

### SANTA CRUZ 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 Santa Cruz Regional Partnership Council’s State Fiscal Year 2024-2027 (SFY24 – 27) Strategic Plan promotes equity and support of under-resourced and underserved children and their families in various ways. This plan utilizes a multi-generational approach, which emphasizes high-quality choices for families and young children. The Santa Cruz Regional Council is choosing to focus on family support, given the low level of educational attainment among parents in the region and the number of children living in poverty who are considered to be at risk. The regional council is keenly aware that a multi-pronged approach is necessary to serve families across the spectrum of needs. Families receiving home visitation services will be those who are harder to reach and considered to be more at risk or disenfranchised, such as families with limited English proficiency, single parent homes and families with transportation challenges. Family resource center services will be targeted to families more universally. Families and caregivers receiving services through the family resource centers may feel a stronger sense of community and may be better equipped in seeking information, education and supports. Family resource centers will provide parent support and connection to resources for families that are locally available. Both of these strategies utilize a multi-generational approach so that entire families, including families that represent grandparents raising grandchildren and other family members raising young children, are benefiting from these services.

The Santa Cruz Regional Partnership Council also recognizes the importance and need for accessible, affordable, high-quality early childhood education. According to the 2022 Santa Cruz Regional Needs and Assets Report, while the cost of center-based care is lower in Santa Cruz than elsewhere, incomes are also lower. Families in Santa Cruz County pay about 10-13% of their income for child care in center-based programs, depending on the child’s age. Child care is a substantial expense for families, especially for families with multiple young children needing care. That is more than the United States Health and Human Services recommended 10% of their annual incomes for child care. Single female parent homes, which account for 26% of all households in the region, have a lower median income, resulting in a higher proportion of their income being spent on child care (31-44%). The regional council currently supports Quality First Scholarships to help minimize inequities, but those only reach a small percentage of eligible children. Additionally, children birth to age 5 living in families with incomes below the poverty guidelines are eligible for Early Head Start and Head Start services; however, there are only two Early Head Start and four Head Start sites serving the entire region. For those families who do not meet the eligibility requirements of Head Start, there are only 46 registered child care providers approved to serve up to 997 children, which isn’t nearly enough to serve the 4,416 children birth to age 5. This means that there are 4.5 times as many children birth to age 5 compared to the number of available child care slots in the region, meaning the region meets the criteria of a “child care desert.” While accessibility is an on-going issue for the region, the regional council sees improving the quality of early care and education as the first step to reaching accessibility.

The Santa Cruz Regional Partnership Council also recognizes the value and need for local professional development opportunities for early childhood practitioners. According to qualitative data provided by early childhood practitioners in the region, there are not enough local professional development offerings available, which forces them to travel to Tucson or Phoenix. Further exacerbating the challenge is that the majority of professional development currently available is only offered in English, which is a challenge to many local practitioners who primarily speak Spanish. The regional council is addressing the inequitable access to professional development by building capacity through the Early Learning Systems Change Strategy. The intent is to provide culturally and linguistically responsive, local professional development opportunities as well as to begin a “grow your own” model to build the professional knowledge and capacity of early childhood professionals in the region. This approach will encourage local early childhood practitioners to become certified to offer high-quality professional development instead of needing to bring in someone from outside the region or accessing professional development outside of the region, which has been the current practice since local instructors do not currently exist.

**Regional Allocation and Proposed Funding Plan Summary SFY24 – SFY27**  
**Santa Cruz Regional Partnership Council**

Allocations and Funding Sources	2024	2025	2026	2027
FY Allocation	\$1,088,848	\$1,088,848	\$1,231,489	\$1,157,168
Population Based Allocation	\$721,996	\$721,996	\$652,584	\$721,996
Discretionary Allocation	\$366,852	\$366,852	\$578,905	\$435,172
Carry Forward From Previous Year	\$73,384	\$1,091	-	\$64,180
<b>Total Regional Council Funds Available</b>	<b>\$1,162,232</b>	<b>\$1,089,939</b>	<b>\$1,231,489</b>	<b>\$1,221,348</b>
Strategies	Approved Allotted	Approved Allotted	Approved Allotted	Proposed Allotted
Early Learning Systems Change	\$22,000	\$22,000	\$22,000	\$22,000
Quality First Academy	\$4,000	\$3,681	\$3,960	\$3,960
Quality First Assessment			\$23,280	\$23,280
Quality First Coaching & Incentives	\$119,290	\$114,778	\$87,525	\$87,525
Quality First Scholarships	\$340,558	\$340,558	\$340,558	\$340,558
Child Care Health Consultation	\$27,200	\$32,031	\$35,663	\$35,663
Family Resource Centers	\$500,000	\$500,000	\$500,000	\$500,000
Home Visitation	\$150,000	\$150,000	\$150,000	\$150,000
Statewide Evaluation	\$48,052	\$48,052	\$48,052	\$48,052
Educational Promotion and Brand Awareness	\$9,932	\$9,932	\$9,932	\$9,932
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,221,032</b>	<b>\$1,221,032</b>	<b>\$1,220,970</b>	<b>\$1,220,970</b>

Fiscal Year	2020	2024	2025	2026	2027
% to Board Priorities		96.06 %	96.06 %	96.06 %	96.06 %
% to Quality First*	13.58%	12.32 %	12.32 %	12.32 %	12.32 %
Fiscal Year	4 Year Average				
% to Board Priorities	96.06%				
% to Quality First*	12.32%				

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

Justification for not meeting % to Quality First expectation: The SFY24-27 Quality First Investments do not equal or exceed those of SFY20 as required by the Board because Quality First Star Ratings for some of the providers in the region have increased since SFY20. That increase in Star Ratings ultimately led to a decrease in the cost of Quality First in the region. The regional council continues to maintain the same level of Quality First slots as it did in SFY20.