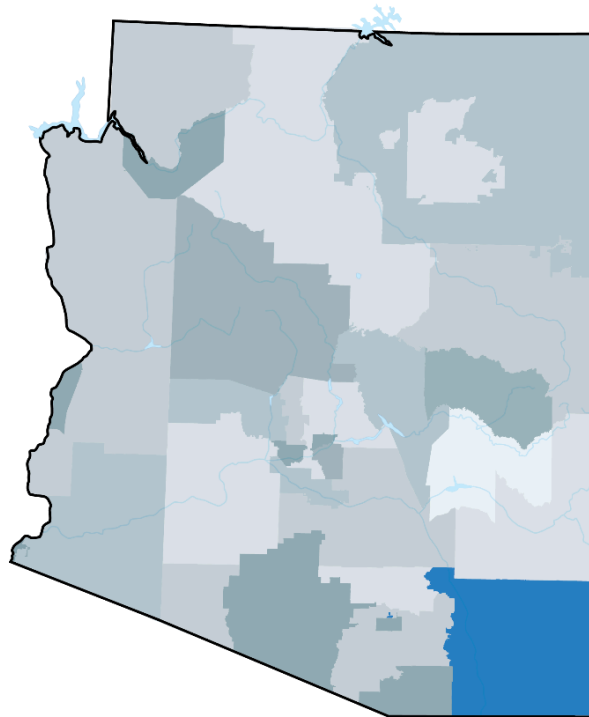


FIRST THINGS FIRST

Cochise Regional Partnership Council
Population birth through age 5: 8,908



State Fiscal Year 2026 Funding Plan

SFY 2024 – 2027 Strategic Plan Update

Presented to the First Things First Board
January 21, 2025



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.

Cochise Regional Partnership Council

Danielle Brownrigg, chair, at-large representative

Kalman Mannis, vice chair, at-large representative

Elisa Castro, parent of a child 5 years or younger

Almanita Graves, representative of the faith community

Anthony Reed, representative of a philanthropic organization

Johanna Scott, public school administrator

Nedra Sealey, at-large representative

Alma Tamayo-Silva, health services provider

Demetry Simonton, member of the business community

Diona Williams, early childhood educator

open, child care provider

Melissa Avant, regional director, First Things First

Kollean McMahon, administrative specialist, First Things First

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

Allocations and Funding Sources	2024	2025	2026	2027
FY Allocation	\$2,135,493	\$2,135,493	\$2,003,809	\$2,297,923
Population Based Allocation	\$1,407,432	\$1,407,432	\$1,272,121	\$1,407,432
Discretionary Allocation	\$728,061	\$728,061	\$731,688	\$890,491
Carry Forward From Previous Year	\$979,283	\$882,065	\$608,868	\$203,984
Total Regional Council Funds Available	\$3,114,776	\$3,017,558	\$2,612,677	\$2,501,907
Strategies	Approved Allotted	Approved Allotted	Proposed Allotted	Projected Allotted
Inclusion of Children with Special Needs		\$232,500	\$232,500	\$232,500
Quality First Academy	\$16,500	\$15,203	\$16,500	\$16,500
Quality First Assessment		\$93,249		
Quality First Coaching & Incentives	\$571,080	\$460,911	\$571,080	\$571,080
Quality First Scholarships	\$1,232,585	\$869,439	\$608,607	\$608,607
First Things First College Scholarships		\$10,800	\$10,800	\$10,800
Child Care Health Consultation	\$112,200	\$130,417	\$112,200	\$112,200
<i>Children's Health Systems Change ***</i>			\$260,832	\$260,832
Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation	\$36,720	\$61,200	\$61,200	\$61,200
Family Support & Literacy Systems Change	\$120,000	\$120,000	\$239,000	\$239,000
Family Support Coordination	\$280,000	\$400,000	\$400,000	\$400,000
Parenting Education	\$119,000	\$119,000		
Statewide Evaluation	\$95,423	\$95,423	\$95,423	\$95,423
Educational Promotion and Brand Awareness	\$20,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000
Media	\$14,634	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000
Total	\$2,618,142	\$2,618,142	\$2,618,142	\$2,618,142
Total Unallotted/Unawarded/Unexpended:*	\$496,634	\$399,416	(\$5,465)	(\$116,235)

Fiscal Year	2020	2024	2025	2026	2027
% to Board Priorities		96.35 %	96.35 %	86.39 %	86.39 %
% to Quality First**	20.03%	26.72 %	23.16 %	26.72 %	26.72 %
Fiscal Year	4 Year Average				
% to Board Priorities	91.37%				
% to Quality First**	25.83%				

*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, Quality First Assessment and Child Care Health Consultation

***The regional council approved the listed funding amount for the strategy but wanted to discuss and develop the strategy in more detail at its next meeting before requesting the Board's approval. Therefore, the listed amount for this strategy is only informational at this time. The regional council desires to use this amount to support a collaboration with the Cochise County Health and Human Services Department. All of the other line items in the table above are for the Board's approval, in the amount of \$2,357,310. Thus, approval of this plan will be approval of all the listed line items except the Children's Health Systems Change line item. The regional council intends to submit the Children's Health Systems Change \$260,832-line item for approval at a future Board meeting.

COCHISE REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP COUNCIL

Please describe how the Regional Partnership Council's SFY24-27 Strategic Plan promotes equity and support of under-resourced and underserved children and their families.

Cochise County covers about 6,200 square miles located in southeast Arizona next to the Mexico border and New Mexico and is diverse in geography, population and ethnicity. The Cochise landscape consists of scenic country and mountains, is largely rural, consists of small towns with populations of less than 10,000 people and is known for agriculture, mining and tourism. Cochise County offers a wealth of pro-growth and development opportunities thanks to low taxes, land availability, affordable commercial space, high-quality healthcare and education, and easy access to Interstate 10 and rail transportation. In Cochise, there are five major hubs, Douglas, Sierra Vista, Benson, Willcox and Bisbee. Each hub of the county has a different culture and the regional council continues to adapt programs and services to help accommodate the differences and provide inclusivity of all people and offers a family-oriented society.

Through the strategic planning process and examining the data, the regional council intentionally focused on targeting families with young children who are impacted by single parent households, homelessness, housing instability, domestic and intimate partner violence, mental health and adolescent pregnancy to promote self-sufficiency and wellbeing. Due to this data, there is a commitment to advancing equity by elevating the voices and perspectives of parents, grandparents, providers, community members and others with lived expertise with young children birth to age 5 in the Cochise Region.

The consistent themes presented by this process include the need for an integrated closed-loop referral system, mental health services, parenting education, community resources, services and access to affordable high-quality child care.

The regional council was intentional in funding strategies that could affect each of these communities through a plan that promotes equity, supports low-income working families and promotes children's learning by improving the quality of early care and education and parenting programs that embed cultural responsibility to the under-resourced and underserved children and their families.

SFY26 FUNDING PLAN UPDATE / CHANGE TABLE
COCHISE 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:

Quality First

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, more targeted administration support and additional hours for Child Care Health Consultation.

At the end of SFY24, 83.3% of participating programs were achieving quality levels.

Quality First Scholarships:

First Things First increased the Quality First Scholarship reimbursement rate to the cost of quality in SFY25, informed by a study conducted in 2021. This increase supports a robust and stable network of child care providers and continues the reimbursement rate that providers were receiving through federal pandemic relief funding.

Coordinated planning with the Arizona Department of Economic Security (DES) allowed for 125 children statewide to be transitioned from Quality First Scholarships to DES Security Child Care Assistance in advance of the end of the federal funds.

The FTF Cochise Regional Partnership Council continues to support access to quality early care and education through Quality First center and home-based slots and Quality First Scholarships. The regional council made it a priority for the region to understand the decrease in federal dollars and the future impacts of an intentional step-down in Quality First Scholarships. Over 16 plus years, the regional council has invested over \$20 million in this strategy and has included the community in a conversation about the other funding streams available regarding child care assistance.

Challenges:

Quality First Scholarships:

Reimbursing Quality First Scholarships at the 2021 cost of quality has resulted in fewer scholarships in SFY25 for the same amount of funding from the previous year.

Changes:

As originally documented in the region’s SFY 2024 – 2027 Strategic Plan, the regional council opted to annually reduce funding to the Quality First Scholarships Strategy. The regional council analyzed the effects of the decision to move to the cost of quality coupled with the regional council’s decision to continue moving forward with the original plan to decrease the allotment of funds to Quality First Scholarships. The regional council has prioritized the critical need

to focus on other ways to support access to quality care in the region, such as building awareness of the usage of Quality First Scholarships and DES child care subsidies across the region. In making this decision, the regional council considered several factors, including children aging out to kindergarten, cost of quality, availability of other child care assistance and number of children eligible for child care subsidies. The regional council is committed to a thoughtful approach amidst decreasing funds in future years with this step-down approach in this funding cycle.

The FTF Cochise Regional Council is committed to create initiatives aimed to promote community awareness and foster a shared responsibility at the local level in addressing critical child care issues within the region, including the funding of and affordability of child care tuition. Through the work of the Cochise Early Care and Education Summit (October 9, 2024), the regional council aims to work with cities, towns, elected officials, businesses and county Board of Supervisors to create a local solution or new innovative ways in providing local level funding into school readiness and access to affordable high quality child care.

Changes:	SFY25	SFY26
Quality First Scholarships		
Allotment:	\$869,439	\$608,607
Service Unit:	Number of scholarship slots for children 0-5 years: 65	Number of scholarship slots for children 0-5 years: 40

DESIRED OUTCOME: INFORMATION, SERVICES AND SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES:

Strategy Areas and Funded Strategies

Navigating and Connecting Families to Resources

- Family Support Coordination (prioritized)
- Family Support and Literacy Systems Change (prioritized)

Successes:

Family Support Coordination

The grantee has reported that they have successfully filled their previously vacant positions. This is a significant achievement for the region, where finding qualified applicants to provide services is often challenging. The successful implementation of the strategy relies heavily on these key roles to ensure that services reach communities effectively. The grantee has divided the county into zones for Family Support Coordination. The zoning assists the program staff to provide coverage enrollment/outreach/networking to the smaller areas in Cochise County.

Zone 1-Willcox, Bowie, San Simon, Cochise, Sunsites, Kansas Settlement, Dos Cabezos, Paradise, Portal, Pearce, Sunizona.

Zone 2-Benson, Dagoon, St. David, Pomerene, Cascabel, Johnson.

Zone 3-Sierra Vista, Tombstone, Whetstone, Huachuca City.

Zone 4-Bisbee, Hereford, Double Adobe, Naco, Palominas.

Zone 5-Douglas, McNeal, Pirtleville, Elfrida, Gleeson, Apache.

The grantee continues to work on outreach, enrollment and recruitment of families within the region.

Family Support and Literacy Systems Change

Family Support and Literacy (FSL) Systems Change provides a local, on-the-ground expert to work with our local Community Based Organizations (CBO) regarding the need for enrollment, support, training and utilizing the Arizona closed loop referral online platform called Community Cares. There are no additional partners funding this work within

the Cochise Region, however there are partners collaborating on developing a feasible shared plan for sustainability for the future. The amount of time it takes for one CBO to fully engage in the idea of an online platform is taking approximately 2-4 months. Contexture runs the Community Cares system, but is not contracted to do outreach work at the local level, specifically engaging and building relationships with potential local service providers. Without this current system building strategy, in the Cochise Region, it would be impossible to get CBOs buy-in and involvement to utilize this existing system infrastructure AHCCCS is presenting for the partners. The FSL Systems Change vendor has been successful in SFY24, working at the local level to engage, educate, train and enroll the CBOs within the region, resulting in 6 CBOs signed up the platform and for SFY25 so far an additional 8 organizations are currently in the process of onboarding with Contexture. For example, a local CBO nonprofit food pantry (Peach's Pantry) is now using the system to streamline referrals throughout the region for young families to obtain food boxes and utilizing the system for online referrals from school districts, child care centers/homes and other entities that provide services to families.

Challenges:

Family Support Coordination

The Family Support Coordination Strategy (FSC), newly introduced to the Cochise Region in SFY24, faced a delayed implementation due to the two releases of Requests for Grant Applications (RFGA) being awarded on September 1, 2023, two months behind schedule. The grantee reported challenges in recruiting and filling positions essential to executing the grant, resulting in significantly low Actual Service Unit (ASU) numbers. Given Cochise has limited spaces for program delivery, the grantee is currently addressing this concern by establishing relationships with local entities where families go for services such as clinics, schools etc., so they can meet the families in their trusted safe spaces. In addition, the grantee noted difficulties in establishing professional working relationships with agencies in the Cochise Region and that it takes time to start a brand new program from the ground up. The grantee is currently addressing this concern by marketing the new program with service providers and attending local events with other community partners in the region to enhance relationships.

Changes:

Parenting Education:

The Parenting Education Strategy was unsuccessful within the region, resulting in the grantee's request to be released from their contract due to lack of demand in early childhood parent education, despite outreach efforts connecting with 65 agencies in Cochise County and distributing 210 flyers. Significant challenges were faced in generating community interest or establishing a ready population of participants, thus the zero allocation within the Parenting Education Strategy for SFY26.

Overall since the pandemic, this region is experiencing a tremendous decline in parents/caregivers wanting in home services or parenting education classes. Families with young children are heavily stressed with the basic needs of caring for their young children including: food, transportation, clothing, housing and utility expenses. The regional council has had to shift and pivot on ways to build a lasting and sustainable infrastructure with community partners.

New Family Support and Literacy Systems Change Proposed Strategy

Learning from the challenges related to finding locations across the Cochise Region and to meet and address needs of families as part of Family Support Coordination Strategy, the regional council has identified the need for family resource centers (FRC) or the need for local hubs to coordinate support and services for family needs. Though the regional council has considered the Family Resource Centers Strategy previously, the breadth of the Cochise Region (6,200 square miles) was seen as a challenge, as funding one or two locations is not viable to address the need. Hence, to address this system's need for community spaces where services for families can be coordinated, the regional council determined to fund an innovative systems approach. This system change approach is meant to be short-term and to engage a vendor to work with existing family service providers (libraries, schools, clinics, hospitals etc.) in the region who can potentially become local hubs (like family resource centers), so services can be accessed

and navigated easily by the families with young children. The system change work focus is to build initial infrastructure and capacity of the Cochise providers, including a readiness assessment to be a local hub, training and support to coordinate services.

Additionally, in alignment to the statewide work, these partners will be connected to additional supports such as the Family Resource Network, Pathway Statewide work and the National Family Support Network. The anticipated outcome is to transform some of the existing locations to become sustainable FRC-like local hubs throughout the Cochise Region. As a result of this work, the regional council will be able to create a lasting legacy of creating a seamless infrastructure for services and information for young children and their families that will reach the breadth and depth of the Cochise Region for years to come.

Changes:	SFY25	SFY26
Parenting Education		
Allotment:	\$119,000	\$0
Service Unit:	Number of series completed: 20	Number of series completed: 0
Family Support and Literacy Systems Change		
Allotment:	\$120,000	\$239,000

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

Strategy Areas and Funded Strategies

Professional Development for ECE Professionals

- Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (prioritized)
- Inclusion of Children with Special Needs (prioritized)
- First Things First College Scholarships (prioritized)
- Child Care Health Consultation (prioritized)

Successes:

Early Childhood Mental Consultation (ECMHC)

The grant partner is presently providing services to five child care centers within the Cochise Region. In addition, the grant partner has enrolled one site funded under the Department of Economic Security’s Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) to further ECMHC services. Ongoing themes include: support for challenging behaviors, classroom routines, scheduling and creating social-emotionally supportive classroom environments. While progress has seemed slow, positive changes have taken place, particularly regarding classroom management and the ability to respond more effectively to challenging behaviors. There are currently no sites on the waitlist.

Inclusion of Children with Special Needs

The grant partner is contracted to serve 26 centers and 5 homes (31 CSUs total) through this newly introduced strategy for the region, with a start date of July 1, 2024. The grant partner is working hard to collaborate with other programs and partners in the area to spread the word about the strategy and recruit qualified staff to begin providing services.

Child Care Health Consultation

The grant partner is serving all centers and homes currently enrolled in Quality First within the Cochise Region. The grant partner is providing training, observations, policy development, etc. to meet centers’ and homes’ needs.

Challenges:

Inclusion of Children with Special Needs

The grant partner has expressed a challenge in hiring qualified staff for the region. The grant partner just recently hired a qualified inclusion coach for the strategy. It has taken approximately six months to recruit and hire qualified staff for the Cochise Region.

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
- Media

Successes:

Educational Promotion and Brand Awareness

The regional council is dedicated to community engagement. This commitment is demonstrated through the efforts of the regional council members and staff. To advance this mission, the regional council hosted a well-attended summit featuring local officials and industry leaders from the region. In the future, the regional council will continue to focus on local policy agendas, advocacy and innovative approaches to further invest in early care and education throughout the Cochise Region. These efforts aim to inspire action, from influencing personal networks to advocating for policies and investments in the early childhood sector.

Media:

In SFY24, targeted media efforts in the Cochise Region raised awareness about the importance of early childhood development, connecting families to resources and empowering communities to support children from birth to age 5. Building on this success, the SFY25 media campaign will expand these efforts with targeted online media ads and ads placed on grocery carts in four stores in the Benson, Bisbee, Sierra Vista and Willcox communities.

DESIRED OUTCOME: COORDINATED, INTEGRATED, AND COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM

Strategy Areas and Funded Strategies

Evaluation

- Statewide Evaluation (non-prioritized)

Successes:

Statewide Evaluation:

The 2024 Regional Needs and Asset Reports were delivered in June 2024 and approved by the Board in August 2024.

APPENDIX A

SFY26 Funding Plan – New System Change Planning Document

Cochise Regional Partnership Council

**Cochise Regional Partnership Council -
Family Support and Literacy Systems Change**

Problem to be solved and system to be changed / influenced	<p><i>System Area:</i> Family Support and Literacy Systems Change</p>
	<p><i>Problem to address:</i> Given the vast rural area of the Cochise Region, the regional council aims to create infrastructure similar to family resource centers (FRC), but with a more feasible approach for a rural region, by promoting community engagement and momentum around establishing permanent Hubs in response to community requests.</p>
	<p><i>Geographic area:</i> Cochise Region</p>
	<p><i>Target Audience:</i> Community organizations throughout the Cochise Region.</p>
Activities	<p><i>Activity 1:</i> Establish relationships with community partners and Statewide Family Resource Center Pathway efforts to build trust and buy into the Hub model, which is similar to the Family Resource Center (FRC) Strategy.</p>
	<p><i>Activity 2:</i> Conduct information sessions, one-on-one buy-in meetings and group meetings in selected locations, based on community momentum with current conversations and ideas that came from the October 9, 2024 Summit.</p>
	<p><i>Activity 3:</i> Map out desired locations throughout the Cochise Region – which might change over time.</p>
	<p><i>Activity 4:</i> Establish Memorandum of Understanding agreements with a sustainability-guided approach that aligns with FTF's mission/vision and branding efforts. In addition, align with the Statewide Family Resource Center Pathway efforts and develop opportunities for additional funding.</p>
Deliverables and Timeline	<p>Year One Collaborate and build the infrastructure with the current taskforce to garner buy in for potential agencies to agree to a Hub infrastructure. Meet monthly with the FTF regional director and external partners, to include discussing statewide initiatives.</p>
	<p>Year Two Develop a partnership with potential agencies based on current need and staff time for each location.</p>

Expected Impact	<i>Expected Impact:</i> The establishment of long-term links between school districts, libraries, categorical programs, community-based organizations, health care providers/organizations and county agencies to create a sustainable partnership that serves young children and their families for years to come in their respected neighborhoods.
	<i>Timeline:</i> 2 year project