



Media Alert
For Immediate Release

To: Newsroom
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VIDA Awarded \$625,000 ACE Grant
Bringing Valley residents out of poverty and into high-demand occupations

The Texas Innovative Adult Career Education (ACE) Grant Program recently awarded the Valley Initiative for Development and Advancement (VIDA) a two-year, \$625,000 grant. This grant will enable VIDA to serve hundreds of low-income adults in the Rio Grande Valley who are pursuing a degree, license, or certification in high-demand occupations in the Valley.

The ACE Grant Program was established by the 83rd Texas Legislature to support the work of eligible nonprofit workforce intermediary and job-training organizations. Award recipients are required to develop, support, or expand programs that prepare low-income students to enter careers in high-demand, and significantly higher-earning, occupations. (The ACE Grant does not sponsor bachelor's programs.)

ACE Grant recipients must achieve these measures of success:

- Above average completion of developmental education among participating public junior college, public state college, or public technical institute students
- Above average persistence rates for these students
- Above average certificate/degree completion rates by participating students within a three-year period compared to demographically comparable students in these institutions
- Entry into careers with significantly higher earnings for program participants

ACE funds will provide funding for up to 50 percent of participant cost for case management and wraparound services and will be braided with other funding sources. Wraparound services include tuition, books, uniforms, tools, childcare, and testing/certification fees.

Astrid Rangel, a single, unemployed woman who lives in Weslaco with her father, brother, and sister is a current VIDA participant. Rangel's mother lives in Rio Bravo, Mexico, and her father is a painter who accepts jobs as they come available in order to pay expenses for his family. Rangel's sister is a college student pursuing a career in education, and her brother is in college majoring in business. Rangel is pursuing a bachelor's degree in social work because one of her strengths is working with people, especially children. Upon graduation, scheduled for fall of 2021, Rangel plans to work in the field of hospice care. Because of her family's financial hardships, graduating from college may not have been possible without VIDA, which is assisting Rangel with tuition, books, and required uniforms, in addition to one-on-one and group counseling with her VIDA case manager. This is how the organization changes lives, one VIDA at a time.

VIDA is a community-based, nonprofit 501(c)(3) agency created in 1995 through a local effort led by community leaders of Valley Interfaith and private-industry leaders. The impetus was the need to empower the underserved residents of our region with the tools, education, and training needed to become self-sufficient while fueling the growth of existing employers and recruiting new investors to the area by developing a highly skilled workforce. Since its inception, VIDA's mission remains constant--to formulate new institutional relationships in the Rio Grande Valley that simultaneously address employers' needs for skilled workers and link the area's unemployed and underemployed with high skilled, high-wage jobs in the region. To learn more, call 956.903.1900 or 1.800.478.1770 or visit vidacareers.org.