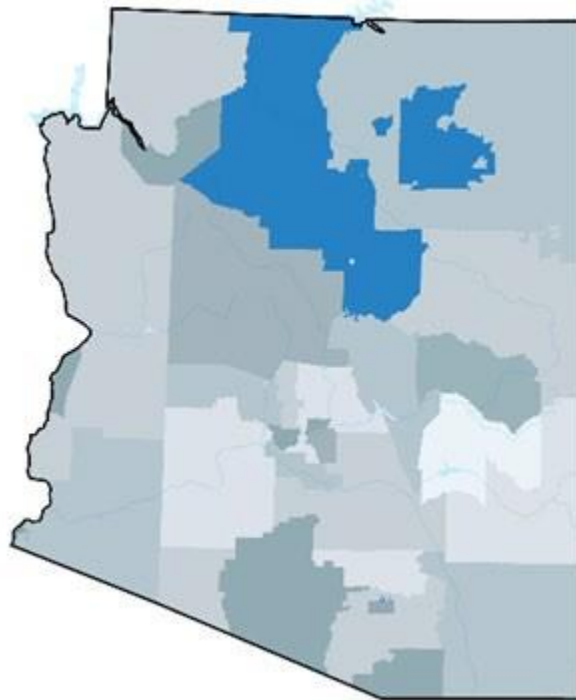




# FIRST THINGS FIRST

**Coconino Regional Partnership Council**  
Population birth through age 5: 8,530



## 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.

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### **Coconino Regional Partnership Council**

**Kelly McCue**, chair, health services provider

**Kay Bordwell**, vice chair, representative of the faith community

**Emily Patch**, early childhood educator

**Jennifer Brown**, child care provider

**Rayma Duyongwa**, public school administrator

**David Owen**, parent of a child age 5 years or younger

**Carletta Tilousi**, tribal public official/employee

**Debbie Winlock**, at-large representative

**Elyce Harris**, at-large representative

**Christy Stuth**, member of the business community

**Sandi Ernst Perez**, representative of a philanthropic organization

**Pearl Santillan**, regional director, First Things First

**Ellen Felty**, administrative specialist, First Things First

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

Allocations and Funding Sources	2024	2025	2026	2027
<b>FY Allocation</b>	<b>\$1,904,100</b>	<b>\$1,904,100</b>	<b>\$1,326,534</b>	<b>\$1,663,909</b>
Population Based Allocation	\$981,290	\$981,290	\$886,949	\$981,290
Discretionary Allocation	\$922,810	\$922,810	\$439,585	\$682,619
<b>Carry Forward From Previous Year</b>	<b>\$835,038</b>	<b>\$972,279</b>	<b>\$932,316</b>	<b>\$314,785</b>
<b>Total Regional Council Funds Available</b>	<b>\$2,739,138</b>	<b>\$2,876,379</b>	<b>\$2,258,850</b>	<b>\$1,978,694</b>
Strategies	Approved Allotted	Approved Allotted	Proposed Allotted	Projected Allotted
Quality First Academy	\$12,000	\$11,050	\$12,000	\$12,000
Quality First Assessment		\$19,799		
Quality First Coaching & Incentives	\$314,640	\$281,869	\$314,640	\$314,640
Quality First Scholarships	\$854,864	\$659,264	\$593,184	\$527,104
First Things First College Scholarships			\$32,400	\$32,400
Child Care Health Consultation	\$81,600	\$95,522	\$81,600	\$81,600
Children's Health Systems Change			\$110,954	\$132,554
Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation		\$30,600	\$55,080	\$79,560
Well Child and Family Care	\$300,000	\$310,000	\$320,000	\$330,000
Family Support & Literacy Systems Change	\$110,954	\$110,954		
Home Visitation	\$325,000	\$335,000	\$345,000	\$355,000
Parenting Education		\$120,000	\$120,000	\$120,000
Statewide Evaluation	\$69,095	\$69,095	\$69,095	\$69,095
Educational Promotion and Brand Awareness		\$15,000	\$4,200	\$4,200
Media		\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$2,068,153</b>	<b>\$2,068,153</b>	<b>\$2,068,153</b>	<b>\$2,068,153</b>
<b>Total Unallotted/Unawarded/Unexpended:</b>	<b>\$670,985</b>	<b>\$808,226</b>	<b>\$190,697</b>	<b>(\$89,459)</b>

Fiscal Year	2020	2024	2025	2026	2027
% to Board Priorities		82.15 %	81.66 %	75.82 %	74.29 %
% to Quality First**	13.48%	19.73 %	19.73 %	19.73 %	19.73 %
Fiscal Year	4 Year Average				
% to Board Priorities	78.48%				
% to Quality First**	19.73%				

\* 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.

Justification for not meeting the 80% allotment to Board Priorities:

The Coconino region did not meet the 80% allotment to board priorities due to the decision to fund the children’s health systems change strategy. This decision is critical for addressing the systemic challenges that hinder the effectiveness of early childhood services, particularly in rural communities. The Children’s Health Systems Change strategy focuses on improving provider availability,

strengthening community resource networks and enhancing access to care. It will foster greater collaboration among providers and agencies, allowing them to work together more effectively and deliver existing services in a more integrated manner.

Importantly, this strategy also positions us to leverage the state's closed-loop referral system, which is incentivized and designed to ensure families are connected seamlessly to the services and resources they need. The data generated through this system will help us identify service gaps, providing critical insights that will inform future decision-making and help shape our priorities moving forward. This approach not only supports the Board's priorities by improving family access to services, but it also strengthens our capacity to make data-driven decisions that address long-term needs and create a more efficient, responsive early childhood system.

## COCONINO 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.**

The FTF Coconino Regional Partnership Council has developed the SFY24-27 Strategic Plan in close consultation and partnership with key community agencies and members to identify relevant opportunities for First Things First to address the greatest needs of children ages birth to age 5 and their families. This approach, in part, included facilitating a virtual town hall of our community stakeholders that established consensus on the issues and barriers impacting early childhood in the Coconino Region and further, identified action steps to shape our strategic funding plan and systems change work. Additionally, three tribes participate in the Coconino Region. Efforts are made to engage with the tribal councils and tribal department staff in the three communities to support the regional council in better understanding and addressing the needs of children. These discussions have helped the regional council better understand the perspectives, identities, values and cultures of the region's families allowing the regional council to shape their work to create a more relevant and impactful early childhood system. This has led the regional partnership council to identifying and prioritizing strategies that will have two goals: 1) through services and resources, support families and children who may be vulnerable due to inequities in the early childhood system and 2) through systems level coordination, create a high-quality, interconnected and comprehensive early childhood service delivery system in the Coconino Region that is timely, culturally responsive, family-driven, community-based and directed toward enhancing children's overall development.

**SFY26 FUNDING PLAN UPDATE / CHANGE TABLE**  
**COCONINO REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP COUNCIL**

**DESIRED OUTCOME: ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY, CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION.**

**Strategy Areas and Funded Strategies**

**Quality First**

- Quality First Academy (prioritized)
- Quality First Coaching and Incentives (prioritized)

**Access to Quality Care**

- Quality First Scholarships (prioritized)
- Early Learning Systems Change (prioritized)

**Successes:**

**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.

Together, First Things First and the Arizona Department of Economic Security (DES) developed and facilitated information sessions and resources for Quality First participants to discuss the end of the federal funds and what SFY25 would look like for their participation, whether continuing or not.

One out of six regulated early care and education program funded through the federal pandemic relief funds was able to maintain its participation in SFY25 from existing vacancies in the region and the efficiencies from the revisions.

The percentage of programs achieving/maintaining quality levels has increased in the region which shows the success of implementation among both the grant partner and participating early care and education providers.

**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 DES allowed for 125 children statewide to be transitioned from Quality First Scholarships to DES Child Care Assistance in advance of the end of the federal funds.

**Challenges:**

**Quality First:**

Federal pandemic relief funding to support a statewide expansion of Quality First ended before the start of SFY25. In the Coconino Region, six programs were funded through the federal pandemic relief funds which resulted in five participants who transitioned to the Quality First waitlist starting July 1, 2024. All programs moved to the waitlist that have a rating expiring in SFY25, will have the opportunity to be reassessed to maintain a valid star rating.

**Quality First Scholarships:**

Reimbursing Quality First Scholarships at the 2021 cost of quality has resulted in fewer scholarships in SFY25 (approximately half the number) for the same amount of funding from the previous year. In planning for SFY26, regional partnership councils had to consider the regional impact the reduction had and make decisions to ensure that additional reductions in funding do not disrupt the system in significant ways.

First Things First and the DES will continue to work towards ways to support access to quality early learning to ensure efficient use of funds to serve as many children as possible.

**Changes:**

The funding for Quality First Scholarships is reduced from \$659,264 in SFY25 to \$593,184 in SFY26, representing an 10.02% decrease. This reduction aligns with the regional council's step-down plan to reallocate resources toward other prioritized strategies. These include increased funding for Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (ECMHC) to support more centers with mental health services and college scholarships to strengthen the early childhood workforce.

Changes:	SFY25	SFY26
<b>Quality First Scholarships</b>		
Allotment:	\$659,264	\$593,184

**DESIRED OUTCOME: INFORMATION, SERVICES AND SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES**

**Strategy Areas and Funded Strategies**

**Educating Families and Caregivers**

- Home Visitation (prioritized)
- Parenting Education (prioritized)

**Navigating and Connecting Families to Resources**

- Family Support and Literacy Systems Change (prioritized)

**Successes:**

**Coconino Home Visitation:**

The home visitation program restructured staffing, hiring a full-time parent educator in Flagstaff. This change allows the Winslow-based educator to focus on their community and has significantly improved the program’s ability to serve more families in Flagstaff.

**Havasupai Home Visitation:**

Several in-person visits to Havasupai Canyon by FTF staff and Chicanos Por La Causa (CPLC) leadership have strengthened partnerships with the tribal council, Head Start and Indian Health Services. This collaboration has enhanced program support and increased enrollment stability. Additionally, after the recent flood in Havasupai Canyon, CPLC launched a relief effort, successfully delivering essential items to families and residents, demonstrating the program’s commitment to the community.

**Family Support and Literacy Systems Change:**

Over the past year, the FTF program coordination specialist (PCS) has played a pivotal role in organizing and facilitating child care crisis forums in Page, Williams, Winslow and Fredonia. These forums were a regional team effort but the PCS’s strong relationships in these communities were critical to securing participation. Additionally, the PCS helped plan several health events and hosted early childhood information-sharing meetings in all four areas. The PCS also delivered an annual Systems Change update to the regional council.

**Challenges:**

**Coconino Home Visitation:**

Staff turnover has posed challenges, particularly with the time required for new staff to complete training and fully integrate into their roles. Recruitment and retention of staff, across the family support field statewide and nationally, has been an ongoing challenge that is not unique to the program, nor the region. However, with a strong training and implementation plan now in place in Coconino, the program is seeing an increase in enrollment numbers.

**Havasupai Home Visitation:**

Recruitment and retention have been challenging due to families traveling out of the canyon and difficulties conducting home visits. However, consistent communication between the grant partner, the regional director, First Things First staff, and the tribal council has led to several solutions that are improving program outcomes. These include increased in- person supervision from the program manager, who provides guidance and support while delivering essential materials for program implementation. Additionally, the program has partnered with Head Start to enroll children on the waitlist into the home visitation program, ensuring they receive needed services. Recruitment events, held in collaboration with other community programs, have also been implemented to engage families and raise awareness about available resources.

**Family Support and Literacy Systems Change:**

The regional council aimed to build capacity and accessibility for early childhood services in rural areas, while fostering greater coordination and communication among existing early childhood services. While some activities were implemented successfully, a review of the strategy revealed that measurable outcomes were not fully apparent and did not align with the regional council’s original intent.

**Changes:**

In SFY26, funding for the Home Visitation Strategy will see a slight increase to accommodate rising cost-of-living expenses. This adjustment reflects our commitment to ensuring the continued effectiveness and sustainability of our programs.

After careful consideration, the regional council has decided to discontinue funding for the Family Support and Literacy Systems Change Strategy. Resources will instead be reallocated to the Children’s Health Systems Change Strategy, which is anticipated to better align with the regional council’s goals for improving systems and services in the region.

Changes:	SFY25	SFY26
<b>Family Support and Literacy Systems Change</b>		
Allotment:	\$110,954	\$0

**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)
- Child Care Health Consultation (prioritized)

**Successes:**

**Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation:**

After a one-year gap in FTF funding, ECMHC services are successfully back in operation and are currently serving two child care centers and one home visitation program. Both centers are new to Smart Support, and one of the centers, a



long-established community provider of 40 years, is particularly excited to receive these services. Relationship building over the years helped recruit this center into the program, providing a strong foundation for continued support.

**Challenges:**

**Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation:**

Staffing challenges at child care centers have been a major hurdle in Coconino and across all other regions. As a result, child care centers are struggling to stay fully staffed, leading to increased burnout and turnover. Additionally, low enrollment in the centers is a result of the rising cost of care and the high cost of living in Flagstaff, further exacerbating the pressure on program staff. Mental health consultants support child care centers facing these challenges through child-focused consultation, classroom consultation and programmatic consultation to promote the child care center’s programmatic strengths and staff wellness, as well as their capacity to respond to challenging behavior of children.

**Changes:**

The funding for ECMHC is increasing from \$30,600 in SFY25 to \$55,080 in FY26, representing an 80% increase. This change in funding will enable the grant partner to expand services to include two additional centers in SFY26, further extending the reach of the program.

Changes:	SFY25	SFY26
<b>Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation</b>		
Allotment:	\$30,600	\$55,080
Service Unit:	Number of center-based early care and education programs served: 2	Number of center-based early care and education programs served: 4

**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:**

**Educational Promotion and Brand Awareness:**

Many promotional items remain in stock and are distributed at grant partner events, FTF-supported events and partnership-building meetings.

**Media:**

In SFY24, targeted media efforts in the Coconino 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 expands these efforts with targeted online media ads and ads placed on grocery carts in four stores located in the Flagstaff and Williams communities.

**Changes:**

The funding for this strategy is decreasing from \$15,000 in SFY25 to \$4,200 in SFY26, representing a 72% decrease. These funds have been reallocated to support the College Scholarship Strategy, aiming to further strengthen the workforce and have a greater impact with available resources.

Changes:	SFY25	SFY26
<b>Education Promotion and Brand Awareness</b>		
Allotment:	\$15,000	\$4,200
<b>DESIRED OUTCOME: ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY PREVENTATIVE AND CONTINUOUS HEALTH CARE.</b>		
<b><u>Strategy Areas and Funded Strategies</u></b>		
<b>Health Resource Coordination</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Well Child and Family Care (non-prioritized)</li> <li>o Children’s Health Systems Change (non-prioritized)</li> </ul>		
<b>Successes:</b>		
<b>Well Child and Family Care:</b>		
The grant partner successfully hired three new Healthy Steps specialists, who have completed their initial training and are now beginning to see children during well-child visits. This marks significant progress in implementing the strategy.		
<b>Challenges:</b>		
<b>Well Child and Family Care:</b>		
Visits have been low due to a gap in services caused by the need to re-release the RFGA, resulting in a nine-month contract instead of the standard 12 months. Establishing relationships with clinic staff and creating a workflow to meet Healthy Steps requirements on the correct timeline has required extensive communication and coordination. Additionally, updating the database to track data accurately in accordance with First Things First’s new data requirements has been time-intensive but is critical for long-term success.		
<b>Changes:</b>		
<b>Well Child and Family Care:</b>		
In SFY26, funding for the Well Child and Family Care Strategy will see a slight increase to accommodate rising cost-of-living expenses. This adjustment reflects our commitment to ensuring the continued effectiveness and sustainability of our programs.		
<b>Children’s Health Systems Change:</b>		
The Children’s Health Systems Change Strategy is a new strategy for SFY26, with proposed funding of \$110,954. This strategy will be implemented through a grant agreement with Northern Arizona University's Center for Health Equity Research. The goal is to expand and improve the early childhood system in the rural communities of the Coconino Region while enhancing coordination and communication among community and health services. For further details, please refer to Appendix A.		
Changes:	SFY25	SFY26
<b>Children’s Health Systems Change</b>		
Allotment:	\$0	\$110,954

DESIRED OUTCOME: COORDINATED, INTEGRATED, AND COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM

**Strategy Areas and Funded Strategies**

Evaluation

- Statewide Evaluation (non-prioritized)

**Successes:**

**Statewide Evaluation:** 2024 Regional Needs and Asset Reports were delivered in June 2024 and approved by the Board in August 2024.

## Coconino Regional Partnership Council - Children’s Health Systems Change

<b>Problem to be solved and system to be changed / influenced</b>	<p><i>System Area:</i>          The strategy aims to expand and improve the early childhood system in the rural communities of the Coconino Region by enhancing the capacity and availability of providers and community resource networks. It focuses on increasing access to care, improving resource coordination, and fostering better communication among community and health services. A key component of this approach is increasing enrollment and utilization of Arizona’s closed-loop referral system, ensuring families are seamlessly connected to services. By addressing these systemic challenges, the strategy seeks to create a more integrated, efficient and responsive early childhood service delivery system.</p>
	<p><i>Problem to address:</i>          Rural areas face significant challenges due to a lack of coordination and integration among early childhood service providers. This leads to unmet health needs, unidentified developmental delays, gaps in family support and high-quality affordable child care. Additionally, barriers to enrollment and utilization of Arizona’s closed-loop referral system reduce its effectiveness in addressing social determinants of health and hinder service delivery.</p>
	<p><i>Geographic area:</i>          The geographic focus of this strategy includes the rural communities of Page, Williams, Winslow, Fredonia and possibly tribal communities in the Coconino Region. If the tribal government or other tribal organizations believe this will benefit their community, this strategy could also be implemented there.</p>
	<p><i>Target Audience:</i>          The target audience includes community-based programs, health agencies and early childhood support services operating in these four rural areas. Contexture representatives, service providers, and workgroup members are key partners in this work. Families with children birth to age 5 who need health-related support services will ultimately benefit from the improved system coordination.</p>
<b>Activities</b>	<p><i>Activity 1:</i> A workgroup in each rural community of key stakeholders, including service providers and a Contexture representative, will convene to guide the strategy’s implementation. This committee will set clear goals and priorities to ensure alignment with community needs.</p>
	<p><i>Activity 2:</i> A comprehensive plan will be developed to map existing services in Page, Williams, Winslow and Fredonia. This process will identify available resources, gaps in services and barriers to accessing services.</p>

	<p><i>Activity 3:</i> An assessment of technical, operational and awareness-related barriers preventing agencies from enrolling in Contexture will be conducted. The work group committee will share findings and develop targeted solutions.</p>
	<p><i>Activity 4:</i> Warm handoffs between agencies and Contexture representatives will be coordinated to support enrollment and utilization of the closed-loop referral system. This will include ensuring agencies receive technical assistance and onboarding support as needed.</p>
	<p><i>Activity 5:</i> Training sessions tailored to the needs of rural agencies will be developed in collaboration with Contexture. These sessions will focus on building capacity for effective system use and improving service coordination.</p>
	<p><i>Activity 6:</i> Enrollment strategies will be tested with a small group of agencies to gather feedback and refine the process. Lessons learned from the pilot will inform broader rollout efforts in subsequent quarters.</p>
<p><b>Deliverables and Timeline</b></p>	<p>A comprehensive document outlining existing services, gaps and barriers to accessing services in Page, Williams, Winslow and Fredonia will be completed by the end of Q4 in SFY26. This deliverable will serve as a foundation for identifying priorities and aligning resources within the system.</p>
	<p>An implementation plan developed collaboratively with the work group committee, outlining goals, timelines and responsibilities for system coordination efforts will be finalized by the end of Q2 in SFY26. This plan will guide the work throughout the two-year grant period.</p>
	<p>A detailed report summarizing the findings from the assessment of barriers to agency enrollment in the Contexture system will be completed by the end of Q4 in SFY26. The report will include actionable recommendations for addressing identified challenges.</p>
	<p>A summary report of enrollment pilot efforts with agencies, including key metrics, feedback and lessons learned, will be completed by the end of Q4 in SFY26. This deliverable will inform adjustments to the strategy for broader rollout in the following year.</p>
<p><b>Expected Impact</b></p>	<p><i>Expected Impact:</i>  The strategy is expected to improve service coordination and communication across agencies, resulting in more efficient referrals and better service delivery. Increased enrollment and utilization of Arizona’s closed-loop referral system will address existing gaps and reduce barriers to agency participation. Mapping existing services will help identify and address gaps, strengthening the network of available resources. The data generated from the increased utilization of the closed-loop referral system will allow us to better understand service delivery trends and identify areas where services are lacking, helping to inform our decisions and priorities in the coming years. These efforts will enhance outcomes for children and families by improving access to health, family support and developmental services.</p>

*Timeline:*

**Year 1: SFY 2026**

**Quarter 1:**

- Establish work group committees to guide the strategy and set clear goals.
- Begin mapping existing services in Page, Williams, Winslow and Fredonia.

**Quarter 2:**

- Conduct an assessment of barriers preventing agency enrollment in Coexture.
- Initiate outreach efforts to build relationships with community-based programs and agencies.

**Quarter 3:**

- Design and plan strategies to address identified barriers, such as training or technical support.
- Develop a communication plan to increase awareness of Coexture and its benefits among agencies.

**Quarter 4:**

- Finalize the service mapping document and have the work group committee share with stakeholders.
- Pilot enrollment support efforts with a small group of agencies, one in each community.

**Year 2: SFY 2027**

**Quarter 1:**

- Expand the rollout of system change strategies to promote agency enrollment in Coexture.
- Monitor and report on agency enrollment progress and utilization rates.

**Quarter 2:**

- Conduct feedback sessions with participating agencies to refine strategies and ensure alignment.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of barrier reduction efforts.

**Quarter 3:**

- Identify gaps in services based on mapping and agency feedback.
- Develop proposals to address service gaps and improve overall system coordination.

**Quarter 4:**

- Develop and finalize a sustainability plan to ensure continued progress beyond the grant period.
- Produce a comprehensive report summarizing outcomes, lessons learned, and future recommendations.