



Navigating Resources for Local Growth

Funding, Data, & Technical Assistance

September 16, 2026

What is Texas Rural Funders?

The leading membership organization for philanthropy dedicated to rural Texas

Mission

To mobilize the power of philanthropy to strengthen rural Texas

What Does Texas Rural Funders Do?

For Communities

Share resources including monthly newsletter, Grants Hub, webinars, and more

For Funders

Provide a learning network along with tools and information to serve rural communities

A trusted partner and connector for rural communities.



STAY CONNECTED WITH TEXAS RURAL FUNDERS

Sign up for *The Round-Up*, a monthly newsletter
spotlighting all things rural that matter to Texas.



CONNECT WITH US

Find Resources and Tools on
YouTube, Facebook, LinkedIn and at
www.texasruralfunders.org



Grants Hub on the Texas Rural Funders Website

Built for

Community leaders

Nonprofits

Key features

Free, downloadable database of grant opportunities for rural communities

Roster of vetted grantwriters with subject-matter expertise

[Access the Grants Hub here.](#)



Rural Innovation & Impact Showcase Competition

DEADLINE
2026-03-27

GRANT RANGE
Up to \$5,000

SOURCE
National Forum to Advance Rural Education

#Capacity Building #Education
#Workforce & Economic Development

The Sewell Fund Learning Partnership Program

DEADLINE
2026-03-31

GRANT RANGE
Up to \$100,000

SOURCE
Grace and Harold Sewell Memorial Fund

#Capacity Building
#Community Development #Education

Valley Baptist Legacy Foundation Responsive Grants

DEADLINE
2026-04-01

GRANT RANGE
Up to \$50,000

SOURCE
Valley Baptist Legacy Foundation

#Capacity Building
#Community Development #Education

U.S. Foundation Grants

DEADLINE
2026-04-02

GRANT RANGE
Up to \$45,000

SOURCE
Firehouse Subs Public Safety Foundation

#Capacity Building
#Disaster Prevention & Relief #Education

Downtown Revitalization Programs

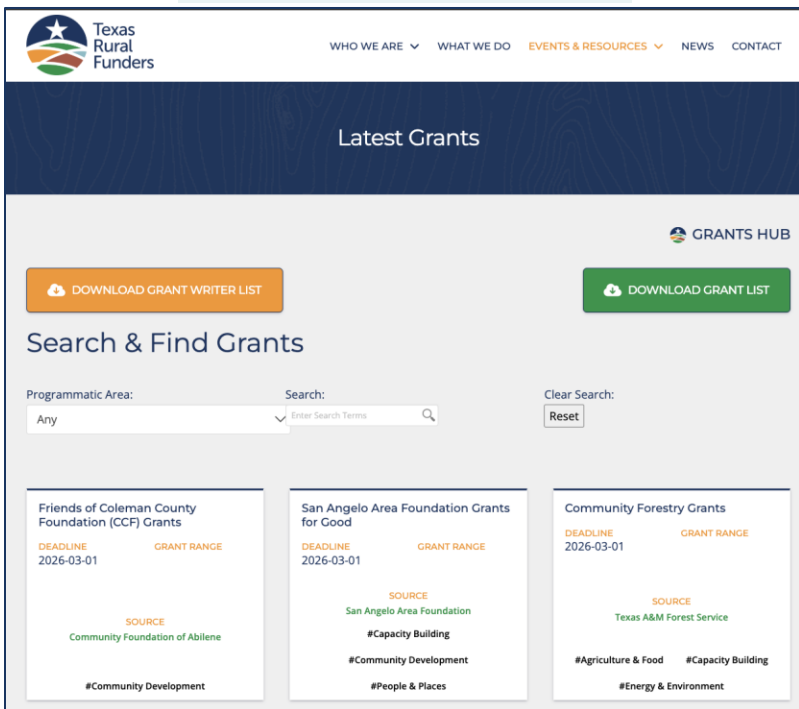
DEADLINE

GRANT RANGE

Temple Foundation Grants

DEADLINE

GRANT RANGE



The screenshot shows the Texas Rural Funders Grants Hub interface. At the top is the logo and navigation menu. Below is a 'Latest Grants' section. The main area features a 'Search & Find Grants' section with a search bar and filters. Below the search bar are three grant listings:

- Friends of Coleman County Foundation (CCF) Grants**: DEADLINE 2026-03-01, GRANT RANGE, SOURCE Community Foundation of Abilene, #Community Development.
- San Angelo Area Foundation Grants for Good**: DEADLINE 2026-03-01, GRANT RANGE, SOURCE San Angelo Area Foundation, #Capacity Building, #Community Development, #People & Places.
- Community Forestry Grants**: DEADLINE 2026-03-01, GRANT RANGE, SOURCE Texas A&M Forest Service, #Agriculture & Food, #Capacity Building, #Energy & Environment.

Grants Hub

Rural Resources on the Texas Rural Funders Website

Built for

Nonprofit and community leaders
Funders

Key features

Resources that highlight success stories and connect users to documents, videos, and orgs dedicated to their success

[Access Rural Resources here.](#)



September 17 | 10:00 – 11:00am CT

Community Webinar: Analyzing Demographic Data for Rural Communities, featuring the Texas Demographic Center

Funders often look to demographic data as a tool to help understand the population a potential grant could serve. But where can you find good demographic data about your rural community?

Join us for a special presentation from [The Texas Demographic Center](#) that will walk you through:

- High-quality data sources for use in your own grantseeking and grantmaking
- Interactive data tools available through the TDC about your local population
- Reports and data profiles the TDC can help create about your community

Who should attend?

Rural nonprofit leaders, funders, and local government leaders who use population data to inform their strategic planning and grant strategies.

[Register!](#)



SESSION GUIDE

- 1. Case Study in Connecting Community Assets**
A Narrative Journey through Cameron County
- 2. Why Funding Rural Matters**
Insights from Philanthropy & Nonprofits
- 3. What We Learned from USDA**
New Data on Rural Funding Patterns
- 4. What We Learned from Rural Texas** Surveying Impacts of
Changes to Federal Funding
- 5. How We Can Respond**
Strategies that Support Rural Capacity



1. Case Study in Connecting Community Assets

A Narrative Journey through
Cameron County



Harnessing Your Cultural Assets: HOT Loop



STOP 1 Port Isabel Lighthouse

- Partnership between museums and the city's economic development corporation (EDC) to support preservation sites
- HOT Feedback loop: creating reasons for tourists to visit, feeding hotel occupancy taxes (HOT) back into preservation

Using Old Tools in New Ways: Eco-Culture

STOP 2



South Texas Eco-Tourism Center

- Collaboration led by county government to use HOT for ecological preservation and learning
- Strategic site choice, expansive purpose: relevant and accessible for locals and tourists alike



Slowly Scaling Up: Regional Vision



STOP 3



Laguna Madre

- Future eco-tourism site on the bay (and along the beach route) focused on aquatic life
- Connecting with regionwide economic development initiative (Caracara Trails)

2. Why Funding Rural Matters

Insights from Philanthropy & Nonprofits



RURAL & URBAN ARE INTERCONNECTED

20% of the U.S. population is rural

70% of funding to rural communities comes from urban areas

\$3.5 billion in grants per year to rural organizations

Source: [Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond](#) (December 2024)



BUT RESOURCES TO RURAL ARE MORE LIMITED

3% of all grants go to rural communities

15:1 ratio of loans to grants in rural communities

Source: [Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond](#) (December 2024)

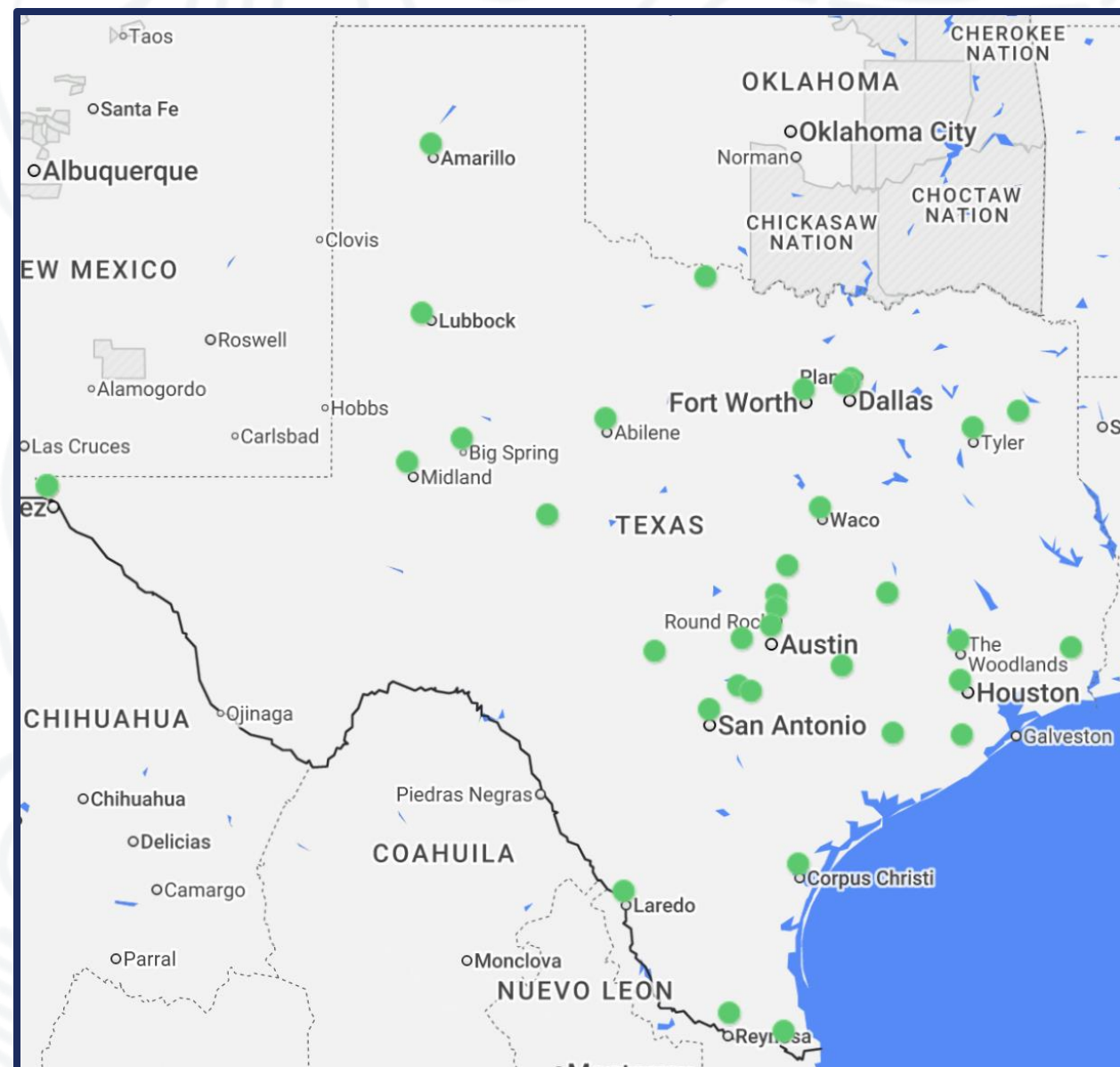


AND ...
CRUCIAL FUNDING
PARTNERS AREN'T
ALWAYS IN RURAL
AREAS

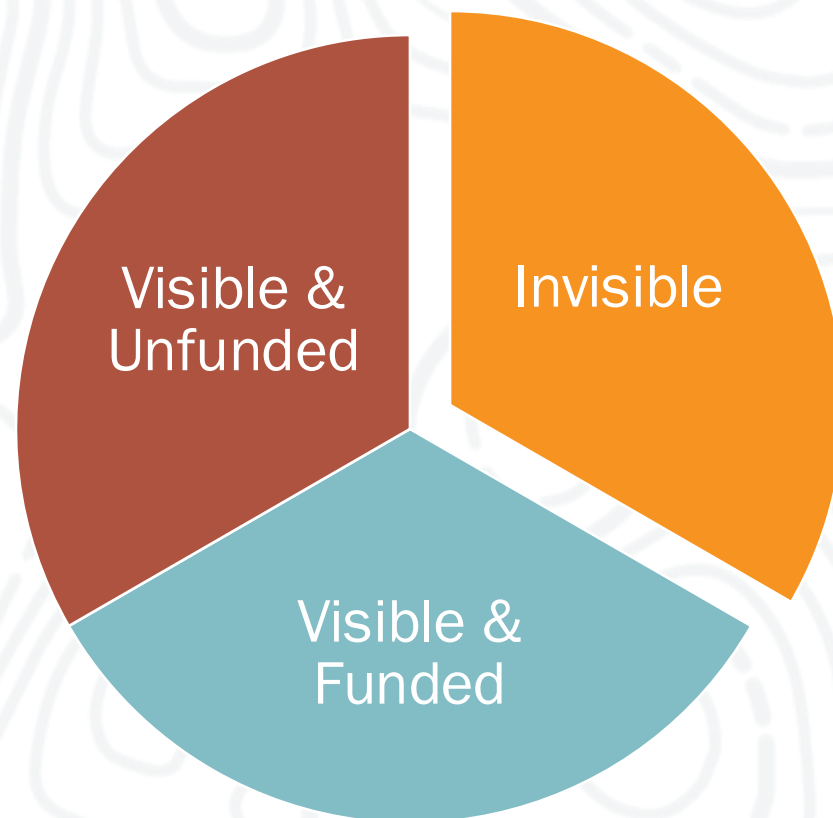
71% of Community Foundation
grants go to local recipients
within the same metro area
or county

Source: [Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia](#) (May 2022)
Map: [Council on Foundations](#) (May 2026)

Community Foundations in Texas, May 2026



PHILANTHROPY'S RURAL BLIND SPOT



Source: [Stanford Social Innovation Review](#) (Spring 2021)



RURAL PHILANTHROPY (MIS)PERCEPTIONS

Mindset

Shift

“Capacity is low”



Rural leaders are multi-talented
and self-sufficient

“Balance sheets are too small”



Rural communities get
fewer resources

“No innovative projects
to support”



Where and how are we
sourcing projects?

“The impact is too small because
most people live in urban”



Rural communities provide
resources that urban needs

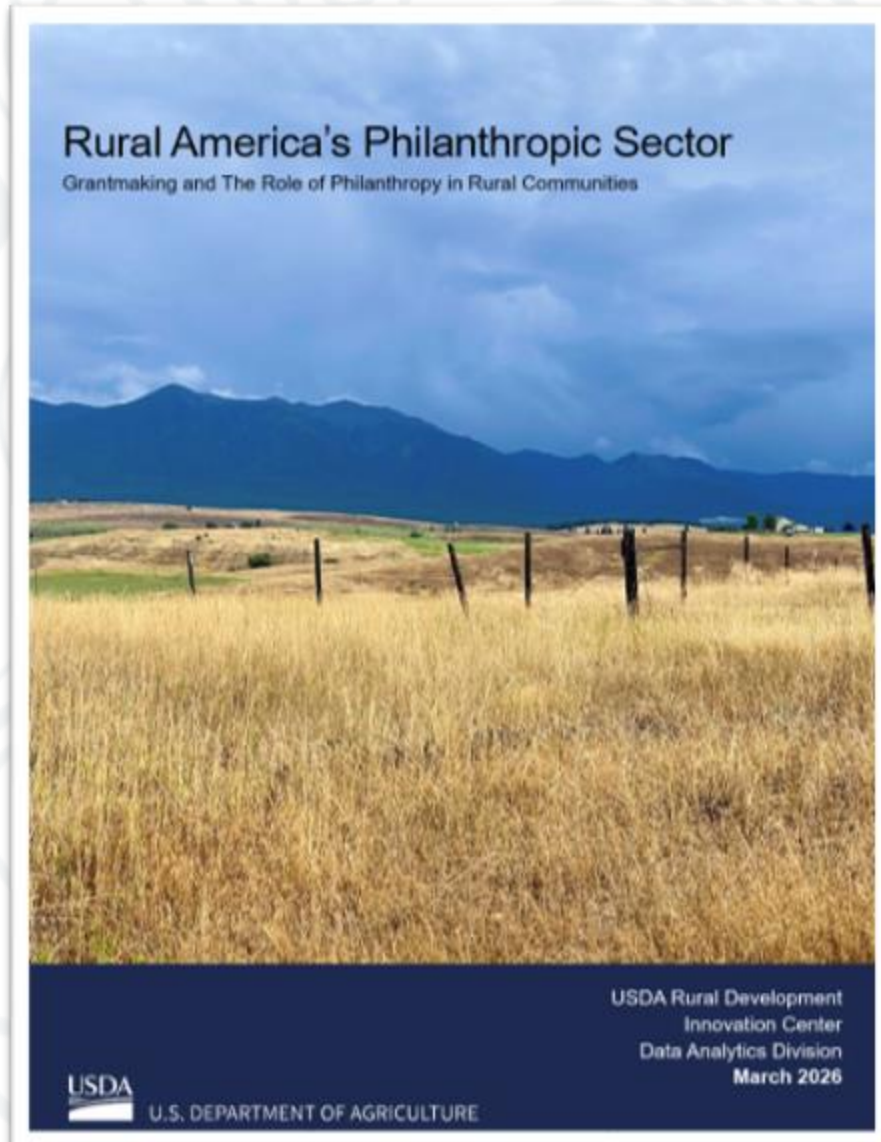


3. What We Learned from USDA

New Data on Rural Funding Patterns



NEW ANALYSIS FROM USDA



Rural America's Philanthropic Sector

Focus

To identify potential gaps in the availability of tax-exempt grantmaking organizations in rural America.

Key Findings

Between 2014-2021:

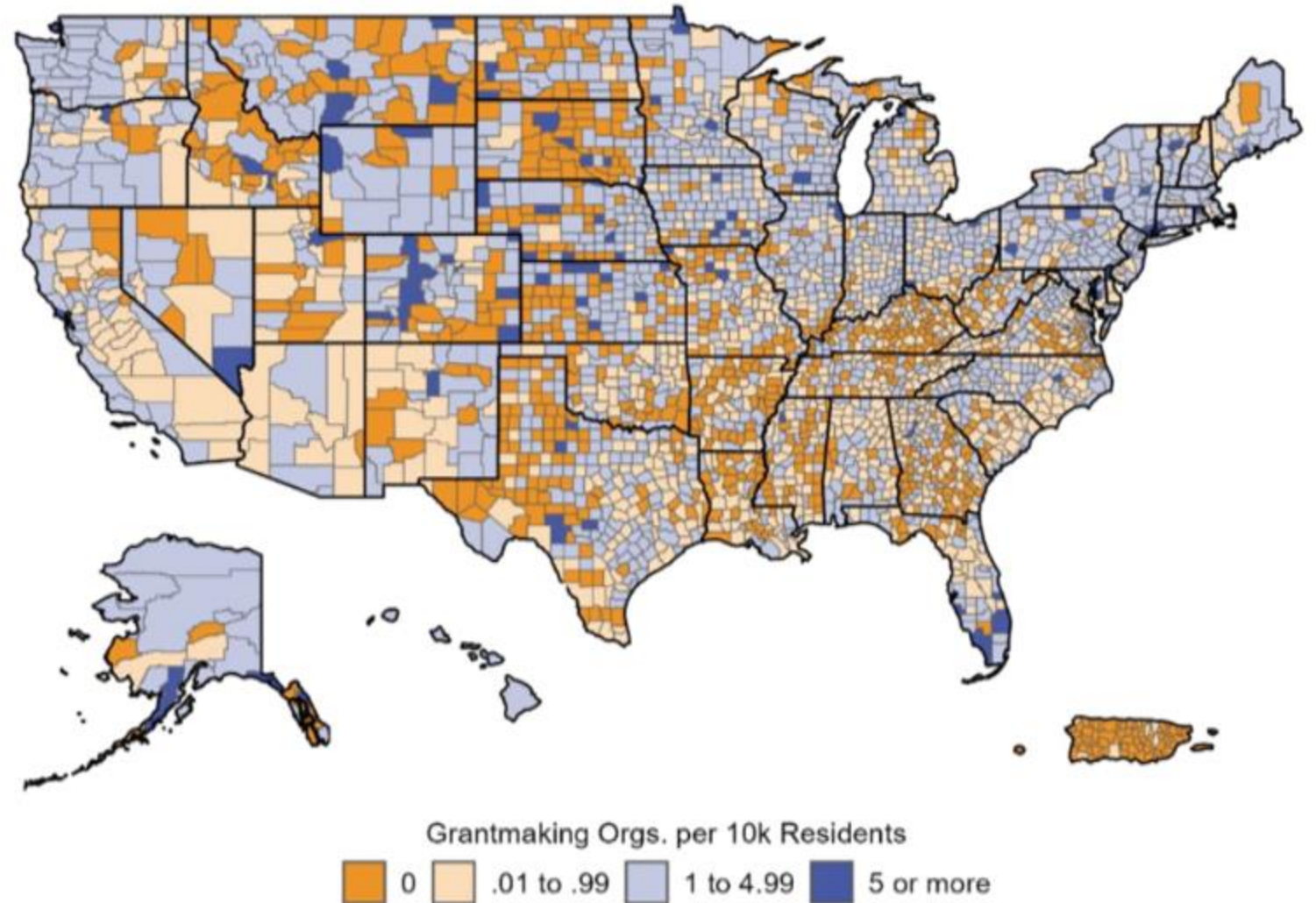
- Only 8% of the ~75K grantmakers active in the U.S. were based in a rural community
- 1 in 3 rural counties nationwide had no locally-based grantmaking organizations
- Rural-based funders issued only 3% of all grant dollars (totaling \$3.5 billion per year)

GEOGRAPHY OF RURAL GIVING

Average Number of Grant Makers per 10,000 People
By County, 2014-2021

Key Insight

Even when accounting for population, rural communities have few - or no - funders.



Note: Estimates include only those organizations identified as relevant domestic grant makers
Sources: Internal Revenue Service Form-990 and 990-PF annual financial extracts, 2014-2021

Source: [U.S. Department of Agriculture](#) (March 2026)

REGIONAL TRENDS

Statistics on Grantmaking Organizations, by Census Region and Urban/Rural Status, 2014-2021

Key Insight

Philanthropy in the rural South (Texas) is lower than every other urban *and* rural region in the U.S.

	Northeast		Midwest		South		West	
	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
Number of grant makers	17,510	905	14,627	2,339	21,499	1,825	15,276	1,235
Grant makers per 10,000 people	3.4	2.0	2.7	1.6	2.1	0.9	2.2	1.9
Avg annual total grant dollars (in millions)	\$27,668	\$552	\$20,904	\$1,280	\$28,370	\$1,085	\$35,660	\$647
Avg annual total grant dollars, per capita	\$533	\$122	\$392	\$86	\$271	\$56	\$505	\$97
Avg annual grants per grant maker (in millions)	\$1.60	\$0.60	\$1.40	\$0.50	\$1.30	\$0.60	\$2.30	\$0.50
Avg total assets (in millions)	\$323,204	\$8,719	\$238,418	\$14,738	\$310,907	\$10,422	\$351,713	\$7,390
Avg total assets, per capita	\$6,231	\$1,936	\$4,469	\$987	\$2,974	\$540	\$4,984	\$1,107
Avg total assets per grant maker (in millions)	\$18.50	\$9.60	\$16.30	\$6.30	\$14.50	\$5.70	\$23.00	\$6.00

Notes: Estimates include only those organizations identified as relevant grant makers based in the U.S. Organizations located in Puerto Rico are excluded in this table. Urban/rural status is based metropolitan area status in the Office of Management and Budget September 2018 CBSA/CSA delineation file.

Sources: Internal Revenue Service Form-990 and -990PF Annual Extracts, 2014–2021.

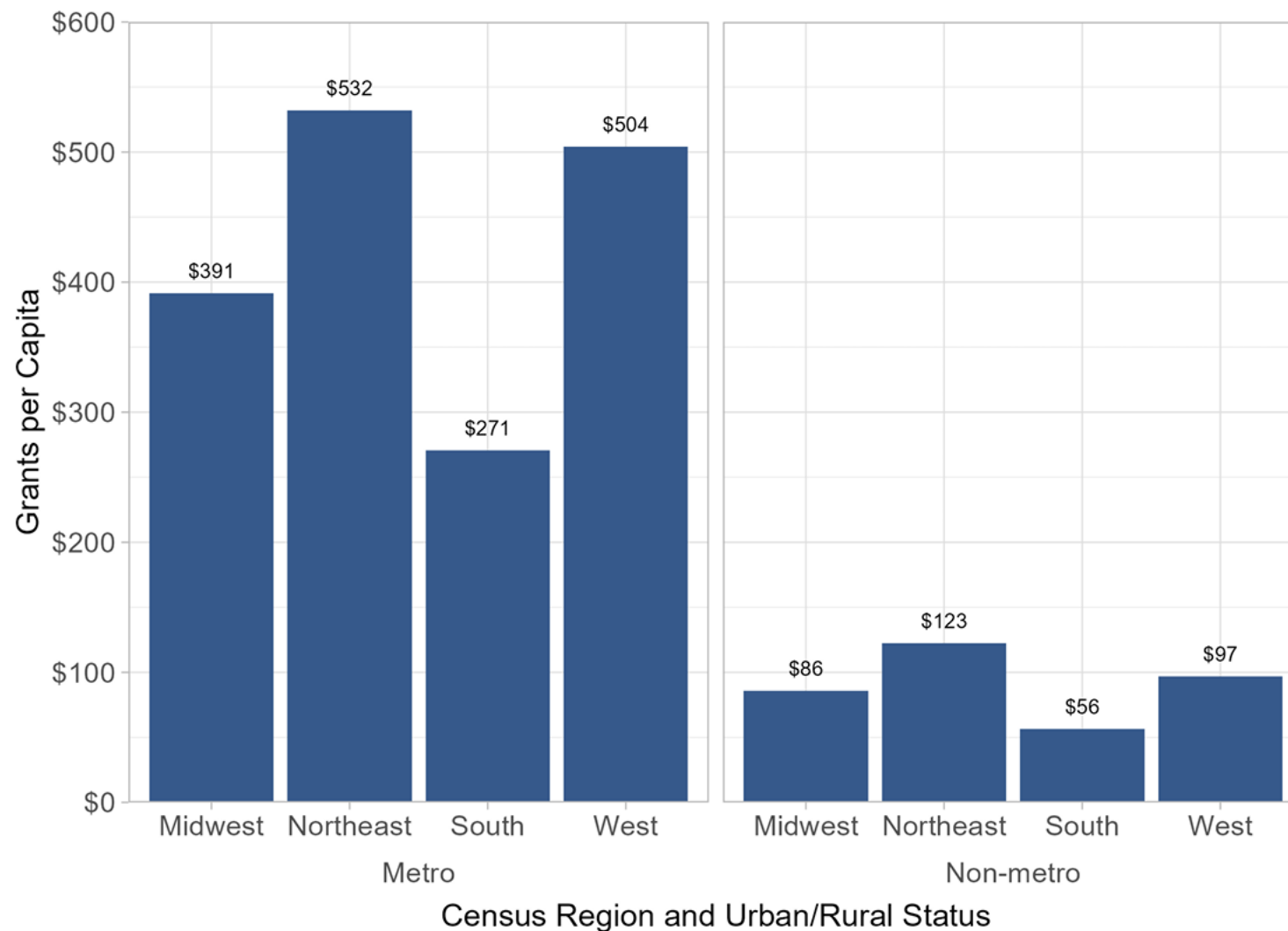
Source: [U.S. Department of Agriculture](#) (March 2026)

URBAN-RURAL FUNDING GAP

Per Capita Grants by Region and Rural/Urban Status, 2014-2021

Key Insight

Explosive population growth in the South has not been enough to close the funding gap with other regions of the U.S.



Note: Urban/rural status is based on metropolitan area status in the Office of Management and Budget September 2018 CBSA/CSA delineation file.

Sources: Internal Revenue Service Form-990 and -990PF Annual Extracts, 2014–2021.

Source: [U.S. Department of Agriculture](#) (March 2026)

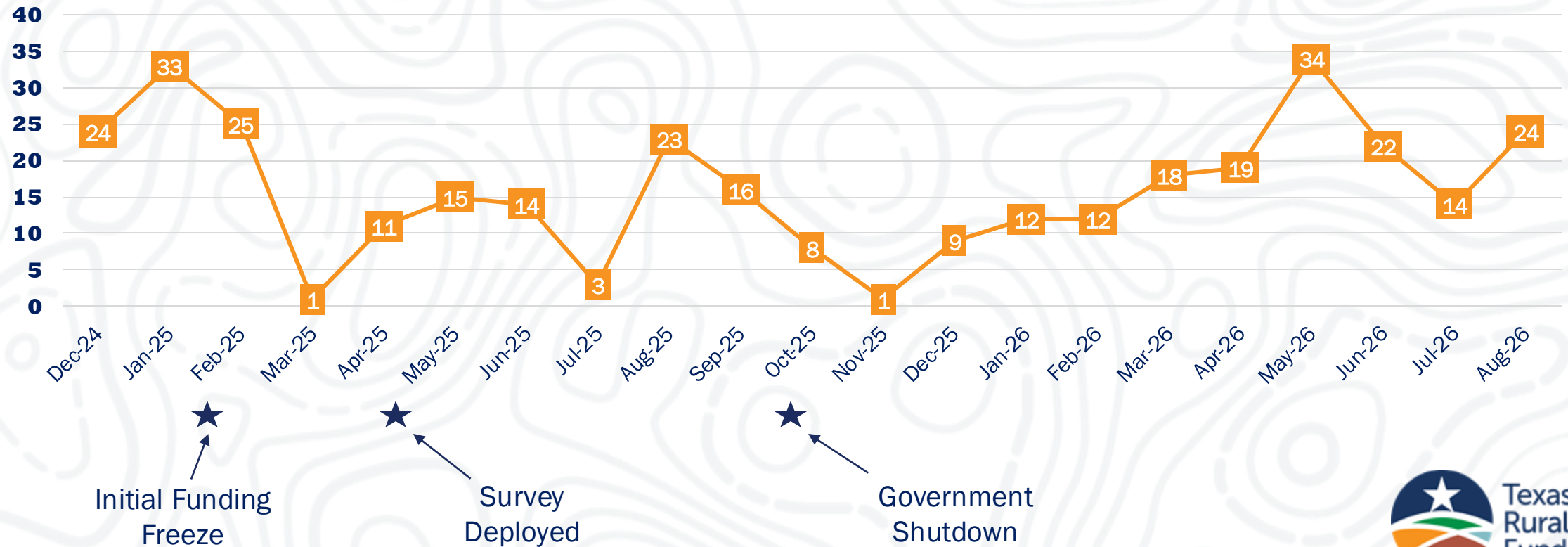
4. What We Learned from Rural Texas

Surveying Impacts of Changes to Federal Funding



BACKGROUND: 2025 BROUGHT BIG CHANGES TO FEDERAL GRANTS

Number of New Federal Funding Opportunities
Flagged for Upload to the Texas Rural Funders Grants Hub



ADAPTIVE SURVEY, POWERED BY A.I.



Depending on how respondents answered, our survey's A.I. had three different 'banks' of questions it could ask them.

Key information collected across all respondents include:

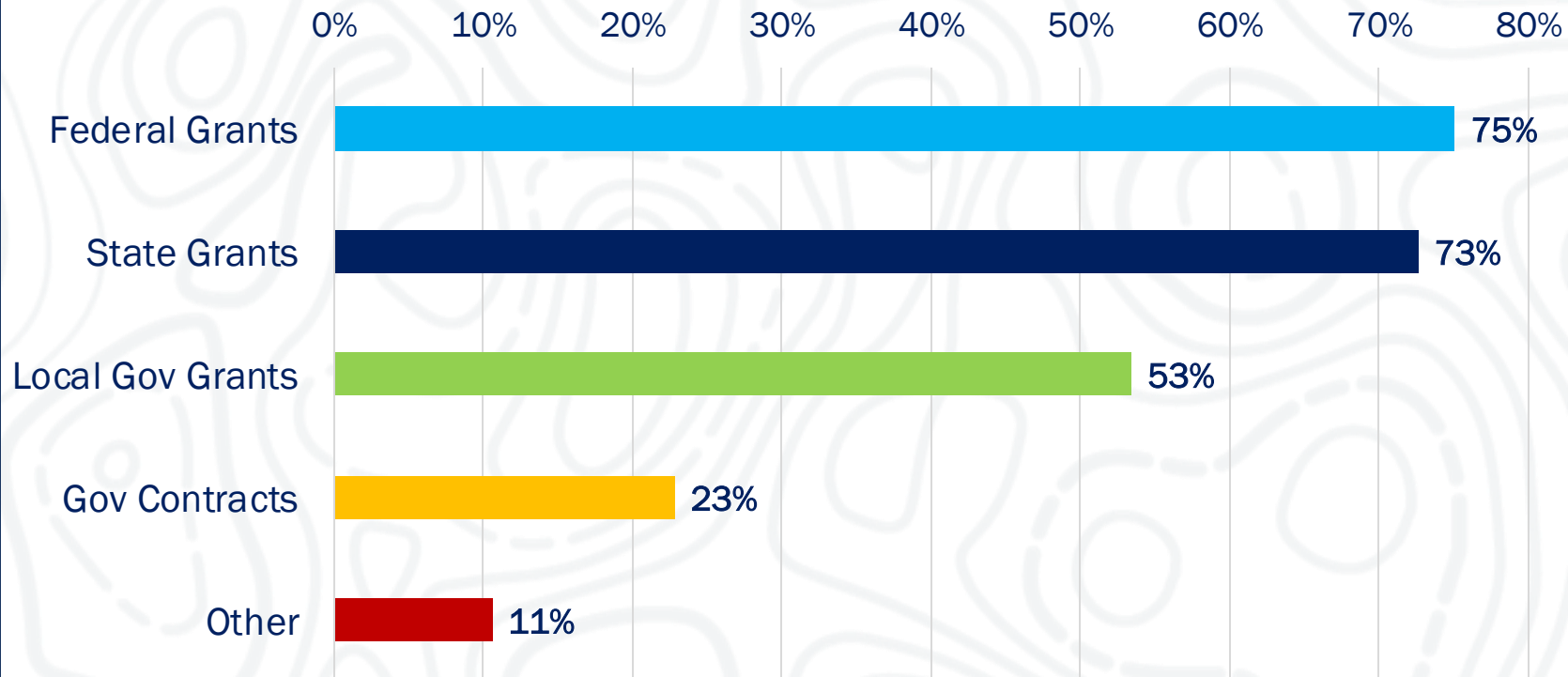
- Types of funding received
- Annual budget size
- Percentage breakdown of funding sources
- Reductions in government funding at time of survey
- How nonprofits are responding to funding changes
- What nonprofits will do if funding cuts continue

Response Period:
April 25 – May 12, 2025

Total Responses:
245

MOST RESPONDENTS RECEIVE A MIX OF FUNDING – NOT JUST FEDERAL GRANTS

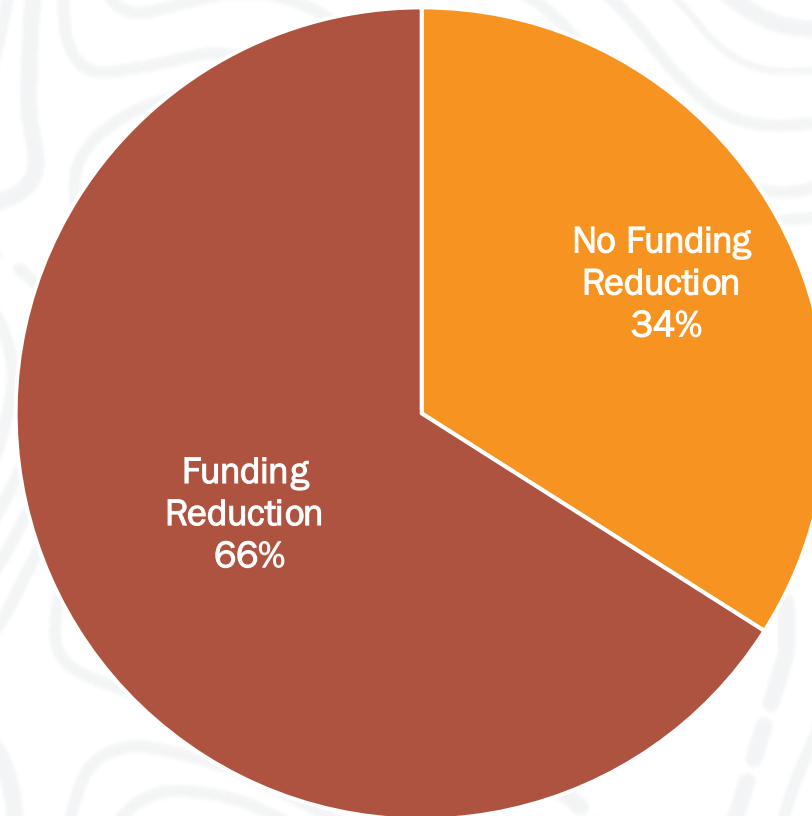
Percent of Respondents that Receive Government Funding, by Funding Source



Please Indicate:
Which types of government
funding does your
organization receive?
Select all that apply.

n = 245

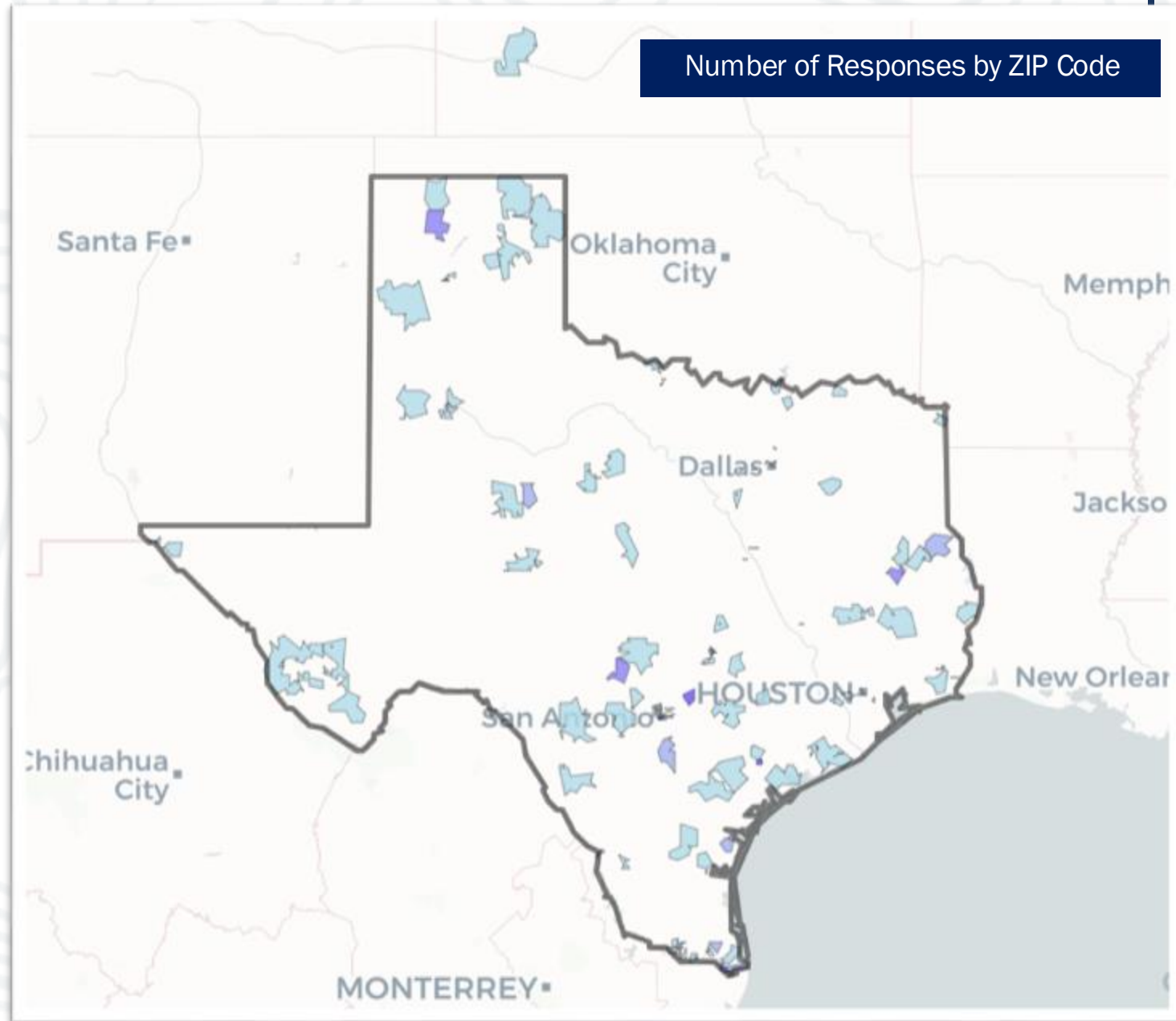
2/3 OF NONPROFITS HAD FEDERAL FUNDING CUT



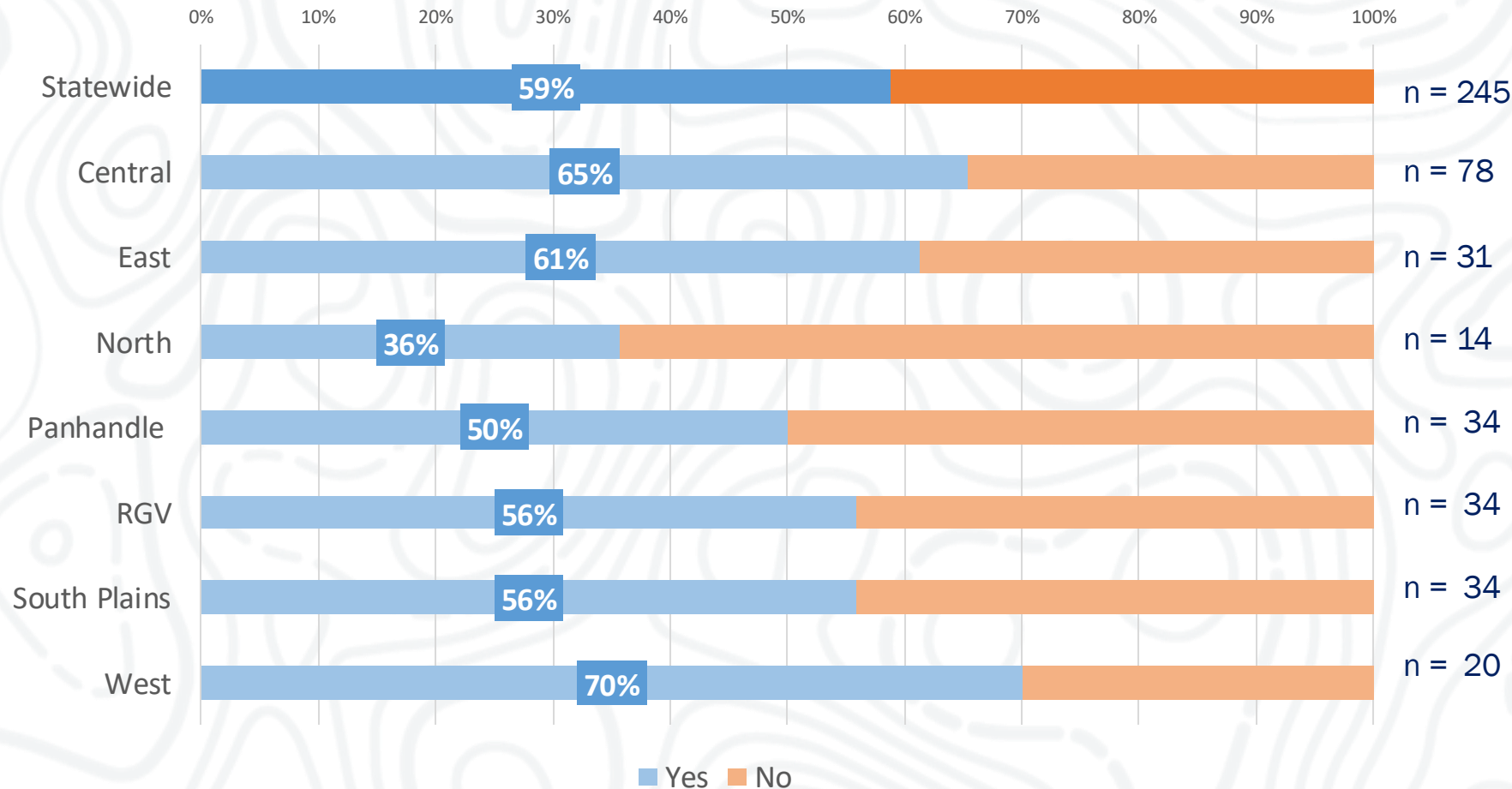
n = 236

REGIONAL TRENDS

n = 245

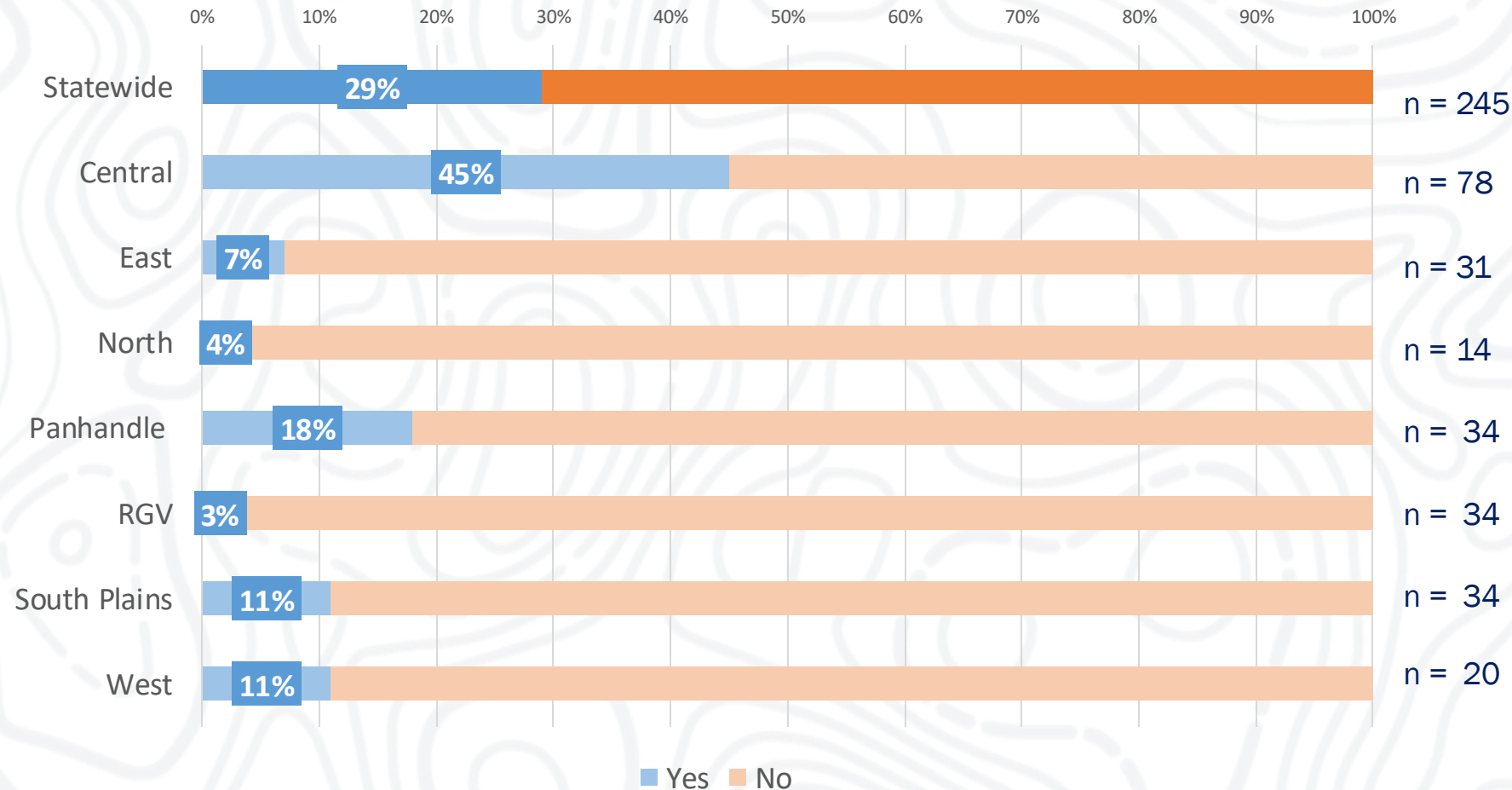


MOST ORGANIZATIONS STARTED LOOKING FOR ALTERNATIVE FUNDING



Yes or No:
Has your
organization sought
alternative funding
sources?

SOME ORGANIZATIONS TURNED TO SEEKING EXTERNAL PARTNERSHIPS



Yes or No:
Has your organization
partnered with another
nonprofit in response to
federal funding cuts?

5. How We Can Respond

Strategies that Support Rural Capacity



DATA INFORMS CAPACITY BUILDING

Rural communities face steep, systemic challenges when seeking funding:

- Limited time and resources to identify funding opportunities
- Few (if any) available staff or volunteers to write applications
- Finite range of organizations within the community to partner with
- Grant applications usually written with urban in mind and rural as the “younger sibling or mini-urban”

Strategy: capacity building tools that leverage rural assets already in the community





POWER YOUR PROPOSAL



A Smart Structure for Grant Writing Success
September 2025



Planting Seeds of Prosperity:
How CDFIs Can Transform Rural Texas



September 2024



Creating Infrastructure Pathways in Texas: Water and Broadband

Landscape Analysis and Recommendations

AUTHORS

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PREPARED FOR

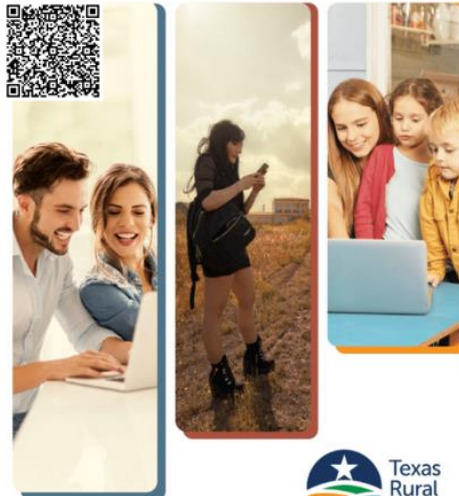


Boosting Broadband with E-Rate
April 2024



Finding Funding for Fiber:
Broadband Financing Options for Rural Texas Communities

September 2023



Get Connected Y'all:
A Guide for Texas Communities on Securing Broadband

May 2022

ctc technology & energy
engineering & business consulting



Broadband Recommendations to
Connect All Texans
Prepared for Texas Rural Funders
December 2022

Columbia Telecommunications Corporation
10613 Concord Street • Kensington, MD 20885 • Tel: 301-933-1488 • Fax: 301-933-3340 • www.ctcnet.us



"It's a 3-legged stool: people need
water, electricity, and broadband":
Broadband Stories from Rural Texas

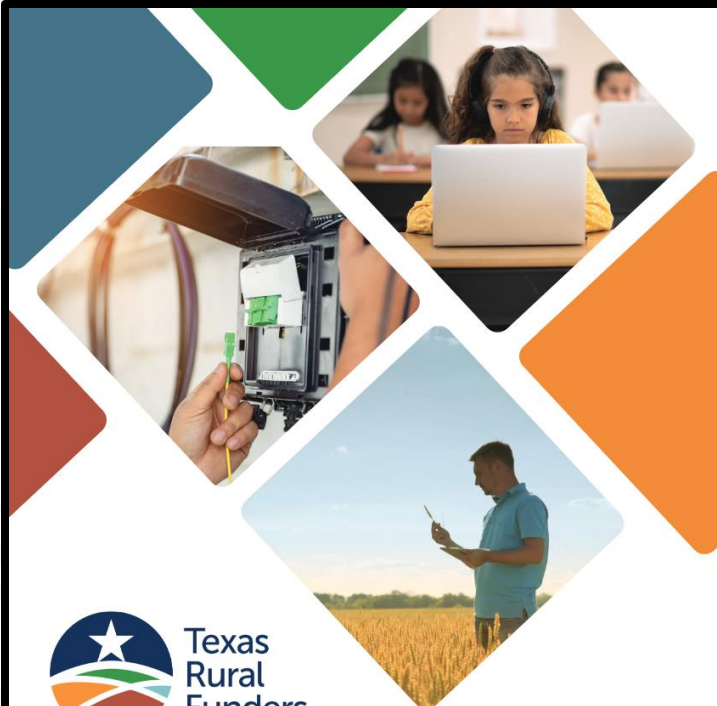
January 2021



Texas
Rural
Funders



Example: Different Paths to Funding a Budget



Texas Rural Funders

Finding Funding for Fiber:
Broadband Financing Options for Rural Texas Communities

September 2023

Private Equity

VIEW CAPITAL ADVISORS, LLC
HostedAmerica[®]
Monahans, TX

Communities partner with a private equity company to finance buildout and operations of the ISP.

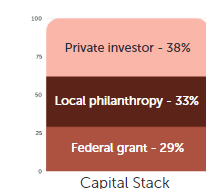
Average 40%-45% rate of return

Strengths

- Private equity companies bring expertise in financing, developing, and administering broadband networks
- Speed of buildout faster than with braided funding
- ISP brings expertise to broadband marketing and operations

Risks

- Ownership, governance, and revenue belong to a private organization
- Support roles can be out of area or offshore



Capital Stack

"As I was going out to talk to private equity folks, it's just like going out to Shark Tank. They ask 'How many passings are there? How many subscribers do you have?' I went through discussions with private equity groups and family offices for a year and a half to find the right partner to fund the project." - Carroll Faulkner, President, Digital Fields

Co-op

etex
Gilmer, TX

A collectively-held cooperative organization expands from telephone or electrical service to broadband and owns last mile service.

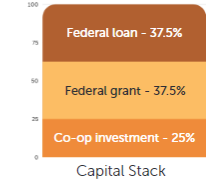
Average 6%-9% rate of return

Strengths

- Locally owned and governed, and provider is easily accessible for repairs and customer service
- Experience in serving last-mile customers with other utilities or services
- Likely to finance improvements over longer term than private companies, given organizational governance and mission

Risks

- Can be challenging to motivate and engage a board to accept risk required to expand service to a new utility
- Capital investment is a significant challenge, and co-ops may have limited access to capital markets



Capital Stack

Privately-Held Company

Totelcom
DeLeon, TX

A locally owned company finances, builds, and provides middle mile and last mile service to commercial and residential customers, including operating the ISP.

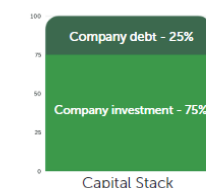
Average 9%-15% rate of return

Strengths

- Local support and connection for repair and service
- Experience with and shared risk in securing funding
- Jobs and profits stay local or regional
- Organization may be strong community partner

Risks

- Ownership, governance of assets, and revenue belong to a private organization
- Not all communities may have available of suitable partners



Capital Stack

Municipal Ownership

TEAMPHARR.NET
Pharr, TX

Local government owns, maintains, and operates the middle mile and last mile network and runs the ISP.

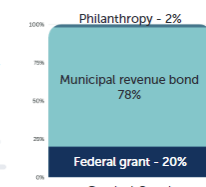
Average 3%-7% rate of return

Strengths

- Locally owned and operated
- Public-private partnership can exist within a municipally-owned system; private partners can often build more quickly than cities
- Revenue comes back to the city or community in perpetuity

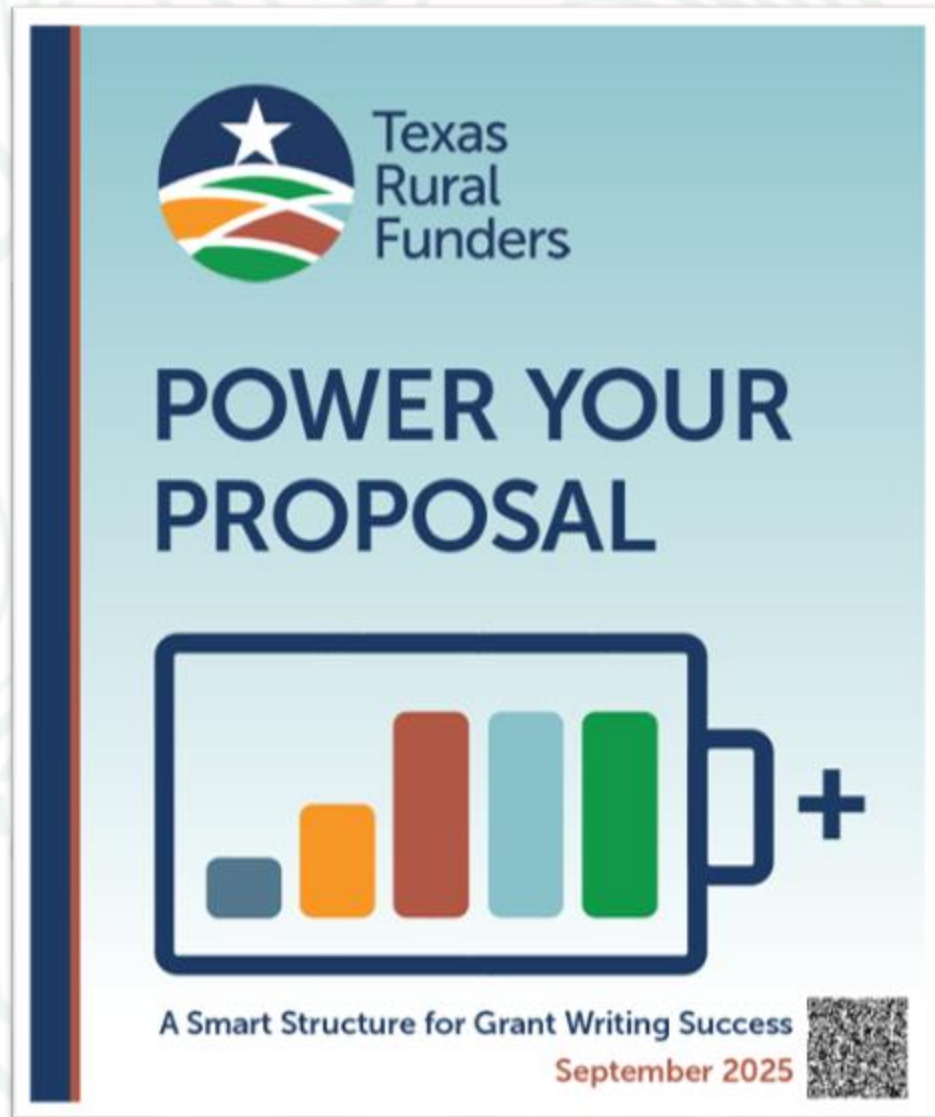
Risks

- Funding resources are complicated for a city or municipality to secure and manage
- Success with this model takes long-term community commitment to technical expertise and operational support
- Low-density networks or low subscription rates may not be attractive for future development



Capital Stack

RESOURCE FOR RURAL GRANTSEEKERS



Power Your Proposal: A Smart Structure for Grant Writing Success

Built for

Nonprofit staff that are new to grants
Volunteer grant writers

Features

What happens at every step in the grant life cycle – and *what you need to get there*
Easy-to-use resources you can use to put together a strong proposal

POWER YOUR PROPOSAL HELPS GRANTSEEKERS...



Understand the kinds of grant that are available



Learn how to prepare the most commonly-needed info in a grant



Find out what funders wish grant applicants knew



Gain access to a rich catalog of grant development resources



Discover how to receive and operate grants and complete reporting



ADVICE FROM FUNDERS (HINT: WE WANT YOU TO SUCCEED)

- We consistently fund the same categories.
- Do your homework.
- Are you addressing an existing need or innovating for future opportunities?
- Please answer my questions within the word limits.
- Your budget tells a story.
- We want to know what you learned and how you achieved your goals.
- No doesn't mean no forever.
- ***Sometimes what I can help with isn't money.***
- Your organization doesn't need to have everything figured out, but you do need a solid plan.
- Relationships matter – even brief encounters can make a difference.



FINDING RESOURCES BEYOND GRANTS

Even with grant funding, you likely need partners to achieve your mission!



- Grants are a crucial tool, but they're not the only resource you have!
- Think about what partners in your community can do to help accomplish your goals.

RURAL PARTNERSHIPS IN ACTION



**Library
Book Brigade**
Meridian



**Emergency
Preparedness Fair**
Kyle



**Bookshelf Meets
Food Bank**
Midland-Odessa



Texas Rural Funders

MOBILIZING THE POWER OF PHILANTHROPY
to strengthen rural Texas.



Visit our Website



Newsletter Sign Up



Grants Hub

CONTACT US



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APPENDIX



USDA'S KEY DEFINITIONS



Philanthropic Grantmaking Organization

Tax-exempt ***public charity*** or ***private foundation*** involved in broadly accessible, routine, meaningful, and relevant domestic grantmaking as part of their regular operations.

- *Public Charity examples: United Ways or Community Foundations*
- *Private Foundation example: The Meadows Foundation*



Rural Community

Any county located outside of a metropolitan statistical area.

USDA'S DATA METHODOLOGY

To study grantmaking organizations in rural communities, USDA Rural Development's research team used **IRS Form 990/990 PF filings**.

Using the following exclusion criteria, they built a dataset of **84,161** unique tax-exempt grantmaking organizations.

Source: [U.S. Department of Agriculture](#) (March 2026)

Exclusion Category	Exclusion Step
Beginning dataset of 501(c)(3) and 501(c)(4) organizations	
Data exclusions	Fewer than 3 years of grants data
Geographic exclusions	Non-U.S. or Puerto Rico based organization, or no identifying geography
Financial exclusions	\$0 in total grantmaking
	\$0 in total assets or expenses
	Total grants to expenses ratio > 1
	Less than \$25k in average annual total grantmaking
	Single year of grantmaking more than 75% of total
Characteristic exclusions	NTEE type code exclusions
	Non-private foundation reason code exclusion
	Educational or medical institution, or national level grant maker or donor advised fund
	Exclusion based on individual review of records

THE ADDED POWER OF PARTNERSHIPS



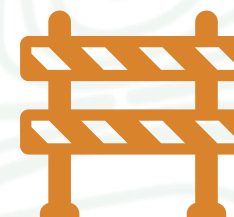
Start small

What's one thing you can achieve *now* and keep building on?



Identify the added value

What can you do together that you can't do alone?



Set parameters

What's in-bounds vs. out-of-bounds?

Source: [Ron Carucci, Forbes "How to Forge Partnerships that Drive Organizational Change"](#)

