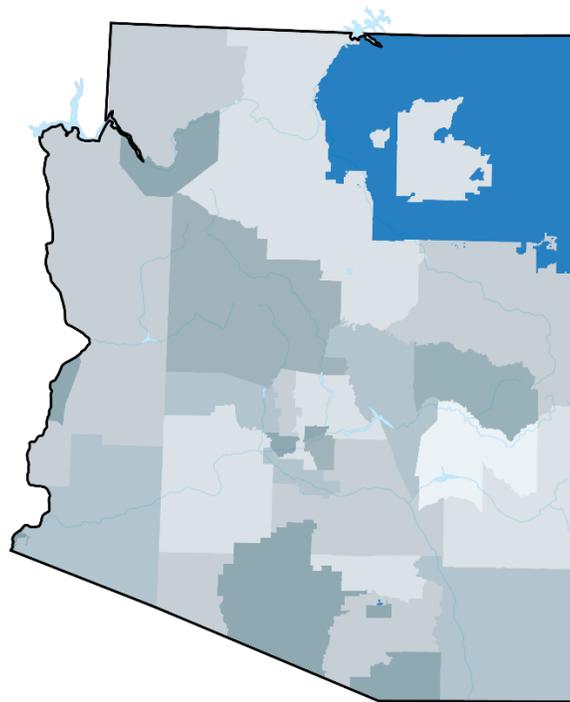




FIRST THINGS FIRST

Navajo Nation Regional Partnership Council
Population birth through age 5: 8,377



State Fiscal Year 2025 Funding Plan

SFY 2024 – 2027 Strategic Plan Update

Presented to the First Things First Board
January 23, 2024



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.

Navajo Nation Regional Partnership Council

Shannon Goodsell, chair, public school administrator

Rhonda Etsitty, vice chair, at-large representative

Victoria Begay, member of the business community

Candi Running Bear, representative of the faith community

Phefelia Nez, parent of a child age 5 years or younger

Paula Seanez, early childhood educator

Valerie Tsosie, representative of a philanthropic organization

Dawn Yazzie, health services provider

open, at-large representative

open, child care provider

open, tribal public official/employee

Memarie Tsosie, regional director, First Things First

Jacquelynn Yazzie, administrative specialist, First Things First

Navajo Nation Regional Partnership Council
Promoting Equity and Supporting Under-Resourced/Underserved Children and Their Families

The Navajo Nation Regional Partnership Council's priorities lie in areas where early childhood opportunities can be more accessible to children, parents and educators. This is a result of the regional council using a strengths-based and holistic approach based on the Diné Way of Life that focuses on the Four Directions of Wellness; social-emotional, intellectual, physical, community and relational wellness. This process also ensured strategies address the cognitive, physical, mental, emotional and cultural needs of children and families.

The regional council used formal and informal data and feedback processes to help inform the strategic plan. This included hosting the annual Diné Early Childhood Summit and using feedback from the Parent Panel to inform methods to increase access to services for families; and feedback from the Early Childhood Educators Panel to inform better professional development opportunities. The regional council reviewed the Navajo Nation Maternal and Children's Health Report, previous Regional Needs & Assets Reports, current strategy data reports and brought their shared expertise and knowledge to further inform the strategic plan. Additionally, the "Start with Equity: 14 Priorities to Dismantle Systemic Racism in Early Care & Education" report by the Children's Equity Project and co-authored by Regional Council Member Dawn Yazzie was used as a framework to further enhance and assess strategies for underserved and under resourced communities.

The entire strategic planning process resulted in funding new strategies that will equitably:

- Help families with complex needs by assisting them in understanding, navigating to and accessing services that promote family well-being. This individualized support will help families in their rural communities, as opposed to requiring them to travel to population hubs in the region where this type of support is currently concentrated.
- Increase access points of service by coordinating and collaborating with school districts and health care facilities in the region.
- Build on the region's strength of Indigenous language and culture to expand capacity for language preservation and traditional cultural practices in families' homes and early childhood settings.
- Increase access to more family care and home-based child care options, based on the Indigenous concept of kinship.
- Increase access to culturally responsive, high-quality professional development that is specialized based on the feedback of early childhood professionals and stakeholders in the region.
- Increase the number of qualified, culturally-competent professionals from the region who can provide specialty services in early intervention, special education, mental health and oral health.

Regional Allocation and Proposed Funding Plan Summary SFY24 – SFY27
Navajo Nation Regional Partnership Council

Allocations and Funding Sources	2024	2025	2026	2027
FY Allocation	\$3,168,372	\$3,168,372	\$3,228,633	\$3,228,633
Population Based Allocation	\$2,052,740	\$2,052,740	\$2,052,740	\$2,052,740
Discretionary Allocation	\$1,115,632	\$1,115,632	\$1,175,893	\$1,175,893
Carry Forward From Previous Year	\$6,123,692	\$6,093,857	\$5,661,288	\$3,622,450
Total Regional Council Funds Available	\$9,292,064	\$9,262,229	\$8,889,921	\$6,851,083
Strategies	Allotted	Proposed Allotted	Proposed Allotted	Proposed Allotted
Early Learning Systems Change	\$258,750	\$279,750	\$279,750	\$279,750
Quality First Increase		\$68,250	\$68,250	\$68,250
Quality First Academy	\$13,500	\$13,500	\$13,500	\$13,500
Quality First Coaching & Incentives	\$471,750	\$471,750	\$471,750	\$471,750
Quality First Scholarships	\$1,920,152	\$1,767,000	\$1,767,000	\$1,767,000
First Things First College Scholarships	\$21,600	\$21,600	\$21,600	\$21,600
Child Care Health Consultation	\$111,500	\$111,500	\$111,500	\$111,500
Children's Health Systems Change	\$89,935	\$90,000	\$90,000	\$82,693
Developmental and Sensory Screening	\$230,000	\$230,000	\$230,000	\$230,000
Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation	\$327,420	\$327,420	\$321,300	\$321,300
Family Support for Children with Developmental Concerns	\$350,000	\$350,000	\$350,000	\$350,000
Nutrition and Physical Activity	\$110,000	\$110,000	\$110,000	\$110,000
Family Support & Literacy Systems Change	\$65,065	\$80,000	\$80,000	\$80,000
Family Support Coordination	\$400,000	\$400,000	\$400,000	\$400,000
Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care	\$190,000	\$190,000	\$190,000	\$190,000
Home Visitation	\$343,750	\$343,750	\$343,750	\$343,750
Language, Literacy and Culture in Tribal Communities	\$141,691	\$200,000	\$200,000	\$200,000
Needs and Assets			\$30,000	
Statewide Evaluation	\$134,071	\$134,071	\$134,071	\$134,071
Educational Promotion and Brand Awareness	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$25,000
Media	\$45,000	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$30,000
Total	\$5,249,184	\$5,243,591	\$5,267,471	\$5,230,164
Total Unallotted/Unawarded/Unexpended:*	\$4,042,880	\$4,018,638	\$3,622,450	\$1,620,919

Fiscal Year	2020	2024	2025	2026	2027
% to Board Priorities		82.58 %	82.56 %	82.07 %	82.66 %
% to Quality First**	8.74%	11.36 %	12.68 %	12.62 %	12.71 %
Fiscal Year	4 Year Average				
% to Board Priorities	82.47%				
% to Quality First**	12.34%				

*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 and Child Care Health Consultation.

**SFY25 FUNDING PLAN UPDATE / CHANGE TABLE
NAVAJO NATION 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:

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. The revisions are anticipated to create efficiencies that allow more regulated early care and education programs to participate and continue the quality improvement trajectory that has shown consistent increases in quality rating over time.

First Things First increased the Quality First Scholarship reimbursement rate to the cost of quality, informed by a study conducted in 2021, this increase will support a robust and stable network of child care providers and continues the reimbursement rate that providers were receiving through federal pandemic relief funding.

In the implementation of the Early Learning Systems Change Strategy, the Program Coordination Specialist for this strategy was successfully hired and on-boarded in September 2023. Since being hired, the Program Coordination Specialist has created a work plan to implement the Professional Development, Navigation and Support for Early Childhood Workforce aspect of the strategy. The work plan is focused on helping to remove barriers and connect professionals to resources, tools, training and education opportunities. Thereby increasing quality practices in early childhood settings that benefit young children. In the upcoming year, this will be implemented by partnering with school districts, tribal child care centers, libraries, early intervention, home visiting programs and Head Start throughout the Navajo Nation Region.

Challenges:

In SFY25, federal pandemic relief funding to support a statewide expansion of 413 programs to participate in Quality First will end, zero of which were located in the Navajo Nation Region. This will result in a number of current Quality First participants potentially being disenrolled and placed on the Quality First waitlist. Discussions are in progress at the statewide level to determine potential supports so that participants funded through expansion will not need to be disenrolled and put back on a wait list.

Reimbursing Quality First Scholarships at the 2021 cost of quality has resulted in less scholarships for the same amount of funding in SFY25. It is estimated that half the number of scholarships will be available at the current level of investment. In planning for SFY25, the regional council had to consider the impact the reduction would have and make decisions to ensure that reductions in funding do not disrupt the system in significant ways. This included using zip code targeting scholarships to ensure Pre-K programs in Kayenta, Pinon and Ganado would continue to receive their current level of funding support through scholarships. Using this type of equitable targeting helped prevent the disenrollment of children and the closure of classrooms in these communities.

Changes:

Funding for Quality First Coaching and Incentives was increased to ensure support for the projected amount of centers, including the potential to allow additional centers to participate.

The reduction in funding of Quality First Scholarships reflects historical actual usage. In addition, zip code targeting will be used to address the need in specific communities where access to quality early childhood education would be limited if the adequate amount of scholarships were not available.

In the implementation of the Early Learning Systems Change Strategy, the regional council currently funds a part-time (.80 FTE) Program Coordination Specialist that focuses on Professional Development Navigation and Coordination within this strategy. After drafting the Program Coordination Specialist’s work plan and analyzing goals, objectives and the outreach to be completed, it was determined the position be increased to full-time to adequately impact the early learning system. Funding has been increased to support a full time position.

Changes:	SFY24	SFY25
Quality First Increase		
Funding Level Changes:	-	\$68,250
Quality First Scholarships		
Funding Level Change:	\$1,920,152	\$1,767,000
Target Population Change:	Zip code targeting will be used to address need in the specific communities of Kayenta, Pinon and Ganado.	
Early Learning Systems Change		
Funding Level Changes:	\$258,750	\$279,750

DESIRED OUTCOME: INFORMATION, SERVICES AND SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES

Strategy Areas and Funded Strategies

Educating Families and Caregivers

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

Navigating and Connecting Families to Resources

- Family Support Coordination (prioritized)
- Family Support and Literacy Systems Change (prioritized)

Successes:

After meeting with several entities to determine a grant partner who has the capacity to successfully implement the Language, Literacy and Culture in Tribal Communities Strategy scope of work, a tribal grant agreement was initiated with Navajo Nation Library. Implementation is expected to begin in the third quarter or SFY24.

Family Support and Literacy Systems Change Strategy has had successes in three areas. The first is an addition to the online resource hub. The Navajo Nation Early Childhood Resource Map, a live ArcGIS map of resources for families and partners to access and utilize, has been added. Existing resources utilized by families on the Navajo Nation are mapped out with information including location, mailing address and phone numbers. The map and resource hub was

created by and is maintained by the Program Coordination Specialist, Navajo Project I-LAUNCH Team and a representative from the New Mexico First Born Home Visitation Program.

The second is the region's home-based Child Care Stakeholder Meetings. Strengthening the early care system and finding long term solutions to stabilize child care opportunities for all families in the region has become a priority of systems change work. The meetings have created a space for stakeholders to collaborate and explore solutions to expand child care services by providing health/safety resources, professional development information and technical assistance support to increase the number of home-based child care providers. Through these meetings, the relationships and collaboration with the following stakeholders has strengthened the group's ongoing efforts: Navajo Nation Department of Child Care Development, Arizona Child Care Resource & Referral, Southwest Human Development and the Arizona Department of Economic Security.

The third is the region's annual Diné Early Childhood Summit. The summit returned to an in-person setting this year. The summit has been held for the past five years. It continues to be a successful event for key stakeholders and decision-makers to convene, collaborate and innovate to improve early childhood and family services, early education, early care systems and child welfare. This year's keynote speakers and morning plenary panel had a specific focus on fathers and male role models who have a positive impact on their children, families and communities. Summit sessions that focused on Family Support and Literacy Systems Change included the following:

- Explore the Navajo Nation Early Childhood Resource Map
- Preschool Cooperatives to Increase Quality of Life
- Parent Panel: Early Childhood Priorities on Diné Bikéyah
- Collaborating for the Well-Being of our Children
- Early Literacy and Diné Language Development Roundtable
- Attachment Styles & Indigenous Parenting
- Positive Diné Parenting
- The Significance of Role Models and the Spiritual Power of Children
- Diné Early Childhood Cultural Practices and Teachings

Community conversations, stakeholder feedback and parents' lived experience highlighted at the annual summit continues to inform the regional council's strategic direction.

A government agreement for the Family Support Coordination Strategy was successfully executed, reviewed by the Navajo Nation Department of Justice and signed by the Navajo Nation President with no delays to the grant start date. In addition, one staff member has been hired under the grant. This is a success since the Navajo Nation has a lengthy and intricate hiring process that can sometimes hinder implementation. The grant partner is hopeful to fill the remaining two vacancies soon.

Challenges:

No applications were received for the region's Home Visitation Strategy when the Request for Grant Applications (RFGA) was released in February 2023. The regional council decided to conduct a second release of the RFGA and two applications were received. Due to the re-release, the awarded grant partner has a delayed start in SFY24.

One aspect of the Language, Literacy and Culture in Tribal Communities Strategy is to conduct a Diné (Navajo) Language survey with families and early childhood professionals in the region. The intent of the survey is to determine the need, interest and challenges of accessing Diné language classes and materials for families. A few meetings were held to initiate a government agreement; and implementation looked promising to begin in SFY24. However, it was later determined the potential grant partner would not have the capacity to conduct the survey. The regional director continues to seek university linguistics departments who may be interested in a government agreement to conduct the survey.

Changes:

With the region’s Language, Literacy and Culture in Tribal Communities Strategy, the regional council prioritizes Diné (Navajo) language and cultural practices that support the development of children’s early language and literacy skills. As the strategy is being implemented through the next few years, it is anticipated the grant partner will move from one-time workshops to more consistent and ongoing language learning settings, such as a language nest. A language nest is a community site-based program where children, birth to age 3, are immersed in their Native language. The increase in funding is meant to support this, as well as, additional staff that may needed.

The regional council determined an additional need for the Family Support and Literacy Systems Change Strategy to increase awareness of and access to available services and programs for children birth to age 5, expectant mothers and families. Tribal communities tend to rely more on informal connections of support, care and trust made with family, friends and community. During the pandemic, social media and local media served as an important medium to share information and resources when in-person connections could not be made. Even as tribal communities come out of the pandemic, social media and local media continues to be a medium where families regularly seek to find resources. The regional council determined they would like to build on this asset to increase awareness of and access to available regional services and programs. The increase in funding level is to support this work to create more regionalized content that helps connect families to resources. Content will be regionalized to also reflect Diné culture and language.

Changes:	SFY24	SFY25
Language, Literacy and Culture in Tribal Communities		
Funding Level Changes:	\$141,691	\$200,000
Family Support and Early Literacy Systems Change		
Funding Level Change:	\$65,000	\$80,000
Target Population Change:	Addition of parents, expectant mothers and families to be targeted through social media and local media.	

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

Strategy Areas and Funded Strategies

Professional Development for ECE Professionals

- o First Things First College Scholarships (prioritized)
- o Child Care Health Consultation (prioritized)

Challenges:

Many center-based Quality First centers participating in Child Care Health Consultation follow a 9- to 10-month schedule. They were not available to meet with the grant partner until the end of August or mid-September due to the busy start of the school year. This impacted the ability for centers to complete the required consultation hours as outlined in the Standard of Practice. This is a change many participating centers will have to adjust to. In addition, most participating centers are spread amongst the vast geographic area of the region with hours of traveling in between. Weather and road conditions further hinder travel with the grant partner experiencing unpaved, muddy or flooded roads to reach centers. The Standard of Practice requires in-person visits, however the grant partner has been given flexibility to implement virtual sessions and consultation hours. While this is an approved solution, the grant partner understands some centers may have limited or an unstable internet connection for a rural area.

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:

Regional staff participated in the Navajo Nation Economic Summit and successfully engaged business and economic stakeholders. Staff was able to build awareness about the impact of early childhood on the business community and provide information about the current child care crisis. This event helped build the foundation for future potential partnerships with the business community.

Challenges:

Despite previous efforts to adapt materials for the Navajo Nation region, a few notable stakeholders have expressed their apprehension in sharing our rack cards, printed materials and other content such as social media. They commented that most of the materials did not connect with the region’s people, culture or language. Regional council members have also expressed in meetings that they would prefer more content that better connects to the region.

Changes:

To address the challenge above, the regional council has decided to move some funds from the statewide Media Strategy to the Family Support Systems Change Strategy that will support regional and localized media/social media.

Changes:	SFY24	SFY25
Media		
Funding Level Changes:	\$45,000	\$30,000

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
- Family Support for Children with Developmental Concerns

Health Resource Coordination

- Children’s Health Systems Change

Nutrition and Physical Activity

- Nutrition and Physical Activity

Successes:

A government agreement for the Family Support for Children with Developmental Concerns Strategy was successfully executed, reviewed by the Navajo Nation Department of Justice and signed by the Navajo Nation President with no delays to the grant start date. The grant partner has started implementation right away by enrolling families and holding monthly virtual parent peer support groups.

The region’s annual Diné Early Childhood Summit returned to an in-person setting this year. The summit has been held for the past five years. It continues to be a successful event for key stakeholders and decision-makers to

convene, collaborate and innovate to improve early intervention coordination and children’s health. Summit sessions that focused on Children’s Health Systems Change included the following:

- Autism – The Hidden Blessing
- A Firsthand Account: The Intersection of the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women’s Crisis and Adverse Childhood Experiences
- Collaborating for the Well-Being of our Children
- Diné Parents Taking Action: Culturally Responsive Practices for Diné Parents of Children with Autism
- Systems of Care for Diné Children with Different Abilities
- VacciNative: Community Immunity

Community conversations, stakeholder feedback and parent’s lived experience highlighted at the annual summit continues to inform the regional council’s strategic direction.

Challenges:

No applications were received when the Nutrition and Physical Activity Strategy Request for Grant Applications (RFGA) was released in March 2023. This was likely due to the change in approved curricula identified in the Standard of Practice, which most entities in the region do not currently implement. Instead of re-releasing the RFGA, the regional council decided to seek a government agreement. This would give the regional director more time to meet with a government entity and inform them of the curriculum options, as well as, determine their capacity to take on a new curriculum. A potential grant partner was identified; however, a government agreement has not moved forward.

DESIRED OUTCOME: COORDINATED, INTEGRATED, AND COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM

Strategy Areas and Funded Strategies

Evaluation

- State Wide Evaluation

APPENDIX A

SFY25 Funding Plan – New System Change Planning Document

Navajo Nation Regional Partnership Council

**Navajo Nation Regional Partnership Council -
Family Support and Literacy Systems Change**

<p>Problem to be solved and system to be changed / influenced <i>Clearly describe both the system area (Early Learning, Children’s Health, Family Support and Literacy) in which the work will be occurring and the problem that is being addressed. Include geographic area (regional or statewide) and the target audience.</i></p>	<p><i>System Area:</i> Navigating and Connecting Families to Resources</p>
	<p><i>Problem to address:</i> The regional council determined an additional need for the Family Support and Literacy Systems Change Strategy to increase awareness of and access to available services and programs for children birth to age 5, expectant mothers and families. Tribal communities tend to rely more on informal connections of support, care and trust made with family, friends and community. During the pandemic, social media and local media served as an important medium to share information and resources when in-person connections could not be made. Even as tribal communities come out of the pandemic, social media and local media continues to be a medium where families regularly seek to find resources. The regional council determined they would like to build on this asset to increase awareness of and access to available regional services and programs for parents with children birth to age 5, expectant mothers and families.</p>
	<p><i>Geographic area:</i> Navajo Nation region</p>
	<p><i>Target Audience:</i> Parents and families with children birth to age 5 and expectant mothers</p>
<p>Activities <i>Clearly describe the activities to be conducted to meet identified deliverables and achieve the desired outcome.</i></p> <p><i>Activities are the processes, actions, and events through which the intended outcomes would be achieved; they are the steps in implementing a program. Examples include collaborating with partners, developing training or curriculum materials, conducting training sessions or workshops, and collecting</i></p>	<p><i>Activity 1:</i> Participate in planning meeting(s) convened by FTF staff. The planning team will be composed of regional council representatives and FTF Communications staff. A scope of work will be developed for region specific media content. Content will connect community members to information about FTF, tribal and community supported programs, resources and events. Additionally, content will reflect the region’s community, Diné culture and language.</p>
	<p><i>Activity 2:</i> Once a scope of work is developed and approved by regional council and planning team, the Regional Director will work with FTF Communications staff to procure a vendor who can meet deliverables outlined in the scope of work. A proposal will be submitted by interested vendors through the state procurement system. The proposals will be reviewed by the planning team.</p>

<p><i>and analyzing student performance data.</i></p>	<p>Activity 3: Once a proposal is accepted and approved by the planning team, the vendor will implement the scope of work and provide quarterly reports, including social media engagement data, to the regional director and staff.</p> <p>Activity 4: The regional council will analyze reports at the end of each fiscal year to understand impact. In subsequent years, the regional council will reflect on impact and provide feedback to the vendor regarding content.</p>
<p>Deliverables and Timeline <i>Deliverables are tangible, often process-oriented results or products that must be provided upon completion of a project. Clearly describe the project deliverables, including a timeline for completion of each deliverable.</i></p>	<p>Quarter 1: Scope of Work is created by the planning team. Quarter 2: Vendor submits proposals, this will then determine deliverables and timeline. Quarter 3: Regional content is created and approved by regional council and planning team. Quarter 4 and beyond: Regional content engagement and impact reports are provided every quarter</p>
<p>Expected Impact <i>State the expected impact/ lasting impact of the work. Including the timeline for completion of the project.</i></p>	<p>Expected Impact: Increased awareness of and access to available services and programs for children birth to age 5, expectant mothers and families. It is the intent to see more families and caregivers access programming and services to support their child's education, health and well-being.</p>