

FROM INSUFFICIENCY TO SELF-SUFFICIENCY:
A COLLABORATIVE STUDY AND RECOMMENDATIONS
FOR GREATER SAHUARITA AND GREEN VALLEY

Presented by the FITSS Collaborative

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SUMMARY

In April 2016, representatives of about twenty community groups met to discuss ways to help low-income residents of greater Sahuarita-Green Valley move “From Insufficiency to Self-Sufficiency.” The participants—leaders from government, education, business, media, human services, faith, and recreation—expressed their desire for greater cooperation among community organizations and more services for low-income residents so that we can strengthen and secure our community. The meeting resulted in a Steering Committee that undertook an investigation into the most significant needs of low-income residents and drafted this study and its recommendations to promote greater collaboration as well as initiatives to address the underlying causes of poverty and insufficiency.

Quantitative data reveal that approximately 20,000 or one quarter of the 80,000 residents of our region live with incomes below 185% of poverty, a benchmark widely considered the minimum income for self-sufficiency. This means that the relatively low poverty rates in the core communities of Sahuarita and Green Valley mask significantly higher near-poverty rates, while near-poverty rates in some rural areas are shockingly high. Those who live in insufficiency include seniors and disabled persons who are unlikely to improve their incomes and will thus need long-term community support. However, many others will be able to move to increased self-sufficiency with an appropriate combination of physical resources, community support, job training, and job opportunities.

The Steering Committee undertook interviews, surveys, and conversations to learn the greatest needs as expressed by low-income residents themselves as well as by human service providers, faith leaders, businesses, school administrators, and others. Low-income residents prioritized low-cost housing, living-wage jobs, job skills, and affordable health care, as well as food. Human service agencies, faith leaders, employers, and school administrators added basic employability skills, mental health care, family and school support services, and help for the elderly. Participants also suggested other ways to help that are less urgent but nonetheless important.

This Steering Committee report recognizes that our community already has significant resources to address insufficiency. The most important resource is the willingness of community organizations, and indeed the general population, to cooperate in helping those in need. The Committee agrees that it is essential to increase advocacy and collaboration in providing services that are inadequate or lacking.

Toward this end, we recommend the adoption of four guiding principles and the formation of five working groups. The guiding principles—partnership, self-sufficiency, holistic development, and community participation—form the outline of a mission statement. The five working groups—steering committee, employer-focus, workforce development, school-focus, and human services coordination—serve to promote collaboration and advocacy.

To be sustainable, the working groups will require support from all sectors of the community. Most especially, we believe the support and often leadership of governments, schools, and businesses are essential to the success of this effort. Thus we also recommend that working groups include representatives from these entities, as relevant,

as well as a diversity of stakeholders such as non-profits, faith-based organizations, different communities, and potential clients.

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INTRODUCTION: HISTORY AND RATIONALE

Like many communities, the Sahuarita and Green Valley region is a study in economic contrasts. By national standards portions of our area are relatively wealthy, but we know that there are many who have insufficient means to live a stable and dignified life. In fact, by the definition used in this study, 185% of the federal poverty level, over 8,000 persons live in insufficiency in Green Valley and Sahuarita and more than 20,000 in our larger region (see page 12 below). This insufficiency in our midst has given the “From Insufficiency to Self-Sufficiency” (FITSS) Project energy and focus as we have undertaken the following study.

When thirty community leaders from all sectors—government, education, business, media, human services, faith, and recreation—met in April 2016, a consensus quickly emerged around the goals for our project. We knew we needed to know more about the extent and nature of poverty in our region. Furthermore, there was a strong agreement that proposed solutions had to be collaborative and innovative and focused on addressing the root causes of poverty to move individuals from insufficiency to sufficiency. Today, most non-profit and government funding addresses immediate, urgent needs. Such funding is vital and indeed needs to be strengthened. However, if we are to reduce poverty we must create more opportunities to shorten the lines at the food banks, close educational gaps, and prepare and support those who are able to work.

Over the last nine months, the Steering Committee has engaged more than two hundred clients and community stakeholders in identifying the community resources that are helpful, those that need strengthening, and those that do not exist. These conversations also have revealed the impact of poverty on the many individuals and families who struggle to attain and maintain economic self-sufficiency. Perhaps the largest challenge for those living in poverty and near-poverty is the constant stress of having to solve the daily challenges, often with a lack of hope that their prospects will ever improve.

Those who serve the community in education, health care, human services, business, and government also directly and indirectly experience the impact of poverty. Educators struggle with family crises and home conditions that impede children’s learning. A single mom raising two children on two part-time jobs has little time to be deeply involved in her kids’ lives. Health care providers and emergency rooms need to address acute conditions that could be forestalled with regular medical care, but transportation problems, demanding work schedules and lack of dollars for co-pays get in the way. Non-profit service providers deal with one or two sets of issues with a client, but often don’t have the resources to address the whole person. Businesses struggle to hire well-qualified workers who have work histories and are prepared for the workplace. Also, when the residents of a community do not have adequate financial wherewithal, they buy basic goods only, and local businesses suffer. And finally, those who earn poverty-level wages pay fewer taxes to enable government to provide high-level and responsive services.

PROCESS OF INVESTIGATIONS

The Sahuarita Food Bank and the Greater Green Valley Community Foundation jointly convened the April 2016 meeting of leaders from Pima County communities south of Tucson. Attendees included representatives of local and regional non-profits, governments, churches, businesses, schools, and others:

- Community Food Bank - Green Valley
- Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona
- Continental Elementary School District
- Farmers Investment Company
- Friends in Deed
- The Good Shepherd United Church of Christ
- Green Valley News and Sahuarita Sun
- Green Valley Recreation, Inc.
- Interfaith Community Services
- La Posada
- The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Stake
- Non-Profit Leadership Institute
- Pima County Community Development and Neighborhood Conservation
- Sahuarita Unified School District
- Town of Sahuarita (Council and Manager's Office)
- United Community Health Center
- United Way of Tucson and Southern Arizona
- Valley Assistance Services
- White Elephant

Freeport-McMoRan, Sharpe and Associates, and Crosspoint Church were invited but unable to attend the initial meeting.

The lively discussion on April 22 focused on community needs, existing cooperation, and ways to improve our efforts. The group decided to form a Steering Committee to investigate the needs of our communities and prepare a case statement with proposals for next steps. About half of the attendees volunteered to serve and additional organizations attended various meetings or became part of the Steering Committee as well (e.g., Pima County Community Services, Employment and Training; Pima County Sheriff's Office; Pima Council on Aging; and DES on the Go.

The members of the Steering Committee included

Teri Bankhead	Assistant to the Town Manager, Town of Sahuarita
Jim Conroy	Chief Operating Officer, Green Valley Recreation, Inc.
Kara Egbert	Council Member, Town of Sahuarita
	The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Stake
Mary Jane Goodrick	Executive Director, Community Food Bank - Green Valley and Amado
Scott Hagerman	Superintendent, Continental Elementary School District
Chris Kang	Executive Director, Valley Assistance Services
Curt Keim	Board Member, Sahuarita Food Bank
Margaret Kish	Director, Community Development and Neighborhood Conservation
	Pima County
Linda Leatherman	Manager, Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, Pima County
Tom Murphy	Mayor, Town of Sahuarita
	Board Member, Sahuarita Unified School District

Rev. Randy Mayer	Community Liaison, United Community Health Center
Penny Pestle	Pastor, The Good Shepherd United Church of Christ of the Santa Cruz Valley
Michelle Phillips	President, Sahuarita Food Bank Board of Directors
Kristian Quihuis	Executive Director, Greater Green Valley Community Foundation
	Director, Regional Connections Office
Edilia Quiroz	United Way of Tucson and Southern Arizona
	Enrollment/Outreach Specialist Manager
	United Community Health Centers
Sage Ramirez	Manager, Budget Insurance—Sahuarita Office
Rosalva Zimmerman	Manager, DES on the Road, Department of Economic Security
	Pima County

The Steering Committee met six times during the summer and fall of 2016 and once in early 2017. The first task was to devise ways to query businesses, faith leaders, school administrators, and especially existing clients of local human service agencies. We decided on a mixed approach using mostly individual interviews, but also surveys and small group conversations. The group suggested short lists of questions that could stimulate relevant answers. For example, for some clients:

- How do you pay your bills?
- How do you get your food?
- What agencies (service providers) do you know about? Which ones help you the most?
- Do you have access to a computer that you use regularly?
- What would make your life easier?

And for businesses:

- How many people do you employ who are in non-salaried, hourly wage positions. Would you be willing to share your starting wage?
- Do you know if you have employees who are on some type of government program such as AHCCCS, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, KidsCare?
- Do you experience turnover with your lower-wage employees? Do you have a sense of the causes? Which ones are most common?
- What kind of services does the community need to help reduce turnover for your business?
- What kind of services would help your lower-wage employees the most?

Once the Steering Committee had agreed on its approaches, we divided the work as follows:

Clients	Community Food Bank-Green Valley	Mary Jane Goodrick, Jean Kralej
Clients	United Community Health Center	Edilia Quiroz, Tom Murphy
Senior Clients	Valley Assistance Services	Chris Kang, Joey Zimmerman
Non-Profits	Greater Green Valley Community Fdn	Michelle Phillips
Faith Orgs	Sahuarita Town Council member	Kara Egbert
Business	GGVCF and Sahuarita Food Bank	Michelle Phillips, Penny Pestle, Curt Keim
Schools	GGVCF and SFB	Michelle Phillips, Penny Pestle, Curt Keim

Specifically, the information on strengths and needs came from the following:

- Individual interviews with forty-nine clients of United Community Health Centers
- Forty telephone interviews of clients of Valley Assistance Services
- Individual interviews with eighty-three food bank clients
- A small group conversation with leaders of four locally-owned businesses
- Individual conversations with thirteen faith leaders
- A focus group of ten non-profit leaders
- Individual conversations with two school superintendents

As the interview and survey process proceeded, the reports on these qualitative data were presented to the Steering Committee for discussion. Committee members also shared information about their organizations and other resources. Indeed, the Steering Committee meetings began to serve as a valuable means of collaboration. The dedication to completing this process and contributing to the report is noteworthy.

As the interviews, surveys, and conversations finished and reports were submitted, the authors began to write this report and share it with the Steering Committee and other readers. When the Steering Committee had finished several drafts, the report went to the entire group that had first met in April of 2016. On February 28, 2017, that group added their comments, suggested ways to communicate the report to the community, and agreed to be involved in supporting the report's recommendations in a variety of ways.

We envision this report as part of a long-term process that will improve the ways we address insufficiency in our region. We both welcome further suggestions and realize that the ideas we have proposed will be modified as we attempt their implementation.

FINDINGS FROM COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Our investigations reveal that the greater Sahuarita and Green Valley area already supports those with insufficiency in many ways, but also that more can be done. We list our strengths first to recognize the contributions of hundreds of individuals and to remind readers that we are building on a solid foundation.

STRENGTHS

Overall: The greatest strength in human services in greater Sahuarita-Green Valley is the willingness of community stakeholders across sectors—nonprofit, government, and business—to build collaboration and explore innovative and systemic approaches to increasing self-sufficiency.

Our Agencies: Human services agencies with significant presence in the community include United Community Health Center, Valley Assistance Services, Arivaca Human Resources, Casa Community Services, DES on the Road, Community Food Bank—Green Valley and Amado, and Sahuarita Food Bank. These and other local agencies will join the collaborative working groups in the future.

Our Philanthropies/Capacity Builders: Philanthropy and capacity-building entities in the region include Country Fair White Elephant, Greater Green Valley Community Foundation, United Way of Tucson and Southern Arizona, Freeport-McMoRan Foundation, Green Valley Council Foundation, Green Valley Recreation Foundation, St. Vincent de Paul, plus many individuals in community.

Our Locally-Owned Businesses: This area is fortunate to have many locally-owned businesses that can be involved in the project. Examples of larger businesses that have already contributed ideas include FICO and La Posada and smaller businesses include Homewatch Care Givers, Green Valley Heating and Cooling, and Budget Insurance. Many locally owned businesses are already offering their employees services such as employee assistance programs (EAPs), education assistance, savings plans, and job skill training.

Movement Toward Region-Wide Economic Development: Current economic development activities include the Freeport-McMoRan Economic Development Initiative, designed to build capacity; the enhancement of the Town of Sahuarita economic development staff and plans; and the coordinated efforts of the Greater Green Valley Community Foundation, Green Valley Council, Green Valley Recreation, Inc. and Green Valley Sahuarita Chamber of Commerce, which are designed to retain existing business and attract new businesses

Local Government Support: The Town of Sahuarita and Pima County have increased their focus on poverty, resulting in contracts with non-profits for results-oriented services, using both local and federal dollars.

Our Schools: School administrators are eager to collaborate with the community for support for students and their families.

Faith Community Initiatives/Missions: Several faith communities have their own programs to support movement toward self-sufficiency. For example, there are The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints employment initiative (in Tucson), lunch programs for community residents, counseling, aid for those in need, and volunteers for a host of community programs.

NEEDS

Through small group discussions, one-on-one interviews, surveys, and telephone calls, the Steering Committee gathered a significant amount of information regarding the available services in our communities, the need for additional services, and the strengths that already exist in addressing poverty. The findings were consistent across the groups.

Greatest Unmet Needs Reported by Clients:

1. Affordable housing, lower rent: Many respondents to the FITSS surveys, interviews, and small group discussions expressed concern about rents that are high and increasing regularly. The most affected seem to be young families, single parents, and single seniors. High utility bills only compound the challenge. While there isn't a large homeless population in our region, interviews of United Community Health Center clients reveal that many people live in homes with multiple families, or they "couch surf" or have some "other" housing situation. Few households with insufficiency can afford a mortgage.

2. Jobs and job skills: Closely related to the need for housing is the need for jobs at wages above the poverty level. Without adequate income, families cannot afford housing, utilities, food, health care, transportation, and other necessities. And even where good jobs are available, many individuals cannot obtain and keep them without appropriate training and education. The result is a cycle of insufficiency that is difficult to break. Although training exists in Tucson, there are many barriers to participation, such as transportation, the cost of courses, scheduling during work hours, and the lack of applicable training. Individuals need help securing relevant experiential training.

3. Lower health care bills: While the two communities of greater Sahuarita and Green Valley present different demographics, both have similar needs when it comes to health care. Lower income families with children and elderly adults alike need assistance. Studies show that eligible people often do not sign up for AHCCCS (Medicaid); this may be an issue of pride, lack of knowledge about health care options, and providers who do not accept Medicaid for payment. Families with enough resources to participate in the Affordable Care Act have found fewer plans available and higher deductibles. Emergency rooms frequently charge high co-pays, while some medical providers and hospitals require co-payments prior to treatment. Fortunately, health care options are available through the United Community Health Center, but medical bills are often still out of line with available income. And as health care and prescription costs rise faster than overall inflation, there is an ever-widening gap for those in need.

4. Food: Food bank clients report they need food because of low income and the high cost of other necessities. Whether because of low Social Security earnings, disability, seasonal work, job loss, minimum wages, or other low-income situation, many

individuals and families simply can't afford sufficient food. And clients also report that rent, utility bills, childcare, and healthcare must come first.

Additional Significant Unmet Needs Reported by Clients:

5. Landlord responsiveness for repairs: The lack of affordable housing is often accompanied by casual or non-existent attention to needed repairs by landlords, despite repeated complaints by tenants. In general, Arizona's laws side with landlords not tenants.

6. Lower utility bills: Surveys of those living on the economic margins repeatedly speak to the size of utility bills and the very difficult trade-offs between rent, utility bills, and feeding their families.

7. Inadequate public transportation: There are few public transportation routes within the Green Valley and Sahuarita area. While Dial-a-Ride is one dollar per ride for seniors and the disabled, it requires reservations and is inefficient. At three dollars per ride for others, the expense is too high to be used more than occasionally. The transportation infrastructure must improve to enable workers to get to their jobs.

Greatest Unmet Needs Expressed by Social Service Agencies, Schools, Businesses

1. Employability skills, including basic computer proficiency: Those seeking entry-level employment, particularly if not employed full-time in the past, often lack knowledge of the basic habits and skills necessary for the workforce such as promptness, reliability, how to relate to a supervisor/manager and fellow employees, and basic math. Good jobs in today's workplaces also require keyboarding and computer skills.

2. Mental health care: The non-profit organization conversation highlighted the need for increased mental health care options in our community. The National Alliance on Mental Illness estimates that one in five adults experiences mental illness every year. One participant noted that "We need to start focusing on that now.... We need to focus on collective impact." Mental illness often prevents individuals from being able to hold jobs, which then has a wide effect on their families and the community. Mental illness often co-occurs with drug or alcohol abuse, confounding the issues and demonstrating the need for broad treatment.

Children also suffer from mental illness and often manifest their problem in ways that are hard to diagnose and treat. If treated, they often receive only prescription drugs rather than counseling or counseling combined with medication. For both children and adults much more needs to be done through education, service provision, and cooperative assistance.

3. Services supporting schools: Family and personal crises have a major effect on school readiness and achievement. The child is often the symptom carrier of family crisis. Schools need more support to find resources for students and their families who are living in crisis and economic insufficiency.

4. Family assistance and advocacy: Most parents want to be good parents, but those working two or three jobs, single parents, parents with addictions, parents who need

parenting skills, and those with other chaotic family situations need assistance that is currently too episodic, too costly, or simply unavailable.

5. Assistance for the elderly: A significant number of interviewees were elderly individuals who will always have difficulty becoming self-sufficient. Many women are outliving their spouses and find their reduced Social Security and pension incomes inadequate. We also found that many elderly persons with limited income are raising their grandchildren and thus the grandchildren are also living in insufficiency. Our educators report that children who are being raised by their grandparents are those most likely to be in crisis.

In addition, many adult children with insufficient resources are taking care of their aging parents. One client at the United Community Health Center, for example, cares for her ill mother by using her savings and retirement to pay bills, but the money is running out. Her mother was denied disability and the client has been unable to secure a job locally that will allow her to be available in the event of an emergency. Households with insufficient means have no hope of affording adult daycare, let alone the rising cost of assisted living facilities and nursing homes.

Additional Significant Unmet Needs Expressed by Social Service Agencies, Schools, and Businesses

6. Public transportation. As described above.

7. Affordable day care for children and adults. Only when workers have affordable care for their children and disabled older family members can they take and retain jobs.

8. Posting of local job opportunities at locations where job-seekers congregate, such as food banks and other human services agencies.

9. Effective community advertising of the needs of human services agencies. Often community members will donate items such as car seats, backpacks, vehicles, and food if they are aware of the need.

FINDINGS FROM CENSUS DATA

What do available quantitative data tell us about the need for help in our communities? The most obvious figures are those that indicate poverty rates. In 2016 and early 2017, the federal poverty thresholds are \$11,880 for individuals, \$16,020 for a family of two, \$20,160 for a family of three, and \$24,300 for a family of four. Larger families get higher thresholds, so a family of eight needs \$40,890 to reach the poverty threshold. By the measure of the poverty rate, the core of our region, Sahuarita and Green Valley, is relatively well off, with 2014 poverty rates of 5% and 6% respectively, compared to the national average of 14.8% and Pima County average of 19 percent. (For selected data see Appendices 1 and 2 and Maps 1, 2, and 3.)

Favorable poverty rates mask, however, the needs in our communities. Even with relatively low poverty rates, there were over 2,600 people living in poverty in Sahuarita and Green Valley in 2014, the date of the latest census estimate. In our wider region, there are at least 8,000 people living in poverty. Moreover, research suggests most families don't become secure until their income reaches around twice the poverty rate. For this study we've chosen 185% of poverty as a conservative baseline. The census indicates more than 8,300 individuals in Sahuarita and Green Valley live below that level. Estimates for an approximate 10-mile radius from central Sahuarita and Green Valley suggest that at least 20,000 out of a population of around 80,000 live in such insufficient economic conditions. That's 25%.

Feeding America estimates that Arizona has the sixth highest rate of food insecurity in the country and southern Arizona has the highest rate in Arizona. 26% of Pima County's children experience food insecurity, a symptom of family economic insufficiency which threatens the long-term well-being of our community's children. Family income below 185% qualifies children for federally funded Free and Reduced-Price School Meals. (Note: food banks and SNAP/food stamps also use 185% of poverty as the income threshold for eligibility.)

Below are the spring 2017 percentages of children reported by Green Valley and Sahuarita schools who receive federally subsidized school meals.

Continental Elementary School	37%
Anza Trail	31%
Copper View Elementary School	23%
Sahuarita High School	38%
Sahuarita Intermediate School	42%
Sahuarita Middle School	43%
Sahuarita Primary School	35%
Walden Grove High School	26%

School officials note that these tend to be undercounts of those who might be eligible because some families and some older children do not register for various reasons.

If we use census data differently, we can see more clearly where there are pockets of higher need within our communities. For this study, we have chosen five so-called census tracts to represent different types of areas, urban and rural (see Map 2). For example, in Census Tracts 43.23 and 43.29 (which comprise the major housing developments of central Sahuarita), 15% and 8% of individuals respectively do not have incomes above 185% of the poverty level. Thus even in prosperous Rancho Sahuarita there are over 1,450 individuals living at less than 185% of poverty. However, the near poverty rates are significantly higher in some surrounding communities. For example, in Census Tracts 43.27 (west of I-19; Helmet Peak), 41.14 (Summit and east of Nogales Highway), and 41.20 (south of Whitehouse Canyon Road), 27%, 64%, and 33% of individuals respectively do not have incomes above 185% of poverty level.

These higher rates are reflected in registration of children in these Census Tracts for the Free and Reduced-Price School Meal program at some schools. At Summit View Elementary in Summit, for example, 93% of children utilize the program. And at Sopori Elementary School in Amado, 87% of children receive school meals.

Not surprisingly, the data also reveal that areas with less income per family or household tend to have higher unemployment, more single parents and grandparents responsible for children under 18, greater use of government benefits (such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program/SNAP/food stamps and Supplemental Security Income/SSI), more disability, lower educational attainment, and less available transportation. It is important to remember, however, that social service agencies report that their clients come from every community in the region.

RECOMMENDATION 1: GUIDING PRINCIPLES

As the Steering Committee considered recommendations, we quickly realized that we need to be explicit about the rationale for our work so that those who have not been involved will be able to understand our goals. Thus we propose the guiding principles below. When stated more succinctly, the guiding principles can form a mission statement: *Through organizational partnership we promote holistic development and sustainable self-sufficiency for low-income members of our community. We encourage the participation and support of the wider community in this effort.*

Partnership: The FITSS collaborative promotes partnership and sharing among organizations that help individuals and families in the greater Sahuarita-Green Valley region move from insufficiency to self-sufficiency. We encourage collaborative projects, joint funding proposals, and resource sharing.

Self-Sufficiency: The FITSS collaborative promotes services that help individuals and families become sustainably self-sufficient. These services include education and training and the provision of resources that meet basic human needs. We believe that no one in our community should have to live below 185% of the poverty level.

Holistic Development: The FITSS collaborative promotes holistic development of individuals and families. Toward this end, we emphasize relationships with individuals and the accompaniment of individuals and families on their paths to self-sufficiency. We believe that self-sufficiency includes emotional, spiritual, and mental, as well as material dimensions.

Community Participation: The FITSS collaborative promotes community participation in helping individuals and families move toward self-sufficiency. This implies education of the whole community, building bridges between diverse sub-communities, encouraging a sense of belonging, and requests for community support. It also implies that low-income residents are included in planning and executing the initiatives undertaken by the collaborative.

RECOMMENDATION 2: WORKING GROUPS

To achieve our mission, we recommend the formation of working groups that promote collaborative responses to the needs described above and ask others to join our efforts. The following working groups would promote collaboration and participation in helping low-income residents achieve self-sufficiency through focus on specific arenas, which would be closely coordinated by the new Steering Committee.

Steering Committee: This committee ensures that working groups are formed, that their efforts are coordinated, and that they maintain momentum in the spirit of the FITSS guiding principles. The Steering Committee promotes new collaborative initiatives and advocates for system-level changes required for self-sufficiency such as increased accessibility of affordable housing, public transportation, mental health care, and other human services. At least yearly it organizes conversations on self-sufficiency among community stakeholders.

Employer-Focus Working Group: This group promotes the availability of employer-based resources in collaboration with other community resources with the goal of increasing the effectiveness and well-being of employees. In cooperation with employers, it aims to establish one or more Employer Resources Networks to help employees find needed human services and physical resources while reducing the turnover of entry-level and lower-wage employees.

Workforce Preparation Working Group: This group promotes the establishment of workforce preparation initiatives at several locations in the region that emphasize the so-called soft skills necessary for employment such as personal readiness for work, resume preparation, and interviewing skills. It would also enhance existing initiatives for computer literacy, high-school completion, and English-language and basic math competency.

School-Focus Working Group: This group promotes the availability of resources that will enable students to focus on scholarship and personal growth. In cooperation with schools, it aims to establish a virtual or mobile Family Resources Center to help families of students find needed human and mental health services and physical resources.

Human Services Working Group: This group takes a broad-based view of available human services and assistance to clients and potential clients. It works with human service providers to promote concrete and collaborative changes in the way services are accessed and delivered. It undertakes initiatives such as the development or acquisition of web-based collaboration software and the placement of public notices of community and agency needs and job and services availability. It also will build on the recently-funded position of Success Coach, whose purpose is to provide intensive individual guidance and support in navigating the specific resources that will assist individual clients in achieving greater self-sufficiency. This position is a shared project of United Community Health Centers, Valley Assistance Services, and the Sahuarita Food Bank.

RECOMMENDATION 3: MOVING TOWARD SUSTAINABILITY

This report is a first step in that it highlights insufficiency in our communities and recommends a structure and focus areas on which to concentrate. A very important second step will be to present the report to the many and diverse constituencies in our region, answer questions, and then enlist others who recognize the potential for local and regional engagement in a process of improvement.

A third step will be to develop sustainable working groups that further the principles of this report. However, no matter how visionary, committed, and dedicated these working groups are, a voluntary effort such as this can succeed only with formal and sustained engagement by institutions, including governments, schools, faith communities, and businesses. Indeed, many of the needs discussed above are often addressed by governments or public/private collaborations. We are fortunate that Pima County and the Town of Sahuarita are committed to strong community development that provides for basic needs and supports systemic change in community and human services. Over time, they may be able to build more capacity for human services in the area.

Sustainability will come from the foundational work of the “From Insufficiency to Self-Sufficiency” project as it engages our local governmental and quasi-governmental resources, businesses, churches and other non-profits, and other institutions in addressing systemic issues of poverty so that all can prosper in our interconnected community.

CONCLUSION AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This report is a beginning and not an ending. It is intended to help bring about change in our community, government, businesses, and human services organizations. It presumes that we can build and engage support for the journey of those who desire to transform their own economic and personal circumstances. And because poverty and near-poverty have a profound effect on our children, our families, our seniors, and every sector in the community, it will benefit all of us to increase self-sufficiency in our region.

The Steering Committee recognizes that this is not a simple endeavor. It will require time, patience, and financial resources. Also, it may ask each one of us to look critically at some of our assumptions and expectations, as well as at the way we do things now. Individually and collectively, we will learn new perspectives, establish enhanced expectations, and change systems as necessary. Collaboration, honest communication, and mutual respect, so present in the process to date, must underlie how we move forward. We believe that our community is ready for this, and that we could become a model for reduction of poverty in other communities.

Our Thanks

The original conveners of the FITSS collaborating organizations, the Greater Green Valley Community Foundation and the Sahuarita Food Bank, are extremely grateful to those who attended the April 2016 Community Conversation and to those who volunteered to be part of the Steering Committee. This group has worked diligently and creatively to find its mission, to search out the perspectives of multiple stakeholders, and to craft meaningful and ambitious recommendations.

The Steering Committee appreciates the participation of more than 200 individuals, including human services clients, whose honesty was instrumental in creating a deeper understanding of the issues. We also thank Rancho Sahuarita and the Town of Sahuarita for providing meeting space over the last nine months.