

First Things First Evaluation & Study Plan

September 2009

Overview: This document outlines a menu of research studies that First Things First may undertake on a statewide and/or a regional level in Fiscal Year 2010 (July 1, 2009 - June 30, 2010). This information is intended to inform FTF staff and Regional Partnership Councils across the state about potential studies that will provide additional data that can be used to facilitate statewide and regional strategic planning.

In this document, studies are defined as data collection undertaken to gather new information. Studies are different than needs and assets reports and program evaluation. Needs and assets reports generally summarize already existing data to provide a picture of a region. Program evaluation is new data collection undertaken to assess the efficacy and impact of a particular program or programmatic area. For information related to needs and assets 2010, please refer to the "Overview and Timeline of Regional Needs and Assets" document.

Regional Partnership Council Evaluation Allocations: Regional Partnership Councils that have allocated additional funds for regional evaluation need to decide how to spend those funds each year. There are two major options for 2010 evaluation/research funds:

- Carry forward funds for program evaluation into 2011
- Allocate 2010 funds to one or two of the study options outlined below

Also included are recommendations for 2011 funding related to program evaluation.

Recommendations to Regional Partnership Councils for Expenditure of Regional Evaluation Funds:

<p>Fiscal Year 2010: Carry Forward</p>	<p><u>Recommendation:</u> Councils may decide to carry forward all or part of their program evaluation funds until 2011.</p> <p><u>Rationale:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Few regional programs are currently in place; in most cases, services will only be in place for 9 months and much of program implementation in FY2010 will consist of capacity and infrastructure building, therefore, program evaluation efforts will be more fruitful in 2011. • Many Regional Partnership Councils did not identify specific evaluation activities in their funding plans so additional time is needed to determine the specific evaluation activities that best suit regional strategies.
<p>Fiscal Year 2010: Participate in Studies</p>	<p><u>Recommendation:</u> Based on the amount of the regional allocation for evaluation, Councils may decide to participate in one or more of the research studies described below.</p> <p><u>Rationale:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many Councils identified the lack of important data needed for decision-making; the research studies discussed below address some of those concerns.
<p>Fiscal Year 2011: Identify Program Evaluation Priorities</p>	<p><u>Recommendation:</u> Begin discussions regarding possible programmatic evaluation activities and determine an appropriate regional allocation to support those activities.</p> <p><u>Rationale:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$1 million in FTF administrative funds for FY2011 will be designated for regional program evaluation; regional evaluation allocations can supplement these funds. • Because of the large investment and complex programming undertaken by FTF, the Evaluation Division is currently working on a recommendation for a 2011 program evaluation study of home visiting; FTF is seeking Council input in this area.

FY2010 Study Plan: The following information summarizes research studies as noted above. Each table is organized according to a general focus area, and highlights the need for the study, the main elements and approach of the study, and benefits to Regional Partnership Councils that allocate regional evaluation dollars for participation in the study. Options A and B are recommended for Council consideration and other studies are included for informational purposes.

Option A:

TABLE 1 – HEALTH:

Title/Topic of Proposed Study:	St. Luke’s Arizona Health Survey
Identified Need:	There is a current lack of adequate data and analysis related to FTF key measures: children with health insurance, children receiving timeline well-child visits, and children receiving oral health visits. Additional need for planning information has been identified related to: rates of underinsurance, regional health disparities, and mental health status of families.
Study Elements and Approach:	First Things First administrative funds will support the St. Luke’s Arizona Health Survey with data collection in the Regional Behavioral Health Authority areas for children 0-6.
Benefits to Regional Partnership Councils that allocate regional funds for the study:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The survey includes questions about many indicators for which little or no data currently exist: insurance rates, underinsurance, healthy behaviors, mental health, well child visits, and dental care. • Data will NOT be regionally specific – but high quality data will be available for RBHA areas. • FTF dollars will allow for focus on children birth through five • Because study samples will be based on the RBHA areas, tribal regions and rural regions are unlikely to receive enough randomized phone calls to analyze information for their communities themselves. However, analysis about rural and tribal regions in general, which have been lacking before this study, will be available. • Data will be NOT be available for FY 2011 funding planning; however, information will be available for the 2010 regional needs and assets (based on St Luke’s final timelines) and for FY 2012 funding planning. • Information from this study provides baseline information on the health status of children and families for which FTF and communities can identify progress and areas for additional focus. • FTF Regional Partnership Councils could purchase additional samplings to obtain more regionally specific information. Interested Councils should allocate approximately \$40,000 – \$60,000 dollars for each additional regional area included in data collection and analysis. Collaboration between multiple Regional Partnership Councils to increase sample size in a County or RBHA area will be most fruitful.

Option B:**TABLE 2 – EARLY LEARNING:**

Title/Topic of Proposed Study:	Child Care Study
Identified Need:	There is a current lack of adequate data and analysis related to FTF key measures: number of children enrolled in early care and education, vacancies in early care and education, and current cost of early care and education. Additional need for planning information has been identified related to: quality of current early care and education, demand for early care and education, and prevalence of unregulated early care and education.
Study Elements and Approach:	<p>Key research questions that must be addressed in the study include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What roles do socio-economic, demographic, regional and supply-specific factors play in the choice of mode of child care? • How big is the present demand potential for child care in child care facilities, home child care, and unregulated care in the different regions of Arizona? • What are the key decision factors for families? (e.g. What is the impact of cost, proximity, age of child, children’s special needs, and cultural competence) • How many licensed and regulated early care providers are providing care? • How many children (of each age group) could Arizona’s licensed and regulated early care providers serve at their current capacity? • Based on a sample, how many children (of each age group) do Arizona’s unregulated early care providers care for on an average day? • Based on a sample, how many children (of each age group) could Arizona’s unregulated early care providers serve at their current capacity? • What is the cost of care to parents across localities and ages served? • Which providers offer care or have the capacity to offer care for children with special needs?
Benefits to Regional Partnership Councils that allocate regional funds for the study:	<p>In their 2010 funding planning, a number of Regional Partnership Councils identified the need for more information on unregulated care and/or parent demand for care. In response to these identified regional needs, a scope of work was prepared and released to the University Consortium.</p> <p>It is recommended that Regional Partnership Councils with remaining evaluation funds in their 2010 allocation, who have identified the need for demand and unregulated care information in their region, allocate \$30,000-\$50,000 to this study. Note: the range in funding is based on number of interviews required; approximately 300 interviews are recommended for each Region of interest.</p> <p>Regional Partnership Councils, who allocate funds to the study will have the opportunity to provide feedback on the proposal before a contract is finalized. The study will provide overall statewide information with specialized analysis and reporting for regions that allocated dollars from their funds.</p> <p>Anticipated date for review of proposal is September 30, 2009.</p>

Other Studies

TABLE 3 – EARLY LEARNING:

Title/Topic of Proposed Study:	Quality of Care Study
Identified Need:	There is a current lack of adequate data and analysis related to the level of quality in early care and education.
Study Elements and Approach:	FTF is seeking interested parties to support the assessment and analysis of data related to the quality of early care and education currently provided in Arizona. Total needs are \$600,000 for assessment and \$300,000 for analysis. Assessment will coordinate with the Quality First rating scale and assessments.
Benefits to Regional Partnership Councils that allocate regional funds for the study:	FTF is currently considering multiple strategies for funding this study. We are very interested in Council ideas about outside entities that may be interested in financially supporting this study.

TABLE 4 – FAMILY SUPPORT:

Title/Topic of Proposed Study:	Family and Community Survey
Identified Need:	There is a need to re-assess data and analysis related to FTF key measures: parent satisfaction with information related to child development, parent confidence in supporting their children, parent optimal literacy practice, parent satisfaction with coordination and quality of services, early childhood service providers satisfaction with coordination and quality of services, parent and community support of the early childhood movement.
Study Elements and Approach:	<p>First Things First administrative funds will support a second family and community survey and partner survey. The FTF Family and Community Survey 2008 was completed by almost 3700 parents of children five and under in Arizona. The assessment of parents' understanding of early development and the timing of children's early abilities identified a number of knowledge gaps which highlight areas in which parents need additional education and accurate information.</p> <p><i>Knowledge.</i> When asked about early development, most Arizona parents understood that brain development starts early. However, at least twenty percent of parents did not realize that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The first year impacts later school progress; • Even very young babies take in and respond to their environments; • Infants react to the mood of their caregiver; • Play is important for young babies and for intellectual development; and • Language is better learned by 'real talk' rather than from watching TV.

	<p>The survey also measured parents’ understanding of age-appropriate child behavior and age-appropriate parenting during the early years of life. When asked if a number of parenting behaviors were appropriate or were likely to spoil a child, more than one-third of parents did not correctly identify typical abilities and behaviors of children.</p> <p>Many parents did not understand that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A 12 month olds’ exploratory behavior is normal, and not motivated by anger at a parent; • Attentive, responsive parenting will not spoil an infant; • Rocking a one year old to sleep will not spoil him; • A 15 month old will typically not be ready to share; • A two year old is usually not capable of quietly sitting for an extended period of time; • A typical three year old cannot sit still for an hour; • A five year old who chooses his own school clothes is learning autonomy and self-confidence: <p>Improving parents’ understanding of these concepts may positively impact the degree to which they sensitively interact with their children.</p> <p><i>Services.</i> Parents were asked about services in Arizona for young children and their families. Although many parents do not report difficulty, some responses indicate that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agencies are not working together and communicating; • The quality of available services is not good; • They do not have good information about things like eligibility; • Needed services are not very accessible; • Services are not family centered; • Prevention and early intervention are not available. <p>Families from lower socio-economic backgrounds are more likely to find that services are not readily available or comprehensive. This information provides insight into specific aspects of service coordination and provision that can be improved to ensure that Arizona’s youngest residents and their families are readily obtaining the assistance and services they need to optimize their child/children’s health, development, and future educational success.</p>
<p>Benefits to Regional Partnership Councils that allocate regional funds for the study:</p>	<p>2008 survey results will be available at the regional level for Regional Planning 2011 and Regional Need and Assets 2010 in the FTF Regional Profiles. 2010 results will also be available for 2012 funding planning. Because of administrative support for these surveys, Regional Partnership Council allocations are NOT recommended.</p>

*Other Studies***TABLE 5 – FAMILY SUPPORT:**

Title/Topic of Proposed Study:	Parent Kit and Resource Distribution Evaluation Study
Identified Need:	There is a need for evaluation and information related to: efficacy and impact of parent kit and other resource distribution strategies.
Study Elements and Approach:	FTF central office will pursue an evaluation study of the impact of the FTF parent kit which will include evaluation of other resource distribution strategies.
Benefits to Regional Partnership Councils that allocate regional funds for the study:	Because of current support for these analyses, Regional Partnership Council allocations are NOT recommended.

TABLE 6 – SYSTEM SUPPORTS:

Title/Topic of Proposed Study:	Mapping of Community Assets
Identified Need:	There is a current lack of asset mapping for communities throughout Arizona.
Study Elements and Approach:	The FTF central office, as part of our External Evaluation, has secured mapping capacity and will begin initial roll-out of community resource mapping in early 2010.
Benefits to Regional Partnership Councils that allocate regional funds for the study:	Because of the current support for this effort, Regional Partnership Council allocations are NOT recommended.

TABLE 7 – SYSTEM SUPPORTS:

Title/Topic of Proposed Study:	Children’s Budget
Identified Need:	There is a current lack of knowledge on the total funds allocated and expended for children birth through five in Arizona.
Study Elements and Approach:	First Things First central funds will support the preparation of a Children’s Budget. This budget will identify programs that support young children and their families and the funds expended over time.
Benefits to Regional Partnership Councils that allocate regional funds for the study:	Because of the current support for this effort, Regional Partnership Council allocations are NOT recommended.