

Hidalgo and Starr County nonprofits to receive help from federal grant

By Office of University Relations

Posted 03/31/2010

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Informational meetings will cover new grants and training opportunities for nonprofits

The University of Texas-Pan American's Southwest Border Nonprofit Resource Center (SBNRC) has been selected to receive almost a \$1 million to strengthen operations of nonprofit organizations in Hidalgo and Starr counties so they can provide assistance to residents affected by the economic downturn.



Local U.S. congressmen are collaborating with UTPA's Southwest Border Nonprofit Resource Center's Stronger Together Initiative to administer new federal funding the SBNRC was awarded to strengthen area nonprofit organizations' expertise in providing assistance to residents of Hidalgo and Starr counties during the national economic downturn and recovery. Pictured left to right are Desiree Mendez-Caltzonztint, Office of Congressman Rubén Hinojosa (TX-15); Victor Martin De Leon, Office of Congressman Henry Cuellar (TX-28); and Lucila Lagace, director, SBNRC's Stronger Together Initiative.

The local contribution is part of a \$46 million grant that has been awarded to 84 grantees nationwide by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) under a new program called Strengthening Communities Fund (SCF), created by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

The local funds will be overseen by SBNRC's Stronger Together Initiative (STI). The UTPA program is one of only four in Texas to receive the monetary award and the recipient of the largest grant

which totals \$982,111. Of this amount, \$600,000 will be available in the form of competitive grants and awarded to nonprofits that apply for the funding and meet certain criteria. The remaining funds will be provided to groups considered for non competitive funding.

In all, STI hopes to assist up to 50 nonprofits in Hidalgo and Starr Counties. The program will target faith and community based organizations such as church food

pantries and adult literacy centers. Those competing for grants will be given priority if they have annual budgets of \$500,000 or less and work collaboratively with agencies administering funds and programs under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families.

The funding, if awarded, will allow SBNRC to train nonprofits in the areas of organizational, leadership, strategic and program development for one full year. They will also be eligible for intensive technical assistance and cash grants from \$10,000 to \$20,000. Noncompetitive groups that qualify will receive training and technical assistance for two years at no cost to them.

STI says the idea is to provide the nonprofits with the expertise they need to be able to assist low-income individuals secure and retain employment, earn higher wages, obtain better-quality jobs, and gain greater access to state and federal benefits and tax credits.

To learn more about the grant money guidelines and the application process, six informational sessions and workshops will be held in Hidalgo and Starr Counties during the month of April. They include:

- April 5 - 9-11 a.m. at Mercado Delta in Elsa
- April 5 - 1-3 p.m. at RGV Partnership in Weslaco
- April 9 - 1:30-3:30 p.m. at Dustin Michael Sekula Memorial Library in Edinburg
- April 13 - 1-3 p.m. at Senior Citizen Center in La Joya
- April 15 - 9-11 a.m. at Self-Help Center in Rio Grande City
- April 16 - 1-3 p.m. at Alton Community Center in Alton

To register, call the SBNRC at 956/292-7566 or visit the online registration page at ce.utpa.edu/sbnrc.