

CDBG MITIGATION CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE 2
Virtual Committee Meeting
Tuesday, October 26, 2021
1:00-2:00 PM

Zoom Meeting

Committee Purpose: Each committee shall adopt the following statement of purpose: “The purpose of this committee is to advise the Texas General Land Office (GLO) on the implementation of programs using first-of-its-kind Community Development Block Grant – Mitigation (CDBG-MIT) funding.”

Meeting Objective: Discuss results from the *CDBG-MIT Program Challenges Survey* and determine next steps.

Agenda

- | | |
|------------------|--|
| 1:00-1:15 | Welcome & Introductions |
| 1:15-1:30 | Presentation of Survey Results
Katya presents results from the <i>CDBG-MIT Program Challenges Survey</i> . |
| 1:30-1:35 | Feedback from GLO
Committee reviews feedback from the GLO on the survey results. |
| 1:35-1:55 | Discussion: Committee Workplan
Committee discusses a prioritized program of work. Challenges the Committee may investigate will be assessed according to their: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Feasibility to address (in-whole or in-part) within the timeframe and existing capacity of the Committee• Potential impact to benefit Texas CDBG-MIT grantees and citizenry• Potential impact to benefit the state Texas CDBG-MIT program• Potential impact to benefit the federal CDBG-MIT program |
| 1:55-2:00 | Next Steps |

**CDBG MITIGATION CITIZEN ADVISORY
COMMITTEE B
Virtual Committee Meeting
Tuesday, October 26, 2021
1:00-2:00 PM**

Minutes for October 26, 2021 Meeting

1:00-1:15 Welcome & Introductions

Committee Meeting Attendees

Dr. Katya Wowk
Derek Katznelson
Dr. Christa Lopez
Amanda Fenwick
Hon. Nate MacDonald
Yvonne Sheasby
Tracy Stephens
Keith Downey
Arjumand Mubarak

Representing (*Committee B Member)

Nueces County*
Hidalgo County*
The Texas General Land Office
Galveston County
Matagorda County*
The Harte Research Institute
Harris County*
Harris County*
Harris County*

Dr. Kateryna Wowk, CDBG-MIT Citizens' Advisory Committee – B President, called the 2nd Committee meeting to order. She noted that the meeting was to be recorded and distributed to the public for any comments they may have on the Committee's work.

Each attendee introduced themselves.

1:15-1:30 Presentation of Survey Results [included within report]

Dr. Wowk presented on the development and results of the survey on CDBG-MIT challenges and priority areas. She noted that the survey received 112 respondents. Dr. Wowk thanked the committee members present or not who distributed the survey. She discussed that the next steps are to review the survey results, then to develop a program of work for the Committees.

Dr. Wowk recognized the Harte Research Institute for Gulf of Mexico Studies out of Texas A&M – Corpus Christi because they are supporting Dr. Wowk's position on the committee. She presented on the responses by county, responses by area type, and involvement with the CDBG-MIT program. She reviewed the survey responses on timeline challenges, where 70% percent of respondents had difficulty meeting GLO contract benchmarks. Dr. Wowk also reviewed how survey respondents rated priority challenges, like lack of response, shifting requirements and lack of communication. She noted that survey respondents selected one priority challenge to provide more detail.

Dr. Wowk commented that she would be happy to share the results of the survey and presentation.

1:30-1:35

Feedback from GLO [included within report]

Dr. Christa Lopez, from the Texas GLO, commented that she had met and brought the survey results to Director Heather Lagrone, Deputy Director Martin River, and Deputy Director Jet Hays to discuss the opportunity for the GLO to grow. She noted that discussion was on what is within and without the GLO's span of control and what the Committee can help with. Dr. Lopez noted that the GLO Executive Team will be notifying the entire GLO leadership team on having a meeting in the next several weeks to create challenge buckets and themes between what GLO is able to work on and able to be accomplished.

Dr. Lopez presented a document that listed thematic buckets and continuing work. She explained an example of GLO's work on the timely expenditure process: where HUD contracts with GLO and the local community, and within the contract, milestones are inserted on clearance of items like the environmental. Dr. Lopez noted that timely expenditure notification letters are sent depending on the contract amounts spent, and she noted, that the process is currently being revamped. She noted that she had brought on a new person with experience for more engaging training. Dr. Lopez also noted that GLO will be updating the implementation plan, which should be used as a playbook for each phase of the project the local community is in. She noted GLO is working on revising the website and asked the Committee on GLO's website on design, phrasing and keywords.

Dr. Lopez commented that the document expresses the seriousness that GLO is taking the survey results and the work that is being done and will be done.

Mr. Keith Downey commented on the importance of setting expectations with the public that is being served. He noted that not everyone has wi-fi in poorer communities. He asked if it has been considered to go into Churches to speak on GLO's offerings. Mr. Downey advised communicating understandable terminologies and updates on a regular basis.

Dr. Lopez commented on GLO's efforts to reach out to communities through long-term recovery groups, non-profits, community action agencies and churches. She recommended to the Committee to send on information on sectors that GLO is consistently missing. Dr. Lopez noted GLO monthly newsletters on updates yet asked how the community gets that information. She expressed thanks for the Committee for providing information so that the GLO can improve and together come up with solutions.

Ms. Amanda Fenwick reiterated that the Committees would provide valuable input, like getting into the neighborhoods.

Judge Nate MacDonald agreed with Mr. Downey. He expanded that not only senior citizens, but younger citizens get the information, but the information may not be clear on what it is. Judge MacDonald advised to change the parlance of the messaging for ordinary citizens to understand. He commented on the calls he received on the Bay City housing program, and they disconnect between the newspaper and website public notices. He asked for the program notices to communicate to ordinary citizens.

Dr. Lopez agreed and explained that the housing program was named due to the HUD money for GLO internal use, but she suggested they should call the program, "GLO Housing."

Judge MacDonald commented the public communication should be easily understood for all citizens.

Dr. Wowk summarized the themes of website improvement and community engagement, to be integrated into a workplan after GLO reviews their capabilities.

Mr. Downey advised on website navigability, to make the website more user friendly.

Dr. Wowk suggested to Dr. Lopez when working on GLO's response to the survey, to include timelines on when certain themes or solutions are available.

Dr. Lopez asked the Committee on fresh eyes for reviewing the website and search terms.

Mr. Downey suggested using pictures, photos, and illustrations on the website.

Dr. Lopez added that adding visual representations help to tell the story across multiple language. She asked the Committee if success stories should be added to the website.

Ms. Fenwick commented that the people completing those projects can be GLO's voice.

Mr. Downey noted that ambassadors can reach like-minded and like-situation people to show proof that GLO is fixing housing in the community.

Judge MacDonald offered for judges, mayors, city councilmen, and commissioners to champion the cause to spread the word.

Mr. Tracy Stephens asked if the information would be sent out via regular mail.

Dr. Lopez noted that when the Housing Programs are started, FEMA sends a mailing list to GLO to target the population affected under the same disaster. She commented that, on updates to 140 counties, mailers are difficult to handle. Dr. Lopez did note that the initial outreach could be improved by reaching out to church bulletins or community action groups if people did not apply for FEMA assistance initially. She related program applications to election research, and how time consuming or how lack of internet accessibility leads to missing people in the initial mail outs.

Mr. Downey commented on how different people have limited means for connecting with information on their concerns. He mentioned how we can build relationships and trust by sending information.

Dr. Wowk suggested sending on information through municipality partnerships like a water bill and/or partnering with boundary organizations like faith-based or community organizations.

Dr. Lopez mentioned on the survey feedback concerning policy. She noted that although HUD policy is frustrating where money streams have different rules, she can gather data and feedback from citizens and constituents to bring the feedback up to HUD for the federal government to fix problems.

Judge MacDonald noted that government listens better to private citizens rather than other elected officials. He commented that if members of this Committee each wrote a letter to HUD, then we would get a response. Judge MacDonald noted that private citizen voices are heard.

Mr. Downey explained that when the congressmembers tell citizens that the congressmember have secured dollar amounts from the federal government for those citizens, the average person feels that the trickle-down effect does not happen to them. He noted that there must be a way for communicating how the funding will get down to the grass roots level.

Dr. Lopez agreed that tangibly explaining, for example, how a drainage ditch impacts a visit to the grocery store or to church. She suggested GLO sending a better message on how the funds come into the community.

Mr. Downey noted the concerns from the residents on how to keep water off their property.

Dr. Lopez agreed that if water could be kept off the resident's property, then the resident's house would not have to be rebuilt.

1:55-2:00

Next Steps

Dr. Wowk asked the Committee to think about next steps, including the themes of website, engagement, communications, and policy changes. She proposed waiting for Ms. Fenwick to update on Committee A's meeting on 10/29/2021 and for GLO's fuller response on what GLO is working on, what can be worked on, what needs to be changed at the level of HUD, and where GLO believes the Citizens Advisory Committees can be most useful. Dr. Wowk proposed outside of meeting thinking, and that we can communicate by email. She suggested a SurveyMonkey survey sent out to the Committees by the Committee leadership team to prioritize the themes, with the themes to be worked on in sub-groups.

Ms. Fenwick commented that she will update Dr. Wowk on any new information from Committee A's meeting.

South Texas Coastal Bend Regional Resilience Partnership



**Dr. Katya Wowk - Director, Texas OneGulf
Co-Lead, Regional Resilience Partnership
Harte Research Institute for Gulf of Mexico Studies
Texas A&M University Corpus Christi**

**Ms. Emily Martinez – Director, Regional Economic Development
Co-lead, Regional Resilience Partnership
Coastal Bend Council of Governments**

HARTE RESEARCH

Regional Resilience Partnership of the South Texas Coastal Bend

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING
ESTABLISHING A JOINT PROJECT BETWEEN
TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY-CORPUS CHRISTI
AND
COASTAL BEND COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
Agreement No. 1

I. PARTIES

This Memorandum of Understanding ("Agreement") is entered into by Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi ("TAMUCC"), represented herein by Dr. Kelly Quintanilla in her capacity of President, and the Coastal Bend Council of Governments (CBCOG), represented herein by Mr. John Buckner, in his capacity of Executive Director, with the purpose of setting forth the general framework for specific projects in the future in matters related with: Disaster Resilience and Mitigation of the Texas Coastal Bend and Investigation and the Disclosure thereof, subject to the following considerations, recitals and clauses:

RECITALS

II. TAMUCC HEREBY DECLARES THROUGH ITS AGENT:

- (1) That it is a university managed by a Board of Regents of The Texas A&M University System (the "A&M System"), and that it has legal capacity to engage in, and be engaged under the terms of the policies of the A&M System and the laws of the State of Texas.
- (2) That its purpose is supporting investigation and education activities as well as the disclosure thereof, which includes long term development in the sustainable use and preservation of the Gulf of Mexico and resilience building of Gulf coastal communities, specifically through the Harte Research Institute for Gulf of Mexico Studies.
- (3) That the TAMUCC President has the legal capacity to execute this Agreement and additional agreements with other institutions according to the laws of the State of Texas and the policies of the A&M System.
- (4) That its legal domicile is located at Texas A&M University Corpus Christi, 6300 Ocean Drive, Corpus Christi, Texas 78412, United States of America, telephone +1(361) 825-2000.

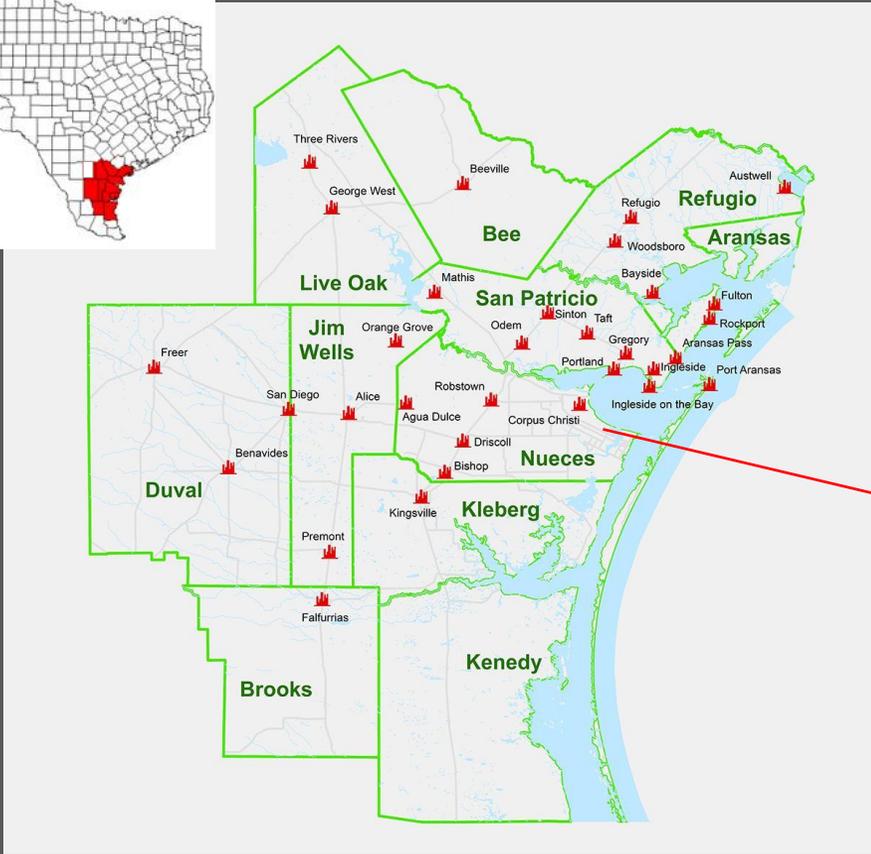


RRP builds community capacity to mitigate disaster risk

- RRP Listserv for training and funding announcements
- Monthly training sessions (local officials, small business, NGOs, students)
- Strategic resilience assessment locally and across counties
- Direct technical support and guidance on building and implementing recovery, resilience and risk mitigation
- Technical assistance in data and GIS

Future Efforts

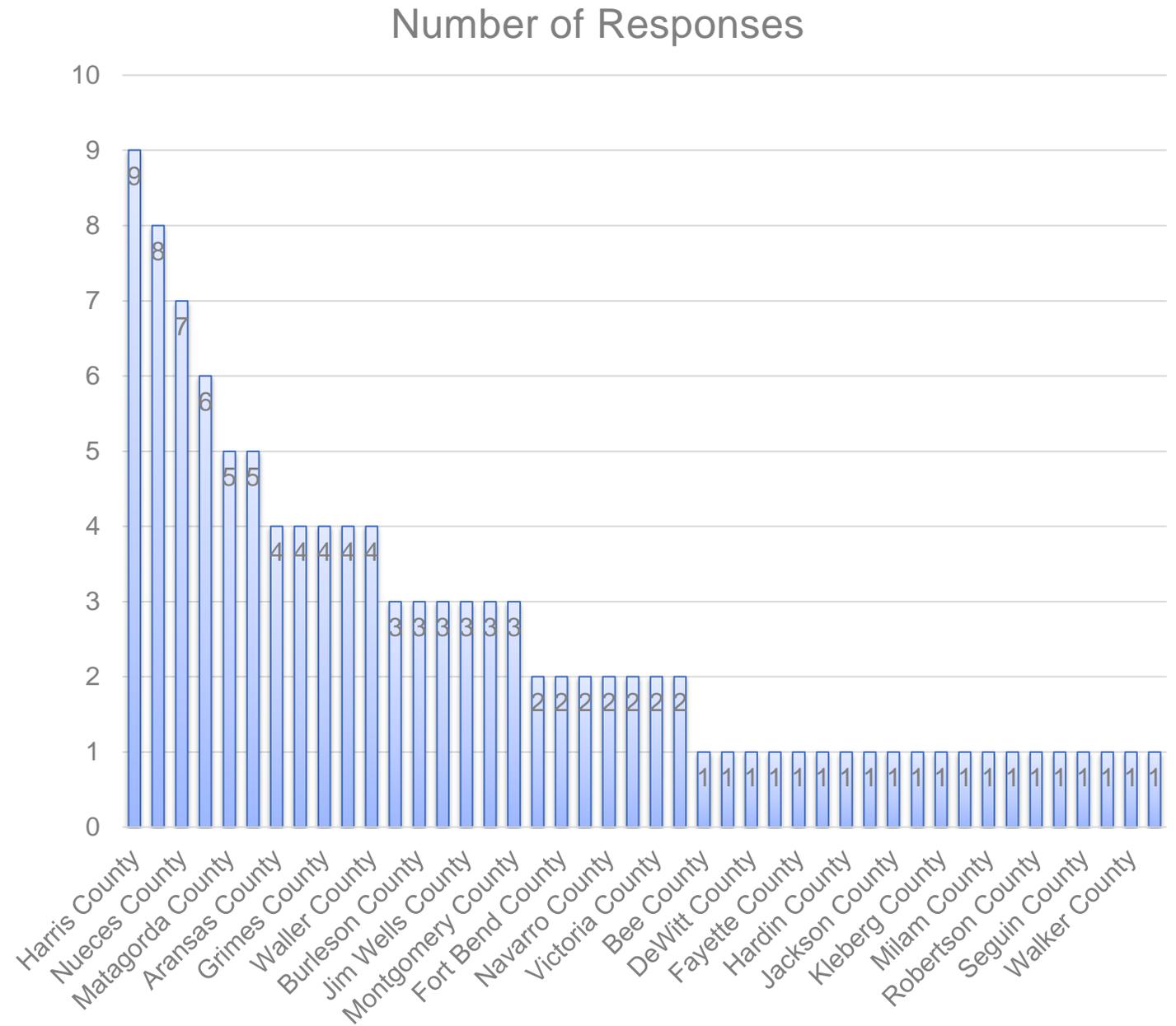
- Develop funding strategies, assist with grants applications and administration

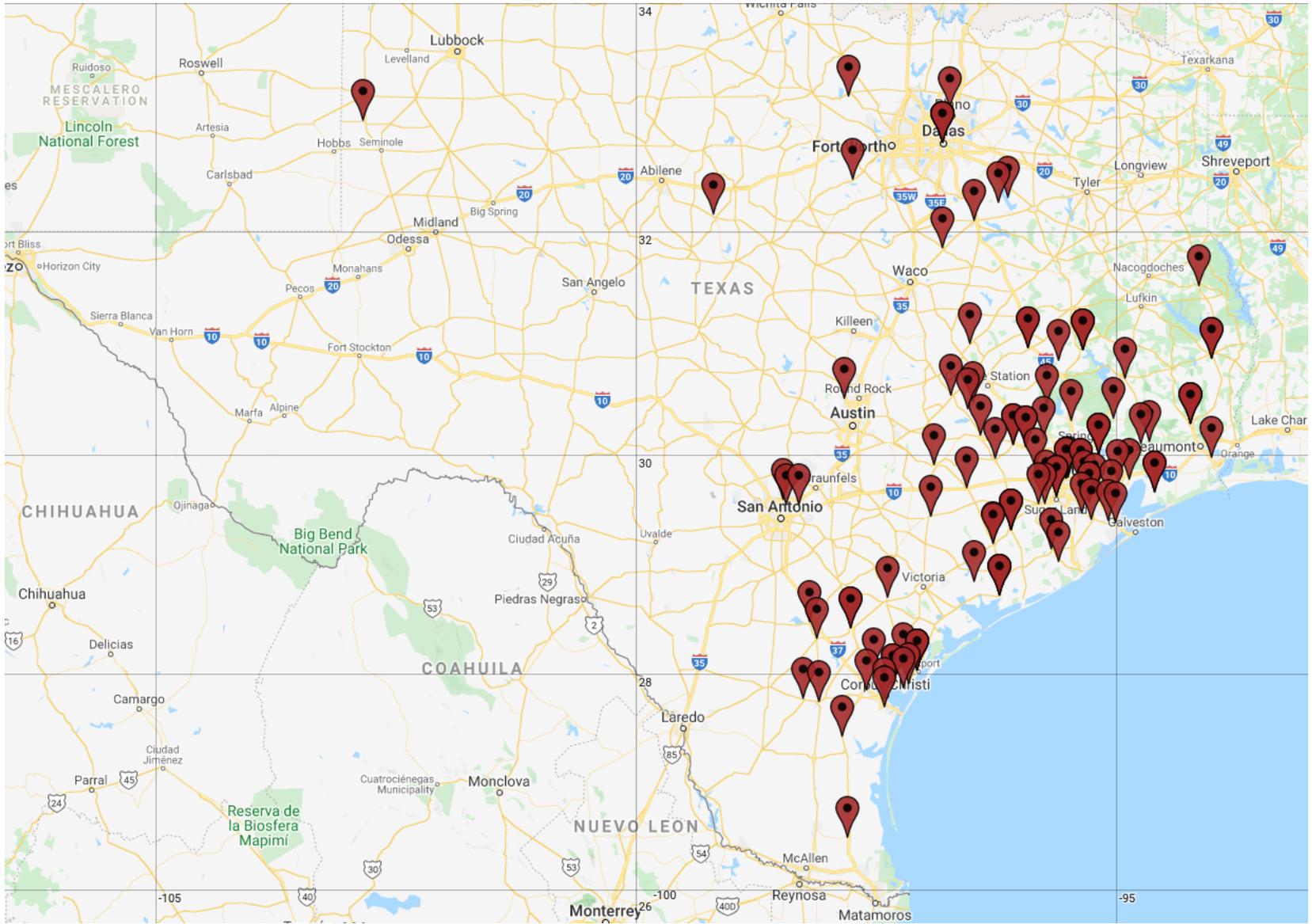


South Texas
Coastal Bend

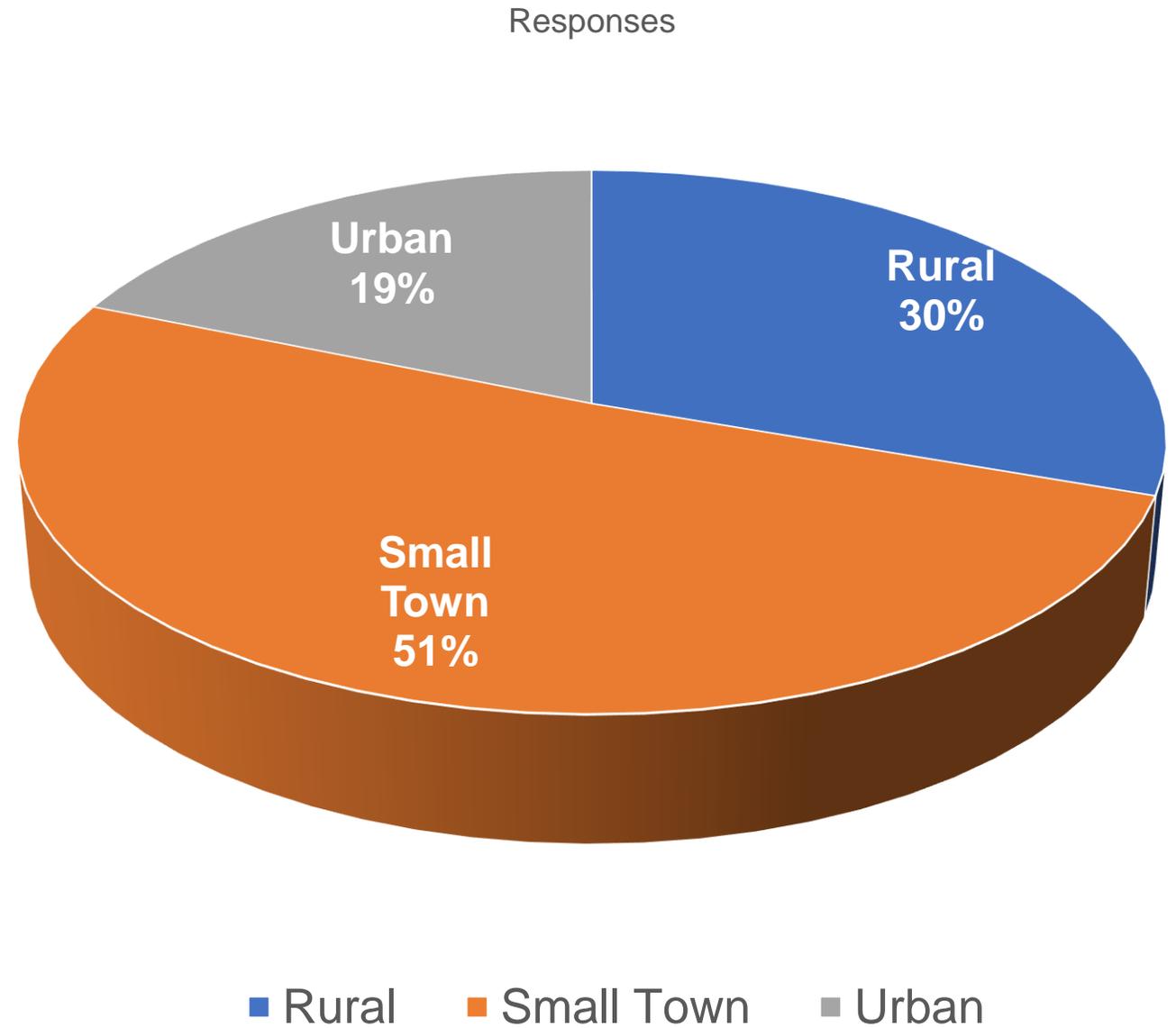
Harte Research Institute for Gulf of Mexico Studies
TAMUCC – the *Island University*

Response by County

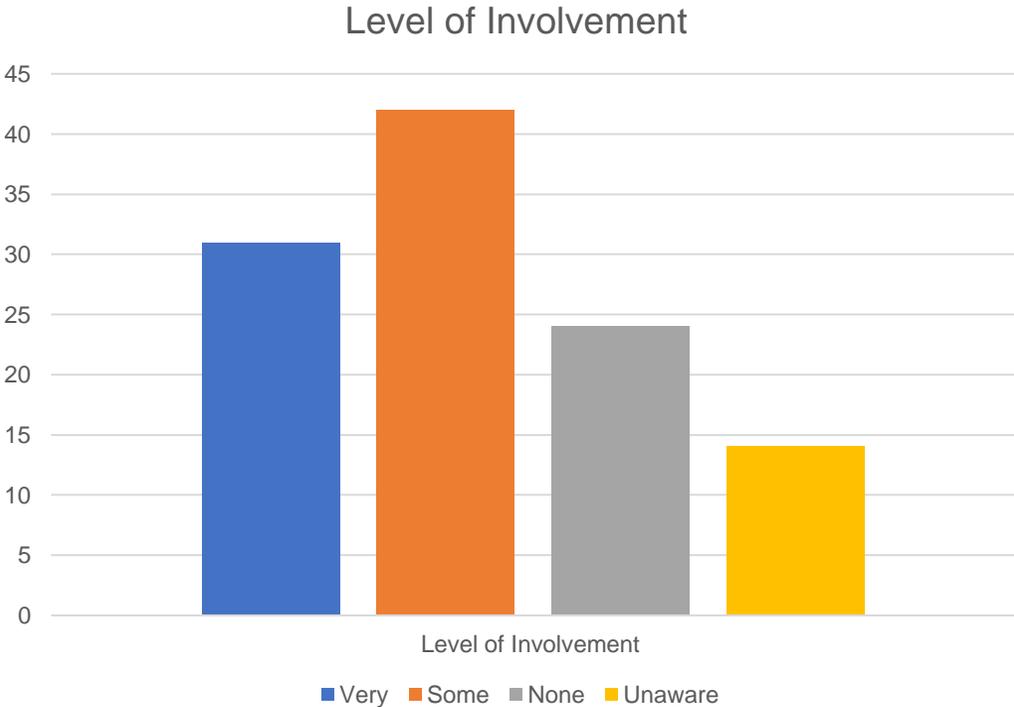
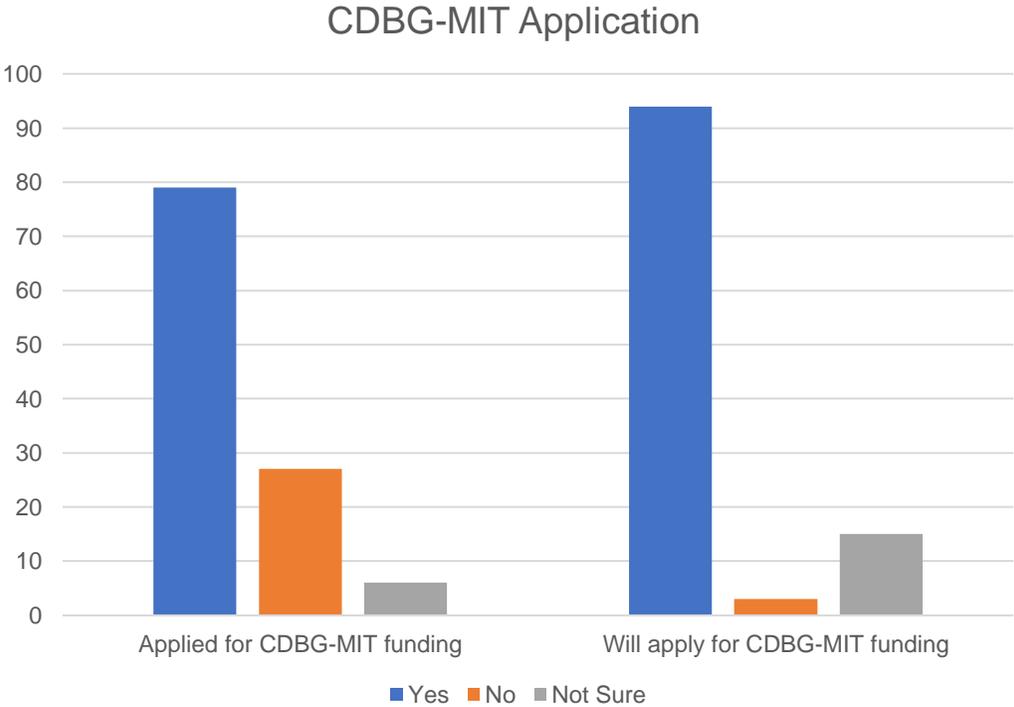




Response by Area Type

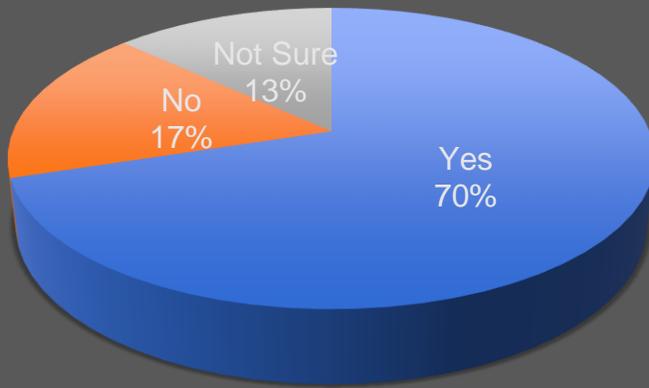


Involvement with CDBG-MIT



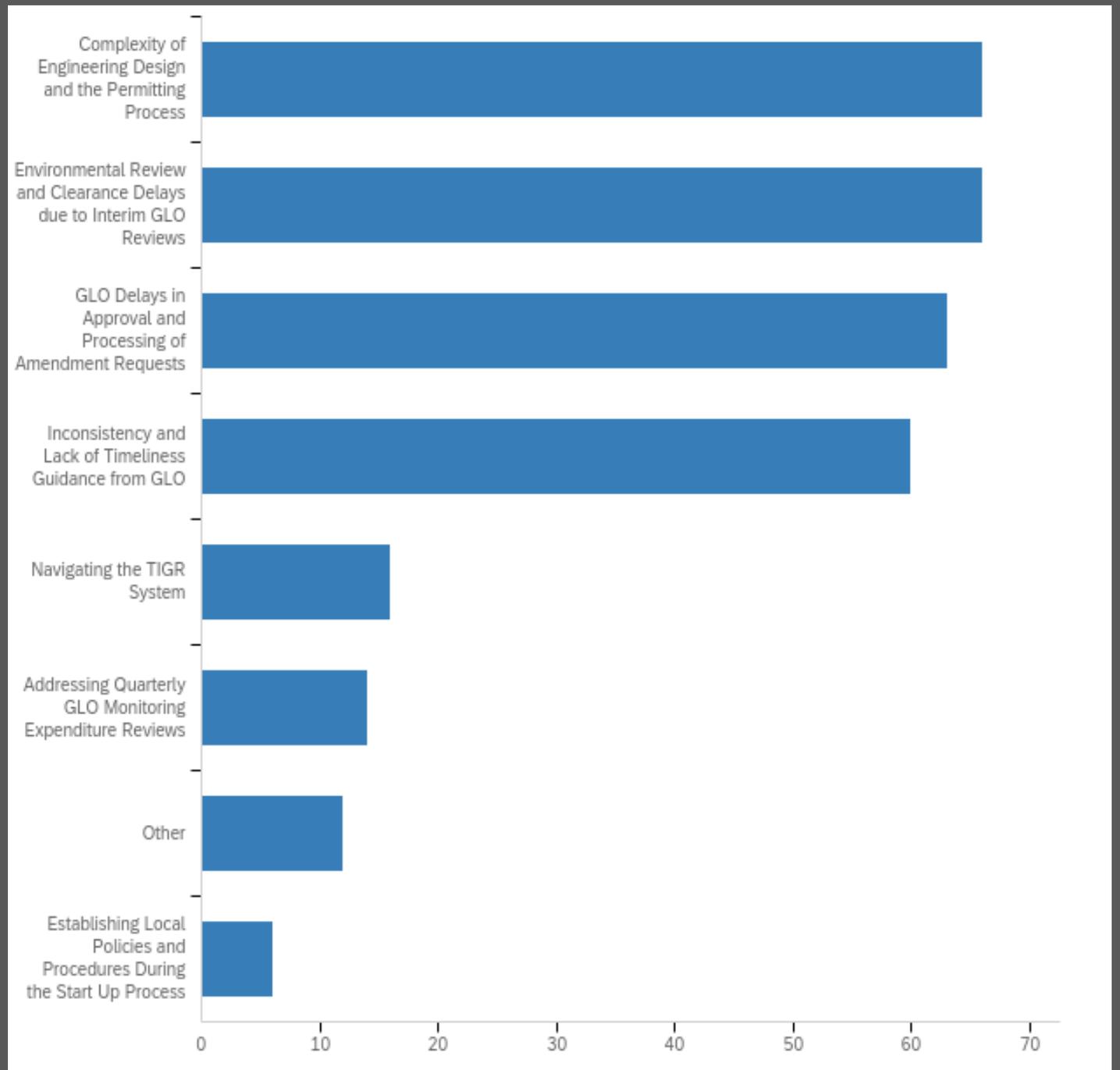
Timeline Challenges

Difficulty meeting GLO contract benchmarks



■ Yes ■ No ■ Not Sure

N=107





**Timeline
Challenges:
Other**

Timeline Challenges-Other

Arbitrarily changing contact emails for notices from GLO

Attempting to navigate grant processes during a pandemic while dealing with multiple major disasters at the same time

Covid- Hurricanes-Floods

Delays in sole source requests

Equipment delivery delays

Expenditures and construction draws

GLO delays in approval of local buy-in guidelines

Retaining professional services

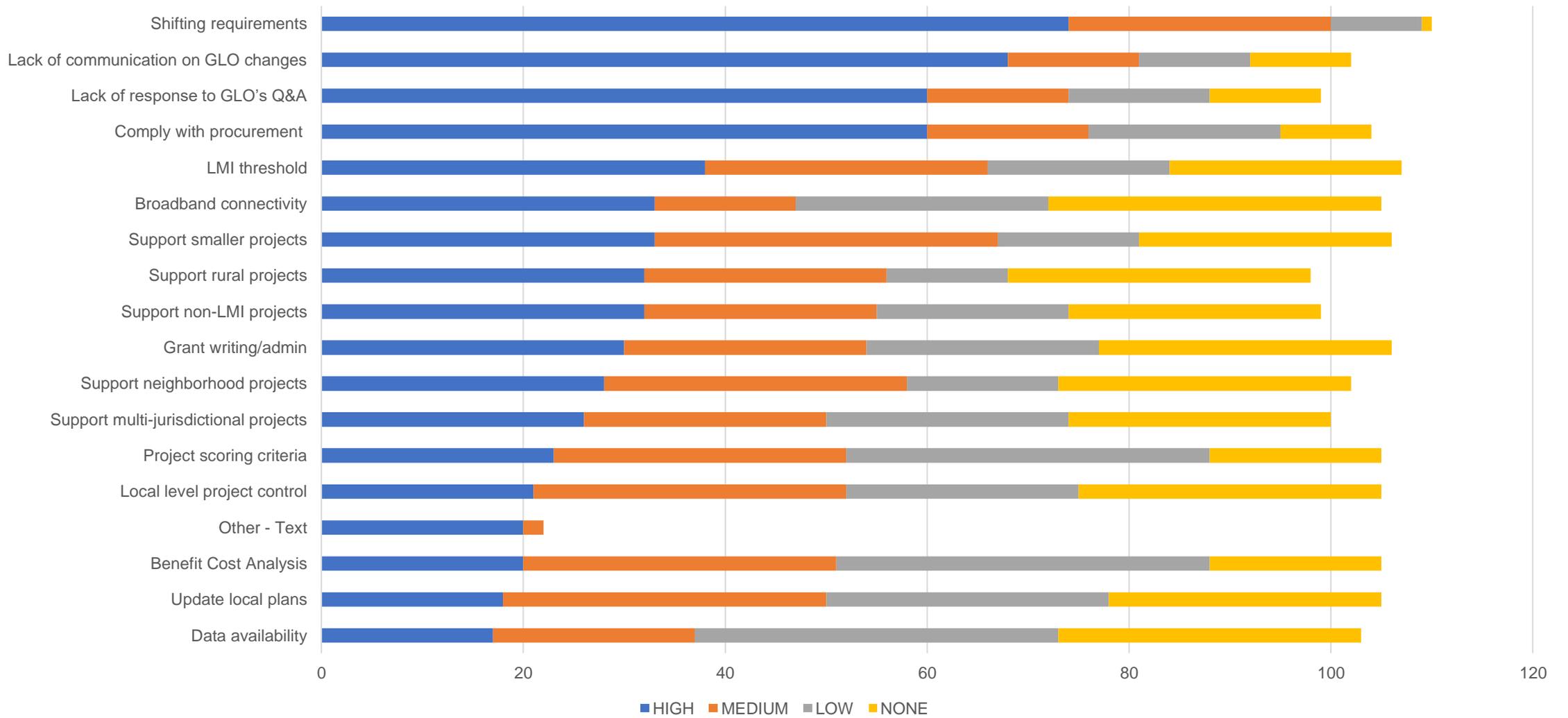
We also have not received notices from MQA in a timely manner

Weather and COVID-19

CDBG Priority Challenges

PRIORITY	HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW	NONE
Shifting requirements	74	26	9	1
Lack of communication on GLO changes	68	13	11	10
Comply with procurement	60	16	19	9
Lack of response to GLO's Q&A	60	14	14	11
LMI threshold	38	28	18	23
Support smaller projects	33	34	14	25
Broadband connectivity	33	14	25	33
Support non-LMI projects	32	23	19	25
Support rural projects	32	24	12	30
Grant writing/admin	30	24	23	29
Support neighborhood projects	28	30	15	29
Support multi-jurisdictional projects	26	24	24	26
Project scoring criteria	23	29	36	17
Local level project control	21	31	23	30
Benefit Cost Analysis	20	31	37	17
Update local plans	18	32	28	27
Data availability	17	20	36	30

PRIORITY CHALLENGES



Other Challenges Included

Other Priority Challenge	Priority
Better Communication and Perhaps Training Videos on Website/Forms	Medium
Changes to format in middle of application process	High
City match	High
Continued feedback and responsiveness	High
Delayed environmental process	High
Duplication of local policies and micromanaging projects	High
Email blast for forms for policy changes	High
Emails for updated policy and form changes	High
Lack of quick response to changes in scopes and/or timelines	High
Local match	High
Need more training videos and webinars	Medium
Prioritize lowest income/housing resilience	High
Sewer Plant, Curbs, Drainage, Water System Upgrades	High
The heavily weighted allocation of funds to rural areas	High
TIGR, Timely expenditure reports	High
Time Requirements	High
Training video suggestions email notices policy changes	High
Training Videos & Email Updates	High
Training videos and email blasts for form changes policy changes new implementation manual uploaded	High
Training videos for the Tiger System	High
Training Videos for the TIGR	High
Training Videos/how to fill out forms/email blasts for policy changes/implementation manual updates	High



Challenge Descriptions (sampling)

Comply with procurement processes for professional services: Guidance is complex and unclear especially if GLO just points to the federal regulations. This leaves us guessing what will meet the requirements. GLO's advice is too vague or too late to help since we need to procure early in the application process.

Inconsistency, Lack of Guidance: Forms on the GLO website often lack useful or complete instructions leaving us to use our own judgement. GLO provides its feedback as a monitoring finding months or years later. This also causes inconsistent interpretations by GLO GMs in file reviews. Lack of consistent, clearly written guidance forces GLO GMs to rely on their own interpretations of program policies, often by relying on trial-and-error or personal preference.

Shifting Federal/GLO requirements: Requirements change frequently and are not always communicated effectively – GLO does not provide Policy Issuances or form-update notifications so we find out when it is rejected.

Lack of Response to application questions and submitted to GLO: When written or verbal guidance is sought, questions go a long time unanswered if at all, creating delays in application preparation and/or project delivery.

Lack of communication on changes to GLO requirements and programs: Grantees work closely with their GLO GMs but then get monitoring findings for issues like timely expenditure that the GMs have not warned about and seem to be unaware of since they come from another GLO division.

Complexity of Engineering Design and the Permitting Process: Usually a multi-month process, longer for complicated projects like MIT, especially if consultation with the Corps of Engineers or other agency is required. GLO could consider that engineering design and environmental review takes many months when determining timeliness of expenditures.

Environmental Review: This takes at least three months even for the simplest projects and longer for complex ones, especially if a Phase I ESA, archaeological study or historic consultation is required. A lack of clear guidance and the GLO's multi-step review process also creates delays.

GLO delays in approval and processing of amendment requests: Amendments can take months and halt a project because the risk of proceeding without approval is too great. Faster turn-around will improve outcomes.

We want to hear
from you!

*Contact us to
partner for
resilience*

RRP@tamucc.edu

Thank you!



RRP provides strategic direction and capacity building to the Coastal Bend, Texas and the Gulf. The three pillars include:

- I. Partnerships & Networks for Resilience - develop data-sharing and trust with communities
- II. Training & Data-Informed Actions - co-develop actionable strategies for resilience
- III. Implement Actions, Monitor & Update Actions – implement, monitor and update actions

CDBG MIT Survey Summary

The GLO Executive Leadership has reviewed the survey. We are coordinating with our leadership team a workgroup day to sift through each comment and work on the items that are within the GLO control and come up with actionable steps to make the appropriate changes.

Of the items we see require change from our federal partners and help from our local partners we will also note those and communicate those the respective parties.

There are themes that have emerged from the survey that the GLO has identified: procurement, timely expenditures, training, guidance (federal and state), requirements (federal and state), and website.

Prior to receiving the survey results the GLO was already working to improve: timely expenditure process, training, updating the implementation plan that outlines much of the requirements and guidance, and improving our website. The survey will now help guide these items. Things we could use help from will emerge from this such as, when we update our website, we would like to hear from the CAC: what do you use the website for, what is missing, what key words do you use to search within the GLO website so we can improve our indexing?



Timeline Challenges-Other
Arbitrarily changing contact emails for notices from GLO
Attempting to navigate grant processes during a pandemic while dealing with multiple major disasters at the same time
Covid- Hurricanes-Floods
Delays in sole source requests
Equipment delivery delays
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GLO delays in approval of local buy-in guidelines
Retaining professional services
We also have not received notices from MQA in a timely manner
Weather and COVID-19

For the timeline challenges the GLO can work on or is already working on: changing contact emails for notices, delays in communication/contracts/amendments, delays in guidance, delays in timely expenditures.

For the timeline changes that the GLO can relay to HUD and other federal partners: impact of multiple disasters including a pandemic on the overall process and timeline.

What the local jurisdictions can help with: when there are equipment delivery delays or the milestones in contracts are not achievable note such with your associated GLO Grant Manager as soon as possible so the relevant updates can be made to the case file and MQA can be aware as that may impact timely expenditures.

**CDBG
Priority
Challenges**

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Shifting requirements	74	26	9	1
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As it relates to CDBG-MIT Priority Challenges the GLO can assist with: GLO shifting requirements (though most of that lies with the federal requirements that shift), lack of communication on GLO changes and responses overall, better training for procurement so that there are less compliance issues, review of scoring criteria for future competitions, we have funding available through MIT funds to help with local Hazard Mitigation Plans that program is currently getting ready to launch.

As it relates to things we can communicate to our federal partners: LMI threshold, non-LMI project concerns, BCA.

As it relates to the things we can use help from our CAC and local partners: help us identify how to balance the needs of urban versus rural, what data improvements are needed, what scoring criteria changes are needed.