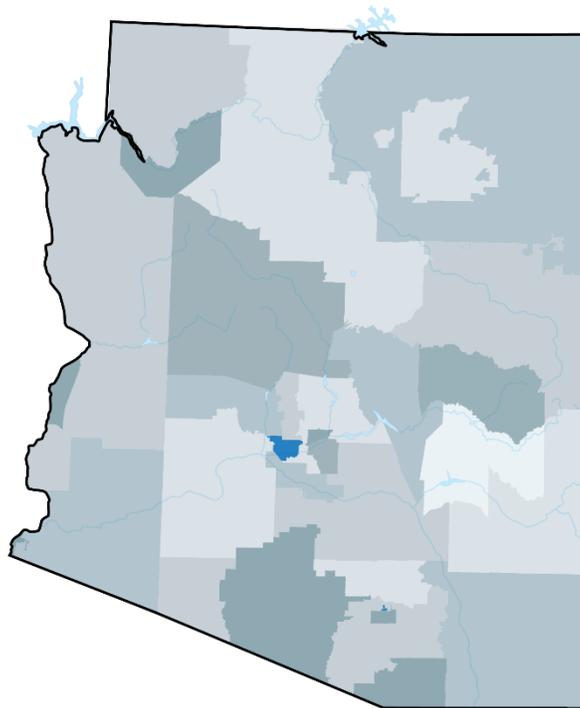




FIRST THINGS FIRST

Phoenix South Regional Partnership Council
Population birth through age 5: 59,009



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.

Phoenix South Regional Partnership Council

Patricia Neff, chair, early childhood educator

Jessica Jarvi, vice chair, member of the business community

Felicia Durden, public school administrator

Joyce Harper, representative of a philanthropic organization

Joshua Henry, parent of a child age 5 years or younger

Chesa Mendez, at-large representative

Patricia Merk, at-large representative

Sakina Pasha, health services provider

Lenny Reel, child care provider

Karen Stewart, representative of the faith community

Carolyn Willmer, at-large representative

Janet Wright Moore, regional director, First Things First

Danae Gandara, administrative specialist, First Things First

The Phoenix South Regional Partnership Council has a vision that young children in the Phoenix South Region thrive through First Thing First's family-led kindergarten readiness initiatives supported by the community.

Phoenix South is a diverse region with a plethora of history, culture, community pride and hard-working families. Unfortunately, those hard working families often struggle to meet basic needs due to low wages, limited English proficiency, limited education and housing insecurity. According to the Regional Needs and Assets Report, nearly one-third (30%) of residents in the Phoenix South Region lives in poverty, almost double that of Maricopa County (16%). When it comes to young children, more than four in 10 (42%) live in poverty in the region. Compounding high poverty, 39% of families in Phoenix South are facing housing insecurity. Additionally, a smaller proportion of adults have more than a high-school education in the Phoenix South Region (39%) than in Maricopa County (64%), Arizona (62%), and the United States overall (60%). This difference is also seen specifically in mothers giving birth, with a smaller proportion of births in the region to mothers with more than a high-school education (37%) than the county (58%) and state (56%). Simultaneously, 47% of children in Phoenix South Region live with one or two foreign-born parents; this is higher than the county as a whole (30%). Household language use also reflects these demographic patterns; a higher proportion of individuals speak a language other than English at home in the Phoenix South Region (55%) than in the county (27%) and state (27%). There is also a higher percentage of limited-English-speaking households in the region (12%), than in the county and state (4% in each).

Findings from the Regional Needs and Assets Report illustrate opportunities for the regional council and community stakeholders in early childhood health and development systems to focus work on the communities' most vulnerable families. The Phoenix South Regional Partnership Council strategic plan promotes equity and support of under-resourced and underserved families by funding services and programs that target those most at risk, such as Quality First Scholarships and Home Visitation. To promote language and literacy development, the council has chosen to implement a Community Based Language and Literacy Strategy. Additionally, the regional council has chosen to specifically target refugee families who often struggle to access services and navigate the complex early childhood development and health systems. Finally, the regional council has chosen to fund strategically placed family resources centers, so that they are easily accessible to families with transportation barriers.

To guide their work over the next four years, the regional council has adopted the following guiding principles. The Phoenix South Regional Partnership Council will:

- Insist on diversity, treat everyone with courtesy and equality, and support and encourage our communities' values.
- Support programs and practices that demonstrate a commitment to quality and success through realistic measurable outcomes.
- Make decisions that are in the best interest of children.
- Partner with community and family stakeholders to develop and implement solutions that build and strengthen the early childhood development and health systems in Phoenix South and other First Things First (FTF) regions.
- Operate with transparency and hold the highest ethical stands for ourselves and those with whom we work.
- Advocate for diversity in our practices, resource-allocating decision making.
- Support innovative approaches.

In addition, the regional council envisions supporting a tiered approach to ensure all families have access as well as supporting services that address the needs of the most vulnerable families in the region. The regional council will do this by:

- Ensuring services are provided in multiple languages.
- Identifying and partnering with service partners that serve the most vulnerable (homeless and domestic violence shelters, low income housing facilities, refugee facilities).
- Targeting school districts that serve students whose families live under the federal poverty line.

With the leadership of the Phoenix South Regional Partnership Council and the many assets and committed stakeholders in the community, the region is positioned to continue to build on positive trends and ensure all children are ready to succeed in school and in life.

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

Allocations and Funding Sources	2024	2025	2026	2027
FY Allocation	\$14,883,333	\$14,883,333	\$13,852,710	\$13,852,710
Population Based Allocation	\$10,791,226	\$10,791,226	\$10,791,226	\$10,791,226
Discretionary Allocation	\$4,092,107	\$4,092,107	\$3,061,484	\$3,061,484
Carry Forward From Previous Year	\$5,829,258	\$5,695,987	\$4,992,230	\$1,902,451
Total Regional Council Funds Available	\$20,712,591	\$20,579,320	\$18,844,940	\$15,755,161
Strategies	Allotted	Proposed Allotted	Proposed Allotted	Proposed Allotted
Early Learning Systems Change	\$120,000	\$120,000	\$120,000	\$120,000
Inclusion of Children with Special Needs	\$154,000	\$154,000	\$154,000	\$154,000
Quality First Increase		\$215,000	\$215,000	\$215,000
Quality First Academy	\$71,000	\$71,000	\$71,000	\$71,000
Quality First Coaching & Incentives	\$2,011,310	\$2,011,310	\$2,011,310	\$2,011,310
Quality First Scholarships	\$7,021,128	\$7,021,128	\$7,021,128	\$7,021,128
Child Care Health Consultation	\$482,800	\$482,800	\$482,800	\$482,800
Children's Health Systems Change	\$75,000	\$97,667	\$97,667	\$97,667
Developmental and Sensory Screening	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$100,000
Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation	\$500,000	\$500,000	\$500,000	\$500,000
Family Support for Children with Developmental Concerns	\$200,000	\$200,000	\$200,000	\$200,000
Community Based Language and Literacy	\$157,500	\$157,500	\$157,500	\$157,500
Family Resource Centers	\$1,950,000	\$1,949,999	\$1,949,999	\$1,949,999
Family Support & Literacy Systems Change	\$129,167	\$229,167	\$229,167	\$229,167
Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care	\$900,000	\$900,000	\$900,000	\$900,000
Home Visitation	\$1,947,374	\$1,947,374	\$1,947,374	\$1,947,374
Home Visitation Coordinated Referral System	\$86,000	\$63,333	\$63,333	\$63,333
Partnering with Child Welfare Systems	\$16,667	\$16,667	\$16,667	\$16,667
Statewide Evaluation	\$575,244	\$575,244	\$575,244	\$575,244
Educational Promotion and Brand Awareness	-	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$15,000
Media	\$115,300	\$115,300	\$115,300	\$115,300
Total	\$16,612,490	\$16,942,489	\$16,942,489	\$16,942,489
Total Unallotted/Unawarded/Unexpended:*	\$4,100,101	\$3,636,831	\$1,902,451	(\$1,187,328)

Fiscal Year	2020	2024	2025	2026	2027
% to Board Priorities		94.18 %	94.15 %	94.15 %	94.15 %
% to Quality First**	10.88%	15.42 %	16.40 %	16.40 %	16.40 %
Fiscal Year	4 Year Average				
% to Board Priorities	94.02%				
% to Quality First**	16.16%				

*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
PHOENIX SOUTH 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 state fiscal year 2024 (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 continues the reimbursement rate that providers were receiving through federal pandemic relief funding.

The Phoenix South Regional Partnership Council identified increasing quality early learning, including quality, accessible, affordable child care as a priority and made the decision to continue this investment in SFY25. This priority is funded through the investment in Quality First (Academy/Coaching/Child Care Health Consultant).

The Phoenix North and South Regional Partnership Councils collaborated to funding a consultant under the Early Learning Systems Change Strategy to establish two communities of practice. The goal of each is to offer early childhood professionals a series of aggregated sessions linked to early childhood best practices on a recognized topic of study over an extended period of time. Each community of practice has targeted enrolling 20 child care providers. To date, the consultant has exceeded that target number of enrolled participants for each cohort. An additional goal is to recruit child care centers that are not currently enrolled in Quality First as a way to ensure that additional centers are receiving quality professional development to meet the needs of the children they are serving.

Challenges:

In SFY25, federal pandemic relief funding to support a statewide expansion of 413 programs to participate in Quality First will end, 18 of which were located in the Phoenix South 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.

Changes:

The regional council approved increased funding in SFY25 in the amount of \$215,000 to Quality First to support approximately eight early care and education centers, prioritizing those centers currently participating under DES expansion.

Changes:	SFY24	SFY25
Quality First Increase		
Funding Level Changes:	0	\$215,000

DESIRED OUTCOME: INFORMATION, SERVICES AND SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES

Strategy Areas and Funded Strategies

Educating Families and Caregivers

- Home Visitation (prioritized)
- Community Based Language and Literacy (prioritized)
- Family, Friend and Neighbor Care (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:

Within the Family Support and Literacy Systems Change Strategy, the regional council approved funding to support revisiting a capacity building project with grassroots organizations in Phoenix South. The initial capacity building project was conducted in SFY23, and the intent of the project was to provide skill building/training and technical assistance to community and faith based service providers in the Phoenix South region in the areas of resource development and sustainability. Additional conversations will be needed to determine specifications for the scope of work and how the strategy will be implemented in SFY25 and beyond.

Family resource centers’ community events have reached thousands and shown an increase in participation; therefore, the regional council approved additional funding toward this strategy, which will support two additional facilities.

Family resource centers in the region continue to work with diverse populations of varied ethnicities ensuring that books, staff and resources are available in the families’ language of Swahili, Arabic and Spanish and reflect their culture.

There is a new contractor to facilitate the Arizona Family Resource Network (AzFRN) under the Family Support and Literacy Systems Change Strategy. The AzFRN convenes family resource centers from across the State in the effort to support their ongoing implementation. Prevent Child Abuse Arizona will be taking on the lead role in the facilitation and deliverables for the SFY24-25 contract to operate the AzFRN. Two new components within this contract include funding for 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.

Changes:

The Home Visitation Coordinated Referral System Strategy was reduced by \$22,667 due to the 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.

The regional council approved increasing funding in SFY25 in the amount of \$100,000 to Family Support and Literacy Systems Change. The regional council's intent is to support smaller, grassroots nonprofits in the region through a funder-nonprofit collaborative focused on capacity building. The goal of the collaborative will be to provide professional development and technical assistance to nonprofits as well as to create a feedback loop to help funders consider equity, diversity and inclusion in their funding practices. Additional discussions will be held in order to develop a scope of work and identify a contractor or administrative home to implement the strategy.

Changes:	SFY24	SFY25
Family Support and Literacy Systems Change		
Funding Level Changes:	\$129,176	\$229,176
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)
- Inclusion of Children with Special Needs (prioritized)
- First Things First College Scholarships (prioritized)
- Professional Development of ECE Professionals (prioritized)
- Child Care Health Consultation (prioritized)

Successes:

The Inclusion of Special Needs Strategy grantee is seeing new successes in the areas of equity and accessibility. At one preschool site, all classrooms have transitioned to full inclusion, which means children with all abilities learn side by side in the same preschool environment.

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:

Two newly hired community engagement coordinators have been attending regional council meetings, meetings with grant partners and conducting presentations to the business and faith communities to increase the audience for early childhood education with a focus on reaching and engaging the business community. Their work is geared toward expanding the audience for the importance of early childhood. In Phoenix South, they have connected with the City of Phoenix Economic and Neighborhood Services executive staff with the goal of collaborating on multiple fronts toward this effort.

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
- Family Support for Children with Developmental Concerns

Health Resource Coordination

- Children’s Health Systems Change

Successes:

The second release of the multi-regional Developmental and Sensory Screening Strategy Request for Grant Application (RFGA) for Phoenix South and Phoenix North regional councils had a total of five applications with one applicant recommended by the regional councils for award; subsequently approved by the Board at the September meeting.

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.

Six regional nutrition teams, composed of local partners and First Things First representatives are 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 six teams have been introduced to their new consultant and are meeting on a monthly basis to discuss collaborative efforts.

Challenges:

The initial RFGA for the Developmental and Sensory Screening received no applications Both Phoenix North and Phoenix South elected to re-release the RFGA and it is now awarded. As a result, implementation was delayed until October 2023.

Changes:

The regional council increased funding in SFY25 in the amount of \$22,667 to the Children’s Health Systems Change Strategy to expand on the Medical-Dental Integration pilot project and awareness campaign.

Changes:	SFY24	SFY25
Children’s Health Systems Change		
Funding Level Changes:	\$75,000	\$97,667

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 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.