



December 17, 2025

Hon. Brent Hilliard
Rains County Judge
167 E Quitman St Ste 102
Emory, TX 75440

RE: County Best Practices Awards Program

Dear Judge Hilliard:

I hope you are doing well. I am pleased to let you know that the Texas Association of Counties will begin accepting nominations for its 2026 County Best Practices Awards Program on Jan. 5.

The 2026 nomination form is enclosed. We invite you and your colleagues to share innovative and effective initiatives developed by Rains County over the past 24 months.

The nomination deadline is March 31. TAC is especially interested in county efforts that:

- Offer creative solutions to common challenges faced by local governments.
- Have led to policy, program or legislative changes that improve county operations.
- Strengthen the public's understanding of county government and the value of county services.

We believe Rains County has important achievements to highlight, and we encourage you to submit a nomination. Please also extend this invitation to all elected and appointed officials in your county.

You can find more information, including a digital nomination form and lists of past award recipients, at www.county.org/bestpractices.

Thank you for your leadership. We look forward to your participation in our 2026 County Best Practices Awards Program and wish you a successful year ahead.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Susan M Redford".

Susan M. Redford
Executive Director

TEXAS ASSOCIATION of COUNTIES

2026 COUNTY BEST PRACTICES AWARDS PROGRAM

What is a Best Practices Program?

The County Best Practices Awards Program recognizes the efforts of county leaders in creating new, efficient and effective solutions to challenges facing local governments. These solutions include innovative programs, increased delivery of services and superior achievements in all areas of county operations. Examples include financial and general management, public safety and corrections, health and human services, technology, community improvements and other county-related responsibilities.

Goals of the County Best Practices Program

- Recognize counties for innovation.
- Inspire county leaders to develop improved programs.
- Create an avenue for promoting replicable and proven solutions to common county concerns.

Nominating a Program

To be considered for a County Best Practices Award, please fill out the official nomination form and complete a detailed narrative about the program. Write your narrative so that a general audience can understand what the program is about. You are encouraged to include any additional information (photographs, exhibits, news media coverage, etc.) that helps describe the program.

Recognition of Award Recipients

Recognition of award recipients will include:

- Presentation of Best Practices Award in your county.
- News release for your local media.
- Recognition in *County* magazine, and on the TAC website and TAC social media.

Eligibility Criteria and Standards

The program should demonstrate **Superior Innovation**, **Outstanding Achievement** and/or **Exceptional Delivery of Service**.

Superior Innovation means the program demonstrates a significant level of innovation or streamlining of procedures that benefit the county and/or the public; a new method of operation or solution to a problem; or a measurable and significant increase in productivity, customer service and/or cost savings for the county.

Outstanding Achievement means a program or action that results in a landmark policy, program or legislative change in support of county operations; outstanding county leadership in fostering partnerships in the community and other levels of government to maximize resources; or a one-time heroic or extraordinary performance that produces tremendous benefits for the county and/or the public.

Exceptional Delivery of Service means a program that demonstrates the implementation of a process or program that significantly improves public access and/or use of a county service, is not necessarily high-tech or expensive and focuses on providing services beyond established performance standards.

Guidelines

- The program should have been established within the previous 24 months.
- The program should be in full operation by the submission deadline.
- The program should have measurable or demonstrable results.
- The program should be replicable or scalable to benefit other counties.
- County officials or staff in their official capacities must have played a leadership role in development of the program.
- The program should not be a substantial replication of a previous Best Practices Award recipient.

TEXAS ASSOCIATION of COUNTIES

2026 COUNTY BEST PRACTICES AWARDS PROGRAM

Nomination Form

1. Complete this entry form and attach it to the narrative. The narrative should address the Eligibility Criteria and Standards as described on page 2. Narratives should not be longer than six pages.
2. Forms may be emailed to BestPractices@county.org or mailed to Texas Association of Counties, Attn: Best Practices, 1210 San Antonio St., Austin, TX 78701.
3. The narrative description of a County Best Practices Awards program should respond to the following:
 - a. The challenge or concern that prompted the development of the program/project.
 - b. The solution and steps taken to address the problem and an explanation of the objectives and how they were met.
 - c. The results and how the program affected the community and/or county operations.
 - d. The summary, a 100-word description that includes elements of the challenge, solution and results.
4. The deadline for nominations is **March 31, 2026**.

I. Program Information

County _____

Program title _____

Official/individual playing significant role _____

Actual implementation date _____

II. Authorization

Please check this box to approve the online posting of your winning nomination form.
By checking this box, I authorize TAC to use, exhibit, display, broadcast and distribute in any form the materials I have submitted for the County Best Practices Awards Program.

III. Contact Information *(person to whom correspondence should be sent)*

Name _____ Title _____

Department _____

Address _____

City/State/ZIP _____

Telephone _____ Fax _____

Email _____

IV. Signature of the Elected Official or Auditor

Name _____

Title _____

Signature _____



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