

# Focusing on the Future

*NOT LONG AGO, MANY OF ARIZONA'S COMMUNITIES WERE KNOWN AS SLEEPY LITTLE WESTERN TOWNS. WHILE THERE ARE PLACES THROUGHOUT OUR GREAT STATE THAT STILL OFFER A SLOWER PACE, MANY OF OUR COMMUNITIES HAVE BECOME, OR ARE ON THEIR WAY TO BECOMING, THRIVING CITIES.*

*SMALL-, MEDIUM- AND LARGE-SIZED BUSINESSES ARE MOVING TO ARIZONA, AND WITH THEM COME WORKERS, NEW NEIGHBORS, A NEED FOR NEW SCHOOLS, TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT ISSUES AND GROWTH. COMMUNITY LEADERS MUST MANAGE THAT GROWTH IN A WAY THAT MAKES SENSE FOR THEIR COMMUNITY AND FOR THE STATE.*

Through its Focused Future program, established in 1991, APS has helped leaders from less populated areas develop community and economic development plans that will best prepare their communities for inevitable growth.

Focused Future is a step-by-step process designed to empower rural communities with the ability to determine their own futures. The program helps them:

- Define the goals that ensure their economic futures
- Uncover their community's strengths and weaknesses
- Create policies and implement practical programs that enhance their economy
- Save time and money

To date, leaders from approximately 52 communities throughout Arizona have participated in the Focused Future program. To begin, each community forms an "Action Team" that is comprised of a cross section of community leaders and citizens. The Action Team meets for three or four hours monthly, over the course of approximately eight to 12 months. At the end of the process, the communities develop practical, task-oriented

strategic community and economic development plans.

Because of positive feedback from participants, APS introduced "Focused Future II" a few years ago. Focused Future II enables communities to build upon their successes, introduces quality of life community indicators to benchmark success, and offers numerous opportunities for economic development education. So far, 14 communities have completed Focused Future II plans.

"The Focused Future II planning process enables communities to come together and plan for success," said Economic

Over the course of the Focused Future program, participating communities develop practical, task-oriented plans.

## Fast Fact

*LEADERS FROM APPROXIMATELY 52 COMMUNITIES THROUGHOUT ARIZONA HAVE PARTICIPATED IN THE FOCUSED FUTURE PROGRAM.*

Development Director for the City of Prescott Jane Bristol. "We concentrated on positive goals through a community action team that would lead to accomplishments for Prescott. Through positive energy and guidance, the APS team helped us reach our goals."

To maintain the momentum of the Focused Future program and process, APS

also provides communities with the opportunity to participate in continuous educational forums that include leadership training and discussions related to current economic development issues.

One goal identified in many community Focused Future II plans was the need to develop new leaders to fill community leadership roles. Such roles include preparing future leaders to run for city and/or town council positions, various boards and commissions as well as non-profit organizations. From this need comes the creation and development of Community Leadership Academies. Currently there are seven communities/regions successfully graduating 20 to 30 leaders.

"The Wickenburg Leadership Academy and the community of Wickenburg benefit greatly from the investment made by APS to the program," said Wickenburg Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Julie Brooks. "In three years, we have had more than 60 graduates participate in the academy and learn about their community, town departments and local non-profit organizations. Many now serve in Wickenburg leadership roles including town council. The personal staff involvement, investment and desire APS gives to our program is unmatched. Our slogan, which we use frequently in this program, is borrowed from APS — The Power to Make It Happen!"

## Plugged In

APS-supported Web site helps attract businesses to Arizona

*From Arizona real estate questions to workforce demographics questions, to questions about maps of the state, APS fields many inquiries from out-of-state businesses that are considering making a move to Arizona.*

To support Arizona's economic development efforts, APS has partnered with the Arizona Department of Commerce and launched a free, Web-based tool so that those businesses seeking information can find a wealth of information all in one place.

Arizona Prospector, found at [www.azprospector.com](http://www.azprospector.com), is a Web site that enables prospective businesses to identify available commercial, industrial

and retail properties. The site also provides data including workforce demographics, business information and interactive maps.

The interactive maps, which are powered by Geographic Information Systems (GIS), enable users to view possible properties — examining all of the land's characteristics. Users can tailor this information to narrow down locations that meet their specific needs.