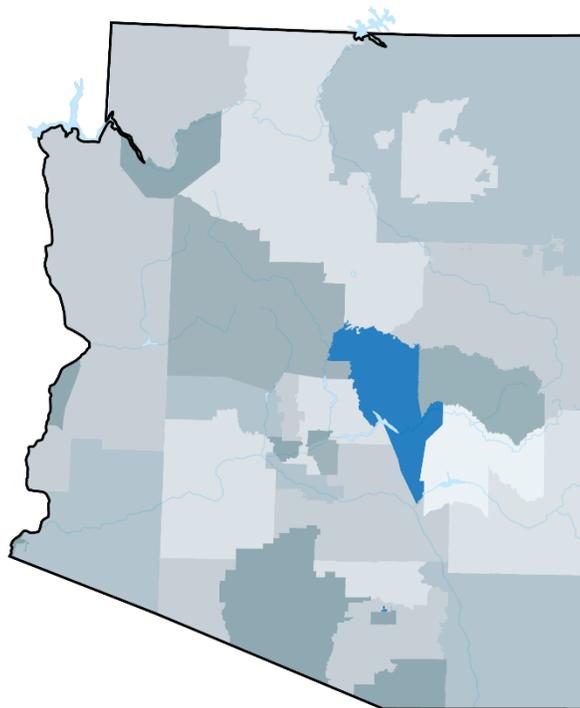


FIRST THINGS FIRST

Gila Regional Partnership Council
Population birth through age 5: 2,404



State Fiscal Year 2025 Funding Plan

SFY 2024 – 2027 Strategic Plan Update

Presented to the First Things First Board
January 23, 2024



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.

Gila Regional Partnership Council

Kristin Wade, chair, health services provider

Kayla Van Cleve, vice chair, member of the business community

Matthew Crespin, parent of a child age 5 years or younger

Sherry Dorathy, public school administrator

Debbie Leverance, early childhood educator

Charles Proudfoot, representative of a philanthropic organization

Adrea Ricke, at-large representative

Fernando Shipley, representative of the faith community

Tashina Smith, tribal public official/employee

Pam Trobaugh, child care provider

open, at-large representative

Carolyn Haro, regional director, First Things First

Victoria Marin, administrative specialist, First Things First

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

The Gila Regional Council has historically and currently promotes the concept that services be available to all children birth to age 5 and their families. The regional council has emphatically expressed that “the rancher living far outside of town” should have the same access to services that “folks that live in town” do. This desire was reflected in regional council conversation and the intention of each strategy specifying availability in both rural and frontier areas. It was discovered that having both in-person and virtual options for services works well within the region as it affords service availability for families who experience transportation challenges and scheduling conflicts, thereby enabling accessibility that would not otherwise be available to them. Therefore, the regional council intent is to provide services in as many formats as possible, including through the mail system for book distribution.

The regional council is aware of the needs of the many low-income families in the region. They have invested in Quality First scholarships to enable lower income families’ accessibility to quality child care. They are also very aware that the region is designated as a child care desert and plan continued conversations regarding quality child care availability throughout the region. The regional council has also opted to target part of the media strategy towards targeted oral health education, inclusive of promoting the dental benefit that is available for children who are currently enrolled in Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS).

This region is home to many different cultures including various ethnicities and rural/frontier locations. Each community within the region has a different culture and the regional council continues to adapt outreach to help accommodate the differences and be inclusive of all people. The Tonto Apache Tribe is a part of our community within the Gila Region. The regional council makes a concerted effort to consult with the tribe in ongoing efforts to promote health, wellness, access to quality child care, learning and screening services within the area. The regional council strives to work with each community in addressing unique needs that may be identified. It is the expectation of the Gila Regional Council that all residents be served without discrimination.

Regional Allocation and Proposed Funding Plan Summary SFY24 – SFY27
Gila Regional Partnership Council

Allocations and Funding Sources	2024	2025	2026	2027
FY Allocation	\$682,076	\$682,076	\$733,808	\$733,808
Population Based Allocation	\$457,456	\$457,456	\$457,456	\$457,456
Discretionary Allocation	\$224,620	\$224,620	\$276,352	\$276,352
Carry Forward From Previous Year	\$81,666	\$69,411	\$25,733	-
Total Regional Council Funds Available	\$763,742	\$751,487	\$759,541	\$733,808
Strategies	Allotted	Proposed Allotted	Proposed Allotted	Proposed Allotted
Quality First Academy	\$3,500	\$3,500	\$3,500	\$3,500
Quality First Coaching & Incentives	\$88,010	\$88,010	\$88,010	\$88,010
Quality First Scholarships	\$381,375	\$381,375	\$381,375	\$381,375
Child Care Health Consultation	\$23,800	\$23,800	\$23,800	\$23,800
Developmental and Sensory Screening	\$44,223	\$44,223	\$44,223	\$44,223
Book Distribution	\$60,000	\$60,000	\$60,000	\$60,000
Parenting Education	\$130,000	\$130,000	\$130,000	\$130,000
Statewide Evaluation	\$30,472	\$30,472	\$30,472	\$30,472
Educational Promotion and Brand Awareness	\$4,000	\$4,000	\$4,000	\$4,000
Media	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$15,000
Total	\$780,380	\$780,380	\$780,380	\$780,380
Total Unallotted/Unawarded/Unexpended:*	(\$16,638)	(\$28,893)	(\$20,839)	(\$46,572)

Fiscal Year	2020	2024	2025	2026	2027
% to Board Priorities		82.73 %	82.73 %	82.73 %	82.73 %
% to Quality First**	11.41%	14.77 %	14.77 %	14.77 %	14.77 %
Fiscal Year	4 Year Average				
% to Board Priorities	82.73%				
% to Quality First**	14.77%				

*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
GILA 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.

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.

There are currently three Arizona Department of Economic Security (DES) expansion sites in the Gila region, one in Payson, one in Young and one in Globe. As a result of the positive experience, two of the sites have indicated interest in continuing with Quality First services.

Challenges:

In SFY25, federal pandemic relief funding to support a statewide expansion of 413 programs to participate in Quality First will end, three of which were located in the Gila Region. This will result 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 waitlist.

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

- Parenting Education (prioritized)

Language and Literacy

- Book Distribution

Successes:

For the Parenting Education Strategy and through the Request for Grant Application process, the regional council awarded a grant partner who provides the programming and uses Active Parenting – First Five Years as their curriculum. Parenting education is embedded in the Gila Region and is part of a continuum of parenting education opportunities that are available to our communities encompassing prenatal to age 18. The regional council has prioritized providing service to all Gila communities from Strawberry, Pine, Star Valley, Payson, Rye, Tonto Basin, Young, Roosevelt, Globe, Miami, Dripping Springs, Hayden and Winkelman. The parenting education program provides service to all remote areas and also makes virtual classes available for those who have conflict with transportation or work schedules.

The Book Distribution Strategy, was awarded through a grant agreement. The Gila County Library District partners with the Dolly Parton Imagination Library to provide the programming for this strategy. Their intent is to both educate families on early learning and to build home libraries in our communities. Children look forward to receiving books in the mail each month. It is a highly popular program within the region and more than 17,000 books are distributed each year directly to families. Their partnerships with many community organizations enable them to enroll many Gila children.

Challenges:

The Parenting Education Strategy grant partner reports transportation and work schedules are an issue that the provider has tried to resolve by offering some virtual opportunities.

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

Strategy Areas and Funded Strategies

Professional Development for ECE Professionals

- o Child Care Health Consultation (prioritized)

Successes:

The University of Arizona Cooperative Extension - Gila provides child care health consultation services to all seven regionally funded Quality First participants and the two DES expansion sites.

DESIRED OUTCOME: PUBLIC UNDERSTANDING AND SUPPORT.

Strategy Areas and Funded Strategies

Building Awareness of the Importance of the Early Years

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

Successes:

Information and promotional items for events and books are distributed in the community by First Things First, regional council members, grant partners and community partners. Information has been shared at the Payson Book Fair, National Night Out and at the Read On Express in December.

The Gila Regional Partnership Council chose to continue to support the statewide media campaign and the campaign will include billboards, shopping cart ads and social media ads. In collaboration with the Maricopa and Phoenix regions, a supplemental campaign featuring oral health information will also run targeted to families with young children, especially those enrolled in the Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS). The campaign will help to connect families to their AHCCCS health plan providers who serve Maricopa and Gila regions to learn more about children’s oral health benefits.

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

Strategy Areas and Funded Strategies

Identifying and Addressing Developmental Concerns

- Developmental and Sensory Screening

Successes:

Grantee staff are certified to conduct all screenings and provide service throughout the Gila Region.

DESIRED OUTCOME: COORDINATED, INTEGRATED, AND COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM

Strategy Areas and Funded Strategies

Evaluation

- Statewide Evaluation