

**ABBREVIATED GLOSSARY OF FIRST THINGS FIRST
(2/5/11)**

Note: This document is not intended to be all inclusive but to serve as a tool to assist board and council members, staff and committee members to share a similar understanding of terms.

Term/Acronym	Definition/Description
Accountability and Monitoring	Accountability and monitoring processes are in place to ensure that services for children and families are carried out efficiently, economically, effectively, ethically and equitably, while achieving desired program outcomes.
Allotted / Allotment	A financial term used by First Things First to indicate the total funding the First Things First Board has authorized to be spent on a strategy.
Awarded	A financial term used by First Things First to mean the total amount of funding included in a contract.
Benchmark	A point of reference by which indicators or objectives can be measured in the attainment of a defined goal.
Best Practice	Best practice asserts there is a technique, method or process that is highly effective at delivering a particular outcome. Best practice can also be defined as the most efficient (least amount of effort) and effective (best results) ways of accomplishing a task, based on repeatable procedures that have proven themselves over time for large numbers of people. Best practices are often contained in the standard of practice for a given strategy and are used to describe the process of developing and following a standard way of performing that multiple organizations (or regions) can replicate and use for management, program implementation, policy and evaluation.
Data Reporting Templates	Data reporting templates are the tools utilized by First Things First grantees to report and submit data that First Things First uses to assess grantee Performance Measures.
Early Childhood System	Early Childhood System refers to the entirety of early care and education, health, family support, early literacy, and professional development components that serve children birth to age 5 and their families.
Expended	A financial term used by First Things First to mean the amount spent by a grantee or contractor, which is calculated after the grantee has submitted invoices and been reimbursed by FTF.

Family	Family includes biological, adoptive and foster parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, siblings, guardians or other significant adults, including extended family members, defined by law or custom of the Tribe, country or cultural group, who provide primary care of a child within a household.
Fidelity	The degree to which a program is implemented according to a specified and proven model.
Financial Incentives	Financial incentives, as used by First Things First, are available through the Quality First program and may be provided to support program improvement, the costs of providing high-quality services, or to reward achievement of quality improvement. Incentives are also tied to other strategies such as those that recruit and retain special health providers and reward early education professionals for attaining education milestones.
Goal	Broad measurable statement of intent to set a future direction or desired accomplishment. The goal communicates the direction of (more, less, maintain) the result statement. Goals indicate what FTF will do as part of the comprehensive early childhood system. Each goal is a piece of a larger picture and is inextricably interrelated and linked with the other goals. (FTF uses goal instead of objective)
Goal Area (FTF)	First Things First has identified 6 goal areas: Quality, Access and Affordability; Health; Professional Development; Family Support/Early Literacy; Coordination, and; Communications.
High-Quality	First Things First defines high quality early care and education, health, and family support programs as those that meet defined standards, best practices and, where applicable, are implemented with fidelity to a proven model. Strategies that meet these quality indicators provide children with the greatest opportunities to reach their maximum potential in life.
Indicator	A statistic or data source used to measure current conditions as well as identify trends.
Key Measure	First Things First's Key Measures align directly with FTF Goals and indicate desired change. Many Key Measures listed will indicate whether regular progress toward First Things First Goals will be achieved within three to five years. Other Key Measures listed will provide important data to determine ongoing impact on and progress of the early childhood development and health system.
Monitoring	A system or process designed to check, record, and track progress of any program, service or organization on a regular basis. Monitoring is generally accomplished by comparing performance to a set of expected

	standards. Examples in early childhood include licensing regulations, Head Start Performance Standards, and quality improvement and rating systems.
Needs and Assets Assessment Reports (N & A)	First Things First Needs and Assets reports are produced every other year, alternating between a statewide and a regional focus. Each FTF Needs and Assets report provides a snapshot of the demographic characteristics within the state or region of young children ages birth to five and their families. Also included are the early care, development and health systems, services and other assets available to young children and their families, as well as areas in which the state or region has unmet needs for these systems and services.
Open Meeting Law (OML)	State law which requires that meetings of public bodies (which include the FTF Board and Regional Councils and subcommittees) must be conducted openly, and meeting notices and agendas must be provided that contain information as is reasonably necessary to inform the public of the matters to be discussed or decided.
Performance Measures	First Things First’s Performance Measures include (1) key indicators of performance (i.e. Units of Service); (2) basic implementation of strategies; (3) alignment of program activities to strategy specific standards of practice, and (4) performance or progress towards pre-established strategic goals. Performance measures may include the level or type of program activities conducted (e.g. serving families/children through home visits) and/or the direct services and products delivered by a program (e.g., providing scholarships).
Professional Development	Professional development generally refers to ongoing learning opportunities available to professionals to enhance skills, knowledge and career advancement. Early childhood professional development encompasses all types of facilitated learning opportunities, including college coursework, conferences/workshops, observation and practice, coaching/mentoring, communities of practice, lesson study, reflective supervision and technical assistance.
Program Standards	Program Standards are the recommended practices for early childhood programs that have been identified to be highly effective in supporting young children’s growth and learning. High quality program standards are not requirements, such as licensing regulations, but address the similar structural components of quality such as healthy and safe environments, curriculum and instruction, staff qualifications, ratios and group sizes, compensation and retention, and family engagement. Arizona’s program standards were developed through a joint effort between First Things First and ADE and are documented in the <i>Program Guidelines for High Quality Early Education: Birth through Kindergarten, Third Edition</i> .

<p>Promising Practice</p>	<p>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. Promising practices may also have been tested under different conditions and, therefore, have a research foundation. However, the practices themselves have not been tested using the most rigorous research designs or were tested in different contexts.</p>
<p>Proven Practice</p>	<p>Proven practice is a study design using a convincing comparison group to identify program impacts, including randomized-control trial (experimental design) or rigorous quasi-experimental designs.</p>
<p>Quality Improvement and Rating System (QIRS)</p>	<p>A systematic approach to assess, improve, and communicate the level of quality in early care and education programs. Based upon defined program standards, this system provides an opportunity to (1) increase the quality of care and education for children; (2) increase parents’ understanding of and demand for higher quality care; (3) increase professional development of early childhood providers; and (4) provide information and accountability to policymakers for funding. (National Child Care Information Center.)</p>
<p>Research-Based</p>	<p>Programs based on neurobiological, behavioral and social science research that is peer reviewed and replicated and that has led to major advances in understanding the conditions that influence whether children get off to a promising or worrisome start in life.</p>
<p>Request for Grant Application (RFGA)</p>	<p>Request for Grant Application is the primary mechanism used by First Things First to solicit proposals and award grant funding to community entities for the implementation of strategies approved in regional or statewide funding plans. Eligible entities respond to an RFGA with a competitive grant application that is reviewed by community stakeholders, with final recommendations for grant awards approved by the FTF Board.</p>
<p>School Readiness</p>	<p>School readiness is a term used with increasing frequency to describe expectations of how children will fare upon entry to kindergarten. Years of research on child development and early learning show that several interrelated domains of development define school readiness—physical wellbeing and motor development, social and emotional development, approaches to learning, language development, and cognition and general knowledge. These domains are interrelated, build on one another, and form the foundation of learning and positive social interaction which lead to success in school and life. Readiness is built upon a foundation of positive early experiences and learning environments in the home and community. School readiness is also viewed as the readiness of school systems to provide opportunities for young</p>

	children of all backgrounds and cultures to succeed after entry into kindergarten.
Strategy (FTF)	A general method or overall approach used to achieve a goal. First Things First strategies provide direction and are globally defined best practices that positively affect the lives of children and families. Strategies work together and indicate how First Things First will achieve goals.
Target Service Number	A Target Service Number represents the number of units (e.g. target population) proposed to be served or the number of products/services proposed to be delivered during the contract year.
Technical Assistance (TA)	Technical Assistance is a response to a specific need for information, direct instruction, modeling, or a combination of these, or the request of support from an expert. Strategies for the delivery of TA include consultation (on-site or by phone), training and resource sharing. Technical assistance often includes a written agreement between the TA provider and the requesting person or group. TA may also be offered when performance of contracted services does not conform to service specifications.
Training	Training refers to the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and competencies as a result of the teaching of vocational or practical skills and knowledge that relate to specific useful competencies. The objective may be to develop initial or basic qualifications or to maintain, upgrade and update skills with the specific goals of improving capability, capacity, and performance.
Unit of Service	A Unit of Service is a First Things First designated indicator of performance specific to each FTF strategy. It is composed of a unit of measure and a number (Target Service Number). A Unit of Service can be a target population and/or a service/product that a contractor is expected to provide as part of an agreement (for example, 50 children shall receive scholarships compared with the actual number receiving scholarships).