

Strategy Name: Pre-Kindergarten Scholarships

Expand pre-kindergarten education slots for children ages 3-5, to enhance access to high quality care and education for at-risk children who are most likely to benefit from such experiences.

Strategy Description:

Strong results from multiple longitudinal studies show investments in high quality pre-kindergarten programs improve both short and long-term outcomes for children. This strategy can be a powerful catalyst for growth and improvement of school success and increase high school graduation rates in the region. Research suggests a need to better support education among young children in the region. There are a number of barriers that limit or prevent access to high quality early education. A major barrier is capacity, as evidenced by a lack of private early care and education centers and long waiting lists. An additional barrier is the remote locations of many communities, which increases the difficulty to families in accessing childcare and preschool programs. One assessment that is used frequently across Arizona schools is the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS), which shows that many children in the region may be behind in literacy acquisition when they enter kindergarten.

The vast geographic area and inadequate infrastructure presents access barriers to early education for children across the Navajo Nation. This clearly demonstrates the need to increase the number of high quality early childhood education classrooms. Increasing access to high quality early education is an effective strategy in preparing children for kindergarten. This strategy would:

- Increase the number of high quality early childhood education slots or classrooms in the region or allow half-day programs to expand to full day.
- Support the development of education slots or classrooms for those children who may not otherwise have access to high quality early care and education

Early Childhood Education classrooms must have an educational program designed to meet the Arizona State Early Learning Standards. Programs such as Department of Economic Security (DES), Early Childhood Block Grant (ECBG) or Federal Head Start should be the first option considered by parents, with this strategy providing access to children who are ineligible for these programs or who have been on program waiting lists. The implementation of this strategy will be in accordance with the Pre-Kindergarten Scholarships Standards of Practice. Funding will support programming for classroom-based services, meaningful family engagement, child screening, and a developmentally and culturally appropriate environment that is child centered and promotes learning.

Programs must be accredited, or enrolled or committed to enrolling in Quality First. Funded entities would be required to demonstrate the use of other sources of funding so First Things First grant monies are not the sole funding source. The proposed slots would serve families at 200 percent or below the federal poverty level. The Navajo Nation Regional Partnership Council recognizes this strategy does not include the mixed delivery system requirement of passing funds to other programs such as private, for-profit, and non-profit. There are no private centers or programs within the region so the mixed delivery system will not be included as a component of this strategy.

¹The DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Literacy Skills) is used to identify children's reading skills upon entry to school and to measure their reading progress throughout the year (Is this required, if so, I don't think the reference is noted in the document?)

Goal Area: Quality, Access, and Affordability

- FTF will increase availability and affordability of early care and education settings.

Key Measure/s:

- Total number of children enrolled and vacancies in regulated early care and education programs as a proportion of total population birth to age five

Target Population:

Children whose families have incomes less than 200 percent of poverty, who are not currently participating in early childhood education through an existing subsidy program or are on a waiting list for such programs.

	units	SFY 2011	SFY 2012	SFY 2013
Regional Council Target Service Numbers	Total number of FTF funded Pre-Kindergarten children	0	100	160
	Total number of public school-district Pre-K sites receiving support	0	5	8

Performance Measures:

1. Total number of public school-district Pre-K sites receiving support
2. Total number of increased slots for children/proposed service number
3. Total number of early and education providers receiving professional development/proposed service number
4. Total number of early care and education providers applying to be regulated through the Department of Economic Security or Department of Health Services/proposed service number

SFY 2012 Expenditure Plan for Proposed Strategy

TOTAL ALLOTTMENT for proposed strategy \$ 594,000

Budget Justification/Estimates of Costs:

Providing a full range of high quality early childhood services requires both appropriate funding levels and significant leveraging of program resources. Prekindergarten services that provide full-day, full-week services for a minimum of nine months produce more positive outcomes than shorter, part-time programs. Full-time program are 28 hours or more over a minimum of 4 days per week and part-time is no less than 12 hours over a minimum of 3 days per week.

Cost estimates for a full day program is estimated at approximately \$5,400 per child based on 9 month school year. Each classroom would serve 20 children with a teacher and assistant. SFY2012 funding will support five school districts to create or expand a preschool classroom:

20 children x \$5,400 x 5 Pre-K sites = \$540,000

Administration Home Fee at 10% = \$ 54,000