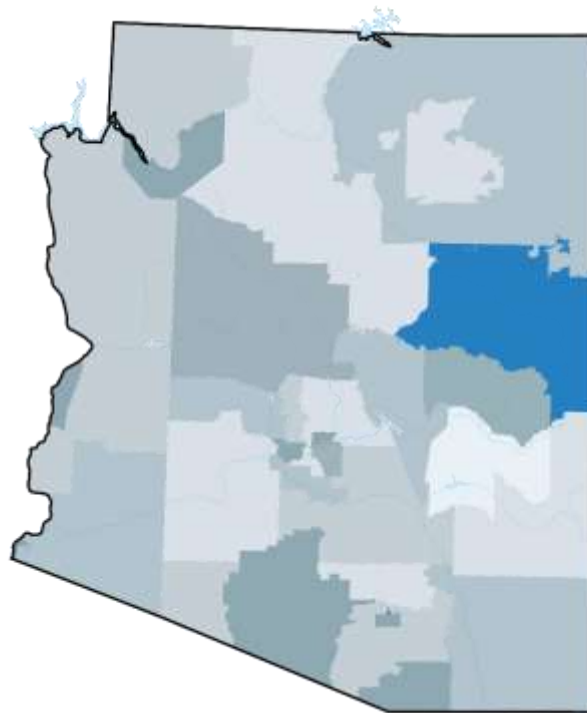


FIRST THINGS FIRST

Navajo/Apache 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.

Navajo/Apache Regional Partnership Council

Becky Benda-Dodd, chair, early childhood educator

Mary "Katherine" Larson, vice chair, representative of a philanthropic organization

Kimberly Avery, at large representative

Manuela Bowler, at large representative

Elizabeth Bierer, health services provider

Claude Endfield, at-large representative

Karli Hueston, child care provider

Byron Lewis, representative of the faith community

Molly McGavock, parent of a child age 5 years or younger

Jeffrey Oakes, member of the business community

Kristen Orton, public school administrator

Michael Caruth, 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

Navajo/Apache 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	Early Learning Systems Change <i>(FTF-Directed)</i>	See Appendix A	No TSU	Coordinated, integrated, and comprehensive systems.
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.
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.	Number of center-based providers served 4	Well-prepared, highly skilled and appropriately compensated professionals.
Professional Development for ECE Professionals	First Things First College Scholarships <i>(Statewide)</i>	1) Effective educational preparation provides those working in regulated early care and education programs the knowledge and skills to develop high-quality learning environments and support the healthy development of young children. 2) Teachers and directors working in regulated programs need financial support to achieve degrees in ECE.	No TSU	Well-prepared, highly skilled and appropriately compensated professionals.
Building Awareness of the Importance of the Early Years	Educational Promotion and Brand Awareness <i>(FTF-Directed)</i>	1) Lack of awareness of the importance of early childhood health and development. 2) Lack of awareness of FTF as a trusted source of early childhood information and programs/services.	No TSU	Public understanding and support.

Building Awareness of the Importance of the Early Years	Media (Statewide)	1) Lack of awareness of the importance of early childhood health and development. 2) Lack of awareness of FTF as a trusted source of early childhood information and programs/services	No TSU	Public understanding and support.
Other Strategy Areas	Strategy	Identified Need	Target Service Unit	Desired System Outcome
Oral Health	Oral Health	1) Many children and expectant mothers lack access to preventive oral health services. 2) Continued prevalence of tooth decay in children and expectant mothers. 3) Many ECE professionals lack sufficient access to oral health education.	Number of children served 500 Number of expectant mothers served 30 Number of early care and education (ECE) programs educated 20	Access to high-quality preventive and continuous health care.
Health Resource Coordination	Children’s Health Systems Change (FTF-Directed)	See Appendix A	No TSU	Coordinated, integrated, and comprehensive systems.
Health Resource Coordination	Well Child Family Care	1) Parents/caregivers frequently need support to navigate barriers in the health care system for their children. 2) Many parents/ caregivers of children do not have access to services and support that provide them with knowledge, guidance and strategies to strengthen their child's development. 3) Children’s developmental delays and vision/ hearing impairments are not always detected early. 4) Families are not always receiving preventive services.	Number of children who received services 2000	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 Navajo/Apache Regional Council developed their SFY 24-27 Strategic Plan, which promotes equity and supports under-resourced and underserved children and their families by identifying and prioritizing the most significant needs in the region.

The Navajo/Apache Regional Council will advance diversity, equity, and inclusion for all, especially for those who have been historically marginalized or underserved, by cultivating a culture where everyone can thrive. The strategic plan promotes equity, supports low-income working families through child-care financial assistance, promotes children’s learning by improving the quality of early care and education and provides professional development opportunities for the early childhood workforce. The regional council’s Early Learning Systems Change Strategy will expand that support by targeting communities where families have limited, or no, access to early learning opportunities. The Navajo/Apache Region is a large geographic area that includes many small, spread out communities such as Heber, Linden, Vernon, St. John’s, Alpine, Sanders and Concho to name a few. Many of the communities in the region have hard-to-reach

families who have a lack of trust of government-funded programs and stigmas in participating in programs of any kind. The intent of the regional council is to reach these families and determine, through an opportunity assessment, how best to support their early learning needs.

The regional council tends to prioritize communities in Apache County. Apache County has the highest poverty level of any counties in the state. The regional council knows that this is where most of our support is needed.

Additionally, the Navajo/Apache Regional Partnership Council will promote health equity and support across the region by promoting positive oral, physical, mental and developmental health to uninsured and underinsured populations. Through the region's Oral Health and Well Child Family Care Strategies, the regional council is ensuring that all families, regardless of income or geographic location, have access to preventative oral health screenings, timely developmental and sensory screenings, immunization, well-child visits, support in navigating the complex health system, access to parenting information and resources and access to developmentally-appropriate books.

The regional council members are committed to advancing equity for all children and families, especially those who have been historically underserved, marginalized, and adversely affected by persistent poverty and inequality in the region by intentionally focusing on communities that are impacted by homelessness, housing instability, domestic and intimate partner violence, mental health and adolescent pregnancy to promote self-sufficiency and well-being. This will be achieved through the council's awareness strategies that will focus not only on promoting the importance of the early years, but also on building trust in First Things First.

Regional Allocation and Proposed Funding Plan Summary SFY24 – 27
Navajo/Apache Regional Partnership Council

Allocations and Funding Sources		2024	2025	2026	2027
FY Allocation		\$1,510,461	\$1,510,461	\$1,625,482	\$1,625,482
Population Based Allocation		\$1,012,965	\$1,012,965	\$1,012,965	\$1,012,965
Discretionary Allocation		\$497,496	\$497,496	\$612,517	\$612,517
Carry Forward From Previous Year		\$264,728	\$171,529	\$61,658	\$48,854
Total Regional Council Funds Available		\$1,775,189	\$1,681,990	\$1,687,140	\$1,674,336
Strategies		Proposed Allotted	Proposed Allotted	Proposed Allotted	Proposed Allotted
Early Learning Systems Change		\$526,603	\$526,603	\$526,603	\$526,603
Quality First Academy		\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000
Quality First Coaching & Incentives		\$38,660	\$38,660	\$38,660	\$38,660
Quality First Scholarships		\$211,820	\$211,820	\$211,820	\$211,820
First Things First College Scholarships		\$43,200	\$43,200	\$43,200	\$43,200
Child Care Health Consultation		\$13,600	\$13,600	\$13,600	\$13,600
Children's Health Systems Change		\$40,000	\$40,000	\$40,000	\$40,000
Oral Health		\$170,000	\$170,000	\$170,000	\$170,000
Well Child and Family Care		\$650,000	\$650,000	\$650,000	\$650,000
Statewide Evaluation		\$67,499	\$67,499	\$67,499	\$67,499
Educational Promotion and Brand Awareness		\$12,000	\$12,000	\$12,000	\$12,000
Media		\$20,000	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$20,000
Total		\$1,795,382	\$1,795,382	\$1,795,382	\$1,795,382
Total Unallotted/Unawarded/Unexpended*:		(\$20,193)	(\$113,392)	(\$108,242)	(\$121,046)
Fiscal Year	2020	2024	2025	2026	2027
% to Board Priorities***		48.33 %	48.33 %	48.33 %	48.33 %
% to Quality First**	3.35%	3.02 %	3.02 %	3.02 %	3.02 %
Fiscal Year	4 Year Average				
% to Board Priorities***	48.33%				
% to Quality First**	3.02%				

*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.

***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 total allotment for the Well Child and Family and Oral Health strategies accounts for 46% of the regional allocation and thus the 80% allotment threshold was not met.

The Navajo/Apache Regional Council is very cognizant of the disparities in early learning that exist in the region. The Navajo/Apache Regional Council recognizes that the region is a child care desert (communities lacking adequate child care centers). The regional council has allotted over \$500,000.00 to the Early Learning Systems Change strategy with the intent to determine the best early learning support that can be offered to the youngest in the region with the First Things First strategies currently available. Nothing in the Navajo/Apache Regional Needs and Assets Report stood out more than the lack of access to quality early learning experiences. The regional council intends to utilize the Early Learning Systems Change Strategy to understand how to best address and support early learning in the Navajo/Apache Region.

The greatest access that the regional council has to parents and caregivers of children birth to age 5 in the Navajo/Apache region is through health strategies. We know this because there is a consistent trend in data that clearly indicates a majority of families in the region take their young children for well child visits regularly. The Well Child and Family Care Strategy currently has over 5,000 children birth to age 5 enrolled, from two grant partners (Summit Healthcare and North Country Healthcare). Access to these families is building trust of First Things First and will build demand for additional family support programs such as Home Visitation and Parenting Education.

Navajo and Apache Counties have the highest rate of untreated tooth decay amongst young children in the state. Untreated tooth decay is a preventable issue with early screenings, fluoride varnish applications, parental education and regular dental visits at a dental home. Knowing this, the Navajo/Apache Regional Council has prioritized oral health as a regional priority and has chosen to allot \$170,000 to the Oral Health Strategy and \$40,000 to the Children's Health Systems Change Strategy. This approach, funding both Oral Health and Systems Change, will build upon the system level work that the regional council has funded over the past four years. Additionally, the systems change work will result in additional dentists in the region accepting AHCCCS and willing to see children under the age of five, making the necessity for the region to fund the Oral Health Strategy obsolete in the future.

The Navajo/Apache Regional Partnership Council has long prioritized the health of the regions' children and believes the continuation of these strategies will continue to lead to greater outcomes for our children and families.

APPENDIX A
SFY24 Funding Plan – System Change Planning Document
Navajo/Apache Regional Partnership Council

Navajo/Apache Regional Partnership Council - Early Learning Systems Change	
Problem to be solved and system to be changed / influenced	<i>System Area:</i> Early Learning Opportunities Assessment
	<i>Problem to address:</i> Lack of access to high-quality early learning experiences in the region. Due to limited number of centers and homes as well as highly skilled workforce.
	<i>Geographic area:</i> Focus on the largest area without available quality early learning centers or homes. Apache County would be the first geographic area to be addressed.
	<i>Target Audience:</i> Early childhood system
Expected Impact	<i>Expected Impact:</i> Increase opportunities for quality early learning experiences in the parts of the region with the greatest need.
	<i>Timeline:</i> SFY24 (Q1-Q2), Release RFGA for an Early Learning Opportunities Assessment to determine where parents are accessing early care, barriers to accessing care, identify needs in relation to accessing quality care and how best to address those needs and support families. Assessment should include recommendations for moving forward, including associated costs and technical support necessary for implementation. Scope of work will include primary data collection from families throughout the Navajo/Apache Region. Data collected will be used to identify a strategy or strategies to best support the needs identified. SFY24 (Q3-Q4), Establish workgroup of the Regional Council to review the data analysis and recommendations from the Early Learning Opportunities Assessment. RFGA vendor will facilitate/lead the Regional Council workgroup. Workgroup will be tasked with identifying which recommendations are feasible for implementation and presenting those recommendations to Regional Council for consideration. SFY25-27, Release RFGA to implement the Regional Council recommendations. May be one or more strategies depending on assessment results.

Navajo/Apache Regional Partnership Council - Children's Health Systems Change

Problem to be solved and system to be changed / influenced	<p><i>System Area:</i> Oral Health Capacity Building</p>
	<p><i>Problem to address:</i> The Navajo/Apache region has many dental disparities such as lack of fluoridation in the water and lack of pediatric dentists in the region to serve the birth to age 5 population.</p>
	<p><i>Geographic area:</i> Navajo/Apache Region</p>
	<p><i>Target Audience:</i> General Dentists in the Navajo/Apache Region</p>
Expected Impact	<p><i>Expected Impact:</i> Increase the number of general dentists that have the skills and willingness to serve children birth to age 5. Through the ongoing work of a consultant, outreach, recruitment, and professional development to increase the number of general practice dentists that have the skills and willingness to serve children birth to age 5.</p>
	<p><i>Timeline:</i> SFY24- Increase the number of private dental practices in the region serving young children SFY25- Continue to assess dental workforce capacity in the region for demonstrated increase SFY 26- Build Oral Health Champions program and recognition SFY 27- Collect data and compare to agreed upon success metrics</p>