



MEMORANDUM

Date: December 19, 2022

To: The Honorable Chair and Members
Pima County Board of Supervisors

From: Jan Leshner 
County Administrator

Re: **Additional Information for Board of Supervisors November 1, 2022 Meeting, Agenda Item No. 12 – Regional Prosperity Task Force**

Supervisor Scott had the following questions and requests during this agenda item:

Which County staff and departments will be involved in the city/county working group?

I appointed Bonnie Bazata, Pima County's Ending Poverty Now Program Manager, to lead this effort for the County. Ms. Bazata was initially invited to the April 19, 2022 Tucson City Council meeting to present on the issue of poverty and the impact of the pandemic, as Ms. Bazata is regarded as the regional authority on the subject. It was that invitation that led to the current prosperity initiative. I have also appointed Nicole Fyffe, Senior Advisor in my office, to assist Ms. Bazata in coordinating this effort, and have asked the following departments and offices to appoint staff to the working group: Community and Workforce Development, Pima County School Superintendent, Health and Behavioral Health, Justice Services, Library, Economic Development, and Development Services. Additional departments, such as the Department of Environmental Quality, have volunteered to participate. Attached is the latest list of working group members. The County's Communications Office will also be involved in the community engagement phase.

Please inform the Board of the other municipalities that chose to participate in this initiative.

All five incorporated cities and towns have chosen to participate and have appointed staff to the working group, as shown on the attached list. The Tohono O'odham Nation has responded that they will appoint someone shortly. A response from the Pascua Yaqui Tribe is pending.

Who are the University of Arizona researchers that will be engaged in this effort?

Consistent with the information provided to the Board on November 1, 2022, we are seeking research assistance to identify evidence-based policies applicable at the local government level, that are frequently cited strategies for breaking the cycle of poverty, improving opportunity and creating community wealth. Such policies will also be limited to those recommended or endorsed by non-partisan, well-recognized authorities on poverty research.

Both Brian Mayer and Keith Bentele have Ph.Ds in Sociology and work out of the University of Arizona's College of Social and Behavioral Sciences with expertise in the area of poverty as well as other areas. Dr. Mayer is also an affiliate faculty member in the Institute of the

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Environment and Dr. Bentele is a staff member at The Southwest Institute for Research on Women (SIROW). SIROW takes an interdisciplinary and intersectional approach to community-based research and is dedicated to improving the well-being of women and girls, their families, and the communities in which they live.

Dr. Mayer has worked closely with the Ending Poverty Now (EPN) program over several years. Dr. Mayer lead the Tucson Mayor's Poverty Commission from 2012-2014 and Bonnie Bazata connected with Dr. Mayer soon after she took her EPN position in fall of 2015. Ms. Bazata has co-presented with Dr. Mayer on poverty issues several times, worked with his experiential learning Tucson Poverty Project class, and worked together on community projects.

Dr. Bentele is an active member of EPN's Eviction Prevention Collaboration, which started in the fall of 2020 and meets monthly. He has collaborated on critical research on eviction and homelessness prevention, creating bi-monthly *Housing Insecurity and Homelessness* reports based on the Census Bureau's "Pulse Survey" data that has been invaluable to Community and Workforce Development for analyzing what the data was telling us about potential evictions. Dr. Bentele also served on Pima County's *Eviction and Homelessness Prevention Task Force*, which met throughout the fall of 2020 and created 37 recommendations. The EELS program was an outgrowth of those recommendations. Working at SIROW, Dr. Bentele is able to access the staff, resources, and expertise of his colleagues.

Both are well qualified and available within the tight time restrictions proposed for this initiative. The contract amounts in total are not to exceed \$25,984.53 and in the process of being finalized for approval by our Procurement Director.

Please provide more information on the Opportunity Atlas

[The Opportunity Atlas](#) was developed by researchers at the U.S. Census Bureau, Harvard University's Opportunity Insights, and Brown University. It is based on longitudinal data from the Census and Federal income tax returns for 20 million Americans born between 1978 and 1983, from childhood to their mid-thirties today. This equates to 94 percent of children born during these years, and 25,000 of those children are from Pima County (or the Tucson Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) – which is Pima County).

The objective of the Opportunity Atlas is to measure the average earnings of children who grow up in each neighborhood in America, by demographic subgroup (race, gender, and parental income). The focus is on the neighborhoods where people grew up rather than where they live as adults because recent studies have shown that the neighborhood in which a child grows up has substantial causal effects on their prospects of upward mobility, whereas where one lives as an adult has smaller effects.

A review of the initial data for Tucson and Pima County was published in a report as well as a series of articles in 2021 written by Jim Kiser. Mr. Kiser is a former editorial page editor and columnist for the Arizona Daily Star, alumni of the UA College of Education, and worked for the Southern Arizona Leadership Council. That initial review found that Pima County provides less economic opportunity to its children as they grow up than the rest of the nation

and than most of the cities in which Pima County and the Tucson MSA compares itself. Similar to many communities across the nation, there is significant variability in opportunity from one neighborhood in Pima County to the next. Mr. Kiser estimated that Tucson is paying a high price for its failure to provide more opportunity to our children, with its economy foregoing roughly \$2.2 billion per year.

Other communities have used this data set to inform long-term policy direction. Charlotte-Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, for example, was bottom of the list for opportunity when the data was first released, which seemed counter to the impressive overall economic gains the City/County had been experiencing. Those at Harvard's Opportunity Insights then took a more focused look at the neighborhood level data for Charlotte and identified the following three policy recommendations:

- Invest more in programs that directly support education and health of low-income children.
- Use housing policy to deconcentrate poverty and reduce segregation (i.e. increase supply of affordable housing in higher opportunity neighborhoods); and
- Ensure high school graduates have access to college and universities that are likely to increase their earnings across their lifetime.

Staff will be engaging with Mr. Kiser to review this data set and specific findings for Pima County and its cities, towns and tribes, which could inform policy options to build community wealth by addressing generational poverty through increased opportunity.

Summary

In summary, the working group held its first meeting on December 15, an additional 35 meetings have been held with approximately 150 stakeholders, and policy level research is underway. The City of Tucson is driving an early deadline to identify 3-5 policy options by March to inform the City Council's budgeting process. That will require draft policies by the end of January and extensive outreach in February. I will keep the Board updated on this important initiative.

JKL/anc

Attachment

c: Carmine DeBonis, Jr., Deputy County Administrator
Francisco Garcia, MD, MPH, Deputy County Administrator & Chief Medical Officer
Steve Holmes, Deputy County Administrator
Dan Sullivan, Director, Community and Workforce Development
Rhonda Piña, Deputy Director, Community and Workforce Development
Bonnie Bazata, Ending Poverty Now Program Manager
Nicole Fyffe, Senior Advisor, Pima County Administrator's Office

Prosperity Initiative Working Group

Participant	Title	Jursidiction/Agency
Betty Villegas	Housing and Community Development Director	South Tucson
Bonnie Bazata	Ending Poverty Now Program Manager	Pima County
Brandi Champion	Housing First Program Director	Tucson
Brian Mayer	Researcher	UA
Chris Poirier	Development Services Deputy Director	Pima County
Deborah Bryson	Pima County School Superintendent Chief Deputy	Pima County
Heath Vescovi-Chiordi	Office of Economic Development Director	Pima County
Karyn Prechtel-Altman	Library Deputy Director	Pima County
Kate Vesely	Justice Services Department Director	Pima County
Keith Bentele	Researcher	UA
Kelle Maslyn	Office of Economic Development Assistant Director	Pima County
Kim VanPelt	Health Department Deputy Director	Pima County
Lisa Shafer	Community & Neighborhood Services Director	Marana
Liz Morales	Director of Housing & Community Development	Tucson
Margie Adler	Economic Development Specialist	Oro Valley
Mari Vasquez	Community Risk Reduction Manager	Tucson
Molly Hilber	Behavioral Health Program Manager	Pima County
Natalie Shepp	Environmental Quality Program Manager Senior	Pima County
Nicole Fyffe	Senior Advisor, County Administrator's Office	Pima County
Orlanthia Henderson	Planning & Zoning Manager	Sahuarita
Ryan Stephenson	Community and Workforce Development Planner	Pima County
Sarah Launius	Community Safety, Health & Wellness Program Director	Tucson
Silvia Amparano	Deputy Director Tucson Water	Tucson