

State-of-the-State Report Post-School Transition in Arizona

August 2021



COLLEGE OF MEDICINE TUCSON

Sonoran Center for
Excellence in Disabilities

Acknowledgements

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We respectfully acknowledge the University of Arizona is on the land and territories of Indigenous peoples. Today, Arizona is home to 22 federally recognized tribes, with Tucson being home to the O'odham and the Yaqui. Committed to diversity and inclusion, the University strives to build sustainable relationships with sovereign Native Nations and Indigenous communities through education offerings, partnerships, and community service.

About the Sonoran Center for Excellence in Disabilities

The **Sonoran Center for Excellence in Disabilities** envisions a future where all community members participate fully, recognizing the strength of our diversity in abilities, culture, age, and lived experiences. The Sonoran Center for Excellence in Disabilities is one of 67 UCEDDs in the United States and its territories. Sonoran Center for Excellence in Disabilities endeavors to support people living with developmental disabilities through all stages of their lives, through interdisciplinary education, service development and dissemination, research, and impacting policy at the local, state, and national levels. Our programs are based on the principles of cultural respect, empowerment, and self-determination. Our governance, leadership, and programs are inclusive of diverse cultures, ages, geographies, and experiences.

The Sonoran Center for Excellence in Disabilities supports *Arizona Employment First*¹, an initiative that works with stakeholder groups across the state to redefine and rethink how we work with and for individuals with disabilities to increase successful employment outcomes.

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¹ Employment First is a nationwide philosophy and movement to support competitive integrated employment as the expectation for all Arizonans who have a disability. Arizona Employment First is a collaborative, community-engaged shift to support systems change in the form of policies, services, and funding structures since 2013. Supporters know that access to “real jobs with real wages” is critical in preventing people with disabilities from experiencing long term poverty, dependence, and isolation. For more information, visit azemploymentfirst.org.

Youth-to-Adult Transition Program Area

The **Sonoran UCEDD** collaborates with local, state, and national organizations to assist people with disabilities to become fully included in their communities. Youth-to-Adult Transition is a core area of research and programmatic development.

To explore the **Sonoran UCEDD's** research products and resources related to youth-to-adult transition, visit <https://sonoranucedd.fcm.arizona.edu/resources/publications>.

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Project: Exploration of Transition Services in Arizona

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Executive Summary

Issue: Several publications have identified persistent challenges and ongoing needs for effective support of post-school transition for students who have disabilities. However, little is known about locally tailored strategies stakeholders are using to overcome these challenges and which strategies could serve as models for other communities with similar characteristics.

Project: Sonoran UCEDD conducted a statewide assessment of transition services in Arizona to identify exemplary practices, areas of need, and make actionable recommendations for improvement. A mixed-methods qualitative and quantitative approach was utilized to gather information from school and employment services personnel who provide transition services.

Findings: Ongoing Challenges

- Low levels of funding, inadequate staffing, and high turnover rates are ongoing obstacles to transition success.
- Transition stakeholders in schools and local communities report limited involvement from state agencies including Vocational Rehabilitation and Division of Developmental Disabilities, and this gap increases with rurality.
- Communication and coordination difficulties among *all* transition stakeholders—including students and families, schools, local business communities, local governments, and state agencies/staff allow students to fall through the cracks.
- Transition stakeholders have difficulty attracting and retaining the passionate staff that are the foundation of transition success.
- Successful transition requires access to multiple transportation options, which are rarely available across AZ's varied and expansive geography.

Findings: Opportunities for Action

- Transition services vary substantially according to contextual factors such as level of urbanization, community size, and existence of groups with specific cultural and/or linguistic characteristics. Yet, even within communities, variations in transition services are apparent and directly influence outcomes.
- Transition stakeholders are developing additional innovative strategies that can serve as models for other communities; several such strategies are described below.
- Communities of Practice in Transition (CoPTs) are repeatedly identified as a desired, effective, and useful strategy that can be tailored to specific community types.
- Successful transition services incorporate local community awareness and purposely engage in relationship development outside of school settings.
- Communities are exploring creative partnerships to support transportation.
- When students/families can be engaged, their investment supports transition success.

Introduction

Background

This State-of-the-State report summarizes a study conducted by the Sonoran University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD) at the request of the Arizona Developmental Disability Planning Council (ADDPC). It describes the current landscape of post-school transition outcomes across Arizona (AZ), including overall strengths, opportunities for improvement, identification of exemplary practices and highlighting unmet needs. It continues with urban, suburban, and rural school and community profiles. Strategies to enhance transition success across all Arizona communities are identified.

Defining Success: Transition Outcomes

AZ Employment First seeks to ensure that competitive integrated employment and/or pursuing post-secondary education is the preferred outcome for young adults with disabilities transitioning out of high school. In Arizona, 34.1% of people with a disability are employed, whereas the employment rate for people without a disability is 72%. Arizona ranks 32nd out of all states with regard to this disparity (Arizona MAP Dashboard, 2018). In the past it was common to count center-based vocational programs, group-supported work arrangements, and day services as successful outcomes. Today, Arizona's vision is that all students exiting high school will be meaningfully engaged in competitive integrated employment and/or post-secondary education.

There is considerable geographic diversity in transition experiences and outcomes across the state. Every year districts across Arizona are required to contact leaving students in order to complete the Post-School Outcomes survey, which identifies any engagement that has occurred in the past 12 months, with results available at the district and county level. According to the 2020 Post School Outcomes report, rates of "not engaged" as a post-school outcome for transitioning youth range from 40%-50% in Apache, Yuma, La Paz, and Santa Cruz Counties, to 25-26% in Maricopa and Pima counties. Reported rates of students who were competitively employed ranged from 14%-16% in Apache and Yuma counties to 44%-50% in Graham and Greenlee counties.

Objectives

Three primary objectives have driven the data collection, analysis, and interpretations reported here.

1. Identify factors that promote successful transition in Arizona. Successful transition is defined as competitive employment, post-secondary education, or both.
2. Analyze sources of variation within and across community types.
3. Highlight emerging strategies and potential best practices.

Gathering Information

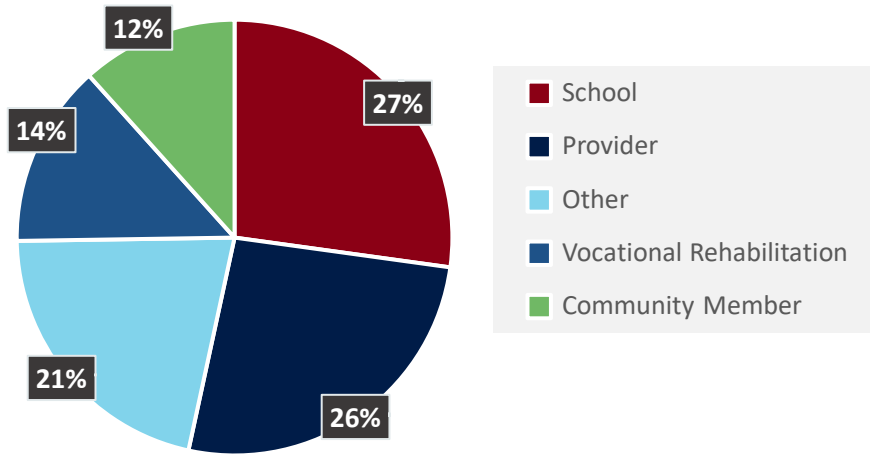
Data for this report was collected in two phases (See [Appendix A](#) for a detailed discussion of this methodology). In the first phase, the research team interviewed 75 professionals working in different capacities with transitioning students with disabilities. Interviews were carried out in Spring 2020 as the CoVID-19 pandemic arose. Participants included 53 educators and 22 community members, including state government personnel.

Interview participants were recruited from 6 rural, 6 suburban, and 5 urban school communities. Two were purposively selected from each of the state's regional zones to represent the State's geographic and demographic diversity ([Appendix B](#)). Five of the school communities served significant numbers of Native American students, while three were charter or specialty schools. Despite multiple outreach efforts to organizational contacts within the southeastern part of Arizona, securing community participation from this area proved elusive. Ultimately, the research team selected communities with similar demographic characteristics for inclusion to address this gap. Interviews were conducted ([Appendix C](#)), qualitatively analyzed, and coded.

In the second phase, key themes that had emerged from in-depth interviews guided the development of a statewide survey ([Appendix D](#)). Invitations to participate in the transition survey were sent via UCEDD's and organizational partner lists, as well as in UCEDD's newsletter distribution, and via Facebook and Instagram. The survey was open from late October 28, 2020, to November 21, 2020. There were 102 unique responses to the survey. Qualitative responses to the surveys and interviews reflected diverse experiences with transition across the state. Amid this diversity, characteristic strengths and challenges emerged.

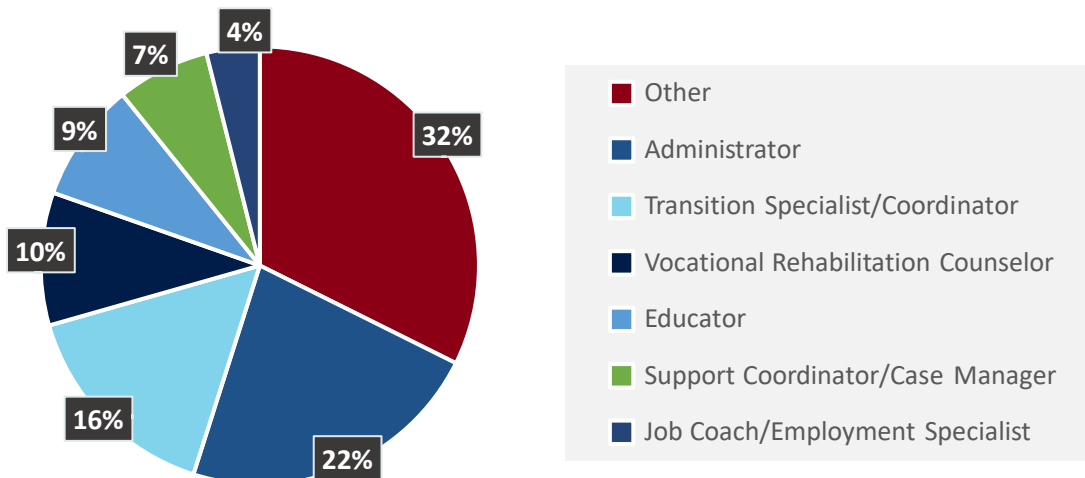
Survey Respondent Organizational Affiliation Survey respondents were affiliated with schools (n=28), employment services (n=27), Vocational Rehabilitation (n=14), community members (n=12) and Other (n=22). The "Other" category included a diverse group: Managed Care Organizations, Centers for Independent Living, Arizona Department of Education, Tribal Educational Departments, Division of Developmental Disabilities, State of Arizona (unspecified), health care providers, and vendor representatives. "Other" also included more than one respondent with dual roles, such as an employment service provider or other professional who *also* identifies as a family member or youth advocate.

Figure 1. Survey Respondents' Organizational Affiliations



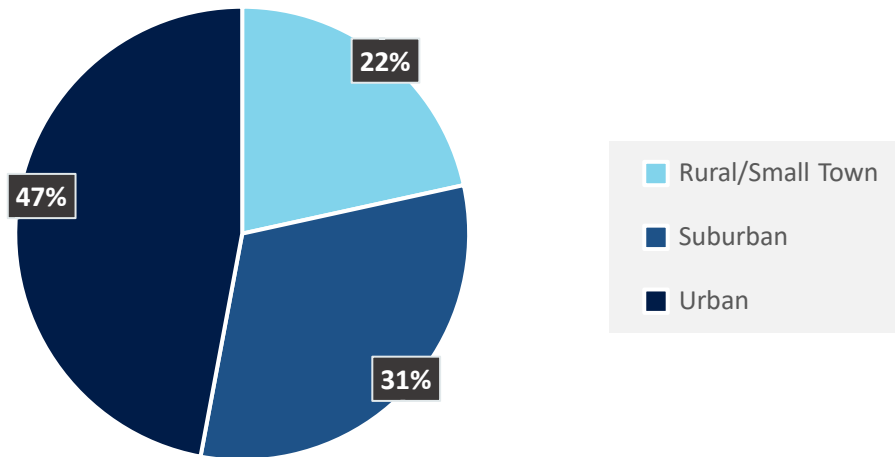
Survey Respondent Roles and Job Titles Respondents represented a diverse array of roles and job titles, including: Administrators (n=23), Transition Specialists/Coordinators (n=16), Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors (n=10), Educators (n=9), Support coordinators/case managers (n=7) and Job Coach/Employment Specialist (n=4). The “Other” category was the most frequent response to “Role” (n=33). Included in this category were job titles such as: medical social worker, psychologist, parent, grandparent, guardian, youth transition director, director, occupational therapist, self-advocate, disability resource specialist, physician, speech language pathologist, physical therapist, and student support specialist.

Figure 2. Survey Respondents' Roles and Job Titles



Survey Respondent’s Local Level of Urbanization and Development Respondents represented communities of varying levels of urbanization. The representation of each was roughly proportional to the population of Arizona.

Figure 3. Survey Respondents’ Local Community: Urbanization and Development



State of the State: Transition in Arizona

Survey respondents were asked to identify the “typical” outcomes that they saw for transition-age students leaving high-school in their communities. Possible responses included: competitive integrated employment, post-secondary education and training, center-based vocational programs, group-supported work arrangements, day services, and stay-at-home/not engaged. Respondents could select more than one option if there were multiple typical outcomes they were seeing. Responses that identified only successful transition, i.e., competitive employment, post-secondary, education, or both, as “typical outcomes”, are shaded in blues and greens on [Figure 4](#) and [Figure 5](#).

Responses that indicated that successful outcomes were typical *as well as* were center-based vocational programs, group-supported work arrangements, day services, and “not engaged” are shaded in brown. Responses that indicated neither competitive work *nor* post-secondary outcomes are typical are shaded in red. The majority of respondents across Arizona indicated that transition success was mixed in their communities, with both successful and unsuccessful transition being typical outcomes for students. Just eighteen percent indicated that some form of successful transition (post-secondary education, competitive employment, or both) was the *typical* transition outcome in their communities.

Figure 4. Typical transition outcomes as reported by Arizona survey respondents (n=61).

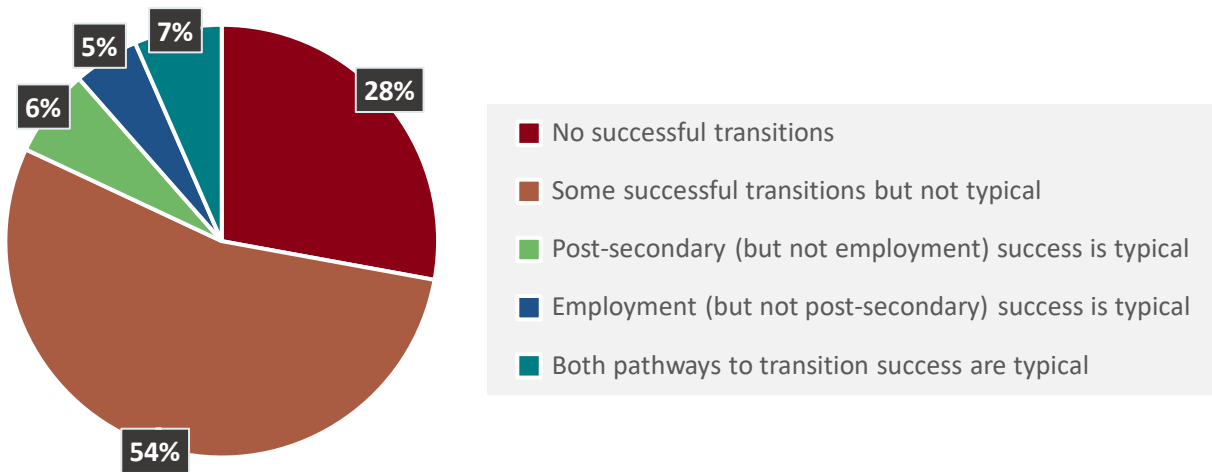


Figure 5. Typical transition outcomes seen by Arizona survey respondents who indicated they are affiliated with **Transition School to Work** programs only (n=23).

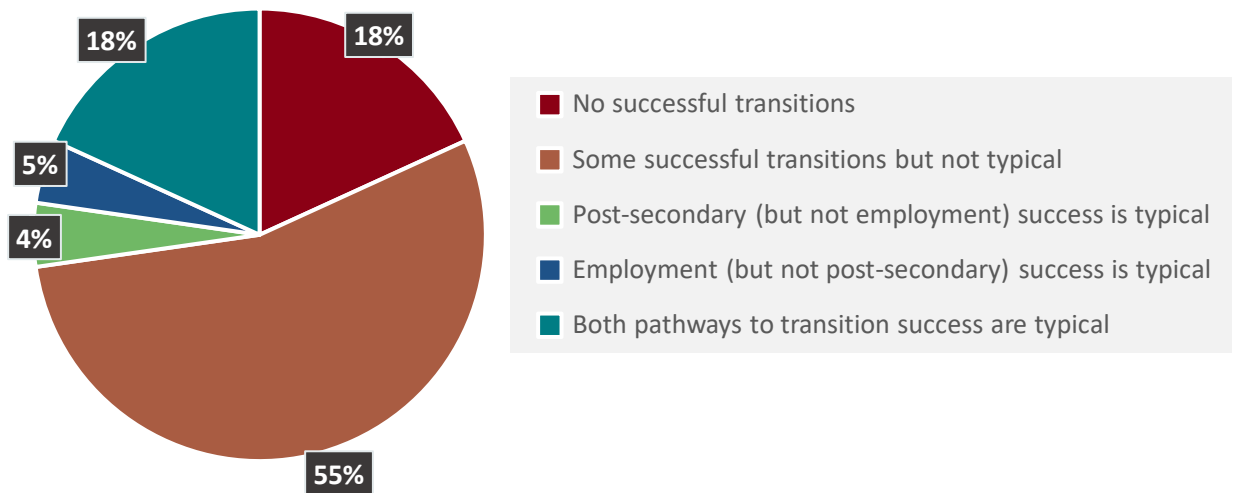


Figure 6 (below) displays survey respondents answering “Yes” to questions regarding the sufficiency of factors that support transition. For nearly all supportive factors, fewer than half of all Arizona respondents reported that factors supporting transition were adequate.

Figure 6. Transition supports as perceived by Arizona survey respondents (n=61)

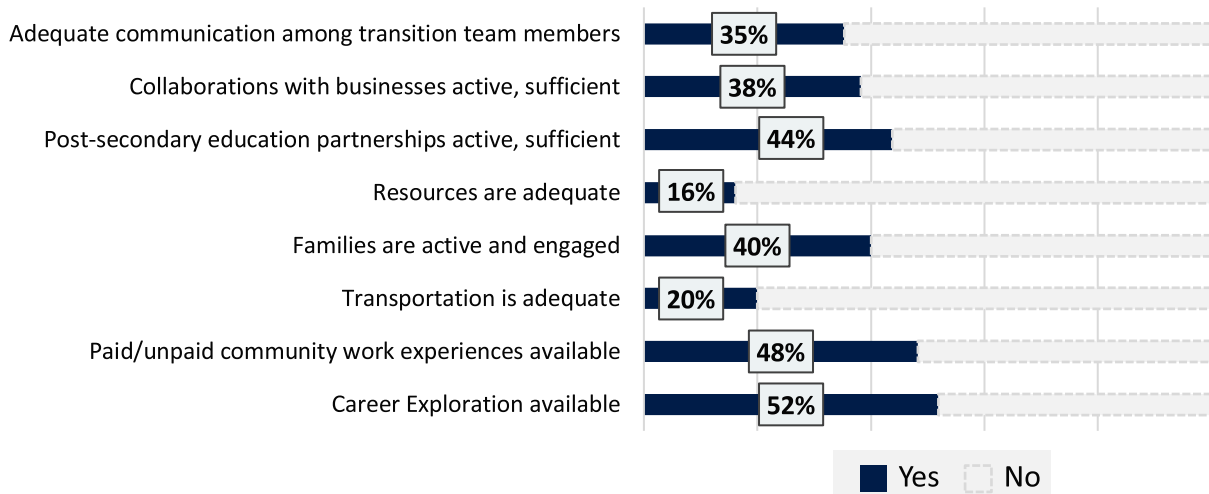


Table 1 (below) displays survey respondents’ perceptions of the transition-related involvement of Vocational Rehabilitation, Employment Services Vendors, and Division of Developmental Disabilities, respectively. Red shading indicates services that do not lead to successful transition. In terms of activities supporting transition, across all organizational actors, the most frequently reported activities were putting on Transition Fairs, and attending IEP meetings. The Division of Developmental Disabilities was recognized by nearly all respondents as being involved in support coordination and case management, with transition fairs, IEP meetings, and non-work activities reported with roughly equal frequency.

Table 1. Involvement and activities of Vocational Rehabilitation, Employment Service Vendors, and the Division of Developmental Disabilities in Arizona. (n=61)

	Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)	Employment Services Vendors	Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD)
Support students in higher education	20		
Competitive Employment Services	16	19	
Transition School to Work Programs (TSW)	22	24	
Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS)	25	25	
Project Search	15	14	
Attend IEP/Transition Meetings	23	22	24
Transition Fairs	27	27	21
Family Resources and Information Sharing	17	24	22
Involved with students at age 14 / Early in the transition process	15		9
Support Coordination/Case Management			32
Provide Transition to Employment Services (TTE)			17
Provide non-work, day, group supported employment, and center-based vocational programs		24	23

Arizona's Transition Strengths

Qualitative responses from surveys and interviews together highlighted several key resources that were regularly identified as supporting transition success across the state:

1. Leveraging community resources. Connection to community resources impacted how well schools were able to communicate with families and specific community members. In rural areas of the state, numerous respondents mentioned the importance of their “small and close-knit communities” where “everyone knows each other.” Transition staff were able to develop personal relationships with local businesses that would regularly offer transition students work experience while they were still in school. In more urban areas, schools where staff felt their transition programs were especially strong mentioned the importance of developing relationships, a process facilitated by the abundance of potential community partners available in urban settings. Suburban areas may have what one respondent referred to as “the best of both worlds,” allowing for close community connections and also numerous community services and supports.

2. Partnership and collaboration. Successful transition services collaborated frequently with outside stakeholders. Partners included public agencies such as VR and DD as well as private businesses and non-profits. These partnerships were much more common in more urban communities. Survey respondents stressed the importance of having a “variety of service providers” to work with, as well as “some choices” of where students might work and what sectors they would like to explore. They also mentioned the importance of collaborating with medical personal such as doctors and nurses who treat children who have disabilities. Meanwhile, rural and even suburban communities either relied on nearby urban communities or developed close connections with specific private businesses on their own. One interview stressed the importance of a partnership with local “mom n’ pop” businesses, including one local auto service shop where transition students gained training and experience.

3. Transition teachers and staff. Successful transition teachers and staff were described as “dedicated,” “focused,” and “supportive.” This strength was not exclusive to any one community type, but most rural project participants mentioned that they were plagued by high turnover rates and were therefore not able to keep especially strong team members for long. Suburban school districts that were interviewed did retain some highly qualified staff but also mentioned that they were not always able to keep them, while only participants from the more specialized urban schools mentioned that they were able to keep highly qualified personnel with specific interests for longer.

4. Transition Fairs. Transition fairs are a common means in the state of introducing students to potential employers and introducing employers to the benefits of hiring students who have disabilities. They were most common in urban areas, but study participants from across the state mentioned their value. A few respondents from rural and tribal-serving areas also requested public and private assistance in holding one.

Arizona's Innovative Transition Practices

Qualitative responses from interviews and surveys revealed promising and innovative practices that were employed at individual schools or clusters of schools. To ensure confidentiality, respondent's organizations are not named. However, the information is contextualized to support school communities interested in piloting similar initiatives:

1. Communities of Practice in Transition. A group of schools reported great benefit from their Community of Practice in Transition (CoPT) team. Interviews with this team ensured that established institutional knowledge and practices was shared among newer staff. They had well-established connections with local employers, and even had a program for paid summer work while students were still in school. Additionally, all the schools in the network could benefit from the knowledge of the few that participated in the TSW program. Non-TSW schools noted gaps between the transition services they were able to offer and those of TSW schools in the CoPT, but they also recognized that they had a significant advantage over AZ schools that did not regularly communicate or collaborate with TSW schools.

2. Local Knowledge and Self-Determination. Another school community benefitted from longtime teachers and staff and their longstanding relations with the community. Because this community is located far outside the state's urban core, local VR, DD, and other government staff turnover was very high. As a result, teachers had to rely more on their own internal knowledge of students' needs and interests, as well as community knowledge and resources, and less on state agency guidance and support. Schools in this community developed their own partnerships with one another and with local businesses and organization. These initiatives helped to make up for the lack of support in services and resources they felt they had resulting from their location.

3. Innovative School Staff. Specialized and charter schools that were located in the state's urban center emphasized the value of personnel that brought their own unique strengths to transition services. For those that were affiliated with universities, this involved active connections with those universities, including with Disability Resource Centers at the state's three major public universities: Northern Arizona University, Arizona State University, and University of Arizona. Those having a focus around specific disabilities employed staff with similar disabilities who were described as "a gift to the students." These schools were also able to begin transition services early in their students' academic careers, helping to ensure that students student success.

Arizona's Challenges, Gaps, and Needs in Transition

Qualitative responses from surveys and interviews emphasized persistent challenges, gaps, and needs in transition services. While variation according to community type existed, three needs were broadly shared by all respondents:

1. Transportation Support. For non-urban participants, as well as some from urban areas, transportation issues loomed. One survey respondent in a rural tribal-serving community mentioned how several of the locations their students lived in were “unincorporated, so there is no LEA (Local Education Agency) assigned” to their areas and thus students were unable to access transition services. Another mentioned, “Our rural location has kept us on the outer loop of information.” This was also true in more outlying suburban school communities, where transition staff mentioned having to transport their students to career fairs in the central urban areas. The transportation gap is particularly striking for students with profound impairments living in rural areas.

2. Funding resources. Funding was identified as a key gap across all school communities. Study respondents located in the far corners of the state revealed that they feel they must rely on themselves because government staff from Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), the Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD), and other agencies rarely come out to their communities. This was especially true in schools that were not part of the TSW program, some of which had to send their students to “outside programs” because they could not hold their transition programs and services. The need for more resources even came up in school communities that have relatively more resources than others, such as more affluent urban school communities around Phoenix and Tucson. Simply put, study participants universally felt that AZ schools’ transition services do not receive the funding and resource support that they need to be successful.

3. Relationships with agencies and families. The importance of relationships across the full network of transition stakeholders was continually mentioned. Gaps in communication were reported between transition teachers and staff and the government agencies with which they are supposed to partner (DDD and VR). Communication and coordination challenges were also reported between transition staff and students’ families, especially after students had graduated or left the school. These challenges were noted as frequently in urban communities as well as suburban and rural ones.

Transition in Arizona: Geographic Profiles

To make sense of the diversity in participant responses, the influence of regional and community characteristics was explored. Analysis of qualitative responses from surveys and interviews highlighted shared perspectives among transition personnel in urban, suburban, and rural settings, respectively. Converging perspectives were also identified in communities with significant numbers of Native American students, as well as among charter/specialty schools. To support the development of community profiles, quantitative survey data was also segmented according to these factors and analyzed.

Transition in Urban Arizona

Students with disabilities residing in the greater Phoenix and Tucson metro areas have comparatively greater access to resources and services, facilitated by the relative density of state agencies, NGOs, and health service providers in these urban settings. In some cases, urban schools are able to link students with public transportation options, and in many cases have access to a larger and more highly trained staff. However, urban schools often lack some of the close personal connections with students and local businesses commonly reported in smaller communities. Fifty-two percent of survey respondents reported that typical transition outcomes in their communities are mixed, while just 18% indicated that successful transition was the typical outcome they saw. Thirty percent of urban respondents reported that unsuccessful transition was the typical outcome for transitioning students in their communities (Figure 7).

Figure 7. Typical transition outcomes as reported by survey respondents living in urban Arizona communities and not affiliated with TSW schools (n=26).

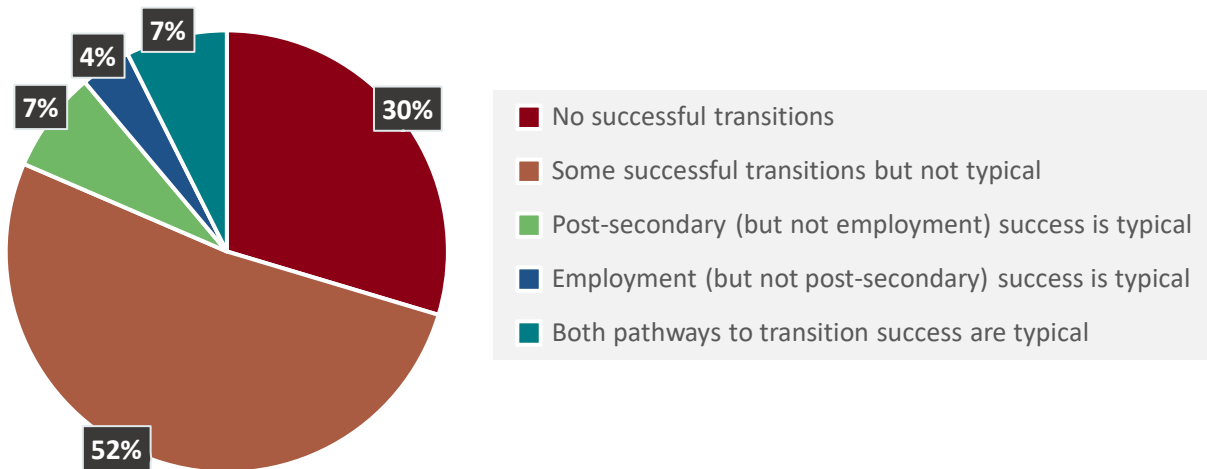


Figure 8, below, shows that even in comparatively well-resourced urban settings, 85% of survey respondents perceived financial resources to be inadequate to support successful transition. However, post-secondary partnerships were reported to be adequate by nearly half the participants, and 42% of respondents believed paid and unpaid community work experiences were available in their communities.

Figure 8. Transition supports as perceived by survey respondents living in urban Arizona communities and not affiliated with TSW schools (n=26)

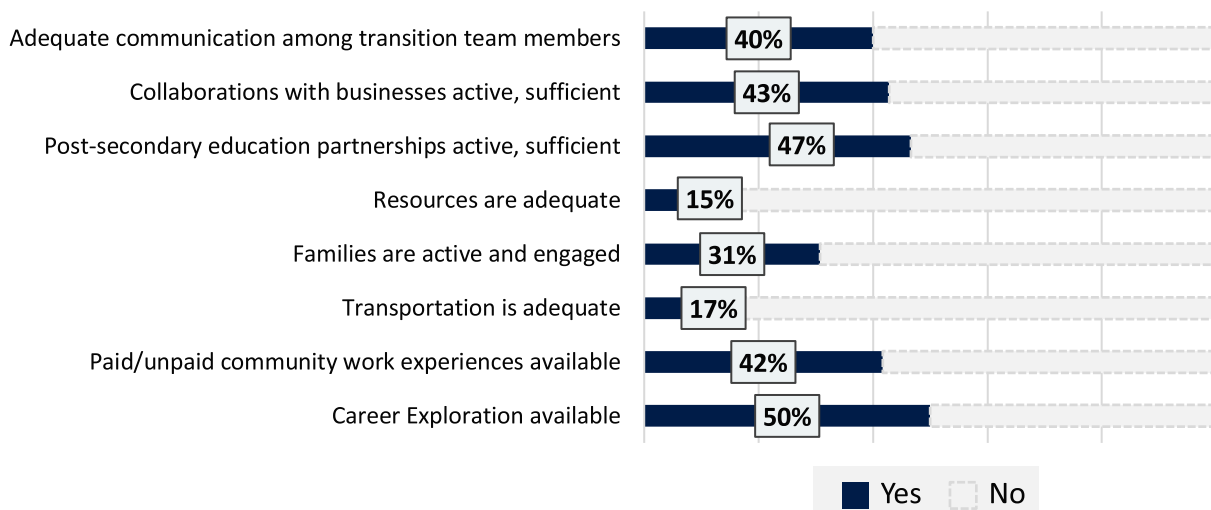


Table 2, below, displays Urban respondents’ assessments of agency and vendor engagement in transition. Urban respondents mirrored the overall statewide results.

Table 2. Involvement and activities of Vocational Rehabilitation, Employment Services Vendors, and the Division of Developmental Disabilities as perceived by Urban respondents.

	Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)	Employment Services Vendors	Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD)
Support students in higher education	9		
Competitive Employment Services	8	11	
Transition School to Work Programs (TSW)	12	12	
Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS)	13	12	
Project Search	6	6	
Attend IEP/Transition Meetings	8	10	9
Transition Fairs	11	12	9
Family Resources and Information Sharing	9	10	9
Involved with students at age 14 / Early in the transition process	7		3
Support Coordination/Case Management			14
Provide Transition to Employment Services (TTE)			9
Provide non-work, day, group supported employment, and center-based vocational programs		10	10

Urban Transition Strengths

Study data revealed urban schools to have several strengths that may not be as well developed in suburban and rural school communities. However, they still have several elements of relevance to transition services in general.

1. Work opportunities and post-secondary connections. Many urban schools have long-standing collaborations with local public and private partners. Students are routinely connected with further transition services and paid work experiences at these organizations. Urban schools also have frequently developed connections with disability resource centers at the state's major public universities. Students interested in post-secondary education can connect with these centers before they matriculate or apply.

2. Relationships and Perceived Access to Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) and Vocational Rehabilitation (VR). DDD and VR offices are active in both Phoenix and Tucson. They help to put on transition fairs and other events for transitioning students that are universally regarded as positive. Yet urban respondents desire improved communication and coordination with agencies. Many transition staff at urban schools must be resourceful and feel compelled to develop their own connections with local services and businesses independently of VR/DDD assistance.

3. Transportation. Both surveys and interviews with urban school communities revealed the value of having multiple transportation options. Students can choose between public busses and disability-specific services such as Valley Metro Paratransit in Phoenix and Sun Tran in Tucson to get to job sites and other off-campus transition services. Transportation challenges still existed for several students, including those with more profound disabilities or who commute from suburban or rural areas, but urban communities offer more options than other communities.

Urban Innovative Practices

Because of their many strengths, some urban school communities are also able to develop innovative and exemplary practices in transition that other schools can learn from. These were only mentioned in a few interviews or surveys.

1. Starting Early. In interviews, transition staff at one specialized school mentioned the benefit of working with students from a young age. They often begin discussing and preparing students for their transition out of the education system in a way that would better prepare them for employment or higher education.

2. University Connections. Some respondents at urban schools also mentioned connections with Arizona's public universities. Because they were in regular contact with Disability Resource Centers at each of AZ's three major universities, they were able to make the transition to post-secondary education smoother for students who attend those schools.

3. Health Care Provider Involvement. Health care providers were mentioned by two school-based survey respondents as key players in some urban transition programs. Providers regularly interact with students and families outside of school settings and long before most school's transition services begin. Doctors, nurses, and specialists can play a large part in promoting family buy-in of the transition process. Two urban health care provider respondents indicated their interest in building robust transition networks including interdisciplinary clinical teams and social workers.

Urban Challenges, Gaps, and Needs

Despite their overall strength, urban schools noted some prominent challenges, gaps, and needs in the transition services they offer to students who have disabilities.

1. School size. Urban schools' connections to their students largely depends on their size. Smaller programs have good relations with their students, as staff claimed in interviews, "we know our students." They conduct significant outreach to students' families and have a good record of following up with their students. Larger schools may struggle with this, however, especially because it is difficult for staff in larger communities to develop strong community connections with students' families.

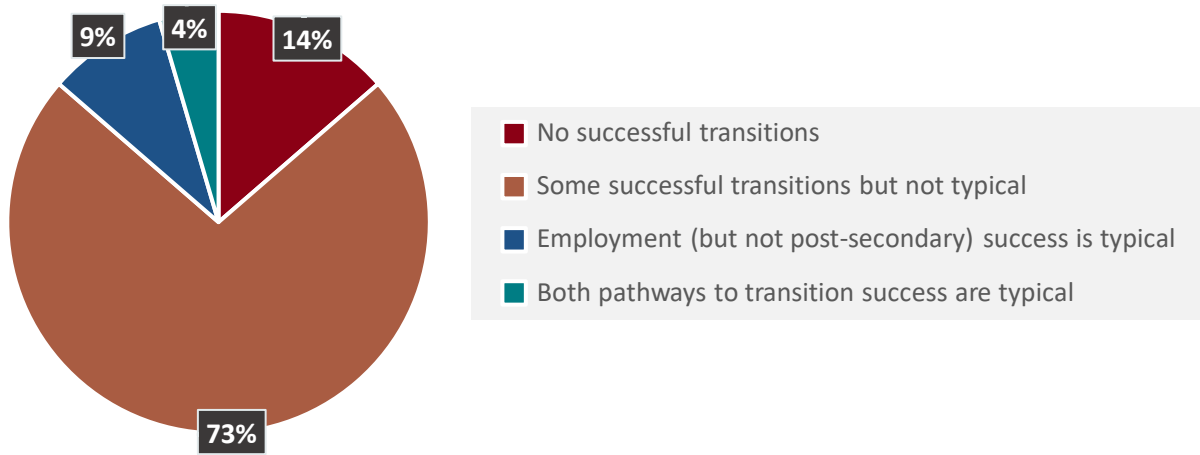
2. Community Awareness. Community understanding of the capabilities and strengths of students who have disabilities was often described as lacking. This lack of awareness limited potential partners for work experiences during school and employment opportunities for students after they graduate.

3. Family Involvement. Urban schools experienced spotty involvement from transition students' parents and families. Respondents noted how parents were often absent in the transition process despite the role of their involvement in transition success.

Transition in Suburban and Large Town Arizona

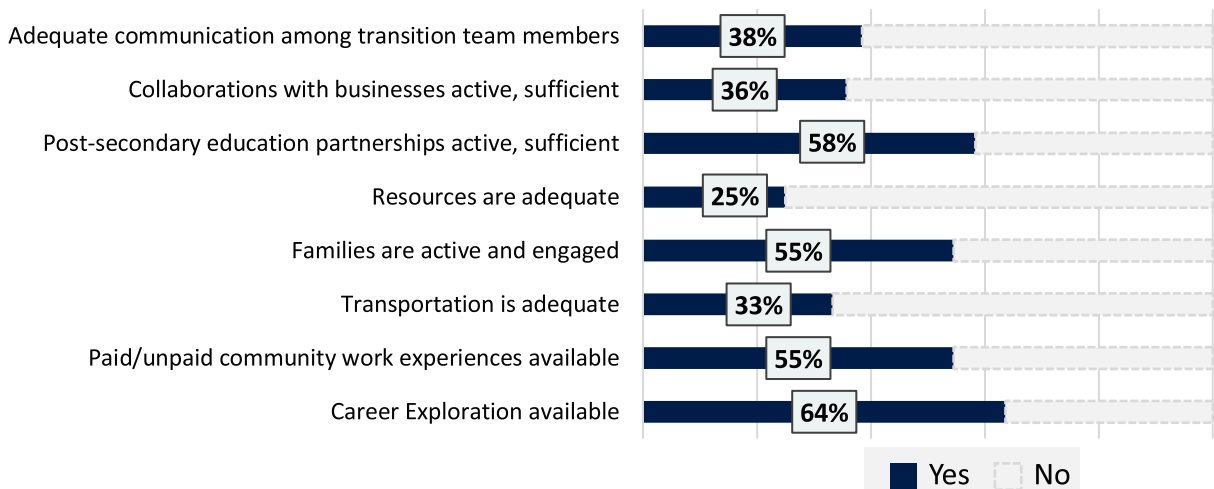
Suburban and large town communities have less population density than urban ones (less than 1000 residents per square mile) but are home to more than 10,000 residents and still have many of the same factors that benefit urban schools. They have many services and resources for disabled students, but do not have as many potential partners, but are still able to work with many local NGOs and businesses in support of transitioning students. They may also need to send students in to Phoenix or Tucson to access some statewide programs and events, such as large transition fairs or programs held in concert with Arizona State University (ASU) and the University of Arizona (UA).

Figure 9. Typical transition outcomes as reported by survey respondents living in suburban Arizona communities and not affiliated with TSW schools (n=22).



Most suburban respondents perceived sufficient career exploration (64%), post-secondary educational partnerships (58%), community work experiences (55%), and experienced that families are active and engaged (55%) (Figure 10).

Figure 10. Transition supports as perceived by survey respondents living in suburban Arizona communities (n=14)



Agency involvement, according to suburban survey respondents, was similar to urban and statewide responses. Agencies and vendors were reported to be involved with roughly equal frequency in activities that support transition and activities that do not (Table 3).

Table 3. *Involvement and activities of Vocational Rehabilitation, Employment Services Vendors, and the Division of Developmental Disabilities as perceived by suburban respondents.*

	Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)	Employment Services Vendors	Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD)
Support students in higher education	7		
Competitive Employment Services	6	4	
Transition School to Work Programs (TSW)	6	6	
Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS)	5	6	
Project Search	5	3	
Attend IEP/Transition Meetings	8	7	9
Transition Fairs	9	7	6
Family Resources and Information Sharing	4	7	8
Involved with students at age 14 / Early in the transition process	4		3
Support Coordination/Case Management			10
Provide Transition To Employment Services (TTE)			3
Provide non-work, day, group supported employment, and center-based vocational programs		8	8

Suburban Transition Strengths

Suburban schools have many of the same transition strengths as urban ones. In addition, they also bring new strengths based in their smaller community characteristics. One interview participant referred to this combination as “the best of both worlds.”

1. Personal Connections. Suburban school staff were more likely to report having personal connections with students and families than urban staff. Because of this connection, some report being able to tailor their transition services to students’ own particular strengths, abilities, and interests. Some discussed meeting with transition students’ families outside of IEP meetings. If done before transition services begin, this allowed them to secure family buy-in.

2. Community Relations. Because of their communities’ sizes, suburban transition staff are able to develop strong relationships with local businesses and non-profits. They partner frequently with these organizations to offer students paid work experiences while they are still in school. Local organizations also offer pre-ETS services, which were frequently cited as key for transition success. Finally, having strong community relations allows for the integration of local VR and DD counselors into transition services, ensuring a more integrated transition process.

3. Service and Support Availability. Most suburban communities are large enough to offer several services and supports to students who have disabilities. For services that

are only available in the state's urban centers, most suburban communities are relatively close to Tucson or Phoenix.

Suburban Innovative Practices

Individual suburban schools and communities were able to have a number of innovative practices that drew on their unique blend of urban and rural community characteristics.

1. Communities of Practice in Transition (CoPT). One suburban school community had an especially longstanding and active CoPT. The CoPT facilitated numerous community connections between transition staff and local partner organizations, as well as transition fairs and other joint projects across all member schools in the CoPT. Though the many schools in the CoPT that were not part of the TSW program noted significant disparities between their services and those of TSW schools, they were able to indirectly benefit from the program through the CoPT.

2. Connections Across Multiple Schools. Personal connections between transition staff in another suburban community facilitated regular communication and collaboration, allowing for some of the exemplary practices and lessons learned by schools with greater success to be shared with others. In one community located far outside the state's urban core, transition staff from multiple schools, families, and community members worked together to develop a successful and comprehensive community training in transition that VR and DDD were either unwilling or unable to provide.

3. Strong Outreach with Businesses. In one particular suburban community, a school had recently developed a relationship with an area hotel. As staff at the school noted, "We had developed relationships with a local hotel who created part-time paid positions for students with our team providing coaching." Another school regularly sent students to the same car repair businesses for paid work experience that they could continue upon graduation. In surveys, respondents at some schools even mentioned the need to recreate these partnerships in urban areas of Phoenix and Tucson.

Suburban Challenges, Gaps, and Needs

Suburban and Large Town School Communities may have significant strengths, but staff also noted several key difficulties. These were largely similar to other communities' challenges but reflected specific suburban conditions.

1. Agency Coordination and Communication. Suburban schools do not generally have good cooperation with DDD and VR. Schools that participate in the TSW program have regular communications with VR agents and do share some of their expertise with non-TSW schools. But even they admit that there is not very much support they can give to schools without TSW resources and formal partnership with state VR. Suburban schools instead rely on their relationships with local organizations and businesses who in many cases make up for schools' more spotty coordination with official state agencies.

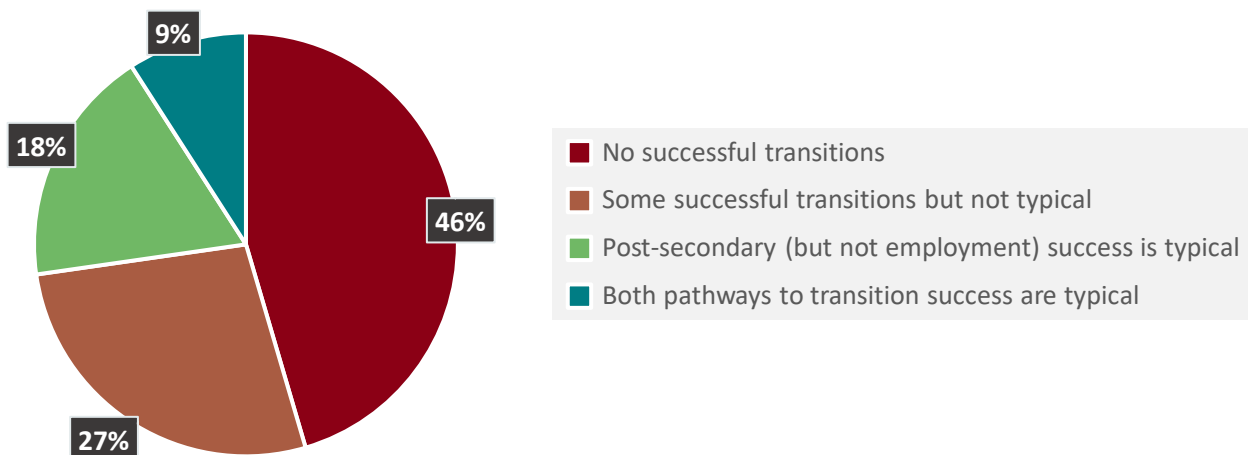
2. Transportation. Unlike transition services at urban schools, suburban services face large transportation challenges. Many of their students travel from nearby rural areas to attend and cannot arrive early for or stay late for events or programs that occur before or after school. For these students, many of whom travel into suburban communities from bordering Tribal communities and Nations, the lack of regular and reliable public transportation presents an enormous burden. Moreover, some transition staff reported they have had to personally drive students to transition fairs and events in urban areas.

3. Linguistic and Cultural Competency. Respondents frequently mentioned that they struggled to find transition staff with the linguistic and cultural competencies to work with their students. Hispanic students and more frequently with Native American students. Staff with transition training and qualifications in these areas live and work in the state’s more populous urban communities and were thus harder to come by and to retain in suburban communities.

Transition in Rural and Small Town Arizona

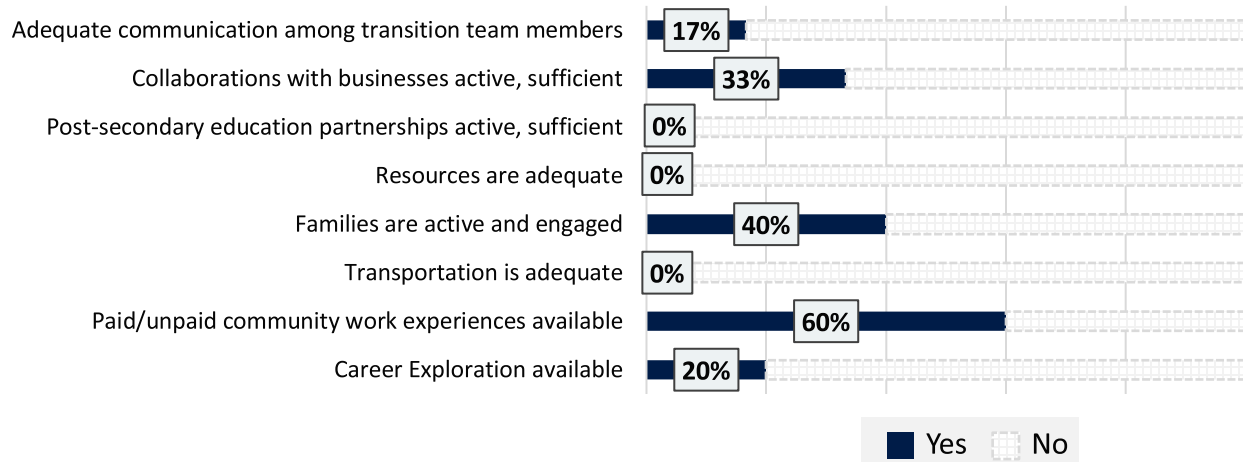
Rural and Small Town communities have fewer than 10,000 residents. They make up the majority of Arizona’s communities and represent most of its land but are home to a minority of its population. Schools in these communities are defined by their connections to students and the surrounding communities. They are also areas of limited resources and publicly available services, including transition services.

Figure 11. Typical transition outcomes as reported by survey respondents living in rural and small town communities and not affiliated with TSW schools (n=11).



Rural respondents reported weak or absent transition supports, except for the availability of paid and unpaid community work experiences as well as collaboration with the local business community. Zero rural respondents reported adequate post-secondary education partnerships (Figure 12).

Figure 12. Transition supports as perceived by survey respondents living in rural and small town Arizona communities not affiliated with TSW schools (n=11).



Rural survey respondents reported activities with a pattern matching that of suburban and urban respondents (Table 4). However, qualitative survey responses suggested that while a particular activity may be “happening”, they happened infrequently, or, that the quality of the activities was lower for rural respondents in particular. One respondent mentioned that family information sharing happened once a year, was not well promoted, and few families attended. Another respondent mentioned that they had rarely seen or heard of any agency staff attending IEP meetings in their community.

Table 4. Involvement and activities of Vocational Rehabilitation, Employment Services Vendors, and the Division of Developmental Disabilities as perceived by rural respondents (n=11).

	Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)	Employment Services Vendors	Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD)
Support students in higher education	4		
Competitive Employment Services	2	4	
Transition School to Work Programs (TSW)	4	6	
Pre Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS)	7	7	
Project Search	4	5	
Attend IEP/Transition Meetings	7	5	6
Transition Fairs	7	8	6
Family Resources and Information Sharing	4	7	5
Involved with students at age 14 / Early in the transition process	4		3
Support Coordination/Case Management			8
Provide Transition To Employment Services (TTE)			5
Provide non-work, day, group supported employment, and center-based vocational programs		6	5

Rural Transition Strengths

Interview and Survey participants in rural school communities commonly mentioned a few key strengths upon which students, families, and community members draw.

1. Personal Connections. Most rural schools are small, and small schools all benefit from strong relationships between teachers and students. Transition staff in rural areas mentioned being able to connect with and get to know students' families. They are also able to develop or draw on existing relationships with local business owners who their students can work with, increasing the likelihood that students who have disabilities will be respected and accepted by bosses and co-workers.

2. Close-knit Community. Rural communities facilitate integration between transition staff, community services, and local business partners especially well. Though this was not true in all school communities, it was common enough that one survey respondent commented, "We have a close-knit, small community and all the vendors and counselors meet regularly to discuss the services" that they offer to students.

3. Communicative and Engaged Staff. Respondents in many rural communities mentioned the benefit of having staff who are engaged and take their own initiative to develop connections with students and families. They are able to flexibly adapt their services to match student and family interests and capabilities when they arise, ensuring their value and sustainability to individual students' diverse transition needs.

Rural Innovative Practices

Despite few strengths that were commonly shared by rural study participants, several mentioned unique innovations that their rural schools were able to employ.

1. Program integration. One rural school housed a Joint Technical Education District (JTED) program on their campus. It offered transition students training and experience in culinary arts, agriculture, and automotive repair alongside their peers who do not have disabilities. Students could then pursue careers in these fields upon graduating.

2. Off-campus work programs. Another rural school community developed an off-campus work program for their students. The program made use of a local JTED program but also partnered with the town's school. A suburban school community even visited to study the program and intends to replicate it in a different part of the state.

3. Local Knowledge and Traditions. A rural school community located near Tribal lands had Native healing practitioners come to work with their students. The program built on staff's local knowledge and to help students pursue careers that were unique or uniquely suited to the tribal culture, including basket-weaving and carpentry. A few other rural schools also benefitted from staff who shared ethnic identities with their students. These schools were able to draw on local knowledge and traditions in

providing transition services, ensuring their relevance to students outside of school and promoting their adoption in students' post-school lives..

Rural Challenges, Gaps, and Needs

Interview and survey respondents from rural school communities noted numerous challenges, gaps, and unmet needs. These included some of the gaps mentioned by urban and suburban school communities, however the gap been needs and reality as well as the perceived impact of these barriers on transition outcomes was largest among rural participants.

1. Transportation. Though this was common to all of our geographical categories, it presented the largest barrier in rural communities. Some respondents noted how busses and other forms of public transportation were not available at all in their communities. As a result, families and friends would have to personally drive students to school, transition activities, or work experiences. These were often located great distances from student homes, requiring sacrifices from families in terms of time and resources dedicated to transporting the student to and from transition activities.

2. Coordination and Communication with VR and DDD. All communities reported these problems, regardless of geography or community composition. However, rural and outlying communities were especially at risk of experiencing these challenges. Some communities reported not having been visited by representatives of these agencies in years. One tribal-serving community mentioned that their tribal VR office closed down a few years earlier, and they were not aware of any replacement VR services nearby.

3. Staff Turnover. Rural Communities reported the greatest difficulties attracting and keeping skilled staff. This led to frequent turnover of transition personnel and effectively curtailed the important relationships with between staff and students, families, and local businesses that facilitated the strongest transition services in more suburban and urban school communities.

Additional Considerations

Schools Serving Native Communities

Respondents located on Tribal lands—or on non-Tribal lands in communities with significant numbers of American Indian students—reported the importance of language and cultural needs in providing transition services, as well as strategies that improve success.

1. Interview participants noted the need to have more transition staff who shared cultural and linguistic competencies with their students. Schools that are located in or near to the state's 22 American Indian Reservations are able to draw on personnel that belong to the same ethnic and linguistic communities as their students. However, as

most Tribal populations are relatively small, even transition staff who are Native often come from other communities. One survey respondent suggested the potential benefit of a Native or inter-Tribal CoPT that was not tied to geography, but instead was based in the shared experience and interest in promoting transition success with Native students and families.

2. Several participants mentioned Native cultural resources they currently employ in their transition services. These included traditional healing supports and partnerships with other Tribal communities within AZ and across other states, including transition fairs specific to Native students. Tribal-serving schools have robust relationships with not only schools in Arizona, but also with transition specialists at Tribal-serving schools in other states. They informally share experiences and strategies with each other in ways that would benefit their students' unique needs. This was especially important because these schools are some of the most disconnected from state transition resources.

3. Some Tribal-serving school participants noted that they have especially strong relationships with Tribal VR. One mentioned that Tribal VR staff offer services directly in the school, including in culinary arts, and automotive repair. Students in the program gain work experience and training with local businesses in these fields and are able to continue working with them after graduation, getting a jump-start on post-school transition.

4. One survey respondent reported of a promising innovation for Tribal-serving communities, an adaptation of AZ@Work that will allow them "To obtain partnerships with local businesses. How it works: The employer chooses from a menu of options that suit their needs, and we match those needs with students looking for an opportunity to learn. Involvement may be simple—like allowing a student to job shadow you or an employee for the day; other options may include paid or unpaid internships, or part- or full-time employment. There is an entry point suitable for every business."

Charter and Specialty Schools

Over 25% of Arizona's schools are charter or specialty schools; these schools enroll 18% of Arizona's students in 2020. While some were established decades ago, the majority have only recently opened. Their services are often focused on specific disabilities or specific transition outcomes, which directly impacts the quality of services offered, along with a few other key factors.

1. Many of the oldest specialty and charter schools are located in urban areas. As a result, they have long experience with transitioning students and a history of partnerships and collaboration with local public and private organizations to draw on. Some of them are also able to connect with students and begin working with them before they matriculate. By meeting with their future students and their families, they

help to identify, establish, and hone students' employment skills and interests before beginning formal transition education.

2. Some specialty schools are able to focus on one or two specific disability categories. They also have extensive experience helping students with particular disabilities transition to post-secondary employment or education. Moreover, they are more likely than other schools to have staff who share disability identities with their students. One interview participant referred to this as “a gift to our students” because school transition staff could more easily relate to students' transition difficulties and strengths.

3. Some charter schools are able to develop especially strong relationships with state universities and community colleges. They facilitate student visits to the institutions before they matriculate, both motivating the students to graduate with high enough marks to continue into post-secondary education and ensuring that they will have as seamless a transition to college life as possible. One staff member said that, “We have Cabinet-level support for each student to have a personalized plan for their high school education and post-secondary goals,” because of its formal relations with local colleges.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are proposed to implement, enhance, and evaluate transition services, experiences and outcomes for students who have disabilities in Arizona.

Arizona should expand and support networks of informal and formal Communities of Practice in Transition (CoPTs).

- ✓ Tailor CoPTs to address community characteristics. As examples:
 - Create an Inter-Tribal CoPT engaging Native Nations in Arizona and beyond.
 - Create Rural CoPTs connecting Arizona's rural communities.
- ✓ Establish regular connectivity of Arizona CoPTs to CoPTs in states with similar geographic and demographic characteristics (Utah, Colorado, New Mexico, etc.)

Arizona should actively engage with Arizona CoPTs to identify, evaluate, share, and scale emerging strategies.

- ✓ Engage partners to write case studies describing emerging practices and partnerships from multiple perspectives: including students and families, employers, schools, agencies, and health care professionals. Case studies will serve as guidance for CoPT members, potential employers, and other community stakeholders.
- ✓ Facilitate regular conferences, workgroups, and/or symposia, while always including virtual options for participation.

- ✓ Recruit CoPT members to present unique programming and practices that have made a positive impact.
- ✓ Develop asynchronous virtual platforms for transition stakeholders around the state.

Arizona should elevate the following practices that are working well in Arizona, promoting shared vision, standardization, and replication of effective practices.

- ✓ Transition fairs, including virtual options for attendance.
- ✓ Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS)
- ✓ Project SEARCH
- ✓ Transition School-to-Work Programs (TSW)
- ✓ Career and Technical Education coursework
- ✓ Require early transition planning meetings that include adult services.

Arizona should develop and support certifications and credentials for transition professionals.

- ✓ Work with Arizona Department of Education to design a professional development training and certification for transition professionals.
- ✓ Establish a dedicated transition leadership role for schools and districts that is responsible for coordinating effective transition planning.

Arizona should ensure accountability of schools and districts.

- ✓ Define successful transition as (1) competitive employment and/or (2) post-secondary education; use success rates in evaluations of school and district performance.

Arizona should evaluate agency staff and vendors with respect to transition outcomes.

- ✓ Maintain parity in service quality regardless of geographic region.
- ✓ Support accountability by publicly displaying report cards.

Arizona should recognize that some health care providers are engaged and active in transition services, identify opportunities to strengthen this role, and leverage provider credibility.

- ✓ Encourage and train health care providers to:
 - refer students/families to VR and DDD.
 - coordinate with employment services vendors as needed to support success of medically complex students and students with behavioral health needs.
 - influence family/student perceptions about each student’s potential and the multifaceted value of transition success.

Vocational Rehabilitation and Division of Developmental Disabilities should prioritize service provision to rural, Tribal, and suburban areas.

- ✓ Create Transition Toolkits to educate, inform, and inspire.

- Provide Student and Family Toolkits that include information on transition process, available state-level support, and regularly updated lists of local vendors and their contact information.
 - Provide Transition Professional Toolkits for use by schools, employment services vendors, and health care providers with continuously updated information on best practices, available state level support, job development strategies, and a real-time database of local vendors and their contact information.
- ✓ Offer the option of virtual/telehealth meetings with rural schools, students, and families to offset structural incentives that disadvantage rural school communities.
 - ✓ Ensure that all services and materials are available in Spanish, Tribal, and other languages as well as English across Arizona, particularly in rural and suburban areas.

Vocational Rehabilitation and Division of Developmental Disabilities should consider opportunities to improve interagency partnership and coordination.

- ✓ Develop and implement a data sharing agreement between VR and DDD to facilitate service coordination for students receiving services through both agencies.
- ✓ Train VR and DDD staff on transition services offered by their sister agencies, including how to connect students and families with these services.

Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) should prioritize staff hiring and retention and intensify staff training around transition services and processes.

- ✓ Invest in comprehensive training and make efforts to improve retention of Division of Development Disabilities Support Coordinators.
- ✓ Reduce DDD caseloads so that Support Coordinators can participate regularly in IEP meetings.
- ✓ Maintain continuous staffing of DDD Tribal Liaisons and other liaison positions.

School districts and schools should emphasize importance of transition outcomes for *all* students, including students with significant disabilities, making conscious efforts to elevate student, family, and staff expectations for career exploration and competitive employment.

- ✓ Identify and recognize staff, agency personnel, vendors, and employers who achieve successful transition with students who have significant disabilities.
- ✓ Develop case studies of student successes.
- ✓ Share case studies using social media and other engagement platforms.
- ✓ Ensure all transition students participate in work-based learning and other activities related to employment outcomes.

School districts and schools should proactively engage local business community.

- ✓ Cultivate individual relationships with local business owners to raise local awareness and develop opportunities for students' career exploration.
- ✓ Participate in business membership networks and community philanthropic events.
- ✓ Assess local labor market opportunities; competently match student strengths and goals with available opportunities.

School districts and schools should consider developing and implementing student and family peer-mentoring programs: a promising practice with a growing evidence base.

- ✓ Programs should include ongoing leadership training for mentors as well as mentees.

School districts and schools should invest in meaningful engagement of students and families at all stages in the transition process; student choice should drive transition planning.

- ✓ Include Transition Planning early in the Individualized Education Planning (IEP) process and engage families from the beginning in developing aspirational and realistic goals that utilize student strengths.
- ✓ Honor families and students as the experts and be willing to back track as necessary to satisfy all stakeholders in individualized planning.
- ✓ Work with families to identify unmet needs and help connect them with services.
- ✓ Formally teach and inspire students and families to value successful transition outcomes.
- ✓ Avenues to competitive employment *and* post-secondary education should be presented to students and families and supported.
- ✓ Develop and implement a Universal Design system for transition, using plain language that all students and families can easily understand.

School districts and schools should emphasize employment outcomes in their Individualized Education Transition Plans (IEPs).

- ✓ Incorporate Employment First into the IEP process with goals and objectives leading to competitive employment or post-secondary education upon graduation.
- ✓ Expand opportunities for work-based learning in school programming.
- ✓ Monitor steps and measure progress toward competitive employment and/or post-secondary education and adjust annually to ensure successful outcomes.

Transition stakeholders should seek, pilot, and scale creative transportation options throughout the state, with special emphasis on more outlying rural and tribal areas.

- ✓ Fund intensive public transportation training for all Arizonans with disabilities, not just those living in major metropolitan areas.
- ✓ Fund individual driving lessons for students who would be capable of learning to drive with the addition of 1:1 instruction

- ✓ Explore and pilot public-private collaborations and other creative approaches to funding transportation access for students in transition, especially students living in rural and/or Tribal areas.
- ✓ Provide telehealth networks or online services in communities where transportation needs remain unmet.

Appendices

Appendix A: Study Methodology

Multiple methods were employed to ensure a representative picture of the “state of the state” in transition services was captured and reported. The proposed goals guiding project activities were as follows: 1) Gather information from stakeholder groups in twelve representative school communities across the state using qualitative data collection strategies, and 2) Develop a questionnaire for completion by school and vocational rehabilitation personnel to gain their insights using quantitative data collection strategies.

The two distinct phases of data collection are described below. The first consisted of individual and group interviews with 75 transition personnel at 17 school communities throughout the state. The second comprised comprehensive qualitative and quantitative surveys based on interview data. Surveys were distributed to transition personnel at school, community, and state agencies throughout the state.

Interview Phase

Qualitative data collection for the study was carried out in Spring 2020, despite the CoVID-19 pandemic. A total of 75 Individuals who worked in different capacities with transition-aged youth and young adults who have disabilities were interviewed. Participants included 53 educators and 22 community members, including state government personnel. These individuals were recruited from 6 rural, 6 suburban, and 5 urban school communities that were selected to represent the State’s geographic and demographic diversity. Five of the selected school communities served significant numbers of Native American students and 3 were charter or specialty schools. The study was unable to secure community members in the most southeastern part of the state, despite multiple attempts and outreach to contacts within this region. However, the study was able to include several other communities with similar characteristics to account for this gap.

School Community Selection

Arizona has a wide range of geographic and demographic characteristics. The study attempted to account for this diversity through a selection process based on three criteria:

1. *Community composition*: Urban, suburban, and rural school communities.
2. *Regional Representation*: County-based sub-zones: **Northwest** (Mohave and Yavapai Counties), **Southwest** (La Paz and Yuma Counties), **Center-North** (Coconino and Gila Counties), **Center** (Maricopa County), **Center-South** (Pima, Pinal, Santa Cruz Counties), **Northeast** (Navaho and Apache Counties), **Southeast** (Cochise, Graham, Greenlee Counties).
3. *Special Characteristics*: At least three public schools located in or near Tribal lands, and no more than one charter school from each sub-zone.

Schools were randomly selected from a list provided by the AZ Department of Education according to community composition and regional characteristics (1 and 2). Selected schools were combed through to ensure they met study criteria after random selection (3). If they did not, schools from the same sub-zone were randomly selected until 15 schools were chosen to meet the above criteria (see appendix B). Principals and Special Education coordinators of the selected 15 schools were contacted by email and invited to participate in the study. When contact information was unavailable for school principals, general administration was contacted. Only three responded. Two declined to participate and the third deferred to the school district's research coordinator, who did not respond. Voicemails were left at the 12 remaining schools, but none were returned. Once these initial schools had declined to participate or failed to respond, the next school on the list was then emailed and invited to participate in the study. None responded.

Study staff reconsidered sampling procedures and decided to use a method of convenience sampling to contact school personnel with whom Sonoran Center staff already had connections. Many schools expressed interest with this new method. Schools that expressed interest were chosen in order of selection to fit within the above selection procedures. A total of 17 school communities participated in the study using this method, including 5 serving significant Native American student populations and 3 charter or specialty schools. No school communities confirmed their participation from the Southeast sub-zone of the state, and staff accounted for this by adding two school communities with similar characteristics.

Before the research team could conduct site visits to any of these interested schools, however, complications with school policies due to the coronavirus epidemic occurred. All data collection efforts shifted to a virtual format. Institutional Review Board (IRB) permission was obtained for the modified interview procedures conducted over a Zoom platform. Consent was obtained via digital signature before conducting the scheduled interviews. The majority of interviews were conducted individually, however, some communities chose to participate as a group.

Participant Recruitment

Three groups of participants were identified and recruited at the 17 school communities. Interviews included a variety of participants from each group.

Educators:

The study began by contacting key educators in special education and transition services in selected school communities throughout the state, and state agency representatives. They were asked to disseminate study promotional fliers to their transition and special education director list serves. These individuals contacted the study, expressing their interest to participate, and they were asked to sign IRB consent forms before enrolling in the study.

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Personnel and Community Participants:

Study staff contacted VR administrators responsible for selected school communities and invited them to participate in the study. Administrators informed their staff that they may be asked to be part of the study. Study staff worked with the schools to identify which (if any) VR

counselors should be asked to participate in the research, and the staff contacted them to complete IRB consent forms and schedule individual or group interviews. Nearly each school that was interviewed, had a VR representative(s) be part of the interview.

Others:

UCED staff did specific outreach to Developmental Disability services (DD) personnel because no school had identified members of this important community partner for the interviews. Staff also contacted representatives of local Communities of Practice on Transition across the state to participate in interviews. A few employers that work with selected school communities were also contacted to gain their perspective as relevant community members. Finally, provider groups that were located in selected school communities were also contacted to gain their perspective on the transition services.

Data Collection

Participants were asked a series of questions related to their perspectives and experiences regarding transition practices in their communities (see appendix C). Probing questions were asked for clarification and more in-depth information. Each participant was encouraged to share any additional thoughts or comments throughout the interview.

Data Analysis

Qualitative interviews were coded and analyzed for common themes among each interview question. Themes were then grouped by sub-zone and community characteristics to identify underlying patterns. Themes were further analyzed to identify salience and are listed in the report as commonly mentioned by interview participants. Two rounds of coding were completed with two separate project staff members; codes were then harmonized and grouped by sub-zone.

Survey Phase

After qualitative data collection and analysis was completed, a survey was composed and distributed statewide. A total of 102 respondents participated in the study representing education, vocational rehabilitation, developmental disability, and provider organizations. Participants were diverse in terms of their roles and geographic location. Responses were collected, analyzed, and summarized by study staff.

Survey Development

A 24-question forced choice and open-ended survey was developed from the information gathered by participants in the qualitative study. It was designed to target the main themes that emerged in the individual and group interviews and assess their relevance and importance to the rest of the state. The survey consisted of numerous demographics, yes/no, and qualitative questions (see appendix D).

Participant Recruitment

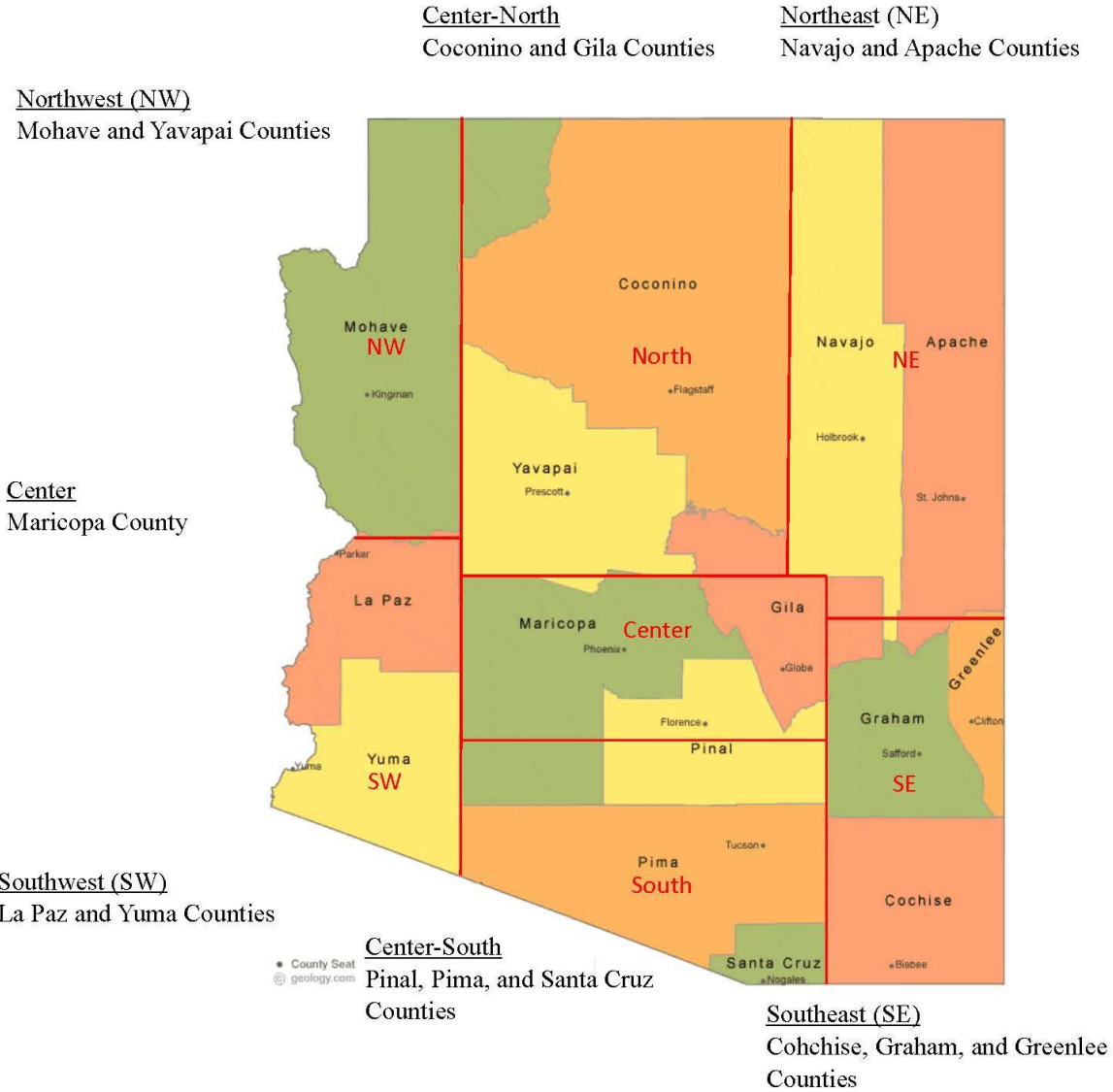
The invitation to participate was sent by the Sonoran Center through its listserve, newsletter, and targeted emails with multiple repeated requests. The organizational communications are outlined below.

- Wednesday, October 28 – 2,049 Email Recipients
- Thursday, October 29 – Announcement on Sonoran UCEDD Website
- Friday, October 30 – Announcement in the Newsletter – 2,813 Recipients
- Tuesday, November 17 – 1,541 Email Recipients (Audience was comprised of individuals who did not open the October 28 email)
- Saturday, November 21 – Social Media Post on Facebook and Instagram accounts

Sonoran Center staff sent the survey to their personal contacts and listservs in addition to state agency representatives for distribution to personnel within their organizations.

Appendix B: Regional Sub-Zone Map

Sub-zones*



*Regional boundaries are approximations (see selection criteria)

Appendix C: Interview Questions

1. Please describe any transition services and programs in your school/organization.
 - What was happening before?
2. What are the greatest needs in the area of transition?
 - Needs that are being met?
 - Needs that are not being met?
3. What are the strengths of transition services in your school/community and in the state?
 - Who should be responsible for that?
 - How do you know this is occurring?
4. What are the weaknesses of transition services in your school/community and in the state?
 - Who should be responsible for that
 - How would you know this is occurring?
5. What is a unique component of your community's transition program?
 - who is involved?
 - can you give me an (anonymous) example?
 - what, if anything would you like to add to this?
6. What opportunities are available for work experiences for students, such as career & technical education, apprenticeships, or STEM training?
 - Can you give me an (anonymous) example?
7. What happens to transition-aged youth when they leave school in your community?
 - What should happen?
 - Can you give me an (anonymous) example?
8. How would you describe collaborations and community stakeholder involvement in transition?
 - What is the role of transition students/families/teachers/community stakeholders
 - Can you give me an (anonymous) example?
9. What would you recommend to improve transition services and outcomes?
 - In your community
 - In the state
 - In the country
10. Is there anything else that we have not covered that you would like to add?

Appendix D: Survey Questions

Respondent Information Requested:

Affiliation:

- School
- Vocational Rehabilitation
- Division of Developmental Disabilities
- Provider
- Community Member (Please specify _____)

Position/Role:

- Administrator
- Educator
- Transition Specialist/Coordinator
- Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor
- Support Coordinator/Case Manager
- Job Coach/Employment Specialist
- Other (Please identify _____)

Geographical Location

- Urban
- Suburban
- Small city/town
- Rural

1. Do you provide transition services?

Yes No

2. Do you serve transition aged youth between ages of 14 and 22?

Yes No

3. Are individuals with significant disabilities equally involved in transition services, programming, and outcomes?

Yes No

4. What are the typical outcomes you see for transition-aged youth when they leave high school in your community? (check all that apply)

- Competitive employment
- Post-secondary education/training
- Center-based vocational programs
- Group supported work arrangements
- Day services
- Stay at home/Not engaged
- Other (Please identify _____)

5. What are the greatest strengths of transition services in your community?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

6. Where do you see the greatest weaknesses of transition services in your community?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

7. Do you feel communication is effective among transition team members, including all transition stakeholders involved?

Yes No

If yes, what do you feel are the contributing factors?

If no, what is needed to improve communication in this area?

8. Do you have collaborations with businesses in place to support transition services?

Yes No

If yes, what has contributed to successful business partnerships?

If no, what is needed to improve business involvement?

9. Do you feel collaboration with post-secondary education stakeholders is in place to support transition services?

Yes No

If yes, what has contributed to successful partnerships with higher education/post-secondary institutions?

If no, what is needed to improve higher education/post-secondary education involvement?

10. Do you feel resources are sufficient to support successful transition in your community?

Yes No

If yes, what has contributed to having adequate resources?

If no, what resources are needed?

11. Do you feel family's are active participants in transition?

Yes No

If yes, what has contributed to family involvement?

If no, what is needed to improve family participation?

12. Are transportation opportunities sufficient to support community transition experiences?

Yes No

If yes, what has contributed to having adequate transportation options?

If no, what is needed to improve transportation access to the community?

13. Are students participating in community paid and/or unpaid work experiences?

Yes No

If yes, what factors do you believe have contributed to community work opportunities for students?

If no, what is needed to improve community work opportunities for students?

14. Are opportunities for career exploration, such as Career and Technical Education, Apprenticeships, STEM training, and internships, available for students?

Yes No

If yes, what has contributed to accessing career exploration opportunities for students?

If no, what is needed to improve access to career exploration opportunities for students?

15. How is vocational rehabilitation involved in transition programming, services, and outcomes with your school/students? (check all that apply)

Pre Employment transition services (preETS)

Transition School to Work programs (TSW)

Project Search

Transition fairs

Family resources & information sharing

Attend IEP/Transition meetings

Involved with students at age 14/early in the transition process

Support students in higher education

Provide competitive employment services

Other (please identify _____)

16. Is there anything you would like to share to help improve transition services provided through VR?

17. How is the division of developmental disabilities involved in transition programming, services, and outcomes? (check all that apply)

Transition fairs

Family resources & information sharing

Attend IEP/Transition meetings

Involved with students early in the transition process

Support coordination/Case Management

Provide non-work, day, group, and center-based vocational programs

Provide Transition to Employment (TTE) services

Other (please identify _____)

18. Is there anything you would like to share to help improve DD collaboration on transition services?

19. How are provider organizations involved in transition programming, services, and outcomes? (check all that apply)

Pre-Employment Transition Services

Working with TSW students

Project Search

Transition fairs

Family resources & information sharing

Attend IEP/Transition meetings

Provide day treatment and training services

Provide center-based employment services

Provide group supported employment

Provide competitive employment services

Other (please identify _____)

20. Is there anything you would like to share to help improve provider collaboration on transition services?

21. Please share any other recommendations you have to improve transition services and outcomes in the state of Arizona?