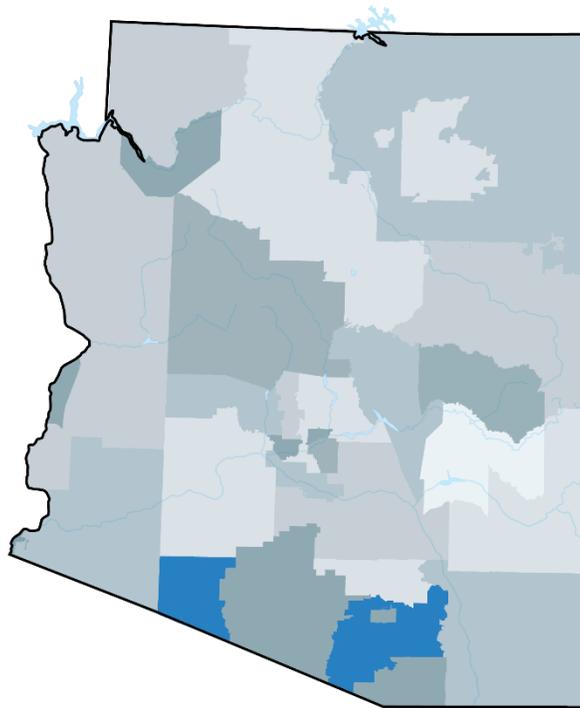




FIRST THINGS FIRST

Pima South Regional Partnership Council
Population birth through age 5: 23,941



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.

Pima South Regional Partnership Council

Toni Lopez Krause, chair, at-large representative

Leticia Lujan, vice chair, member of the business community

Dennis Billie, at-large representative

Tami Bonesteel, representative of the faith community

David Dumon, public school administrator

Connie Espinoza, early childhood educator

Eduardo Estrada, health services provider

Linda Kubiak, child care provider

Javare’ Phillips, at-large representative

Ashley King, parent of a child age 5 years or younger

open, representative of a philanthropic organization

Jaymie Jacobs, regional director, First Things First

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

The Pima South Regional Council developed the State Fiscal Year (SFY24-27) Strategic Plan by diving deep into local needs and asset data, holding several in-depth strategic planning work sessions and conducting a community conversation to gain input from key community stakeholders in order to discover relevant opportunities for the region to address the greatest needs of children ages birth to age 5 and their families.

The Pima South Region is a unique mix of urban and rural communities. The region has a poverty rate of 28% with some rural communities with over 30% poverty. The needs of the families are vast. Nearly one-quarter of children under six live in single-female households and/or cared for by grandparents. While there are under-resourced and underserved children and families in the region, they also feel a strong sense of community. Based on this, the council approved several family support strategies for SFY24. The Family Resource Centers and Home Visitation Strategies will start “where the families are at” by building upon each families’ strengths, then establish stronger and more comprehensive supports and services for families. Both of these strategies utilize a multi-generational approach so the entire family can benefit from these services. Additionally, the regional council will fund a Program Coordination Specialist position to create a more seamless system to better serve families especially those with the highest needs.

The ultimate goal of the Pima South Regional Partnership Council is to create a high-quality, interconnected and comprehensive early childhood service delivery system in the region that is family-driven, community-based and directed toward enhancing children’s overall development.

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

Allocations and Funding Sources	2024	2025	2026	2027
FY Allocation	\$5,637,112	\$5,637,112	\$6,152,534	\$6,152,534
Population Based Allocation	\$3,766,660	\$3,766,660	\$3,766,660	\$3,766,660
Discretionary Allocation	\$1,870,452	\$1,870,452	\$2,385,874	\$2,385,874
Carry Forward From Previous Year	\$1,074,264	\$818,436	\$320,719	-
Total Regional Council Funds Available	\$6,711,376	\$6,455,548	\$6,473,253	\$6,152,534
Strategies	Allotted	Proposed Allotted	Proposed Allotted	Proposed Allotted
Quality First Academy	\$36,500	\$36,500	\$36,500	\$36,500
Quality First Coaching & Incentives	\$1,020,950	\$1,020,950	\$1,020,950	\$1,020,950
Quality First Scholarships	\$1,717,398	\$1,717,398	\$1,717,398	\$1,717,398
First Things First College Scholarships	\$86,400	\$86,400	\$86,400	\$86,400
Professional Development for Early Childhood Practitioners	\$412,500	\$412,500	\$412,500	\$412,500
Child Care Health Consultation	\$248,200	\$248,200	\$248,200	\$248,200
Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation	\$428,400	\$428,400	\$428,400	\$428,400
Family Resource Centers	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000
Family Support & Literacy Systems Change	\$120,000	\$120,000	\$120,000	\$120,000
Home Visitation	\$1,520,000	\$1,520,000	\$1,520,000	\$1,520,000
Statewide Evaluation	\$255,488	\$255,488	\$255,488	\$255,488
Educational Promotion and Brand Awareness	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$15,000
Media	\$29,653	\$29,653	\$29,653	\$29,653
Total	\$6,890,489	\$6,890,489	\$6,890,489	\$6,890,489
Total Unallotted/Unawarded/Unexpended:*	(\$179,113)	(\$434,941)	(\$417,236)	(\$737,955)

Fiscal Year	2020	2024	2025	2026	2027
% to Board Priorities		96.29 %	96.29 %	96.29 %	96.29 %
% to Quality First**	15.62%	18.94 %	18.94 %	18.94 %	18.94 %
Fiscal Year	4 Year Average				
% to Board Priorities	96.29%				
% to Quality First**	18.94%				

*Per FTF 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
PIMA SOUTH REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP COUNCIL**

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 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.

The Pima South Regional Partnership Council focuses on increasing opportunities for the children of the region to access high-quality early care and education programs. This is done through the Quality First suite of services and Quality First Scholarships.

The Pima South Regional Council continues to support 42 center-based and 31 home-based Quality First sites in the region. 97% of all Quality First sites have earned a 3-, 4- or 5-star rating. This is a 10% increase from last year. Approximately 2,700 Pima South children are enrolled in Quality First centers and homes throughout the region.

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.

The regional council understands the importance of supporting children and families who are in need of accessing quality early learning but who may not have the financial resources. One way of assisting families is by providing Quality First Scholarships. The regional council continues to provide Quality First Scholarships by zip code, targeting the highest areas of need, which includes the highest poverty areas and the most rural communities that are also recognized as the greatest child care deserts within the region. This priority of supporting highest needs communities in the Pima South Region will continue in State Fiscal Year 2025 (SFY25). Additionally, the Quality First Scholarships Strategy works in partnership with system partners including local and state programs that also support child care scholarship assistance. This includes building upon the Pima Early Education Program Scholarships, scholarships made available through workforce development programs through the Women’s Foundation of Southern Arizona and Pima Community College in addition to the Department of Economic Security child care subsidy.

Challenges:

In SFY25, federal pandemic relief funding to support a statewide expansion of 413 programs to participate in Quality First will end, resulting in a number of current Quality First participants potentially being disenrolled and placed on the Quality First waitlist, including 11 home-based providers in the Pima South Region. 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, including the Pima South Regional Council, considered the regional impact the reduction would have and make decisions to ensure that reductions in funding do not disrupt the system in significant ways.

Requests for child care for parents who work early in the mornings, evenings, nights and weekends has increased in the region. The child care crisis brought on by the pandemic has amplified the challenges of accessing non-traditional-hour care and the impact it is having for families. Without child care options parents are not working. Families are utilizing other family members and friends to piecemeal together care for their child. This can be problematic, inconsistent and sometimes inadequate for the children and the parents.

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)

Successes:

The Pima South Regional Council utilizes a multi-pronged approach of strategies in order to impact the family as a whole. This funding cycle, the regional council added two new strategies, the Family Resource Centers and Family Support and Literacy Systems Change Strategies and continues the long-standing support of the Home Visitation Strategy. This array of services offered to families is paramount to the regional council's strategic direction of supporting families. The continuum of approaches ranges from more universal with Family Resource Centers Strategy to more targeted with the Home Visitation Strategy and the Family Support and Literacy Systems Change Strategy intends to identify and minimize the barriers and challenges families experience when navigating available services and resources through a systems lens.

The family resource centers are located in three communities within the region: Sahuarita, Altar Valley and Sunnyside. The Sahuarita site opened in October 2023, the Altar Valley site opened in November 2023 and the Sunnyside site plans to open in early calendar year 2024. The family resource centers are a welcoming and safe location for families of children birth to age 5 to receive culturally responsive information, resources and services covering a wide range of topics within their communities. The family resource centers in the Pima South Region are comprehensively unique in providing the parenting education and the family support coordination supplemental components to the Family Resource Centers Strategy. The Pima South Region is one of two regions in the state incorporating these two supplemental components to ensure greater support to families. Through the parenting education component, parents and immediate caregivers attend series of classes, housed at the family resource center, to build skills and strengthen their role as their child's first and most important teacher. Should a family exhibit additional challenges, the family support coordination component supports families by navigating additional resources and referrals in partnership with the family.

The regional council recognizes families representing both rural and urban communities of the region struggle to connect to and access resources that best meet their needs for myriad reasons. Additionally, there is a need to educate service providers in the health care, child care and family support sectors about available early childhood programs, supports and services in the region. This includes an opportunity to identify and catalog the landscape of services

available to families throughout the Pima South Region and to work with system providers to ensure partners are familiar and understand how to connect with the various programs and supports available to families with young children. To address these needs, the regional council prioritized the Family Support and Literacy Systems Change Strategy, new for SFY24. Through this strategy, the regional council identified the approach of hiring a full-time program coordination specialist, who began in August 2023. The intent of this new position is to build robust connections between early childhood providers and broader system stakeholders and providers so service gaps can be identified and remedied while families become better connected to resources that will help their children thrive and promotes the resiliency of families.

Challenges:

Several of the home visitation programs have been unable to stay fully staffed and while this turnover has been disruptive to providing support to families, the program supervisors are working to retain most of the families and hire more staff.

WELL-PREPARED, HIGHLY SKILLED AND APPROPRIATELY COMPENSATED PROFESSIONALS

Strategy Areas and Funded Strategies

Professional Development for ECE Professionals

- Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (prioritized)
- First Things First College Scholarships (prioritized)
- Professional Development of Early Childhood Practitioners (prioritized)
- Child Care Health Consultation (prioritized)

Successes:

The Pima South Regional Partnership Council, in partnership with the Pima North Regional Council is implementing a Community of Practice (CoP) model through the Professional Development for Early Childhood Practitioners Strategy. Both regional councils recognize the need to have highly qualified early childhood professionals possess the tools and skills necessary to educate and support high-quality learning experiences. Thirteen Communities of Practice are offered and 165 Pima South early childhood practitioners are anticipated to be a member of a CoP by the end of SFY24. The CoPs provide opportunities for early childhood practitioners to receive sequential, ongoing professional development on an identified topic of research; gain a shared focus on best practices and pedagogy; applied newly learned theories into practice and build a sense of community amongst peers. Some CoPs are tied to college credit and a pathway to a degree for the participants. The grantee has created opportunities for CoP members and the early childhood community to explore anti-bias education by focusing on research and study topics such as diversity and inclusion.

In previous funding cycles, early childhood practitioners could register for more than one CoP; however, beginning in SFY24, participants identify one CoP to commit to for the duration of the year. This approach encourages equitable access to as many Pima County early childhood educators as possible to participate in a CoP. Committing to one CoP encourages early childhood practitioners to focus their studies and participation on one topic area and develop stronger relationships with peers within the learning cohort.

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:

The members of the Pima South Regional Partnership Council recognize they are credible messengers and play a key role in helping promote awareness and importance of early childhood. Members work closely with the regional director

and community engagement staff to collectively support and speak to the mission and vision of First Things First. To ground the members in the work, at the beginning of every regional council meeting, the Pima South Guiding Principle is read by a regional council member, “to identify and support equitable and locally accessible opportunities for all children and families of the region to enhance and achieve their maximum potential in school and life.” Additionally, members have a shared agreement to commit to actions in conducting outreach and messaging related to early childhood education, health and development in between regional council meetings. There is designated time on the agenda at each regional council meeting for members to share examples, which range from participation in community events, speaking with groups of people, assisting with regional council member recruitment and sharing upcoming events and opportunities for community engagement that supports First Things First messaging and promotion of early childhood.

Strides have been made in the area of localized media to increase the public’s awareness of early childhood health, education and development. First Things First information is now included in small local newsletters such as the *Fencepost* in the Three Points community and several school district digital newsletters. For many parents, child care providers and community members living in rural communities, local newsletters are one of the few ways they receive information. They are considered trusted information sources and thus a valuable way to provide information about First Things First and the importance of early childhood education and health.

DESIRED OUTCOME: COORDINATED, INTEGRATED, AND COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM

Strategy Areas and Funded Strategies

Evaluation

- Statewide Evaluation