FIRST THINGS FIRST

The right system for bright futures

Regional Partnership Council Member Survey Results

August 2012

This is the third annual survey completed by Regional Council members. Overall, the results of the survey were very positive. All survey responses received more positive responses than negative responses. In addition, 70% of all the rated questions received responses with 80% of the respondents "strongly or mostly agreeing".

New questions were added to the survey to assess regional council members' satisfaction with the work of the regional councils, FTF's role as a leader and partner in advancing the early childhood system and how the regional councils are strengthening the early childhood system in their communities. In addition, questions were included that addressed the various aspects that go into developing a strategic plan, from having sufficient information to how the process was facilitated to the amount of community involvement.

One of the great strengths, as identified throughout the survey, are the Regional Directors and the great job they are doing to support the Regional Councils. According to responses, meetings and agendas are well planned, communication is good, information is accurate, staff is responsive to questions and requests for information, and the Regional Councils' experience with funding plans is very positive.

In comparison to the 2010 survey's results, regional council members reported an increase in activities to advance early childhood development and health in their regions. From networking outside First Things First meetings to participating in other community partnerships and seeing an increase in community attendance at regional council meetings, regional council members are actively engaged and working in their regions.

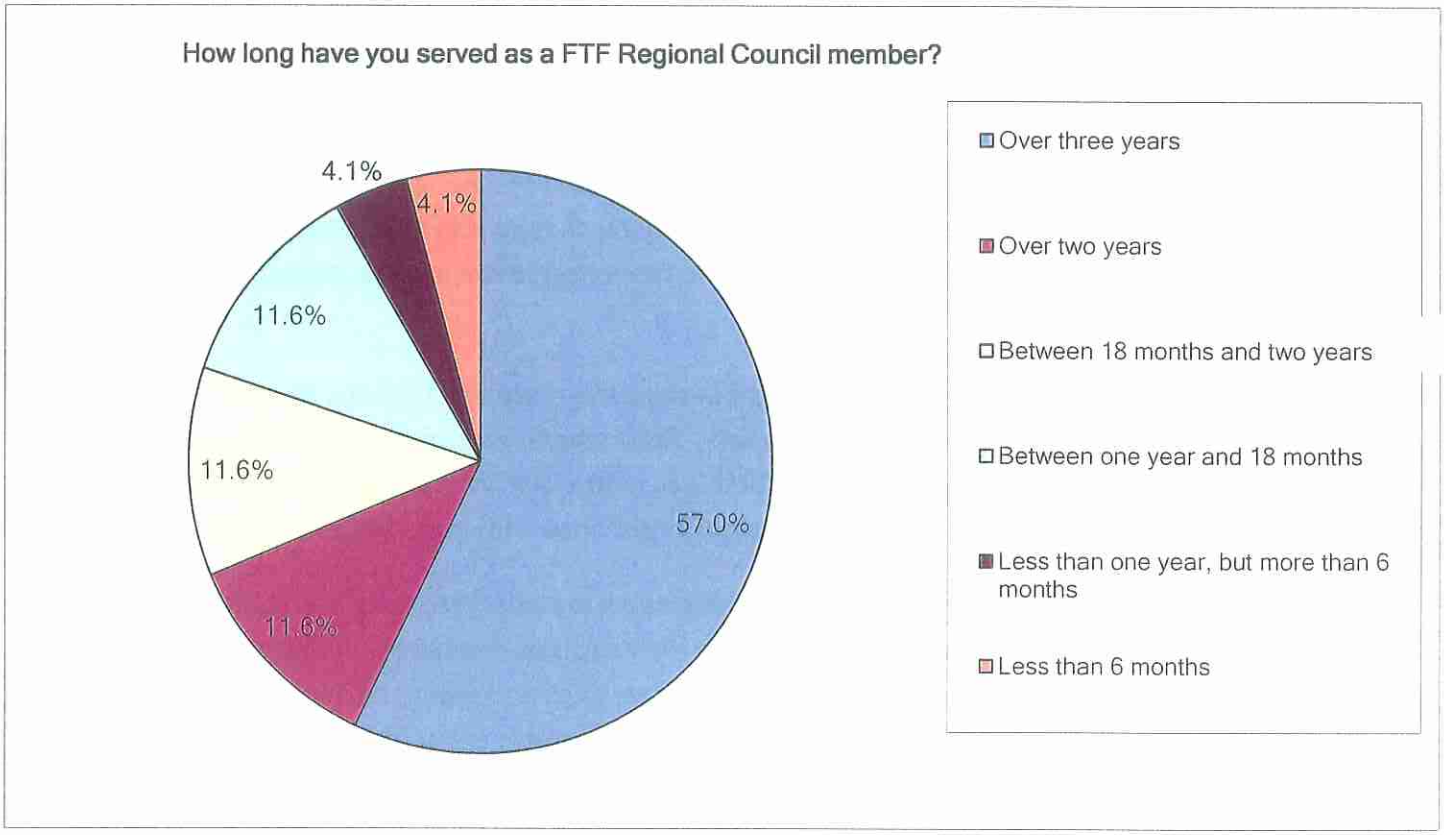
In the past the RFGA process has had a level of dissatisfaction by regional council members and opportunities for improvement were needed. The 2012 survey results show significant progress in this area. Eighty-six percent of regional council members were satisfied with the development and quality of the RFGAs released as compared to 70% in 2010.

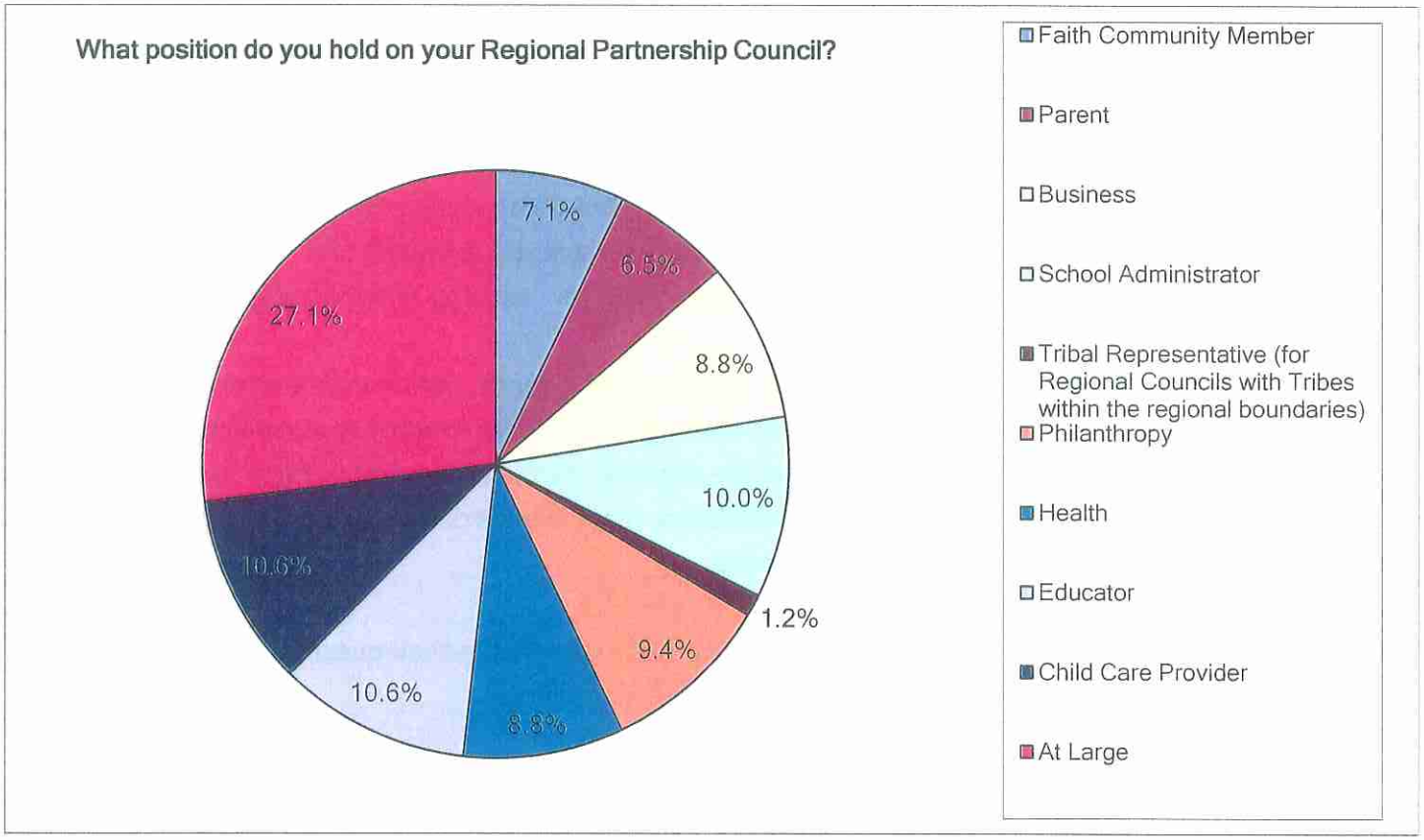
The open ended questions at the end of the survey provided for great feedback and the themes are summarized in this report. In summary, conflict of interest, open meeting law, and the ability to maintain a quorum were identified as areas impacting the Regional Councils ability to conduct their work

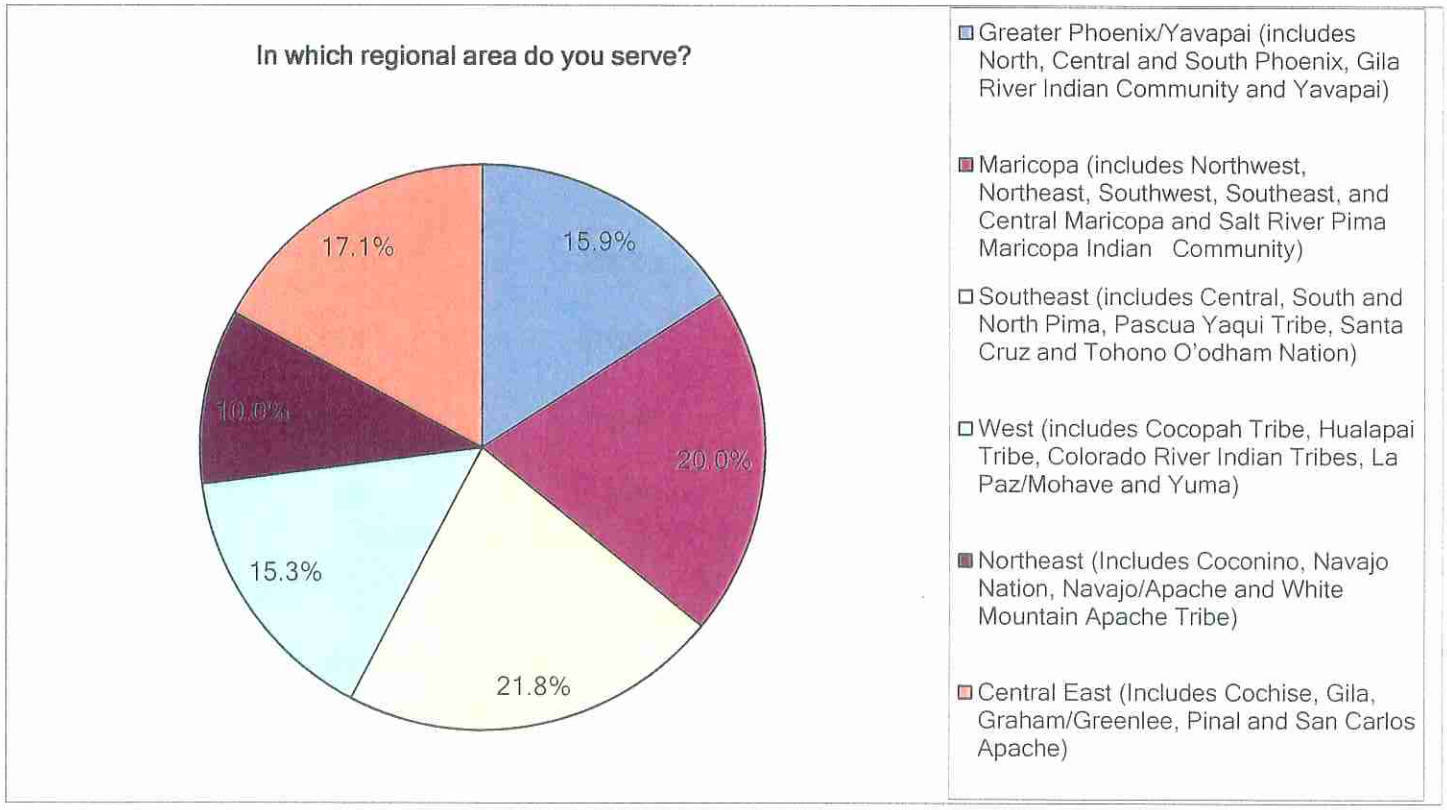
effectively. Overwhelmingly, the comments were statements of thanks and gratitude for the opportunity to be a part of First Things First and make a difference for children.

RESPONDANTS

There were 171 respondents representing 57% of the regional council positions filled, which was an increase of 20% from the 2010 survey. Of the respondents, the majority, 56.7%, represented regional council members who have served more than three years. The respondents were an equal representation of the various roles for the regional councils, and the six regional areas. As would be expected the at-large positions that make up 3 of the 11 positions had the largest number of respondents or 27.2%. The remainder of respondent categories were relatively even except for the Tribal Representative seat, which was significantly lower at 1.2%. This was expected because there are only Tribal Representatives for those Regional Councils in which a Tribe participates.




What position do you hold on your Regional Partnership Council?
7.1%
6.5%
8.8%
10.0%
1.2%
9.4%
8.8%
10.6%
10.6%
27.1%
Faith Community Member
Parent
Business
School Administrator
Tribal Representative (for Regional Councils with Tribes within the regional boundaries)
Philanthropy
Health
Educator
Child Care Provider
At Large


In which regional area do you serve?
15.9%
20.0%
21.8%
15.3%
10.0%
17.1%
Greater Phoenix/Yavapai (includes North, Central and South Phoenix, Gila River Indian Community and Yavapai)
Maricopa (includes Northwest, Northeast, Southwest, Southeast, and Central Maricopa and Salt River Pima Maricopa Indian Community)
Southeast (includes Central, South and North Pima, Pascua Yaqui Tribe, Santa Cruz and Tohono O'odham Nation)
West (includes Cocopah Tribe, Hualapai Tribe, Colorado River Indian Tribes, La Paz/Mohave and Yuma)
Northeast (Includes Coconino, Navajo Nation, Navajo/Apache and White Mountain Apache Tribe)
Central East (Includes Cochise, Gila, Graham/Greenlee, Pinal and San Carlos Apache)

FTF STAFF PERFORMANCE

Questions 4 through 6 of the survey evaluated the effectiveness of the FTF Staff. Overwhelming, the regional council members' believe that their Regional Director is effective in carry out the various roles and responsibilities of their position which include consulting and advising the regional council, assisting with funding plan development, communicating and partnering with regional council members, coordinating and collaborating with regional and community partners, and facilitating the regional council's strategic planning and implementation processes. All responses were above 91% for "strongly and mostly agree".

Working with other staff faired positive across the teams of Finance, Community Outreach, Program, and the Executive Team, although an average of 30% of the respondents selected "I don't know or I am unsure". This reflects that the regional team, as expected, is the primary staff working with the regional councils with the other team members serving in a supportive role to assist with the regional councils as needed.

Regional Council members reported overall that staff is responsive to their questions and requests for information with 93.2% strongly and mostly agreeing.

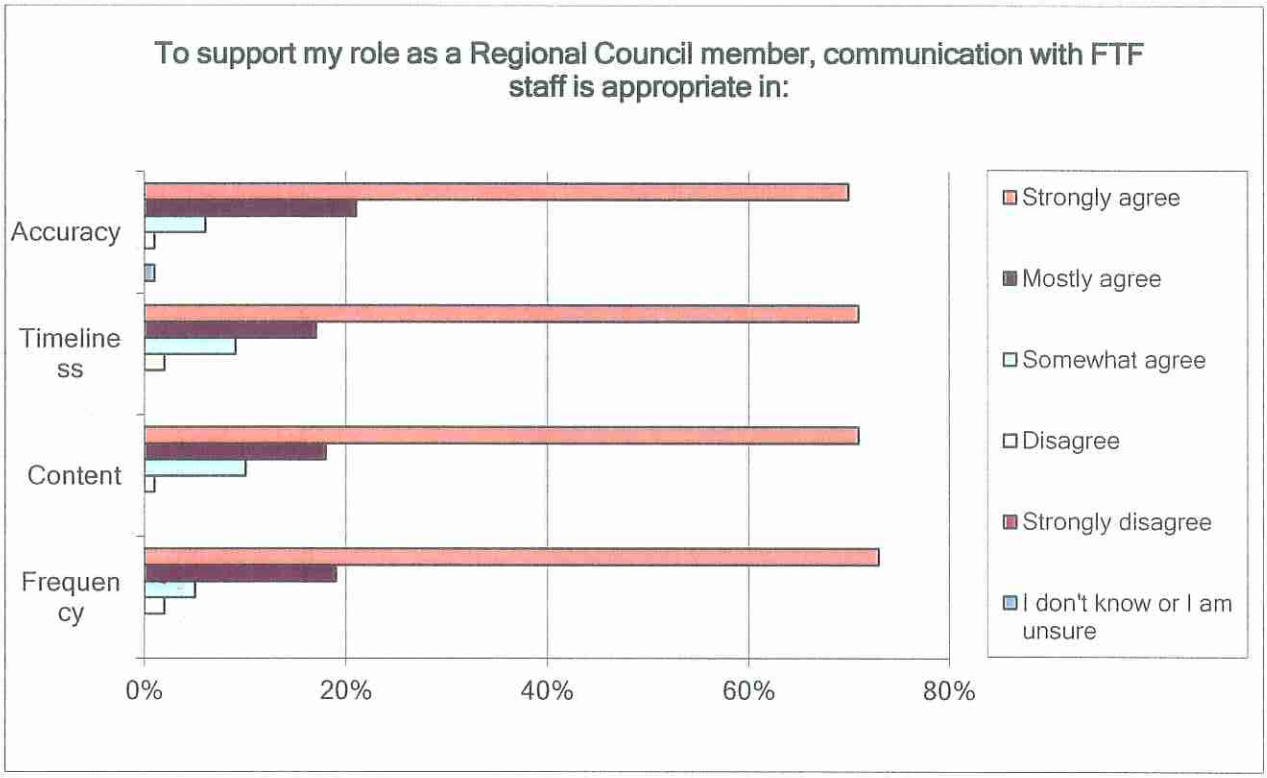
First Things First staff is excellent to work with in my role as Regional Council Member.

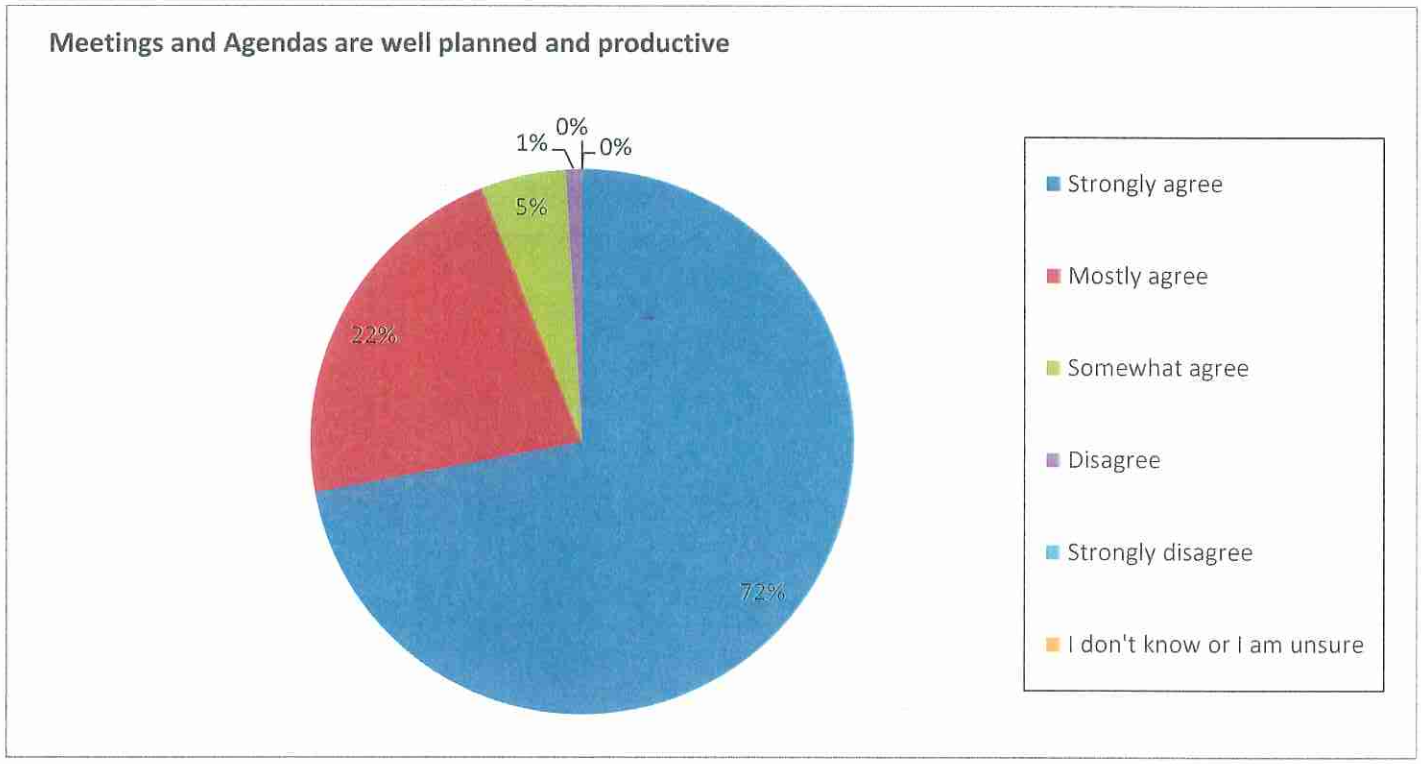
	Strongly or Mostly Agree	Disagree or Strongly Disagree
Regional Staff (Senior Regional Director and Administrative Staff)	**85.7%**	**1%**
Finance	**65.4%**	**1.2%**
Community Outreach	**73.7%**	**3.6%**
Program	**68.1%**	**1.2%**
Executive Team	**51%**	**4%**

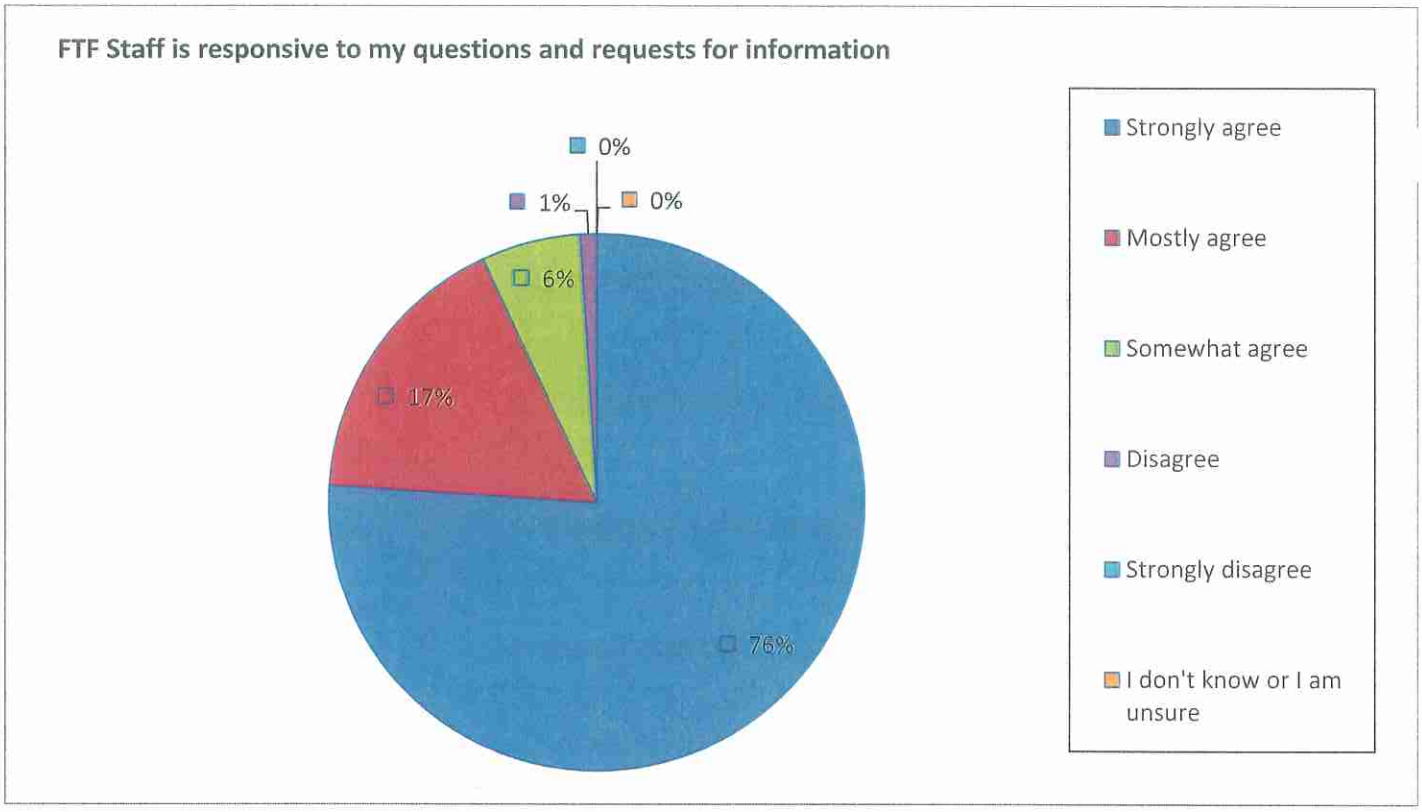
**Difference in columns represents respondents marking "I don't know or I am unsure".*

EXPERIENCES WITH MEETINGS AND COMMUNICATIONS

Question 7 and 8 of the survey evaluated the meetings and communication with regional councils. Respondents felt that meetings and agendas were well planned and productive with 94% "strongly agreeing or mostly agreeing". Additionally, they felt that communication with staff as it relates to frequency, content, timeliness and accuracy is very positive.

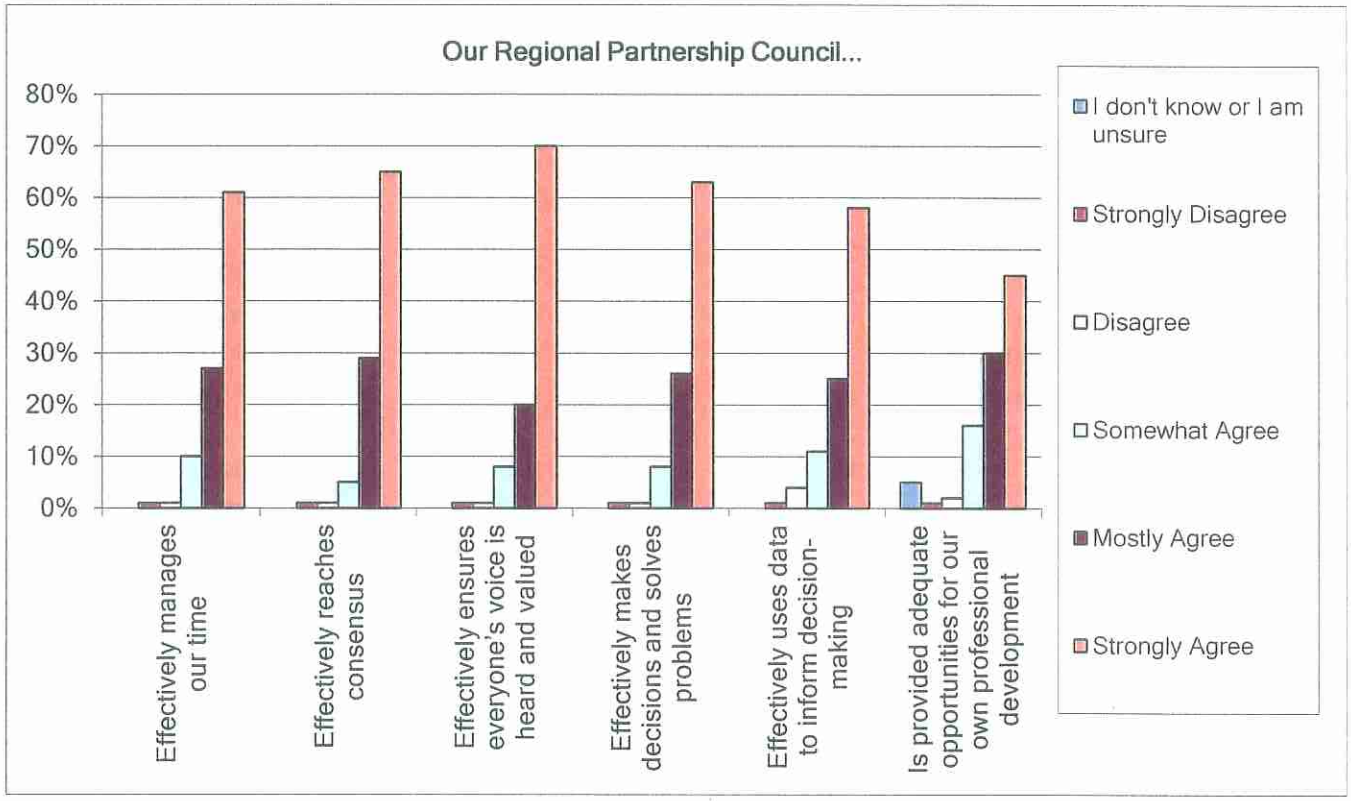

To support my role as a Regional Council member, communication with FTF staff is appropriate in:
Accuracy
Timeliness
Content
Frequency
0%
20%
40%
60%
80%
Strongly agree
Mostly agree
Somewhat agree
Disagree
Strongly disagree
I don't know or I am unsure


Meetings and Agendas are well planned and productive
1%
0%
0%
5%
22%
72%
Strongly agree
Mostly agree
Somewhat agree
Disagree
Strongly disagree
I don't know or I am unsure



HOW THE REGIONAL COUNCIL CARRIES OUT ITS WORK

Question 9 was added as a new question for the 2012 survey and assesses the functioning and operations of the regional council as it relates to managing time, reaching consensus, decision making, utilization of data and opportunities for professional development. Overall responses for these functions were favorable with respondents reporting they strongly or mostly agreed. An area to focus on is professional development for our regional council members. This will be a significant focus for the Director for Learning and Leadership working with the regional team and regional partnership councils.



BUILDING COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Questions 10 and 11 addressed the regional council member's satisfaction with the strategic communication efforts in their region and how the regional council has developed relationships in the community to advance early childhood development and health. Close to 80% of respondents are satisfied with how the region and FTF is advancing the public's awareness of the importance of early childhood. In addition, outreach through various mechanisms has increased in all areas from 2010 to 2012.

	Strongly and Mostly Agree	Disagree and Strongly Disagree
I am satisfied with the strategic communications efforts in our region and the result on increasing public awareness of the importance of early childhood and the role of FTF?	**78.2%**	**7.7%**

How has your Regional Council been involved in developing relationships within the community to advance early childhood development and health for children birth through five?

	2010	2012
Community Attendance at Meetings	73.0%	81%
Community Forums	55.9%	76.1%
Networking	72.1%	83.4%
Community Partnerships	66.7%	74.2%
Meetings with Government Officials	48.6%	57.1%
Presentations	57.7%	74.2%
Tours of Programs and Services	43.2%	61.3%

SYSTEM BUILDING

Questions 13 and 14 were new questions added to the survey to assess FTF's role in advancing the early childhood system and system building at the local level. The responses strongly indicate that members believe FTF is effective in serving as a leader and partner in advancing the early childhood system. Members report that the regional councils have been effective in establishing and strengthening partnerships and establishing strategic plans that advance the system in their communities.

	Strongly Agree or Mostly Agree	Disagree or Strongly Disagree
FTF is effectively leading the development of the early childhood system in Arizona	88.5%	1.2%
FTF is an effective partner in advancing the early childhood system	89.8%	1.2%
My regional council has been effective in developing and strengthening partnerships to advance the early childhood system in my region	86.8%	.6%
The strategic plan in place for SFY13-SFY15 will position our regional council to be a catalyst for brining community partners together to advance the early childhood system	83.1%	.6%

BOARD FUNCTIONING

This question addressed the perceptions of the regional council members regarding the functioning of the Board. Eighty-four percent, as compared to 87% in 2010 reported that they are satisfied with how the Board is setting the strategic direction. Over 70% of respondents, same as in 2010, are satisfied with the formulation and communication of policy decisions. Almost 74% of members reported that they believe the Board respects local needs and decision making as compared to 78% last year. Nearly 70% reported they were satisfied with the level of information they received from the statewide committees.

I am satisfied with the following aspects of the First Things First Board.	Strongly or Mostly Agree	Disagree or Strongly Disagree
Setting the strategic direction of First Things First	84%	3.6%
Formulating and communicating policy decisions at a state level	73.3%	5.5%
Respecting local needs and decision making	73.3%	9.4%
The level of information received about the program committee and statewide advisory committees	67.7%	7.9%

FUNDING PLANS

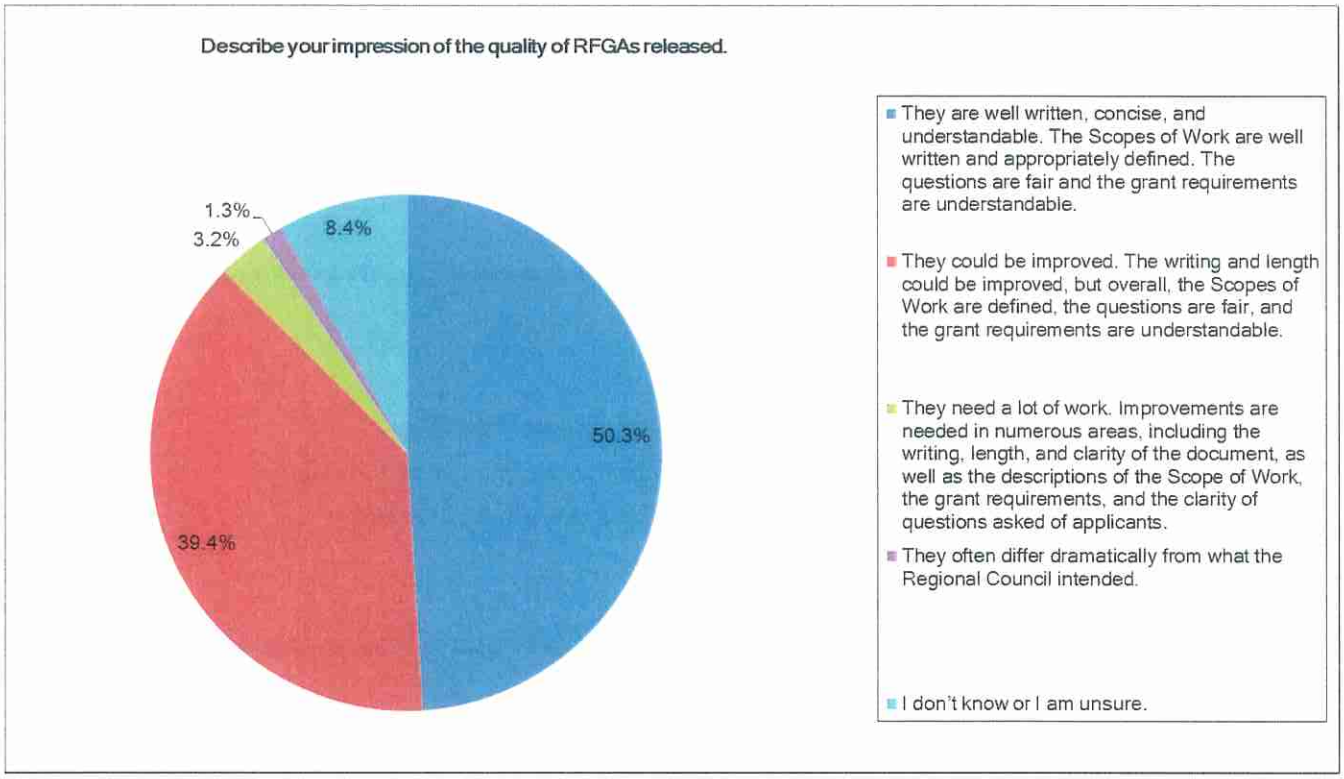
The following questions focused on regional council members' satisfaction with the Funding Plan, RFGA, and grant renewal process. Eighty two percent of respondents favorably viewed developing their SFY2013 funding plan, an increase from 77% in 2010. Additional questions were added to the survey to assess regional council members' satisfaction with availability of data, needs and assets, community input, information about FTF indicators and strategies, methods used to complete the funding plan and their overall confidence in the plan to achieve outcomes. Responses in each of these areas were nearly 80% or above for all categories except for the needs and assets reports and including community input in the process. Seventy-three percent of the respondents strongly or mostly agreed that the needs and assets information was sufficient to complete the plan with nearly 10% reporting they disagreed or strongly disagreed. About 63% of the respondents reported that there was the appropriate amount of community input with almost 10% disagreeing.

	Strongly Agree or Mostly Agree	Disagree or Strongly Disagree
My experience in developing our Region's State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2013 funding plan was positive.	82%	6.6%
The background information and data from the previous plans (SFY11 and SFY12) was available and clear	82.4%	4.8%
The community needs and assets information was sufficient to complete the plan	72.7%	9.7%
The amount of community input was appropriate	63.2%	9%
The necessary information about FTF strategies was available	83.7%	1.2%
The methods used for council preparation and decision making were well facilitated and encouraged participation	83.7%	4.8%
There was sufficient information to understand and select FTF indicators appropriate for the region	78.3%	3%
I feel confident that our plan is well-developed, appropriate, and will achieve outcomes	85.5%	0%

FUNDING PROCESS (RFGA, AGREEMENTS AND GRANT RENEWALS)

With our past surveys, the subject with the most negative responses was the RFGA process. With the 2012 survey we have seen significant improvement. Nearly 95% of respondents reported that their regional council released RFGAs in SFY12 for SFY13 awards. Eighty-six percent of regional council members were satisfied with the development and quality of the RFGAs released as compared to 70% in 2010. While almost 4%, as compared to 7%, in 2010 reported they were not satisfied. In addition, 84% of the respondents were satisfied with the process for reviewing and recommending grant applications for funding for their regional councils. Respondent's dissatisfaction with the review process and award recommendations decreased from 13% in 2010 to 4.2% in 2012. The regional council members' positive impression of the quality of RFGAs increased by 20% from 2010 to 2012. Almost 90% of the

respondents, compared to 67.9% in 2010, reported that the grants were well written or could be improved. Less than 4% stated that they needed a lot of work and/or differed dramatically from the Regional Council's intentions.



Regional council members also viewed favorable the development of agreements with governmental entities and tribal governments and the grant renewal process. Seventy-four percent of the respondents reported that they awarded other agreements with government entities or the Tribes to carry out their funding plan.

	Strongly Agree or Mostly Agree	Disagree or Strongly Disagree
I was satisfied with the development of the agreements and they met the intent of the regional council	80.2%	1.5%
For SFY 2011 I was satisfied with the grant renewal process for my Regional Council.	84.3%	4.8%
I had the necessary information to make a decision to continue or discontinue the grant.	85.2%	3.8%

OPEN ENDED QUESTIONS—MAJOR THEMES

How has your Regional Council functioned: What has worked best?

- Good, open, and honest communication and collaboration
- Respect for each other
- Subcommittees, study sessions, and workgroups
- Diversity of experience and expertise of Regional Council members
- Effective staff and Regional Director
- Attendance at meetings
- Commitment to engage the whole community
- Strong leadership from chair and vice chair
- Scheduling meetings at program and community locations and moving meetings throughout the region
- Community input and involvement
- Cross regional meetings and sharing resources

How has your Regional Council functioned: What has been the biggest challenge?

- Open meeting law and structuring meetings to engage the community in discussion
- Conflict of interest and key expertise missing from discussions due to recusals
- Maintaining a quorum; attendance at meetings
- Awareness of FTF in the community
- For the Board and staff to recognize and understand that the rural areas having different needs than urban areas
- Vacant regional council seats
- Current data on our region to make informed decisions
- Timely and accurate data about the grant awards
- Significant information to digest and time commitment necessary to fully understand and become knowledgeable to make informed decisions
- Getting funding to diverse groups and organizations
- Understanding the intent and direction of the Board

How do you view your Regional Council's connection with the community and the success or challenge in efforts to develop relationships, to increase awareness about early childhood, and to increase coordination among programs and services?

- Regional Directors are networking in the regions, developing relationships, and attending events
- Networking by Regional Council members who have various connections and relationships in the community
- Beginning to make a real impact in the community through outreach; starting to have a major presence in the community; brand is becoming known
- Connections are growing in the communities at the same time need to get to all areas of the region
- Often working with same segments of the public; need to diversify our outreach
- Utilizing tribal resources to facilitate goals

What have you learned through your participation in the Regional Council that would help other Regional Councils as they move forward with their work?

- It takes a lot of dedication, hard work, teamwork, collaboration and communication
- Engage the community in meetings and discussions; need to be present in the community
- Need everyone's input
- Respect for all and everyone's opinion
- Stay mission-driven
- Going on site visits
- Focus on solutions; recognition that you can't do it all
- It's a process

What changes are needed, if any, to improve the process for awarding grants through RFGAs, other agreements, or renewing grants?

- Streamline the process and the paperwork needed, shorter timeframes for approval, simplification of the process
- Publicize the RFGAs in a way that draws a larger pool of applicants
- Assistance and methods to support smaller organizations and agencies to write and apply for grants and to be competitive
- Training and technical assistance for organizations awarded grants and agreements
- Ongoing education on the process
- More input from service providers

Do you have recommendations for the FTF Board about how to best partner with Tribal governments to advance the early childhood system?

- Keeping tribal councils informed on work of the regional council
- Continue developing the relationships by learning about the culture and traditions
- Starting earlier to fulfill requirements such as needs and assets reports
- Continue to hold state board meetings on tribal lands

What would further strengthen the relationships between the FTF Board and regional councils?

- Communicate more on decisions and status of work
- Visit the regions and attend regional council meetings
- Understand that regions are different, they have different needs.
- Community awareness for FTF throughout the state
- Engage regional councils as the board considers policy changes
- More communication on the statewide initiatives