

PROCESS OVERVIEW AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

First Things First (FTF) was established by voter initiative in 2006. Focused on providing quality early education and health programs for Arizona children ages 0-5, FTF is guided by a number of core principles, including a strong emphasis on local communities coming together to plan and administer what works best in their community. Regional Partnership Councils are the structure delineated in statute to accomplish this. There are currently 31 regional partnership councils, ten of which are tribal.

By Law, First Things First is required to review the regional boundaries every two years to determine if any changes are needed to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery.

FTF is currently in the process of preparing draft recommendations for the Statewide Board to review. In order to accomplish this, the FTF Board convened a Regional Boundary Task Force (Task Force) representing a broad cross section of regional council members, board members and community stakeholders.

In October 2012, the Regional Boundary Task Force adopted a set of guiding principles to direct the data gathering, public survey and draft recommendation process.

The Task Force determined that any proposed regional boundary modification would:

- Maintain or increase access to services;
- Promote scale of services and programming through a geographic region;
- Strengthen leadership capacity and infrastructure to create and sustain a high-quality service system;
- Recognize the uniqueness and diversity of individual communities that make up a region, and ensure that regional council representation across a geographic boundary can be achieved;
- Maximize and leverage resources resulting in efficiencies in creating and strengthening the service delivery system, thus reducing redundancies and duplication;
- Minimize disruption of service delivery from any regional boundary changes that are proposed.

The Task Force has met three times during the latter part of 2012 and the beginning of 2013. They were charged with specifically evaluating the regions where ongoing quantitative and qualitative data suggested a more in-depth analysis was required in order to answer the following questions:

- Should La Paz/Mohave remain as one region or be split into two regions?
- Should Winslow stay in the Coconino Region or be moved to the Navajo/Apache region?
- Should Gila remain as one region or be split into two regions?
- Should Pima County remain as three regions or be consolidated into a smaller number of regions?
- Should Maricopa County remain as eight regions or be consolidated into a smaller number of regions?

In addition to conducting an in-depth review of the current regional boundaries, demographics and FTF strategy data, extensive feedback was solicited at the onset of and throughout the Task Force's work. At the conclusion of its third meeting – on February 19, 2013 – the Task Force put forward a series of draft recommendations regarding regional boundaries.

Public feedback is crucial to gather and consider before the Task Force recommendations can be forwarded to the Statewide Board. This includes feedback early childhood stakeholders, regional partnership council members and community partners. The Task Force wants to ensure individuals have ample opportunity to provide feedback and insight regardless of geographic location. Surveys have been released in the regions that are specifically impacted by the draft boundary recommendations. In addition, a survey is available to the public through FTF's website and targeted focus groups will be conducted in several regions.

The Task Force's draft recommendations will be presented to the Statewide Board in June 2013 for their consideration. The Board will then determine any action on the recommendations by August 2013.