

CONNECT Program

Spring 2020 Project Cohort Report

The CONNECT Program aims to increase data, measurement and evaluation capacity within Central Texas organizations. It matches organizations' projects with graduate students at the University of Texas at Austin looking for applied and practical experience in the social and/or public sector.

This project cohort was CONNECT's largest yet - consisting of both new and returning organizations, as well as graduate students! Projects were largely focused in three areas - measurement strategy, measurement tool development, and data analysis. For a closer look at the challenges addressed and deliverables produced by the Spring 2020 project cohort, visit: <https://rgkcenter.org/connect-project-library>.



29 community organizations



56 interested students



31 matches made



31 projects



100% match rate*



67 deliverables produced



\$50,000 student fellowships



8 returning organizations



100% student & organization satisfaction

"Our organization's world was turned upside during March and April of this year and we still walked away from this partnership with a valuable tool that will benefit our clients."

Jason Walters, Data Analyst, Goodwill Central Texas



* number of matches made divided by number of match possibilities

** a total of \$50,000 was issued in the form of fellowships to students working on projects

Lessons Learned:

With the onset of COVID-19, we learned that the CONNECT program can operate via an entirely remote model. This will allow CONNECT to work with organizations beyond Central Texas in future cohorts. We also learned how to leverage the network CONNECT has built. In response to COVID-19, organizations began to approach us with time-sensitive projects that did not fit into our semester-based model. We were able to quickly identify past and current CONNECT Fellows interested in and capable of completing these special projects and put them in touch with the organizations in less than three weeks. Lastly, we learned that a reasonable ratio of projects to an FTE manager is roughly 20 : 1. As we enter into CONNECT's next phase, we will focus on ways to make the internal operations more efficient and the project support more advanced so that we can increase both the quantity and the technical variety of future projects.



"I participated in this program at the same time that I started to go on the job market and I found my experience crucial for securing other opportunities. I don't think that I could have had the same opportunities for my career if I had not done the CONNECT program."

Mary Abbe Roe,
CONNECT Fellow

100%

of students reported

their CONNECT experience as equaling, exceeding, or far exceeding their expectations

100%

of organizations reported

their CONNECT experience as very or extremely useful

87%

of organizations reported

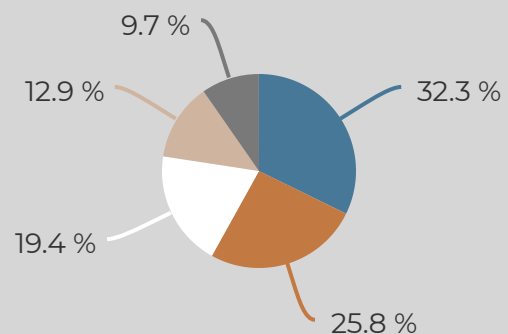
the time and resources required of them during their CONNECT experience as about right

"This was not only a great experience for my organization, but an amazing exercise for me as a leader. We are finally able to capture relevant data so we can provide better services."

Lourdes Zuniga, Executive Director, Financial Literacy Coalition of Central Texas



Sectors engaging with CONNECT



Education Social & Legal Services Health Services
Other Environmental Advocacy