University Economic Development Association – 2026 Summit

2026 Call For Nominations

Nominate a Project	View Webpage

Nomination Window: May 20 – August 21, 2026

UEDA is calling for nominations for this year's Awards of Excellence program. Every year, we recognize leading-edge projects and initiatives in university-based economic development. Finalists will present at the **2026 UEDA Summit, co-hosted by University of West Florida**, where the audience will vote for category winners.

This year's categories:

Talent - Preparation of individuals' success by connecting learning with real-world application

Innovation - Advances in research and development across the full research spectrum.

Place - Contributions to the vitality and character of communities and regions.

Impact - Sustaining impact on regional economic diversification and community advancement.

Review Criteria

Nominations for the Awards of Excellence will be based on the following criteria:

- **Ingenuity:** originality and creativity within the project's approaches and results
- **Performance:** relevant milestones, result timelines, progress trackers and ROI, performance outcomes
- **Strategic Engagement:** demonstration of leadership, stakeholder engagement efforts, and partnerships
- **Institutionalization:** replicability, scalability, and sustainability of projects
- **Overall:** holistically review on individual opinions

Nomination Form

The worksheet below provides the information you will be asked to submit online. Please submit all conference proposal information via the **Summit Application Portal**.

2026 Awards of Excellence Nomination

Institutions wishing to nominate their projects for the 2026 Awards of Excellence are required to submit their project using this form. The deadline for applications is **Friday, August 21 by midnight (local submission time). Finalists will be notified by Friday, September 25, 2026.** Finalist presentations and Awards Ceremony will occur at the UEDA Annual Summit in Pensacola, AL on December 2 - 4, 2026. **All selected finalists must attend the Summit in person.**

For more information on the Awards of Excellence program, past recipients, or 2026 Submission Guidelines, please visit **https://www.universityeda.org/knowledgenetwork/awards-of-excellence**.

All projects submitted must have started within the last five years (since January 2021), except for nominations in the Impact category, which has no start date requirement.

Organization and Contact Information

The following questions request information about the applicant.

Institution Name

Project's Main Contact Name

Project's Main Contact Phone

Project's Main Contact Email

Project Information

The following questions request information about the Project.

Project Title

Project Website

Project Start Date

Reminder: *projects starting before 2021 do not qualify (except projects nominated for the Impact category)*.

Project End Date
Leave blank if ongoing.

Primary Awards Submission Category
Please select one of four options below.

- **Talent:** Workforce development programs that teach people how to thrive in the 21st century Knowledge Economy.

- **Innovation:** Driving applied research and development solutions (e.g. industry-contracted research, cooperative extension services, technology transfer).

- **Place:** Regional development that contributes to the overall aesthetic and quality of life of their communities.

- **Impact:** Sustained regional economic diversification and community advancement (Previous Awards of Excellence awardees and finalists only).

Project Summary

The following question requests an overview of the project.

Please provide a brief description of the project or initiative (maximum 300 words) that addresses the following:

- Objectives
- The problem the project seeks to address
- How the problem aligns with your institution's and region's broader economic development strategy

Feel free to add a one-sentence pitch that will be featured on our website and in our Annual Summit program.

Key Project Details

The following questions reflect the Awards of Excellence judging criteria.

Ingenuity: Explain the project's originality and how its objectives, approach, and results are distinct. (maximum 250 words)

Performance: Please describe the project intended outcomes and plan (maximum 300 words):

- Relevant milestones and interim results
- Result timelines
- Progress trackers
- Return-on-Investment (ROI)

Feel free to include any discussion of qualitative and quantitative performance outcomes and trends that you have noted over time.

Strategic Engagement: Describe the project's stakeholder engagement and resulting partnerships, detailing their contribution to overall success. (maximum 300 words)

Institutionalization: Please describe the following components of the project (maximum 250 words):

- **Replicability:** How can the insights, tools, and best practices from the project be duplicated by other institutions in other regions?
- **Scalability:** How can it be easily scaled up or down, and/or modified to reflect different regional or institutional contexts?
- **Sustainability:** Does the project have a business model that can sustain the project beyond its initial funding?

Total Budget: Please share the budget (or investment) of your project.
Example: $5,000

Video Submission

Please record a brief (maximum 30 seconds) video sharing an overview of your project and why it should be considered for an Awards of Excellence.

- Videos can be uploaded to the following link: **https://centerrec.sharepoint.com/:f:/s/Associations/IgAJCECUMi21SLPIyYRQRdogARPIl7fk-faaRrHLf2tdfvU**

Informal recording via phone or laptop is encouraged. ***Professionally produced videos will not be accepted.***