Call to Order and Introductions
The regular meeting of the La Paz/Mohave Regional Partnership Council was held on October 27, 2011 at 9:30 a.m. at the Lake Havasu Unified School District Board Room, 200 Havasupai Boulevard, Lake Havasu City, Arizona 86403.

Chairman Frei called the meeting to order at 9:36 a.m. Council members, staff, and guests introduced themselves.

Members present
Riley Frei, Chair; Nancy Mongeau, Vice Chair; Vijette Saari, Catie Sondrol, Terri Holloway, Debra Weger, Alisa Burroughs appeared telephonically

Members absent
Melissa Howell, Jose Garcia, Lenore Knudtson, Betsy Lewis

Call to the Public
Jason George, Physical Therapist, Milemarker’s Therapy, received help through the Therapists Incentives Strategy and thanked the Council for the good work they are performing. Mr. George described his background and said he has been a therapist working with children for over eight years, and he really enjoys working with children. Rebecca McLenning, Superintendent of schools in Bouse, Arizona, expressed the need for help for the preschool in her community. Ms. McLenning explained the importance of the preschool in her community as it gives children a safe place to go and guarantees that the children will receive a meal. Ms. McLenning also expressed that good schooling helps children go on to become productive citizens. Aggie Wolter, Director of Special Services for Lake Havasu Unified School District, expressed the growing need for free preschool to be available to the children of Lake Havasu City. Ms. Wolter also expressed the importance of having a program, such as Pre-Kindergarten, that can serve to provide early intervention services to young children. Ms. Wolter stated that Lake Havasu Unified School District is committed to collaborating with First Things First to help make opportunities available for the children of the area. Rich Miers, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Interagency Council expressed concern over the direction of the food security strategy in the Lake Havasu City area. Mr. Miers explained he had had a discussion with St. Mary’s Food Bank on the food included in the food boxes and whether there were accommodations made for younger children, specifically under the age of 5. Mr. Miers reported that St. Mary’s Food Bank stated children over 2 years of age need the same food as adults. This is of great concern to Mr. Miers and his agency as young children have special food needs for good nutrition. Mr. Miers asked the Council to consider including a food security strategy as part of the funding plans for the upcoming years.

Declaration of Conflict of Interest
Member Weger declared a Conflict of Interest with Agenda Item 6-Discussion and Possible Action on SFY2012-2015 Funding Plan Recommendations.

Approval of August 25, 2011 Meeting Minutes
Vice Chair Mongeau made a motion to approve the September 22, 2011, meeting minutes. Member Sondrol seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously by members present.

SFY2011 Financial and Program Data Summary
Director Beckett gave an update on the financial and program data summaries from SFY2011. Director Beckett reminded the Council the grantees had until the middle of August to submit information and reimbursements, which explains why a final update was not available until October. Director Beckett explained the unexpended monies for some of the strategies, including Community Awareness, which had a balance due to a significant cost savings on materials ordered in bulk. Some programs, including the Fort Mohave Indian Tribe home visitation and Bullhead Elementary School District Pre-Kindergarten expansion, were signed toward the end of SFY2011, so monies were not fully expended due to the timeframe. Mohave County Public Health Department Child Care Health Consultation (CCHC) and the Association for Supportive Child Care (ASCC) Community-Based training strategies had
significant setbacks with filling staffing vacancies. Director Beckett explained the total carry-forward from SFY2011 for SFY2012. Chair Frei inquired if programs that still have outstanding monies to be spent could still submit for reimbursement and thus the total carry-forward would change. Director Beckett replied that all reimbursements are closed out and any amount in a contract not expended falls into the carry-forward for the next year. Member Holloway asked for clarification on the CCHC program. Director Beckett clarified that the CCHC program had some staff turnover and training difficulties, which created the expenditure issue.

Director Beckett provided some highlights on the accomplishments from SFY2011. The expansion strategy through ASCC served 27 sites, including 16 new start-up child care settings, and 11 quality improvement grants. These awarded grants created 118 infant and toddler child care slots, of which 39 were infant slots. Director Beckett provided an example of one site that received an expansion grant that was able to split up the 1 and 2 year old children into separate rooms and serve more children. Director Beckett explained to the Council that 100 children were served through the Pre-Kindergarten expansion strategies with programs at 5 school districts, not including the Bullhead Elementary School district which did not appear on the report, but added another 20 slots for children. The Mental Health Consultation strategy that gave scholarships to mental health professionals to attend the Harris Institute had 9 professionals enroll for SFY2011, of which 4 finished the 1-year program, 4 are in their second year of the 2-year program and one dropped-out. T.E.A.C.H. awarded 27 scholarships for SFY2011, which is a significant increase from the previous quarters. ASCC’s community-based education strategy served 200 participants with a 70% completion rate. The factors that contributed to a lower completion rate included the need to attend all classes, and so to address that issue, an online component will be included for SFY2012. The Court Team provided 49 trainings in SFY2011 with an average number of participants of 23 per session. For the developmental screenings strategy, the Council had set a target of 416 screenings, and 346 screenings were provided. There was some difficulty with low turnout in more remote areas of the region. In the Home Visitation strategy, the numbers were above the anticipated total for the year, so many more families were served than expected. Through Quality First program 8 centers and 1 home provider were served with regional funds, and 3 centers and 1 home provider were served through statewide funding. Due to the changes to the Quality First model, vacancies will not be filled for SFY2012.

Discussion and Possible Action on SFY2012-2015 Funding Plan Recommendations
Director Beckett provided a brief overview of the data from the 2010 Regional Needs and Assets Report that was discussed at length by the Funding Plan Workgroup when making recommendations for funding plans for SFY2012-2015. One of the main needs considered includes the poor birth outcomes in La Paz County, which involves low birth rates and high infant mortality. There is a correlation between poor birth outcomes and lack of prenatal care, and in La Paz County, there is no available prenatal care, so all residents have to travel a long distance to receive prenatal care. Mohave County poor birth outcomes percentage is also above the recommended federal level. A second need considered was the discrepancy between the number of available child care slots, which is around 4000, and the number of children attending regulated child care which is around 2700 children. It is known that there is a large waitlist of children for child care subsidies, so the Council knows that these vacancies are not due to families not wanting regulated child care but because families cannot afford regulated child care. The lack of quality preschool settings, lack of affordable quality child care settings, lack of qualified early education staff, and the need for increased availability of services for children with special health care needs were noted. Director Beckett explained the Council values community input, so two community Strategic Planning sessions were held, one in Parker and one in Bullhead City to gather information and a survey was sent out to 561 community stakeholders to gather input on the needs of the community and there were 105 responses. According to the survey, the highest priority needs in the community are parent education and coaching and Pre-kindergarten programs. Also according to the survey, the two top priorities for First Things First are to make sure children are ready to learn when they reach kindergarten, and make sure families are confident and competent to support their children’s safety and wellbeing. The funding plan workgroup has two recommendations. First, the Council needs to bring strategies to a more narrowed and focused approach, so that the neediest population of children, those in the child welfare system, those living in poverty, those are risk for neglect and/or abuse, and those with special needs are better served. Second, the Council needs to expand the Pre-Kindergarten strategy, which will allow a broader base of the region to be covered. The funding plan workgroup recommends expanding the Pre-Kindergarten sites for the current fiscal year, SFY2012, to include sites in Bouse, Lake Havasu City, and Centennial Park. Member Sondrol inquired if Parker Unified School district had been approached as a possible Pre-Kindergarten site, as the Parker Head Start has a waitlist and there is a definite need in that area. Director Beckett stated that the Colorado River Indian Tribes (CRIT) Regional Partnership has been addressing the need. Senior Regional Director Gary Arnold further clarified that the interest in Parker is for professional development of their preschool staff, at this time. Senior Director Arnold also explained that conversations have occurred with the Head Start in Parker, and there is an issue of space. Director Beckett noted that the First Things First CRIT Regional Partnership Council does allocate funds for 22 child care scholarships in Parker. Vice Chair Mongeau explained for the Council the struggle the funding plan workgroup had developing the recommendations and reiterated the need to prioritize strategies to better serve children in the region. Vice Chair Mongeau made a motion to expand the Pre-Kindergarten strategy to include the three new sites in the current fiscal year SFY2012. Member Holloway seconded the motion. Six members of the Council approve the motion, and the motion to expand the Pre-Kindergarten strategy for SFY2012 carried. Member Weger abstained from voting.
Director Beckett explained the funding plan workgroup recommendations for SFY2013-2015 by strategy area. The recommendation is to continue to serve all districts, including three new ones just approved, for SFY2013-2015. There is an increase in the amount allocated for the strategy because the three new districts will only be served for 6 months in SFY2012 but will need full year funding for SFY2013-2015. The recommendation is also to expand Quality First to meet the new model, as the need for child care scholarships are so great. In order to accommodate this expansion of Quality First, there will need to be a reduction in the number of sites served from 12 sites to 9 sites. Therefore, between Pre-Kindergarten and Quality First, there will be 285 child care scholarships available to children in the region. The recommendation is to end the Expansion Grant strategy through ASCC because there is a greater need to address the number of families needing financial help to access quality child care and to help bring existing strategies to scale. The recommendation is to expand the professional development for early child care professionals to bring that strategy to scale by adding a Kith and Kin component, as many children in the region are cared for by family and friends in the area. The recommendation is to continue the Court Team strategy with a minor reduction in cost. The recommendation is to continue existing funding at the same level for the T.E.A.C.H. scholarships with the recognition that once the tiered training offered as part of professional development for early education professionals is completed a next step needs to be available to help these professionals continue their education. The recommendation is to continue the family support-home visitation strategy with expansion to serve more families, especially those with children with special needs who are ineligible for other programs. The recommendation is to end the food security strategy. The recommendation is to end most of the health strategies, including developmental and health screenings. It is the funding plan workgroups belief that since developmental screenings are a required component of the Pre-Kindergarten strategy, which is being expanded, and in the home visitation strategy, the need for additional resources in developmental screening are not critical. The recommendation is not to continue the mental health consultation strategy as the number of applicants has dropped dramatically from year one to year two. The recommendation is to end Child Care Health Consultation outside of Quality First, as the feedback from the grantee has been that there is no incentive for centers outside of Quality First to participate. The recommendation is to continue the community outreach and awareness strategy on the same level as before. Vice Chair Mongeau asked for clarification on what the fund balance will be once the plan is drafted. Director Beckett explained to the Council that if the plan were drafted according to the workgroup’s recommendation, then by SFY2015, there would be almost no carry-forward leftover. The expected carry-forward for SFY2013-2015 is built in to the recommendations at this time. Vice Chair inquired if revisiting a strategy for inclusion in the funding plan could occur later. Director Beckett informed the Council they might revisit a strategy each year, if a new or previous strategy is needed once again and could look at using any unexpended funds that may be available. Senior Director Arnold also reminded the Council of the high number of Request for Grant Applications (RFGA) being required at the end of SFY2012 and the possibility of less carry-forward due new programs needing more for start-up costs. Member Holloway made a motion to approve the funding plan recommendations and direct staff to draft a funding plan according to the recommendations. Vice Chair Mongeau seconded the motion. Seven members of the Council approve the motion to approve the funding plan recommendations and direct staff to draft a funding plan. The motion carried. Chair Frei commented on the amount of data presented and thanked those involved in gathering the data.

**Director’s Report and Possible Discussion**

Director Beckett applauded the effort of various people in making the “Big Check” presentation a success, including Catie Sondrol, who was the Council representative, and Margaret Taylor from ASCC who coordinated with a grant recipient to host the presentation. Director Beckett informed the Council the Vice-Mayor of Lake Havasu City and a representative from the Mohave County Supervisor’s office were both in attendance. Member Sondrol gave an overview of the improvements made to the child care center with the monies received from an expansion grant through ASCC. The grant allowed the center to put up a shade structure, put in a bike track and purchase tricycles and helmets, as well as new playground equipment. The grant also allowed the center to address water damage and mold issues. Member Sondrol suggested anyone who has a chance stop by ASCC and see the before and after book of what First Things First funds have helped accomplish.

**Next Meeting**

The next meeting is at 9:30 a.m. on Thursday, December 1, 2011, at the Fort Mojave Indian Tribe Education Center, 1599 Plantation Road, Mohave Valley, Arizona 86440.

**Adjourn**

Member Saari made a motion to adjourn. Member Sondrol seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously by members present.

There being no further business Chairman Frei adjourned the meeting at 10:57 a.m.

Minutes **NOT** Approved

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

**APPROVED BY:**  
**Riley Frei, Chair**