



FIRST THINGS FIRST

The right system for bright futures

March 17, 2009

Dear Community-Based Family Support Provider:

Arizona is facing unprecedented, tumultuous economic times. Families are facing tremendous financial and emotional stress, threatening the well-being of young children. The First Things First (FTF) Board has determined that it must take immediate and proactive actions to shore up the foundation of early childhood and development of children birth through age five. The FTF Board has expressed a desire to help mitigate some of the economic damage and turmoil and respond immediately to the urgent needs of Arizona's young children and families.

To respond to the dire challenges being faced by families with young children, the FTF Board has received approval from the Arizona Department of Administration (ADOA) for a bid waiver, granting authority to expedite the awarding of contracts quickly in certain strategy areas through a non-competitive process. To provide immediate supports for children and families, FTF is focusing on family support strategies that will help prevent abuse and neglect of children, which increases in times of financial and emotional stress. Families need access to supports for a safe and stable home environment.

FTF Regional Partnership Councils have been given the option to expedite the award of family support strategies without FTF Board approval. **The North Pima Regional Partnership Council has chosen to expedite strategy four, Community-Based Family Support, with \$100,000 allotted to fund this expedited strategy.**

To be considered, community-based family support programs must meet the following criteria:

- Provide comprehensive family support services that address the immediate health, safety and welfare of children birth to age 5. Programs will provide prevention as opposed to intervention services. (Services that provide direct cash benefits, such as emergency assistance for rent, utilities or transportation; or programs providing support exclusively to families involved in the child welfare system, such as family preservation, will not be eligible for funding.)
- Provide services that are in compliance with FTF Community-Based Family Support Scope of Work and Standards of Practice
- Demonstrate immediate capacity to serve families
- Be a current service provider in Arizona

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Regional Coordinator

- Serve targeted geographic area or demonstrate capacity to immediately expand to that area
- Keep administrative costs below 10%

A.R.S. §8-1183 provides for a prohibition on supplanting of state funds by First Things First expenditures, meaning that no FTF monies expended are to be used to take the place of any existing state or federal funding for early childhood development and health programs.

The North Pima Regional Partnership Council will engage in a process to immediately identify a provider(s) to implement this strategy. If you are a Community-Based Family Support provider that meets the above FTF criteria and you wish to be considered, please complete the Agency/Program Profile and submit it electronically to Erin Lyons at elyons@azftf.gov by **March 24, 2009 by 12:00 p.m.** for consideration. If you have any questions, please contact Erin Lyons, Regional Coordinator, in writing at elyons@azftf.gov.

FTF staff will notify you if additional information is needed and to inform you of the Regional Council's decision, which is anticipated by April 1, 2009. Thank you for your willingness to serve the children of Arizona.

Sincerely,

Erin Lyons
North Pima Regional Coordinator

North Pima Community-Based Family Support Scope of Work

The North Pima Regional Partnership Council has identified the need for regional implementation of the following strategies:

- 1) Enhance and/or implement inclusive family education and support services through collaborations among community/neighborhood-based locations (i.e. schools, universities, libraries, faith-based organizations, community centers, medical facilities, business, early care and education facilities, as well as parks and recreation services).
- 2) Expand programs that support parents and caregivers in their ability to promote their children's optimal development and health.
- 3) Support, enhance, and implement programs and services that provide parents and caregivers access to information, resources, and high-quality social support.

The North Pima Region serves, and applications submitted in response to this funding opportunity, must serve the communities of Avra Valley, Picture Rocks, Mount Lemmon, Marana, Rillito, Oro Valley, Catalina and the Northern Foothills part of Tucson including zip codes 85619, 85653, 85654, 85704, 85718, 85737, 85739, 85741, 85742, 85743, 85749, 85750.

The intended target population of this funding opportunity is families with children birth to five years who reside within the boundaries described above. This strategy is intended to target all communities within the region with emphasis on those in rural communities and communities where few services currently exist. Specific areas to be targeted include: Avra Valley, Catalina, Picture Rocks, Rillito, and Northwest Tucson.

The 2008 needs and assets assessment of the region suggests that there is limited access to comprehensive family education and support services. In addition, there is limited information within the region regarding child development and high quality early care and education programs, and many families must travel to the greater Tucson area for services since few programs extend into the most rural areas within the North Pima boundaries. Specifically, parents and families require a greater understanding of child development and health; more effective parenting skills; and improved access to resources. Surveys and interviews indicate there is a lack of quality family support and education services to assist families in developing the necessary skills to support their children's optimal development and health, as well as a lack of capacity among available programs to meet the needs of all families in the region.

Research literature suggests that at birth the brain is about one-quarter of full adult size, by the age of two, the brain is not only bigger, but complex connections have been made between cells. Brain size is only a small part of the story. It is the connections between brain cells that help young children control their bodies and learn about their worlds.¹ Young children need stimulation and interaction throughout their lives, but lack of enrichment can be most damaging in the very early years. Connections in the brain become stronger when they are used often, and connections that are not used die away in childhood and early adolescence as seen on the picture on the left. It is true for adults and true for babies – “use it or lose it!” – babies and young children need stimulation to develop socially, emotionally, and intellectually.² Children who experience sensitive, responsive care from a parent perform better academically and emotionally. Family support is the foundation for enhancing children’s positive social and emotional development.³

Although community-based parent education programs provide support and services, few have demonstrated an evidence-based approach. However, based upon existing research, certain program elements have been identified to be indicators of quality in community-based family education and information programs that help families meet outcomes.⁴ These include: program design and content implemented with fidelity, program relevance, high quality staffing and monitoring activities.⁵ For example, programs that involve both parent and child demonstrate a positive impact upon outcomes.

¹ Shonkoff, J.P. (2008). The Science of Child Development and the Future of Early Childhood Policy. Presented at the National Symposium on Early Childhood Science and Policy, June 26, 2008.

<http://www.developingchild.harvard.edu/>

² Barnard, K. (1998). Developing, implanting and documenting interventions with parents and young children. *Zero to Three*, 18(4), 23-29.

³ Meeker, E. and Levinson-Johnson, J. Evidence-Based Parenting Education Programs: Literature Search, September 2005. Coordinated Care Services, Inc.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Hageman, G. (2005). Evidence-Based criteria for family support and parent education programs: Early childhood Iowa, Quality Services and Program Components Work Group.

Implementation Requirements:

The specific goal area, goals and key measures identified by the Regional Partnership Council as areas they would like to see change are:

First Things First Goal Area to be addressed:

- Family Support

First Things First Goals to be addressed:

- FTF will coordinate and integrate with existing education and information systems to expand families' access to high quality, diverse and relevant information and resources to support their child's optimal development.
- Increase the availability, quality and diversity of relevant resources that support language and literacy development for young children and their families.
- Collaborate with existing AZ early childhood health care systems to improve children's access to quality health care.

First Things First Key Measures to be addressed:

- Number and percent of families that report satisfaction with provided family support
- Number and percent of families showing an increase in parenting knowledge and skill after receiving family support.
- Percentage of families with children birth through age five who report they are competent and confident in their ability to support their child's safety, health and well-being
- Percentage of families with children birth through age five who report they are satisfied with the accessibility of information and resources on child development and health
- Percentage of families with children birth through age five who report they maintain language and literacy rich home environments

It is expected that community-based family education and support programs funded by First Things First will offer comprehensive programs to the families they serve. In order to address the distinct needs of families in North Pima, the Council will accept a variety of proposals to enhance family support services that are both evidence-based and relevant to the community served. Programs may include various levels of intensity designed to meet the needs of the children and families.

Programs must address one or more of the following core service areas:

- All domains of child development (physical, cognitive, social, emotional, language, sensory)
- Natural support for families/peer support
- Health-related issues
- Child/Family literacy

Using a family-centered and strengths-based approach in natural environments, these programs will:

- Follow the FTF Community-Based Family Support Standards of Practice, attached
- Provide resource and referral information (e.g. where to access regular developmental screenings).
- Identify outreach, engagement and retention practices for participants/ families.
- Provide program evaluation data and information to demonstrate evidence of program effectiveness and impact upon the identified performance and key measures. Pre and Post testing must be administered.

The program may involve both parents and children. Programs should address topics such as:

- All domains of child development (physical, cognitive, social, emotional, language, sensory)
- Offer developmental screenings to parent participants using a standardized or criterion-referenced tool for all of the following developmental domains (i.e. Ages and Stages Questionnaire)
- Appropriate child-adult interactions and development of parenting skills (i.e. physical touch, showing affection, spending time together, positive discipline, parental monitoring, early reading and language experiences and communication)
- Resource & Referral Information-Identify supports and services available to families with young children, for example, health (i.e. nutrition; obesity; breastfeeding; physical activity; immunizations; oral health; insurance enrollment; participation in consistent medical/dental homes; participation in prenatal care; safety; developmental health, vision and hearing screening)
- Identification of natural supports such as peer support.
- Access opportunities to participate in family literacy activities.

- Address issues of substance abuse, domestic violence, mental health, and children with developmental delays or disabilities.

Additional implementation considerations:

- Preference will be given to approaches that are research-based and to applicants who can demonstrate positive outcomes for the target population.
- Applicants should identify curricula currently utilized in service provision and state how the program will incorporate and meet the FTF Community-Based Family Support Standards of Practice.
- Research indicates that programs that involve both parents and children demonstrate a positive impact on outcomes. Effective program models may run simultaneous parent-only and child-only sessions, followed by family sessions with opportunities to practice new skills. The critical element is that families have opportunities to practice skills.
- Applicants must demonstrate a history of collaboration with other service providers and community resources, as well as how they will specifically serve the region in which they are receiving funding.
- Applicants should identify the roles and services that each partner will provide, if applying as a collaborative.
- Applicants must show staff qualifications, supervision, and training plans that will support the successful implementation of the evidence-based model.
- Programs should work with families to mobilize formal and informal resources to support family development, and advocate with families for services and systems that are fair, responsive, and accountable to the families served.
- Language and early literacy development will be a strong component of this strategy and grantees will need to address how it will be supported through their services.
- Applicants must describe their plans for recruiting families.
- Applicants should identify length and duration of services/program activities.
- Family participation in community-based services is voluntary and must be provided free of charge to the family.

Coordination and collaboration with all FTF grantees is critical to developing a seamless service delivery system for children and families. Services and programs cannot be implemented in isolation and coordination and collaboration must occur within a region

and across regions. FTF staff and Regional Councils will identify opportunities for collaboration and coordination with successful applicants that become grantees of First Things First. Successful applicants will be required to attend meetings and workgroups in the region being served to identify, develop, and implement mechanisms around coordination and collaboration. Successful applicants will also be required to share data with First Things First and the Regional Partnership Council that will be used for cross regional analysis. Successful applicants will also participate in cross regional and statewide work that may include additional workgroups and meetings. In order to accomplish these tasks, applicants should plan the appropriate budget that would include travel for monthly meetings within the regional area, four cross regional meetings/workgroups held in various locations, and one statewide meeting to be held in Phoenix, Arizona. All travel related costs for these trainings and meetings should be included in the applicant's budget.

Evaluation efforts should be directly connected to the Goals, Key Measures, and the Performance Measures and should determine the extent to which the program has accomplished the stated goals and key measures. The evaluation should also measure program fidelity by assessing which activities were implemented and the quality, strengths and weaknesses of the implementation. Successful Applicants agree to participate in the First Things First evaluation and will meet the requirements of the evaluation including, but not limited to, timely and regular reporting and cooperation with all First Things First evaluation activities. Timely and regular reporting of all performance and evaluation data includes the electronic submission (through the First Things First secure web portal) of performance measures and other evaluation data as proposed by the Applicant in this Request for Grant Application. Performance measure data must be submitted in its raw form (e.g. number of children served/proposed service number= 52 actual children served/50 proposed service number).

Successful Applicants are also required to collaborate with the First Things First longitudinal evaluation. The provider must participate in child assessment activities associated with the longitudinal evaluation including tracking and reporting to First Things First data pertaining to participant attendance, enrollment, and demographic information, all of which must be maintained in a secure and anonymous manner. In addition, Applicants agree to allow First Things First and evaluation consultants of First Things First to observe program activities on site and obtaining parent consent for data collection related to evaluation efforts.

Performance Measures are defined by First Things First to determine the key impacts of the strategies, programs and approaches being implemented. Applicants are expected to collect and report data to First Things First on the progress of achieving the Performance Measures. Performance Measures for purposes of this funding opportunity are as follows:

- Number of families and children served /proposed service number
- Staffing ratios of provider to participants /proposed ratio
- Frequency of services /proposed frequency
- Staff attrition/ strategic target number
- Family attrition/ strategic target number
- Number of families reporting satisfaction with provided services (minimum questions provided by First Things First staff)/actual service number
- Number of families showing increases in knowledge and skill after receiving services (pre-post test linked with evidence based curriculum) /actual service number
- Number of families who report an increase in reading to their child in pre-post test (minimum questions provided by First Things First staff)/actual service number