

LOOKING BACK: YEAR ONE



HILL COUNTRY
LEADERSHIP
INSTITUTE

Local leaders.
Regional challenges.
Real solutions.
Lasting relationships.



OVERVIEW

In 2023, the Hill Country Alliance launched the Hill Country Leadership Institute - a ten-month program for elected officials and key staff from across the Texas Hill Country, with a focus on local planning and natural resource management challenges and solutions. From January to October each year, the cohort meets twice monthly for a total of ten in-person sessions and nine virtual sessions on themes ranging from water infrastructure funding to transportation and development codes, to engaging the Texas Legislature.

The inaugural cohort included fourteen participants* - two county judges, three county commissioners, two mayors, three city council members, two groundwater district board members, and two city staff. Reviews and results of the first year of programming were overwhelmingly positive.

DIRECT OUTCOMES

- The City of Castroville has contracted with Simplecity Design, a forward-thinking firm, for the creation of their new Downtown Plan, Comprehensive Plan, and Unified Development Code. Simplecity's founder and president Matt Lewis was a presenter at two Leadership Institute sessions.
- The Cities of Fredericksburg and Boerne each adopted resolutions directing staff to fully consider One Water strategies when developing or permitting public and private facilities. These resolutions were inspired and informed by the Leadership Institute's session on One Water. More communities are expected to adopt similar resolutions in 2024.
- The City of Castroville is pursuing a Medina River restoration project with Native American Seed, a well-regarded native plant landscaping firm and seed farm, who presented about land stewardship during a Leadership Institute session.
- The Hill Country has a stronger network of local and state leaders who are aligned in a vision for the region. This network not only includes the Leadership Institute cohort itself, but also more than a dozen other officials who attended a Leadership Institute session to offer a welcome to their town and then stuck around to learn more.
- Real County Judge Bella Rubio joined the Hill Country Alliance board of directors as a result of her positive experience getting to know the organization and our work through the Leadership Institute.
- A very strong 2024 cohort** was seeded with referrals from the 2023 cohort. Nine of the 14 incoming members were either directly referred to us by 2023 participants or attended a session as a guest during 2023.

* See reverse for a roster of participants.

** It's not too late to join the cohort for 2024.

Contact Cliff@hillcountryalliance.org for more information

PROGRAM GOALS

- Connect local leaders to practical solutions for common challenges.
- Strengthen the network of leaders aligned in their vision for our region.
- Identify opportunities for stronger regional collaboration.

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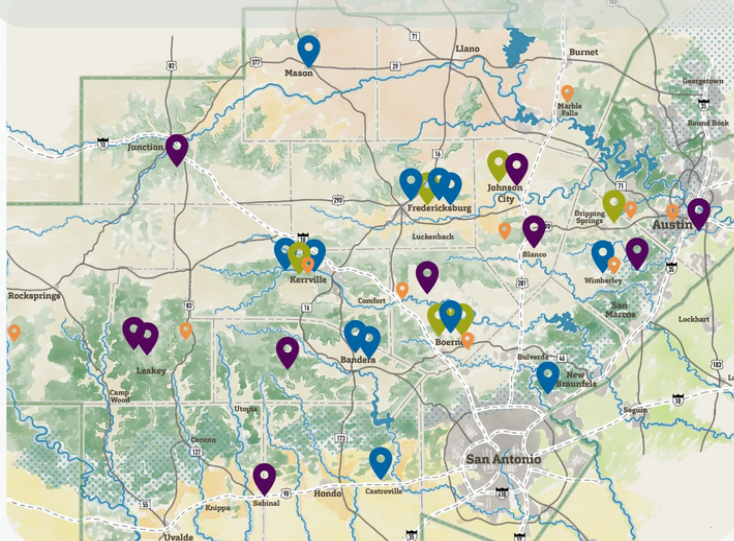




LOOKING AHEAD

In 2024, we will build on 2023's successes, continuing to deliver first-rate content and access to experts and resources. The program will also benefit from our new alumni network - the participants of the inaugural year - who welcomed the 2024 cohort into the Leadership Institute at our year-end celebration in November. We look forward to ensuring that alumni are connected to one another and to the incoming cohort in 2024, while continuing to support them all in local policy making across the region (see map below). The alumni will also help steward the Leadership Institute as it develops in coming years through the institution of a steering committee.

2023 & 2024 PARTICIPANTS



2023 COHORT

- Judge Bella Rubio (Real County)
- Judge Hal Rose (Kimble County)
- Commissioner Andra Wisian (Kendall County)
- Commissioner Jack Moseley (Bandera County)
- Commissioner Lon Shell (Hays County)
- Mayor Rebeca Gibson (Bandera)
- Mayor Darrin Schroeder (Castroville)
- Mayor Pro Tem Lisa Swint (Garden Ridge)
- Council Member Emily Kirchner (Fredericksburg)
- Council Member Joseph Macaluso (Boerne)
- GCD Board Member Ben Eldredge (Cow Creek GCD, Kendall County)
- GCD Board Member Curt Campbell (Cow Creek GCD, Kendall County)
- City Manager Clinton Bailey (Fredericksburg)
- Planning Director Drew Paxton (Kerrville)

-  Groundwater conservation district official
-  County official
-  City official
-  2023 meeting location

"I have thoroughly enjoyed being a part of the inaugural class of the Hill Country Leadership Institute through the Hill Country Alliance. Every session has brought new ideas and a better perspective and understanding to take back to the Real County Commissioner's Court as we pursue local policies to preserve water quality and quantity. I count the Leadership Institute as one of the greatest opportunities I've had to learn on behalf of my county since taking office."

-Judge Bella Rubio, Real County

