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Mission Statement

“ENCOURAGE AND PERMIT LOCAL UNITS OF THE GOVERNMENT TO JOIN AND COOPERATE WITH ONE ANOTHER AND WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF MAJOR ECONOMIC INTERESTS, CITIZEN GROUPS AND GROUPS EXPERIENCING ECONOMIC DISTRESS TO IMPROVE THE HEALTH, SAFETY AND GENERAL WELFARE OF THEIR CITIZENS AND TO PLAN FOR THE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF THE REGION”

REGIONAL PURSUITS

REGIONAL PURSUITS is the newsletter published by the LRGVDC. This publication is financed in part through funding assistance from State and Federal grants.

REGIONAL PURSUITS is available without cost and inquiries should be directed to Ken Jones, Executive Director Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council. 311 N. 15th St., McAllen, Texas 78501-4705 E-Mail- info@lrgvdc.org • website - www.lrgvdc.org

Printed on Recycled Paper



Lower Rio Grande Valley
Development Council
311 N. 15th St. • McAllen, TX 78501-4705

PRRST STD
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
PERMIT NO. 31
McALLEN, TX 78501

MARCH - 2004
VOLUME XLV

POD PRINTING

REGIONAL PURSUITS

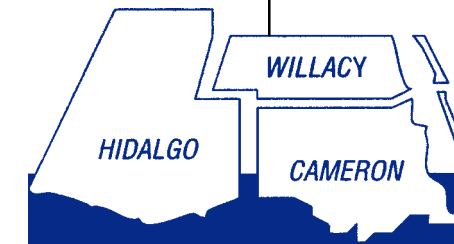
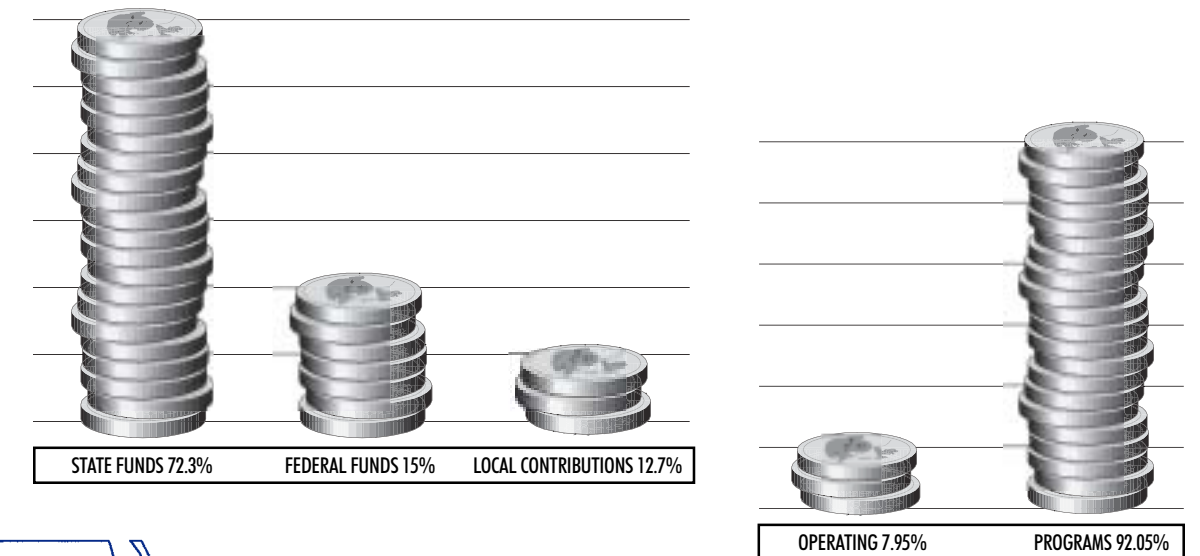
Development Council Membership Approves Work Program and Budget for FY 2004

The LRGVDC Membership has approved the 2004 Work Program and Budget that will allow the Council to continue its active role in the Lower Rio Grande Valley Region. Criminal Justice Assistance, Homeland Security, Law Enforcement Training, 9-1-1 Coordination, Solid Waste, Water Quality/Quantity Planning, Economic Development, Border Health, and other programs that address the needs within Cameron, Hidalgo, and Willacy Counties will be emphasized this year.

The Development Council employs 103 individuals and will operate on an annual budget of \$11.6 million in 2004. “The budget reflects a sound organization and the continued regional support for comprehensive services provided,” according to Harlingen Mayor, Connie de la Garza, LRGVDC President. “Local revenues are used successfully to leverage state and federal funds,” said de la Garza. Only 1.5% of the Council budget is generated from membership dues.

State income sources include the Texas Office of Rural Community Affairs, Texas Water Development Board, Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, Criminal Justice Division of the Governor’s Office, Texas Department of Transportation, Texas Department of Health, Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs, and the Texas Department of Aging. Federal sources of funds are Economic Development Administration, Federal Emergency Management Agency, and the Federal Transit Administration.

LRGVDC 2004 BUDGET



A Publication of the Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council
The Valley’s Regional Economic Development District and Council of Governments

LRGVDC Awarded MMRS Sub-Contract

The City of McAllen received a \$600,000 contract from Homeland Security (Federal Emergency Management Agency) to develop a **Lower Rio Grande Valley Metropolitan Medical Response System (LRGV-MMRS)** that will support and assist local jurisdictions with emergency medical response and recovery operations undertaken in a WMD event causing mass casualties.

The Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council (LRGVDC) is acting as **Lead Agency** to develop a sustainable, integrated, MMRS plan for our border region encompassing Cameron, Hidalgo, Starr, and Willacy Counties. This planning process is both a regional and binational effort, and includes participation of appropriate local, regional, state, and federal officials from both sides of the Texas-Tamaulipas border. It will also include representatives from the private and volunteer sectors of this binational region.

The LRGVDC Director of Border Health, Ms. Elaine Hernandez, is the LRGV-MMRS Project Leader, and is spearheading this initiative to plan a medical response to mass casualties, purchase special pharmaceuticals and equipment, and identify and initiate the training requirements tailored to the four counties. Ms. Vanessa Alvarado is the City of McAllen MMRS Project Coordinator.

The **LRGV-MMRS Management Team** has been formed, comprising representatives from public health, public safety, medical providers and first responders, and meet monthly to develop and approve plans, which are submitted to Homeland Security. The Co-Chairs of the Management Team are Mr. Gilbert Torres (Trauma Regional Advisory Council) and Mr. Paul Forward (Rio Grande Regional Hospital). Other members include CAPT Angel Braña (US Public Health Service), Dr. Isidore Flores (Texas A&M University System), Mr. Michael Huckabee (American Red Cross), Mr. Ken Jones (LRGVDC), Dr. William McIntyre (University of Texas - Pan American), Mr. Cruz Rodriguez (US Border Patrol), Capt. Laurencio Saenz (Texas Department of Public Safety), Mr. Alex Camacho - Tx DPS, Mr. Anthony Sala (Rio Grande Regional Hospital), Dr. Ken Sexton (University of Texas - Brownsville), Mr. Garry Simmons (FBI), Dr. Brian Smith (Texas Department of Health), Mr. George Garratt (Hidalgo County LEPC), and Mr. Noel Garcia (Starr County LEPC).

There are 12 major reports to be written within an 18-month time frame, including a pharmaceutical plan, a basic MMRS plan, a plan for managing the health consequences of a biological WMD, a plan for responding to chemical, radiological, nuclear, or explosive WMD event, a plan for the forward movement of patients, a plan for local hospitals and health systems, an equipment plan, and a training plan. There must also be a 5-year MMRS sustainability plan, and a documented MMRS exercise plan.

Solid Waste Implementation Projects Get Approved

A total of fifteen (15) projects were submitted to the LRGVDC for Solid Waste Grant Funds. The LRGVDC Board of Directors approved the attached Solid Waste Grant Implementation Projects and has submitted these projects to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ), for approval. Once approved by TCEQ, the LRGVDC will begin working on the contracts.

County	Entity	Grant Application	Amount Funded
Cameron	Cameron County	Local Enforcement	\$50,000
Hidalgo	Hidalgo County Precinct 3	Local Enforcement	\$50,000
Hidalgo	City of San Juan	Local Enforcement	\$35,800
Hidalgo	City of McAllen	Source Reduction & Recycling (Office Trailer)	\$25,000
Cameron	Cameron County	Source Reduction & Recycling (Illegal Dumping PSAs Summer 2004)	\$10,000
Cameron	Cameron County	Source Reduction & Recycling (Illegal Dumping PSAs Spring 2004)	\$10,000
Hidalgo	City of McAllen	Education & Training (Compost PSAs)	\$10,000
Hidalgo	City of San Juan	Educational & Training (Mascot custom & Supplies)	\$10,000
Cameron	City of Brownsville	Education & Training (Teacher Compost Training)	\$10,000
Cameron	City of Brownsville	Education & Training (Local Enforcement Trainer)	\$6,500
Cameron	City of La Feria	Source Reduction & Recycling (Chipper)	\$25,000
Hidalgo	City of Donna	Citizens' Collection Station (Clean Up Events)	\$10,000
Hidalgo	Pharr/San Juan/Alamo ISD	Education & Training (Recycling Library Materials)	\$10,000
Cameron	Cameron County Sheriff's Office	Education & Training (Local Enforcement Educator)	\$5,000
Cameron	Cameron County District Clerk's Office	Source Reduction & Recycling (Recycling Enforcement)	\$16,000

Formation of the LRGV Border Health Council

On November 11, 2003, the Lower Rio Grande Valley Border Health Council (LRGVBHC) was formed with the mission to "strengthen the capacity of border communities...to address public health issues". Nine members have been elected to the Board of Directors:

<i>Chairperson:</i>	<i>Dr. Angel Braña</i>	<i>Member:</i>	<i>Dr. Isidore Flores</i>
<i>Past Chairperson:</i>	<i>Dr. Brian Smith</i>	<i>Member:</i>	<i>Dr. Marin Garza</i>
<i>Secretary:</i>	<i>Dr. Ann Millard</i>	<i>Member:</i>	<i>Ms. Kathy Lawless</i>
<i>Treasurer:</i>	<i>Mr. Anthony Sala</i>	<i>Member:</i>	<i>Dr. Nelda Mier</i>
<i>Member:</i>	<i>Mr. Roy Becker</i>		

The LRGVDC has been selected as the administrative and fiscal agent for the LRGVBHC. The LRGVDC Director of Border Health, Ms. Elaine Hernandez, provides staff support. A mini-grant for \$5000 has recently been approved by the Texas Department of Health - Office of Border Health to support the activities of this border health council.

At a meeting held in McAllen on January 30-31, 2004, the LRGVBHC facilitated the development of a **Binational Strategic Plan for Rotary Districts 4130, 5840, 5870, and 5930** to address tuberculosis at the Texas-Mexico border. On March 24, 2004, the four RI District Governors from Texas and northeastern Mexico will make a declaration of support for **World Tuberculosis Day**.

In collaboration with the Mexican Consulate in McAllen, the LRGVBHC also facilitated the development of by-laws for the **Comisión Regional de Salud de Reynosa** (Reynosa Border Health Council). This organization will join the LRGVBHC in forming a new Binational Health Council for this region.

A **Border Health Academy** has been formed to provide quality educational experiences, which enhance the understanding of border health issues. For the first project, the LRGVBHC hosted ten medical students from Florida State University College of Medicine from March 6-13, 2004. These students volunteered to provide initial health screenings at the Hope Medical Clinic in McAllen, joined medical students from the Universidad Mexico-America del Norte to assist in a health brigade in Reynosa, and visited Mabel's Clinic in Nuevo Progreso.

Activities for a **Binational Health Week**, scheduled for October 18-22, 2004, are being organized regionally by the LRGVBHC. The US-Mexico Border Health Commission and the US Public Health Service (HRSA) are sponsoring this special week of health promotion.

Area Agency on Aging Holds Seminars on Medicare and Medicaid

The Area Agency on Aging recently held Case Management Services (CMS) presentations in the communities of Elsa (January 21, 2004) and San Benito (February 18, 2004). The events took place to inform the community of the benefits available through Medicare and Medicaid. The CMS event had presenters Sheila Cunningham for Medicare, Anna Lopez from Social Security, Sylvia Vasquez from Adult Medicaid, Claudio Cruz from the Alzheimer's Association, and Dr. Enrique Griego on Diabetes. The events in Elsa had 110 participants for the surrounding communities. The event for San Benito had a good turn out as well with about 60 participants from the community.



The Hope Medical Clinic invited ten medical students from Florida State University College of Medicine on March 8, 2004, to provide initial health screenings to patients. These students were members of the FSUCares student organization, and came to the Rio Grande Valley to learn about border health issues under the auspice of the Lower Rio Grande Valley Border Health Council's Border Health Academy. Pictured from left to right are Stefano Bordoli, Dr. Steven Grossman (FSU Faculty Advisor), Erin Connelly, Ken Jones (Executive Director, LRGVDC), Rebecca Nickerson, Shirley Arnold (Medical Services Coordinator, Hope Medical Clinic), Dr. Angel Braña (Chairperson, LRGVBHC), and Courtney Nall. The LRGVDC is the administrative and fiscal agent for the LRGV Border Health Council.



The graduates of the LRGVDC 105th Basic Peace Officer Academy celebrated graduation February 26th at the Palm Aire Banquet room in Weslaco. The graduates represent departments throughout the Lower Rio Grande Valley and include Harlingen, Weslaco, Edinburg, San Benito, Texas State Technical College police departments. Congratulations to all and good luck in your law enforcement careers!