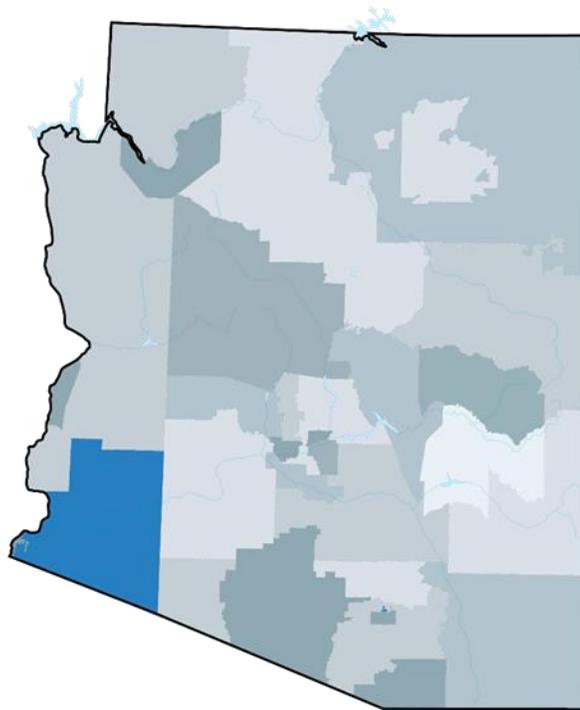




# FIRST THINGS FIRST

**Yuma Regional Partnership Council**  
Population birth through age 5: 17,983



## 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.

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### **Yuma Regional Partnership Council**

**Donald Vickers**, chair, representative of the faith community

**Linda Elliott-Nelson**, vice chair, at-large representative

**Alma Barrandey**, early childhood educator

**Emilia Cortez**, health services provider

**Marla Ford**, child care provider

**Mariam Limon**, member of the business community

**Lizette Esparza**, at-large representative

**Cori Rico**, parent of a child age 5 years or younger

**Mario Ybarra**, public school administrator

**Mia Sanchez**, representative of a philanthropic organization

open, tribal public official/employee

**Rudy Ortiz**, regional director, First Things First

## **Yuma Regional Partnership Council**

### **Promoting Equity and Supporting Under-Resourced/Underserved Children and Their Families**

The Yuma Regional Partnership Council SFY24-27 Strategic Plan provides a multiple disciplinary approach to offer high quality choices for our families and engage our community to increase understanding and take action toward a connected early childhood system that cares for the whole child and their family. The Yuma Regional Council underwent an Appreciative Inquiry exercise (a facilitation philosophy and a methodology for positive change). It helped the council reach their “North Star” vision for their plan. They determined this plan had to be part of the solution to break the cycle of poverty in our region. This led to the regional council incorporating the voice and perspective from our region’s leaders and stakeholders through three sub-regional town halls. These town halls were instrumental in providing insight on how the regional council’s plan would ensure equity and support of under-resourced and underserved children and their families. The outcomes of the town halls supported and confirmed the Yuma Regional Partnership Council’s decision in prioritizing the early learning and family support systems. The Yuma Regional Partnership Council developed a strategic plan that aligns with the State Board’s priorities and meets the region’s specific needs identified in our town halls. This strategic plan will promote equity and support under-resourced and underserved children and their families by:

- Being intentional to increase awareness of the services in the region with enhanced efforts executed in the south and east sub regions and in communities of higher poverty (for example, north end Yuma).
- Enhancing system partners’ workforce capacity to deliver services in the region and improve collaboration of system partners to enhance the referral process.
- Providing outreach and services in English and Spanish with sensitivity to the cultural needs of a U.S./Mexico border region. The Yuma Region has relatively more Hispanic persons (64%) than the state of Arizona as a whole (31%), and relatively more Hispanic children under age 5 (79%) than across the state (45%). Spanish is the language spoken in the home for a majority of the region's population (52%).
- Providing multiple and diverse opportunities for families to engage and to best serve our working families and families living in our most rural areas of the region. Partners will implement a multiple delivery system approach including, and not limited to, in-person at community hubs, in the home and virtually.
- Developing partnerships designed to serve the target population in Yuma’s south county sub-region, which has a high number of multi-generational households.
- Intentionally incorporating investments for all families and children in the region, including typically developing children and children with delays.
- Sustaining and enhancing relationships at all levels to meet the vast needs of our under-resourced and underserved children and their families, which is the backbone upon which this strategic plan was built.

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

Allocations and Funding Sources	2024	2025	2026	2027
FY Allocation	\$4,608,852	\$4,608,852	\$4,977,311	\$4,977,311
Population Based Allocation	\$3,088,052	\$3,088,052	\$3,088,052	\$3,088,052
Discretionary Allocation	\$1,520,800	\$1,520,800	\$1,889,259	\$1,889,259
Carry Forward From Previous Year	\$758,084	\$558,981	\$223,835	-
<b>Total Regional Council Funds Available</b>	<b>\$5,366,936</b>	<b>\$5,167,833</b>	<b>\$5,201,146</b>	<b>\$4,977,311</b>
Strategies	Allotted	Proposed Allotted	Proposed Allotted	Proposed Allotted
Early Learning Systems Change	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$20,000
Inclusion of Children with Special Needs	\$200,000	\$200,000	\$200,000	\$200,000
Quality First Academy	\$22,000	\$22,000	\$22,000	\$22,000
Quality First Coaching & Incentives	\$458,410	\$458,410	\$458,410	\$458,410
Quality First Scholarships	\$2,029,657	\$2,029,657	\$2,029,657	\$2,029,657
Professional Development for Early Childhood Practitioners	\$151,152	\$151,152	\$151,152	\$151,152
Child Care Health Consultation	\$149,600	\$149,600	\$149,600	\$149,600
Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation	\$100,980	\$100,980	\$100,980	\$100,980
Family Support for Children with Developmental Concerns	\$275,000	\$275,000	\$275,000	\$275,000
Oral Health	\$141,000	\$141,000	\$141,000	\$141,000
Community Based Language and Literacy	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$100,000
Family Support & Literacy Systems Change	\$129,616	\$129,616	\$129,616	\$129,616
Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care	\$180,000	\$180,000	\$180,000	\$180,000
Home Visitation	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000
Parenting Education	\$200,000	\$200,000	\$200,000	\$200,000
Statewide Evaluation	\$206,687	\$206,687	\$206,687	\$206,687
Educational Promotion and Brand Awareness	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$20,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$5,384,102</b>	<b>\$5,384,102</b>	<b>\$5,384,102</b>	<b>\$5,384,102</b>
<b>Total Unallotted/Unawarded/Unexpended:*</b>	<b>(\$17,166)</b>	<b>(\$216,269)</b>	<b>(\$182,956)</b>	<b>(\$406,791)</b>

Fiscal Year	2020	2024	2025	2026	2027
% to Board Priorities		88.43%	88.43%	88.43%	88.43%
% to Quality First**	9.75%	11.70%	11.70%	11.70%	11.70%

Fiscal Year	4 Year Average
% to Board Priorities	88.43%
% to Quality First**	11.70%

\* 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  
YUMA 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.

The Yuma Regional Partnership Council continues to support access to quality early care and education through Quality First center and home-based slots and Quality First Scholarships. One hundred percent of the region's Quality First Scholarships were served by providers with a rating at quality levels. Sixty-two percent of the scholarships were served by participants with 4- and 5-star ratings.

Quality First has significantly improved the quality of child care options available to Yuma region families. Over 96% of the centers and homes participating in Quality First are rated quality and above.

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.

Two hundred and thirty-five early childhood professionals attended the annual Yuma County Early Childhood conference held in April at Arizona Western College. The keynote speaker Gerry Brooks was booked in collaboration with Crane Elementary School District. Mr. Brooks brought a motivational climate by presenting the topic, Personal Climate and Culture... It's Up to You. The conference had over 20 community agencies as exhibitors. The topics offered during the conference ranged from STEAM, Social Emotional, Effective Interactions and Self-Care. Twenty-one workshops were offered both in English and Spanish.

***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 Yuma 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.

To help address the child care crisis, the Yuma Regional Partnership Council is starting to work in collaboration with the Great Yuma Economic Cooperation (GYEC), Yuma County Chamber of Commerce and the Yuma Education Advocacy Council (YEAC). For more details on the goals and desired outcomes of this collaboration, please refer to the “DESIRED OUTCOME: PUBLIC UNDERSTANDING AND SUPPORT” section of this plan below.

## DESIRED OUTCOME: INFORMATION, SERVICES AND SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES

### Strategy Areas and Funded Strategies

#### Educating Families and Caregivers

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

#### Navigating and Connecting Families to Resources

- Family Support and Literacy Systems Change (prioritized)

#### **Successes:**

The regional council continues to implement a comprehensive approach which ensures multiple strategies at various levels of the continuum of family support services (i.e. intensive home visitation to community-level parenting education and early literacy opportunities). The approach provides high quality choices for families and engages our community to take responsibility for a connected early childhood system, caring for the whole child and their family.

The Yuma County Early Childhood Collaborative facilitated by the FTF Yuma regional staff acts as the largest convener of early childhood system partners in the region. The collaborative will have four meetings during a fiscal year with a leadership team committed to the planning, implementation and success of the collaborative. The collaborative will be focusing on how to improve awareness and collaboration of our system post pandemic. The vision and mission are:

#### Vision:

Our vision is a Yuma County where all children and families thrive and reach their full potential through a high quality interconnected early childhood system.

#### Mission:

Our mission is to educate and empower all Yuma County families and children by coordinating efforts with our leaders and agencies. Collaboratively, we strengthen and sustain a high quality early childhood system encompassing services in health, family support and early education.

Strong coordination and collaboration efforts are still of high importance within family support strategies. Navigating and connecting families to resources is a high priority for the Yuma region to increase the availability of and access to high-quality family support services for families with young children and link families to other resources and supports to meet their needs. To achieve this, the FTF program coordination specialist, with guidance from an advisory committee, has released the second version of the Yuma Region Resource Connection Guide. The guide has more than 200 updates, available online and in a printed version, and the category labels are now in Spanish to support our entire region. The FTF program coordination specialist provides a free training to system partners in the region to enhance the use of the resource guide and improve awareness of programs the region, with the ultimate goal of improving the rate of correct referrals in the region.

The regional council collaborated with Southwest Arizona Town Hall to help convene over 150 leaders to learn about family resource centers (FRC), and to start a task force facilitated by regional FTF staff. The event produced an outcome of the Yuma County Library system taking the lead to allow their facilities to become future FRC sites. Although the FRCs will not be funded by FTF, we currently have 21 taskforce members who will convene to successfully start the FRCs within a year using the FTF standards of practice as a guide.

**Challenges:**

The purpose of the resource guide and family resource centers is to help improve awareness and referrals in our region. Regional FTF staff are still working with our grant partners to identify additional opportunities to address the ongoing challenge of enhancing the awareness of the early childhood programs in the region. One solution is to collaborate with the University of Arizona Yuma’s Human Development and Family Science department to bring an intern to work with the regional FTF staff to support the work of updating the resource guide and efforts to coordinate and participate in resource fairs in the region.

**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)
- Professional Development of ECE Professionals (prioritized)
- Child Care Health Consultation (prioritized)

**Successes:**

Arizona PBS is the regional council’s grant partner implementing the Professional Development of ECE Professionals Strategy to provide high quality professional development through a community of practice delivery system. The content areas of the communities of practice include infant toddler development, social emotional development and early language and literacy. The professional development is being provided in English and Spanish.

**Challenges:**

Not all of the communities of practice have been completely filled to meet the intent of the Professional Development of ECE Professionals Strategy. The grant partner is experiencing challenges with lower attendance, however there are efforts to improve over time as word of mouth gets out on the overall satisfaction and improved teaching practices by the professionals participating in the communities of practice.

**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)

**Successes:**

To help address the child care crisis, the Yuma Regional Partnership Council is starting to work in collaboration with the Great Yuma Economic Cooperation (GYEC), Yuma County Chamber of Commerce (YCCC) and the Yuma Education Advocacy Council (YEAC). The goals and expected outcomes of this collaboration are:

1. Bring awareness of the child care crisis in the Yuma Region. FTF Yuma staff will speak at the GYEC investors luncheon to bring awareness to the early childhood crisis. FTF staff will plan and intentionally invite County leaders and workforce development leaders in attendance to a local leadership forum in collaboration with GYEC, YCCC and YEAC.
2. The goal of the forum (that will take place before the end of SFY24) is to inform, inspire and empower. Leaders who are in attendance at the forum will have the opportunity to join the Early Childhood Crisis

Committee facilitated by GYEC (currently focused on solving the third shift care crisis in the region). The taskforce will transition their focus to coming up with solutions to enhance the early learning infrastructure and access needs of our region.

**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**

- Family Support for Children with Developmental Concerns

***Successes:***

The Oral Health Strategy had a decreased allotment from SFY23 to SFY24. This strategy is targeting sub-regions in the region with higher tooth decay and risk factors. The grantee, the University of Arizona Cooperative Extension Yuma, has successfully identified those sub-regions and is primarily delivering services at child care and preschool locations within those areas.

**DESIRED OUTCOME: COORDINATED, INTEGRATED, AND COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM**

**Strategy Areas and Funded Strategies**

**Evaluation**

- Statewide Evaluation