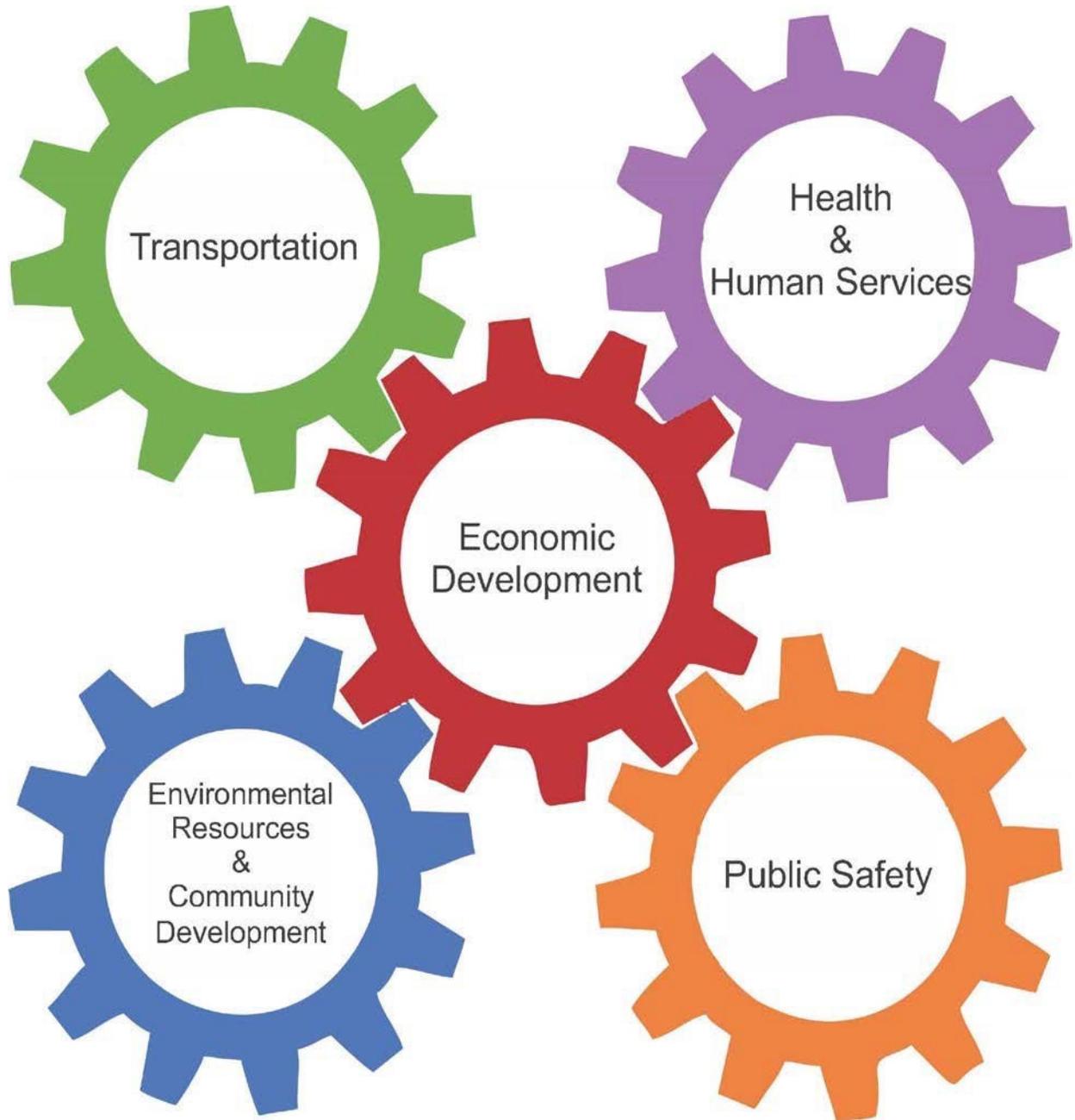# 2017-2022 LOWER RIO GRANDE VALLEY REGIONAL STRATEGIC PLAN

Regional Strategic Plan facilitated, planned and prepared by the Lower Rio Grande Development Council

The Lower Rio Grande Valley has established itself as the front door to the international marketplace with its vast regional assets such as efficient access to Mexico, diverse human capital, environmental advantages and thriving coastal ecology.

The 2017-2022 Regional Strategic Plan is categorized into five strategic vision domains which interconnect a spectrum of community service priorities to include:

- Economic Development
- Health & Human Services
- Public Safety
- Environmental Resources & Community Development
- Transportation

Each strategic vision domain is equally vital and codependent and through effective planning, collaboration and service delivery, ensures our residents and visitors the highest quality of life, now and for many years to come.

VISION STATEMENTS

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

As a highly desirable place to live, work and visit, the Lower Rio Grande Valley will ensure regional prosperity and a premier quality of life by sustaining a balanced and resilient international economy, developing an educated, qualified workforce and providing enhanced opportunities for commercial, industrial and entrepreneurial growth.

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

The Lower Rio Grande Valley will develop, coordinate and maintain a locally based system of resources and services such as access to quality health care, comprehensive care for vulnerable individuals and accessible services to safeguard a livable, healthy, safe community for persons of all ages.

ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Through effective services, education and preservation efforts, we shall strive for the healthiest environment where urban and rural community growth ensures residents safe and sustainable housing opportunities, appropriate infrastructure development and proactive planning for the conservation of the regions' vital agricultural and natural resources.

PUBLIC SAFETY

To ensure optimal public safety and protect all persons throughout the region, first responders, criminal justice, homeland security, and 9-1-1 will work collaboratively, with optimal training and resources to prevent, protect, respond and recover from threats.

TRANSPORTATION

Through effective planning and service delivery, people and goods will be able to move throughout the region safely and efficiently by using a seamless multi-modal transportation network.

Economic Development
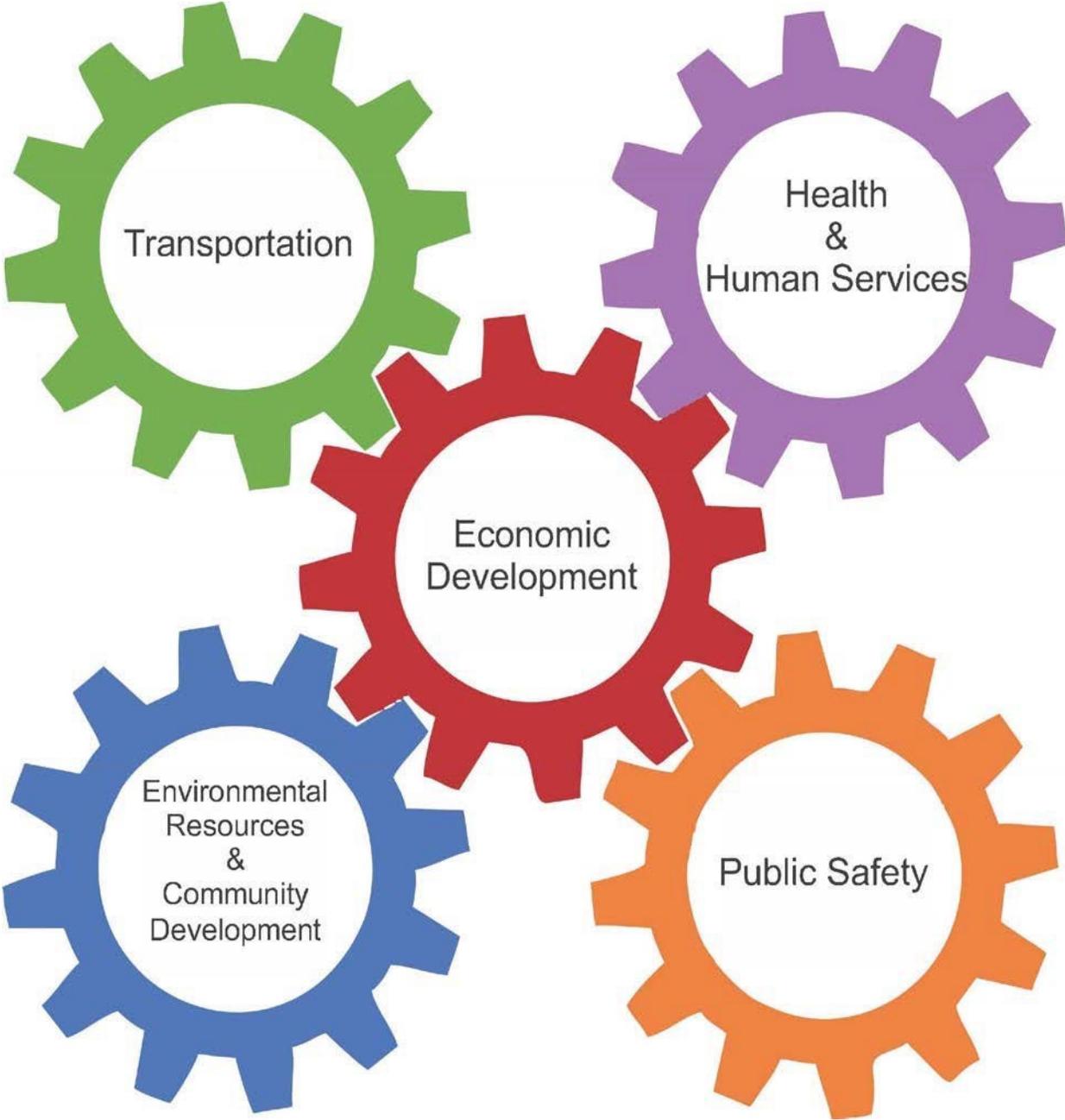
VISION STATEMENT

As a highly desirable place to live, work and visit, the Lower Rio Grande Valley will ensure regional prosperity and a premier quality of life by sustaining a balanced and resilient international economy, developing an educated, qualified workforce and providing enhanced opportunities for commercial, industrial and entrepreneurial growth.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOALS

GOAL (A). Enhance marketing strategies to current and potential residents and visitors which highlight the region's high quality of life factors such as outdoor recreational activities, ecotourism and geographic assets.

GOAL (B). Diversify economic development of the entire region (urban and rural) by developing collaborative strategies, resources and initiatives between business, industry, and government.

GOAL (C). Maintain international competitiveness by increasing foreign trade and direct investment opportunities.

GOAL (D). Ensure the region's human capital development includes essential strategies and resources to effectively prepare a well-educated, highly- skilled professional and technical workforce.

GOAL (E). Strengthen economic resilience through the advancement of emerging high-tech & high value industries (e.g., healthcare, tourism, construction, etc.), reinvestment of agricultural/aquaculture and plans for effective disaster recovery.

GOAL (F). Improve economic disproportionality through diversified strategies for small business incubation, entrepreneurial innovation, information technology infrastructure and access to capital.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

GOAL (A). Enhance marketing strategies to current and potential residents and visitors which highlight the region's high quality of life factors such as outdoor recreational activities, ecotourism and geographic assets.

A.1.   Partner with recreational, tourist, state and local governments to create a Regional Marketing Plan to enjoy, promote and protect the area's natural beauty and recreational opportunities.

A.2.   Promote, educate, and protect the region's historical preservation sites.

A.3.   Provide education on ecotourism in schools.

A.4.   Market World Birding Centers internationally and nationwide.

A.4.   Create and develop a "Regional" marketing strategy to market the Valley as one region.

A.5.   Support the Rio South Texas Economic Council (RSTEC).

A.6.   Provide financial support for recreational facilities and activities.

A.7.   Identify and inventory existing marketing strategies and the coordination of regional marketing efforts.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

GOAL (B). Diversify economic development of the entire region (urban and rural) by developing collaborative strategies, resources and initiatives between business, industry, and government.

B.1. Enable/encourage an ever advancing infrastructure to properly serve the demands of a growing regional economy.

B.2. Strengthen, expand and diversify the local tax base.

B.3. Encourage continued development of new industry clusters that encourage job growth and business expansion thereby creating a stronger and more stable economy.

B.4. Explore benefits of "Regional" MSA designation.

B.5. Create and develop a business alliance for new or expanding businesses.

B.6 Create an economic database of regional statistics to attract businesses.

B.7. Support changes in eligibility criteria to allow easier access to state funds for rural areas.

B.8. Support the need for expanding and improving public infrastructure.

B.9. Educate and inform Valley Legislators on the economic development needs of the small business community. (Purpose of the LRGV Regional Strategic Plan)

B.10. Access to affordable health insurance for self-employed small businesses.

B.11. Facilitate new business development through education of building requirements and planning regulations.

B.12. Promote State and International incentive programs for small businesses.

B.13. Training and support for improving the quality of customer service.

B.14. Update the LRGVDC's regional community profiles as a marketing tool.

B.15. Continue to sponsor and support the Regional Small Cities Coalition.

B.16. Conduct monthly meetings in each member city in order to connect as one region.

B.17. Provide information and training materials on economic development.

GOAL (B). SUPPORTING STRATIGES *(CONTINUED):*

B.18. Focus on each community's unique strength and available resources in order to develop and execute effective strategies for economic growth.

B.19. Provide information and resources on grant funding and sustainable programs for small and rural cities through the Council of Governments.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

GOAL (C).   Maintain international competitiveness by increasing foreign trade and direct investment opportunities.

C.1.   Provide education, regional training, and information to promote trade as a vital component of the region's economy.

C.2.   Identify and support the infrastructure needed to support the advancement of international trade including education on national trade policies.

C.3.   Support and promote designation of an "International" Metropolitan Statistical Area.

C.4.   Support border security and training initiatives using high technology.

C.5.   Continue to provide technical assistance to businesses for international trade.

C.6.   Create a small business trade program.

C.7.   Support infrastructure development for ports of entry and navigation districts.

C.8   Create a HUB Center in order to coordinate and conduct business with international partners.

C.9   Identify and promote International activities.

C.10. Promote "regional training conferences" in available federal, state, and local resources.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

GOAL (D). Ensure the region's human capital development includes essential strategies and resources effectively prepare a well-educated, highly-skilled professional and technical workforce.

D.1.   Support the advancement of emerging technology for job creation, communication, and collaboration among businesses, manufacturing, and educational entities.

D.2.   Support the expansion and financial assistance for technical and academic training.

D.3.   Designate a "Central Depository of Data & Information" on employers and available workforce including the development of a standardized data set.

D.4.   Develop models for public dissemination of information to improve access to workforce resources and opportunities for educational entities.

D.5.   Encourage coordination of adult education providers.

D.6.   Encourage access to internet resources.

D.7.   Identify all multilingual educational programs.

D.8.   Support a coordinated system between employers and educational providers to maximize skill training for the region's workforce.

D.9.   Encourage educational opportunities for attaining post-secondary degree.

D.10.   Encourage educational opportunities for leadership training and development.

D.11.   Promote life-long continuum (Pre-K and beyond) programs for drop-out prevention and recovery, alternative education/after school youth programs.

D.12.   Encourage the implementation of scientific, mathematic and literary principles in elementary and middle schools.

D.13.   Improve access to grant writing training.

D.14.   Identify and strengthen clearinghouse resources.

D.15.   Increase the number of professional degree programs available.

D.16.   Encourage using more financial literacy programs.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

GOAL (D). SUPPORTING STRATIGES *(CONTINUED):*

D.17. Continue identification of workforce needs and educational provider capabilities and utilize the annual updates.

D.18. Continue annual updates of targeted occupational study of the Lower Rio Grande Valley in coordination with the Texas Workforce System. (Now known as RGV Lead)

D.19. Establish real world skills and lifelong learning training programs.

D.20. Strengthen apprenticeship opportunities.

D.21. Increase access to workforce training in small cities and communities.

D.22. Develop Bi-national standards of training, certification and re-certification.

D.23. Improve the transition from community college to university through articulated agreements and 2+2 programs.

D.23. 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.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

GOAL (E). Strengthen economic resilience through the advancement of emerging high-tech & high value industries (e.g., healthcare, tourism, construction, etc.), reinvestment of agricultural/aquaculture and plans for effective disaster recovery.

E.1.   Promote the research and development of new technology for the purpose of job and wealth creation.

E.2.   Increase GIS training and funding opportunities.

E.3.   Support the technology to develop space transport infrastructure.

E.4.   Work with agricultural providers, community groups, and other agencies to provide support, technical assistance, and innovative opportunities for the expansion of agriculture, and agriculture related businesses, including sustainable agriculture.

E.5.   Identify markets for locally grown agricultural/aquaculture products and services.

E.6.   Support research for alternate products that can be grown in the region.

E.7.   Develop incentive programs and legislative action to encourage purchase of locally grown products.

E.8.   Research green products and byproducts.

E.9.   Promote sustainable agriculture in order to sustain the economic viability of farm operations.

E.10. Market and support farmers market days region wide.

E.11. To ensure that businesses and communities are able to continue their essential functions as rapidly as possible and receive the necessary training, resources and financial assistance needed for their economic recovery after a wide range of emergencies, including localized acts of nature, accidents and technological or attack related emergencies.

E.12. Conduct a regional assessment of flood control/drainage systems infrastructure for economic recovery.

E.13. Support the Regional Economic Adjustment Plan by providing annual updates.

E.14. Support coordination of flood control activities for the Lower Rio Grande Valley.

E.15. Request FEMA to update their maps in order to identify flood prone areas in the Valley.

GOAL (E). SUPPORTING STRATEGIES *(CONTINUED):*

E.15.   Continue the development of the EAP's regional flood/drainage plan by incorporating needed infrastructure and initiatives for Capital Improvement Projects.

E.16.   Conduct an economic disaster survey to assess and inventory important economic assets.

E.17.   Provide businesses with information, training, and resources to assist in their economic recovery after a disaster.

E.18.   Provide information and training materials on emergency/hurricane preparedness.

E.19.   Conduct a regional economic disaster recovery conference.

E.20.   Conduct Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) mini trainings for businesses.

E.21.   Provide information and resources on economy recovery strategies.

E.22.   Coordinate services and trainings with existing emergency management and emergency preparedness agencies/programs.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

GOAL (F). Improve economic disproportionality through diversified strategies for small business incubation, entrepreneurial innovation, information technology infrastructure and access to capital.

F.1.   Support the development of business incubators, high growth businesses, and entrepreneurial technology centers to enhance economic development and international competition.

F.2.   Promote and support the development of small business financing. (e.g. Micro-loans, Revolving Loan Fund Programs, PACE)

F.3.   Support the development of educational entrepreneurship initiatives.

F.4.   Continue the "MoneyWise" Financial Literacy Program and coordinate with other entities (GEAR UP, local banks, schools) on financial literacy.

F.5.   Provide Access to Information Technology to Rural and Urban Communities.

F.6.   Identify resources to help rural and small urban communities to access and acquire technology.

Health & Human Services

VISION STATEMENT

The Lower Rio Grande Valley will develop, coordinate and maintain a locally based system of resources and services such as access to quality health care, comprehensive care for vulnerable individuals and accessible services to safeguard a livable, healthy, safe community for persons of all ages.

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES GOALS

GOAL (A). Encourage development of a comprehensive strategy to address the impact of our local aging population.

GOAL (B). Enhance access to quality health care by expanding the current network of public/private service delivery systems for improved public health, disability management and disease prevention for medically vulnerable individuals.

GOAL (C). Enrich community health, safety and wellness through promotion of quality nutrition, physical activity, obesity prevention and support of active lifestyles.

GOAL (D). Promote expanded community resources and services for vulnerable and underserved populations such as Veterans, ex-offenders and homeless, and those with chronic health conditions in the region.

GOAL (E). Promote enhanced civic engagement and social inclusion across all ages by expanding volunteer opportunities, cultural diversity activities and fostering multi-generational interaction.

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

GOAL (A).   **Encourage development of a comprehensive strategy to address the impact of our local aging population.**

Note: Every day 10,000 baby boomers are turning 65. Regionally, we exceed national average as currently 1 in 5 individuals are age 60 and over in the tri-county area. Local and regional communities need to start the planning process to meet the needs of residents allowing them to age healthy and independent while contributing to their community.

SUPPORTING STRATEGIES:

A.1.   Urge local community leaders to evaluate resources, conduct resource mapping and identify gaps within their communities to determine readiness for an aging population.

A.2.   Adopt local county and individual municipality planning documents to develop a viable community resource network.

A.3.   Implement innovative techniques such as community resource "centers, portals, coordinators, mobile vehicles, etc." to assist aging individuals and their family members easier access to resources without having to negotiate multiple agencies and organizations.

A.4.   Provide training and technical assistance to local community leaders to address different aspects on the impact to their communities by an increasing population.

A.5.   Strategize to connect available resource directories such as 2-1-1, Area Agency on Aging, "Aging and Disability Resource Center", etc. to create a more seamless network of access.

A.6.   Expand and enhance community senior centers to promote quality aging in a socially engaging manner.

A.7 Increase advocacy and support from local community leaders to initiate and implement evidence-based programs that show outcome based results.

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

GOAL (B). Enhance access to quality health care by expanding the current network of public/private service delivery systems for improved public health, disability management and disease prevention for medically vulnerable individuals.

SUPPORTING STRATEGIES:

B.1. Work with health providers to recruit, develop or expand availability of medical professionals, medical homes and palliative care to address patient centered care.

B.2. Expand family education programs that coordinate maternal/infant care and healthy parenting principles.

B.3. Coordinate among local organizations the need to address food insecurity affecting families, the aged, children, and other special populations.

B.4. Increase advocacy and educational initiatives to support the awareness, treatment and prevention of mental health, suicide, substance abuse, homelessness, and individuals with disabilities.

B.5. Support further development of health education resources such as county indigent programs, Regional Diabetes Research Institute, family crisis and assistance support centers.

B.6. Support and expand opportunities for innovative medical treatment approaches and pilot therapeutic programs.

B.7. Advocate for federal and state legislative support for health care policies and law to address service and resource gaps.

B.8. Support healthcare opportunities for those without adequate benefits such as farm/agricultural workers, self-employed individuals, etc.

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

GOAL (C). Enrich community health, safety and wellness through promotion of quality nutrition, physical activity, obesity prevention and support of active lifestyles.

SUPPORTING STRATEGIES:

C.1.   Increase educational initiatives to support nutrition resources for obesity, hunger, diabetes prevention and malnutrition.

C.2.   Expand network of available walking/jogging trails, bike lanes, sidewalks, safe school routes and regional parks through the Rio Grande Valley.

C.3.   Encourage the creation of a smoke free workplace that will protect workers and benefit businesses by cutting down on the high cost of health and insurance benefits.

C.4.   Embrace the development of designated walkable communities to promote safe and healthy community engagement.

C.5.   Increase access to parks, buildings and facilities through accessible design and equipment for those of all ages and physical abilities.

C.6.   Encourage further development of youth nutrition awareness and physical activities such as recreational programs to help prevent childhood obesity.

C.7.   Expand worker awareness of occupational safety, ergonomic practices, heat, hydration and other working environment protocol.

C.8.   Seek funding to support pilot programs and evidenced based practices for healthy communities.

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

GOAL (D). Promote expanded community resources and services for underserved populations such as Veterans, ex-offenders and homeless, and those with chronic health conditions in the region.

Note: According to the 2014 American Community Survey (ACS), the Lower Rio Grande Valley is home to approximately 40,000 veterans. The number of veterans for both Gulf Wars represent over 30% of Valley veterans. Veterans from the Vietnam Era, Korean War, and World War II veterans represent over 50%. ACS does not specify the gap in the veteran percentage between Gulf War and other veterans.

SUPPORTING STRATEGIES:

D.1.   Support expansion of Veterans Outpatient Clinic and other health services.

D.2.   Identify funding opportunities for Veterans and their families. (include services for behavioral health and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder)

D.3.   Coordinate appropriate support systems for ex-offenders to reduce the incidence of recidivism.

D.4.   Conduct regional resource analysis for emergency shelter and transitional housing supports for homeless prevention.

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

GOAL (E). Promote enhanced civic engagement and social inclusion across all ages by expanding volunteer opportunities, cultural diversity activities and fostering multi-generational interaction.


SUPPORTING STRATEGIES:

E.1. Identify or develop a referral service that will link professional and volunteers to areas of need or specialty.

E.2. Establish a clearinghouse of services and volunteers.

E.3. Identify agencies that have or can provide volunteers.

E.4. Identify agencies that need volunteers.

REGIONAL HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES RESOURCES:

LRGVDC, Area Agency on Aging, Counties, Cities, Universities, Colleges, Private sector, State and Federal Agencies, School of Rural Public Health, FQHC's, Promotora Programs, Hope Family Clinic, TMC, L.U.P.E, So.Tx. Center, DSHS, MHP, Farm Bureau, USDA, CDC, NIOSH, private foundations, TRLA, WFS, MET, UFW, United Migrant Opportunity Services, HHSC, Non-profit organizations, CCRGV, 211, TTBH, Adult Literacy, Community Services, UTRGV-Center on Aging and Health, Red Cross, Financial Institutions, Mujeras Unidas, Faith-based Communities, Baylor University, MMRS, Community Council of the RGV, UNIDAD coalition, Valley Aids Council, Modern View, American Diabetes Association, DARS, WIC, Holy Family Birthing Center, Easter Seals, C-Bird, Mental Health Initiative Collaboration, TRAC-V, National Institute of Mental Health, SAMHSA, VA, So.Tx. Epilepsy Center,TCOLE, Mental Health Peace Officers curriculum, Crisis Intervention Techniques Course, CSAP, Office of the Governor, TDHCA, Domestic violence and Homeless shelters, UDVA, Texas Veterans Land Board, RSVP, United Way, Mana de Hidalgo, Police Explorers, Parks and Recreation.

Environmental Resources
&
Community Development

(Natural Resources, Waste Management, Water Planning & Housing)
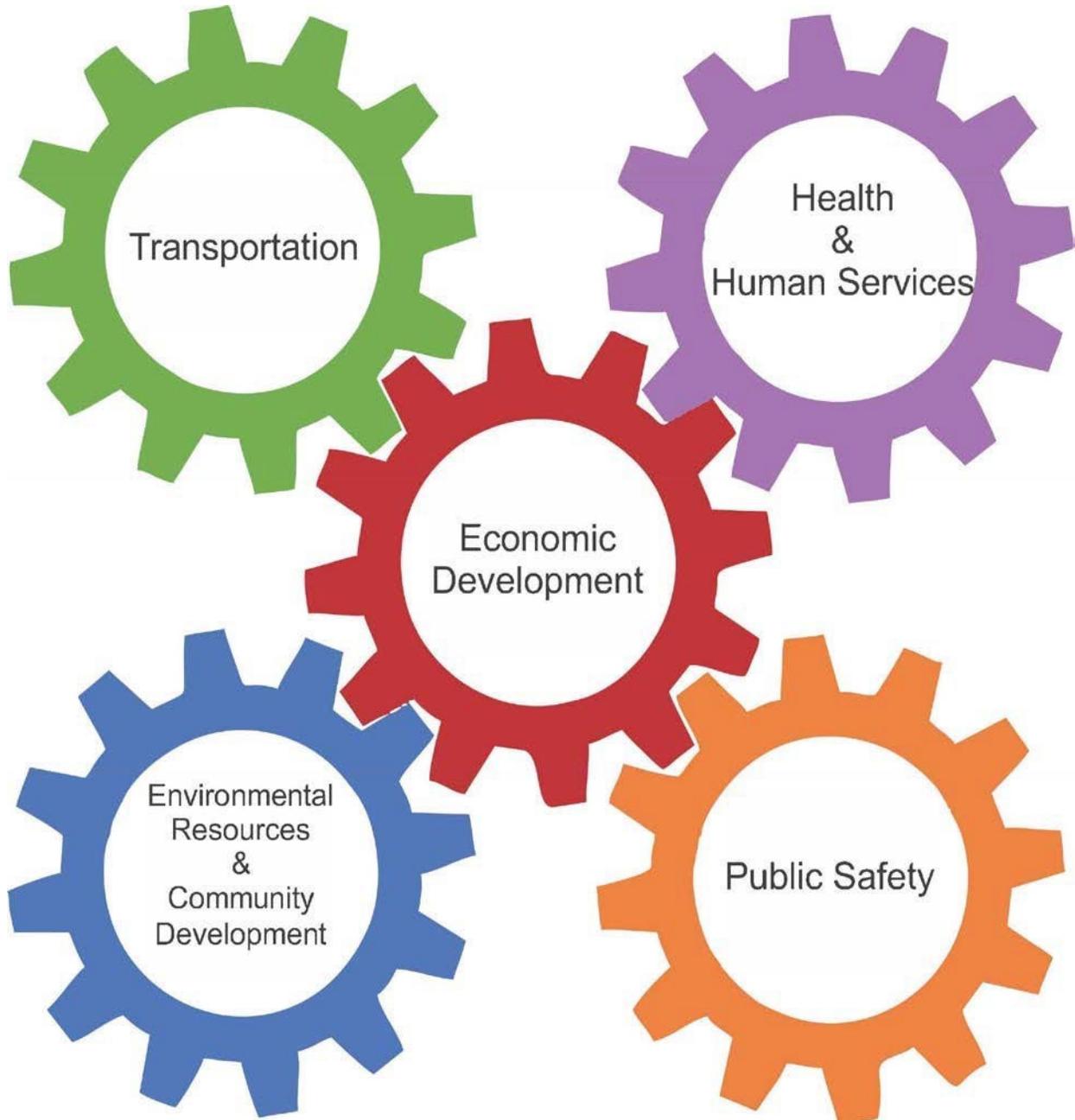
VISION STATEMENT

Through effective services, education and preservation efforts, we shall strive for the healthiest environment where urban and rural community growth ensures residents safe and sustainable housing opportunities, appropriate infrastructure development and proactive planning for the conservation of the Region's vital agricultural and natural resources.

ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES GOALS

GOAL (A). Encourage innovative projects and initiatives which promote environmentally sustainable development.

GOAL (B). Promote recycling and waste reduction through development of effective disposal systems for sewage, solid waste, tires, brush and hazardous materials.

GOAL (C). Support water conservation measures by addressing water quality and quantity concerns.

GOAL (D). Improve flood control/drainage.

GOAL (E). Protect, conserve and restore regional ecosystem and native habitat.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT GOALS

GOAL (A). Expand the availability of suitable and affordable housing options for all valley families and residents.

GOAL (B). Ensure appropriate housing and resources are available to underserved populations which may include economically disadvantaged, elderly, displaced women and children, and those with chronic health conditions and disabilities.

GOAL (C). Support homelessness prevention by ensuring adequate and accessible emergency shelter and transitional housing resources.

GOAL (D). Promote and protect fair housing rights for all residents of the Rio Grande Valley.

ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES

GOAL (A). **Encourage innovative projects and initiatives which promote environmentally sustainable development.**

The conservation and protection of our natural resources is a gradual evolution motivated initially by concerns over management of water resources. Efforts were later broadened to include protection of air, land, and water and proper disposal of hazardous and non-hazardous waste. The rapid population growth on both sides of the Rio Grande has meant increased demands for the region on the ability to pay for environmental infrastructure, to include capacity to treat drinking water and wastewater treatment and proper-solid waste disposal management. Coordination amongst all agencies, local, state, federal, private, non-profit and international agencies is necessary to accomplish objectives and improve and maintain the quality of life for everyone involved.

SUPPORTING STRATEGIES:

A.1.   Disseminate information on the economic benefits of establishing sustainable development projects.

A.2.   Support implementation of "Smart Growth" ordinances and other regulations that preserve open space and agricultural projects.

A.3.   Involve community leaders to the greatest extent possible.

A.4.   Promote use of alternative energy sources.

A.5.   Increase employment opportunities for sustainable development.

A.6.   Encourage responsible, sustainable economic development and efficient use of land infrastructure resources.

A.7   Provide leadership and policy guidance for these initiative.

A.8.   Improve awareness for protection and conservation of our natural resources.

ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES

GOAL (B). Promote recycling and waste reduction through development of effective disposal systems for sewage, solid waste, tires, brush and hazardous materials.

The need to improve waste reduction, recycling, and disposal of sewage, solid waste, tires, brush and hazardous waste material which must be clearly understood by everyone involved including community leaders and the public sector.

SUPPORTING STRATEGIES:

B.1. Promote public environmental education programs that help reduce illegal dumping, increase code compliance and local enforcement and conduct community cleanup events.

B.2. Increase and expand on recycling programs and promote proper waste reduction, recycling and reuse programs both for solid waste materials.

B.3. Develop programs for household hazardous waste collection or BOPA (batteries, oil, paints and antifreeze) disposal programs.

B.4. Support regional recycling and solid waste reduction initiatives and community alliances in order to promote recycling programs, policies and projects.

B.5. Develop more environmental education programs to address these goals.

B.6. Assist and promote proper waste collection and minimization sites within the county's rural areas including colonia areas.

B.7. Promote the certification and education of Environmental Education (EE) Coordinators and Solid Waste Managers using state approved programs such as Texas Solid Waste Association of North America (TXSWANA) and North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE) or reputable EE program.

B.8. Implement LRGVDC Regional Solid Waste Management Plan.

ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES

GOAL (C). **Support water conservation measures by addressing water quality and quantity concerns.**

The LRGV is one of the fastest growing regions in the nation with a climate that is typically hot, windy, dry and occasional floods. Decades of human use along with urban growth have strained and degraded the quality of our water. Comprehensive education and outreach must take place to ensure that everyone involved understands the issues and how to address them properly. Senate bill 1 enacted by the Texas Legislature to address issues and concerns related to water conservation, water supply and drought management which initiated the development of Regional Water Plans. The Regional Water Plans have a wealth of information to include population, water demands, water supply and key factors that impact water supply and water quality. The Arroyo Colorado Watershed Protection Plan is another plan that is very important to the Region, as it addresses many water quality issues and contains a vast amount of information for the region.

SUPPORTING STRATEGIES:

C.1.   Update Regional Water Supply Plan including system upgrades.

C.2.   Support implementation of Regional Water Supply Plan (Region M).

C.3.   Support implementation of Arroyo Colorado Watershed Protection Plan.

C.4.   Support more funding for IBWC (water supply and drainage projects).

C.5.   Encourage public participation and seek federal legislative and state support for the implementation of the plan.

C.6.   Support efforts of the RGRWA in areas of seawater and Brackish Groundwater Desalination.

C.7.   Cooperation between local, state, federal and international entities to address water supply and maintain safe water flow levels.

C.8.   Coordinate efforts to develop and research education and outreach material.

C.9.   Increase education and outreach activities to improve public awareness.

C.10. Maintain and implement regional water supply plans.

ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES

GOAL (D). Improve flood control/drainage.

Improving flood control/drainage can only be accomplished with coordination and collaboration within all agencies involved, especially when creating and managing current and future projects that affect this goal.

SUPPORTING STRATEGIES:

D.1.   Support the maintenance of the EDA "Regional Economic Adjustment Plan for building disaster resilient communities" for flood control.

D.2.   Encourage establishment of a regional task force to address flood control and drainage issues.

D.3.   Support coordination of county flood control activities for the region.

D.4.   Update FEMA's Flood Insurance Rate Maps and enhance flood control and have an adequate levee system.

D.5.   Support federal funding opportunities to rehabilitate levees under U.S. IBWC jurisdiction.

D.6.   Include colonias in the discussion of needed drainage.

D.7.   Develop a clearinghouse for all drainage projects being conducted in the region so we can clearly see where work is being done.

D.8.   Develop a clearinghouse similar to transportation (MPO) for all drainage projects.

D.9.   Work towards adequate drainage regulations in all cities.

D.10. Coordinate drainage/flood control programs throughout the region and increase enforcement of limiting construction in flood prone areas.

GOAL (E).   Protect, conserve and restore regional ecosystem and native habitat.

Protecting, conserving and restoring native habitat can only be accomplished by understanding and acknowledging the actions and measures that must be planned and executed in order to achieve this goal.

SUPPORTING STRATEGIES:

E.1.   Enhance eco-tourism resources and opportunities.

E.2.   Promote habitat restoration.

E.3.   Promote nature recreation.

E.4.   Improve the awareness and understanding of natures' habitat.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

GOAL (A). **Expand the availability of suitable and affordable housing options for all valley families and residents.**

Increase home ownership opportunities for low income families in the tri-county area and support neighborhood and community revitalization efforts.

SUPPORTING STRATEGIES:

A.1. Promote efforts to reduce the number of substandard and dilapidated dwellings.

A.2. Partner with homeless shelters and assist with financial assistance for shelter beds.

A.3. Encourage valley communities to establish housing programs for families in need.

A.4. Develop support services to maintain individuals/families in their homes.

A.5. Assist partners in developing & offering support services and resources empowering valley residents with information to prevent foreclosures.

A.6. Create a system of transitional housing units.

A.7. Provide workshops on home ownerships.

A.8. Increase the region's 24-hour emergency shelter facilities.

A.9. Establish a case worker network.

A.10. Expand information & referral services to include information on housing opportunities.

A.11. Encourage additional eviction counseling predatory lending education and homebuyer education programs.

A.12. Expansion of availability of credit counseling, when considering home ownership.

A.13. Create or work toward regional building codes.

A.14. Include weather sustainable construction as well as energy efficient construction beyond mandated minimum.

A.15. Support UTRGV efforts on research of the housing stock in the region.

A.16. Development of appropriate mortgage products readily available in the region.

A.17. Increase education opportunities in skill trades for construction workers.

A.18. Standardize or create a uniform code enforcement mechanism.

A.19. Continue to work on nimbyism issues.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

GOAL (B): Ensure appropriate housing and resources are available to underserved populations which may include economically disadvantaged, elderly, displaced women and children, and those with chronic health conditions and disabilities.

Creating opportunities for adequate and affordable housing in the tri-County region to benefit the elderly and individuals with disabilities & their families, so they may enjoy a barrier free home.

SUPPORTING STRATEGIES:

B.1.   Promote development of affordable housing facilities for the elderly and citizens needing modified accommodations.

B.2.   Promote educational awareness of housing needs for individuals with special needs.

B.3.   Partner with Housing Providers and Local communities to assist with the rehab expenditures of subsidized rental housing units which serves the senior communities.

B.4.   Enable partners to provide vouchers to reduce the cost of rent as an emergency financial assistance for the elderly and individuals with special needs.

B.5.   Partner with cities to meet all housing needs and land development.

B.6.   Provide financial assistance in form of vouchers to partners for opportunities to assist the elderly, disabled, veterans and their families with their utilities.

B.7.   Support non-profits with technical assistance with training and financial support to increase the capacity to provide resources for exploring housing options.

B.8.   Provide people with disabilities and elderly in the Tri-County area with opportunity to improve their home with modifications, such as building a ramp, installing grab bars, widening doors and more. (applicants must have documentable disability)

B.9.   Promote development of adequate and affordable housing for elderly or other individuals who want to transition from a skilled nursing facility to the community.

B.10.   Encourage building contractors and developers to consider the construction of new homes allowing older individuals to "age in place" and accessible for individuals with disabilities.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

GOAL (C): **Support homelessness prevention by ensuring adequate and accessible emergency shelter and transitional housing resources.**

Promote adequate housing and basic shelter in the tri-county area to assist the needs of the homeless.

SUPPORTING STRATEGIES:

C.1. Expand transitional housing resources across the region to create a more seamless shift from temporary to permanent housing.

C.2. Institute a coordinated access entry system for prioritization of need of homeless individuals and families.

C.3. Promote the development of an emergency shelter for children (ages 0-17), specifically for teen moms and illegal immigrants

C.4. Provide emergency shelter during disaster declarations and unforeseen issues

C.5. Encourage existing agencies to maintain communications with Texas Homeless Network

C.6. Support community efforts for the renovation and rehabilitation of existing Homeless shelters

C.7. Encourage agencies to establish a strong proactive continuum of care to develop and coordinate the implementation of the strategic homeless plan and provide a process for responding to new needs of the homeless

C.8. Provide supporting technical assistance to increase capacity of agencies that offer services for homeless

C.9. Develop guidelines to evaluate outcomes and ensure that the greatest number of homeless individuals and families are served

C.10. Provide disaster preparedness education training and volunteer opportunities to help communities in the event of a disaster

C.11. Redefine Homelessness in the region.

C.12. HUD definition of homelessness should also include 3 generation of relatives living in one house

C.13. Seek and secure additional funding to provide opportunities with specialized emergency shelter

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

GOAL (D): **Promote and protect fair housing rights for all residents of the Rio Grande Valley.**

Participate in establishing an open and inclusive community committed to fair housing and to promote appropriate activities by private and public entities to provide or advocate for integration and equal housing opportunities for all residents and prospective residents of the Lower Rio Grande Valley.

SUPPORTING STRATEGIES:

D.1. Ensure fair housing for all residents of the Lower Rio Grande Valley

D.2. Distribute printed material at housing events to promote public awareness of Fair Housing

D.3. Attend Fair Housing meetings to increase knowledge of fair housing trends in order to effectively continue to work with other entities to address ongoing issues and improve quality of life for residents

D.4. Adopt a resolution that supports testing in the region and require local jurisdictions to pass similar resolutions

D.5. Participate in any testing recommended or implemented by other organizations such as state and local communities

D.6. Work with local/regional groups, the State and HUD to create the testing

D.7. Seek out additional funding sources and avenues that would allow for annual testing at the regional level

ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES
REGIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

- The region's recycling rate has increased to about 20%
- Recycling centers have been established and are now operating through support of TCEQ/LRGVDC
- Community awareness on environmental issues, water quality and water quantity issues
- The region has used CDBG Disaster Recovery funds to provide long term flood/drainage in order to protect and restore communities and continue to create a stable secure environment for individuals and families

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
REGIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

- Regional Needs Assessment in coordination with HUD Disaster Recovery (Round 2 Housing Guidelines).
- Development of the FHAST Form in accordance with the State's Analysis of Impediments.
- Every year the LRGVDC Board of Directors approves and passes a resolution in support of Fair Housing.
- Promotion of Fair Housing law awareness by distributing information and printed materials.
- LRGVDC Section 3 Plan was developed and is being implemented by LRGVDC.
- Section 3 Advisory Committee was established.
- A local Section 3 Certified Subcontractors pool was established.
- Housing Assistance Program (Single Family Owner Occupied) assisted 641 homes.
- Homeowner Assistance Program (HOP) assisted 116 applicants.
- Rapid Recovery Pilot Program assisted 20 applicants.
- Single Family Rental Program reconstructed 12 single family units.
- Five entities received disaster recovery funds to reconstruct multi-family units across the three counties (San Benito HA – 50 units, Pharr HA – 80 units, Willacy County – 58 units rehab, Willacy County White Houses – 46 units recon and Donna STEDC – 4 units rehab)
- The region has used CDBG Disaster Recovery funds to provide long term flood/drainage in order to protect and restore communities and continue to create a stable secure environment for individuals and families.

REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES:

PHA, HUD, LRGVDC, Cities/Counties, Secretary of State, Homeless Shelters, Faithbased organizations, Housing Authorities, Private Sector, United Way, Existing Service Providers, TDA and TDHCA, Cities/Counties, Water Districts, IBWC, TCEQ, Irrigation Districts, EPA FEMA, TWDB, U.S. Fish & Wildlife, Texas Parks & Wildlife, Environmental Groups, LRGVDC, TXSWANA, NAAEE, Rio Grande Regional Water Planning Group (RGRWPG), Equal Voice Network and the Private Sector
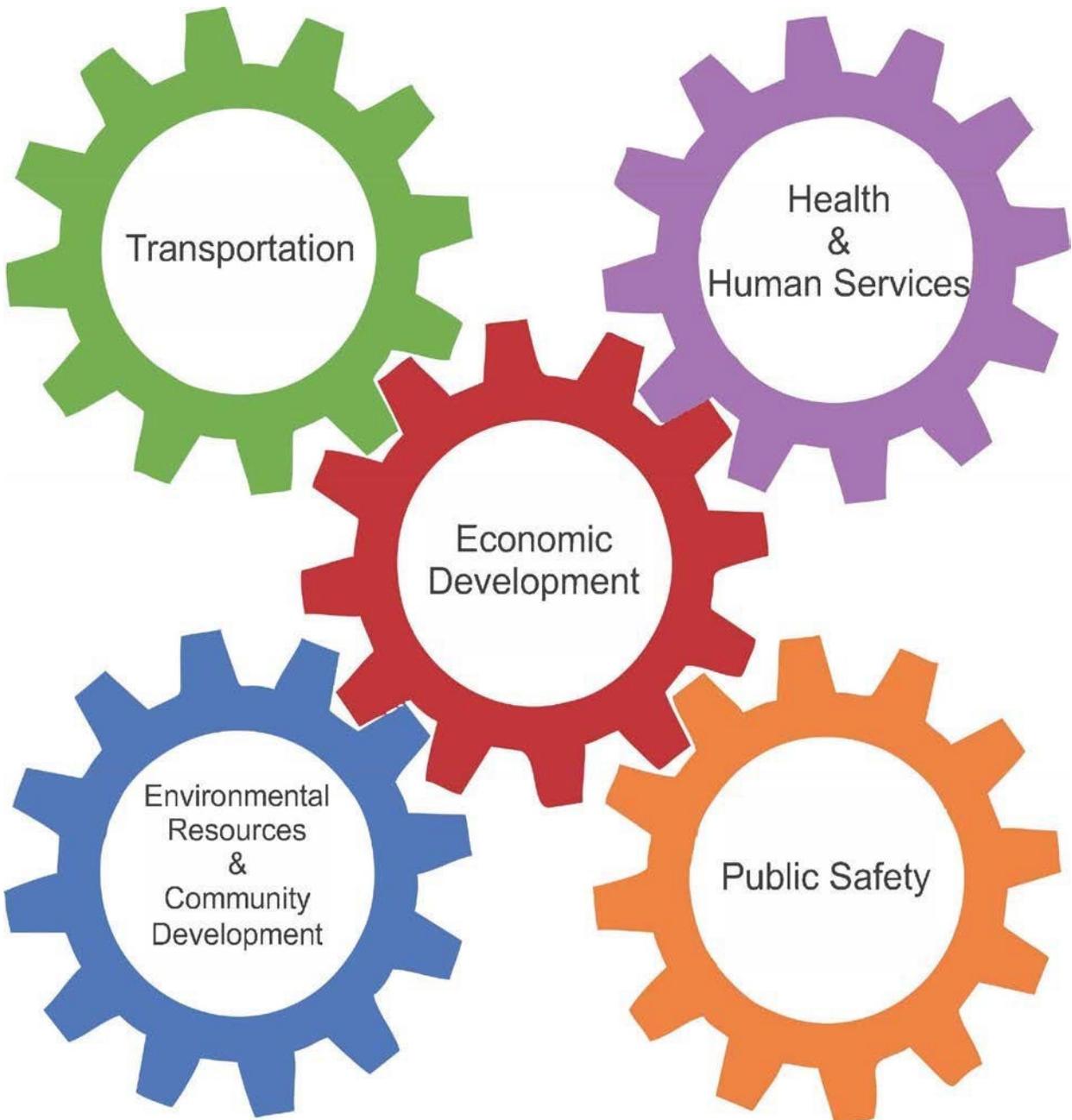
PUBLIC SAFETY

Section   I. Criminal Justice
Section II. Homeland Security
Section III. 9-1-1
Section IV. Police Academy

Transportation

Health
&
Human Services

Economic
Development

Environmental
Resources
&
Community
Development

Public Safety

VISION STATEMENT

To ensure optimal public safety and protect all persons throughout the region, first responders, criminal justice, homeland security, and 9-1-1 will work collaboratively, with optimal training and resources to prevent, protect, respond and recover from threats.

PUBLIC SAFETY GOALS

Section I.   **CRIMINAL JUSTICE**

GOAL (A).   Reduce human and drug trafficking and smuggling.

GOAL (B).   Support the prevention of drug and alcohol abuse.

GOAL (C).   Prevent and reduce incidents of violent crimes across the Rio Grande Valley.

GOAL (D).   Promote programs that prevent or reduce juvenile-related delinquency, criminal activity and school dropout rate.

GOAL (E).   Ensure regional agencies and personnel maintain adequate access to technological advancements in law enforcement equipment and resources.

GOAL (F).   Increase advocacy and efforts to eliminate child abuse and neglect in our community.

GOAL (G).   Encourage the establishment of additional mental health and suicide prevention treatment facilities and resources.

GOAL (H).   Expand advocacy, education and support group resources for victims of violent crimes.

Section II.   **HOMELAND SECURITY**

GOAL (A).   Enhance homeland security in the Lower Rio Grande Valley.

GOAL (B).   Improve the capability of local governments to prepare for and respond to terrorist and other hazardous incidents.

GOAL (C).   Provide resources and assistance to local agencies to establish and maintain a statewide interoperable communication radio system.

GOAL (D).   Increase individual and community preparedness, response, and recovery in the region.

GOAL (E).   Strengthen the capacity of communities to address public health issues along the U.S./Mexico border.

GOAL (F).   Increase bi-national surveillance and coordination of health awareness for high consequence infectious disease.

PUBLIC SAFETY GOALS

Section III.   **9-1-1**

GOAL (A).   Provide continuous, reliable operation of regional 9-1-1 system.

GOAL (B).   Implement emerging next generation 9-1-1 technologies.

GOAL (C). Promote 9-1-1 public safety education to all public, private and educational agencies.

Section IV.   **POLICE ACADEMY**

GOAL (A). Promote the development of highly qualified law enforcement professionals by providing quality education and training in alignment with requirements set forth by the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement (TCOLE).

GOAL (B). Provide continuing professional development instruction and resources to ensure law enforcement personnel remain dynamic, skilled, and proficient across the region.

SECTION. I. - CRIMINAL JUSTICE

GOAL (A).   Reduce human and drug trafficking and smuggling

The Rio Grande Valley Border Patrol Sector is the highest in the nation for undocumented immigrant's apprehensions and controlled substance seizures. The trafficking of illicit drugs continue to pose an enormous danger to our citizens and a significant challenge for our law enforcement agencies and health care systems. The most significant drug trafficking organizations operating in the United States today are the dangerous and highly sophisticated Mexican transnational criminal organizations (TCOs) that continue to be the principal suppliers of cocaine, heroin, methamphetamine, and marijuana. These organizations are responsible for the extreme violence seen in Mexico, as these groups battle for turf and attack public officials and innocent civilians. Trafficking persons is a serious crime and a serious violation of human rights. Every year, thousands of men, women and children fall into the hands of traffickers, in their own countries and abroad. Almost every country in the world is affected by trafficking, whether as a country of origin, transit or destination for victims. This fact together with the amount of illegal drug activity crossing the border raises our risk of terrorism vulnerability in the region, as well as the country.

SUPPORTING STRATEGIES:

A.1.   Seek and secure additional funding to provide opportunities with specialized training, to include intelligence sharing.

A.2.   Funds to establish courts and to hire prosecutors to prosecute drug and human trafficking/smuggling crimes.

A.3.   Provide training to all law enforcement agencies that currently have or in the process of establishing K-9 units.

A.4.   Hire more law enforcement personnel for specific tasks on drug interdiction and human trafficking/smuggling crimes**.**

A.5.   Funds to establish emergency services to victims of human trafficking/shelter resources.

A.6.   Seek funding to secure shelter management that houses human trafficking victim's

A.7.   Provide all agencies with grant writing technical assistance and grant management.

A.8.   Apply for grants for area programs and additional personnel.

A.9.   Increase training for law enforcement personnel.

A.10.   Hire additional prosecutors.

GOAL (A). SUPPORTING STRATIGES *(CONTINUED):*

A.11.   Obtain technology/equipment needed for drug interdiction.

A.12.   Criminal Justice Computerized Criminal History (CCH) data entry awareness to ensure requirements meets state and federal regulations and mandates.

SECTION. I. - CRIMINAL JUSTICE

GOAL (B). Support the prevention of drug and alcohol abuse.

Consistent messages to people, young and adults alike, about drugs and alcohol can prevent substance abuse. Effective prevention requires that the same messages about alcohol, drugs, and even tobacco be delivered by multiple messengers (i.e. schools, parents, peers, and the community) frequently throughout childhood and adolescence. Delaying the first use of alcohol or other drugs for as long as possible is a prevention step. Numerus research exists indicating that someone consuming alcohol before age 14 is significantly more likely to experience alcohol dependency at some point in their lives compared to individuals who begin consuming after 21 years of age. In addition, youth who drink alcohol are more likely to experience a number of negative consequences, such as physical or sexual assault, unintentional injuries, memory problems, legal problems, and impaired school performance. Other protective factors, especially proactive parenting and strong family bonds, can help delay or deter the experimentation with drugs and alcohol which helps reduce long-term problems. Attention should be given to multiple risk and protective factors. Reducing one risk factor may result in reduction of multiple problems in the family, school, peer group, and/or community.

SUPPORTING STRATEGIES:

B.1.   Support and expand public information and education programs on alcohol and substance abuse that include information about early warning identifiers.

B.2.   Set up crisis management training for school personnel.

B.3.   Establish after school programs (i.e. Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD)) to inform students of the dangers of underage drinking and substance abuse.

B.4.   Coordinate awareness months for alcohol/drug abuse with schools, parks/recreation centers and boys & girls club or any other facility providing services to youth.

B.5.   Seek greater involvement from the media and medical community for public information and education endeavors.

B.6.   Create an awareness program on prescription drug abuse, synthetic drugs/energy drinks. (Bath salts, incense, and the like).

B.7.   Create taskforces to conduct covert operations to deter the selling of alcoholic beverages and tobacco to minors.

B.8.   Inform the public of existing resources to address alcohol & drug prevention.

B.9.   Reduce the incidence of underage drinking and youth related substance abuse.

SECTION. I. - CRIMINAL JUSTICE

GOAL (C). Prevent and reduce incidents of violent crimes across the Rio Grande Valley

<u>Violent Crime:</u> Violent crime remains a serious problem. It continues to inflict a heavy toll on communities across the Rio Grande Valley, limiting the quality of life for RGV citizens, paralyzing neighborhoods, and stretching local, state and federal law enforcement resources to their limits. While a small number of cities are equipped to handle issues involving violent crimes such as; rape, assaults, kidnapping and homicide and gang violence, many smaller cities and towns are easily overwhelmed by the violence and criminal activity that gangs bring to their communities.

<u>Juvenile Crime:</u> The ongoing rise of urban violence involving our youth is particularly troubling. Often, local law enforcement efforts are hampered by a lack of resources to implement creative programs that would stem the violent criminal activity involving young people in our communities. Municipalities need to work with their community organizations to develop programs with the highest potential for benefit in their community to begin addressing this issue.

SUPPORTING STRATEGIES:

C.1.   Reduce the number of rapes, assaults, kidnappings, and homicides in the Rio Grande Valley by building the capacity of law enforcement agencies and providing equipment.

C.2.   Train law enforcement, schools and youth centers on subject matters of child and adult abuse, and sexual assault.

C.3.   Provide assistance to victims of sexual abuse, family violence, and human trafficking.

C.4.   Collaborate and network agencies in the best interest of child and adult abuse victims and their non-offending family members.

C.5.   Raise public awareness of family violence, violence in the workplace, schools, adult and teen dating situations, stalking and hate crimes.

C.6.   Create programs that will reduce the number of family violence perpetrators.

C.7.   Employ a comprehensive strategy that focuses on investigation, prosecution, and prevention efforts to address violence.

C.8.   Pinpoint sources to maintain and provide ongoing technical assistance for medical records associated with sexual assault.

C.9.   Create intervention programming for abusive spouses and parents.

C.10.   Establish furnish housing alternatives for victims of Violent Crimes and Family Violence.

C.11.   Provide housing alternatives for victims of violent crimes.

GOAL (C).   SUPPORTING STRATEGIES *(CONTINUED):*

C.12. Schedule anger management, conflict resolution therapy, and treatment programs for youths.

C.13. Establish individual sexual assault, homicidal grief counseling, and support groups for victims (adults/children) of sexual assault and family violence.

C.14. Raise community and public safety awareness on gang recruitment.

C.15. Enhance public safety intelligence gathering and sharing resources to reduce local gang violence.

C.16. Criminal Justice Computerized Criminal History (CCH) data entry awareness to ensure requirements meets state and federal regulations and mandates.

SECTION. I. - CRIMINAL JUSTICE

GOAL (D). **Promote programs that prevent or reduce juvenile-related delinquency, criminal activity and school dropout rate.**

SUPPORTING STRATEGIES:

D.1. Reduce school truancy by providing parenting classes for truancy, mentoring, counseling, guidance, character education and intensive training to truant/delinquent behavior.

D.2. Increase attendance and academic achievement.

D.3. Increase the collaborative efforts of key stakeholders such as school district officials, Justice of the Peace & Municipal Courts and local law enforcement.

D.4. Assistance in control efforts and alternatives to gang participation by juveniles.

D.5. Offer alternatives to dropping out to include flexible scheduling, adult education classes, and "Early Start" programs.

D.6. Acquire funding for juvenile prevention programs that will allow the schools to hire and/or enhance school law enforcement officers.

D.7. Acquire funds for community outreach programs that target local youths.

D.8. Operate programs and community facilities that address truancy, drop-outs, family violence, teen dating violence, and drug abuse and gang activity.

D.9. Apply for and operate programs that provide anger management training and parenting skills for teens.

D.10. Apply for and operate programs to hire truancy officers and prevention/ intervention programs.

D.11. Coordinate programs to train and educate personnel on behavior disorders, drug abuse and truancy issues.

D.12. Acquire funding for gang and juvenile offender intervention.

D.13. Acquire funding for youth facilities and centers for after school programs.

D.14. Continue to address the underlying factors of what is the cause of truancy.

D.15. Acquire funding for college access programs.

SECTION. I. - CRIMINAL JUSTICE

GOAL (E).   Ensure regional agencies and personnel maintain adequate   access to technological advancements in law enforcement equipment and resources.

With the lack of resources at hand, combating violent criminal organizations such as transnational gangs and drug cartels continues to be a challenge and top priority for all law enforcement agencies. These organizations have infiltrated our society and continue to pose a great threat to Texas citizens and their way of life. Gangs have become bolder and more sophisticated in their participation in organized crime. These groups aggressively promote dangerous drugs to adults as well as youth alike and are the source of violence, racketeering, human trafficking and smuggling, prostitution, money laundering, and illegal weapons sales. Defeating these organizations requires multi-agency coordination and most importantly cooperation and interaction among agencies and jurisdictions. In order to address this issue, local criminal justice strategies envision a law enforcement network in which cross boundary coordination and support, and multijurisdictional and interagency operations are standardized.

SUPPORTING STRATEGIES:

E.1.   Continue to improve automation of imaging, fingerprinting, and mug shot systems.

E.2.   Provide standard law enforcement equipment as well as computer software and hardware to law enforcement agencies.

E.3.   Purchase courtroom programs and equipment for prosecution.

E.4.   Provide accurate, efficient, and uniform data collection, data compilation, and data sharing.

E.5.   Provide for locally relevant, ongoing evaluation of programs to improve program implementation.

E.6.   Purchase security and surveillance cameras for city, county, schools and youth centers.

E.7.   Work towards setting up a database to link local law enforcement agencies together and eventually, with other agencies nationwide.

E.8.   Work towards computerizing imaging, fingerprint, and mug shot systems in city and county jails.

E.9.   Establish infrastructure to promote uniform information sharing among agencies to facilitate planning. Install CAD Systems in all law enforcement departments.

E.10.   Work towards increasing equipment budgets for law enforcement departments.

E.11.   Work towards linking separate local law enforcement computer systems.

GOAL (E). SUPPORTING STRATEGIES *(CONTINUED):*

E.12. Install hardware and software for courtroom presentation of evidence.

E.13. Establish a centralized clearinghouse for data collection and program implementation.

E.14. Create programs to provide current technology and equipment to law enforcement and prosecuting agencies.

E.15. Keep law enforcement and social service agencies better prepared to utilize equipment and technology to its maximum capability.

E.16. Purchase interoperability equipment to move from level 4 to 6 (P25) compliance.

E.17. Enhance security and courthouse safety.

E.18. Court clerks will coordinate and manage cases for expedited service to patrons.

E.19. Schedules will be distributed to all courts on a weekly basis.

E.20. Procedures will be put in place for moving and containing prisoners, scheduling cases dealing with children during slow periods to cause fewer traumas to victims, and for training, awareness, and promotion to the community with information on safety and procedures for special cases.

E.21. Security will be analyzed and all systems upgraded.

E.22. Acquire funds to add additional personnel.

E.23. District Attorney, County Clerk and District Clerk will meet once a week to coordinate and cooperate in meeting timing disposition of cases.

E.24. Court schedules will be distributed, posted, and mailed to all involved parties.

E.25. Apply for funding to update and acquire additional security system for court house and court rooms.

E.26. Request funds for set up of special rooms for children involved in court cases "Safe Room" Counselors and or designated social workers will manage Safe Room. Awareness campaign to communities.

E.27. Enhance public safety intelligence gathering and sharing resources.

GOAL (E).   SUPPORTING STRATEGIES *(CONTINUED):*

E.28. The RGV Chief's Association and the LRGVDC will appoint a blue ribbon committee to draft a plan to locate the technology that will be used to track relevant gang activity.

E.29. Create a regional task force to oversee the operations and data entry of gang related activities.

E.30. Work with law enforcement agencies to promote the use of the data to combat gang activities.

SECTION. I. - CRIMINAL JUSTICE

GOAL (F). **Increase advocacy and efforts to eliminate child abuse and neglect in our community.**

SUPPORTING STRATEGIES:

F.1. Establish separate child-friendly facilities for interviewing and providing services to child victims and their families.

F.2. Preventing or reducing trauma to children caused by multiple contacts with professionals and involvement with the courts.

F.3. Increase community understanding of child abuse. Identifying and developing funding and marketing strategies.

F.4. Maintaining open communication and case coordination among community professionals and agencies involved in child protection efforts.

F.5. Enhance the skills of professionals and volunteers who support child abuse intervention such as the local Children's Advocacy Center.

F.6. Developing and negotiating interagency agreements and protocols.

F.7. Enhance training and education about trauma and Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

F.8. Child abuse and neglect has increased and there is a need for Children's Shelters and more Crisis Centers.

F.9. Increase child abuse services, prevention and education.

F.10. Increase successful child abuse investigations and prosecution.

F.11. Schedule development and interagency discussions to negotiate agreements and protocol.

F.12. Create awareness materials and meetings to market information.

F.13. Provide educational opportunities for professions and volunteers.

F.14. Increase prevention facilities and alternate housing for victims.

F.15. Advocate methods of communication with court and legal agencies.

GOAL (F).   SUPPORTING STRATEGIES *(CONTINUED):*

F.16.   Criminal Justice Computerized Criminal History (CCH) data entry awareness to ensure requirements meets state and federal regulations and mandates.

F.17.   Provide education opportunities for parenting of victims to include life skills, parenting, and trainings on trauma.

SECTION. I. - CRIMINAL JUSTICE

GOAL (G).   Encourage the establishment of additional mental health and suicide prevention treatment facilities and resources.

SUPPORTING STRATEGIES:

G.1.   Increase programs providing mental health and mental disability services for indigent and low income populations.

G.2.   Increase emergency residential facilities for adults/children with mental health issues.

G.3.   Establish group homes for persons with mental health issues.

G.4.   Establish long term residential facilities for persons with mental health and behavioral issues.

G.5.   Purchase transportation means to safely transport persons with mental health issues.

G.6.   Hire trained law enforcement officers to safely transport persons with mental health issues.

G.7.   Increase awareness in the community on mental illness and substance induced psychosis.

G.8.   Establish more support groups for families and persons with mental health issues.

G.9.   Prevent and address bullying, cyber-bullying, social networking, sexting, etc.

G.10. Train law enforcement personnel and Justice of the Peace Officers on dealing with persons with mental health issues.

G.11. Establish mental health clinics on post-secondary campuses to train counselors, social workers, and medical professionals with hands on training.

G.12. Increase funding to hire additional personnel to work with persons with mental health issues.

G.13. Establish prevention programs on mental health issues to include school prevention.

G.14. Purchase equipment, technology, assessment tools to work with mental health issues.

G.15. Increase the number of programs providing mental health services.

G.16. Provide alternatives for residential services.

G.17. Properly train on how to secure a mental health patient during transport.

G.18. Apply for funds to provide group and halfway houses with adequate staff to manage patients.

GOAL (G).   SUPPORTING STRATEGIES *(CONTINUED):*

G.19. Collaborate and network with all mental health professionals.

G.20. Establish a day center with mental health and behavior issues.

G.21. Criminal Justice Computerized Criminal History (CCH) data entry awareness to ensure requirements meets state and federal regulations and mandates.

SECTION. I. - CRIMINAL JUSTICE

GOAL (H). **Expand advocacy, education and support group resources for victims of violent crimes.**

Homicide is devastating for families and friends of the loved one who is murdered. The grief process will not be the same as it might be for someone who died in another way. There are many complications in the bereavement because of the violence involved in a homicide such as: the victim's relationship with their family and friends; the sudden, violent way in which the death occurs; there is a belief that the people left behind eventually "just need to get on with life" and financial strain on those left behind. The community in which the victim was part of is also affected. Not only could the victim have had relationships with the community but there is also fear that they may be in danger as well. Sometimes there is a disregard for the impact of the crime on the community as it rallies to assist the family.

SUPPRORTING STRATEGIES:

H.1.   Increase crisis counseling to homicide co-victims.

H.2.   Increase support services and groups for victims of crime in the Rio Grande Valley.

H.3.   Increase training and education about trauma and PTSD.

H.4.   Reduce re-victimizing of victims of violent crimes.

H.5.   Increase homicidal support services and support groups.

H.6.   Providing information and referrals to other support services.

H.7.   Helping victims write a victim impact statement.

H.8.   Preparing and supporting victims during a court case.

H.9.   Helping victims obtain information on the status of police investigations.

H.10. Providing support when making an application for a restraining order.

H.11. Providing information about criminal injuries compensation.

H.12. Helping victims understand their rights within the criminal justice system.

SECTION. I. - CRIMINAL JUSTICE

REGIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

Increased technology and public safety for cities of Sullivan City, Penitas, Edcouch, Edinburg, Harlingen, Port Isabel, Pharr, Laguna Vista, Brownsville, Los Fresnos, Palmhurst, Raymondville, and Mission.

Enhanced and established victim service agencies Cameron County District Attorney's Office, Willacy County District Attorney's Office, Harlingen Police Department, Pharr Police Department, Women Together Foundation, Estrella's House, Monica's & Maggie's House, Friendship of Women and Family Crisis Center. Rio Grande Valley empowerment Zone, Alamo Automatic Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS), Cameron/Hidalgo County Veterans Court.

Enhanced and established programs to address juvenile crime and prevention, school truancy and gang reduction programs for Cameron County, Willacy County, San Benito, McAllen, San Juan, Pharr, La Joya ISD, Willacy County Juvenile Probation, and Raymondville ISD.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE RESOURCES:

All local, state and federal law enforcement and advocacy centers RGV Families and Friends of Murdered Children, RGV Empowerment Zone – Victims of Crime Prevention/Restoration Programs, Crime Victim Advocates, Cameron, Hidalgo and Willacy County District Attorney and Juvenile Probation Departments. Mothers against Drunk Drivers (MADD) and all other alcohol and drug prevention programs in the LRGV. Hospital districts. Faith based organizations. LRGVDC Police Academy, City Parks & Recreation Programs, local boys & girls clubs, schools and Rio Grande Valley Council, Inc., SADD and Tropical Texas Behavioral Health. Youth centers and all school districts in the LRGV. Region One Education Service Center. Neighborhood Watch Programs and schools, Children's and Adult Advocacy centers. Palmer Drug Abuse Program (PDAP), Rio Grande Valley Council, Inc., Neighborhood Watch Programs and Schools. Child Advocacy Centers and local, state and federal law enforcement. County District Attorney, County Clerks and/or District Clerks offices in the LRGV. Child Protective Services, Child Advocacy Centers, Hospitals, Health Clinics. Mental health and mental retardation, schools and local and state behavioral centers.

SECTION.II. –HOMELAND SECURITY

GOAL (A).   Enhance Homeland Security in the Lower Rio Grande Valley

Homeland security in the LRGV region encompasses all efforts, both strategic and tactical, that optimally position our region to prevent, protect from, prepare for, and respond to all hazards. The term "all hazards" refers to all disasters, human-caused and natural, from a terrorist attack to a catastrophic hurricane. Homeland security includes all activities aimed at preventing terrorist attacks within the region, gathering intelligence and analyzing threats, reducing vulnerability, protecting our critical infrastructures, and coordinating responses to all hazards.

Although the LRGV region has dedicated significant resources to the prevention of terrorist acts and protection of our critical infrastructures and key resources, not every disaster can be prevented. The region must continue enhancing it capabilities and prepare to respond and recover from man- made and natural disasters. Addressing the consequences of a disaster requires a unified effort encompassing multiple jurisdictions and disciplines, including emergency management, law enforcement, firefighting, public works, public health, citizen volunteers, recovery workers, health and safety professionals, emergency medical services and the private sector. Our goal is to minimize loss of life in the event of a disaster and normalize life during the recovery process as rapidly as possible. We will build on the significant success achieved to date.

SUPPORTING STRATEGIES:

A.1. Secure and provide homeland security grant funds to perform homeland security planning and emergency preparedness related activities within the region. A.2. Enhance and maintain a strategic plan for first responders.

A.3.   Provide forums on emergency response activities for Homeland Security.

A.4.   Assist local governments in completing risk/threat/capability assessments are required by Department of Homeland Security.

A.5.   Provide additional training opportunities to enhance first responder's capabilities.

A.6.   Aid local governments and response organizations in meeting requirements for adopting and implementing National Incident Management System (NIMS).

A.7.   Perform homeland security planning and emergency preparedness related activities within their regions.

A.8.   Adopt and enhance the emergency management program.

A.9.   Assist jurisdictions in updating and creating emergency management plans.

A.10. Conduct meetings between the larger neighboring jurisdictions or their County entity in securing an inter-jurisdictional or joint ordinance that will cover the smaller jurisdiction in the Emergency Management Plan.

A.11. Routinely validate the effectiveness of their plans, and ensure that a changing environment has not rendered a key portion of a critical plan un-executable.

GOAL (A). SUPPORTING STRATEGIES *(CONTINUED)*

A.12. Provide a mechanism for entities to collaborate on the emergency management plans to eliminate duplication or over reliance on an agency.

A.13. Assist in the completion of a regional assessment for newly-created jurisdictions and update regional assessments.

A.14. Identify any improvements needed in the system to provide hazard information and emergency preparedness and response guidance to local Emergency Management Coordinator's (EMC's) and general public.

A.15. Distribute state guidelines and eligibility requirements to forty-six (46) jurisdictions on the basic and intermediate level of emergency preparedness.

A.16. Establish effective regional collaborations and increase the regions level of readiness by establish communication "WEB EOC" for the region's Emergency Operation Center (EOC's) and secure preparedness funding.

A.17. Providing training and equipment for emergency responders.

A.18. Continue to facilitate the implementation requirements of NIMS for the thirty-five (35) currently eligible jurisdictions within the region. Update the current thirty-five (35) approved emergency management plans and specific annexes with new NIMS standards. A.19. Increase security of critical infrastructure and key resource facilities.

A.20. Assess current security system and update procedures.

A.21. Support the implementation of security measures.

A.22. Identify the fourteen infrastructures sectors.

A.23. Maximize the use of mutual aid to help ensure enough of the right resources are available to respond when and where needed.

GOAL (B). **Improve the capability of local governments to prepare for and respond to terrorist and other hazardous incidents.**

Preventing a terrorist attack requires law enforcement, security personnel, medical/EMS first responders and volunteers trained to recognize the suspicious activities, tradecraft, and precursor crimes that often precede a terrorist attack. These can include theft of explosives or chemicals used in explosives, surveillance activities, rental of self-storage space to store chemicals or mixing apparatus, unusual deliveries to residential or rural addresses, signs of chemical fires or toxic odors in hotels or apartment complexes, the modification of vehicles to handle heavier loads, small test explosions in remote areas, and other suspicious activities.

SUPPORTING STRATEGIES:

B.1. Strengthen CBRNE response and decontamination capabilities to prevent and deter acts of terrorism.

B.2. Enhance early detection of a biological or chemical event to minimizing loss of life.

B.3. Provide and coordinate specialized training opportunities of state courses for local first responders.

B.4. Determine and identify Homeland Security training shortfalls requirement within the region and implement strategies to address the issues.

B.5. Recognizing, responding to, and reporting precursor activities and crimes must be incorporated into law enforcement, homeland security and medical/EMS first responder personnel training and activities across the region.

B.6. Conduct training to recognize the indicators of a Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear and Explosive (CBRNE) presence and know how to respond appropriately.

SECTION.II. –HOMELAND SECURITY

GOAL (C). **Provide resources and assistance to local agencies to establish and maintain a statewide interoperable communication radio system.**

Interoperability Communications is the ability of public safety agencies (e.g., police, fire, EMS) and service agencies (e.g., public works, transportation, Public Health, and hospitals) to talk within and across agencies and jurisdictions via radio and associated communications systems, exchanging voice, data and/or video with one another on demand, in real time, when needed, and when authorized. Emergency responders must have direct communications between agencies and practitioners via wireless radio and associated communications systems to exchange voice, data and/or video with one another. Direct communications must be available in real time, when needed, and when authorized, in order for responders to adequately discharge their obligation to protect life and property in a safe, efficient, and cost-effective manner.

National and regional level public safety information systems provide unique and invaluable capabilities to the homeland security communities within the region. Local jurisdictions must fully leverage state and federal information sources and channels and remain engaged in all state level technology initiatives so that information continues to flow within the region in a way that optimally supports investigative and intelligence activities in Texas. Regional level development ensures the provision of robust, interoperable communications among and between local, regional, state, and federal partners.

SUPPRORTING STRATEGIES:

C.1.   Enhance standard operating procedures and training for all public safety.

C.2.   Respond to major emergency incidents requires a coordinated response by public safety from multiple agencies and jurisdictions.

C.3.   Facilitate the collection of data and equipment on regional communication systems and information on the jurisdictions in the region.

C.4.   Collaborate with existing Homeland Security Advisory Committee, Rio Grande Valley Communication Group and other Steering Committees and three (3) counties to identify the best avenue to continue to enhance a statewide interoperable communications system by the target date of 2020.

C.5.   Enhance and disseminate the LRGVDC Regional Interoperability Communications Plan (RICP) and State Communications Interoperability Plan (SCIP) which addresses Interoperable communications standards and procedures.

C.6.   Disseminate information to all jurisdictions on Homeland Security Grant programs, annual state requirements, and deadlines and continue to enhance the regions RICP on a yearly basis to identify and close any gaps.

GOAL (C). SUPPORTING STRATEGIES *(CONTINUED)*

C.7.   Establish Level 6 of Interoperable Communications

C.8.   Enhance funding mechanism for the maintenance and upkeep of the Regional Radio System and Spanish Severe Early Weather Warning Notification System and increase regional coverage.

GOAL (D). **Increase individual and community preparedness, response, and recovery in the region.**

Following the tragic events that occurred on September 11, 2001, state and local government officials have increased opportunities for citizens to become an integral part of protecting the homeland and supporting the local first responder community. In over 95% of all emergency, bystanders or victims themselves are the first to provide emergency assistance or perform a rescue. Officials agree that the formula for ensuring more secure and safer communities consists of preparedness, training, and citizen involvement in supporting first responders.

SUPPRORTING STRATEGIES:

D.1. Support initiatives of the LRGVDC Citizen Corps and volunteers in the region.

D.2. Promote individual and community preparedness, response and recovery capabilities at the local level.

D.3. Identify training and volunteer opportunities that build the capacity of citizens to prepare for and respond to emergencies in the communities of the Rio Grande Valley.

D.4. Continue to support agencies that initiate and sustain CERT and MRC programs.

D.5. Support regional efforts to build medical surge capability.

D.6. Include the PAFN population in preparedness and response plans.

GOAL (E).   Strengthen the capacity of communities to address public health issues along the U.S./Mexican border.

To organize and hold public forums and develop advocacy training for community based groups and organizations and help raise awareness of basic health issues in the community. Health-related emergencies are a homeland security focus because optimal detection and rapid response can protect citizens from loss of life or long-term adverse health effects. Disease surveillance allows us to predict, observe, and minimize the effects of an outbreak, which may prevent the disease from spreading to become an epidemic or pandemic.

SUPPRORTING STRATEGIES:

E.1.   Enhance the awareness of Community Leaders to Affect Public Health Policy.

E.2.   Assess the impact of the legislation in the US and in Mexico that affect cross-border collaboration.

E.3.   Hold Public forums and Develop Advocacy Training for Community Based Groups and Organizations.

E.4.   Raise awareness of basic health issues in the community.

SECTION.II. –HOMELAND SECURITY

GOAL (F). **Increase bi-national surveillance and coordination of health awareness for high consequence infectious disease.**

The region has achieved unprecedented success in improving our ability to share awareness of available medical resources throughout the region. The coordination of international border health issues, coupled with a rapid increase in surge capacity of laboratory and epidemiology resources, produced significant contributions to understanding the high consequence infectious disease and developing targeted disease control and communication strategies.

SUPPRORTING STRATEGIES:

F.1.   Develop training opportunities for health care professionals and first responders.

F.2.   To enhance bi-national surveillance by High Consequence Infectious Disease.

F.3.   Encourage high consequence infectious disease awareness at all level of response in the community.

F.4.   Organize Sister City Health Campaigns in health promotion and disease prevention at the grass root level.

F.5.   Enhance all emergency management and first responder's organizations with support of increased alerts to develop a shared system for U.S.-Mexico Border Bi-National Health alerts.

F.6.   Encourage public participation in improving the disease reporting system.

F.7.   Focus on health-related emergencies for optimal detection and rapid response to protect citizens from loss of life or long-term adverse health effects.

SECTION.II. –HOMELAND SECURITY

REGIONAL HIGHLIGHTS:

- Established a Regional Mass Fatality Management Plan.
- Assist in establishing NIMS Implementation Plans to ensure compliance for individual jurisdictions and completed the NIMS requirements throughout the region.
- New employees completed the NIMS IS 100, 200, 700, and 800 courses; ICS 300-400 trainings were conducted.
- Assisted in updating Emergency Management Plans before the 5th anniversary plan dates to meet state requirement levels (Intermediate or Advanced).
- Regional Implementation Plan was revised.
- Conducted various training opportunities for first responders throughout the region.
- Enhanced communication, cooperation and coordination between local, state and federal Public Safety.
- Support local, state, and federal law enforcement operations such as Operation Unified Alliance, Operation Stonegarden, Operation Borderstar which gathers valuable intelligence and operating methods.
- Established a Joint Operations Intelligence Center (JOIC) in the Lower Rio Grande Valley.
- Implemented a regional Law Enforcement Emergency Regional Response Team (LEERRT) SWAT.
- Drills/Full-Scale Exercises to include Bi-National Terrorism HAZ-MAT event, Active Shooter Exercise.
- Increased interdiction by Law Enforcement to reduce drug trafficking and human trafficking.
- Increased surveillance along the border within Public Safety due to the implementation of Un-manned Aerial Vehicles, UAV.
- Established the Texas Border Security campaign (DPS "Operation Border Star" and "Operation Stonegarden".)
- Improved interoperable communications in the region.
- Created a Regional Interoperable Communications Plan and Standard Operating Procedure that includes P25 digital radio equipment.
- Creation of Rio Grande Valley Communications Group Governance Committee to oversee regional communications implementation.
- Conducted communications exercises to test interoperable communications to include weekly testing.
- Accomplishment of the State's NECP Goal 2.
- Secured funding for the Border Interoperability Demonstration Project.
- Standardization of all mobile (ACU-1000) interoperable communication systems.
- Funded P25 digital radios through SHSP grant funds.
- Conducted interoperability basic training and certified COM-L's (Communication Leaders), which has produced two certified COM-L's and one COM-T.
- Upgraded Regional Interoperable Communications Plan (RICP) and SOP has been updated and revised.
- Assisted with Operation Lone Star is a joint military and civil authority strategic national stockpile exercise with a focus on medical readiness, mass prophylaxis response, which encompassed nearly 10,000 participant's region-wide.
- Conducted Emergency Management Planning Grant (EMPG) required exercises.

- Increased training for public through Citizen's Academy Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) Programs.
- Specialized equipment purchased for the Sight/Hearing impaired and Non-English speaking persons.
- Utilize social media for bi-lingual/bi-cultural information.
- Enhanced public health capabilities such as mass fatality management, medical surge, mass prophylaxis, and CBRNE detection, response and decontamination.
- Cooperative efforts with the Department State Human Services (DSHS) as it relates to Zoonatic activity and other potential outbreaks.
- CBRNE Awareness Training for local public health and public safety personnel.
- Assessment, discovery, and interdiction capabilities for chemical threats are in place.
- Systems are in place to identify sources for substances identified as potential chemical attacks.
- Local first responders are trained and equipped to quickly detect chemical, biological and radiological materials and/or exposure at the scene of a major incident.
- Local medical facilities are included in the Critical Infrastructure Identification Plan.
- Local, State, and Federal agencies in CBRNE defense successfully identified chemical or radiological materials through inspections, surveillance, security, counterintelligence, and infrastructure protection efforts.
- Local first responders, including fire rescue and emergency medical services (EMS), recognized the presence of chemical, biological or radiological materials during emergency responses and took appropriate measures to respond.
- Law Enforcement CBRNE out of state training.
- Sustain of Spanish NOAA Severe Early Weather Warning Notification System.
- The 2016 South Texas Hurricane Conference: All Hazards Approach.
- TDEM Disaster accounting.
- Century 16 Theater Shooting and High Risk Extraction Protocol Presentation.
- 2016 LRGV Aeromedical Evacuation Full Scale Exercise.
- Regional synthetic drug awareness symposium.
- Accomplished a radiological workshop/training.

REGIONAL RESOURCES:

LRGVDC, Cities/Counties, TXDPS, TDEM, Federal & State Agencies, Media, EMS Providers, Health Care Providers, Cameron & Hidalgo Counties Local Emergency Planning Committee, DSHS, FEMA, TEEX, 211, ARES, NOAA, FBI, TRAC V, PSAP's, PW, CBP ATF, National Guard and USCG, USCBP, Institutions of Higher Education, LEERRT, School Districts and Public Health. LRGVDC Citizen Corps, TARC, Media, FEMA Region 6 Citizen Corps Advisory Group, School Districts and Public Health and Education institutions, Food Bank RGV, United Way of South Texas, UTRGV, American Red Cross. Community and Civic Organizations, Public and Private Foundations, DSHS, US Department of Health and Human Services-CDC, Legislative and Executive Bodies of the US and Mexican Border States, Public Health and Emergency Management, Promotoras, Health Care Providers, Health Clinics, College and University programs, Migrant Health Providers, Reynosa-Matamoros Mexico, International Red Cross, and EPA Compacts, CVF, LRGV-Area Health Education Center, Commicion Regional de Salud Reynosa-Frontera Chica Mexico, LEERRT, Mass Fatality Plan, RGVCG, RICP, EMPs and local Hazard Mitigation Action Plans.

SECTION. III. – 9-1-1

GOAL (A). Provide a continuous, reliable operation of regional *9-1-1 system*.

The overall key service provided by LRGVDC for Public Safety in the area of 9-1-1 is to marry together many different resources that are need to direct responders quickly and reliably to emergencies. The 9-1-1 offices in the region orchestrate agencies, technologies, and data used by telecommunicators for dispatch. This includes monitoring contracts for best use of funds allocated through the state derived from 9-1-1 fees collected.

SUPPORTING STRATEGIES:

A.1.   Harden Cyber Security in the 9-1-1 Call Centers and Administrative Offices.

A.2.   Provide accurate, reliable and current GIS data to all of our PSAPs

A.3.   Establish MOUs with Emergency Service Districts to improve medical pre-arrival instructions and minimize delays arrival at emergencies.

A.4.   Implement Continuous Improvement best practices for 9-1-1 Call Centers and Administrative Offices.

A.5.   Perform Cell Phone Tower testing to align sectors to correct PSAP, validate new smartphone technology, and prove compliance with federal standards.

A.6.   Confirm Location Data is transfer between neighboring 9-1-1 jurisdictions.

A.7.   Provide Long Term Recorder & Generators used for 9-1-1 Calls.

A.8.   Provide Professional Develop & Certifications to our Telecommunicators and Administrative staff.

GOAL (B).   Implement emerging *Next Generation 9-1-1* technologies.

As Next Generation 9-1-1 Public Safety data centers become available, our region needs to convert from older pre-computer and pre-internet technologies to standards based new technologies. This will assists us with routing, texting and streaming audio along with related data on Emergency Services Networks (ESInets).

SUPPORTING STRATEGIES:

B.1.   Transition from older telephone legacy networks to newer cloud and service based networks and servers, with required security for NG911.

B.2.   Implement backup networks that ties regional PSAPs to state and national ESInets.

B.3.   Ensure compatibility of emerging Smartphone Applications that feed 9-1-1 call centers.

B.4.   Certify customized geolocation equipment through testing with approved labs.

B.5.   Maintain state formatted geospatial data and servers used to route NG911 calls.

GOAL (C). **Promote 9-1-1 *Public Safety Education* to all public, private and educational agencies.**

Public Safety Education competes for attention with polished multimedia, graphic entertainments, and conflicting interests. Equally, attention grabbing campaigns are need to reduce the number of future 9-1-1 calls. Follow-up calls with prior 9-1-1 callers can also help by focusing first on those with the most urgent needs. Collaboration with case management can help reduce the need for repeated emergency response.

SUPPORTING STRATEGIES:

C.1.   Use signage, graphics, animations, and maps to tell *the real story* to at risk communities.

C.2.   Promote compliance with Kari's Law in businesses, government offices, and universities.

C.3.   Collaborate with neighboring 9-1-1 entities to synergize goals. (South Texas 9-1-1, TARC, CBCOG, MRGDC, CC911, RGVAUG).

C.4.   Participate in state committees & conferences (PETS, TNT, SCAUG).

C.5.   Adopt standards & certifications developed through national and international associations (NENA, Mexico NENA, APCO, and ESRI).

C.6.   Improve public education activities through geospatial analysis within the region.

REGIONAL HIGHLIGHTS:

- Assisted in Telecommunicator Licensing

- Revived Public Education funding and events

- Provided Mapping updates to emergency Call Centers

- Helped Unify "9-1-1" as the Emergency Number in Mexico

- Awarded the TEXAS NENA Presidential Award in 2015

REGIONAL RESOURCES:

LRGVDC Board, City & Counting Offices, PSAPs, Emergency Responders, Industry Consultants, Texas 9-1-1 Commission, neighboring 9-1-1 jurisdictions, Contractors & Vendors, Telephone Service Providers, CSEC, 9-1-1 Alliance, NG911 Test Lab, Consultants, National Standards Associations, MMRS, Criminal Justice, Area Agency on Aging, 2-1-1, TNRIS, Google, Public Education Programs in cities and counties (Fire, Law, EMS)
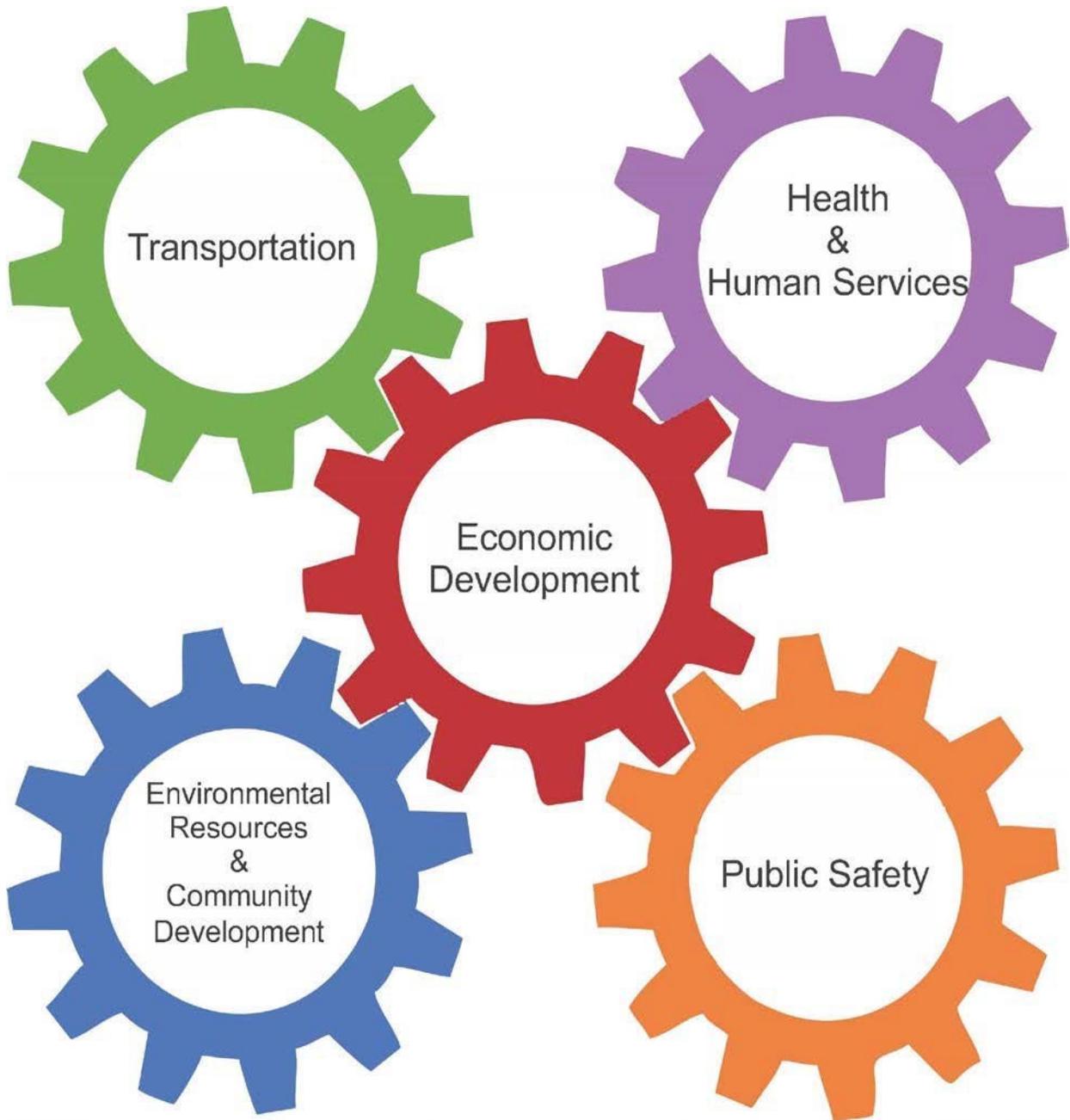
SECTION. IV. – POLICE ACADEMY

GOAL (A). Promote the development of highly qualified law enforcement professionals by providing quality education and training in alignment with requirements set forth by the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement (TCOLE).

SUPPORTING STRATEGIES:

A.1. Provide the basic certification courses for those individuals wishing to obtain their Texas Peace Officer license or Telecommunicator's license.

A.2. Provide professional development opportunities for incumbent TCOLE licensees (peace officers, county jailers, telecommunicators and school marshals) to maintain their license proficiently and acquire higher level proficiency certificates based on the license(s) held (basic, intermediate, advance, master)

A.3. Provide professional development opportunities for those individuals wishing to attain instructor level certifications and/or proficiency certifications as subject matter experts (SME

GOAL (B). Provide continuing professional development instruction and resources to ensure law enforcement personnel remain dynamic, skilled, and proficient across the region.

TRANSPORTATION

Transportation

Health
&
Human Services

Economic
Development

Environmental
Resources
&
Community
Development

Public Safety

VISION STATEMENT

Through effective planning and service delivery, people and goods will be able to move throughout the region safely and efficiently by using a seamless multi-modal transportation network.

TRANSPORTATION GOALS

GOAL (A). Establish a seamless transportation system to increase connectivity and accessibility for people and freight, emphasizing regional planning efforts to meet the growing population demands of the region and ensure strategic development of urban and rural areas.

GOAL (B). Further adopt and implement multi-modal transportation infrastructure, policies and resources to develop healthier, safer, livable communities.

GOAL (C). Preserve and improve existing transportation system to ensure the safety and security for motorized and non-motorized users.

GOAL (D). Ensure environmental sustainability, energy conservation and preservation of natural resources through coordinated state and local planning and economic development.

TRANSPORTATION

GOAL (A). Establish a seamless transportation system to increase connectivity and accessibility for people and freight, emphasizing regional planning efforts to meet the growing population demands of the region and ensure strategic development of urban and rural areas.

SUPPORTING STRATEGIES:

A.1.   Coordinate partnership and collective planning efforts between existing transportation planning and service delivery entities.

A.2.   Develop comprehensive regional and international transportation plans and strategies to accommodate the needs of the surging freight industry and public transportation.

A.3.   Enhance regional rural development through creation of a Rural Planning Organization (RPO).

A.4.   Support regional economic development, tourism and trade by ensuring adequate infrastructure and transportation access.

A.5.   Expand opportunity for stakeholders and public involvement.

A.6.   Identify efficient and affordable transportation resources to provide adequate access for underserved individuals such as minorities, elderly and disabled.

A.7.   Establish a reliable consistent source of local revenue to continue the development of public transportation infrastructure and service.

TRANSPORTATION

GOAL (B). **Further adopt and implement multi-modal transportation infrastructure, policies and resources to develop healthier, safer, livable communities.**

Communities across the Rio Grande Valley are increasingly experiencing a transformative shift from a rural to an urban landscape. Adoption of multimodal strategic principles in transportation planning will encourage the growth of communities that are safe, attractive and healthy. Accessible and safe streets increase transportation options for all users including those traveling by car, bus, on foot, and bicycling—encouraging people to be more physically active while reducing traffic congestion, air pollution and protecting green spaces.

In addition to safe and healthy communities, a Complete Streets design that incorporates multimodal principles benefits community economic development by facilitating the mobility of people and reducing the reliance on more than one vehicle per family, allowing for increased disposable income to be injected into the local economy.

SUPPORTING STRATEGIES:

B.1.   Evaluate the connectivity between different modes of transportation such as highways, pedestrian and bicycle lanes, public transit routes, school routes, and amongst others.

B.2.   Develop and adopt "complete streets" policy at the county and/or municipality level.

B.3.   Further expand individual city multi-modal trail system and facilitate collaborative planning to connect city trails into regional network.

B.4.   Consider principles of "age-friendly" livable communities to ensure multi-modal system supports users of all ages.

B.5.   Improve multi-modal awareness as an effective, low-cost, evidence-based health and wellness improvement strategy.

B.6.   Encourage designated eco-tourism corridors, recreational events and open-street festivals as a means to market multi-modal plans.

TRANSPORTATION

GOAL (C). **Preserve and improve existing transportation system to ensure the safety and security for motorized and non-motorized users.**

The terrorist events of September 11th, 2001, emphasized that effective coordination and communication among the many different operating agencies in a region is absolutely essential. In addition, our region includes the potential of various environment, natural and man-made disasters.

Efficient coordination is needed to allow enforcement, security, and safety responses to occur in an expeditious manner, while at the same time permitting the transportation system to handle the overwhelming public response to the incident. The public needs to have clear and concise information about the situation and what actions need to be taken.

SUPPORTING STRATEGIES:

C.1. Coordinate regional resources to ensure transportation plan mitigates the possible sudden disruptions of the transportation system by either man-made or natural disasters.

C.2. Ensure adequate and efficient regional evacuation routes and implementation procedures.

C.3. Develop strategies to decrease the number of vehicle-vehicle and vehicle-pedestrian Incidents.

C.4. Develop and expand safety protocol such as the HCMPO Incident Management Program (IMP) to address safety, accident reporting and data analysis.

C.5. Support disaster prevention through improved facility designs, surveillance, monitoring, and sensing technologies.

C.6. Facilitate rapid reconstruction of services after an incident.

C.7. Institute comprehensive investigation principles and organization self-assessment before, during and after disaster incidents.

C.8. Develop and utilize special transportation studies and projects on topics such as congestion management, hazmat mitigation and weather-resiliency.

C.9. Preserve current infrastructure by implementing goals and strategies such as multimodal plans and mass transit to reduce daily users on current transportation system.

C.10. Right of Way preservation via the thoroughfare plan also preserves the existing transportation system by securing expansion potential for future additional lanes.

TRANSPORTATION

GOAL (D). Ensure environmental sustainability, energy conservation and preservation of natural resources through coordinated state and local planning and economic development.

Enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, improve the quality of life, and promote consistency between transportation improvements, since stakeholders establish priorities thru a collaborative effort taking into consideration the vulnerable aspects and needs of: the sensitive environmental areas; colonias; populations such as minorities, the underserved, the elderly, and the disabled; federal lands, historical markers and natural preserves; public transportation; congestion, and economic development, amongst others.

SUPPORTING STRATEGIES:

D.1   Promote energy conservation and air quality through efficient mass transit and rideshare programs.

D.2.   Ensure mass transit resources provide adequate and efficient means of community transportation.

D.3.   Support transportation planning to protect natural and environmental habitat.

D.4.   Develop eco-tourism routes to highlight historical areas, natural preserves and beatification zones.

D.5.   Endorse incentive programs for hybrid, electric and other non-gas consumption modes of transportation.

D.6.   Utilize technological resources that provide expanded data analysis and measurement of local transportation patterns.

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION RESOURCES:

Cities/Counties, LRGVDC, FHWA, TxDOT, Regional mobility Authorities and Private Sector, Valley Metro, Metro McAllen, Bicycling Advocacy Groups, FTA, Homeland Security, 911, DPS, Water Districts, IBWC, TCEQ, Irrigation Districts, EPA, FEMA, TWDB, US Fish & Wildlife, Texas Parks & Wildlife, Environmental Groups, Brownsville Metro, Island Metro, local cycling groups, Workforce Solutions and Private Sector.