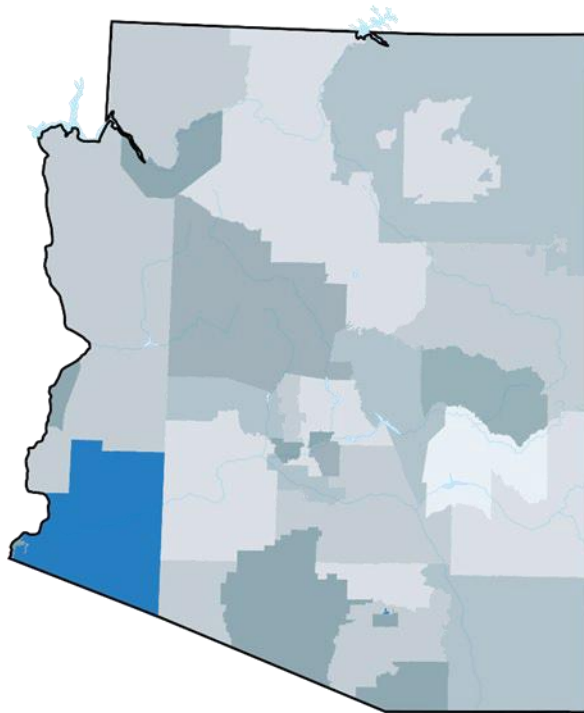


FIRST THINGS FIRST

Yuma Regional Partnership Council
Population birth through age 5: 17,983



State Fiscal Year 2026 Funding Plan

SFY 2024 – 2027 Strategic Plan Update

Presented to the First Things First Board
January 21, 2025



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.

Yuma Regional Partnership Council

Donald Vickers, chair, representative of the faith community

Linda Elliott-Nelson, vice chair, representative of a philanthropic organization

Ayari Armenta, health services provider

Alma Barrandey, early childhood educator

Emilia Cortez, at-large representative

Lizette Esparza, at-large representative

Marla Ford, child care provider

Mariam Limon, member of the business community

Cori Rico, at-large representative

Mia Sanchez, parent of a child age 5 years or younger

Mario Ybarra, public school administrator

Rudy Ortiz, regional director, First Things First

Kimberly Corbin, administrative specialist, First Things First

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

Allocations and Funding Sources	2024	2025	2026	2027
FY Allocation	\$4,608,852	\$4,608,852	\$4,810,590	\$4,977,311
Population Based Allocation	\$3,088,052	\$3,088,052	\$2,791,165	\$3,088,052
Discretionary Allocation	\$1,520,800	\$1,520,800	\$2,019,425	\$1,889,259
Carry Forward From Previous Year	\$758,084	\$590,107	\$245,585	\$112,176
Total Regional Council Funds Available	\$5,366,936	\$5,198,959	\$5,056,175	\$5,089,487
Strategies	Approved Allotment	Approved Allotment	Proposed Allotment	Projected Allotment
Early Learning Systems Change	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$20,000
Inclusion of Children with Special Needs	\$200,000	\$200,000	\$200,000	\$200,000
Quality First Academy	\$22,000	\$20,242	\$22,000	\$22,000
Quality First Assessment		\$9,624		
Quality First Coaching & Incentives	\$458,410	\$423,406	\$458,410	\$458,410
Quality First Scholarships	\$2,029,657	\$2,029,657	\$2,029,657	\$2,029,657
Professional Development for Early Childhood Practitioners	\$151,152	\$151,152	\$151,152	\$151,152
Child Care Health Consultation	\$149,600	\$176,738	\$149,600	\$149,600
Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation	\$100,980	\$100,980	\$100,980	\$100,980
Family Support for Children with Developmental Concerns	\$275,000	\$275,000	\$275,000	\$275,000
Oral Health	\$141,000	\$141,000	\$141,000	\$141,000
Community Based Language and Literacy	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$100,000
Family Support & Literacy Systems Change	\$129,616	\$129,616	\$129,616	\$129,616
Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care	\$180,000	\$180,000	\$180,000	\$180,000
Home Visitation	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000
Parenting Education	\$200,000	\$200,000	\$200,000	\$200,000
Statewide Evaluation	\$206,687	\$206,687	\$206,687	\$206,687
Educational Promotion and Brand Awareness	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$20,000
Total	\$5,384,102	\$5,384,102	\$5,384,102	\$5,384,102
Total Unallotted/Unawarded/Unexpended:*	(\$17,166)	(\$185,143)	(\$327,927)	(\$294,615)

Fiscal Year	2020	2024	2025	2026	2027
% to Board Priorities		88.43 %	88.43 %	88.43 %	88.43 %
% to Quality First**	9.75%	11.70 %	11.70 %	11.70 %	11.70 %
Fiscal Year	4 Year Average				
% to Board Priorities	88.43%				
% to Quality First**	11.70%				

* 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.

YUMA 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 Yuma Regional Partnership Council (includes the Arizona portion of the land belonging to the Fort Yuma-Quechan Indian Tribe) SFY24-27 Strategic Plan provides a multiple disciplinary approach to offer high-quality choices for families and engage the community to increase understanding and take action toward a connected early childhood system that cares for the whole child and their family. The FTF Yuma Regional Council underwent an Appreciative Inquiry exercise (a facilitation philosophy and a methodology for positive change). It helped the regional council reach their "North Star" vision for their plan. They determined this plan had to be part of the solution to break the cycle of poverty in the region. This led to the regional council incorporating the voice and perspective from the region's leaders and stakeholders through three sub-regional town halls. These town halls were instrumental in providing insight on how the regional council's plan would ensure equity and support of under-resourced and underserved children and their families. The outcomes of the town halls supported and confirmed the FTF Yuma Regional Partnership Council's decision in prioritizing the early learning and family support systems. The FTF Yuma Regional Partnership Council developed a strategic plan that aligns with the State Board's priorities and meets the region's specific needs identified in town halls. This strategic plan will promote equity and support under-resourced and underserved children and their families by:

- Being intentional to increase awareness of the services in the region with enhanced efforts executed in the south and east sub regions and in communities of higher poverty (for example, north end Yuma).
- Enhancing system partners' workforce capacity to deliver services in the region and improve collaboration of system partners to enhance the referral process.
- Providing outreach and services in English and Spanish with sensitivity to the cultural needs of a U.S./Mexico border region. The Yuma Region has relatively more Hispanic persons (64%) than the state of Arizona as a whole (31%), and relatively more Hispanic children under age 5 (79%) than across the state (45%). Spanish is the language spoken in the home for a majority of the region's population (52%).
- Providing multiple and diverse opportunities for families to engage and to best serve working families and families living in the most rural areas of the region. Partners will implement a multiple delivery system approach including, and not limited to, in-person at community hubs, in the home and virtually.
- Developing partnerships designed to serve the target population in Yuma's south county sub-region, which has a high number of multi-generational households.
- Intentionally incorporating investments for all families and children in the region, including typically developing children and children with delays.
- Sustaining and enhancing relationships at all levels to meet the vast needs of under-resourced and underserved children and their families, which is the backbone upon which this strategic plan was built.

SFY26 FUNDING PLAN UPDATE / CHANGE TABLE
YUMA 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:

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.

Together, First Things First and the Arizona Department of Economic Security (DES) developed and facilitated information sessions and resources for Quality First participants to discuss the end of the federal funds and what SFY25 would look like for their participation, whether continuing or not.

One regulated early care and education program funded through the federal pandemic relief funds was able to maintain its participation in SFY25 due to funding made available as part of the Arizona Department of Education's High-Quality Early Learning program.

Quality First has significantly improved the quality of child care options available to Yuma Region families. Over 93% of the centers and homes participating in Quality First are rated quality and above.

Quality First Scholarships:

The FTF Yuma Regional Partnership Council continues to support access to quality early care and education through Quality First center and home-based slots and Quality First Scholarships. One hundred percent of the region's Quality First Scholarships were served by providers with a 3- star rating and above. Eighty-three percent (83%) of the scholarships were served by participants with 4- and 5-star ratings.

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 providers received through federal pandemic relief funding.

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

Challenges:

Quality First:

Federal pandemic relief funding to support a statewide expansion of Quality First ended before the start of SFY25. In the Yuma region, 25 programs were funded through the federal pandemic relief funds which resulted in 24 participants who transitioned to the Quality First waitlist starting July 1, 2024. All programs moved to the waitlist that have a rating expiring in SFY25, will have the opportunity to be reassessed to maintain a valid star rating.

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.

DESIRED OUTCOME: INFORMATION, SERVICES AND SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES

Strategy Areas and Funded Strategies

Educating Families and Caregivers

- Home Visitation (prioritized)
- Parenting Education (prioritized)
- Community Based Language and Literacy (prioritized)
- Family, Friend and Neighbor Care (prioritized)

Navigating and Connecting Families to Resources

- Family Support and Literacy Systems Change (prioritized)

Successes:

The regional council continues to implement a comprehensive approach that ensures multiple strategies at various levels of the continuum of family support services (i.e. intensive home visitation to community-level parenting education and early literacy opportunities). The approach provides high-quality choices for families and engages the community to take responsibility for a connected early childhood system, caring for the whole child and their family.

Family Support and Literacy Systems Change:

The Yuma County Early Childhood Collaborative facilitated by the FTF Yuma Program Coordination Specialist, acts as the largest convener of early childhood system partners in the region. The collaborative will have four meetings during a fiscal year with a leadership team committed to the planning, implementation and success of the collaborative. The collaborative will focus on how to improve awareness and collaboration of the system post-pandemic. The vision and mission are:

Vision:

Our vision is a Yuma County where all children and families thrive and reach their full potential through a high-quality interconnected early childhood system.

Mission:

Our mission is to educate and empower all Yuma County families and children by coordinating efforts with our leaders and agencies. Collaboratively, we strengthen and sustain a high-quality early childhood system encompassing services in health, family support and early education.

Strong coordination and collaboration efforts are still of high importance within family support strategies. Navigating and connecting families to resources is a high priority for the Yuma region to increase the availability of and access to high-quality family support services for families with young children and link families to other resources and supports to meet their needs. To achieve this, the FTF program coordination specialist, with guidance from an advisory committee (including Arizona 211), has released the third version of the Yuma Region Resource Connection Guide. The guide had 376 updates (including 32 additional programs and services), available online and in a printed version, and the category labels are now in Spanish to support the entire region. The program coordination specialist provides a free training to system partners in the region to enhance the use of the resource guide and improve awareness of programs in the region, with the ultimate goal of improving the rate of correct referrals in the region.

The regional council has made family resource centers their top system change priority. The regional council collaborated with Southwest Arizona Town Hall to help convene over 150 leaders to learn about family resource centers (FRC), and to start a task force facilitated by the FTF program coordination specialist and supported by the regional director. Although the FRCs will not be funded by FTF, the task force has over 80 local leaders who meet monthly to create a pilot site. The task force has used local data to identify priorities/needs and to help bring awareness of the work and gain champions. The task force has identified Sunset Health Clinic and Regional Center for Border Health as two backbone agencies to house a family resource center. The regional director and program coordination specialist are currently in the middle of working with both federally qualified health center providers to make family resource centers a reality in the Yuma region. The goal is to start building the pilot in SFY26.

The regional director is the community lead for Read On Yuma. In collaboration with the Yuma County Office of Education (fiscal agent), Read On Yuma was awarded a \$40,000 Read On Arizona grant to implement a “parent university” model for every elementary school in the Somerton School District. The city of Somerton was selected because it’s a child care desert in the region, with its school district being the only school district in the region to not have a typical preschool program. The model enhances the scope and scale of both the parent education and community-based language and literacy grantee (both Arizona’s Children’s Association). The grant will target preschool families to enroll in the programs with the Community Based Language and Literacy Strategy component provided by the family’s future kindergarten teacher. The grantee will train the teachers to successfully with fidelity execute the curriculum. The expectation is to graduate 90 families.

Challenges:

Family Support and Literacy Systems Change:

The purpose of the resource guide and family resource centers is to help improve awareness and referrals in the region. Regional FTF staff are still working with grant partners to identify additional opportunities to address the ongoing challenge of enhancing the awareness of the early childhood programs in the region. One solution is to collaborate with the Northern Arizona University (Yuma Campus) Social Work department to bring an intern to work with the regional FTF staff to support the work of updating the resource guide and efforts to coordinate and participate in resource fairs in the region. Successful results have been observed in the intern hosting tables at local family events and reaching out to local child care providers.

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)
- Inclusion of Children with Special Needs (prioritized)
- Professional Development of ECE Professionals (prioritized)
- Child Care Health Consultation (prioritized)

Successes:

Professional Development of ECE Professionals:

Arizona PBS is the regional council’s grant partner implementing the Professional Development of ECE Professionals Strategy to provide high-quality professional development through a community of practice delivery system (including professionals from Fort Yuma-Quechan Reservation). The content areas of the communities of practice include infant toddler development, social emotional development and early language and literacy. The professional development is being provided in English and Spanish. This work is the only professional development providing evidence based professional development in the region and allowing early childhood educators to receive the hours they need to renew their permits and credentials. It is also the only bilingual opportunity in the region. With many home providers monolingual Spanish, the scope of work is meeting a critical need in the region.

Challenges:

Professional Development of ECE Professionals:

The region has a few opportunities for K-12 system educators to receive professional development. The regional director is currently working with the Yuma County Office of Education to explore opportunities to add early childhood tracks to those existing professional development opportunities.

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)

Successes:

Educational Promotion and Brand Awareness:

To help address the child care crisis, the FTF Yuma Regional Partnership Council has been working in collaboration with the Great Yuma Economic Development Cooperation (GYEDC), Yuma County Chamber of Commerce (YCCC). The goals and expected outcomes of this collaboration are:

- In May 2024 a child care crisis forum was convened and facilitated by the regional director. The FTF CEO was present and able to support a breakout session. More than 40 local leaders participated. The forum was held at OC Johnson Elementary School (The school is a community school with a clinic and preschool on site. The community school model was facilitated by the regional director and school principal. The school was a “D” school and is now a “B” school).
 - The major outcome of this forum was the development of the Greater Yuma Child Care Crisis Taskforce. The taskforce is led and facilitated by GYEDC. The taskforce has more than 50 local leaders; with the intent of identifying opportunities to solve the crisis locally.

- The task force will be the convener and facilitator of the Read On Arizona grant Arizona Early Childhood Fiscal Map component. The regional director is the current community lead for Read On Yuma. Read On Yuma in collaboration with the Yuma County Office of Education will create an interactive report allowing policymakers, partners, and stakeholders in Yuma’s early childhood system to visualize and analyze the funding streams that supported early education, child care, and other services for children and families over 2019, 2020 and 2021, including the impact of federal relief dollars and the imbalance of federal and state funding. Once the interactive map is completed, it will empower the task force and community to have a better understanding of funding streams to improve decision-making and actions.
 - A new preschool was opened by the faith-based panel member of the forum. The new site can serve around 40 children. A ribbon cutting in collaboration with the Yuma County Chamber of Commerce will take place in January.
 - A local private business is in the process of opening a new child development center in SFY26
 - A Yuma regional council member who served on the panel of the event invited the community engagement coordinator to present to the Yuma regional council and the presentation was executed a few months later.
- FTF is a proud members of the Yuma County Chamber of Commerce (YCCC). The regional director, program coordination specialist and community engagement coordinator have all had opportunities to present at different chamber events. The YCCC along with Sunset Clinic and Avenir Financial were proud champions of the ribbon cutting for the 3rd edition of the Yuma Region Resource Connection Guide. More than 40 local leaders attended, including elected officials.
- FTF is a new member of the Great Yuma Economic Development Cooperation. The regional director and community engagement coordinator have been attending quarterly meetings to network to enhance local business champions. Some members of GYEDC have already joined the Greater Yuma Child Care Taskforce.

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

Strategy Areas and Funded Strategies

Oral Health

- Oral Health (non-prioritized)

Identifying and Addressing Developmental Concerns

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

Successes:

The Oral Health Strategy is targeting sub-regions (including South County Yuma and North End Yuma) in the region with higher tooth decay and risk factors. The grantee, the University of Arizona Cooperative Extension Yuma, has successfully identified those sub-regions and is primarily delivering services at child care and preschool locations within those areas.

Challenges:

The regional council is exploring opportunities to learn more about what federally qualified health center providers are doing in the region in regards to oral health. We will have presentations from the providers at future regional council meetings to learn and identify opportunities to collaborate.

DESIRED OUTCOME: COORDINATED, INTEGRATED, AND COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM

Strategy Areas and Funded Strategies

Evaluation

- Statewide Evaluation (non-prioritized)

Successes:

Statewide Evaluation:

The 2024 Regional Needs and Asset Reports were delivered in June 2024 and approved by the Board in August 2024.