

Absolute Priority – *Historias Americanas: Engaging History and Citizenship in the Rio Grande Valley*

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV) requests funding to implement *Historias Americanas: Engaging History and Citizenship in the Rio Grande Valley*. The B3 Institute at UTRGV, which leads the university's transformation into a bilingual, bicultural, and biliterate institution, will partner with the largest Title I school districts in South Texas, Brownsville ISD and Edinburg CISD, located in one of the most economically distressed regions in the country. UTRGV faculty in collaboration with District Social Studies specialists and K-12 teachers will develop and implement a professional development program that gives teachers the necessary tools to use innovative teaching and learning modalities to enhance current and historical understandings of local and national citizenship. Teachers will learn place-based pedagogical approaches that examine and build on student, family, and community knowledge and cultural wealth to link micro realities to the larger American history narrative. According to David Sobel (2004):

Place-based education is the process of using the local community and environment as a starting point to teach concepts in language arts, mathematics, social studies, science and other subjects across the curriculum. Emphasizing hands-on, real-world learning experiences, this approach to education increases academic achievement, helps students develop stronger ties to their community, enhances students' appreciation for the natural world, and creates a heightened commitment to serving as active, contributing citizens (Sobel 2004, 6).

This 3-year project will improve the quality of teaching and learning by: 1) providing professional development summer institutes and follow-up workshops for teachers; 2) creating culturally and linguistically relevant supplemental curricula; and 3) building innovative teachers and teacher-leaders who will in turn provide staff development to their colleagues. Through the development and implementation of culturally meaningful pedagogy, lessons and hands-on activities rooted in the geography, history and languages of the region, *Historias Americanas*

will deepen understanding of American history, civics, and government through a micro-macro perspective. It aims to increase awareness of engaged citizenship as it relates to the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights. *Historias Americanas* will promote student academic achievement, particularly among ELLs, through culturally relevant place-based teaching and learning and the creation of content that resonates with students and aligns with the social studies Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS).

Research results and materials developed and collected by this grant's PIs and team of researchers through the *Historias Americanas* program will be disseminated through the *Historias Americanas Digital Platform* (HADP), presentations at UTRGV's Festival of International and Books and Art (FESTIBA) and the Engaged Scholars Symposium held annually in the spring, and through talks, symposiums or roundtable discussions for the community. Beyond the Rio Grande Valley, research results and materials will be presented at national and regional and state academic conferences and published in special issues of *Rio Bravo: A Journal of the Borderlands* and other journals that focus on Hispanic/Latino education, history, social studies, and K-12 curricula and pedagogy.

Competitive Preference Priority

Historias Americanas will build and implement an open access digital platform hosted through UTRGV to provide online teaching materials and instructional guides, online courses, and online learning communities. The *Historias Americanas Digital Platform* (HADP) will be a multi-dimensional, multi-purpose platform that will utilize popular online platforms such as *Weebly*, *Wordpress*, *Youtube*, Facebook, video recordings and podcasts to build an archive that provides supplemental culturally and historically relevant curricula, lessons, activities and project ideas. These materials will be produced as a result of the *Historias Americanas*

professional development program and research collected by this grant's PIs and team of researchers that support this grant and made available to ECISD and BISD teachers and the community at large. The HADP team will also partner with Edinburg (CISD) and Brownsville (BISD) teachers to develop place-based data collection through oral histories, ethnographic studies, and partnerships with local museums that will participate by their making new archival holdings public through periodic archive alerts.

An instructional design process spanning K-12 and higher education will align the supplemental materials to the TEKS and CCRS and student learning outcomes with an intended purpose of building a knowledge base of historical, geographic, and citizenship along the Rio Grande Valley. The knowledge base will provide content, substance, and identity to the formative HADP that will serve as a depository specific to the history of South Texas that will serve as an encyclopedia-like source for teachers, students, and the community at large. HADP content will be provided in both English and Spanish through the partnership of the B3 Institute's Translation Office for expanded community access and will utilize social media such as Facebook to increase access and scalability.

The potential of *Historias Americanas* to improve the quality of student achievement in teaching American history and civics lies not only in the professional development of teachers, but also in the creation of supplemental curriculum guides that includes culturally, historically, and linguistically relevant place-based lessons and hands-on activities for K-12 teachers. Teaching materials will draw from students, families, and communities' cultural knowledge and aligned to state (TEKS) and national (CCSS) standards of American history and civics, as well as the English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS). This will allow teachers and students to engage in learning American history, civics, and geography through the dimensions of family,

local community, and the region as they are related to the nation. These ancillary, place-based curriculum materials (activities, materials, and reproducibles) will be available in the HADP open access online platforms for all teachers in the Rio Grande Valley. In particular, Teacher-leaders who participated in the *Historias* process will have access to all materials so that they can provide staff development for fellow teachers in their own schools after the grant ends.

Placed-based materials and research developed and collected by this grant's PIs and team of researchers as a result of the *Historias Americanas* program will be disseminated through presentations at UTRGV's Festival of International and Books and Art (FESTIBA) held in February 2019 and 2020 and the Engaged Scholars Symposium held in April 2019 and 2020, and talks, symposiums or roundtable for the community. Beyond the Rio Grande Valley research and materials will be dissemination through conference papers, presentations, panels or roundtable discussions at national and regional and state academic conferences such as the National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies Conference, Tejas Foco (NACCS Tejas-Foco) held in February 2019 and 2020; the American Educational Research Association (AERA) in Spring 2019 and 2020, and the National Hispanic and Latino Studies Conference in October 2019. Research on the program, pedagogy and archival materials created and collected will also be published in the *Rio Bravo: A Journal of the Borderlands* published by UTRGV's Center for Mexican American Studies and other journals that focus on Hispanic/Latino education, history, social studies, and K-12 curricula and pedagogy.

A. Quality of Project Design

A.i. Exceptional Approach

Historias Americanas represents an exceptional approach to addressing both the Absolute Priority and the Competitive Preference Priority. The proposed project uses place-based

pedagogy from a micro-macro perspective to improve the teaching of history, civics, government and geography in K-12 social studies and history curricula because it helps students' connect their cultural identities as individuals, family members and community members to broader notions of citizenship. *Historias Americanas* uses an exceptional approach to address the Competitive Preference Priority through the development and implementation an open access digital platform hosted through UTRGV to provide online teaching materials and instructional guides, online courses, and online learning communities. The *Historias Americanas Digital Platform* (HADP) will be a multi-dimensional, multi-purpose platform that uses popular online platforms such as *Weebly*, *Wordpress*, *Youtube* and podcasts to build an archive that provides supplemental culturally and historically relevant curricula, lessons, activities and project ideas.

The Rio Grande Valley UTRGV principal investigators (PIs) and other faculty and its partners Brownsville Independent School District (BISD) and Edinburg Consolidated Independent School District (ECISD) will design, develop and implement a professional development program that provides K-12 teachers with supplemental content and instructional methods to help them integrate culturally, historically, geographically, and linguistically relevant teaching and learning into existing social studies, history and government curricula. The objective is to help students make connections between the micro history, culture and geography of the region and the macro dimensions of American history, civics and government. To help create and teach place-based content relevant to the students' cultural, linguistic and and geographic realities, UTRGV faculty and its school district partners will cooperate with the Museum of South Texas History (MOST), the Brownsville Historical Association and the Palo Alto Battlefield National Historical Park (Palo Alto), located in Brownsville, to assist in developing relevant lessons and activities around their archival content and area of specialty.

Palo Alto's location in Brownsville is relevant to students in the Rio Grande Valley because it is where the U.S.-Mexico war began. This provides an especially geographically relevant historical location to create place-based pedagogies that stimulate student engagement because students will learn about the war where it happened and the role that local residents, especially those of Mexican-descent, had in the war. Through educational tours organized by BISD and the parks' superintendent, elementary, middle and high students will gain a deeper understanding of the micro-macro dimensions of the U.S-Mexico war as they examine the impact of this national event on the local families who lived in border region in 1846 and after the war ended in terms of citizenship and geopolitical aspects of the war. Any curricula developed in cooperation with the museums will provide teachers with culturally, historically and geographically relevant supplemental content to help students' connect their own lives and that of their families and communities to the larger historical narrative and strengthen their knowledge of the role people of South Texas in American history, civics, and leadership.

This professional development program will not only provide teachers with the necessary supplemental content and pedagogy, it will also focus on teaching teachers about the power and value of place-based instruction. Teachers will work alongside UTRGV faculty and district social studies specialists to develop place-based lessons, activities, and investigative projects that address and reinforce the content and skills aligned with state (TEKS), and national (CCSS) standards. Teaching and learning history, civics, and geography in this manner, and from micro-macro framework, ensures that both teachers and students are actively engaged and culturally invested in the larger national history. *Historias Americanas* aims to enrich the curricula of American history, civics, and government by creating a culturally, geographically, and linguistically relevant professional development program for elementary and secondary school

teachers. The objective is to enhance students' content knowledge of American history and civics and government, improve students' academic performance and scores on End-of-Course assessments and state exams (STAAR), and build engaged citizens by establishing closer connections between students and their communities.

The Lower Rio Grande Valley (RGV) of South Texas is located along the Texas-Mexico border, stretching from Brownsville in the southernmost tip of Texas to Roma, some 120 miles up the Rio Grande River in the upper-west corner of "the Valley." The RGV is comprised of four counties: Cameron, Hidalgo, Starr, and Willacy Counties, and has a total population of 1.36 million residents, with Hidalgo and Cameron Counties being the largest. The predominant population of RGV is Hispanic/Latino, most of which is of Mexican descent; this demographic constitutes approximately 90 percent of the population in each of the four counties that compose the region.¹ The two largest MSAs (Metropolitan Statistical Areas) are McAllen-Edinburg-Mission and Brownsville-Harlingen, each surrounded by smaller towns, cities and *colonias*. The RGV is considered a borderlands (Anzaldúa 1987) rather than a metroplex, with McAllen, Brownsville and Harlingen as its principal communities on the north side of the Rio Grande river with the Mexican sister cities of Matamoros, Rio Bravo, Nuevo Progreso and Reynosa in the state of Tamaulipas on the south side of the border.²

¹ Hispanic and Latino/a are pan-ethnic terms used interchangeably by the U.S. Census Bureau to classify a diverse population who have origins in Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, the Dominican Republic (and other parts of the Caribbean), Central America, South America, and Spain. Ennis, Rios-Vargas & Albert, *The Hispanic Population: 2010: 2010 Census Briefs*. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic and Statistics Administration, U.S. Census Bureau), 2011. In this grant, we will use the term Hispanic to be consistent with the U.S. Census Bureau as well as Mexican-descent to accurately portray the demographic reality of the region. We also use the term ELL (English Language Learners) and LEP (Limited English Proficient) interchangeably to refer to the subpopulation of students that this program targets. These terms encompass students who speak English as a second language and/or are bilingual.

² The 2016 national census figures indicate that the overall Hispanic/Latino population stands at 57.5 million and comprises 17.8 percent of the nation's total population. Sixty-four percent of the overall Hispanic/Latino population is of Mexican-origin. Texas is home to 10.8 million Hispanics/Latinos, comprising 39 percent of the state's total

The RGV was coined “The Magic Valley” by land development companies and chambers of commerce during the early part of the 20th Century. The place naming of the region profoundly impacted the economic and historical trajectory, as railroads, canals, and town sites were developed with the idea of building a regional agricultural economy. The result of this developmental venture was the creation of a two-tiered society where a ruling class owned and controlled the economic and social institutions, and a working-class that was predominantly Mexican and Mexican American provided the preponderance of labor for the growing agricultural sector. A smaller economic sector included retail, small businesses, international trade, and service-industry. This century-long development impacted the political and social history of the region, particularly as it defined citizenship and limited the participation of non-white residents in economic, educational, and political institutions. The de facto rules of the Jim Crow South, for example, guided decision-making and behavior regarding community development, access to educational access, and a path toward upward socioeconomic mobility. The railroad tracks, as Arthur Rubel (1966) poignantly argued, divided the “Mexican side” of towns from Anglo American society in much of the region.

In the midst of this systemic inequality countless unpublished events occurred where individuals, organizations, and communities demonstrated courage, resiliency, and sheer agency as they fought the forces of social, economic, educational, and political injustices (Montejano, 1986; San Miguel, 1987). Examples include people such as the Juan Nepomuceno Cortina, a local hero who fought the oppressive vigilantism and land grabbing through a show of force to protect the constitutional rights of South Texas citizens. Other examples include Jose Tomas

population. According to 2016 census figures, the total population of the RGV is 1,357, 910 with Hidalgo County comprising the largest portion of this population with 849, 843 residents and Cameron County comprising the second largest with 422,135 residents. The populations of Starr and Willacy Counties stand at 64,122 and 21,180 respectively. The current population of Edinburg at 87,650. The Brownsville’s population stands at 183,823. U.S. Census Bureau Quick facts www.census.gov/quickfacts/table.

(J.T.) Canales, a lawyer, and Texas State Representative from Brownsville, who filed lawsuit against the Texas Rangers for civil and human rights violations along the Texas-Mexico border that resulted in legislative hearings. Organizational resistance in the form of mutual aid societies emerged throughout the region to provide the community with financial support in times of dire need, organize cultural activities and defend political rights. The formation of the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), now a national civil rights organization, emanated from a convention held in Harlingen in 1927. Legal cases include the *Salvatierra v. Del Rio Independent School District* filed by Mexican American parents in 1929 to challenge the segregation of their children in separate buildings, a case that foreshadowed other lawsuits filed by Mexican American parents in the Valley and other parts of Texas and the Southwest who sought educational equality for their children and communities. In the post-World War II era, Dr. Hector P. Garcia, a war veteran and physician who attended UTRGV's first legacy institution (Edinburg College) in the 1930s, formed the American GI Forum in 1948 in South Texas to promote veterans' rights; this organization exists to date. More recent key historical events that coincided with broader Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s include the 1966 Melon Strike by farm workers in Rio Grande City against the Casita Farms Melon growers to protest low wages and poor working conditions. Organized by leaders from the United Farm Workers founded by Dolores Huerta and Cesar Chavez in California, the strike is credited by strike participants (via oral histories) as the event that catalyzed the Civil Rights Movement in South Texas. The "Casita" strike coincided with strikes against the large grape and lettuce growers in the San Joaquin Valley in California. Two years later, Mexican American students from Edcouch-Elsa High School walked out in protest of discriminatory, unfair school policies, practices, and unequal educational opportunities that students believed impeded their academic progress and

access to higher education. The Edcouch-Elsa walkouts took place eight months after approximately 10,000 Mexican American students walked out of 10 high schools in East Los Angeles. The student walkouts, aka “blowouts” reverberated throughout the Southwest and other part of the nation, forming an important part of the broader Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s.

These examples of struggles for equality and citizenship are not in the history books studied by children in Texas and are conspicuously absent in the historiography covered in American history classes in the Rio Grande Valley, Texas, and the nation. There is a compelling micro-macro dynamic that shapes the contours of the historical record, but local communities are often left out of the narrative. *Historias Americanas* intends to remedy this historical and instructional omission utilizing a place-based approach to teaching and learning, one that centers learning on the physical environments of local communities, including their culture and history, and students’ daily experiences in the educational process to promote student engagement.

Through place-based pedagogical approaches and a micro-macro dimension, *Historias Americanas* will improve teaching and learning of history, civics, government and geography and academic achievement because it stimulates students’ interest in learning about their local communities by encouraging students to draw from their cultural knowledge to learn about their local histories and communities and the role they play in larger processes. Culturally relevant place-based lessons, projects and materials created by UTRGV faculty and teachers in *Historias Americanas* program will be archived in the *HADP*, for future use by teachers, in online courses provided by UTRGV, and for research purposes.

A.ii Appropriate partners

Brownsville and Edinburg are historically significant towns that have not received the appropriate recognition in the historiography or in the canon of the mainstream American

literature. Events that transpired in Brownsville initiated the US-Mexico War and events there also impacted the economy of the American Civil War. Economic and political processes in Edinburg shaped regional and international economies that defined the identity of a region that would become “the Magic Valley.” But the local history is only marginally known, and schools typically do not integrate the stories of these communities, or the stories of the region. *Historias Americanas* intends to mine the historical, cultural, economic, and political treasures that have been in a dormant state--but the treasure are there! One prominent child of this region even helped the world re-imagine how to make sense of borderlands regions. Local intellectual and philosopher Gloria Anzaldúa became a leading theorist on the idea of cultural fronts, as she described the “open wound” that existed historically along the US-Mexico border. But students in local schools do not read Anzaldúa. *Historias Americanas* intends to tap the historical and cultural wealth of the region and to use that wealth to excite teachers, students, and the community to engage in teaching and learning history, geography, government and civics in much more engaged ways. We must prepare teachers to develop an awareness of the local wealth that exists in Brownsville, in Edinburg, and across the region. And we are not unique, as Haas and Nachitgal (1998) argue, in that most places people do not know their own history--unless the place is Gettysburg, Williamsburg, or Jamestown. *Historias Americans* will help teachers facilitate a teaching and learning process through which students will see themselves and their communities as significant in the chronicle of the national history.

Historias Americanas at UTRGV maximizes the effectiveness of the proposed project’s services and intended outcomes to improve teaching and learning of history, civics, government and geography and student academic achievement through a partnership with Edinburg Consolidated ISD (ECISD) and Brownsville ISD (BISD).

BISD

The Brownsville Independent School District (BISD), an Early College District, serves a student population of almost 50,000 students. The student population is predominantly Hispanic (98%) and economically disadvantaged (96%). It incorporates support programs, such as the Early College High Schools and Bilingual or English as a Second Language programs, to provide learning opportunities to their diverse student population. The programs have demonstrated gains in state assessments, graduation rates, and in students' college and career readiness. While BISD's programs have demonstrated continuous academic progress among students in general, ELLs are not achieving as high as the general student population, indicating a need to improve teaching and learning for these students. Although many BISD students match or outperform similar districts, continued support is still necessary to improve and expand the services the district already provides. BISD implements research-based strategies and practices and monitors closely student performance through the evaluation of state and district assessments. The evaluation processes involve all core content, area personnel such as teachers, department chairs, and campus administrators. District and campus administrators, social studies curriculum specialist and teachers meet by grade level to pinpoint areas of weakness and strengths. The District has identified ELL and Special Education students as the populations with the greatest need for improved instructional strategies and more frequent interventions that are implemented with fidelity. This need is also evident in the Spring 2017 Campus Assessment Survey conducted throughout the District where over 70% of the teachers believed they needed more professional development in technology integration, more support to meet the needs of Special Education students, deal with social and emotional (and disciplinary) needs of students, and provide differentiation of instruction for all students.

A great area of improvement in BISD is the 8th grade Social Studies state assessment performance. The Spring 2017 State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) summary report shows that the performance of only 25% of all students tested (3186 students) met the grade level standards. More astounding is that only 5% of the LEP subpopulation (636 students) and 6% of the Special Education subpopulation (290 students) met the grade level standards. Moreover, 68% of all students tested (3276) who took the Spring 2017 U. S. History STAAR met grade level standards and only 37% of the LEP sub-population (436 students) and 27% of the Special Education subpopulation (285 students) met the grade level standards.

ECISD

The Edinburg Consolidated Independent School District (ECISD) is located in the Educational Center of the Rio Grande Valley of South Texas. Edinburg is a three-time "All-America City," and home to the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. Edinburg is a closely-knit community which strongly emphasizes the value of providing a good education. The ECISD encompasses 945 square miles, making it one of the largest districts in the nation. It offers 4 high schools, 6 middle schools, 31 elementary schools, 1 alternative campus and 1 credit recovery academy. ECISD, an Early College District, serves a student population over 35,000 students, and the District continues to grow at a rate of approximately 5% annually. The student population is predominantly Hispanic (98%) and economically disadvantaged (86%).

ECISD offers a well-rounded curriculum that reaches the needs of all students regardless of their academic, social, and developmental levels. Due to its proximity to Mexico, a bilingual program is crucial to responding to the linguistic needs and knowledge acquisition of our students. In order to set a strong foundational program, the District also partners with the

Hidalgo County Headstart Program to serve our three and four year olds.³ ECISD's Bilingual/ESL program offered in grades Pre-K to 12th reflects the philosophy that administrators, faculty and staff believe that a bilingual program should provide many educational opportunities for learners to develop and maintain their primary language and culture in a way that promotes biliteracy and a positive self-esteem to promote high academic performance and success. This program serves students who speak a language other than English in their homes and need help learning English. The goal of the program is to help students master English listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. Academic instruction begins in the student's first language and transitions into English. Teachers are trained to meet the special language needs of their students, regardless of their level of proficiency upon enrollment in our schools. In grades 6th-12th, an ESL (English as a Second Language Program) is offered. At the middle school (6th-8th), the District has a HILD (High Intensive Language Development) program for students who are recent immigrants. Students may remain in the program up to three years so that they can receive intensive language instruction. At the high school level (9th-12th), the district has a Newcomers English Course. This is a one-year course specifically designed for recent immigrants. ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Language) courses are also available for second and third year recent immigrants.

ECISD monitors ELLs' academic progress and improvement using Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS) scores, which fulfill federal requirements

³ Individual campuses have created targeted learning communities driven by student data to assist teachers in determining the level of specificity of instruction. Any given classroom, however, will contain a heterogeneous mix of students with varying ability talents, skill levels and educational needs. A primary focus, however, is on our English Language Learners (ELLs). ECISD aims to provide students with opportunities to develop and demonstrate their individual strengths, talents, and abilities while strengthening the areas they need additional enrichment. Therefore, educators are provided with Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) strategies to help student become proficient in the Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and achieve excellence on the Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALPS), which requires students to demonstrate understanding and comprehension of academic terminology.

for assessing the English language proficiency among ELLs in kindergarten through grade 12 in four language domains: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. TELPAS assesses students in alignment with the Texas English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS), which are part of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). Student performance is reported in terms of the four English language proficiency levels described in the ELPS: beginning, intermediate, advanced, and advanced high. TELPAS results are used in accountability and performance-based monitoring indicators. Through this process, the District has identified ELL and Special Education students as the populations with the greatest need for improved instructional strategies and more frequent interventions that are implemented with fidelity.

Like Brownsville ISD, ECISD has identified the 8th grade Social Studies state assessment performance as area for improvement. For the past 3 years (2015, 2016 & 2017), the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) summary report shows mixed results. In 2015, only 60 percent of all students tested (2,355) met the standard and only 24 percent of the ELL subpopulation (307 students) and 14 percent of the Special Education subpopulation (43 students) met the standards. Moreover, 88 percent of the 3,645 student who took the Spring 2015 U. S. History STAAR met the standard, while only 55 percent of the ELL subpopulation (340 students) and 55 percent of the Special Education subpopulation (199 students) meeting that standard. Similarly, in 2016, 61 percent of all students tested (2,310 students) met the standard while only 25 percent of the ELL subpopulation (383 students) and 25 percent of the Special Education subpopulation (64 students) met the standard. Additionally, 86 percent of all students (2,134) who took the Spring 2016 U. S. History STAAR met the standard compared to only 62 percent of the ELL subpopulation (296 students) and 59 percent of the Special Education subpopulation (90 students). In 2017, only 58 percent of all students tested

(2,424 students) met the standard, with 21 percent of the ELL subpopulation (465 students) and 21 percent of the Special Education subpopulation (129 students) meeting the standard. 87 percent of all students (2,461) who took the Spring 2017 U. S. History STAAR met the grade level standards compared to 60 percent of the ELL subpopulation (336 students) and 40 percent of the Special Education subpopulation (129 students). These figures demonstrate a great need for innovative culturally and linguistically relevant supplemental curricula, pedagogy, and instructional methods that help teachers connect the content, skills and knowledge required by TEKS social studies standards to student learning.

Given Edinburg's and Brownsville's location in the Texas-Mexico border, ECISD and BISD teachers, social studies specialists and administrators know and understand the students and communities served by their respective districts as well as the cultural, linguistic and geographic realities of their location. Therefore, teachers from these districts are most qualified to provide the expertise needed to create a culturally and linguistically relevant curricula that includes place-based lessons, activities and projects to address the specific needs of their student populations and communities. ECISD and BISD teachers and social studies specialists will thus work closely with UTRGV PIs and other faculty to organize the professional development workshops, community learning exchanges and curricula for K-12 teachers in their districts, making this partnership a crucial component for the success of *Historias Americanas*.

Museums

To facilitate and enhance the curricula developed by UTRGV and partner school districts, UTRGV faculty, district social studies specialists and participant teachers will also coordinate and work with the Museum of South Texas History (MOST), located in Edinburg, and the Brownsville Historical Association and the Palo Alto Battlefield-National Historical Park (PAB-

NHP/Palo Alto), located in Brownsville. Families and children who visit museums and historical parks interact with the exhibits and archival content in different ways depending on cultural values and daily social interactions in families, communities, and schools and thus provide another learning experience in a different learning environment. Visiting and interacting with museums' can play a role in how students learn and understand content, and contributes to their educational process (Gaskins, 2016).

ECISD's established relationship with MOST and BISD's established relationship with the BSA and Palo Alto will facilitate collaboration with UTRGV faculty who will work with museum staff to identify and mine historical treasures hidden in the museums that teachers will use in their classrooms to make history, civics, geography and government relevant to students and communities in the Valley. This applied method of learning social studies and history content is effective because students will apply the new information to what they already know to build their knowledge base (scaffolding). This multi-partner collaboration will aid in the designing, developing and implementing culturally relevant placed-based lesson plans, hands-on activities and projects using museum exhibits and archival materials for the *Historias Americanas* professional development program.

For instance, the MOST, which has been in operation since 1967, offers multiple forms of exhibits and archival materials on the history of the Rio Grande Valley and Texas-Mexico border. This specialty provides UTRGV faculty an opportunity to work closely with museum staff and teachers to create culturally and geographically relevant placed-based lessons and hand-on activities for students using the museum's content. The museum's focus on the history and development of the Rio Grande Valley is particularly relevant for students here. MOST staff will collaborate with both UTRGV faculty and teachers to develop relevant placed-based lessons on

Spanish colonization, the battle for Texas between Spain, Mexico and the United States, the U.S. Mexico War, the Mexican Revolution, agricultural development of the RGV and the impact of World War II on the RGV. Tours for elementary, middle and high school students will be aligned with the TEKS and relevant topics in history, civics, government and geography that are not covered in regular social studies units. Museum staff have the expertise to provide students with deeper knowledge of place-based historical and civics-related content that teachers will integrate into existing social studies and history curricula with the aid of UTRGV faculty and scholar presenters in *Historias Americanas* Summer Institutes and follow-up workshops.

Located in Brownsville, Palo Alto is especially relevant because of its focus on the U.S.-Mexico War. Given this focus, park staff bring their expertise of the park and its historical relevant to the micro-macro perspective of the U.S.-Mexico war. Because the war began at Palo Alto, it not only serves as a historically and geographically relevant location, it also provides a relevant placed-based learning classroom for students. The expertise of park staff can help students who visit the park understand how this important war impacted Brownsville, local residents, particularly those of Mexican-descent, and South Texas in terms of citizenship, changes in government, geography, culture and economic development. The fact that in 1846, Brownsville was part of Mexico and two years later became part of the United States, brings the micro-macro dimension of American history to life for students of the Rio Grande Valley, especially those from Brownsville. Both Palo Alto and the BHA are located in close proximity to Brownsville ISD, which makes collaborating with UTRG and the BISD Social Studies specialist and teachers an ideal partnership to assist in developing a plan to help students become more engaged learners and citizens as they understand their role and that of their communities in the larger historical narrative from a culturally and geographically relevant placed-based framework.

Teachers from both districts will work with UTRGV faculty and scholar presenters during the Summer Institutes and follow-up workshops to create culturally and linguistically lesson plans, activities and projects based on the content provided by the scholar-presenters. Teachers will also learn place-based theories and instructional methods to help them integrate their supplemental content into existing social studies, history, civics, and government curricula. The objective is to create and teach place-based content relevant to the students' cultural, linguistic and geographic realities to help students make connections between the micro history, culture and geography of the region and the macro dimensions of American history, civics and government, and thus promote student engagement. While public school teachers are the experts in their student population, teaching methods, and well versed in state standards and assessments, working with staff from the museums and Palo Alto provide additional educational materials, lesson for elementary, middle and high school students that meet the TEKS standards to supplement content on relevant topics students in the Rio Grande Valley.

The UTRGV/ECISD/BISD/Museum *Historias Americanas* team will thus collaborate to develop and implement a professional development program that emphasizes place-based pedagogy centered on local and regional history that enables students to make meaningful and engaging connections to meet the specific needs of students in these districts, especially ELLs. By enriching teachers' lessons with local geography, culture, history and economic relevance, students will transform their daily experiences into an educational process that will promote student engagement and academic achievement (Smith and Sobel, 2010).

A.iii Research and Effective Practice

The design of *Historias Americanas* reflects up-to-date knowledge from research and effective practice in the areas of culturally relevant pedagogy, place-based school and

community education and community learning exchanges to make education for student in the RGV more relevant and congruent to their culture, language, history and location (Sobel, 2004; Smith & Sobel, 2010; Guajardo, Guajardo, et al., 2016). Almost a half-century ago Cárdenas and Cárdenas (1977) argued persuasively that Hispanic children, specifically English Language Learners (ELLs), tended to lag in terms of academic achievement because the values and life experiences of Hispanic children tended to be incompatible with the values and teaching and learning approaches of American public schools. Cárdenas and Cárdenas made meaning of this reality through an analytical framework they described as a “theory of incompatibilities.” Beyond the critique, they offered a set of recommendations calling for meaningful cultural, historical, and linguistic relevance in the ways that schools provided instruction, professional development, and leadership training. Schools can better serve ELLs, they argued, if the instructional process finds congruence with the lives of students, including their native language.

A quarter century later, Valenzuela (1999) wrote that Mexican American children were subjected to “Subtractive Schooling,” wherein schools used instructional practices that negated the historical, cultural, and linguistic heritage of recent immigrants, ELLs, and even of the larger Hispanic student population. Valenzuela’s research demonstrates that changing this longstanding practice to recognizing and using the knowledge and cultural wealth students, families and communities bring to the educational process is effective in transforming the education of Hispanic students from subtractive schooling” to an “additive,” “enhancing” or “affirming” education (Valenzuela, 1999).

Similarly, Spring (2000) argued that for hundreds of years Native American children have been subject to a “deculturalization” process through schools that tend to marginalize the experiences of Native Americans in the chronicle of America. Spring has called for a re-

examination of how American schools teach history, geography, civics, government, and literature through a diversity of perspectives and through pedagogies that may be compatible with population groups such as Native American, Hispanic American, and African American. In this context, Ladson Billings (1995, 2014) offers a theory toward a culturally relevant pedagogy that links principles of learning with the cultural experiences of children, families, and communities. Moll and Gonzalez's *Funds of Knowledge* framework (1992) builds on Valenzuela's theory of subtractive schooling while Yosso's concept of community cultural wealth (2004) builds on the work of all these scholars to offer a culturally relevant and culturally congruent teaching and learning frameworks that seek to remedy American schools' legacy of cultural incompatibility. The exceptional approach offered by *Historias Americanas* is informed by these theoretical frameworks and concepts. Based on this research, using these frameworks to inform the place-based pedagogical approach is an effective way to make learning history, civics, government and geography more meaningful and relevant to students, their families and their communities.

More recent research builds on this established education literature and demonstrates the impact of culturally relevant pedagogies and curricula. Cabrera, et al., (2014) analyzed data from a high school program in Arizona (2008-2014) that emphasized culturally and linguistically relevant pedagogy, curricula, materials, and instructional practices. Researchers found a positive relationship between this program and higher academic achievement, graduation rates, test scores on state standardized test (AIMS), and college-enrollment rates. Higher student retention rates and graduation rates were directly related to a positive connection to the curricula, readings, and assignments, which led to increased student engagement. Historian Ronald Takaki describes the connection students make when learning American history and other subjects using the

metaphor of a “mirror.” According to Takaki (2008), learning American history is akin to looking in the mirror, if students do not see themselves in the mirror, it infers they do not exist:

What happens when historians leave out many of America’s peoples? What happens, to borrow the words of Adrienne Rich, “when someone with the authority of a teacher” describes our society, and “you are not in it”? Such an experience can be disorienting—“a moment of psychic disequilibrium, as if you looked into a mirror and saw nothing.” (quoted in Cabrera, et al., 2014).

Takaki’s message: students must see themselves in the teaching of American history in order to feel a sense of belonging, value and self-worth. An important purpose of public schooling is to engender a sense of citizenship and encourage civic engagement, but to accomplish this, students must see themselves as active participants and agents in the historical process of making the nation and body politic. This is in large part the focus of the national historical narrative that students learn in the elementary social studies and secondary high school history curricula. At all levels, students learn who they are as individuals and members of communities and the important role a person plays in a community as a responsible citizen.

In Cabrera, et al.’s study (2014), which involved 8,400 primarily Hispanic/Latino students over 4 cohorts between 2008 and 2011, researchers found that students who took more than one high school course (Language Arts, American Government, and History) taught from a culturally relevant framework in the Tucson high school program achieved higher GPAs, raised scores on the state AIMS test, and experienced a higher probability of graduating high school. The study concluded that student academic achievement can be increased through culturally relevant teaching and learning practices that positively impacts learning and intellectual development. A similar study conducted by Dee and Penner (2016) using data from 1,405 students from five school year cohorts in the San Francisco School District found that implementing culturally relevant curricula inspired students to “explore their individual identity,

their family history, and their community history” (Dee and Penner, 10). Researchers in this study argue that culturally relevant pedagogy and “instructional practices are substantially more effective when differentiated to align with the distinctive cultural priors that individual students experience outside of school and when they also affirm both cultural identity and critical social engagement” (Dee and Penner, 1). This research found that such a teaching and learning approach increased attendance, improved GPA by 1.4 grade points, reduced the probability of student dropouts, and improved academic achievement. Both studies demonstrate a positive correlation between teaching and learning from a culturally relevant framework. These studies demonstrate the merits of providing culturally relevant content through culturally responsive pedagogical instructional strategies to increase student engagement to improve learning and academic achievement. This research supports the notion that education should be relevant for all students in order them to engage the content, learning and be academically successful. *Historias Americanas* aims to do just that, help students be engaged learners, community members and citizens.

B. Significance

B.i Build local capacity to address the needs of target population

Historias Americanas will build local capacity to provide, improved, and expand services that address the American history and civics educational needs of BISD and ECISD teacher and students, especially ELLS in the districts. *Historias Americanas* provides an antidote to the theory of incompatibility by providing teachers with culturally relevant professional development and teaching them about the value of cultural affirmation. The outcome will be increased student engagement and improved academic achievement, especially for ELLs. Considering the low performance of the ELL subpopulation on the State of Texas Assessment of

Academic Readiness (STAAR) for the two districts, the need for new and innovative approaches to teaching and learning that are culturally and linguistically responsive is evident. Therefore, a target demographic subgroup of *Historias Americanas* is the largely underserved population that is comprised of economically disadvantaged students and ELLs. *Historias Americanas* programming and activities intentionally focus is on building the local capacity of teachers through instructional methods and strategies that facilitate cultural and linguistic differentiation in the teaching and learning of American history and civics. There will be multiple measures of accountability to assess not only student learning but also academic achievement through end of course exams, portfolios, projects and pre and post surveys to gauge student, teacher and community response. Accountability is thus refashioned to address and respond to community-specific needs and reflect community values, knowledge, and cultural wealth (Yosso, 2004).

Historias Americanas offers an opportunity for schools, teachers, and students to bridge the gap between the traditional narrative of American history and the local, familial and regional histories of the RGV in a way that is culturally reflective and linguistically sensitive. Making connections between content and students' lived experiences and community realities is a proven method of increasing student engagement and learning, and ultimately, student achievement (Smith, 2010; Cabrera 2014; Dee and Penner, 2016). By building the capacity among teachers, *Historias Americanas* seeks to further deepen these connections to encourage students to go beyond their lived experiences and draw on the existing funds of knowledge of their families and communities and create a classroom that takes full advantage of place, culture and language. Place-based teaching and learning provides a framework from which to create innovative pedagogical and curricular workshops based on up-to-date research and practices for teacher

development that places students lived experiences, social context and community realities at the center of the instructional process (Smith and Sobel, 2010; Haas and Nachtigal, 1998).

As part of the professional development offered to teachers during summer 2018 and 2019 and throughout the school year, UTRGV faculty, scholars will work with district social studies specialists, teachers and museum to help them develop and integrate culturally, historically and geographically relevant place-based content into existing school programming, cultural activities, and events such as Hispanic/Latino Heritage Month (September 15-October 15), *Dia de los Muertos* (November 1-2), Charro Days (February) (Brownsville) and National History Week (April). Teachers will be encouraged to participate in these events with students to reinforce culturally relevant content and improve performance on state and national social studies and history standards through place-based teaching and learning. Other events that provide teacher and student opportunities for community involvement include scheduled annual events at UTRGV such as Hispanic Engineering, Science, and Technology (HESTEC) week in fall 2018 and Festival of International and Books and Art (FESTIBA) held in spring 2019.

Project Activities will culminate in the *Historias Americanas* Symposium, a celebratory event that allows teachers from both CEISD and BISD to reflect on their experiences in learning about the role that place-based pedagogies and culturally relevant content can play in enhancing teaching and learning for students. It will also provide teachers with opportunities to share best practices with other teachers. Students, whose teachers participated in the workshops, will have an opportunity to present any project (research paper, oral history, digital history, performance, website, or exhibit) developed as a result of *Historias Americanas* and presented at the fall 2019 HESTEC and spring 2020 FESTIBA held at UTRGV and History Week spring 2019 and 2020. Throughout the grant period, teachers will help students develop placed-based research projects

that make use of primary and secondary sources (including oral histories) and technological resources to develop and create exhibits, websites or facebook pages, documentaries, papers, or dramatic performances.

Considering student performance on state exams, which indicate low student achievement on the social studies process standards that promote critical thinking, analysis, and the synthesizing of information from multiple sources, as outlined in the TEKS, Summer Institutes and the workshops will focus on these process standards. These process standards, which begin at the kindergarten level and continue through 12th grade, are necessary for student success on state exams to meet CCRS in preparation for higher education. The activities and programming of *Historias Americanas* are intentionally designed to build local capacity to provide and expand services that address low performance on existing state, national, and college readiness standards by actively engaging teachers and students in the learning of American history, civics, and geography.

Ultimately, the objective of *Historias Americanas* is to build local capacity of teachers and resources in ECISD and BISD to enable them provide, improve and expand educational services by broadening their curricula to make learning more engaging and relevant to their student population, their families and the communities they serve. To do this, *Historia Americanas* further aims to enrich the existing body of content knowledge in history, civics, government and geography to inspire critical thinking, create cultural awareness, and generate a sense of civic duty and responsibility and build a better-informed, engaged citizenry. Research shows that providing culturally, historically, and geographically relevant content to supplement the existing curricula via place-based pedagogies is effective and plays a positive role in

promoting students' intellectual development and improves academic achievement on state assessment exams (Cabrera et al., 2014; Dee & Penner, 2016; Smith, 2010, Sobel 2004,).

B.ii Importance or magnitude of results or outcomes

The intended results and outcomes in the area of improving teaching and learning American history and civics education from implementing *Historias Americanas* is likely to be of great importance and magnitude because teachers, social studies specialists and administrators from ECISD and BISD, the two largest school districts the Rio Grande Valley, will collaborate with UTRGV faculty and museum staff to develop, implement and profit from a professional development program specifically designed for their students and communities.

As mentioned earlier in this proposal, Hispanic/Latino residents, most of whom are of Mexican descent comprise approximately 90 percent of the population in the Lower Rio Grande Valley. Many families and communities in this region have deep historical roots in the region that date back to the 1730s when there was no distinction between Brownsville/Matamoros or McAllen/Reynosa. The region was truly a borderlands of northern New Spain. Spanish Cattle raisers were sent to the far north as settlers to build colonies to fortify the northern frontier from European encroachment during a period of European empire-building, a global event. By the late 18th century New Spain was implementing political and economic reforms, known as the Bourbon Reforms, to promote economic development and political stability in its northern territories. When the Spanish House of Bourbon promulgated its Reforms during the mid-18th Century, it set in motion a series of world events that would, in part, impact the province of Nuevo Santander (now known as the Rio Grande Valley) along the Rio Grande River. Land grants on the north side of the Rio Grande would be assigned to new settlers, including lands given to Juan José Hinojosa on July 4, 1776. That same day, intrepid American colonists

changed the course of history as they declared independence in Philadelphia against the British Monarchy. Spanish global developments, American Independence, and the formation of the modern Rio Grande Valley of Texas would all converge during a singular moment in history. That moment of historical convergence is not altogether understood, however, even as the global and the national stories are well established truths. The missing link is an understanding of the micro dimension that should be an integral part of the broader story. *Historias Americanas* addresses the essence of the micro (local)-macro (national/global) dynamic as a central part of how we understand ourselves as Americans and as citizens who play a meaningful role in shaping a new historical understanding.

Historias Americanas is designed to utilize the micro-macro framework expressed by the example of how a global event such as the Spanish Bourbon Reforms is played out and impacted the local development of the region when Spanish land grants were awarded to promote the colonization of the northern borderlands along the Rio Grande Valley. UTRGV faculty, scholar-presenters will provide this type of relevant content for the Summer Institutes and follow-up workshops that encompass major components of the *Historias Americanas* professional development program. Using this content, UTRGV faculty will work with teachers and district social studies specialists to learn placed-based teaching and learning approaches and develop leadership skills and cultural competence among teachers through self-reflection and community-learning exchanges (Guajardo & Guajardo, et al., 2016). The Community Learning Exchange (CLE) model is a social innovation that brings school, community, and organizational stakeholders together to learn from each other. Through the use of engaging culturally relevant content and pedagogies, the CLE unites the wisdom of people with the power of place to solve their own problems, to build hope, and to imagine new ways of teaching and learning. Teachers

will learn to use this framework to enrich their curriculum through placed-based approaches and enhance the classroom experience in two intensive Summer Institutes, one 6-day institute over a two-week period (3 days one week and 3 days the second week) in Summer 2018 and one 3-day institute in Summer 2019. Shorter follow-up workshops will also be provided in fall 2018, Spring 2019 and fall 2019 (see table).

Scholar presenters for the Summer Institutes and follow-up workshops are drawn from UTRGV faculty and well-known scholars with relevant expertise and publications in specific areas who will provide teachers with relevant content for the region. Scholar-presenters bring an important dimension to *Historias Americanas* because teachers and social studies specialists will learn about topics, events, and people that they have not thought about or would not have access to otherwise. All of the scholars we invited to participate as scholar-presenters did not hesitate to agree to be a part of *Historias Americanas*, which speaks to the importance of the project. An example of a presentation may be on Américo Paredes, a scholar of border literature and folklore, who was from Brownsville and wrote several important works on the Mexican American experience in South Texas during the early twentieth century and had a long teaching career at the University of Texas. Very few students in the Valley, know of Paredes and his works. Using placed-based instructional practices to help students make the relevant micro-macro connections, teachers will learn how to integrate the content on Americo Paredes into the relevant sections of their existing social studies and history curriculum. Scholar-presentations in the summer institutions and follow-up workshops will be video recorded and deposited in the HADP for viewing by participant teachers of *Historias Americanas*, other teachers beyond the Rio Grande Valley and the community to increase the program's reach.

Workshop activities include interactive opportunities for teachers to apply the micro-macro framework via place-based pedagogies and create lessons that encourage students to draw from their personal and communities' experiences and cultural knowledge for pertinent grade levels. The goal of the Summer Institutes and follow-up workshops is to build innovative school leaders among the selected participants (teachers, administrators, museum personnel and community members) to become mentors and partners in their respective schools and communities who will then provide in-service professional development workshops for their colleagues. Given the size of both ECISD and BISD, *Historias Americanas* aims to serve as many teachers as possible with this important professional development program. Another component of the workshops will provide participants with learning experiences in English, Spanish or bilingually, which goes to the cultural and linguistic relevance of the program given the number of ELLs and Spanish-speaking families that these districts serve. Additionally, materials will be provided in English and translated to Spanish for classroom teachers. Some materials will be developed and provided in Spanish given that activities such as oral histories may be conducted in Spanish and translated to English. This is an important aspect of *Historias Americanas* of given that a primary objective of this important professional development program is to increase academic achievement and have a positive impact test scores of both ECISD's and BISD's ELL student population and goes to the magnitude of the expected outcomes of the project.

B.iii Extent to which results are to be disseminated and enable others to use the information or strategies

UTRGV and its partners have developed a coordinated plan to widely disseminate the materials and results of the proposed project, in ways that will enable others to use the information, strategies, and research developed by implementing *Historias Americanas*. As

described in the Competitive Preference Priorities section, online teaching materials and instructional guides, online courses, and online learning communities will be provided through the UTRGV *Historias Americanas Digital Platform* (HADP) that will be accessible to ECISD and BISD teachers and the community at large through an open source website. Given the important role social media plays in how the youth, teachers, and the general public obtain information, other information about *Historias Americanas* will also be available via an *Historias Americanas* face-book page to increase awareness and visibility.

HADP will serve as a depository for all of the materials developed and collected from the Summer Institutes and workshops for the use and dissemination by K-12 teachers, students, and interested community members in the Rio Grande Valley and beyond. Teacher-leaders will have access to teaching materials including supplemental culturally and historically relevant subject content, lessons, activities and project ideas in various media forms (documents, articles, content, video recordings, audio recordings (podcasts), oral histories and short Youtube videos) so that they can provide staff development for fellow teachers in their own schools after the grant ends. Teachers and community members will also be able to submit requests for materials to be translated to Spanish through the B3 Institute's Translation Office.

The HADP knowledge base will provide content for the online courses offered by qualified faculty members of the *Historias Americanas* team to teachers from the Edinburg and Brownsville school districts as part of *Historias Americanas* professional development plan. Materials produced from the summer institutes and follow-up workshops, including video recordings of the institutes and workshops will inform and provide the content for the online courses. This will enable teachers who did not participate in *Historias Americanas* and those beyond the Rio Grande Valley to engage in a continuous improvement process through which

they gain access to local and regional subjects that are historical, geographic, and civic (citizenship) in nature. The emerging micro-level knowledge base aligns to the macro perspective of American history that teachers will utilize as a teaching approach that synergizes *Historias Americanas* place-based historical context with national history content that shape the quintessential characters and episodes of mainstream American history. The juxtaposition of the local/regional, or place-based approach alongside the macro process gives this initiative a particular identity that honors the lived experiences of our students, their families, and their communities. Through this place-based exploratory approach to teaching and learning students will connect these local and regional events to the events and characters that shape the national history. The online professional development will integrate the said pedagogical approaches focused on culturally relevant teaching, learning and content that will nurture an exciting learning community of public school teachers, university faculty, and personnel from local and regional historical museums. Eventually, teachers from other school districts throughout the Rio Grande Valley and elsewhere will be able to use this platform and take the online courses.

Historias Americanas will offer graduate course credit for a certificate program offered by UTRGV as well as professional development credit for participating teachers. A certificate enables students to take courses that could later be applied to a specific degree program. It will also offer continuing education credit through UTRGV's Office of Continuing Education to teachers, museum personnel and/or other community members who participate in this HADP developmental process. The content and process will be offered in both English and Spanish, as the historical and linguistic realities of the region require bilingual offerings.

Research and results as well as materials developed and collected by this grant's PIs and team of researchers as a result of the *Historias* program will be disseminated through local

presentations at UTRGV's Festival of International and Books and Art (FESTIBA) held in February 2019 and 2020 and the Engaged Scholars Symposium held in April 2019 and 2020 and talks, symposiums or roundtable for the community. Beyond the Rio Grande Valley research results and materials will be dissemination through conference papers, presentations, panels or roundtable discussions at national and regional and state academic conferences such as the National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies Conference, Tejas Foco (NACCS Tejas-Foco) held in February 2019 and 2020; the American Educational Research Association (AERA) in Spring 2019 and 2020, and the National Hispanic and Latino Studies Conference in October 2019. Research on the program, pedagogy and archival materials will also be published in the *Rio Bravo: A Journal of the Borderlands* published by UTRGV's Center for Mexican American Studies and other journals that focus on Hispanic/Latino education, history, social studies, and K-12 curricula and pedagogy. All of these venues for dissemination of culturally, linguistically, and geographically relevant teaching and learning materials as well as any research and findings are crucial to the success of building capacity of teachers and resources to expand educational services and the scalability of the project throughout the Rio Grande Valley, South Texas and beyond.

C. Quality of the Management Plan

C.i Adequacy of plan to achieve objectives with clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks

The purpose of the *Historias Americanas* Project Management Plan is to establish procedures for the planning, development, design, delivery and evaluation of all the project activities, include the curricular components. More specifically, it assigns roles to the primary partners so that responsibilities and accountability are set for the development and design of lessons and activities and other important components of the UTRGV/BISD/ECISD's *Historias*

Americanas professional development program (See Organizational Chart in Appendices of this grant). The management plan includes design and implementation of the two Summer Institutes and follow-up workshops where the lesson design and development, place-based teaching strategies and a comprehensive professional development component are developed. All lessons and content will be aligned with the national and state curriculum standards based on the needs assessment completed in previous years (2015-2017) and during the grant writing process. A schedule for all project activities and components of the program has been created for the three-year grant period (2017-2020). This management plan also includes important components and specifics for monitoring and evaluating the *Historias Americanas* summer institutes, workshops, lessons, activities, delivery and effectiveness of program, monitoring sample classes for instruction and achievement in the Brownsville ISD and Edinburg CISD. UTRGV PIs and Project Director will monitor for any necessary targeted adjustments for year 2 and 3. A sample of the Project Activities Management Plan is provided below with the activity, date of activity, description, person(s) responsible, activity participant, and milestones. The entire Management Plan is located in the Appendices section of this grant.

Historias Americanas: Engaging History & Citizenship in the Rio Grande Valley Professional Development Program
2017-2020 Management Plan for Program Activities

GRANT KICK-OFF	
Date	October Fall 2017 (Grant awarded)
Activity Description	The University of Texas-Rio Grande Valley along with the participating school districts, Brownsville ISD and Edinburg CISD, will have a joint meeting to kick-off the implementation of the project. This will be an opportunity to unite all project partners and stakeholders as well as introduce project leaders.
Person(s) Responsible	UTRGV Principal Investigators (PIs)
Activity Participants	UTRGV PIs, Brownsville ISD and Edinburg CISD personnel, MOST, BHA, Palo Alto staff, UTRGV faculty and students, CMAS, CBS, TIO, B3 Institute Staff & Faculty
Milestone(s)	Naming and introduction of project partners, leaders and managers and staff
PROJECT MANAGEMENT MEETING	
Date	November 2017
Activity Description	Overview of timeline of activities and solidifying of calendar of events for Spring 2018 and 2018/2019 academic year.
Person(s) Responsible	UTRGV PIs & Project Director
Activity Participants	UTRGV PIs, Brownsville ISD Project Coordinator, Edinburg CISD Project Coordinator, UTRGV Project Coordinator, CMAS Director, CBS Director
Milestone(s)	Finalize Calendar of Events

UTRGV's B3 Institute and Brownsville ISD and Edinburg CISD departments of curriculum and instruction will create a Curriculum Management Committee. This critical component of oversight will provide ongoing support and guidance through the District curriculum specialists in the organization, design, peer review and evaluation of the *Historias*

Americanas program Management Plan. The superintendent of schools at BISD and ECISD will appoint members to the Curriculum Management Committee that will work directly with the UTRGV PIs, Project Director, and B3 Institute. The members will include:

- UTRGV *Historias Americanas* co-principal investigators
- UTRGV Faculty from relevant colleges, departments and programs
- UTRGV Director of Center for Bilingual Studies (CBS)
- UTRGV Director of Center for Mexican American Studies (CMAS)
- UTRGV Director of Translation & Interpretation Office (TIO)
- Assistant Superintendents of Curriculum and Instruction (BISD and ECISD)
- Curriculum and Instruction Social Studies Specialists (BISD and ECISD)
- History and Social Studies Teachers (BISD and ECISD)
- Representative from MOST, BSA and Palo Alto National Park

The grant will provide funding for a Project Coordinator (Social Studies Specialists) at each district and for teachers to attend the Summer Institutes and workshops where they will participate in collaborative curriculum development to adjust and align grade level activities and lessons to that developed by the UTRGV *Historias Americanas* program. The grant will also provide funding and assistance from UTRGV and BISD and ECISD to develop, implement and meet the objectives of the professional development program (See Budget & Budget Narrative in Appendices). This will ensure the implementation of culturally, linguistically and geographically relevant activities and lessons, and placed-based strategies for instruction and development of the Summer Institutes and follow-up workshops. This management group will assist the *Historias Americanas* program personnel by identifying and referring teachers to work the *Historias Americanas* staff in one of the following groups: 1) curriculum development and alignment to elementary, middle school and/or high school level grades including use of digital tools, assessments and materials that maximize classroom instructional best practices; 2) professional development teams for elementary, middle school and high school workshops via face-to-face and/or video-conferences to ensure high quality teacher training; 3) development and alignment

of traditional and digital activities and lessons for teachers that are engaging, hands-on and that are culturally and linguistically sensitive; 4) evaluation of activities and lessons, museum tours and digital and video resources to ensure rigor and alignment with state and national standards, promote student engagement and improve student academic achievement.

Once the UTRGV/BISD/ECISD teacher groups are formed and finalized, the PIs and Project Director will proceed to work with UTRGV faculty, B3 Institute and BISD and ECISD teachers and Social Studies Specialists to identify areas of need in developing activities, lessons, digital and visual resources that align with the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) so that they are appropriate to the proper grade levels. To ensure that teachers at both school districts have easy access and implementation, the instructional products and resources will be made available through UTRGV's HADP (See Competitive Preference Priority) so that usage can be tracked for evaluation purposes and be available for review and other teachers. These activities will be formatted to a style agreed upon by teachers from both school districts, the Social Studies Specialists (District Project Coordinators), UTRGV PIs, Project Director, CBS Director and other members of *Historia Americanas* team so that there are some common features and consistency throughout the life of the UTRGV *Historias Americanas* program. In addition, instructional products and resources developed in Summer Institutes and follow-up workshops will:

1. Clearly identify the national and state standards (TEKS -one or more) that the activity or digital resource support
2. Clearly identify the content areas where culturally, linguistically, and geographically relevant content can be integrated to enhance/enrich existing curricula
3. Provide place-based pedagogical teaching and learning approach, micro-macro theoretical framework and Community Learning Exchange (CLE) strategies for classroom activities,
4. Include strategies to help teachers implement the above to meet the needs of bilingual, ELLs and special needs children
5. Provide for rigor and differentiated instruction to help teachers meet the needs of all

learners

6. Include several delivery methods and placed-based strategies where appropriate (whole class, small group, cooperative groups, partner team work, independent study, and/or family/community)
7. Provide a suggested time during the scope and sequence of a grade level to insert the supplemental activity, lessons or digital resources (i.e. six-week period)

All partners will ensure that the UTRGV *Historias Americanas* program supplemental instructional materials are developed with data driven preference for evaluation and research purposes. Based on needs assessments and data shared from both BISD and ECISD, the curriculum and instruction products and resources will be developed to be aligned with all social studies and history process standards identified in the (TEKS to ensure rigor, promote student success and improve academic achievement, particularly for ELLs. The elementary, middle and high school teams under the direction and guidance of the PIs, Project Director, Curriculum Management Committee and *Historias Americanas* team will focus on the top ten standards requiring the most attention, and improvement and enrichment and then proceed to develop and align the next five lowest performing TEKS. This will guide the *Historias Americanas* team, teachers, museum and Social Studies specialist in planning for the development of the curricula, lessons and activities for the Summer Institutes and follow-up workshops.

C.ii Extent to which the time commitments of project director, principal investigator, and other key personnel are appropriate and adequate to meet objectives

There are two principal investigators who work as Co-PIs in the development and writing of this grant and project in collaboration with other members of the UTRGV grant writing team. To adequately meet the objectives and implementation of the *Historias Americanas* Professional Development Program, the *Historias Americanas* Team includes two CoPIs, of which will serve as the Project Director (50 percent time commitment) and the other as a the Administrator for the project as the Direct of the B3 Institute and six Project Coordinators (15 percent time

commitment each), one designated for each of the following: UTRGV, Edinburg ISD, and Brownsville ISD, UTRGV Center for Bilingual Studies, Center for Mexican American Studies, and Translation and Interpretation Office, and two graduate assistants (100 percent time commitment), one designated for the Center for Mexican American Studies and one for the Translation and Interpretation Office (See Organizational Chart in Appendices).

One of the Co-PIs, an Assistant Professor of History will act as the Project Director and will have a course buy out, equivalent to 20 percent time commitment, during the Fall and Spring semesters of the grant period. In addition, the project director will work during the summers the summer 2018, 2019 and 2020 at a 100% rate, or the equivalent of 1/3 of 9-month salary to assist in implementation of Summer Institute and provide leadership to overall project. The total time commitment of the project director is equivalent to 50 percent of full-time duties as a UTRGV faculty member. The CBS Coordinator, Professor and Director of Center for Bilingual Studies, will have a 50 percent buy out for the summer (equivalent of two courses taught) and will dedicate 50 percent time during the summers to plan, implement, and internally evaluate summer professional development with teachers and university faculty focused on performance objective measures relative to English Language Learners, their families, and community. The CMAS Coordinator, Professor and Director of Center for Mexican American Studies, will work 50 percent time during the summers to plan, implement, and internally evaluate summer professional development with teachers and university faculty focused on performance objective measures relative to culturally relevant and culturally appropriate teaching and learning. The Translation and Interpretation Office Coordinator, Professor and Director of Translation and Interpreting Office will work 50% time during the summers to oversee translation of *Historias Americanas* materials. The UTRGV Program Coordinator will work 10 Calendar months in

Year 1; 12 calendar months in Years 2 and 3 and have a 100 percent time commitment to the *Historias Americanas* Professional development program. *Historias Americanas* will also have two graduate assistants, a doctoral graduate student who will work 9 calendar months directly with the co-PIs, Project Director and internal and external evaluation teams, and will be dedicated to summer workshop preparation, implementation, and data collection, and an MA graduate student who will work 9 calendar months and will be dedicated to Translation Office for translation on project materials. All members of the *Historias Americanas* team will work together in the planning, development, organizing, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of this professional development program to ensure that all of the major components of the program, project activities and events are successfully carried out and implemented in order to meet the program objectives and expected outcomes.

D. Quality of the Project Evaluation

The quality of the project evaluation of *Historias Americanas* will be determined by the collaborative evaluative work conducted by internal and external evaluation teams. Internal evaluation will be led by co-principal investigators Dr. Maritza de la Trinidad, a history professor, and Dr. Francisco Guajardo, a professor of Educational Leadership and executive director of the B3 Institute at UTRGV. The external evaluation team will be led by distinguished University of Texas at Austin historian Dr. Emilio Zamora, a scholar of wide renown. Dr. Zamora's scholarship and teaching focus on the American Southwest, the US-Mexico Borderlands, and Mexican American labor history. Dr. Zamora's professional portfolio includes deep knowledge on educational policy in Texas public schools, and he has a specialization on archival history. Dr. Zamora will work collaboratively with the UTRGV Principal Investigators and with teachers and administrators from the Edinburg and Brownsville school districts.

D.i Extent to which methods of evaluation include objective performance measures and will produce quantitative and qualitative data

Historias Americanas will employ methods of evaluation that include objective performance measures through quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods research approaches through a responsive mixed-methods evaluation process to demonstrate areas of program effectiveness and areas of improvement or replacement. This evaluation process will include all program staff, faculty, teachers, students and the community partners (i.e. speakers and museums). To capture, document, assess, and learn from the work of *Historias Americanas*, the program evaluation will employ both quantitative and qualitative data and analyses to determine the various program components' degree of effectiveness. The multi-point evaluation includes objective performance measures and subjective performance measures to gain a wide range of responses by workshop participants, users (teachers, students, and community members) of the activities, lessons, and digital resources of the *Historias Americanas* program. Also, internal and external evaluators of the grant will guide the program's mixed-methods evaluation process to ensure all stakeholders are part of the data collection process, as well as the recipients of the results of the evaluation.

Historias Americanas will improve the quality of teaching and learning by: 1) by improving teacher content knowledge of the micro-macro dynamic relationship between the local and national/global historical narrative; 2) improving student engagement and comprehension through culturally and linguistically relevant supplemental curricula; and 3) improving teacher leadership skills; teachers will in turn provide staff development to their colleagues.

Quantitative: Professional development activities such as workshops and observations of teachers and university faculty will reflect growth and development in leadership through the use

of survey instruments. To assess teacher growth the evaluation process will employ pre- and post-test performance measures in content knowledge of micro-macro dynamic relationships between local and national/global historical narrative, in culturally responsive instruction, and in leadership skills. Statistical analysis will be used to demonstrate significant differences between Social Studies teachers who received the *Historias Americanas* training and those who did not. Survey instruments will be validated in content and reliability analysis will be conducted using pilot data. These instruments will yield valid and reliable quantitative data, which will allow PIs and the evaluation team an objective read of performance measures for each of the three objectives.

Direct student performance data will be collected through teacher-made district benchmarks and STAAR assessments to measure student knowledge and comprehension of TEKS and language acquisition. Benchmark assessments will be open ended and designed by teachers and reviewed by project personnel to generate test items that will allow students to think critically about their learning and to expand their knowledge of what they had already learned. Specific student expectations from the TEKS will be selected based on prior STAAR data to have the greatest impact on student achievement on the state assessment. Stratified random sampling will be used to collect student data and analyzed for significant differences between students of teachers who received *Historias Americanas* training and students of teachers who did not receive the training.

Qualitative: Professional development activities will also offer qualitative data through surveys that include short answer reflections, stories, and other qualitative data. The qualitative data will similarly offer an objective read of performance measures such as teacher knowledge and integration of place-based principles of teaching aligned with TEKS, TELPAS, and other

pertinent local, state, and federal standards. The data will show teacher knowledge and integration of culturally relevant approaches to teaching and learning aligned with TEKS, TELPAS, and other pertinent local, statewide, and federal standards. The data will show teacher knowledge and understanding how to deliver instruction and assessment through both English and Spanish and bilingually (English/Spanish) with ELLs and to extend instructional process through engagement with families and communities through bilingual modalities that are culturally relevant and appropriate.

Structured and methodical observations of teachers in classrooms will assess objective performance measures such as student interest, student engagement, and student comprehension. Mixed method approaches to teacher observations will both objectively quantify the frequency of student interest, engagement, and comprehension and will offer objective qualitative data through student and teacher responses through an inquiry process intended to learn from observations. The objective performance measures will also assess teacher knowledge and integration of place-based principles of teaching aligned with TEKS, TELPAS, and other pertinent local, state, and federal standards; knowledge and integration of culturally relevant approaches to teaching and learning aligned with TEKS, TELPAS, and other pertinent local, statewide, and federal standards; knowledge and understanding how to deliver instruction and assessment through both English and Spanish and bilingually (English/Spanish) with ELLs and to extend instructional process through engagement with families and communities through bilingual modalities that are culturally relevant and appropriate.

Classroom portfolios (compilation of student work and products) include objective performance measures such as portfolios that demonstrate an understanding of place-based principles aligned with TEKS, TELPAS, and other pertinent local, state, and federal standards.

Approximately 50 student portfolios will be selected randomly to avoid skewed data and ensure random distribution. Data observed includes knowledge of culturally relevant content aligned with TEKS, TELPAS, and other pertinent local, statewide, and federal standards.

The co-principal investigators, the external program evaluator, and project directors at each school district will meet twice a month in person and electronically to stay abreast of data collection points. As data is collected the evaluation team may deem it necessary to analyze, advise and provide a responsive recommendation or solution(s).

D.ii Extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide performance feedback and permit periodic assessment of progress

ECISD and BISD use research-based strategies and practices to monitor student performance through the evaluation of state assessment and accountability system. They have available a standardized evaluation system that helps campuses monitor and analyze campus data through the use of two main data management systems, DMAC and Eduphoria to disaggregate data. These results provide teachers with state-of-the-art tools and services necessary to analyze their data to determine which resource would address areas of concern based on their data. This also helps teachers develop and improve the quality of instruction based on students' needs to promote student achievement. This evaluation process involves all instructional personnel including central office administrators, campus administrators, department chairs, teachers and any other personnel that impacts student learning. These evaluation and assessment tools allow teachers to keep track of student performance via formative and summative exams and provide specific data as it pertains to student achievement, performance and improvement.

Community Learning Exchange (CLE) evaluative methods will be employed to provide performance feedback and continuous assessment of progress. In half-day retreats, the CLE model (Guajardo, et al, 2016) will use participatory dynamic pedagogies to engage the internal

evaluation team to offer feedback, to learn from feedback, and to build continuous evaluation of *Historias Americanas*. This will equip district coordinators and leadership teams with culturally competent leadership skills and engage them with the community. These new skills will allow district leaders to inspire and motivate teachers and campus administrators to enhance their commitment and support to *Historias Americanas*.

Video documentation of professional development workshops and methodical review of video by internal review team will be used as a method of evaluation to provide performance feedback and to engage in periodic assessment of progress. Theme analysis will allow PIs to evaluate the overall impact of *Historias Americanas* on civic engagement and citizenship demonstrated by all stakeholders and provide feedback and recommendations to improve the implementation of the project.

The Center for Mexican American Studies will engage in content evaluation of culturally relevant materials and will provide performance feedback on materials and reproducibles for teachers; CMAS will provide periodic assessment of content progress. The Center for Bilingual Studies will use a document review method of evaluation to provide feedback on pedagogies used by teachers related to English language acquisition (use and impact of strategies, evaluate planning for continued use of instructional strategies for ELLs). The CMAS and CBS coordinators will be active participants in the CLEs, meetings, workshops, and classroom observations and will share their expertise in culturally and linguistically responsive instructional approaches.

The CLE evaluation method offers the community to engage *Historias Americanas* as key evaluators of the project and key players in providing periodic assessment of project progress. CLE pedagogies such as circle, *pláticas*, and World Cafés, will be used to engage

community members such as parents, families, neighborhoods, and communities at large to acquire performance feedback from the local community and to participate in the project's continuous assessment process. External evaluator Emilio Zamora will employ mixed-methods research designs that include objective performance measures through the use of data collection instruments such as surveys, focus groups, interviews, ethnographies, document reviews that include digital archives, and observations; it will also include review of state and federal assessment tools to find pertinent data. The external evaluation will use evaluation methods to provide performance feedback and to permit periodic assessment of progress; methods such as surveys, focus groups, interview, ethnographies, document reviews, and a digital archive will provide performance feedback and will permit the project periodic assessment of progress. The internal evaluation team will work closely with the external evaluator to use evaluation methods such as surveys, interviews, observations, ethnographies, document analyses, and results from state and local tests. The evaluators will use those methods of evaluation to provide performance feedback and to provide for continuous assessment of progress of *Historias Americanas*. See also Project Evaluation Plan Overview in Appendix.