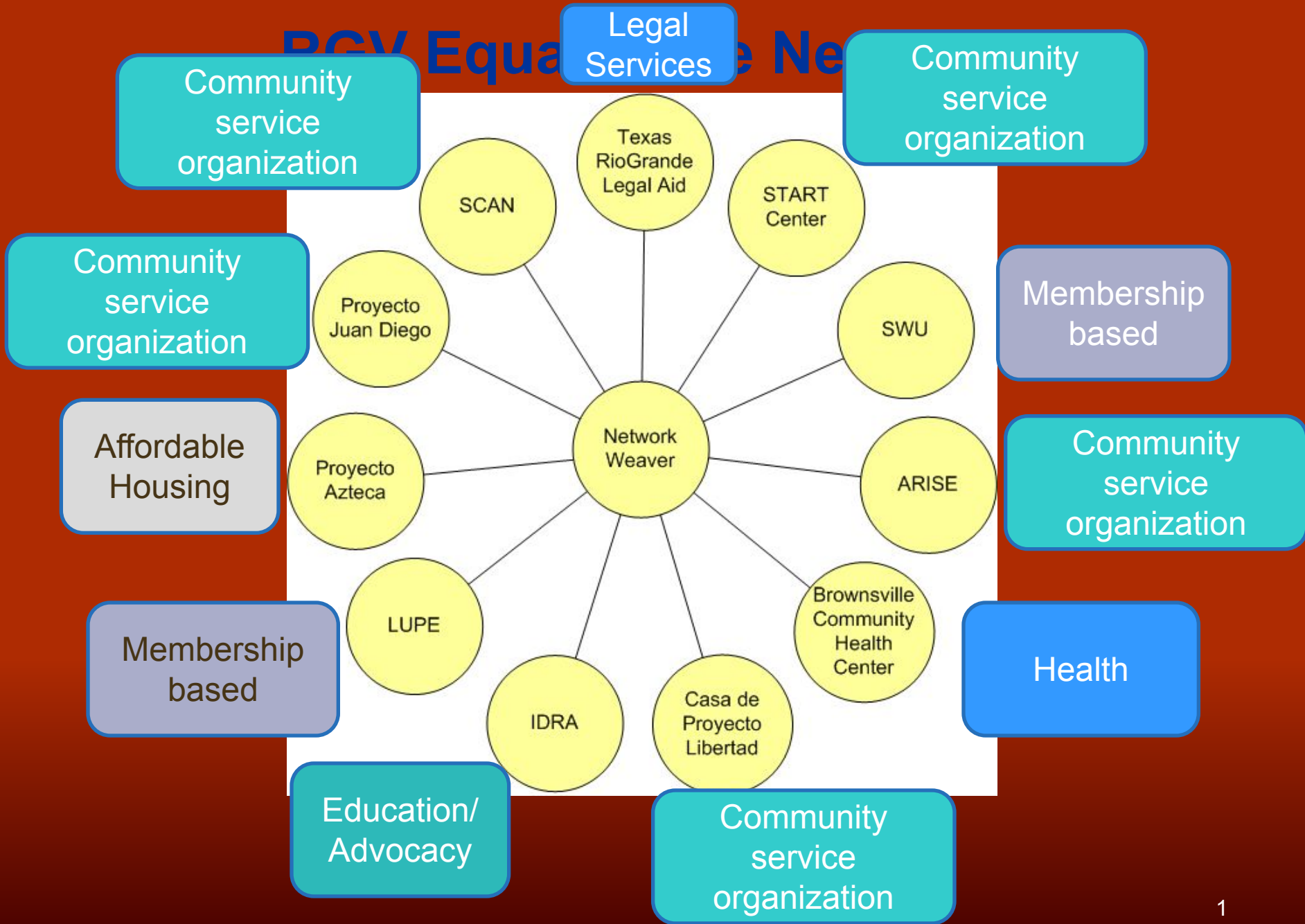


# Rio Grande Valley Equal Voice Network

## RGV Equal Voice Network



# Nonprofits now in the RGV EVN:

\*ARISE

\*LUPE

\*Proyecto Azteca

\*South Texas Civil Rights Project

\*ACLU

\*TRLA

\*Proyecto Juan Diego

\*Brownsville Community Health  
Center



The first Equal Voice for America's Families Townhall meeting was held right here in San Juan in January of 2008.



Even though it was an unusually extremely cold day for the Valley....4





...over 800 families came out and shared with us what their needs were.



Other townhall meetings were held from Starr County to Cameron County and over 10,000 voices were raised.





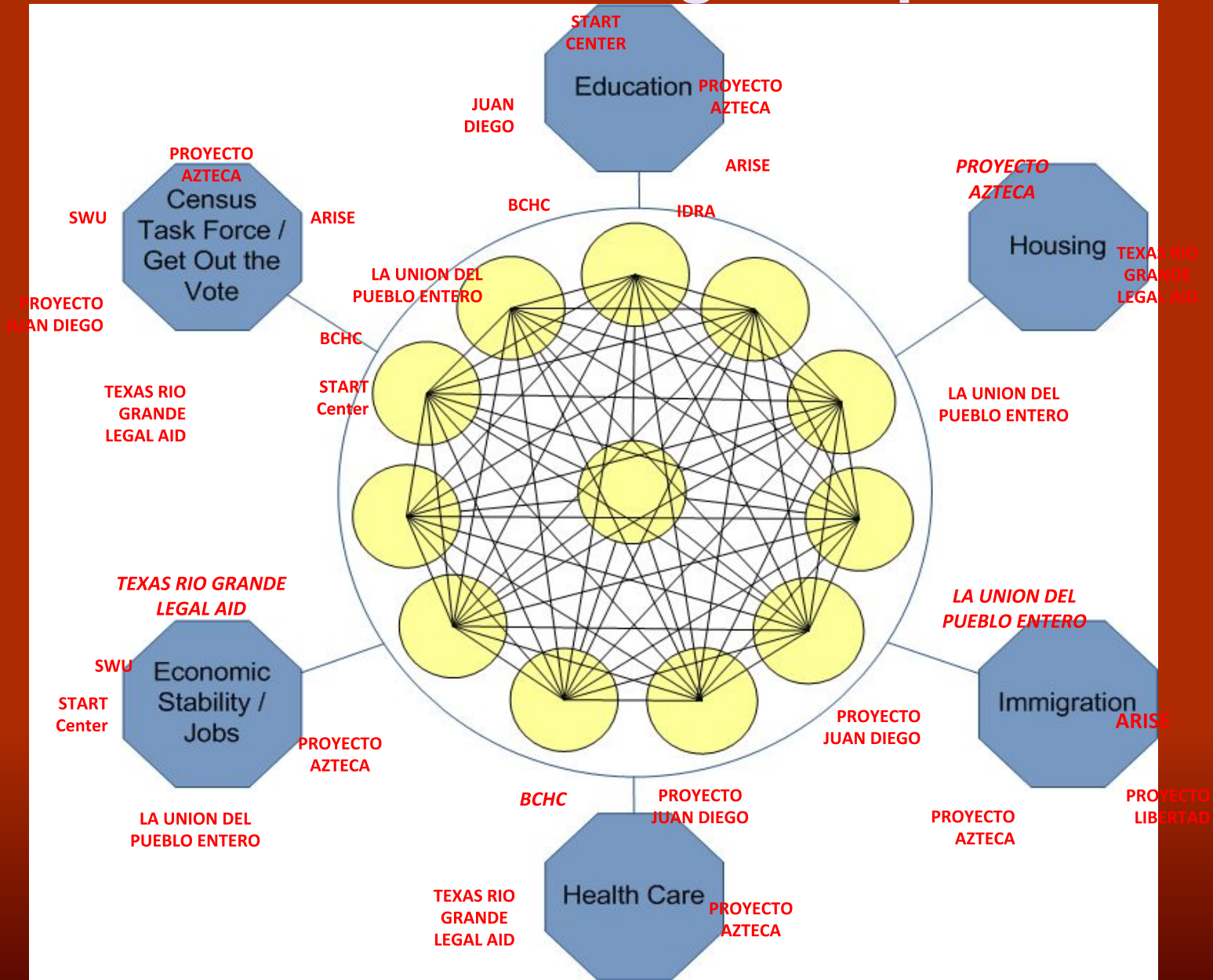
15,000 voices  
came together  
and formed the  
National Family  
Platform



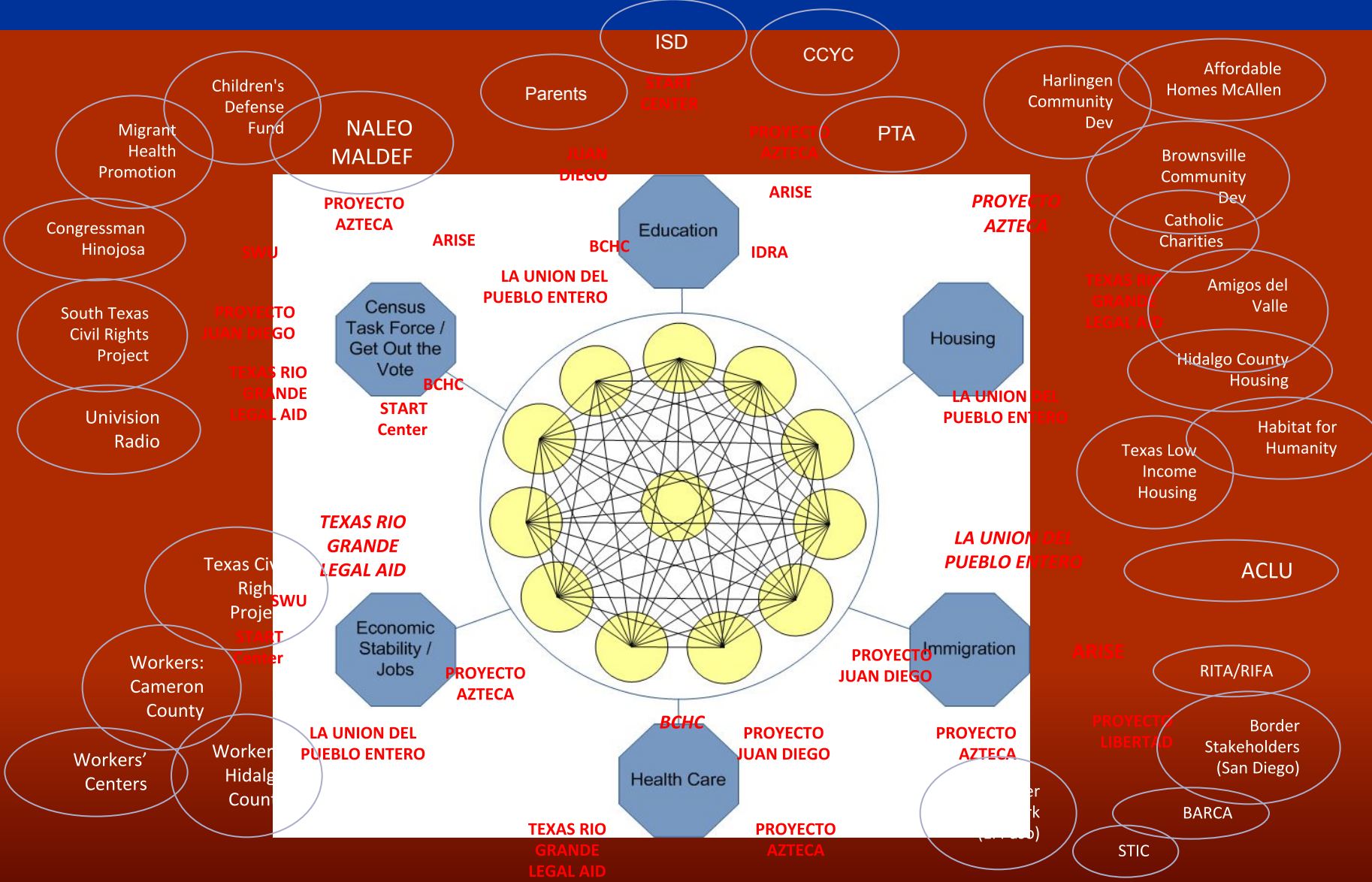
- Health
- Education
- Wages/ jobs
- Housing/transportation
- Immigration
- Civic Participation/leadership



# RGV Working Groups



# Extended Network







# HIDALGO COUNTY

## POPULATION

860,661

## MEDIAN AGE

29.2

**MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD**

**INCOME**

**\$37,106**

**POVERTY RATE**

**31.8%**

**[2017]**

McAllen MSA: 1<sup>st</sup>

Brownsville MSA: 2<sup>nd</sup>



McAllen MSA: 2<sup>nd</sup>

Brownsville MSA: 1<sup>st</sup>

# Health

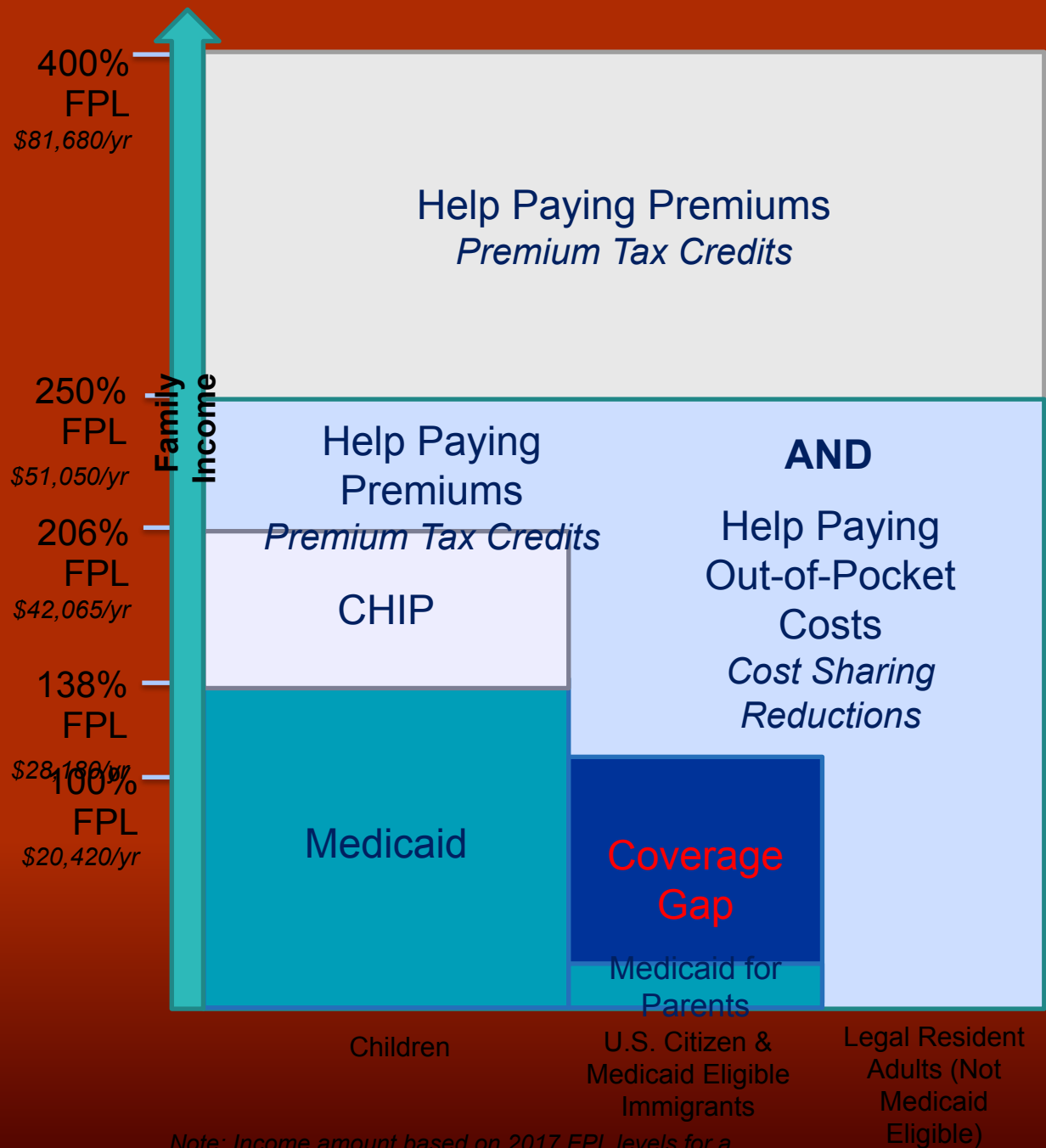
- No public hospital
- 300,000 without any health insurance
- National health care challenge: hospitals, insurance companies, pharmaceutical companies, providers [doctors and clinics]
- Mosquito borne diseases
- Diabetes-A&M/NCDV-pulga experience & UCD
- Medically underserved area but lacking two professions :dentists and mental health

- \* Substandard housing contributes to health issues, both physical and mental.
- \* We are the asthma capitol of the State.
- \* Since HB4 people are afraid to leave the colonias for health care.
- \* 81% food insecurity in colonias



\* Negative effect of the public charge-people have been given misinformation. Still do not know if it will effect public housing.

# Help Paying for Coverage Under the ACA



Note: Income amount based on 2017 FPL levels for a family of three.

2,228 to 1

**PATIENT TO PRIMARY CARE  
PHYSICIAN RATIO**

3,916 to 1

**PATIENT TO DENTIST RATIO**

1,967 to 1

**PATIENT TO MENTAL HEALTH  
PROVIDER RATIO [2017]**



# Education

- One out of two children who start kindergarten will not graduate from high school
- Dual language program
- Problem finding qualified teachers
- Under funding
- Lack of transportation does not allow for colonia residents to participate in extra-curricular activities.

# Transportation/Housing

- No decent public transportation system
- This is an impediment to work, health care, faith communities, grocery and retail stores, education, after school activities, etc
- Rural transportation with the COG [LRGVDC] is a great partner

# Wages/Jobs

- \$7.25/hour average wage
- stolen wages
- Living wage campaign

# Civic Participation

- Only two out of ten registered voters vote!

## Census 2020

- No citizenship question-thank goodness!
- No delivery of Census materials to PO Boxes
- No wifi in colonias and a digital divide.

# Housing:

- \* No knowledge of the housing stock, very substandard housing in small cities and in colonias.

- \* Drainage problems

- \* Improvement on the Model Subdivision Rules to provide for street lights, sidewalks, better constructed roads, and drainage



\* Poor housing affects children's progress in school, mental and physical health, sociability

\* Where most of the 925 colonias in this county now have potable water and are on the grid, many cannot afford the hook-ups and meters and therefore will share electricity with extension cords and water with hoses.

# What is a Colonia?

## Texas Secretary of State's Definition:

The term "colonia," in Spanish means a community or neighborhood. The Office of the Secretary of State defines a "colonia" as a residential area along the Texas-Mexico border that may lack some of the most basic living necessities, such as potable water and sewer systems, electricity, paved roads, and safe and sanitary housing.



Colonias are neighborhoods of low income families that were developed in isolated unincorporated areas of the counties. Most were developed over the last fifty years.

- A number of factors have contributed to the development and continued existence of the colonias. Chief among them are weak land use regulations and lack of enforcement by local authorities.

Low-income residents, attracted by low prices and the inability to qualify for a conventional loan, have purchased these small lots and constructed their own homes, using available materials and adding to them when possible.





- So, even where the infrastructure now exists, the cost of living on a lot with infrastructure results in substandard housing or dilapidated mobile homes being built.



One of our new home owners. Previously rented this property for \$185/month

The need for affordable housing is great. Housing needs to be sustainable as well to survive the weather events that we have, cross winds, hurricanes, hail storms. The neighborhoods in the colonias lack street lights, sidewalks, and recreational areas.

Consequently 59% of the children in the colonias are morbidly obese and admit that they are couch potatoes because their neighborhoods do not have sidewalks, areas to play/exercise, and feel dangerous.

(Recent study by Texas A&M Rural Public Health.)





Because there is no garbage collection in Hidalgo County people tend to dispose their solid waste in drainage canals or on the streets.



It would be nearly impossible to manage a wheelchair in a colonia.





- Because the colonias were/are developed in isolated areas of the County, they are not close to community services such as grocery stores, retail stores, schools, libraries, clinics, or places of worship.
- Lack of public transportation is an impediment to colonia families finding jobs, community services, and seeking higher education.

- It is important for community development to take place before we can see real economic development. Our region needs both as we develop sustainable communities.

- We need to ask businesses to locate near colonias where they have a young, strong, bilingual, resilient, creative work force.
- We need to change the paradigm on what economic development is.
- We are working with the county, McAllen EDC, Tx Workforce, to begin rural economic development.















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- We do believe by providing resources for health, education, jobs, etc., we can help families move from poverty to prosperity.



***“From the depth of need and despair, people can work together, can organize themselves to solve their own problems and fill their own needs with dignity and strength.”***

**- César Chávez**

Immigration:

Just like people traveled through Israel to get to Egypt, people travel through the RGV to get north.

# Mexican drug cartels' main areas of influence, Apr 2012



We used to be one community

Passports

Border Wall

Violence in Mexico

# Types of immigrants:

- Bad hombres-drug dealers, human traffickers
- People looking for work
- People seeking asylum
- Adults, adults with children, unaccompanied minors
- All are counted together under “apprehensions”



- Nearly 50% of those who are here in this country unauthorized, came into the country legally, on work or student visas, and let them expire.
- Those who are working here with stolen or made-up social security numbers are paying into a special account for SS and they will never receive the benefits.

- Children on the Run: Unaccompanied Children Leaving Central America and Mexico and the Need for International Protection:

<http://unhcrwashington.org/children>





You do not need to know precisely what is happening, or exactly where it is all going. What you need is to recognize the possibilities and challenges offered by the present moment and to embrace them with courage, faith, and hope.

-Thomas Merton



