

MARICOPA COUNTY & CITY OF PHOENIX REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP COUNCILS

Summary

The Regional Boundary Task Force reviewed potential consolidation of the five current regions in Maricopa County (Northeast, Northwest, Central, Southeast and Southwest) and the three current regions in the City of Phoenix (North, Central and South). Specifically, they sought to address the question:

- Do the current eight regions provide for the most effective service delivery and positive impact for children 0-5 in Maricopa County?

Based on data review and community feedback the Regional Boundary Task Force recommends the consolidation of the existing five Maricopa regions (Northeast, Northwest, Central, Southeast and Southwest Maricopa) and the three City of Phoenix regions (North, Central and South Phoenix) into a total of six regions – a reduction from the existing eight regions.

Specific recommendations include:

- **Maintain the current boundaries of the Northwest Maricopa, Southwest Maricopa and Southeast Maricopa regions.**
- **Consolidate the existing Northeast and Central Maricopa regions as well as Cave Creek into a new East Maricopa region.**
- **Consolidate the existing North, Central and South Phoenix regions into two new regions: North Phoenix and South Phoenix.**

Maricopa County Today

Data for the current eight regions in Maricopa County was gathered to ensure guiding principles were adhered to and that community feedback on the potential impact of a recommended boundary change was included. The key question facing regional partnership council members, community partners and ultimately the Task Force was if the current eight regions were providing for the most effective service delivery and positive impact for children 0-5 in Maricopa County. If not, would potential consolidation in Maricopa County better address these needs?

The Task Force was provided demographic information on the make-up of the current regions. Specifically:

- Central Maricopa has 31,001 children age 0 through 4; 5,300 (17%) of whom are living in poverty; and has a current allocation of **\$6,100,534**.
- Northeast Maricopa has 13,997 children age 0 through 4; 954 (7%) of whom are living in poverty; and has a current allocation of **\$2,622,512**.
- Northwest Maricopa has 45,644 children age 0 through 4; 9,903 (22%) of whom are living in poverty; and has a current allocation of **\$10,288,819**.

- Southeast Maricopa has 56,981 children age 0 through 4; 8,399 (15%) of whom live in poverty; and has a current allocation of **\$10,377,397**.
- Southwest Maricopa has 23,733 children age 0 through 4; 3,313 (14%) of whom live in poverty; and has a current allocation of **\$4,206,967**.
- Central Phoenix has 28,502 children age 0-4; 12,210 (43%) of whom are living in poverty; and has a current allocation of **\$10,175,357**.
- North Phoenix has 37,900 children age 0-4; 7,865 (21%) of whom are living in poverty; and has a current allocation of **\$8,320,490**.
- South Phoenix has 43,982 children age 0-4; 17,759 (40%) of whom are living in poverty; and has a current allocation of **\$15,028,067**.

Additional comparative demographic data reviewed by the Task Force included:

East Valley Regions (Northeast Maricopa, Central Maricopa, Southeast Maricopa)

- Southeast Maricopa saw a growth in its population of children birth to 5; Northeast Maricopa had a decrease.
- Families in Northeast Maricopa have a higher median income and a greater proportion of adults with college degrees.
- Northeast Maricopa has a smaller proportion of: single-mother households; Hispanic residents; children living in the household of their grandparents; children living in poverty; and births paid for by AHCCCS or the IHS.
- Tempe (Central Maricopa) and Mesa (Southeast Maricopa) students tend to have lower passing rates on the 3rd grade AIMS reading test than those in other districts across the East Valley.

Phoenix Regions (North Phoenix, Central Phoenix, South Phoenix)

- Both North Phoenix and South Phoenix saw a growth in the young child population, with a decrease in Central Phoenix.
- South Phoenix has a higher proportion of Hispanic residents.
- The rate of poverty is nearly twice as high in Central and South Phoenix as it is in North Phoenix.
- WIC enrollment and free-lunch eligibility are much higher in South Phoenix.
- More adults in the North Phoenix region have college degrees than in the South Phoenix region.
- A greater proportion of births in the South Phoenix region are to teenage mothers compared to the North Phoenix region.

West Valley Regions (Northwest Maricopa, Southwest Maricopa)

- The regions have seen the highest rates of growth in the county in their population of children birth to 5 (300% in Southwest Maricopa since 2000).
- Southwest Maricopa has a greater proportion of Hispanic and African American residents than the Northwest region.

- The rate of childhood poverty is lower in Southwest Maricopa compared to Northwest Maricopa.
- Median family incomes and unemployment rates in both regions vary greatly town to town.
- There are a somewhat higher proportion of AHCCCS and IHS-covered births in Northwest Maricopa.

In addition to demographic data, Task Force members reviewed and discussed the differences and synergies of strategy across the eight regions.

- There are a total of 35 strategies that are implemented between all eight regions. Specifically:
 - 5 (15%) of those strategies are implemented across all eight regions;
 - 4 (11%) are implemented across seven of the eight regions;
 - 2 (6%) are implemented across six of the eight regions;
 - 3 (9%) are implemented across five regions;
 - 2 (6%) are implemented across four regions;
 - 2 (6%) are implemented across three regions;
 - 11 (31%) are implemented across two regions;
- Of the nine strategies funded across at least seven regions (26% of all strategies), the total funds allotted for these is \$58,190,897. This is 47% of the total allocation across all eight regions.
- The five Maricopa regions (Northeast Maricopa, Northwest Maricopa, Central Maricopa, Southeast Maricopa, Southwest Maricopa) issued 11 Requests for Grant Applications, with five being multi-regional.
- The three Phoenix regions (North Phoenix, Central Phoenix, South Phoenix) issued 20 Requests for Grant Applications with two issued as multi-regional.
- Of the nine strategies funded across at least seven regions, six are statewide and multi-regional strategies and thus have the same grant partner.

Community Feedback

To ensure the Task Force understood the potential impact of any regional boundary changes in Maricopa County, regional council members were surveyed and community partners were invited to provide feedback on the efficacy of the current regional boundaries.

Regional council members were asked to respond to an online survey soliciting feedback to close-ended questions as well as to provide explanatory comments and suggestions regarding potential consolidation scenarios.

The survey was sent to 79 individual regional council members across all eight regions, with 37 individuals responding – a 47% return rate. Specific feedback included:

- **81%** agreed or strongly agreed that having eight Maricopa County regions advances the early childhood system.
- **67%** agreed or strongly agreed that intentional collaboration and coordination is occurring across the regions.

- **54%** agreed or strongly agreed having eight regions eliminates duplication.
- **77%** agreed or strongly agreed that having eight regions promotes creativity and resource maximization.
- **66%** agreed or strongly agreed that having eight regions effectively utilizes public resources.
- **72%** agreed or strongly agreed that having eight regions promotes cross-regional collaboration.
- **57%** agreed or strongly agreed that having multiple regions makes communication and participation difficult.
- **66%** disagreed or strongly disagreed that having eight regions limits service availability.
- **55%** agreed or strongly agreed that having eight regions creates barriers to the RFGA process.
- **58%** agreed that the current regions align with where providers typically provide services.

In addition to the survey, community partners were invited to one of two focus groups to discuss the current regional relationships, the potential issues for improvement and successes. They were also asked to provide feedback regarding modified regional boundaries. Twenty-nine individuals participated and provided the following information:

Current Regional Boundary Positives

- The current regions provide for responsiveness to local needs and “grassroots” work is easier.
- It is easier to build relationships with council members, providers and families.
- Having multiple regions allows smaller agencies to work as providers.

Current Regional Boundary Challenges

- The focus seems to be on eliminating barriers for organizations, it should be barrier elimination for families.
- Current boundaries do not account for school districts.
- When families move, they cannot continue to work with trusted providers.
- Funding for particular programs is impacted because designated service areas don’t align with regional boundaries.
- Current boundaries create geographical challenges and encompass needs that are too diverse.
- Multiple grant processes are burdensome, especially for smaller organizations.
- Consolidated boundaries could impact the ability to serve people locally; impact smaller communities; and, force families to receive services in areas they are not familiar or comfortable with.

Feedback on the Extent and Success of Collaboration across Eight Regions

- FTF doesn’t promote collaboration, and it is the largest challenge. When it occurs, it is because of established relationships or it is service-specific within a region.
- Councils do not formally collaborate and modified boundaries will not solve the issue.
- There is no strategic way for grantees to be informed about what is occurring across regions.
- A more defined framework for collaboration is needed. This could include meetings or regional “one-pagers.”

Criteria to Consider When Examining Potential Consolidation

- Maintain client focus.
- Align with school district or possibly ZIP code boundaries.
- Use realignment experiences of the Department of Economic Security and Behavioral Health Services as a reference.
- Provide flexibility for service provision to contiguous communities.
- Create a “pooled” fund for collaborative efforts.
- Allow families that move a transitional “grace” period for service provision.
- Regardless of final boundary decisions, the system needs more flexibility, which could address current concerns.

Task Force Discussion

Using all of this information as the foundation, the Task Force discussed scenarios as well as potential impacts of recommended boundary changes.

The Task Force discussed the diversity of services across the eight regions. It was noted this could be perceived as either a positive or a challenge. First Things First staff advised that this is most often a challenge when looking at the mobility of families and the loss of services that can occur when families move among regions. First Things First staff provided information on the statutory restrictions in place regarding provision of services in one region using dollars from another region. The discussion also noted that the diversity of services could potentially be driven by the diversity of allocation amounts.

Furthermore, the Task Force considered how the proposed regional boundaries impact or cross over school district boundaries. It is important to note when reviewing the proposed regional boundary maps that although it may appear that a school district boundary may cross two or more proposed FTF regional boundaries, the Task Force carefully reviewed the actual locations of school sites, i.e. the physical location of elementary schools, as it relates to the proposed FTF regional boundary.

- For the proposed North Phoenix region, the actual school sites within the Alhambra, Deer Valley, Madison, Osborn, Paradise Valley, and Washington School Districts fall within the proposed regional boundary area. For the Creighton School District, one site (the Biltmore Preparatory Academy formerly named the Squaw Peak Preparatory Academy) falls within this proposed region.
- For the proposed South Phoenix region, the actual school sites within the Balsz, Cartwright, Fowler, Issac, Laveen, Murphy, Pendergast, Phoenix, Riverside, Roosevelt, and Wilson School Districts fall within the proposed regional boundary area. Other than the one site (the Biltmore Preparatory Academy formerly named the Squaw Peak Preparatory Academy), all other sites within the Creighton School District fall within this proposed region.
- For the proposed East Maricopa region, the actual school sites within the Cave Creek, Chandler, Fountain Hills, Kyrene, Scottsdale, and Tempe School Districts fall within the proposed regional boundary area.

One clear theme identified by the Task Force as a result of the survey and focus group feedback was a perception that there is limited collaboration occurring across the Maricopa County regions. Task Force members noted by nature, having eight regions adds complexity to any attempt at collaboration. Simply providing guidance from the Statewide Board that cooperation is expected is not enough due to the complexity of strategies, the large amount of funding and the variance of need.

The Task Force also discussed the value of potentially utilizing advisory councils to assist the regional partnership councils if current regions were consolidated and became geographically larger. With a structure like this, the decision-making authority would still rest with the regional partnership council, but decisions could be better informed by individual communities within the region.

The potential benefit of a larger region was also discussed in light of the fact that some councils have members with conflicts of interest that lead to those councils' inability to meet quorum, or can lead to a very small number of members making funding decisions.