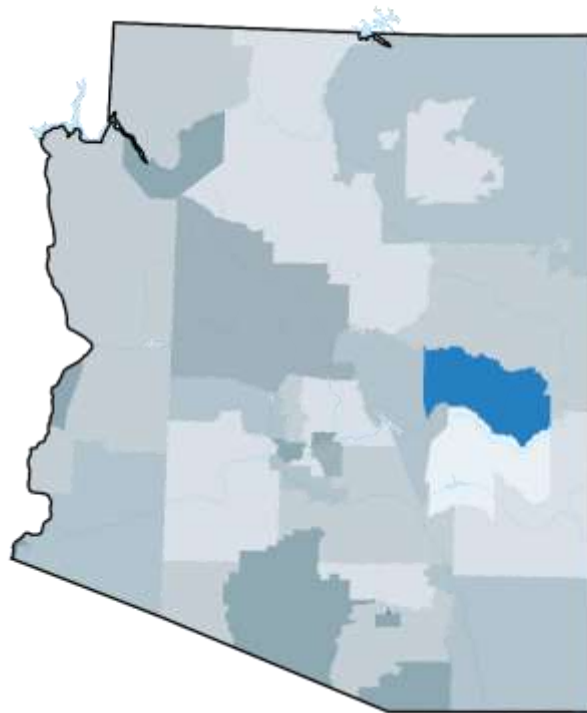


FIRST THINGS FIRST

White Mountain Apache 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.

White Mountain Apache Tribe Regional Partnership Council

Laurel Endfield, chair, early childhood educator

Dawnafe Whitesinger, vice chair, public school administrator

David Bostedt, representative of the faith community

Jandi Craig, member of the business community

Sylvia Hinton, at-large representative

Derrick Leslie, representative of a philanthropic organization

Mona Lupe, child care provider

Michelle Martinez, at large representative

Terrie Parker, at large representative

Ardith Titla, health services provider

open, parent of a child age 5 years or younger

Feather Sprengeler, 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

White Mountain Apache 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	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	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.
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	Language, Literacy and Culture in Tribal Communities	1) Lack of children’s books or materials that are reflective of the Native Culture/Language in the children’s homes or community environments. 2) Lack of opportunities for children/ caregivers/families to participate in community events (activities) to learn about language and literacy through the context of culture/traditions. 3) Lack of access to coaching for ECE professionals to integrate and implement Native culture and language materials in early care and education settings.	Number of materials distributed 10,000 Number of community events conducted 4	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	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 <i>(Statewide)</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.
Other Strategy Areas	Strategy	Identified Need	Target Service Unit	Desired System Outcome
Language and Literacy	Reach Out and Read <i>(Statewide)</i>	1) Some families need information around the importance of reading aloud and awareness of early language and literacy development. 2) Some families lack access to developmentally appropriate books (book distribution).	No TSU	Information, services and support for families.
Identifying and Addressing Developmental Concerns	Family Support for Children with Developmental Concerns	1) Many parents of children with developmental concerns do not have access to services and supports that provide them with knowledge, support, and strategies to strengthen their child’s development. 2) Children’s vision/hearing impairments are not always detected early.	Number of families currently enrolled 25 - 30	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 boundaries of the First Things First White Mountain Apache Tribe Regional Council are the same as the White Mountain Apache Reservation (sometimes called Fort Apache Indian Reservation). The region covers more than 2,500 square miles in Apache, Gila, and Navajo counties with the lowest elevation in the Salt River Canyon at 2,600 feet above sea level to the highest point at 11,400 feet on the peak of Mount Baldy. There are twelve communities identified by the U.S. Census: Canyon Day, Carrizo, Cedar Creek, Cibecue, East Fork, Fort Apache, Hondah-McNary, North Fork, Rainbow City, Seven Mile, Turkey Creek, and Whiteriver. Whiteriver, the largest of these communities, serves as the capital with Cibecue and McNary following. There are approximately 2,003 children birth to age 5 in the region and 51% live in poverty, with the highest percentage of poverty among those from the Canyon Day community.

The White Mountain Apache Tribe Regional Council has developed the SFY 2024-2027 Strategic Plan through a comprehensive approach which considered the current and greatest needs of all children birth to age 5 and their families. The regional council contributed to discussions surrounding the coronavirus pandemic

impact in the region. Prior to COVID impacting the region as significantly as it did, the tribal council requested First Things First regional staff and White Mountain Apache Tribe Head Start (WMAT Head Start) staff to address the low enrollment of children in WMAT Head Start. This led First Things First staff to have internal discussions for a campaign in the region to build the awareness of the importance of early childhood education. Throughout the pandemic, there was a significant decrease in children receiving quality early childhood education, behavioral health services, early intervention services such as those offered through White Mountain Apache Tribe Child Find and well-child visit attendance. The regional partnership council also shared their knowledge and expertise from their respective professional backgrounds, reviewed past impact reports, and analyzed the latest Regional Needs and Assets Report which included supplemental reports. These discussions helped identify and prioritize needs most significant in the region, which led to identifying and prioritizing strategies that would best fit children and their families. These strategies target at risk families in the region with a focus on the cognitive, physical and social-emotional health and well-being of each child. The regional partnership council's highest priority at the conclusion of strategic planning was meeting the needs of families with children who have developmental concerns. Building awareness of the importance of early childhood was the second priority with discussions primarily on gathering families for activities in the community to build trust of services offered through First Things First grant partners and tribal organizations.

Regional Allocation and Proposed Funding Plan Summary SFY24 – 27
White Mountain Apache Tribe Regional Partnership Council

Allocations and Funding Sources		2024	2025	2026	2027
FY Allocation		\$676,296	\$676,296	\$711,320	\$711,320
Population Based Allocation		\$452,826	\$452,826	\$452,826	\$452,826
Discretionary Allocation		\$223,470	\$223,470	\$258,494	\$258,494
Other (FTF Fund balance addition)					
Carry Forward From Previous Year		\$1,183,417	\$1,156,662	\$1,074,668	\$1,027,697
Total Regional Council Funds Available		\$1,859,713	\$1,832,958	\$1,785,988	\$1,739,017
Strategies		Proposed Allotted	Proposed Allotted	Proposed Allotted	Proposed Allotted
Quality First Academy		\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,000
Quality First Coaching & Incentives		\$99,330	\$99,330	\$99,330	\$99,330
Quality First Scholarships		\$374,916	\$374,916	\$374,916	\$374,916
First Things First College Scholarships		\$32,400	\$32,400	\$32,400	\$32,400
Child Care Health Consultation		\$20,400	\$20,400	\$20,400	\$20,400
Family Support for Children with Developmental Concerns		\$240,000	\$240,000	\$240,000	\$240,000
Family Support & Literacy Systems Change		\$117,370	\$117,370	\$117,370	\$117,370
Language, Literacy and Culture in Tribal Communities		\$150,000	\$150,000	\$150,000	\$150,000
Reach Out and Read		\$31,000	\$31,000	\$31,000	\$31,000
Statewide Evaluation		\$29,538	\$29,538	\$29,538	\$29,538
Educational Promotion and Brand Awareness		\$13,000	\$13,000	\$13,000	\$13,000
Media		\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000
Total		\$1,115,954	\$1,115,954	\$1,115,954	\$1,115,954
Total Unallotted/Unawarded/Unexpended:		\$743,759	\$717,004	\$670,034	\$623,063
Fiscal Year	2020	2024	2025	2026	2027
% to Board Priorities**		73.06 %	73.06 %	73.06 %	73.06 %
% to Quality First*	8.52%	10.99 %	10.99 %	10.99 %	10.99 %
Fiscal Year	4 Year Average				
% to Board Priorities**	73.06%				
% to Quality First*	10.99%				

*Includes QF Academy, QF 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 Family Support for Children with Developmental Concerns and Reach Out and Read strategies accounts for 24% of the regional allocation. Therefore, the 80% allotment threshold for statewide priorities was not met.

According to the latest Regional Needs and Assets (RNA) report, there continues to be high rates of developmental delay and speech and language impairments in the region. From the RNA report, between 25% and 30% of young children in the region have mild to moderate developmental delays but do not meet thresholds for publicly-funded early intervention services. The White Mountain Apache Tribe Regional Partnership Council has always prioritized families who have children with developmental concerns in past strategic funding plan cycles. The way Family Support for Children with Developmental Concerns strategy has been delivered in the region has varied over the years with its own unique challenges. There remains the need for continued services and outreach around speech language pathology and hearing services. Knowing this, the White Mountain Apache Tribe Regional Partnership Council has prioritized Family Support for Children with Developmental Concerns and has chosen to allot \$240,000 to this strategy with 25 to 30 families enrolled, which is a decreased allotment from the previous funding cycle of \$300,000 and 50 families enrolled.

In every strategic plan cycle, the White Mountain Apache Tribe Regional Partnership Council consistently prioritized early literacy by increasing access to books. To increase Apache children and families' access to books, the regional council implemented the Reach Out and Read Strategy at health care clinics in the region. This was successful as some WMAT families regularly participate in visits to the pediatricians in the region. Families who take their children to well-child visits receive tips on how to play, talk, read and interact with their children while the children receive a book to take home. According to the latest Regional Needs and Assets Report, more than two-thirds of caregivers indicated that they read to their child once a week or less. Knowing this, the White Mountain Apache Tribe Regional Partnership Council has prioritized Reach Out and Read and chose to allot \$31,000 to this strategy, which is an increased allotment from the previous funding cycle (\$20,000) to support distributing developmentally and culturally appropriate books and materials.

APPENDIX A
SFY24 Funding Plan – System Change Planning Document
White Mountain Apache Tribe Regional Partnership Council

White Mountain Apache 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> Programs and resources are available in the community but families are not enrolling or utilizing these programs (White Mountain Apache Tribe Head Start, Apache Behavioral Health Services Thrive Birth to 5, White Mountain Apache Tribe Child Find, First Things First grant partners, etc.) or resources due to both lack of knowledge and trust.</p>
	<p><i>Geographic area:</i> White Mountain Apache Tribe; communities include Canyon Day, Carrizo, Cedar Creek, Cibecue, East Fork, Fort Apache, Hondah-McNary, North Fork, Rainbow City, Seven Mile, Turkey Creek, and Whiteriver.</p>
	<p><i>Target Audience:</i> Primary target should be first time parents and/or pregnant women, particularly pregnant teenagers. Secondary target is families with children birth to age 5.</p>
Expected Impact	<p><i>Expected Impact:</i> Increase knowledge of local resources and build trust of both tribal and non-tribal programs and service providers. This will result in increased enrollment and participation in best practice, evidence-based family support and literacy services (e.g. early head start, home visitation, parenting education).</p>
	<p><i>Timeline:</i> SFY23: Release for Grant Application subsequently approved by Regional Partnership Council and state board for July 1, 2023 start date. Scope of work will include activities requested by the regional council including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family resource events in the different communities. Create a referral system to provide support in navigating families to access needed services. • Provide one-time workshops to first time parents/caregivers and/or pregnant women/teenagers on children behavior, health, importance of early childhood and prenatal care. • Build awareness among community partners about the importance of early childhood so that they then promote early childhood programs/services and early childhood education. • Promote various services in the region including the White Mountain Apache Tribe Head Start, Apache Behavioral Health Services: THRIVE Birth to 5, and future grant partners, etc. to assist in increased enrollment in these programs.

The Regional Partnership Council requested the structure of workshops to be two-generational – so that parents/caregivers and children can attend together. It is important that children and parents/caregiver build nurturing relationships with one another. Furthermore, outreach should include the smaller communities on the reservation including Cibecue, McNary, Turkey Creek, East Fork, Seven Mile, Canyon Day and North Fork.

SFY24: Quarter 1 and 2 initial ramp up in the region. Quarter 3 and 4 implementation of strategy in the region.

The Regional Partnership Council will receive quarterly reports from the Regional Director. The grant partner will be invited to participate in quarterly White Mountain Apache Tribe First Things First grantee meetings. The purpose of the grantee meetings is to provide partners with First Things First updates, White Mountain Apache Tribe updates, grantee updates, which include discussions for coordination and collaboration.

The grant cycle will end in SFY27 on June 30.