

PEEPS

Pima Early Education Program Scholarships

FY2021/2022 Annual Report



PIMA COUNTY
COMMUNITY & WORKFORCE
DEVELOPMENT





"Thank you for the opportunity that this scholarship has provided me to be able to work and not have to stress about having to pay for child care. I am nearing the end of being able to use the scholarship as my son will be going to kindergarten next year. I have been appreciative of the fact it was here and available while it was needed. The scholarship is a great help and benefit for all families in our program."

— Parent and child-care educator

What a Year!

This first year of the **Pima Early Education Program (PEEP)** has been one of learning and adapting in what seemed to be an ever-changing environment. Despite the pandemic, teacher and other staffing shortages, and changes in funding, **PEEPs served 856 children at over 100 locations** across Pima County! These included free new preschool classes operated by school districts, extended day Head Start classes, and individual scholarships used at a variety of preschools participating in “Quality First”. Quality First is a program operated by the State’s First Things First agency, and is one of two evidence-based early childhood education programs used to implement PEEP. The other is the Federal Head Start program operated in our region by Child Parent Centers, Inc. With evidence-based programming, clear metrics, and multi-year funding partnerships, we strive to achieve the short-term and lasting benefits to children, families and communities proven to result from similar programs across the nation.

PEEPs Guiding Principles

1. Increase high-quality preschool capacity while addressing existing need for financial aid.
2. Distribute scholarships efficiently and effectively through existing programs and partners.
3. Do not supplant existing public assistance for preschool and utilize local funding as a “last dollar in” approach.
4. Coordinate with existing agencies that provide public assistance for high-quality preschool to establish baseline need and simple system-level benchmarks, monitor progress and refine collaborative efforts to improve the system as a whole.
5. Establish scholarship rates that cover the full cost of providing high-quality preschool per child, based on accepted cost of quality and local market rate studies, considering wages necessary to attract quality teachers, and accounting for current DES subsidy rates and school district in-kind contributions, and pandemic-related increased costs.
6. Ensure participating preschool providers are geographically dispersed, with priority given to preschools serving lower income/higher need neighborhoods, tribal and rural areas.
7. Connect eligible families to high-quality preschools and financial assistance, including



parents in local workforce development programs.

8. Collaborate with partners to connect participating families with other community resources to accelerate family and community wide benefits.
9. Maximize multi-year partner contributions to make the program more sustainable.
10. Advocate with partners for a long-term state-wide solution.
11. Remain flexible as providers and families recover and rebuild from the pandemic.
12. Review, reevaluate, revise, and report regularly with input from stakeholders.

Kids & Preschools!

The two primary goals of the **Pima Early Education Program** are to:

- a) Increase the number of 3-5 year old children from low-income families attending high quality preschools in Pima County, and
- b) Increase the number of high quality preschools in Pima County.

This is achieved by entering into local funding partnerships, allocating a portion of the County’s Federal pandemic recovery funds, contracting with those already in the business of providing high quality preschool and scholarships, and coordinating at a statewide level.

Pima County measures progress at both the program level (PEEPs) and the system-level (combined with others that fund preschool for families in need). At the program level, PEEPs served 856 children from low-income families, which was 75 percent of the contracted target for year 1.

PEEPs Contracts by Type	Total # of Students Served	Year 1 Contracted Max Students Served	% of Contracted Max Served Total
Pima County Funded Quality First Scholarships	526	600	88%
Pima County Funded School District Expansion Classes	165	340	49%
Pima County Funded Head Start Extended Day Classes	165	205	80%
Totals	856	1145	75%

School District	# of PEEPs Classes	# of Students Served
Amphitheater Unified School District	3	38
Flowing Wells Unified School District	1	20
Marana Unified School District	1	18
Sahuarita Unified School District	1	20
Sunnyside Unified School District	2	35
Tucson Unified School District	3	34
Totals	11	165

At the system level, PEEPs and other programs assisted 4,690 children from families with incomes up to 200 percent of the Federal Poverty level in attending high quality preschool in Pima County. While the number has risen over the past year, the gap between those served and those who need access to high quality preschool is still substantial.

Filling the Gap

Systems-level approach to filling the high-quality preschool gap

Pima Early Education Program Scholarships

Provides funding for low-income families (at or below 200% FPL).
County Program.

First Things First Quality First Scholarships

Provides funding for low-income families (at or below 200% FPL).
State Program.

Head Start

Provides funding for very low-income families (at or below 100% FPL), does not include Tribal Head Start.
Federal Program.

Arizona Department of Economic Security Child-Care Subsidies

Provides funding for low-income working families (at or below 165% FPL).
State Program.

*Funding sources currently supporting children in high-quality preschool in Pima County.

4,690*

Estimated number of eligible 3, 4, & 5 year olds enrolled in high-quality preschools, funded at least in part by a variety of federal, state and local dollars

As of July 31, 2022

5,324

Number unserved to date

As of July 31, 2022

10,014

Estimated number of eligible children who need access to high-quality preschool

(Using 60% uptake rate of the total number unserved as of June 2021 baseline date.)



Increasing the number of eligible children attending high quality preschool requires more high quality preschools, which is the second goal of PEEPs. Over the last year, **an additional 28 preschools and childcare providers joined the Quality First program at a high quality rating** of 3 stars or above. This is due in large part to our contracts with school districts that added new high quality preschool classes, the Arizona Department of Economic Security's partnership with First Things First to fund the cost of adding quality preschools and childcare providers to the Quality First Program (including assessments and ratings), and the United Way of Tucson and Southern Arizona's Accelerate Quality program that prepared preschools and childcare providers for the Quality First assessments. **An additional 10 nationally accredited programs, not in Quality First, also began contracting with DES in this past year.**

Arizona Department of Economic Security (DES) recognized high-quality providers	June 2021 Baseline #s	FY2021/22 Total # HQ Providers
Quality First 3-5 star preschools (some also Nationally Accredited)	142	170
Head Start centers and family child care homes	50	50
Nationally Accredited preschools (Not in QF) contracted with DES	7	17
Totals	199	237



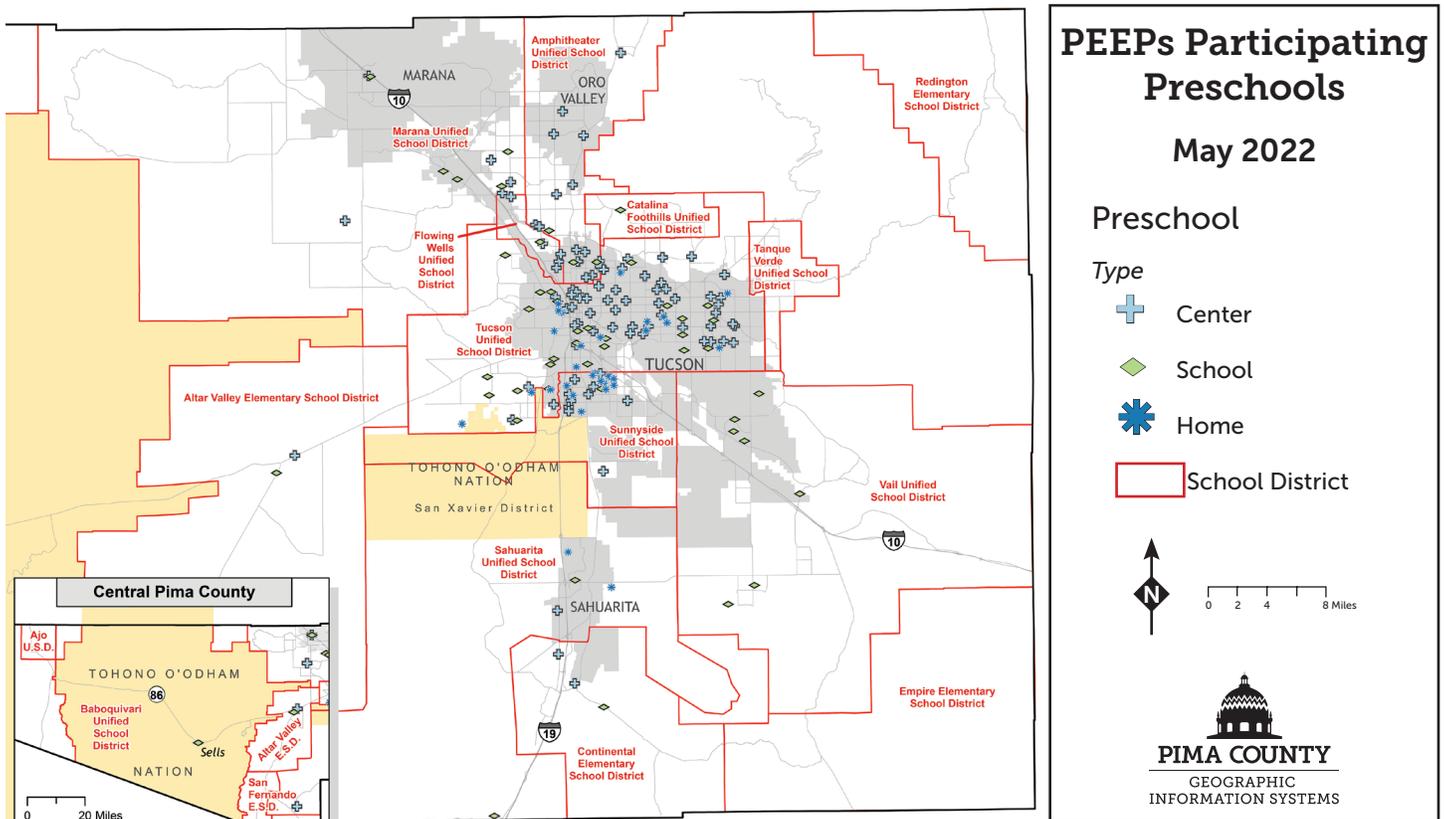
“He’s never actually been around kids his age, especially with the pandemic. He missed out for a whole year on a lot of things. I’m happy that he’s finally in the classroom and he’s finally getting a feel of all that.”

— Janet Cervantes, mother of 4-yr old son, Juan Enrique, who is enrolled in Head Start’s extended-day program
Arizona Daily Star, Updated July 28, 2022

Overall, 176 preschools had the potential of participating in the PEEPs program in Year 1 via contracts with school districts, First Things First for scholarships and Child Parent Centers for extended day Head Start. However, due to the pandemic and teacher/staffing shortages, only 116 of those preschools actually served PEEPs children. TUSD was unable to open five contracted classes due to the inability to hire teachers for those classes, and Baboquivari Unified

School District on the Tohono O’odham Nation was virtual for most of the year and did not open their class. In addition, many preschools allocated scholarships were unable to use them because of staffing shortages that limited their capacity to re-open classes, they were already at capacity when the scholarships were allocated, or they did not have families that met the income eligibility requirements. We anticipate full usage this next year based on a variety of changes in the program, including increased reimbursement rates, increased income eligibility, as well as less class closures due to COVID-19.

In Year 1, 57 percent of PEEPs participating preschools were private childcare centers, 31 percent were operated by public school districts, and 12 percent were private family home-based childcare providers.



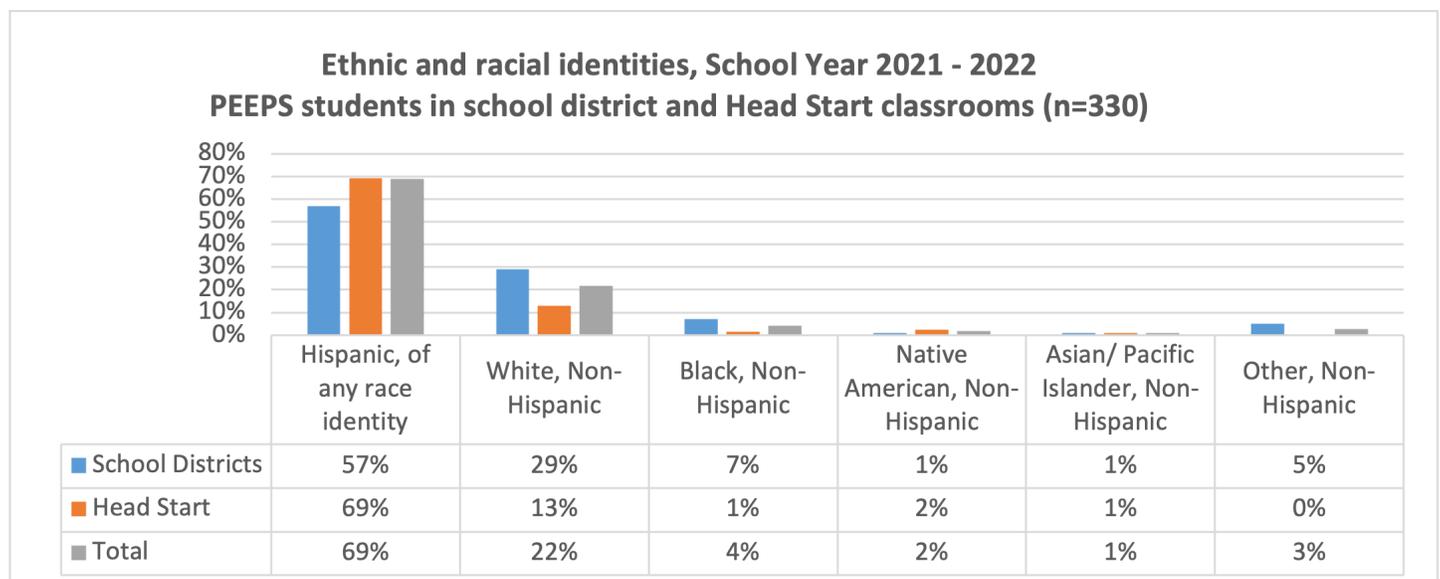
The State of Arizona recognizes high quality preschools as those participating in the State’s Quality First Program with a rating of 3-5 stars, those participating in the Federal Head Start program, and those with certain national accreditations. All of the preschools participating in the PEEPs program, with the exception of one are participating in the State’s Quality First program, have applied to participate in the State’s Quality First program and are in the process of receiving an assessment and rating, or are participating in the Federal Head Start program. One preschool is Nationally Accredited, but not in Quality First or Head Start.

Of the Quality First PEEPs participating preschools, the average Quality Rating is 3 stars, and 80 percent have a three star rating or above.

PEEPs offered scholarships at a small number of 2-star programs with the goal of increasing the quality of the program in future years.

Jurisdiction	Number of Quality First PEEPs Preschools by Rating				
	2-Star	3-Star	4-Star	5-Star	Total
Town of Marana	1	1	2	0	4
Town of Oro Valley	0	0	3	1	4
Town of Sahuarita	1	1	1	0	3
City of South Tucson	0	3	0	0	3
City of Tucson	22	46	24	16	108
Unincorporated Pima County	6	11	11	3	31

A wealth of research shows those that benefit the most from high quality preschool are children from economically disadvantaged families, children of color and dual language learners. While all PEEPs children had to be from economically disadvantaged families (i.e. low income), data on race, ethnicity and dual language learners was collected for PEEPs school district expansion classes and PEEPs extended day Head Start classes. Quality First does not yet have the capacity to collect and report this data for children with scholarships. Of the 330 PEEPs students surveyed, **21 percent were dual language learners, and 78 percent were children of color.**





“This program has allowed me to focus more on my education knowing that my son is in a program that is helping him learn.”

**— Parent, PEEPs class
Kellond Elementary School**



“Without the scholarship, we would not be able to send our son to the early learning center. This scholarship and the program has changed our lives. Our son has a hard time with speech, and the school has helped him become more verbal. It has changed his life.”

— Parent, September 2021





"The PEEPs program has opened up my schedule to start working. My son has become more social, has friends and I have noticed his speech has improved."

— Parent, 2022



"The Pima Early Education Program has given me the opportunity to have free time, which gives me time to get my GED studies in. I love how loving the teachers are and my daughter rushes me in the morning so she can come to school."

— Parent, PEEPs class
Robins Elementary, Tucson Unified School District

Preschool Costs How Much?!

The cost of preschool can be surprising for those without children in preschool. The Board of Supervisor’s initial commitment of \$10 million in General Funds for this first year was a bold investment in what is a costly endeavor in the short term, with substantial return on investment for County and taxpayers in the long term. At the time of that initial Board action, it was unforeseen that Pima County would receive American Rescue Plan Act funding for pandemic recovery spending, and that early childhood education would specifically be called out in the Treasury guidance as a suitable use of those funds. Subsequently, the Board approved a plan for the **ARPA funding that allocates \$30.2 million over three years for PEEPs**, such that the original General Fund commitment was no longer needed. **Other funds for PEEPs have been generously provided by the City of Tucson, and towns of Marana and Oro Valley.** Program revenues to date total \$32.6 million. This does not include the required school district in-kind contribution for classroom space, utility costs, custodian services, security, and administrative overhead, valued at approximately \$1,750 per child. Private funders are encouraged to donate to the United Way’s Accelerate Quality program, which complements PEEPs by expanding preschool capacity and improving quality.

FY22/Year 1 PEEPs Budgeted and Actual Expenses

IGAs & Contracts	Budgeted Expenses	Actual Expenses
Firts Things First Quality First Scholarships*	\$3,811,600	\$1,712,888
Child-Parent Centers, Inc. Head Start Extended Day	\$1,149,845	\$904,620
Seven School District IGAs New Preschool Classes	\$2,244,000	\$1,155,634
Totals	\$7,205,445	\$3,773,142

*Pending final, reconciled, expense reporting

“We have not received scholarships in our program since I have been here and I always feel so bad when I have to tell families that we do not have that extra financial assistance available, but now with the new PEEPs scholarships I will be able to help those families that need it most. I am so excited to get the chance to have scholarships in my school.”

— Director, September 2021



PEEPs Contracts and Max Expenses Years 1-3

Contractor (SD=School District)	Fund Source	Term End Date	# of Classes Year 1	Max Amount Year 1	# of Classes Year 2	Max Amount Year 2	# of Classes Year 3	Max Amount Year 3	Total Max Amount Years 1-3
Sahuarita SD	ARPA	May-24	1	\$132,000	1	\$172,828	1	\$172,828	\$477,656
Marana SD	Town	May-23	1	\$118,800	1	\$155,545	1	\$155,545	\$429,890
Marana SD	ARPA	May-24	N/A	\$0	1	\$172,828	1	\$172,828	\$345,656
Flowing Wells SD	ARPA	May-24	1	\$132,000	3	\$518,484	3	\$518,484	\$1,168,968
Tucson SD	City	May-24	4	\$368,280	8	\$1,382,624	8	\$1,382,624	\$3,133,528
Sunnyside SD	City	May-24	2	\$237,600	2	\$345,656	2	\$345,656	\$928,912
Sunnyside SD	ARPA	May-24	N/A	\$0	2	\$345,656	2	\$345,656	\$691,312
Amphitheater SD	City	May-22	2	\$158,400	0	\$0	0	\$0	\$158,400
Amphitheater SD	ARPA	May-24	1	\$92,400	10	\$1,728,280	10	\$1,728,280	\$3,548,960
Baboquivari SD*	ARPA	May-24	0	\$0	1	\$172,828	1	\$172,828	\$345,656
CPC Head Start	ARPA	Jun-22	11	\$1,149,845	N/A	\$0	N/A	N/A	\$1,149,845
CPC Head Start	ARPA	Jun-23	N/A	N/A	11	\$877,595	N/A	N/A	\$877,595
CPC Pima College	ARPA	Jun-24	0	N/A	1	\$483,616	1	\$393,616	\$877,232
FTF Scholarships	ARPA	Jun-22	N/A	\$3,811,600	N/A	\$0	N/A	\$0	\$3,811,600
FTF Scholarships	ARPA	Sep-24	N/A	\$0	N/A	\$6,813,100	N/A	\$6,813,100	\$13,626,200
Amphi Facilities	Town	Jun-24	N/A	N/A	N/A	\$75,000	N/A	\$25,000	\$100,000
Other Facilities*	ARPA	Jun-24	N/A	N/A	N/A	\$425,000	N/A	\$475,000	\$900,000
Program Design*	ARPA	Aug-23	N/A	N/A	N/A	\$75,000	N/A	\$20,000	\$95,000
Total			23	\$6,200,925	41	\$13,744,040	29	\$12,721,445	\$32,666,410

*Pending



Funding sustainability after ARPA funding ends is a frequent question. Thanks to the Board's recent action increasing the Pima County Library District tax rate for this current fiscal year, funds will begin to accrue for the purposes of sustaining PEEP's in Year 4 and beyond. Additional tax rate increases may be necessary, or alternative funding identified. Funding for childcare and preschool statewide and nationally after ARPA is also a concern. Consistent with the PEEP's guiding principles, Pima County's legislative agenda includes lobbying for long term statewide and federal funding to avert this fiscal cliff.



Lessons Learned

Teachers, Families & Preschools are All in Need of Assistance

In this first year, a lack of teachers and other staff was the most significant constraint to opening new PEEPs preschool classes and re-opening existing classes to enable families with PEEPs scholarships to attend existing preschools. While this was in part due to the pandemic, the early childhood education profession has long been a low-wage industry. Recognizing the critical need to retain and attract quality teachers, PEEPs school district contracts for years 2 and 3 include increased reimbursement rates, aligned with similar increases for statewide childcare subsidy and scholarship programs. These rates reflect the actual cost of providing quality education and care as informed by a recent statewide study, and intended to address the primary goal of improving teacher compensation.

Additionally, income eligibility has increased for PEEP scholarships, as well as the statewide First Things First Quality First scholarship program, to 300 percent of the Federal Poverty Level. This means, for example, that **a family of four with an annual household income of up to \$83,250 is eligible for these scholarships.** TUSD will also be piloting a sliding scale assistance program for their PEEPs classes with income eligibility up to 300 percent. These changes recognize the fact that preschool costs are a significant burden to working families, too.

Many of the school district PEEPs expansion classes are located in schools not designed for younger children. This coming year the Town of Oro Valley's funding contribution to PEEPs will improve

"My child has been able to socialize with other children. He has also been talking about how much they enjoy school...I have been able to pay bills that I normally would have struggled to pay because of the PEEPs scholarship I receive for my son."

— Parent, September 2021

"I have struggled my whole life, for instance, I worked three jobs and I am a full time student. It was such a struggle paying for child care. I even found myself giving up sometimes. Until I was able to get on the PEEPs program...through Little Ranch Preschool. This program lifted so much stress off my shoulders..."

— Parent, September 2021



playgrounds, as well as modify a classroom, to support PEEPs expansion classes at Amphitheater public schools located in Oro Valley. Other school districts with similar needs will be working with the County to access funding to similarly support and improve the quality of their PEEPs expansion classes.

"With the help of the PEEPs program I am able to provide so much more for myself and my family. I am grateful for how easy it was to apply."

— Parent, 2021





"Students have better outcomes when they know their children are on campus or on-site in high-quality learning environments. The impact of these experiences goes well beyond the preschool years. Graduation rates are higher for children who have been in high-quality programs, incarceration rates are lower, there's more employment opportunities and higher educational attainment."

- Eleanor Droegemeier, board chair of Child-Parent Centers

Summary

At a ribbon cutting for the new PEEPs class at Pima Community College's Desert Vista Campus, Tony Penn, the United Way of Tucson and Southern Arizona's President and CEO stated that **early childhood education is economic development, our regions greatest asset is our people, and our children are our future.** The data is clear. Investment in high quality early childhood education results in a higher return on investment than other forms of government social spending. Children, parents, schools, employers, and taxpayers benefit. **Our community will be healthier, wealthier and more equitable as a result of the Pima Early Education Program.**

PEEP
Pima Early Education Program
SCHOLARSHIPS FOR HIGH QUALITY EARLY EDUCATION IN PIMA COUNTY

PIMA COUNTY
TUCSON UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

In year one Tucson Unified School District created a video spotlighting the impact that the Pima Early Education Program has had within their community. We invite you to share in this beautiful representation of how important this program is to the children and families within our communities:



www.youtube.com/watch?v=QZCzfJ0tPVw



“The parent feedback has been extremely positive. I have been working closely with families to help them develop routines and schedules at home along with academic play learning they can bring home. In class we have been working through our emotions and social skills to engage in play based learning in each lesson. Thank you for this opportunity to enhance our early childhood community. I take this as a huge responsibility and am enjoying every minute of it”.

– Ms. Jessica, Teacher, Emily Meschter Early Learning Center, Flowing Wells Unified School District, September 2021

“This program has benefitted my family in a positive way, it has helped my child overcome her fear of being around other people and it has helped her social skills. My child is now able to speak the English language better. She is also more outgoing with children her age, and is speaking up a lot more.”

- Parent, Ocotillo Early Learning Center PEEPs class



PEEPs Multi-Departmental Oversight Team

Dustin Williams, Superintendent of Schools
Francisco Garcia, Deputy County Administrator
Daniel Sullivan, Community and Workforce Development Director
Amber Mathewson, Library Director
Theresa Cullen, Health Department Director
Heath Vescovi-Chiordi, Economic Development Director
Jenifer Darland, Community and Workforce Development Deputy Director
Deborah Bryson, Deputy Superintendent of Schools
Patrick Cavanaugh, Economic Development Deputy Director
Nicole Fyffe, County Administrator's Office Senior Advisor

Program Staff

Nicole Scott, Program Manager
Irene Moreno, Program Coordinator



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Sharon Bronson, *Chair*, District 3
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Rex Scott, District 1
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Steve Christy, District 4

Pima County Administrator

Jan Leshner

