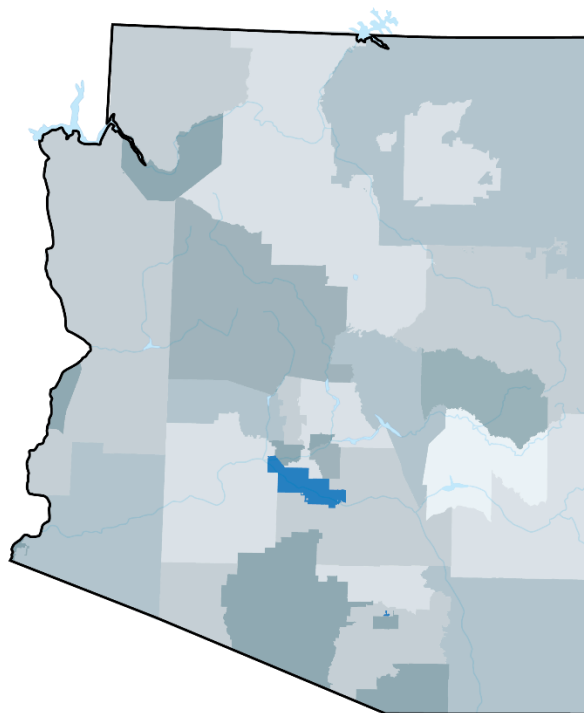




**Gila River Indian Community Regional Partnership Council**  
Population birth through age 5: 1,432



**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.

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#### **Gila River Indian Community Regional Partnership Council**

**Sandra Nasewytewa**, chair, member of the business community

**Gleebah Enos**, vice chair, at-large representative

**Deborah Chadwick**, early childhood educator

**Priscilla Foote**, health services provider

**Kami Hart**, at-large representative

**Annette Lewis**, representative of the faith community

**Elisia Manuel**, representative of a philanthropic organization

open, child care provider

open, parent of a child age 5 years or younger

open, public school administrator

open, at-large representative

**Ember Tahy**, regional director, First Things First

**Amber Martin**, administrative specialist, First Things First

**Gila River Indian Community Regional Partnership Council**  
**Promoting Equity and Supporting Under-Resourced/Underserved Children and Their Families**

The Gila River Indian Community Regional Partnership Council collaborated with both the Gila River Indian Community (GRIC) tribal government and Gila River Health Care to identify and prioritize the needs of families residing in the Gila River Communities. This included identifying the needs of under-resourced and underserved children and their families, especially those most vulnerable populations such as single-parent households, teen parents, grandparents raising grandchildren and those families living in rural isolation. Data from the Regional Needs and Assets Report demonstrates that nearly three-quarters (74%) of young children in the Gila River Indian Community Region live in a single-parent household, a higher proportion than in all Arizona reservations combined (64%). More than half (54%) of households with young children in the region are single-female households, a proportion more than twice that of Arizona overall (24%). Of the children living in a grandparent's household in the region, close to two-thirds (65%) live with a grandparent who is responsible for them. Additionally, a higher proportion of births in the region were to mothers who were younger than 18 (6%) and younger than 20 (15%) compared to births across the state (2% and 6%, respectively).

Based on the focused discussions with the tribe and the available data, the regional council prioritized those strategies that had access to, and are anticipated to have the greatest impact on, the aforementioned vulnerable populations. Identified strategies include: Well-Child and Family Care (WCFC), Home Visitation, Family, Friends and Neighbor Care, Quality First and Quality First Scholarships. In implementation of these strategies, the regional council will specifically target teen parents, grandparents raising grandchildren, single female parents and care providers in isolated communities within the region.

The Well-Child and Family Care Strategy will assist and support families in navigating potential barriers within the health system. The regional council plans to serve 100 children through WCFC's tiered system that is offered through Zero to Three's Healthy Steps program. The regional council is very excited to see this strategy at work, for it will not only transform the GRIC health system culture but also engage families prenatally and support families that are in need of further services to better their overall well-being. Historically, the Well-Child and Family Care Strategy has been very successful with engaging teen parents and providing support early in pregnancy to age five.

The Home Visitation Strategy will provide resources and offer in-home support to both teen parents and first-time parents. The regional council will serve 35 children through the Parents As Teachers Home Visitation model.

The Family, Friends and Neighbor Care Strategy will provide support and serve grandparents, and other non-parental caregivers, raising children in GRIC, especially those providing services in rural isolated communities. In addition to supporting caregivers, the Family, Friends and Neighbor Care Strategy is anticipated to increase collaboration between regional caregivers and the GRIC Education and Health departments, which will supplement by providing education on such topics as childhood obesity and healthy lifestyles, and supporting families on their child's transition to kindergarten with consistency and limited absences.

Finally, in alignment with the GRIC's tribal priorities, the regional council has chosen to support culture and language preservation. The Language, Literacy and Culture in Tribal Communities Strategy will support current activities and programs that target language and culture specific to GRIC's cultural values. This particular strategy will look to expand current programs that support families through book drives, professional development in GRIC's culture and traditions and extend to community events that further promote language, literacy and culture.

**Regional Allocation and Proposed Funding Plan Summary SFY24 – SFY27**  
**Gila River Indian Community Regional Partnership Council**

| Allocations and Funding Sources                      | 2024               | 2025               | 2026               | 2027               |
|--|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| FY Allocation  | \$574,373          | \$574,373          | \$574,279          | \$574,279          |
| Population Based Allocation                          | \$424,498          | \$424,498          | \$424,498          | \$424,498          |
| Discretionary Allocation                             | \$149,875          | \$149,875          | \$149,781          | \$149,781          |
| Carry Forward From Previous Year                     | \$773,916          | \$839,519          | \$774,229          | \$595,964          |
| <b>Total Regional Council Funds Available</b>        | <b>\$1,348,289</b> | <b>\$1,413,892</b> | <b>\$1,348,508</b> | <b>\$1,170,243</b> |
| Strategies   | Allotted           | Proposed Allotted  | Proposed Allotted  | Proposed Allotted  |
| Quality First Academy                                | \$2,000            | \$2,000            | \$2,000            | \$2,000            |
| Quality First Coaching & Incentives                  | \$58,700           | \$58,700           | \$58,700           | \$58,700           |
| Quality First Scholarships                           | \$228,800          | \$228,800          | \$228,800          | \$228,800          |
| Child Care Health Consultation                       | \$13,600           | \$13,600           | \$13,600           | \$13,600           |
| Well Child and Family Care                           | \$150,000          | \$120,000          | \$120,000          | \$120,000          |
| Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care                    | \$30,000           | \$30,000           | \$30,000           | \$30,000           |
| Home Visitation                                      | \$200,000          | \$200,000          | \$200,000          | \$200,000          |
| Language, Literacy and Culture in Tribal Communities | \$45,597           | \$75,597           | \$75,597           | \$75,597           |
| Statewide Evaluation                                 | \$23,847           | \$23,847           | \$23,847           | \$23,847           |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>\$752,544</b>   | <b>\$752,544</b>   | <b>\$752,544</b>   | <b>\$752,544</b>   |
| <b>Total Unallotted/Unawarded/Unexpended:*</b>       | <b>\$595,745</b>   | <b>\$661,348</b>   | <b>\$595,964</b>   | <b>\$417,699</b>   |

| Fiscal Year           | 2020           | 2024    | 2025    | 2026    | 2027    |
|-----------------------|----------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| % to Board Priorities |                | 76.89 % | 80.88 % | 80.88 % | 80.88 % |
| % to Quality First**  | 7.46%          | 9.87 %  | 9.87 %  | 9.87 %  | 9.87 %  |
| Fiscal Year           | 4 Year Average |         |         |         |         |
| % to Board Priorities | 79.88%         |         |         |         |         |
| % to Quality First**  | 9.87%          |         |         |         |         |

\* 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**  
**GILA RIVER INDIAN COMMUNITY 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)

***Successes:***

In State Fiscal Year 2024 (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.

***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 are located in the Gila River Indian Community. 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, regional partnership councils had to consider the regional impact the reduction would have and make decisions to ensure that reductions in funding do not disrupt the system in significant ways.

**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)

**Successes:**

The regional partnership council engaged in productive conversations and the Tribal Education Department was identified to be a potential partner on implementing Language, Literacy, and Culture in Tribal Communities Strategy. These conversations resulted in the scope of work and standards of practice being reviewed to potentially begin offering funding for the strategy in the community.

After the community lifted all COVID-19 pandemic restrictions in March 2023, the Home Visitation Strategy grantee was permitted to go back into families' homes which resulted in increased engagement among program participants.

**Challenges:**

There was a delay in the start of the Language, Literacy and Culture in Tribal Communities Strategy. The regional council needed more time to further develop their intent for this strategy, prescribe some of the scope of work specifications and identify a potential grant partner within the Gila River Indian Community to enter into an agreement with implementation.

**Changes:**

Due to delay in contracting for the Language, Literacy and Culture in Tribal Communities Strategy, the SFY24 allotment was prorated for six months. The remaining \$30,000 was moved to Well Child Family Care Strategy as a one-time cost to train staff in Healthy Steps in SFY24. Funding for SFY25 reflects the full year of funding.

| Changes: | SFY24 | SFY25 |
|----------|-------|-------|
|----------|-------|-------|

**Language, Literacy and Culture in Tribal Communities**

|                        |          |          |
|------------------------|----------|----------|
| Funding Level Changes: | \$45,597 | \$75,597 |
|------------------------|----------|----------|

**DESIRED OUTCOME: ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY PREVENTATIVE AND CONTINUOUS HEALTH CARE.****Strategy Areas and Funded Strategies****Health Resource Coordination**

- Well Child Family Care

**Successes:**

The grantee is now fully staffed and the Healthy Steps programming is being implemented.

**Challenges:**

The grantee had challenges with staffing and there was a delay in the training for the newly hired staff provided by ZERO TO THREE, the national office that supports the implementation of the Healthy Steps program with consultation, training and technical assistance. Due to SFY24 as the ramp-up year and having some initial training costs of \$30,000 for Healthy Steps, SFY25 will have a \$30,000 decrease as the training costs are no longer needed.

| Changes: | SFY24 | SFY25 |
|----------|-------|-------|
|----------|-------|-------|

**Well Child Family Care**

|                        |           |           |
|------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Funding Level Changes: | \$150,000 | \$120,000 |
|------------------------|-----------|-----------|

## DESIRED OUTCOME: COORDINATED, INTEGRATED, AND COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM

### **Strategy Areas and Funded Strategies**

#### Evaluation

- Statewide Evaluation
- Needs and Assets

#### ***Successes:***

The regional partnership council has been highly supportive and actively engaged in continuing to move the request for approval for the 2022 and 2024 Regional Needs and Assets (RNA) report forward to the Education Standing Committee, Health and Social Standing Committee, and Tribal Council. Specifically, the regional partnership council chair provides support by attending the standing committee meetings and tribal council meetings with staff while working closely with the First Things First regional director and senior director of tribal affairs in this effort.

The regional director has developed and fostered new relationships with the Gila River Indian Community Standing Committees health, education, social services, Tribal Council and legal teams. This has resulted in open communication and the beginning of a foundation for productive partnership and collaboration.

#### ***Challenges:***

Due to the pandemic priorities within the community and changes in First Things First staff, the Gila River Indian Community has not approved the 2022 regional needs and assets report. Because of this, First Things First staff are requesting approval of a combined 2022 and 2024 regional needs and assets report. The regional director and senior director of tribal affairs are in the process of working with legal teams to develop an agreement for the approval of the report.

First Things First staff, including the regional director and senior director of tribal affairs, have directed special focus, time and attention toward re-establishing and cultivating productive relationships with the Gila River Indian Community.