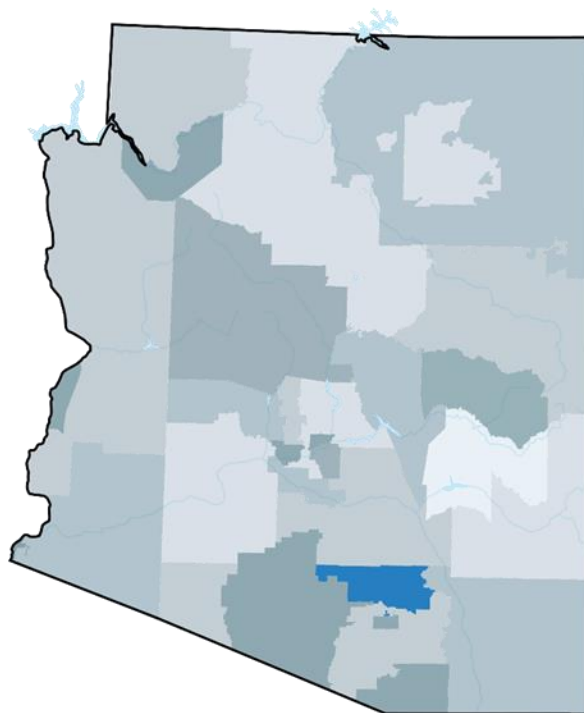




Pima North Regional Partnership Council
Population birth through age 5: 42,552



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.

Pima North Regional Partnership Council

Susan Shinn, chair, public school administrator

Mandy Carlsen, vice chair, health services provider

Katayoun Anderson, representative of the faith community

Eileen Caito, at-large representative

Nicholas Clement, at-large representative

Heidi Elizondo Hultquist, representative of a philanthropic organization

Daniel Huff, member of the business community

Dorothy Johnson, early childhood educator

Amber Jones, parent of a child age 5 years or younger

Celina Robles, child care provider

Whitney de Haseth, at-large representative

Amy Morales Baum, regional director, First Things First

Roxanne Ochoa, administrative specialist, First Things First

Pima North Regional Partnership Council
Promoting Equity and Supporting Under-Resourced/Underserved Children and Their Families

The Pima North Regional Partnership Council worked together over the past year to develop the State Fiscal Year 2024-2027 (SFY24-27) Strategic Plan and included a deep dive into data and narratives with representation from under-resourced communities in the region as well as four specific strategic planning sessions. Through the data deep dive, the regional council identified a few key needs among children and families who are under-resourced and underserved. First, the strategic plan addresses one of the largest barriers which is caregiver awareness and access to the early childhood system. New for SFY24, the regional council will fund a Program Coordinator Specialist whose role will be to create a more seamless system to better serve families especially those with the highest needs in the Pima North Region. Second, the Pima North Region includes many young children being raised in multi-generational families and households, the regional council is addressing this through the work of home visitation targeted for families who are at highest risk and need.

Economic hardships families have faced through the past few years due to the COVID-19 pandemic and in general were also identified as a challenge. Data from the region highlighted that 25% of children under the age of six and their family live in poverty and the average child care cost is 9 to 16% of the median household income. The high cost of child care is a barrier to children accessing care that helps children achieve long-term educational and health benefits. To provide multi-generational opportunities that address this, the regional council designated 20 Quality First Scholarships for the Family Engagement Network. The Family Engagement Network is a program that supports families parenting young children who are also enrolled in higher education. While the parent works toward further education at the local community college simultaneously, their young child is able to access a quality rated Quality First early learning program. This approach increases the probability of success for both generations and the potential to eliminate the disparities of poverty. Additionally, the strategic plan sets aside over three million dollars to provide access to high-quality early learning for children and their families who live at or under 300% of the Federal Poverty Line.

Finally, the regional council identified that only 50% of children are meeting reading proficiency in Pima North. To address this, the regional council prioritized funding toward Community Based Language and Literacy, an approach that will target young children and families of highest need and meet them in trusted community places such as libraries and apartment complexes to provide opportunities to learn about the importance of literacy at an early age. This strategy also aims at the multi-generational approach as grandparents raising their grandchildren, family caregivers and anyone who is helping to raise a child will have access to the workshops provided.

Regional Allocation and Proposed Funding Plan Summary SFY24 – SFY27
Pima North Regional Partnership Council

Allocations and Funding Sources	2024	2025	2026	2027
FY Allocation	\$8,777,855	\$8,777,855	\$8,756,596	\$8,756,596
Population Based Allocation	\$6,939,736	\$6,939,736	\$6,939,736	\$6,939,736
Discretionary Allocation	\$1,838,119	\$1,838,119	\$1,816,860	\$1,816,860
Carry Forward From Previous Year	\$2,836,541	\$2,887,636	\$2,349,411	\$924,499
Total Regional Council Funds Available	\$11,614,396	\$11,665,491	\$11,106,007	\$9,681,095
Strategies	Allotted	Proposed Allotted	Proposed Allotted	Proposed Allotted
Quality First Academy	\$63,500	\$63,500	\$63,500	\$63,500
Quality First Coaching & Incentives	\$1,706,960	\$1,706,960	\$1,706,960	\$1,706,960
Quality First Scholarships	\$3,730,630	\$3,780,405	\$3,780,405	\$3,780,405
First Things First College Scholarships	\$127,200	\$127,200	\$127,200	\$127,200
Professional Development for Early Childhood Practitioners	\$614,647	\$676,112	\$676,112	\$676,112
Child Care Health Consultation	\$431,800	\$431,800	\$431,800	\$431,800
Well Child and Family Care	\$600,000	\$251,295	\$251,295	\$251,295
Community Based Language and Literacy	\$274,647	\$302,112	\$302,112	\$302,112
Family Support & Literacy Systems Change	\$120,000	\$120,000	\$120,000	\$120,000
Home Visitation	\$2,100,000	\$2,310,000	\$2,310,000	\$2,310,000
Statewide Evaluation	\$363,624	\$363,624	\$363,624	\$363,624
Educational Promotion and Brand Awareness	\$18,500	\$18,500	\$18,500	\$18,500
Media	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$30,000
Total	\$10,181,508	\$10,181,508	\$10,181,508	\$10,181,508
Total Unallotted/Unawarded/Unexpended:*	\$1,432,888	\$1,483,983	\$924,499	(\$500,413)

Fiscal Year	2020	2024	2025	2026	2027
% to Board Priorities		90.53 %	93.96 %	93.96 %	93.96 %
% to Quality First**	18.35%	21.62 %	21.62 %	21.62 %	21.62 %
Fiscal Year	4 Year Average				
% to Board Priorities	93.10%				
% to Quality First**	21.62%				

* Per FTF 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
PIMA NORTH 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)
- Early Learning Systems Change (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 continue the reimbursement rate that providers were receiving through federal pandemic relief funding.

The Pima North Regional Partnership Council identified increasing quality early learning: quality, accessible, affordable child care as a priority and made the decision to continue this investment in State Fiscal Year 2025 (SFY25). This priority is funded through the investment in Quality First and Quality First Scholarships. Quality First Scholarships in Pima County continue to be used at maximum usage.

The regional council supports 104 center-based and 23 home-based Quality First sites in the region. Ninety-four percent of all Quality First sites have earned a 3-, 4- or 5-star rating. This is a 10% increase from the previous year. Over 1,000 Pima North children are supported by Quality First Scholarships so that families with low-incomes are able to access quality early care and education programs in the region.

The regional council prioritized expanding and leveraging funds towards high quality early childhood education in collaboration with community and system partners. The Pima Early Education Preschool Scholarships is a partnership with the Pima County Board of Supervisors, which has expanded access to child care for an additional 1,000 children in the Pima North Region. In addition, a strong partnership with the Department of Economic Security Division of Child Care (DES DCC) has helped to secure DES child care subsidies for the maximum amount of children possible. Overall, the Pima North Region is well set up to continue this level of support towards children accessing high quality early childhood education.

Challenges:

In SFY25, federal pandemic relief funding to support a statewide expansion of 413 programs, 66 of which are in Pima North, to participate in Quality First will end, resulting 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.

Quality First centers in the Pima North Region are reporting struggles with staffing. The issues include finding educated and qualified staff as well as keeping staff for any length of time. The high turnover rates are impacting child care centers and family care homes ability to enroll children at full capacity.

DESIRED OUTCOME: INFORMATION, SERVICES AND SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES

Strategy Areas and Funded Strategies

Educating Families and Caregivers

- Home Visitation (prioritized)
- Community Based Language and Literacy (prioritized)

Navigating and Connecting Families to Resources

- Family Support and Literacy Systems Change (prioritized)

Successes:

The Pima North Regional Council identified the use of a multi-generational approach through the education and nurturing of the child and their family as a priority. The regional council decided to continue to fund the Home Visitation Strategy and Community Based Language and Literacy Strategy for SFY25 to support this priority.

The Pima North Regional Council values a continuum of home visitation modalities that range from less support to more intensive programming for families. These models include: Nurse-Family Partnership, Healthy Families and Parents As Teachers. Each of these programs are evidence-based and support at-risk children and families in a variety of ways including parent coaching, building resiliency and referrals to other supports.

Community Based Language and Literacy is a new strategy for Pima North for SFY24. This strategy funds Story School, an interactive two-generation approach where children and families learn together through ongoing story time sessions. Through these sessions, caregivers discover their ability to create a positive future for their children through literacy and language.

Another new SFY24 strategy for the Pima North Regional Council was the hiring of a full-time Program Coordination Specialist to implement the Family Support and Literacy Systems Change Strategy to support accessibility of services for families. This role works to help the early childhood community understand how families access services. The work is done by building more robust connections between stakeholders so that service gaps can be identified and remedied in the region. The ultimate goal is to connect families to the resources that will help their children thrive. The current Program Coordination Specialist is already hard at work making connections and collaborating with a number of agencies to identify gaps in the system specific to the Pima North Region.

Challenges:

In the Pima North Region an identified challenge found across strategies is in maintaining full staffing. Reasons for this challenge include inability to hire new staff or turnover due to job stress and/or salary rates.

Changes:

The Pima North Regional Partnership Council decided to increase funding by 10% towards the Home Visitation Strategy and Community Based Language and Literacy Strategy for SFY25. In SFY24, there were dollars that went unallocated in the overall budget due to only a portion of the Well Child Family Care allotted dollars being applied for and awarded. The regional council decided to distribute the unallocated dollars among currently funded strategies in the region in the spirit of equality and to emphasize their commitment to the strategies they identified.

Changes:	SFY24	SFY25
Home Visitation		
Funding Level Changes:	\$2,100,000	\$2,310,000
Community Based Language and Literacy		
Funding Level Change:	\$274,647	\$302,112

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

Strategy Areas and Funded Strategies

Professional Development for ECE Professionals

- First Things First College Scholarships (prioritized)
- Professional Development of Early Childhood Practitioners (prioritized)
- Child Care Health Consultation (prioritized)

Successes:

The expansion of First Things First College Scholarships from two to 10 in the Pima North Region has seen great success. The scholarships are all quickly being used by applicants who have been on the waitlist for years.

The Professional Development of Early Childhood Practitioners Strategy continues to be a priority of the Pima North Regional Partnership Council. This multi-regional professional development grant implements 13 Communities of Practice (CoPs) with a shared focus on evidenced-based practices and creating new knowledge to advance a domain of professional practice. The unique CoPs are highly sought after and cover a range of topics including infant and toddler care, trauma informed care and inclusion of children with special needs. This work directly addresses the regional council's desire to increase resources and support for early childhood educators.

Child Care Health Consultation (CCHC) is a part of the Quality First suite of services for providers who participate in Quality First. The new revisions to Quality First include an expansion of CCHC support. This includes working with early childhood providers on Arizona state licensing compliance, completing health and safety checklists and reviewing health policies.

Challenges:

The local grantee for Child Care Health Consultation (CCHC) has reported issues with staffing. While the CCHC team is working to resolve these issues, temporarily there is less capacity for early childhood providers to receive CCHC supports.

Changes:

The regional council is proposing a 10% increase to the funding of the Professional Development for Early Childhood Practitioners Strategy. In SFY24 there were dollars that went unallocated in the overall budget due to only a portion of the Well Child Family Care Strategy allotted dollars being applied for and awarded. The regional council decided to distribute the unallocated dollars among currently funded strategies in the region in the spirit of equality and to emphasize their commitment to the strategies and strategic direction the regional council identified for SFY24-SFY27.

Changes:	SFY24	SFY25
Professional Development of ECE Professionals		
Funding Level Change:	\$614,647	\$676,112
DESIRED OUTCOME: PUBLIC UNDERSTANDING AND SUPPORT		
<u>Strategy Areas and Funded Strategies</u>		
Building Awareness of the Importance of the Early Years <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Educational Promotion and Brand Awareness (prioritized) ○ Media (prioritized) 		
Successes: The Pima North Regional Partnership Council identified increasing the awareness of the broader community to FTF and FTF supported programming as a priority. The regional council funds this through the Educational Promotion and Brand Awareness Strategy and Media Strategy. A portion of the funds are allocated toward sponsorship and tabling of the Tucson Festival of Books. This literacy focused event has over 100,000 people in attendance each year and is for the whole community. During this event, regional council members, staff and volunteers meet families with young children and community members. Many connections are made during this event including educating attendees about the importance of the first five years, meeting new potential early childhood champions, sharing resources with families and building new relationships with community members.		
DESIRED OUTCOME: ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY PREVENTATIVE AND CONTINUOUS HEALTH CARE		
<u>Strategy Areas and Funded Strategies</u>		
Health Resource Coordination <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Well Child Family Care 		
Successes: The Well Child Family Care Strategy was new to the Pima North Region for SFY24. The new grant partner has previous experience implementing the Healthy Steps model, which is a benefit in the roll out of the strategy. The team is fully staffed and has begun meeting with and supporting families and young children.		
Challenges: As a new strategy to the region and a new partner to FTF in SFY24, there is a learning curve that is to be expected.		
Changes: During the Request For Grant Application (RFGA) process for the Well Child Family Care Strategy, \$371,500 were not allocated. There was one entity that successfully applied for a portion of the \$600,000 available. Due to receiving only one application for a portion of the available funds, the regional council chose to take dollars that were not applied for and allocate them as 10% increases to all of the RFGA regionally funded strategies. The regional council made this decision in the spirit of equality and to emphasize their commitment to the strategies they identified.		
Changes:	SFY24	SFY25
Well Child Family Care		
Funding Level Changes:	\$600,000	\$251,295

DESIRED OUTCOME: COORDINATED, INTEGRATED, AND COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM	
<u>Strategy Areas and Funded Strategies</u>	
Evaluation	
○ Statewide Evaluation	
Successes: A timeframe was provided for the draft of the short report for the 2024 Pima North Regional Needs and Assets report.	
Challenges: The Statewide Evaluation Strategy has caused concerns for members of the Pima North Regional Partnership Council due to the high annual allotment. For many funding cycles now, there has not been consensus as a regional council with this vote due to the high allotment. The regional council would like statewide evaluation costs lowered for the region.	