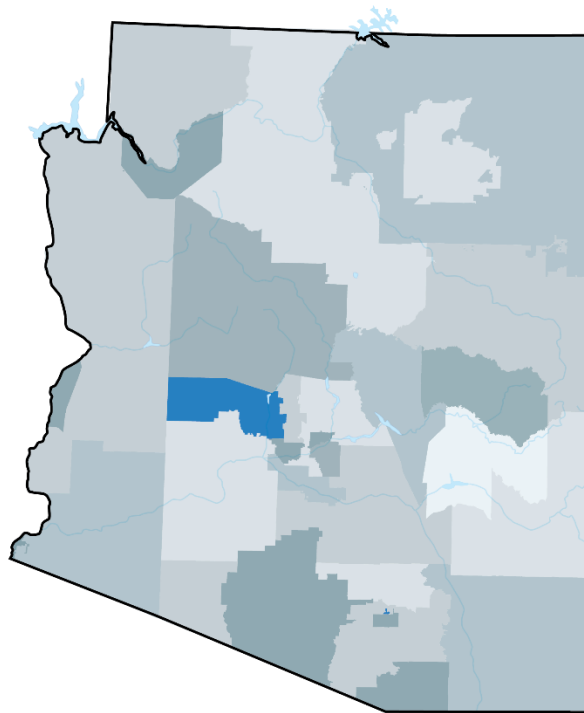




FIRST THINGS FIRST

Northwest Maricopa Regional Partnership Council
Population birth through age 5: 53,931



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.

Northwest Maricopa Regional Partnership Council

Sherie Steele, chair, at-large representative

Teri Sarmiento, vice chair, member of the business community

Veronica De La O, health services provider

Erin Hart, at-large representative

Katia Jones, parent of a child age 5 years or younger

Brielle Rawlings-Dube, at-large representative

Jennifer Scrivner, representative of a philanthropic organization

Andrew Wannemacher, public school administrator

Ashley Worrell, early childhood educator

open, child care provider

open, representative of the faith community

Brooke Colvin, regional director, First Things First

Cynthia Gandara, administrative specialist, First Things First

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

The Northwest Maricopa Regional Partnership Council is dedicated to the promotion of equity and the support of under-resourced and underserved children and their families. The proposed strategic plan for SFY24-27 includes strategies targeting populations in high poverty and rural areas where there is great need but fewer resources. For example, the funding plan includes seven family resource centers, including one that will serve the rural area of Wickenburg and its surrounding communities. To support access to high-quality early education in another rural area, the council has designated that 20 Quality First Scholarships be made available for children in Aguila. These scholarships are the only source of financial support to families of this rural area for children of preschool age. The regional council has also proposed a new strategy - Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care as a way to outreach to caregivers in both rural and urban areas of the region that otherwise do not have access to early care and education centers. The regional council renews its commitment to the Inclusion of Children with Special Needs Strategy and is implementing a Children's Health Systems Change Strategy to increase the capacity of health providers in the region to serve the birth to age 5 population.

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

Allocations and Funding Sources	2024	2025	2026	2027
FY Allocation	\$10,088,341	\$10,088,341	\$10,087,101	\$10,087,101
Population Based Allocation	\$8,104,941	\$8,104,941	\$8,104,941	\$8,104,941
Discretionary Allocation	\$1,983,400	\$1,983,400	\$1,982,160	\$1,982,160
Carry Forward From Previous Year	\$1,547,742	\$2,094,096	\$1,767,353	\$560,979
Total Regional Council Funds Available	\$11,636,083	\$12,182,437	\$11,854,454	\$10,648,080
Strategies	Allotted	Proposed Allotted	Proposed Allotted	Proposed Allotted
Inclusion of Children with Special Needs	\$70,000	\$70,000	\$70,000	\$70,000
Quality First Academy	\$49,500	\$49,500	\$49,500	\$49,500
Quality First Coaching & Incentives	\$1,285,350	\$1,285,350	\$1,285,350	\$1,285,350
Quality First Scholarships	\$5,000,000	\$5,200,000	\$5,200,000	\$5,200,000
First Things First College Scholarships	\$270,000	\$270,000	\$270,000	\$270,000
Child Care Health Consultation	\$336,600	\$336,600	\$336,600	\$336,600
Children's Health Systems Change	\$134,999	\$157,666	\$157,666	\$157,666
Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation	\$403,920	\$403,920	\$403,920	\$403,920
Family Support for Children with Developmental Concerns	\$200,000	\$200,000	\$200,000	\$200,000
Oral Health	\$200,000			
Family Resource Centers	\$1,500,000	\$1,500,000	\$1,500,000	\$1,500,000
Family Support & Literacy Systems Change	\$29,166	\$29,166	\$29,166	\$29,166
Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care	\$575,000	\$575,000	\$575,000	\$575,000
Home Visitation	\$600,000	\$600,000	\$600,000	\$600,000
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	\$418,874	\$418,874	\$418,874	\$418,874
Educational Promotion and Brand Awareness	\$45,000	\$45,000	\$45,000	\$45,000
Media	\$72,400	\$72,400	\$72,400	\$72,400
Total	\$11,293,475	\$11,293,475	\$11,293,475	\$11,293,475
Total Unallotted/Unawarded/Unexpended:*	\$342,608	\$888,962	\$560,979	(\$645,395)

Fiscal Year	2020	2024	2025	2026	2027
% to Board Priorities		91.40 %	92.97 %	92.97 %	92.97 %
% to Quality First**	13.46%	14.80 %	14.80 %	14.80 %	14.80 %
Fiscal Year	4 Year Average				
% to Board Priorities	92.58%				
% to Quality First**	14.80%				

*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
NORTHWEST 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)

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.

Within the Northwest Maricopa Region there are 107 Quality First sites, which consists of 93 regionally-funded and 14 expansion sites funded through the federal American Rescue Plan. These expansion sites will be able to participate in evaluation, rating and guidance toward quality improvement.

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, 14 of which were located in the Northwest 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 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.

Due to unawarded funds for the Oral Health Strategy, the regional council needed to decide where to reallocate the \$200,000 allotment. The regional council had the difficult decision of electing to invest those dollars within the Quality First program and continue funding for some of the DES expansion sites or invest in Quality First Scholarships due to the increase in cost of quality beginning in SFY25 and fewer number of slots available in the region. Ultimately, the regional council voted to invest in increasing scholarships and will revisit the Quality First program allotment for SFY26.

Changes:

An additional \$200,000 is proposed to be added to Quality First Scholarships from current unawarded funds.

Changes:	SFY24	SFY25
Quality First Scholarships		
Funding Level Changes:	\$5,000,000	\$5,200,000
DESIRED OUTCOME: INFORMATION, SERVICES AND SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES		
<u>Strategy Areas and Funded Strategies</u>		
Educating Families and Caregivers		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Home Visitation (prioritized) ○ Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care (prioritized) 		
Navigating and Connecting Families to Resources		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Family Resource Centers (prioritized) ○ Family Support and Literacy Systems Change (prioritized) ○ Home Visitation Coordinated Referral System (prioritized) 		
Successes:		
<p>The new regionally funded Surprise Family Resource Center is now open, fully staffed, and has seen an increase in the number of families participating in activities. Through staff training on referrals, they have been able to refer several families to needed and timely resources. One parent visited the resource center to apply for rent/utility assistance and was referred to and qualified for a home visitation program for her one-year-old. The cross-regionally funded family resource center in the Pendergast Elementary School District is now partnering with Avondale Civic Center Library to bring classes to the library with high interest and participation from families. The Pendergast Family Resource Center is providing Raising a Reader classes at all locations and partnering with Make Way for Books to enhance early literacy skills. A Pendergast Family Resource coordinator will also be participating on the new Zero to Three “Built for Babies” state team for Arizona to build capacity and advance family-centered policies. Arizona is one of five states selected to participate in the technical assistance project from July 2023 – November 2025. First Things First staff are actively working to secure a location for the Wickenburg Family Resource Center, which will be the first of its kind in this more rural part of the region. Potential locations have been identified for a hub in Wickenburg, as well as a possible satellite location in Aguila.</p>		
<p>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.</p>		
<p>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. So far, they have coordinated with several staff members through this system.</p>		

Several new home visitation programs joined the Home Visitation Coordinated Referral System. They also invited the Home Visitation Coordinated Referral System team to present at their 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.

Challenges:

The Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care Request for Grant Applications was released twice without a recommendation of award for applications received. Recognizing the continued need in the community, the regional council voted to re-release in Spring 2024 with an updated scope of work to include explicit language regarding the intent of the strategy as a community-based professional development opportunity for caregivers. The Glendale/Peoria Family Resource Center Request for Grant Applications were released with no initial awarded applications. Two separate Requests for Grant Applications were subsequently released to specifically target the Glendale and Peoria populations and provide additional details on implementation. Awards have been made and program implementation is anticipated to begin January 2024.

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.

Changes:	SFY24	SFY25
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)
- Child Care Health Consultation (prioritized)

Successes:

The grantee for Inclusion of Children with Special Needs has been collaborating with system partners to identify and recruit sites that would benefit from ongoing inclusion support. They have met with 66 sites to discuss enrollment options and complete a program assessment. Seventeen Foundational Level trainings were provided by the inclusion coaches and 34 welcome sessions were completed prior to onsite coaching. After completing the “Welcome to Inclusion” training, several sites started seeing improvements including more positive interactions between the children and decreased challenging behaviors.

Challenges:

Staffing challenges have made it difficult to meet contracted service units for Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation and Child Care Health Consultation; however, grantees are actively recruiting to fill vacancies.

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:

With the regional investment in Educational Promotion and Brand Awareness Strategy, the Northwest Maricopa Community Engagement Coordinator sponsored a book nook at a new West Valley Housing Assistance Center located in Surprise. The center contains seven housing units designed especially for families with children. The book nook is adjacent to the community dining area and provides a safe place for children to explore age appropriate books and interact with peers. There are First Things First posters on the walls for parents to learn more about the importance of early development and how to access programs and resources available. A New Leaf held a grand opening event on October 20, 2023 where community leaders and members could tour their new facility, donate items needed by residents, and meet some of the families benefitting from the program.

Through this same strategy, there was an opportunity to partner with Banner Health Estrella and City of Phoenix Library to sponsor a book reading program for children in the hospital. Librarians read books to children in the hospital, provide information on programs available at the local library and let the child pick out a book to keep. The books are provided by First Things First and made possible through the Educational Promotion and Brand Awareness regional allotment. Several librarians, hospital staff, children, and families are benefiting from this community partnership and the Northwest Maricopa Regional Council is proud to offer books for the children through this program.

Challenges:

Several community partners are requesting sponsorship from the First Things First Northwest Maricopa region; however, we are unable to meet all requests that are made due to limited funds. Staff are working diligently to prioritize and strategize sponsorship funding in the region and follow guidance from the regional council.

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

Strategy Areas and Funded Strategies

Health Resource Coordination

- Children’s Health Systems Change

Successes:

The Program Coordination Specialist position has been filled as of Oct 30, 2023. This position serves both the Northwest and Southwest Maricopa regions and will work toward building relationships with health service providers, increasing medical-dental integration efforts in the west valley and connecting families to providers and health services in the community.

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.

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. In the Northwest Maricopa Region, the regional team partnered with St. Mary’s Food Bank to host a community food and backpack distribution. Over 500 families (2,579 individuals) were served at this event, and over 30 family direct service providers attended to share resources and connect with families.

Challenges:

The Oral Health Request for Grant Applications for programmatic implementation was released with no applications submitted. The regional council has chosen to increase funding for Oral Health Systems Change instead to continue making an impact across Maricopa County.

Changes:

The Regional Partnership Council removed the Oral Health Strategy and increased funding for the Children’s Health Systems Change Oral Health Strategy in SFY25 in the amount of \$22,667 to expand on the medical-dental integration pilot project(s) and awareness campaign.

Changes:	SFY24	SFY25
Oral Health		
Funding Level Changes:	\$200,000	\$0
Children’s Health Systems Change Oral Health		
Funding Level Change:	\$41,666	\$64,333

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 Partnering with Child Welfare Systems Change Strategy 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.