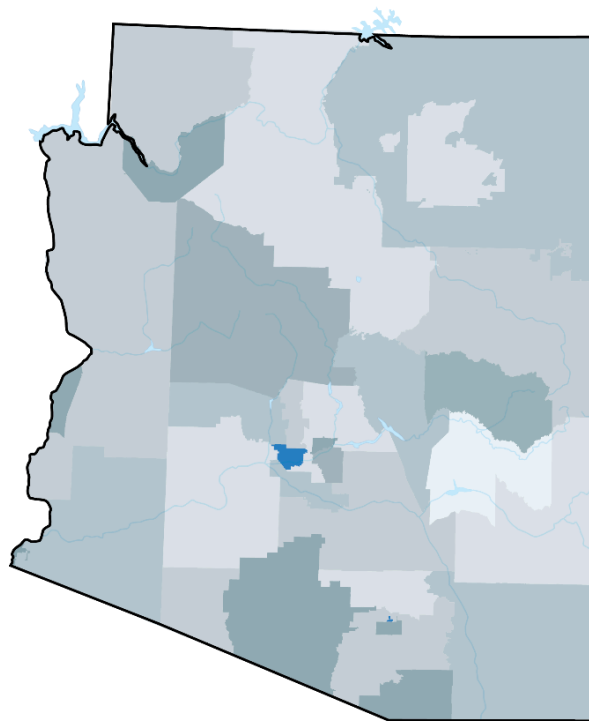




FIRST THINGS FIRST

Phoenix South Regional Partnership Council
Population birth through age 5: 59,009



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.

Phoenix South Regional Partnership Council

Patricia Neff, chair, early childhood educator

Joyce Medina Harper, vice chair, representative of a philanthropic organization

Felicia Durden, public school administrator

Jessica Jarvi, member of the business community

Joshua Henry, parent of a child age 5 years or younger

Chesa Mendez, at-large representative

Patricia Merk, at-large representative

Sakina Pasha, health services provider

Lenny Reel, child care provider

Karen Stewart, representative of the faith community

Carolyn Willmer, at-large representative

Janet Wright Moore, regional director, First Things First

Sophia Acosta, administrative specialist, First Things First

Regional Allocation and Proposed Funding Plan Summary SFY24 – SFY27
Phoenix South Regional Partnership Council

Allocations and Funding Sources	2024	2025	2026	2027
FY Allocation	\$14,883,333	\$14,883,333	\$12,330,786	\$13,852,710
Population Based Allocation	\$10,791,226	\$10,791,226	\$9,753,751	\$10,791,226
Discretionary Allocation	\$4,092,107	\$4,092,107	\$2,577,035	\$3,061,484
Carry Forward From Previous Year	\$5,829,258	\$6,048,975	\$5,345,218	\$2,088,935
Total Regional Council Funds Available	\$20,712,591	\$20,932,308	\$17,676,004	\$15,941,645
Strategies	Approved Allotted	Approved Allotted	Proposed Allotted	Proposed Allotted
Early Learning Systems Change	\$120,000	\$120,000	\$120,000	\$120,000
Inclusion of Children with Special Needs	\$154,000	\$154,000	\$154,000	\$154,000
Quality First Academy	\$71,000	\$68,172	\$68,172	\$68,172
Quality First Assessment		\$312,228		
Quality First Coaching & Incentives	\$2,011,310	\$1,809,648	\$2,121,876	\$2,121,876
Quality First Scholarships	\$7,021,128	\$7,021,128	\$7,021,128	\$7,021,128
Child Care Health Consultation	\$482,800	\$590,062	\$590,062	\$590,062
Children's Health Systems Change	\$75,000	\$97,667	\$97,667	\$97,667
Developmental and Sensory Screening	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$100,000
Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation	\$500,000	\$500,000	\$500,000	\$500,000
Family Support for Children with Developmental Concerns	\$200,000	\$200,000	\$200,000	\$200,000
Community Based Language and Literacy	\$157,500	\$157,500	\$157,500	\$157,500
Family Resource Centers	\$1,950,000	\$1,949,999	\$1,949,999	\$1,949,999
Family Support & Literacy Systems Change	\$129,167	\$229,167	\$229,167	\$229,167
Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care	\$900,000	\$900,000	\$900,000	\$900,000
Home Visitation	\$1,947,374	\$1,947,374	\$1,947,374	\$1,947,374
Home Visitation Coordinated Referral System	\$86,000	\$63,333	\$63,333	\$63,333
Partnering with Child Welfare Systems	\$16,667	\$16,667	\$16,667	\$16,667
Statewide Evaluation	\$575,244	\$575,244	\$575,244	\$575,244
Educational Promotion and Brand Awareness	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$15,000
Media	\$115,300	\$115,300	\$115,300	\$115,300
Total	\$16,627,490	\$16,942,489	\$16,942,489	\$16,942,489
Total Unallotted/Unawarded/Unexpended*:	\$4,085,101	\$3,989,819	\$733,515	(\$1,000,844)

Fiscal Year	2020	2024	2025	2026	2027
% to Board Priorities		94.18 %	94.15 %	94.15 %	94.15 %
% to Quality First**	10.88%	15.42 %	16.40 %	16.40 %	16.40 %
Fiscal Year	4 Year Average				
% to Board Priorities	94.16%				
% to Quality First**	16.16%				

*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.

PHOENIX SOUTH 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 Phoenix South Regional Partnership Council has a vision that young children in the Phoenix South Region thrive through First Things First's family-led kindergarten readiness initiatives supported by the community.

Phoenix South is a diverse region with a plethora of history, culture, community pride and hard-working families. Unfortunately, those hard working families often struggle to meet basic needs due to low wages, limited English proficiency, limited education and housing insecurity. According to the Regional Needs and Assets Report, nearly one-third (30%) of residents in the Phoenix South Region live in poverty, almost double that of Maricopa County (16%). When it comes to young children, more than four in 10 (42%) live in poverty in the region. Compounding high poverty, 39% of families in the Phoenix South Region are facing housing insecurity. Additionally, a smaller proportion of adults have more than a high-school education in the Phoenix South Region (39%) than in Maricopa County (64%), Arizona (62%) and the United States overall (60%). This difference is also seen specifically in mothers giving birth, with a smaller proportion of births in the region to mothers with more than a high-school education (37%) than the county (58%) and state (56%). Simultaneously, 47% of children in Phoenix South Region live with one or two foreign-born parents; this is higher than the county as a whole (30%). Household language use also reflects these demographic patterns; a higher proportion of individuals speak a language other than English at home in the Phoenix South Region (55%) than in the county (27%) and state (27%). There is also a higher percentage of limited-English-speaking households in the region (12%), than in the county and state (4% in each).

Findings from the Regional Needs and Assets Report illustrate opportunities for the regional council and community stakeholders in early childhood health and development systems to focus work on the community's most vulnerable families. The FTF Phoenix South Regional Partnership Council strategic plan promotes equity and support of under-resourced and underserved families by funding services and programs that target those most at risk, such as Quality First Scholarships and Home Visitation. To promote language and literacy development, the regional council has chosen to implement a Community Based Language and Literacy Strategy. Additionally, the regional council has chosen to specifically target refugee families who often struggle to access services and navigate the complex early childhood development and health systems. Finally, the regional council has chosen to fund strategically placed family resource centers, so that they are easily accessible to families with transportation barriers.

To guide their work during this funding cycle, the regional council has adopted the following guiding principles.

The FTF Phoenix South Regional Partnership Council will:

- Insist on diversity, treat everyone with courtesy and equality and support and encourage our community's values.
- Support programs and practices that demonstrate a commitment to quality and success through realistic measurable outcomes.
- Make decisions that are in the best interest of children.
- Partner with community and family stakeholders to develop and implement solutions that build and strengthen the early childhood development and health systems in Phoenix South and other FTF regions.
- Operate with transparency and hold the highest ethical stands for ourselves and those with whom we work.
- Advocate for diversity in our practices, resource-allocating decision making.
- Support innovative approaches.

In addition, the regional council envisions supporting a tiered approach to ensure all families have access as well as supporting services that address the needs of the most vulnerable families in the region. The regional council will do this by:

- Ensuring services are provided in multiple languages.
- Identifying and partnering with service partners that serve the most vulnerable (homeless and domestic violence shelters, low income housing facilities, refugee facilities).
- Targeting school districts that serve students whose families live under the federal poverty line.

With the leadership of the FTF Phoenix South Regional Partnership Council and the many assets and committed stakeholders in the community, the region is positioned to continue to build on positive trends and ensure all children are ready to succeed in school and in life.

SFY26 FUNDING PLAN UPDATE / CHANGE TABLE
PHOENIX SOUTH 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 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.

At the end of SFY24, 91.3% of programs were achieving quality levels.

Together, FTF 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 State Fiscal Year 2025 (SFY25) would look like for their participation, whether continuing or not.

In SFY24, the FTF Phoenix South Regional Partnership Council allocated additional funding to the Quality First strategy to support 12 regulated early care and education programs previously funded by federal pandemic relief funds. This funding allowed these programs to continue participating in SFY25 by utilizing existing vacancies in the region and benefiting from efficiencies introduced through recent revisions.

Quality First Scholarships:

FTF 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.

Early Learning Systems Change:

The FTF Phoenix North and Phoenix South regional partnership councils collaboratively funded a consultant under the Early Learning Systems Change Strategy to facilitate communities of practice. This strategy provides early childhood professionals and directors that are not enrolled in Quality First with a series of sessions that will help increase their knowledge base focused on best practices in targeted areas of study over an extended period. Topics such as *“What is Best for Children?”*, *“Conscious Discipline”* (available in English and Spanish), and *“Leadership in Every Role”* are participant-driven and customized based on participant feedback and identified priorities.

In SFY24, two communities of practice were offered, building upon the foundation established in SFY23. For SFY25, this initiative has expanded to include two additional cohorts, bringing the total to four options. These new cohorts introduce enhanced professional development opportunities, including specialized programs for individuals in leadership roles and offerings in Spanish.

Each community of practice consists of eight live virtual or in-person sessions held between August 1, 2024, and June 30, 2025, complemented by self-study materials. Participants (which include early childhood professionals and directors) can earn over 25 professional development hours through a combination of self-directed learning and live sessions. Interest in these opportunities has been robust, with over 100 individuals across both regions expressing enthusiasm. This year, 97 participants representing 12 child care centers have joined the cohorts, including 32 participants from four centers in the Phoenix South Region.

Participants have shared overwhelmingly positive feedback, highlighting their appreciation for the collaborative and ongoing learning environment. Many are thrilled to report successfully implementing the skills acquired through these sessions into their daily practices.

Challenges:

Quality First:

Federal pandemic relief funding to support a statewide expansion of Quality First ended before the start of SFY25. In the Phoenix South Region, 18 programs were funded through the federal pandemic relief funds which resulted in six participants who transitioned to the Quality First waitlist starting July 1, 2024. All programs that were 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, the 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.

FTF 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.

DESIRED OUTCOME: Information, SERVICES AND SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES

Strategy Areas and Funded Strategies

- Educating Families and Caregivers**
- Home Visitation (prioritized)
 - Community Based Language and Literacy (prioritized)
 - Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care (prioritized)

- Navigating and Connecting Families to Resources**
- Family Resource Centers (prioritized)
 - Family Support and Literacy Systems Change (prioritized)
 - Home Visitation Coordinated Referral System (prioritized)

Successes:

The Phoenix South Regional Partnership Council has successfully contracted with grantees for all of the region’s family support strategies.

Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care:

Through the Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care Strategy, caregivers have learned practical techniques for creating safe and nurturing environments for young children, such as setting up play spaces that promote development, establishing consistent routines and using positive discipline methods. They have also gained knowledge about early childhood milestones, nutrition and effective ways to encourage language and social-emotional skills.

Additionally, structured socialization opportunities, such as caregiver meet-ups, workshops and peer-led discussion groups, have supported their mental health. These gatherings provide a platform for caregivers to share experiences, exchange tips and seek advice on challenges like managing tantrums or balancing caregiving responsibilities. This interaction fosters a strong sense of community, reduces feelings of isolation and enhances their confidence in navigating difficult caregiving moments.

Family Resource Center:

Nine family resource centers spread across the region in the areas of Maryvale, Laveen and central Phoenix continue to serve thousands of families. The locations of these family resource centers are based on the region's greatest need with participation steadily increasing. These centers work with diverse populations representing various ethnicities and ensure that books, staff and resources are accessible in families' native languages, including Swahili, Arabic and Spanish. Additionally, the materials and programs are designed to reflect and celebrate the families' cultural backgrounds, fostering inclusivity and a sense of belonging.

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 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. To date, there have been many successes which included the following:

- The AZFRN facilitated the first family resource center summit in August of 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.

Also within the Family Support and Literacy Systems Change Strategy, the regional council approved funding to support a capacity building project with grassroots organizations (i.e. Our Sister Our Brother, Black Lives Matter and Unlimited Potential to name a few) in the Phoenix South Region. This capacity-building strategy intends to foster collaboration among funders, local non-profits and capacity-building experts to dismantle existing silos and integrate programming for greater community impact. Additionally, the strategy intends to provide skill-building/training and technical assistance to community and faith-based service providers in the Phoenix South Region in the areas of resource development and sustainability. A special emphasis should be placed on engaging smaller, grassroots and diverse organizations in the efforts. The final objective of the project is to bring additional resources and funding to the Phoenix South Region.

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:

Recruitment and retention of staff and families, across the family support field statewide and nationally, has been an ongoing challenge that is not unique to the program nor the region. All staff in the Phoenix South Region have completed the Parents as Teachers Foundational Training and each team member is responsible for participating in at least one recruitment event monthly recruiting new families that could utilize our services. The team is working to develop a stronger community presence and are recruiting at the libraries, family resource centers and community parks.

Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care:

School administrators who previously hosted the Kith and Kin program have encountered challenges in securing space to convene Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care sessions. While they have expressed interest in offering the service again, the lack of available space to provide child care has hindered their ability to do so. This challenge is impacting the grantee's performance by delaying session implementation, limiting their ability to meet program expectations,

and preventing the completion of services for families in need. The administrators have committed to notifying the grantee as soon as space becomes available to resume the program.

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 Child Care Health Consultation (prioritized)

Successes:

Inclusion of Children with Special Needs:

The grantee 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 one to five across content areas of goal planning, promoting change, confidence in serving children with special needs and skills gained. The results showed 91% overall satisfaction for the Phoenix South Region. Participants shared that their staff feel better about identifying children who may have developmental delays. The survey also indicated that staff are also more open to children with different abilities and have a growth mindset.

Challenges:

Inclusion of Children with Special Needs:

The grantee has expressed concerns that data collection does not adequately represent the services and trainings provided in the region. To address this concern, they have been meeting with FTF staff as well as program administrators from other agencies to discuss data collection as well as how to utilize narrative reports to better reflect the details of trainings and services provided to the sites enrolled in services.

DESIRED OUTCOME: PUBLIC UNDERSTANDING AND SUPPORT.

Strategy Areas and Funded Strategies

Building Awareness of the Importance of the Early Years

- o Educational Promotion and Brand Awareness (prioritized)75
- o Media (prioritized)

Successes:

Educational Promotion and Brand Awareness:

The Phoenix South Region sponsored the Black Chamber of Arizona's 2024 Juneteenth event, the 10th Annual Teacher Leadership Summit and the Phoenix Art Museum's *Southwest ABC Children's Book* initiative to broaden support for the early childhood system and FTF's mission. These sponsorships led to several impactful outcomes:

- **Black Chamber of Arizona's Juneteenth Event:** The Black Chamber of Arizona's 2024 Juneteenth Vision Forward Celebration honored the emancipation of enslaved African Americans while celebrating the achievements of Arizona's Black business community. The event brought together a diverse audience, including community members, business leaders and policymakers, with distinguished guests such as Governor Katie Hobbs, Congressman Greg Stanton and Phoenix Councilwoman Kesha Hodge Washington. A highlight of the celebration was a visionary address by Dr. Velma Trayham, president and CEO of the Black Chamber of Arizona, who outlined the Chamber's new vision and goals, reaffirming its commitment to supporting Black businesses statewide. This sponsorship aligned seamlessly with FTF's mission

and vision by increasing awareness of the importance of early childhood education within diverse communities, particularly among African American families. By supporting the Black Chamber of Arizona's event, FTF enhanced its brand recognition, gained online promotion and expanded its reach within the community. The event also fostered meaningful partnerships with various local organizations that promote family well-being and early learning opportunities, further strengthening FTF's role as a champion for early childhood development and education.

- **10th Annual Teacher Leadership Summit:** The Arizona Alliance of Black Educators convened this summit to empower educators with leadership skills and innovative strategies to enhance early learning environments, benefiting young children and their families. Through its sponsorship, FTF not only raised awareness among elementary educators about its impactful work but also enhanced its brand recognition and online presence. This partnership strengthened ties with local school administrators in the Phoenix South Region, fostering collaborative efforts to advance early learning and family support initiatives while elevating FTF's mission and visibility in the education community.
- **Phoenix Art Museum's Southwest ABC Children's Book Initiative:** A portion of the funds has been allocated to sponsor the Phoenix Art Museum's upcoming *Southwest ABCs* book release, a children's book based around the museum's collection. This sponsorship, covering the printing of the books and supporting child and family programming, will enable FTF to achieve key goals by providing direct access to the museum's patrons and boosting brand visibility in impactful, educational environments. The sponsorship will be prominently featured through the creation and launch of the *Southwest ABCs* children's book, as well as through the museum's "Storytime in the Galleries" and "Create Play Date" programs. Additionally, FTF will be recognized throughout the year across the museum's virtual presence, which includes 1.8 million website visitors annually and 120,000+ social media followers. This partnership will strengthen FTF's presence in the community by connecting families to FTF Family Guides which include a variety of resources to families with young children. This collaboration represents a strategic effort to increase brand awareness, connect families with essential resources, and establish partnerships that extend our reach to new audiences in the community.

Media:

In SFY24, targeted media efforts in the Phoenix South Region raised awareness about the importance of early childhood development, connecting families to resources and empowering communities to support children from birth to age five. Building on this success, the SFY25 media campaign will expand these efforts with ads placed on grocery carts in 11 local stores, digital billboards at two key locations, toppers and posters at 10 gas stations and icebox wraps at five gas stations throughout the region.

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

Strategy Areas and Funded Strategies

Identifying and Addressing Developmental Concerns

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

Health Resource Coordination

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

Successes:

Developmental and Sensory Screening:

The grant partner was awarded for the Developmental and Sensory Screening Strategy at the mid-year of SFY24 to implement a sensory screening component of the strategy in the Phoenix South Region. The grant partner was able to recertify staff for hearing and vision screenings and an additional staff member is now a board-certified hearing and vision trainer. Although programming started late, the grantee was able to spend 76% of their funding and reach a total of 325 children in both the Phoenix South and Phoenix North regions. Considering the establishment of solid staffing and outreach plans proposed by the grant partner, it is expected that the grant partner is likely to continue to increase the number of children screened for vision and hearing to meet the contracted service unit.

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. The regional team within the Phoenix South Region, holds monthly meetings with community providers and partners. These meetings focus on developing sustainable projects and identifying partners committed to leading new initiatives. Plans are underway to launch a workshop series in 2025, fostering collaboration among current partners.

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 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. 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:

The 2024 Regional Needs and Asset Reports were delivered in June 2024, reviewed by the regional partnership council and approved by the Board in August 2024.