

FTF BOARD APPROVES FY 14 BUDGET

On October 2, the First Things First Board approved a fiscal year 2014 budget totaling almost \$146 million. The budget includes approximately \$140 million in projected tobacco tax revenue from fiscal year 2013, and approximately \$6 million drawn from FTF's fund balance. Monies drawn down from the fund balance will help to hold the regions harmless for population shifts that would have – in some cases – severely reduced their FY14 allocations. They also will offset expenditures in evaluation that resulted from recommendations of the National Advisory Panel.

As intended by Arizona voters, the lion's share of the FY14 budget – more than \$118 million – was allocated by the Board to the 31 FTF Regional Partnership Councils statewide. Combined with anticipated carry-forward funds of \$33.5 million, the Regional Councils will have almost \$152 million to plan for education, health and family support services for kids birth to 5 in their local communities.

The approval of the FY14 regional allocations officially kicks off the FY14 planning season. Over the next few months, regional councils will discuss their local needs and assets, and will work with local partners to determine how to maximize these funds to have the greatest impact on school readiness for young children in their regions. This is on-going work that is part of the regions' 3-year strategic planning efforts. The regions' funding plans will be reviewed by the FTF Board at its January 22-23 meeting in Phoenix.

The budget presentation also included analysis of regional carry-forward dollars requested by the Board. That analysis showed that regional carry-forward balances were the result of two main factors: lack of infrastructure in some regions to implement funded strategies; and, reluctance on the part of some grantees to implement strategies during the time that FTF funding was on the November 2011 ballot. In fiscal year 2012, the regional carry forward balance began to be expended, a trend FTF anticipates will continue. The Board indicated that it will watch the carry forward balance carefully in the coming years.

Information about the FY14 budget is available at azfff.gov, Meeting Materials and Public Notices section.

BENCHMARKS SET FOR PROGRESS ON SCHOOL READINESS INDICATORS

In August 2011, the FTF Board approved 10 School Readiness Indicators that, taken together, give FTF a unified, measurable way to gauge progress in its mission to ensure that all Arizona children reach their first day of kindergarten healthy and ready to succeed. On October 1, the Board approved benchmarks in 8 of the 10 indicators – achievable targets for each of the indicators that demonstrate that FTF is doing its part to help kids get to school with the tools they need to be successful. (See box.)

FTF 2020 BENCHMARKS ON SCHOOL READINESS INDICATORS

- **Indicator 2 Benchmark:** Increase by 20% over baseline the (number/percentage) of children enrolled in an early care and education program with a QF rating of 3 to 5 stars.
- **Indicator 3 Benchmark:** Increase by 20% over baseline the (number/percentage) of children with special needs enrolled in an inclusive early care and education program with a QF rating of 3 to 5 stars.
- **Indicator 4 Benchmark:** Maintain the (number/percentage) of families that spend no more than 10% of regional median family income on quality care and education with a QF rating of 3 to 5 stars.
- **Indicator 6 Benchmark:** 30% of children served in preschool special education will exit to kindergarten regular education.
- **Indicator 7 Benchmark:** 75% of children age 2 to 4 at a healthy weight (Body Mass Index).
- **Indicator 8 Benchmark:** 80% of children receiving at least six well-child visits within the first 15 months of life.
- **Indicator 9 Benchmark:** 32% of children age 5 with untreated tooth decay.
- **Indicator 10 Benchmark:** 73% of families report they are competent and confident about their ability to support their child's safety, health and well being.

NOTE: Benchmarks for Indicators 1 and 5 require additional research and development.

Board approval of the statewide indicators is one step in accountability for FTF's role in Arizona's early childhood system. Each Regional Council will now begin prioritizing indicators and setting local benchmarks. They will present their regional recommendations to the Board in April 2013.

In addition, annual targets at the state and regional levels are slated to start in the year 2020. Combined, they will provide a yearly progress report to the state Board, FTF's 31 regional partnership councils and the community at large.



1ST EDITION OF ARIZONA'S INFANT AND TODDLER DEVELOPMENTAL GUIDELINES NOW AVAILABLE ONLINE

First Things First is proud to announce the publication of the first edition of [Arizona's Infant and Toddler Developmental Guidelines](#). The guidelines were developed in partnership with the Arizona Department of Education and serve as a tool to help parents, families and other caregivers understand the appropriate development of infants and toddlers. They also promote healthy growth and development for the youngest children, both in their own homes and in high-quality child care and early learning programs. In addition, the guidelines can serve as a framework for early childhood stakeholders to use when planning comprehensive and coordinated services to infants and toddlers and their families.

In presenting the guidelines to the statewide FTF Board earlier this month, Chief Program Officer Karen Woodhouse highlighted their historic significance. "When combined with the [Program Guidelines for High Quality Early Education](#) (birth through kindergarten) and [Arizona's Early Learning Standards](#) (which address the preschool years), these guidelines represent the first time in history that our state has

had a continuum of standards to guide those providing care to our youngest children, giving them the opportunity to help children develop to their maximum potential across all of the developmental domains," Woodhouse said.

Early Learning Policy Specialist Cami Ehler cautioned stakeholders and parents about the use of the guidelines.

"The guidelines are not an assessment tool; all children develop at their own pace," Ehler said. "These are general guidelines that also incorporate resources to help caregivers as they support young kids' learning."

Among those resources is training, which ADE will develop and deliver to child care providers throughout the state on how to use the guidelines with infants and toddlers in their care. Training will begin with providers participating in Quality First.

FTF and ADE estimate that 300 early childhood professionals will be trained by the end of the fiscal year.



EVALUATION PLAN FOCUSES ON BUILDING INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMPLETING CRITICAL STUDIES

FTF has always strived for transparency and accountability as it works to improve early childhood education in Arizona. Evaluation and research are critical tools in this process – measuring the effectiveness of FTF programs and helping to improve planning and program implementation.

FTF's Research and Evaluation Plan: 2013-2017, incorporates 17 recommendations from the Early Childhood Research and Evaluation National Advisory Panel. FTF CEO Rhian Evans Allvin and Dr. Amy Kemp, Senior Director for Research and Evaluation,

presented FTF's plan for implementing the panel's recommendations.

The first focus area is to build an infrastructure that better supports more evaluation activities. Eight goals were outlined to improve how data is collected, analyzed and shared to enhance the available information about FTF programs. The eight goals included strategies to enhance or expand the areas of:

1. High quality program implementation;
2. Creation of a comprehensive, longitudinal integrated database;
3. Use of dash boards in continuous quality improvement;
4. Meaningful approaches to data analysis, including ensuring that data supports regional councils' decision-making;
5. Ensuring that tribal governments are full participants in evaluation activities;
6. Development of a statewide Kindergarten Developmental Inventory;
7. Evaluation oversight and review; and,
8. Use of data collected by the Tri-University Consortium.



The panel also recommended specific evaluation studies examining how FTF programs are impacting different aspects of children's lives. The panel worked with FTF to focus on key areas, examine strategy and implementation, and analyze relations between the program and child, family and community outcomes.

The recommended studies focus on programs like Quality First, Child Care Capacity, Home Visitation and Oral Health, to name a few.

Overall, this research and evaluation plan will increase the amount of information available for strategic planning while focusing on data collection in strategic areas. It will also build up the capacity of FTF, regional councils, the Board and the early childhood system to create and sustain a high-quality service system.

A complete copy of the implementation plan, recommended studies and detailed budget can be found in the Board materials online, Attachment 15.

REGIONAL NEEDS AND ASSETS REPORTS APPROVED TO GUIDE COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS & REGIONAL DECISION-MAKING

The Board approved Needs and Assets Reports from 25 Regional Partnership Councils. The regional reports reflect the diverse needs of our regions and are the primary vehicle for the collection and synthesis of all data available at the regional level.

The reports are critical, as they inform the strategic planning of each council.

Dr. Amy Kemp, FTF Senior Director for Research and Evaluation, stressed the importance of establishing a common set of information in each regional report, while still making sure the reports reflect the diversity of each region. This is the goal for 2014 and in future reports.

The Board reviewed executive summaries of the 25 reports, and Dr. Kemp highlighted some of the major issues facing regional areas of the state. Overall, communities throughout Arizona struggle with a variety of factors, including poverty, unemployment, access to child care, lack of access to or use of prenatal care, teen pregnancy, childhood obesity, lack of oral health care and lack of transportation to available services, to name a few. Depending on the community, one or several of these issues may be more prominent than others.

Board Chair Steven Lynn said he was struck by the information in the regional reports.

"The state of Arizona is a very different place than many policymakers think it is; we are not as well off as some say we are," Lynn said. "There are needs in many areas. We have a lot of work to do to bring this state to a level where we can say we are enjoying economic prosperity."

Dr. Kemp said her goal is to make sure the regional needs and assets reports improve in quality with each iteration, so that they can continue to be a vital and useful tool for regional councils to use in their strategic planning.

The executive summaries of the 25 approved reports can be found in the Board meeting materials online.



PANEL, PLAN FOCUS ON ENHANCING PUBLIC/PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

Across the country and around Arizona, people are realizing the importance of quality early childhood initiatives like FTF. Foundations, corporations and private individuals see that investing in children improves education and public health in the communities they serve.

Dr. Ida Rose Florez, Sr. Director Strategic Initiatives, presented a report to the Board that outlined numerous initiatives – in Arizona and nationally – that have used public and private funds to expand early childhood initiatives. As FTF’s presence and influence in communities statewide continues to grow, Dr. Florez stressed that the timing is right to explore how FTF can strategically leverage local, state and national resources – public and private – to advance Arizona’s early childhood system.

Dr. Florez outlined an 8-part plan to enhance FTF’s public-private partnerships, including:

1. Identify and leverage additional federal resources.
2. Build relationships with national philanthropies to tell the Arizona story and identify opportunities for collaborative initiatives.
3. Continue to build relationships with Tribes, tribal corporations, organizations and philanthropies both nationally and statewide to learn more about resources available for creative collaborations to strengthen early childhood development and health efforts in Arizona’s tribal communities.

4. Partner with Arizona private sector philanthropies by participating in a cross-sector systems approach to early learning.
5. Develop, in partnership with regional councils, a standard of practice by which regions can collaborate and develop local public-private initiatives.
6. Build the procedural infrastructure within FTF to support, receive and account for public and private grant revenue sources.
7. Explore an FTF Early Childhood Endowment.
8. And, research and determine approaches for earned income.

The next steps include creating a public-private partnership committee made up of Board, regional council members and private sector partners. The initial meeting will be set near the end of calendar year 2012. A draft public-private partnership plan will be submitted to the Board by March 2013. In the meantime, interim guidance for the regional councils will be distributed by February 2013.



Dr. Florez’ presentation came the same day that the Board heard from a panel of three philanthropic representatives about building partnerships with early childhood. Highlights from their comments include:

Marilee Dal Pra, Program Director, Virginia G. Piper Charitable Trust – Understand the difference between partnership and collaboration. In a true collaboration, everyone has to leave their own agenda at the door. We need a collective agreement on what the “stakes in the ground” are so that, as resources become scarce, our priorities remain intact. Her advice to the Board: (the early childhood community) needs to carve out time to plan together; to more narrowly focus on what our priorities are and what we will hold on to when times get difficult.



Mary Baldwin, Manager, Global Corporate Citizenship, The Boeing Company – The key ingredients to having successful public-private partnerships is to have a common goal, have the right people to carry the project out, and have good outcome/accountability measures. Her advice to the Board: Keep your focus. Communicate the successes; keep them in full view. Everyone needs to be aware of what’s happening.

in place for evaluation; we are living in a time when we have to prove the value of everything we are doing. When thinking about champions for early childhood, focus on the *unusual* suspects; keep them out in front, let them be the spokespeople.

When asked what she thought it would take for early childhood to become something valued, instead of a “nice to have,” Ms. Rasmussen replied, “We have not created a sense of urgency ... we are throwing generations of kids away.” She said the early childhood community spends a great deal of time fighting amongst ourselves. It’s not about this program versus that program.



Jessie Rasmussen, President, Buffett Early Childhood Fund – Partnership is fundamental. Funders need to stay at the table so they can adjust as necessary. They need to be actively engaged in influencing policy and practice. She recommended that the Board be careful and selective about who it chooses to partner with. There are many needs in communities, and it can be easy to get pulled in to a lot of good causes that are not really your focus. Also, be responsive and adaptive. Make sure there are very good mechanisms

Save the date! The next FTF Board meeting will be held December 10-11 in Casa Grande.