Connecting Families to Community Resources

OCTOBER 2023

SWATH
South West Arizona Town Hall

COMPILATION STATEMENT

SOUTHWEST ARIZONA TOWN HALL FORUM

CONNECTING FAMILIES TO COMMUNITY RESOURCES

OCTOBER 13, 2023

The Southwest Arizona Town Hall (SWATH) met on October 13, 2023, at the Yuma Regional Medical Center Administration Building to discuss *Connecting Families to Community Resources.* More than 125 attendees discussed the need for equitable information and resource access across Yuma County to assist residents with their needs. SWATH partnered with First Things First to request community input on existing resources and resource connections in Yuma County, what Resource Centers could look like, and how these centers could be designed and sustained for equitable outreach and utilization.

Resources and Connections in Yuma County

Yuma County develops connections between organizations by providing resources to the community through word of mouth and through organizations that connect individuals to resources for specific needs such as those looking for childcare, work, and early childhood development. Local taskforces, coalitions, and organizations, specialized in their area of focus, provide connections between organizations serving their particular segment of the community. Social workers in organizations such as schools, the hospital and the health department often do this work. The Greater Yuma Economic Development Corporation, the Salvation Army, County Libraries, the public-school systems, WACOG, churches, and the Yuma County and City governments are examples of entities that connect various organizations and resources to the community.

There are several examples of specific entities connecting residents to resources. Kofa High School connects industry leaders and students through information, licensed certificates, and access to jobs via their medically based CTE programs. The Transitional Living Center and Recovery (TLCR) program provides linkage to resources and a catchment that provides food, resources and assistance to people transitioning from prison back to the community. The HOPE Center assists any parent who asks for assistance. Their staff can complete an assessment and refer the individual out to services. This center also works together with the EasterSeals Blake Foundation. Arizona@Work connects with partners such as unemployment insurance, veterans' services, farm worker agencies, and more. Sunset Health informs their patients about resources, holds parent meetings, advocates for patients, sets up transportation services,

networks with other agencies at health fairs and other events, visits assisted living homes and offers blood pressure checkup and COVID testing.

Despite the plethora of connecting assistance these agencies offer, most community members are not aware of the many services provided due to existing silos of information. Families often do not know of the services and agencies that exist or where to find them. Many families going to social workers in the high school ask for assistance in specific areas. This frames people into niches when they could have benefited from a broader range of services. While there is a broad knowledge of calling 911 in an emergency, in general, families do not know how to navigate the system and are treading water. A user-friendly center platform for non-emergency resources would assist county residents with this navigation challenge.

Each agency struggles to know who offers what resource. Currently, these organizations often use internet tools and their individual connections when the issues their community members face go beyond their specific resources. However, referrals involve detailed information of various agencies in different areas that often confuse and overwhelm community members.

Extending leader networks and sharing information is essential to know who is at the table and what resources they provide in Yuma County. Collaborative solutions are the best option for the broader community. The ultimate goal of developing these connections is to instill a culture of having entities reach out to be included in resource guides and resource fairs rather than those individuals tasked with building the resource guide having to track down organizations providing resources.

Development of connections between organizations needs to involve educating leaders in organizations about the importance of building relationships with other entities. Communication and networking provide the greatest opportunity for developing those connections. A centralized place, for a broad range of organizations to meet, network and share, through meetings or the creation of an association, would be the most effective way to facilitate and maintain connections especially for organizations and individuals that may already be stretched thin. Organizations also need a way to follow-up with each other once referrals or resources have been provided so that they can better understand whether the connections are being made and resources are being utilized. Some events that are already making connections are events such as town halls, WACOG events, and Yuma leadership training. These types of events are necessary to build those relationships. Hurdles to accomplishing those goals often include the time and timing of events.

Once these connections have been made by organizations the challenge is connecting information to individuals being served without overwhelming them with the plethora of resources available. There are many platforms in Yuma County that offer different assistance. Several online guides are available in separate locations. It is crucial that this separate information be brought together into one location. A combination of formats for

the resource guide is critical to meeting people where they are at. The formats need to also take into account and be provided in multiple languages, specifically in Spanish, as many community members are not comfortable communicating in English. Some examples of formats include technology, such as QR codes, on the college's digital boards, student handbooks, Parent and Student Vue events, school district websites, social media, bathroom stalls, and front desks of schools when families register for the school year. These are venues that people can readily access. Having an app on the phone that people can search for quickly and easily would also be a great resource. It would be a useful tool to place a resource guide in the computers on the rigs so that the fire department on the street can share resources with the community. Having a community guide would be beneficial for employers to share with their employees to help employees be "present" at work. Concerns about safety and security distract employees. A community guide would also be beneficial for public agencies, like Fire and Police, because they work with community members at vulnerable moments in their lives.

Trust is an issue. If households do not trust you, they will not admit to a need nor reach out for assistance. Therefore, it is key to build the relationships for a soft hand-off of the information, potentially by in-person conversations at public venues such as the county fair, Friday night markets, school sporting events and community resource fairs. For this and many other reasons, a warm hand-off of resources and advocated follow-up needs to be used with families to ensure they can access the resources they need. Often during a crisis or emergency, people may not think clearly and are overwhelmed at needing to call a list of different agencies for separate services. To provide the necessary soft hand-offs, there should be educators and counselors, who could ensure crucial information gets to those who need it most. Students are comfortable sharing with counselors as trusted adults in their lives. The development of Family Resource Centers needs to be at locations, such as libraries, that reach the broader community and where resources are already being provided. Being intentional about advertising is critical to ensuring the community members in need are aware of the resources. Student organizations can help facilitate the distribution of information, and existing programs and events can be used to further those efforts.

However, not all community members have access to technology or are comfortable using technology. Our county population includes those who cannot afford a cell phone and would not be able to scan a QR code. Therefore, tools need to be provided at locations people can easily access and there needs to be a focus on getting people to go to the places that have those tools. There are different mechanisms that work for different generations. Some need paper copies and others need internet. Organizations should consider asking people who in their family would be the best person to talk to.

An example of an organization focused on bringing the resources to a central location is First Things First who has partnered with 211 organizations to be able to include updated and accurate resource information across the state. However, First Things First focuses on young families with children from birth to 5 years old and as such, there needs to be

consideration in expanding the focus to other areas of the community as well. For instance, the City of Yuma is planning to offer a downtown center that could serve as a potential hub for resources.

A community survey could be conducted through an existing infrastructure, such as the City of Yuma. Many current activities appear to focus on older visitors and their interests and a broader outreach, in particular for the middle-aged residents, needs to be included.

Additional consideration needs to be given to the fact Yuma is also near the border and has many multi-generational homes. There is a feeling that the resources are only geared toward central Yuma. Some people do not have the courage to step into certain environments like the hospital and library. The focus needs to be to meet people where they are and invite them to have a voice at the table with multiple opportunities to meet at multiple different locations. We need to create engagement opportunities and create an inclusive environment without intimidation. Businesses such as barbershops, nail salons, daycares, dollar stores and grocery stores could be places to connect and have partners with the community to provide resources and workshops. Businesses could be the entry to providing information. Those owners need to be part of the discussions to build capacity and resilience for the community. This format has been explored through barbershops by connecting people to skin cancer screening. Non-traditional community places could be good partners to build those connectors and a referral network. The Chamber of Commerce, agriculture growers and civic organizations would also be good connection sources.

Resource Center Considerations

Yuma County is excellent at coming up with ideas to meet needs. The challenge is getting these ideas off the ground and out into the community. Resource Centers in our community could have both a physical and digital presence A brick-and-mortar facility is traditionally thought of as the epitome of a Resource Center; however, such a Resource Center could also include the compilation of resources into a digital format for those who do not want to seek out services in a particular location. Resource Centers could start small and grow organically and exponentially to serve our county, although this process will take time. Organizers need to be patient and build trust. Referrals to Resource Centers could begin within the community through school counselors, school social workers, and churches. Having a digital app, an at-home option, would support those who do not feel comfortable going out. Trained individuals throughout the county could provide a broader ability to share resources available. A rotating group of people educated and skilled at navigating through the system can provide the warm handoff that individuals and families need.

One format for the overarching organization is an independent entity with a largely virtual presence, but with its own employees and volunteers, and an advisory board, in partnership with local organizations. This format is likely the most effective way to

communicate and share information, provide networking opportunities, facilitate resources, locate centers, and research and develop the body of resources available. This type of entity would also ensure continuity and longevity. County and City governments should be heavily involved and have buy-in to the entity and its centers. Additionally, the potential use of grant-funded locations would benefit with extra numbers of visitors. A central Resource Center could also provide a solution to the issue of funding for organizations in providing individual services as it combines multiple resources under one set of staff.

A Resource Center could be one large facility or many little ones in different locations. In building Resource Centers in Yuma County, a critical first step is to change the name from Family Resource Centers to Family and Community Resource Centers to broaden the scope. The importance of creating all-inclusive Resource Centers is to ensure more than one agency could be under the same roof. This prevents users from getting lost, as is the potential if they need to drive or walk to another location for additional or different resources. Further, making a list of the core services needed could help with setting up a Resource Center. Health, wellness, and employment could be those core services that then could be added to based on expressed need by the community. Examples of potential expanded needs include food stamp services such as SNAP and childcare services.

It is important to know about in-kind support that already exists that can be leveraged to provide a facility and staff. Rebranding what is already in existence will be necessary so that people can receive outreach and knowledge of where to go for necessary resources. A potential source of staff could be social work students who are looking for internships or learning experiences. Arizona@Work offers paid internship positions. If it is not feasible to staff a Resource Center with all agencies at all times, a possible alternative is hoteling stations as a way where different agencies can use the same location at different days and times to help our communities.

A model of creating a one-stop Resource Center is the Yuma County Health Department that is located in one place as is the Regional Center for Border Health in Somerton. One possibility would be to create one main Resource Center as a hub that serves as the main location for all services and resources with possible smaller Resource Centers in other locations. Different agencies could have a space within this one location. A one-stop center should be open to those who need resources at different hours or on the weekends. Alternatively, the community could establish many Resource Centers in locations that already provide some services. This model placement of the Resource Centers needs to be at locations where individuals have easy access. Looking at a combination of freestanding entities, a mobile unit and facilities connected with existing organizations is possible. Adding a mobile unit would ensure access to the Resource Centers for remote community members.

The biggest challenge to establishing these Resource Centers is finding the funding to set them up. A possible solution is collaborating with organizations such as libraries,

schools, and even well-known fast-food corporations who already have the infrastructure in place. These Resource Centers need to be friendly, welcoming, and warm. Schools are another option because they are trusted within their communities and are already a resource for families; however, schools need to be careful due to risks to student safety and as such do not open their doors to the greater community. People think of schools as Resource Centers, but not everyone has children or feels comfortable in a school setting. Therefore, they would need to be supplemented with additional or different locations for Resource Centers. People who need resources at different hours also need to be considered. Additional options include existing community centers, such as the MLK Center, the Clymer Center, and more, which are already used by Parks and Recreation to reach out to the population. Health clinics, churches and senior centers also provide great potential locations. Libraries are friendly and welcoming environments and there are eight locations throughout Yuma County.

Transportation is an issue in Yuma County and resources need to be provided where people are located. Resource outreach should be located at places where people are already going. Since Yuma has deep roots in agriculture, one option is to offer mobile services. It is important to have Resource Centers in every part of the county with extended hours and weekend availability. For remote locations in the county, locations like the Dateland Library which is connected to the Dateland School and Dateland Post Office need to be considered. These existing centers could be used as a resource for various agencies.

Ultimately, the question in determining the location of a Resource Center needs to consider existing foot traffic at established locations and the space available to expand use. It is helpful to look for organizations where people already gather to ensure the ability for spreading the information by word of mouth and visibility. Resource Centers should serve every member in the community with needs to include those who are homeless. Offering a mobile service would bring the resources to where community members are located.

Since the county is reaching out to all the population, Walmart stores could be an ideal but non-traditional location to consider for Resource Centers since many community members go to Walmart. The area around Walmart stores could store different agencies.

Any Resource Center needs to be a venue where people feel safe and feel that people care about them. Locations should consider accessibility, comfort, and security – it should be centralized, easy to get to, and safe. Locating family Resource Centers at existing community hubs like libraries, health centers, and schools should allow for the greatest use of available resources. Doing so also allows each community to pick the best location for its population and greatest needs. The resources provided should cover a broad range of needs. Any organization that takes on the physical space for the family Resource Center needs to be comfortable giving up space for the needs of the center. It cannot be hidden or limited to a corner. For best practices, we should reach out to already established family Resource Centers.

The next challenge after establishing Resource Centers, is confirming their value through community member usage. We need to build the trust necessary to ensure community members will use the Resource Centers. Going to locations that are not are not traditionally thought of as locations for receiving resources may provide opportunities to connect with community members in need who would not seek out assistance alone. An example might be in Somerton there is a boba shop where a lot of people hang out. Young people go to Starbucks in San Luis and go to the gym to hang out and release stress. A taskforce could host pop-up family Resource Centers at popular community events and places, such as parking lots of local restaurants, near busy bus stops, at local parks, such as the Joe Orduno Park that hold large yard sales and other events, and events like Friday Night Munchies and First Friday's downtown. The community could start the Resource Center first as a 'pop up style' to become established and then work toward sustainability and finding stakeholders. A task force can tie in social media such as TikTok as it is now used across generations. It is important to market and promote resource information with different variations for the different generations such as flyers and social networks.

An additional challenge is reaching those community members who are isolated. Considerations should include partnering with Helping Hands and Catholic Community Services who often reach into this segment of the community. Families in need look for resources right away in the same location, such as food, services, healthcare, and more. Promotoras and other community health workers are trusted individuals who visit homes, reaching these isolated community members and providing information on what people need. Neighborhood specialists could help connect specific sections of the community with resources and build trust with families. Coordination with mobile services and a coordinator or neighborhood specialist would help empower the capacity to bring services to the communities.

The Process

A resource hub could help assess what the needs of the individual or household are. Emergency situations can be volatile and require immediate attention in one area with then bridging into other areas that would benefit the household. As such, Resource Center venues should be a soothing, calm environment with comfortable seating to make people feel welcome.

Potential classes should be scheduled based on the requirements of the geographical location needs. A survey should be taken and include the modality preferences. A list of questions should be asked to help direct individuals to the right resources for them and applications available. The County Library offers a similar assistance. Modalities will need to be available to those with disabilities as well.

The development of materials for Resource Centers should begin with speaking directly with the community. The Resource Center should provide the resources community members need. Information, services, and/or materials that will need to be covered at an

effective family Resource Center include: food assistance, cash and financial, child care, transportation, domestic violence, medical, mental health, rent assistance, early childhood, behavioral health, job prep and resume writing, pet care and needs, volunteer opportunities, programs available for students, legal assistance, social security, long-term/short-term disability, and the transition to Medicare. Two areas of particular importance to Yuma County are in the areas of mental health and job assistance.

In addition, there will need to be some support for unique needs. For example, families and children that need assistance navigating the McKinney Vento Program, which is for displaced minors that are out of parents' care/home and do not have a fixed residence. A Resource Center should include information centers that take materials that already exist from organizations providing services and should ensure a feeling of equal importance between organizations reflected in the materials.

The materials and the individuals staffing a Resource Center need to be able to assess individual needs of community members that come into the Resource Centers and provide accurate and detailed directions to access the available resources, so the community member doesn't waste time traveling to resources that aren't applicable to their needs. The established entity should gather information for all the organizations and determine what resources they offer. The entity could create a physical and online directory, but it would be best and most helpful to develop a SDOH (Social Determinants of Health) System, or something similar, where families could answer a series of questions and be directly connected with organizations to meet their needs.

Follow-up also needs to happen with families who have received referrals or have used resources to make sure their needs have been met or whether there might be new or different needs. In addition, "first points of contact" need to better understand what resources are available and know that when they make referrals that connections are actually being made.

Organizations could also provide direct links to applications when appropriate or helpful. Centers should also be collecting data on a regular basis to determine whether needs are being met within the community they serve and whether there might be new or different needs that are not being met. Surveys would be a good way to collect data on what is needed within a community. Surveys could be collected at center events or through other means. Family Resource Centers (FRCs) may also best provide a central location to bring those resources to the community members rather than sending them to other locations.

Having one application that people can fill out and can be forwarded to separate agencies would help our community without the need to complete several different forms. In this way, different agencies can learn of the needs that a family has and can reach out to provide services. People need help with filling out applications for various services that a one-stop shop could provide in person. Experts who know the correct way to complete forms can help community members in need. Forms that lack the correct answer can have repercussions to the individual who may miss out on needed services or benefits.

Having one form to complete instead of many would truly help individuals who need various services. There are areas in Maricopa County where one form is being piloted and shared with other agencies who can follow up with applicants. There is also software that can help reach many agencies and require only one form. Cybercom is a language service that can assist those needing information in different languages. There is a Redcap data system that connects families to resources and partners with the Yuma County Health Department. This system supports staff that call families directly on the phone. There is an initial intake with demographic information and needs and then a follow-up is conducted within a month and then two months to ascertain if the household has been able to access the resources needed.

A kiosk station could be made available in several locations to provide availability of resources and consistency. A determination survey could help direct individuals to available resources. Adding specific directions with maps (color-coded) and "warm hand-offs" to individuals that can provide help would be of assistance. A visual map instead of lists would give the community members a more effective guide. Landmarks are continually used to help direct people to locations. Large font would help as well.

Accessibility is an issue and can take various forms. This needs to be considered when focused on reaching the entire county population. For these reasons, materials should be presented in multiple formats and be tailored to the community, both in the information and the formatting, like the photos used for flyers. Formats need to be tailored to different types of individuals, in multiple languages and presented in written format, both digital and paper, as well as in presentations and in-person conversations with community members. Digital formatting can include community calendars, websites, and hyperlinks located on a central website - all with the goal of widening the reach. Additionally, using social media like TikTok, would be a good delivery method. Flyers, pamphlets, and informational booklets could also be used.

The county and the library, along with schools could help share materials with individuals. Adding a tab for community resources on websites would be a form of communication online. Testimonies or shared stories are also valuable in showing how they/others benefited from the resources. A toll-free number for the Resource Center would ensure access to Resource Centers by community members. Billboards could also be effective about getting the word out when the centers first get started. All advertising should also be colorful and eye-catching. One-sheets would also be really helpful – one for each type of service or age group with a QR Code sending them to a website with resource and organization information.

One-on-one meetings with community members in connection with facilitators to tailor the information to the individual would assist with sharing information. Such meetings would begin with a needs assessment, connecting that individual with the then applicable resources and following-up with a survey to ensure that the Resource Center can continue to adapt to the needs of the community.

More direct communication with other people will help build trust. People want to sit down and talk with someone to feel heard and valued. During the pandemic people had to do things virtually and many are tired of interacting through technology and crave personal interaction.

Another potential resource would be peer-to-peer support through Resource Centers to help build support systems for impacted community members. This would require sufficient space in the Resource Center to provide those community gatherings. This space would need to be child friendly and needs to be a welcoming non-judgmental atmosphere. The services provided by Resource Centers need to be advertised to the broader community. Some potential places for the advertising to be placed would be break rooms of large employers, highly trafficked areas such as bathrooms, and billboards.

One of the most effective forms of advertising would be accomplished through empowering families to help other families, from those who have utilized the Resource Center and then taking the information they have learned to others in their network. The advertising of Resource Centers can be grounded in word of mouth from those who have used the Resource Centers. Community members who have used the Resource Centers will best be able to spread the word if they are able to have takeaways from the services received at the Resource Centers.

Staffing is always a concern, so the assistance of technology is critical to be able to connect to outside resources and potentially even make the connection for the community member to the next step. Staffing may be supplemented by internships in connection with those working towards degrees in related fields such as education and social work. Partnering with local higher education institutions to identify potential candidates and bring on interns that are interested in social work and non-profit work is an option for potential staffing.

Staff need to be actively engaged in the community and be trained in what resources currently exist. Those who will work within the family Resource Center will need to be very knowledgeable about what is available, from the front desk representative to the director. Understanding how to navigate it, getting notices on the latest updates that have been made, and hosting regular meetings with users of the guide and those organizations that are included in the guide to ensure that staff is up to date on how the individual organizations operate is key. These staff should be also diverse, as various age groups would feel more comfortable talking with someone from their own age group.

Training should include cultural awareness or competence and should touch on mental health basics. Empathy or sensitivity would be an important part of the training program. Having training on how to work with others is so crucial and should include being empathetic in order to interact appropriately with others.

Crisis communication skills are key to defusing situations so that people can process what they need in a traumatic circumstance. Trauma-informed communication techniques are

essential, in particular when people are in an emergency situation. This helps people know how to interact with diverse community members that have gone through difficult experiences in life.

Not utilizing appropriate communication skills can lose the person who is seeking assistance. De-escalation training is important to be able to work with others so that people can be at a mindset so they can share what they need. The restorative practices should include conflict resolution training. Training for staff also needs to include training in ethical boundaries, including FERPA, confidentiality, customer service training and self-care.

To help with the above goals, training could also include the teaching of various communication methods – certain methods seem to work better than others do.

Training should be for employees and volunteers. Training would be conducted in both directions – by the established center entity to the organizations, employees and volunteers, and by the organizations to center employees and volunteers. Group training would likely be the most efficient method and should occur as needed related to turnover or growth. However, training should be determined based on the needs of each community center and should be flexible. Staff and volunteers should be trained initially, and the training should be refreshed annually. Realistically, training never really stops for anyone who is working within the Resource Center. The county requires a certain number of hours of training to be done on a regular basis.

Stakeholders/Task Force

Everyone in the community needs to be involved at various levels and to varying extents to ensure the success of Resource Centers. The task force mentioned during this town hall should be involved in building this program from the ground up. The sooner they are brought on board, the better. Holding a summit would be a good start. Bringing stakeholders together as a taskforce or forum can provide a venue to share the benefits that go to the community and those benefits that will then be reflected on the agency or business or educational institution.

There is an investment and a return on that investment. This should be tackled at different levels, including the advocates, the community, and the agencies. This would allow for a streamlined and continuous process. The task force would also work on understanding the operational processes and complexities of each organization and the resulting challenges. Part of that process would be identifying how we overcome those challenges.

The task force should operate as a board with at least one hired position. The board and director would oversee bringing agencies together and looking at the data. Additionally, the task force would need to show data with the beneficial results of the work when resources are available to families. A good example of this format is the Foundation of Yuma Regional Medical Center Board. Under this structure, community members serve

on the board with a paid director to carry out the activities designated by the board. Members of the board become primary stakeholders and have the buy-in in directing actions to serve the community.

However, specific important outside stakeholders to consider include: City of Yuma; County of Yuma; medical providers; elected officials; lawmakers; school officials, government officials, community leaders, local media, the key organizations already offering services, such as First Things First; the county health department; the food bank; businesses large and small; medical professionals; Rotary clubs; service clubs; faith-based organizations; veteran services; Arizona Complete Health; AHCCCS; Banner; Yuma Regional Medical Center; higher education institutions, especially those fields that have required internships and trainings; school districts; law enforcement; court systems; military; those agencies that see the most people (police, fire, Emergency Medical Services); children's services; housing; the Department of Public Services; Arizona Public Service; Yuma County Area Transit (YCAT); Southwest Arizona Human Resource Association; restaurants (fast food and other); homeless that are willing to be involved; the LGBTQ community; and families.

Households in Yuma County are the customers of large businesses. People will go to businesses who serve their needs well. This connection needs to be made known to businesses so that they buy back into the community. Walmart has health hubs where you can receive different healthcare services. There is buy-in and use from the community. This could represent a model and experience in serving the greater community and could possibly have funds. These members could be invited to the table to obtain buy-in.

One coordination process for the stakeholders as a steppingstone to more involvement would be to use existing stakeholders' websites by placing a hyperlink to Resource Centers for further resources. This would be an effective and easy way to spread the word and connection of Resource Centers. To ensure visibility, this information would need to be on the first screen of websites.

Sustainability

Staffing sustainability of the Resource Centers should be encouraged through volunteers from stakeholder organizations, such as schools. This ensures long-term buy-in from individual community members.

Once established the Resource Center will need to be sustained. Ensuring continuity and sustainability can be done through establishing buy-in by organizations through peer pressure; everyone else is doing it so we should too. To sustain the buy-in, it will be important to share the why through testimonials from community members who have benefited from the Resource Centers. The testimonials can be presented both digitally, such as social media, and in presentations to leadership. Presentation to the community

is necessary to expand knowledge of the Resource Centers by the community, while presentations to leadership of stakeholders ensures continued buy-in.

To do all this work there will need to be staff for the Resource Center along with the paid executive director. The paid positions would need to be funded, not just initially but also sustained into the future. Hired staff (several positions) would be needed to keep information up to date. There needs to be a team with specific roles that have accurate information. First Things First has a taskforce of volunteers that are currently updating the resource guide, but it will likely need to be shifted to paid personnel to ensure sustainability. People that represent and share the lived experience of our county are probably the best recruits to pull from to understand the circumstances and help those people in need. Another source would be to use our existing pipeline of students as a source of potential recruits for careers. This is a structure already in place that could be more greatly utilized.

As such, funding will be a big piece for ensuring sustainability. Funding this entity and these centers is the most significant challenge. To begin with, organizations who already have budgets for these types of activities could use those funds to help fund the entity and centers. This would also be true for human capital. In addition, grant funding will likely be essential. Connecting with stakeholder organizations with the process of grant writing will keep stakeholders engaged in the process. Many organizations have philanthropic entities that could provide funding or grants. The staff could seek out further grants to keep the Resource Center funded and sustained. There are grants that can be combined and partnered on that can fund and sustain various agencies. Collaboration on grants is key to obtaining these funds. It is also possible to reach out to elected officials at the national level for needed funds.

Being structured as a resource hub, the Resource Center can act as a place where collaboration is accomplished, and agencies do not compete for funds since the agencies are together under one umbrella. A regional grant that shows collaboration and greater coverage has more opportunities to be chosen. Keeping a regional focus when submitting for grants will give us more opportunity to receive funds. We will need data and metrics to establish needs and track progress. Another alternative is to mirror the high schools' social media to fund certain programs.

Linking grant money from Resource Centers or other umbrella organizations to providing services and volunteering with the Resource Centers would also help to ensure sustainability. This is coupled with the advantage to the organization of the exposure at the Resource Centers. The next step to tying the obligations to the grants is to establish a set schedule of when the organizations will come in to provide services at the Resource Centers. This step is necessary to ensure that community members can continue to come back and rely on the availability of the resources beyond their initial visit. Agencies could rotate monthly to service the Family Resource Center and provide resources on certain days of the month to sustain continuity.

The other aspect of ensuring sustainability of Resource Centers is to ensure continued buy-in from stakeholders. Collaboration with community members is important and surveys should be sent to agencies to ensure that the information listed is accurate.

Leveraging existing resources and focusing on growing employees from current residents can be very beneficial to Yuma County and can sustain Resource Centers through staffing. There should be talks in the middle school and high school levels informing students of careers that are available to help others in Yuma County and provide incentive to stay in Yuma County. This exposure helps students focus on what they want and what they have options for in the future in public service careers.

To encourage sustainability of information access in the community, new businesses could be given a resource guide at their start up.

There are a number of areas that can assist with utilizing and sustaining equitable information to the Yuma County community. It is important to recognize that the faith community can reach more people than we realize. They can help share resources in their announcements, counseling, and activities. Networking with private and charter schools can also assist with information sharing.

In order to leverage resources as a community and build engagement, we need to establish an outreach plan including social media (i.e. TikTok, Instagram, etc.), print, radio (i.e. Jennifer Blackwell), email, and more. To gain momentum, we could host a contest for community members to create an eye-catching logo for the Family Resource Centers. This will create community buzz and spread awareness. Face-to-face communications are the best way to connect and ensure stakeholders continue to be engaged. Additionally, stakeholders are also more likely to stay engaged if the general community is engaged. Specifically, data needs to be shared with stakeholders to keep them engaged together with the stories of who was helped and how they were helped. Data in numbers is needed but stories touch people's hearts. Being able to transition people from those being helped to those helping others has a great impact on the community. A survey could be conducted to see how connected people feel to the community and share with community stakeholders so they understand how they can help.

Monthly or yearly meetings and trainings for Resource Centers' staffs will be necessary for sustainability of the knowledge base necessary to keep Resource Centers effective. Along with consistent outreach by Resource Centers to organizations that Resource Centers are referring to, it is important to ensure providing the most up to date information. Stakeholders will continue to see the value if they know their organization's information is accurate.

Yuma County is known for its collaborations that are successful and help our community members. Finding solutions to an equitable way of sharing important information on resources will help our residents to a better quality of life.