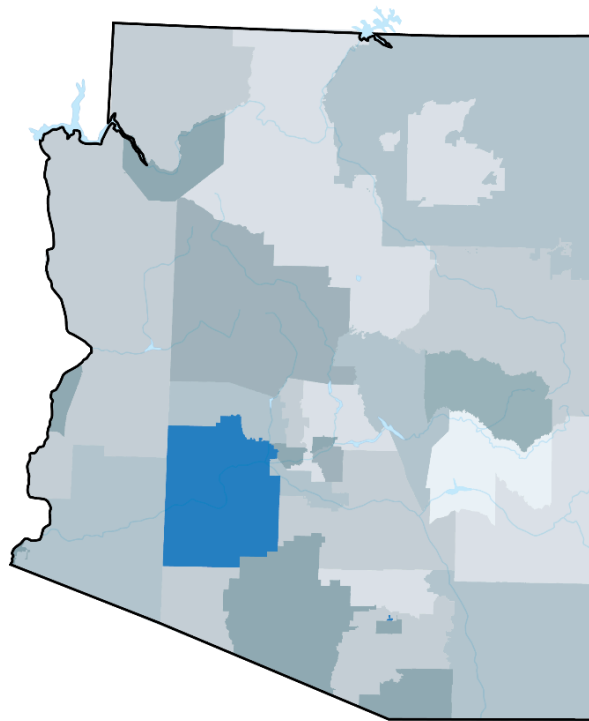




FIRST THINGS FIRST

Southwest Maricopa Regional Partnership Council
Population birth through age 5: 29,932



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.

Southwest Maricopa Regional Partnership Council

Jamie Lopez, chair, early childhood educator

Simone Hurst, vice chair, at-large representative

Brittany Brown, parent of a child age 5 years or younger

Sandra Brown, representative of the faith community

Pedro Gomez, health services provider

JoEllen Johnson, child care provider

Courtney Kovats, member of the business community

Stephanie Morales, at-large representative

Brenda Thomas, public school administrator

Aaron White, at-large representative

open, representative of a philanthropic organization

Delaney Russell, regional director, First Things First

Cynthia Gandara, administrative specialist, First Things First

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

Allocations and Funding Sources	2024	2025	2026	2027
FY Allocation	\$4,234,845	\$4,234,845	\$3,797,276	\$4,234,428
Population Based Allocation	\$3,566,730	\$3,566,730	\$3,223,822	\$3,566,730
Discretionary Allocation	\$668,115	\$668,115	\$573,454	\$667,698
Carry Forward From Previous Year	\$1,388,869	\$1,446,311	\$1,146,107	\$408,331
Total Regional Council Funds Available	\$5,623,714	\$5,681,156	\$4,943,383	\$4,642,759
Strategies	Approved Allotted	Approved Allotted	Proposed Allotted	Projected Allotted
Early Learning Systems Change		\$80,000	\$80,000	\$80,000
Quality First Academy	\$12,500	\$11,510	\$12,500	\$12,500
Quality First Coaching & Incentives	\$346,550	\$333,014	\$346,550	\$346,550
Quality First Scholarships	\$1,500,000	\$1,500,000	\$1,500,000	\$1,500,000
Transition to Kindergarten		\$160,000	\$160,000	\$160,000
Child Care Health Consultation	\$85,000	\$99,526	\$85,000	\$85,000
Children's Health Systems Change	\$134,999	\$97,666	\$97,666	\$97,666
Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation	\$320,000	\$320,000	\$320,000	\$320,000
Family Support for Children with Developmental Concerns	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$250,000
Nutrition and Physical Activity	\$200,000	\$200,000	\$200,000	\$200,000
Family Resource Centers	\$875,000	\$875,000	\$875,000	\$875,000
Family Support & Literacy Systems Change	\$29,166	\$29,166	\$29,166	\$29,166
Family Support Coordination	\$180,000			
Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care	\$300,000	\$300,000	\$300,000	\$300,000
Home Visitation	\$375,000	\$375,000	\$375,000	\$375,000
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	\$175,838	\$175,838	\$175,838	\$175,838
Educational Promotion and Brand Awareness	\$28,115	\$28,115	\$28,115	\$28,115
Media	\$28,000	\$28,000	\$28,000	\$28,000
Total	\$4,942,834	\$4,942,834	\$4,942,834	\$4,942,834
Total Unallotted/Unawarded/Unexpended:	\$680,880	\$738,322	\$549	(\$300,075)

Fiscal Year	2020	2024	2025	2026	2027
% to Board Priorities		84.27 %	81.78 %	81.78 %	81.78 %
% to Quality First*	7.99%	8.98 %	8.98 %	8.98 %	8.98 %
Fiscal Year	4 Year Average				
% to Board Priorities	82.40%				
% to Quality First*	8.98%				

* 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.

SOUTHWEST 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 First Things First Southwest Maricopa Region is the largest region by land within Maricopa County. The region spans 4,804 square miles across the Southwest Valley and has one of the fastest-growing populations in the state. The landscape of the Southwest Maricopa Region includes the cities of Avondale, Buckeye, Goodyear, Litchfield Park and Tolleson and the rural communities of Gila Bend, Tonopah, Arlington, Palo Verde and Harquahala.

Current statistics show that nearly one in five adults in the Southwest Maricopa Region have a bachelor's degree or higher. In Arlington, Tolleson and Tonopah nearly one in four adults did not complete high school with Gila Bend at over one in five. Thirty-two percent of children in the region live with a single-parent, 52% in Gila Bend and 42% in Avondale. Relatively high percentages of children in the region, specifically in Gila Bend, Tonopah and Arlington are living with a grandparent with no parent present. The Gila Bend Unified School District struggles with chronic absenteeism, high dropout rates and low rates of graduation. Nineteen percent of the children in the Southwest Maricopa Region live with the complex challenges of poverty. Sub-regional data shows a great deal of poverty in areas like Arlington with 46% of children living in poverty and 40% in Gila Bend.

For these reasons, the FTF Southwest Maricopa Regional Partnership Council continues to prioritize investing in family support and education strategies that meet the complex needs of families and caregivers with young children throughout the region. The regional council has prioritized targeted outreach and enrollment efforts to reach families living in the more rural, isolated and underserved communities in the region who have limited access to family support services, lack transportation and reside within food deserts. These efforts are meant to also reach children living in single-parent households, grandparents raising grandchildren and children living in poverty. One example of the regional council's response to equity and supporting underserved children is the regional council's strategically prioritized investment in family resource centers in the Gila Bend, Buckeye, Avondale and Pendergast communities. Investing in these approaches continues to show the regional council's dedication to serve children birth to age 5 and the diverse families within the region.

SFY26 FUNDING PLAN UPDATE / CHANGE TABLE
SOUTHWEST 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)
- 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.

At the end of SFY24, 85.7% percentage of participating programs were achieving 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.

Four 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 and First Things First 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 Southwest Maricopa Region, 28 programs were funded through the federal pandemic relief funds, but due to limited regional funding, 24 of those participants 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.

Early Learning Systems Change:

The FTF Southwest Maricopa Regional Partnership Council has put their focus on supporting the agency’s objective of engaging with the business community. In Southwest Maricopa, the regional partnership council has developed a plan to enhance access to quality early learning settings by evaluating feasible, tangible and community-oriented solutions. Through a procurement contract, the goal is to assess the capacity of current partnerships (chamber organizations, economic development groups, businesses associations) and identify key stakeholders who have yet to be engaged, thereby strengthening regionally focused efforts. The council has specifically identified the need to increase both access to and availability of child care across the region. By identifying and engaging these stakeholders, the regional partnership council can work toward developing solutions tailored specifically to the needs of Southwest Maricopa.

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 (prioritized)
 - Family Support and Literacy Systems Change (prioritized)
 - Home Visitation Coordinated Referral System (prioritized)

Successes:

Family Resource Centers:

Four family resource centers support the region in the communities of Avondale, Buckeye, Gila Bend and the shared parts of the region in Pendergast. Grant partners encounter many families looking for necessities like diapers, food banks and rental and utility assistance. Families are also asking for help in enrolling with critical support services such as AHCCSS and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Grantees are building strong relationships with community partners to help refer families to critical services and make follow-up contact with the families to ensure they get the services needed. One family resource center partnered with a diaper bank to be able to provide this additional concrete support to families in need. Diapers were a continual ask of families participating in early childhood programming at that FRC and through collaboration and coordination of the grant partner to an external provider, this concrete support is now onsite. Another family resource center hosted Science Center Saturdays, where the Arizona Science Center has come on-site to provide science experiments and activities for families and young children.

The regional FRCs have collected family engagement surveys as a way to identify what needs or topics they wish to learn more about or engage with. This has given the FRCs a chance to provide programming specific to the needs of

parents, caregivers and young children. By seeking and responding to feedback, the FRCs are showing adaptability in programming and their offerings. One family resource center was able to establish a “parent social hour,” giving time and space onsite for parents and caregivers to engage with one another in a casual setting, whereas prior they attempted to launch a “support group” and did not have much interest.

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 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.

Family, Friend and Neighbor Care:

Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care (FFN) is contracted to support and serve caregivers in both community and home-based settings across the region. In the Southwest Maricopa Region, caregivers have predominately requested trainings focused on CPR and first aid, car seat safety and early literacy support. The FFN provider has been successfully able to deliver those series in the more rural parts of the regions, specifically the areas of Gila Bend and the town of Harquahala in Buckeye. Additionally, FFN has partnered with other regional grant partners, such as family resource centers and community based entities like school districts and libraries, to provide community-based workshops and series.

Challenges:

Family, Friend and Neighbor Care:

Staffing continues to be a challenge for the Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care Strategy in the region. An early childhood educator left their role within the region due to personal reasons and the grant partner has actively worked on recruitment to refill the vacancy. The in-home and community-based model operates like a mobile classroom and requires a staff of three team members: one parent educator and two early childhood educators (ECE) in order to deliver a session. The shortage of an ECE slowed down programming in the region as the ratio of children to ECE is 4:1, and sessions often needed to be put on hold or frequently rescheduled when less children were present.

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 Child Care Health Consultation (prioritized)

Successes:

Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation:

The Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (ECMHC) Strategy in the Southwest Maricopa Region has a team of highly trained and committed mental health consultants that support child care providers to strengthen the programmatic foundation and improve providers' capacity to appropriately address critical concerns ranging from children's behaviors to mandated reporting duties. Mental health consultants have also introduced the Pyramid Model, a framework of evidence-based practice for promoting young children's healthy social-emotional development, to child care providers as part of programmatic consultation. In the Southwest Maricopa Region, 16 center-based providers and one home-based provider have received services through this grant partner. The Family, Friend and Neighbor Care team as well as the two Parents as Teachers home visitation programs have also received consultations. All sites receiving services through this grant partner have action plans in place specific to adverse child behaviors and there has been an increase in director availability and overall participation. Additionally, in response to staffing challenges experienced by child care providers and home visiting teams, mental health consultants provided

programmatic consultation on hiring and staff retention for them, which resulted in improved practice in supporting staff in areas of professional development, staff appreciation and staff wellness.

Challenges:

Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation:

Staff turnover continues to be a challenge within child care providers and home visitation teams that are receiving the ECMHC support. Therefore, the focus of the consultation has been oriented to strengthen the programmatic foundation and promote staff wellness. Currently, the grant partner is fully staffed. However, one full-time mental health consultant and one half-time mental health consultant were on leave during the first quarter in SFY25, restricting the number of sites able to be serviced in Quarter 1.

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:

Education Promotional and Brand Awareness:

The Southwest Maricopa Regional Partnership Council had opportunities in SFY25 to participate in a number of events hosted by the Southwest Valley Chamber of Commerce, the region’s largest chamber organization. Additionally, opportunities to participate in local community-based networking opportunities through the Goodyear Faith and Community Roundtable, as well as the Avondale Interfaith Partnership meeting occurred throughout the year. In addition to the engagement opportunities with the region’s chamber, there are also engagement opportunities with local economic development groups such as WESTMARC. WESTMARC is the West Valley’s largest economic development convening organization, which helps coordinate and collaborate economic development efforts among the West Valley’s 16 municipalities. The Southwest Maricopa Region had an opportunity to share First Things First workforce highlights with WESTMARC as part of their West Valley Pipeline annual report. This highlight will showcase the work being done to support early childhood education professionals and the First Things First Workforce Registry.

The FTF Government Affairs team has also presented to the regional partnership council on legislative issues to help support future efforts related to advocacy in the community. In addition to that presentation, the Government Affairs team conducted a “civic engagement” workshop, where they gave pointers on how to speak with local elected officials. In the following month, a regional council member was able to meet with and talk to a locally elected mayor and city council member at a networking event in the region.

Media:

In SFY24, targeted media efforts in the Southwest 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 targeted social media, 90 radio spots, ads placed on grocery carts in 10 local stores, paid print ads in two regional magazines and toppers and posters 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

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

Health Resource Coordination

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

Nutrition and Physical Activity

- Nutrition and Physical Activity (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 5, 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 Southwest Maricopa Region, focused on the community of Avondale and Goodyear, convenes a monthly meeting of providers and partners within this community. This includes participants from local food banks, community co-ops and non-profits that service families. Meetings have been focused on establishing collaboration of resources in the community with a plan of creating an intentional outreach campaign to all of the residents of the community. Additionally, there has been a focus on evaluating what food systems families in the region are connected to, either through local food banks, summer meal programs, etc. The ECNT in the region sees this as a way to understand the level of need in helping families reach a point of food security.

Challenges:

Children’s Health System Change – Program Coordination Specialist

The program coordination specialist position became vacant in the beginning of SFY25 and due to time constraints for hiring and onboarding within the current funding cycle, the regional partnership council decided not to fill the position and to reallocate funds to the Transition to Kindergarten Strategy.

Children’s Health Systems Change – Early Childhood Nutrition Team

The Southwest Maricopa regional ECNT has had a goal to pull in more providers from the more rural parts of the region. These entities include local churches, food banks and non-profits that serve families with young children.

Specifically, the ECNT has wanted to target providers in the areas of Buckeye and Gila Bend. However, some providers have not been able to make meeting times, or there is not a representative available to attend meetings. A regionally specific recruitment flyer has been made for participants to share out with their networks in order to increase the overall number of participants.

DESIRED OUTCOME: COORDINATED, INTEGRATED, AND COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM

Strategy Areas and Funded Strategies

Bridge from ECE to Kindergarten

- Transition to Kindergarten (non-prioritized)

Child Welfare Prevention /Intervention

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

Evaluation

- Statewide Evaluation (non-prioritized)
- Needs and Assets (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.