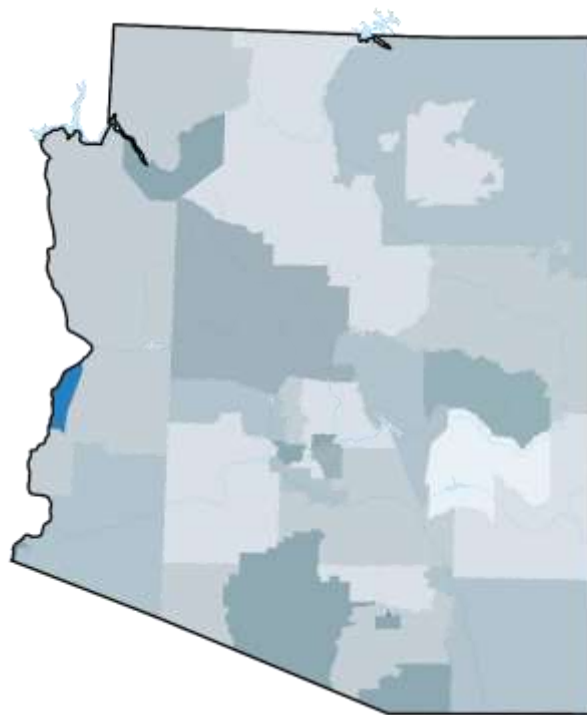


FIRST THINGS FIRST

Colorado River Indian Tribes Regional Partnership Council



State Fiscal Years 2024 – 2027 Strategic Plan

Presented to the First Things First Board
January 10-11, 2023



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.

Colorado River Indian Tribes Regional Partnership Council

Norma Ray, chair, early childhood educator

Elvira Aspa, vice chair, parent of a child age 5 years or younger

Delise Beavers, representative of a philanthropic organization

Gloria Flores-Lopez, member of the business community

Daris Laffoon, tribal member representative

Monica Rosnagle, child care provider

Brad Sale, public school administrator

Penny Swarthout, representative of the faith community

open, at-large representative

open, health services provider

open, at-large representative

Tara Gene, Regional Director



FIRST THINGS FIRST

Equity Vision Statement

Advancing equity is essential to First Things First’s mission and we aspire to embody our vision for diversity, equity and inclusion through all facets of our work.

To be effective partners and contribute to a world in which Arizona’s children birth to age 5 of all backgrounds have access to high-quality early childhood experiences, we must create and maintain an equitable workplace, work in partnership with the communities we serve and ensure that our funding practices align with our equity-centered values, particularly focusing on those who are most in need.

First Things First recognizes the pervasive inequities historically and currently faced by the Black, Indigenous and Latino communities and all people of color, and we strive for a world in which they will thrive. We also recognize that individuals and groups have been marginalized due to factors such as race, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, mental and physical ability, national origin, income, language and religious affiliation and that people of color are particularly affected across these factors. We commit to increasing our understanding about these and all matters that create inequities and to bettering our actions internally and among the communities we serve.

This important work starts from within. As such, we strive to cultivate and maintain a workplace that:

- Reflects the diversity of our state within all levels of the organization (i.e., staff, leadership, regional partnership councils and state Board)
- Cultivates a community in which all members are welcome, seen, heard and valued
- Supports and expects each individual to engage in candid, introspective learning about equity and inclusion
- Engages an intentionally diverse, representative set of voices in key decision-making, centering on the voices of families and the community whenever possible
- Employs equitable workplace practices that yield high satisfaction, morale and career success consistently across all demographic groups
- Responds swiftly to address workplace inequities
- Ensures that our work as a funding organization – from planning to implementation to assessment – reflects our commitment to equity

Through our DEI strategic priorities and individual growth, we will be better able to meet the needs of Arizona’s youngest children, serve as a trusted ally for equity and fulfill our vision that all Arizona’s children are ready to succeed in school and in life.

Approved December 2021

Colorado River Indian Tribes Regional Partnership Council SFY24 – 27 Strategic Plan

Prioritized Strategy Areas	Strategy	Identified Need	Target Service Unit(s)* <i>*If applicable, identify targeted population and/or geographic areas</i>	Desired System Outcome
Quality First And Professional Development for ECE Professionals	Quality First Coaching and Incentives <i>(Statewide)</i>	1) More of Arizona’s early care and education (ECE) programs need to provide high-quality learning environments. 2) ECE programs, at administrative and classroom levels, require access to a system of equitable support to engage in quality improvement to achieve and sustain high-quality practices. 3) Families need reliable information about ECE program quality in order to make informed decisions when seeking child care.	No TSU	Access to high-quality, culturally responsive early care and education.
	Quality First Academy <i>(Statewide)</i>			Well-prepared, highly skilled and appropriately compensated professionals.
Access to Quality Care	Quality First Scholarships <i>(Statewide)</i>	The high cost of quality early care and education programs limits access for families due to affordability. High-quality child care positively impacts a child’s development and readiness for school.	No TSU	Access to high-quality, culturally responsive early care and education.
Educating Families and Caregivers	Community Based Language and Literacy	1) Lack of opportunities for parents and children to participate in hands-on, modeling, or targeted language and literacy parenting workshops. 2) Lack of awareness of the importance of early language and literacy.	Number of workshops conducted 50	Information, services and support for families.
Professional Development for ECE Professionals	Child Care Health Consultation <i>(Statewide)</i>	ECE Providers do not have enough access to information and guidance on how to implement consistent high-quality health and safety policies and practices.	No TSU	Well-prepared, highly skilled and appropriately compensated professionals.
Professional Development for ECE Professionals	Early Learning Systems Change <i>(FTF-Directed)</i>	See Appendix A	No TSU	Information, services and supports for families.
Other Strategy Areas	Strategy	Identified Need	Target Service Unit	Desired System Outcome
Language and Literacy	Book Distribution	Some families lack access to developmentally appropriate books.	Number of children currently enrolled 40	Information, services and supports for families.

Nutrition and Physical Activity	Nutrition and Physical Activity	Some families and caregivers lack skills on how to implement healthy nutrition and physical activity practices in their homes.	Number of parents/ caregivers who participated in the series 25	Access to high-quality preventive and continuous health care.
--	---------------------------------	--	--	---

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 Colorado River Indian Tribes (CRIT) Regional Partnership Council developed its SFY24-27 strategic plan using a strategic planning committee made up of regional council members with guidance from a consultant specializing in tribal communities. The regional council members utilized data reports, community input through family events and two meetings with tribal council members to collectively identify the needs of children birth to age 5 and families. The strategic planning committee’s goal was to better understand the needs of the community, the impact of the regional council’s current strategies and the readiness of the community to engage with FTF-funded programs. The CRIT Reservation spans Arizona and California, with 84% of the reservation located in Arizona. The CRIT region includes the Arizona part of the CRIT Reservation and the town of Parker, Arizona. Parker is the closest town with access to services for families and is partially on the CRIT reservation, and this creates a blended community of tribal and non-tribal members. Many of the programs are open to everyone in both communities. The tribe consists of four distinct tribes: the Mohave, Chemehuevi, Hopi and Navajo. With four different tribes, the regional council understands that not all of the tribal members have the same cultural practices and languages, which can create a challenge in preserving the culture and languages. The regional council always encourages programs to integrate any tribal teachings that will tie into their lessons to help preserve culture and language. In addition, the regional council’s plan includes recommendations for programs to offer evening or weekend sessions to accommodate families’ work schedules. The regional council expects strategy implementation to include activities provided in the housing hubs of the region to alleviate barriers, such as transportation, for families to access services. The regional council developed its strategic plan with intentionality around the flexible implementation of strategies to have the greatest impact on children and increased engagement with the community.

Regional Allocation and Proposed Funding Plan Summary SFY24 – 27
Colorado River Indian Tribes Regional Partnership Council

Allocations and Funding Sources	2024	2025	2026	2027
FY Allocation	\$260,144	\$260,144	\$277,072	\$277,072
Population Based Allocation	\$174,922	\$174,922	\$174,922	\$174,922
Discretionary Allocation	\$85,222	\$85,222	\$102,150	\$102,150
Carry Forward From Previous Year	\$34,931	\$37,359	\$20,459	\$20,487
Total Regional Council Funds Available	\$295,075	\$297,503	\$297,531	\$297,559

Strategies	Proposed Allotted	Proposed Allotted	Proposed Allotted	Proposed Allotted
Early Learning Systems Change	\$46,508	\$91,079	\$91,079	\$91,079
Quality First Academy	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000
Quality First Coaching & Incentives	\$19,330	\$19,330	\$19,330	\$19,330
Quality First Scholarships	\$104,000	\$59,429	\$59,429	\$59,429
Child Care Health Consultation	\$6,800	\$6,800	\$6,800	\$6,800
Nutrition and Physical Activity	\$62,000	\$62,000	\$62,000	\$62,000
Book Distribution	\$6,000	\$6,000	\$6,000	\$6,000
Community Based Language and Literacy	\$65,000	\$65,000	\$65,000	\$65,000
Statewide Evaluation	\$11,506	\$11,506	\$11,506	\$11,506
Total	\$322,144	\$322,144	\$322,144	\$322,144

Total Unallotted/Unawarded/Unexpended*: (\$27,069) (\$24,641) (\$24,613) (\$24,585)

Fiscal Year	2020	2024	2025	2026	2027
% to Board Priorities***		75.31 %	75.31 %	75.31 %	75.31 %
% to Quality First**	8.91%	8.42 %	8.42 %	8.42 %	8.42 %

Fiscal Year	4 Year Average
% to Board Priorities***	75.31%
% to Quality First**	8.42%

* 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.

The CRIT Regional Council has maintained their support for Quality First in the region, and this plan maintains participation for the same number of early care and education providers. The percentage is lower based on the lower costs projected to continue implementing the Quality First strategies in the region.

***Justification for not meeting the 80% allotment to Board Priorities: During the strategic planning process, the regional council was provided with information, guidance and technical assistance regarding the First Things First Strategic Plan, State Fiscal Years 2024-2027. This included the Board’s six priority areas and Foundational Guidance #1, #2 and #3 related to Quality First and Quality First Scholarships. The regional council understood the importance of aligning with the statewide strategic direction as they assessed data about local needs and identified priorities as well as strategies. Ultimately, the regional council was faced with significant capacity and infrastructure issues including a lack of existing child care programs i.e. a childcare desert. As a result, the region did not meet the recommended funding level for the Board-identified

priorities and supports funding other local priorities. The regional council will continue to assess and look for future opportunities to continue to align with the Board’s priority areas and support Quality First.

The CRIT Regional Council’s SFY24-27 Strategic Plan allocates over 75% of its funding to Board Priorities. Two strategies, Book Distribution and Nutrition and Physical Activity, were deemed critical by the regional council to support school readiness in the region, but are outside of the Board Priorities, in addition to the Statewide Evaluation strategy. The CRIT Regional Council has increase their funding plan percentage allotted to Board priorities greatly from the current/previous strategic plan.

According to the 2022 CRIT Regional Needs and Assets Report, AZ MERIT data from the Arizona Department of Education show that 61% of third graders are not meeting proficiency standards for English Language Arts, compared to 54% of third graders statewide. The CRIT Regional Council would like to focus on supporting children with early literacy opportunities. They will be funding Community Based Language and Literacy to give families opportunities to attend workshops and events that help educate and provide opportunities to engage their children in language and early literacy. As supplemental support, the Book Distribution Strategy will give children a library of books to support their literacy development at home. Based off the CRIT community engagement survey, many families don’t have age appropriate books to read to their children. In addition, the CRIT Regional Council wanted to provide opportunities for families to engage in less screen time for their child and to build opportunities for parent/child bonding.

Obesity is associated to health outcomes, such as higher risks of diabetes, cancer and heart disease. From the 2022 CRIT Regional Needs and Assets report, 37% of CRIT children 2 years and older are obese or overweight, and the rate has increased overall from 29% in 2015. The rate is higher than the state average, and this caused concern for the regional council. The CRIT Regional Council conducted a Caregiver survey within the region from November 2021 – February 2022. According to the Caregiver survey, when caregivers were asked what types of support they feel they most need to help with their child/children, nutrition and physical activity opportunities was one of the top services that caregivers indicated. With the experience and data available to them, there was a need to support families in developing a healthier lifestyle and support healthy child development. The regional council chose the Nutrition and Physical Activity strategy as one of their top priorities to continue.

Exhibit 5.6. Types of services and support caregivers indicate they need

Service	Percent
Child Development	53%
Nutrition/Physical Activity	44%
Early literacy	44%
Behavior	40%
Health Services	22%
Guardianship	18%
Special Education	13%
Legal	13%
Other	0%

*Note: Survey respondents (n=45) could select multiple responses
Harder+Company Community Research. (2022). [FTF CRIT Region Caregiver Survey]. Unpublished data.*

APPENDIX A
SFY24 Funding Plan – System Change Planning Document
Colorado River Indian Tribes Regional Partnership Council

**Colorado River Indian Tribes Regional Partnership Council -
 Early Learning System Change Strategy**

Problem to be solved and system to be changed / influenced	<p><i>System Area:</i> Increased Access to High-Quality Early Care and Education Programs</p>
	<p><i>Problem to address:</i> The Colorado River Indian Tribes (CRIT) region, including the Town of Parker, has only one child care facility for children ages birth to 5 years old, outside of CRIT Head Start which serves children who are ages 3 to 5 and who meet eligibility requirements. The current child care center is at full capacity with a waiting list. Prior to the pandemic, CRIT Head Start had the ability to have 11 classrooms open. Now, the Head Start only has three classrooms open due to the lack of staff. With many parents and children without alternatives, families have to explore other options for child care which could mean other family members or friends, or other unregulated care, taking care of their children in the region.</p> <p>To help address this issue, the CRIT Regional Partnership Council plans to work with a consultant to evaluate the resources in the community/region and build collective collaboration to develop regional options to help address the child care desert issue. The CRIT Regional Partnership Council sees that this is not just an individual group’s issue but a community issue and should involve other entities within the community to help develop solutions and collaboration to alleviate the need for child care.</p>
	<p><i>Geographic area:</i> CRIT region</p>
	<p><i>Target Audience:</i> Childcare community, which include providers, governmental entities, potential funding sources, parents and community members.</p>
Expected Impact	<p><i>Expected Impact:</i> The community will collaborate to come up with solutions or options for families for child care within the region. In return, this will impact the ability of families and children birth to 5 years old to access child care.</p>
	<p><i>Timeline:</i> SFY24: Hire a consultant to help evaluate the resources in the region, hold community meetings to develop potential collaborations and provide solutions to address the child care desert.</p> <p>SFY25-27: The CRIT Regional Partnership Council will review the possible solutions discovered in SFY24 and decide which direction the council would like to take as part of the collective effort to address the issue.</p>