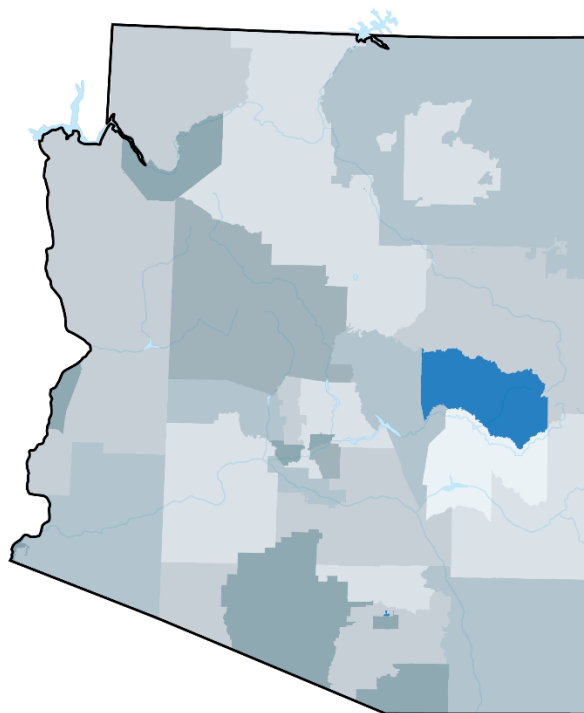


FIRST THINGS FIRST

White Mountain Apache Tribe Regional Partnership Council
Population birth through age 5: 1,814



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.

White Mountain Apache Tribe Regional Partnership Council

Laurel Endfield, chair, early childhood educator

Dawnafe Whitesinger, vice chair, public school administrator

David Bostedt, representative of the faith community

Jandi Craig, member of the business community

Derrick Leslie, representative of a philanthropic organization

Mona Lupe, child care provider

Michelle Martinez, at-large representative

Terrie Parker, at-large representative

Ardith Titla, health services provider

open, at-large representative

open, parent of a child age 5 years or younger

Feather Sprengeler, regional director, First Things First

Kymani Morris, administrative specialist, First Things First

White Mountain Apache Tribe Regional Partnership Council
Promoting Equity and Supporting Under-Resourced/Underserved Children and Their Families

The boundaries of the First Things First White Mountain Apache Tribe Regional Council are the same as the White Mountain Apache Reservation (sometimes called Fort Apache Indian Reservation). The region covers more than 2,500 square miles in Apache, Gila, and Navajo counties with the lowest elevation in the Salt River Canyon at 2,600 feet above sea level to the highest point at 11,400 feet on the peak of Mount Baldy. There are twelve communities identified by the U.S. Census: Canyon Day, Carrizo, Cedar Creek, Cibecue, East Fork, Fort Apache, Hondah-McNary, North Fork, Rainbow City, Seven Mile, Turkey Creek, and Whiteriver. Whiteriver, the largest of these communities, serves as the capital with Cibecue and McNary following. There are approximately 2,003 children birth to age 5 in the region and 51% live in poverty, with the highest percentage of poverty among those from the Canyon Day community.

The White Mountain Apache Tribe Regional Council has developed the SFY 2024-2027 Strategic Plan through a comprehensive approach which considered the current and greatest needs of all children birth to age 5 and their families. The regional council contributed to discussions surrounding the coronavirus pandemic impact in the region. Prior to COVID impacting the region as significantly as it did, the tribal council requested First Things First regional staff and White Mountain Apache Tribe Head Start (WMAT Head Start) staff to address the low enrollment of children in WMAT Head Start. This led First Things First staff to have internal discussions for a campaign in the region to build the awareness of the importance of early childhood education. Throughout the pandemic, there was a significant decrease in children receiving quality early childhood education, behavioral health services, early intervention services such as those offered through White Mountain Apache Tribe Child Find and well-child visit attendance. The regional partnership council also shared their knowledge and expertise from their respective professional backgrounds, reviewed past impact reports, and analyzed the latest Regional Needs and Assets Report which included supplemental reports. These discussions helped identify and prioritize needs most significant in the region, which led to identifying and prioritizing strategies that would best fit children and their families. These strategies target at risk families in the region with a focus on the cognitive, physical and social-emotional health and well-being of each child. The regional partnership council's highest priority at the conclusion of strategic planning was meeting the needs of families with children who have developmental concerns. Building awareness of the importance of early childhood was the second priority with discussions primarily on gathering families for activities in the community to build trust of services offered through First Things First grant partners and tribal organizations.

Regional Allocation and Proposed Funding Plan Summary SFY24 – SFY27
White Mountain Apache Tribe Regional Partnership Council

Allocations and Funding Sources	2024	2025	2026	2027
FY Allocation	\$676,296	\$676,296	\$711,320	\$711,320
Population Based Allocation	\$452,826	\$452,826	\$452,826	\$452,826
Discretionary Allocation	\$223,470	\$223,470	\$258,494	\$258,494
Carry Forward From Previous Year	\$1,071,795	\$1,086,896	\$1,004,902	\$600,268
Total Regional Council Funds Available	\$1,748,091	\$1,763,192	\$1,716,222	\$1,311,588
Strategies	Allotted	Proposed Allotted	Proposed Allotted	Proposed Allotted
Quality First Academy	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,000
Quality First Coaching & Incentives	\$99,330	\$99,330	\$99,330	\$99,330
Quality First Scholarships	\$374,916	\$374,916	\$374,916	\$374,916
First Things First College Scholarships	\$32,400	\$32,400	\$32,400	\$32,400
Child Care Health Consultation	\$20,400	\$20,400	\$20,400	\$20,400
Family Support for Children with Developmental Concerns	\$240,000	\$240,000	\$240,000	\$240,000
Family Support & Literacy Systems Change	\$117,370	\$117,370	\$117,370	\$117,370
Language, Literacy and Culture in Tribal Communities	\$150,000	\$150,000	\$150,000	\$150,000
Reach Out and Read	\$31,000	\$31,000	\$31,000	\$31,000
Statewide Evaluation	\$29,538	\$29,538	\$29,538	\$29,538
Educational Promotion and Brand Awareness	\$13,000	\$13,000	\$13,000	\$13,000
Media	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000
Total	\$1,115,954	\$1,115,954	\$1,115,954	\$1,115,954
Total Unallotted/Unawarded/Unexpended:*	\$632,137	\$647,238	\$600,268	\$195,634

Fiscal Year	2020	2024	2025	2026	2027
% to Board Priorities		73.06 %	73.06 %	73.06 %	73.06 %
% to Quality First**	8.52%	10.99 %	10.99 %	10.99 %	10.99 %
Fiscal Year	4 Year Average				
% to Board Priorities	73.06%				
% to Quality First**	10.99%				

* 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 for ward balance.

**Includes Quality First Academy, Quality First Coaching and Incentives and Child Care Health Consultation.

Justification for not meeting the 80% allotment to Board Priorities: The regional council recognizes the importance of aligning with the statewide strategic direction. However, the regional council continues to assess local needs and assets and significant capacity and infrastructure issues remain, including a region-wide child care desert with a critical lack of existing child care programs and an acute need for sensory and developmental screenings. The regional council will continue to assess and look for future opportunities to continue to align more closely with the Board’s priority areas, particularly concerning Quality First and continues working to implement the Early Learning Systems Change strategy.

**SFY25 FUNDING PLAN UPDATE / CHANGE TABLE
WHITE MOUNTAIN APACHE TRIBE 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.

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, zero of which were located in the White Mountain Apache Tribe 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.

DESIRED OUTCOME: INFORMATION, SERVICES AND SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES

Strategy Areas and Funded Strategies

Educating Families and Caregivers

- Language, Literacy and Culture in Tribal Communities (prioritized)
- Family Support and Literacy Systems Change (prioritized)

Navigating and Connecting Families to Resources

- Family Support and Literacy Systems Change (prioritized)

Language and Literacy

- Reach Out and Read

Successes:

Language, Literacy and Culture in Tribal Communities was successfully awarded to Arizona’s Children Association, a previous a grant partner and is familiar with the region. Their staff have been able to connect with Apache language teachers to create materials for families including Apache language library kits with handouts that translates colors, body parts, days of the week, food and animals. The grant partner was able to hold one community event and looks forward to holding more.

A Program Coordination Specialist (PCS) has been hired internally to implement the Family Support and Literacy Systems Change Strategy. The PCS has connected with community partners who may be interested in participating in an early childhood workgroup to plan and implement future community events targeting families with young children. The PCS also asked these partners if they would like to be included in an early intervention referral form that has been created for all partners to be trained in utilizing so families and caregivers with children birth to age 5 are connected to the appropriate services to meet their unique needs. The PCS is updating the 2020 Family Resource Guide for reprint as a community resource families and partners can use. In addition, the PCS is creating a family planner, which will include community events and reminders for upcoming appointments while incorporating the Apache language.

Challenges:

The Language, Literacy and Culture in Tribal Communities grantee has had challenges in staffing, translating material into the Apache language since each community in the region speak different dialects, recruiting families to attend community events, which includes transportation for families and finding a venue for the events. The grant partner received suggestions from the regional partnership council during a meeting to address some of the challenges.

The Program Coordination Specialist implementing the Family Support and Literacy Systems Change Strategy is identifying community venues to hold parent workshops as part of their goal to support families and better understand the barriers they have to enrolling in and receiving services. There has been a challenge with connecting with appropriate community members to schedule a date to use buildings. Another anticipated challenge is winter weather effecting community events and anticipated parent workshops held.

Reach Out and Read Arizona (RORAZ) is reassessing a vacant coordinator position. The RORAZ manager is providing support to sites in the interim, with administrative support provided by the Arizona Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics Program Assistant. Staff turnover at clinic sites impacts program-related data including provider training and book distribution rates. The RORAZ staff provide support to the sites by sending training reminders with a direct link to access the training to providers and collaborate with site coordinators to ensure that staffing changes are communicated to RORAZ staff in a timely manner.

DESIRED OUTCOME: WELL-PREPARED, HIGHLY SKILLED AND APPROPRIATELY COMPENSATED PROFESSIONALS

Strategy Areas and Funded Strategies

Professional Development for ECE Professionals

- First Things First College Scholarships (prioritized)
- Child Care Health Consultation (prioritized)

Successes:

There have been orientations on the changes to the Child Care Health Consultation (CCHC) program, along with discussions on scheduling health and safety checklists. The assessment tool and the action plan were completed with three child care directors, reaching a total of five child care sites. The health and safety checklist was completed at one child care site in the region. The assessment tool was initially scheduled to occur in the second quarter.

Challenges:

For Child Care Health Consultation, there is continued outreach to child care sites with most centers responding. There are some centers that do not respond, or it is challenging to connect with the site directors when they are available. The distances of travel between sites to meet in-person is another challenge. Attempts are made to cluster area visits for the day. However, plans often change and this does not always work out. Continued attempts are made to meet the required number of hours per site; the number of hours needed to travel and to meet on site, particularly at more than one site a day is difficult. The option to meet virtually will allow for more opportunities for meetings. This will help in many situations and regions, with the exception where internet service is inadequate. In those areas, this is not an option.

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 regional partnership council prioritized Apache language in the region for many funding cycles and is looking forward to the utilization of the media buy to be more responsive to the Apache language and culture in public service announcements, posters and material and to include photos that share Apache families and children.

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

Challenges:

The Family Support for Children with Developmental Concerns (FSCDC) Strategy did not receive any grant applications during the request for grant applications (RFGA) period. First Things First regions, program and grant and contract specialists met with two community organizations to determine if a tribal grant agreement or government agreement could be reached without success due to the availability of staff to implement FSCDC. The regional partnership council has decided to re-release FSCDC as an RFGA during the third quarter of SFY24.

DESIRED OUTCOME: COORDINATED, INTEGRATED AND COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM

Strategy Areas and Funded Strategies

Evaluation

- State Wide Evaluation