



## FIRST THINGS FIRST

### 2008 Regional Partnership Council Funding Plans

#### Overview

At the October 2008 meeting of the Early Childhood Development and Health Board, members approved the first regional needs and assets reports from the First Things First Regional Partnership Councils. Now presented to the Board for review and approval are the Regional Councils' FY 2010 funding plans, which represent thoughtful discussion and deliberation of how best to use regional funding allocations to improve the lives of children in local communities throughout Arizona.

For the past several months, Regional Council members have worked vigorously to complete a strategic planning process using needs and assets data to identify priority goals and key measures for their regions, and develop strategies to address those areas. Many Regional Councils appointed subcommittees to complete research and thoroughly vet proposed ideas. Throughout the entire process, Regional Council members and First Things First staff worked collaboratively and extensively to finalize funding plans that are targeted to local population needs. Plans are also relevant to and reflective of the diverse communities in Arizona, but are meaningful in the context of building and improving the comprehensive foundation of the early childhood system statewide.

The contents of this book include:

- Funding plans approved by 22 Regional Partnership Councils and submitted for Board consideration for approval. An additional seven funding plans will be sent to Board members via Fed Ex on Monday, November 24. The funding plans from the Navajo Nation and Yuma Regional Partnership Councils continue to be developed and will be presented to the Board for approval at the January Board meeting.
- A Funding Plan Summary for each funding plan that recaps the regional strategies and funding amounts, with a recommended action on each strategy from First Things First staff leadership. A detailed explanation of the recommended action is provided in this document under the Board Review and Approval of Funding Plans section.
- A state map reflecting 31 First Things First Regional Partnership Councils and the respective FY 2010 funding allocations and population of children birth through five years.
- A comprehensive overview showing the collective distribution of regional strategies and funding amounts across the First Things First six goal areas of Quality, Access and Affordability, Health, Professional Development, Coordination and Communication. The overview also identifies opportunities for collaboration and communication within communities and with local and statewide partner organizations and agencies. *(This document will be included in the package mailed on November 24.)*
- Pie charts and bar graphs representing the funding amounts and distributions. *(These documents will be included in the package mailed on November 24.)*

## Finalizing Funding Plans

During the past month, Regional Council members and First Things First policy, regional and finance staff reviewed and discussed draft funding plans to ensure the following criteria were met:

1. Do the proposed strategies address prioritized needs in the region?
2. What evidence is provided that proposed strategies address needs and will lead to desired outcomes?
3. Is the allocated funding sufficient to achieve proposed service numbers and performance measures?
4. Is there strong and detailed justification for any funding not allocated in this initial funding plan? (This justification must be tied directly to the needs of children and families and the continued advancement of the work needed by the Regional Council to identify how to address those needs.)

Throughout the development of funding plans, Regional Council members were cognizant of ensuring discussions and decisions were transparent to community members, and required open meeting laws including those regarding conflicts of interest and quorum, were followed.

The Board Program Committee met for a preliminary review and discussion of funding plan strategies on November 17. The committee familiarized themselves with the sections and information included in a finalized funding plan. They were briefed on several strategies that appeared in funding plans and discussed issues and provided guidance to First Things First staff in the areas below. Program Committee comments and decisions were forwarded to Regional Councils and incorporated into funding plans before final approval.

1. Access and affordability to early care and education (including proposal for a cross-regional pilot study): The cost of care and education or the lack of child care settings prevents many families from even considering this option for their children. Many Regional Councils propose to provide varying types and degrees of financial supplements to offset the high cost of providing care, and thereby decreasing the cost for families. Additionally, a number of Regional Councils propose to work together to design and implement a cross-regional pilot program and evaluation study to understand financial barriers. Regional Councils are also proposing the establishment or expansion of early care and education programs. ***Program Committee comments: Agreement that expanding access and affordability needs to be tied to Quality. The committee understands the complexity of the early care and education system and its finance structure and recognizes the importance in being flexible with the approaches taken up by the Regional Councils.***
2. Lawful unregulated child care: Many family child care providers, including family, friend and neighbor care, do not have access to child care licensing by DHS, or certification by DES, if they care for four or more children and receive compensation for this service. ***Program Committee comments: Recognition that unregulated care is part of the early care and education system and that this is an area that needs further development and focus going forward. Questions were raised as to whether there are liability issues if First Thing First is working with or endorsing unregulated care.***
3. Professional development: Some Regional Councils have expressed concern with the T.E.A.C.H. model because it requires a small percentage financial investment on the part of the center owner/operator and provider. Councils have also identified that unregulated care providers may not access T.E.A.C.H., so have proposed alternate scholarship model strategies. ***Program***

**Committee comments: Scholarship programs for those not eligible for TEACH must include standards and include a service obligation—must be able to show impact and have evidence of this. Community based training is part of the career pathway for early childhood teachers. It must be tied to standards and outcomes to ensure the community based training is tied to improving the quality of early care and education.**

4. **Planning and/or study time:** During the strategic planning process, many Regional Councils determined that they required more time to plan or study specific issues to better make an informed decision about strategies and funding. Once Councils complete the planning or study process in the timeframe indicated in the funding plan, the resulting strategies will be brought forward to the Board for approval. **Program Committee comments: Indicated support for planning time but plans must clearly state what will occur during the planning phase—what is being considered or further studied.**
5. **Tribal:** In areas where Tribes have made the decision to remain as part of the geographic region, several Regional Councils have begun the process of solidifying partnerships with the Tribal community and government. Funding plans contain several innovative strategies that demonstrate these important partnerships. **Program Committee comments: Looking forward to reviewing these strategies.**
6. **Prenatal:** Acknowledging that First Things First is an initiative for children birth through age five, many Regional Councils have developed strategies promoting outreach and information on prenatal care. Councils cite evidence that adequate prenatal care is vital in ensuring the best pregnancy outcome, and that a healthy pregnancy leading to a healthy birth sets the stage for a healthy infancy during which time a baby develops physically, mentally, and emotionally into a curious and energetic child. **Program Committee comments: The Program Committee will request the full Board address the issue of funding prenatal services at the December Board meeting.**
7. **Broadly defined strategies:** Some Regional Councils have broadly defined proposed strategies in order to allow a wide range of proposals to be submitted through an RFGA process. While these Councils have provided a level of evidence to support the inclusion of the broad strategies in their funding plan, they are expecting applicants to provide the evidence and research to support the specific program that is proposed and the intended outcomes. Through the RFGA review process, Regional Councils will determine the best approaches for funding recommendations. **Program Committee comments: Support for broadly defined strategies if the broadly defined strategy is based on evidence and tied to outcomes. Committee understands that the full Board approves the grant awards so there is another opportunity to confirm the recommended strategies are tied to evidence and outcomes.**
8. **Payment for direct costs of health care:** Members of some Regional Partnership Councils have proposed strategies for paying the direct cost of medical care for children and pregnant women in their regions. These strategies raise concern regarding liability issues, supplanting state or federal funding, non-use of existing and available health care systems, as well as short-term and long-term costs of such support. **Program Committee comments: The policy of First Things First is to not pay for direct health care.**
9. **Coordination:** Many Regional Councils have identified strategies to develop or expand local collaborative efforts for young children and families by coordinating with other agencies and programs to align standards and practices which impact program quality, access and delivery across early childhood systems. Specific strategies vary; however, funds are allocated primarily for a lead organization to develop and carry out service coordination strategies. **Program Committee comments: Recognition that coordination is important; strategies must clearly articulate the model that is being proposed , how it will be sustained, and that it does not**

***duplicate the statewide system (examples raised were with development of the data system and website). Coordination strategies with large dollar amounts need a strong justification.***

10. **Communications, mobilization and advocacy:** Working in partnership with the Board, the Communications Division and other Regional Partnership Councils, many Regional Councils propose strategies to implement a community awareness/education and mobilization campaign to build the public and political will necessary to make early childhood development and health one of Arizona's top priorities. Since the full development of this campaign is still in progress at the state level, Regional Councils have identified funding amounts for this effort, and are committed to working collaboratively with other Regional Councils and the Board to further define the community awareness and mobilization effort. Once the campaign is developed, Regional Councils will use their funding to replicate materials, develop other tools, and carry out the cohesive campaign efforts in their communities. ***Program Committee comments: Communication strategies will not be considered in December, but will be considered by the Board upon presentation of the developed strategy. The Program Committee supports the development of cross regional work on this. The Board should allow a placeholder in the funding plan and work in partnership—the State and Regional Councils—to determine how best to proceed in these areas.***
11. **Evaluation:** Many Regional Councils identified a percentage of their funding for local evaluation efforts that may be conducted internally by working with the FTF Program Evaluation Division, or through an external evaluation process. A few Regional Councils have proposed a regionally specific and comprehensive evaluation plan that includes ongoing regional consultants and/or staff positions to develop research proposals, conduct program evaluation, and ensure data collection for needs and assets reporting. ***Program Committee comments: Funding for evaluation should not duplicate statewide evaluation efforts, but instead allow for much more specific local data. Strong support for evaluation was expressed with two concerns: 1) Board policy should be that the regional needs and assets and evaluation processes must be consistent and at the same level of quality around the state. This is not the case when Regional Councils are putting in very different amounts and some may not be able to allocate funding. The regions that probably need this the most are the ones who can least afford it. 2) First Things First is allocating \$5M per year into evaluation, and allocating more funding into evaluation is a concern without having a clear understanding of purpose. It appears that some of the plans are proposing research, not evaluation. If there are research questions that need to be answered in order to move forward in the future, then those should be considered. The Board should not be funding additional evaluators until there is a need to do so. Needs & assets and evaluation will not be considered by the Board in December, but the Board should allow a placeholder in the funding plan and work in partnership—the State and Regional Councils—to determine how best to proceed in these areas.***

### **Board Review and Approval of Funding Plans**

While it is not expected that Board members thoroughly read through every funding plan, copies of all complete funding plans are provided to members for review or reference if desired. In addition to the Funding Plan Summary, each funding plan consists of six sections:

- I. Regional Needs and Assets Summary
- II. Prioritized Goals and Key Measures
- III. Strategy Selection
- IV. Summary Financial Table for FY 2010
- V. Sustainability – Three Year Expenditure Plan: July 2010 – June 2012
- VI. Discretionary and Public/Private Funds

Members are encouraged to use the Funding Plan Summary to understand the strategies and funding allocations included in each funding plan. If further information is desired without having to read the entire funding plan, members should reference Section III, and read the grey shaded box for each strategy(which provides a comprehensive description and the evidence base), and the green shaded box for each strategy (which provides the service numbers for the target population as well as performance measures).

The Funding Plan Summary also contains a column that indicates First Things First leadership staff recommendations for action on each strategy. The following is the key for notations in this column:

**Approve:** Recommend that the Board approve the strategy based on the following:

- The strategy addresses the need identified by the Regional Council
- The level of evidence provided demonstrates that the strategy will lead to desired outcomes
- The allocated funding is sufficient to provide proposed service levels and achieve performance measures

**RFD (Requires Further Development):** Recommend that the Board have the Regional Council further develop the strategy as the level of specificity does not exist to demonstrate the following:

- The strategy addresses the need identified by the Regional Council
- The level of evidence provided demonstrates that the strategy will lead to desired outcomes
- The allocated funding is sufficient to provide proposed service levels and achieve performance measures

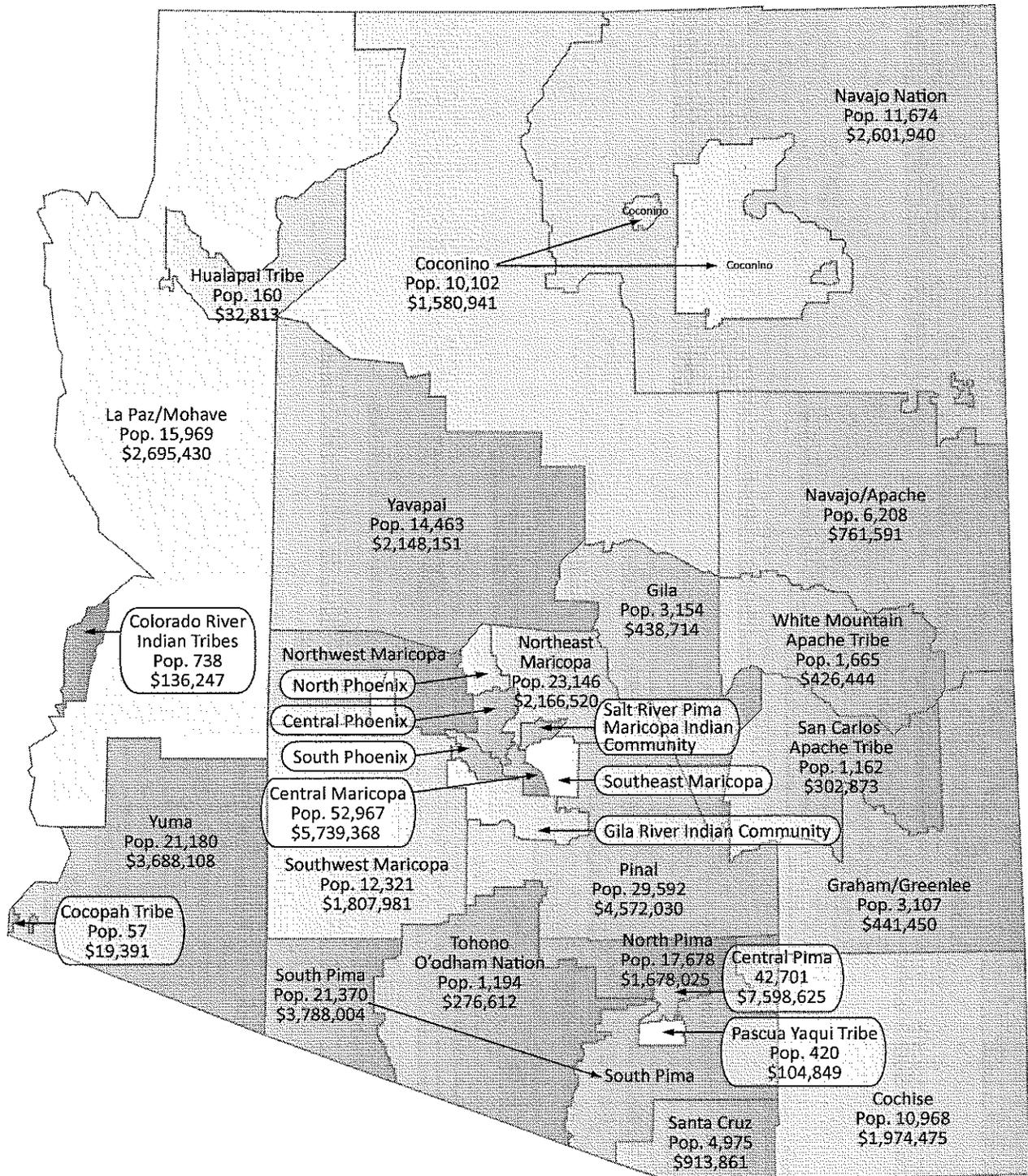
The Regional Council will then resubmit the strategy to the Board for reconsideration.

**RS (Reconsider Strategy):** Justification for the proposed strategy does not demonstrate that the strategy will have a positive impact and therefore it is being returned to the Regional Council for reconsideration.

**Held:** Recommend that the Board hold the item to consider at a later time as it is necessary to allow for further discussion and review between the State and Regional Council on how to proceed.

Board members should also keep in mind that while many of the strategies included in funding plans will require Regional Councils to utilize a Request for Grant Award (RFGA) process, other strategies will use other types of procurement, such as Memorandums of Understanding with municipalities or government agencies. Those strategies supporting participation in Quality First!, T.E.A.C.H. or additional Parent Kit distribution may require an application or other type of agreement.

At the December Board meeting, at least one representative (usually the Council Chair) from all Regional Councils submitting funding plans for Board consideration will be present. The representative will make a brief presentation to the Board, the Board will have an opportunity to ask questions and engage in discussion with the representative. The Board will then have the option to take action on the individual strategies in the funding plan. It is anticipated that each funding plan will take approximately 20 minutes for the presentation, discussion and possible action.



**Central Phoenix, Pop. 55,013, Allocation: \$11,172,677**

**North Phoenix, Pop. 65,510, Allocation: \$7,871,209**

**Northwest Maricopa, Pop. 50,887, Allocation: \$6,328,813**

**South Phoenix, Pop. 58,795, Allocation: \$10,782,032**

**Gila River Indian Community, Pop. 1,741, Allocation: \$510,403**

**Salt River Pima Maricopa Indian Community, Pop. 822, Allocation: \$170,853**

**Southeast Maricopa, Pop. 78,561, Allocation: \$8,469,572**