

COMMUNITY PLAN SUBMISSION FORM

Instructions: Complete this form (continued on next page) and attach it to the community plan when it is submitted to the regional council of governments. Both pages must accompany all community plans.

This Box for COG Use Only
Grant #: <u>2107003, 2133803</u>
Fund Source: <u>VX</u>
Date Received By COG <u>12 / 15 / 11</u>

1. Name of Plan: Eastland County Community Plan - 2012

2. Cities, counties, or parts thereof covered by this plan:

All of Eastland County, including the cities of Eastland, Cisco, Ranger, Gorman and Rising Star

3. List the types (general focuses) of projects currently funded by CJD that the community planning group agrees should continue. DO NOT list specific grant applications or agencies.

1. Victim Services
2. Domestic Violence Intervention
3. Sexual Assault Prevention and Response
4. Homeland Security-related

4. List the gaps in services that would enhance the community plan if funding were available. List these gaps as types of services. DO NOT list specific grant applications or agencies.

1. After-school activities for youth
2. School Resource Officer for early intervention
3. Inter-jurisdictional information exchange
4. Early Warning Systems
5. Identity theft awareness and training
6. Emergency Services District
7. Drought relief / adequate water supply

For more information about this community plan, contact:

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COMMUNITY PLAN SUBMISSION FORM (CONTINUED)

All community plans must be accompanied by a brief written summary of the plan. The summary must meet the following criteria:

Planning groups must submit a summary of the priorities, goals and objectives from the community plan relating to:

- ✓ Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention Issues
- ✓ Criminal Justice Issues
- ✓ Victims' Issues

This summary **must** accompany all community plans and must be submitted to the WCTCOG along with the other two *Community Plan Submission Forms*.

Please type in a brief summary (as outlined above) of your Community Plan in the space provided below. Please attach extra pages if needed.

- I. Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Issues
 - a. Establish a School Resource Officer program
 - b. Encourage involvement of parents/role models
 - c. Reduce drug and alcohol use by realistically depicting consequences
 - d. Establish bullying/cyber-bullying awareness/prevention programs
 - e. Utilize drug/alcohol awareness programs for early intervention

- II. Criminal Justice Issues
 - a. Reduce property crimes by eliminating opportunity
 - b. Demolish and remove vacant structures that invite vandalism
 - c. Enhance inter-jurisdictional information exchange (CopSync, etc.)
 - d. Establish Campus Crime Stoppers program in schools
 - e. Provide crime prevention information and materials to the public

- III. Victims' Issues
 - a. Provide support to victims through Crime Victims Assistance Center
 - b. Reduce the incidence of domestic violence/sexual assault through education
 - c. Establish anti-victimization and awareness programs in schools

Eastland County Community Plan 2012

**EASTLAND COUNTY
COMMUNITY PLANNING GROUP**

COMMUNITY PLAN 2009

The Eastland County Community Planning Group has identified and prioritized the following problems, resources, and gaps in resources which affect Eastland County:

1. CRIME

- a. Property crimes
- b. Family violence
- c. Crime victimization
- d. Sexual assault
- e. Drugs
 - 1. abuse (Legal and Illegal)
 - 2. trafficking (Legal and Illegal)
 - 3. manufacturing (Illegal)
- f. Juvenile crime
- g. DWI
- h. Identity theft
- i. Crimes against children
 - 1. Online predatory activity
 - 2. Homeless students

RESOURCES

- a. Law enforcement
 - 1. Municipal police agencies
 - a. Cisco PD
 - b. Eastland PD
 - c. Gorman PD
 - d. Ranger PD
 - e. Rising Star PD
 - 2. County agencies
 - a. Eastland County Sheriff's Office
 - b. Constables
 - c. Adult Probation
 - d. Juvenile Probation
 - e. Criminal District Attorney's Office
 - 3. Regional agencies
 - a. West Central Texas Council of Governments

CRIME ISSUES (cont'd)

4. State agencies

- a. Texas Department of Public Safety
 - 1. Texas Rangers
 - 2. Narcotics Division
 - 3. Criminal Intelligence Division
 - 4. Texas Highway Patrol
 - 5. Division of Emergency Management
- b. Texas Department of Family and Protective Services
 - 1. Child Protective Services
 - 2. Adult Protective Services
- c. Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles
- d. Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission
- e. Office of the Attorney General
 - 1. Crime Victims Compensation Division
- f. Office of the Governor, Criminal Justice Division

5. Federal agencies

- a. Federal Bureau of Investigation
- b. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms
- c. U.S. Department of Justice
 - 1. Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS)
 - 2. Office of Juvenile Justice
- d. Department of Homeland Security

6. Judicial agencies

- a. 91st District Court
- b. 11th Court of Appeals
- c. Eastland County Court
- d. Justice of the Peace courts
- e. Municipal courts

b. Services provided by private-public sector/social/citizen organizations:

- 1. Alcohol/drugs
 - a. Parents Against Dangerous Drugs (PADD)
 - b. Abilene Council on Alcohol and Drug Abuse
 - c. MADD
 - d. Alcoholics Anonymous
 - e. Narcotics Anonymous
- 2. Family Violence / Sexual Assault
 - a. Crime Victims Assistance Center - Eastland
 - b. Noah Project, Inc. – Abilene
 - c. Freedom House - Weatherford
 - d. HOPE, Inc. - Mineral Wells
 - e. The Ark – Brownwood

3. Children's services
 - a. Child Advocacy Center
 - b. Noah Project, Inc. (Unaccompanied youth shelter up to 14 days)
 - c. Community Resource Coordinating Group (CRCG)
 - d. CPS / TDFPS
 - e. School districts
 - f. Eastland County Child Welfare Board

4. Printed materials/information on Domestic Violence available from:
 - a. National Coalition Against Domestic Violence
 - b. Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence
 - c. Texas Council on Family Violence
 - d. National Domestic Violence Hotline

5. Citizen groups
 - a. Neighborhood Watch programs
 - b. Crime Stoppers
 - c. Campus Crime Stoppers
 - d. Postal workers
 - e. Utility workers

6. Private/public sector therapists/counselors
 - a. Pastoral Care and Counseling - Battering intervention/counseling
 - b. Central Texas MHMR/Center for Life Resources - Mental health issues
 - c. Child Advocacy Center – Sexual abuse
 - d. School Districts
 - e. The Open Door – Cisco
 - f. Crime Victims Assistance Center
 - g. Adult Probation Office – Offender counseling

7. Training / education programs
 - a. Crime Victims Assistance Center
 1. Anti-Victimization Programs
 2. Risk Reduction/Awareness Programs
 3. Family Violence / Sexual Assault prevention and response
 - b. Noah Project, Inc.
 1. Teen violence prevention
 2. Family Violence / Sexual Assault prevention and response
 - c. West Central Texas Council of Governments
 1. Regional Law Enforcement Academy – continuing education
 - d. School districts/Colleges (Cisco, Ranger)
 - e. Eastland Chamber of Commerce – Soft skills training

CRIME ISSUES (cont'd)

GAPS IN RESOURCES

The Eastland County Community Planning Group has identified certain areas in which there appears to be less than adequate services and/or resources.

1. In the area of drug abuse and juvenile crime, it is our opinion that a School Resource Officer, with an officer assigned to each school district, would be a tremendous asset to the school systems within the County. Increased attention should be given to the area of alcohol and drug availability to juveniles. Teen pregnancy, school dropouts, truancy, and uninvolved/unskilled parents and/or role models are issues of great concern to the community.
2. In the area of service to victims of violent crime (domestic violence, sexual assault, etc.), there appears to be gaps in the ability to provide services to those who are fearful of reporting incidents to law enforcement or victims advocate groups. With no report to law enforcement, compensation to victims is non-existent under the Crime Victims Compensation Act. Recent cuts in grant funding have further reduced the ability of advocate groups to respond adequately to the needs of victims.
3. Due to lack of funding, services provided by local agencies are extremely limited, and calls for service must be prioritized, often resulting in little or no response to less urgent incidents. This contributes to the lack of understanding and lack of communication between the community and the involved agencies. Incidents simply are not given the attention that they deserve, due to lack of financial resources.
4. In the area of emergency response to hazardous materials incidents and terrorist activities, there is a lack of training and lack of equipment; however, the process of eliminating this problem has begun. Additionally, the security at vital locations, such as seats of government and utility providers, is lacking, again due to inadequate training, equipment and personnel.
5. Recent legislative changes regarding racial profiling requires local law enforcement agencies to collect data and make reports. The State initially provided necessary equipment for such data collection; however, that equipment quickly became obsolete and needs to be replaced with more modern digital technology. There are no statewide standards or methodologies for analysis of data, therefore, required reports take many forms. However, TCLEOSE requires an annual report from law enforcement, and their form may become the standard.
6. Students in prior planning sessions advocated increased drug awareness programs in school, to include prescription drug abuse. They suggested that more attention be given to making people aware of the long-term consequences of bad decisions, possibly by bringing in speakers who have had first-hand experience in this area, similar to the "Scared Straight" program. The "Shattered Dreams" program has been presented to students in Cisco and Eastland and was considered very effective.

CRIME ISSUES (cont'd)

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. Community Center for after-school and night activities**
- 2. School Resource Officer**
- 3. Enhance services to victims of domestic violence and sexual assault**
- 4. Mayors Youth Council**
- 5. PAL (Peer Assistance and Leaders)**
- 6. Community Volunteer Mentors (Big Brothers/Big Sisters)**
- 7. Family Planning Clinic**
- 8. Teen Court**
- 9. Community Service projects**
- 10. Campus Crime Stoppers program in all Eastland County schools**
- 11. Battering Intervention Program**
- 12. Regional and local training for law enforcement**
- 13. All-Stars parent/child school program**
- 14. Training for clerks at stores on tobacco related laws**
- 15. Scared Straight programs, including tours of the jail**
- 16. Shattered Dreams programs**
- 17. Drug awareness programs similar to the "Together Against Drugs" program**
- 18. Handling of truancy cases by police as well as Juvenile Probation officer**
- 19. Drug Endangered Children program**
- 20. Truancy Court**
- 21. School-employed Truancy Officer**
- 22. Community Service requirement for High School graduation**
- 23. Local counseling for victims**
- 24. Travel expense for victims to obtain counseling**
- 25. Student parking privileges tied to drug testing**
- 26. Sex offender accountability during Halloween trick-or-treating**
- 27. Free or reduced cost legal aid for access to courts**
- 28. Contact representatives about unfair distribution of VOCA funds**
 - a. In 2007, Texas received \$28 million in VOCA funding from the Federal government**
 - b. Only \$1.7 million was allocated to areas west of a San Antonio – Fort Worth line**
 - c. 15% of the allocations were for new programs**
 - d. 85% of the allocations went to sustain existing programs**
 - e. Urban vs Rural allocations were out of balance due to low reporting rates in rural areas.**
- 29. Enhance communications capabilities for law enforcement organizations throughout the County by providing systems such as CopSync, which will enable inter-jurisdictional information sharing and enhance officer safety.**

2. ECONOMIC ISSUES

- a. Depressed economy in area
 - 1. Decline in agricultural economy
 - 2. Lack of jobs
 - 3. Lack of access to the oil industry
 - 4. Lack of adequately trained workforce
 - 5. Inadequate economic growth
 - a. drought influence on agri-business
 - b. lack of workforce to support non-retail segment of economy
- b. Under-employment to avoid payment of fringe benefits
 - 1. Increase in migrant workers
- c. Lack of housing availability
 - 1. Vacant housing presents nuisance, health & safety issues
- d. Severe drought conditions / inadequate water supply for economic growth and basic human needs

RESOURCES

- a. Economic Development Corporations
- b. Industrial Foundations
- c. Chambers of Commerce
- d. Texas Workforce Commission
- e. Cisco College and Ranger College – Vocational Training
- f. Agri-Life Extension Service – GED Program study classes
- g. Eastland County Crisis Center
- h. Noah Project, Inc.
- i. Food Pantries
- j. Small Business Center – Tarleton State University
- k. Ministerial Alliance
- l. 2-1-1 Texas (Information and referral services)
- m. Adult Probation
- n. CTO – Central Texas Opportunities
- o. Texas Tech Small Business Center - Abilene

GAPS IN RESOURCES

The CPG determined that there is a need for:

- a. Vocational training, including basic customer service skills
- b. Incentives for employers to provide cross-training to employees
- c. Adult literacy program
- d. Increased job opportunities
- e. Funding to promote economic development and jobs with fringe benefits.
- f. Reduced rate child care, night child care
- g. Administration of grants
- h. Career counseling / financial planning for youth

3. HOUSING/PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION ISSUES

- a. Lack of rental properties
- b. Vacant/run-down structures
- c. Limited public transportation
- d. Need for housing development property in private sector
- e. Need for local zoning ordinances and building codes
- f. Need for infrastructure support for real estate development/investment
- g. Debris disposal facilities

RESOURCES

- a. Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services (DADS)
- b. Adult Protective Services (TDPRS)
- c. West Central Texas Council of Governments/Area Agency on Aging
- d. Social Security Administration - Abilene
- e. West Central Texas Council of Governments/Natural Resources
- f. CARR (City And Rural Rides)
- g. AARP
- i. AmeriCorps VISTA
- j. National Guard
- k. Local Prisons
- l. 2-1-1 Texas (Information and referral services)
- m. North Texas Legal Aid – civil issues (income based)

GAPS IN RESOURCES

There is a need for affordable housing for all age groups, as well as the need for demolition or renovation of older, vacant structures that become attractive nuisances for transients.

There is no 24/7 public transportation in the county. It is essential that senior citizens be provided with a means of making low-cost non-emergency errands or trips; however, as in other areas of concern, there is a severe lack of funding for this need.

The Group identified the need for some system of checking on elderly citizens on a daily basis.

The Group further identified a need for debris disposal so that abandoned structures can be demolished and properly disposed.

4. HEALTH/MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

- a. Victimization of MH/MR clients
- b. Increased police personnel time spent on MH/MR matters
- c. Police/Civil/Social concerns
- d. Transportation to mental health facilities
- e. Increased costs for health care
- f. Lack of availability of affordable health care insurance
- g. Lack of alternatives to incarceration of mentally ill
- h. Lack of funding for emergency services (fire, EMS)

RESOURCES

- a. Central Texas MHMR/Center for Life Resources - Brownwood
- b. Eastland Memorial Hospital
- c. Social Security Administration
- d. Medicare/Medicaid
- e. West Central Texas Council of Governments
- f. Eastland County (Indigent Health Care)
- g. West Texas Rehabilitation Center
- h. 2-1-1 Texas (Information and referral services)
- i. CRCG

GAPS IN RESOURCES

1. Decreases in State funding for mental health organizations and facilities, or reallocation of funds for those needs has created problems for law enforcement in Eastland County due to the lack of resources capable of dealing with mental health issues. Mental health cases that were previously handled by State-funded agencies are now being referred to local law enforcement agencies.
2. Reductions in State funding for CPS/APS and MH-MR has resulted in reduced manpower during a time when caseloads are increasing, and the end-result is that law enforcement is placed in the position of dealing with mentally impaired persons and youth at-risk who do not meet the guidelines or criteria for services previously provided by the State.
3. A reduction in Medicare payments to doctors and hospitals caused by the Balanced Budget Act has created a health care crisis for rural facilities. Consequently, the facilities have to increase assessments to private individuals to compensate and remain viable.
4. Single parent family assistance
 1. Parenting skills
 2. Medical insurance for children
 3. Payroll deductions to cover ER visits
5. West Central Texas Council of Governments, working with the Health and Human Services Commission, is making information and assistance available to women and children about the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), Medicaid, and women's health.

5. HOMELAND SECURITY ISSUES

Although there has been an increased effort on the part of Federal agencies to share information with State and local agencies, a tremendous gap still exists with regard to terrorist activity intelligence. The Federal government is the only agency that can overcome this deficiency. However, on the local level, there are still gaps in resources with regard to early warning systems, GIS mapping capabilities, communications equipment, and emergency management training on the level that would enable local agencies to protect our vital resources. Homeland security-related equipment could serve double-duty as hazard mitigation, containment, and response resources.

It is obvious that a response to terrorism or the task of protecting our homeland must be carried out at all levels of government. Traditionally, we have relied on the Federal government to provide responses to threats against our country, because the threats have come about as a result of actions of foreign governments. The violent actions of terrorist cells cannot be attributed to one specific government; therefore our response to it must come from all levels of American government. Simply stated, we are not adequately prepared at the local level to handle this type of threat.

Other than funding resources from the Federal government and the State of Texas, there are no local funds available to accomplish the goals and objectives. Funding to address homeland security must be directed toward enabling local authorities to respond to threats on a local level with support from State and Federal agencies. This funding should be directed toward the acquisition of equipment to provide adequate warning to the public, enable efficient communications between agencies, identifying potential threats, and training in all of these areas. Homeland Security training is available at the local level at Cisco College and Ranger College, if funding becomes available.

GAPS IN RESOURCES

1. Inadequate warning systems
2. Inadequate communication systems
3. Inadequate training
4. Inadequate sharing of information between jurisdictions

SUMMARY

The problems identified herein are by no means the only problems facing Eastland County, but they are problems that affect the lives of the majority of citizens in our area. The questions raised and discussions had by the Community Planning Group during the drafting of this document brought the Group members to the realization that crime, prosecution issues, juvenile issues, alcohol issues, economic issues, elderly issues and health/mental health issues are so closely related and intertwined that one area cannot be addressed without having some degree of impact on the others.

Although some of the sub-topics identified as problems may be resolved through local efforts and resources, it became evident to the members that it will be necessary to develop and implement a mechanism or protocol that will enable the community to utilize our assets to our greatest benefit. In addition, the Group recognized the need for School Resource Officer programs in the various school districts within the County. Implementation of some of the recommendations of the Group will necessitate the expenditure of funds that, at the present time, are not available to the community. However, in order to implement the program quickly, the Group suggested that the SRO program could be started out on a smaller scale initially, with a cost-sharing agreement between the schools and governmental entities. The Group suggested the formation of a school-government task force to get the program started.

Apathy, lack of focus and lack of communication was a recurring topic of discussion in each of the problem areas, and perhaps this will be addressed and resolved through continued meetings of the CPG and discussion of the problems and possible solutions among the various entities represented. A clear understanding of the responsibilities, expectations and perceptions of each entity involved can greatly enhance individual and collective productivity, but this can occur only with widespread participation in this plan, so that all entities are aware of the problems and resources.

There was discussion within the Group concerning the financial stability of the emergency services within the county, especially the fire and EMS services. With widespread wildfires and floods within the past few years, fire departments throughout the county are spending a great amount of their resources and manpower providing services in the unincorporated areas of the county. These concerns have been at least partially addressed through increased funding from the County for firefighting services.

With the demise of smaller hospital districts in the county, we are left with only one hospital to serve the county, and it is struggling to continue providing emergency medical services to residents throughout the county. Prior Group meetings had brought up the possible need to establish an Emergency Services District to provide continued support for the fire departments, EMS, and Eastland County Dispatch.

Economic depression and the lack of employment opportunities are problems that are not easily addressed, but appear to be significant contributors to the other identified problems. The factors contributing to economic issues can be readily related to the problems of crime, juvenile issues, etc. Until this problem is resolved, actions taken in the other problem areas may be only cosmetic in nature.

Severe drought and lack of adequate water supplies to support economic growth and basic human needs was a topic of concern for the Group. This problem impacts the economy and directly affects the quality of life in Eastland County.

In light of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 and the ensuing “war on terrorists”, the Group recognized the need for higher levels of security at vital locations and recommended that emergency response agencies be provided with training and adequate equipment to effectively respond to critical incidents in our community. The Community Planning Group will continue to work to identify resources and gaps in resources, make recommendations for the most efficient use of available resources, and closely monitor progress in eliminating the gaps.

The Group also considered the State strategies outlined in the Governor’s website, <http://www.governor.state.tx.us/priorities>, enumerated below:

- a. Strengthening Our Economy
 - 1. Industry Cluster Efforts
 - 2. Investing for Growth
 - 3. Tax and Regulatory Reform
 - 4. Trade Initiatives

- b. Securing Our State
 - 1. Disaster Preparedness and Response
 - 2. Public Safety
 - 3. Securing the Border

- c. Moving Texas Forward
 - 1. Transportation
 - 2. Reduce Wasteful Spending
 - 3. Natural Resources
 - 4. Energy

- d. Encouraging Stronger Families and Healthier Citizens

- e. Educating Our Children

The Community Planning Group agreed to adopt the State strategies as a part of this plan. The recommendations made on the website are hereby incorporated by reference into this plan.

Crime statistics from local sources as well as from the compilation Crime in Texas were considered in the formulation of this plan.

The following persons participated (and continue to participate) in drafting this plan for Eastland County, each contributing ideas, resources, and precious time to the project:

Cecil Funderburgh, Executive Director, Eastland Chamber of Commerce, Eastland

Rex Fields, Eastland County Judge

Jana Pittman, Eastland County Crisis Center

Terry Simmons, Public Information Officer, City of Eastland

Angela Robinson, Business Coordinator/Marketing Director, Kennedy Financial Services

Jim Kennedy, President, Kennedy Financial Services

Ron Holliday, City Manager, Eastland