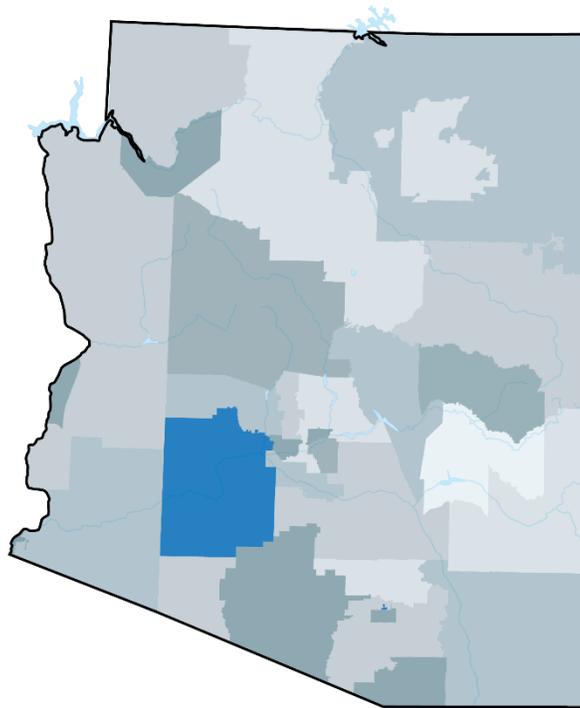




FIRST THINGS FIRST

Southwest Maricopa Regional Partnership Council
Population birth through age 5: 29,932



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.

Southwest Maricopa Regional Partnership Council

Aaron White, chair, at-large representative

Jamie Lopez, vice chair, early childhood educator

Cristina Galto, health services provider

Simone Hurst, at-large representative

JoEllen Johnson, child care provider

Courtney Kovats, member of the business community

Nubia Garcia-Shinagawa, at-large representative

Alexandra Oropeza, parent of a child age 5 years or younger

Sandra Brown, representative of the faith community

open, public school administrator

open, representative of a philanthropic organization

Delaney Russell, regional director, First Things First

Cynthia Gandara, administrative specialist, First Things First

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

The First Things First Southwest Maricopa Region is the largest region by land within Maricopa County. The region spans 4,804 square miles across the Southwest Valley and has one of the fastest-growing populations in the state. The landscape of the Southwest Maricopa Region includes the cities of Avondale, Buckeye, Goodyear, Litchfield Park and Tolleson and the rural communities of Gila Bend, Tonopah, Arlington, Palo Verde and Harquahala.

Current statistics show that nearly one in five adults in Southwest Maricopa have a bachelor's degree or higher. In Arlington, Tolleson and Tonopah nearly one in four adults did not complete high school with Gila Bend at over one in five. Thirty-two percent of children in the region live with a single-parent, 52% in Gila Bend and 42% in Avondale. Relatively high percentages of children in the region, specifically in Gila Bend, Tonopah and Arlington are living with a grandparent with no parent present. The Gila Bend Unified School District struggles with chronic absenteeism, high dropout rates and low rates of graduation. Nineteen percent of the children in the Southwest Maricopa Region live with the complex challenges of poverty. Sub-regional data shows a great deal of poverty in areas like Arlington with 46%of children living in poverty and 40% in Gila Bend.

For these reasons, the Southwest Maricopa Regional Partnership Council continues to prioritize investing in family support and education strategies that meet the complex needs of families and caregivers with young children throughout the region. The regional council has prioritized targeted outreach and enrollment efforts to reach families living in the more rural, isolated and underserved communities in the region who have limited access to family support services, lack transportation and reside within food deserts. These efforts are meant to also reach children living in single-parent households, grandparents raising grandchildren and children living in poverty. One example of the regional council's response to equity and supporting underserved children is the council's strategically prioritized investment in family resource centers in the Gila Bend, Buckeye, Avondale and Pendergast communities. Investing in these approaches continues to show the regional council's dedication to serve children birth to age 5 and the diverse families within the region.

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

Allocations and Funding Sources	2024	2025	2026	2027
FY Allocation	\$4,234,845	\$4,234,845	\$4,234,428	\$4,234,428
Population Based Allocation	\$3,566,730	\$3,566,730	\$3,566,730	\$3,566,730
Discretionary Allocation	\$668,115	\$668,115	\$667,698	\$667,698
Carry Forward From Previous Year	\$1,388,869	\$1,178,309	\$878,103	\$169,697
Total Regional Council Funds Available	\$5,623,714	\$5,413,154	\$5,112,531	\$4,404,125
Strategies	Allotted	Proposed Allotted	Proposed Allotted	Proposed Allotted
Early Learning Systems Change		\$180,000	\$180,000	\$180,000
Quality First Academy	\$12,500	\$12,500	\$12,500	\$12,500
Quality First Coaching & Incentives	\$346,550	\$346,550	\$346,550	\$346,550
Quality First Scholarships	\$1,500,000	\$1,500,000	\$1,500,000	\$1,500,000
Child Care Health Consultation	\$85,000	\$85,000	\$85,000	\$85,000
Children's Health Systems Change	\$134,999	\$157,666	\$157,666	\$157,666
Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation	\$320,000	\$320,000	\$320,000	\$320,000
Family Support for Children with Developmental Concerns	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$250,000
Nutrition and Physical Activity	\$200,000	\$200,000	\$200,000	\$200,000
Family Resource Centers	\$875,000	\$875,000	\$875,000	\$875,000
Family Support & Literacy Systems Change	\$29,166	\$29,166	\$29,166	\$29,166
Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care	\$300,000	\$300,000	\$300,000	\$300,000
Home Visitation	\$375,000	\$375,000	\$375,000	\$375,000
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	\$175,838	\$175,838	\$175,838	\$175,838
Educational Promotion and Brand Awareness	\$28,115	\$28,115	\$28,115	\$28,115
Media	\$28,000	\$28,000	\$28,000	\$28,000
Total	\$4,942,834	\$4,942,834	\$4,942,834	\$4,942,834
Total Unallotted/Unawarded/Unexpended:*	\$680,880	\$470,320	\$169,697	(\$538,709)

Fiscal Year	2020	2024	2025	2026	2027
% to Board Priorities		84.27%	83.81%	83.81%	83.81%
% to Quality First**	7.99%	8.98%	8.98%	8.98%	8.98%
Fiscal Year	4 Year Average				
% to Board Priorities	83.92%				
% to Quality First**	8.98%				

*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
SOUTHWEST 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)
- 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, 29 of which were located in the Southwest Maricopa 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.

Changes:

The regional council added an Early Learning Systems Change Strategy for SFY25 in the amount of \$180,000. This opportunity will enable the regional council to look at the possibility of surveying and gathering information from parents/families and businesses on how to best support the early learning system within the region. In particular, information will be gathered on child care needs for working families who are employed by businesses within the region. The regional council was able to move unallocated funds from an unfulfilled strategy in SFY24.

Changes:	SFY24	SFY25
Early Learning Systems Change		
Funding Level Changes:	\$0	\$180,000

DESIRED OUTCOME: INFORMATION, SERVICES AND SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES

Strategy Areas and Funded Strategies

Educating Families and Caregivers

- Home Visitation (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:

There is a positive trend across all four regionally-funded family resource centers in their inclusion and expansion of external partnerships in the Southwest Maricopa Region. For example, the Pendergast Family Resource Center is partnering with the Make Way for Books program to provide additional early literacy tool to families. The Gila Bend Family Resource Center is working with the local farmer's market to ensure that families in need are connected to food resources. All family resource centers have reported a need for additional early literacy supports, safe child practices (car seat safety, safe sleep, etc.), and parenting education which they plan to coordinate with existing community partners. The family resource centers are Tier 1, meaning parenting education is not within their scope of work within their contract. Because of this, coordination with community partners is essential to ensure the needs of families are met fully.

The long-standing Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care and Home Visitation programs in the region continue to show success in meeting the needs of families currently enrolled in services. Both programs have made inroads within the rural parts of the region to ensure the inclusion of isolated families with lack of access to services. For these family support strategies, staffing has not been a concern at this time, which is a positive shift from previous years.

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.

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 also removed funding in SFY25 for Family Support Coordination Strategy as the RFGA went unfulfilled with no applications received. The regional council further determined that there was no longer a need for this strategy so the regional council will invest this funding in an Early Learning Systems Change Strategy instead. Information on this new strategy is detailed below in Appendix A.

Changes:	SFY24	SFY25
Family Support Coordination		
Funding Level Changes:	\$180,000	\$0
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:

Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation is a new strategy in the region. Strong outreach efforts are occurring with center-based and home-based child care centers. The grant partner has experienced a positive welcome from centers and grant partners who are exhibiting a high motivation to collaborate and fully participate. The current funding level has allowed the grant partner to begin implementing work within the region. However, due to the demand for this service, the grant partner has had to establish a waitlist for providers.

Challenges:

Although the Early Childhood Mental Health Strategy has been well-received in the region, staffing within the program has been a challenge. To date, there is a need for two additional full time mental health consultants in order to serve the 25 regionally-funded sites. Once the program is fully staffed, programming will resume and all early care and education centers will continue to receive services.

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:

The Educational Promotion and Brand Awareness Strategy has continued to be effective in spreading the awareness of First Things First and the importance of early childhood programming in the region. This funding enables community engagement staff to reach a diverse number of community partners who influence how community members think about, value and engage in supporting early childhood.

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

Strategy Areas and Funded Strategies

Identifying and Addressing Developmental Concerns

- Family Support for Children with Developmental Concerns

Health Resource Coordination

- Children’s Health Systems Change

Nutrition and Physical Activity

- Nutrition and Physical Activity

Successes:

In SFY24 the Northwest and Southwest regional councils invested additional dollars in the existing Children’s Health System Change Strategy to better coordinate children’s health services in the region. To carry this strategy out a program coordination specialist has been hired to support the entire West Valley in this effort. This position will allow the regions to participate in systems change work relating to children’s health outcomes. A survey of regional capacity regarding children’s health partners will be completed in SFY24 to help move forward coalition efforts that will take place in SFY25.

Additional work within the Children’s Health Systems Change Strategy includes the Early Childhood Nutrition Policy Team. This group of service providers has created a food safety crosswalk that would be helpful for providers to have. 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 six teams have been introduced to their new consultant and are meeting on a monthly basis to discuss collaborative efforts.

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.

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(s) and awareness campaign.

Changes

SFY24

SFY25

Children’s Health Systems Change		
Funding Level Changes:	\$134,999	\$157,666
DESIRED OUTCOME: COORDINATED, INTEGRATED, AND COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM		
<u>Strategy Areas and Funded Strategies</u>		
Child Welfare Prevention /Intervention		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Partnering with Child Welfare Systems Change 		
Evaluation		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Statewide Evaluation 		
<p>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.</p>		

APPENDIX A

SFY25 Funding Plan – New System Change Planning Document

Southwest Maricopa Regional Partnership Council

Southwest Maricopa Regional Partnership Council - Early Learning Systems Change	
Problem to be solved and system to be changed / influenced	System Area: Early Learning Systems Change
	Problem to address: Assessing regional need and capacity pertaining to child care and early childhood support services for families
	Geographic area: Southwest Maricopa Region
	Target Audience: This work will first target businesses of varying sizes, local government entities, and potentially expand to community system partners across the region. The end goal of this work is to reach parents and caregivers, and First Things First would be utilizing the employer as an outlet to reach those families.
Activities	Activity 1: Southwest Maricopa’s Regional Partnership Council will develop a mechanism to assess parental needs for child care and family support services.
	Activity 2: The regional council will contract with a consultant to gather the information/feedback from families.
	Activity 3: Feedback and/or recommendations in alignment with the strategic direction of the Southwest Maricopa Regional Partnership Council, as well as the state board for First Things First will be reviewed by the regional council for implementation considerations.
Deliverables and Timeline	SFY24- Develop a scope of work for the Early Learning Systems Change Strategy.
	SFY24- Secure a consultant and/or mechanism to move the work forward.
	SFY25- Engage with and be a liaison to local businesses and government entities in the Southwest Maricopa Region
	SFY25-27- Develop a road map and specific projects within one year for ongoing systems change effort
Expected Impact	<p>Expected Impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a baseline understanding of the needs of major and small businesses, local governments, and their employee’s needs surrounding child care and early childhood support services in Southwest Maricopa. • Raise awareness on the importance of early childhood and child care for the workforce and economic development in Southwest Maricopa. • The completion of a survey with various businesses would allow First Things First to identify key trends specific to Southwest Maricopa. Additionally, services and

	response efforts can be tailored to the individual businesses based on parent and caregiver feedback.
	Timeline: SFY25-27