

The Rio Grande Valley Broadband Coalition



The politics of "good enough" is not good enough

For decades, low-income, rural, and Hispanic residents in the Rio Grande Valley (RGV) on the Texas-Mexico border have been left without fast, affordable internet. Large, incumbent Internet Service Providers (ISPs) have under-invested in these communities while government efforts to bridge digital divides have fallen short.

Today **only 46% of RGV households** are estimated to have a fixed internet subscription in a time when more than **80% of jobs are posted online** and **92% of jobs require some digital skills**.

If we want to see communities in the Rio Grande Valley thrive, we must ensure there are more pathways to digital inclusion and equity. Beyond jobs, broadband is critical to accessing healthcare, educational opportunities, civic participation, and economic growth. To break the cycle of persistent poverty and create shared prosperity in South Texas, it's vital that everyone is able to access the tools and skills to harness the benefits of digital technology.

The Rio Grande Valley (RGV) Broadband Coalition is a network of partners working to accelerate digital equity. Together we will bring affordable, reliable internet access to families and businesses across the region.

Communities need internet access, tools, and skills to take part in our digitizing society.

Our work systematically, and holistically addresses persistent barriers to digital equity, starting with planning, followed by programs to connect businesses and families to the internet, provide digital skills and workforce training, and link people to the digital services they need.

Planning for high-speed, affordable broadband

The coalition supports local governments to create engineering and feasibility studies that will pave the way for high-speed networks that reach all RGV residents. Partnerships with local ISPs and anchor institutions set these broadband deployments up for success.

Investing in the digitalization of the region's small businesses

The South Texas Small Business Broadband Fund will support the digitalization of local businesses, helping to unlock the region's enormous entrepreneurial spirit. Investing in high-speed infrastructure, digital tools, and skills, the fund will help enterprises increase sales, create jobs, and generate wealth in their communities.

Digital workforce training

The Level Up RGV Digital Workforce Program provides training covering Network Design-Build-Maintenance, Cybersecurity, Information Technology (IT), how to be a Digital Navigator, and more. All programs include paid internships/apprenticeships, professional development, and information technology policy.

Opening the door to telehealth

The RGV Strategic Telehealth Expansion Plan establishes a partnership between local governments, ISPs, community health clinics, hospitals, and nonprofits to ensure that, in addition to connecting residents, healthcare providers have the high-speed internet, tools, and skills they need to provide robust telehealth services in underserved communities, including the colonias.

“As city leaders, we're taking on the digital divide in our communities because we know it is the most powerful way to unlock the many talents and potential our people have. This Fund is a necessary step on our digital journey as we ensure that every student, every neighborhood, and every entrepreneur, has the broadband they need to thrive.”

Dr. Ambrosio Hernandez, Mayor of the City of Pharr

With the generous support of the **Ford Foundation, Methodist Healthcare Ministries, Rural LISC, Valley Baptist Legacy Foundation, and Connect Humanity**, we have made progress on these work streams. We are raising an initial \$2M, en route to fully capitalizing the South Texas Small Business Broadband Fund at \$10M. The Fund is a critical step to ensure networks are built and run with, by, and for the community — connecting small businesses to high-speed internet — some for the first time — building their digital presence, and preparing students for a variety of digital jobs at each step in the process. We plan to expand this model across RGV counties and periurban and rural colonias, ensuring that families, businesses, and service providers across the region have the tools they need to thrive.

Rio Grande Valley Broadband Coalition Members

Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council | City of Pharr and TeamPharr.Net | Region One Educational Service Center | La Union Del Pueblo Entero (LUPE) | ARISE Adelante | Workforce Solutions (Hidalgo-Starr-Willacy; Cameron) | City of Brownsville; City of Harlingen | RGV Counties - Cameron, Hidalgo, Starr, Willacy | VTX1 Companies | SmartCom | Lit Communities-BTX Fiber | CobbFendley Engineering | Vanguard Academy | Pharr-San Juan-Alamo ISD | South Texas College (STC) | Texas State Technical College (TSTC) | Lone Star National Bank | come dream. come build. (cdcb) | Valley Baptist Legacy Foundation | Brownstone Consulting | Graybar | University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV) | Connect Humanity | Rural LISC | Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) | Methodist Healthcare Ministries | Fiber Broadband Association |

Get in touch

We hope you will join us in this critical work and help improve the lives of communities in the Rio Grande Valley for future generations.

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