



FIRST THINGS FIRST

# FIRST THINGS FIRST OVERVIEW

## CREATED BY ARIZONA VOTERS

On November 7, 2006, Arizonans made an historic decision on behalf of our state's smallest citizens. By majority vote, they made a commitment to all Arizona children 5 and younger: that kids would have the tools they need to arrive at school healthy and ready to succeed. The voters backed that promise with an 80-cent per pack increase on tobacco products, so that funding for early childhood services for our youngest children would not be at the mercy of economic and political winds.

The initiative also created the statewide First Things First board and the 31 regional partnership councils that share the responsibility of ensuring that these early childhood funds are spent on strategies that will result in improved education and health outcomes for kids 5 and younger.



## FOCUSED ON KIDS BIRTH TO FIVE

Why focus on kids 5 and younger? Research shows that 80% of a child's brain is formed by age 3; more than 90% by age 5. Because of this rapid development, what happens to children in the early years lays the foundation for a lifetime. Research has proven that kids with quality early childhood experiences do better in school. They are more likely to advance into college and successful careers. They also tend to be healthier and demand less from the public welfare system.

## DRIVEN BY LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Not all children have the same needs; and voters designed First Things First to meet the diverse needs of Arizona communities. Decisions about which early education and health strategies will be funded are made by the 31 regional partnership councils made up of community volunteers, not government



bureaucrats. Each regional council member represents a specific segment of the community that has a stake in ensuring that our children grow up to be healthy productive adults, including: parents, Tribal leaders, educators, health professionals, business leaders, philanthropists and leaders of faith communities. The regional councils study the challenges faced by children in their communities and the resources that exist to help kids in their area. Because of all these factors, the regional councils know best what their kids need.

## LEARN MORE ABOUT FTF

For more information and to find your Regional Partnership Council, please visit us at [www.azftf.gov](http://www.azftf.gov).



## PROVENTO WORK

National studies show that children exposed to high-quality early childhood education:

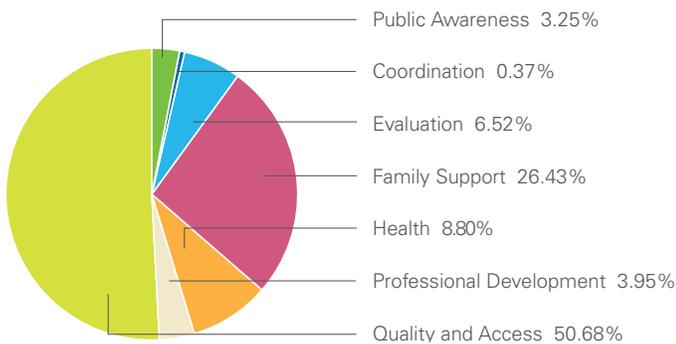
- Are 40% less likely to need special education or be held back a grade;
- Are 70% less likely to commit a violent crime by age 18;
- Have better language, math and social skills, and better relationships with classmates;
- Have better cognitive and sensory skills and experience less anxiety; and,
- Score higher on school-readiness tests.

First Things First's Signature Programs build on this body of research to address critical early childhood needs statewide, including supporting parents in their role as a child's first teacher, improving the quality of early learning in homes and child care centers, enhancing the professional skills of teachers working with our youngest kids, and helping doctors to address a child's developmental and physical needs.



Our regional strategies vary from county to county. They also are research-based, and address issues specific to a community. Regional strategies may include: Native language development, family literacy, preventative oral health care, early detection of developmental problems, and prevention of child abuse and child obesity.

FY09 & FY10 Program Expenditures by Goal Area  
Total = \$87.9 Million



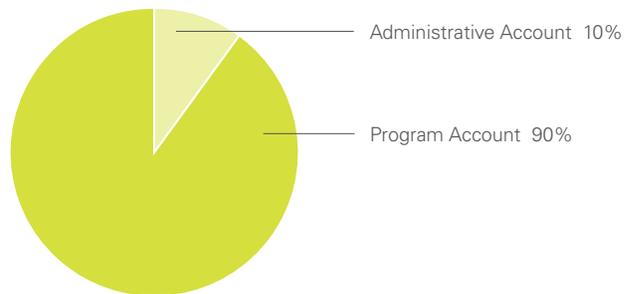
## EFFECTIVE

Although First Things First services have been available for a short time, their impact has been tremendous. In Fiscal Year 2010 alone:

- Almost 12,000 children who would have had nowhere else to go have been able to remain in child care while their parents work, look for work, or prepare themselves for work.
- 64,000 parents of newborns have received an Arizona Parent Kit before they leave the hospital. The kit includes with critical information about healthy parenting practices and how to support their baby's early learning.
- Almost 30,000 Arizona children are receiving improved childcare from better-trained teachers in more nurturing, literature-rich learning environments.
- Almost 9,300 families have received home-based services to strengthen their families and support their child's early learning and health.
- 330,000 children will benefit from training to physicians on the specific needs of young children so that they are better able to identify developmental concerns and refer parents to the appropriate services to address those concerns.
- 66,000 children benefit from child care health consultants who help early caregivers create healthy, safe learning environments.
- Almost 137,000 food boxes were distributed (2.5 million pounds of food) to help families with children five and younger have access to nutritious food.

## EFFICIENT

In addition to being effective, First Things First is also efficient. By law, 90 percent of the revenue collected must be used to fund early education and health services for children 5 years old and younger. No more than 10% of revenue collected may be used for administrative costs.



## ACCOUNTABLE

Most importantly, First Things First is accountable – to voters, to the state, and most importantly, to Arizona's children. That's why we have partnered with the state's three universities to do an independent study of the impact First Things First services have on the long-term education and health of Arizona's youngest. This study, called the First Things First External Evaluation, is believed to be the most comprehensive assessment of the impact of an early childhood initiative in the country!