central Texas

Contact Name: Linda Angel       Title: Director, Transformation and Effectiveness
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Community Population: 474,505 (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 program and completion date, if applicable. Provide measurable results from the program in the past 12 months. The workforce development initiative can be a long-term program, 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: Cynthia Hernandez (individual, not organization)
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Please return nomination forms and supporting documents by Tuesday, May 1, 2018 to Amy Swank, amy@texasedc.org, or by fax to 512-472-7907.
Brief Description of the Workforce Development Initiative:

Start Date: August 24, 2015
End Date: Ongoing Program

It is not unusual to hear employers and community members talking about the exemplary work ethic and in-demand skills that veterans bring to the workforce. However, it is also true that veterans have an exceptionally high unemployment rate. The “Hiring Our Heroes Fellowship Program” (HoH) is a program that is designed to address the unemployment rate issues and rapidly link exiting Soldiers and military spouses to in-demand jobs that match their skills sets. In most cases, the Soldiers can transition into civilian jobs without ever being counted among the unemployed.

HoH began as a partnership between Workforce Solutions of Central Texas (WSCT; local Workforce Board), the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Central Texas College, the Department of the Army/III Corps and Fort Hood, and the Soldier for Life Program on Fort Hood. The overarching goal is to develop a system for connecting active duty service members to the civilian work environment during their last six months of military service. A secondary goal is to ease the transition of Soldiers leaving active duty military service; specifically, the program focuses on reducing the difficulty being faced by career Soldiers who have experience working in structured, command-driven environments but little/no experience working in civilian jobs.

To their advantage, participating employers and partners know that Soldiers have a strong work ethic, unique high-demand job skills, and exemplary leadership skills/training. Unfortunately, the experiences and training soldiers received did not prepare them for similar high-level positions in less structured environments. These Soldiers could lead people into battles defending our country, but they had limited experience leading people who do not take orders and they are inexperienced working with people who have a more “relaxed” work ethic. As is demonstrated by the outstanding results, HoH gives them the opportunity to learn a high-level job, take classes to help them understand and navigate in the civilian work environment, and gain the transition skills they need to attain and retain employment when their military service commitments ended.

After participating in the planning process, Workforce Solutions of Central Texas (WSCT) dedicated staff to screen potential participants for the HoH program and also determine their eligibility for additional Workforce services. WSCT also facilitated the initial job matches during an on-site, targeted job fair that connects service members and spouses with their potential future employers for interviews/selection. A unique feature of the matching process relates to the fact that the employers and the HoH Fellows both rate the interviews, and each have input into the final employee (intern)/employer match. Prior to interviewing, WSCT provides space and resources to complete interview and resume preparation and work as mentors for selected participants.

In support of the HoH program, the U.S. Chamber provides a full-time staff person who develops job opportunities, engages employers, identifies training partners, clarifies job expectations, and tracks results. This individual serves as the primary point of contact to address each participant’s issues and concerns. WSCT works jointly with the Chamber staff person to assess participant satisfaction and to make changes based upon participant and employer feedback. Additionally, HoH Fellows, who are determined to be eligible for additional Workforce services, receive supportive services such as transportation and/or child care assistance during the internship.

Regarding the actual training and work experience, HoH participants are on-site with their employer doing internships for three days per week and in classroom training one day per week for 12 weeks. The fifth day of each week the participants return to their respective military unit. The U.S. Army pays the full salary and benefits for participants during the entire 12 weeks. Classroom training coursework includes team building, “selling” yourself, human resource/management planning, communication, time
management, human relations, quality control, managerial ethics, customer service, change
management, budgeting, accounting, and risk management. Internship training, at the worksite, is
designed to expose service members and spouses to civilian management/leadership skills by giving them
hands-on guided experience in high level positions. The industry partners/employers make an up-front
commitment to offer the position to the soldier or spouse or to refer them to a similarly high-level job at
training completion.

**Innovativeness**

HoH is an innovative, rapid employment program that immediately connects highly-skilled soldiers and
spouses who are exiting the military from Fort Hood with in-demand leadership jobs in central Texas.
Demonstrating the Army’s support for this program, the exiting Soldiers and spouses are given the
opportunity to work at their new job while still being paid by their soon-to-be previous employer (the
Army). They receive the benefit of getting to know the employers, learn the job, and show their true
potential. The approach is designed to increase employment opportunities and ultimately retain skilled
workers in Texas rather than have them return to their home states after serving in the military.

Hiring Our Heroes is unique for several reasons. The comprehensive partnership between the Workforce,
community partners, Fort Hood Leadership, and employers is unparalleled. The Army facilitates this
program by allowing the soldier to participate while still on active duty; thus the Army pays Soldiers and
covers workers comp while the Soldiers build relationships, train, and learn skills working in their future
civilian jobs. The Soldiers are being trained to navigate and succeed in a civilian work environment and
they benefit from the substantial commitment from employers who agree to hire these Soldiers/spouses
when they exit the service. On the extremely rare occasion when job offers are not made, the employer is
committed to helping the soldier/spouse find a similar well-paying, in demand local job.

Innovation can also be seen in the process being used to identify, recruit, and select Fort Hood’s
exemplary workforce and match them with central Texas jobs that have similar skills demands.
Employers and individuals participating in HoH go through a mutual selection process during which
they each meet, conduct interviews, and rank their selections for employment and employee. Through
this process, employers select their top employee candidates and the Soldiers select their top choices for
employment.

**Transferability**

Workforce Solutions strategies are based on quality principles promoted by the Baldrige Award for
Performance Excellence criteria. The criteria require leaders to document organizational knowledge and
processes so they can 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 of the HoH program could vary in different Workforce Areas;
however, the overarching goals and strategies will not change. To help others accomplish similar goals,
WSCT’s 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. Additionally, WSCT’s strategies/approaches can be shared and
further expanded through train the trainer forums.

Demonstrating our ability to share our best practices, WSCT has presented similar information at local,
state, and national conferences. WSCT 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 workforce professionals and
organizations across the state and nation.
Finally, WSCT has begun replicating HoH for other job seeker groups. Our first HoH for military spouses started in August 2016. This group demonstrates the fact that the program can be replicated for other high-profile dislocated worker groups.

**Community Commitment**

The local Hiring Our Heroes program began with Workforce Solutions of Central Texas meeting with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Central Texas College, the Department of the Army/III Corps and Fort Hood, and the Soldier for Life Program on Fort Hood. The mutual goal was to develop a system for exposing active duty military to the civilian work environment. The goals were to address issues related to army downsizing and the difficulty being faced by career Soldiers with experience working in structured, command-driven environments. It was noted that Soldiers have a strong work ethic, yet their expectations and leadership skills do not prepare them for leadership positions in the corporate world. As is demonstrated by the results of the HoH program, this program gave them the exposure and transition skills they needed.

From the initial foundation work, the HoH program has grown into a community-wide engagement effort. For Workforce Solutions of Central Texas, every conversation with current, incoming and expanding business representatives includes a discussion about exiting military and the skills Soldiers and spouses bring to the workforce. Additionally, all of the local Chambers of Commerce promote HoH to their members and potential members; they describe the program as an unprecedented link and unique opportunity to access highly skilled workers with a demonstrated work ethic. In addition to local Chambers, the U.S. Chamber’s message regarding the local HoH program has resulted in business contacts from across the nation; in fact, as demonstrated in the below list of Employer Partners, national businesses with jobs in Texas are exceptionally interested in hiring HoH’s Soldiers and spouses. Perhaps the greatest commitment is reflected in the behaviors of the Soldiers and spouses themselves; HoH participants are “paying it forward” by telling their success stories and encouraging businesses to hire transitioning Soldiers and military spouses.

**Partners Include:**

National/Federal and Community Partners
- III Corps (Garrison Command) & Fort Hood
- Central Texas College
- Soldier for Life Transition Assistance Program
- United States Chamber of Commerce
- Workforce Solutions of Central Texas

**Employer Partners**

- Amazon
- ApplicantsPlus
- Central Texas Council of Governments
- Central Texas Veterans Administration
- City of Killeen
- CSRA
- Dallas Veterans Administration
- Dell Computers
- Edward Jones
- Empirex
- Forward March
- General Land Office
- Grace Bible Church
- Honeywell
- La Quinta
- MAXIMUS
- McLane Company
- Paceline
- Reki Travel
- Response Plan
- Ryder
- Sage Environmental Consulting
- Target
- Texas Department of Criminal Justice
- Veolia
Measured Objectives
The overarching objective for HoH is to rapidly connect highly-skilled workers exiting the military from Fort Hood with in-demand leadership jobs in central Texas. The approach is expected to increase opportunities to retain skilled workers in Texas rather than have them return to their home states after serving in the military.

To accomplish the objectives, an alternative process was developed to identify and recruit the best Fort Hood based candidates and connect them with central Texas jobs requiring the skills that exiting Soldiers possess. Generally, individuals leaving the service go to the Soldier for Life Program where they receive employment assistance, such as resume preparation and access to potential job openings. For the individuals in HoH, that was a small part of a program that was designed to rapidly reconnect them into the workforce. Demonstrating the Army’s support for this program, the exiting Soldiers are given the opportunity to work at their new job while still being paid by their soon-to-be previous employer (the Army). They receive the benefit of getting to know the employers, learn the job, and show their true potential.

Secondary Benefits
Hiring Our Heroes increases active duty military (exiting veterans) employment potential and marketability. Participants graduate with a job or substantially competitive edge in the local job market. Quoting from a Fort Hood Class participant, “There is a sense of comfort knowing that after our fight in America’s longest war, not everyone has forgotten us. Hiring Our Heroes ensures that our skills learned throughout the years in war will not be in vain. They are helping bridge the gap for veterans and the workforce.”

Hiring Our Heroes in central Texas is an exceptional opportunity for service members to transition into civilian management positions. Sponsored by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Workforce and the U.S. Army, HoH prepares Soldiers for separation from the Army by providing corporate-focused classroom training, extensive on-the-job/Internship experience, and facilitated networking opportunities. This three-pronged combination is important because Soldiers report difficulty transitioning from structured, command-driven work environments.

To fully realize the secondary benefits, 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 $35.4 billion impact on the Texas economy in 2015. There are a variety of factors regarding local and statewide support contracts as well as actual wages that result in this high-dollar impact. For example, the military income, excluding federal civilian income, in central Texas grew from $3,072,137,000 in 2004 to $3,549,253,000 in 2005 (the latest available data). The growth reflects a 15.5 percent increase compared to a statewide change of no increase during the same period. Additionally, reflecting the potential economic impact associated with Fort Hood, IRS outmigration statistics indicate that 21,545 military households with incomes totaling $731,865,000 left the central Texas region. Notwithstanding transfers to bases within Texas, 51.7 percent moved to a different state and 5.6 percent left the country. These moves are likely to be associated with the military.

Thus, having the support of Fort Hood leadership is a benefit that helps central Texas and the entire State. Demonstrating the substantial support given from Fort Hood, top leaders have authorized resources to pre-screen/select exiting military participants for referral to WSCT and the U.S. Chamber. Fort Hood sets high standards for those who will be referred which results in having the best potential candidates available to compete for local employment. HoH Fellows are all senior enlisted service members or junior officers with extensive military leadership experience and training.

The HoH Program is equally beneficial to all participants, employers, and partners. Working closely with service members and participating businesses, WSCT makes connections based on their needs, skills and preferences. Businesses conduct interviews and choose the individual that best matches the needs of
their organizations, and Fellows identify the businesses that they would most like to gain work experience. Thus, businesses and future veterans have the opportunity to learn to work together in a no-risk environment that ultimately leads to permanent high-skill, high-wage civilian employment opportunities.

**Results since Program Inception (Six HoH Cohorts)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Fellows</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Offers</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continued Education</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dropped</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Salary</td>
<td>$6,597,306</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Salaries for averages</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hire Rate</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Salary</td>
<td>$73,303</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Following are the results for the 2017 calendar year**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Fellows</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Offers</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Offer/Hire Rate</td>
<td>86.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Salary</td>
<td>$78,822</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cohort 7 which started in January 2018 with 31 Soldiers and one military spouse also promises to be successful. To date, one soldier and the military spouse have been offered CEO/COO positions with their host businesses.

In addition to the results garnered to date, following are quotes from HoH employers and fellows:

As is stated by a past program participant, "It was a really humbling experience for me when I found out the talent level of the other individuals interviewing alongside me. This opportunity has changed my life. It has revolutionized my life."

One of the HoH program instructors explained the leverage gained by exiting military succinctly. “You see what people expect in the military, and once you get on the civilian side, it’s a bit different. Even though you can take some of those same skill sets, the culture is different. You can’t just say ‘you have to do this because I said so,’” said Lameka Grayson, one of the program instructors. “I teach them things that, as managers, they’ll deal with from (a human resources) perspective.”

"While on active duty, I was a Combat Engineer First Sergeant, I chose the Hiring Our Heroes Corporate Fellowship Program because I thought that it would be a great way to gain a bit of Experience that I otherwise may not have the chance to gain while finishing my military career... While in the program I learned that a guy like me, without any semiconductor experience whatsoever, had something to offer a major company like Applied Materials. My leadership understandings and training meshed perfectly with the needs of the business unit I was assigned to. [I] couldn’t be happier with the direction my future is headed!"