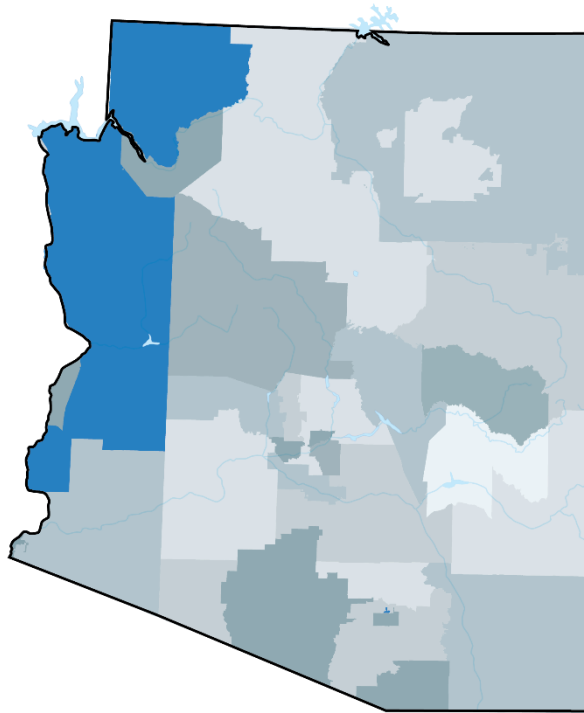




FIRST THINGS FIRST

La Paz/Mohave Regional Partnership Council

Population birth through age 5: 11,193



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.

La Paz/Mohave Regional Partnership Council

Lori Long, chair, health services provider

Kip Anderson, vice chair, at-large representative

Shawn Bristle, member of the business community

Jose Garcia, representative of the faith community

Michelle Jessop, at-large representative

Suzanne Leonelli, child care provider

Betsy Lewis, tribal public official/employee

Christy Rail, parent of a child age 5 years or younger

Carolyn Stewart, public school administrator

open, early childhood educator

open, representative of a philanthropic organization

Vanessa Sandoval, regional director, First Things First

Kimberly Corbin, administrative specialist, First Things First

La Paz/Mohave Regional Partnership Council

Promoting Equity and Supporting Under-Resourced/Underserved Children and Their Families

The La Paz/Mohave Regional Council hired a consultant to synthesize regional data, develop a region-specific parent survey, facilitate guided discussion groups with early childhood professionals servicing the region and conduct seven key informant interviews. The regional council actively participated in three workshops to identify their regional priorities by using the Elements of a Healthy Community model (the Elements of a Healthy Community model was designed and produced by Vitalyst Health Foundation in collaboration with community partners; the Elements are inspired by the work of the World Health Organization and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) in order to address the regional gaps and barriers.

The regional council is addressing the needs of the region by focusing on targeted areas of the region in the following ways:

- Quality First Scholarships will meet the needs of families in the most rural areas of the region. The regional partnership council prioritized the six most rural zip codes in the region with child care centers to receive Quality First scholarships. The regional partnership council has given approval for 2-star rated centers to receive Quality First scholarships as they realize these centers are located in rural, isolated parts of the region.
- The La Paz/Mohave Regional Council determined the need was to provide home visitation services in parts of the region where there are gaps in services. The regional partnership council shifted their approach from a universal approach to a targeted approach for Home Visitation. Their approach is to specifically address the gaps in services, focusing on areas where there is no home visitation available as well as meeting the needs of families with risk factors such as, lower-income families that might “slip through the cracks,” families where a livable income to meet basic needs is a stressor, families with multiple children under the age of 5, families with child developmental concerns and families isolated from necessary services. The regional council also determined that home visiting services would need to be implemented at the highest intensity of the program model that is awarded the grant, as the target population is for families with risk factors.
- Family Support Systems Change Strategy will continue the work of the Service Coordination Strategy from the past funding cycle. The strategy will move the foundational work established by the Program Coordination Specialist throughout the region during the past funding cycle. The regional council has identified the need to add an additional Program Coordination Specialist in consideration of the large geographic area to better support the system change work in the region. The two program coordination specialists will cover separate parts of the region in order to support the entire region in coordinating equitable access to health services, especially in rural areas, meeting the needs of families in rural areas through coordination of early childhood providers and school districts (center hubs of the community) to bring services into the communities.
- The La Paz/Mohave Regional Council was able to closely analyze the region from multiple perspectives, including data from reports, community partner perspectives, key informant perspectives and perspectives of families. The regional council determined their priorities based on the information and discussions they had. They were able to understand how the schools in the most isolated communities are the main trusted source for support and how essential they are in their communities. The regional council was able to pinpoint gaps in services and identify opportunities for both continued and new coordination efforts throughout the region’s most isolated communities.

Regional Allocation and Proposed Funding Plan Summary SFY24 – SFY27
La Paz/Mohave Regional Partnership Council

Allocations and Funding Sources	2024	2025	2026	2027
FY Allocation	\$3,074,116	\$3,074,116	\$3,141,973	\$3,141,973
Population Based Allocation	\$1,942,344	\$1,942,344	\$1,942,344	\$1,942,344
Discretionary Allocation	\$1,131,772	\$1,131,772	\$1,199,629	\$1,199,629
Carry Forward From Previous Year	\$1,648,480	\$1,142,030	\$796,962	\$352,277
Total Regional Council Funds Available	\$4,722,596	\$4,216,146	\$3,938,935	\$3,494,250
Strategies	Allotted	Proposed Allotted	Proposed Allotted	Proposed Allotted
Quality First Academy	\$11,500	\$11,500	\$11,500	\$11,500
Quality First Coaching & Incentives	\$281,470	\$281,470	\$281,470	\$281,470
Quality First Scholarships	\$1,645,795	\$1,186,824	\$1,005,485	\$948,024
First Things First College Scholarships	\$21,000	\$21,000	\$21,000	\$21,000
Child Care Health Consultation	\$78,200	\$78,200	\$78,200	\$78,200
Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation	\$24,480	\$244,800	\$269,280	\$293,760
Family Support & Literacy Systems Change	\$220,000	\$220,000	\$220,000	\$220,000
Family Support Coordination	\$480,000	\$476,982	\$480,000	\$480,000
Home Visitation	\$1,089,250	\$1,089,250	\$1,089,250	\$1,089,250
Statewide Evaluation	\$130,473	\$130,473	\$130,473	\$130,473
Total	\$3,982,168	\$3,740,499	\$3,586,658	\$3,553,677
Total Unallotted/Unawarded/Unexpended:*	\$740,428	\$475,647	\$352,277	(\$59,427)

Fiscal Year	2020	2024	2025	2026	2027
% to Board Priorities		96.72 %	96.51 %	96.36 %	96.32 %
% to Quality First**	8.50%	9.32 %	9.92 %	10.34 %	10.44 %
Fiscal Year	4 Year Average				
% to Board Priorities	96.48%				
% to Quality First**	9.98%				

*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
LA PAZ/MOHAVE 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 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 (FTF) 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.

The La Paz/Mohave Regional Partnership Council has prioritized the most isolated, underserved zip codes within the region to ensure that the distribution of Quality First Scholarships to child care centers and preschool programs for eligible families responds efficiently and effectively to current regional needs. The regional council did so by prioritizing six zip codes (86021, 86432, 86436, 85334, 85348, 85357) across the region that face additional challenges such as not having Arizona Department of Economic Security (DES) offices within 20 miles of their sub-regional area. Regionally, there are approximately 49 scholarships being used within the targeted prioritized zip codes.

Challenges:

In SFY25, federal pandemic relief funding to support a statewide expansion of 413 programs to participate in Quality First will end, 13 of which were located in the La Paz/Mohave 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 La Paz/Mohave Regional Partnership Council 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.

In addition to the Quality First Scholarship reimbursement rate increasing to the cost of quality, the La Paz/Mohave Regional Council also had to consider their previous strategic decision to decrease the allotment to the Quality First Scholarships Strategy by 25% as part of a step-down approach over the SFY24-27 strategic plan. The impact of these two decisions will result in a significant drop in Quality First Scholarships, from approximately 226 scholarship slots in SFY24, down to approximately 68 scholarship slots in SFY25.

Changes:

The La Paz/Mohave Regional Partnership Council has determined to continue their strategic step-down approach with allocations to Quality First Scholarships and is implementing an approximate 25% decrease in the allotment to Quality First Scholarships from SFY24 to SFY25. The regional council analyzed the effects of the State Board decision to move to the cost of quality coupled with the regional council's decision to continue moving forward with the original plan to decrease the allotment of funds to Quality First Scholarships. They prioritized the critical need to focus on other ways to support access to quality care in the region, such as building awareness of the usage of Quality First Scholarships and the Arizona Department of Economic Security (DES) child care subsidies across the region. With the support of program coordination specialists implementing the systems change strategy, a La Paz/Mohave Child Care Support Team Cohort has been convened, which is made up of Quality First coaches, child care health consultants, Child Care Resource and Referral representatives, Quality First child care center directors, DES Task Force Team and FTF regional staff, in order to provide awareness and aim to increase usage of other supports for quality child care, such as DES child care subsidies in the region.

Changes	SFY24	SFY25
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Quality First Scholarships

Funding Level Changes:	\$1,645,795	\$1,186,824
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DESIRED OUTCOME: INFORMATION, SERVICES AND SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES**Strategy Areas and Funded Strategies****Educating Families and Caregivers**

- Home Visitation (prioritized)

Successes:

The La Paz/Mohave Regional Partnership Council strategically focused on targeting home visitation in the three most isolated, underserved sub-regional areas of the region. Request for Grant Applications (RFGA) were released in La Paz County and the Northern Strip (Colorado City and Littlefield/Beaver Dam), where there was little to no home visitation services without FTF regional funding. The scopes of work within the RFGAs were specific on targeting these sub-regional areas and specified the intensity of services along with a 20% cap on the number of families that could be served in the areas where there are opportunities for other home visitation services but are limited.

The grant partner is currently implementing two home visitation models (Parents As Teachers program and Healthy Families program) in order to address the regional partnership council's priority in providing intensive home visitation services in order to address the needs of families most at risk.

Navigating and Connecting Families to Resources

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

Successes:

In SFY19, the La Paz/Mohave Regional Partnership Council began implementing the Family Support and Literacy Systems Change Strategy (known as the Service Coordination Strategy at that time) with the hiring of a program coordination specialist to work toward the goal of improving the early childhood systems to maximize funding, reduce duplication and barriers for children to access services and, ultimately, improve outcomes for young children. This collaborative work occurs among system partners to maximize resources and effectiveness by collectively identifying opportunities to coordinate and strengthen existing early care and education, health and family support services and to address and resolve gaps and barriers.

Continuing in SFY24, the La Paz/Mohave Regional Partnership Council and the Hualapai Tribe Regional Partnership Council collaborate under the Family Support and Literacy Systems Change Strategy to carry out a strategic plan that connects families to appropriate resources (including the development and ongoing updates of region and sub region-specific resource guides); creates and improves a coordinated referral system so that families receive services from the program that best meets their needs; increases collaboration between agencies; and educates early care and education, health and family support providers on community resources so that referrals are made to the most appropriate resources. This strategy is currently implemented by two program coordination specialists in the La Paz/Mohave and Hualapai Tribe regions. Additionally, the program coordination specialists are working with partners in the outlying communities of the La Paz/Mohave region to establish resource hubs in partnership with the schools, churches and other locations where the community congregates. They specialists are also working with other organizations' mobile services to support collaborations in conducting health and developmental screenings and referrals to services. In specific areas throughout the La Paz/Mohave region, the specialists are leading efforts address the misunderstandings and underutilization of available resources and services to support access to quality early care and education, such as the purpose of the La Paz/Mohave Child Care Support Team Cohort as described above in the ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY, CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION section.

Challenges:

The Family Support Coordination Strategy is a new strategy in the La Paz/Mohave Region. Implementation for the strategy was delayed because there was not a recommendation for award during the first round of RFGAs. The La Paz/Mohave Regional Partnership Council made some changes according to the regional needs for the strategy and rereleased two separate RFGAs for the strategy in the region. The two RFGAs were awarded on September 1, 2023, therefore implementation was delayed by two months. Both of the regional grantees have shared that they are experiencing difficulties in hiring and filling the positions to implement the grants.

Changes:

The award amount for one of the RFGAs awarded in SFY24 was less than the full amount available in the RFGA. Therefore, the regional council decreased the allotment to the Family Support Coordination Strategy by \$3,018 so that the allotment amount was equal to the award amount.

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

Strategy Areas and Funded Strategies

Professional Development for ECE Professionals

- Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (Prioritized)
- First Things First College Scholarships (Prioritized)
- Child Care Health Consultation (Prioritized)

Changes:

The Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Strategy has three unique service units: early care and education programs, home visitation programs and family, friend and neighbor programs.

The Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Strategy was introduced to the La Paz/Mohave Region with the support of DES expansion funds, during the four-year strategic planning process and this made the regional council aware of the great asset the strategy brought to providers in the region. The goal of the regional council was to support the continuation of mental health consultation services for early care and education programs beginning with the regional council's SFY25 funding plan, when the DES expansion money would come to an end. The original plan was to fund mental health consultation support for four home visitation programs in SFY24 and gradually add early care and education centers in the second and third years of the strategic plan, which would allow for the grant partner to build their capacity in the region.

With the new funding cycle, there were unexpected changes in the home visitation programs serving the region and the La Paz/Mohave Regional Council addressed these changes with an adjustment to the target service units according to the regional needs. Two home visitation programs were added, making the target service unit a total of six home visitation programs in SFY25. The La Paz/Mohave Regional Council worked in partnership with the grant partner to make sure the changes would not affect anyone currently receiving services and so that the changes would best support the needs of the region.

Changes:	SFY24	SFY25
Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation		
Funding Level Changes:	\$24,480	\$244,800
Service Unit Changes:	Number of home visitation programs served: 4 Number of center-based early care and education programs served: 0	Number of home visitation programs served: 6 Number of center-based early care and education programs served: 17
DESIRED OUTCOME: COORDINATED, INTEGRATED AND COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM		
<u>Strategy Areas and Funded Strategies</u>		
Evaluation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statewide Evaluation 		