
Goals of First Things First Evaluation

Overarching goals for learning about First Things First's impacts

- Identify the overall impact of First Things First in strengthening children's kindergarten readiness, at a statewide level and in specific, diverse communities.
- Determine the cost effectiveness or cost/benefits of FTF funded services and strategic approaches (single or bundled programs/services/strategies).
- Learn about the impact of FTF efforts on individual early childhood indicators.

Goal related to establishing the conditions for conducting evaluation studies

- Establish a longitudinal data system to house all newly collected data in a format consistent with the essential elements of data quality; work with partners to house or share existing data in a manner that facilitates longitudinal, cost-benefit, and implementation analysis, minimizes redundant reporting, and ensures data quality and security.

Goals related to understanding program effects for subgroups

- Obtain accurate information on met and unmet needs of children and families, determine if services are matched with need, and identify what services children receive, by age, and over time, and how well services are matched with needs.
- Understand if FTF funded services are more (or less) effective for certain groups of children, or at certain points in time in the development of a child and family.
- Determine the effectiveness of Quality First as an approach to strengthen the quality of child care/education programs and services, and determine if there is a relationship between QF ratings, improved early childhood programs, and child development and kindergarten readiness.

Goals for learning about First Things First's implementation and processes

- Learn which children and families do not receive needed services, and identify "bottlenecks" or outright barriers in the service system that may prevent families and children from accessing services.
- Understand how and how well regional strategies are implemented, and how the system of services as a whole comes together over time to benefit children and families.
- Determine how and if individual programs or strategic approaches work together in communities to strengthen communities and families, and ultimately improve child readiness to succeed in school.
- Determine through comparison between local communities if there are critical funding strategies, underlying infrastructure, or community needs and assets that differentially increase or decrease desired community, family and child outcomes and impact.

- Determine the type and extent of resources needed to ensure adequate implementation of funded programs, services, and strategies.

Goals related to the use of results of the evaluation studies

- Produce evaluation products that can support learning communities whereby regional councils can have a sound understanding of what “best practice” programs and strategies, in what combinations and with what available and potential additional resources, are most likely to have a high impact in the region.
- Obtain formative evaluation feedback related to FTF local and statewide decision-making related to strategic and programmatic planning, funding and oversight of strategic efforts.
- Obtain formative evaluation feedback to better understand the Early Childhood Education system in Arizona, and inform efforts to strengthen the system to better meet the needs of children, families, and professionals in the field.