

# Maricopa County Workforce Development Board Strategic Plan: Progress Report

January 2024

## Partnerships

### Goal 1

Optimize the culture of collaboration among the core partners and providers.

*Strategy 1.A: Deploy a unified platform for partnership and referrals and ensure universal adoption of the chosen platform*

#### January 2023

We are investigating the best options for implementing a universal platform for tracking Title partner referrals and collaboration. Currently, Maricopa County Human Services Division (HSD)/Workforce Development Division (WDD) implemented the Dynamics platform a year or so ago. The UniteUS platform is utilized by all other AZ workforce areas. At this time, these platforms do not interface, but our plan is to continue working with our IT staff and our new One-Stop Operator (OSO), Equus, to develop ways that these platforms might interface.

#### January 2024

The UniteUS platform is being rolled out to all appropriate staff in the Workforce Development Division. Training has been scheduled, and this universal platform should enhance our ability to communicate with all partners. Additionally, work continues to build relationships with the One-Stop Operator and our core partners. We acknowledge the opportunity to improve and apply the MCWDB best-in-class philosophy in this area.

### Goal 2

Expand the role of the Maricopa County Workforce Development Board in regional economic development efforts.

*Strategy 2.A: Actively engage in partnerships with local and regional economic development organizations.*

#### January 2023

We have seen limited progress in this area so far in 2023. These efforts will move forward when we begin engaging economic development partners in early spring 2023. Economic development is one of the three focus areas of the Annual Central Arizona Regional Workforce Summit in the summer of 2023. Economic development professionals will integrate with education and workforce development specialists in this collaborative event.

#### January 2024

Partnerships in economic development have progressed this past year. MCWDB staff have been active in the Arizona Association for Economic Development (AAED) to connect with leaders in this area. Regional partnerships with the City of Phoenix, Pinal County, Greater Phoenix Chamber Foundation, WESTMARC, and many other municipalities have allowed for better workforce integration and economic development. Plans for this next year include a continuation of the 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Arizona Regional Workforce Summit in September 2024. The 2024 Central Arizona Regional Workforce Forum will focus on economic development, education, and workforce development.

## Goal 3

### Expand the role of the Maricopa County Workforce Development Board in the local education ecosystem.

*Strategy 3.A: Actively engage with K-12 school districts in bridging the career readiness gap between K-12 and post-secondary education institutions.*

*Strategy 3.B: Convene employers and educational providers.*

*Strategy 3.C: Construct a career literacy initiative that will support the educational system in introducing students to the local labor market's high-value career pathways.*

#### January 2023

Beginning in the fiscal year 2023, the MCWDB modified its bylaws to allow for the expansion of the MCWDB committees. This change set the stage for the inclusion of representatives from K-12, CTED's, and post-secondary entities. The Youth Committee added representatives from WestMEC, ElevateEdAZ, Grand Canyon University, and the Maricopa County Community College District. Current and ongoing recruitment is underway for representation from the K-12 community.

As a part of the Annual Central Arizona Regional Workforce Summit, we plan to include education as one of the three focus areas. Our hope is to convene employers and educational providers as we address collaborative workforce solutions.

#### January 2024

We have made respectable progress in engaging educational leaders from K-12 through post-secondary. The MCWDB Youth Committee engages in conversations around ways to bridge the gap between K-12 and the current career pathways for students. The Youth Committee has discussed career pathways, from those requiring little or no formal schooling beyond high school to opportunities for those open and able to attend formal and informal education after high school graduation. One of the focuses of this committee is how the Arizona@Work system can provide support for all who qualify. The Youth Committee continues to expand its roster to include all stakeholders across the education spectrum.

The MCWDB staff has begun reaching out to professional organizations in career and technical education, school administrators, school board members, and others to educate these major stakeholders on career literacy issues and better inform them of the opportunities in the in-demand industries of today and tomorrow.

## Goal 4

### Strengthen regional collaboration among the Maricopa County Workforce Development Board and other local workforce areas.

*Strategy 4.A: Explore best practices for regional collaboration.*

*Strategy 4.B: Investigate the potential to establish a regional entity to support the pursuit of grants and other opportunities*

*Strategy 4.C: Establish quarterly meetings to collaborate with other local workforce areas in addressing regional solutions to workforce development issues.*

#### January 2023

Our focus on a regional approach to workforce issues has gone from monthly discussions to the point where we are establishing the 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Central Arizona Workforce Summit. This collaboration involves three major workforce areas: Maricopa County, the City of Phoenix, and Pinal County. Additionally, we have convened the first collaborative meeting involving the Board Chair's from the three workforce areas along with the Executive Directors from these areas.

#### January 2024

The planning and coordination of the 2023 Arizona Regional Workforce Summit in June 2023 was the catalyst for the close partnerships in the central Arizona region. The Executive Directors of each respected workforce area of Maricopa County, the City of Phoenix, and Pinal County continue to meet at least monthly to discuss innovative approaches to workforce development and how we can look at solutions from a regional perspective.

In July 2023, the MCWDB approved a new Regional Initiatives Committee focusing on regional collaboration. The committee membership includes leaders, staff, and Board members from all three areas, and subject matter experts in workforce development. The committee will have a significant role in guiding the planning and implementation of the 2024 Central Arizona Regional Workforce Forum, which will take place in September 2024.

# Impact

## Goal 5

### Increase participation of individual job seekers and businesses served across all Maricopa County Workforce Development Board title partner programs<sup>1</sup>

*Strategy 5.A: Develop and implement marketing and outreach strategies to drive participation and public awareness of the title partner programs in the ARIZONA@WORK system.*

*Strategy 5.B: Build and leverage relationships with community-based organizations and local businesses to encourage partnerships with the title partner programs in the ARIZONA@WORK system.*

*Strategy 5.C: Annually review, identify, and prioritize the in-demand industry sectors in Maricopa County.*

*Strategy 5.D: Assess in-demand industry needs and education programs to identify gaps.*

*Strategy 5.E: Convene in-demand sector stakeholders to develop career pathways to alleviate labor market shortages.*

#### January 2023

Our staff works closely with many community partners in developing new initiatives and marketing strategies to drive participation in title partner programs in the ARIZONA@WORK system. With the recent onboarding of a new OSO, we anticipate a significant increase in awareness of Titles II, III, and IV. Much work is needed to include increased participation and awareness of these specific partner programs. The scope of work and involvement of all title partners is included in the OSO contract and will be monitored regularly to ensure title partner inclusion.

The current Maricopa County In-demand industries are being analyzed and reviewed for potential recommended modification by the Employer Connection Committee to the Executive Committee and MCWDB Full Board for consideration. The most recent review was conducted in 2018. A new MCWDB-approved selection of in-demand industries will be the goal for spring 2023.

#### January 2024

For the second year in a row, the MCWDB Employer Connection Committee (ECC) analyzes our in-demand industries and occupations. As part of the committee's goals, they will review and examine our current industry selection and explore potentially modifying the list based on the economic and labor market projections. The Arizona Office of Economic Opportunity has been a valuable partner. The ECC will submit its recommendation to the MCWDB Executive Committee and eventually the Full Board for consideration.

The participation of job seekers and local businesses continues to grow. We collaborate with our regional partners to continue to provide services as WIOA allocations dwindle. It will be necessary to continually assess the availability of funds as we expand our client and business partner base.

## Goal 6

### Maximize the scope of services available to individuals served by our title partner programs.

*Strategy 6.A: Evaluate community resources to increase services and assets available to ARIZONA@WORK participants.*

*Strategy 6.B: Increase the number of providers on the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL)*

#### January 2023

MCWDB staff works closely with WDD to monitor and evaluate the scope of services available to individuals served by ARIZONA@WORK. The services and assets will be reported at the MCWDB Full Board meetings on a regular basis.

Providers listed on the approved Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) are evaluated on a regular basis. Our goal is to transfer monitoring of the ETPL to the MCWDB staff instead of the service provider side (WDD). This will be accomplished as we fill open staff positions on the MCWDB staff in spring 2023. This transfer of oversight will bring the ETPL procedure more in line with WIOA guidelines and will facilitate routine reporting and evaluation of the ETPL.

#### January 2024

Management and oversight of the ETPL have been transferred from WDD to our MCWDB staff. This has resulted in the MCWDB more closely overseeing current programs on the ETPL, evaluating and assessing the applications of potential new providers, and interfacing with the state of Arizona to implement the ETPL according to the regulations. In 2023, we had five new providers and 20 new programs.

Changes to the services provided are routinely shared with the Board, including allocation changes that impact services.

<sup>1</sup> Title Partners include Workforce Development Activities (Title I), Adult Education and Literacy (Title II), and Wagner-Peyser Act (Title III), Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Title IV).

# Innovation

## Goal 7

Position the Maricopa County Workforce Development Board as a forward-thinking strategic leader.

*Strategy 7.A: Research global best practices in workforce development.*

*Strategy 7.B: Create best practices for engaging the public on the topic of Maricopa County workforce trends*

### January 2023

MCWDB staff has established and maintained a presence on social media platforms including Instagram and LinkedIn. Routine and regular communication of activities and special events will continue to expand with the use of additional social media platforms.

MCWDB staff attends many local and regional conferences and seminars to remain engaged with national, state, and local partners. In March 2023, four staff members and seven MCWDB members plan to attend the National Association of Workforce Boards (NAWB) Forum in Washington D.C. This will provide many opportunities for innovative research and discussion from workforce boards across the nation. MCWDB staff will present a follow-up report to the MCWDB Full Board soon after attending the NAWB Forum.

### January 2024

Best practice research and investigating successful innovative approaches to workforce development issues are an ongoing focus of our staff and Board. Many opportunities for sharing are available locally and regionally.

Our staff and Board members continue to attend the National Association of Workforce Boards Summit in Washington, D.C. This event has proven to be a valuable avenue to share and explore best practices. At the March 2024 Forum, we are being nominated for the Trailblazer Award, which honors a workforce development board that has been a leader in adopting the changes envisioned in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

## Goal 8

Create system-wide standards derived from implemented best practices that improve the scope and quality of services from partners and providers.

*Strategy 8.A: Document and evaluate past strategies and initiatives*

*Strategy 8.B: Identify and compile successful practices from core partners and providers*

### January 2023

A compilation of best practices from core partners will be disseminated later in the fiscal year. Many of these will be the result of a closer relationship with our OSO and a regular examination of the quality of services provided.

### January 2024

The relationship and performance of our One-Stop Operator has shown room for improvement. The scope and quality of services and building positive relationships with the core partners are significant roles for the OSO. We hope to implement changes over this next year to improve results for Goal #8 significantly.