



PROFILES: SUCCESSFUL PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

State:	Arizona
Partnership name:	Arizona Early Childhood Development and Health Board (also known as First Things First)
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FIRST THINGS FIRST

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1. Background

The Early Childhood Development and Health Board (ECDH), also known as First Things First (FTF), was created through a voter-approved initiative in 2006 that enacted an 80-cent per pack tax increase on tobacco products to sustainably fund early childhood services in Arizona.

The initiative also created the statewide FTF Board and local 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 children younger than age 5. Upon voter approval, the initiative language became the authorizing state statute creating ECDH (FTF).

FTF is a state board agency and staff members are state employees. The state board and 28 regional partnership councils are staffed by FTF employees. All board members and regional partnership council members are volunteers.

2. Mission and Goals

FTF's mission is to act as one of the critical partners in creating a family-centered, comprehensive, collaborative, and high-quality early childhood system that supports the development, health, and early education of all Arizona's children birth through age five. The goals for FTF focus on the system, and are informed by the ECDH statute as well as a 2010 Early Childhood Task Force convened by the state board. A publication detailing the work of the Early Childhood Task Force can be found at: http://www.azftf.gov/WhoWeAre/Board/Documents/Creating_the_Model_Early_Childhood_System.pdf.

Six system outcomes were identified by the Task Force, and inform the work of FTF:

1. All children have access to high-quality, culturally responsive early care and education that promotes their development;
2. All children have access to high-quality preventative and continuous health care including physical, mental, oral, and nutritional health;
3. All families have the information, services, and support they need to help their children achieve their fullest potential;
4. All early childhood education and health professionals are well-prepared, highly skilled, and compensated based on their education and experience;
5. The early childhood system is high-quality, centered on children and families, coordinated, integrated, and comprehensive.; and
6. All Arizonans understand the importance of the early years and the impact of early childhood development, health, and education on Arizona's quality of life. As a result, they substantially support—both politically and financially—a model system that delivers these benefits.



The work of the 2010 Early Childhood Task Force identified specific priority areas for FTF. FTF focuses financial resources in each of these priority areas. In addition, FTF convenes partners, offers leadership, and works collaboratively with the existing system to maximize resources and improve outcomes in these priority areas:

1. Early Care and Education System Development and Implementation;
2. Quality Early Care and Education Standards, Curriculum, and Assessment;
3. Quality, Access, and Affordability of Regulated Early Care and Education Settings;
4. Access to Quality Health Care Coverage and Services;
5. Nutrition and Physical Activity;
6. Supports and Services for Families;
7. Professional Development System;
8. Building Public Awareness and Support; and
9. Early Childhood System Funding.

3. Governance and Partnership Members

FTF uses a shared governance model that combines consistent state infrastructure and oversight with strong local community involvement in the planning and delivery of services. The FTF Board and regional partnership councils work together with the entire community, all sectors, and the Arizona Tribes to ensure that a comprehensive, high quality, and culturally sensitive, early childhood development and health system is created for young children and families.



FTF Board of Directors

The nine-member Board of Directors is appointed by the Governor and approved by the state Senate. Additionally, the Board includes three non-voting ex-officio members, including the state Superintendent of Public Instruction, and Directors from the state Department of Health and state Department of Economic Security. The Board determines statewide child development goals. The statewide FTF Board is responsible for ensuring that Arizona's early childhood funds are spent on services that help Arizona's young children be healthier and start kindergarten ready to succeed. The Board sets the vision for FTF, determines the priorities for FTF within Arizona's broader early childhood system, and ensures that services funded at the statewide and local levels result in improved education and health outcomes for children from birth to 5 years of age. The FTF Board is responsible for completing a statewide needs and assets assessment, approving statewide grants, designating the regional boundaries, appointing the Regional Partnership Council members, approving the grants awards recommended by the Regional Partnership Councils, and providing staff for monitoring and reporting progress on improving early childhood development and health.

Additional information about the state board is available at <http://www.aztff.gov/whoweare/board/pages/default.aspx>.

Local Regional Partnership Councils

The 28 local Regional Partnership Councils (which include 18 geographically defined councils and 10 local tribal land councils) are comprised of volunteers who determine which early childhood services will be funded in their communities. According to statute, each council has 8 specific seats which must include a parent; a child care provider; an early childhood educator*; a public school administrator; a health service provider; and a representative from the business, philanthropy, and faith-based communities; plus 3 at-large seats, for a total of 11 members.

* For the purpose of local regional council membership, an early childhood educator refers to an individual who educates child care providers and typically represents someone from higher education.

The Regional Partnership Councils are responsible for completing a regional needs and assets report, completing an annual regional funding plan, soliciting grant proposals, recommending grant proposals to the Board, implementing and monitoring the programs, increasing parents and providers' awareness of resources and information, and soliciting private grants.

Additional information about the local councils (which are a part of the FTF structure and not independent nonprofit agencies) can be found on the FTF Web site at <http://www.azftf.gov/pages/yourregionalcouncil.aspx>.

Other Partners

The Arizona Community Foundation provided seed funding to launch the Arizona Early Education Funds—a regional capacity building effort that was the precursor to FTF.

Recently, the Virginia G. Piper Charitable Trust has invested more than \$18 million in early childhood health and development programs. The Trust's early childhood strategies include the Quality Preschool Curricula Project; a model program advancing early learning practices, training, and curricula, including standardized orientation for new teachers and accreditation for community-based preschools. The Trust launched the Arizona Parent Kit, which is now funded by FTF and reaches every parent of a newborn with critical health, safety, and learning information. Currently, The Trust is collaborating with FTF and the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) to implement a kindergarten developmental inventory that will assess the learning status of all young children as they begin kindergarten in Arizona's public schools.

4. Funding and Other Resources



FTF is funded entirely through a dedicated 80 cent tax additional tax on tobacco products. There is no legislative appropriation.

Current average tobacco revenue is approximately \$121 million annually and FTF earns an average of \$3 million in additional annual interest. For every dollar collected, 90 cents is deposited into a program account to be used for programs and services to directly benefit young children and 10 cents of every dollar is allowed to fund administrative costs. Ninety percent of all funding deposited in the program account is allocated by formula to local communities. The amount of money allocated to each regional council is based on the number of children birth through age 5 in each community, with extra consideration given to children living in poverty.

Additional current information about funding is found on the FTF Web site at

<http://www.azftf.gov/WhoWeAre/HowWeWork/Pages/Funding.aspx>.

5. Activities

Program Quality and Access

Quality First is a quality support program that partners with over 900 regulated programs in child care centers, family child care homes, and schools to enhance early learning in areas proven to help children thrive.

Family, Friend and Neighbor help relatives, neighbors, and friends caring for young children in their homes expand their early learning and child care skills by providing classes on brain development and early literacy.

Summer Transition to Kindergarten exposes children who may not have had an opportunity to attend preschool to the routines of school so they may be ready to succeed in kindergarten.

Additional FTF strategies provide other early learning programs such as scholarships to help more families and young children access quality child care and preschool, support for child care staff to attend college courses and earn degrees in early childhood, technical assistance to child care programs in areas such as dealing with behavioral challenges or promoting healthy habits in children, and incentives to keep the best teachers working with Arizona's youngest children.

Family Support

The **Arizona Parent Kit** is provided to every family of a newborn upon discharge from an Arizona hospital or birthing center. The kit includes DVDs about healthy parenting practices, an 80-page resource guide, and a book to encourage parents to begin reading immediately with their child.

The **Birth to 5 Helpline** allows all Arizona parents to call in with questions about their infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. The line is toll-free statewide and staffed by early childhood development specialists, registered nurses, disabilities specialists, early literacy specialists, and mental health counselors.

Family Resource Centers and Community-Based Classes provide families with children ages birth to 5 years access to information and education on a variety of child development and health topics. The centers are established and classes are offered in areas of the community where families naturally congregate.

Home Visitation programs provide participating families of infants and toddlers with information and education on parenting, child development, and health topics while assisting with connections to other resources or programs as needed. Home visitors deliver one-on-one coaching and interaction tailored to the needs of individual families.

Preventative Health

FTF supports healthy children by providing access to screenings for oral health, medical, and developmental issues, and by creating opportunities for families to learn about brain development, nutrition, healthy weight, and physical activity.

FTF also helps families identify health insurance options and connects them to available health care. In underserved areas, FTF funds training in needed specialties, such as speech therapy for children, and offers incentives for health care providers to work in smaller communities.

FTF also works with early childhood health partners to increase collaboration and maximize health resources. For example, FTF's investments in health promotion and disease prevention are used to leverage additional resources, such as federal grants, that allow these efforts to serve more young children and their families.



6. Evaluation and Outcomes

Using further stakeholder and partner input, FTF identified 10 School Readiness Indicators that are designed to guide and measure progress in building an effective early childhood system in Arizona. These indicators and state level benchmarks for 2020 are available at <http://www.azfff.gov/publications/Documents/Arizona%20School%20Readiness%20Indicators%20-%20April%202014.pdf>.

Data dashboards for the state level and local regional partnership councils are being developed and will be available in early 2015.

The FTF research and evaluation plan is guided by recommendations from National Advisory Panel, are available at http://www.azfff.gov/WhoWeAre/Board/Documents/National_Advisory_Panel_Report.pdf.

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