

2023 ANNUAL REPORT

# JUNTOS PODEMOS MÁS

DOING MORE  
TOGETHER



RGV FOCUS

a COLLABORATION with EDUCATE TEXAS

## COLLABORATING FOR TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGE

Since 2012, RGV FOCUS has partnered with education, business, and community leaders to help Rio Grande Valley students receive the education they need to achieve meaningful careers and lives. This annual report shares the most recent annual data and stories about our work from across our community and emphasizes that *juntos podemos más*. Collaboration is essential to doing more for our students so they can succeed in school, in the workforce, and in life.

Working together, we will achieve transformative change in the Rio Grande Valley.

RGV FOCUS IS COMMITTED TO SUPPORTING EDUCATE TEXAS' STATEWIDE 2025 STRATEGIC PLAN BY ACHIEVING **TWO ESSENTIAL GOALS IN OUR REGION**

- Contributing to the Educate Texas statewide goal of 85,000 new postsecondary degrees, credentials, and certificates by 2025
- Enabling schools to better attract, prepare, develop, and retain more high quality and diverse teachers to improve our state's effective teaching workforce

## 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.

# CRADLE TO CAREER PATHWAY

★ RGV 2023 Average Meets or Exceeds the State 2023 Average ● RGV 2023 ● RGV 2022



For more information and data visit the expanded scorecard at [EdTx.org/RGVscorecard](https://EdTx.org/RGVscorecard)

## RIO GRANDE VALLEY BY THE NUMBERS

**1.3M**  
POPULATION

**30**  
MEDIAN AGE

**370,451**  
Public Pre-K-12 Students (95% Latino)

**67,181**  
Public Higher Education Students (92% Latino)

**92%**  
LATINO  
POPULATION

**78%** of RGV residents have internet access, compared to **89%** in the state.



Only 14% of Hidalgo & Cameron County residents **25-34 years** old are earning at least a **\$50K** annual living wage.

In the RGV, **27%** of the population lives below the poverty threshold, compared to **14%** in the state.



**OF RGV RESIDENTS 25 YEARS OLD AND OLDER:**

**6%** have associate degrees, compared to **8%** in that age group in the state. **19%** have bachelor's degrees or higher, compared to **32%** in that age group in the state.

**27%**

of RGV latino residents live in poverty, compared to **14%** in the state.

**42%**

of RGV high school graduates are college-ready, compared to **42%** in the state.



**90%** of RGV teachers are Latino, compared to **30%** in the state. **14%** RGV teacher turnover rate, compared to **21%** in the state.



RGV teachers have an average of **12 years** experience, compared to **11 years** in the state.

# STORIES FROM OUR COMMUNITY

## POLICY IMPACT: HOUSE BILL 3 – TEACHER INCENTIVE ALLOTMENT AND OUTCOMES BONUS FUNDING IN THE RGV

Passed by the Texas Legislature in 2019, House Bill 3 (HB3) improves public education funding through key levers, including Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA) and College, Career, and Military Ready (CCMR) Outcomes Bonus Funding (OBF). RGV FOCUS has been working closely with partner school systems in the Rio Grande Valley to ensure that our K-12 partners have the tools and resources to leverage HB3 to benefit our region.

The Texas Impact Network (TIN), a collaboration between Educate Texas and the Commit Partnership, has been a key part of this work. **“We do this work through strong, locally connected intermediary partners, and RGV FOCUS is our stellar partner in the Rio Grande Valley,”** says TIN Executive Director Ben Mackey.

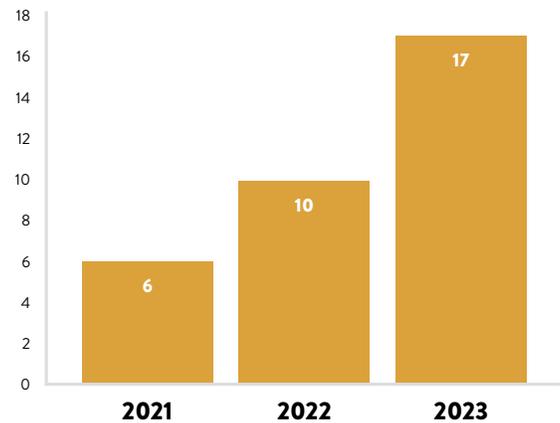
Over the last two years, the TIA allotment in the Rio Grande Valley has impacted the salaries of more than 1,300 teachers and tens of thousands of students in the region. **“Through the Teacher Incentive Allotment, most school systems in the RGV have not only been able to recognize and reward teacher effectiveness but also to increase the retention of effective teachers, which directly impacts student outcomes,”** says Dr. Socorro Espinoza, TIA Technical Assistance Consultant.

RGV FOCUS also launched the Rio Grande Valley CCMR Professional Learning Community (PLC) in Spring 2023. Through the PLC, RGV FOCUS has provided a platform for collaboration across districts, data-driven decision making, and sharing of best practices and strategies for enhancing CCMR initiatives and increasing post-secondary education and workforce opportunities for the region’s students.

According to Mackey, **“Through and alongside RGV FOCUS, the Valley continues to be an exemplary region for innovation and outcomes. For example, for the Class of 2022, the Rio Grande Valley stands out as a bright spot for statewide OBF, drawing down 23% of total possible OBF, compared to 14% for the state of Texas.”** The result is an estimated OBF drawdown of approximately \$28.5 million for districts across the Rio Grande Valley.

**\$16 MILLION IN TIA DRAWDOWN WAS AVAILABLE TO 17 DISTRICTS IN THE RGV.**

Districts receiving TIA funds has more than doubled since 2021.



Source: TEA TIA Funding Report, 2021-2023



## PARTNER SPOTLIGHT: REGION ONE EDUCATION SERVICE CENTER

Visionary leadership and a powerhouse team at the Region One Education Service Center (ESC 1) have facilitated increased partnerships with RGV FOCUS this year. We have strengthened our relationship with the service center to maximize opportunities for professional learning and collaboration and help design innovative approaches to our region’s challenges.

- **TxNSI Project** – RGV FOCUS brought the Texas Network for School Improvement to Region One, in collaboration with the University of Texas Charles A. Dana Center, for a pilot Rural Middle School Math Matters program impacting math instruction practices at five RGV school districts.
- **Education-to-Career Pathways** – Together with Region One’s Office of College, Career, and Life Readiness, as well as regional community colleges, RGV FOCUS is partnering towards ensuring the effective design and execution of dual credit programs in Valley districts.
- **Tri-Agency Regional Convener Grant** – RGV FOCUS has the privilege of sitting on Region One’s Advisory Board, helping to promote collaboration among education, workforce, and economic development organizations to enhance regional alignment and drive economic growth.

READ THE FULL STORIES AT [RGVFOCUS.ORG](https://rgvfocus.org)

## TEXAS PHILANTHROPY LEADERSHIP CIRCLE: EDUCATIONAL GRANTMAKERS VISIT THE RGV

In April 2024, Educate Texas hosted the Texas Philanthropy Leadership Circle (TPLC) in the Rio Grande Valley for the first time since 2018. The event gave 15 state and national funders a glimpse into the immense cultural wealth and assets unique to the RGV through presentations, panel discussions, and site visits to ARISE Adelante and the PSJA ISD Dr. Daniel P. King College & University Center. Dr. Kevin Peek, Economics Professor at South Texas College, used data to highlight the transformational economic and educational change in the Valley over the last 25 years. Karina Chapa, Executive Director of the Texas Association for Bilingual Education, spoke to the needs of emergent bilingual students and the gap in bilingual educators in the Valley. A “Fireside Chat” with Manny Vela, Vice President and COO of the Texas A&M University Higher Education Center at McAllen, rounded out event programming. The TPLC fostered collaboration among educational grantmakers, took a deep dive into the gaps and opportunities of the region, and identified potential for impactful investment in the RGV.



### Our Designations & Networks

### With heartfelt thanks to our funders who support our work



BILL & MELINDA  
GATES foundation

The Meadows  
Foundation  
*Serving the People of Texas*

StriveTogether®  
Every child. Cradle to career.



GREATER TEXAS FOUNDATION

TexasMutual®  
WORKERS' COMPENSATION INSURANCE

StriveTogether®  
Every child. Cradle to career.



W.W. CARUTH, JR. FUND  
at COMMUNITIES FOUNDATION of TEXAS

## ABOUT EDUCATE TEXAS & COMMUNITIES FOUNDATION OF TEXAS

In 2012, Educate Texas and Communities Foundation of Texas (CFT) partnered with Valley-based leaders to establish RGV FOCUS. Educate Texas is proud to be an initiative of Communities Foundation of Texas and, together, we are building thriving communities and a thriving education system for all Texas students. As a trusted change agent in Texas education, Educate Texas works side by side with partners through programs and policies to empower students to realize their dreams and fuel a thriving Texas.