



FTA Awards Nomination/Entry Form

Person who led this effort or project

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About your program, idea, or project

Name your program, idea, or project: Fiscal Notes Relaunch

What is the problem that you wanted to solve?

For nearly 50 years, Fiscal Notes, the flagship publication of the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts, has provided information, original research and balanced analysis on the Texas economy. Our goal was to modernize the publication, better aligning it with current best practices in journalism and developing a format and content more engaging to a broader audience.

The publication previously featured long-form (2,000-word) stories in print and a corresponding online format. Developing such stories required a huge effort and time commitment from the writers, editors, web and graphic designers, as well as an extensive group of reviewers across the agency. We wanted to shorten the writing, editing, design and review cycles and use new content types to share news about the Texas economy and our agency's initiatives.

Additionally, we were cognizant of the evolution from print to online news products that engage readers. Our traditional story lengths and formats did not match what currently existed in the vast majority of media. We wanted to expand the types of content we developed to engaging formats like infographics, listicles, photo essays and short feature stories. These expanded options would enable us to more nimbly respond to content requests from our executive team and to cover news events in more timely and accessible ways.

Finally, each team involved in the publication process (writing, editing, graphic and web design) worked in a siloed way. We wanted to create more opportunities for cross-team collaboration, holding brainstorming sessions on story ideas, images and the most effective ways to present information.

Who was involved in addressing the problem?

Writers, editors, web and graphic designers within the Comptroller's Communications and Information Services Division and writer/analysts in the Data Analysis and Transparency Division were involved in addressing the problem.

How did they go about finding a solution?

As Editorial Team members play the primary role in managing the publication process, a core group of employees closely examined workflows and timelines to identify pain points. To do this, they held a series of discussions with internal stakeholders, managers and the executive team. They examined web and email outreach analytics and collected anecdotal information concerning the writing and production of the publication.

Describe the outcome. What is the new idea, approach, program, or activity?

Fiscal Notes' webpages were completely redesigned with a new masthead and navigation. Stories now

can be easily identified by content type and a simple taxonomy. Links to republish content and to subscribe to the publication have been relocated to more prominent locations on the publication's landing page. The print issue is now published quarterly and comprises abridged versions of content that was previously published online. (Please see new and old screenshots of the Fiscal Notes homepage attached, as well as an issue of the relaunched print edition.)

What has changed since this was implemented? How have your operations improved? Include any data, analytics or metrics that would show the value of your program. Don't forget management advantages such as improved morale.

Our new, varied content types are shorter and easier to produce. As a result, we can more nimbly publish content and respond to news of the day, agency initiatives or requests from the executive team. Fiscal Notes has evolved from a publication of reference into a tool equipped to quickly communicate about a broad range of agency programs and priorities.

The updated format has injected new life into the publication. Writers, editors and web and graphic designers who produce content are excited about exploring new ways to present information and have enjoyed the new collaborative experience. Our cross-agency reviewers also appreciate that their editing process requires much less time.

Our audience is responding positively as well: media outlets are quoting our content and organizations outside the agency have approached us about covering their projects and initiatives.

Another measure of success is audience traffic to Fiscal Notes webpages. Comparing February through March 2023 to February through March 2024, there was a 22 percent increase in total number of pageviews and a 20 percent increase in number of visitors to content published during that timeframe. These increases have been in line with our goals and are attributable to a more frequent publication cycle, which was made possible by producing shorter content pieces serving as additional points of entry to the publication.

Is there any component of your program that makes it workable only in your state or city?

Another agency with a similar tax type or this kind of problem could adapt or adopt this idea.

Is this an in-house project, or did you partner with an outside vendor or service-provider?

100% in-house

Additional information or comments about your usage of outside vendors or service providers.

Not applicable.

What comes next – will you be adding to your program, rolling it out more widely, trying additional approaches?

We are closely monitoring the success of Fiscal Notes' new format as well as the popularity and communication value of individual new content types. We plan to monitor these metrics by measuring pageviews on our website, clicks and open rates from email marketing messages and responses to direct reader surveys. With those data in hand, collected continuously over the next year, we will refine our content strategy and respond accordingly, taking concrete steps to roll out the types of information that best connect with our readers.

Additional Optional Materials

Website/Documentation URL (Must be publicly accessible) <https://comptroller.texas.gov/economy/fiscal-notes/>

FISCAL NOTES
A REVIEW OF THE TEXAS ECONOMY

FN HOME INDUSTRY ECONOMICS GOVERNMENT INFRASTRUCTURE ABOUT/REPUBLISH **SUBSCRIBE**

From the Desk of Glenn Hegar
The Comptroller's perspective on economic issues.

FINANCIAL LITERACY FOR FAMILIES



ECONOMICS
Credit Scores: A number that can cost or save you money.



Welcome to the new *Fiscal Notes!* Look around and come back soon. There's a lot to look forward to.



GOVERNMENT
Enhancing Rural Law Enforcement in Texas

TRENDING

INFRASTRUCTURE
Infographic: Learn more about Texas' diversified energy portfolio.

INFRASTRUCTURE
Good for Texas Tour: Energy Edition

GOVERNMENT
Property Tax Cuts as Large as Texas

GOVERNMENT
Fighting a Fossil Fuels Boycott - Updated

GOVERNMENT
Fossils? Flowing Into Texas

Economy

FiscalNotes

Translation: 

A Review of the Texas Economy

Current Issue (PDF)

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER

Regular Session Wrap-Up of Texas' 88th Legislature

Putting Record-Breaking Revenue to Work for Texans

The 2024-25 budget cycle allowed lawmakers to focus on an array of issues facing everyday Texans. The 88th Legislature's Regular Session entered uncharted territory — marked by record revenues.



Property Tax Cuts as Large as Texas

Unprecedented Revenues Lead to Historic Property Tax Legislation

The Texas Legislature passed and voters approved a slew of adjustments to give property tax relief to homeowners: increased exemptions, reductions in school district tax rates and limitations on some appraised values.



FN-Q1-2024.pdf