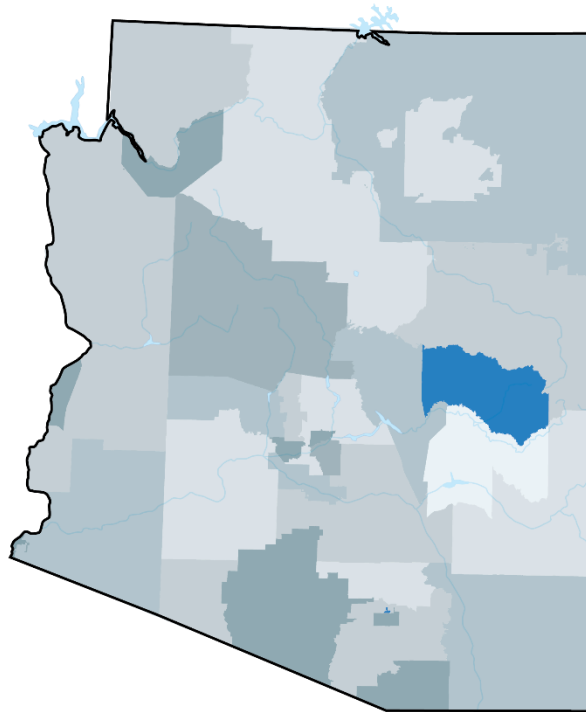


FIRST THINGS FIRST

White Mountain Apache Tribe Regional Partnership Council
Population birth through age 5: 1,814



State Fiscal Year 2026 Funding Plan

SFY 2024 – 2027 Strategic Plan Update

Presented to the First Things First Board
January 21, 2025

FIRST THINGS FIRST

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

Michelle Classay, at-large representative

Jandi Craig, member of the business community

Derrick Leslie, representative of a philanthropic organization

Mona Lupe, child care provider

Josenia Ngo, at-large representative

Terrie Parker, at-large representative

Jelayne Samuel, parent of a child age 5 years or younger

Ardith Titla, health services provider

open, representative of the faith community

Feather Beatty, regional director, First Things First

Kymani Morris, administrative specialist, First Things First

Regional Allocation and Proposed Funding Plan Summary SFY24 – SFY27
White Mountain Apache Tribe Regional Partnership Council

Allocations and Funding Sources	2024	2025	2026	2027
FY Allocation	\$676,296	\$676,296	\$902,422	\$711,320
Population Based Allocation	\$452,826	\$452,826	\$409,292	\$452,826
Discretionary Allocation	\$223,470	\$223,470	\$493,130	\$258,494
Carry Forward From Previous Year	\$1,071,795	\$1,033,305	\$886,027	\$1,030,157
Total Regional Council Funds Available	\$1,748,091	\$1,709,601	\$1,788,449	\$1,741,477
Strategies	Allotted	Allotted	Proposed Allotted	Proposed Allotted
Inclusion of Children with Special Needs			\$52,500	\$52,500
Quality First Academy	\$3,000	\$2,761	\$3,000	\$3,000
Quality First Coaching & Incentives	\$99,330	\$95,946	\$99,330	\$99,330
Quality First Scholarships	\$374,916	\$374,916	\$491,586	\$491,586
First Things First College Scholarships	\$32,400	\$32,400	\$43,200	\$43,200
Child Care Health Consultation	\$20,400	\$24,023	\$20,400	\$20,400
Family Support for Children with Developmental Concerns	\$240,000	\$240,000	-	-
Family Support & Literacy Systems Change	\$117,370	\$117,370	\$150,000	\$150,000
Language, Literacy and Culture in Tribal Communities	\$150,000	\$150,000	\$165,000	\$165,000
Reach Out and Read	\$31,000	\$31,000	\$31,400	\$31,400
Statewide Evaluation	\$29,538	\$29,538	\$29,538	\$29,538
Educational Promotion and Brand Awareness	\$13,000	\$13,000	\$20,000	\$20,000
Media	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$10,000	\$10,000
Total	\$1,115,954	\$1,115,954	\$1,115,954	\$1,115,954
Total Unallotted/Unawarded/Unexpended:*	\$632,137	\$593,647	\$672,495	\$625,523
Fiscal Year	2024	2025	2026	2027
% to Board Priorities	73.06 %	73.06 %	94.53 %	94.53 %
% to Quality First**	10.99 %	10.99 %	10.99 %	10.99 %
Fiscal Year	4 Year Average			
% to Board Priorities	83.80%			
% to Quality First**	10.99%			

* 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, Quality First Assessment and Child Care Health Consultation.

WHITE MOUNTAIN APACHE TRIBE REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP COUNCIL

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 12 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 FTF White Mountain Apache Tribe Regional Council has developed the SFY24-27 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 corona virus 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 staff to address the low enrollment of children in White Mountain Apache Tribe Head Start. This led FTF 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 FTF grant partners and tribal organizations.

SFY26 FUNDING PLAN UPDATE / CHANGE TABLE

WHITE MOUNTAIN APACHE TRIBE 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:

Quality First:

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, more targeted administration support, and additional hours for Child Care Health Consultation.

Quality First Scholarships:

First Things First increased the Quality First Scholarship reimbursement rate to the cost of quality in SFY25, informed by a study conducted in 2021. This increase supports a robust and stable network of child care providers and continues the reimbursement rate that providers were receiving through federal pandemic relief funding.

Coordinated planning with the Arizona Department of Economic Security allowed for 125 children statewide to be transitioned from Quality First Scholarships to DES Child Care Assistance in advance of the end of the federal funds.

Challenges:

Quality First Scholarships:

Reimbursing Quality First Scholarships at the 2021 cost of quality has resulted in fewer scholarships in SFY25 (approximately half the number) for the same amount of funding from the previous year. In planning for SFY26, regional partnership councils had to consider the regional impact the reduction had and make decisions to ensure that additional reductions in funding do not disrupt the system in significant ways.

First Things First and DES will continue to work towards ways to support access to quality early learning to ensure efficient use of funds to serve as many children as possible.

Changes:

Quality First Scholarships:

The regional council took action to increase the funding allotment to the Quality First Scholarship Strategy. This amount would increase the current amount of scholarships available in the region.

Changes:	SFY25	SFY26
Quality First Scholarships		
Allotment:	\$374,916	\$491,586

DESIRED OUTCOME: INFORMATION, SERVICES AND SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES

Strategy Areas and Funded Strategies

Educating Families and Caregivers

- Language, Literacy and Culture in Tribal Communities (prioritized)

Navigating and Connecting Families to Resources

- Family Support and Literacy Systems Change (prioritized)

Language and Literacy

- Reach Out and Read (non-prioritized)

Changes:

Note: The Family Support for Children with Developmental Concerns Strategy was discontinued (details under the “Identifying and Addressing Developmental Concerns” section below) which allowed for the regional council to redistribute funds.

Language, Literacy and Culture in Tribal Communities:

The regional council increased the funding allotment to this contract. The grantee will continue to help maintain and strengthen the identity of the White Mountain Apache people by providing home library kits with Apache language material and free resources to promote the use of the White Mountain Apache language and culture, along with providing caregivers and parents extra resources about their child’s development.

Family Support and Literacy Systems Change:

The regional council took action to increase the funding allotment to this strategy. Staff will plan an Early Childhood Summit for the region to spread awareness and build trust with families to participate in services, which the regional council requested. The regional director convened a community discussion. Those who attended agreed an early childhood summit would support one of their goals, which is strengthening the community involvement and cultural roots to advocate for and promote well-being and school readiness in children ages birth to 5 and families on the Fort Apache Indian Reservation. Additional research is needed to see if children books in the Apache language can also be created in this systems change strategy.

Changes:	SFY25	SFY26
Language, Literacy and Culture in Tribal Communities		
Allotment:	\$150,000	\$165,000
Family Support and Literacy Systems Change		
Allotment:	\$117,370	\$150,000

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

Strategy Areas and Funded Strategies

Professional Development for ECE Professionals

- Inclusion of Children with Special Needs (prioritized)
- First Things First College Scholarships (prioritized)
- Child Care Health Consultation (prioritized)

Changes:

Inclusion of Children with Special Needs:

The regional council took action to approve the Inclusion of Children with Special Needs Strategy for SFY26 due to the discontinuation of the Family Support for Children with Special Needs Strategy. The strategy is new to the region and will support special needs children in early childhood education centers in the region. The regional council has long supported and prioritized strategies to identify and support children with developmental concerns. A Request for Grant Applications will be released during 3rd quarter of SFY25 with a start date of July 1, 2025 for SFY26.

First Things First College Scholarships:

The regional council took action on this strategy to fund four bachelor degree scholarships to assist in preparing highly skilled and appropriately compensated professionals. Northland Pioneer College has a new bachelor degree program in early childhood, so the regional council is anticipating more students in need of scholarships in the future.

Changes:	SFY25	SFY26
Inclusion of Children with Special Needs		
Allotment:	\$0	\$52,500
Service Unit:	-	Number of center based providers served: 6
Target Population:	Quality First Centers located in the region.	
First Things First College Scholarships		
Allotment:	\$32,400	\$43,200
Service Unit:	Number of full-time scholarships for Bachelor's degrees: 3	Number of full-time scholarships for Bachelor's degrees: 4

DESIRED OUTCOME: PUBLIC UNDERSTANDING AND SUPPORT.

Strategy Areas and Funded Strategies

Building Awareness of the Importance of the Early Years

- Educational Promotion and Brand Awareness
- Media

Successes:

Media:

In SFY24, targeted media efforts in the White Mountain Apache Tribe Region raised awareness about the importance of early childhood development, connecting families to resources and empowering communities to support children from birth to age 5. Building on this success, the SFY25 media campaign expands these efforts with targeted online media ads and five print ads in the local newspaper.

Changes:

Educational Promotion and Brand Awareness:

The regional council is proposing to increase the funding allotment to \$20,000 for this strategy to support the cost of updated promotional items, including books to give as incentives at community events and book orders.

Media:

The regional council would like the creation of a region specific media campaign that more appropriately reflects Apache families with young children, while highlighting the “Importance of Early Childhood” and use White Mountain Apache language (spoken/written) where appropriate. The regional council asked to see digital advertising through short video ads and use of social media, as well as traditional advertising through the creation of posters that can be placed at intersections, grocery store cart ads and on the radio. The aim is to connect the audience to the FTF website properties, where additional resources can be found, including the FTF White Mountain Apache Tribe web page so they can find FTF-funded programs and services in the region. The regional council also requested that a photographer come to the region to take pictures of children and families from the region so they can see the community represented in material shared.

Changes:	SFY25	SFY26
Educational Promotion and Brand Awareness		
Allotment:	\$13,000	\$20,000
Media		
Allotment:	\$5,000	\$10,000

DESIRED OUTCOME: ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY PREVENTATIVE AND CONTINUOUS HEALTH CARE.

Strategy Areas and Funded Strategies

Identifying and Addressing Developmental Concerns

- Family Support for Children with Developmental Concerns (non-prioritized)

Changes:

Family Support for Children with Developmental Concerns:

The regional council has decided to not support this strategy for SFY26. A Request for Grant Applications (RFGA) was released for SFY24 with no applicants. The regional council and staff discussed alternatives for implementation. The FTF team also met with two potential community partners to enter into an agreement with. Ultimately, the regional council opted to re-release for an RFGA in SFY25, and there were no applicants for the RFGA in SFY25 either. The regional council explored the Inclusion of Children with Special Needs Strategy and decided to disperse funding to strategies that are successfully being implemented.

Changes:	SFY25	SFY26
Family Support for Children with Developmental Concerns		
Allotment:	\$240,000	0
DESIRED OUTCOME: COORDINATED, INTEGRATED, AND COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM		
<u>Strategy Areas and Funded Strategies</u>		
Evaluation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Statewide Evaluation (non-prioritized) 		
<p>Successes: Statewide Evaluation: 2024 Regional Needs and Asset Reports were delivered in June 2024 and approved by the Board in August 2024.</p>		