

# # FIRST THINGS FIRST

Coconino Region

# IMPACT REPORT 2021

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[FirstThingsFirst.org/Regions/Coconino](https://FirstThingsFirst.org/Regions/Coconino)

90%

of a child's brain growth happens before kindergarten.

## Early childhood matters.

First Things First partners with families and communities to help our state's youngest children prepare for kindergarten and beyond.

Many young children in Arizona face challenges that threaten their healthy development and learning. In the FTF Coconino Region, there are **9,652 children** (under age 6) with **27% of living in poverty**.

Here is how FTF is working to support young children and their families in this region.

“ We are our child's first teacher, therefore it's imperative that we teach and share what we want them to emulate in the world. Providing a foundation, rooted in values, identity and confidence in who they are and where they come from, early on will increase our child's chances to be successful contributing members of society.”

**Hannah Honani**

*2021 FTF Coconino Champion for Young Children*

## FTF Coconino Region Strategic Priorities



### Strengthening Families and Early Literacy

Families are a child's first and best teachers. FTF programs in the Coconino region give parents choices for how they want to support their child's health and learning. The region offers voluntary **home visiting** programs that provide comprehensive, one-on-one support for families with young children. Families of newborns throughout the region and across the state also receive the **Arizona Parent Kit**, with helpful information and resources for new parents.



### Quality Preschool and Child Care

Children who attend high-quality early learning programs go on to do better in school and are more likely to graduate. The Coconino region provides funding for child care providers and preschool programs to participate in FTF's **Quality First**. Providers benefit from training, coaching and a wide range of evidence-based supports to improve the quality of their early learning programs in ways that help children learn, grow and thrive. The region also funds **Quality First Scholarships** to help low-income families afford quality early learning for their young children.



### Preventive Health

Undetected or untreated health issues can impact learning later on. Left unaddressed, developmental delays and chronic medical conditions can contribute to serious learning problems. FTF works to support the health and development of young children in the Coconino region by funding **developmental and sensory screenings** to detect vision, hearing and developmental issues and help prevent later learning challenges. **Oral health screenings and fluoride varnishes** are also offered to protect children against childhood tooth decay, a leading cause of school absences.



## High-quality preschool provides nurturing environment for Flagstaff girl

Veronica Gonzalez is a single mother of five children. She is an immigrant who came to Flagstaff to provide the best life possible for her children. Gonzalez knew one of the steps to a better life would be to enroll them in high-quality education.

After researching pre-kindergarten programs in Flagstaff, she wanted to send her youngest, Sarahi, to San Francisco de Asis Catholic School's preschool, but knew she would struggle to afford the program.

"I looked at the tuition rates and knew that I would have to make severe sacrifices in order to send Sarahi to this amazing school," Gonzalez said. "Then, I realized that because of the Quality First program, I could apply for a scholarship. The Quality First and First Things First information was right there on the San Francisco de Asis website."

The First Things First Coconino Regional Council funds the Quality First program, which the preschool participates in. Gonzalez qualified for a Quality First scholarship, which allowed her to enroll Sarahi at the school.

FTF's Quality First program partners with child care and preschool providers across Arizona to improve the quality of early learning. Quality First funds quality improvements that research proves help children thrive, such as training for teachers to expand their skills and to help create learning environments that nurture the emotional, social and academic development of every child. The preschool has a five-star rating, the highest rating available through the program.

Quality First scholarships help eligible families afford quality early care and education, but availability is often limited.

Gonzalez especially liked the supportive environment the teachers and staff provide at San Francisco de Asis. She knew her daughter needed the extra attention after having experienced several adverse childhood experiences early in life.

"It is the reason I wanted to leave and come to Flagstaff," Gonzalez said. "I was worried that her experiences as a child would have long-lasting, negative effects on her and our family's life, but because she is in such a nurturing environment, she is doing really well, and she loves her school."

"I looked at the tuition rates and knew that I would have to make severe sacrifices in order to send Sarahi to this amazing school. Then, I realized that because of the Quality First program, I could apply for a scholarship."

—Veronica Gonzalez, parent

For Gonzalez, it has made all the difference. Knowing that Quality First was able to provide a scholarship meant that she was able to prioritize her care for her children in other ways, like providing them with healthy meals.

"I hope that Sarahi and other young children who grew up under harsh conditions will always have the opportunity to have a successful life," Gonzalez said.



 Read more FTF stories at [FirstThingsFirst.org/Region-Stories](https://www.FirstThingsFirst.org/Region-Stories)

# FTF Coconino Regional Partnership Council

The FTF Coconino Regional Partnership Council is made up of volunteers who study the unique needs of the local community and decide how funds should be used to best support the healthy development and early learning of young children birth to age 5. FTF invests in proven

programs and innovative strategies through grants to community organizations that provide services to children and families. Some of the programs in this region include Parents As Teachers, Smart Support and HealthySteps.

## FTF Coconino SFY21 Total Regional Program Expenditures

Quality Child Care and Preschool

\$1,123,679

Preventive Health

\$526,314

Strengthening Families

\$433,259

Parent and Community Awareness

\$95,071

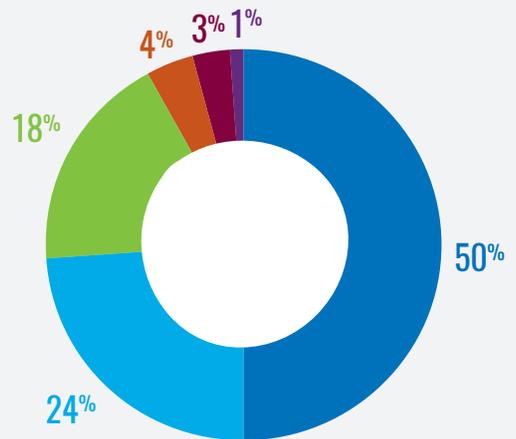
Research and Evaluation

\$81,081

Workforce Development and Training

\$25,766

**Total** \$2,285,170



## FTF Coconino Regional Partnership Council and Staff

*Chair*  
**Kelly McCue**

*Vice Chair*  
**Emily Patch**

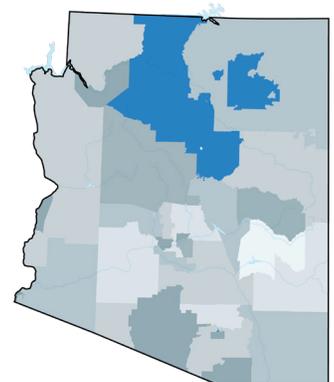
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*The **FTF Coconino Region** includes most of Coconino County, minus the Navajo Nation and the Hualapai Reservation, plus Winslow, the Hopi Reservation, and the Kaibab Paiute Reservation. The Havasupai Reservation is also part of the region. While the majority of the region's young children live in or near Flagstaff, many live in towns or rural areas. The FTF Coconino Region includes Legislative Districts 6 and 7. (Legislative districts are not necessarily congruent with regional boundaries.)*

Learn more at  
[FirstThingsFirst.org/Regions/Coconino](https://www.firstthingsfirst.org/Regions/Coconino)