

# TEXAS COUNCILS OF GOVERNMENTS



AN ISSUE BRIEF FROM LEGISLATIVE BUDGET BOARD STAFF

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## OBJECTIVE

Councils of governments guide the unified development of a region, eliminate duplication, and promote regional economies and efficiency.

## KEY FACTS

- ◆ Texas has 24 councils of governments that represent all 254 counties. These organizations were developed from 1966 to the early 1970s.
- ◆ Councils of governments' planning activities vary among regions, but typically include: planning for economic growth; water supply and water quality; air quality; transportation; emergency preparedness; and delivery of social services.
- ◆ Each council's policy decisions are made by its board of directors, which includes at least two-thirds of its members from participating counties or municipalities.

## BUDGETARY IMPACT

In fiscal year 2014, Texas' 24 councils of governments collectively received approximately \$877.2 million in revenue from federal, state, and local sources.

## STATUTORY REFERENCES

The Texas Local Government Code, Chapter 391.

Councils of governments (COG), regional councils, or commissions are political subdivisions of the state codified pursuant to the Texas Local Government Code, Chapter 391. These councils were organized to guide unified development and improve efficiency within regions. These organizations are not governments and have no authority to make laws, levy taxes, or exercise police powers. Texas has 24 COGs that represent all 254 counties. These communities are made up of counties, cities, school districts, and special districts. These organizations were developed from 1966 to the early 1970s.

## SERVICE PROGRAMS

COGs are authorized to conduct planning; assist local governments in implementing plans; contract with local, state, and federal governments and other public and private agencies to provide community services; and assist local governments in solving governmental problems. COGs also serve as intermediaries among federal, state, and local governments while reviewing and commenting on applications for federal and state grants-in-aid and solid waste permits.

Texas' COGs conduct regional planning activities that vary among regions. Typically, these activities include planning for economic growth, water supply and water quality, air quality, transportation, emergency preparedness, implementing regional homeland security strategies, maintaining and improving regional 911 systems, and the delivery of social services. Each council's policy decisions are made by its board of directors, which includes at least two-thirds of its members from elected officials of participating counties or municipalities.

## COORDINATION

The Texas Association of Regional Councils is a statewide association developed in 1973 by an interlocal agreement among the state's 24 COGs. The organization provides COGs a mechanism for the regular exchange of information and ideas; educates other governmental entities and public and private organizations; educates the public about the services and functions of regional councils; and represents the councils when addressing state or federal agencies and legislative bodies.

## REVENUE SOURCES

COGs primarily receive funding from federal sources, but the councils also receive funding from state and local sources. On the local level, a COG collects dues from and for its member governments. A COG may receive a state grant based on the amount of local dues it collects; and it may receive direct or indirect federal grants through the state. In fiscal year 2014, the 24 COGs collectively received approximately \$877.2 million in revenue and incurred approximately \$868.1 million in expenditures. **Figure 1** shows the fiscal year 2014 expenditures and each COG's two largest program expenditures.

**FIGURE 1**  
**TEXAS COUNCILS OF GOVERNMENTS' EXPENDITURES, FISCAL YEAR 2014**

(IN MILLIONS)

COUNCIL	HEADQUARTERS	TOTAL EXPENDITURES	LARGEST PROGRAM	EXPENDED	2ND LARGEST PROGRAM	EXPENDED
1. Panhandle RPC	Amarillo	\$21.5	Workforce Development	\$13.2	Aging Services	\$2.8
2. South Plains AOG	Lubbock	\$5.0	Aging Services	\$1.8	Emergency Communications	\$1.2
3. Nortex RPC	Wichita Falls	\$3.3	Area Agency on Aging	\$1.4	Emergency Communications	\$0.6
4. North Central Texas COG	Arlington	\$148.2	Workforce Development	\$57.7	Transportation	\$53.2
5. Ark-Tex COG	Texarkana	\$15.2	Housing and Urban Development	\$6.6	Transportation	\$4.4
6. East Texas COG	Kilgore	\$36.2	Workforce Development	\$24.9	Transportation	\$4.6
7. West Central Texas COG	Abilene	\$13.5	Employer of Record Services	\$4.8	Aging Services	\$2.9
8. Rio Grande COG	El Paso	\$6.4	Aging Services	\$4.6	Emergency Communications	\$0.7
9. Permian Basin RPC	Midland	\$4.7	Aging Services	\$2.1	Emergency Communications	\$1.2
10. Concho Valley COG	San Angelo	\$12.4	Family and Children Services	\$7.0	Emergency Communications	\$2.5
11. Heart of Texas COG	Waco	\$8.0	Aging Services	\$2.6	Transportation	\$1.6
12. Capital Area COG	Austin	\$21.3	Emergency Communications	\$9.2	Aging Services	\$8.0
13. Brazos Valley COG	Bryan	\$30.4	Housing and Urban Development	\$10.5	Workforce Development	\$9.5
14. Deep East Texas COG	Jasper	\$21.8	Regional Housing Authority	\$10.2	Area Agency on Aging	\$4.0
15. South East Texas RPC	Beaumont	\$54.0	Community Development	\$39.9	Substance Abuse	\$3.8
16. Houston-Galveston AC	Houston	\$256.3	Workforce Development	\$184.0	Transportation	\$28.7
17. Golden Crescent RPC	Victoria	\$8.9	Health and Welfare	\$7.8	Public Safety	\$1.0
18. Alamo Area COG	San Antonio	\$39.9	Aging Services	\$17.1	Health and Welfare	\$10.4
19. South Texas DC	Laredo	\$7.3	HIV Intervention and Prevention	\$3.5	Aging Services	\$1.8
20. Coastal Bend COG	Corpus Christi	\$5.1	Health and Welfare	\$2.9	Emergency Communications	\$1.2
21. Lower Rio Grande Valley DC	Weslaco	\$85.3	Disaster Recovery	\$63.1	Aging Services	\$6.0
22. Texoma COG	Sherman	\$10.9	Housing and Client Services	\$6.4	Aging Services	\$2.4
23. Central Texas COG	Belton	\$38.9	Housing and Urban Development	\$14.4	Health and Human Services	\$11.0
24. Middle Rio Grande DC	Carrizo Springs	\$13.7	Economic Opportunity	\$7.8	Public Safety	\$3.2

NOTE: RPC=regional planning commission; AOG=association of governments; COG=council of governments; AC=area council; DC=development council.  
 SOURCE: Texas State Auditor's Office, A Summary of Financial and Performance Reports Submitted by Regional Planning Commissions, October 2015.

#### USEFUL REFERENCES

[www.sao.texas.gov/reports/main/16-005.pdf](http://www.sao.texas.gov/reports/main/16-005.pdf)

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