

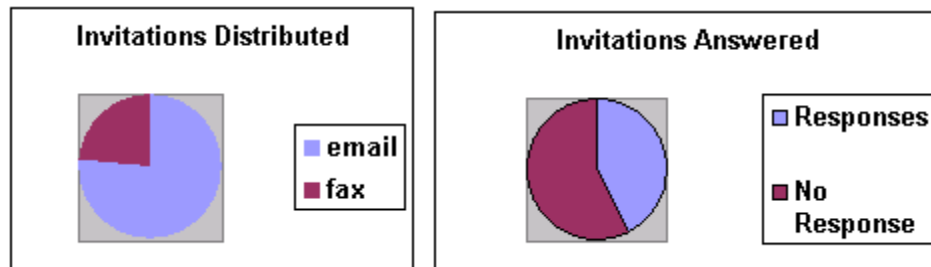
## Executive Summary

### Introduction

The Texas State EGTAW Project **End-Users Survey** was conducted from **April 1 through May 1, 2002** through the Survey of Organizational Excellence Group offices in the Center for Social Work Research at the University of Texas at Austin. The survey was administered for the Electronic Grants Technical Assistance Workgroup (EGTAW) and sponsored jointly by the State Grants Team, Texas State Governor's Office of Budget and Planning and the Survey of Organizational Excellence Group. The purpose of the survey was to identify resources and processes currently employed by Texas nonprofits, educational facilities, and municipalities who seek grants through Texas State agencies.

### Methodology

A contact database of 638 organizations and individuals was compiled with a heavy emphasis on technological availability. **478 contacts** received an **email** invitation to participate. **151 contacts** received an invitation **via fax**. 9 contacts were not utilized due to a lack of email and fax. Several state agencies under confidentiality constraints also sent email invitations and or faxes to their contacts. The invitation itself encouraged the recipient to pass the survey information on to others who would be interested in reporting their experience with the state grant process. Due to this type of snowball approach to sampling, a response rate was not calculated for the survey. However, the **total number of respondents was 267 of the 629 contacted, or 42 percent** of the contact database.

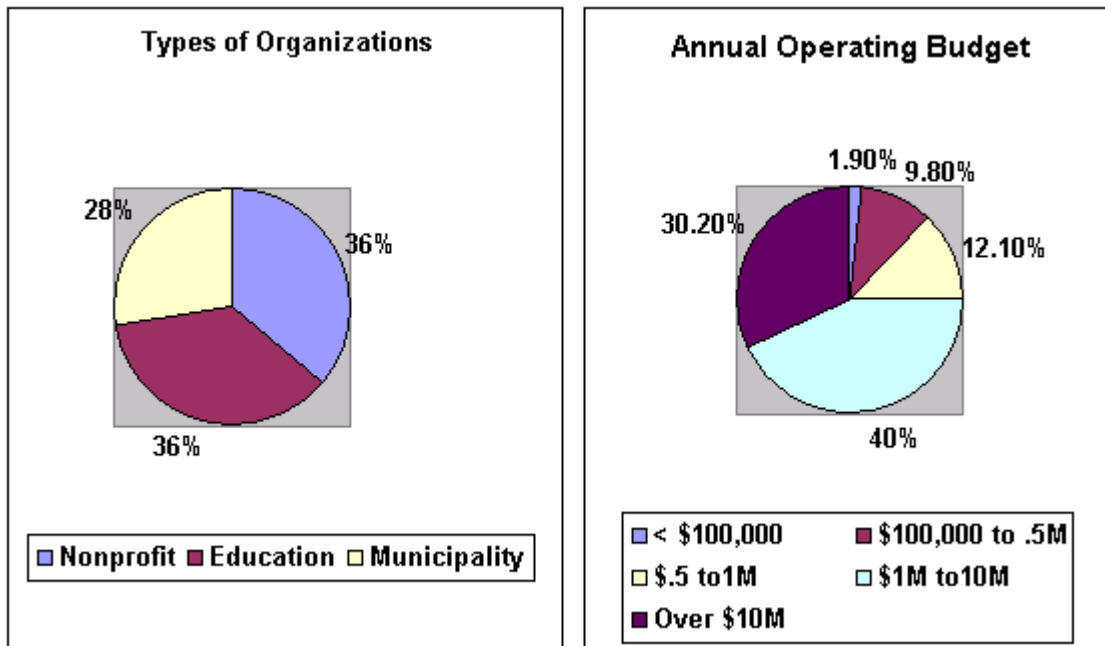


### Demographics

Respondent demographics reflect roughly **35 percent nonprofit, 35 percent school district or secondary education, and 27 percent municipalities**. One tribal agency also participated. Geographically, the heaviest concentration of respondents occurred in the more populated eastern half of the state but participants are also evident along the Texas-Mexico border, and up into the panhandle. 11 percent of the respondents have budgets less than \$500,000, **82 percent fall within the \$500,000 to \$10 million range** and 6 percent higher, for their annual operating budget.

Dependence of annual operating budgets on Texas State grants demonstrated great variability, from 0 to 100%, with a third of the respondents choosing not to answer.

Of the 169 who offered specific percentages, **40% or 67 respondents reported that 5% or less of their budgets come from Texas State grants.** Another **68 respondents reported that 25% or more of their budgets come from Texas State grants, with 52 reporting 50% or more.** The remaining 20% reported percentages of 5-25%. With some organizations depending on Texas State grants for ancillary opportunities and others, basic funding, it seems essential that the Texas State grant system be as accessible and efficient as possible. Further research into the types of organizations who are primarily dependent on Texas State grants for funding would be important information for state leadership. Just as respondents are dependent to varying degrees on grant funding, respondents also covered a wide variety of areas listed as the primary focus of the organization. All areas were covered with the exception of ‘animal welfare’ and ‘arts/culture/museums’; **51 percent marked education.**



**Findings: Reported Grant Activity**

Respondents were asked to consider grant activities over the last completed fiscal year in their reporting. 30 percent of respondents indicated applying for 1-3 grants, 16 percent for 4-5 grants, and the remaining 54 percent for more than 5. 59 percent of respondents applied to 1-3 State agencies, 11 percent indicated 4-5, and the remaining 30 percent indicated more than 5. **The top two reasons for not applying for State agency grants were lack of awareness of grant opportunities (58%) and unavailability of staff and resources (23%).** Only 16 percent of respondents indicated having one or more professional grant writers on staff. **Most processes are centralized (62-76%)** for respondents with the most frequently decentralized process being preparation and submission of applications. State agency web sites (25%), informal communication (20%), and state agency mailing or bidder’s list (16%) are the top primary sources

reported to learn about Texas state Grant awards. **U.S. mail ranks as the top communication method for both preparing and submitting applications/proposals and for receiving notification of grant status;** e-mail is used for correcting and clarifying submissions, and the phone for negotiating. **Copies of forms are generally downloaded from the Internet (67%)** although agencies (26%) also still rely on mailings from the funding agencies or a combination of both (7%).

Of the proposals or applications requested by potential grantees, 104 respondents report actually submitting 1-25% of what they receive. 34 respondents indicated submitting 26-50%, 38 indicated 51-75%, and 60 indicated 76-100%. **61 percent report requiring modifications and/or corrections for 1-25% of the applications or proposals they submit.** Top reasons to not apply included: incompatibility of program requirements with mission, service or approaches (26%); lack of resources to devote to the process (20%); and administrative or program requirements were too burdensome (18%). **69 percent of respondents reported that training and or technical assistance is generally available** and 90 percent report being notified of the final disposition of funding, whether they are recipients or not. However, **30 percent of respondents reported that Texas State agencies did not give them a reason why funds were not awarded to their agency.** Once they've been selected for funding, 73 percent report they generally have enough lead-time to implement programs.

### **Top 3 Problem Areas Identified**

The top three processes chosen as the most inefficient and resource intensive were the same three processes chosen for both simplification and availability on the Internet:

- 1. Preparing and submitting applications and proposals;**
- 2. Identifying grant opportunities at a single web address;**
- 3. Finding key information in notifications.**

### **Findings: Current Technology**

In the Technology section, only 8 percent of respondents reported no local networking of PC and Internet access for grant application and management staff. 77 percent of respondents use **Windows 98 or later as an operating system** and 62 percent use **Internet Explorer 5.0 for their web browser.** **Only 5 out of 267 respondents reported no intent of having Internet access within the next 12 months.** Ethernet (45%) was the most frequently identified access to the Internet, followed by DSL Line (15%), and dedicated phone modem (14%). 77 percent reported having a web site and provided the URL address.

### **Top 5 Barriers to Technological Advancement**

Respondents were asked to choose the top 3 barriers to technological advancement from a list of 13. Representing almost 70% of the vote are the following:

- 1. Lack of funds to pay for technology or requisite support (20%);**
- 2. Lack of staff time to devote to planning (14%);**
- 3. Other needs/expenses take precedence (14%);**
- 4. Funding agencies don't cover related costs (11%);**
- 5. Lack of State legislation that provides appropriations (10%).**

### **Findings: Open Ended Remarks**

In the Comments section, some of the state applications and forms identified as most efficient included forms from the Texas Education Agency, Office of the Attorney General, Telecommunications Infrastructure Fund Board, Texas Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse, Criminal Justice Division of the Office of the Governor, Department of Human Services, Texas Department of Housing & Community Affairs, Texas Parks and Wildlife, Department of Public Safety, and Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. Respondents also identified Federal forms including the National Science Foundation's Fastlane, the Federal Department of Justice, Violence Against Women, and forms from the National Institute of Health.

**As expected, comments also supported the problem areas, priorities for change, and leadership, funding and training needs, reflected in the hard data.** Comments focused on the need for coordination and leadership by State agencies with an emphasis on moving away from paper (U.S. mail and typewriters) to electronic downloadable forms, which could be edited then sent via the Internet. Participants discussed a desire for simplification, consistency in forms and processes across agencies, and ongoing communication and involvement. Training, communication about required infrastructure specifications, and funding to support tech hardware, software, and support were also emphasized.

### **Recommendations**

As a result of the survey, the following recommendations to the EGTAW group and all state funding agencies remains a general guideline based on the opinions of 267 respondents across the state. Keeping in mind that a majority of the organizations represented have budgets over \$500,000 and have more technology available to them than some other organizations, there was an emphasis on use of the Internet to make processes simpler and more efficient. With the changing Texas demographics represented by broader diversity and the continuing impact of economic conditions, we need information systems and processes that can respond more rapidly to changing needs and conditions. Potential benefits that could accrue from moving more of the grant process on-line include:

- improved use of time and resources for both funders and end-users,
- improved response time to inquiries and changes in priorities,
- improved access to funding for more remote parts of the state, and
- a broader pool of organizations supplying services and needed innovations.

However, without the coordination and collaboration of the funding agencies to provide consistent uniform standards for grant information and processing, the benefits of Internet access will be limited. State leadership support for the staff and technology resources needed for this effort will be an essential ingredient in the success of this initiative.

Providing grantees with on-going information and opportunities to test new systems prior to launch will honor the requests of those who have assisted in the improvement process initiated by EGTAW and the Governor's Office. Continuing to work on the collaboration, facilitating change management techniques, and providing data to state leaders will also be important factors. These recommendations are offered towards the goals of all concerned:

- 1. Continue to build out TRAIL as a single portal for grant information.**
- 2. Establish a standard format for key information in state grant opportunities.**
- 3. Develop a dictionary of data elements for the development of a standard initial state grant application.**
- 4. Provide mechanisms for training and feedback for users as improvements are initiated.**
- 5. Continue to encourage collaboration with university interns and faculty as a way of sharing resources and providing valuable practical experience.**
- 6. Repeat a survey process in one year to measure progress.**