



RGV FOCUS  
a COLLABORATION with EDUCATE TEXAS

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# CONTIGO

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2018 ANNUAL REPORT



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RGV FOCUS thanks each of you who worked side by side with us to make this report possible. We sincerely appreciate the time you devoted and the inspiring stories you shared.

*¡Muchas gracias!*

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# CONTIGO

The Rio Grande Valley is a place where language and culture are celebrated in our communities, in our homes, in our schools, and on college and university campuses. Here, business leaders, leaders of community organizations and civic leaders are working side by side with parents and education leaders to give our children the academic foundation they need to succeed in the classroom, in their careers and in life.

In Spanish, this idea of working “side by side” is expressed by the word *contigo* – with you. Contigo is what RGV FOCUS is all about.

Join us.



**RGV FOCUS**

o COLLABORATION with EDUCATE TEXAS

## ABOUT RGV FOCUS

RGV FOCUS is a community partnership that exists to make sure all children in the Rio Grande Valley get the education they need and deserve to achieve meaningful careers and lives.

RGV FOCUS is led by a team of leaders from public schools, colleges and universities, funders, businesses and community organizations working side by side to improve academic results and job opportunities for students across the four counties of the Rio Grande Valley – Cameron, Hidalgo, Starr and Willacy.

To achieve the change we seek, RGV FOCUS follows a Collective Impact (CI) approach – a process that provides a structure for how we can best work together to reach our agreed-upon goals.

Within this structure, the RGV FOCUS staff, known as the Backbone, works side by side with community partners to serve as connector, organizer, facilitator, supporter and skill-builder to create strategies, ideas and actions to achieve our shared goals:



### COLLEGE READINESS

*All students will graduate from high school college-ready*



### TIMELY TRANSITION

*All high-school graduates will transition to higher education within one year*



### ACHIEVEMENT

*All higher-education graduates will achieve a degree or credential*



### EMPLOYMENT

*All higher-education graduates will be employed within six months of graduation*

RGV FOCUS WORKS CONTIGO TO UNITE LEADERS TO CHANGE LIVES.

# COLLECTIVE IMPACT APPROACH



## COMMON AGENDA

- Common understanding of the challenge
- Shared vision for change



## SHARED MEASUREMENT

- Collecting data and measuring results
- Focus on performance management
- Shared accountability



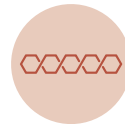
## REINFORCING ACTIVITIES

- Differentiated approaches
- Coordination through joint plan of action



## CONTINUOUS COMMUNICATION

- Consistent and open communication
- Focus on building trust and relationships



## BACKBONE SUPPORT

- Administrative core and partner
- Convener, facilitator, capacity builder and catalyst for the thought, strategy and purpose of the initiative

## OUR MISSION

Our mission is to transform college readiness, access and success in the four counties of the Rio Grande Valley: Cameron, Hidalgo, Starr and Willacy.

## OUR VISION

Our vision is for all RGV learners to achieve a degree or credential that leads to a meaningful career.

## OUR CORE VALUES



### STUDENT FOCUSED

*We are focused on students and their experiences, strengths, challenges and aspirations.*



### TRANSFORMATIONAL

*The strategies we pursue are transformational both for individual institutions and the RGV at large.*



### COLLABORATIVE

*We collaborate across institutions and sectors, and invest the resources to ensure this collaboration will be sustained.*



### COMMUNITY

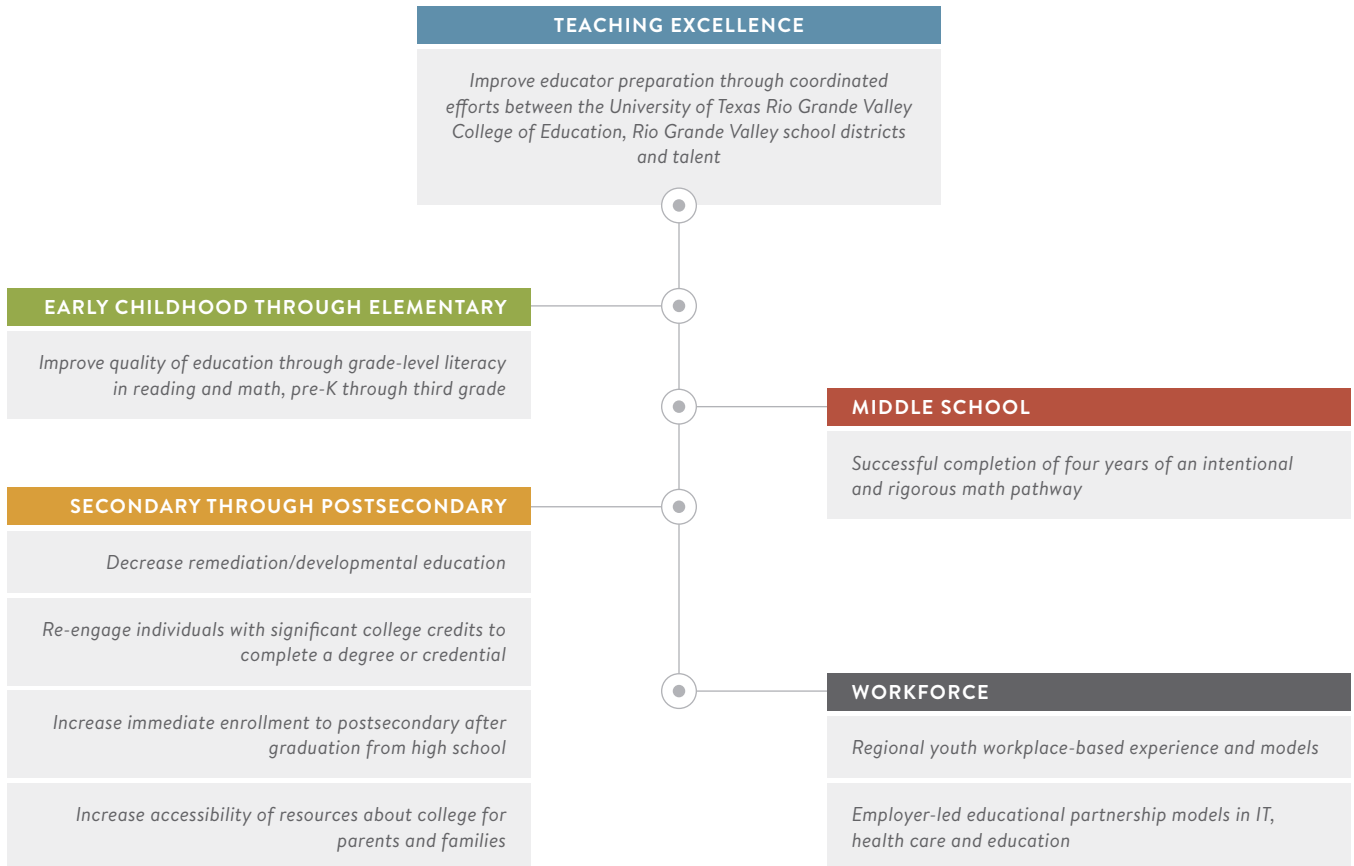
*Our work is community centered and depends on the voices of many organizations and individuals across the RGV.*



### DATA-DRIVEN

*We are evidence driven in our approach, and use shared data and metrics to drive constant improvement across the region.*

# RGV FOCUS STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



## 2018–2019 LEADERSHIP TEAM

The RGV FOCUS Leadership Team works side by side with the RGV FOCUS Backbone and other community partners. Many thanks to the leaders who represent the organizations below for their dedication to the vision and mission of RGV FOCUS.

### PRE-K THROUGH 12





PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION

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COMMUNITY-BASED

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BUSINESS

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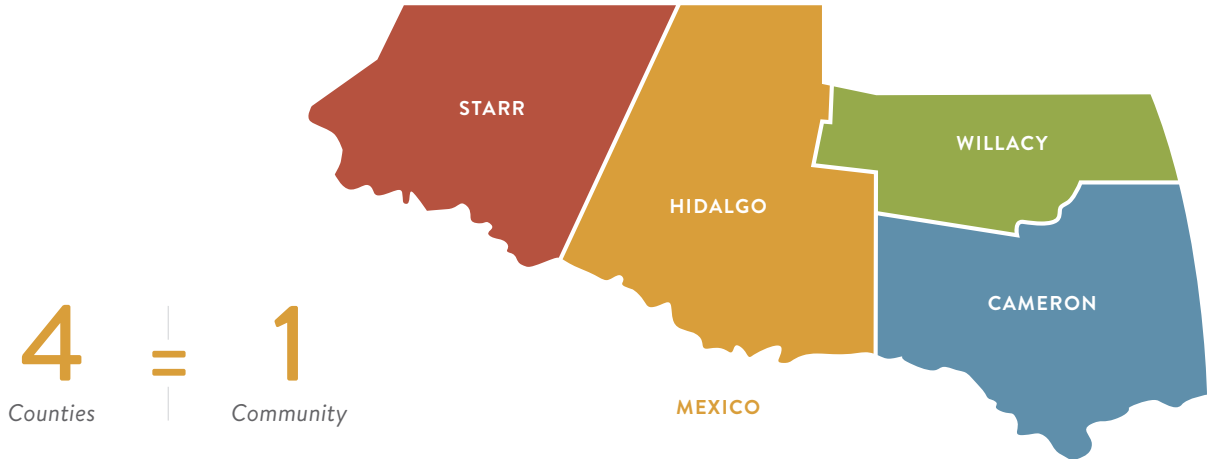


## ABOUT THE RIO GRANDE VALLEY

The Rio Grande Valley is full of opportunity. It is a region where many residents are bilingual, biliterate and bicultural. This is a great asset and important strength for businesses already in the RGV, as well as businesses looking to settle in the region.

The RGV's population is growing but, more importantly, so is its economy. Agriculture, tourism and retail are still important here, but the Valley is also seeing major growth in education, health care and manufacturing, as well as science, technology, engineering and math (STEM).

This is very positive for the RGV because these jobs all bring higher wages, which will allow families to build a thriving community.



# RGV BY THE NUMBERS



1.35m

People call the Rio Grande Valley Home

The median age in the Rio Grande Valley



of the population in the Rio Grande Valley is Latino



In the RGV, **32%** of the population lives below the poverty threshold, compared to **16%** in the state



Of RGV residents 25 years old and older, **17%** have a bachelor's degrees or higher, compared to **29%** in that age group in the state and **31%** in the United States



37

and

360k

Public Independent School Districts

Students in public pre-K-12 (97% Latino)



4

and

72k

Public Institutions of Higher Education

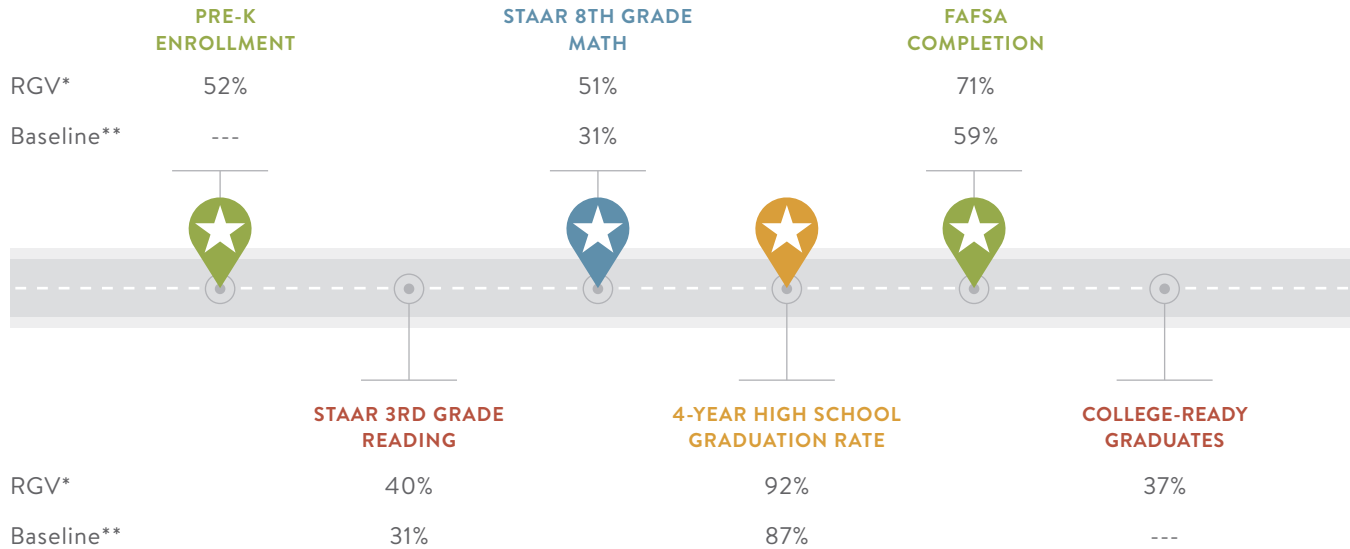
Public Higher Education Students (92% Latino)

## Sources:

- U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Educational Attainment, 2017 (most recent data available as of March 2019)
- Texas Education Agency Texas Academic Performance Report, 2018 report

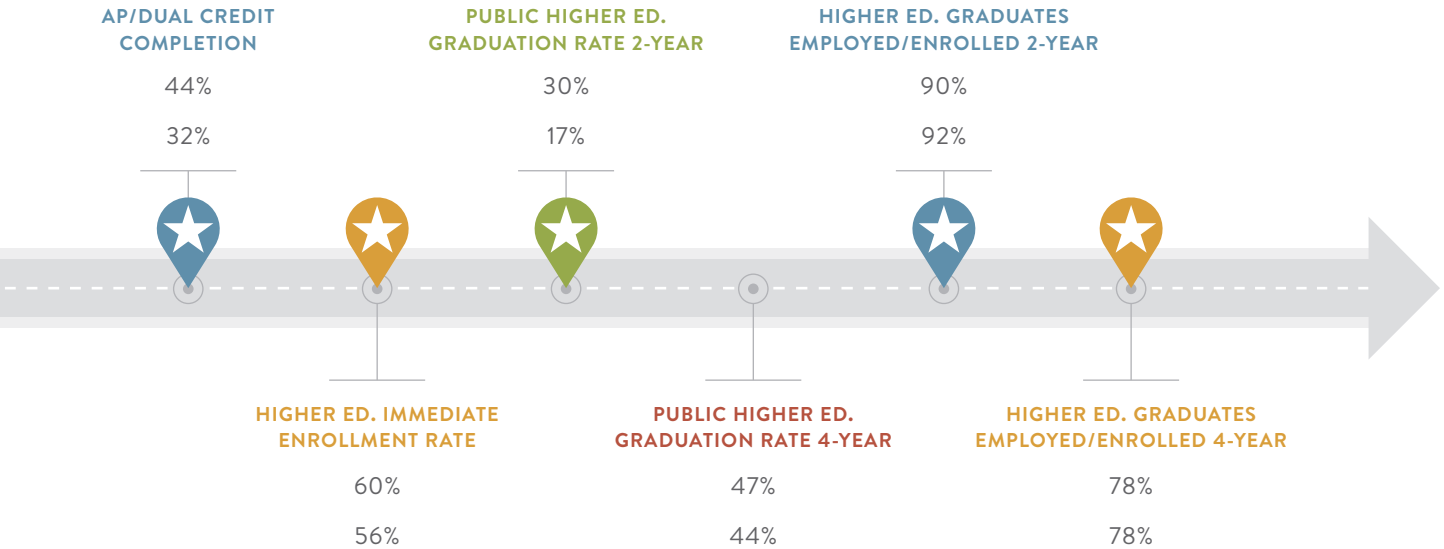
# MAKING A DIFFERENCE ALONG THE CRADLE-TO-CAREER EDUCATIONAL PATHWAY

 Matches or exceeds state performance



For additional data, visit [RGVFOCUS.ORG/SCORECARD](http://RGVFOCUS.ORG/SCORECARD)

\*Graduating Class of 2017 | \*\*2011-2012 Baseline



Sources:

- Texas Public Education Information Resource Pre-K Enrollment, 2018 report
- Texas Education Agency STAAR Aggregate Data at the “Meets Grade Level” standard, 2017-2018 school year
- Texas Education Agency Texas Academic Performance Report, 2018 report (HS graduate class of 2017), (9th-12th graders during the 2016-2017 school year)
- US Department of Education, FAFSA rates as of September 30, 2018
- Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, “HS Graduates Enrolled in Higher Ed” report (HS graduate class of 2017)
- Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, Accountability System (2018)

## CONTIGO, WE'RE THE BACKBONE THAT GUIDES THE WORK FORWARD

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RGV FOCUS' CHRIS COXON, EUGENIO LONGORIA SÁENZ AND KATHERINE DÍAZ

*back•bone (bak,bōn/) noun: The chief support of a system or organization; the mainstay.  
synonyms: mainstay, cornerstone, foundation, chief support, buttress, pillar  
“these firms are the backbone of our industrial sector”*

“The success of RGV FOCUS is based on the simple idea that together we can achieve more,” said Chris. “Working together is key, and we are proud to be the ‘backbone’ that connects, supports and guides the work.”

Chris is referring to the RGV FOCUS Backbone – the small and mighty team of three, made up of himself, Eugenio Longoria Sáenz and Katherine Díaz.

As part of an official collective impact initiative (see pages 2-3), the RGV FOCUS support staff is known as the *Backbone*. They are a team of passionate, experienced and dedicated individuals who work side by side and alongside the other RGV FOCUS members – the leadership team, work groups, councils and community partners – to create ideas, strategies and actions to achieve the initiative’s shared goals.

Individually, Chris, Eugenio and Katherine have their own special reasons why this work is important to them, but together, their combined passion and commitment to all students across the Rio Grande Valley forms a dependable and motivating support system that helps to guide the work forward.



To read the full story, visit  
[RGVFOCUS.ORG/STORIES](https://rgvfocus.org/stories)



*Left to right: Chris Coxon, Katherine Díaz  
and Eugenio Longoria Sáenz, RGV FOCUS*

## CONTIGO, WE'RE USING DATA TO GIVE MORE STUDENTS ACCESS TO COLLEGE

UNITED WAY OF SOUTHERN CAMERON COUNTY'S TRACI WICKETT AND BROWNSVILLE ISD'S DAHLIA AGUILAR WITH RGV FOCUS' EUGENIO LONGORIA SÁENZ

"Thank you to RGV FOCUS for their support in compiling and analyzing the data, and we applaud the spirit of partnership that drives their collective work," says the *All In* 2017–2018 Annual Report.

Access to the clear and thought-provoking data and data strategies provided by RGV FOCUS has helped the *All In* team, a partnership led by the United Way of Southern Cameron County, to realize that using data to form and tweak plans and to measure outcomes is critical to their success.

*All In* and RGV FOCUS partner Brownsville ISD is now a leader in the Valley when it comes to seniors completing and submitting their FAFSAs (Free Application for Federal Student Aid). "Students realize now that, when they complete the FAFSA, they will have the opportunity and the funds to go to college," said Dahlia.

"This success came about because data showed us that there is a clear link between FAFSA completion and going to college," said Traci. Eugenio is encouraged that RGV FOCUS partners are embracing the use of data "to build a foundation of support for students to increase their success. These plans in action show students we are with them, side by side, through their entire journey."

*"This success came about because data showed us that there is a clear link between FAFSA completion and going to college."*

**TRACI WICKETT**

*President and CEO of United Way of Southern Cameron County*



To read the full story, visit  
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Left to right: Traci Wickett, United Way of Southern Cameron County; Eugenio Longoria Sáenz, RGV FOCUS; and Dahlia Aguilar, Lopez Early College High School in Brownsville ISD

## CONTIGO, WE'RE DISCOVERING WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A HISPANIC-SERVING COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS RIO GRANDE VALLEY'S PATRICIA ALVAREZ MCHATTON AND JANINE SCHALL WITH RGV FOCUS' EUGENIO LONGORIA SÁENZ

“The RGV FOCUS Backbone team brings the right people to the table. The leaders RGV FOCUS gathers share our vision, hopes and dreams for what we want to be,” said Patty. Side by side, teachers, school and district leaders, students and families, community-based leaders and college faculty are working together to develop new approaches for preparing teachers to provide all Rio Grande Valley (RGV) students from early childhood through college the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in school and achieve meaningful careers.

Building upon fresh ideas and a collaborative approach prompted by the RGV FOCUS team, the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley's (UTRGV) College of Education and P-16 Integration (CEP) launched a Special Interest Research Group (SIRG) initiative focused on discovering what it means to be a Hispanic-Serving College of Education (HSCOE), and how understanding this guides teacher training and higher education. “The SIRG research results were so rich and valuable to us that we realized sharing our work would benefit the broader HSCOE community, both inside and outside of the RGV,” said Janine.

*“The SIRG research results were so rich and valuable to us that we realized sharing our work would benefit the broader HSCOE community, both inside and outside of the RGV.”*

**JANINE SCHALL**

*Chair of Bilingual and Literacy Studies,  
University of Texas Rio Grande Valley*



To read the full story, visit  
[RGVFOCUS.ORG/STORIES](https://rgvfocus.org/stories)



*Left to right: Janine Schall, UTRGV;  
Patty Alvarez McHatton, UTRGV;  
Eugenio Longoria Sáenz, RGV FOCUS;  
and Alma Rodriguez, UTRGV*

## CONTIGO, WE'RE IMPROVING OUR COMMUNITY AND THE ENTIRE REGION

LYFORD CISD'S EDUARDO INFANTE AND UNITED WAY OF SOUTHERN CAMERON COUNTY'S TRACI WICKETT WITH RGV FOCUS' KATHERINE DÍAZ

“We are smarter together than we are apart,” Eduardo said about being asked six years ago to “sit at the RGV FOCUS table” with other Rio Grande Valley leaders. “RGV FOCUS has helped us come together to identify obstacles, share data and improve education not only in our own districts, but across the Rio Grande Valley.” To Eduardo, this is a major leap forward.

Katherine agrees, “The culture of trust among RGV FOCUS partners helps us improve student success in the Rio Grande Valley.”

One partnership that had great results this past year is between Lyford CISD and the United Way of Southern Cameron County. Together, they brought VITA, the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program, to the Lyford community and engaged LCISD students to join in as well. “We trained and certified students to be official IRS tax preparers,” said Traci. “Bringing VITA to Lyford has been so beneficial! It helped students build skills and saved families money at the same time.”

*“RGV FOCUS has helped us come together to identify obstacles, share data and improve education not only in our own districts, but across the Rio Grande Valley.”*

### EDUARDO INFANTE

Superintendent, Lyford CISD and  
2018-2019 RGV FOCUS Co-Chair



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*Left to right: Eduardo Infante, Lyford CISD;  
and Katherine Díaz, RGV FOCUS*

## BUILT ON A SOLID FOUNDATION

WITH GRATITUDE TO OUR FUNDERS WHO WORK SIDE BY SIDE WITH US TO SUPPORT OUR WORK AND HELP US ACHIEVE OUR GOALS.

BILL & MELINDA  
GATES foundation



W.W. CARUTH, JR.  
FOUNDATION  
at Communities Foundation of Texas



GREATER TEXAS  
FOUNDATION



Lumina™  
FOUNDATION

### ABOUT EDUCATE TEXAS AND COMMUNITIES FOUNDATION OF TEXAS

Educate Texas is proud to be a strategic initiative of the Communities Foundation of Texas (CFT). CFT works with families, companies and nonprofits to build thriving communities across the state through a variety of charitable funds, defined strategic grant-making and key initiatives. Together, we see education as the foundation of a thriving community. This relationship uniquely positions Educate Texas to turn ideas into action to make sure every generation is smarter, stronger and more capable than the last.

In 2012, Educate Texas and CFT partnered with Valley-based leaders to establish RGV FOCUS. In addition to RGV FOCUS, Educate Texas' efforts in the Rio Grande Valley include work supporting Texas Regional STEM Degree Accelerator, Investing in Innovation (I3) Early College Expansion Project and the Texas Education Agency's (TEA) College and Career Readiness School Models Network of T-STEM Academies, Early College High Schools and Pathways in Technology Early College High School (P-TECH)/Industry Cluster Innovative Academies (ICIA).



EDUCATE TEXAS  
at COMMUNITIES FOUNDATION of TEXAS

COMMUNITIES  
FOUNDATION of TEXAS



# LOOKING FORWARD

We have much to celebrate about the work we have done side by side so far in the Rio Grande Valley! Our focus and investments in education – all along a student’s journey from pre-K to career – are the path to a thriving community and a prosperous future for students, families and the region overall. The progress we have made is so notable that the RGV is now not only a model for Texas, but also for the nation in developing best methods for educating Latino students.

But we are not finished yet. There are still many opportunities to seize.

It takes a continued commitment – of time, resources and funding – to achieve our mission to transform college readiness, access and success in the four counties of the Rio Grande Valley so all RGV learners achieve a degree or credential that leads to a meaningful career.

CONTIGO, it is working. CONTIGO, we can keep it going. CONTIGO, we can change lives.

Join us.



To join us, visit  
[RGVFOCUS.ORG/JOINUS](https://RGVFOCUS.ORG/JOINUS)



**RGV FOCUS**

o COLLABORATION with EDUCATE TEXAS

Contigo, we can change lives.  
Join Us.



*email [rgvfocus@cftexas.org](mailto:rgvfocus@cftexas.org) or visit [rgvfocus.org/joinus](http://rgvfocus.org/joinus)*