Call to Order and Introductions
The regular meeting of the First Things First – La Paz/Mohave Regional Partnership Council was held June 23, 2011 at 9:30 a.m. at the Mohave County Sheriff’s Department training room, 600 W. Beale Street, Kingman, Arizona 86401.

Chairman Frei called the meeting to order at 9:35a.m. Council members, staff and guests introduced themselves.

Members present: Riley Frei-Chair, Lenore Knudtson-Vice Chair, Nancy Mongeau, Terri Holloway; Telephonically-Catie Sondrol, Vijette Saari, Alisa Burroughs, and Debra Weger

Members Absent: Betsy Lewis, Jose Garcia, Melissa J. Howell

Call to the Public:
Ms. Jennifer Hernandez from the Reach Out and Read program introduced herself and gave an overview of the program and the recent developments with the program. Reach Out and Read partners with doctors and health providers to provide books that are given out to children. Recently, in the area, the number of doctors and health providers has started to greatly increase and the program is experiencing great expansion and success.

Declaration of Conflict of Interest
No Conflicts of Interest were declared.

Approval of May 26, 2011 Meeting Minutes
Member Mongeau made a motion to approve the May 26, 2011, meeting minutes. Motion was seconded by Member Holloway. Motion carried unanimously by members present.

Needs and Assets Work-Plan for Additional Services Presentation, Discussion and Possible Action
Regional Director Merritt Beckett explained the proposal from the University of Arizona for additional work for the Needs and Assets report for SFY2012 which includes fifteen fact sheets by geographic area with similar Health, Early Education and Family Support indicators along with the list of resources specific to the geographic sub-regions. Director Beckett pointed out that the time and cost estimates were exactly as expected and proposed. No changes were recommended by the University of Arizona. Ms. Michelle Walsh of the University of Arizona was present by phone and stated she is available for any questions or concerns that may arise. Director Beckett informed the Council that Ms. Walsh will be attending the regular Regional Partnership Council meeting in July in Colorado City to present the plan in full. Member Mongeau expressed her approval of the proposal stating it is exactly what the Council requested. Member Mongeau made a motion to accept the proposal from the University of Arizona. Member Holloway seconded the motion. All members present voted unanimously to accept the proposal from University of Arizona.

St. Mary’s Food Bank Alliances Services in Mohave County Presentation and Possible Discussion
Eric Wolverton, Director of Northern Arizona Development/Operations, gave a brief overview of St. Mary’s Food Bank Alliances and its services. Mr. Wolverton thanked the Council for supporting the St. Mary’s Food Bank and expressed his confidence that St. Mary’s Food Bank will be able to fulfill the needs throughout Mohave County quite adequately. Mr. Wolverton explained the handout that outlined the different pounds of food and the changes in pounds of food that were distributed throughout the region last year. Mr. Wolverton explained the merger with the Arizona Diaper Bank which has been a huge asset to the region. Mr. Wolverton explained St. Mary’s Food Bank’s stance on including infant formula in food boxes distributed to families. St. Mary’s Food Bank decided not to distribute infant formula to the region as breastfeeding is the recommendation from most pediatricians. Discussion ensued later regarding the various reasons some families may need formula, including families not utilizing the Woman, Infant, Children (WIC) program due to fear of government and the high levels of substance abuse in the area leaving certain segments of the younger population’s needs unmet. Director Beckett explained at that time a provision was included in the strategy to disperse information regarding WIC with the food boxes. Audience members who work with the families utilizing WIC explained that many families using formula do not receive enough formula for the month from WIC. Director Beckett noted these concerns and agreed to look into them for further discussion later. Mr. Wolverton explained a pilot program that is currently being executed in the Flagstaff, Arizona, area that involved St. Mary’s Food Bank creating the individual food boxes and then sending them to the agencies for distribution rather than sending bulk food to be broken into boxes at the agencies. The individual food boxes are built.
utilizing student volunteers from nearby Northern Arizona University. This pilot program will hopefully allow for better monitoring of product and of families being served and allow for more detail in the demographic reports. St. Mary’s Food Bank hopes to have this pilot program up and running by November 1, 2011. Mr. Wolverton informed the Council that none of the agencies St. Mary’s Food Bank assists are charged a fee for transporting food. Chair Frei expressed the Council’s excitement over the new agreement between the Council and St. Mary’s Food Bank. Member Mongeau asked for clarification on the funding amount being used for the Food Strategy for SFY2012. Director Beckett clarified the overall amount is $112,000; however, the amount is divided based on population distribution in Mohave County by St. Mary’s Food Bank and in La Paz County by Yuma Community Food Bank. Director Beckett further clarified the portion for Mohave County which is awarded to St. Mary’s Food Bank is $92,000. Chair Frei elaborated for the audience that this strategy has been one the Council felt was very important but struggled with over the years due to many different issues. Member Holloway remarked the Council worked with three food banks last year and asked if the Council would now be working with many more food banks on the list presented. Director Beckett explained that St. Mary’s Food Bank would be working with all the food banks on the list on the Council’s behalf. This partnership will help with many of the capacity issues that arose last year. Member Mongeau expressed her satisfaction with the impeccable recordkeeping and wonderful organization done by St. Mary’s Food Bank. Vice Chair Knudtson asked for clarification on the number of pounds listed on St. Mary’s Food Bank’s report, specifically if the pounds listed included the help from the Council last year and the reason for a decrease in pounds of food in some locations. Mr. Wolverton explained the pounds of food listed are above and beyond any help received last year from the Council. Mr. Wolverton also addressed the decreases listed on the report being due to the amount of families asking for assistance decreasing in those areas. The new pilot program being implemented will hopefully clear up some of the reporting discrepancies.

Promising Programs From Other Regions Presentation and Possible Discussion
Senior Program Specialist K Vilay presented a power point outlining different programs being implemented in other regions. The power point outlined how these different programs align to the draft indicators. Program Specialist Vilay reminded the Council that while these programs work in the area where they are currently being implemented, it is important to remember that each region has unique demographics and issues that are being addressed. A few of the programs highlighted included an inclusion coaching program for language acquisition in the Central and South Pima regional areas; a lending library of books for children; Reach Out and Read in the Navajo/Apache region; Therapist loan forgiveness and stipend, which is a new strategy also being implemented in the La Paz/Mohave region for the SFY2012; a developmental specialist embedded into home visitation in the Navajo/Apache region; and a traveling dental lab with Delta Dental in the Santa Cruz region. Discussion ensued regarding the law around children with disabilities and differentiating between delayed versus disabled as well as marketing the importance of therapists in a region and ways to grow your own therapists and the difficulties in attracting more people to the career of therapy, especially working with children.

First Things First Statewide Indicators Presentation and Possible Discussion
Director Beckett explained the State Board and Early Childhood Task Force which was appointed by the State Board along with the three Advisory committees in the areas of Health, Early Learning, and Family Support have been working on defining First Things First roles and priorities in creating a model Early Childhood System. The Advisory Committees have identified specific and measurable outcomes for children. A publication was sent out to all regional Council members that outlines key system elements, outcomes, and priorities roles for First Things First over the next five years and includes the 8 priorities that have been identified. Five priorities are service oriented and three priorities are system oriented. Director Beckett further clarified the 8 priorities for the Council. Director Beckett explained the intent right now is to get feedback and input from Regional Councils and partners on the proposed indicators that have been drafted in order finalize the indicators to be presented to the State Board in August 2011. Once the indicators are approved by the board, the indicators can be used as part of the strategic planning for SFY2013. The goal statewide is to align both the Statewide and the Regional funding plans with the indicators. Over time the indicators will be used to help the Council refine programs and to keep the Council accountable for achieving measurable outcomes for children. Director Beckett asked the Council for their input and feedback on the indicators so that she may take it back to the Advisory committees. Member Mongeau expressed concern with the struggle over who understands the region better. Member Mongeau stated the Council understands the State needs to be accountable to the citizens for how the money is spent, but she feels the Council is important to the region as the Council understands the region best. Program Specialist Vilay reminded the Council the indicators are draft versions and discussion using the feedback provided are ongoing. Program Specialist Vilay asked if there are any indicators that really concern the Council more than others. Director Beckett expressed concern over the heavy focus for Early Learning indicators on the Quality First star rating for child care centers and homes. This concern arises due to the substantial portion of the Council’s funding being invested in Pre-Kindergarten expansion and most of the Pre-Kindergarten sites are not Quality First; therefore, the Council’s priorities will not move that indicator. Program Specialist Vilay pointed out the Early Learning indicators that could be aligned with a non-Quality First Pre-Kindergarten site. Program Specialist Vilay also expressed the difference will be in the expectations set for regions and whether the expectations are for regions to move one indicator, some indicators, and all indicators. Program Specialist Vilay acknowledged that expecting regions to move all indicators or one indicator may be unrealistic and so these expectations are still being adjusted and many considerations are still being deliberated. Program Specialist Vilay explained what the Advisory committees are trying to achieve with the indicators – making them broad enough to be managed at the local level. Vice Chair Knudtson expressed concern over the children who do not attend a day care being possibly left out of the model early childhood system. Program Specialist Vilay explained that First Things First is working on drafting infant and toddler guidelines for an early childhood system. Simultaneously, the developmental guideline component is also being addressed in the Advisory
Committees at this time. These components are outside Quality First and are intended to be more systemic. Vice Chair Knudtson reiterated the concern regarding early learning indicators being based on one program or curriculum. Director Beckett agreed and stated it might be better to include more universal indicators that still encompass the same competencies. Program Specialist Vilay also acknowledged the importance of the parent’s role. It is critical to include all components of early childhood, not just early learning, but also health and family support. Vice Chair Knudtson expressed concern that the neediest children, such as those who are homeless and living in poverty may be forgotten or underserved as a result of not having access to programs being implemented. Member Burroughs agreed with Vice Chair Knudtson and added her experience with these children in the schools. Program Specialist Vilay thanked the Council for their feedback and stated she will relay the information to the appropriate parties. Member Holloway asked about the possible repercussions if the Council is not in alignment with the State Board in SFY2013. Director Beckett eased the concerns by referring to the SFY2010 Needs and Assets report and past alignment with State goals and noted that no case has occurred in the past where the State Board has not been open to working with a Regional Council to meet the specific needs of the region. Senior Regional Director Gary Arnold informed the Council the State board is made up of volunteers from around the state including other members from rural areas as well as the more urban areas of the State. Chair Frei closed the discussion by stating the process is necessary and working together to set benchmarks and meet priorities is beneficial.

**SFY2011 Financial and Program Data Report Presentation and Possible Discussion**

Director Beckett gave an update on the financial report and program data for the La Paz/Mohave region to date. Director Beckett explained the year to date expenditures have been $2,693,587. Remaining to be spent is $1.5 million. This means 61% of the budget for SFY2011 has been expended. Director Beckett informed the Council grantee’s have until August 15, 2011, to submit for SFY2011 reimbursements, so a total amount left for carry over and final fiscal year end data will not be available until September. Director Beckett informed the Council based on the included reports the majority of the grantees are spending the funds allocated to them. Member Holloway noticed that Mohave County Health Department has only spent 39% of their allocation and asked if there is an explanation such as a lag in billing or submitting for reimbursement. Senior Director Arnold pointed out Mohave County Health Department does have an additional $10,000 submitted for reimbursement that is pending and not yet reflected in the overall percentage of funds spent at this time. Director Beckett clarified that the services are getting out despite the low reimbursement percentage. Director Beckett also explained the Child Care Health Consultation (CCHC) program has only been fully staffed since February. Member Mongeau suggested it might be a good idea to request an explanation for use of funds thus far from all grantees that have greater than 50% funds unexpended, as it is the end of the fiscal year. Senior Director Arnold told the Council regional staff does reconnect with those grantees that are spending below 50%. Director Beckett explained the surplus of funds remaining in the staff-directed strategy for Community Outreach and the Council expressed satisfaction with the explanation and stated that explanation on grants that are under-expended would be beneficial. Director Beckett stated she would work on clarification from grantees and follow up for the next meeting.

Director Beckett explained the program data reports to the Council. Many or most of the grantees have met or exceeded the target service goals. Director Beckett informed the Council two grantees have not met the target service units – Milemarker’s Therapy and Association for Supportive Child Care (ASCC) Expansion Grants. Director Beckett reiterated for the Council the reasons previously discussed for Milemarker’s Therapy and ASCC not meeting the target service units. ASCC faced substantial barriers during the voting season due the proposition to remove First Things First funding. Child Care providers did not want to start up centers if the possibility of funding was going to be lost and the staff member from ASCC responsible for the program resigned due to the instability at the time. The position has remained unfilled for several months due to a lack of qualified applicants. Both factors were beyond the grantee’s control. Milemarker’s Therapy was unable to meet the target service units originally projected for their second year, and as a result, the funding amounts awarded to Milemarker’s Therapy for SFY2012 have been reduced to reflect new target service units that can be met. Chair Frei requested an update on the statewide strategy T.E.A.C.H. Director Beckett gave an update and clarification for T.E.A.C.H. Member Mongeau wondered if there is a way to know if a student dropped out or graduated to identify if there is a retention problem. Director Beckett agreed there seems to be a problem with retention. Program Specialist Vilay explained it is hard to tell if it is a problem within the program or the field. Member Mongeau also asked for an approximate cost per student. Program Specialist Vilay explained the cost varies based on the program. Chair Frei expressed the program seemed to be closer to the Council’s goal than it was initially. Chair Frei asked for clarification on the different cuts made to the program for the area. Director Beckett explained in year one the Council funded forty scholarship openings while in year two the Council only funded twenty scholarship openings. However the Council did increase the number of scholarships available through Quality First. T.E.A.C.H. is embedded in Quality First. Vice Chair Knudtson expressed this strategy struggles with the rural nature of the geographic area and suggested it would be possible to remove the Regional Partnership Council T.E.A.C.H. portion and still meet the region’s needs. Director Beckett reminded the Council that there is a difference between the Quality First T.E.A.C.H. scholarships which are reserved for child care workers who are employed at a Quality First site while T.E.A.C.H. only scholarships are awarded to any child care worker. Director Beckett also pointed out the community-based professional development grant currently in place at ASCC is creating stepping stones to lead professionals into completing degrees in the T.E.A.C.H. program. Without T.E.A.C.H., child care workers participating in Tier 1 and Tier 2 professional development may not be able to continue with the education at the college level once graduated from Tier 2 due to increasing tuition costs at colleges across the state. Chair Frei agreed that T.E.A.C.H. does serve a need and he expressed that statistics for T.E.A.C.H. have greatly improved. Program Specialist Vilay explained the numbers as related to Arizona as a whole. Vice Chair Knudtson expressed concern with the overall outcomes of the program to date. Senior Director Arnold suggested this issue be included in discussions when planning for SFY2013. Senior Director Arnold also clarified the
exact amount that is budgeted for each scholarship is $3300. Senior Director Arnold informed the Council a regional T.E.A.C.H. Outreach Liaison is being piloted in the Coconino region and it is hoped the next region to receive a T.E.A.C.H. Outreach Liaison would be La Paz/Mohave. Audience member Margaret Taylor from ASCC informed the Council its professional development program is just now reaching a point where the child care workers enrolled can begin to utilize T.E.A.C.H. Member Mongeau asked how many child care workers were enrolled in Tier 1 that continued to and completed Tier 2. Ms. Taylor answered Tier 1 had around 100 child care workers to begin with and now Tier 2 just graduated 65 child care workers. Member Mongeau expressed satisfaction with those numbers. Vice Chair Knudtson asked that the Council continue to monitor the numbers and if at least 50% is not being met, the issue be revisited. Director Beckett shared the Contractor’s Performance on Target Service Units by Strategies within Regions document which allows the Council to see how well the La Paz/Mohave region is doing in comparison to other regions. Council members expressed appreciation for the document.

**Regional Director Report & Possible Discussion**

The update on Quality First’s new model design and a report on Communications were tabled until the next meeting. Director Beckett updated the Council on the June 14, 2011, State Board meeting. The State Board approved all regional recommendations for grant renewals and new agreements for the SFY2012. Director Beckett explained the next meeting’s agenda includes wonderful speakers from Colorado City and Centennial Park as well as a presentation from the Department of Health Services on the new Therapist Incentives Program and strongly encouraged any grantees and partners and all Council members to attend as it will be a very informative meeting. Director Beckett also asked Council members to let Regional staff know as soon as possible if they plan to attend so accommodations can be made.

**Next Meeting:** The next meeting is at 8:30a.m. Arizona Time (9:30a.m. Utah time) on Thursday, July 28, 2011, at El Capitan Public School located at 225 N. Cottonwood Street, Colorado City, Arizona 86021. (Colorado City, AZ uses Utah time.)

**Adjourn**

Member Holloway made a motion to adjourn. Motion was seconded by Member Mongeau. Motion carried unanimously by members present.

There being no further business, Chair Frei adjourned the meeting at 12:08pm.

**Minutes NOT approved**

**SUBMITTED BY:** Julia Cosmano, Administrative Assistant II

**APPROVED BY:** Riley Frei, Chair