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FIRST THINGS FIRST

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December 29, 2009

Dear Arizona Early Childhood Development and Health Board Members,

The Northwest Maricopa Regional Partnership Council is requesting permission from the Arizona Early Childhood Development and Health Board to invest \$50,000 to expand regional participation in the Early Learning Child Care Study.

During the initial development of the FY 2010 funding plan by the Northwest Maricopa Regional Partnership Council, funds were set aside for regional evaluation activities. The Board placed that funding request on hold for further development in December 2008. Since the request was placed on hold, the Northwest Maricopa Regional Partnership Council has been working diligently to establish the region's priorities relating to evaluation. On September 8, 2009, the Northwest Maricopa Regional Partnership Council determined that it would be in the best interest of the Regional Partnership Council, and the communities in which the Regional Partnership Council serves, to invest \$50,000 in evaluation activities that will provide a clearer picture of the regional Early Care and Education System.

Currently, there is a lack of adequate data and analysis related to the First Things First key measures: number of children enrolled in early care and education, vacancies in early care and education, and current cost of early care and education. This is especially true at the regional level, where additional needs for planning information have been identified related to: quality of current early care and education, demand for early care and education, and prevalence of unregulated early care and education.

To address this need, the Northwest Maricopa Regional Partnership Council has voted to expand regional participation in the Early Learning Child Care Study.

The scope of work for this study has been prepared and released to the University Consortium, and the key research questions to be addressed in the study are as follows:

- What roles do socio-economic, demographic, regional and supply-specific factors play in the choice of mode of child care?
- How big is the present demand potential for child care in child care facilities, home child care, and unregulated care in the different regions of Arizona?
- What are the key decision factors for families? (e.g. What is the impact of cost, proximity, age of child, children's special needs, and cultural competence)
- How many licensed and regulated early care providers are providing care?
- How many children (of each age group) could Arizona's licensed and regulated early care providers serve at their current capacity?
- Based on a sample, how many children (of each age group) do Arizona's unregulated early care providers care for on an average day?
- Based on a sample, how many children (of each age group) could Arizona's unregulated early care providers serve at their current capacity?
- What is the cost of care to parents across localities and ages served?
- Which providers offer care or have the capacity to offer care for children with special needs?

Northwest Maricopa Regional Partnership Council



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It is anticipated that the outcomes of the Early Learning Child Care Study will address the Regional Council's need for more information on unregulated care and parent demand for care. The Northwest Maricopa Regional Partnership anticipates that this investment will result in a richer and more accurate depiction of the regional needs and assets, which will allow for more informed and higher quality decision making.

At this time, the Northwest Maricopa Regional Partnership Council would like to request that the Arizona Early Childhood Development and Health Board approve the Regional Partnership Council's petition to invest \$50,000 to expand regional participation in the Early Learning Child Care Study.

Sincerely,



Jannelle Raddocia, Council Chair
Northwest Maricopa Regional Partnership Council