



Attached is Fiscal Year 2024-25 Q3 Report for your convenience (Attachment 2). The Q4 and Annual Report for MEC will be completed at the end of July 2025 and subsequently transmitted to the Board of Supervisors.

The Honorable Chair and Members, Pima County Board of Supervisors

Re: **Additional Information for Board of Supervisors July 15, 2025, Meeting – Addendum Item
#5 Regarding the Metropolitan Education Commission (MEC) Fiscal Year 2025-2026
Contract**

July 15, 2025

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If you have any questions, Pima County Economic Development staff and MEC staff are prepared to address them.

JKL/anc

Attachments

c: Carmine DeBonis, Jr., Deputy County Administrator
Steve Holmes, Deputy County Administrator
Heath Vescovi-Chiordi, Director, Economic Development Department

ATTACHMENT 1

Exhibit A – Scope of Services
(Updated for Fiscal Year 2025-2026)

1. Program Overview

The Metropolitan Education Commission (the “Agency”) delivers a coordinated portfolio of programs that advance academic success and civic engagement across Pima County. By promoting access to high school graduation, postsecondary and workforce readiness, and youth participation in civic life, the Agency ensures that learners are supported along meaningful educational and service pathways. Operating under the direction of its Board of Directors or an appointed Chief Executive Officer, the Agency maintains full compliance with Pima County requirements, applicable state and federal nonprofit regulations, and Arizona Open Meeting Law as a shared public body of Pima County and the City of Tucson.

2. Program Purpose:

The Agency exists to empower a more educated and engaged community by democratizing access to learning, service, and opportunity for all. Its regional programs increase high school completion, expand access to college and career pathways, and cultivate youth leadership in public life. These efforts strengthen the economic vitality and civic health of Pima County by preparing young people to succeed in education, employment, and community service. The Agency’s work is guided by a governance model rooted in transparency, equity, and measurable impact.

3. Required Activities of the Agency:

3.1. Academic Empowerment Activities:

3.1.1. College and Career Access Center:

- 3.1.1.1. Facilitate the Peer Coach Program, employing trained high school seniors to assist peers with college and career readiness.
- 3.1.1.2. Deliver in-person advising at schools, libraries, and accessible community venues.
- 3.1.1.3. Host workshops on postsecondary exploration, applications, FAFSA completion, and scholarships.
- 3.1.1.4. Maintain and promote a publicly accessible scholarship directory.

- 3.1.1.5. Extend FAFSA-related data insights and best practices to schools, districts, and the public.

3.1.2. College and Career Night:

- 3.1.2.1. Co-host a consolidated, regional college and career event with Tucson Unified School District and other partners.
- 3.1.2.2. Invite diverse colleges, training programs, and employers to connect with students, families, and educators.
- 3.1.2.3. Provide on-site support for admissions, financial aid, and career guidance.

3.1.3. Peer Coach Program:

- 3.1.3.1. Recruit, train, and support Peer Coaches in collaboration with the Arizona Board of Regents.
- 3.1.3.2. Ensure coaches complete formal training and certification to support peers.
- 3.1.3.3. Serve as a liaison between students, schools, and postsecondary institutions.

3.2. Civic Empowerment Activities:

3.2.1. Teen Town Hall:

- 3.2.1.1. Engages students in civic discussions on Constitution Day.
- 3.2.1.2. Facilitates dialogue between students and elected officials, enhancing understanding of governmental processes.
- 3.2.1.3. Engage students on timely issues and integrate their perspectives into regional advocacy.
- 3.2.1.4. Distribute civic education materials, including state and federal constitutions.

3.2.2. Tucson Teen Congress:

- 3.2.2.1. Offers a series of workshops and mentorship opportunities focused on public service and civic leadership.
- 3.2.2.2. Participants conduct community projects and advocacy initiatives, translating insights from the Teen Town Hall into actionable community engagement.

3.2.3. Legislative Day:

- 3.2.3.1. Coordinate an occasion in which students may learn from and engage with officials and staff at the Arizona State Capitol.

- 3.2.3.2. Afford coverage of travel and consumables to students and chaperones in attendance.

3.3. Recognition and Incentive Programs:

3.3.1. 20 Under 20 Outstanding Teen Citizens

- 3.3.1.1. Recognize outstanding citizenship among teens and youth across Pima County.
- 3.3.1.2. Eligibility includes a measure of personal resilience and service to the community.

3.3.2. Evening to Empower Ed:

- 3.3.2.1. Recognizes outstanding contributions in education across Pima County, additionally serving as a culmination of service by Peer Coaches.
- 3.3.2.2. Categories include Youth of the Year, Educator of the Year, Counselor of the Year, and College Catalysts, among others.

3.4. Organizational Leadership:

3.4.1. Operating Hours

- 3.4.1.1. Maintains operations from Monday through Friday, between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m., available to those it serves within those hours.

3.4.2. Operational Maintenance:

- 3.4.2.1. Operates as a joint entity between Pima County and the City of Tucson, adhering to governance structures and operational standards necessary for maintaining its nonprofit status.
- 3.4.2.2. Regularly coordinates with city and county officials to align educational initiatives with regional development goals.
- 3.4.2.3. Includes management of organizational finances, compliance with regulatory requirements, and oversight of program effectiveness.
- 3.4.2.4. Exercises operational sustainability

3.4.3. Financial Compliance and Sustainability

- 3.4.3.1. Engages with the City of Tucson to secure a commitment for equal financial support, ensuring balanced funding and demonstrating a unified effort to address the educational needs within the region.

- 3.4.3.2. Actively seeks and applies for sponsorships and grants from federal, state, and private sources to supplement its funding. This includes, but is not limited to, applications for educational and community development grants that align with the Agency's mission and objectives.

3.4.4. Marketing and Communications

- 3.4.4.1. Disseminate information to the greater public, in digital and print formats, focusing on the status, and importance of, education, employment, and career opportunities in Pima County.
- 3.4.4.2. Utilize public relations channels to raise the highest levels of interest in, and support for, education in Pima County.
- 3.4.4.3. Develop collaborations with public entities to maximize the visibility of opportunities, programs and services for learners.

- 4. **Target Population:** Agency will serve high school youth, their families, and their advocates throughout Pima County.

5. Key Personnel

5.1. Agency will:

- 5.1.1. Employ suitably trained and skilled professional personnel to perform all services under this agreement.
- 5.1.2. Perform its duties in a humane and respectful manner and in accordance with any applicable professional standards.
- 5.1.3. Have a personnel policy manual, adhere to its provisions and conduct an annual performance appraisal of all personnel. Only personnel who have received satisfactory evaluations will provide services under this agreement.

6. Performance Tools

- 6.1. Design and utilize, as appropriate, the following:
 - Registration Form: Collect service recipient goals and needs.
 - Post-Event Surveys: Assess service quality, engagement, and impact.
 - Quarterly Program Reports: Document service delivery and key performance indicators.
- 6.2. Agency will provide the County with copies of the documents described in paragraph 7.1, upon request.

7. Reports

- 7.1. Agency will complete Quarterly and Annual Reports for this Agreement and submit on or by the following dates:
 - 7.1.1. October 31: Quarter 1 Report (Jul. 1 - Sept. 30, 2025);
 - 7.1.2. January 31: Quarter 2 Report (Oct. 1 - Dec. 31, 2025);
 - 7.1.3. April 30: Quarter 3 Report (January 1 - March 31, 2026);
 - 7.1.4. July 31: Quarter 4 Report (Apr. 1 - June 30, 2025) and Annual Report.
- 7.2. Unless written approval has been granted by the Director of Economic Development or designee, all reports must be submitted in a timely manner.

Budget: The allocation of funds will be distributed across several areas. The exact allocation across these areas is subject to change at the will of the contractor. To inform the execution of this contract the anticipated expenditures are as follows:

Anticipated Expenditures

- 1.1. Administrative Payroll (\$49,788):
 - Personnel - Executive Director (Salary): \$47,388.00
 - Personnel - Executive Director (Benefits): \$2,400.00
- 1.2. Administrative Operations (\$312):
 - Functional - Phone and Virtual Meetings (Fee): \$312.00
- 1.3. Programs and Services (\$71,900):
 - Southern Arizona College and Career Night
 - Venue with Rentals: \$3,000.00
 - School Travel Assistance: \$1,200.00
 - School Scholarship Incentives: \$4,500.00
 - Arizona College Readiness Symposium Transportation: \$1,500.00
 - Peer Coach Program
 - Consumables and Beverage: \$2,000.00
 - Service Awards (\$500 Add-On x 65 Coaches): \$32,500.00
 - School Incentive (\$600 x 24 Host Schools): \$13,200.00
 - Teen Town Hall: \$4,500.00
 - 20 Under 20 Outstanding Citizens: \$4,500.00
 - Evening to Empower Ed: \$5,000.00

TOTAL CONTRACT BILLING: \$122,000.00

Program Goals and Predicted Outcomes:

- **Goal 1:** Expand academic empowerment and postsecondary readiness for high school students across Pima County.
Outcome: At least 3,750 students will receive targeted college and career readiness support. Among them, a minimum of 1,500 will complete postsecondary applications, scholarships, or FAFSA submissions with Peer Coach or staff assistance.
- **Goal 2:** Cultivate youth civic leadership and engagement through year-round opportunities for public service, policy learning, and community advocacy.
Outcome: Tucson Teen Congress members complete at least two community-based projects involving their Peers, will 90% of project participants reporting an increased knowledge of local government and how to engage with it.
- **Goal 3:** Increase access to financial aid and postsecondary resources for students and families through regional coordination and advising.
Outcome: For 2025–2026, the Agency will drive a 25% year-over-year increase in FAFSA submissions in collaboration with local schools and ABOR.
- **Goal 4:** Deliver inclusive community-facing events that connect students and families to postsecondary, workforce, and civic opportunities.
Outcome: A minimum of three signature events will serve a combined audience of at least 3,200 students, family members, educators, and civic leaders.

Public Benefit: The Agency's work fosters long-term economic mobility and civic participation for youth and families in Pima County. By delivering equitable access to educational resources, college and career pathways, and civic engagement opportunities, the Agency helps prepare the next generation of informed, employed, and empowered community members. These efforts directly benefit the region through a more skilled workforce, higher rates of postsecondary attainment, and strengthened democratic participation.

Metrics Available to Measure Performance: Agency will submit quarterly reports which include the number of units served, number of deliverables to unduplicated participants, and the number of unduplicated participants that have met the expected performance.

ATTACHMENT 2



To: Pima County Economic Development

From: Rocque Perez, Executive Director, Metro Education Commission

Date: Mon, June 16, 2025

Re: Quarter Three Report (January 1 – March 31, 2025)

Please be advised of the following updates regarding the Metro Education Commission in Quarter Three Report (January 1 – March 31, 2025) of Fiscal Year 2024/2025:

Executive Summary

In Quarter Three, the Metro Education Commission saw continued growth, accelerated impact, and steps toward the long term sustainability and support of its mission to empower a more educated and engaged community by democratizing access to learning, service, and opportunity for all.

Notable achievements included:

- 23 AmeriCorps Peer Coaches supported over 2,300 students across nine high schools with postsecondary planning, FAFSA assistance, and college readiness workshops. MEC is set to expand the program to 75 Peer Coaches in 2025–2026.
- FAFSA completion rates dropped due to federal policy changes under the Trump Administration, which led to retroactive rejections and application delays. MEC led workshops and direct support to help students and families navigate these unprecedented challenges.
- Youth Civic Fellows traveled to the Arizona State Capitol to meet with legislators, share insights from Teen Town Hall, and advocate for educational equity and student well-being.
- Despite federal grant rescissions, MEC secured over \$29,000 in new sponsorships and maintained key AmeriCorps partnerships, with total in-kind support reaching nearly \$100,000.

- MEC coordinated Read Aloud Week proclamations across the City and County, engaging literacy partners to distribute books and promote early learning.

Program Progression

Peer Coach Program

The Peer Coach Program, a collaborative initiative between MEC and Arizona Serve, supported by AmeriCorps, is designed to empower high school seniors with the tools and training necessary to support college and career readiness among their peers. Over the past five years, more than 100 Peer Coaches have boosted college enrollment in 19 high schools across Pima County, ensuring that all students have access to the resources they need to succeed.

In Quarter Three, the Peer Coach Program maintained its enlisted 23 Peer Coaches in the current academic year, but increased their service impact as the 2025-2026 Free Application for Federal Student Aid opened and they continued advising sessions and workshops in school and in the community.

Program Highlights

- Over 2,300 students continue to receive in-school ongoing support, with 73 in Q3, and 390 for the academic year, receiving in-depth assistance on post-secondary program searches, applications, and planning.
- As a part of their AmeriCorps service team, Peer Coaches commit to 300 hours for the academic year. By Q3, Peer Coaches have collectively completed a total of 6,460 hours of the 6,900 hours required. Highest-Performing Coaches include:
 - Marianna Martinez, Pueblo High School (290 hours)
 - Brianna Campos Tapia, Pueblo High School (286 hours)
 - Sugey Ortega, Sunnyside High School (284 hours)

Peer Coach service for the term included continued assistance in resume-building, college essay development, and post-secondary offer acceptance next steps. In particular, this included hands-on FAFSA assistance, increasing student confidence in navigating postsecondary opportunities.

FAFSA Progression by School (November 2024 to March 2025)

SCHOOL	FAFSA Submissions Through March 31, 2025	FAFSA Completions Through March 31, 2025	Completion Percent Change From Quarter 2
DESERT VIEW	166	165	-18.7
SUNNYSIDE	245	242	-5.5
EMPIRE	124	121	0

ANDRADA POLY	56	51	0
PUEBLO	152	143	-38.9
RINCON	111	106	-11.7
SABINO	79	75	-45.7
ST AUGUSTINE	44	43	-32.8
TUCSON MAGNET	306	294	-22.6

Between November and December 2024, many high schools in Pima County demonstrated strong early engagement with the new FAFSA cycle, as reflected in high submission and completion counts during that period. However, by the end of Quarter 3 (March 31, 2025), those numbers had significantly declined across nearly every school. This apparent regression is not due to student disengagement or institutional inaction, but rather to unprecedented disruptions in federal financial aid processing.

Following the inauguration of President Trump in January 2025, the U.S. Department of Education implemented sudden policy and operational changes that resulted in increased scrutiny of submitted FAFSA forms—both new and previously completed. Many applications were flagged for additional verification, and in some cases, already completed FAFSAs were retroactively rejected. Students and families, particularly those from mixed-status households or with documentation complexities, were either forced to re-submit their forms or were deemed ineligible for federal aid under new interpretations of eligibility criteria.

This wave of retroactive rejections and processing delays led to a noticeable drop in both submission and completion totals by March 31. Students who had previously been counted as FAFSA completers in December were no longer reflected in updated counts, while newly impacted applicants struggled to re-complete the process amid confusing and often shifting guidance.

As a result, FAFSA completion metrics in Pima County for Q3 do not fully reflect student effort or institutional support but rather a broader federal disruption. Local education and college access partners have worked tirelessly to support students through these barriers and will continue to advocate for stable, student-centered FAFSA processing at the national level.

Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) Workshops

Quarter Three continued the second half of FAFSA workshops, a critical initiative to support students and families in accessing federal financial aid for college.

- 6 of 6 workshops hosted by the end of Q3 across different locations:
 - Quincie Douglas Library, Dec. 10

- Community Foundation for Southern Arizona, Dec. 16
- W. Anne Gibson-Esmond Station Library, Dec. 19
- Miller-Golf Links Library, Jan. 6
- Flowing Wells Library, Jan. 15
- Sahuarita Library, Jan. 27
- 46 students and their families served in Q3, for a total of 82 for the year.
- The estimated amount of pell grants earned through application completions in Q3 ranges from \$170,085 to \$340,170, for a total of \$266,385 to \$532,605 for the year depending on students' eventual enrollment status (part-time vs. full-time).

Development

During Quarter 3, the Metro Education Commission (MEC) advanced several significant development initiatives aimed at sustaining and expanding its programming, particularly in the areas of college access, civic engagement, and postsecondary readiness.

Federal Grant Pursuits

In partnership with the University of Arizona and Pima Community College, MEC co-authored and submitted a competitive application for the federal Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) grant, totaling \$11.9 million over seven years. This program, administered by the U.S. Department of Education, is designed to support low-income students as they prepare for and transition into higher education. While the proposal was awarded funding—allocating approximately \$1.1 million to MEC—the grant was ultimately rescinded before execution due to national-level reductions in discretionary federal funding under the Trump Administration's Department of Education.

Similarly, MEC was selected to receive an estimated \$200,000 grant from ECMC, acting on behalf of the U.S. Department of Education, to support FAFSA completion efforts across Southern Arizona. Like GEAR UP, this award was also rescinded amid sweeping cuts to previously allocated federal education grants.

Local Grant Applications and Competitive Climate

MEC submitted proposals to both the Community Foundation for Southern Arizona and the Marshall Foundation. While not selected for funding, the application cycles demonstrated a sharp increase in competition and demand across the nonprofit sector, much of it attributed to the broader shortfall in federal education funding that has placed strain on local philanthropic resources.

Sponsorships and Strategic Investments

Despite federal setbacks, MEC secured a total of \$29,200 in sponsorships and one-time investments to directly support programming in Quarter 3 and beyond. These funds underwrote expenses related to the Evening to Empower Celebration on May 9, 2025, student travel to the Arizona State Capitol, and regional FAFSA workshops. These contributions reflect a growing base of local investment and partnership in MEC's work.

In-Kind Contributions

Notably, MEC continues to benefit from an in-kind partnership with Arizona Serve of Prescott College, the regional AmeriCorps grantee. Through this relationship, MEC receives essential capacity support for its Peer Coach Program, including the recruitment, training, and service stipends of AmeriCorps members who deliver direct guidance to students across Pima County. The valuation of this benefit from Arizona Serve is \$94,430, with \$45,000 expended by the end of Q3.

Financial Report

Pima County Contributions in Contract Year

Total Pima County Economic Development Contract: \$122,000

- Quarterly Expenditures from County Funds:
 - January: \$10,697.59
 - February: \$9,366.27
 - March: \$27,770.38
- Total Expended in Q3: \$47,834.24
- Remaining Balance by End of Q3: \$0

City of Tucson Contributions in Contract Year

- Total City of Tucson Contribution in Contract Year: \$34,570
 - City Manager: \$19,570
 - Council Members (Wards 2, 5 and 6): \$15,000

External Contributions

- Total Sponsorships in Contract Year: \$47,023.31
 - Total Sponsorships in Q3: \$29,200
- Total In-Kind in Contract Year: \$98,315
 - Total In-Kind in Q3: \$64,430

Next Steps

Following a successful exploration of a collaborative Peer Coach Program with the Arizona Board of Regents, MEC will formally assume stewardship of the unified program beginning in the 2025–2026 academic year. Under this expanded model, MEC will coordinate Peer Coach placements across multiple school districts, including Tucson Unified, Sunnyside, Flowing Wells, Marana, Vail, Tanque Verde, Catalina Foothills, and Sahuarita. This consolidation of resources will allow MEC to grow the program significantly—scaling from 23 to as many as 75 Peer Coaches.