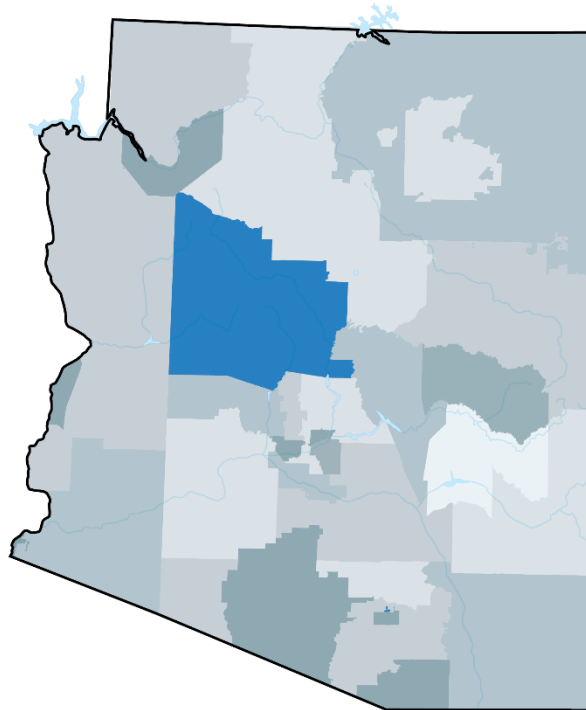


FIRST THINGS FIRST

Yavapai Regional Partnership Council
Population birth through age 5: 11,066



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.

Yavapai Regional Partnership Council

April Hepperle, chair, member of the business community

Virginia Hout, vice chair, child care provider

Sherry Birch, representative of the faith community

Joe Donaldson, health services provider

Vickey La Motte, at-large representative

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

Nancy Ruiz, tribal public official/employee

Matt Schumacher, public school administrator

Kathy Watson, representative of a philanthropic organization

open, at-large representative

open, early childhood educator

Lisa Blyth, regional director, First Things First

Melissa Robertson, administrative specialist, First Things First

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

Allocations and Funding Sources	2024	2025	2026	2027
FY Allocation	\$2,593,737	\$2,593,737	\$2,502,970	\$2,538,500
Population Based Allocation	\$1,530,042	\$1,530,042	\$1,382,943	\$1,530,042
Discretionary Allocation	\$1,063,695	\$1,063,695	\$1,120,027	\$1,008,458
Carry Forward From Previous Year	\$188,474	\$238,563	\$209,743	\$90,203
Total Regional Council Funds Available	\$2,782,211	\$2,832,300	\$2,712,713	\$2,628,703
Strategies	Approved Allotted	Approved Allotted	Proposed Allotted	Projected Allotted
Quality First Academy	\$20,000	\$18,418	\$18,418	\$18,418
Quality First Assessment		\$140,937		
Quality First Coaching & Incentives	\$593,300	\$430,931	\$593,300	\$593,300
Quality First Scholarships	\$1,221,862	\$1,092,052	\$1,077,052	\$1,077,052
First Things First College Scholarships	\$21,600	\$21,600	\$21,600	\$21,600
Child Care Health Consultation	\$136,000	\$159,014	\$159,014	\$159,014
Children's Health Systems Change	\$80,000	\$40,000	\$40,000	\$40,000
Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation	\$242,352	\$293,760	\$293,760	\$293,760
Family Support for Children with Developmental Concerns	\$180,000	\$180,000	\$180,000	\$180,000
Family Support & Literacy Systems Change	\$137,168	\$247,859	\$247,859	\$247,859
Needs and Assets		\$15,000		
Statewide Evaluation	\$105,413	\$105,413	\$105,413	\$105,413
Community Engagement	-			
Educational Promotion and Brand Awareness	\$5,000	-	\$5,000	\$5,000
Media			\$25,000	\$25,000
Total	\$2,742,695	\$2,744,984	\$2,766,416	\$2,766,416
Total Unallotted/Unawarded/Unexpended:*	\$39,516	\$87,316	(\$53,703)	(\$137,713)

Fiscal Year	2020	2024	2025	2026	2027
% to Board Priorities		86.67 %	87.59 %	88.23 %	88.23 %
% to Quality First**	18.89%	27.31 %	22.16 %	27.86 %	27.86 %
Fiscal Year	4 Year Average				
% to Board Priorities	87.68%				
% to Quality First**	26.30%				

* 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.

YAVAPAI 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 FTF Yavapai Regional Partnership Council strategic planning process evolved over SFY22 and SFY23 and included data review; community, family and community feedback with representation from remote and under-resourced communities in the region; as well as five specific strategic planning sessions in the past year utilizing appreciative inquiry and Liberating Structures facilitation techniques. This process allowed the regional council to gain an understanding of the early childhood system in Yavapai from data, equity, anecdotal, family and service provider perspectives to clearly identify priorities. There is considerable variability in the needs of families across the region. Although the population centers of the region are more likely to have resources and opportunities for young children and their families, areas outside of these population centers run the risk of being overlooked for services if only regional or county-level "averages" are examined. Families identify needing assistance with infant and child care, coordination of care for their children with special needs, food access, transportation, housing and income. A key component of the regional council's work has been recognizing that some of the most impactful ways to effect change and support families is to take time to examine the components of the system; identify barriers and strengths within the system; gain a comprehensive understanding of what direct services are most relevant and how they can be most effectively implemented.

Due to limited funding outside of Quality First obligations, not all prioritized system areas could be addressed. The strategies identified focus on the most significant system and service gaps in the Yavapai Region. The strategies either target families with young children who may be vulnerable to health and service access inequities, or focus on system change processes that will provide the regional council with information as to where inequities exist and the most appropriate way to address them. Data Sources for strategic planning included:

- Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats analysis of 2018 and 2020 Regional Needs and Assets by regional council and community member subcommittee
- Meta-Analysis of Existing Opportunity Assessments and Improvement Plans in Yavapai
- Community Member and Partner Interviews
- Family Interviews re: Accessibility of Health and Family Support Services
- Potential Opportunities for Addressing Collaboration and Coordination Report
- Children's Health System Change Final Assessment
- 2022 Yavapai Regional Needs and Assets Report (RNA)
- 2022 Yavapai Developmental Concerns Brief
- 2022 Yavapai Family Support Community Needs Assessment
- 2022 RNA Yavapai Apache Nation Supplement
- Phase II Quality First and the Implementation of Quality Improvement Supports

SFY26 FUNDING PLAN UPDATE / CHANGE TABLE

YAVAPAI 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:

The percentage of programs with quality ratings have remained consistent in the region. The informal assessments offered during early enrollment in Quality First have been helpful to sites in creating their own improvement plans in preparation for their eventual formal assessment. Child care sites connected to schools and churches that provide infrastructure support such as more organization staff on-site, paid time off and access to a substitute teacher pool seem to be adjusting satisfactorily to the new model. At the end of SFY24, the Quality First coach visited every site and reviewed coaching hour availability for each rating level because some of the highest-rated sites were under the impression that they did not have coaching hours. With this clarification, it is anticipated that more sites will reach out throughout SFY25.

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 continues the reimbursement rate that providers were receiving through federal pandemic relief funding.

Challenges:

Quality First:

The adjustment to the new model created some initial confusion and sense of a loss of support for some of the independent sites in the region. Quality First technical assistance providers have shared examples of some site directors telling staff to “lower the bar” so that at the next assessment they will be in a quality rating category that receives more/the most technical support. These responses are considered initial shock reactions and technical assistance providers are interested to see if quality ratings will actually decrease in the next year.

Recruiting and maintaining staffing continues to be an issue across most of the region. An additional need has come up for the higher rated sites that now have a new director and/or many new staff. A high-quality rating indicates a level of self-sufficiency and sustainability that doesn’t quite align with the needs of a high-quality site with a new director and/or new staff. The technical assistance providers are working with these sites to create plans that maximize their access and use of all resources available to them.

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. This was a significant blow to early education providers and the families they were unable to support with scholarships. Although data was used to estimate the number of families who would be eligible for child care subsidy/support from other state partners, the access to those resources has been extremely difficult, as well as connection to those who might help

troubleshoot those issues. 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 further disrupt the system in significant ways.

DESIRED OUTCOME: INFORMATION, SERVICES AND SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES

Strategy Areas and Funded Strategies

Navigating and Connecting Families to Resources

- Family Support and Literacy Systems Change (prioritized)

Successes:

Family Support and Literacy Systems Change

Family Support Systems Change work in Yavapai is occurring along two tracks. One is to expand the already existing network of community based events to include an early childhood component and the other is exploring the development of community-based resource hubs.

In partnership with local family service providers, a grant partner is expanding already existing community-based events to include an early childhood component. At the original release of the Request for Grant Applications (RFGA) in SFY24 there was no award. Although the scope of work identified a concrete deliverable, there was equal emphasis on articulating system change efforts behind the implementation of the deliverable. Applications had a highly programmatic focus rather than systems change. The regional council adjusted the scope of work delineating three distinct phases of implementation highlighting systems change best practices. The RFGA was successfully awarded in February 2024. The grant partner immediately hired a program coordinator who has been successfully creating welcoming family-centered spaces at community events and collecting data from families across the region about needs specific to the remote communities of the region. The program coordinator is recruiting an advisory panel to support the systems change efforts that will be informed by this data.

After unsuccessful efforts in SFY24 to recruit an AmeriCorps VISTA to explore the development of community-based resource hubs, the other focus of this funded Family Support and Literacy Systems change work, the regional council voted to hire a program coordination specialist. A highly qualified and enthusiastic applicant was hired in August 2024 and in three months has completed a number of collective impact and systems change trainings and recruited and met with an advisory panel to develop a plan for examining, policies, practices and partners in the early childhood and family support systems to identify system levers and opportunities for improved system coordination.

Prevent Child Abuse Arizona (PCAAz) has received funding for a Family Resource Center (FRC) Systems Coordinator and Yavapai has been designated as an “enhancement” site to conduct needs assessments and interest for a physical FRC. The PCAAz supervisor of this new FRC System Coordinator serves on the Yavapai Regional Partnership Council and is committed supporting all of these family support systems change efforts collaboratively. To that end, in 2025 collaboration meetings will be regularly scheduled to include the leads for the FTF Yavapai systems change efforts and the PCAAz FRC System Coordinator to ensure coordinated efforts minimizing focus duplication and strategically planning a “team” approach to addressing the layers of family support needs in the region.

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)

Successes:

First Things First College Scholarships:

Despite the discontinuation of the early childhood education associate degree at Yavapai College (YC), the Education curriculum still includes enough courses/credits for students to complete an associate degree with an early childhood emphasis. YC has a fully executed agreement with Northland Pioneer College (NPC) in which all credits from the students' associate degrees transfer and apply to the online NPC bachelor's degree. There are currently three YC students interested in attending NPC's online courses to earn their bachelor's degree.

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 (prioritized)
- Media (prioritized)

Successes:

Educational Promotion and Brand Awareness:

With no community engagement coordinator or funding allotted to the Educational Promotion and Brand Awareness or Media Strategies, public awareness efforts became the responsibility of the regional director and regional council members. The chair, vice chair and regional council members have rotated attendance at community engagement events across the region and have attended city council, public forum and community conversation meetings in their respective communities. The chair has continued to travel to community events with her "Book Garden" sharing early literacy messaging. The regional director has been meeting with economic development and Chamber of Commerce representatives in Prescott, Prescott Valley, Chino Valley, Camp Verde and Cottonwood to collaboratively develop a public forum framework for east and west Yavapai to discuss/regionally address the child care crisis. The statewide child care survey distributed by FTF last year will be distributed in Yavapai through the chambers to bring regionally specific data to the forums. A west Yavapai business forum to explore potential regional solutions to the child care crisis is tentatively planned for February 2025.

Changes:

Educational Promotion and Brand Awareness, Media:

Due to Quality First allotment obligations in SFY24, the regional council chose to prioritize funding for system change and programmatic strategies with the remaining funding. This eliminated funding for both Educational Promotion and Brand Awareness and Media. It was anticipated that by SFY26 there would be more room in the budget to resume funding of these two strategies, as is the case. The regional council believes both of these strategies will support regional and statewide efforts in raising awareness about the importance of quality child care as an integral component of all communities' economic development planning.

Changes:	SFY25	SFY26
Educational Promotion and Brand Awareness		
Allotment:	\$0	\$5000
Media		
Allotment:	\$0	\$25,000
DESIRED OUTCOME: ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY PREVENTATIVE AND CONTINUOUS HEALTH CARE.		
<u>Strategy Areas and Funded Strategies</u>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Family Support for Children with Developmental Concerns (non-prioritized) ○ Children’s Health Systems Change (non-prioritized) 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 		
<p>Successes:</p> <p>Children’s Health Systems Change:</p> <p>The Yavapai Communities for Young Children (YCYC) steering committee, supported by the Northern Arizona University Center for Health Equity Research (NAU CHER), maintains a committed membership of executive leaders representing health, government, education, and family support service agencies in Yavapai. Since convening in SFY23, the committee has focused on addressing the fragmented health system that prevents families from effectively identifying and accessing essential health services. They meet quarterly to support the first of four working groups focused on addressing health system change priorities identified during their planning in SFY23 and SFY24. The remaining three workgroups will eventually address additional priorities: overcoming AHCCCS-related barriers to health insurance enrollment for families with young children, creating a pipeline to recruit health care providers to the region, and increasing developmental screenings for young children. In recognition of their efforts, NAU CHER and the steering committee were awarded a Vitalyst Spark grant to support their system change work.</p> <p>The closed-loop referral system working group has been meeting for about eight months and is co-chaired by leadership from a health organization and a community-based organization. The northern Arizona Contexture (administrative home of Community Cares, the state’s closed-loop referral system) representative as well as a representative from AZ 2-1-1 are both members of the working group that is actively recruiting Yavapai community-based organizations to Community Cares.</p> <p>In January 2025, Paul Schmitz, senior advisor to the Collective Impact Forum, will be presenting a one-day workshop for regional council members, Yavapai grant partners, Steering Committee and Working Group members on the 10 pitfalls of collective impact work.</p>		
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: 2024 Regional Needs and Asset Reports were completed in June 2024 and approved by the Board in August 2024.</p>		

Changes: Needs and Assets data collection is conducted every four years, thus funding is not required every year. Data collection for the 2026 Regional Needs and Assets Report occurs in SFY25. The FTF Yavapai Regional Partnership Council allotted funding for a Yavapai-Apache Nation supplement as part of the 2026 Regional Needs and Assets Report. No data collection will be conducted in SFY26.

Changes:	SFY25	SFY26
Needs and Assets		
Allotment:	\$15,000	\$0