



AGENDA ITEM COMMENTARY

MEETING NAME:	Economic Development Corporation
MEETING DATE:	September 1, 2026
ITEM TITLE:	Consider and take appropriate action on board education related to The High Ground of Texas regional economic development organization.
STAFF INITIATOR:	Danielle Sweat-EDC Director

BACKGROUND:

It has come to my attention that it may be time for a quick refresher on who The High Ground of Texas is, what they do, and why our involvement with the organization is important to WEDC. Kasey Coker, Executive Director of The High Ground, has visited with our board in the past, but it has been a while, and I think it is important for the board to understand the role this organization plays in our business recruitment efforts.

WEDC is a member of The High Ground of Texas, a regional economic development and marketing coalition representing 70 counties across West Texas, from the northern Panhandle through the South Plains and into the Permian Basin. The organization was established in 1988 and represents economic development organizations, cities, counties, chambers of commerce, and other partners with a shared interest in growing the West Texas economy.

One of the easiest ways I describe The High Ground is that it allows us to market and recruit as a region rather than trying to compete individually. We know that a community the size of Wolfforth does not have the same marketing budget or name recognition as Dallas-Fort Worth, Austin, Houston, or San Antonio. However, when communities throughout West Texas combine our assets, workforce, infrastructure, available sites, educational institutions, energy resources, and quality of life, we have a much stronger story to tell. The goal is to work together to make sure West Texas is considered when companies and site selectors are looking at Texas, particularly when we are competing against the "Texas Triangle."

The High Ground markets our region at the state and national level and builds relationships with site selectors, consultants, companies, state partners, and other economic development professionals. Their target industries include manufacturing, energy, food processing, aerospace and aviation, distribution, agriculture, and technology.

One of the most important benefits to WEDC is lead generation and access to Requests for Information (RFIs). The High Ground can receive RFIs from companies, consultants, site selectors, and other economic development partners and then distribute applicable opportunities throughout the region. This means Wolfforth can have access to projects that may never have contacted us directly or even initially had Wolfforth on their radar.

A great example of the importance of this is Leprino Foods in Lubbock. That project began with an RFI that came through The High Ground and ultimately resulted in Leprino selecting Lubbock for its major

dairy manufacturing facility. At the time it was announced, the project represented approximately \$870 million in capital investment and 600 new jobs. That is a pretty powerful example of how a regional organization and an RFI can ultimately turn into a transformational project for one of its member communities.

The High Ground also helps its members with site and location information, site visits, tax and incentive information, funding resources, marketing, networking, professional development, and regional collaboration. Just as importantly, it gives economic developers throughout West Texas an opportunity to build relationships and share information. In economic development, those relationships matter.

I currently serve on The High Ground of Texas Board of Directors, which gives Wolfforth a seat at the table and allows me to be directly involved in conversations about how our region is marketed and where the organization focuses its recruitment efforts.

Ultimately, I see our membership in The High Ground as another tool in WEDC's recruitment toolbox. We do not have to recruit in isolation. A company may start its search looking at Texas, West Texas, or the High Ground region without knowing anything about Wolfforth. Our involvement gives us an opportunity to get into that conversation, respond to opportunities that fit our community, and then make the case for why Wolfforth should be considered.

For a relatively small investment in regional partnership, we gain a much larger reach than we could create on our own.

EXHIBITS:

COUNCIL ACTION/STAFF RECOMMENDATION: