

PIMA COUNTY REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP COUNCILS

Summary

The Regional Boundary Task Force reviewed potential consolidation of the three current regions (North, Central and South) in Pima County. Specifically, they sought to address the question:

- Do three regions in Pima County present the most effective service delivery and positive impact for children 0-5 in Pima County?

Based on data review and community feedback the Regional Boundary Task Force recommends consolidating the existing three regions (North, Central and South Pima) into two regions. The existing North and Central Pima regions would become a single North Pima region.

The South Pima region would maintain its current boundaries with a slight modification. The South Pima modification would include the movement of four ZIP codes. ZIP codes 85757 and 85746, in the current Central Pima region, would move to the new South Pima region. ZIP codes 85748 and 85730, in the current South Pima region, would move into the newly proposed North Pima region.

Pima County Today

Data for the current three regions in Pima 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 three regions were providing for the most effective service delivery and positive impact for children 0-5 in Pima County. If not, would potential consolidation in Pima County better address these needs?

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

- Central Pima has 29,645 children age 0 through 4; 10,174 (34%) of whom are living in poverty; and has a current allocation of **\$9,147,281**.
- North Pima has 12,287 children age 0 through 4; 1,770 (14%) of whom are living in poverty; and has a current allocation of **\$2,886,735**.
- South Pima has 19,252 children age 0 through 4; 3,805 (20%) of whom are living in poverty; and has a current allocation of **\$5,149,138**.

Additional comparative demographic data reviewed by the Task Force included:

- South Pima has seen greater growth in the number of young children from 2000 to 2010 than North Pima or Central Pima.
- The young children in the Central Pima region are somewhat more likely to live in a household headed by a single woman.

- The proportion of Hispanic residents is larger in Central Pima than in South Pima. North Pima has the smallest proportion of Hispanic residents.
- North Pima has higher median family incomes and a lower poverty rate for young children.
- SNAP and WIC enrollments are highest in Central Pima and lowest (roughly half the rate) in North Pima.
- On the third-grade AIMS reading test, the children in North Pima have higher passing rates than other children in the county.
- Mothers giving birth in North Pima are less likely to be unmarried and are less likely to have an AHCCCS or IHS-covered birth.

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

- Central Pima implements 24 different program strategies; North Pima implements 18 program strategies; South Pima has 20 program strategies.
- 45% (10) of those strategies are implemented in all three regions with an investment of more than \$18 million; 32% (7) of strategies cross two regions with a total investment of nearly \$2.3 million; and five strategies are implemented in only one of the regions for a total investment of approximately \$722,000.
- A total of 13 Requests for Grant Applications (RFGAs) were released; of these, three were multi-regional (two or more regions collaborated).
- There is also quite a bit of synergy around service providers across the three regions. For the ten strategies funded across the entire county, six are statewide strategies and therefore have the same service providers.
- All regions are required to articulate specific key priorities. In Pima, there were a total of seven priorities identified between the three regions, four of which were noted in all three.

Community Feedback

To ensure the Task Force understood the potential impact of any regional boundary changes in Pima County, regional partnership 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 28 individual regional council members across all three regions, with 16 individuals responding – a 57% return rate. Specific feedback included:

- **81%** agreed or strongly agreed that having three Pima County regions advances the early childhood system.
- **94%** agreed or strongly agreed that intentional collaboration and coordination is occurring across the regions.

- **57%** agreed that having three regions eliminated duplication.
- **69%** agreed or strongly agreed that having three regions promoted creativity and resource maximization.
- **73%** agreed or strongly agreed that having three regions effectively utilizes public resources.
- **88%** agreed or strongly agreed that having three regions promotes cross-regional collaboration.
- **62%** disagreed or strongly disagreed that having multiple regions makes communication and participation difficult.
- **73%** disagreed or strongly disagreed that having three regions limits service availability.
- **60%** disagreed or strongly disagreed that having three regions creates barriers to the RFGA process.
- **60%** agreed that the current regions align with where providers typically provide services.

In addition to the survey, community partners were invited to a focus group to discuss the current regional relationships, the potential issues for improvement and successes. They were also asked to provide feedback regarding modified regional boundaries. Seven individuals participated and provided the following information:

Current Regional Boundary Positives

- Regional councils have stakeholders “sitting at the table”, allowing them to focus attention on areas of the county that might not otherwise be served.
- Having smaller regions allows for meeting more specific needs and grantees are able to engage rural communities.
- Smaller regions allow grantees with less capacity to serve as providers.
- ZIP codes that cross county boundaries allow for serving families at those boundaries.
- Boundaries that cross school districts allow for educating districts about possible services.
- Well-functioning, cross-regional collaboration has allowed grantees to serve families across urban boundaries.

Current Regional Boundary Challenges

- Urban Tucson is served by all three regions causing family and provider confusion; potentially misleading the public about what services are provided; and can especially become a problem when families move.
- North and South Pima serve urban and rural areas – each with their own unique sets of issues. This can lead to North and South Pima focusing more on rural communities and creates challenges for grantee budgeting.
- The extreme western portion of South Pima is a challenge to serve.
- ZIP codes that cross county boundaries can make it difficult for providers whose specific service area is the county.
- North Pima funding is such that the region is limited in what they can provide.
- The boundaries do not consider school districts.
- There is an administrative burden when responding to multiple RFGAs.

Criteria to Consider When Examining Potential Consolidation

- Rural areas must have a voice.

Task Force Discussion

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

Task Force members noted that a number of the data elements provided caught their attention. One member stated the income differences between regions was notable and that the Task Force needs to be mindful that there are a handful of ZIP codes in the current North Pima region that have high median income and since there are also ZIP codes in that same region with low income, the high income figures can end up skewing the data. First Things First clarified that in North Pima there are a smaller number of children in poverty, but those children tend to reside in rural communities.

First Things First then highlighted that with the exception of the area of health, there is quite a large amount of synergy across Pima County's three regions. Staff also shared that the three current regions have been working collaboratively, including with issuing RFGAs. For example, all three use the same vendor for their Needs and Assets report to allow data to be combined and compared across the county.

Task Force members also discussed the mix of urban and rural communities in each region and the rationale for that decision. Examples of leveraging urban funds to benefit rural communities were mentioned and the success of a robust county-wide home visiting program was also cited.

In addition, 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 Pima region, the actual school sites within the Amphitheater, Catalina Foothills, Flowing Wells, Marana, Tanque Verde and Tucson School Districts fall within the proposed regional boundary area.
- For the South Pima region, the actual school sites within the Ajo, Altar Valley, Continental, San Fernando, Sahuarita, Sunnyside and Vail School Districts fall within the proposed regional boundary area.
- Also of note, although Redington and Empire are identified as School District Boundaries, no actual school sites are located within those districts and school children are transported to other sites in neighboring school districts.

A member who also serves on a Pima regional council advised the Task Force that the North region's limited funding has positively driven their collaboration with other regions. She further shared that collaboration in Pima County has been very intentional and thoughtful. She finally advised Task Force members to be mindful of ensuring recommendations do not lead to the loss of the "rural voice" in regions.

First Things First staff confirmed it is their belief the Statewide Board would be receptive to recommendations around consolidation in Pima County, and advised based on funding allocations and service delivery, it could potentially be difficult to include South Pima in any consolidated region; however, there could be potential benefit for the North Pima region. Further, it was confirmed that from the First Things First staff perspective, there were not any large service gaps currently in Pima due to strategy alignment.