

BOARD EXPLORES REGIONAL CAPACITY BUILDING

CEO Rhian Evans Allvin addressed the Board on the state of capacity building at FTF. Capacity Building represents the field's ability to successfully respond and subsequently deliver on grant opportunities. She reviewed FTF's funding application, evaluation and award process. In FY2010, a total of 113 Request for Grant Applications (RFGA's) were issued. 68% percent of them (77) were awarded, for an average award of \$485,527. Thus far in FY2011, a total of 48 Request for Grant Applications (RFGA's) were issued, with 56% percent of them (27) awarded, for an average award of \$441,892. More than 78 percent (78.56%) of total funds in FY2011 were distributed through the grant renewal process.

But service gaps still exist: to date, FTF has released 25 RFGAs that were met with no response and no awards. Seventeen grants were cancelled and never released; 32 RFGAs received applications but no award.

FTF can cite numerous success stories in capacity building—including partnerships among organizations, like the collaboration of multiple home visitation providers in one grant application in Cochise County; large non-profits like statewide United Way organizations acting as the lead organization with multiple smaller nonprofits as partner; and, local relationships developed through FTF regional directors.

But challenges remain. RFGAs require, by law, a strict and comprehensive application process that may be beyond the resources of many small agencies. Some of the agencies that do apply discover they lack the capacity to fulfill their grant agreements.

The Board discussed various remedies—including bidder conferences to better inform grantees—and to offer resources that make the application process more practical. Rhian also noted that, although the reimbursement system has significantly trimmed its red tape and improved response time, these efforts must continue to ensure speedy flow of funding to grantees. FTF will also explore capacity building through partnerships with private philanthropic agencies.



MARK YOUR CALENDARS

Future statewide Board meeting dates:

- June 13-14 in Phoenix
- July 19 in Phoenix (telephonic)
- September 26-27 in Phoenix
- December 5-6 in Rio Rico (Santa Cruz County)
- January 17-18, 2012 in Phoenix
- April 2-3, 2012 in Safford (Graham County)
- June 11-12, 2012 in Phoenix

CAPACITY BUILDING: A VIEW FROM THE NAVAJO APACHE RPC

Rhian was joined by a panel of Kate Dobler-Allen Regional Director of the Navajo Apache Regional Partnership Council, Mary Tyler, Assistant Director of the Navajo County Public Health District and Linda Morrow, Navajo County Superintendent of Schools, to discuss capacity building from a local perspective.

Dobler-Allen gave an overview of the Region and its issues: they cover the non-tribal areas in Navajo and Apache counties—Show Low, Pinetop-Lakeside, Holbrook and Forest Lakes. In 2000, 22% of the children birth to 5, lived below the poverty level. 1 in every 162 homes in the Show Low area has experienced a recent foreclosure. The majority of area students met or exceeded AIMS standards in 2008. Graduation rates are generally high; though only 17% of adults go on to earn at least a Bachelor's degree. In 2000, 19% of children in Navajo County, and 22% of children in Apache County had no insurance. Fifty-six percent (56%) of children 19-35 months received vaccinations in Navajo/Apache in 2009.

Morrow characterized local needs simply: "900 babies a year [born in the area,] where there are 1,600 available child care spots. It doesn't take a lot of math to know we're falling behind." The area has a dire need for a high quality preschool program. "Children are coming into kindergarten way behind. We have nine months [in kindergarten] to catch them up."

Existing early education providers are determined. But more high quality providers are needed, Morrow said, for the area to be a viable living option for locals who want to raise their children without moving.

Morrow also mentioned they are in the process of putting together a lab school, a collaborative project to be up and running within the next two years. It would be a center that offers high quality early care and education for children birth to five, while it trains high school students to be future child care professionals and models best practices. “Teachers could go through and see what a quality [early care and education] program looks like,” she said.

Tyler spoke about capacity building in rural areas. “It’s more difficult than you might think.” Because rural areas have few amenities, like jobs and educational opportunities, simply starting a family is a challenge. Many local people, she said, leave this area—even though they love it—so they can raise and educate their families. “If you have people who want to live here, why not provide an opportunity to grow and get an education?” Lab schools, she said, are an excellent possible solution. “It’s ‘grow your own.’ We get them the education they need before they leave, and they stay right here.” She also agreed that some rural agencies, while accomplishing remarkable things, lack the ability to fulfill RFGA’s. “That’s not [FTF’s] job,” she told the Board. “Your job is to get kids ready for school. But just because you build it, doesn’t mean they’ll come.”



EVALUATION STUDIES REPORT

FTF’s Dr. Amy Kemp presented an updated overview of findings from the Early Childhood Partner Survey, the Arizona Children’s Budget, and the Arizona Health Survey — studies conducted to monitor FTF’s progress and inform its strategic planning.

The Partner Survey showed improvement in the quality of collaboration in early childhood, and in perceptions of information and service accessibility over 2008; including a 15% increase those who characterized FTF service quality as “very good” and “excellent.” Qualitative questions showed positive perceptions of FTF for: working on programs that are important for children; working with and collaborating in communities; improving quality and early care; supporting evidence-based programming; and, increasing public awareness. Areas cited as needing improvement included: streamlining processes; increasing collaboration; continued progress on public awareness; and focusing on priorities.

The Arizona Children’s Budget, an FTF study funded to analyze federal and state funding for children’s services, demonstrates that the child population has grown dramatically, especially between 2004 and 2006. But Arizona General Fund spending for programs benefitting children under six and their families has dropped 35% since 2008 while overall general fund expenditures decreased only 6%. Programs for children birth to five tend to grow more slowly than other government programs in good economies, and decrease more rapidly in bad times. Federal funding increased to 84% of the total Children’s Budget program spending in 2010. However, not all programs for children under six and their families are supported by federal funds. The Children’s Budget reflected the dramatic decline of General Fund dollars for children and the resulting dramatic cuts in programs supported exclusively by the General Fund.

The Arizona Health Survey, conducted by St. Luke’s Health Initiatives, confirms that the state lags behind in: the percentage of children receiving health and oral health services, continuous health insurance coverage for children, and establishing a steady ‘medical home.’ On the plus side, Arizona parents were statistically more likely to breast feed and less likely to smoke; although the frequency with which they read and tell stories with their children lags behind the national average.

ASU’s Dr. Beth Swadener, Dr. Jamie Joanao and Dr. Karen Applequist of NAU and Project Director, Dr. David Yaden of U of A—presented two sets of findings from **The Family and Community Case Study**, focusing on families and early childhood stakeholders in Arizona. The qualitative study reported that primary caregivers often experience isolation and struggle to

reach out—to their families, faith communities, tribes and neighborhoods—seeking an informal support system for assistance, information and emotional support. The study also found that outsiders, immigrants and newcomers experience the greatest difficulty because they lack this support system. The study also interviewed stakeholders, (service providers, educators, family support workers, etc.) and recorded a sense of frustration with the “fragmented” network of services statewide. Stakeholders are responding by increasing collaboration efforts, to serve families in new and innovative ways. Stakeholders and caregivers are also very concerned about the accessibility and quality of child care, and often find their choices limited by cost and availability. Stakeholders were very positive about the contributions of Quality First. The evaluators recommended: more creative solutions to meet the needs of families, increasing parent access to information, streamlining processes, and increased collaboration as a means of change.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER UPDATE

Rhian Allvin and Josh Allen reported on FTF’s Human Resource Comprehensive Plan, the result of a 10 month internal study designed to formalize HR procedures, clarify expectations and responsibilities, and anchor FTF’s mission—serving Arizona children, birth to five—more closely to every employee every working day. The study included feedback from outside consultants, senior leadership and staff.

“We heard from staff that there wasn’t enough clarity on responsibilities,” Allvin explained. “It was time for us, as a maturing organization, to hone in on who does what and what the expectations will be.”

The plan includes an emphasis shift, from policy making to the programs that execute those policies. As part of this process, there was a realignment of resources, with new resources directed to the program area to add a Sr. Director for Child Health, Family Support & Literacy and Strategic Initiatives. The program area will also add a program quality assurance function. A clear employee evaluation process for both covered and uncovered employees has been established. This compliments the uniform state system for covered employees. New employee orientation has been expanded to include in-depth discussion of FTF’s mission and core values.

Other CEO announcements:

- FTF has convened three policy groups: early learning, literacy support and child health. They have been tasked to provide performance indicators prepared to the Board by August, and are making progress on that goal.
- Implications of the state’s budget decisions will be examined at the June Board meeting.
- Rhian Allvin, Beverly Russell and Karen Woodhouse had a very productive trip to Washington in late March. They met with representatives from the Departments of Education and Health and Human Services, Bureau of Indian Education, Indian Health Services, WIC and the child care food program. The organizations showed great interest in FTF.
- The National Smart Start Conference—one of the largest and most prestigious child development conferences—is coming up in May. FTF has been invited to make presentations on: Early Childhood Evaluation and Data Collection; and Communications, Community Outreach and Developing a Strategic Communications Plan.
- FTF is excited to announce that Sam Leyvas has been hired as the new Vice President of Government Affairs, and will introduce him at the June Board meeting.
- Arizona is one of the few states that used its State Advisory Council ARRA funding to align its early learning standards with its K-12 curriculum. In addition, FTF will have infant/toddler program guidelines that will align with the early learning standards. “You won’t have too many states with that level of continuum across the Board,” Allvin said.
- FTF’s Health programs are currently featured in the Spring issue of *Gateway to the East Valley*, the East Valley Partnership magazine.
- Last month, the Arizona Junior League awarded Rhian its 2010-11 Valley Impact Award, for her work in Early Child Development.
- Allvin urged stakeholders not to miss June’s Board meeting: “In addition to the FY2012 budget being finalized, we are finally rolling out Quality First, our Quality Improvement and Rating system, in its full capacity along with interesting data in finance and child care.”



BOARD MEMBER UPDATES

Dr. Pamela Powell encouraged everyone to attend the Coconino Regional Partnership Council's First Annual Early Child Fair, Saturday morning April 9th. More than 57 groups will gather at Flagstaff's Coconino High School to offer child-based health, literacy and educational services in a kid-friendly atmosphere. "It's a community-wide effort, with many different vendors coming together to create what we know will be an annual event." She recommends that Podcast fans explore the Early Childhood podcasts from the Intercultural Development Research Association, in San Antonio, "In Texas, they face the same issues we do and they've done a lot of remarkable work." **Chair Steven Lynn** congratulated **Dr. Powell** on her upcoming tenure at NAU.

Mary Ellen Cunningham reminded the Board that Public Health Week is this month, and the Arizona Dept of Health Services website has useful links for Home and Play Safety at: www.azdhs.gov/phs/owch/safekids.htm. She also mentioned that the Academy of Pediatrics has announced new car seat guidelines that included keeping children in rear-facing car seats up until age two.

Dr. Cecil Paterson said that, for the last 6-8 months, he and Rhian have been going in Arizona communities, spreading the word about FTF. They have also worked together on several development and public relations issues. He thinks they've been successful and he pledged that their efforts will continue.

Dr. Eugene Thompson said that FTF has impacted his unofficial touch point of notoriety, the Prescott Senior Softball League. "In the last couple weeks I've had three of them come up to me, 'What's that Board you're on again? I saw you on TV.' So you are making an impact. To those of you in the field: do not despair. No matter how difficult it is. I just returned from working in three nations, where the daily income is \$1 a day, \$2 a day and \$8 a day. The hope for early childhood there is nonexistent. You're making progress. So, hang in there."

Brad Willis announced that Clarence H. Carter, the new Director of DES, will meet with Rhian in early April, and Director Carter "looks forward to attending these meetings in the future."

Spt. John Huppenthal spent late March in Washington, helping develop national K-12 assessments, which are rolling out in 2014. "We also met with Congressional and Senate Educational staffers to check about the ESBA [Educational Standards Based Assessment] reauthorization. Perhaps we could coordinate our efforts on that."



NEW REGIONAL COUNCIL MEMBERS

The Board approved the following new regional council members at its April 2011 meeting:

Central Phoenix Regional Partnership Council

- Maria Ramos, Parent

Cochise Regional Partnership Council

- Melanie Rottweiler, At Large
- Charles Hoyack, Educator

Pinal Regional Partnership Council

- Michelle Kintner, Philanthropy

San Carlos Apache Regional Partnership Council

- John McGaughey, Parent
- Mitch Hoffman, Philanthropy

Navajo Nation Regional Partnership Council

- Leonard Anthony, Faith-based
- Martin Ashley, Business
- Grace Boyne, Early Childhood Provider

Save the date! The next FTF Board meeting will be held June 13 & 14 in Phoenix.