

NAVAJO/APACHE 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 Navajo/Apache Regional Council developed their SFY24-27 Strategic Plan, which promotes equity and supports under-resourced and underserved children and their families by identifying and prioritizing the most significant needs in the region.

The FTF Navajo/Apache Regional Council will advance diversity, equity and inclusion for all, especially for those who have been historically marginalized or underserved, by cultivating a culture where everyone can thrive. The strategic plan promotes equity, supports low-income working families through child-care financial assistance, promotes children's learning by improving the quality of early care and education and provides professional development opportunities for the early childhood workforce. The regional council's Early Learning Systems Change Strategy will expand that support by targeting communities where families have limited, or no, access to early learning opportunities. The Navajo/Apache Region is a large geographic area that includes many small, spread out communities such as Heber, Linden, Vernon, St. John's, Alpine, Sanders and Concho to name a few. Many of the communities in the region have hard-to-reach families who have a lack of trust of government-funded programs and stigmas in participating in programs of any kind. The intent of the regional council is to reach these families and determine, through an opportunity assessment, how best to support their early learning needs.

The regional council tends to prioritize communities in Apache County, which has the highest poverty level of any county in the state. The regional council knows that this is where most of our support is needed.

Additionally, the FTF Navajo/Apache Regional Partnership Council will promote health equity and support across the region by promoting positive oral, physical, mental and developmental health to uninsured and underinsured populations. Through the region's Oral Health and Well Child Family Care strategies, the regional council is ensuring that all families, regardless of income or geographic location, have access to preventative oral health screenings, timely developmental and sensory screenings, immunization, well-child visits, support in navigating the complex health system, access to parenting information and resources and access to developmentally-appropriate books.

The regional council members are committed to advancing equity for all children and families, especially those who have been historically underserved, marginalized, and adversely affected by persistent poverty and inequality in the region by intentionally focusing on communities that are impacted by homelessness, housing instability, domestic and intimate partner violence, mental health and adolescent pregnancy to promote self-sufficiency and well-being. This will be achieved through the regional council's awareness strategies that will focus not only on promoting the importance of the early years, but also on building trust in First Things First.

Regional Allocation and Proposed Funding Plan Summary SFY24 – SFY27
Navajo/Apache Regional Partnership Council

| Allocations and Funding Sources | 2024 | 2025 | 2026 | 2027 |
|---|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| FY Allocation | \$1,510,461 | \$1,510,461 | \$1,231,670 | \$1,625,482 |
| Population Based Allocation | \$1,012,965 | \$1,012,965 | \$915,579 | \$1,012,965 |
| Discretionary Allocation | \$497,496 | \$497,496 | \$316,091 | \$612,517 |
| Carry Forward From Previous Year | \$239,791 | \$570,150 | \$934,988 | \$759,355 |
| Total Regional Council Funds Available | \$1,750,252 | \$2,080,611 | \$2,166,658 | \$2,384,837 |
| Strategies | Approved Allotted | Approved Allotted | Approved Allotted | Proposed Allotted |
| Early Learning Systems Change | \$521,403 | \$521,403 | \$383,003 | \$383,003 |
| Quality First Academy | \$2,000 | \$1,841 | \$1,760 | \$1,760 |
| Quality First Assessment | | \$6,015 | \$7,760 | \$7,760 |
| Quality First Coaching & Incentives | \$38,660 | \$30,389 | \$28,640 | \$28,640 |
| Quality First Scholarships | \$211,820 | \$211,820 | \$311,820 | \$311,820 |
| First Things First College Scholarships | \$43,200 | \$43,200 | \$81,600 | \$81,600 |
| Child Care Health Consultation | \$13,600 | \$16,015 | \$15,850 | \$15,850 |
| Children's Health Systems Change | \$45,200 | \$45,200 | \$45,200 | \$45,200 |
| Oral Health | \$170,000 | \$170,000 | \$170,000 | \$170,000 |
| Well Child and Family Care | \$650,000 | \$650,000 | \$650,000 | \$650,000 |
| Statewide Evaluation | \$67,499 | \$67,499 | \$67,499 | \$67,499 |
| Educational Promotion and Brand Awareness | \$12,000 | \$12,000 | \$12,000 | \$12,000 |
| Media | \$20,000 | \$20,000 | \$20,000 | \$20,000 |
| Total | \$1,795,382 | \$1,795,382 | \$1,795,132 | \$1,795,132 |

| Fiscal Year | 2020 | 2024 | 2025 | 2026 | 2027 |
|-----------------------|----------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| % to Board Priorities | | 48.05 % | 48.05 % | 48.04 % | 48.04 % |
| % to Quality First* | 3.35% | 3.02 % | 3.02 % | 3.00 % | 3.00 % |
| Fiscal Year | 4 Year Average | | | | |
| % to Board Priorities | 48.04% | | | | |
| % to Quality First* | 3.01% | | | | |

*Includes Quality First Academy, Quality First Assessment, Quality First Coaching and Incentives and Child Care Health Consultation.

Justification for not meeting the 80% allotment to Board Priorities:

The First Things First Navajo/Apache Regional Partnership Council recognizes the importance of aligning with the statewide strategic direction. However, the regional council continues to assess local needs and assets and significant capacity and infrastructure issues remain, including a region-wide child care desert with a critical lack of existing child care programs. The region continues its SFY27 funding plan with the same funding levels as the FTF Board-approved SFY26 plan and will continue to assess and look for future opportunities to continue to align more closely with the FTF Board’s priority areas, particularly concerning Quality First, and continues working to implement the Early Learning Systems Change strategy.

Through its Early Learning Systems Change Strategy, the council aims to further this support by targeting communities where families have limited or no access to early learning opportunities. Spanning a large geographic area, the Navajo/Apache Region includes numerous small, dispersed communities, such as Heber, Linden, Vernon, St. Johns, Alpine, Sanders, and Concho. Many families in these areas face barriers like distrust of government-funded programs and stigmas associated with participating in such initiatives. The total allotment for the Well Child and Family and Oral Health strategies accounts for 46% of the regional allocation and thus the 80% allotment threshold was not met.

The Navajo/Apache Regional Council is very cognizant of the disparities in early learning that exist in the region and recognizes that the region is a child care desert. The regional council has allotted over \$380,000 to the Early Learning Systems Change strategy with the intent to determine the best early learning support that can be offered to the youngest in the region with the First Things First strategies currently available.

The regional council funded a start-up, expansion grant, starting in SFY26, from the Early Learning Systems Change allotment in the amount of \$285,000 to address the need for more access to childcare. Four Star Quality First rated Tracy's Childcare, the recipient of these funds plans to expand care of the six week to twelve-month population at their center by 16-20 infants. These funds will enable them to build two new infant rooms to support this proposal. This will be a huge step in addressing the needs for early childcare in the Navajo/Apache region.

During the SFY26, maintained in SFY27, the regional council added \$100,000, from the Early Learning Systems Change strategy, to add Quality First Scholarships, to address current waitlists in the region.

During SFY26, maintained in SFY27, the council added \$38,400, or three slots, to the First Things First College Scholarships strategy. This was to address the waitlist of students applying for these scholarships. This funding was also moved from the Early Learning Systems Change Strategy.

The greatest access that the regional council has to parents and caregivers of children birth to age 5 in the Navajo/Apache region is through health strategies, demonstrated by a consistent trend in data indicating a majority of families in the region take their young children for well child visits regularly. The Well Child and Family Care Strategy currently has over 4,000 children birth to age 5 enrolled, from two grant partners (Summit Healthcare and North Country Healthcare). Access to these families is building trust of First Things First and will build demand for additional family support programs such as Home Visitation and Parenting Education.

Navajo and Apache Counties continues have the highest rate of untreated tooth decay amongst young children in the state. Untreated tooth decay is a preventable issue with early screenings, fluoride varnish applications, parental education and regular dental visits at a dental home. Knowing this, the Navajo/Apache Regional Council has prioritized oral health as a regional priority and has chosen to allot \$170,000 to the Oral Health Strategy and \$45,200 to the Children's Health Systems Change Strategy. This approach, funding both Oral Health and Systems Change, will build upon the system level work that the regional council has funded over the past four years. Additionally, the systems change work will result in additional dentists in the region accepting AHCCCS and willing to see children under the age of five, making the necessity for the region to fund the Oral Health Strategy obsolete in the future.