

CONNECT Program

Spring 2019 Project Cohort Report

The CONNECT Program aims to increase data, measurement and evaluation capacity within Central Texas community organizations through the use of an online platform. It matches organizations' projects with graduate students at the University of Texas at Austin looking for applied and practical experience in the social and/or public sector.

This cohort's projects varied in focus; however, all fit into one or more of the following categories: research and policy, data mining and analytics, training material development, program management and evaluation, reporting and data visualization, and survey design and administration. For a closer look at the challenges addressed and deliverables produced by the Spring 2019 project cohort, visit [CONNECT's project library](#).



8 community organizations



18 interested students



10 matches made



9 projects



83% match rate*



15 deliverables produced



90% match success rate**



\$18,000 net worth***



100% student & organization satisfaction

"This project has taken us one step further in using valuable and efficient tools to help us assess program quality. It was a great partnership, and also helped give me a better framework for any type of internship model, realistic scope of work, and ways of articulating a clear work project for my own future staff or other cross-departmental work."

Sarah Rinner, Senior Director of OST Programs, Creative Action



* number of matches made divided by number of match possibilities

**number of matches made divided by number of matches with fulfilled deliverables

*** a total of \$18,000 was issued in the form of fellowships to students working on projects

Lessons Learned:

We learned about the key components of a successful project from the inaugural project cohort. Some of the important factors for successful projects include: clear project scope, establishment of a project plan as the first major milestone, a regular communication schedule set between the organization and graduate student, and the CONNECT program coordinator having a clear understanding of the project goal and deliverables. Additionally, for projects involving a highly technical goal (e.g. algorithm development), it is critical to have a project mentor checking-in regularly with the student(s) working on the project. These components will be incorporated into future projects.



"My experience definitely improved my data analysis and visualization skills, and the project was instrumental in helping me find a long-term job after graduation."

Ryan Carlino, CONNECT Fellow

100%

of students reported

they would work with their client again

88%

of organizations reported

their CONNECT experience as very or extremely useful

86%

of organizations reported

their CONNECT student as very or extremely effective in synthesizing information, presenting findings, and recommending solutions

"Having a consultant look at the state of our data, help us pull what we could from it, and think about next steps was incredibly helpful and shined a light on places where we need more work and support."

*Natalie Gray, ServeAustin
Managing Director*



Opportunities to get involved:

- ✓ Provide student stipends
- ✓ Submit a project
- ✓ Refer an organization
- ✓ Spread the word