

# EAST TEXAS COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

## Regional Report Spring 2009

3800 Stone Road • Kilgore, Texas 75662 • (903)984-8641 • (903)983-1440 fax • www.etcog.org

### 2008 - 2009 Executive Committee

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Councilmem. Robert Nelson

Judge Thomas Cravey

## “ON THE BRINK...”

### MESSAGE FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, DAVID CLEVELAND

**W**hen I became the East Texas Council of Governments (ETCOG) Executive Director in June, 2007, one of my top priorities was to get out in the region and determine how our customers viewed the organization. I capitalized on nearly every opportunity and have asked our customers three questions:

- 1) *What is ETCOG doing that it shouldn't be doing?*
- 2) *What isn't ETCOG doing that it should be doing?*
- 3) *How can ETCOG serve you better?*

Many were sincerely complimentary of ETCOG. Others seemed to struggle to answer these questions. One East Texas leader summarized a perception I heard too many times, albeit stated in different ways. The customer indicated he was aware that ETCOG secured grants for the region, but beyond that he wasn't sure what the organization did. As Executive Director, I should be (and was) alarmed. If even one of our customers cannot readily identify at least three of ETCOG's specific service deliverables that is relevant and value-added to their community, we have a problem. Responsibility for this lack of knowledge did not lay with the customer, but rather with our organization that for whatever reason was not completely successful in getting the message out about ETCOG's activities in Economic Development, 9-1-1 Emergency Services, Criminal Justice, Transportation, Workforce Development and programs and services for senior citizens.

We have been getting better over the last year, in large part because we created a new Public Information Officer position and hired a stellar

professional who is paying attention to our public communications on a daily basis. But we are also improving because there is a paradigm shift occurring within ETCOG and it is taking hold little by little with each passing day. Everyone at ETCOG is now personally responsible for looking for ways to improve our service. As a result, some new and exciting things are beginning to happen.



For example, in mid-December of this last year, we were made aware of a company in a small town in our region that advised they could immediately create 25 net-new jobs with a full benefits package; but they could not find a suitable training facility. ETCOG's workforce team, including our subcontractor, Arbor Training & Education Services, took immediate

action. A demonstration project was initiated. A contract was developed which provided the company with the use of the East Texas Workforce Solutions Board's fully equipped mobile training unit which was parked next to their facility for five days. What was the result? Twenty-Five jobs with benefits were created by the end of January, 2009! (These numbers are subject to final verification). The company's rental price for use of the unit was to create the jobs and complete the training, with accountability provisions built in the contract if they failed to deliver. This is just one example of a recent success. Stay tuned--in the coming months you will discover ETCOG is **on the brink** of many more successes that should never leave our customers gasping for examples of what we do!

“EVERYONE AT ETCOG IS NOW PERSONALLY RESPONSIBLE FOR LOOKING FOR WAYS TO IMPROVE OUR SERVICE.”

# Serving a Fourteen County Region

**Providing services and programs to East Texas seniors, employers and job seekers**

## COMMERCE SECRETARY GUTIERREZ INVITES APPLICATIONS FOR DISASTER ASSISTANCE TO STATES IMPACTED BY 2008 STORMS

SECOND EDA SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATION OF \$400 MILLION

In response to hurricanes, floods and other natural disasters occurring during 2008, U.S. Secretary of Commerce Carlos M. Gutierrez announced that the Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration (EDA) is now accepting applications to support long-term post-disaster economic recovery through an additional \$400 million in emergency funding provided through a Second Supplemental under the Consolidated Security, Disaster Assistance, and Continuing Appropriations Act, signed into law on September 30, 2008. This announcement follows EDA's August, 2008 announcement of the availability of \$100 million through the First Supplemental Appropriations Disaster Relief Opportunity pursuant to Act of June 30, 2008.



Federal Funding Opportunity (FFO) notices for both of these Supplemental Appropriations, totaling \$500 million, may be viewed at [www.eda.gov/InvestmentsGrants/FFON.xml](http://www.eda.gov/InvestmentsGrants/FFON.xml).

As with the First Supplemental, funding for the Second Supplemental Appropriations Disaster Relief Opportunity will be allocated entirely to EDA's six Regional Offices for competitive awards.

The \$400 million will be allocated to the Regional Offices according to a formula designed to maximize funding to those regions most severely affected by 2008 natural disasters, as follows:

- Atlanta Regional Office: 14.38% or \$57,500,000 (Ala., Fla., Ga., Ky., Miss., N.C., and Tenn.)
- **Austin Regional Office: 33.58% or \$134,300,000 (Ark., La., N.M., Okla., and Texas)**
- Chicago Regional Office: 15% or \$60,000,000 (Ill., Ind., Mich., Minn., Ohio, and Wis.)
- Denver Regional Office: 26.14% or \$104,600,000 (Iowa, Kan., Mo., Mont., Neb., and S.D.)
- Philadelphia Regional Office: 6.93% or \$27,700,000 (Maine, Mass., N.H., P.R., Vt., W.Va., Virgin Isl.)
- Seattle Regional Office: 3.96% or \$15,800,000 (Alaska, Calif., Hawaii, Idaho, and Nev.).

The EDA notice also encourages the submission of several types of innovative projects for funding under the \$400 million Second Supplemental Appropriations Disaster Relief Opportunity, such as "mother grants" obligated to a State for redistribution to individual projects; regional, multi-State strategy development grants; and grants to universities and research institutions to undertake multi-disciplinary activities to develop disaster-resilient economies.

EDA is the primary Department of Commerce bureau to assist with post-disaster economic recovery – although it does not have "first responder" duties or capabilities. EDA's mission is to lead the federal economic development agenda by promoting innovation and competitiveness, preparing American regions for growth and success in the worldwide economy.

Additional information on how EDA investments are helping distressed communities create a positive and sustainable economic future can be accessed at: <http://www.eda.gov>.

"WE ARE COMMITTED TO THE MOST EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT DISTRIBUTION OF FUNDS TO OUR NATION'S MOST DISASTER-AFFECTED AREAS."

- SECRETARY CARLOS GUTIERREZ

## WORKING TOGETHER: LONGVIEW & TYLER COLLABORATE IN COUNCIL MEETING

In an effort to encourage cooperation and coordination between the two largest cities of the East Texas region, the elected leaders of the Cities of Longview and Tyler held a combined Council Meeting at the Tyler Rose Garden on February 4, 2009. Led by Tyler Mayor Barbara Bass and Longview Mayor Jay Dean, the agenda included a resolution regarding the desire for Tyler and Longview to continue to work together for the betterment of both cities and the East Texas Region. Regional promotion, marketing for economic development, transportation, and economic stimulus projects were among the items discussed during the meeting.



Coming together in a sense of cooperation is not an entirely new concept for the two councils that have collaborated on a variety of issues over time, but several years had passed since the previous joint council meeting was held in June 2005 just outside of Gladewater. As Tyler Council Member Charles Alworth commented, "I am glad to see us together again. We point out to everybody that the City of Longview and the City of Tyler actually cooperate a great deal together. We work together through the East Texas Council of Governments. We work together through the NET RMA, which is a transportation issue here...The cooperation is there, we just need to make it grow a bit more."

Daryl Williams of the Longview City Council noted that, "It is very important that we work together and that we try to get our ducks in a row because it is hard for the cities our size to compete with Dallas, Houston, and the big cities...We have to make our voices heard, and I think together we can do that."

Plans are already underway for another combined council meeting to take place sometime later this year. According to Mayor Jay Dean, "Hopefully this is the beginning of some sharing of ideas, and possibly even resources, of how we can work together. We have to realize that what is good for the region is good for individual communities, and what is good for the individual communities is good for the region."

## EAST TEXAS ENERGY CONSORTIUM SAVES EAST TEXAS \$1.4 MILLION ON ENERGY COSTS

- *Electricity aggregation contract involving 10 local parties*
- *Total Lifetime Contract Value savings of \$1.4 million, or 18.3%*
- *Clients can benchmark/report usage through LPB's Utility Manager*
- *Fixed commodity pricing produced budget predictability*
- *Commodities savings re-invested into local community services, programs*

Today, saving money—especially tax payers' money—is more important than ever before. And it always pays to have strength in numbers. ETCOG has partnered with LPB Energy to form the East Texas Energy Consortium to gain group purchasing power to procure competitively priced electricity and generate substantial savings. This group solution, known as aggregation, has significant benefits for the whole as well as its individual members.

Why pay more for the same electricity? To find out more about the East Texas Energy Consortium, contact Luke Kimbrough at (903) 984-8641 x219 or [Luke.Kimbrough@etcog.org](mailto:Luke.Kimbrough@etcog.org).

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## ETCOG OPENS CONGREGATE MEAL CENTER IN YANTIS

SERVING  
SENIORS HOT,  
NUTRITIOUS  
MEALS

Opens March 2  
(9:30 am—2 pm)

Free to  
individuals 60 or  
older; however,  
donations are  
accepted

Must call to enroll  
1.800.442.8845

Meal cost to  
individuals under  
60—\$4.00

Serving meals  
Monday—Friday  
from 11:30 am—  
1:00 pm

## SBA APPLAUDS STIMULUS BILL, PLANNING UNDERWAY FOR BROADEST, QUICKEST SMALL BUSINESS IMPACT

**T**he American Recovery and Reinvestment Act contains a package of loan fee reductions, higher guarantees, new SBA programs, secondary market incentives, and enhancements to current SBA programs that will help unlock credit markets and begin economic recovery for the nation's small business sector.

The bill provides \$730 million to SBA and makes changes to the agency's lending and investment programs so that they can reach more small businesses that need help. The funding includes:

- \$375 million for temporary fee reductions or eliminations on SBA loans and increased SBA guaranteed shares, up to 90 percent for certain loans
- \$255 million for a new loan program to help small businesses meet existing debt payments
- \$30 million for expanding SBA's Microloan program, enough to finance up to \$50 million in new lending and \$24 million in technical assistance grants to microlenders
- \$20 million for technology systems to streamline SBA's lending and oversight processes
- \$15 million for expanding SBA's Surety Bond Guarantee program
- \$25 million for staffing up to meet demands for new programs
- \$10 million for the Office of Inspector General

The bill also authorizes refinancing for certain SBA loans so borrowers can expand their businesses on favorable terms, and expands leverage capability for Small Business Investment Companies.

The stimulus bill takes a comprehensive approach and attacks several problems facing small businesses at once by reducing fees, guaranteeing a greater share of certain loans, expanding capacity in the Microloan program, providing new loans to help small businesses keep their doors open through economic hardship, as well as new mechanisms to help unfreeze the secondary markets for SBA-backed loans.

## 2010 CENSUS: IT'S IN OUR HANDS

WHAT ELECTED OFFICIALS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE 2010 CENSUS

**I**n 2010, the U.S. census will define who we are as a nation. Taken every 10 years, the census affects political representation and directs the allocation of billions of dollars in government funding. Elected officials work daily to secure the best interests for their constituents and to ignite positive change for their communities. By becoming a 2010 Census partner, you can help ensure that everyone in your community is counted so that your community receives its fair share of important services and resources.

### *It's in Our Hands: Your Community's Participation in the Census Matters*

- Every year, more than \$300 billion in federal funds is awarded to states and communities based on census data. That's more than \$3 trillion over a 10-year period.
- Census data guide planning for new hospitals, schools and other services.
- Census data is used to determine the most need for additional social services, including who receives community development block grants and other grant programs essential to many communities.

**Why should everyone participate in the 2010 Census?** The 2010 Census will shape the future of your community, define your voice in Congress and generate local employment opportunities for your constituents.

**Important Dates.** February – March 2010: Census questionnaires are mailed or delivered to households. April 1, 2010: Census Day. April – July 2010: Census takers visit households that did not return a questionnaire by mail.

[www.census.gov/2010census](http://www.census.gov/2010census)

# Workforce Solutions East Texas

**Improving the quality of life in this area through economic development by providing a first-class workforce for present and future businesses**

## WORKFORCE BOARD RETREAT

**T**he Workforce Solutions East Texas Board held a retreat on February 12, 2009 from 10:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at Camp Gilmont located near Gilmer, Texas. The Board held its regular monthly meeting immediately preceding the retreat. The retreat included a roundtable discussion for area economic developers to comment on how the Board can better meet the regions workforce development needs.



Along with presentations by John Stroud of Longview Economic Development Corporation and Tom Mullins of Tyler Economic Development Corporation, participating area economic developers offering their insights included:



*Laurie O'Neal*, Office of the Governor for Economic Development & Tourism

*Carey Palmer*, Alto Economic Development Corporation

*Ronnie Morrison*, Upshur County Economic Development Corporation

*Amanda Nobles*, Kilgore Economic Development Corporation

*Debbie Sadler*, White Oak Economic Development Corporation

*Clyde Smith*, Emory Economic Development Corporation

*Steve McCarty*, Community Relations, BancorpSouth

The retreat also included a presentation on workforce funding streams by Board staff. A luncheon presentation by Robert Knight of Arbor Education and Training LLC focused on current federal workforce policy issues. Mr. Knight's presentation was followed by an address by Andres Alcantar, the Commissioner Representing the Public for the Texas Workforce Commission. The Commissioner offered his perspective on the state legislative issues. The retreat concluded with discussion among the Board members regarding ways the Board can be improved. This discussion included a report by ETCOG Executive Director

David Cleveland on a recent economic development initiative in Rusk in which the Workforce Solutions East Texas Mobile Unit served as a training venue for customized training provided for new employees of Etech Inc.

The retreat provided an excellent opportunity for the Board to learn more about workforce and economic development issues and to explore strategies for serving East Texas.

## NON-CUSTODIAL PARENT CHOICES EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM

**T**his spring Workforce Solutions East Texas will begin a new employment program in Gregg County.

The Non-Custodial Parent Choices Employment Program (NCP) is an employment project for low-income unemployed or underemployed non-custodial parents residing in Gregg County whose child is currently receiving or previously received public assistance.

The project goals are to target NCPs with unpaid child support orders in the Office of the Attorney General Child Support Program and to help the NCPs through employment services so they can better financially support their children. Entering Employment and Employment Retention are the objective outcomes sought through this project.

The Texas Workforce Commission is working in tandem with the Office of the Attorney General to link OAG child support services, the local court system and Workforce Solutions East Texas to accomplish the project goals. The local project will begin by serving residents of Gregg County then will be expanded to all fourteen counties in the East Texas Workforce Development Area.

The award winning Texas pilot program has received national recognition as the most effective effort in this field to date producing over \$9 million in child support payments while serving more than 2,800 non-custodial parents. The NCP program is the next step in welfare reform.



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The East Texas Council of Governments is a voluntary association of counties, cities, school districts and special districts within the fourteen-county East Texas region. ETCOG assists local governments in planning for common needs, cooperating for mutual benefit and coordinating for sound regional development. Established in 1970, ETCOG, either directly, or through its contractors, provides programs and services for East Texas seniors, employers, and job seekers. ETCOG and its contractors also build the 9-1-1 emergency call delivery system, provide peace officer training and homeland security planning services; and deliver rural transportation services, business finance programs, and environmental grant funding for the region.

**TDD: 211**



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