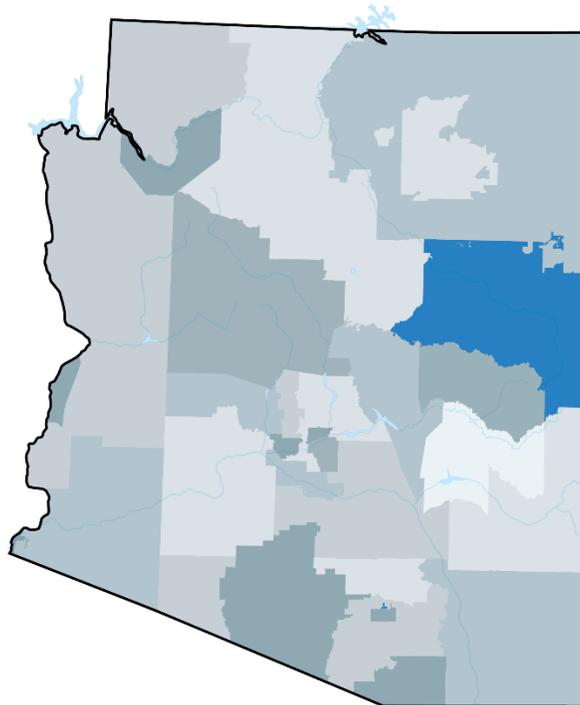




FIRST THINGS FIRST

Navajo/Apache Regional Partnership Council
Population birth through age 5: 5,345



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.

Navajo/Apache Regional Partnership Council

Becky Benda-Dodd, chair, early childhood educator

Mary "Katherine" Larson, vice chair, representative of a philanthropic organization

Kimberly Avery, at-large representative

Manuela Bowler, at-large representative

Elizabeth Bierer, health services provider

Claude Endfield, at-large representative

Karli Hueston, child care provider

Byron Lewis, representative of the faith community

Molly McGavock, parent of a child age 5 years or younger

Jeffrey Oakes, member of the business community

Kristen Orton, public school administrator

Michael Caruth, regional director, First Things First

Kymani Morris, administrative specialist, First Things First

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

The Navajo/Apache Regional Council developed their SFY 24-27 Strategic Plan, which promotes equity and supports under-resourced and underserved children and their families by identifying and prioritizing the most significant needs in the region.

The Navajo/Apache Regional Council will advance diversity, equity, and inclusion for all, especially for those who have been historically marginalized or underserved, by cultivating a culture where everyone can thrive. The strategic plan promotes equity, supports low-income working families through child-care financial assistance, promotes children’s learning by improving the quality of early care and education and provides professional development opportunities for the early childhood workforce. The regional council’s Early Learning Systems Change Strategy will expand that support by targeting communities where families have limited, or no, access to early learning opportunities. The Navajo/Apache Region is a large geographic area that includes many small, spread out communities such as Heber, Linden, Vernon, St. John’s, Alpine, Sanders and Concho to name a few. Many of the communities in the region have hard-to-reach families who have a lack of trust of government-funded programs and stigmas in participating in programs of any kind. The intent of the regional council is to reach these families and determine, through an opportunity assessment, how best to support their early learning needs.

The regional council tends to prioritize communities in Apache County, which has the highest poverty level of any counties in the state. The regional council knows that this is where most of our support is needed.

Additionally, the Navajo/Apache Regional Partnership Council will promote health equity and support across the region by promoting positive oral, physical, mental and developmental health to uninsured and underinsured populations. Through the region’s Oral Health and Well Child Family Care Strategies, the regional council is ensuring that all families, regardless of income or geographic location, have access to preventative oral health screenings, timely developmental and sensory screenings, immunization, well-child visits, support in navigating the complex health system, access to parenting information and resources and access to developmentally-appropriate books.

The regional council members are committed to advancing equity for all children and families, especially those who have been historically underserved, marginalized, and adversely affected by persistent poverty and inequality in the region by intentionally focusing on communities that are impacted by homelessness, housing instability, domestic and intimate partner violence, mental health and adolescent pregnancy to promote self-sufficiency and well-being. This will be achieved through the council’s awareness strategies that will focus not only on promoting the importance of the early years, but also on building trust in First Things First.

Regional Allocation and Proposed Funding Plan Summary SFY24 – SFY27
Navajo/Apache Regional Partnership Council

| Allocations and Funding Sources | 2024 | 2025 | 2026 | 2027 |
|--|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| FY Allocation | \$1,510,461 | \$1,510,461 | \$1,625,482 | \$1,625,482 |
| Population Based Allocation | \$1,012,965 | \$1,012,965 | \$1,012,965 | \$1,012,965 |
| Discretionary Allocation | \$497,496 | \$497,496 | \$612,517 | \$612,517 |
| Carry Forward From Previous Year | \$239,791 | \$680,118 | \$570,247 | \$400,347 |
| Total Regional Council Funds Available | \$1,750,252 | \$2,190,579 | \$2,195,729 | \$2,025,829 |
| Strategies | Allotted | Proposed Allotted | Proposed Allotted | Proposed Allotted |
| Early Learning Systems Change | \$521,403 | \$521,403 | \$521,403 | \$521,403 |
| Quality First Academy | \$2,000 | \$2,000 | \$2,000 | \$2,000 |
| Quality First Coaching & Incentives | \$38,660 | \$38,660 | \$38,660 | \$38,660 |
| Quality First Scholarships | \$211,820 | \$211,820 | \$211,820 | \$211,820 |
| First Things First College Scholarships | \$43,200 | \$43,200 | \$43,200 | \$43,200 |
| Child Care Health Consultation | \$13,600 | \$13,600 | \$13,600 | \$13,600 |
| Children's Health Systems Change | \$45,200 | \$45,200 | \$45,200 | \$45,200 |
| Oral Health | \$170,000 | \$170,000 | \$170,000 | \$170,000 |
| Well Child and Family Care | \$650,000 | \$650,000 | \$650,000 | \$650,000 |
| Statewide Evaluation | \$67,499 | \$67,499 | \$67,499 | \$67,499 |
| Educational Promotion and Brand Awareness | \$12,000 | \$12,000 | \$12,000 | \$12,000 |
| Media | \$20,000 | \$20,000 | \$20,000 | \$20,000 |
| Total | \$1,795,382 | \$1,795,382 | \$1,795,382 | \$1,795,382 |
| Total Unallotted/Unawarded/Unexpended:* | (\$45,130) | \$395,197 | \$400,347 | \$230,447 |

| Fiscal Year | 2020 | 2024 | 2025 | 2026 | 2027 |
|-----------------------|----------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| % to Board Priorities | | 48.05 % | 48.05 % | 48.05 % | 48.05 % |
| % to Quality First** | 3.35% | 3.02 % | 3.02 % | 3.02 % | 3.02 % |
| Fiscal Year | 4 Year Average | | | | |
| % to Board Priorities | 48.05% | | | | |
| % to Quality First** | 3.02% | | | | |

*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.

Justification for not meeting the 80% allotment to Board Priorities: The regional council recognizes the importance of aligning with the statewide strategic direction. However, the regional council continues to assess local needs and assets and significant capacity and infrastructure issues remain, including a region-wide child care desert with a critical lack of existing child care programs. The region continues its SFY25 funding plan with the same funding levels as the Board-approved SFY24 plan. The regional council will continue to assess and look for future opportunities to continue to align more closely with the Board’s priority areas, particularly concerning Quality First and continues working to implement the Early Learning Systems Change strategy.

**SFY25 FUNDING PLAN UPDATE / CHANGE TABLE
NAVAJO/APACHE 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)
- Early Learning Systems Change (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.

Challenges:

In SFY25, federal pandemic relief funding to support a statewide expansion of 413 programs to participate in Quality First will end, 9 of which were located in the Navajo/Apache 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 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: WELL-PREPARED, HIGHLY SKILLED AND APPROPRIATELY COMPENSATED PROFESSIONALS

Strategy Areas and Funded Strategies

Professional Development for ECE Professionals

- Child Care Health Consultation (prioritized)
- First Things First College Scholarships (prioritized)

Successes:

There have been orientations on the changes to the Child Care Health Consultation (CCHC) program, along with discussions on scheduling health and safety checklists. The assessment tool and the action plan were completed with three child care directors, reaching a total of five child care sites. The health and safety checklist was completed at one child care site in the region. The assessment tool was initially scheduled to occur in the second quarter.

Challenges:

Child Care Health Consultation services in the Navajo/Apache Region have largely consisted of virtual visits. Child Care Health Consultants, have continued outreach to child care sites with most centers responding. There are some centers that do not respond, or it is challenging to catch the site directors when they are available. The distances of travel between sites to meet in-person is another challenge. Attempts are made to cluster area visits for the day. However, plans often change and this does not always work out. Continued attempts are made to meet the required number of hours per site; the number of hours needed to travel and to meet on site, particularly at more than one site a day is difficult. The option to meet virtually will allow for more opportunities for meetings. This will help in many situations and regions, with the exception where internet service is inadequate. In those areas, this is not an option.

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)

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

Strategy Areas and Funded Strategies

Oral Health

- Oral Health

Identifying and Addressing Developmental Concerns

- Developmental and Sensory Screening

Health Resource Coordination

- Well Child Family Care
- Children’s Health Systems Change

Successes:

In implementation of the Well Child Family Care Strategy, services have continued to grow in numbers at each of the sites in the region, resulting in opportunities to conduct screenings and consultations in person. Quarter one data shows that over 500 unduplicated families were seen in the quarter, which is over one-third of the contracted service unit.

Challenges:

While the Well Child Family Care Strategy has seen successes, it has also experienced challenges. Those challenges include a lack of qualified providers in the region, turnovers in medical staff, re-establishing clientele within clinic services and many cancelled well child visits by parents and caregivers. Our grant partners continue to address and rise above these challenges to serve well above the set service units required in their contract.

DESIRED OUTCOME: COORDINATED, INTEGRATED AND COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM

Strategy Areas and Funded Strategies

Evaluation

- Statewide Evaluation (Prioritized)
- Needs and Assets (Prioritized)