

The Arizona We Want

The Voice of Young Arizonans



CENTER FOR THE
FUTURE OF ARIZONA





YOUNG TALENT

Arizona is surging with energy and growth. Our dynamic urban hubs, rural communities, and regional economies are home to talented young Arizonans who have much to say and to contribute.

Making Arizona the place to be for this next generation of Arizonans is critical to our future and demands our attention.



Young Arizonans want to be heard and to have an impact on what matters most to them and to their future. This report highlights some of the voices we heard in our travels across the state to listen to what young Arizonans in more than 20 focus groups think and care about. We explored what keeps Arizona's young talent here, their greatest hopes and dreams, and what might make them want to leave. Across the great diversity of experiences and perspectives, we heard some universal truths about what matters most to them: a great education for themselves and for their children, welcoming workplaces, and vibrant and healthy places to live.



I want Arizonans to balance preserving the natural resources of the state with building a long-term economic development strategy.”

- Focus Group Participant

Arizona's young people drive culture, the success of our state, and ultimately Arizona's identity. The Center for the Future of Arizona is committed to bringing attention to the voice of young Arizonans, to inviting them to participate in important discussions, and to working with and alongside them to create the future they want and that we all desire – *The Arizona We Want*.

We hope you will join us and Arizona's young people on this journey.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sybil Francis'.

Sybil Francis, Ph.D., President & CEO
Center for the Future of Arizona

Big Issues that Concern Young Arizonans

- Cost of Housing
- Sustainable Water Supplies
- Jobs with Upward Mobility
- Workplace Culture
- Access to Quality Health Care
- Competitive Wages
- Quality of K-12 Education
- Cost and Quality of Child Care
- Justice System Reform
- Multimodal Infrastructure
- Leaders with Vision
- Greater Voice for Young Arizonans
- Quality of Higher Education
- Climate Change
- Stronger Regional Economies



KHARA HOUSE, FLAGSTAFF

Why Are You in Arizona?

I'm originally from Pennsylvania but came to Flagstaff in 2009 for school and stayed because of a teaching opportunity. I wanted to stay in Flagstaff but needed more job security. I now work in multi-family property management.

What Concerns You?

Much as I like Flagstaff, cost of living makes it difficult to live here. Costs of living are on the rise and wages have not kept pace. I'm involved in volunteer work for a number of organizations, and another concern I have is the lack of celebration of the city's history. Various cultural groups helped build Flagstaff in the early years with their labors in the timber and railroad industries. Some plaques would not be inappropriate.

Why Would You Leave?

I am passionate about politics and social engagement; my community work keeps me here. If I began to feel that my efforts were not having an effect, I would be more likely to leave.

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There's a distinction between the 'old guard' and the 'new guard.' People with the power to make decisions need to hear from both.

- Focus Group Participant

DATA INSIGHTS

53% of Tucson renters are cost-burdened.

47% of Flagstaff renters are cost-burdened.

46% of Metro Phoenix renters are cost-burdened.

SOURCE: Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University

There are more than
500,000
small businesses in Arizona.

44.5%
of all employed Arizonans work
for small businesses.

SOURCE: U.S. Small Business Administration, 2018

KIRK DUNN, YUMA

Why Are You in Arizona?

My great-grandparents moved here from Texas to start our family farm. It's a way of life for us and I'm proud of what we've built. I appreciate the great sense of community in Yuma. People feel connected and involved with one another because many of us have deep roots here.

What Concerns You?

Agriculture is a competitive industry. For family farms such as ours, some of the largest issues we face include the regulatory environment, our country's broken immigration system, and trade barriers preventing farmers from selling U.S. grown agriculture products to certain world markets. As a graduate of the University of Arizona, I know how important rapid tech transfer from the universities is to our success as an industry. Water will always be a divisive issue, but Yuma and the tribal communities have the best chance to maintain Arizona agriculture because we have the most sustainable water supplies. Above all, we want Arizona to stay independent and pro-business.

Why Would You Leave?

It would take a lot to move me away from Arizona. If agriculture becomes economically impossible here, I would have to make a hard decision.



ZACH CHARNELL, PHOENIX

Why Are You in Arizona?

I was born here and grew up in the Northwest Valley. I attended Barrett Honors College at ASU and found it a stimulating, intellectual environment. I graduated in Engineering in the Digital Culture program. I intended to go out of state for opportunities but found a position at Carvana here in Phoenix, with lots of other young people, and a culture that's more like an exciting Bay Area company without the ego.

What Concerns You?

I'm a software engineer and I don't see many other companies in Metro Phoenix that offer a workplace that is youthful, demanding, exciting, and innovative. I hope that other tech companies in our region begin cultivating the kind of workplace that not only attracts young people, but keeps them.

Why Would You Leave?

While I have no plans to leave, there's only so much opportunity for advancement in Phoenix. If I continue to progress in my career, I'll stay. If not, I will head out of state. I'm interested in obtaining an MBA and while ASU and Thunderbird are possibilities, I am also looking at top programs in other urban areas.

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It's easy to find a good, entry-level job here; it's hard to have any upward mobility within the same company.”

- Focus Group Participant

DATA INSIGHTS

Employee turnover in the software industry averages just over

13%

which is the highest turnover of any industry.

SOURCE: TechRepublic, 2017

Arizona's ratio of K-12 students to school counselors is

905:1

which is the worst in the country. Access to counseling significantly impacts high school GPA and graduation.

SOURCE: American School Counselor Association, 2019

LUPITA GAMEZ, TUCSON

Why Are You in Arizona?

I was born in Sinaloa, Mexico. My father is from Mexico, and my mother is from San Jose. We came to Tucson in 2005 and I graduated from high school with a full scholarship my first year to the University of Arizona. I graduated in 2017 with a degree in Mexican-American Studies & Latin American Studies, and I now work for the Tucson Unified School District. I'm charged with college and career readiness for Mexican American Student Services.

What Concerns You?

My staff of eight works district wide, which becomes challenging since more than 70% of students within TUSD identify as Latino. We are stretched thin. Regarding college and career readiness, most students are first gen, so the transition is challenging, but my support extends to the families as well. Like I say to parents, "It's not just your student going to college, it's your entire family."

Why Would You Leave?

Most Mexican-American students graduate from UArizona and then leave. I want to stay because I'm passionate about youth development and giving back to the community that supported me.



LUKE AMARGO, PHOENIX

Why Are You in Arizona?

My family comes from the Philippines and California. My grandfather served in the Filipino underground during World War II and afterwards joined the American Navy. My father and uncles also served in the American military. Duty, honor, and resolve, as immigrants, are emblematic of the truest of American and immigrant values. I came to Arizona to attend Grand Canyon University and am now a doctoral candidate. Previously I served as a Manager at the Honors College at GCU; now I am Entrepreneur Manager at Better Business Bureau's first incubator "ignite".

What Concerns You?

I believe Arizona needs to encourage an intentional awareness of what outliers bring to the community – be it veterans or immigrants. For anyone working to keep talent here, provide mentorship and educational benefits.

Why Would You Leave?

I've a passion for the veterans and others who are unfairly neglected. Arizona must allow entrepreneurship from the bottom up. Kendrick Lamar has a litmus test quote, "If I told you that a flower bloomed in a dark room, would you trust it?"

“

I'm a third-generation Arizonan and I want people to recognize that while this is a young state, it's an old culture. Respect it.”

- Focus Group Participant

DATA INSIGHTS

81%

of graduates from Arizona's three public universities stay in state after graduation.

Ten years later, only

55%

are still here.

SOURCE: Arizona Board of Regents

Arizona has excellent universities. The two largest state universities are among the

TOP 60

universities in the country.

SOURCE: Shanghai Jia Tong University, 2019

REBECCA DETERMAN, TUCSON

Why Are You in Arizona?

Born and raised in Yuma, I came to Tucson to attend the University of Arizona. While in college, I earned a Neuroscience degree as I had always been interested in pursuing a medical career. I was also the school mascot, Wilma, for two years.

After graduation, I participated in the Walt Disney World Internship for six months and returned to UArizona for my MBA because of the university's and Tucson's friendly atmosphere. I am currently a project specialist for the UArizona Alumni Association working with students and young alumni. My long-term career interests include hospital administration and higher education.

What Concerns You?

My experience with health care and physicians was affected by my sister's story, who died of pediatric cancer. I experienced the doctor-patient relationship up close and how doctor-family communication could be improved. I've also seen the lack of resources for mental health issues. We need to change our attitude about emotional issues among youth, whether it's from autism, or any other life situation.

Why Would You Leave?

I plan to stay in Tucson. I enjoy the kindness and openness, and opportunity.

The Arizona We Want

is a shared vision of success around what matters most to Arizonans that expresses their highest aspirations and hopes for the future.



YOUNG TALENT



WHY IT MATTERS

Arizona's long-term success depends on the contributions of all our young people.

WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

Arizona is "the place to be" for the next generation of doers, makers, thinkers and innovators to advance their lives and communities.

The Center for the Future of Arizona brings Arizonans together to build a bright future for our state.

LEARN MORE: arizonafuture.org