

EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT
ACCOUNTABILITY

The success of the (First Things First) board and the regional partnerships, as well as the programs they undertake and fund, (must) be measured by outcomes for children and families.

- Arizona Revised Statutes

Effectiveness and Efficiency – It’s the Law!

When voters created First Things First, they built efficiency and effectiveness for early childhood funds into the law. The statutes that guide our work require that:

- 90 cents of every tobacco tax dollar currently directed to FTF go into a program account that can only be used to fund programs or services that benefit children and families.
- Decisions about which programs to fund are made by local communities who know best what their kids need.
- Every two years, the state board and regional councils are required to do extensive studies on the needs of children in Arizona and in specific communities, as well as the resources available to meet those needs. These studies ensure that programs funded meet the needs of local communities and allow for changes as improvements are made and as new needs are identified.
- Every year, First Things First’s finances are audited by an independent organization, and the results of that audit are made public.
- In addition, FTF is required to submit an annual report to the Governor and Legislature that reflects how monies were spent and the impact to kids and families.



Funding that Works

Part of being both efficient and effective is funding what works. Services funded by FTF are backed up by evidence that they improve the early education and health of children 5 years old and younger. Every contract approved by FTF meets the procurement standards established by the Arizona Department of Administration. Selected grantees must provide comprehensive financial and service reports on a quarterly basis. Those progress reports outline how funds are being used, the number of children and families served, as well as narrative information about the impact of those services.



FTF monitors the impact of its programs and services in three tiers:

- **Grantee Accountability** – each grantee must provide information that shows they are providing the services to children required in their contracts with FTF.
- **Programmatic Accountability** – Programs at FTF are evaluated on whether the services provided are achieving the desired result in that area. For example, did the Arizona Parent Kit effectively impact parental knowledge and behavior?
- **Statewide Accountability** – Statewide studies determine whether the services funded by FTF collectively are resulting in children arriving at school healthier and ready to succeed.

Fulfilling Our Commitment to Arizona's Youngest Kids

While it is important to ensure that individual grantees or strategies are successful, it is also critical that taken together – and as part of a larger, statewide early childhood system – those services are producing long-term gains in school readiness for Arizona's children. To that end, FTF has funded several multi-year efforts to assess the success of the voters' early childhood commitment. Those studies include:

Kindergarten Readiness Assessment

- A valid and reliable scientific instrument.
- An assessment that is right for children, and is developmentally appropriate.
- Readiness data will be collected on 1200 randomly selected kindergarten students each year.

Longitudinal Analysis

- An Arizona specific, large scale longitudinal study of the impact of quality early childhood experiences.
- Geographic analysis of programs and services for Arizona children.
- The measurement of children's progress over time and the comparison of that progress to similar children who were not able to access the same services.