

Table 1. Possible Evaluation Approaches Designed to Address Key First Things First Questions

Evaluation Question	Evaluation Approaches					
	Family Case Studies	Large-Scale Implementation / Process Studies	Descriptive Outcome Studies	Place-Based System Level Process and Outcome Studies	Quasi-Experimental Design Studies	Planned-Variation Experimental Studies
1. Are the capacity and level of coordination of the early childhood system changing and are changes associated with funding levels?	<p>✓ Select a small number of families participating in key components of FTF, conduct in-depth interviews every 6-12 months, track their experiences with and perceptions of FTF system components. (1a)</p>	<p>✓✓✓ Collect statewide implementation / process data on EC system elements, their coordination, funding levels, and choices. (1b)</p>		<p>✓ Collect data on experiences of children and families, system outcomes, and costs through surveys and administrative records. Use mapping software to display variations in the three facets across Arizona counties, regional policy councils, or other desired geographic boundaries. Measure progress using statistical process control method. (1c)</p>		
2. Are programs and strategies being implemented fully and in accordance with FTF's standards of practice?		<p>✓✓✓ Collect statewide implementation / process data on EC system with focus on the local context of particular programs and strategies; monitor key measures and indicators for changes in</p>				

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		implementation. (2a)				
3. What services, and combinations of services, are children receiving and how does service receipt relate to identified family and child needs?	✓ With same families in case studies for #1, ask questions about how their services relate to needs. (3a)	✓✓✓ Add data on child and family needs; analyze associations with various services and combinations of services received. (3b)	✓✓ Conduct studies of naturally occurring variations in such factors as geographic areas, types and intensities of services, family risk and protective factors; analyze how well they concurrently or longitudinally predict child outcomes. (3d)	✓✓ Ensure that data described for question 1 include combinations of services; add data on child and family needs; (3c)		
4. Are the 10 school readiness indicators improving over time?			✓✓✓ Collect K entry data annually for X years; analyze trends over time. (4a)			✓ Repeat PVES, analyze change in impacts over time. Strong design (see 5b) because could learn about changing impacts, not just outcomes, but would be restricted to the sites (and their populations) in which the enhanced services were experimentally studied. (4b)

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5. What impacts is FTF having on children’s school readiness indicator 1 (number and percentage of children demonstrating school readiness at kindergarten entry in the developmental domains of social-emotional, language and literacy, cognitive, and motor and physical)?					<p>✓✓✓</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regression-discontinuity (RD) design. Select representative sample of children around age 5; compare scores of those just old enough to enter K and those who just missed the cut-off and are entering pre-K. (5a) - Place-based RD approach in which some counties or neighborhoods introduce services not available in others; compare participants in some places with those in others both before and after service was introduced. (5b) - Quasi-experimental approach in which there is a pre-test to permit analyses that deal with potential confounding of individual, family, or community behavior 	<p>✓✓</p> <p>PVES: Identify enhancement of services FTF desires to implement. Select sample of sites and randomly assign them to receive the enhanced services (through training, etc.) or not. Compare “treatment” and control groups on assessments of school readiness at K entry. (5c)</p>

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					with treatment. (5c) - Propensity scores used to match children who received services with the most similar children from the group not getting services. Particularly useful when there is no pre-test. (5d)	
6. Is FTF affecting long-term outcomes for children?					✓✓✓ Assess 3 rd grade (or other long-term outcomes) for children participating in the RD design Study 5a. (6a)	✓ Assess 3 rd grade (or other long-term outcomes) for children participating in the 5b PVES. (6b)
7. Are there FTF strategies, programs, or models that are particularly effective and how is their effectiveness related to costs?				✓✓ Analyze associations of strategies, etc. with school readiness outcomes and costs. (7a)	✓✓✓ To RD study (5a) add data on the strategies, programs, and models (and their costs) in which children participated. Analyze associations with school readiness outcomes. (7b)	✓ Could partially address Question 7 if the quality enhancements being studied in the PVES are the ones for which FTF is also interested in seeing relationships among. (7c)

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8. Are there relationships among Quality First ratings, improved early childhood programs, and children's kindergarten readiness?			<p>✓✓✓</p> <p>Based on study 4a, add data on Quality First ratings and changes in EC program quality (at least 2 time points). Analyze associations among K readiness scores, QF ratings, and changes in program quality from T₁ to T₂. (8a)</p>		<p>✓✓ Link</p> <p>impacts on children's readiness found in RD study (5a) to QF ratings and program quality changes from T₁ to T₂. (8b)</p>	<p>✓✓ Within</p> <p>the PVES, analyze relations among QF ratings, readiness outcomes, and program quality changes from T₁ to T₂. (8c)</p>