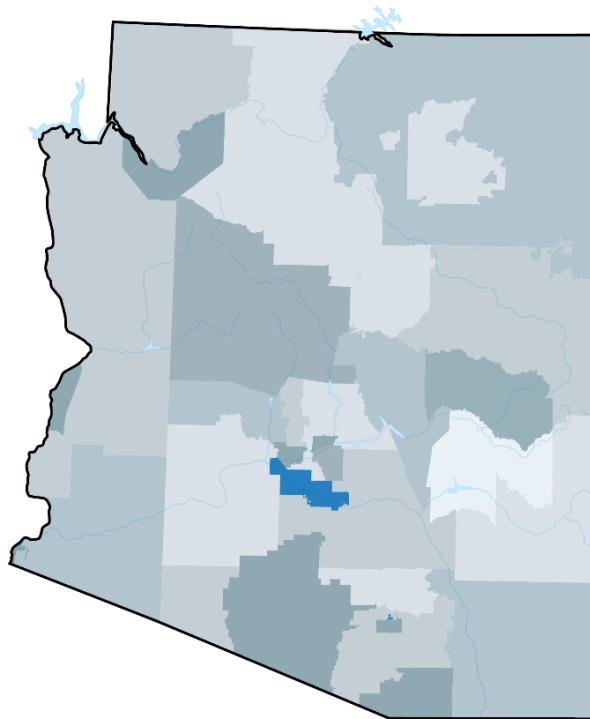


FIRST THINGS FIRST

Gila River Indian Community Regional Partnership Council
Population birth through age 5: 1,432



State Fiscal Year 2026 Funding Plan

SFY 2024 – 2027 Strategic Plan Update

Presented to the First Things First Board
January 21, 2025

FIRST THINGS FIRST

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.

Gila River Indian Community Regional Partnership Council

Sandra Nasewytewa, chair, member of the business community

Leonard Bruce, vice chair, at-large representative

Deborah Chadwick, early childhood educator

Gleebah Enos, at-large representative

Kami Hart, at-large representative

Laramie Kisto, health services provider

Annette Lewis, representative of the faith community

Elisia Manuel, representative of a philanthropic organization

open, child care provider

open, parent of a child age 5 years or younger

open, public school administrator

Ember Tahy, regional director, First Things First

Sophia Acosta, administrative specialist, First Things First

Regional Allocation and Proposed Funding Plan Summary SFY24 – SFY27
Gila River Indian Community Regional Partnership Council

Allocations and Funding Sources	2024	2025	2026	2027
FY Allocation	\$574,373	\$574,373	\$386,139	\$574,279
Population Based Allocation	\$424,498	\$424,498	\$383,687	\$424,498
Discretionary Allocation	\$149,875	\$149,875	\$2,452	\$149,781
Carry Forward From Previous Year	\$773,916	\$762,972	\$697,683	\$444,159
Total Regional Council Funds Available	\$1,348,289	\$1,337,345	\$1,083,822	\$1,018,438
Strategies	Approved Allotted	Approved Allotted	Proposed Allotted	Proposed Allotted
Quality First Academy	\$2,000	\$1,835	\$2,000	\$2,000
Quality First Coaching & Incentives	\$58,700	\$55,880	\$58,700	\$58,700
Quality First Scholarships	\$228,800	\$228,800	\$228,800	\$228,800
Child Care Health Consultation	\$13,600	\$16,585	\$13,600	\$13,600
Well Child and Family Care	\$150,000	\$120,000	\$120,000	\$120,000
Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$30,000
Home Visitation	\$200,000	\$200,000	\$200,000	\$200,000
Language, Literacy and Culture in Tribal Communities	\$45,597	\$75,597	\$75,597	\$75,597
Statewide Evaluation	\$23,847	\$23,847	\$23,847	\$23,847
Total	\$752,544	\$752,544	\$752,544	\$752,544
Total Unallotted/Unawarded/Unexpended*:	\$595,745	\$584,801	\$331,278	\$265,894

Fiscal Year	2020	2024	2025	2026	2027
% to Board Priorities		76.89 %	80.88 %	80.88 %	80.88 %
% to Quality First**	7.46%	9.87 %	9.87 %	9.87 %	9.87 %
Fiscal Year	4 Year Average				
% to Board Priorities	79.88%				
% to Quality First**	9.87%				

* 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.

GILA RIVER INDIAN COMMUNITY 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 Gila River Indian Community Regional Partnership Council collaborated with both the Gila River Indian Community (GRIC) tribal government and Gila River Health Care to identify and prioritize the needs of families residing in the Gila River Community. This included identifying the needs of under-resourced and underserved children and their families, especially those most vulnerable populations such as single-parent households, teen parents, grandparents raising grandchildren and those families living in rural isolation. Data from the 2020 Regional Needs and Assets Report demonstrates that nearly three-quarters (74%) of young children in the GRIC Region live in a single-parent household, a higher proportion than in all Arizona reservations combined (64%). More than half (54%) of households with young children in the region are single-female households, a proportion more than twice that of Arizona overall (24%). Of the children living in a grandparent's household in the region, close to two-thirds (65%) live with a grandparent who is responsible for them. Additionally, a higher proportion of births in the region were to mothers who were younger than 18 (6%) and younger than 20 (15%) compared to births across the state (2% and 6%, respectively).

Based on the focused discussions with the Community and the available data, the regional council prioritized those strategies that had access to, and are anticipated to have the greatest impact on, the aforementioned vulnerable populations. Identified strategies include: Well-Child and Family Care (WCFC), Home Visitation, Family, Friend and Neighbor Care, Quality First (QF) and Quality First Scholarships. In implementation of these strategies, the regional council will specifically target teen parents, grandparents raising grandchildren, single female parents and care providers in isolated communities within the region.

The Well-Child and Family Care Strategy will assist and support families in navigating potential barriers within the health system. The regional council plans to serve 100 children through WCFC's tiered system that is offered through Zero to Three's Healthy Steps program. The regional council is very excited to see this strategy at work, for it will not only transform Gila River Indian Community health system culture, but also engage families prenatally and support families that are in need of further services to better their overall well-being. Historically, the Well-Child and Family Care Strategy has been very successful with engaging teen parents and providing support early in pregnancy to age 5.

The Home Visitation Strategy will provide resources and offer in-home support to both teen parents and first-time parents. The regional council will serve 35 children through the Parents as Teachers Home Visitation model.

The Family, Friend and Neighbor Care Strategy will provide support and serve grandparents, and other non-parental caregivers, raising children in Gila River Indian Community, especially those providing services in rural isolated communities. In addition to supporting caregivers, the Family, Friend and Neighbor Care Strategy is anticipated to increase collaboration between regional caregivers and the Gila River Indian Community Education and Health departments, which will supplement by providing education on such topics as childhood obesity and healthy lifestyles and supporting families on their child's transition to kindergarten with consistency and limited absences.

Finally, in alignment with the Gila River Indian Community's priorities, the regional council has chosen to support culture and language preservation. The Language, Literacy and Culture in Tribal Communities Strategy will support current activities and programs that target language and culture specific to GRIC's cultural values. This particular strategy will look to expand current programs that support families through book drives, professional development in Gila River Indian Community's culture and traditions, and extend to community events that further promote language, literacy and culture.

SFY26 FUNDING PLAN UPDATE / CHANGE TABLE

GILA RIVER INDIAN COMMUNITY 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 State Fiscal Year 2024 (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.

The percentage of programs achieving/maintaining quality levels has remained consistent 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 State Fiscal Year 2025 (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 Child Care Assistance in advance of the end of the federal funds.

Challenges:

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 State Fiscal Year 2026 (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.

In SFY24, Gila River Indian Community child care facilities had other sources of funding to subsidize child care for members of the community, so all FTF scholarship funds were not utilized. Additionally, some sites were implementing virtual learning due to the pandemic. However, they anticipate the need going forward since subsidized funding was temporary and sites are back to in-person learning. FTF scholarships are currently being utilized in SFY25.

DESIRED OUTCOME: INFORMATION, SERVICES AND SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES

Strategy Areas and Funded Strategies

Educating Families and Caregivers

- Home Visitation (prioritized)
- Language, Literacy and Culture in Tribal Communities (prioritized)
- Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care (prioritized)

Successes:

Home Visitation

The Home Visitation Strategy grantee has maintained a full capacity caseload throughout the year with a focus on teen parents and grandparents raising grandchildren.

Language, Literacy, and Culture in Tribal Communities

The Tribal Education Department has agreed to implement the Language, Literacy and Culture in Tribal Communities Strategy to supplement work already being done in their Language and Culture Department. A Tribal Grant Agreement is currently in progress with implementation projected to begin in SFY25.

Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care

The Family, Friend and Neighbor Care grantee has fully implemented services. The established infrastructure at Gila River Health Care creates the ability for the grantee to collaborate with other partners.

Challenges:

Language, Literacy, and Culture in Tribal Communities

There was a delay in the implementation of the Language, Literacy and Culture in Tribal Communities Strategy. At the guidance of the Gila River Indian Community Office of General Counsel, the Tribal Education Department was advised to postpone Tribal Grant Agreements until a memorandum of agreement for the FTF regional needs and assets report data collection was in place. The Gila River Indian Community Education Standing Committee and Health and Social Standing Committee advised FTF and Gila River Indian Community's Office of General Counsel to work collaboratively on a memorandum of agreement to set forth understandings and agreements between parties for approval of the 2022 and 2024 Regional Needs and Assets report. This memorandum of agreement is currently in progress. Due to this progress, the Tribal Education Department and FTF were given direction to move forward with the Language, Literacy and Culture in Tribal Communities Strategy to be implemented in the region.

Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care

The Family, Friend and Neighbor Care strategy has been fully implemented in the region. Due to staffing vacancies and transportation challenges for participants, the grantee continues to work through the challenges of meeting contract service units. Outreach and recruitment is an implementation focus for the grant partner.

DESIRED OUTCOME: ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY PREVENTATIVE AND CONTINUOUS HEALTH CARE.

Strategy Areas and Funded Strategies

Health Resource Coordination

- Well Child Family Care (non-prioritized)

Successes:

Well Child Family Care

In SFY24, the Well Child Family Care Strategy grantee implemented their ramp-up year and had some initial training and consultation costs of \$30,000. The regional partnership council granted a one-time \$30,000 increase to grantee in order to cover costs for consultation and training by Zero to Three, the national office that supports the implementation of Healthy Steps. The grantee staff was trained and continued implementation of services with a focus on pregnant and parenting teens. The staff completed a training with Gila River Health Care providers and has since created a joint coordination with Gila River Health Care providers on referrals and follow up care. Gila River Health Care is now officially recognized as a Healthy Steps site by the Zero to Three/Healthy Steps National Office.

The grantee recently experienced turnover with the Healthy Steps position, which led to a minor delay in services; however, the grantee quickly filled the position. The new hire has completed the Healthy Steps training and FTF program and evaluation staff provided the strategy implementation and data reporting training for the new hire.

DESIRED OUTCOME: COORDINATED, INTEGRATED, AND COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM

Strategy Areas and Funded Strategies

Evaluation

- Statewide Evaluation (non-prioritized)

Successes:

Statewide Evaluation

The regional partnership council has been highly supportive and actively engaged in continuing to move the request for approval for the 2022 and 2024 Regional Needs and Assets Report forward to the Gila River Indian Community Education Standing Committee, Health and Social Standing Committee and Tribal Council. Specifically, the regional council chair attended the standing committee meetings and tribal council meetings with the FTF regional director.

The regional director has developed and fostered new relationships with the Gila River Indian Community Standing Committees and legal teams. Additionally, the regional director has strengthened partnerships by holding regular meetings with staff from Gila River Health Care and Tribal Education, ensuring continued support and collaboration. This has resulted in open communication, engagement and the beginning of a foundation for productive partnership and collaboration.

Challenges:

Due to the pandemic priorities within the community, changes in FTF staff and concerns with an enhanced data collection request, the Gila River Indian Community has not approved creating a 2022 Regional Needs and Assets report. Because of this, FTF staff have instead requested approval to prepare a combined 2022 and 2024 Regional Needs and Assets report. The FTF regional director, FTF senior director of tribal affairs, and FTF General Counsel are in the process of working with Gila River Indian Community's legal team to develop a memorandum of agreement about data collection preliminary to getting approval from Gila River Indian Community committees and the Community Council to prepare the report.

The Gila River Indian Community Education Standing Committee and Health and Social Standing Committee advised FTF and Gila River Indian Community's Office of General Counsel to work collaboratively on a memorandum of agreement to set forth understandings and agreements between parties for approval of the 2022 and 2024 Regional Needs and Assets Report. This memorandum of agreement is currently in progress.

FTF staff, including the regional director and senior director of tribal affairs, have directed special focus, time and attention toward re-establishing and cultivating productive relationships with the Gila River Indian Community.