



## Hidalgo County Commissioners Court

**Ramon Garcia**  
*County Judge*

**David L. Fuentes**  
*Commissioner, Precinct 1*

**Eduardo "Eddie" Cantu**  
*Commissioner, Precinct 2*

**Joe M. Flores**  
*Commissioner, Precinct 3*

**Joseph Palacios**  
*Commissioner, Precinct 4*

### Public Affairs Division

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*Director*

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## PRESS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Tuesday, November 27, 2018

### **Hidalgo County awards \$100,000 to small businesses**

**EDINBURG** –Hidalgo County moved to expand services to businesses in small and rural communities by approving \$100,000 in grants in the first-ever Small Town Economic program.

The program, which was created by the county's Economic Development Division in the County Judge's Office, partnered with the University of Texas-Rio Grande Valley Small Business Development Center. STED is based on similar programs available through larger cities economic development corporations.

"This economic development program was created to advance small businesses throughout the county," said County Judge Ramon Garcia. "We wanted to help the businesses that may not have access to other resources."

More than 40 businesses applied to the program and 21 were selected to participate. STED Grant Program participants were required to attend multiple days of business training, hosted by the UTRGV Small Business Development Center. There they worked on developing strong business plans and were provided numerous resources to help assess the viability of their proposals.

The STED participants were given 10 minutes to present their business ideas – Shark Tank style – to a panel of independent judges comprised of academic and public-sector business experts from throughout the county. The judges made their final recommendations based on the submitted business plan and the corresponding presentation.

Five businesses were awarded \$20,000 grants as a way to further spur prosperity in their communities. They are Reybotics, Green Thumb Nursery, Cappadona Ranch, Ashley Nicole Boutique, and Hernandez Barns.

Many of the participants expressed appreciation of the resources provided, finding value in the process itself, said Economic Development Director Michael Leo.

"Even those that were not awarded grants benefited from the program's training component because they now have a better sense of what it takes to run a successful business and the economic factors that affect commerce," said Leo.

The evaluation committee included Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council Economic Development Director Terrie Salinas, UT-RGV Professor Dr. Marco Garza, UT-RGV Director of the Rio Grande Valley Texas Rural Cooperative

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Center Dr. Collin Cain, RGV Partnership President Sergio Contreras, and Rio South Texas Economic Council Executive Director Matt Ruszczak.

"The evaluation committee is the group that did the majority of the heavy lifting on this. They are the ones that sorted through all 43 applications. Thank you for your effort and hard work," said Garcia. "The grant recommendation was 100 percent their evaluation and decision."

Funding for the STED program came from the state Comptroller's Office and was designated for economic development and literacy programs, said County Judge Chief of Staff Yolanda Chapa.

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**Photo:** *County Judge Chief of Staff Yolanda Chapa, Administrative Assistant Nestor Lopez, and Economic Development Director Michael Leo.*

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