STRATEGY TOOLKIT OVERVIEW

I. Purpose

The purpose of the Strategy Toolkit is to provide information to First things First Regional Partnership Councils that will help them to determine strategies that will best address their community assets, prioritized needs and the priorities set by the FTF Board. This Toolkit describes strategies that are currently being implemented through both regional and statewide program funding. However, the list of options provided is not exhaustive, and Regional Partnership Councils may initiate original strategies or adopt proven strategies not included in this document. This Toolkit is an update of the original FTF Strategy Toolkit which was completed in 2008.

II. Description of Toolkit

The Toolkit is organized into the following sections to complement the First Things First Goal Areas:

- Quality, Access and Affordability
- Professional Development
- Health
- Family Support
- Coordination
- Additional Resources

Each Goal Area cover page lists the strategies included in that area, along with the FTF Strategy Workgroup to which each is assigned, and the Policy and Finance Specialists who are responsible for the strategy. Following the Goal Area Cover Page are separate strategy pages which include the goal area, the priority role established by the FTF Board, the evidence base and research for the strategy, considerations for strategy selection and design, and cost of strategy implementation, should a region choose to add or expand it. Additional information to assist in the strategic planning by the Regional Councils include the standard of practice for each strategy, performance measures, the data template and instructions, and additional resources.

The FTF Strategy Toolkit is a continuous work in progress, and information will be added to the Toolkit over time. New models, research and resources will be added to incorporate advances in the fields of early childhood education and health and system-building, and as lessons are learned from FTF's data collection and evaluation activities.

STRATEGY TOOLKIT OVERVIEW

III. Introduction

The starting point for Regional Partnership Councils as they continue to develop Funding Plans is to revisit the assets, gaps and data trends using the 2010 Needs and Assets Reports. The next step is to review current Funding Plans to determine the alignment of strategies with the Needs and Assets Reports and with the FTF Goals and Priority Roles, as recommended by the Early Childhood Education Task Force and approved by the FTF Board at its September 2010 meeting.

The next step is strategy development during which Councils determine which strategies to maintain or discontinue, which to expand and, possibly, which to add. As Regional Partnership Councils determine their strategies, it is critical that they align those strategies with findings from their Regional Needs & Assets Reports and the First Things First Statewide Goals, Measures and Priority Roles.

It is often not a single strategy, but a collection of strategies that help to achieve a desired scope of service or service network which complements the existing assets of a region. It is therefore important for Regional Partnership Council members to leverage and link with existing resources to form a stronger, more capable community to meet the needs of young children and their families. It is this community development that produces "system-building" which can maximize all resources for the benefits of young children.

Regional Partnership Councils should strengthen and build cross agency/organization collaboration and partnerships both within their region and across regions. Partnerships are necessary with city, county, state and tribal departments. Regional Partnership Councils should further ensure coordination through planning and strategy implementation which is coordinated with other FTF Regional Councils and the FTF Statewide Strategies as we work together to build an effective early childhood system.

IV. Explanation of Strategy Toolkit Key Terms (Also refer to the Strategy Toolkit Glossary)

Goal Area – The First Things First five Goal Areas: Quality, Access and Affordability; Professional Development; Health; Family Support; and Coordination. (The goal area of Communication is not included in this version of the Toolkit, but may be added at a later date.)

Goal- Broad measurable statement of intent to set a future direction. Goals indicate **<u>what FTF will do</u>** and accomplish as part of the comprehensive early childhood system.

STRATEGY TOOLKIT OVERVIEW

Each Goal is a piece of a larger picture and is inextricably interrelated and linked with the other Goals.

FTF Priority Role – The eight Priority Roles which were recommended by the ECE Task force and adopted by the FTF Board at its September 2010 Board meeting. Five roles relate to services to children and families, and three are coordination and system-building.

Strategy- A general method or overall approach used to achieve a goal. Strategies provide direction and are globally defined best practices that positively impact the lives of children and families served. Strategies work together and indicate **how we will implement** the Goals. **Note:** The First Things First Statewide Board funded strategies are listed first on each of the Goal Area pages. Additional multi-regional and regional strategies are not listed in any particular order and the list of strategies is not exhaustive.

Key Measures- Key Measures align directly with Goals and indicate **what we want to change.** Key measures are specific, observable, measurable characteristics or changes that represent impact over time and achievement of success. Key measures are what is observed, measured, assessed or monitored in clients or systems to learn if the outcome has been achieved. They are what will be used to "count successes."

Evidence/Research -The level of data or research that supports the value or impact of a strategy for specific target populations. Some strategies in the Toolkit indicate which type of evidence exists, such as:

a. Proven Practice-Study design uses a convincing comparison group to identify program impacts, including randomized-control trial (experimental design) or some quasi-experimental designs. Sample size of evaluation exceeds thirty in both the treatment and comparison groups and the practice must directly impact one of the indicators.

b. Promising Practice- Includes practices that were developed based on theory or research, but for which an insufficient amount of original data have been collected to determine the effectiveness of the practices. Practices in this category may have been studied, but they did not go through rigorous study designs. These practices have been tested but the results are not as clear as those results in the proven category above. Practices that fall in this category are based on some type of research – whether it is theoretical, qualitative, or quantitative – but data have yet to be collected on effectiveness. Promising practices may have been tested under different conditions and, therefore, may

have a research foundation. However, the practices themselves have not been tested using the most rigorous research designs, or were tested in different contexts. The practice must:

- Have a clear focus: have a clearly defined conceptual framework, clear aims, and clear desired outcomes;
- Take account of contemporary research and practice developments in the field;
- Position diversity as key to the development, understanding and delivery of good practice models;
- Have been evaluated as successful

Considerations for Implementation and Cost – These considerations address issues such as capacity for expansion, linkages with other strategies, length of commitment for funding, the timeline for implementing expansion or start-up, the recommended saturation levels, whether the strategy can be taken to scale, and whether there is an administration home infrastructure.

Cost – Includes unit cost for the strategy along with additional information to help Regional Councils to determine a budget for the strategy.

NEED → GOAL AREA → GOAL & PRIORITY ROLE → KEY MEASURE → STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT →STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION → MONITORING AND EVALUATION

V. Identifying Strategies

How do we know what works or shows promise of working? Research or evidence based strategies along with the social and economic environment of the region should all be considered in determining strategies to pursue. For instance, research tells us that not all home visiting programs are equal. Frequency of visits and staff qualifications are integral in preventing child abuse, better assuring good health and providing stimulating environments for children. A set of criteria is needed to help determine what works (See Additional Resources for an example set of criteria).

It is important that Regional Partnership Councils recognize the cultural diversity and uniqueness in Arizona's children and families and ensure that they have access to culturally and linguistically appropriate services. Effective systems of care respect and make every effort to understand and be responsive to cultural differences.

In addition to recognizing that all families and children bring a unique cultural background with them, effective systems of care also acknowledge and address proactively the disparities in access and treatment that historically have been the

experience of diverse families in traditional systems. Therefore, it is imperative that Regional Partnership Councils strive to build culturally competent systems that serve and advocate on behalf of children and families from traditionally underserved populations.

However, there is a lack of evidence based, best practice strategies for some populations. As a result, it is imperative that strategies be adapted to be culturally responsive and that data be collected to build understanding about the components of strategies that will positively impact these populations.

Regional Councils may need to identify additional "capacity building" strategies which lay a foundation for future high-quality delivery of services or programs. There may be infrastructure, community building, professional development, recruitment or capitol investments necessary before implementation of a successful program can take place. There may also be longer term plans and timelines needed in order to address a priority.

On occasion, a Regional Partnership Council may identify a specific program to implement in the region, after reviewing the data from the region, determining the Goal and Measure of success. A program is defined as a specific approach for implementing the strategy. Should a Regional Council identify a specific program to implement, the research and evidence for implementing such a program should be cited. Councils are not to specify an agency or organization to implement the program.

> *To be effective, system-building processes must pay attention to the impact of culture, ethnicity, race, gender, sexual orientation and class within the process itself, as well as on how systems operate and the ability of families to access and use services. In addition, successful systems' leaders draw on a variety of approaches and strategies employed on an ongoing basis to build cultural proficiency into the system of care.*-from Building Systems of Care: A Primer.