

Creating **Mighty** Change

for **HEALTH**

MC2026:

A **5-Year Plan** for Mighty Change in Maricopa County

United Way belongs to our community, so we focus on issues the community tells us are most important. That's why we led a year-long community-driven process to develop MC2026. Our research showed that issues intensified due to the pandemic and that systemic racial, social, economic and educational inequities exist in every issue, so addressing equity must be part of every solution.

All of these issues are interrelated which is why we are addressing them together. The bold goals already existed in the community, so we're shining a light on them and will focus our resources on achieving them. We hope you'll join us!



Focus on Health

By 2026, **TOGETHER** we will remove barriers to ensure everyone in our community is healthy, with a focus on access to food and healthcare.

GOAL #1:

Decrease food insecurity by 50%

Good health, including access to nutritional food, is foundational to success in school, work and life. Yet, in Arizona food insecurity increased since COVID-19, especially among children and senior adults.

► **1 in 4 children** and **1 in 7 seniors** in Arizona don't have enough to eat



GOAL #2:

Increase access to affordable healthcare for 100,000 individuals

Affordable, quality healthcare not only keeps a person healthy, it also positively impacts their ability to succeed in school and work, and to pay bills such as rent, utilities and groceries. Yet, too many people in Maricopa County are a medical emergency away from losing their home, their business or their livelihood. Others are forgoing their health and medical needs, which can create chronic health issues.

► More than **1 million Arizonans** report **NOT** having **health insurance**

MEET

Martha and Louise

A ride shouldn't come between a person and their health, but that is the reality for so many in our community. Homebound seniors, like Martha and Louise, are often forced to skip doctor visits simply because they have no way to get there. Valley of the Sun United Way is working with local nonprofits to make sure everyone has access to healthcare. One of those organizations is Duet.

Martha and Louise have been using Duet's services for almost a year. Volunteers drive them to and from their doctor's appointments free-of-charge. Louise says, "Volunteers pick us up at the door. They make sure we're safe. They even walk with you. It's really like having your own family or friend who is able to do it. We are very blessed to find duet."





TOGETHER, for individuals,
their families and the Valley's future.

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Health 2023-2026 Priorities

✓ Federal Priorities

1. Expand access to healthy, affordable foods for all Arizonans through Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Benefits.
2. Support and create safe and healthy communities.
3. Improve accessibility and affordability of healthcare coverage.
4. Support assessment and implementation of BlueZones zip codes to optimize community well-being.
5. Advocate for the reimbursement of Community Health Workers (CHWs) through Medicaid.
6. Educate healthcare community on benefits of the Community Health Worker Certification.
7. Support expanding access of the KidsCare Program by increasing eligibility to 300% of the federal poverty level.
8. Promote mental health and address substance use disorders (SUDs).

✓ State Priorities

1. From the Governor's budget:
 - ➔ Support Healthy Families AZ voluntary home-visit program which supports families that are at high risk of abuse or neglect
 - ➔ \$20M to expand the income eligibility cutoff for the KidsCare program from 200 percent of Increase federal expenditure authority for AHCCCS and the Department of Economic Security (\$115.8 million) the federal poverty level to 300 percent of the federal poverty level
2. Increase access to wellness programs and alternative medicine.
3. Expand Arizona's Medicaid (AHCCCS) eligibility requirements to include more lower-income residents.
4. Guarantee affordable healthcare and insurance for Arizonans with preexisting health conditions.

✓ County Priorities

1. Support Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) and Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) that will dictate and shape the county's public health priorities.

✓ Local Priorities

1. Support the City of Phoenix Food Action Plan to reduce food insecurity by increasing the community's ability to access healthy, affordable food.
2. Assist City of Phoenix Public Health Office in developing City health priorities in collaboration with MC2026 Healthcare Mighty Goals.

Creating **Mighty** Change for **HOUSING & HOMELESSNESS**

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Think Bigger, Act Bolder to Reduce Homelessness

By 2026, TOGETHER we will ensure ALL our neighbors have access to a safe home to call their own.

GOAL #1:

Decrease homelessness by 50%

The 2021 Point-in-Time Homeless Count conducted by Maricopa Association of Governments shows that approximately 7,400 people are experiencing homelessness in Maricopa County. Only half have access to emergency shelter, where they are safe for the night.

Maricopa County is one of the fastest growing metro areas in the country, adding nearly half a million people since 2015. This prosperity is good for our local economy, yet it's leaving some of our neighbors behind. Population growth drives higher demand for housing, which also drives up costs. This spike, combined with the economic and health impacts of COVID-19, puts Maricopa County at the forefront of a national housing crisis.

- ▶ Between August 2020 to August 2021, Valley rents **increased 20%** with an **uptick of 3.7% in July alone**. The average costs for a **one bedroom apartment is \$1,100**, a price **too steep** for many local families.

MEET Sharon

Target or Walmart comes down to convenience. Sharon, an East Valley retiree, based her decision on which parking lot was empty enough so she could park her car and sleep.

Then on a 114-degree day, the 76-year-old came across a flyer for the Tempe Community Action Agency (TCAA) I-HELP program, a vital partner in Valley of the Sun United Way's MC2026 5-year plan and funded in part by United Way supporters. At the I-HELP shelter she washed her clothes and took a warm shower for the first time in a month. She immediately worked with a case manager to create an action plan to get her back into stable housing. It's now been two years since Sharon moved into her own apartment, where she also receives nutritional meals from TCAA's Food Pantry.

"I cannot express the gratitude to all the donors who have given generously to help me and so many others," said Sharon, "You helped get me off the streets and into a home. Thank you for being there for me when others were not."





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Housing & Homelessness 2023-2026 Priorities

✓ Federal Priorities

1. Build Housing with Care Act: proposed legislation encourages the co-location of affordable housing and childcare centers. Bill provides \$500 million in grant funding prioritizing affordable housing properties located in childcare deserts or rural communities and those that serve children in low-income families.
2. Increasing housing access and affordability.

✓ State Priorities

1. From the Governors' Budget: Deposit into the Housing Trust Fund \$150.0M to support those at risk of becoming unhoused in Arizona through: Utility assistance, Emergency rental assistance, Legal aid for families facing eviction, home repair grant program for seniors, home repair grant program for seniors.
2. Reconvening the Arizona Commission on Housing and Homelessness.

✓ Local Priorities

1. Support local efforts to mitigate zoning and community opposition for affordable housing, new shelter and homeless services.
2. Strengthen funding to decrease homelessness through providing resources that promote housing stability and mental health.
3. Advocate for Downtown Revitalization Act to include funding to convert office space into affordable housing, shelter or permanent supportive housing.
4. Support renewal of Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LITECH).
5. Support employment-first programs in order to connect employed people experiencing homelessness with housing and supportive services.
6. Support subsidies to improve access to workforce housing.
7. Increase access to minority, underserved and low-income homebuyers facing racial equity in affordable housing in Arizona.

Creating **Mighty** Change for **EDUCATION**

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Focus on Education

By 2026, **TOGETHER** we will close opportunity gaps to ensure children read at grade level by 3rd grade and youth are prepared for educational success and employment.

GOAL #1:

Increase 3rd grade reading proficiency by 25%

Student success starts with quality early education that builds skills, especially reading proficiency. If students are not proficient readers when they begin 4th grade, as much as half of the curriculum will be incomprehensible.

- ▶ 3rd graders who **don't read at grade level** are **four times more likely** to **drop out** of high school
- ▶ In Arizona, **only 35%** of 3rd graders **read proficiently**

GOAL #2:

Increase youth ages 16-24 engaged in education and employment opportunities by 38%

The combination of a high school diploma plus post-secondary education is the gateway to better paying jobs. In fact, nearly 7 of 10 jobs in Arizona require training beyond high school.

- ▶ **1 in 4** local **16-24 year olds** are **not enrolled in school or employed**
- ▶ **13%** of **12-17 year olds** reported **at least one depressive episode** in the past year

MEET **Mia & Jeri**

The pair have been matched at New Pathways for Youth for nearly five years. New Pathways for Youth helps young adults, like Mia, realize their full potential through one-on-one mentoring and life-skill development. The youth in the program are facing many barriers such as generational poverty, homelessness and family instability.

Mia, 15, joined the program when she was in fifth grade. She says Jeri taught her about believing in herself and setting goals. Mia is now focused on graduating high school. She plans to attend a post-secondary school and hopes to one day have her own apartment with a pet lizard or dog.

Valley of the Sun United Way is partnering with nonprofits, like New Pathways for Youth, to create Mighty Change in Maricopa County. Together, we can empower our youth through education.





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Education 2023-2026 Priorities

✓ Federal Priorities

1. Promote access to high quality childcare for working families.
2. Ensure all families have high quality early childhood education options.
3. Ensure all children have access to K-12 educational opportunities that set them up for long-term success.
4. Support access to high quality post-secondary education options that lead to gainful employment and increased professional mobility.

✓ State Priorities

1. Advocate for no expansion to the Universal Empowerment Scholarship Accounts (ESA) Program for Arizona taxpayers.
2. Lift the constitutional aggregate expenditure for K12 schools and community colleges.
3. From the Governor's budget:
 - Charter schools and ESA funded private schools will be held to the same reporting requirements as district school
 - Elimination of Results-Based Funding
 - Support Dual Enrollment Programs
 - Expand the Arizona Promise Scholarship Program by including funding capacity for an additional 10,000 students
4. Advocate to increase teacher pay and benefits.
5. Increase the percentage of children in high quality early learning settings.
6. Make all-day kindergarten and preschool more accessible, including expanding high-quality learning from infant and toddlers and out of school time settings.
7. Create higher quality access for all with additional funding for underfunded, underperforming, and under-resourced schools.
8. Support strategies that encourage attraction and retention of educators across the P-20 continuum.

✓ Local Priorities

1. Support programming and policy that reduces Chronic Absenteeism.
2. Support Families and Students access to high quality academic supports, the appropriate tools, and their basic needs met for effective support of their child's academic journey.
3. Continue to lead Read On Communities in collaboration with Read On Arizona in order to build literacy supports using best practices anchored in the Science of Reading and that are evidence-based, and include of building educator capacity.
4. Support efforts to meet the Achieve60AZ attainment goal, where 60 percent of the state's population of working adults (ages 25-64) will have a certificate, license, or degree.

Creating **Mighty** Change

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Focus on Workforce Development

By 2026, **TOGETHER** we will open pathways to better paying jobs.

GOAL #1:

Increase preparation for a living wage job by 33%

Financial success starts with access to resources that help individuals achieve job opportunities that increase their income and create sustainable employment.

- ▶ **70%** of Arizona jobs **require training beyond high school**
- ▶ **Only 51%** of Maricopa residents 25-64 **have completed a 2 or 4 year degree**

GOAL #2:

Increase achievement of higher paying employment by 20%

We all benefit from an economy where everyone can access the training for higher paying, living wage jobs. For many Valley families, these jobs are the pathway to economic stability that creates the foundation for generations to follow.

- ▶ **13%** of Maricopa County residents are **employed in work that underutilizes their skills**, or employed **part-time but not by choice**

MEET **Jasmine**

25-year-old Jasmine is currently working to finish her education journey and hopes to work in the mental health or nonprofit field. Live and Learn is helping her find financial stability, something her family struggles with.

"Live and Learn is helping me to break the ancestral cycle. It's a vicious cycle that I am trying to get out of. I feel it will give me the independence to actually start and be the first one in my family to change."

Jasmine says a big motivator for her is her young nieces. She wants to show them how important education is.

Valley of the Sun United Way is proud to partner with nonprofits, like Live and Learn, to create Mighty Change in the lives of women across our community.

Together, we can increase access to better paying jobs for everyone.





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Workforce Development 2023-2026 Priorities

✓ Federal Priorities

1. Engage federal policymakers on new economic development and competitiveness concepts.
2. Strengthen tax credits and tax assistance to support workers and families.
3. Support effective workforce development programs and opportunities.

✓ State Priorities

1. Improve economic stability for lower-wage workers through improved work benefits, greater education and training, and opportunities to advance.
2. Provide more affordable, high-quality options for childcare.
3. Improve pay equality and opportunities for promotion.
4. Ensure equitable and inclusive economic recovery.
5. Support reforming the criminal justice system through the elimination of administrative fees associated with juvenile justice, providing post incarceration employment pathways, and sentencing reform to address racial disparities.
6. From the Governor's budget:
 - Support the Universities' New Economy Workforce Initiatives
 - Address operating shortfall for the Arizona Teacher's Academy

✓ Local Priorities

1. From the Governor's budget:
 - Restore STEM and Workforce funding for Maricopa, Pima, and Pinal Community Colleges to match STEM and Workforce funding for rural counties
2. Lead policy and civic dialogue to drive consensus around economic performance objectives for advancing our region's competitiveness.
3. Work with partners, employers, Valley business associations and education institutions to create strategies for success.