The preceding chapters in Greater Phoenix Forward offer human-services practitioners and administrators, as well as business, public, and nonprofit leaders, an analytic platform for planning. Collectively, the ASU scholars who contributed to this volume have more than 200 years of experience studying human-services infrastructure, clients, and delivery systems, especially in the Greater Phoenix area. Drawing on their research, they share knowledge about the present and speculate on issues that are likely to have profound effects on our community’s future well-being.

For those who take planning seriously, this kind of knowledge can be especially empowering. If we were to plan and develop public policies for human services as seriously as we do our physical infrastructure, we would ensure that Greater Phoenix is known, not only for its economic development and population growth, but also for its attention to human and social potential. In turn, earning a reputation as a good steward of the human condition would make Greater Phoenix that much more desirable as a place to live and work. In the end, a city is known for its people and for the quality of life it offers to all of its residents.

It is tempting to think that only a subset of the population is touched by the human and social-services sector. In fact, the effectiveness of that sector affects everyone. The downtown business community knows well, for instance, that how the city and county deal with homeless people affects not only the homeless, but all who work and live downtown; that, in turn, affects the economic potential of the central core. Understanding these implications led to the public-private-nonprofit partnership that produced downtown Phoenix’s human-services “campus” for the homeless, an outstanding example of forward planning and action that benefits homeless people and the community at large.

Human and social services are not minor players in the economic landscape. Taken together, they are a major economic sector, not only in terms of the clients they serve but also the jobs they provide. While the human and social service sectors are perpetually under-funded with respect to demand, they comprise the third-largest “industry” in Arizona.

This report is meant to promote dialogue about our collective future. It consists of 11 chapters written by professors in ASU’s College of Public Programs, with additional contributions from researchers in ASU’s W.P. Carey School of Business and at Morrison Institute for Public Policy. These scholars have spent their professional lives researching their fields, and were chosen both for their subject expertise and for their familiarity with Greater Phoenix. They seek to provide understanding of causes and consequences, and are able to take a long-term view. However, they do not confront the daily pressures and trade-offs faced by practitioners in these various areas. For that reason, this report is meant to create dialogue with leaders in the practitioner and policy communities. Thus if this report were to be read and shelved, or even read and praised without leading to further engagement, it would not have served its intended purpose.

Due to the nature of scholarship, professors are subject experts and so the report is organized by subject. One criticism both of scholarship and practice in the area of human services is that they exist in silos. It is a fair criticism. There have been repeated calls to move away from single-sector planning, but while many agree that it is a good idea, it is very difficult to achieve. We hope that this report provides a pathway that will prove useful to develop integrated planning.

Fundamental issues that contribute to each and every challenge in human services—poverty being the most obvious, and seemingly the most difficult to ameliorate—arise in every one of the chapters. There are other crosscutting themes, as well. In this final section of the report, we have highlighted five of those themes in order to place all the chapters in a larger context.

CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Debra Friedman, Ph.D., University Vice President and Dean, College of Public Programs, and Rob Melnick, Ph.D., Director, Morrison Institute for Public Policy and Chief Operating Officer and Executive Director, Global Institute of Sustainability
FIVE CHALLENGES FOR FUTURE PLANNING

Challenge #1: The Comparative Youth of the Greater Phoenix Population

Maricopa County’s population is younger than the national average. The City of Phoenix’s population is, on average, even younger. As the chapter on demographics notes: “While retirement-age migrants continue to move into the area, their numbers are dwarfed by the numbers of young adults moving to the area.” In particular, there is a disproportionate number of youth, ages 5-14. What difference does that make for the human-services sector? A lot, it turns out.

If we think of this group as an elephant moving through a snake, the idea of advance planning for their special needs becomes relevant. What might those special needs be?

Acute Mental Health Care

José Ashford observes that, given the large number of youth, “we might start to see marked increases in enrollments to the RBHA for persons with a diagnosis of schizophrenia, and increases in hospitalization and in bookings in the Maricopa County Jail system, when these reach their late teens and early 20s.” Previous research has shown that nationally, mental-health hospitalizations increase during these ages, and so planning would suggest both prevention and ramping up acute-care services for youthful individuals with serious mental illness.

Crime

There is a well-known association between youth and crime: the older the group, the fewer the criminals. Taken together with the mental disorders common for adolescents and young adults, according to Dr. Ashford, we can expect to see greater demand for mental-health courts, jail health services, and specialized probation officers.

Young Families

As this population group moves into late adolescence and young adulthood, we can expect to see an increase in the number of young families with all of the demands that this places on the human-services sector. According to Nora Gustavsson’s research, “Many of these families...will be monolingual Spanish with wage earners in the lower-income occupations. This combination will strain the current capacity of CPS as well as the larger child welfare community.”

Substance Abuse

Substance abuse among teens—especially, alcohol, tobacco and marijuana use—remains high. Regrettably, as Marsiglia, Nieri, and Becerra note, “Arizona has higher-than-national drug use rates in several indicators,” including alcohol use, heavy drinking, and cocaine use. They report that “64% of juveniles committed to Arizona Department of Juvenile Corrections facilities...reported lifetime methamphetamine use...Of those, 47% reported daily meth use and 27% reported weekly meth use...The average age of first-time methamphetamine use for adolescents in ADJC facilities was 13.6 years.” In their study of seventh-graders in Phoenix public schools—an important age group because it is the time when drug experimentation often begins—abuse of prescription drugs is also prevalent.

Parks and Recreation

In Chapter 12, Professor Virden notes that, given the higher poverty rate for children in our area, “One implication...is an increased need for after-school youth recreation programs, youth centers, and sport fields/facilities, particularly in lower-income urban areas.”

From these few snapshots of implications of the relative youth of the Greater Phoenix population taken from the report—there are many more—the directives for planning are evident. There is enough research to give us a strong sense of what we can expect in terms of trade-offs in addressing the needs of the 5-14 age group in the next five years and beyond. But these chapters also offer clear pathways to prevention. For example, Marsiglia, Nieri, and Becerra provide evidence for community, family, school, and individual factors that protect against substance abuse. These are not all intuitive or obvious. For instance, less-acculturated Latino youth have a lower rate of substance abuse than their more-acculturated counterparts. Dr. Gustavsson notes that there have been many reforms in the child-welfare sector, but there are other research-based steps that would lead to more effective resource use and greater levels of service. Each author offers such recommendations.

Ultimately, as a community, we will end up both investing in prevention services and paying for treatment. The ratio of prevention to treatment dollars will depend upon our will to plan for that future—the sooner the better.

Challenge #2: The Complex Service Environment, for Clients and Providers

In Professor Hall’s chapter on the Human-Services Infrastructure, there are two intimidating illustrations: one portrays a client’s perspective in searching for services such as food, medical services, and housing; the other shows the dizzying array of funders and providers that populate the sector. Even veteran practitioners have a hard time fully knowing a single sector. Clients—who are often challenged by time, money, educational level, and language—have little hope of mastering the system.

Federal, state, county, and city funding all play major roles in supporting services at the local level. Each has its own reporting and accountability requirements. And each suffers from unpredictable levels of funding which, in turn, affect every service provider. Examples abound throughout the report.
Poverty, child welfare, mental health, substance abuse, and aging programs all benefit from—and suffer from—the variability of providers and funding sources.

Add to this mix the critical role of nonprofits that have proliferated to fill voids in human services. As Professor Ashcraft explains in Chapter 3, the nearly 19,000 Arizona nonprofits fill gaps between the market and the state, provide delivery systems upon which the public sector depends, and work in partnership to provide essential services across the full spectrum of human needs. In her chapter on child welfare, Professor Gustavsson asserts that “...the public child welfare sector could very well collapse in total chaos without the nonprofit sector.” With respect to some services, such as parks and recreation, there are major players among the nonprofits—such as the YMCA and the Boys & Girls Clubs—that serve as essential partners in the public provision of services.

It is tempting to critique the human-services sector from a business-driven perspective. One might ask, then, what a business perspective might offer in the way of direction under conditions in which very few of the parameters are under the control of the practitioners. Gerald Grinstein, former CEO of both Delta Airlines and Burlington Northern, once explained why it was more fun to run a railroad than an airline: Relative to railroads, airlines have very few degrees of freedom, governed as they are by federal regulations, restricted by labor union contracts, and subject to the global vicissitudes of gas prices. One might say the same about leading a social service unit: There are very few degrees of freedom, many regulations, and vulnerability to the upswings and downturns of local, state, national and global economies. Worse, when there is a downturn in the economy, caseloads increase while funding decreases.

**Challenge #3: Data**

One of the challenges of compiling this report was the absence of systematic data across the human-services sector. While each author has utilized the best data available, they are a far cry from the kind of systematic data required for a proper integrated analysis. More important, however, the absence of systematic data hampers the efficient provision and use of these services. Neither providers nor clients can determine the full array of alternative opportunities to solve problems, nor can they choose among alternatives based on an empirically driven fit. Practitioners cannot know how well their efforts have paid off, or not, nor can they know what has worked for their clients in settings other than their own agencies. For example, it would be good—and important—to know whether participation in a YMCA after-school program was followed by enrollment in a drug-abuse program...or not; whether Latino adult clients were served as effectively as Anglo clients by the same provider; whether participation in arts programs leads to a higher rate of academic achievement among homeless youth when combined with housing assistance; and so on.

Why aren’t the data available? There are many reasons. Building this kind of relational database would be an expensive up-front investment, and would require continuing, predictable funding—indeﬁnitely. An effective data project in the human-services sector would have to cross all boundaries of public, private, and nonprofit agencies. Participation would be necessary from all. And everyone—practitioners and clients alike—would have to be convinced that the ethical standards governing the use of the data were inviolable. A tall order, to be sure.

Can it be done? Perhaps there is a lesson from the medical profession—with its many specializations, providers, rules and regulations—which has managed to ﬁnd a way. Of course, that did not happen until demands for accountability from the insurance companies and HMOs exerted sufﬁcient pressure. There is no such comparable force in this arena: Clients, who have the most to gain, are in no position to act collectively.

The urgency of immediate needs also overwhelms long-term investments of this sort. There is no question where the next dollar should be spent when confronted with a hungry child. Yet our dilemma remains: How many more dollars will that child require, what is the best way to serve her, and which provider should do so?

Professor Hall tells us what we need to know in the coming years as our population increases dramatically. He writes, “To better understand and improve the region’s future human-service infrastructure will require better information and evaluation of efforts. This could include:

- A Greater Phoenix human-services budget by functional areas...
- An inventory of needs, assets and human-services delivery mechanisms...
- Comprehensive, objective evaluation of existing human-service interventions...
- Human-services outcomes and measures to track progress toward those goals.”

“Other good questions are likely,” he notes, “but answers are difficult because data are lacking.”

**Challenge #4: Labor Force Shortages in the Human-Services Sector**

The shortages in the human-services sector rival those in any sector, including nursing. Among the findings of this report:

- The part of the nonprofit sector that provides human services is projecting a significant increase in demand.
- Many veteran mental-health professionals are coming of retirement age, while demand is increasing.
In the child welfare arena, Child Protective Services is facing a staffing shortage that makes it unable to meet present demand, let alone future needs, and turnover due to working conditions continues to be high.

Arizona 2020 and the state Department of Economic Security have identified preparation for an aging population as a key goal, while the U.S. Department of Labor anticipates significant shortages in both human-services and health-care professionals trained to work with the elderly.

There is a growing need for culturally competent service providers in all sectors, including providers fluent in Spanish.

Greater and more diverse services will be required for the nearly 40 million visitors expected in Maricopa County in five years.

To meet the growing resident population demands on park and recreation services, there is a need for “more youth and senior programmers, inclusion and therapeutic recreation staff, park rangers, and more bilingual staff.”

Increases in educational opportunities for social workers, parks and recreation practitioners, and nonprofit leaders are critical to meeting these demands. So too are changes in curriculum to meet new needs, scholarship support, and improvements in working conditions.

Challenge #5: Budgeting for Human Services (in a Difficult Economy)

Implicit in the challenges described in this report is the need for sufficient financial resources to meet the human-services needs of a rapidly growing and diversifying population. It is, to use the appropriate cliché, the elephant in the room. Clearly the public and nonprofit sectors in Greater Phoenix and the state already dedicate considerable funding to building and maintaining the area’s human-services infrastructure. But while there is always an argument to be made for improving the system’s efficiency, it is a fact of life that adequately addressing the needs of more people usually costs more money.

Certainly, this logic prevailed when Arizona policy makers determined long ago that funding formulas would be used to annually determine public allocations for the state’s K-12 schools and for health care for the indigent. The alternative would have been to continue waging annual battles over these amounts. However, for many of the human services analyzed in this report—for example, the protection of children and their families, the availability of important recreational amenities, and special services provided to the aged—no such formula prevails. Thus tough economic times—which happen to coincide with the release of this report—create substantial stress on both the people needing human services and the leaders who wish to offer them.

We here face a classic dilemma of public policy: What goods and services can we provide for whom, within the constraints of responsible public budgeting?

Public administrators in Greater Phoenix, and the elected politicians who appoint them, are known worldwide as some of the best public managers and public fiduciaries. They have done great service to their communities by making smart decisions despite the dizzying pressures of rapid population growth that would befuddle lesser professionals. They have done so during both tough economic times and good ones. During all these times, the pressures to maintain and develop the area’s physical infrastructure have understandably enjoyed a high priority. Clearly, no one who lives in the region wants to face unnecessarily overcrowded roadways, insufficient sewers and waste disposal, or inadequate power and water.

That said, such legitimate physical needs of the community usually compete for the same discretionary public funding as do human-services needs. With our area now facing an unusually difficult public revenue picture, what will we decide regarding finances to grow and enhance human services? If history is a guide, they will be inadequate to meet the considerable demand. And, notwithstanding the substantial support that the nonprofit sector may offer, government revenue will continue to be the majority funder of human services.

Yet we will pay, either in prevention or treatment. The only question is about that ratio.

QUESTIONS AND CHALLENGES FOR PUBLIC POLICY

Although Greater Phoenix Forward is not a policy analysis per se, the analyses nevertheless have numerous implications for public policies that could improve the human-services infrastructure in Maricopa County. What follows is a partial list of questions and challenges derived directly from the chapters. It illustrates a few especially important implications of those are covered in the report:

- Migrants, retirees, and immigrants face somewhat different obstacles to economic success. Public programs to address the needs of poor people will not be especially effective if they are “one-size-fits-all.”

- Many of the public services for tourists are partially paid for by residents. This raises issues of equitable distribution of the costs of these services. Should
visitor expenditures and taxes paid by the private side of the tourism industry be made sufficient to eliminate current subsidies to visitors, and how is this to be balanced against the substantial economic contributions of the tourism industry to the state?

- The federal funding formula for placement supports foster homes over the homes of relatives. Therefore, state dollars have to be used to cover the costs of placement with relatives. The state may want to examine the tradeoffs between the quality of care by relatives compared to care in foster homes and the attendant costs.

- As the population of Greater Phoenix ages in place, policymakers will need to consider public services for the so-called “notch group” of our older population—individuals whose incomes put them above current eligibility guidelines for home and community-based services, but who are unable to afford services at full cost.

- Less acculturated Latino youth report lower substance-use rates than their more acculturated counterparts and than non-Latino White students. This reflects a certain resilience phenomenon against substance use that has interesting implications for prevention and service delivery.

- Adolescents and young adults are at the greatest risk of being involved in crime. This relationship between age and crime has policy implications for persons diagnosed with mental disorders who are also involved in the justice system. Members of the current 5-14 age cohort will begin reaching the late teens and young adulthood within the next 15 years, which likely will increase demand for use of mental health courts, jail health services, and specialized mentally ill caseloads provided by the Maricopa County Probation Department.

- Maricopa County’s national—and even local—label as a retirement mecca is out of date. While retirement-age migrants continue to move to the area, their numbers are dwarfed by the numbers of young adults moving to Greater Phoenix.

- Hispanics are moving toward a majority-minority population in Phoenix in the next 10 years. Parks and recreation services will need to consider the cultural preferences of this population segment, particularly in the older areas of Phoenix and in established suburbs with a substantial number of Hispanic residents.

- The substantial inter-generational transfer of individual wealth to soon occur suggests that many human-services nonprofits will receive gifts that will enable them to extend their missions in significant ways.

Readers of this report are reminded that it is not meant to stand alone. Instead, it is the first phase of a project that seeks to engage individuals who are the stewards and leaders of human-services delivery in Greater Phoenix. In short, it is a tool to be used as background information, context and, hopefully, inspiration for tackling the tough choices that lie ahead.

Certainly, sophisticated practitioners are already familiar with key data presented in their particular areas of expertise. For them, the value of this report hopefully will be the breadth of data and analyses across a wide spectrum of human services, the policy implications therein, and the authors’ speculations about the future.

In any case, the College of Public Programs and Arizona State University remain committed to assisting human-services practitioners and community leaders by providing high-quality research, convening policy discussions, and teaching coming generations of public servants who will build, manage, and grow the human-services infrastructure that the growing population of Greater Phoenix will surely need.

Debra Friedman, Ph.D., joined ASU in 2005 when she was named Dean of the College of Public Programs, one of three colleges that established the ASU Downtown Phoenix campus in 2006. In February 2008, President Crow appointed her to serve as University Vice President at the ASU Downtown Phoenix campus while remaining Dean. Friedman led the relocation of the college to downtown, refined its vision and strategic plan, and has secured new funds during her tenure as Dean. She has mobilized a Phoenix Futures Board and Dean’s Investment Board comprised of influential and highly-visible community leaders.

Rob Melnick, Ph.D., has been the Director of the Morrison Institute for Public Policy at Arizona State University—Arizona’s oldest “think tank”—since 1987 and holds an academic appointment as research scientist in the School of Public Affairs. He also is Executive Director/Chief Operating Officer of ASU’s Global Institute of Sustainability.
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