



## Summary of Stakeholder Survey Responses

Economic Recovery Plan

May 5, 2021

In early April, the CTCOG issued a request for information to municipalities across the CTCOG region. A total of 13 responses were received-to-date, which includes the cities of Belton, Copperas Cove, Gatesville, Hamilton, Killeen, Lampasas, Lometa, Milano, and Nolanville; the counties of Bell, Hamilton, and Mills; and the Salado Independent School District.

This survey has informed us of the most pressing challenges facing CTCOG constituent communities, and this information will focus our work in the months ahead. Several common issues were identified by respondents, revealing these high-need focus areas:

- **Infrastructure:** Almost every respondent identified infrastructure as a top priority for the region. Broadband internet was the single most commonly cited issue, but other infrastructure priorities included transportation, power, water and sewer.
- **COVID-19 Related Impacts:** Several respondents included priorities focused on general COVID-19 impacts on businesses with a focus on tourism, the hospitality sector, and real estate, as well as occupation-specific mentions of healthcare professionals, school teachers, and students.
- **Technology and Workforce Development:** Many respondents included technology funding and capacity building for businesses and schools as a priority, including the need for workforce development programs that focus on improving technology skills.

In terms of current resources and planning, nearly half of the respondents identified having a recent economic development strategy. Most of the communities have not implemented any COVID-specific recovery plan and about half of the respondents provided COVID-specific program resources, including technical assistance and funding opportunities.

In general, we found a high degree of variability across the region related to response efforts, some of which may be explained by the varied level of impacts of the pandemic as well as municipality type (e.g. city versus county).

What follows is more detail about responses to the survey, and attached is a full compilation of survey responses.

## Information Request Answers

### Plans and Strategies

- What is your community's most recent economic development strategy?
- Has your community adopted any COVID-19-specific economic recovery plans?

Of the 13 respondents, eight indicated that they have an existing Economic Development Strategy or support economic development through tax abatements and/or the Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) program. Two cities have implemented initiatives to support COVID-specific recovery:

- The City of Belton offered Coronavirus Small Business Relief Grants. The objective was to assist with the pandemic recovery efforts of local small businesses.
- The Nolanville EDC created a COVID-19 Business Bridge Program that aided Nolanville-based small businesses with 25 or fewer employees impacted by COVID-19. The program provided \$60,000 in local government-funded grants for eligible small businesses that were independently owned and operated.

Other cities and counties have directed their workforce and businesses to various COVID recovery resources available online in place of a formally adopted plan. These resources generally include available local, state, and federal funding opportunities.

### Programs and Resources

- Has your community created any COVID-19-specific recovery programs or resources?
- What programs and resources (other than the above) do you typically refer your businesses and municipalities to with respect to COVID-19 recovery and resilience?
- Are you aware of any "best practices" programs or resources that other communities have implemented that we could bring to the region?

In terms of COVID-specific programs and resources, cities and counties have provided a variety of information to businesses and the workforce that include small business assistance, rent assistance, and funding opportunities. A majority of the programs were funded through the CARES Act.

- Six out of the 13 respondents reported developing COVID-specific recovery programs.
- Some of the respondents within the CTCOG region provided some type of Business Assistance/Grants Program. These programs assisted businesses in helping with operating costs, utility bills, and support for marketing and advertising.
- Other programs include rent/mortgage assistance, child care, telemedicine, and meal assistance for seniors.
- Other resources respondents refer businesses and the workforce to include local financial institutions for the Paycheck Protection Program and Small Business Loans, Chambers of Commerce, and the Central Texas Business Resources Center.

Respondents were also asked to identify examples of "best practices" that other communities have implemented. Some of these examples included programs for business rental/mortgage assistance, larger marketing and advertising programs, virtual communication, housing, jobs, and physical and mental health.

### Topics and Priorities

In addition to certain pre-identified topics, the following were identified by respondents to the survey as areas of interest:

- Small government grant application assistance
- Public safety infrastructure
- Dealing with lack of quality-of-life alternatives during quarantine periods
- Encourage business innovation through incentive funding for breakthrough projects
- Business Waste Streams; EDC involvement in solving industry end products issues