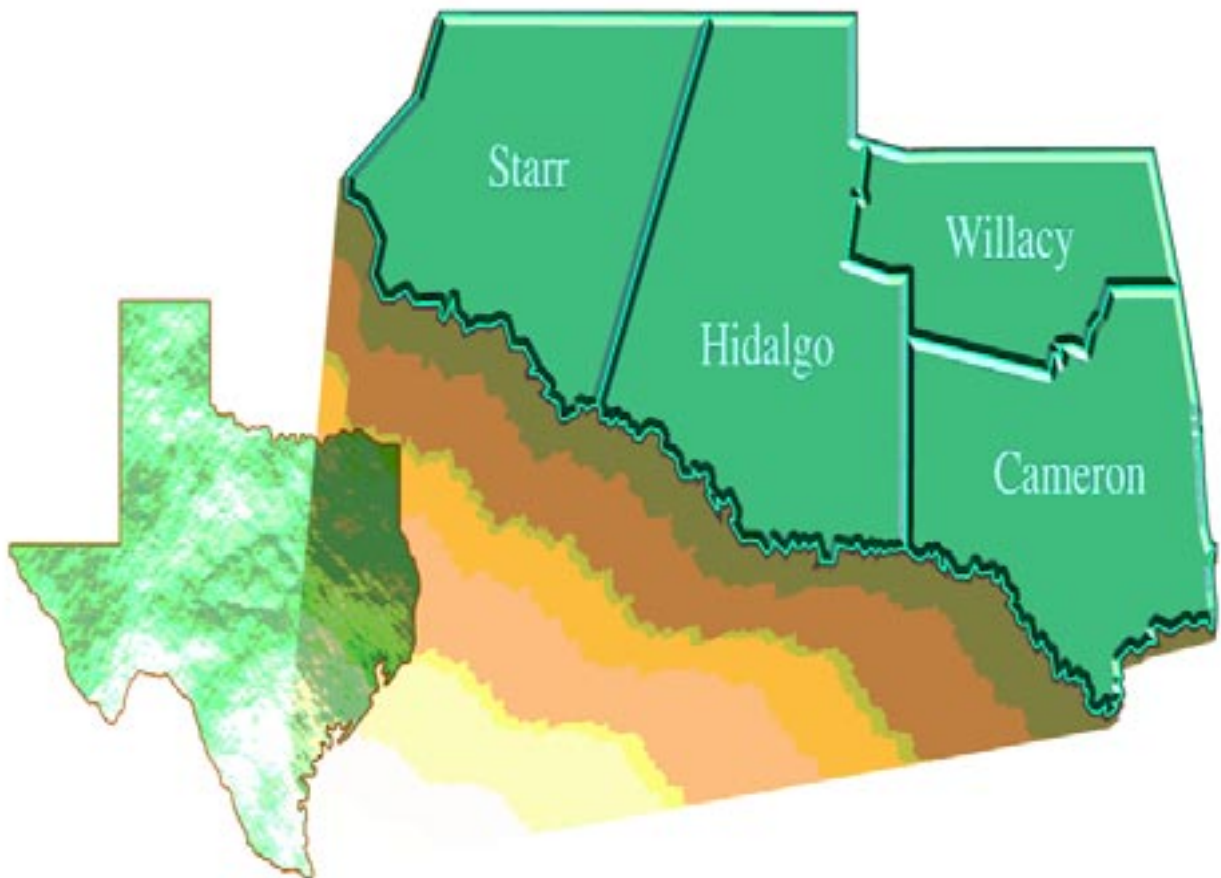

TARGETING THE FUTURE

A REPORT ABOUT THE EVOLVING LABOR MARKET
IN TEXAS' RIO GRANDE VALLEY



Submitted by
TECH PREP OF THE RIO GRANDE VALLEY, INC., for
CBIRD-TEXAS REGIONAL ACTION COUNCIL

2002 LABOR MARKET INFORMATION REPORT

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in collaboration with
Cameron Works, Inc.

Lower Rio Grande Valley Workforce Development Board dba
WorkFORCE Solutions

DECEMBER 2002

INTRODUCTION AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Tech Prep of the Rio Grande Valley, Inc. (“Tech Prep Inc.”) is the Texas nonprofit and federal 501(c)(3) corporation that leads the Lower Rio Grande Valley Tech Prep Consortium and the Lower Rio Grande Valley School-to-Careers Partnership. Tech Prep Inc.’s Board is a regional board, serving Cameron, Hidalgo, Starr, and Willacy Counties. The corporation’s voting members include 32 independent school districts, 6 colleges and universities, the Region One Education Service Center, and numerous professional and civic organizations working together under the leadership of one private-sector-led board.

In July 1996, Tech Prep Inc., as the School-to-Careers Partnership, assumed the responsibilities formerly assigned to the Region 21 Quality Workforce Planning Committee to publish a labor market information report for Cameron, Hidalgo, and Willacy Counties. Fulfilling this responsibility required Tech Prep Inc. to analyze local labor market trends and to identify the most probable “best jobs”—current and emerging—in the Rio Grande Valley. Using the latest labor market information available from national, international, state, and local sources, Tech Prep Inc. has published an annual labor market information report every year since 1996.

The Cross-Border Institute for Regional Development (CBIRD) is a bi-national collaborative created to serve as a catalyst for regional development in the southern United States and northern Mexico—and in particular in the Lower Rio Grande Valley (Cameron, Hidalgo, Starr, and Willacy Counties). CBIRD has a U.S. subsidiary organization, the CBIRD-Texas Regional Action Council, Inc. (CBIRD-TRAC), that has contracted with Tech Prep Inc. to develop and implement a Communities Career Ladder program that will bridge the gap between labor market

studies, education and training programs, and the business community's actual and predicted needs. This labor market study is an extension of the work conducted by Tech Prep Inc. in the past and is also the first component of the CBIRD Communities Career Ladder program.

Reporting about the Lower Rio Grande Valley's labor market is a challenge, for the region is undergoing rapid change and is impacted by the economies of both Texas and Mexico. The region is experiencing rapid economic growth, and the students, parents and working adults who live here need to understand labor market changes to prepare well for the future and to experience personal economic success. The information in this report will provide invaluable career information for students, parents, and educators and can be used by public schools and postsecondary institutions for program planning. In addition, this report is intended to meet the needs of workforce development boards, chambers of commerce, economic development organizations, and other community leaders, and to support development of a regional Communities Career Ladder system.

Data from state, local, and national sources was gathered and analyzed in the preparation of this report. In addition, local employer input was included in the report through employer focus groups that met in Brownsville, Harlingen, McAllen, Raymondville, Rio Grande City, South Padre Island, and Weslaco. More than 100 employers from various Rio Grande Valley cities participated in these groups and shared insights about workforce trends and needs. Many occupations included in the final targeted occupations list in the report have been included because of local needs identified through the discussions in these employer focus groups.

It is important to note that employers throughout the Rio Grande Valley requested that Tech Prep Inc. share with educators, students, and parents the need for youngsters to acquire foundational skills such as work ethics, honesty, integrity, loyalty, willingness to accept responsibility, customer service and human relations competencies, and critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Employers stressed that these skills are needed along with academic excellence, literacy in both English and Spanish, and work-related skills. Complete notes from the employer focus groups have been included in the appendix.

The 2002 report provides a listing of targeted occupations and correlates those occupations with actual programs offered by school districts, colleges, and other educational service providers. This report may be reviewed or downloaded through Tech Prep Inc.'s website (<http://www.techprepRGV.com>), and a limited number of hard copies of the report are available through Tech Prep Inc.'s Harlingen office (956/364-4509).

Many organizations and individuals contributed to the preparation of Tech Prep Inc.'s 2002 Targeting the Future report, beginning with the visionary leadership provided by the CBIRD-TRAC Board and by Tech Prep Inc's Partnerships Committee Co-Chairs, Ed Tamayo and Adrian A. Arriaga, CCIM, CEA. Tamayo is Executive Vice President of the First Community Bank in Harlingen, and Arriaga is a real estate broker who owns AAA Real Estate & Investment in McAllen. Tamayo is immediate past chair of the Tech Prep Inc. Board of Directors and a member of the Board of Cameron Works, Inc. Arriaga serves as Vice President of the Tech Prep Inc. Board of Directors, as chair of the WorkFORCE Solutions Business Advisory Committee, and as a member of the Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council.

We gratefully acknowledge the collaboration and support of the Texas Workforce Commission and two workforce development boards in the preparation of the 2002 report. Workforce development boards have tremendous responsibilities for serving youth, adult workers, and employers in the Rio Grande Valley, and these organizations utilize labor market information on a daily basis. The two workforce boards serving Cameron, Hidalgo, Starr, and

Willacy Counties have collaborated with the Texas Workforce Commission on a community audit and employer survey providing data that will validate the information contained in this report. Information about the community audit can be obtained from either workforce board. The following organizations and individuals provided invaluable collaboration and support for the preparation of the 2002 labor market report:

- Cameron Works, Inc., the workforce development board serving Cameron County—Stella Garcia, Executive Director, and Gilbert Elizondo, Board Chair
- WorkFORCE Solutions, the board serving Hidalgo, Starr, and Willacy Counties—Carlos Herrera, President/CEO; Hector (Buddy) De la Rosa, Board Chair; Cuauhtemoc Roldan, Resource Manager; and Gloria Ramos, Business Development Specialist.

We are also grateful for the collaboration and support of the Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council and its Executive Director, Kenneth Jones, Jr. This organization is the regional council of governments in which mayors and other community leaders plan for regional growth and development, and this group must work with labor market information to plan well.

In addition, we appreciate the collaboration and support provided by the chambers of commerce, economic development agencies, and professional organizations that cosponsored employer focus groups for the 2002 report. These organizations work to attract new businesses to their communities and to meet the needs of businesses that are situated here. These organizations' work contributes to the overall economic well-being and prosperity of the entire Rio Grande Valley, as well as each local community. Thanks to the following organizations that cosponsored the employer focus groups this year:

- Brownsville Area Manufacturers' Association—Hector Quintanilla, President
- Brownsville Chamber of Commerce—Frank Feild, CEO
- Brownsville Economic Development Council—Jason Hilts, President/CEO.
- Harlingen Area Chamber of Commerce—John Crutchfield, President and CEO, and Nanette Fitch, Director of Economic Development and Liaison for the Harlingen Manufacturers' Association
- McAllen Chamber of Commerce—Steve Ahlenius, President/CEO
- McAllen Economic Development Corporation—Mike Allen, President/CEO; Keith Patridge, Executive Vice President
- Raymondville Chamber of Commerce—Elma Chavez, CEO
- Rotary International, Rotary District 5930-Rio Grande City—Samuel Ramos, President; Billy Canales, Member
- South Padre Island Chamber of Commerce—Roxanne Harris, President
- South Texas Community College—The Partnership—Carlos Margo, Training Manager
- South Texas Manufacturers' Association—Jim Welton, Director
- The Economic Development Corporation of Weslaco—Hernan Gonzalez, Executive Director
- Willacy County Industrial Foundation, Inc.—Guy Fambrough, Board Chair

The subcontractors who worked on this report have done an excellent job. These individuals from the University of Texas-Pan American, Edinburg are knowledgeable, talented, and hard-working individuals, and we gratefully acknowledge their contributions:

- Roland S. Arriola, Vice President for External Affairs, UTPA
- S. J. Sethi, Ph.D., Associate Executive Director, Office of Center Operations and Community Services (CoSERVE), UTPA

Tech Prep Inc.'s Partnerships Committee is responsible for overseeing the preparation of the report, for reviewing the final draft before it is presented to the Tech Prep Inc. Board—and then to the CBIRD-TRAC Board—for final approval. We are grateful for the contributions of the many dedicated, talented individuals who serve on Tech Prep Inc.'s Partnerships Committee:

- Ed Tamayo, Executive Vice President, First Community Bank, Harlingen, Tech Prep Inc. Board—Executive Committee; Partnerships Committee Chair
- Adrian A. Arriaga, CCIM, CEA, Broker/Owner, AAA Real Estate & Investment, McAllen; Tech Prep Inc. Board—Vice President; Partnerships Committee Co-Chair

- Rosa G. (Rosie) Cavazos, Program Director, WorkFORCE Solutions (Hidalgo, Starr, and Willacy Counties)
- Francisco Castellanos, Weslaco City Manager—Tech Prep Inc. and WorkFORCE Solutions Boards
- Guy Fambrough, Chair, Willacy County Industrial Development Corp., Inc., Raymondville (Willacy County)
- Stella Garcia, Executive Director, Cameron Works, Inc. (Cameron County)
- Dominique Halaby, Executive Director, Valley Initiative for Development and Advancement (VIDA), Weslaco (Cameron, Hidalgo, Starr, and Willacy Counties)
- Jeff Hembree, Deputy Superintendent, South Texas Independent School District, Mercedes (Cameron, Hidalgo, and Willacy Counties)
- Carlos Herrera, President/CEO, WorkFORCE Solutions, Edinburg (Hidalgo and Willacy Counties)
- Kenneth N. Jones, Jr., Executive Director, Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council, McAllen (Cameron, Hidalgo, and Willacy Counties)
- Maria Nuez Hall, Principal Agent and Personal Financial Advisor, Allstate Insurance Company, Brownsville—Tech Prep Inc. Board (Cameron County)
- Manuel Ochoa, Project Director, Motivation, Education and Training, Inc., Edinburg—WorkFORCE Solutions Board (Hidalgo, Starr, and Willacy Counties)
- Keith Patridge, Executive Vice President, McAllen Economic Development Corp., McAllen (Hidalgo County)
- Hector Quintanilla, President, Brownsville Area Manufacturers' Association and Business and Industry Director, the University of Texas at Brownsville and Texas Southmost College—Cameron Works, Inc., and Tech Prep Inc. Boards
- Cuauhtemoc Roldan, Resource Manager, WorkFORCE Solutions, Edinburg (Hidalgo and Willacy Counties)
- Stephen M. Vassberg, Associate Vice President for Workforce and Economic Development, Texas State Technical College, Harlingen, Tech Prep Inc. Board (Cameron, Hidalgo, Starr, and Willacy Counties)

We cannot adequately express our gratitude for the cooperation and contributions of our working partners in the 32 school districts, 6 colleges and universities, Region One Education Service Center, the South Texas Career and Technology Administrators and Supervisors Association, and the numerous other organizations that are voting members of Tech Prep Inc. Many of these organizations participated in the regional focus groups that were held throughout the Valley, and these organizations will be able to utilize the information in this report in working with students, parents, and adult workers throughout the Valley.

Finally, we are inexpressibly grateful for the visionary leadership provided by the Boards of Directors of Tech Prep of the Rio Grande Valley, Inc., and CBIRD-TRAC and its Executive Director, Abderrahmane Megateli, Ph.D.:

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Hilario (Larry) Rincones, Associate Director for Service Provider and Resident Organization, College of Architecture, Center for Housing and Urban Development, Texas A&M University-College Station; Weslaco
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The leadership, ideas, and vision of all of the individuals named above are represented in the 2002 Targeting the Future report. We are grateful for the contributions made by all!



Patricia G. (Pat) Bubb, Executive Director

Tech Prep of the Rio Grande Valley, Inc.

Harlingen, Texas, December 2002