

LRGV ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT:

V. GOALS AND STRATEGIES

AND

LISTED ACCOMPLISHMENTS

COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY PLAN

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Pictures denote projects funded through the LRGV Economic Development District as designated by the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration:

- **Foster and Support Small Business and Entrepreneurial Initiatives for Domestic and International Markets**

Port of Brownsville



Port of Port Isabel



- **Increase Domestic and International Trade**

Anzaldua International Bridge



Center for International Economic Development Opportunities (CIEDO) Building



- **Assist Rural and Urban Communities to Incorporate Information Technology as a Tool for their Economic Development**

Basic GIS Training for Chambers of Commerce Economic Development Corporations



City of Santa Rosa EDA Technology Center



Basic GIS Training for Members of the Regional Small Cities Coalition (RSCC)



Donna Independent School District Technology Center



- **Promote Research Development, Marketing and Distribution of Agricultural and Aquaculture Products Appropriate to the Region**

Citrus Center Screen Houses - Texas A&M University-Weslaco, Citrus Budwood Certification Program



- **Increase Domestic and International Tourism**

Hidalgo, State Farm Arena – Hockey Ring



Brownsville, Palo Alto Battlefield's Visitors Center



EDA Grants were awarded for the World Birding Centers in Mission, Weslaco and Brownsville:



Create and Expand Industries and Business Development in the Lower Rio Grande Valley

LRGVDC's "Stir Biz Up" Program



**UT-Brownsville's International
Innovation Entrepreneurship Program
Jose Gavino, Program Director**

**Abel Moya, Owner & Trainer,
American Safety Consulting
OSHA 10-Hr Certification
Training for Construction Companies**



- **Develop a Regional Economic Adjustment Plan (EAP) for Creating Disaster Resilient Communities**

Willacy County EAP Public Meeting – Raymondville



Starr County EAP Meeting – Rio Grande City



Cameron County EAP Public Meeting - San Benito



Hidalgo County EAP Public Meeting – McAllen



**Regional EAP Colonia Outreach Meeting
Green Valley Farms – San Benito**



**Regional EAP Colonia Outreach Meeting
Charro #2 – Edinburg**



- Provide a Business Hurricane and Information Training (B-HIT) Program and Collaborate with Other Programs for Disaster Recovery

Continuity of Operations Training – City of Alton

2011 Regional B-HIT Conference - South Padre Island



Sponsor & Support Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) Trainings

Sponsor & Support MACC Trainings



- **Create and Develop a Regional Forum to Enhance and Improve the Economic Development of the Regional Small Cities Coalition (RSCC)**

2014 Regional Small Cities Coalition Officers



(RSCC Officers From L to R): Representing the City of Sullivan-Judy Davila , Rio Hondo-Ben Medina Lyford-Lydia Moreno, Combes-Aida Gutierrez, and Donna- Oscar Ramirez

RSCC Monthly Meeting in the City of La Feria



(Presenter: Danny Torres, U.S. Department of Agriculture



RSCC Meeting in the City of Primera, July 2014

COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY PLAN

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- **Provided technical assistance to cities, universities, economic development corporations, navigation districts and port of entry**
- **Provided grant administration services to cities/counties, economic development corporations, and navigation districts**
- **Created the “Stir Biz Up” program to educate, inform, and provide certification classes to construction companies in order to help increase their skills for competing for contracting opportunities in the housing industry**
- **Conducted financial literacy trainings to small businesses using “MoneyWise” program**
- **Provided Basic GIS Trainings for small, rural cities; Chambers of Commerce; and Economic Development Organizations. Trainings included: Getting Started with GIS; Basic Editing Techniques; and Using Basic Geo-Processing Tools**
- **Conducted two annual B-HIT Workshops and was successful in incorporating Economic Recovery with Emergency Management and Hurricane Preparedness**
- **Conducted several “mini workshops” on the Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP)**
- **Created a “Local Resource Guide for Disaster Preparedness & Economic Recovery”**
- **Administer the Regional Small Cities Coalition (RSCC) under the auspices of the Economic Development Department**
- **The RSCC membership is composed of 60% of the Valley’s small cities**
- **Continued to provide staff support and technical assistance to the “USDA Stronger Economies Together” (SET) Program**
- **Applied for and was awarded an EDA grant for the Center for International Economic Development Opportunities (CIEDO) to attract businesses, programs, and services to the Valley (Groundbreaking event held June 17, 2014)**

COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY PLAN

- GOAL:** Foster and Support Small Business and Entrepreneurial Initiatives for Domestic and International Markets
- OBJECTIVE:** Identify All Types of Small Business Needs and Opportunities

Small businesses are the largest employers in the Valley and nationwide, therefore, it is imperative that we provide technical assistance and support to small businesses. This business sector is vital to the region's overall economy and more emphasis is needed on developing mentoring and entrepreneurial programs.

Measurable Outcomes for this specific goal: Increase and improve public infrastructure to attract economic development; Promote and increase access to small business incubators; Market and increase access to these funding sources; Increase rural business development and sustainability; Create women mentoring and business training programs; Develop educational entrepreneurial programs in schools and higher education institutions; Continue providing Financial Literacy; Create a business alliance; Increase funding and local resources; Increase insured employees and job retention by retaining existing businesses and creating a Small Business Directory.

STRATEGIES:

- Support the need for expanding and improving public infrastructure
- Support the development of Small Business Incubators
- Promote Micro-loan and Revolving Loan Fund Programs
- Promote and support rural business development
- Promote and support women-owned businesses
- Support the development of educational entrepreneurship initiatives
- Continue the "MoneyWise" Financial Literacy Program
- Coordinate with other entities (GEAR UP) on financial literacy.
- Create and develop a business alliance for new or expanding businesses
- Educate and inform Valley Legislators on the economic development needs of the small business community
- Access to affordable health insurance for self-employed small businesses
- Facilitate new business development through education of building requirements and planning regulations
- Promote State and International incentive programs for small businesses
- Training and support for improving the quality of customer service.

POTENTIAL RESOURCES:

LRGVDC/LRGVEDD, EDCs, Cities/Counties, Higher Education Institutions, EDA, USDA, SBA, Ports of Entry, Women's Business Organizations, School Districts, Non-Profit Mentoring Programs & Organizations, Civic Organizations, SBDC, Financial Lenders, Economic Development Organizations; Insurance Companies, Insurance Co-Ops, Texas Insurance Association, Business Owners, Local & International Chambers of Commerce, Public Libraries

COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY PLAN

GOAL: Increase Domestic and International Trade
OBJECTIVE: To Encourage the Continued Expansion of Domestic and International Trade

This area is considered the gateway to global commerce because of its strategic and logistic location. It is in the Valley's best interest to aggressively pursue international trade for economic growth. Mexico is the United States' "second largest export market" with over \$303 billion in total value of exports (2010). Although international trade is an integral part of our economy, it is of vital importance to increase border security to ensure a safe environment to conduct business.

Measurable Outcomes for this specific goal: Increase activity on international trade; Develop programs to help link small businesses with companies who deal internationally; Increase domestic and international trade; Develop a regional border security and training facility to facilitate international trade.

STRATEGIES:

- Continue to provide technical assistance to businesses for international trade
- Create a small business trade program
- Support infrastructure development for ports of entry and navigation districts
- Support border security and training initiatives using high technology
- Create a HUB Center in order to coordinate and conduct business with international partners

POTENTIAL RESOURCES:

Foreign Trade Zones, TIRFs, EDCs, LRGVDC/LRGVEDD, EDA, Cities/Counties, International Trade Administration (ITA), Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA) Higher Education Institutions, Local & International Chambers of Commerce, Export Assistance Centers, Congressional District Offices, Mexican Consulates, Federal & State Agencies, NADBank, Ports of Entry, Navigation Districts, U.S. Custom's and Border Protection Agency

COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY PLAN

- GOAL:** Assist Rural and Urban Communities to Incorporate Information Technology as a Tool for Their Economic Development
- OBJECTIVE:** Provide Access to Information Technology to Rural and Urban Communities

The Lower Rio Grande Valley is made up of 44 cities of which 80% are small, rural cities with populations less than 20,000. Rural areas need additional support and funding for technological grant projects in order to attract higher paying jobs. Technological advancement is also critical for our larger cities in order to attract domestic and international companies to the Valley. Technology is a major force in our economic future. (Information technology is the technology involving the development, maintenance, and use of computer systems, software, and networks for the processing and distribution of data.)

Measurable Outcomes for this specific goal: Identify resources for grant availability; Identify financial resources to expand technical training and education; Enhanced funding opportunities for rural areas; Attract high tech industries for the purpose of creating higher-paying jobs. Provide cities with the latest technology including more access to Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and space transport infrastructure.

STRATEGIES:

- Identify resources to help rural and small urban communities to access and acquire technology
- Support the expansion and financial assistance for technical and academic training
- Support changes in eligibility criteria to allow easier access to state funds for rural areas
- Promote the research and development of new technology for the purpose of job and wealth creation
- Increase GIS training and funding opportunities
- Support the technology to develop space transport infrastructure

POTENTIAL RESOURCES:

LRGVDC/LRGVEDD & 9-1-1 Department; EDA, USDA, Cities/Counties, Higher Education Institutions, School Districts, Federal & State Agencies/Legislators, Texas Municipal League, Texas Association of Counties, Digital Communication Companies, Homeland Security, Private Sector, Non-Profit Organizations, EDCs, Manufacturer Associations, Cell Phone Companies, Broadband Providers, Cable Companies, Space X

COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY PLAN

GOAL:	Promote Research, Marketing Development, and Distribution of Agricultural/Aquaculture Products Appropriate to the Region
OBJECTIVE:	Identify Markets for Locally Grown Agricultural/Aquaculture Products and Agricultural Services

The Valley's continuous population growth has claimed valuable land for residential and commercial use; however, this region's roots are based on agriculture and aquaculture. In order to safeguard this economic foundation, we must focus on diversifying and adding value to existing agriculture and aquaculture products.

Measurable Outcomes for this specific goal: Increase the number of alternate products produced; Enhanced marketing of value added products; Create legislative action and tax incentives for our local farmers.

STRATEGIES:

- Support research for "alternate products" that can be grown in the Region
- Support value added industries
- Develop incentives programs and legislative action to encourage purchase of locally grown products
- Research "green" products and byproducts
- Promote "sustainable agriculture" in order to sustain the economic viability of farm operations
- Market and support "Farmer Market Days" region wide

POTENTIAL RESOURCES:

Agriculture/Aquaculture Farmers, Food Industry, Texas A&M Extension Services, USDA, TDA, Water and Irrigation Districts, Cities/Counties, Chambers of Commerce, LRGVDC/LRGVEDD, Federal & State Legislators, School Districts, Health Care Facilities

COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY PLAN

GOAL: Increase Domestic and International Tourism
OBJECTIVE: Market the Region for Its Recreational and Tourism Facilities

This unstable economy has redirected families spending habits and it now makes good sense to “keep travel local” and visit the many wonderful tourist attractions in our Valley towns. This area is extremely rich in history and culture; therefore it has much to offer both local and international tourists. These tourist attractions have helped grow our region’s economy and perpetuate more interest on recreational facilities for our local residents as well.

Measurable Outcomes for this specific goal: Expansion of Historical preservation sites and increased marketing; Increased educational awareness and marketing of historical preservation and eco-tourism; Increased eco-tourism activities and a coordinated promotional tourist campaign; A World Class Birding Center, sub-centers throughout the Valley, and increase eco-tourism and environmental awareness.

STRATEGIES:

- Promote and support local tourist attractions
- Promote and protect historical preservation sites
- Provide education on historical preservation and eco-tourism in schools
- Market World Birding Centers internationally and nation wide
- Provide financial support for recreational facilities and activities

POTENTIAL RESOURCES:

Chambers of Commerce, LRGVDC, Cities/Counties, National & State Park Services, Historical Preservation Commission, Media, Environmental Groups, EDCs, Private Foundations, Museums, EDA, Private Sector, Civic Organizations, Mexican Consulates, Coastal Conservation Associations, ITA, Business Related State Offices

COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY PLAN

GOAL: Create and Expand Industries and Business Development in the Lower Rio Grande Valley
OBJECTIVE: To Create and Develop a Regional Marketing Strategy

The limitless opportunities for economic prosperity must be addressed as a regional marketing strategy. In order to attract businesses, economic data must be centralized and easily accessible so the Valley can be marketed as one region. Smaller, rural cities that lack financial resources for marketing should be included in the overall picture and individual profiles can be updated to help in this effort.

Measurable Outcomes for this specific goal: Create an economic database of information to attract businesses; create marketing strategies for the region and promote it as one region. Increase international marketing opportunities; regional trainings on available resources; and assist in updating Valley profiles for each city. Need to continue sponsoring and supporting the Regional Small Cities Coalition in order to provide economic stability and diversification to small, rural communities.

STRATEGIES:

- Create an economic database of regional statistics to attract businesses
- Identify and inventory existing marketing strategies and the coordination of regional marketing efforts
- Market the Valley as one region
- Support the Rio South Texas Economic Council (RSTEC)
- Identify and promote International activities
- Promote “regional training conferences” on available federal, state, and local resources
- Update the LRGVDC’s regional community profiles as a marketing tool for small cities
- Continue to sponsor and support the Regional Small Cities Coalition

POTENTIAL RESOURCES:

LRGVDC/LRGVEDD, Chambers of Commerce, Cities/Counties, EDA, EDCs, Universities, MBDA, ITA, USDA, RSTEC, State & Federal Agencies, Business Related State Offices, Utility Companies, Mexican Consulate, Media

COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY PLAN

- GOAL:** Develop a Regional Economic Adjustment Plan (EAP) for Creating Disaster Resilient Communities
- OBJECTIVE:** Conduct a Regional Assessment of Flood Control/Drainage Systems Infrastructure for Economic Recovery

Due to hurricanes and other natural disasters, the Valley is prone to severe flooding. These natural disasters cause enormous financial burdens on the citizens and local governments of the region. In order to minimize these hardships, the LRGVDC has developed a program to address these issues and coordinate flood control through its "Regional Economic Adjustment Plan for Creating Disaster Resilient Communities".

Measurable Outcomes for this specific goal: Enhance flood control; Update maps to identify flood and drainage areas in need of attention; Review Adequate Levee System; Establishment of a Regional Flood Control/Drainage Task Force or Entity; and Develop a Regional flood/drainage plan identifying capital improvement projects for the Valley.

STRATEGIES:

- Support the Regional Economic Adjustment Plan by providing annual updates
- Support coordination of flood control activities for the Lower Rio Grande Valley
- Request FEMA Update their maps in order to identify flood prone areas
- Support Federal funding opportunities to rehabilitate levees under jurisdiction of U.S. IBWC
- Continue the development of the EAP's regional flood/drainage plan by incorporating needed infrastructure and initiatives for Capital Improvement Projects
- Conduct an economic disaster survey to assess and inventory important economic assets

POTENTIAL RESOURCES:

LRGVDC/LRGVEDD, Federal & State Agencies, Drainage Districts, Water Districts, Irrigation Districts, Farmers/Ranchers, IBWC, TWDB, Cities/Counties, TCEQ, EPA, Private Sector, FEMA, Corps of Engineers, US Fish & Wildlife, Texas Parks & Wildlife, Colonia Advocates

COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY PLAN

GOAL:	Develop a Business Hurricane and Information Training (B-HIT) Program for Disaster Recovery
OBJECTIVE:	Provide Businesses with Information and Training Resources to Assist in their Economic Recovery after a Natural Disaster

Natural disasters such as hurricanes can disrupt businesses and ruin lives, however, when a business is destroyed or shut down in a small, rural area, it can affect the entire community. It is imperative to provide these businesses with the necessary disaster recovery tools so they can help rebuild their communities and recover economically. Also, information and training materials on emergency preparedness are extremely useful in reaching the public.

Measurable Outcomes for this specific goal: Help business owners create their own COOP; distribute vital information on emergency preparedness and disaster recovery resources; conduct or sponsor conference(s) on economic development and emergency preparedness; create and distribute “B-HIT Resources Booklets”; and help coordinate and support the efforts of existing emergency management/preparedness agencies in serving the general public.

STRATEGIES:

- Provide information and training materials on emergency preparedness
- Distribute information and checklists for hurricane preparedness
- Conduct a regional economic disaster recovery conference
- Conduct Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) Mini Trainings for Businesses
- Provide information and resources on economy recovery strategies
- Create a “B-HIT Resource Booklet”
- Coordinate services and trainings with existing emergency management and emergency preparedness agencies/programs

POTENTIAL RESOURCES:

LRGVDC/LRGVEDD, Business Owners, Federal & State Agencies, Emergency Management Centers, Cities/Counties, Police & Fire Departments, Schools, Universities, Faith-Based Disaster Recovery Organizations

COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY PLAN

- GOAL:** Create and Develop a Regional Forum to Enhance and Improve the Economic Development of the Regional Small Cities Coalition (RSCC)
- OBJECTIVE:** Provide Information, Training, Resources, and Funding to Assist in the Economic Growth of Small, Rural Communities

On November, 2011, the LRGVDC Economic Development Department was given the responsibility to oversee the economic growth and development of the Small Cities Coalition (SCC) for Cameron County. The Economic Development District (EDD) had an existing grant from the Economic Development Administration (EDA) for regional planning which allowed the LRGVDC to provide staff support, technical assistance, and coordination of services to the entire Valley. However, this project entailed additional support to small and rural communities. The SCC was then restructured and became the “Regional” Small Cities Coalition, which was to encompass all three counties.

Measurable Outcomes for this specific goal: Help strengthen the economic development foundation for small, rural cities by providing vital information, resources, and funding opportunities through monthly meetings; encourage self-sufficiency and the creation of innovative programs to help grow their economies; identify and focus on each community’s unique strength; and create a comprehensive and supportive network for the RSCC

STRATEGIES:

- Conduct monthly meetings in each member city in order to connect as one region
- Provide information and training materials on economic development
- Focus on each community’s unique strength and available resources in order to develop and execute effective strategies for economic growth
- Provide information and resources on grant funding and sustainable programs for small and rural cities through the Council of Government
- Coordinate services and trainings to include adjacent larger cities in order to support and harness their economic strength and global connectivity
- Encourage self-sufficiency and innovation
- Create a comprehensive network of collaboration and support

POTENTIAL RESOURCES:

LRGVDC/LRGVEDD, Cities, Counties, Economic Development Corporations, Chambers of Commerce, RGVP, Business Owners, Federal & State Agencies, Special Districts, Schools, Universities, Non-Profit Organizations

COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY PLAN

WORKFORCE AND TRAINING GOALS

- **Develop a Regional Coordinated System**
- **To Mobilize Education and Training Resources into a Seamless System**

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- **Co-Sponsored the first annual State of the Workforce Conference with the Lower Rio Grande Valley Workforce Solutions, Cameron County Workforce Solutions, and Rio Grande Valley Partnership**



- **The LRGVDC Economic Development Department joined the Lower Rio Grande Valley Workforce Solutions, Cameron Workforce Solutions, and Rio Grande Valley Partnership in forming a “Regional Workforce Group”**

COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY PLAN

GOAL: Develop a Regional Coordinated System
OBJECTIVE: Designate a Central Depository of Data and Information for the Region

The need for a centralized data base for employees and employers has been long-term goal for the region and statewide. Agencies are now implementing programs to address this need, but progress has been slow.

Measurable Outcomes for this specific goal: Consider applying as one MSA in order to obtain more federal and state funding for job training and create a regional workforce database.

STRATEGIES:

- Explore benefits of Regional MSA designation
- Identify a central data collection agency
- Develop a standardized data set
- Develop models for public dissemination of information
- Support and promote designation of an International Metropolitan Statistical Area

POTENTIAL RESOURCES:

LRGVDC, Cameron Workforce Solutions, Lower Rio Grande Valley Workforce, Rio Grande Valley Partnership, Institutions of Higher Education, Cities/Counties, private and non-profit public organizations

COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY PLAN

GOAL: To Mobilize Education and Training Resources into a Seamless System
OBJECTIVE: Improve Access to Resources Opportunities for Education Entities

Workforce Agencies must collaborate with educational institutions to best prepare tomorrow's employees and to provide easy access to available resources.

Measurable Outcomes for this specific goal: Increase public access to resources for adult education thru internet resources; Increase multi-lingual educational opportunities; Increase number of graduates with post-secondary degrees; Increase number of community leadership pool; Reduce regional drop-out rates; Enhance knowledge of scientific, mathematical and literary principles; Increase the number of grant submissions for educational entities; Increase availability of technical assistance and support services focused on increasing and retaining a more educated workforce.

STRATEGIES:

- Encourage coordination of adult education providers
- Encourage access to Internet resources
- Identify all multi-lingual educational programs
- Encourage educational opportunities for attaining post-secondary degree
- Encourage educational opportunities for leadership training and development
- Promote life-long continuum (Pre-K and beyond) programs for drop-out prevention and recovery, alternative education/after school youth programs
- Encourage the implementation of scientific, mathematic and literary principles in elementary and middle schools
- Improve access to grant writing training
- Identify and strengthen clearinghouse resources
- Increase in the number of professional degree programs available
- Encourage using more financial literacy programs

POTENTIAL RESOURCES:

Higher Education Institutions, Rio Grande Valley Linking Economic and Academic Development (RGV LEAD), Inc., School Districts, Region One, Public Libraries, CCRGV, Advisory and Non-Profit Organizations, Literacy Task Force, Charter Schools, Workforce Solutions, Homeless Shelters & Domestic Violence Programs, and Cameron County Homeless Coalition; Cities/Counties, RGVP, LRGVDC, SW Non-Profit Resource Center, VIDA

COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY PLAN

GOAL: To Mobilize Education and Training Resources into a Seamless System
OBJECTIVE: Support a Coordinated System between Employers and Educational Providers to Maximize Skill Training for the Region's Workforce

Current Trends are changing for the existing workforce. Technical training has increased and academic education has decreased due to the types of jobs immediately available. Employers, Workforce agencies and job training programs need to combine both academic and technical training in order to provide good paying jobs for Valley residents and meet the demands of the private sector.

Measurable Outcomes for this specific goal: Identify target occupations and educational resources; provide Annual updates of targeted occupational and industry training systems (code enforcement, city planning, public administration); Increase efficiency in achieving an educated workforce and job placement; More students enrolled in apprenticeships; Increase the number of programs and enrollment in workforce training and recognized certification programs by both American and Mexican job markets.

STRATEGIES:

- Continue identification of workforce needs and educational provider capabilities and utilize the annual updates
- Continue Annual Updates of Targeted Occupational Study of the Lower Rio Grande Valley in coordination with the Texas Workforce System
- Establish real world skills and life-long learning training programs
- Strengthen apprenticeship opportunities
- Increase access to workforce training in small cities and communities
- Develop Bi-national standards of training, certification and re-certification
- Improve the transition from Community college to University through articulated agreements and 2+2 programs
- Establish Employer "Alternative Financing Program" for students, such as tuition reimbursement and internship opportunities in order to obtain higher education degrees and keep students from getting into debt

POTENTIAL RESOURCES:

Private Sector, RGV LEAD, Workforce Boards, RGVP, Higher Education Institutions, School Districts, Region One, LRGVDC, TTC-MHMR, VAIL, VIDA, Non-Profit Organizations, Red Cross, GED, Adult Basic Education, Literacy Task Force, Private Vocational Schools, Public Libraries, Homeless Shelters and Programs, Domestic Violence, Community Colleges, Economic Development Corporations, Cities and Counties