

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Development in Rural Texas:

#### An Assessment of TEEEX Economic Development Reports

**Client:** Knowledge Division of the Texas Engineering Extension Service

The Development in Rural Texas report provides an evaluation and assessment of economic development recommendations made by the Texas Engineering Extension Service (TEEX). Due to the nature of its work, TEEX seldom has an opportunity to revisit the communities it has worked with in the past. In 2011, the Bush School of Government and Public Service was contacted with the opportunity to assist in evaluating several of the economic development recommendations and plans put in place by TEEX. The Capstone group evaluated ten TEEX reports that were written from 2006-2009. Their subjects vary between facility development plans to regional economic development strategies.

Providing the context for evaluation was essential before any evaluation could take place. This Capstone report provides a brief background on TEEX, as well as steps the organization takes during its “community process” of identifying cities and organizations with which to work. The literature review section is broken down into two parts, one focusing on rural Texas and the other on economic development. The rural Texas literature review provides several historical definitions of rural, while also highlighting demographics and organizations of importance in Texas. The economic development literature review offers an academic background of the theory and approaches to local economic development in the United States. This section also addresses the need to bridge the gap between the evidence found in academia with the results of past community development efforts in order to provide a practical blueprint going forward.

The methodology section of this report examines the steps taken by the Capstone team to conduct their research. This work included analyzing historical community data, conducting interviews with public officials and other individuals involved with the TEEX reports, and making site visits. A demographic breakdown is also provided for each community, which includes economic, population, race/ethnicity and education information. Following this, the TEEX Hearne Report from 2007 is reviewed, serving as a pilot study and introducing the structure of research undertaken in the remaining reports.

Nine individual case studies are presented, each evaluating the work done by TEEX in communities throughout Texas between 2006 and 2009, asking the central question: What has happened since TEEX delivered its report. The case studies are:

- Beeville – Development Market Study
- Brazoria – County Fairgrounds & Expo Market Study
- Bastrop – Convention and Exhibit Center
- Canton – Economic Impact Study

- Paris – Feasibility Study of Multi-Purpose Arena
- Jacksboro – Economic Development Study
- Vernon – Community & Economic Development Initiative
- Permian Basin – Economic Development Strategy
- Paris and Lamar County – Baseline Study

Following these case studies, this report provides a series of best practices and recommendations going forward. This section is broken down between facility and community reports provided by TEEX. In summary, the Capstone group found that the cities and organizations TEEX works with that have local cooperation, effective leaders, and community involvement have a greater chance of moving forward with any projects or recommendations made. However, given the many variables influencing community and economic development, it is difficult to assert that these variables, by themselves, made the difference. Causation in these cases is hard to establish. In order to improve upon future projects, the organization should work towards tying the local economic and political conditions of the community with the report, particularly in cases dealing with site-specific development. Additionally, it is recommended that TEEX provide information detailing potential limitations to the recommendations given.

The Capstone group would like to sincerely thank all participants who offered their time and knowledge as interviewees for this project.