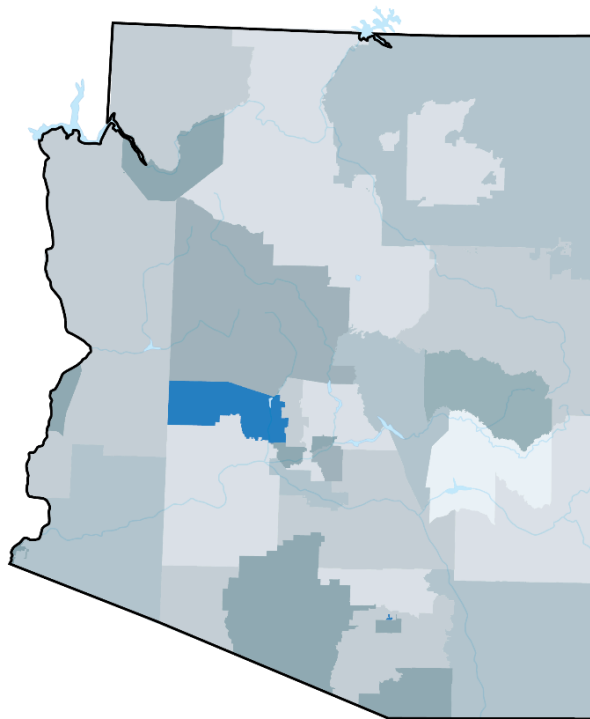




Northwest Maricopa Regional Partnership Council
Population birth through age 5: 53,931



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.

Northwest Maricopa Regional Partnership Council

Sherie Steele, chair, at-large representative

Teri Sarmiento, vice chair, member of the business community

Theresa Christensen, child care provider

Veronica De La O, health services provider

Sara Fox, parent of a child age 5 years or younger

Erin Hart, at-large representative

Katia Jones, representative of a philanthropic organization

Leah London, representative of the faith community

Debbie Pischke, at-large representative

Andrew Wannemacher, public school administrator

Ashley Worrell, early childhood educator

Brooke Colvin, regional director, First Things First

Cynthia Gandara, administrative specialist, First Things First

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

Allocations and Funding Sources	2024	2025	2026	2027
FY Allocation	\$10,088,341	\$10,088,341	\$8,299,030	\$10,087,101
Population Based Allocation	\$8,104,941	\$8,104,941	\$7,325,727	\$8,104,941
Discretionary Allocation	\$1,983,400	\$1,983,400	\$973,303	\$1,982,160
Carry Forward From Previous Year	\$1,547,742	\$2,991,674	\$2,665,424	\$549,370
Total Regional Council Funds Available	\$11,636,083	\$13,080,015	\$10,964,454	\$10,636,471
Strategies	Approved Allotted	Approved Allotted	Proposed Allotted	Projected Allotted
Inclusion of Children with Special Needs	\$70,000	\$70,000	\$70,000	\$70,000
Quality First Increase			\$60,000	\$60,000
Quality First Academy	\$49,500	\$45,591	\$49,500	\$49,500
Quality First Assessment		\$126,144		
Quality First Coaching & Incentives	\$1,285,350	\$1,106,754	\$1,285,350	\$1,285,350
Quality First Scholarships	\$5,000,000	\$5,200,000	\$5,200,000	\$5,200,000
First Things First College Scholarships	\$270,000	\$270,000	\$270,000	\$270,000
Child Care Health Consultation	\$336,600	\$392,961	\$336,600	\$336,600
Children's Health Systems Change	\$134,999	\$157,666	\$97,666	\$97,666
Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation	\$403,920	\$403,920	\$403,920	\$403,920
Family Support for Children with Developmental Concerns	\$200,000	\$200,000	\$200,000	\$200,000
Oral Health	\$200,000			
Family Resource Centers	\$1,500,000	\$1,500,000	\$1,500,000	\$1,500,000
Family Support & Literacy Systems Change	\$29,166	\$29,166	\$29,166	\$29,166
Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care	\$575,000	\$575,000	\$575,000	\$575,000
Home Visitation	\$600,000	\$600,000	\$600,000	\$600,000
Home Visitation Coordinated Referral System	\$86,000	\$63,333	\$63,333	\$63,333
Partnering with Child Welfare Systems	\$16,666	\$16,666	\$16,666	\$16,666
Statewide Evaluation	\$418,874	\$418,874	\$418,874	\$418,874
Educational Promotion and Brand Awareness	\$45,000	\$45,000	\$45,000	\$45,000
Media	\$72,400	\$72,400	\$72,400	\$72,400
Total	\$11,293,475	\$11,293,475	\$11,293,475	\$11,293,475
Total Unallotted/Unawarded/Unexpended:*	\$342,608	\$1,786,540	(\$329,021)	(\$657,004)

Fiscal Year	2020	2024	2025	2026	2027
% to Board Priorities		91.40 %	92.97 %	93.50 %	93.50 %
% to Quality First**	13.46%	14.80 %	14.80 %	15.33 %	15.33 %
Fiscal Year	4 Year Average				
% to Board Priorities	92.84%				
% to Quality First**	15.06%				

* 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.

NORTHWEST MARICOPA 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 Northwest Maricopa Regional Partnership Council is dedicated to the promotion of equity and the support of under-resourced and underserved children and their families. The proposed strategic plan for SFY24-27 includes strategies targeting populations in high poverty and rural areas where there is great need but fewer resources. For example, the funding plan includes seven family resource centers, including one that will serve the rural area of Wickenburg and its surrounding communities. To support access to high-quality early education in another rural area, the regional council has designated that 20 Quality First Scholarships be made available for children in Aguila. These scholarships are the only source of financial support to families of this rural area for children of preschool age. The regional council has also proposed a new strategy - Family, Friend and Neighbor Care as a way to outreach to caregivers in both rural and urban areas of the region that otherwise do not have access to early care and education centers. The regional council renews its commitment to the Inclusion of Children with Special Needs Strategy and is implementing a Children's Health Systems Change Strategy to increase the capacity of health providers in the region to serve the birth to age 5 population.

SFY26 FUNDING PLAN UPDATE / CHANGE TABLE
NORTHWEST MARICOPA 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, 88.3% of participating programs were achieving/maintaining quality levels.

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.

Five regulated early care and education programs funded through the federal pandemic relief funds were able to maintain their participation in SFY25 from existing vacancies in the region and the efficiencies from the revisions.

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 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 Northwest Maricopa Region, 11 programs were funded through the federal pandemic relief funds which resulted in six participants that transitioned to the Quality First waitlist starting July 1, 2024. All programs moved to the waitlist that have a rating that will expire 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 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 regional council chose to move \$60,000 from the Children’s Health Systems Change Strategy to the Quality First Strategy to support an increase in early childhood providers participating in the Quality First program in the region.

Changes:	SFY25	SFY26
Quality First Increase		
Allotment:	\$0	\$60,000

DESIRED OUTCOME: INFORMATION, SERVICES AND SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES

Strategy Areas and Funded Strategies

Educating Families and Caregivers

- Home Visitation (prioritized)
- Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care (prioritized)

Navigating and Connecting Families to Resources

- Family Resource Centers with Family Support Coordination (prioritized)
- Family Support and Literacy Systems Change (prioritized)
- Home Visitation Coordinated Referral System (prioritized)

Successes:

Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care:

This strategy was awarded for the first time in the Northwest Maricopa Region with a start date of July 1, 2024. The program was fully staffed within the first few months of implementation and the first cohort began training in October 2024. Cohorts for training include caregivers from both rural and urban areas across the region and will continue to expand throughout the grant period. Training includes classes and support aimed at enhancing caregiver knowledge of young children’s development and understanding of health and safety practices, as well as strategies to support positive early learning.

Family Resource Centers with Family Support Coordination:

The regional council has prioritized funding for a family resource center in the rural area of Wickenburg. First Things First is partnering with a local government agency for a government agreement with an anticipated contract start date in January 2025. Town representatives and community leaders are excited about this partnership and opportunity to provide additional resources to families in their area. The six other family resource centers continue serving thousands of families of young children across the region through hundreds of parenting activities, events and resource referrals. Two new family resource center contracts in Peoria and Glendale were awarded in January 2024 and include a newly added component of Family Support Coordination, which involves 90-day case management for high-need families. Coordinators for these programs are collaborating with school districts, local municipalities and

community partners to send and receive referrals in real-time to meet families' basic and concrete needs. Through participation in this program, a parent received support to secure employment and a family with young children experiencing homelessness received emergency housing, food, clothing and diapers.

Family Support and Literacy Systems Change:

The Arizona Family Resource Center Network (AZFRN) is being led by Prevent Child Abuse Arizona (PCAAZ). PCAAZ led the facilitation and support of the AZFRN for its first year in SFY24. This system change effort is a cross-regional collaboration between six Maricopa County regional councils, including East Maricopa, Northwest Maricopa, Phoenix North, Phoenix South, Southeast Maricopa and Southwest Maricopa. To date, there have been many successes which included the following:

- The AZFRN facilitated the first family resource center summit in August 2024. A total of 120 AZFRN members from 47 family resource centers attended the event. The goal of the summit was to provide members of the AZFRN an opportunity to collaborate and exchange information about their individual locations, attend professional development workshops and hear an update on the national movement to uplift family resource centers.
- Delivered four, two-day Standards of Quality Certification trainings. The nationally-adopted Standards of Quality for Family Strengthening & Support Certification is designed to be used by all family strengthening and support stakeholders, including public departments, foundations, community-based organizations and families, as a tool for planning, providing and assessing quality services. The goal is that the implementation of the standards will help ensure that families are supported and strengthened through quality practice. There were a total of 112 participants that successfully completed both trainings and received their certificates.
- Implemented a variety of professional development opportunities, including a six-part virtual training on six protective factors and a Raising a Reader certification training with 34 participants.
- Conducted two communities of practice meetings for family resource center staff.
- Developed a family resource center awareness and advocacy committee focused on coordinating tours for elected officials.
- Prevent Child Abuse Arizona has been instrumental in convening state partners including the AZFRN Advisory Council, the Arizona Department of Economic Security and the Department of Child Safety among others all in the effort to support prevention efforts for children and families. Long-term sustainability and support for family resource centers is at the forefront of these conversations as a means to support families with young children.

Home Visitation Coordinated Referral:

This strategy is funded as a cross-regional collaboration between six Maricopa County regional councils, including East Maricopa, Northwest Maricopa, Phoenix North, Phoenix South, Southeast Maricopa and Southwest Maricopa. The grant partner implements the Parent Partners Plus (PPP) program and continues to streamline connecting families with the most appropriate home visitation program. PPP also manages the waitlist of families seeking home visitation services and refers them to appropriate community resources. Waitlisted families are regularly engaged to receive information about other community resources. Since its inception, PPP has served over 25,000 caregivers.

PPP convenes home visitation grant partners to work more intentionally and collaboratively in the community. Currently, 10 FTF-funded and 19 non-FTF-funded home visiting programs in Maricopa County participate in the Home Visitation Coordinated Referral (HVCR) Alliance. Additionally, PPP continues to coordinate opportunities among home visitation providers with branding, marketing, outreach and recruitment with consistent messaging.

PPP hosted a strategic planning session for the PPP Advisory Group members in December 2023 to gain their perspective on strategic priorities for the upcoming year. In advance of this meeting, alliance members completed the Wilder Collaboration Factors survey to identify areas for improvement in the collaboration. The survey showed

strengths, including members seeing the collaboration as being in their self-interest, mutual respect and trust, flexibility and open and frequent communication. Areas for improvement included having multiple layers of participation and an appropriate cross-section of members. The PPP Advisory Group adjusted the alliance meetings to allow more staff participation at all levels of alliance member programs. PPP implemented these changes through June 2024. In July 2024, PPP hosted an alliance meeting and invited program staff/home visitors in addition to the manager, who usually attends, to allow for more staff participation at different levels. The focus of the meeting was self-care for home visitors and included time for networking with staff from other programs.

Challenges:

Home Visitation:

There have been challenges with recruitment and implementation of families for home visiting programs in rural communities, however, the opening of the family resource center in Wickenburg will hopefully bring new opportunities for building connections and outreach opportunities to connect with and recruit families.

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

Strategy Areas and Funded Strategies

Professional Development for ECE Professionals

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

Successes:

Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation:

This strategy includes a highly trained and committed team of consultants that continue to serve the Northwest Maricopa Region. A theme within the region is that many child care providers and families of the enrolled children experienced heightened stress due to the end of the scholarships available to them, as the Department of Economic Security’s American Rescue Plan funding ended on June 30, 2024. Mental health consultants are assisting directors in coping with those changes and identifying resources for families. Additionally, with the assistance of mental health consultants, many child care directors and teachers increased their capacity to improve and develop processes for identifying children who present with developmental delays, mental health and signs of trauma. Successful work with early care and education directors and teachers in supporting crucial conversations with parents and/or guardians and making referrals to school districts for evaluations and/or mental health/child development providers is occurring regularly at most centers served.

Inclusion of Children with Special Needs:

The grant partner sent out a year-end survey to all sites participating in Comprehensive Technical Assistance services for three months or longer. Ratings were calculated as a score of 1-5 across content areas of goal planning, promoting change, confidence in serving children with special needs and skills gained. The results showed 95% overall satisfaction for sites participating in Northwest Maricopa. Participants shared that their staff better understands inclusion and what the program provides and are seeing the positive impact on teachers and students since participation in the program began.

Challenges:

Inclusion of Children with Special Needs:

Many Early Childhood Mental Health Consultants work closely with Inclusion Coaches to provide a multi-tiered system of support to providers serving children with special needs, however, they are limited with the sites they can

collaborate with in the region due to maxing out caseloads for coaches. The regional allocation for the Inclusion of Children with Special Needs Strategy funds 10 sites to participate in the program. Although the grant partner has exceeded this number to consistently serve 11 sites, there is still an ongoing waitlist of approximately 5-6 sites wanting to participate.

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:

The Northwest Maricopa Region has utilized funds from this strategy to sponsor local events that provided an opportunity to share the mission of First Things First and the importance of investing in early childhood to a broader audience and new sector of the community. Some of these sponsorships include chamber events, economic forums and business networking meetings. One event held by the Glendale Chamber highlighted the importance of educational institutions partnering with local businesses. First Things First staff and regional partnership council members were very active in the conversation and led a discussion on the economic and workforce benefits of supporting child care for families in addition to the educational and life-long benefits for children participating in high-quality early childhood programs.

Media:

In SFY24, targeted media efforts in the Northwest Maricopa 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 ads placed on grocery carts in 15 local stores, digital billboards at two key locations, toppers and posters at five gas stations and icebox wraps at five gas stations throughout the region. The targeted zip codes for these media campaign efforts include low-income zip codes in both urban and rural high needs areas throughout the region.

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

Strategy Areas and Funded Strategies

Identifying and Addressing Developmental Concerns

- Family Support for Children with Developmental Concerns (non-prioritized)

Health Resource Coordination

- Children’s Health Systems Change (non-prioritized)

Successes:

Children’s Health System Change- Oral Health Systems Change

The Oral Health Systems Change Strategy focuses on promoting medical-dental integration in health settings for families with children birth to age 5. This effort is a cross-regional collaboration between six Maricopa County regional councils, including East Maricopa, Northwest Maricopa, Phoenix North, Phoenix South, Southeast Maricopa and Southwest Maricopa.

There are three overarching goals for this systems change strategy.

Goal 1: Promote education and awareness through a targeted oral health media campaign. First Things First's Communications staff partnered with an external marketing agency to create a web page and digital content promoting the importance of taking care of baby teeth and seeing a dental provider at an early age. The content drives users to the Baby Teeth Matter website where parents and caregivers can learn more about pediatric oral health and connect them to a provider. The campaign launched from February - June 2024 and consisted of display and video social ads, 50% in English and 50% in Spanish. The campaign had high interaction rates and the most successful ad platforms will be relaunched in the SFY25 media campaign in January 2025.

Goal 2: Promote medical-dental integration (MDI) by implementing a pilot project at a community health center located in Maricopa County. The lead consultant is contracted with Neighborhood Outreach Access to Health (NOAH) to implement a medical-dental integration (MDI) pilot project at their Palomino Health Center located in Phoenix. The MDI pilot project activities for NOAH consist of:

1. Enhancing oral preventive care and MDI knowledge through training and collaboration among medical and dental care providers. Medical providers, including pediatricians and medical assistants, participated in Smiles for Life training sessions in Sept-Oct 2024 with follow-up training in March 2025.
2. Increasing MDI services for children birth to age 5 through:
 - a. Participating in monthly MDI coaching sessions to review and improve clinical procedures, workflows, data collection, patient experience and program outcomes.
 - b. Creating and providing patient education resources on the importance of preventive oral health measures. These materials are currently in production with a goal of dissemination in early 2025.
 - c. Increasing the number of pediatric medical patients birth to age 5 receiving dental screenings, fluoride varnishes and referrals. This is primarily done through a dental hygienist who integrates dental services into well-child visits.

The project with NOAH officially launched in April 2024 and within the first six months of implementation, there were 1,300 children total (533 children birth-age 5) who received an oral health screening and 679 children total (262 children birth-age 5) who received a fluoride varnish. NOAH continues working to improve knowledge, practices and data collection with the hope of increasing provider knowledge and improving overall patient health.

Goal 3: Convene an MDI committee consisting of government, nonprofit and private community and health organizations. The contracted consultant convenes an MDI committee two to three times annually to provide project updates and collaborate on oral health systems change best practices and recommendations. This committee originated the vision and plans for the oral health media campaign in conjunction with the MDI pilot project.

Children's Health System Change Strategy - Early Childhood Nutrition Team:

The Children's Health System Change - Early Childhood Nutrition Team (ECNT) Strategy is a cross-regional collaboration between six Maricopa County regional councils, including East Maricopa, Northwest Maricopa, Phoenix North, Phoenix South, Southeast Maricopa and Southwest Maricopa. The goal of the ECNT in each region is to coordinate efforts so that families with young children prenatal to age five in Maricopa County will be supported in providing nutritious food and establishing healthy eating habits while creating a community-based system of support for children's health.

The Early Childhood Nutrition Team (ECNT), is broken up into three areas.

1. An advisory group works cross-regionally to support the overarching goals of increasing coordination between early childhood programs and food service providers to reduce food insecurity among families with children birth to age 5. Members across the six regional teams, policy team and advisory group were asked to individually complete the Wilder Collaborations Factory Inventory which is made up of 20 research-based factors that influences successful collaborations. The results showed that all teams scored collaboration,

skilled leadership and trust as strengths of their work. Members also felt their work within the ECNT was meaningful and that they had concrete attainable goals for their respective teams.

2. The ECNT has a policy team that includes representatives from First Things First and the Arizona Department of Health Services to identify key areas to align messaging and identify best practices and tips to support early childhood providers to implement best practices and provide nutritious food. In quarter one of SFY24, A Safe Feeding infographic was piloted with eight early care and education providers. This infographic was designed to display best practices related to food environment, food preparation and feeding practices in an early childhood education center. It included using the most up-to-date best practice modeling information from entities such as the Institute of Child Nutrition and the US Department of Agriculture. This will be a supportive tool in centers to ensure providers are reminded of and following best practices related to safe feeding.
3. Lastly, each regional area has its own ECNT addressing food insecurity at a local level. A regional team within the Northwest Maricopa Region convenes monthly to focus on meeting the nutritional needs of children and family in the community. Through a multi-agency partner collaboration between First Things First, Glendale Strong Family Network and more than a dozen community organizations, the regional team held a back-to-school event on August 4, 2024. Through this event, there were 450 families served and 385 food boxes distributed. In addition, nearly 1,000 children received a new backpack with school supplies, 100 children received vision screenings, 60 children received a free haircut and 33 vaccinations were administered for free.

Changes:

Children’s Health Systems Change:

The regional council shifted priorities and chose to move \$60,000 from the Children’s Health Systems Change Strategy - Program Coordination Specialist to the Quality First Strategy to support an increase in early childhood providers participating in the Quality First program in the region.

Changes:	SFY25	SFY26
Children’s Health Systems Change - Program Coordination Specialist		
Allotment:	\$60,000	\$0

DESIRED OUTCOME: COORDINATED, INTEGRATED, AND COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM

Strategy Areas and Funded Strategies

Child Welfare Prevention /Intervention

- Partnering with Child Welfare Systems Change (non-prioritized)

Evaluation

- Statewide Evaluation (non-prioritized)

Successes:

Partnering with Child Welfare Systems Change:

This systems change effort is a cross-regional collaboration between six Maricopa County regional councils, including East Maricopa, Northwest Maricopa, Phoenix North, Phoenix South, Southeast Maricopa and Southwest Maricopa. Through strategy implementation, the regional councils partner with Maricopa County Juvenile Court to provide the necessary training and staff development to enhance the education and understanding of how to best support families with young children within the child welfare system.

In SFY24, some of the trainings delivered include:

- An 18-month Child-Parent Psychotherapy (CPP) training.
- A Cradle to Crayons (C2C) virtual Court Procurement and Circle of Security training and a collaboration with Zero to Three to have two individuals assigned to provide technical assistance for the C2C/Safe Babies calendars in Maricopa County.

Additional trainings for systems partners have included Effects of Abuse and Neglect on Child Development, A Trauma Responsive System: Working with Young Children and their Parents Who Have Experienced Substance Use and Trauma, C2C Approach and Services and Understanding the Dynamic of Domestic Violence in Child Welfare. Additionally, Trauma-Responsive Courts provided for a Dependency Brown Bag training attended by 80 judges and attorneys.

Statewide Evaluation:

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