



IMPACTING
SUSTAINABLE
ECONOMIC
GROWTH
IN THE
REGION...
ONE **VIDA**
AT A TIME

2016
ANNUAL REPORT



Valley Initiative for Development & Advancement

A message from the **Chairman of the Board**

Dear Friends and Partners,

These are interesting times!

Interesting because, whereas change often times creates concern and uncertainty, we are confident that South Texas will fall on the positive side of change. Interesting because changes to NAFTA will bring a focus on the US/Mexico border and that can only bring new employment opportunities to this region. Interesting because The United States has identified manufacturing and infrastructure as its primary investment focus and the Rio Grande Valley is uniquely poised to benefit from that directive. Interesting because in recent days the federal government has highlighted vocational trades, two- year degrees, and apprenticeship programs have been highlighted as a necessity to create and fill US jobs and has committed to fund those programs. For VIDA these are exciting times! When we hear what is promised and we know that the Administration for Children and Families will soon be releasing findings of depth and substance on VIDA's program outcomes, we are optimistic that those training dollars will follow the programs with data driven, historical results in addressing self-sufficiency and with direct economic impact.

To all of our funding partners and program allies, thank you for continuing to navigate these waters with us. To all of the VIDA participants and graduates, congratulations! You are the only measure of VIDA's success. Keep up the good work and remember that part of success is civic involvement; stay informed and stay engaged!

Mr. Eduardo Anaya



Chairman of the Board

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Sister Mignonne Konecny-IAF



Philosophy

Our philosophy is very simple. Well-trained, well-educated people will not only be ready for tomorrow's jobs, but they will also be able to live more prosperous, healthy, and happy lives. The ultimate goal is job retention, not just job placement. Long-term employment will develop strong citizens who can support their families and who are taxpayers who generate a clear return on investment of federal, state, local and private funding. Our graduates not only help the families they support and the businesses that now employ them, but their ability to successfully rise from the ranks of the low-income helps us all. Their increased earnings enhance their contribution to our tax system and reduces their dependence on public assistance. VIDA has demonstrated a model for success by graduating participants into high-skilled, high-wage in-demand occupations that normally were jobs unfilled or filled at a very high cost by people outside of our community.

History & Services

Valley Initiative for Development and Advancement (VIDA) is a community based, non-profit 501 (c) (3) agency. Created in 1995, VIDA was the result of a local effort led by community leaders of Valley Interfaith and private industry business leaders. The impetus was the need to empower the underserved residents of our region with the tools, education and training to become self-sufficient while fueling the growth of the existing employers and increasing the recruitment of new investment to the area by developing a highly skilled workforce. Since its inception, VIDA's mission remains constant, to formulate new institutional relationships in the Rio Grande Valley that simultaneously address employers' needs for skilled workers and link the area's unemployed and underemployed with high skilled, high wage jobs identified in the region. VIDA works closely with the business sector, training providers, and community based organizations to develop a skilled workforce that will meet the demands of employers in the Rio Grande Valley.

Impacting Sustainable Economic Growth in the Region...One **VIDA** at a time.

Annual Summary FY 2015-2016

FY 2015 - 2016 AT A GLANCE

- > 58% Between the Ages of 25-50
- > 63% Female
- > 93% Public Assistance at or Below National Poverty
- > 35% Single Parents
- > 46% Two Dependent Children or more in Household

733 Economically Disadvantaged Adults Served

Average Salary Reported for 2015-2016 Graduates

\$36,774.40

GRADUATES COMPLETERS

ASSOCIATES
48%

BACHELOR'S
6%

CERTIFICATE
23%

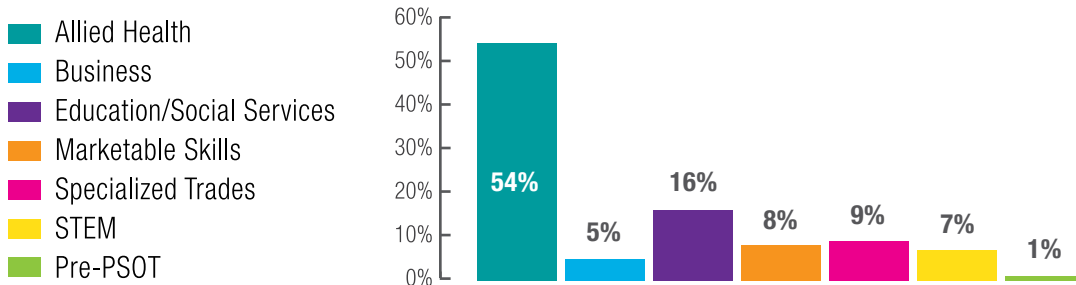
MARKETABLE SKILLS
21%

PRE-PSOT
2%

AVERAGE WAGES BY DEGREE/CERTIFICATE & TOP PROGRAMS OF STUDY WITHIN EACH DEGREE



POST SECONDARY CREDENTIALING BY INDUSTRY



ACTIVE STUDENTS

ASSOCIATES
77%

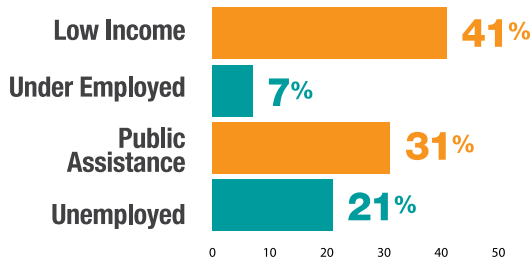
BACHELOR'S
8%

CERTIFICATE
14%

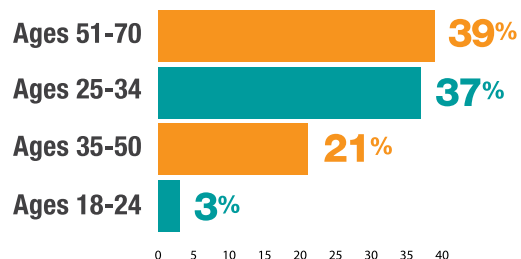
MARKETABLE SKILLS
1%

PRE-PSOT
0%

FINANCIAL ELIGIBILITY



PARTICIPANT AGE



*Some participants meet more than one eligibility factor

**For every one dollar invested in the program,
there is a return of \$12.12 to the communities we serve.**

Funding Partners

VIDA REVENUE SUMMARY SEPTEMBER 30, 2016

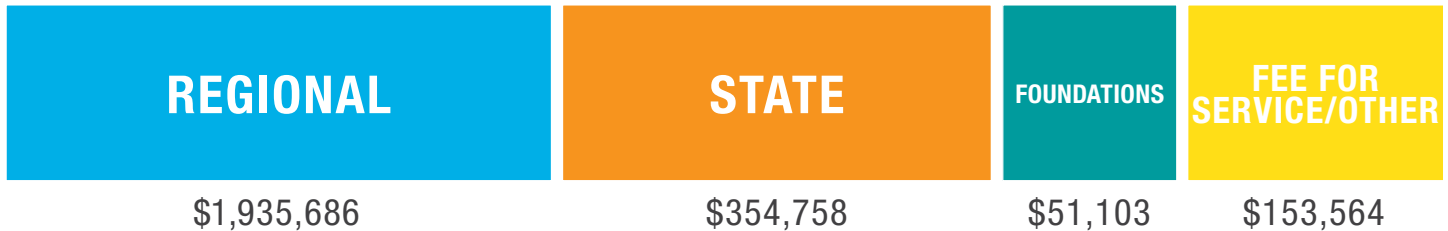
Alamo EDC
Brownsville EDC
City of La Feria
McAllen EDC

City of Mercedes
Pharr EDC
City of Mercedes EDC
Weslaco EDC

Hidalgo County
City of Raymondville EDC
Austin Community
College District

Texas Veterans Commission
Laura & John Arnold Foundation
Abt Associates Inc.
BBVA Compass Bank

The Trull Foundation
The Raul Tijerina Jr. Foundation
Bank of America



TUITION RATES ON THE RISE

TUITION RATES ARE NOT DECREASING. ON THE CONTRARY THEY ARE RISING EVERY YEAR. WHAT DOES THIS MEAN TO LOW INCOME FAMILIES? CAN THEY STILL GO TO COLLEGE?

Aside from paying bills, and using what little money they have, families now need to set aside a bigger share for college costs. In many cases, students will seek financial aid, loans, or financial assistance from organizations like VIDA. Thus, it is imperative for VIDA's funding partners to continue investing to address self-sufficiency issues in underserved communities. If nothing is done, the increasing financial distress will propel students to drop out of college, give up their dream of becoming self-sufficient, and remain stuck in the same poverty cycle.



BBVA COMPASS: A DAY OF SERVICE

On June 18, 2016 VIDA teamed with BBVA Compass Bank to host "A Day of Service." The event was designed specifically for VIDA participants interested in learning about the process of purchasing a home of their own. Twenty soon to be VIDA graduates eager to buy a home of their own learned and discussed topics from personal finance to homebuyer contract options. BBVA Compass partners shared financial and technical expertise to help students understand the critical component finance plays in our everyday lives. With "A Day of Service," our funding partner, BBVA Compass Bank seeks to strengthen underserved communities through financial literacy.



Funding Partners

\$46,384

Average Salary for Veterans upon Graduation

67

Total Veterans Served

99%

Persistence Rate for Veterans

FUND FOR VETERANS' ASSISTANCE GRANT

VIDA for Veterans was funded through the Fund for Veterans' Assistance Program. The project addressed barriers and service gaps that hindered our veterans and their families when they tried to become employable civilians. Our region has been struggling to provide a centralized, coordinated system to access veterans' service providers and their programs. There is also a lack of short-term job training programs for veterans to earn industry recognized credentials and certifications. Thus, Vida for Veterans addressed these barriers and service gaps through assessment, referrals, financial assistance, support services and training. A total of 67 veterans and their family members were helped to become more competitive in the workforce so that they can enter high-demand, high-wage occupations where they can earn family-sustaining living wages. As a result, our veterans are becoming part of a high-skilled workforce which is crucial for economic advancement in the Lower Rio Grande Valley.



Sgt David Facundo, VIDA Veteran Outreach Coordinator reviews VIDA web page and enrollment process with veterans

The TVC program is supported by a grant from the Texas Veterans Commission Fund for Veterans' Assistance.

The Fund for Veterans' Assistance provides grants to organizations serving veterans and their families.

SUCCESS STORY



Sanzabedee Guerrero

Sanzabedee enlisted in the United States Army at the age of 18. After boot camp, he was deployed to both Iraq and Afghanistan. While deployed, he was injured several times and after serving four years, Sanzabedee decided it was time to leave the Army. When he arrived stateside, he moved from town to town because he felt he did not belong anywhere. As a father of three and separated from his wife, he decided to go to college and pursue his dream of becoming a nurse. Sanzabedee needed to find a career to be able to provide for his children. He enrolled in college at the University of Texas-Pan American (UTPA), now known as University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV), and was accepted into the Nursing Program. Sanzabedee proudly graduated and is now working as a registered nurse at the McAllen Medical Center earning \$90,000 a year plus benefits. He credits VIDA for his success and added that without the assistance from VIDA he could not accomplish his goal of becoming a nurse.

Funding Partners

VIDA'S SELF-SUFFICIENCY PIPELINE FOR WOMEN



THE RAUL TIJERINA JR. FOUNDATION

The Raul Tijerina Jr. Foundation is determined to improve quality of life in the Lower Rio Grande Valley by investing in nonprofits that help advance education and health. With their investment in VIDA's Self-Sufficiency

Pipeline for Women, a total of ninety-six families with single mothers as head of households were served. VIDA participants seeking a postsecondary education received financial assistance with wrap around

support services including tuition fees, books, childcare, intensive case management, and transportation assistance as determined through an individual assessment of need.

Grant Period: February 24, 2016 to February 24, 2017

\$42,161

Average Salary for GTF Graduates/Completer's

96

Total Served

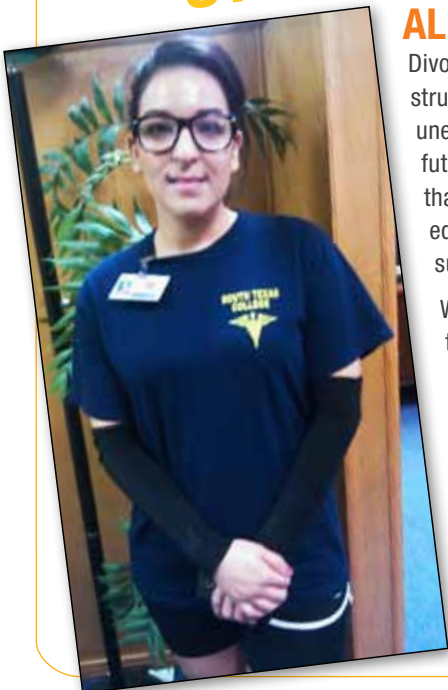
100%

Graduation Rate

100%

Persistence Rate

SUCCESS STORY



ALISA VALDEZ

Divorced mother of two, Alisa Valdez found it a daily struggle to support her family because she was unemployed. Desperate for a better life and a better future for her two children, Alisa came to understand that the only way to a better life would be to get an education that would allow her to earn a family-sustaining wage.

With dedication and the resilience needed to better their lives, Alisa decided to pursue her dream of becoming a Physical Therapy Assistant by enrolling at South Texas College. She had learned about VIDA and how they might help her, so she applied for assistance and was accepted. The wraparound services that VIDA provided included financial assistance and weekly case management which gave her the ability to concentrate on her studies and focus on her children's needs.

Alisa's sacrifice and determination paid off when she graduated in the Spring of 2016 and received her Associates Degree as a Physical Therapy Assistant. Today, Alisa is employed at Jump Start Therapy earning \$87,360 per year with full benefits. She is thankful for the immense assistance and support she received from VIDA with the help from the Raul Tijerina Jr. Foundation. Her dream of being a better parent without constantly worrying about her economic standing came true.

Success Stories



Elisa Hernandez

Air Force Reserve veteran and single mother, Elisa Hernandez, a resident of Edinburg, often found it difficult to stay on top of her financial situation. In dire straits, Elisa had resorted to using her credit card so she and her son could survive.

One day she came across VIDA, and spoke with one of our counselors to learn more about how our program could help her obtain the education she knew she needed in order to provide for her son. Once accepted into VIDA's program, Elisa's case manager guided her as she attended South Texas College to

pursue an Associate's Degree in Nursing while being a full time mom and serving part time with the Air Force.

With guidance, support, and financial assistance from VIDA, as well as Elisa's commitment and determination to provide for her family, she was able to walk the stage in the Fall of 2015. She is now employed with Superior Health Plans as a Registered Nurse earning \$70,000 plus benefits!

RISING STAR



Kristina is all smiles knowing her life is about to change for the better!

Kristina Gaytan

Kristina Gaytan, a single mother of three was struggling to make ends meet. She was tired of living pay check to pay check and did not want to rely on public assistance anymore. She believed she had so much more to contribute to her community and to her children. Although Kristina feared her disability might make it difficult for her to finish her program of study, she knew that if she could find some assistance and support to help her take care of her children and if she studied really hard she could go to school and prove to herself and everyone else that she has the ability to accomplish what she set out to do.

Immediately, Kristina signed up at South Texas College (STC) and began working on an Associates Degree in Business Management. Although Kristina was glad to have taken the first step by enrolling in classes, she knew she needed childcare assistance and financial help. Worried about her future, Kristina began looking for childcare assistance that could

facilitate and speed up her studies. One day, as she was walking through campus she met and spoke to a VIDA counselor about her situation. Instantly, Kristina signed up for help and was accepted. Today, Kristina is determined to complete her post-secondary education. With VIDA's intensive case management, guidance, and financial assistance Kristina is on track to graduate Fall 2017 with her degree in Business Management!

RISING STARS



Juan Arevalo

Marine Corps veteran and McAllen resident, Juan Arevalo found himself in a dead-end after a major accident left him with multiple injuries. Unemployed and facing several personal issues, Juan could have simply given up after his accident, but he knew he did not want to live his life consumed in the what ifs. He was determined to move forward and do something positive so he took the initiative by enrolling at South Texas College (STC) to earn his Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning, & refrigeration Technician Certification (HVAC).

With VIDA's financial support, educational and motivational counseling, and with Juan's dedicated perseverance, he was able to overcome the many barriers he faced and proudly graduated from the HVAC program in the Fall of 2016. Juan is currently looking forward to the new opportunities his education has given him and is eagerly seeking employment!



Onasis Rodriguez

Divorced parent of two, Onasis Rodriguez struggled to make ends meet. He was not satisfied with his quality of life. Onasis wanted to pursue a career that would help him support his family and obtain a stable job.

Wanting to pursue his dream of becoming a nurse seemed out of reach for him until he heard about VIDA. He knew he wanted to help others while also caring for his family so the nursing program at South Texas College (STC) seemed a good fit for him. Worried about how he would pay for school and still help his family was a huge barrier for him until he applied for assistance and was accepted into VIDA's program.

With persistence and determined to provide a better life for his family, Onasis graduated in the Fall of 2016. He shares how much his life has changed for the better and reports that he is working at his dream job as a nurse at Rio Grande Regional Hospital earning \$55,744 per year.

Funding Partners



On January 26, 2017 Ocean Gate Hospitality, holding company for Holiday Inn Express & Suites and Tru-Home 2; both hotels in the City of Edinburg announced a corporate donation of \$5,000. Owners Vic, Nitin, and Cookie Kasan made an investment in the economically disadvantaged adults in their community that are working hard to get a college degree, break through, and gain family sustaining employment.

Monica Vega, Director of Sales and Marketing, and other representatives from Ocean Gate Hospitality visited VIDA's office to present the check to VIDA's Board of Directors. They were deeply impressed by VIDA's ability to change the lives of entire family units and its demonstrated economic impact to the region.

Ms. Vega shared Mr. Kasan's message to VIDA Board and Staff. "We do not usually walk away with an urgent desire to donate. But this was different. We know business and we understand what hard work and dedication will do for a family. We wanted to do something to help make that happen."

The Trull Foundation

The Trull Foundation is concerned with low resource communities in Texas which is why the foundation commits to providing support services that low skilled participants need to enter high-demand, high-wage jobs. With the Trull Foundation's investment in the Lower Rio Grande Valley, VIDA participants have gone on to work at family sustaining careers that consequently pulled them out of poverty and are therefore able to contribute back to society.



Bank of America

Bank of America believes in advancing economic mobility by addressing workforce development and education issues in underserved populations. Understanding that the best way to address economic self-sufficiency is with an education, Bank of America has decided to invest in the VIDA Skills Development and Job Training Project. The project aims to help low income veterans and the Hidalgo and Cameron counties' underserved population become self-sufficient by giving them access to an education and training needed to gain highly paid skills in the workforce.

***For every one dollar invested in the program,
there is a return of \$12.12 to the communities we serve.***

Economic Impact Study 2015 - University of Texas Pan American, Data & Information Systems Center (DISC)

Community Service



Keeping Mercedes Beautiful



Pharr Operation Clean Sweep



VIDA Veteran Cleanup Group Photo

Cities and counties from across the Valley have been investing in VIDA's participants since 1995. They have been, and continue to be, unwavering in their commitment to education and job training because they understand how these can act as a catalyst for empowerment and positive change. They are improving the quality of life of families, breaking the cycle of poverty, and are making a solid investment in economic development in the region. Their support of VIDA's participants is changing the lives of people who are struggling to make ends meet.

Our supporters are committed to success. That's why VIDA participants are required to commit as well. They commit to going

to school full-time, to making the grade, to attending classes, and to participating in the weekly counseling sessions with VIDA Career Counselors/Case Managers. And finally, VIDA participants commit to community service so they can give back to the community that has given them new possibilities.

VIDA is changing the way participants view community service. When many enter our program they think of community service as a chore to complete as part of their commitment to VIDA. But it doesn't take long for them to realize that is not the case. Participants quickly learn that community service is a chance to give back to the communities that invest in them.

“Volunteers do not necessarily have the time; they just have the heart.”

-Elizabeth Jean Andrew

CITIZENS IN ACTION
**VALLEY
INTERFAITH**
CIUDADANOS EN ACCION

Valley Interfaith is a non-partisan, broad-based organization of 45 churches and public schools throughout the Rio Grande Valley. Valley Interfaith was formed to give a voice to the people who are usually excluded from the major decisions that affect their lives and offers people the opportunity to develop the leadership skills necessary to be full participants in society. Through Valley Interfaith 60,000 families join together to develop community leaders who participate in the economic and political decision of public life. VIDA was the result of a local effort led by community leaders of Valley Interfaith and private industry business leaders. We continue to partner and empower the underserved residents of our region with the tools, education and training to become self-sufficient while fueling the growth of the existing employers and increasing the recruitment of new investment to the area by developing a highly skilled workforce.

National & Regional Collaborations



Workforce Solutions, under the direction of the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC), is one of 28 local workforce development boards located throughout the state. This workforce development board serves Starr, Hidalgo, Cameron and Willacy counties through a network of partners. The primary goal of TWC and the 28 local workforce development boards is to

respond to the needs of Texas employers and workers through locally designed market-driven workforce development initiatives. WFS assists VIDA in recruiting participants, identifying demands in the workforce and whenever possible we leverage resources to best meet the needs of the program participants.

www.wfsolutions.org



In the Rio Grande Valley, Educate Texas launched RGV Focus, bringing together superintendents, higher education presidents, philanthropic

partners, and business and community leaders across four counties, including Cameron, Hidalgo, Starr and Willacy. This effort focuses

on more than 410,000 students — of which 90% or more are Hispanic and 86% are economically disadvantaged. RGV Focus supports the region by identifying opportunities to enable all learners to achieve a degree or credential which, ultimately, leads to a meaningful career.

www.edtx.org/collective-impact/initiatives

Institute for Women's Policy Research

VIDA is proud to have partnered with the Institute for Women's Policy Research, whom communicates research that inspires public dialogue, shapes policy, and improves the lives of women from all back grounds. With VIDA's help, the Institute for Women's Policy Research was able to discover

essential program strategies and methods helping connect underserved adult women populations seeking a postsecondary education with support services.

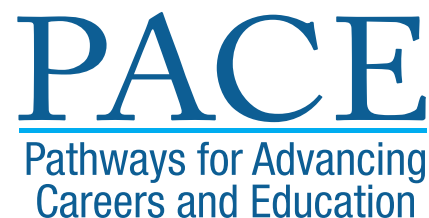
To read the complete publication please visit <https://iwpr.org/>.



The Pathways for Advancing Careers & Education

The Pathways for Advancing Careers and Education (PACE) study sought to research the effectiveness of nine career pathway programs, including VIDA. The rigorous evaluation of

next –generation strategies for increasing the economic self-sufficiency of low-income individuals and families helped assist over 470 participants.



VIDA Staff

Executive Staff

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Executive Director

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Daniel Mena
Accounting Manager

Janie Rea
Communications &
Outreach Manager

Laura Lopez
Senior Career Counselor/
Program Manager

Jolynda Arriaga
Career Counselor

Norberto Garcia
Career Counselor

Ruben Garcia
Career Counselor

Martha Morales
Case Aide

San Juanita Sanchez
Executive Assistant/Placement
Coordinator

Jessisca Tristan
Accounting Support Specialist



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www.vidacareers.org
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twitter.com/vida_careers



ESCALATING GAINS: PROJECT QUEST'S SECTORAL STRATEGY PAYS OFF

Our sister organization in San Antonio, Project Quest, took part in a randomized controlled trial study. For ten years, the program's impact on participants' earnings was assessed.

Findings demonstrate that Project Quest has proven that investing in underserved individuals can move people out of poverty. With intensive case managers helping them along the way and program covering costs such as tuition, books, transportation, and other personal expenses students can attain the higher education they always dreamed of. According to the study, once students completed the Project Quest program their average salary rose to a family sustaining income of \$38,000. It is evident that Project Quest is helping underserved students rise out of poverty to compete for high skill, high wage careers.

To read the full study please visit the following url: http://economicmobilitycorp.org/.../Escalating%20Gains_WEB.pdf

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Economic Impact Study 2015 - University of Texas Pan American, Data & Information Systems Center (DISC)



Valley Initiative for Development and Advancement

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