ARIZONA EARLY CHILDHOOD CAREER AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT NETWORK:
Two-Year Strategic Plan

APRIL 2015

ARIZONA
EARLY CHILDHOOD
Career and Professional Development Network

FIRST THINGS FIRST

Build
INITIATIVE
Strong Foundations For
Our Youngest Children

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Arizona Early Childhood Career and Professional Development Network:
Strategic Plan 2015 - 2017

Background

Specialized knowledge of how young children develop and learn is critical for members of the early childhood workforce. Because a significant number of Arizona's young children, including infants and toddlers, spend time in early care and education settings outside their own homes, it is especially important to ensure that the professionals responsible for their early care and education have the tools and skills to promote learning and healthy social and emotional development, and know how to help when development is not progressing as expected. All members of this workforce need access to preparation programs and opportunities for ongoing education and professional development.

Well-educated and highly skilled early childhood teachers are strongly linked with high quality and optimal child outcomes at entry into kindergarten. Research demonstrates that when child care and other early learning programs are of high quality and developmentally appropriate, children score higher on school readiness measures and do better in school. They also have better relationships with their peers and are more likely to graduate. But the quality of early care and education depends on the professionalism, education and skills of the teacher (Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies, 2008).

In collaboration with BUILD Arizona, First Things First continues to lead, convene, and staff the Professional Development Workgroup (PDWG), comprised of key cross-sector stakeholders including faculty from Arizona's institutes of higher education, FTF Regional Council members, state agency representatives, professional development providers, the Arizona Association for the Education of Young Children, early care and education providers, health and family support service agencies, and representatives from philanthropy.

The PDWG developed [Arizona's Early Childhood Professional Development System Framework and Two-Year Strategic Plan](#)[1] for implementation during the 2013-2014 calendar years. The plan provided a comprehensive overview of Arizona's rich professional development history, going back at least three decades, conceptualized the essential elements of a robust Early Childhood professional development system, described the state of Arizona's professional development system at the time, identified gaps and opportunities within that system, and outlined a plan to build the system infrastructure by identifying a set of priorities with the potential to leverage the existing components of Arizona's professional development system.

The 2013 Strategic Plan identified five (5) critical infrastructure initiatives. A sixth initiative was later added, after the plan was written, to address specific competencies for professional development instructors and technical assistance providers.

> **Degrees and Credentials** Initiatives (1 & 2):
> 1. Adopt or develop an early childhood Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) that is eligible for college credit;
> 2. Develop an Associate of Arts in Early Childhood Education Degree (AAECE) that can be implemented at any Arizona community college.

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[1] http://www.azftf.gov/publications/Documents/Building%20Arizona%27s%20Early%20Childhood%20Professional%20Development%20System.pdf

Workforce Knowledge and Competency (WFKC) Framework Initiatives (3 & 6):
3. Develop a comprehensive WFKC framework and disseminate/integrate across the professional development system.
6. Develop professional development instructor and technical assistance provider competencies to disseminate/integrate across the professional development system.

Registry and Website Subgroup Initiatives (4 & 5):
4. Design, develop, and launch an early childhood professional development website.
5. Design, develop, and launch an early childhood workforce registry
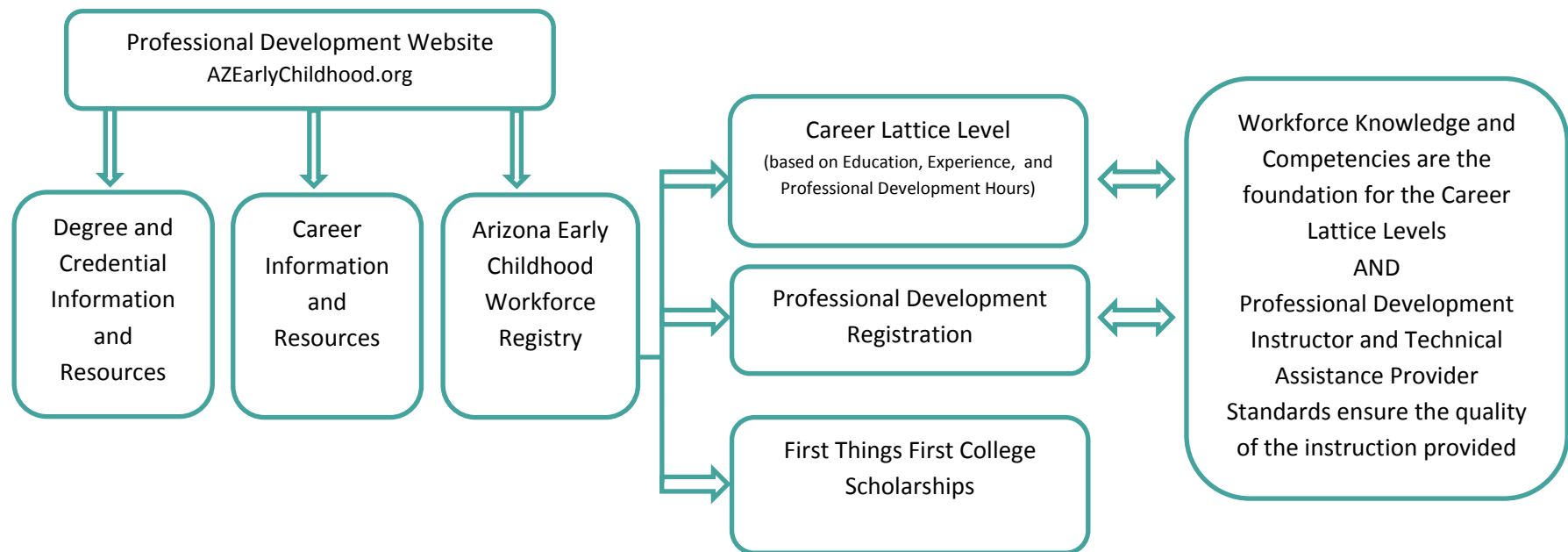
Initiatives from the 2013 Strategic Plan laid the foundation to build a statewide system of professional development for all program staff and personnel who work or with or on behalf of young children. The plan identified critical infrastructure that would benefit the current system and as a result, the Arizona Early Childhood Career and Professional Development Network (Network, Exhibit 1) for the Arizona early childhood workforce was established. This Network is an online platform that includes:

- a professional development website that serves as the entry point for the Network and provides information and resources about workforce professional development, including higher education and careers in the early childhood field;
- a workforce registry to collects and track data for and about the workforce;
- professional standards that identify the knowledge and skills necessary for the direct workforce and those who provide instruction and technical assistance for the direct workforce, and;
- a career lattice that identifies a pathway of education and work experience for the workforce.

First Things First will identify an organization to administer the Arizona Early Childhood Career and Professional Development Network beginning in summer 2015. This administrative home will 1) promote access to and participation in the Arizona Early Childhood Career and Professional Development Network; 2) implement the Arizona Early Childhood Workforce Registry, and; 3) administer the First Things First College Scholarships for Early Childhood Professionals strategy.

Now that important infrastructure for the Network is in place, the focus over the next two years is implementation and operation. Arizona Early Childhood Career and Professional Development Network Strategic Plan 2015 - 2017 provides a status update on the critical infrastructure initiatives identified in the 2013-2014 plan and outlines the strategic initiatives for 2015 – 2017 intended to move the Network and professional development system forward.

Exhibit 1. Arizona Early Childhood Career and Professional Development Network

ARIZONA
EARLY CHILDHOOD
Career and Professional Development Network

Professional Development Website
AZEarlyChildhood.org

Degree and Credential Information and Resources

Career Information and Resources

Arizona Early Childhood Workforce Registry

Career Lattice Level
(based on Education, Experience, and Professional Development Hours)

Professional Development Registration

First Things First College Scholarships

Workforce Knowledge and Competencies are the foundation for the Career Lattice Levels
AND
Professional Development Instructor and Technical Assistance Provider Standards ensure the quality of the instruction provided

Framework for Arizona Early Childhood Career and Professional Development Network Strategic Plan

The National Association for the Education of Young Children Policy Blueprint for State Early Childhood Professional Development Systems (NAEYC Blueprint)[2] and the National Child Care Information Center (NCCIC) Early Childhood Professional Development Systems Toolkit (NCCIC Toolkit)[3] provide the conceptual framework for the Professional Development Strategic Plan.   The framework includes essential policy areas used to build, support, and sustain an effective, integrated early childhood education professional development system. The focus is on the policies that connect professional development activities and support and make possible effective implementation of a state system of professional development. The framework was used to identify gaps and opportunities within Arizona's current system, and determine which initiatives have the highest probability of moving the system and workforce forward. The NAEYC Blueprint highlights six policy areas that build or sustain an integrated system—a system that ensures quality in all settings in which early childhood professionals work. The NCCIC Toolkit aligns with the NAEYC Blueprint, but adds one additional policy area that was used in the PDWG's strategic planning. All seven policy areas are listed below and described within this plan.

1. Professional Standards*
2. Career Pathways*
3. Articulation*
4. Advisory Structure*
5. Data*
6. Financing*
7. Access and Outreach**

*NAEYC Policy Blueprint for State Early Childhood Professional Development Systems
**NCCIC Early Childhood Professional Development Systems Toolkit

These policy areas are aimed at the development and retention of a competent and stable early childhood workforce—a skilled cadre of effective, diverse, and adequately compensated professionals.

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[2] http://www.naeyc.org/policy/ecwsi-blueprint

[3] National Child Care Information and Technical Assistance Center (2007). *Early Childhood Professional Development Systems Toolkit*. The Child Care Bureau: Fairfax, VA.

2013 Plan Updates and 2015 – 2017 Strategic Plan Recommendations:

Status updates for initiatives in the 2013 plan, and recommendations from the PDWG for the 2015 -2017 strategic plan are provided within the Strategic Plan Framework.

1. Professional Standards: the content of professional preparation and ongoing development.

State policies should specify qualifications and ongoing development required for all early care and education professionals—from teacher assistants to trainers and higher education faculty, family child care providers, licensors, resource and referral staff, and program, school, district, and agency administrators. These specifications should address levels and content of education as well as ongoing development.

Update: 2013 Strategic Plan

Workforce Knowledge and Competencies Framework: Development of the Workforce Knowledge and Competencies Framework was completed to identify the skills and competencies expected at various levels of a professional's career development in order to:
- establish a set of standards that support professionals working in the field by identifying the basic skills and competencies needed across all sectors of early care and education, early intervention, mental health, physical health and social services/child welfare working with expectant parents, infants, toddlers, young children to age eight, and their families; and,
- inform intentional professional development approaches for the early childhood workforce that ensure they have the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to provide services to young children and their families that is targeted to their unique developmental needs.

Professional Development Instructor & Technical Assistance Provider Standards: Professional Development Instructor & Technical Assistance Provider Standards were also completed for those who instruct, consult, or provide technical assistance outside of colleges and universities. The Professional Development Instructor & Technical Assistance Provider Standards are intended to:
- identify the basic knowledge, skills, and abilities needed for early childhood Professional Development Instructors and Technical Assistance Providers; and,
- assist in planning, delivering, assessing, and evaluating professional development instructors and technical assistance providers to help Arizona's early childhood workforce gain, continue, or further their knowledge of early care and education.

Recommendations: 2015 Strategic Plan

The PDWG recommends strengthening this policy area by developing a Quality Assurance Process for Professional Development Instructors and Technical Assistance Providers to ensure that the instruction and technical assistance provided to the early childhood workforce is provided with the utmost integrity, consistency, quality and effectiveness.

2. Career Pathways: routes of continuous progress for early childhood professionals, so they can plan the achievement of increased qualifications, understand the professional possibilities, and be appropriately compensated.

Policies should institutionalize pathways in all sectors and for all roles—both direct service (those individuals working with young children and their families) and non-direct service (those working on behalf of children and families in training, resource, and other administrative roles).

Update: 2013 Strategic Plan

Arizona Early Childhood Career Lattice: The Arizona Early Childhood Career Lattice was completed as part of the Workforce, Knowledge and Competencies Framework and is a tool that provides the pathway of

education, professional development, and work experience for early childhood professionals to use for individualized assessment, setting professional development goals, and documenting progress in achieving professional milestones.

Recommendations: 2015 Strategic Plan
Three initiatives are recommended to build on existing work in this policy area so that early childhood professionals can easily understand professional possibilities and increase their qualifications and progress on the career lattice:.
1. Develop an online function within the Registry that can produce individualized career lattices for professionals to understand the next steps of their education, professional development, and work experience that will support their movement along the career lattice.
2. Develop an online and interactive career lattice tool so that professionals can view resources at each level that will support their movement along the career lattice.
3. Develop an approval process to assign career lattice levels for new and existing professional credentials so that levels are commensurate with the skills and knowledge represented by the attainment of the professional credential.

3. Articulation: the transfer of professional development credentials, courses, credits, degrees, and student performance-based competencies from one program or institution to another, ideally without a loss of credits.

States should require colleges and universities to make articulation agreements that assist early childhood professionals in moving seamlessly through and across undergraduate and graduate degree programs. Grants or specific directions for resource allocations should be attached to such policy requirements; colleges and universities will need fiscal support to change or augment long-standing, institutionalized processes.

Update: 2013 Strategic Plan
Associate of Arts in Early Childhood Education: Development of a new associate degree, Associate of Arts in Early Childhood Education (AAECE) was completed. Currently, three community colleges (Eastern Arizona College, Central Arizona College, and Northland Pioneer College) have incorporated an AA ECE into their degree offerings and are currently working with universities on articulation of this degree into a Bachelor's degree.

Prior Learning Assessment: In addition to the AAECE, the 2013 strategic plan included an initiative for the adoption or development of a Prior Learning Assessment (PLA). The PDWG explored the use of PLAs in other states and found that these assessments and their use were limited. Additionally, several issues were raised by representatives of Arizona institutes of higher education including transferability, cost, eligibility for financial aid, lack of credit towards a degree, and a college culture that sees coursework as superior to PLAs. The findings in this report caused the PDWG to reconsider how to move this initiative forward.

Recommendations: 2015 Strategic Plan
Three initiatives are recommended to continue the momentum with the AAECE and determine next steps for the PLA:
1. Expand adoption of the AAECE to six additional community colleges in Arizona.
2. Increase articulation agreements between community colleges that adopt the AAECE and four-year universities.
3. Create a Community of Practice for institutes of higher education to explore the feasibility of a PLA and involve representatives of Arizona institutes of higher education directly in the design and

development process.

4. Advisory Structure: the coordination mechanism for an integrated early childhood professional development system, which should be free standing and have some authority or direct link to authority in the state's governance structure.

State policy should require the creation of an advisory structure to examine needs and provide policy recommendations to the entity or combined entities funding the professional development system. Its composition should include representatives from the diverse settings, auspices, and roles of the early childhood field and professional development system supports.

Update: 2013 Strategic Plan
The 2013 plan did not identify any specific initiatives in this policy area; however, currently the PDWG provides direction and leadership for the initiatives identified in the strategic plan.

Recommendations: 2015 Strategic Plan
The PDWG continues as the advisory structure for the implementation of the strategic plan to provide feedback and recommendations for ongoing development and implementation.

5. Data: to gauge impacts and systems change, as well as to inform planning, evaluation, quality assurance, and accountability.

State policies should require the collection of specific data and also mandate cross-sector data collection, sharing, and alignment, and non-duplication of efforts. Policies also should require comprehensive workforce studies conducted at regular intervals and ongoing collection and reporting of professional development utilization and improvement indicators. Additionally, policies should include specific requirements for disaggregating data by type of setting, demographics, and primary financing source(s).

Update: 2013 Strategic Plan
Data System Infrastructure – Workforce Registry: RegistryOne® software was purchased and customized for the Arizona Early Childhood Workforce Registry (Registry). The Registry is a web-based information system designed to maintain statewide data on Arizona's early childhood professionals working with or on behalf of children birth-8 years of age. The Registry is designed to be voluntary and allow individuals to build a verifiable profile of education, certification, professional development and employment in alignment with the Arizona Workforce Knowledge and Competencies and Career Lattice, and to access professional development and education that builds upon their current knowledge, skills and lattice levels. The long-term goal for the Registry is to integrate workforce data into a comprehensive, longitudinal, integrated, early childhood database that provides accurate information about the state of Arizona's early childhood workforce. This data will be used to inform policy and program development and guide investments in professional development.

Recommendations: 2015 Strategic Plan
Two initiatives are recommended for collection, use and application of professional development data:
1. Populate the Registry with 10,000 participants by 2017 (approximately 35% of early care and education workforce).
2. Secure data sharing agreements with the Arizona Department of Health Services, the Arizona Department of Education, and the Arizona Department of Economic Security.

6. Financing: the funding that all professional development systems need in order to operate.

State policies should support the financing of integrated professional development systems in the specific areas of needs-based support for early childhood professionals to obtain education and ongoing development; support for programs/workplaces that facilitate professional development; explicit rewards

and compensation parity for attainment of additional education and development; and financing of the professional development system infrastructure.

Update: 2013 Strategic Plan

Infrastructure Funding: Funding to complete infrastructure pieces of the Network were secured through the 2013 Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Grant (ECCS), the 2010 State Advisory Council Grant (SAC) and First Things First statewide funds. Together, these funding streams supported the development of the WFKC Framework, the Professional Development Instructor and Technical Assistance Provider Standards, the purchase and customization of the RegistryOne® software, and the development of the professional development website. Ongoing funds to operate the Network infrastructure have been identified in the First Things First statewide budget.

Recommendations: 2015 Strategic Plan

Funding for sustainability of Network administration and operations should be confirmed for future years, and funding to provide professional development for those in the workforce should be leveraged through a variety of funding sources and commensurate with demand.

7. Access and Outreach: as system that is easily accessible to the people it is meant to serve with established procedures, resources, and infrastructure that facilitate information dissemination and access.

Access includes mechanisms used to link providers to opportunitied, including career advising, multiple training delivery options, multiple gateways to a career lattice, and other personal and professioal supports. Outreach includes activities and efforst to inform providers, the public, policymakers, and funders about professional delveopment opportunities, including career lattices and professional supports.

Update: 2013 Strategic Plan

Professional Development Website: The professional development website (AZEarlyChildhood.org) was completed to provide an online presence for the Network, house professional development documents and information, and serves as a "one-stop-shop" for current and future early childhood professionals working with or on behalf of children birth through age 8. This website houses the Arizona Early Childhood Workforce Registry (Registry) and offers information about:

- Growing Your skills (professional development opportunities and conferences/events);
- Advancing Your Career (position requirements, career paths, certification, credentials, degrees, scholarships and incentives and a job bank; and,
- Resources and Information (WFKC framework, Arizona Early Childhood Standards and Guidelines, articles and publications, and early childhood organizations and agencies).

Recommendations: 2015 Strategic Plan

Implement a successful awareness campaign to ensure that the early childhood workforce and those interested in joining the workforce have knowledge of the Network, including how to use the system to further their skills and knowledge, develop a career pathway, and monitor their progress so that they can provide optimal care and education to Arizona's youngest children.

Arizona Early Childhood Career and Professional Development Network Work Plan 2015 - 2017

Funding for Plan Initiatives:

$500,000 for Network Administrative Home FTF Contract 15-0501-00 (Source: FTF Statewide Funding Plan)

$100,000 for 1.0 FTE Staff Position Salary and ERE (Source: FTF Administrative Funds)

$4,000 for software customization (Source: FTF SAC Grant Funds)

Professional Standards			
INITIATIVE	RESPONSIBLE	TIMELINE	METRIC
Quality Assurance Process for Professional Development Instructors and Technical Assistance Providers	PDWG FTF Staff Support to PDWG Network Administrative Home (Phase I and full implementation)	April – August 2016 Develop, vet, and finalize QA process September – December 2016 Phase I implementation of QA Process January 2017 Full implementation of QA Process	Quality Assurance Process Developed 20 PD or TA Providers participate in Phase I

Career Pathways			
INITIATIVE	RESPONSIBLE	TIMELINE	METRIC
Interactive Career Lattice	PDWG FTF Staff Support to PDWG	July - December 2015 Identify and collect information needed at each level of the career lattice February – August 2016 Mock career lattice with interactive information created September – December 2016 User testing of interactive career lattice January 2017 Interactive career lattice posted on Network website	Full implementation of interactive component of career lattice

Career Pathways			
INITIATIVE	RESPONSIBLE	TIMELINE	METRIC
Individualized Career Lattice Report Calculated by Registry	PDWG FTF Staff Support to PDWG RegistryOne®(customization and technical support)	June 2015 Identify "next steps" in education, work experience, and professional development for each level of the career lattice (A – I) August 2015 Finalize logic with RegistryOne® January 2016 Implement individualized career lattice calculation in Registry	Completion of Registry customization for individualized user report about what is needed in experience, formal education and professional development to achieve the next career lattice level
Credentials with Career Lattice Alignment	PDWG FTF Staff Support to PDWG	August 2016 - March 2017 Develop, vet and finalize rubric developed April 2017 Full implementation of credential rubric	Full implementation of rubric for determining at which career lattice level credentials are aligned

Articulation			
INITIATIVE	RESPONSIBLE	TIMELINE	METRIC
Adoption of AAECE	PDWG FTF Staff Support to PDWG Community Colleges	August - October 2015 Develop, brand and provide outreach information materials for community colleges	6 additional community colleges adopt the AAECE model (9 total)
Articulation Agreements between Community Colleges and Universities	Institutes of Higher Education	July 2015 – December 2016 Articulation process April 2017 Articulation agreements in place	Articulation agreements in place for the 3 community colleges that have adopted the AAECE
Create a Community of Practice for IHEs to explore feasibility of a PLA	PDWG FTF Staff Support Institutes of Higher Education	August – October 2015 Outreach to IHEs to participate in a PLA Community of Practice October 2015 – October 2016 Community of Practice convenings to identify PLA January 2017 Adopt PLA	5 IHEs support the use of and implement PLA

Advisory Structure			
INITIATIVE	RESPONSIBLE	TIMELINE	METRIC
PDWG serves as an advisory body for Network Implementation	PDWG FTF Staff Support to PDWG Network Administrative Home	May 2015 Finalize PDWG membership participation from the Administrative Home Ongoing Network implementation items on PDWG agenda	Annual update report on progress of strategic plan and implementation of Network

Data			
INITIATIVE	RESPONSIBLE	TIMELINE	METRIC
Registry	Network Administrative Home	April 2016 5,000 participants enrolled in the Registry April 2017 10,000 participants enrolled in the Registry	10,000 participants registered
Data Sharing Agreements	FTF Staff Support to PDWG	August 2015 Registry overview provided by Admin Home to state agencies April 2017 Agreement signed between FTF and DES, ADE, and DHS	Agreements with DHS, DES and ADE are signed

Financing			
INITIATIVE	RESPONSIBLE	TIMELINE	METRIC
Sustainability of Network Implementation	PDWG FTF Staff Support to PDWG	January – March 2016 Report drafted and provided to PDWG with Information from other states with recommendations for AZ May, 2016 Final report with recommendations completed	Report completed that includes information about other states' financing with recommendations for Arizona

Access and Outreach			
INITIATIVE	RESPONSIBLE	TIMELINE	METRIC
Awareness Campaign	PDWG FTF Staff Support to PDWG Network Administrative Home	April 2015 Outreach materials reviewed by PDWG and finalized May 2015 Outreach Materials provided to Network Administrative Home October 2015 Outreach training for infrastructure groups (i.e. QF Coaches, etc.)	Outreach materials developed and deployed 150 Participants of Infrastructure groups trained

Appendix A Arizona Professional Development System-Building Workgroup Member Roster

Jan Brite
Arizona Department of Education

Melissa Busby
Central Arizona College

Maureen Casey
Arizona Early Intervention Program

Amy Corriveau
Arizona Department of Education and
Arizona Head Start Collaboration Office

Dawn Craft
Arizona Association for the Education of
Young Children

Terri Doolan
Arizona Department of Education

James Emch
Arizona Child Care Association
Valley Childcare

Claude Endfield
Northland Pioneer College

Diane Fellows
Child & Family Resources, Inc

Jonathon Adam H. Gonzales
Arizona Head Start Association

Dawn Henry
Association for Supportive Child Care

Susan Jacobs
Association for Supportive Child Care

Mary Jamsa
Southwest Human Development

Naomi Karp
United Way of Tucson and Southern Arizona

Holly King
Building Bright Futures and Bright Choices
Child & Family Resources, Inc.

Shanna Kukla
Pima Community College

Laura Landis
Arizona State Training and Technical Assistance
Center

Sibieanne Martinez
Community Extention Programs

Barb Milner
Arizona Infant Toddler Institute

JoAnn Morales
Eastern Arizona College

Dr. Martha Munoz
Northern Arizona University

Lourdes Ochoa
Arizona Department of Health Services

Dr. Karen Ortiz
Helios Education Foundation

Dr. Pamela Powell
Northern Arizona University

Erin Raden
Arizona Child Care Association

Jakob Raskob
Arizona Department of Economic Security

Nicol Russell
Arizona Department of Education

Michelle Saint Hilarie
Child Care Resource and Referral
Child & Family Resources, Inc.

Christine Shrader
Valley of the Sun United Way

Alan Taylor
Southwest Human Development

Alexandra Thorson
Teach For America * Phoenix

Brenda Tomlin
Southwest Human Development

Helen Unangst
Arizona Department of Health Services

Tim Valencia
Office of the City Manager, Youth and Education Programs

Dana Vela
Sunrise Preschools

Dr. Mary G. Warren
Prevent Child Abuse Arizona

Brad Willis
Arizona Department of Economic Security