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2010 Innovations Awards Application
Deadline: March 1, 2010

ID # (assigned by CSG): **10-S-16TX**

Please provide the following information, adding space as necessary:

State: **Texas**

Assign Program Category (applicant): **Public Information**

Presentation power point to accompany application was mailed via FED EX on 3/1/10.

1. Program Name
Claim it Texas – A New Approach to Unclaimed Property Outreach and Consumer Protection

2. Administering Agency
Comptroller of Public Accounts

3. Contact Person (Name and Title)
Anna Presley Burnham
Project Manager, Unclaimed Property Division

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8. Web site Address
www.claimitexas.org

9. Please provide a two-sentence description of the program.

The “Claim It Texas” outreach program pursued a four-point approach designed to get unclaimed property back in the hands of Texas citizens to whom it belongs. Our goals with the “Claim It Texas” Outreach Program are to inform the public of the ease in using www.ClaimItTexas.org, to search and generate claims and to increase the amount of unclaimed property returned to taxpayers.

10. How long has this program been operational (month and year)? Note: the program must be between 9 months and 5 years old on March 1, 2010 to be considered.

“Claim it Texas” outreach began on March 1, 2009.

11. Why was the program created? What problem[s] or issue[s] was it designed to address?

Comptroller Susan Combs is determined to make Texas government work better for the citizens it serves. She believes that her agency has a responsibility to Texans to continually improve the process of returning unclaimed property because it is a matter of doing what’s right for the property’s owners. Also, returning money to consumers throughout the state will help stimulate local Texas economies. Prior to her taking office, there was limited work being done to reach the estimated one in four Texans with unclaimed property. At that time, the state had over \$1.7 billion of unclaimed property, and more was coming in to the state than was going out. Also, there were many misconceptions about unclaimed property. A majority of Texans were unaware of unclaimed property or how they could find out if they had any. Further, those who did make claims often encountered a complicated and lengthy process of getting their money back.

“Claim It Texas” outreach established quantifiable targets, which included promoting www.ClaimItTexas.org, educating Texans on how to use the site and how to claim their money, creating awareness on how to prevent money from becoming unclaimed property and increasing the number of claims generated and paid. These targets would challenge the agency to use the most efficient and proactive means possible to improve the return of both current and previously reported unclaimed property.

12. Describe the specific activities and operations of the program in chronological order.

The first phase of the “Claim It Texas” Outreach Program was to hire two Outreach Specialists who would become the Unclaimed Property Outreach Division and create a strategic outreach campaign. In response to the high importance the Comptroller placed on this agency priority, the Unclaimed Property department was elevated to its own Division, with its management reporting directly to the Comptroller Executive staff.

As noted above, “Claim It Texas” Outreach created a four-point approach that consists of a grassroots component, broad marketing, improved claim generation and processing and a series of Comptroller town hall meetings. Generally the program was rolled out in the order below, but some initiatives were introduced and ran simultaneously.

GRASSROOTS COMPONENT:

- Identified opportunities to reach large numbers of Texas citizens in person at high traffic events ranging from job fairs, college football games, county fairs, expos and professional conferences.
- “Claim It Texas” Outreach staff shared information about the unclaimed property program with thousands of Texans during 43 search events throughout the state. These events, which include searching at town hall meetings, generated 1,825 claims totaling \$710,045.05 in the first year.

- Pursued partnerships with statewide organizations to promote Texas Unclaimed Property and www.ClaimItTexas.org through published newsletter/magazine articles and public service announcements.
- Launched a program to return unclaimed property owned by Texas Cities, Counties and Independent School Districts (ISDs). To date the program has returned more than \$2.4 million to over 699 to Texas cities, counties and ISDs.
- Partnered with three Texas college football teams to roll out a tailored campaign that included: “Claim It Texas” staff presence at on-site pre-game events, online information, radio interview, a texting campaign, signage at games and video commercials on the world’s largest HD video panel in Texas Cowboys Stadium.
- Collaborated with 10 regional library systems in Texas to share the “Claim It Texas” Outreach message with library personnel and to distribute informational material to patrons of 569 branch libraries. The pilot program will start with the South Texas Library system and the outreach will consist of informational kits and special library collateral including bookmarks and bags for checked-out library books.

MARKETING:

- Expanded reach through a statewide multi-media advertising campaign. The standard marketing efforts for unclaimed property in the past consisted of one annual newspaper publication insertion with a pre-empting radio campaign and half-page ads that ran in statewide Hispanic and African American community newspapers. The total campaign budget and costs for fiscal 2009 was \$808,391.73. The objective for fiscal 2010 was to continue to increase awareness, generate more claims, manage workload, reduce the number of dropped calls and decrease costs.
- Replaced the annual newspaper insertion with a more broad-based six- region insertion drop that consisted of 30 newspapers and started in October 2009 and ended in February 2010. This balanced the workload for agency staff, reduced costs, and proved more effective by generating 60 percent more claims.
- Community newspapers were reviewed for content and distribution in areas that had high amounts of unclaimed property when deciding on publications to use for this ad buy. The campaign included 16 Hispanic and 13 African-American community newspapers.
- “Claim it Texas” launched two radio campaigns, which included narration from the Comptroller, to promote www.ClaimItTexas.org as a one-stop online shop for citizens searching for their unclaimed property. The two radio campaigns combined generated 4,515 claims totaling over \$1.1 million.
- Following each radio campaign, an online banner campaign was run for two-weeks on a statewide level enhancing the message to “Find Your Fortune” at www.ClaimItTexas.org.
- The total marketing campaign for fiscal 2010 including newspaper inserts, half-page ads, radio and online marketing totaled \$652,147.48, a \$156,784.25 savings from the previous year. This is a true reflection of the expert marketing skills of the two new unclaimed property outreach specialists.

CLAIMS GENERATION AND PROCESSING

- Implemented major enhancements to www.ClaimItTexas.org that included a more intuitive search, online claims submission capabilities, mobile application accessibility and a function that allowed users to check claim status online.
- Created a link to the Comptroller's Match the Promise Fund, which enabled claimants to donate their approved unclaimed property to the non-profit that offers college scholarships.
- Added an offsite claims processing center that uses the Comptroller system and is managed by an outside consultant, trained by Comptroller staff and is scaleable to manage peak and valley claim workloads.
- Implemented an auto-review process to manage claims meeting certain criteria.
- Partnered with four state agencies to locate unclaimed property owners by matching names, addresses and SSN information with their databases.
- Employed a business intelligence tool to simplify and streamline access of unclaimed property data.
- Implemented an imaging infrastructure for claims processing, including a workflow tool that distributes and manages claims in queue overall.

Comptroller Town Hall Meetings:

- Held a series of unclaimed property meetings throughout Texas, hosted by local officials and presented by the Comptroller.
- Meetings consisted of a presentation by the Comptroller, highlighting the amount of unclaimed property in Texas as well as the dollar figures for the local county and city in which the meeting was hosted.
- Local properties were researched prior to the event for claim processing and approvals as well as previously submitted claims. Approved claimants were invited to be part of the meeting where they were presented with a "big check" and the traditional check.
- County and city officials were researched prior to the meeting to find out who may have personal accounts of unclaimed property to present checks at the meetings.
- The discussion of unclaimed property figures and check presentations was followed by an unclaimed property search for attendees.
- To date, the Comptroller has conducted 7 Town Hall meetings and has scheduled 6 to 8 more meetings for Spring 2010.
- Claims generated for the "big check" presentations have totaled over \$262,000.00

13. Why is the program a new and creative approach or method?

Texas and some other states have historically sponsored more passive outreach (e.g. fairs, statewide publication, Internet sites). "Claim It Texas" is proactive because it included:

- Adopting legislation to match the unclaimed property database against that of four other state agencies to obtain the most current addresses for owners possible.

- Publishing six regional publications over a span of five months, thereby spreading out the claims workload and actually resulting in 60 percent more claims generated.
- Utilizing Comptroller Combs' public appearances to return property to local business owners, individuals, public officials and non-profits organizations.
- Airing of radio and unclaimed property spots featuring Comptroller Combs in English and Spanish.
- Using social networking sites, such as Twitter, to raise public's attention to unclaimed property.
- Strategically partnered with university football teams to promote www.ClaimItTexas.org through university marketing venues.
- Deploying dedicated Outreach staff to dozens of events and celebrations around the state.
- Outsourcing the management of the Unclaimed Property Division to private sector unclaimed property professionals - this includes claim processing, address cleansing and address updating.

14. What were the program's start-up costs? (Provide details about specific purchases for this program, staffing needs and other financial expenditures, as well as existing materials, technology and staff already in place.)

The program's startup was funded through the normal course of the budget cycle and through the unclaimed property-handling fee. Approximately \$350,000 of this start-up cost was expended on one-time technological improvements.

15. What are the program's annual operational costs?

The program's annual operational costs are approximately \$1.85 million.

The \$1.85 million cost excludes the actual cost of the publication, which is included in the pre-existing Unclaimed Property Division budget. Additionally, a cost saving of \$156,784.25 was achieved when the Outreach Team published the newspaper inserts regionally instead of once statewide.

16. How is the program funded?

The outreach effort is funded through state general revenue allocated to the Comptroller's Office and other state funds dedicated to the unclaimed property program.

17. Did this program require the passage of legislation, executive order or regulations? If YES, please indicate the citation number.

Yes. Texas Senate Bill 1589 included the following provisions designed to help Texas locate owners more effectively:

- Mandated various reporting instructions requiring holders to complete due diligence, provide e-mail addresses and driver's license number.
- Required the Employees Retirement System, Teachers Retirement System, Texas Workforce Commission and Department of Public Safety state agencies to cross reference current database records against the Comptroller unclaimed property database owner records annually.

18. What equipment, technology and software are used to operate and administer this program?

The Unclaimed Property database is essential to manage all holder reporting, property, owner locate and claims processing functions of the program. The imaging and workflow programs manage claims documents and workflow. The business intelligence tool used is essential for reporting and analysis.

19. To the best of your knowledge, did this program originate in your state? If YES, please indicate the innovator's name, present address, telephone number and e-mail address.

Yes, the strategic unclaimed property program did originate in Texas under the leadership of Comptroller Susan Combs and was developed and implemented through an in-house team.

Comptroller Susan Combs
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512-936-7567

20. Are you aware of similar programs in other states? If YES, which ones and how does this program differ?

Many states use local events to publicize unclaimed property. Texas is the first state to contract with outside unclaimed property professionals to manage its program onsite with authority to implement program changes and accountability to senior Comptroller executive staff regarding all division activities and improvements.

Texas is also one of the first states to utilize mobile web applications to raise public awareness of the unclaimed property program.

21. Has the program been fully implemented? If NO, what actions remain to be taken?

The program has been fully implemented and proven successful based on metrics cited below. As a result, we intend to continue this innovative "Claim It Texas" Outreach Program indefinitely.

22. Briefly evaluate (pro and con) the program's effectiveness in addressing the defined problem[s] or issue[s]. Provide tangible examples.

To date in Fiscal 2010 (September 1 – August 31) the number of claims received metrics have increased 31 percent over the prior fiscal period. The numbers of claims paid have increased 30 percent over the prior fiscal period. The dollar amount of claims paid has increased 24 percent over the prior fiscal period.

Texas' unclaimed property outreach program is already gaining national attention from other state administrators and unclaimed property professionals. The Unclaimed Property Outreach Division, was asked to give a presentation about unclaimed property owner outreach at the National Association of State Treasurers (NAST) annual conference in May 2009.

23. How has the program grown and/or changed since its inception?

We quickly began to realize the results of our program through a greatly increased claims activity. Claims received increased 31 percent and claims paid increased by \$14.8 million over the same period in fiscal 2009. In response to the increased claims activity, the division implemented more efficient ways to process claims, including outsourcing the processing of certain types of claims, adding temporary staff, refining business processes and implementing workflow software.

24. What limitations or obstacles might other states expect to encounter if they attempt to adopt this program?

States attempting this need to insure that their claims processing mechanism is up to par and ready to handle the additional volume the outreach campaign provides. Additionally, to fund increased outreach and claims processing costs, states may consider imposing a handling fee on the processing of claims.



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2010 Innovations Awards Application Program Categories and Subcategories

Use these as guidelines to determine the appropriate Program Category for your state's submission and list that program category on page one of this application. Choose only one.

Infrastructure and Economic Development

- Business/Commerce
- Economic Development
- Transportation

Government Operations and Technology

- Administration
- Elections
- Information Systems
- Public Information
- Revenue
- Telecommunications

Health & Human Services

- Aging
- Children & Families
- Health Services
- Housing
- Human Services

Human Resources/Education

- Education
- Labor
- Management
- Personnel
- Training and Development
- Workforce Development

Natural Resources

- Agriculture
- Energy
- Environment
- Environmental Protection
- Natural Resources
- Parks & Recreation
- Water Resources

Public Safety/Corrections

- Corrections
- Courts
- Criminal Justice
- Drugs
- Emergency Management
- Public Safety

Save in .doc or rtf. Return completed application electronically to innovations@csg.org or mail to:

CSG Innovations Awards 2010
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This application is also available at www.csg.org.