

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## River Authority Uniformity Study

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The Sunset Advisory Commission provides the Legislature a powerful oversight tool to evaluate government functions, recommend improvements, and apply uniform standard best practices where appropriate. Statute subjects most state agencies to Sunset review, but on occasion, the Sunset Commission and the Legislature may direct Sunset staff to study and report on certain programs or entities. In 2023, the Sunset Commission directed staff to study all river authorities' operations and structure and provide recommendations for uniformity across all river authorities. Since the Legislature subjected river authorities to Sunset review in 2015, the reviews have recommended many uniform standard best practices, often deployed at the state level, to river authorities. For their part, the commission has adopted 75 management directives, and the Legislature has enacted 73 statutory changes based on these standards, a summary of which is provided in Appendix A.

The Sunset Commission and Legislature have applied nearly 150 standard best practices through Sunset reviews of river authorities.

Each river authority has needs unique to its basin in addition to widely varying resources, programming, and operational capacities. Given these unique circumstances and because several river authorities already execute many good government policies and best practices, Sunset and the Legislature have not sought to apply every state-level standard to each river authority, and this study continued this approach. With the intent of creating more uniformity of operations across river authorities and better positioning the authorities to fulfill their mission, the study found one constitutional issue and three opportunities for improvement. Specifically, the study presents two options for aligning all river authority board member terms with state constitutional requirements. The study also recommends requiring river authorities above a certain size to adhere to certain provisions in the Texas Internal Auditing Act to improve risk management and governance; adopt policies governing reserve funds to help maintain reserves that are sufficient and fiscally responsible; and use the Vendor Performance Tracking System before awarding certain contracts to better inform award decisions and reduce contracting risk.

