

## **Executive Summary**

### **Support for the Texas Faith Inclusion Network for People with Disabilities**

#### **Project Goal**

Establish the Texas Faith Inclusion Network for People with Disabilities and their families (TxFIND) as an entity that connects with and provides materials and/or technical assistance to organizations and individuals interested in promoting inclusion in faith communities.

The proposed project would address State Plan Objective 3.4: Work with others to provide information to at least 200 community organizations and/or businesses to support inclusion of people with developmental disabilities more fully by 9/30/2016.

#### **Proposed Funding Amount**

\$20,000 - \$75,000 per year for up to one project, depending upon the outcomes expected by TCDD. Please see “Project Description” below for more information

#### **Proposed Duration**

Up to two years

#### **Background**

The Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities currently provides funding for four “Inclusive Faith-Based Communities Symposium” grants that were developed to assist faith-based communities to better include people with developmental disabilities. Grantees were required to hold symposiums and provide technical assistance to help faith-based communities become more inclusive. Four grantee organizations - OneStar Foundation, West Central Texas Regional Foundation, Arc of Greater Tarrant County, and Jewish Family Services of Dallas – each received grants of up to \$75,000 per year for up to three years, beginning in 2012. All four grants will end by March of 2015. The organizations that received TCDD grants plan to continue their work to the extent that they are able.

While all grants had similar goals, they experienced varying degrees of success and encountered different barriers. One grantee had numerous setbacks due to a lack of support for technology-related issues and changes in key personnel. Another found few other organizations in the region that were interested in partnering and had to spend more time than expected on outreach activities. Attendance at the symposiums ranged from less than 50 at a symposium held the first year to 220 at a symposium in 2014. Three grantees noted an increase of approximately 50 percent in their attendance between their first symposium and the last.

All projects were able to hold at least two symposiums, as required by the Request for Proposals, and other smaller events, such as workshops on inclusive youth ministries and inclusive educational strategies. Presentations were given at the Diocese of Austin; the National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities annual conference; the 2014 Texas Transitions Conference; the State Independent Living Council conference in Corpus Christi; and a training for eight discharge planning staff at the Austin State Supported Living Center.

The projects also developed materials, some of which will continue to be of benefit after the projects end. Products created included a website; resource guides; brochures; promotional videos; and a toolkit available in English and Spanish.

During the last two years of the grants, TCDD staff provided support for the four grantees to meet, share resources, and collaborate. Additionally, a contractor was engaged to assist them in establishing a statewide inclusive faith network to support each other in their work. Staff from all four projects worked with other individuals, representatives from organizations not receiving grants, and the contractor to create TxFIND – a multi-faith statewide network that has the mission to link congregations, organizations, or individuals who wish to start and/or strengthen the inclusion and contributions of people with disabilities and their families in faith communities of their choice. TxFIND seeks to encourage inclusive faith supports that involve people with disabilities and their families in the full life of a congregation or faith community; they do not seek to develop new religious communities, to encourage people to change faith traditions, or to adopt a faith tradition.

TxFIND currently has a listserv supported by the Center for Disability Studies at UT-Austin and a Facebook page. The listserv has approximately 20 members, including both individuals and organizations.

Several other groups have expressed hope that TCDD would provide funding for similar projects to be conducted in other areas of the state, such as Houston and San Antonio. At least two of these groups have been invited to join TxFIND and have participated on TxFIND teleconferences. TCDD grantees have provided some limited technical assistance to individuals from these groups through TxFIND and with additional infrastructure could provide this type of support to other communities as well.

At the November 2014 Project Development Committee meeting, the Committee discussed possible “next steps” for TCDD’s four faith-based projects and expressed interest in providing a small amount of funding to enable these projects to develop infrastructure to support TxFIND’s growth. At that time, TCDD staff advised the Committee that TxFIND might be able to establish a sustainable organization with as little as \$20,000 per year. Since that time, staff have had further discussion with TxFIND members and have determined that developing the infrastructure needed to create an effective, wide-reaching sustainable network that supports individuals with disabilities and family members to take active roles would most likely require funding above this amount. Below are descriptions of outcomes that could be expected with funding up to \$20,000 per year, as was suggested in November 2014, and outcomes that could be expected with funding up to \$75,000 per year, as recommended by staff at this time.

### **Project Description**

One organization will guide and support other members to market TxFIND with the hope of at least doubling the current membership and to provide individuals and organizations with information related to developing inclusion in faith-based communities.

Funding of up to \$20,000 per year for up to two years should result in the following:

- Establish the Texas Faith Inclusion Network for People with Disabilities and their families (TxFIND) that connects organizations and individuals interested in promoting inclusion in faith communities.
  - Coordinate teleconferences for TxFIND members at least monthly throughout Year 1.
  - Reach out to faith networks, parent and self-advocacy groups, provider networks, community centers, clergy training programs, and others as determined by the membership to expand TxFIND to at least forty members by the end of Year 1.
  - Determine benefits of becoming a non-profit vs. being a part of an existing organization.
- Provide materials and technical assistance to organizations and individuals interested in promoting inclusion in faith communities.
  - Maintain a simple web presence that includes links to faith-based inclusion projects in Texas and resources already developed.
  - By the end of Year 2, identify at least four individuals, including at least one individual with a disability and one family member, willing to provide technical assistance.
  - By the end of Year 2, identify at least four individuals, including at least one individual with a disability and one family member, willing to speak about inclusion in faith communities at conferences and other events.
  - By the end of Year 2, provide information to at least four different organizations holding conferences or seminars to enable them to apply for TCDD Disability-Related Presentations Support stipends to support speakers on inclusion in faith-based communities.
  - Develop and implement a process for tracking training and technical assistance provided by TxFIND members.

Funding of up to \$75,000 per year for up to two years should result in the following:

- Establish the Texas Faith Inclusion Network for People with Disabilities and their families (TxFIND) that connects organizations and individuals interested in promoting inclusion in faith communities.
  - Coordinate teleconferences for TxFIND members at least monthly throughout Year 1.
  - Reach out to faith networks, parent and self-advocacy groups, provider networks, community centers, clergy training programs, and others as determined by the membership to expand TxFIND to at least 150 by the end of Year 2.
  - Determine benefits of becoming a non-profit vs. being a part of an existing organization.
  - Establish TxFind bylaws, organizational structure, and a Steering Committee.
  - Develop and implement ideas to generate funding, including a possible dues structures for individuals and organizations and fund-raising options.
  - Develop and distribute marketing materials to build awareness of TxFIND.
- Provide materials and/or technical assistance to organizations and individuals interested in promoting inclusion in faith communities.
  - Develop a brand and branded materials for outreach.
  - Maintain a simple web presence that includes links to faith-based inclusion projects in

Texas and resources.

- Research new resources and determine what resources might need to be developed.
- By the end of Year 2, identify and support at least six individuals, including at least one individual with a disability and one family member, willing to provide technical assistance.
- By the end of Year 2, identify and support at least six individuals, including at least one individual with a disability and one family member, willing to speak about inclusion in faith communities at conferences and other events.
- By the end of Year 2, provide information to at least six different organizations holding conferences or seminars to enable them to apply for TCDD Disability-Related Presentations Support stipends to support speakers on inclusion in faith-based communities.
- By the end of Year 2, provide technical assistance to at least three faith communities to support self-advocates to be leaders.
- Develop and implement a process for tracking training and technical assistance provided by TxFIND members.

### **Other Considerations**

The need for this project was identified by TCDD staff in collaboration with members of the TxFIND and members of the TxFIND provided significant input into the activities described in this Executive Summary. TCDD expects that an organization or organizations that is/are a member of TxFIND may apply to implement the project.

Funds for the project activity will be awarded through a competitive process.