

# ADVANCING ARIZONA'S EARLY CHILDHOOD SYSTEM: First Things First Strategic Plan SFY2018-2022





First Things First (FTF) and its partners have defined a clear structure for Arizona's Early Childhood System, and the role that FTF will play in building and strengthening that system for young children in the coming years through an intensive and inclusive strategic planning process. This report summarizes the work of the 2016 Early Childhood Task Force and the resulting FTF five-year strategic plan. It also clearly demonstrates the importance of collaboration and partnership to continue to build an early childhood system that offers Arizona children the strong start they deserve.

Arizonans have a strong partner in their efforts to invest in early childhood strategies and initiatives that give thousands of young children throughout Arizona the opportunity to start school healthy and ready to succeed. Since its inception in 2006, First Things First has been one of the critical partners in creating a family-centered, comprehensive, collaborative and high-quality early childhood system that supports the development, health and early education of all Arizona's children birth to age 5. As Arizona's only public funding source dedicated exclusively to early childhood, the work of First Things First focuses on seven main areas, including: Quality Child Care and Preschool; Strengthening Families and Early Literacy; Preventive Health; Teacher and Workforce Training and Development; System Coordination; Parent and Community Engagement; and Research and Accountability

## First Things First Vision:

All Arizona's children are ready to succeed in school and in life.




### Acknowledgements

First Things First is deeply grateful for the time, thoughtfulness and dedication of the Arizona Early Childhood Task Force, its co-chairs Nadine Mathis Basha and Don Budinger, the committees, national subject matter experts and the diverse group of leaders from an array of disciplines who gathered from across Arizona's rural, urban and tribal communities to develop FTF's five-year strategic plan. Their expertise, perspectives and ideas in early learning, children's health, family support and overall early childhood systems-building proved invaluable. The development of this strategic plan could not have been accomplished without the knowledge of, and support from, the FTF staff. The expert facilitation and guidance from the consultant teams at Advocacy & Communication Solutions and Flanagan-Hyde Associates is also greatly appreciated.

# WHY A HIGH-QUALITY EARLY CHILDHOOD SYSTEM MATTERS IN ARIZONA

Ninety percent of a child's brain develops before they start kindergarten, and the quality of a child's experiences in their first five years helps shape how their brain develops. Children with positive, stable relationships with parents and caregivers – such as quality child care and preschool experiences – go on to do better in school and in life. Research shows they're more likely to read at grade level, graduate from high school and are more prepared for college and career.

Arizona's children are no exception, but they face numerous challenges on the path to success. In 2018, of the nearly 550,000 children under 6 in Arizona:

-  More than 1 in 4 lived in poverty;
-  Almost 3 out of 4 did not receive screenings to detect potential learning problems; and
-  Almost 2 out of 3 did not go to preschool.

These and other factors may mean that many children in Arizona don't receive the quality early experiences they need to do well in school, and the impact shows up as they grow: More than half (56%) of Arizona third graders didn't pass Arizona's Statewide Achievement Assessment for English Language Arts in the 2017-2018 school year, and the latest data shows that 1 in 5 high schoolers don't graduate on time.

High-quality early childhood programs give children a solid start in life and a foundation upon which they can build on. But, the individuals and organizations that support children's health and development must work together in order to ensure all of Arizona's children have the opportunity to start school prepared to succeed.



# THE MODEL EARLY CHILDHOOD SYSTEM

## Initial Groundwork and Vision

Fulfilling Arizona’s commitment to our youngest children means more than simply funding programs and services. It means having a shared vision about what being prepared for kindergarten actually means and then a collective commitment to work across sectors to realize this vision.

In 2010, First Things First convened the first Early Childhood Task Force to establish a vision and design a model early childhood system that concurrently addressed not just early education, but all facets of young children’s health and development. Further, the 2010 Task Force knew the model system must be one in which all of Arizona’s early childhood partners – including families, early educators, health providers, state agencies, tribes, advocacy organizations, service delivery organizations, philanthropies, faith-based institutions, business representatives and others – played a role.

The vision developed by the 2010 Task Force was clear:

**All Arizona children by the time they are 5 years old have a solid foundation for success in school and in life because we have worked together to create a family-centered, comprehensive, collaborative and high-quality early childhood system that addresses the child’s development, health and early education.**

## Critical Partners of Arizona’s Early Childhood System

### Educators

- Early care and education
- K-12

### Higher Education

- Colleges
- Universities
- Researchers

### Health and Support

- Health providers
- Health systems
- Family-support organizations

### Community/Philanthropic

- Nonprofits
- Advocacy organizations
- Philanthropy
- Business
- Faith-based
- Media

### Public Agencies/Elected Officials

- Local
- State
- Federal
- Tribal

## Six Desired Outcomes

The model early childhood system developed in 2010 also identified six outcomes that are still relevant today. When the early childhood system is successful, everyone will benefit from living in communities where:

- 1** All children have access to high-quality, culturally responsive early care and education that promotes their development.
- 2** All early childhood education and health professionals are well-prepared, highly skilled and compensated based on their education and experience.
- 3** All children have access to high-quality preventive and continuous health care, including physical, mental, oral and nutritional health.
- 4** All families have the information, services and supports they need to help their children achieve their fullest potential.
- 5** All Arizonans understand the importance of the early years and the impact of early childhood development, health and education on Arizona's quality of life. As a result, they substantially support – both politically and financially – a model system that delivers these benefits.
- 6** The early childhood system is high-quality, centered on children and families, coordinated, integrated and comprehensive.



## 20 System Roles

With a vision and desired outcomes in hand, the Task Force then developed specific roles that the model early childhood system must advance in order to deliver success for Arizona's children. Those roles include:

1. Early Care and Education System Development and Implementation
2. Quality Early Care and Education\* Standards, Curriculum and Assessment\*
3. Quality, Access and Affordability of Regulated Early Care and Education Settings\*
4. Quality of Family, Friend and Neighbor Early Care and Education Settings
5. Professional Development System\*
6. Recruitment and Retention of Professionals in the Early Childhood System
7. Specialized Training for Health Services Providers
8. Specialized Training for Family Support Providers.
9. Access to Quality Health Care Coverage and Services\*
10. Early Screening and Intervention
11. Supply of Health Care Services
12. Nutrition and Physical Activity\*
13. Medical and Dental Homes
14. Information and Education for Families
15. Supports and Services for Families\*
16. Building Public Awareness and Support\*
17. Early Childhood System Funding\*
18. Early Childhood System Leadership
19. Coordinated Use of Early Childhood System Data
20. Early Childhood System Evaluation

Understanding that FTF is one of many key partners that have an important role in building and sustaining the system, the 2010 Task Force finalized its work by recommending and prioritizing nine of the above system roles (as indicated with an \*) for FTF to focus on from SFY2011 to SFY2016.

## **First Things First has made significant progress in many of those areas, including:**

- The percentage of early care and education programs participating in Quality First, Arizona's Quality Improvement and Rating System, that meet or exceed quality standards have increased from just 25% in 2013 to 74% in 2018. Thus, more than 42,000 young children in Arizona annually attend early learning programs that meet or exceed quality standards, an increase of 75 percent since 2015 (24,420 children).
- As an early childhood system partner focused on children's health, First Things First investments have contributed to systemic progress in young children's oral health. FTF partnered with the Arizona Department of Health Services in 2014 to coordinate a statewide oral health survey. The study showed that First Thing First and its early childhood system partners' prevention efforts are paying off as fewer kindergartners have untreated tooth decay, 27% in 2015 as compared to 35% in 2003.
- In the area of family support, FTF provides nearly \$20 million annually towards evidence-based home visitation programs which have been shown to effectively improve outcomes for families and children who experience various risk factors. In SFY2018, a total of 5,809 families participated in voluntary home visiting programs proven to reduce parental stress levels, increase connections to community supports and improve children's cognitive, motor, behavioral and socio-emotional development.

## **GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS**

The following Guiding Principles were established and utilized throughout the strategic planning process.

- FTF will emphasize the whole child including the cognitive, physical, social and emotional health and development of young children.
- FTF will support children across diverse socio-economic, geographic, cultural and educational backgrounds.
- FTF will prioritize serving underserved and at-risk children and their families.
- FTF will continue to foster, leverage and promote collaboration with partners committed to child well-being.
- FTF will continue to serve in a leadership, convening and funder capacity in advancing the early childhood system.

## The 2016 Early Childhood Task Force

Building on the progress made and recognizing the importance of continuing to advance the system in all areas that impact young children, the FTF State Board in 2016 appointed a new 50-member Task Force to guide the process to create an ambitious, yet attainable, statewide plan for advancing the work of FTF and Arizona's early childhood system during the next five years.

The Task Force met a total of six times between November 2016 and June 2017 to review and discuss the latest early childhood research and key drivers for system change; assess Arizona's early childhood system – where it currently is and the vision for the future; prioritize the system roles for FTF over the next five years; and finalize the strategic direction, including recommended goals and strategies for implementing FTF's priority system roles and early childhood desired outcomes.

In order to determine the goals for the selected priority system roles, three committees (Early Learning, Children's Health, and Family Support) were established along with convening FTF's Research and Evaluation National Advisory Panel. Throughout the strategic planning process, FTF's Regional Partnership Councils provided feedback on ideas and decision points made by the Task Force and committees.

**Building from the model early childhood system developed in 2010, including its vision, the six desired outcomes and the 20 system roles, the 2016 Task Force considered and prioritized 12 system roles for FTF for SFY 2018-2022. The illustration and tables on the following pages offer an overview of the 12 priority roles FTF will focus on during SFY 2018-2022 and the ways in which it will measure its success.**

## Strategic Plan Components and Definitions:

**Desired outcomes** – The 2010 Task Force defined six desired outcomes for the early childhood system.

**System roles** – Twenty system roles were originally defined by the 2010 Task Force and included all the possible roles in the early childhood system for the system to be successful. The 2016 Task Force used these as a starting point to prioritize FTF's work.

**Priority system roles** – Both the 2010 and the 2016 Task Force prioritized system roles for FTF implementation.

**Measures of success** – A measure of success states a specific, measurable outcome, determined by existing data or data that could be obtained. FTF uses various measures of success to determine its effectiveness for priority system roles.



# HOW THE FTF STRATEGIC PLAN SUPPORTS A STRONGER EARLY CHILDHOOD SYSTEM IN ARIZONA

The FTF Strategic Plan is based on roles identified by the 2016 Task Force as critical to supporting the six desired outcomes and the shared vision for Arizona’s early childhood system, as defined in 2010. By concentrating on 12 of these roles – which FTF calls Priority System Roles – FTF will fulfill its part within the early childhood system.

## FTF SFY2018-2022 Strategic Plan

### 1 VISION

All Arizona children by the time they are 5 years old have a solid foundation for success in school and in life because we have worked together to create a family-centered, comprehensive, collaborative and high-quality early childhood system that addresses the child’s development, health, and early education.

### 6 DESIRED OUTCOMES

- 1** Access to high-quality, culturally responsive early care and education
- 2** Well-prepared, highly skilled and appropriately compensated professionals
- 3** Access to high-quality preventative and continuous health care
- 4** Information, services, and support for families
- 5** Public understanding and support
- 6** Coordinated, integrated, and comprehensive system

### 20 SYSTEM ROLES (12 PRIORITIZED FOR FTF)

Early Care and Education System Development and Implementation	Quality Early Care and Education Standards, Curriculum and Assessment	Quality, Access, and Affordability of Regulated Early Care and Education Settings	Quality of Family, Friend and Neighbor Early Care and Education Settings	Professional Development System*
Recruitment and Retention of Professionals in the Early Childhood System*	Specialized Training for Health Services Providers	Specialized Training for Family Support Providers	Access to Quality Health Care Coverage and Services	Early Screening and Intervention
Supply of Health Care Services	Nutrition and Physical Activity	Medical and Dental Homes	Information and Education for Families	Supports and Services for Families
Building Public Awareness and Support	Early Childhood System Funding	Early Childhood System Leadership	Coordinated Use of Early Childhood System Data*	Early Childhood System Evaluation*

\*These system roles were combined.

# FTF Priority System Roles and Measures of Success

## OUTCOME ONE: Access to High-Quality, Culturally Responsive Early Care and Education

### Priority System Role: Early Care and Education System Development and Implementation

Convene partners and provide leadership in the development and implementation of a comprehensive early care and education system that is aligned both across the spectrum of settings and with the full continuum of the educational system.

**GOAL 1:** To identify and align early care and education programs and services to ensure a comprehensive early childhood system with coordinated and efficient use of resources.

## STRATEGIES

- 1 Develop a framework for how funds and resources from federal, state, tribal and private sources can be used to support an efficient, effective and sustainable early care and education system.
- 2 Develop a framework for a common intake/eligibility system to support families in finding and enrolling their children in a quality early care and education program.
- 3 Establish an integrated data system to provide data that can be used to monitor and evaluate the early care and education system.

## MEASURES OF SUCCESS

- Quality First has a comprehensive resource and finance plan that incorporates state partners including, First Things First, Arizona Department of Education, Arizona Department of Economic Security, Arizona Department of Health Services, Head Start and Tribal partners.
- Targeted measurements should also include tracking the movement towards:
  - A comprehensive data system;
  - Common intake/eligibility infrastructure;
  - Increased funds being used for early care and education; and
  - Decreasing and/or leveraging areas of duplication.

## OUTCOME ONE: Access to High-Quality, Culturally Responsive Early Care and Education

### Priority System Role: Quality Early Care and Education Standards, Curriculum and Assessment

Convene partners, provide leadership and provide funding for the development and implementation of quality standards for early childhood care and education programs and related curricula and assessments.

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**GOAL 1:** To increase the use of research/evidence-based curricula and comprehensive assessment that is aligned with the Arizona State Standards for birth through kindergarten.

### STRATEGIES

- 1 In partnership with state and community partners, support early care and education programs utilizing research/evidence based curricula and comprehensive assessments.

### MEASURES OF SUCCESS

- Programs implementing an evidence-based curriculum that is aligned with the Program Guidelines for High Quality Early Education Birth through Kindergarten, Infant Toddler Developmental Guidelines and the Arizona Early Learning Standards.
- Programs that meet the child assessment indicators identified in the Program Guidelines for High Quality Early Education Birth through Kindergarten.

## **OUTCOME ONE: Access to High-Quality, Culturally Responsive Early Care and Education**

### **Priority System Role: Quality, Access and Affordability of Regulated Early Care and Education Settings**

Convene partners, provide leadership and provide funding for increased availability of and access to high quality, regulated, culturally responsive and affordable early care and education programs.

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**GOAL 1:** To increase the number of Arizona children birth through 5 with access to and participation in quality early care and education.

## **STRATEGIES**

- 1 Establish a State Agency leadership team to review and make decisions that align policies, resources and programming for a comprehensive Quality First system.
- 2 Increase the number of licensed and regulated programs at quality levels.
- 3 Increase the number of children receiving child care subsidy in high quality programs.
- 4 Determine impact of quality level programs on children, with a particular focus on high risk and vulnerable populations.
- 5 Through the State Agency leadership team, identify state and federal resources to align with Quality First, including Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG), Head Start and Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

## **MEASURES OF SUCCESS**

- Number of children birth to age 5 enrolled in a program participating in Quality First by age groups.
- Children birth to age 5 enrolled in a 3 – 5 star program participating in Quality First by age groups.
- Retention of programs maintaining a Quality First rating of 3 – 5 stars.



## OUTCOME TWO: Well-Prepared, Highly Skilled and Appropriately Compensated Professionals

### Priority System Role: Professional Development System and Recruitment and Retention of Professionals in the Early Childhood System

Convene partners, provide leadership and provide funding for the development and enhancement of an early childhood professional development system that addresses availability, accessibility, affordability, quality and articulation. Convene partners, provide leadership and provide funding for the recruitment, adequate compensation and retention of high quality, culturally diverse early childhood professionals.

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**GOAL 1:** To implement, align and continuously improve Arizona's Professional Development System that supports the education, recruitment and retention of early childhood professionals.

### STRATEGIES

- 1 Support partners across the early childhood system to utilize and promote the Arizona Early Childhood Career and Professional Development Network.
- 2 Establish the Professional Development Workgroup as a diverse and inclusive statewide advisory structure for all sectors of the early childhood professional development system.
- 3 Collect and maintain accurate and comprehensive early childhood workforce data to inform and drive decision making and continuous quality improvement.
- 4 Develop and strengthen a continuum of intentional educational and professional development career pathways for the early childhood workforce.

### MEASURES OF SUCCESS

- Number of Institutes of Higher Education with degree requirements and pathways aligned with the Workforce Knowledge and Competencies (WFKC) that support the movement from a high school career and technical education program to an Associate's degree and completion of a Bachelor's degree.
- Early Childhood Teachers and Administrators, separately, with college degree(s) and/or relevant experience.
- Programs offering professional development across the state to the early childhood workforce that are aligned with the WFKC.
- Professionals participating in professional development across the state.

## OUTCOME THREE: Access to High-Quality Preventative and Continuous Health Care

### Priority System Role: Access to Quality Health Care Coverage and Service

Collaborate with partners to increase access to high quality health care services, including oral health and behavioral health, and affordable health care coverage for young children and their families.

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- GOAL 1:** To increase the number of Arizona children birth through five with access to preventive health services, including oral health, behavioral health and immunizations. This includes oral health, behavioral health, immunizations and services for families that address the social determinants of health.
- GOAL 2:** To increase the number of Arizona children birth through five who are receiving care coordination services and healthcare through a medical and dental home.
- GOAL 3:** To increase parents and caregivers knowledge and understanding on how to support their child's optimal health and development.
- GOAL 4:** To increase the number of Arizona pregnant women receiving early and adequate maternal health services, oral health screening and immunizations.

## STRATEGIES

### Oral Health

- 1 Increase the percentage of young children who utilize their oral health benefit.
- 2 Increase the percentage of expectant women who receive an oral health visit during pregnancy.
- 3 Build on current efforts to incorporate oral health services (to include completed referrals) within pediatric/primary care settings and OBGYN clinics.
- 4 Support the capacity building of Federally Qualified Health Centers and Tribally-Operated 638 Programs to provide oral health services.

## STRATEGIES

### Care Coordination

- 5 Identify and support the use of navigation/care coordination models for families to successfully navigate Arizona's comprehensive system to meet the developmental needs of children, with a focus on supporting children with mild to moderate delays. This includes Medicaid eligible and non-Medicaid eligible children.
- 6 Convene and coordinate system partners responsible for care coordination to reduce duplication of efforts, identify gaps in care coordination, communicate best practices and support an effective system of care for families and providers for Medicaid eligible and non-Medicaid eligible children.
- 7 With partners explore opportunities for the expansion of telehealth in rural and tribal communities to address both primary and specialty care.

### Quality Health Care Coverage and Service

- 8 Increase the rate of KidsCare enrollment.
- 9 In the context of providing integrated health care, increase workforce training and knowledge to support the social emotional development of young children.
- 10 With system partners access and review data to understand network adequacy with an emphasis on rural and tribal communities.
- 11 Partner with the Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System and system partners to increase number of children receiving the Early Periodic Screening Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT) benefit.
- 12 Collaborate with system partners on the development and dissemination of key messages, information and services on maternal health.

## MEASURES OF SUCCESS

- Children birth to age 5 with untreated tooth decay.
- Children birth to age 5 with health coverage.
- Children receiving a well child visit (6 visits by 15 months).
- Children age 19-35 months who are immunized.

## OUTCOME THREE: Access to High-Quality Preventative and Continuous Health Care

### Priority System Role: Early Screening and Intervention

Collaborate with partners to increase awareness of an access to a continuum of information, support and services for families and their children who have or are at risk of having developmental, physical and/or mental health concerns.

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- GOAL 1:** To increase the number of Arizona children birth through five receiving appropriate developmental and health screening
- GOAL 2:** To create, sustain and expand the development of coordinated statewide and community based systems to identify and serve children with physical, behavioral, developmental and social needs.
- GOAL 3:** To increase the number of Arizona children birth through age five who are receiving appropriate supports and intervention services based on screenings.

## STRATEGIES

- 1 By March 2019 Arizona's comprehensive system to meet the developmental needs of children is defined and appropriately utilized by all partners. This includes a defined set of inclusive pathways for how children navigate the System.
- 2 Develop and execute a comprehensive public awareness strategy for Arizona's comprehensive system to meet the developmental needs of children.
- 3 By June 2019 define common indicators of success for shared accountability among partners for Arizona's comprehensive system to meet the developmental needs of children.
- 4 By June 2019 data elements for Arizona's comprehensive system to meet the developmental needs of children are defined and coordinated across partners.
- 5 Conduct a policy and program assessment, disseminate findings and develop action plans in response to key findings.
- 6 Create a system for coordinated screening that recognizes the primary place for screening to take place is the medical home.
- 7 Support for and coordination among partners in providing comprehensive evaluations and discipline-specific evaluations for children 0-3, ensuring efficient and effective use of funding and protocols for timely movement of children along the pathways.



## STRATEGIES

- 8 By 2019 identify and pilot navigation models for families to successfully navigate Arizona's comprehensive system to meet the developmental needs of children with a focus on supporting children with mild to moderate delays.
- 9 With partners, develop and pilot effective services, programming and interventions (including therapeutic interventions and parent education) for children with mild to moderate delays.
- 10 Develop and deliver effective system-wide training and resources to ensure definitions and components of Arizona's comprehensive system to meet the developmental needs of children are understood and implemented by all partners.
- 11 Determine and coordinate ongoing professional development needs of the System's workforce across the continuum of screening, referrals, evaluation and services/treatments.
- 12 Effective financing mechanisms are identified and implemented to increase children's access to and receipt of timely and appropriate evaluations and services.
- 13 Develop system-wide process to identify and reduce the duplication of evaluations and services while at the same time identifying and filling the gaps in evaluations and services.

## MEASURES OF SUCCESS

- Children age 9 months to 5 years who received a standardized screening for developmental or behavioral problems.
- Adequacy of Prenatal Care received by pregnant women in Arizona.

## OUTCOME FOUR: Information, Services and Support for Families

### Priority System Role: Information and Education for Families

Convene partners, provide leadership and provide funding for the development and coordinated dissemination of high quality, diverse and relevant information and education on the importance of the early years, child development, health, early education and related resources for families, providers, partners and the public.

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**GOAL 1:** To increase families understanding and use of parenting practices that promote positive child development, health and literacy outcomes for their children.

### STRATEGIES

- 1 Develop original FTF digital content that is available on-demand in multiple formats and that parents/caregivers find trustworthy, valuable, supportive and engaging.\*
- 2 Maximize reach by publishing and adapting digital content across multiple FTF online channels (including social media).\*
- 3 Expand the reach and engagement of targeted audiences through paid distribution and promotion strategies.\*
- 4 Collaborate with system and community partners for the effective dissemination of information including resources and tools for families.
- 5 Develop statewide campaign for parents and caregivers focused on the developmental stages for infants and toddlers.

\*These strategies align with the strategies under the FTF Prioritized System Role: Building Public Awareness and Support and the goal is to increase families' understanding of the importance of early childhood and awareness of resources available to help them ensure positive experiences in their child's first five years.

### PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- Parents/caregivers who report that they are competent and confident about their ability to support their child's safety, health, literacy and well-being (Family Caregiver Survey).\*
  - Focus on knowledge of child development and knowledge of/having information about services and supports in their community.
  - Understanding parent/caregiver's sources of support, informal and formal sources, and how caregivers receive information.

\*This measure of success refers to the % of parents/caregivers that report feeling competent and confident in their ability to support their child's safety, health, literacy and well-being through knowledge of child development and positive parenting practices.

## OUTCOME FOUR: Information, Services and Support for Families

### Priority System Role: Supports and Services for Families

Convene partners, provide leadership, provide funding and advocate for development, enhancement and sustainability of a variety of high quality, culturally responsive and affordable services, supports and community resources for young children and their families.

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**GOAL 1:** To increase the availability of and access to high quality family support services for families with young children.

**GOAL 2:** To continuously improve the quality of family support services.

**GOAL 3:** To increase coordination of planning, development, funding and delivery of family support services to meet the needs of families and leverage available resources.

## STRATEGIES

### Strengthen the Continuum of Family Support Strategies

- 1 Convene partners to define and identify a continuum of Family Support strategies that are available to families, by region, to identify opportunities to expand and address gaps and develop community profiles to highlight the strengths and challenges families encounter across Arizona's diverse communities.
- 2 Continue to improve the quality of family support strategies through development and implementation of a robust multi-level Continuous Quality Improvement Framework.
- 3 Support development of effective approaches to reduce family isolation.

### Strengthen the Home Visitation System

- 4 Support and strengthen formal and informal coordinated referral systems for home visitation across the state.
- 5 Identify and reach high risk and vulnerable populations and overcome barriers to accessing home visitation services.
- 6 Increase supports for home visitors in addressing the complex needs of families.
- 7 Identify and leverage sustainable sources of funding to expand home visitation services.

## STRATEGIES

### **Professional Development for Family Support Professionals and Increased Collaboration among System Partners**

- 8 Identify and convene a group of family support professionals and experts to inform and consult on the family support professional development strategies 9-12.
- 9 Develop and provide effective and high impact professional development opportunities for family support professionals delivering the continuum of family support strategies.
- 10 Develop and provide effective and high impact professional development opportunities, specifically for home visiting professionals.
- 11 Integrate professional development for family support professionals into the Arizona Early Childhood Career and Professional Network.
- 12 Collaborate with Institutes of Higher Education to support and strengthen pre-service professional development for those seeking higher education in the field of Family Support.
- 13 Build upon and expand existing networks to convene family support organizations to strengthen and support statewide and community collaboration.
- 14 Continue coordination and alignment with Read On to infuse effective language and literacy practices into the continuum of family support strategies.
- 15 Improve the quality of developmental and sensory screening and coordinate screening and referral activities carried out by family support organizations.\*

\*These proposed strategies align with the strategies proposed under the FTF Prioritized System Role: Early Screening and Intervention and the goal to increase the number of Arizona children birth through five receiving appropriate developmental and health screening.

## MEASURES OF SUCCESS

- Parents/caregivers who report that they are competent and confident about their ability to support their child's safety, health, literacy and well-being (Family Caregiver Survey).\*
  - Focus on ability to navigate and access supports and services in their community.
  - Focus on language and literacy: Rich home environment; frequency of reading to their child and storytelling or singing to their child.

\*This measure of success refers to the % of parents/caregivers that report feeling competent and confident in their ability to navigate and access supports and services in their community to support their child's safety, health, literacy and well-being.



## OUTCOME FIVE: Public Understanding and Support

### Priority System Role: Public Awareness and Support

Convene partners, provide leadership and provide funding for efforts to increase public awareness of and support for early childhood development, health and early education among partners, public officials, policy makers and the public.

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**GOAL 1:** To increase the number of diverse constituencies who use consistent, compelling messages to actively raise awareness of and build public support for the importance of early childhood as an issue that impacts all Arizonans.

### STRATEGIES

- 1 Provide opportunities for diverse stakeholders (regional council members, board members and early childhood system partners) to engage in building awareness of and promoting effective early childhood policy at the local, state, tribal and national level.
- 2 Engage non-early childhood system partners – such as those within the target audiences of faith, business, health, K-12 education – as voices for early childhood.
- 3 Continue engaging stakeholders in awareness-building efforts through sustained implementation of a tiered community engagement model and continue offering platforms for stakeholders to easily engage with FTF events, volunteer opportunities and other calls-to-action.
- 4 Leverage partnership and investment successes to advance awareness and support for early childhood.
- 5 Regularly test and develop strategic core messaging about early childhood and FTF.
- 6 Continue implementation of trainings on effective messaging for key internal and external stakeholders.
- 7 In collaboration with community partners, leverage community events to facilitate the effective broad dissemination of early childhood messaging and promote grassroots engagement.
- 8 In coordination with regional partnership councils, leverage a strategic mix of broadreach and high frequency paid media.
- 9 Actively pursue regular earned media coverage on the importance of early childhood at the regional and statewide level.

## MEASURES OF SUCCESS

- FTF status as a credible messenger of early childhood information.
- Parents and caregivers who engage with early childhood information.
- Constituents who actively support early childhood.
- Perceived importance of early childhood development statewide.
- Awareness and support for early childhood.

**GOAL 2:** Increase families' understanding of the importance of early childhood and awareness of resources available to help them ensure positive experiences in their child's first five years.

## STRATEGIES

- 1 Develop original FTF digital content that is available on-demand in multiple formats and that parents and caregivers find trustworthy, valuable, supportive and engaging.
- 2 Maximize reach by publishing and adapting digital content across multiple FTF online channels using targeted paid distribution and promotion strategies; monitor online analytics and performance indicators to optimize form, reach and engagement.
- 3 Evaluate and enhance FTF digital platforms (websites, social media channels, email, digital advertising, etc.) to support continuous improvement in delivering content to families.
- 4 Continue to assist First Things First grantees in marketing funded programs.
- 5 Where appropriate and strategic, develop and strengthen marketing of statewide initiatives.
- 6 Across all communication strategies, highlight means for families to connect to resources and provide user-friendly and engaging tools for families to access early childhood resources and messages about the importance of early childhood.
- 7 Through effective storytelling, demonstrate how First Things First funded strategies have improved an individual child's readiness to enter school and/or their caregivers competence and confidence to help build families understanding.

## MEASURES OF SUCCESS

- Parents and caregivers who engage with early childhood information.
- Parents who feel confident and competent in their ability to support their child's health and learning.

**GOAL 3:** Increase policymakers' recognition of the role early childhood plays in educational and economic outcomes and increase regular engagement of early childhood voices in public policy conversations.

## STRATEGIES

- 1 Leverage and promote FTF leadership and staff as experts in early childhood best practice and policy.
- 2 As appropriate, publish and promote research and policy publications for broad consumption at the state and national level (policy papers, reports).
- 3 Expand and leverage FTF's voice in statewide, federal, tribal and local public policy conversations around a broad range of topics impacted by early childhood (education, health, community and economic development).
- 4 Promote and publicize information and success stories to support the infusion of additional resources for program and system development.
- 5 Build public awareness of the impact of quality in early care and education to children's early learning and leverage public awareness of FTF's signature strategy, Quality First, as an indicator of quality in Arizona.
- 6 Use First Things First research and evaluation products to demonstrate the effectiveness of FTF funded strategies in improving child outcomes at the systems level (dashboards, regional annual reports, studies, etc.).
- 7 Across all FTF communication channels, highlight the impact of FTF funded programs on young kids and families in an easily understandable way with an emphasis on proven, evidence-based outcomes.
- 8 Develop and implement a statewide public policy agenda.
- 9 Support FTF regional partnership councils in implementing public policy strategies that reflect local priorities and opportunities.

## OUTCOME SIX: Coordinated, integrated and comprehensive system

### Priority System Role: Early Childhood System Data and Evaluation

Convene and collaborate with partners to identify data needs and resources; define and carry out roles related to collecting, analyzing and reporting data; and utilize data to design, develop, plan and evaluate the early childhood system. Provide leadership in the evaluation of the early childhood system and collaborate with partners to utilize the results to foster continuous improvement of the system.

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**GOAL 1:** To ensure that data needed to inform and guide program and policy decisions is available, coordinated and utilized at the state and local level.

## STRATEGIES

- 1 Execute interagency data sharing agreements towards coordinated use of data.
- 2 Coordinate with Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS), Department of Child Safety and other system partners to institute a Statewide Integrated Data System for Home Visitation to demonstrate both coordinated and shared use of data, as well as shared accountability towards the quality and integrity of data collected.
- 3 Coordinate with system partners such as Department of Economic Security, Arizona Department of Education, ADHS, and Head Start to develop a common repository of data on regulated early care and education providers to inform collective system and FTF work.

## MEASURES OF SUCCESS

- State, Tribal and other government agencies or system partners that participate in the Integrated Data System by sharing and/or using data.
  - Partners will regularly use the data system for monitoring outcomes and quality improvement purposes.

**GOAL 2:** To conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the early childhood system and use results for continuous improvement of the system.

## STRATEGIES

- 1 Partner with ADHS to conduct an Oral Health Survey of children in kindergarten to assess prevalence of tooth decay and other oral health indicators.
- 2 Coordinate with system partners to conduct a Family and Caregiver Survey to inform the percentage of parents/caregivers who report they are competent and confident about their ability to support their child's safety, health, literacy and well-being.
- 3 Conduct the Tempe PRE Evaluation Study to serve as the small-scale blueprint to link Quality First data to child-level data to demonstrate the feasibility of an integrated data project. The study will also serve as a small scale project at the community level that evaluates how individual and collective work of early childhood system partners is impacting young children's school readiness.
- 4 Coordinate with system partners to develop and conduct a Partner Survey to serve as measure of early childhood system partner collaboration and coordination.

## MEASURES OF SUCCESS

- Children demonstrating kindergarten readiness (using the Kindergarten Developmental Inventory (KDI) or alternate child outcome measures).
- Goal Area Measures of Success that significantly contribute to kindergarten readiness.
- FTF will develop a measure of early childhood system partner collaboration and coordination.

## OUTCOME SIX: Coordinated, integrated and comprehensive system

### Priority System Role: Early Childhood System Funding

Secure, coordinate and advocate for resources required to develop and sustain the early childhood system.

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- GOAL 1:** To leverage FTF resources to secure Federal and National Foundation grants to build and sustain the early childhood system.
- GOAL 2:** To strengthen relationships with Arizona Businesses, Individuals and Private Sector Foundations to secure philanthropic investments and partnerships to enhance and sustain the early childhood system.
- GOAL 3:** To increase alignment of Federal, State, Local and Tribal funding that supports a comprehensive early childhood system.

## STRATEGIES

- 1 Define statewide fund development priorities for strategic investment that align with FTF stakeholders.
- 2 Increase investment in statewide fund development priorities.
- 3 Continue to build FTF's internal capacity and infrastructure to search, vet and pursue federal and national foundation grant opportunities.
- 4 Increase investment in various regional priorities.
- 5 Build relations with Arizona businesses, individuals and private sector foundations, including regional council business and philanthropic seats, to increase investment in FTF's statewide fund development priorities.
- 6 Empower regions to build relationships with their local businesses, individuals and private sector foundations to increase investment to support various regional priorities.
- 7 Maximize FTF's annual Early Childhood Summit as an initial entry point for Arizona businesses, individuals and private sector foundations to engage with the early childhood system.
- 8 Position FTF as one of Arizona's early childhood experts to increase alignment of federal, state, local and tribal funding that supports a comprehensive early childhood system.
- 9 Establish giving vehicle(s) to support the early childhood system.
- 10 Convene and leverage expertise of SPI Subcommittee to increase investment in the early childhood system.

## MEASURES OF SUCCESS

- Public and private funding secured in each priority area.

## OUTCOME SIX: Coordinated, integrated and comprehensive system

### Priority System Role: Early Childhood System Leadership

Convene partners, provide leadership and provide funding for the conceptualization and implementation of a high quality, child and family centered, coordinated, integrated and comprehensive early childhood system that includes clearly defined roles and responsibilities.

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- GOAL 1:** To clearly describe Arizona's comprehensive early childhood system and define the roles and responsibilities of those involved in its implementation to increase coordination and leverage resources and services for young children.
- GOAL 2:** To have a common understanding of the early childhood system among agencies and organizations involved in the system, share ownership in its implementation and agree to shared outcomes for young children.
- GOAL 3:** To support State, tribal and local jurisdictions in their efforts to conceptualize and design high quality early childhood opportunities.
- GOAL 4:** Early childhood is recognized as a core component of the P-20 education system.

## STRATEGIES

- 1 Develop and implement a shared agenda across state agency partners that minimally includes:
  - Prioritizing high risk and vulnerable populations across the health, education and family serving sectors;
  - Aligning policies and increasing coordination to reduce duplication across health, education and family support; and
  - Continuing focused efforts in improving quality early care and education, improving early language and literacy outcomes, strengthening and expanding professional development, strengthening the comprehensive early intervention system and alignment with Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System.
- 2 Continue to align and support the intersection of the early childhood system with k-3 education including emphasis on developmentally effective and appropriate practice; leveraging and alignment of resources; and professional development.
- 3 Convene state and system partners to address barriers to availability and access to quality services, particularly in rural and tribal areas.
- 4 Continue to develop and strengthen relationships with local governments and tribes and nations to support new and expand early childhood opportunities.

## MEASURES OF SUCCESS

- Existence of a shared state agency early childhood plan.
- Benchmark systems measures that demonstrate progress in school readiness are agreed to and shared by system partners.
- A measure of partner collaboration and coordination.





## ACHIEVING OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN: MEASURES OF SUCCESS

How will the work of the early childhood system and FTF be held accountable? Given the limitations of existing data, the Task Force recommends using measures of success focused on population level outcomes for children, such as the number of children who receive quality early learning, have access to health care, or teachers being credentialed. Population level outcomes, as opposed to agency or program level outcomes, measure the changes in conditions or well-being and offer long-term results of the efforts of a number of different programs, agencies, and initiatives. (Note that not every system role relates to population level outcomes.)

Population level outcomes underscore the importance of partnerships. No single agency or partner can ever be held responsible for population level outcomes, whether failure or success. All partners involved in the system contribute and should be held accountable for early childhood outcomes.

In addition to tracking population level outcomes, FTF will continue to track agency specific performance metrics and set benchmarks that help evaluate how FTF is contributing to the larger goal of improving outcomes for children

## Conclusion

Implementation of First Things First Statewide Strategic Plan will continue through June 2022. Throughout implementation, FTF is guided by the principles set forth by the 2016 Task Force. In addition, several common themes emerged through discussions with the Task Force and committee members that will be integrated into implementation. These themes include the following:

- **Outreach:** Increase effective outreach to families to connect them with appropriate information, services, and support. Understanding that there are multiple ways to connect families to information, services and supports, focus on coordination and alignment of this work across the goal areas.
- **Public Awareness:** Strengthen partnerships with effective messengers (for example, pediatric and family practices) to increase parents' awareness of the services and supports available and increase the general public's awareness of the importance of early childhood and the work of FTF.
- **Advocacy:** Strengthen engagement with legislators and public policy-makers on early childhood issues.
- **Professional Development:** Promote a professional development system that is inclusive of efforts to support early childhood professionals from multiple professional backgrounds across early learning, family support, and children's health. work of FTF.
- **Partnerships:** Increase coordination and alignment with partners and leveraging resources.
- **Environmental factors:** Conditions in the environments in which children are born, live, learn, work, play, worship, and age that affect a wide range of health, functioning, and quality-of-life outcomes and risks. This includes but is not limited to safe and affordable housing, access to education and healthcare, public safety, availability of healthy foods, local emergency services, health services, and environments free of life-threatening toxins.
- **Data:** Coordination and sharing of data across agencies and sources. Identifying new data sources on health and wellbeing of children.

The work of the 2016 Early Childhood Task Force included a comprehensive review of Arizona’s current early childhood system and how it is preparing Arizona’s young children for success in school and life. The strategic planning process was a chance to reflect and build on the progress FTF has made since 2010. The research conducted as part of this process showed significant advancements in the early childhood system, but also the critical opportunity for improvements. The work of the 2016 Early Childhood Task Force and committees provide a foundation of principles, goals and strategies upon which FTF is building to continue to enhance Arizona’s early childhood system and support the development, health and early education of all Arizona’s children birth through age 5 so they are better prepared for school and life. Advancing the early childhood system for Arizona’s children is not something that FTF nor any other single agency can do alone, and we are sincerely grateful for the many partners and collaborators who continually work in partnership to improve outcomes and futures for all of our state’s youngest learners.



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