



Executive Summary

Center for the Future of Arizona (CFA), in partnership with Arizona Town Hall, proposes a community engagement project designed to build upon the Communities at the Center engagement series and Roadmap developed in 2023. This project will go deeper into the recommendations issued by parents, educators, service providers, and employers that emphasize how to ensure more successful transitions of young people with disabilities — driven by their dreams, desires, and strengths — into postsecondary education and career pathways.

The 2023 report summarizes the key research, perspectives from community conversations, and takeaways from the process. The process surfaced challenges and opportunities for action such as:

- **Investment and support in K-12 Education:** Structural education opportunity gaps disproportionately affect youth with disabilities. More investment and support in special education with a focus on early career exploration and transition planning is needed.
- **Early childhood and family support:** Families report challenges in navigating complex systems and messages about their child’s health, educational journey, and future pathways. They need to be connected early with critical resources and a sense of possibility for the future.
- **Career & Technical Education (CTE) and counseling:** More communication and access to apprenticeship and CTE programs are needed for students with disabilities, families, and educators with support from in-school counselors.
- **Evidence-driven and collaborative strategies:** More data is needed on programs that serve students with disabilities, as well as greater coordination, accountability, and communication across sectors, including education and nonprofit, as well as employers, government agencies, and service providers.
- **Career recruitment and workplace:** Youth with disabilities experience greater challenges during the career recruitment process, discriminatory hiring practices, and barriers to the workplace. Employers need to be reached with key information about the untapped potential that young people with disabilities bring to the workforce.

CFA, in partnership with Arizona Town Hall, proposes a community engagement project to:

- Share the results of the 2023 process and recommendations in order to prompt further dialogue and awareness around issues impacting the transition of young people with disabilities into postsecondary education and career success;
- Engage parents and families to discuss the challenges in and opportunities for advancing equitable access, and surface opportunities for action;
- identify areas of opportunity where CFA, Arizona Town Hall, ADDPC, and others could partner to support these priorities, whether through additional data, engagement, or resources.

We respectfully request support from the Arizona Developmental Disabilities Planning Council (ADDPC) for our community engagement project to support data-driven decision-making and community-led solutions to ensure young people with disabilities have equitable access to opportunity in postsecondary and career pathways.

Proposed Scope of Work and Budget

Through a \$50,000 investment from ADDPC, CFA will build the foundation for collective impact through the following strategies:

- 1) Communicating Data:
 - CFA will develop a background one-pager highlighting challenges and opportunities with the transition of young people with disabilities into postsecondary education and career mobility, drawing upon data from the 2023 report, as well as coordinate translation of the report and findings into Spanish for broader use.
- 2) Dialogue:
 - CFA will partner with Arizona Town Hall, given their track record and deep expertise in facilitating community dialogue and generating key takeaways and recommendations, in order to:
 - Host a series of 3-5 Community Roundtables with a focus on parents and families and a focus on geographic diversity of perspective (rural, urban and suburban communities).
 - Facilitate polling and post-conversation surveys that deepen the understanding of the concerns, priorities, and opportunities for action that emerge from these conversations.
- 3) Action:
 - CFA will develop an action-oriented final report to communicate the findings with a long shelf life. This will capture the data, Community Roundtable themes and stories to bring more voices and perspectives to the issue, and potential areas of action where partners can come together to advance solutions.

The results of these efforts will drive toward the following outcomes:

- Bring visibility and attention to the critical issues of supporting young people with disabilities in successfully transitioning into postsecondary education and careers
- Identify and deliver data that can elevate the importance of these issues to broader dialogue
- Ensure more educators, employers, youth with disabilities, and parents/caregivers see new possibilities for the potential of young people with disabilities and understand their success as critical to our collective success
- Develop a final report that would highlight opportunities for action and position the work for longer-term impact