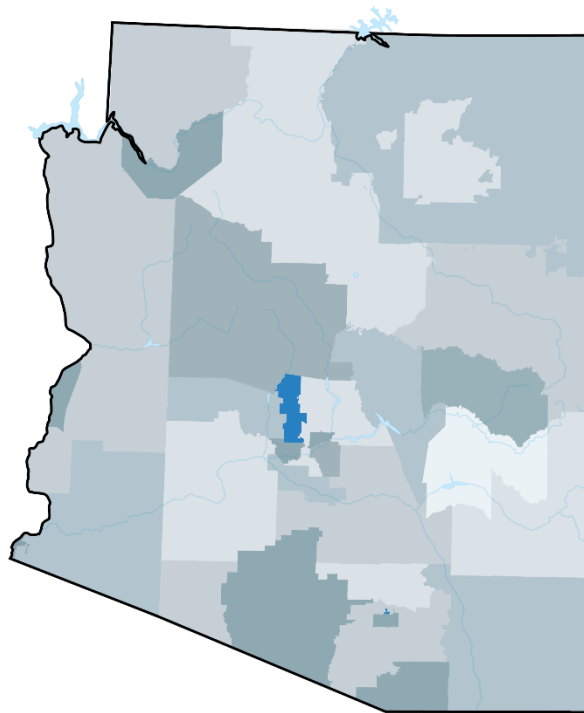




# FIRST THINGS FIRST

**Phoenix North Regional Partnership Council**  
Population birth through age 5: 66,831



## 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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### **Phoenix North Regional Partnership Council**

**Lyn Bailey**, chair, public school administrator

**Kathleen Sprute**, vice chair, early childhood educator

**Eric Bucher**, child care provider

**Claire Todd**, parent of a child age 5 years or younger

**Rebecca Lindgren**, representative of a philanthropic organization

**Wendy Resnik**, at-large representative

**Kathryn Wauters**, at-large representative

**Liz Salazar**, health services provider

**Megan Epley**, member of the business community

**Julie Rhein**, at-large representative

open, representative of the faith community

**Kendra Smiley**, regional director, First Things First

**Danae Gandara**, administrative specialist, First Things First

**Phoenix North Regional Partnership Council**  
**Promoting Equity and Supporting Under-Resourced/Underserved Children and Their Families**

The vision of the Phoenix North Regional Partnership Council for SFY24-27 is that all Phoenix North children are supported, able and ready to succeed in kindergarten and beyond. To address the needs of the children in the region and to ensure the needs of the most under-resourced and underserved children and families are met, the regional council has elected a tiered range of strategies to meet the universal needs of all young children and their families to the targeted needs for those who are at-risk for poor developmental outcomes. This allows intense services like home visitation, Quality First Scholarships and collaborating with child welfare systems strategies to be provide for the needs of the most vulnerable. Intense services are to be implemented in targeted areas with high poverty and high populations to ensure families with the most need can obtain the services they need. Those areas include four school districts in the region where the median family income is less than 70% of the statewide median: Alhambra, Creighton, Isaac and Phoenix Elementary. Additional targeted areas include the Washington School District and the 85023 and 85024 zip code areas of the Deer Valley Unified School District where families are facing housing insecurity, with data showing that more than 50% of renters are facing housing costs in excess of 50% of their monthly income. Finally, family resource centers have been strategically placed to ensure families in under-resourced geographic areas have easy access to both resources and services.

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

Allocations and Funding Sources	2024	2025	2026	2027
FY Allocation	\$13,104,298	\$13,104,298	\$13,042,744	\$13,042,744
Population Based Allocation	\$10,414,361	\$10,414,361	\$10,414,361	\$10,414,361
Discretionary Allocation	\$2,689,937	\$2,689,937	\$2,628,383	\$2,628,383
Carry Forward From Previous Year	\$2,930,064	\$2,736,632	\$2,078,800	\$480,981
<b>Total Regional Council Funds Available</b>	<b>\$16,034,362</b>	<b>\$15,840,930</b>	<b>\$15,121,544</b>	<b>\$13,523,725</b>
Strategies	Allotted	Proposed Allotted	Proposed Allotted	Proposed Allotted
Early Learning Systems Change	\$97,522	\$97,522	\$97,522	\$97,522
Inclusion of Children with Special Needs	\$350,000	\$350,000	\$350,000	\$350,000
Quality First Academy	\$75,500	\$75,500	\$75,500	\$75,500
Quality First Coaching & Incentives	\$2,274,680	\$2,274,680	\$2,274,680	\$2,274,680
Quality First Scholarships	\$7,156,737	\$7,156,737	\$7,156,737	\$7,156,737
Child Care Health Consultation	\$513,400	\$513,400	\$513,400	\$513,400
Children's Health Systems Change	\$75,000	\$97,667	\$97,667	\$97,667
Developmental and Sensory Screening	\$150,000	\$150,000	\$150,000	\$150,000
Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation	\$465,140	\$465,140	\$465,140	\$465,140
Community Based Language and Literacy	\$256,168	\$256,168	\$256,168	\$256,168
Family Resource Centers	\$1,304,000	\$1,304,000	\$1,304,000	\$1,304,000
Family Support & Literacy Systems Change	\$29,167	\$29,167	\$29,167	\$29,167
Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care	\$600,000	\$600,000	\$600,000	\$600,000
Home Visitation	\$527,003	\$527,003	\$527,003	\$527,003
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	\$541,609	\$541,609	\$541,609	\$541,609
Educational Promotion and Brand Awareness	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$25,000
Media	\$96,970	\$96,970	\$96,970	\$96,970
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$14,640,563</b>	<b>\$14,640,563</b>	<b>\$14,640,563</b>	<b>\$14,640,563</b>
<b>Total Unallotted/Unawarded/Unexpended:*</b>	<b>\$1,393,799</b>	<b>\$1,200,367</b>	<b>\$480,981</b>	<b>(\$1,116,838)</b>

Fiscal Year	2020	2024	2025	2026	2027
% to Board Priorities		94.64 %	94.49 %	94.49 %	94.49 %
% to Quality First**	14.61%	19.55 %	19.55 %	19.55 %	19.55 %
Fiscal Year	4 Year Average				
% to Board Priorities	94.53%				
% to Quality First**	19.55%				

\*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 NORTH 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 continues the reimbursement rate that providers were receiving through federal pandemic relief funding.

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, 10 which were located in the Phoenix North 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.

**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:**

The Phoenix North Regional Partnership Council has successfully contracted with grantees for all of the region’s family support strategies. Implementation began July 1, 2023.

Home Visitation Strategy grantees are focusing on collaborations with libraries and family resource centers to connect families to additional resources to support their children as they prepare for school.

The Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care Strategy grantee has been working with families that speak diverse languages (Bengali, Telugu, Hindi, Spanish and Cantonese). The staff are encouraging the children to share and speak the language they are most comfortable with, and as a result the staff are learning phrases that they are now using while conducting classes.

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.

**Challenges:**

Family resource centers were challenged with implementing services in the months of July and August within schools due to summer break.

**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
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**Home Visitation Coordinated Referral System**

Funding Level Changes:	\$86,000	\$63,333
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**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)
- Child Care Health Consultation (prioritized)

**Successes:**

All Inclusion of Children with Special Needs enrolled sites have set their initial goals to increase their inclusion practices. The grantee has focused efforts on including children of all abilities through its use of the “Welcome to Inclusion” training, which encourages peer support for children with special needs. For example, one center paired a child with special needs with a typically developing peer, which has resulted in both children thriving.

**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 two newly hired community engagement coordinators have been attending regional council meetings, meeting with grant partners and conducting presentations to advance the messaging around the importance of early childhood with a focus on reaching and engaging the business community. An example of their work that supports First Things First strategic goal of connecting to the business community includes a new relationship with the City of Phoenix’s Economic Development and Neighborhood Services executive staff. Further conversations will take place to discuss potential collaborations between the City of Phoenix and First Things First.

**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

**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 North and Phoenix South regional councils had a total of five applications with one applicant recommended by the regional councils for award and 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 Strategy 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
<b>Children’s Health Systems Change</b>		
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.