



FIRST THINGS FIRST

Ready for School. Set for Life.

STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

Expansion: Start-Up and/or Capital Expenses

I. Description of Strategy

High quality early childhood services are strongly linked to both academic and life-skills success among children, especially those from families with risk factors such as low income and low education levels of parents or caregivers. First Things First funds may be used through this strategy to support the expansion of programming for those children who may not otherwise have access to high quality early care and education in particular neighborhoods or localities where there is a lack of licensed and/or certified providers.

Expansion Start-Up programs are those in which children will not be enrolled in the program until after October 1 of a fiscal year due to various start-up requirements. They are sometimes located in remote areas of the state or underserved neighborhoods where an increase in child care or preschool slots is warranted. Start-up activities may include equipping and licensing a classroom and playground, hiring and training qualified staff, training and technical assistance for planning and implementing a new program, and in some cases building or renovating space. If capital improvement is required, the First Things First Capital Improvement Policy must be followed, including the requirement for matching funds. (See Exhibit A, page 6)

Depending upon the need within a region, there may be a focus on a subpopulation within the birth to five age range such as infants and toddlers or preschoolers. If this Expansion Start Up strategy is designed to increase the number of preschool slots within a public school due to lack of availability within a specific geographical area, the strategy is typically facilitated through the contract between First Things First and the Arizona Department of Education. Expansion Start-Up for preschoolers may be restricted to public school districts only if there are no other viable options for preschool or child care within a community. If there are other child care options, but they do not meet the demand for services, Expansion Start-Up opportunities must be offered to all viable service providers.

When funding Expansion Start-Up, a Council must also plan to allot funding for Quality First, either Full Participation or Rating Only with access to either Quality First Child Care Scholarships or Pre-Kindergarten Scholarships **for the following year**. In many cases, Full Participation may be the best option for providing additional support to help a new program achieve 3-5 stars. Exceptions in which Rating Only might be considered would be: the public or private provider is already enrolled in Quality First or is very experienced in providing high quality early care and education for the target population. This will help ensure that the new program or classroom is able to successfully achieve quality.

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The length of time required for a start-up program will vary, depending upon the following:

- Whether a classroom and outdoor area are available or will require capital building or renovation;
- Availability of equipment and materials versus a need to purchase and await their delivery;
- Site is already licensed or must submit an application to DHS Child Care Licensing or other licensing authority;
- Familiarity of the school district or private provider with provision of early childhood programming, such as providing preschool or infant/toddler services;
- Time required for hiring and training qualified staff.

Based upon previous experiences with this strategy, start-up prior to the enrollment of children typically requires at least six months and may require up to 12 months before children are able to be enrolled and served. Expansion Start-Up during one fiscal year may include only the start-up supports or it may include start-up plus scholarships for children once they are enrolled and participating in the program. Once children are enrolled in the new program, it must comply with the First Things First adopted *Statement of Commitment to Quality of Programming as a Criterion for Participation in Funding Opportunities for Early Care and Education Programs* (See Exhibit B, page 9).

II. Service Delivery Standards

Following are the options which would be appropriate under this strategy:

- A. Training, Technical Assistance and Consultation
 - Provide on-site coaching and assistance to create plan and budget for start-up
 - Assist with applications for licensing and/or certification
 - Develop a plan for the provider to meet the appropriate regulation requirements
 - Provide training on curriculum, early learning standards, ongoing progress monitoring/child assessment, and other early childhood education topics

- B. Financial Support for Purchase of Equipment, Supplies and Other Start Up Costs
 - Fingerprinting and/or Child Protective Services (CPS) check
 - Grants for purchase of equipment and materials to meet certification and/or licensing requirements as well as standards in Quality First assessment tools (Environmental Rating Scale, CLASS and Points Scale);
 - Financial supports to allow providers to adhere to certification or licensing requirements once the application has been submitted;
 - Licensing or certification fees for:
 - Arizona Department of Health Services (DHS) **Certified Group Home** for home providers who care for more than 4 children for compensation. These providers (except on military or Tribal lands) must be certified by the Arizona Department of Health Services (DHS). Child care providers who care for children in their homes can care for up to 10 children for compensation in a **DHS Certified Group Home**.
 - Arizona Department of Health Services (DHS) **Licensed Child Care Center** for child care centers who serve five or more children for compensation. The Arizona Department of

Economic Security (DES) regulates and monitors some residential providers. These are called **DES Certified Family Child Care Homes**. They may care for no more than 4 children at one time for compensation. They may care for up to 6 children total; including the provider's own children. They may care for no more than 2 children under one year old. DES Certified home providers have an Arizona Child Protective Services (CPS) clearance. They are fingerprinted for a criminal background check. They have provided proof of current training in CPR and First Aid. Their homes are inspected for a wide variety of health and safety standards.

C. Renovation or Capital Investment

- Architectural fees
- Construction
- Installation of playground surfaces, shade structures and/or outdoor equipment
- Addition of child-sized bathrooms, changing tables, floor coverings, etc.

D. Personnel

- Salaries or wages and benefits for teaching staff for planning period

III. Qualifications of Early Childhood Consultant Standards

Specialists or consultants must have the specialized skills and knowledge to assist with Expansion Start-Up, whether it is a public school beginning a new pre-kindergarten program, a private community child care provider expanding to serve infants or some combination of the above.

A. Specific Knowledge and Skills

- Knowledge of child development and developmentally appropriate practices birth to five;
- Knowledge of Arizona Program Guidelines for High Quality Education, Arizona Early Learning Standards and Infant-Toddler Developmental Guidelines;
- Knowledge of Arizona's early childhood system requirements, such as DHS Child Care Licensing Bureau regulations and licensing process, DES Child Care Administration child care subsidy program, CACFP food program administered by the Department of Education, and the Department of Education Special Education policies, if appropriate;
- First Things First early learning strategies, such as Quality First, Quality First Child Care Scholarships, Pre-Kindergarten Scholarships, TEACH Arizona, etc.;
- Knowledge of Quality First program assessments, such as the ERS, CLASS and Points Scale tools;
- If appropriate, school district policies and procedures;
- Experience providing care and education for young children birth to age five;
- Experience providing training and coaching to adults of varying educational and skill levels and knowledge of adult learning principles;
- Observation, listening, interviewing, and communication skills; and
- Curiosity and respect for differences.

B. Educational Qualifications

- At least a bachelor's degree and preferably a master's degree in early childhood education, early childhood special education, child development or related field; or

- At least a bachelor's degree and an early childhood certificate/endorsement issued by the Arizona Department of Education.

C. Cultural Responsivity

- To address cultural competency objectives, specialists / consultants shall ensure that they provide effective, understandable, and respectful services that are culturally compatible with culture, practices and preferred language.

IV. Cultural Competency Standards

Programs will also implement the following best practices and standards related to Cultural Competencies:

- To address cultural competency objectives, early childhood practitioners /early childhood service providers shall ensure that children and families receive from all staff members and program participants effective, understandable, and respectful care that is provided in a culturally competent manner. Early childhood practitioners /early childhood service providers should ensure that staff and participants at all levels and across all disciplines receive ongoing education and training in culturally and linguistically appropriate service delivery. Early childhood practitioners/early childhood service providers should develop participatory, collaborative partnerships with communities and utilize a variety of formal and informal mechanisms to facilitate community and family-centered involvement to ensure that services are delivered in a manner that is consistent with the National Standards on Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services and/or the National Recommendations on Cultural and Linguistic Competence for the National Association for the Education of Young Children." <http://minorityhealth.hhs.gov/templates/browse.aspx?lvl=2&lvlID=15>
<http://www.naeyc.org/positionstatements/linguistic>
- Service providers should understand individual Tribes/Nations are distinct and separate communities from other Tribes/Nations and their governmental systems and structures are not reflective of each other. Services to Tribal communities and on reservations must be provided in a manner compatible with the Tribe's/Nation's cultural beliefs and practices, to include the preferred language of the community. Services must also be provided in accordance with the Tribe's/Nation's laws, policies and procedures. The effectiveness of services is directly related to the provider's consideration of the beliefs, customs and laws of the Tribe/Nation.
- Service providers can obtain information about providing services on tribal lands from a variety of sources. These include the FTF Regional Director, Regional Council members, tribal websites and publications, as well as official representatives of the Tribe/Nation such as the governing body, standing committees and authorized departments.
- It is highly recommended that service providers seek guidance from one or more of these sources before initiating services on reservations. Failure to do so could result in contraventions of cultural beliefs, Tribal laws or sovereignty.
- The ideal applicant will demonstrate their ability to operate within these parameters through prior experience working with Tribes/Nations, demonstrating that staff are culturally competent, partnerships with agencies serving Native American families, knowledge of cultural beliefs, customs and laws of the Tribe/Nation or a combination of these elements.

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- Related to data collection, evaluation or research activities:
 - In the United States, Native American Tribes are considered autonomous nations with all of the rights and responsibilities of a nation. Understanding this, Native American Tribes are charged with protecting the health and safety of their people. To this end, Tribes have full ownership over any data collected within their reservation boundaries. This means that Tribes can allow or not allow any program to collect data from or related to any early childhood development and health program or activities on the reservation.
 - Any grantee implementing programs in tribal communities must have official tribal permission to collect and utilize sensitive data from or related to any early childhood development and health program or activities.

Exhibit A:**FTF Funding Plan Guidance Construction and Purchases of Real Property****December 8, 2009**

In order to enhance the quality, access and affordability of early child care and education settings, the Board of First Things First will consider allocating funds for capital expenditures, including the purchase of real property, building renovation and new construction. Consideration of these funding plan strategies by the Board will require strong justification of the need for funded project(s) in the community and demonstration of how the project(s) will enhance the quality of care as well as accessibility to care for children five and under. In addition to strong justification of need in the funding plan, Regional Councils must include the information detailed in the following sections in their recommendation for grant award or agreement submitted to the Board.

In order to be eligible for funding under these strategies, existing early childhood program providers must meet the following eligibility criteria:

- The program provides early care and education services to children birth through age 5;
- The program is in good standing or with their certifying, licensing or regulatory authority; and,
- The program demonstrates a commitment to quality by one of the following:
 1. Is already enrolled as a Quality First participant and is actively working towards quality improvement, **or**
 2. Is accredited by one of the 6 national accreditations recognized also by the Arizona Department of Education and Arizona Department of Economic Security, and provides a written statement that the entity has either already applied for Quality First (improvement or rating, when available) or will apply and commits to participate when accepted into the Quality First program,

or

 3. Demonstrates that it has applied for Quality First (improvement or rating, when available) and commits to participate when accepted into the Quality First program.

For entities proposing new early childhood programs, and therefore not yet meeting the eligibility criteria above, the recommendation for grant award submitted to the Board must include a written statement from the entity addressing the following:

- An intent to provide early care and education services to children birth through age 5;

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- The plan and timeline for meeting certification, licensing or regulatory requirements as mandated by the appropriate authority; and
- The plan and timeline for demonstrating commitment to quality by meeting one of the quality requirements outlined in the third bullet point above.

Should a Regional Council determine capital expenditures are necessary for an entity to enable it to provide necessary benefits for the children of the region, the recommendation for grant award or agreement submitted to the Board must include:

- Evidence of a strong need for the entity, including demographics of the market that will be served, and existing methods to deliver services to children five and younger;
- A functional organization chart and detailed resumes of key personnel;
- A commitment of on-going support from the community for the capital improvement;
- How funding such capital improvement will enable the Region to address the specific priority needs of children five and under;
- What funds will be available to sustain program operations if the capital request is approved;
- A description of other efforts to meet the capital needs and a narrative that describes how no other resources exist (other than any necessary matching funds) in the community to meet this need;
- A description of how project costs and the quality of the construction will be controlled during the construction or renovation process and what approval process will be utilized at the end of the project to ensure the work was completed within appropriate construction standards;
- A description of the ownership and planned maintenance for the capital asset should the entity no longer utilize the asset for the purpose for which funding support was approved by the Board;
- Verification of financial stability of the entity, plus written confirmation that it has adequate business controls in place (Applicants for funding toward construction or purchase of real property will be required to submit to First Things First a copy of its most recent independent audit. In lieu of an independent audit, applicants are required to submit proof of State of Arizona business registration or registration with the appropriate tribal government, a 5-year financial forecast, and certified banking relationship information);
- Demonstration of understanding and compliance with all applicable State, local and tribal building and operating regulations. For new construction and/or use of trust lands located on tribal lands, the Regional Council must assure that all applicable legal issues such as land use

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planning, tribal environmental regulation, financing, construction design and architecture agreements have been reviewed by the appropriate cultural resource and tribal authority.

- The amount and source of the 50% matching funds required under this guideline for specific capital requests submitted to the Board of First Things First after 8/25/09;
- A written understanding that the Board may require a deed or title restriction or other requirement for repayment of its funds used for a capital expenditure in the event of the disposal or change in use of the asset; and
- Any other significant information that facilitated the Regional Council in making a funding recommendation.

Regional Councils may suggest that entities desiring assistance in developing the above information contact the U.S Small Business Counselors of Retired Executives (SCORE). The website is www.scorephoenix.org or the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) at www.sba.gov . SCORE is a resource partner of the SBA. There are also numerous resources on the internet and in local communities to help individuals and organizations write business plans.

For purposes of these Guidelines, the following definitions apply:

“New Construction” means designing or erecting a new structure or installation of a pre-fabricated building either on land owned or not owned.

“Property” means land, land improvements, and structures, excluding movable machinery and equipment.

“Trust lands” are property on tribal lands which are held by the United States in trust for a federally recognized tribe or American Indian tribal member. Please consult the tribal government for property on tribal lands.

“Major renovation or remodeling” means:

- 1) Structural changes to the foundation, roof, floor, exterior or load-bearing walls of a facility, or the extension of a facility to increase its floor area.
- 2) Extensive alteration of a facility such as to significantly change its function and purpose, even if the renovation does not include any structural change

Improvements or upgrades to a facility which do not meet the criteria under the definition of major renovation or remodeling, may be considered a minor renovation and not subject to the matching requirement by the Board after considering all of the characteristics and costs of the planned renovation.

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Exhibit B:**Statement of Commitment to Quality of Programming as a Criterion for Participation in Funding Opportunities for Early Care and Education Programs**

First Things First (FTF) supports quality improvement and maintenance of high quality in early care and education programs as it focuses on the development of an Arizona Early Childhood Development and Health system for children birth through age 5 and their families.

In alignment and support of this value, FTF funding which supports access to quality early care and education programming, as well as staff support of REWARD\$¹, will require that participating early care and education programs (centers or homes) meet the following criteria²:

1. Program provides or plans to provide early care and education services to children birth through age 5, and
2. Program is or plans to become regulated and, if regulated, is in good standing with appropriate certifying, licensing or regulatory authority, and
3. Program demonstrates a commitment to quality by one of the following (once it is operational):
 - Is enrolled as a Quality First participant, actively working towards quality improvement, or
 - Has applied for Quality First and does not decline an opportunity to participate when selected.
4. Programs receiving Pre-Kindergarten Scholarships must achieve 3-5 stars in the Quality First rating system by the start of FY 2014.

Notes:

1 The FTF strategy categories for which this policy apply are: Quality First Child Care Scholarships, Pre-Kindergarten Scholarships, Expansion (start up or facility improvement (if and when program is serving children), other quality, inclusion programming, or REWARD\$.

2 This criterion, which is intended to demonstrate a program's commitment to quality or quality improvement, is reflective of the developing Early Childhood System in Arizona. As such, FTF acknowledges that modifications to these requirements will be made as the opportunity for defining quality of programs evolves. For example, it is anticipated that a minimum required Star Rating will be used as the measure of quality in upcoming years.

First Things First (or the grantee/administrative home) will have responsibility for communicating these requirements to participants, and for monitoring and verifying that early childhood programs meet the requirements. Please contact FTF for more information on this policy as needed.