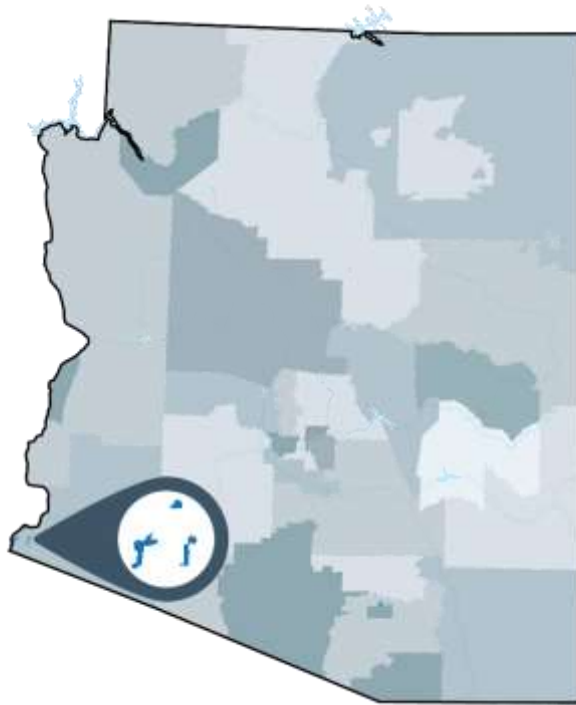


FIRST THINGS FIRST

Cocopah Tribe 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.

Cocopah Tribe Regional Partnership Council

Wilana Ortega, chair, parent of a child age 5 years or younger

Elizabeth Renaud, vice chair, early childhood educator

Esteban Escobar, member of a philanthropic organization

Joena Ezroj, member of the business community

Elizabeth Garcia, public school administrator

June Stillings, member of the faith community

Paula Twist Koolick, at-large representative

Sheena Alvarez, at-large representative

Luke Clemence, health services provider

Diana Navarro, at-large representative

open, child care provider

Nohemi Ortega, 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

Cocopah Tribe 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 Zip code 85350 (Full support of QF in the region due to there being only one eligible QF center in the region.)	Access to high-quality, culturally responsive early care and education.
	Quality First Academy <i>(Statewide)</i>			Well-prepared, highly skilled and appropriately compensated professionals.
Educating Families and Caregivers	Family Support and Literacy Systems Change <i>(FTF-Directed)</i>	See Appendix A	No TSU	Information, services and support for families.
Educating Families and Caregivers	Home Visitation	Parents, grandparents and caregivers in the Cocopah region need information and support to increase their knowledge, skills, and attitudes related to parenting and enhance their own health and well-being (e.g. managing stress, depression, accessing public support services, etc.). Additionally, access to regular screening for the early detection of children's developmental, vision and hearing impairments is a challenge.	Number of families currently enrolled 15-20	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 Zip code 85350	Well-prepared, highly skilled and appropriately compensated professionals.
Other Strategy Areas	Strategy	Identified Need	Target Service Unit	Desired System Outcome
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. The prevalence of childhood obesity in the Cocopah region is 25%. After implementing an awareness campaign about	Number of parents/ caregivers who participated in the series 15	Access to high-quality preventive and continuous health care.

		the importance of healthy lifestyles, the community is ready to engage in more formalized learning opportunities.		
Bridge from ECE to Kindergarten	Transition to Kindergarten	Children with limited experience in preschool settings need support to help ease the transition and adjustment period of entering kindergarten. The transition to kindergarten for children in the Cocopah Region represents leaving the reservation for the very first time to attend school.	Number of children served 15	Coordinated, integrated, and comprehensive systems.

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 Cocopah Regional Partnership Council has developed the SFY24-27 Strategic Plan through a holistic approach that considered the most current and greatest needs of children ages birth to 5 and their families. Major priorities were identified using the Elements of a Healthy Tribal Community framework (developed by Arizona’s Tribes in partnership with Inter Tribal Council of Arizona and Vitalyst Health Foundation 2020) and gathering data from formal reports, history and the cultural practice of storytelling and conversation. The identified priorities included supporting families and caregivers in parenting practices, healthy child development and transitioning to kindergarten off the reservation.

The strategies selected for funding respond to the multiple high risk factors of families of young children in the region. These risk factors include: 59% of children in the Cocopah Tribe region are living under the poverty level, far more than the state (23%); 61% of households with children ages birth to 5 are single female parent households or grandparents raising grandchildren; and, 25% of children in the region are overweight or obese. Also, the Cocopah Tribe region is comprised of three noncontiguous regions: the East, North and West Reservations, causing isolation between the three areas. Additionally, the region is facing a post pandemic crisis of high staff turnover, causing gaps and continuous changes in family support services.

Due to the compounding risk factors, every child in the Cocopah Tribe region is in need of intensive services to support their early childhood development. The strategies presented in this plan are intensive and targeted to serve all children ages birth to 5 and their families in the region, focusing on cognitive, physical and social emotional health and well-being. Furthermore, the Regional Council through a Family Support Systems Change strategy will address staffing issues in the region with the goal of providing culturally appropriate, continuous and coordinated family support services.

**Regional Allocation and Proposed Funding Plan Summary SFY24 – 27
Cocopah Tribe Regional Partnership Council**

Allocations and Funding Sources		2024	2025	2026	2027
FY Allocation		\$150,001	\$150,001	\$150,001	\$150,001
Population Based Allocation		\$30,811	\$30,811	\$30,811	\$30,811
Discretionary Allocation		\$119,190	\$119,190	\$119,190	\$119,190
Carry Forward From Previous Year		\$132,812	\$137,524	\$133,315	\$129,107
Total Regional Council Funds Available		\$282,813	\$287,525	\$283,316	\$279,108
Strategies		Proposed Allotted	Proposed Allotted	Proposed Allotted	Proposed Allotted
Quality First Academy		\$500	\$500	\$500	\$500
Quality First Coaching & Incentives		\$9,350	\$9,350	\$9,350	\$9,350
Transition to Kindergarten		\$30,000	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$30,000
Child Care Health Consultation		\$3,400	\$3,400	\$3,400	\$3,400
Nutrition and Physical Activity		\$40,000	\$40,000	\$40,000	\$40,000
Family Support & Literacy Systems Change		\$14,500	\$14,500	\$14,500	\$14,500
Home Visitation		\$106,580	\$106,580	\$106,580	\$106,580
Statewide Evaluation		\$6,229	\$6,229	\$6,229	\$6,229
Total		\$210,559	\$210,559	\$210,559	\$210,559
Total Unallotted/Unawarded/Unexpended:		\$72,254	\$76,966	\$72,757	\$68,549
Fiscal Year	2020	2024	2025	2026	2027
% to Board Priorities**		63.79 %	63.79 %	63.79 %	63.79 %
% to Quality First*	0.00%	6.29 %	6.29 %	6.29 %	6.29 %
Fiscal Year	4 Year Average				
% to Board Priorities**	63.79%				
% to Quality First*	6.29%				

*Includes Quality First Academy, Quality First Coaching and Incentives, and Child Care Health Consultation.

**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 Cocopah Regional Partnership Council engaged in a thorough process for their SFY24-27 strategic plan. They continue to prioritize strategies that align with the Board priorities and, without taking away any focus from those important priorities, the regional council has also taken into consideration certain needs that were exasperated as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly in the area of health. The Nutrition and Physical Activity Strategy (NAPA) will be funded to address the high prevalence of childhood obesity in the region, estimated to be at 25% for children ages 2 to 5 years during 2020 (according to the 2022 Regional Needs and Assets Report). NAPA is also the continuation of a health awareness campaign funded by the Cocopah Regional Partnership Council during the SFY19-23 strategic plan. The campaign was a first step to address childhood obesity in the region. Now the region is ready to engage in more formalized nutrition and physical activity opportunities that will support families in leading healthy lifestyles.

Additionally, the Cocopah Tribe does not have its own school district or any K-12 school within its reservation, which means children entering Kindergarten will experience leaving the reservation to enter a new public school system for the very first time. Kindergarteners and their families

need support to make this transition successful. The Transition to Kindergarten Strategy will provide children and their families the opportunity to become familiar with the school system and school campus, to learn classroom routines, be provided with opportunities for socialization and learn about family involvement opportunities.

Of the eight strategies the regional council is proposing in the SFY24-27 strategic plan, it is only the two strategies described above and the statewide evaluation strategy which do not align with the Board prioritized areas. However, the data and context provided supports the regional council's recommendations to prioritize the need to implement the two strategies to support the healthy development and transition to off-reservation school systems for young children in the Cocopah Tribe Region.

APPENDIX A
SFY24 Funding Plan – System Change Planning Document
Cocopah Tribe Regional Partnership Council

**Cocopah Tribe Regional Partnership Council -
 Family Support and Literacy Systems Change**

Problem to be solved and system to be changed / influenced	<p><i>System Area:</i> Service Coordination</p>
	<p><i>Problem to address:</i> Families are experiencing significant challenges and barriers to participating in programs and services. There is significant and detrimental staff turn-over. Service providers in the region leave after a short time and families are being impacted by this constant transition. Additionally, families have reported feeling overwhelmed by the multiple number of providers who contact them for services. The Cocopah Regional Council has identified and prioritized the need to strengthen family support professionals and providers in the region in their work to engage families in services and to reduce staff turn-over.</p> <p>In order to address this need a coalition will be developed to provide support to family service providers in the region on culturally appropriate practices and history and opportunities to reflect with reliable community elders and leaders on the particular challenges faced when serving families. The coalition will also be the conduit to convene family support professionals to collaborate and coordinate their services to better serve families.</p> <p>Additionally, a “Grow Your Own” system will be developed to promote early childhood professions among high school students as well as adults in the region. This approach will be in collaboration with the Cocopah Education Department and the Center for Vocational Training. Opportunities to volunteer within the family support programs in the region will be arranged to expose Cocopah members to these professions.</p>
	<p><i>Geographic area:</i> Cocopah Region</p>
	<p><i>Target Audience:</i> Family Support Professionals in the Cocopah Region</p>
Expected Impact	<p><i>Expected Impact:</i> The expected outcome of this system change strategy is improved family referral and enrollment into programs, as well as the retention, coordination and collaboration of family support professionals in the region that will result in a strong system to better serve families.</p>
	<p><i>Timeline:</i> SFY24 Quarter 1 – Develop/start coalition with family support professionals in the region. Develop team of elders and leaders who will provide guidance to family support professionals. Establish trust and relationship among family support professionals that will allow for coordination of services.</p> <p>SFY24 Quarter 2 – Begin collaboration with Cocopah Education Department and Center for Vocational Training to begin promotion of the Early Childhood and Family Support professions.</p>

SFY24 – Quarter 3 – Continue collaboration and coordination of services between family support professionals. Begin referral system development.

SFY24 – Quarter 4 – Continue all activities from previous quarters.