



ETCOG STRATEGIC AGENDA

Utilize this Strategic Agenda to check the progress of the key objectives across the organization for FY 2026 & beyond.

SHORT-TERM INITIATIVES: 12-18 MONTHS

ESTABLISH A REGIONAL EMPLOYER HEALTH INSURANCE CONSORTIUM

Goal: To offer employee health insurance benefits more affordably and efficiently by regional volume purchase through a locally governed consortium.

Objective: Pending successful completion of an employer-by-employer feasibility analysis, establish a regional employer consortium designed to give dues-paying members of ETCOG better command and control of cost while maintaining flexibility in individual plan design. Minimum participation threshold: 1,000 total employees.

Team Leads: David Cleveland and Brandy Brannon

Next Milestone: Identify ETCOG Members who wish to participate in the feasibility analysis step

Estimated Completion: Short Term

☐ Concept ☒ In Progress ☐ Achieved

EAST TEXAS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT BYLAWS REVISION

Goal: Position ETEDD Board to own and manage new workforce center buildings as they come online

Objective: Ensure that our Workforce Centers in our three largest cities are publicly owned assets

Team Leads: David Cleveland, Doug Shryock, and Lisa Smith

Next Milestone: Revive our ETEDD Board. Ask the County Judges and ETCOG Executive Committee to meet to appoint a new ETEDD Board and empower the board to adopt new by-laws that achieve an arms-length business distance from ETCOG.

Estimated Completion: Short Term (FY 2026)

☒ Concept ☐ In Progress ☐ Achieved

SUPPORT RUSK & HARRISON COUNTY 9-1-1 DISTRICT TRANSITION

Goal: Support ETCOG member counties to strengthen their 9-1-1 systems.

Objective: Harrison and Rusk County are currently part of the Texas Eastern 9-1-1 District. They wish to join our regional 9-1-1 program and then eventually the new Piney Woods 9-1-1 District when it is formed.

Team Leads: David Cleveland and Stephanie Heffner

Next Milestone: Communicate the transition plan to all affected cities.

Estimated Completion: Short Term

☐ Concept ☒ In Progress ☐ Achieved

ESTABLISH THE VETERANS DIRECTED CARE PROGRAM

Goal: Establish a Veterans Directed Care (VDC) program to empower veterans to live independently by managing their own care while expanding regional support for veterans, enhancing service coordination, and bringing additional federal funding into the community.

Objective: Enhance existing agency veteran and senior programs to include an East Texas VDC. VDC is modeled after self-directed programs, a method of providing long-term services and support in which program clients help to determine the services they receive. This includes hiring their own workers and purchasing goods and services from a pre-determined budget and spending plan. The individual receiving the services, or their authorized representative, is the employer of the workers providing services to them.

Team Leads: Adrian Cornejo, David Scott, and the AAA Team

Next Milestone: Waiting for FMS Approval and CTCOG Review

Estimated Completion: Short Term

☐ Concept ☐ In Progress ☒ Achieved

DEVELOP AN EMERGENCY OPERATIONS PLAN

Goal: To develop an emergency operations plan to ensure ETCOG can respond effectively to crises, protect staff and customers, maintain essential services, and recover quickly from disruptions.

Objective: Confer CTCOG and TARC to identify best practice example plans to learn from. Establish a mutual aid agreement with another COG so ETCOG can quickly stand up a remote operation under emergency conditions.

Team Lead: David Cleveland

Next Milestone: Confer with CTCOG ED and with TARC

Estimated Completion: Short Term

☒ Concept ☐ In Progress ☐ Achieved

REDUCE ETCOG INDIRECT RATE

Goal: To examine all means and methods of reducing ETCOG's Indirect Cost Rate.

Objective: Become one of the leaders in the state regarding indirect cost rate containment.

Team Lead: Wendi Horst, David Cleveland & Director's Team

Next Milestone: Begin Review of Indirect Cost Methodology and look for effective methods of cost rate reduction without impairing critical services.

Estimated Completion: Short Term

☐ Concept ☒ In Progress ☐ Achieved

ESTABLISH EAST TEXAS REGIONAL WATER ADVISORY BOARD

Goal: East Texas' water supply is a critical resource for our cities, counties, businesses, and citizens. The purpose of the Advisory Board is to strategically protect and manage our water for the benefit of current and future generations. Without water, there is no life.

Objective: Working with the CEO Board, determine the membership and structure of the Advisory Board.

Team Lead: David Cleveland and David Scott

Next Milestone: Follow-up Meeting with Judge LaFleur

Estimated Completion: Short Term

☐ Concept ☒ In Progress ☐ Achieved

SUPPORT/HELP ETCOG JURISDICTIONS WITH THE APPROPRIATE APPLICATION/USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Goal: Research Government AI Platforms and Training for ETCOG Use. Then Offer AI Solutions to ETCOG Jurisdictions.

Objective: Engage the North Carolina Council of Governments & Evaluate their AI Platform for Possible Adoption & Use.

Team Lead: David Scott and Directors' Team

Next Milestone: Enter AI Training Agreement

Estimated Completion: Short Term

☐ Concept ☒ In Progress ☐ Achieved

INVESTIGATE THE POSSIBILITY OF CREATING A 501(c)(3) FOR THE AREA AGENCY ON AGING & REGIONAL BROADBAND PROJECT FINANCE PURPOSES

Goal: Establish a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization to expand its flexibility, funding opportunities, and community impact.

Objective: To expand the AAA's and ETCOG's funding opportunities, enable tax-deductible donations, increase flexibility in service delivery, and strengthen partnerships and advocacy efforts.

Team Lead: Adrian Cornejo, David Scott, and David Cleveland

Next Milestone: Review Existing Models and Procure Contractor

Estimated Completion: Intermediate Term

☒ Concept ☐ In Progress ☐ Achieved

EAST TEXAS AIRPORT SHUTTLE

Goal: Explore the potential to expand regional mobility by providing East Texas residents with direct, reliable access to DFW International Airport.

Objective: With no international airport within the 14-county service area, this initiative aims to close a critical transportation gap, enhancing connectivity, supporting workforce and economic development, and improving the quality of life for residents across the region. First, we will have to assess the demand for transportation between East Texas and DFW International Airport through a comprehensive study that reviews all existing and potential options. The study will identify service gaps and ensure that any proposed solution complements, rather than duplicates, current offerings. If sufficient need is confirmed, the findings will guide the pursuit of funding and developing a coordinated, regional transportation solution.

Team Leads: Vince Huerta

Next Milestone: Request Coordinated Call Funding?

Estimated Completion: Short or Intermediate Term

☐ Concept ☒ In Progress ☐ Achieved

INTERMEDIATE-TERM INITIATIVES: 19-36 MONTHS

ESTABLISH PINEYWOODS 9-1-1 DISTRICT

Goal: To better serve ETCOG regional 9-1-1 needs by empowering local elected officials to set policy for the district, enhancing local control and decision-making while ensuring local control over the full allocation of 9-1-1 fees.

Objective: To exit the State program and complete district conversion by FY 2028.

Team Leads: David Cleveland and Stephanie Heffner

Next Milestone: Full Equipment Replacement in FY27 (9-1-26 – 8-31-27), then come out of the Statewide Program.

Estimated Completion: Intermediate Term

☐ Concept ☒ In Progress ☐ Achieved

BROADBAND IMPLEMENTATION FUNDING SOLUTIONS

Goal: To improve broadband infrastructure in East Texas.

Objective: To collaborate with our jurisdictions to secure project implementation funding for as many of our 65 approved county broadband action plans as possible. Explore additional innovative funding strategies.

Team Leads: David Scott

Next Milestone: Secure a Contractor to assist with the development of project funding strategies. Apply for as many grants as possible that align with our projects.

Estimated Completion: Intermediate to Long Term

☐ Concept ☒ In Progress ☐ Achieved

BUILD SIX MONTHS OF OPERATIONAL RESERVES

Goal: To ensure financial stability during funding delays or emergencies, maintain uninterrupted services, and plan strategically without immediate financial pressure.

Objective: Increase fee-for-service revenue

Team Leads: David Cleveland and Wendi Horst

Next Milestone: To Be Determined

Estimated Completion: To Be Determined

☐ Concept ☒ In Progress ☐ Achieved

COLLABORATE WITH THE CITY OF MARSHALL, HARRISON COUNTY, AND THE MARSHALL DEPOT BOARD TO SECURE THE LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY OF THE MARSHALL TRAIN DEPOT AND THE I-20 CORRIDOR

Goal: To ensure that the Marshall Train Depot remains a viable regional transportation asset.

Objective: Secure Community Buy-In for the Project and ensure the Depot becomes financially independent

Team Lead: David Scott

Next Milestone: Secure Grant Funding for a Strategic Plan

Estimated Completion: Short and Intermediate Term

☐ Concept ☒ In Progress ☐ Achieved

ENHANCE AND GROW COGWORKS REGIONAL PURCHASING COOPERATIVE

Goal: ETCOG is working to enhance and grow the COGWORKS Regional Purchasing Cooperative. The initiative is intended to strengthen procurement options and deliver value to participating governments through regional purchasing opportunities.

Objective: Secure Current Vendor Fees

Team Lead: Wendi Horst

Next Milestone: RFP has been issued, and a vendor recommendation is to be brought to the Executive Committee in November 2025

Estimated Completion: Short and Intermediate Term

☒ Concept ☐ In Progress ☐ Achieved

ESTABLISH TEXAS RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE (REDI) PROGRAM

Goal: Develop a new state competitive grant program modeled after Oklahoma's Rural Economic Action Plan (REAP), administered by Texas' COGs, designed to help rural communities address critical infrastructure, economic development, and sustainability needs.

Objective: Update Program Research and Prepare Draft Legislation for the January 2027 Session.

Team Lead: David Scott and David Cleveland

Next Milestone: Review and Update Program Research

Estimated Completion: Intermediate Term

☐ Concept ☒ In Progress ☐ Achieved

LONG-TERM INITIATIVES: GREATER THAN 36 MONTHS

BUILD NEW LONGVIEW WORKFORCE CENTER

Goal: To build and own a new Workforce Solutions East Texas facility in Longview, Texas.

Objective: To transition from leasing to building and owning the future workforce center in one of our largest cities. ETCOG purchased 11.742 acres on HG Mosley in Longview (in two transactions in 2021 and 2024, respectively) for this project.

Team Leads: David Scott and Doug Shryock

Next Milestone: Complete Architectural Plans and Drawings, then pursue funding.

Estimated Completion: Long Term

☐ Concept ☒ In Progress ☐ Achieved

SEEK FUNDING FOR NEW MULTI-PURPOSE FACILITY

Goal: To build a multi-purpose facility on existing ETCOG property.

Objective: To have a facility to serve as a regional storm shelter, offering more expansive ETCOG and community meeting space, and meet facility needs for public safety and economic development programs.

Team Lead: David Scott

Next Milestone: Create and adopt architectural plans for construction

Estimated Completion: Long Term

☒ Concept ☐ In Progress ☐ Achieved

ESTABLISH A REGIONAL HOUSING PROGRAM

Goal: Investigate options to establish a best practice-driven regional housing program that leverages our members' activities and brings new solutions and financial housing resources into the East Texas region.

Objective: First Step: Resubmit the HUD Grant Application when the window reopens this fall. Second Step: Establish a Housing 501©3 so we can indirectly connect to the Federal Home Loan Bank Housing Program in Dallas

Team Lead: David Cleveland, David Scott, Adrian Cornejo

Next Milestone: Submit HUD Housing Grant Application

Estimated Completion: Short and Long Term

☒ Concept ☐ In Progress ☐ Achieved

RETIRE ETCOG BANK LOANS

Goal: To eliminate all agency debt.

Objective: We want ETCOG to be debt-free again!

Team Leads: David Cleveland and Wendi Horst & Directors Team

Next Milestone: Completion of AAA Office Renovations & Move

Estimated Completion: To be determined

☒ Concept ☐ In Progress ☐ Achieved

ESTABLISH A REGIONAL FUND TO SUPPORT FIRST RESPONDERS' EQUIPMENT NEEDS

Goal: First Responders' Needs are often delayed and are sometimes indefinitely because of a lack of sufficient financial resources. We aim to establish a regional funding mechanism that will enable ETCOG to supplement and/or secure additional funds to meet the critical equipment needs of our region's first responders.

Objective: Identify and take necessary steps to address unmet first responder needs.

Team Leads: David Cleveland, Wendi Horst, and Stephanie Heffner

Next Milestone: To be determined

Estimated Completion: Long Term

☒ Concept ☐ In Progress ☐ Achieved

ESTABLISH A REGIONAL TRANSIT COMPACT

Goal: To develop an agreement between Tyler Transit, Longview Transit, and ETCOG GoBus to plan together for the benefit of all East Texas Public Transit Riders. Also, the same partners would leverage our resources for mutual benefit to eliminate duplicates, improve transit services, and reduce costs. All of the above are to be accomplished while maintaining each partner's identity.

Objective: Transportation staff will continue to work diligently to build trust and partnership with each other

Team Lead: Vince Huerta & David Cleveland

Next Milestone: To be determined

Estimated Completion: Long Term

☒ Concept ☐ In Progress ☐ Achieved

COMPLETED INITIATIVES

PURCHASE MARSHALL WORKFORCE CENTER

Goal: To own the Workforce Solutions East Texas facility in Marshall, Texas.

Objective: To transition from leasing to owning the workforce center in one of our largest regional cities. ETCOG was offered the opportunity to purchase the facility from the Texas Workforce Commission.

Team Leads: David Cleveland, Doug Shryock, and Brandy Brannon

Next Milestone: Purchase completed in February 2025

☐ Concept ☐ In Progress ☒ Achieved