

SECC Frequently Asked Questions

How does it work?

Each fall, we get the opportunity to learn about the charities in the SECC, choose which ones we want to help, and then fill out a pledge form to indicate how much we wish to donate to which groups. We can make a one-time gift by cash or check. Or, even better, our gift can be deducted from each paycheck beginning at the first of next year.

The campaign runs from September 1 through October 31 annually. During this time period, you can expect to attend an informational meeting or be approached by a co-worker with information and a pledge form. The directory provides information on all the charities in the campaign — a great resource not only for helping you make your choices, but also for finding help if you need it yourself.

What charities are involved?

One of the great benefits of the SECC is the wide variety of charities and causes represented — there's something for everyone. They range from small local organizations to large and well-known national and international groups.

Those charities that wish to participate must meet stringent legal requirements, and then be scrutinized by teams of state employees to ensure:

- They are recognized by the IRS as 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations and registered with the Secretary of State.
- They are audited (or reviewed) annually by an accountant in accordance with generally-accepted auditing standards.
- They provide direct or indirect health and human services.
- They spend no more than 25 percent of funds raised on administration and fund raising unless they qualify for an exception due to special circumstances.
- They meet other requirements per the application.

Who governs the SECC?

The SECC is governed at both the statewide and local level, ensuring that the campaign is conducted fairly and equitably under a strict set of guidelines which give donors confidence in both the charities that benefit and the methods used to solicit.

At the state level, a committee of state employees called the State Policy Committee (SPC) provides governance and oversight. Three members are appointed by the Governor and three each by the Lt.

Governor and the Comptroller of Public Accounts. They are responsible for a campaign plan, a budget and ensuring the eligibility of statewide organizations. The SPC also hires a state campaign manager to administer the campaign.

The state policy committee establishes the organization and structure of the state employee charitable campaign at the state and local levels, including:

- establishing local campaign areas;
- appointing any local employee committees, the state policy committee considers necessary to assist the state policy committee with evaluating applications from organizations that seek to participate in the state employee charitable campaign only in a local campaign area; and
- appointing any local campaign managers, the state policy committee considers necessary to administer the state employee charitable campaign in a local campaign area.

How are funds distributed?

How does your contribution find its way to a charity?

Contributions made by state agency employees are distributed by the State Comptroller to participating federations, who then send the funds along to their members. At the local level, the Local Campaign Managers distribute the funds the same way. Each university distributes funds to federations through its own payroll system.

Because it is almost impossible to account for donations lost through such things as an employee leaving or transferring, a percentage method is used to distribute funds. At the end of each year's campaign, the percent of funds pledged to each charity is calculated. Each charity then receives that percentage of what is eventually collected. Undesignated pledges are shared with all participating charities using the same percentage. Each charity also pays its share of the cost of running the campaign (printed materials, etc.) based on the same percentage.

How do I give through the SECC?

The SECC is the charitable giving campaign for the state government and higher education workplace.

Giving through the SECC is one of the easiest things to do. Each year, thousands of state and higher education employees contribute through a payroll deduction or a cash/check gift.

In 2017, through the generosity of state and higher education employees, more than \$7.248 million was contributed to charities and charitable federations.

The best and easiest way to give is through Payroll Deduction. You can designate to charities of your choice through the SECC and have your gift deducted from your paycheck. This spreads your giving over a year and increases the impact you can make to those causes you choose to support.

Cash and check giving is also accepted. You can still designate your gift to your favorite charities

On occasion, state and higher education employees can participate in locally run SECC special events. Special events can be a great deal of fun for you and for your colleagues. They usually involve food but can also involve anything from the boss kissing a pig to office carnivals. Proceeds from these special events are normally spread across charities already receiving funds.

If you have a question about completing your pledge form, ask your Employee Campaign Coordinator or the Local Campaign Manager for your area. They'll be glad to help.

Why isn't my favorite charity listed in the directory of charities?

Federations and charities listed in the brochure meet high standards in order to be listed. These standards are intended to protect you.

The Texas Legislature created eligibility criteria by which charities and federations can be listed in the SECC brochure. In some instances, when a charity applies to either the Local Employee Committee or the State Policy Committee, the eligibility criteria is not met. An eligibility appeals process exists to resolve discrepancies.

Two of the reasons why you may not see your favorite charity listed in the directory of charities are:

- The charity may not have applied for eligibility to your area's Local Employee Committee or may not have applied as part of an eligible Statewide Federation in that group's eligibility application to the State Policy Committee.
- The charity did apply for eligibility but the application was not approved by either the Local Employee Committee and/or the State Policy Committee.

Across Texas, Local Employee Committees and the State Policy Committee of state employees review eligibility applications. These people are interested in ensuring that charities listed in the directory meet high standards so that your charitable gift is used in the manner you intended.

Your support is voluntary.

The SECC strongly discourages coercion. Giving is a personal decision and the SECC respects your choice to give, to which charities receive your give as well as your choice not to give.

If you feel you are being coerced to donate money at any time during this campaign, please submit a written complaint to:

Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts
P.O. Box 13528, Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711-3528