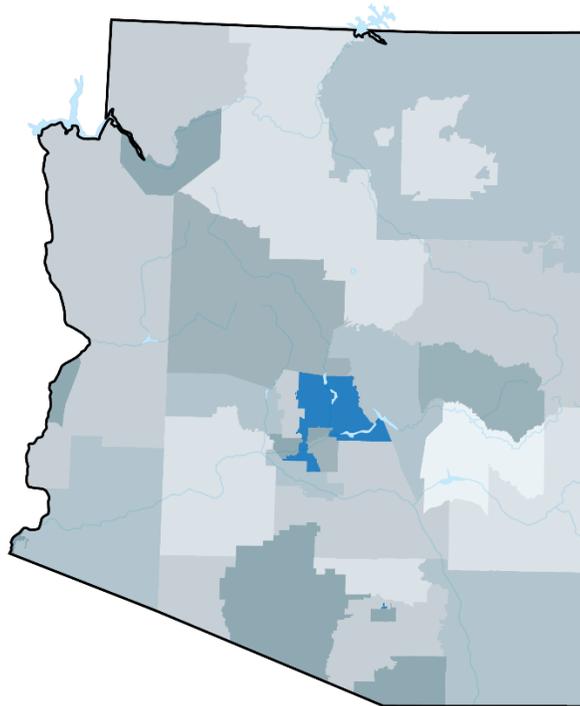


FIRST THINGS FIRST

East Maricopa Regional Partnership Council
Population birth through age 5: 53,928



State Fiscal Year 2025 Funding Plan

SFY 2024 – 2027 Strategic Plan Update

Presented to the First Things First Board
January 23, 2024

FIRST THINGS FIRST

Mission

First Things First is an essential leader and partner in creating a family-centered, equitable, high-quality early childhood system that supports the development, well-being, health and education of all Arizona’s children, birth to age 5.

Vision

All Arizona’s children are ready to succeed in school and in life.

Regional Partnership Councils

First Things First’s statewide Board and its 28 regional partnership councils share the responsibility of ensuring that early childhood funds are invested in strategies aimed at improving educational and health outcomes for young children. Regional partnership councils identify the unique needs of their communities and decide how to best support young children and families in their areas. Regional councils, comprised of local volunteers, provide vision and leadership, governance and oversight. They identify, implement and fund strategies and build collaborations aimed at helping young children across Arizona succeed in school and life.

East Maricopa Regional Partnership Council

Lenay Dunn, chair, representative of a philanthropic organization

Barbara Milner, vice chair, early childhood educator

Antonio Alcala, public school administrator

Juan Aristizabal, at-large representative

Lisa Bautista, at-large representative

Victoria Corlett, tribal public official/employee

Trinity Donovan, member of the business community

Lynn Hockenberger, representative of the faith community

Inez Martinez, health services provider

Delanyo Smith, child care provider

Mitzie Warner, parent of a child age 5 years or younger

Rebecca Heitkamp, regional director, First Things First

Caitlyn Hollins, administrative specialist, First Things First

East Maricopa Regional Partnership Council
Promoting Equity and Supporting Under-Resourced/Underserved Children and Their Families

The East Maricopa Region lies entirely within Maricopa County and spans urban communities to the east of Phoenix as well as less densely populated, suburban and rural communities reaching towards the edges of the Maricopa County boundary. This diverse, expansive region includes: three cities — Chandler, Scottsdale and Tempe; five towns — Carefree, Cave Creek, Fountain Hills, Guadalupe and Paradise Valley; three unincorporated places — Goldfield Ranch, Rio Verde and Sun Lakes; two Phoenix neighborhoods — Ahwatukee and Paradise Valley Village; and one Indian reservation — the Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation.

The regional council has committed to using a trauma informed care approach to their work in early childhood as evidenced by the following Statement of Commitment they have created:

We recognize that traumatic events in people’s lives have a profound impact psychologically, academically and physically and we understand there are informed and intentional practices to help identify, address and bring healing. We also understand that trauma affects people in many different ways. The East Maricopa Region is committed to consistently deepening its understanding, strategies and resources with a trauma-informed lens.

In the development of the SFY24-27 Strategic Plan, the East Maricopa Regional Council was intentional in ensuring that children and families that are the most vulnerable and who historically have not had access to family support and early education resources are provided these opportunities. The regional council used data from the 2022 Regional Needs and Assets Report, as well as several other regional reports and identified three geographic areas with a high percentage of vulnerable families - Guadalupe, downtown Chandler and the Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation. To support these families most in need, the regional council has strategically prioritized the following investments:

- Family resource centers in Guadalupe and downtown Chandler.
- 40 families receiving home visitation services in Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation.
- Coordination with other regional councils in Maricopa County in the implementation of the Partnering with Child Welfare Systems strategy.

With an intentional focus on serving the most vulnerable children in the region, the regional council is demonstrating its commitment that all children birth to age 5 have access to resources that will support their healthy development.

**Regional Allocation and Proposed Funding Plan Summary SFY24 – SFY27
East Maricopa Regional Partnership Council**

Allocations and Funding Sources	2024	2025	2026	2027
FY Allocation	\$7,238,612	\$7,238,612	\$7,173,018	\$7,173,018
Population Based Allocation	\$6,114,627	\$6,114,627	\$6,114,627	\$6,114,627
Discretionary Allocation	\$1,123,985	\$1,123,985	\$1,058,391	\$1,058,391
Carry Forward From Previous Year	\$1,382,666	\$1,294,424	\$1,042,413	\$73,451
Total Regional Council Funds Available	\$8,621,278	\$8,533,036	\$8,215,431	\$7,246,469
Strategies	Allotted	Proposed Allotted	Proposed Allotted	Proposed Allotted
Quality First Academy	\$47,500	\$47,500	\$47,500	\$47,500
Quality First Coaching & Incentives	\$1,460,950	\$1,460,950	\$1,460,950	\$1,460,950
Quality First Scholarships	\$3,125,000	\$3,125,000	\$3,125,000	\$3,125,000
Child Care Health Consultation	\$323,000	\$323,000	\$323,000	\$323,000
Children's Health Systems Change	\$94,999	\$117,666	\$117,666	\$117,666
Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation	\$501,840	\$501,840	\$501,840	\$501,840
Family Resource Centers	\$1,250,000	\$1,250,000	\$1,250,000	\$1,250,000
Family Support & Literacy Systems Change	\$29,166	\$29,166	\$29,166	\$29,166
Home Visitation	\$825,244	\$825,244	\$825,244	\$825,244
Home Visitation Coordinated Referral System	\$86,000	\$63,333	\$63,333	\$63,333
Partnering with Child Welfare Systems	\$16,666	\$16,666	\$16,666	\$16,666
Statewide Evaluation	\$297,865	\$297,865	\$297,865	\$297,865
Educational Promotion and Brand Awareness	\$35,000	\$35,000	\$35,000	\$35,000
Media	\$48,750	\$48,750	\$48,750	\$48,750
Total	\$8,141,980	\$8,141,980	\$8,141,980	\$8,141,980
Total Unallotted/Unawarded/Unexpended:*	\$479,298	\$391,056	\$73,451	(\$895,511)

Fiscal Year	2020	2024	2025	2026	2027
% to Board Priorities		94.97 %	94.69 %	94.69 %	94.69 %
% to Quality First**	17.62%	22.49 %	22.49 %	22.49 %	22.49 %
Fiscal Year	4 Year Average				
% to Board Priorities	94.76%				
% to Quality First**	22.49%				

* Per FTF State Board direction, allotments reflect the budgeting of projected spending, therefore in some years' total allotments may exceed total means of financing. However, actual expenditures against the allotments are expected to be fully supported by revenues, and each year the region is anticipated to end with a carry forward balance which is reflected in the subsequent year's carry forward balance.

**Includes Quality First Academy, Quality First Coaching and Incentives, and Child Care Health Consultation.

**SFY25 FUNDING PLAN UPDATE / CHANGE TABLE
EAST MARICOPA REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP COUNCIL**

DESIRED OUTCOME: ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY, CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION.

Strategy Areas and Funded Strategies

Quality First

- Quality First Academy (prioritized)
- Quality First Coaching and Incentives (prioritized)

Access to Quality Care

- Quality First Scholarships (prioritized)

Successes:

In SFY24, Quality First implemented a revision to the model resulting in service levels that are based on the needs of participating centers and homes. The revisions are anticipated to create efficiencies that allow more regulated early care and education programs to participate and continue the quality improvement trajectory that has shown consistent increases in quality rating over time.

Within the East Maricopa Region there are 184 Quality First sites which are well distributed throughout the region. Ninety one of the 184 sites are expansion sites funded with federal funds through the American Rescue Plan. These expansion sites will be able to participate in evaluation, rating and guidance toward quality improvement until June 30, 2024 when they will return to the Quality First waitlist. At that point the region will continue to serve 93 enrolled sites. Quality First's expenditure for the region is 22.49% of the region's total budget. East Maricopa's large number of Quality First expansion sites can be attributed to regional economics and school district awareness of the Quality First opportunity.

First Things First increased the Quality First Scholarship reimbursement rate to the cost of quality, informed by a study conducted in 2021, this increase will support a robust and stable network of child care providers and continue the reimbursement rate that providers were receiving through federal pandemic relief funding.

Challenges:

In SFY25, federal pandemic relief funding to support a statewide expansion of 413 programs to participate in Quality First will end, 91 of which are in the East Maricopa Region, resulting in a number of current Quality First participants potentially being disenrolled and placed on the Quality First waitlist. Discussions are in progress at the statewide level to determine potential supports so that participants funded through expansion will not need to be disenrolled and put back on a wait list.

Reimbursing Quality First Scholarships at the 2021 cost of quality has resulted in less scholarships for the same amount of funding in SFY25. It is estimated that half the number of scholarships will be available at the current level of investment. In planning for SFY25, regional partnership councils had to consider the regional impact the reduction would have and make decisions to ensure that reductions in funding do not disrupt the system in significant ways.

DESIRED OUTCOME: INFORMATION, SERVICES AND SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES

Strategy Areas and Funded Strategies

Educating Families and Caregivers

- Home Visitation (prioritized)

Navigating and Connecting Families to Resources

- Family Resource Centers (prioritized)
- Family Support and Literacy Systems Change (prioritized)
- Home Visitation Coordinated Referral System (prioritized)

Successes:

All First Things First East Maricopa Regional Council grants were successfully awarded and contracted for five family resource centers and two home visitation programs beginning July 1, 2023.

Family resource centers have reported to be actively recruiting families through activities at local libraries, school events, and cultural events. There has been an increase in parent activities that have been well received and has expanded their reach to families. Below are some examples of successful family resource center implementation in the East Maricopa region:

- The family resource center in Guadalupe has been successfully outreaching to the Pascua Yaqui Tribe which is located in their community.
- The Chandler CARE Center has launched a Wednesday night program and the attendance has exceeded expectations.
- The East Maricopa Region's newest family resource center in Chandler with Valleywise has hosted cultural events for families of a wide diversity of ethnic and cultural origins that have been well attended.
- Tempe Elementary School District's Thrive to Five program at Thew Elementary has increased their presence during student drop off and pick up where they have been able to identify families with infants and toddlers in their vehicles and provide them with a personal invitation to their center and activities. A father receiving services shared that his mental health had improved drastically through the social interactions encountered at the center which also increased his confidence in parenting.
- Scottsdale's Family Resource Center reports success with a mother in need who moved to the area with her elderly father and a young child with autism. Family resource center staff were able to connect the mother to resources and help her schedule an appointment with the Department of Developmental Disabilities for her child. Staff have been able to provide regular referrals to the Southwest Autism Research and Resource Center who is an onsite neighbor at the Paiute Neighborhood Center.

Regional home visitation is provided by two grant partners. The grant partner for Fort McDowell serves 40 tribal families and the second regional grant partner provides services to the remainder of the region and reports that they have been able to get back into birthing hospitals at pre-pandemic levels.

The Arizona Family Resource Network (AzFRN) convenes family resource centers from across the state in the effort to support their ongoing implementation. Program funding alongside regional dollars are being used to help support the work. There also is a new contractor that is facilitating the Network under the Family Support and Literacy Systems Change Strategy. Prevent Child Abuse Arizona is taking on this lead role in the facilitation and deliverables for the SFY24-25 contract to operate the AzFRN. Two new components within this contract include the implementation of the Standards of Quality for Family Strengthening and Support certification training as well as a Community of Practice for

AzFRN members. The addition of these two new components will support resource center staff in their professional growth and development as well as support the effectiveness, quality and success of family resource centers.

To increase referral collaboration opportunities, the Maricopa County cross-regional Home Visitation Coordinated Referral grant partner was added to the Unite Us/Contexture coordinated referral system platform – a closed-loop referral system supported by the Department of Health Services – Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (ADHS – AHCCCS). The platform allows referrals to be made securely from other organizations and for organizations to communicate regarding the referral status of program participants.

Home Visitation Coordinated Referral System staff conducted outreach in Maricopa County to recruit new home visitation programs to be a part of the coordinated referral system. This system is comprised of both FTF-funded and non FTF-funded programs. Three new home visitation programs are now part of the alliance group, and the grantee will continue outreach in the second quarter. These new home visitation programs invited the Home Visitation Coordinated Referral System team to present at staff meetings to learn more about the centralized intake process. Because of this proactive approach, they were ready to receive new referrals and reach out to the families as quickly as possible. This timely service delivery ultimately results in higher enrollment and engagement of families so they receive the benefits of the home visiting program.

Challenges:

The most common challenge with several grant partners including family resource centers and the home visitation program is in the area of staffing, particularly around recruiting qualified staff.

Changes:

The Home Visitation Coordinated Referral System Strategy was reduced by \$22,667 due to amount requested by the grantee in the RFGA response being lower than anticipated. The reduced amount is a portion of the funding for this multi-regional strategy including Northwest, Southwest, East and Southeast Maricopa as well as Phoenix North and Phoenix South regional councils. The total grant award for this strategy is \$380,000 or \$63,333 per region.

Changes:	SFY24	SFY25
Strategy Name Home Visitation Coordinated Referral System		
Funding Level Changes:	\$86,000	\$63,333

DESIRED OUTCOME: WELL-PREPARED, HIGHLY SKILLED AND APPROPRIATELY COMPENSATED PROFESSIONALS

Strategy Areas and Funded Strategies

Professional Development for ECE Professionals

- Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (prioritized)
- Child Care Health Consultation (prioritized)

Successes:

The Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation grant partner for the East Maricopa Region has reported that existing staff are well trained and prepared in the model of implementation. A robust waitlist of sites exists for the East Maricopa Region and training has been provided to several school districts to support those on the waitlist as they await the assignment of a Mental Health Consultant.

Successes include that efforts within a regional site have begun to show positive results by successfully identifying children at risk of developmental delays, trauma-related adverse experiences and/or mental health needs. With the consistent support of the mental health consultants, the leadership and center staff have facilitated successful parent

meetings that resulted in multiple children being referred to a school district priority preschool, mental health therapy and a variety of other child/family community resources. In addition to this success, this priority preschool has developed a positive relationship with their local school district, helping make these referrals happen in a timely manner and engaging parents quickly in the process of positive behavior support planning. Additionally, the grant partner reports success in a site with a long standing participation in Smart Support, Quality First and Child Care Health Consultation recently implementing the Pyramid Model, a framework of evidenced based practices for promoting social emotional development.

Challenges:

Staffing continues to be a challenge for the Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation program in the region. The grant partner is in the process of recruiting and hiring one more full time qualified mental health consultant to be fully staffed and resume full program implementation.

DESIRED OUTCOME: PUBLIC UNDERSTANDING AND SUPPORT.

Strategy Areas and Funded Strategies

Building Awareness of the Importance of the Early Years

- Educational Promotion and Brand Awareness (prioritized)
- Media (prioritized)

Successes:

Robust and timely presentations by the East Maricopa Regional Partnership Council’s Community Engagement Coordinator to the regional council around the importance of engaging the business community have led to connections with local business leaders and other systems partners in the region. Some of the connections include the Phoenix East Valley Partnership, Chandler Chamber of Commerce, NOAH of Scottsdale, Chandler Regional Medical Center, Scottsdale Library, Guadalupe Community Partnership, Read on Tempe, Read on Chandler and For Our City Chandler. Sponsorships have been awarded to various organizations within the region for events including a Back to School and Immunization Event in Guadalupe, Back Pack Event in the Kyrene School District, the Operation Back to School Community Resource Fair in Chandler and Scottsdale Library’s Ultimate Family Play Date Infant Garden.

DESIRED OUTCOME: ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY PREVENTATIVE AND CONTINUOUS HEALTH CARE.

Strategy Areas and Funded Strategies

Health Resource Coordination

- Children’s Health Systems Change

Successes:

The Children’s Health Systems Change Oral Health Strategy focuses on promoting medical-dental integration in health settings and oral health literacy, education and awareness for families with children birth to age 5. Representatives and experts from the oral health field have convened and identified potential pilot efforts to promote medical-dental integration within health care / pediatric settings. First Things First has contracted with a consultant to lead a workgroup around these efforts and to partner with the Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System and other health partners who could benefit from this integration work. A new oral health awareness campaign will be launched in Spring 2024 across Maricopa County that will feature an overall message to families on the importance of oral health for their child in the first few years of life and help connect families to local providers.

Additional work within the Children’s Health Systems Change Strategy includes the Early Childhood Nutrition Policy Team, and six regional Early Childhood Nutrition Teams. The Policy Team has created a food safety crosswalk that will

target food safety practices and developmentally appropriate food introductions. This work will lead to resource creation for early care and education providers regarding developmental appropriateness of introducing foods, allergies, sensitivities, and supervision.

Each of the six regional areas within Maricopa County has created their own regional nutrition teams, composed of local partners and First Things First representatives working to establish goals and deliverables for their individual regional plans. Each plan will center around addressing food insecurity for families with young children. The 6 teams have been introduced to their new consultant and are meeting on a monthly basis to discuss collaborative efforts.

The East Maricopa Regional Partnership Council prioritized Trauma Informed Care during the pandemic in 2020, recognizing that there would be new levels of individual trauma due to the significant increase in deaths and isolation. The council engaged a consultant to assess trauma awareness and responsiveness within the region and in particular with professionals who support and educate young children and their families. The final report concluded that additional training for professionals would be beneficial to increase trauma awareness.

Under the regions Children’s Health Systems Change Strategy, the regional council chose to address the aforementioned need for increased trauma awareness. The regions Trauma Informed Care program is identifying trauma training for professionals serving young children and their families in the region with a plan of scheduling the training for 50 professionals in April 2024.

Changes:

The Regional Partnership Council removed the Oral Health Strategy and increased funding for the Children’s Health Systems Change Oral Health Strategy in SFY25 in the amount of \$22,667 to expand on the medical-dental integration pilot project(s) and awareness campaign.

Changes:	SFY24	SFY25
Strategy Name Oral Health		
Funding Level Changes:	\$41,666	\$64,333

DESIRED OUTCOME: COORDINATED, INTEGRATED, AND COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM

Strategy Areas and Funded Strategies

Child Welfare Prevention /Intervention

- Partnering with Child Welfare Systems Change

Evaluation

- Statewide Evaluation

Successes:

The Partnering with Child Welfare Systems Change Strategy grant partner, Maricopa County Juvenile Court, continues to train clinicians in Child-Parent Psychotherapy and will be starting a second cohort with a goal of training a total of 50-60 clinicians. The clinical director that oversees this strategy has also been working to organize a Circle of Security training for community providers that are working with families of infants and toddlers. This is the largest group of children to enter, remain and/or re-enter the child welfare system. Additionally, a group including the clinical director, juvenile court administrator and three judicial officers attended the Zero to Three annual cross-site meetings to align the Maricopa County Superior Court’s Cradles to Crayons Program approach with the Zero to Three Safe Babies approach and ways the judicial officers could apply the approach from the bench in their court hearings. One idea that has been

acted upon is to develop a “court room training” where a judicial officer would invite all attorneys and staff who regularly appear in their courtroom to learn about the Cradles to Crayons approach and the services available to families. Scheduling is underway for Circle of Security trainings for 20 clinicians and 10 direct service providers from community child serving agencies. The clinical director continues to be involved in collaborative learning environments and community coalitions to address issues pertaining to families of young children including brainstorming possible causes for initial parental resistance in participating in services which can lead to noncompliance with case plans and lower reunification rates.