



MEMORANDUM

Date: August 11, 2026

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

From: Jan Lesher 
County Administrator

Re: **Follow-up to August 5, 2026 Memorandum Regarding Responses to Supervisor Scott Inquiries on the Southern Arizona Education Council and Additional Information for the Fiscal Year 2026-2027 Contract Discussion on the August 11, 2026 Board of Supervisors Agenda**

This memorandum is a follow-up to the August 5, 2026 [memorandum](#) to the Board of Supervisors regarding inquiries from Supervisor Scott on the Southern Arizona Educational Council (SAEC). Attached are responses from SAEC Executive Director, Rocque Perez, to the following additional questions from Supervisor Scott:

1. Why has the Southern Arizona Education Council met so infrequently in 2025 and 2026? Is there a plan for a more regular meeting schedule moving forward?
2. Is there a plan to bring the membership roster up to the stated goal (based on 7/14/26 action by the Executive Committee) of having 21 members representing various entities?
3. Section 5 of the memo states that "SAEC has also indicated they contract with 58 peer coaches." What is the nature of that contract given that peer coaches are minors and high school students?
4. Section 6 of the memo describes, in general, Mr. Perez's job duties. What are his typical duties, tasks, and responsibilities in a typical week and, on average, how much time does he devote to them, including during the summer months? The same section describes him as liaison to Pima County and other entities. How does Pima County staff utilize that role and who are the people in the county in contact with Mr. Perez?
5. Regarding the peer coach program, Section 9 of the memo states that "the Arizona Board of Regents provides the most significant portion of the cost share and facilitates district contacts and contract payouts for peer coaches." SAEC assists ABOR with "orientation and training" and also "facilitates school-level support and peer coach support." It sounds like ABOR is chiefly responsible for the program. Is that the case?

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The Honorable Chair and Members, Pima County Board of Supervisors

Re: **Follow-up to August 5, 2026 Memorandum Regarding Responses to Supervisor Scott Inquiries on the Southern Arizona Education Council and Additional Information for the Fiscal Year 2026-2027 Contract Discussion on the August 11, 2026 Board of Supervisors Agenda**

August 11, 2026

Page 2

How much of the work done by SAEC is the responsibility of Mr. Perez and, during the school year, how much time does he devote to it?

6. Section 11 of the memo states that the City of Tucson will provide \$19,580 to SAEC operations in the 2026-27 fiscal year and it is recommended that Pima County provide \$122,000. The SAEC is a joint city-county venture and has been since its inception decades ago. During that time, the county has always provided more support than the city. How do Mr. Perez and county staff plan to address that concern with city staff and city elected officials?

Mr. Perez will be present at the August 11, 2026 Board of Supervisors meeting to address any additional questions.

JKL/anc

Attachment

c: Carmine DeBonis Jr., Deputy County Administrator
Steve Holmes, Deputy County Administrator
Chad Kasmar, Deputy County Administrator
Heath Vescovi-Chiordi, Director, Economic Development
Rocque Perez, President and CEO, Southern AZ Education Council

From: [Rocque Perez](#)
To: [Kelle Maslyn](#)
Cc: [Heath Vescovi-Chiordi](#)
Subject: Re: Southern Arizona Education Council (SAEC): Response to Supervisor Scott Inquiries and Additional Information for Consideration of the Fiscal Year 2026-2027 Contract Discussion on the August 11, 2026 Board of Supervisors Agenda
Date: Friday, August 7, 2026 2:33:37 PM

CAUTION: This message and sender come from outside Pima County. If you did not expect this message, proceed with caution. Verify the sender's identity before performing any action, such as clicking on a link or opening an attachment.

Hi Kelle and Heath,

Thank you for forwarding Supervisor Scott's additional questions. I will be prepared to address these matters at Tuesday's meeting. For clarity and to assist staff in advance, I've provided responses below.

1. Why has the Southern Arizona Education Council met so infrequently in 2025 and 2026? Is there a plan for a more regular meeting schedule moving forward?

The full Council had seven scheduled meetings in 2025. Thus far in 2026, the full Council has convened twice, with the intention of holding at least three additional meetings before the end of the calendar year. The Council does not maintain a monthly meeting schedule and instead convenes as organizational business, member availability, and programmatic or governance needs require. The last two years have also coincided with the substantial transition of the Metropolitan Education Commission into the Southern Arizona Education Council, including changes to governance, membership, corporate identity, partnerships, and program administration. This aside, membership has been composed of educators and elected officials, which are arguable impossible to schedule simultaneously throughout the day and difficult outside of business hours. With the organizational transition now substantially complete, I anticipate that we will be able to focus more deliberately on filling vacancies and establishing a more regular meeting cadence subject to everyone's availability – including my own given the substantial program load I alone carry.

2. Is there a plan to bring the membership roster up to the stated goal of 21 members?

The Executive Committee intends to move forward with filling the resulting vacancies under the revised structure. Seats appointed by the Executive Committee will be actively recruited, while institutional appointments will continue to be sought from the Governor's Office, public postsecondary institutions, Pima County, and the City of Tucson as applicable. A transition memorandum has also been developed to align

current appointments and future terms into a more predictable staggered schedule. We will not begin onboarding new members until that action plan has been adopted by Pima and Tucson. The delay from before is for the same reason.

3. What is the nature of the “contracts” with 58 Peer Coaches given that they are minors and high school students?

SAEC does not enter into individual contracts with the student Peer Coaches. The students participate in the program through their respective high schools and districts and receive stipends for completion of established program requirements upon which they sign an agreement between the student/guardian and their advisor/school.

For the 2025–2026 academic year, the program included 58 Peer Coaches. Under the ABOR partnership, stipend funding and payment infrastructure are administered through participating school districts. SAEC works with the schools and students on program implementation, training, milestone completion, support, and local coordination.

The structure, oversight, cost sharing, and responsibilities of the Peer Coach Program have also been detailed in the every quarterly report submitted to Pima County throughout the years I have managed the program. I am happy to continue answering questions regarding the program; however, if the County would like this level of program detail reiterated on a recurring basis, it may be useful to incorporate those specific reporting requirements into the contract so expectations are standardized from quarter to quarter.

4. What are the Chief Executive Officer’s typical duties, tasks, responsibilities, and time commitments, including during the summer? How does Pima County utilize the liaison role?

The duties of the Chief Executive Officer are established in the employment agreement previously provided to Pima County and encompass program administration, organizational operations, governance, partnerships, fiscal oversight, reporting, public-body administration, and external relations. My current workload is approximately:

- a. 60% – Programming: program design and implementation, school and partner coordination, FAFSA and college-readiness initiatives, civic engagement programming, events, data review, reporting, and participant support.
- b. 20% – Operations: finance, contracts, payroll, personnel, procurement, compliance, grants, facilities, and general administration.

- c. 10% – Board Governance: agendas, notices, minutes, public records, Executive Committee and Council support, governance documents, and compliance responsibilities associated with the public body.
- d. 10% – Capacity Building and Partnerships: fundraising, governmental and institutional relationships, sponsorships, grants, and development of new partnerships.

The position remains active throughout the summer. In many respects, summer is one of the more operationally intensive periods because it includes year-end reporting, budgeting, contract renewal, onboarding of the next Peer Coach cohort, school and district agreements, fall program planning, staffing, and preparation for the upcoming academic year.

With increased organizational capacity and the onboarding of Federal Work-Study staff for the coming year, I anticipate shifting my time approximately to 50% programming, 15% operations, 25% board governance and advocacy, and 10% capacity building and partnerships.

Using a 40-hour week only as an illustrative baseline, those percentages would currently equate to roughly 24 hours of programming, eight hours of operations, four hours of governance, and four hours of capacity building. The position is salaried, however, and actual weekly hours and the distribution among functions fluctuate substantially based on the program calendar and organizational needs.

As the Council's designated liaison and coordinator, I serve as the principal point of contact for Pima County on contract administration, quarterly and annual reporting, fiscal documentation, governance matters, public-body records and meeting requirements, program coordination, and other matters involving the organization. County contacts have included staff within Economic Development, County Administration, the Clerk of the Board, and other departments or offices as particular matters arise. The frequency of those engagements depends on demand and mutual interest.

5. Is ABOR chiefly responsible for the Peer Coach Program, and how much of SAEC's work is performed by the CEO?

The program is a partnership, but I would not characterize ABOR as chiefly responsible for the Peer Coach Program in Pima County. The respective organizations have deliberately different responsibilities. The program originated locally under the Education

Council's administration. During the 2024–2025 academic year, the program operated through our partnership with Arizona Serve at Prescott College and was substantially borne by the Education Council. In 2025–2026, the first year of our partnership with ABOR, the model transitioned to a shared-cost structure. That agreement placed the total program cost at approximately \$114,720, with \$41,520 borne by the Education Council and \$73,200 by ABOR.

For 2026–2027, the partnership has been further refined. ABOR now assumes a larger portion of direct stipend costs and manages district agreements and stipend-payment infrastructure, while SAEC remains responsible for substantial local administration and implementation. The current agreement expressly assigns SAEC responsibility for school-level programming support, local program administration, coordination with participating schools, monitoring milestones, trainings and recognition activities, expenditure tracking, regional liaison functions, and reporting. It also provides for up to \$20,400 annually in SAEC-administered school programming support, among other responsibilities.

The current annual maximum cost share is approximately \$89,000 from ABOR and \$25,480 from SAEC. The reduction in SAEC's direct financial share should not be confused with a reduction in local responsibility; rather, it reflects our success in leveraging a statewide partner to assume more of the program's direct costs while SAEC continues to provide the local infrastructure necessary to operate it in Pima County.

A substantial portion of the Peer Coach Program's local work falls within my programming responsibilities, particularly school and district coordination, annual planning, partner management, training development, problem-solving, fiscal oversight, and program evaluation. The workload is cyclical and is considerably higher during recruitment and onboarding, FAFSA launch, major training periods, spring completion efforts, and program culmination and stipend payout.

6. How will SAEC address the disparity between the City of Tucson's \$19,580 contribution and Pima County's proposed \$122,000 contribution?

I cannot speak on behalf of Pima County staff regarding what actions the County itself may wish to pursue with the City. From SAEC's standpoint, we will continue maintaining strong relationships with prior existing and newly elected Council members, City Administration, and relevant departments, and will pursue every appropriate avenue for increasing the City's investment.

It's apparent to me by the unprecedented level of inquiry there are concerns by Supervisor Scott. However, I would remind him we have maintained the same level of funding from the county while over two years doubling program quantity and quality, diversifying our funding sources and partnerships, and taking steps to elevate the efficacy and efficiency of our operations, programs, and board governance. This is a process and i'm proud of where we stand in it.

I hope this provides useful context in advance of Tuesday.

Rocque Perez

Chief Executive Officer | *He, Him, His*

Southern Arizona Education Council

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From: Kelle Maslyn <Kelle.Maslyn@pima.gov>

Date: Friday, August 7, 2026 at 1:04 PM

To: Rocque Perez <rocque@sazeducation.org>

Cc: Heath Vescovi-Chiordi <Heath.Vescovi-Chiordi@pima.gov>

Subject: Fw: Southern Arizona Education Council (SAEC): Response to Supervisor Scott
Inquiries and Additional Information for Consideration of the Fiscal Year 2026-2027 Contract
Discussion on the August 11, 2026 Board of Supervisors Agenda

Rocque,

Please see the additional questions below that Supervisor Scott has related to the Southern AZ Education Council. Please be prepared to address them during the August 11 Board of Supervisors meeting.

Additionally, I want to remind you that your Annual Report for 2025-2026 was due on July 31, 2026. Before sending it, please ensure you proofread it carefully. Thanks.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Kelle

Cell: 520.488.3987

From: Rex Scott <Rex.Scott@pima.gov>

Sent: Friday, 07 August 2026 08:45:37

To: Jan Leshar <Jan.Leshar@pima.gov>; Carmine DeBonis <Carmine.DeBonis@pima.gov>

Subject: Re: Southern Arizona Education Council (SAEC): Response to Supervisor Scott Inquiries and Additional Information for Consideration of the Fiscal Year 2026-2027 Contract Discussion on the August 11, 2026 Board of Supervisors Agenda

Here are my follow up questions:

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Rex

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From: Johanna Encinas <Johanna.Encinas2@pima.gov>

Sent: Wednesday, August 5, 2026 5:08 PM

To: Andres Cano <Andres.Cano@pima.gov>; Arianna Martinez Reyna <Arianna.MartinezReyna@pima.gov>; Beth Borozan <Beth.Borozan@pima.gov>; Bonnie Bazata <Bonnie.Bazata2@pima.gov>; Cami Evans <Cami.Evans@pima.gov>; CJ Boyd <CJ.Boyd@pima.gov>; Claudia Bungard <Claudia.Bungard@pima.gov>; David Higuera <David.Higuera@pima.gov>; Douglas Kenyon <Douglas.Kenyon@pima.gov>; Erin Johnson <Erin.Johnson@pima.gov>; Jennifer Allen <Jen.Allen@pima.gov>; Joshua Laughlin <Joshua.Laughlin@pima.gov>; Julie Elvick <Julie.Elvick@pima.gov>; Kim Briggs <Kim.Briggs@pima.gov>; Luis Encinas <Luis.Encinas@pima.gov>; Matt Heinz <Matt.Heinz@pima.gov>; Montserrat Caballero <Montserrat.Caballero@pima.gov>; Nathan Bacal <Nathan.Bacal@pima.gov>; Rex Scott <Rex.Scott@pima.gov>; Shaq McCoy <Shaliqua.McCoy@pima.gov>; Steve Christy <Steve.Christy@pima.gov>; Valerie Buenamea <Valerie.Buenamea@pima.gov>; Vanessa Barchfield <Vanessa.Barchfield@pima.gov>
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Subject: Southern Arizona Education Council (SAEC): Response to Supervisor Scott Inquiries and Additional Information for Consideration of the Fiscal Year 2026-2027 Contract Discussion on the August 11, 2026 Board of Supervisors Agenda

Honorable Chair and Members, Pima County Board of Supervisors:

Please see the attached correspondence from Pima County Administrator Jan Leshar regarding the above-mentioned subject.

Thank you,

JOHANNA ENCINAS

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