



FIRST THINGS FIRST

Ready for School. Set for Life.

Arizona Early Childhood Development & Health Board Gila River Indian Community Regional Partnership Council

MEETING MINUTES – March 20, 2014

Call to Order

Regular Meeting of the First Things First, **Gila River Indian Community Regional Partnership Council** held **Thursday, March 20, 2014**, at **4:30 p.m.** The meeting was held at **Vechij Himdag High School, 168 South Skill Road, Sacaton, Arizona 85147.**

Vice Chair Dale Enos called the meeting to order at approximately 4:53 p.m. and welcomed attendees and Council Members. Introductions were held.

Members PRESENT

Dale Enos, Vice Chair
Priscilla Foote
Sandra Nasewytewa
Kim Franklin
Brooklyn Dee (teleconference)
Emily Warburton (teleconference)
Mary Tatum (teleconference)

Members ABSENT

Melissa Madrid, Chair
Priscilla Antone
Honorable Judge Kami Hart

Consent Agenda

Vice Chair Enos called for a motion to approve the **February 20, 2014 Meeting Minutes.** Member Franklin moved to approve the meeting minutes as presented. Member Foote seconded. Motion carried.

Call to the Public

Vice Chair Enos made a call to the public. Marcela Polo, T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood Specialist with the Association for Supportive Child Care (ASCC) introduced herself and informed the Council she provides technical assistance and support to the Gila River Indian Community. She distributed an informative pamphlet on T.E.A.C.H. Scholarship opportunities.

Read On Arizona Presentation – TABLED – May 15, 2014

Community Outreach – TABLED – April 17, 2014

- a. Speaker's Training
- b. Community Outreach Plan Update

Strategic Planning and Development – Early Childhood System – Update - Director Brown provided a brief summary of ongoing initiatives within the Gila River Indian Community First Things First Grantees and other community agencies. The Council will engage in strategic planning in the fall for the next 3-year funding cycle. She will continue to update the Council in preparation for strategic planning.

SFY2014 Funding Plan/Program Implementation Review

Strategy: Conference Scholarship - Director Brown presented two requests for scholarship funding for professional development. The Council has sufficient allocated funds in the Conference Scholarship Strategy should the Council approve the requests. Director Brown affirmed cost for lodging and meals adhere to State of Arizona Procurement Rules. **Member Foote declared a conflict of interest. Member Foote abstained from discussion and voting.**

Request #1 Gila River Indian Health Care, Behavioral Health Services
13th Annual Women's Mental Health Symposium Integrating a Pediatric Focus
May 9, 2014, Tucson, Arizona
5 Attendees
\$1,245.00 (Approximate) – Registration, Lodging, and Meals

Motion to Approve: Vice Chair Enos called for a motion to approve. Member Franklin moved to approve the request as presented in the approximated amount of \$1,245 and reaffirmed the cost for lodging and meals adhere to State of Arizona Procurement Rules. Members Nasewytewa and Tatum seconded. Motion carried.

Request #2 Gila River Indian Community, Early Education Child Care Center
2014 Intertribal Circle of Caring and Sharing Conference
June 10 – 11, 2014, Prescott Resort and Conference Center, Prescott, Arizona
29 Attendees
\$6,326.00 (Approximate) – Registration, Lodging, and Meals

Motion to Approve: Vice Chair Enos called for a motion to approve. Member Nasewytewa moved to approve the request as presented in the approximated amount of \$6,326, and reaffirmed the cost of lodging and meals adhere to State of Arizona Procurement Rules. Member Franklin seconded. Motion carried.

Chairs/Council Member Updates and General Discussion

Children in Crisis Community Workgroup - Director Brown updated the Council on the workgroup's progress and the "Best for Babies" training that was held on March 19th. She informed the training was well-received and positive feedback was received by all Gila River Indian Community social agencies that attended (i.e. TSS, GRHC, Foster Parents, Family Drug Court, Early Child Care Teachers, and Assistants, Behavioral Health, Prosecutors, Defense Attorneys, Community Members, CASA, Against Abuse Inc.). The workgroup will schedule additional specific monthly trainings for case managers, foster parents, attorneys, law enforcement, etc. The dates will be provided when they are available.

The workgroup will attend a site tour of Maricopa County "Cradle to Crayons" facility on May 13th.

Director Brown also informed the Council her and Judge Hart and/or Judge Pedro will be reporting on behalf of the workgroup to the upcoming Tribal Education and Health and Social Committees. She will inform the Council on the Committee dates she is scheduled to report. The next workgroup meeting is slated for Wednesday, May 28th. Council Members are always welcome to attend.

Gila River Indian Community Regional Partnership Council Governance Policy - 2nd and Final Reading

Director Brown directed the Council to the following sections of the Governance Policy and asked them to review the proposed revisions:

1-103 Meetings of the Council

*Written notice of any regular meeting of the Council, plus the agenda and all material relating to agenda items, shall be transmitted to each member of the Council at each member's last known place of residence or other designated address by the quickest and most reliable method at least **ten seven days prior to the date of such meeting**. Amendments to the agenda and additional supporting materials, not previously available, shall be transmitted at least three days prior to the scheduled meeting. **Except with the approval of three-fourths of the voting members in attendance at a meeting, and if permitted by law, no action shall be taken by the Council on any matter where material is not timely submitted in accordance with this policy.***

Special meetings may be held upon such notice to the members of the Council as is appropriate to the circumstances and upon such public notice as is required by law. **Special meetings may be held in person, by teleconference and/or videoconference. All material relating to special meeting agenda items shall be transmitted to each member of the Council as far in advance of the meeting as possible.**

1-108 Council Officers and Their Duties

~~In the absence of good reason to the contrary, it shall be the Policy of the Council, in nominating members to serve as its Chairperson and Vice Chairperson, to nominate members who have previously served as a member of the executive committee to help ensure greater past experience on the Council. Notwithstanding the previously stated preference for experience, the Council may nominate any appointed member for its Chairperson and Vice Chairperson. A majority vote of the appointed members of the Council shall be required to elect.~~

1-109 Communications To or From the Council

In order to establish and maintain open communication and trust between the G.R.I.C. Tribal Council and the G.R.I.C. Regional Partnership Council, the G.R.I.C. Regional Partnership Council Chairperson, Vice Chair, or Council member delegated by the Chair will attend **monthly Education and Health and Social** Standing Committee meetings, when the G.R.I.C. Regional Partnership Council has a report to present to the Education Standing Committee **or the Health and Social Standing Committee.**

1-112 Regional Council Member Attendance

Attendance Expectations: Regional Council members are expected to attend all Regional Council meetings. However, it is understood, that there will be times when Regional Council members will need to miss a meeting. The Region **Coordinator Director** will maintain an attendance roster that documents each Regional Council member's attendance at scheduled meetings.

Excused Absence: An excused absence occurs when a Regional Council member is unable to attend a meeting due to emergency, illness, injury, or previously scheduled travel or work or family obligation, which prevents participation at a meeting either in person or by phone.

Notification of a previously planned obligation should be provided to the Regional **Coordinator Director** at least 2 weeks in advance of the scheduled meeting. A Regional Council member who misses a meeting other than for a previously planned obligation must still contact the Regional **Coordinator Director** as soon as possible with the reason for missing a meeting. An emergency is a situation that cannot reasonably be planned for in advance, e.g. car trouble, weather conditions, family illness.

Unexcused Absence: An unexcused absence occurs when a Regional Council member is absent from a scheduled meeting without providing sufficient notice or without providing a bona-fide explanation of the reasons for the member's absence, consistent with excused absence definition above.

Determination of Excused Absence: The Regional **Coordinator Director** will determine whether an absence qualifies as an excused or unexcused absence. If there is a question about whether an absence meets the definition of an excused absence, the Regional **Coordinator Director** may consult with the Regional Council Chair or their Region's Manager for a determination.

Problem Attendance: An attendance problem will be defined as:

- a. 2 consecutive unexcused absences
- b. 3 consecutive absences, excused or unexcused
- c. more than 3 unexcused absences in a 12-month period
- d. more than 5 excused and unexcused absences in a 12 month period

*Addressing an Attendance Problem: Upon identification of an attendance problem under “a” or “b” above, the Regional Council Chair or Regional **Coordinator** **Director** will call the Regional Partnership Council member to discuss their attendance record and remind him/her of the attendance expectations.*

*If a member reaches a level of non-attendance as identified in “c” above, the Regional Council Chair or **Coordinator** **Director** will ask the member to resign his/her position on the Regional Partnership Council. If, upon request, the member does not resign, the matter shall be forwarded to the Board for appropriate action.*

*If a member reaches a level of non-attendance under “d” above, of which no more than 3 are unexcused, the Regional Council Chair or Regional **Coordinator** **Director** may ask the member to resign his/her position in order to ensure the Council has sufficient participation to timely and appropriately complete its work. If the member refuses to resign, the matter shall be taken to the full Regional Partnership Council, discussed and a decision made to allow the member to continue to participate or to refer the member to the Board for possible removal from the*

1-113 Amendments

*These policies shall not be added to, amended, or repealed except at a meeting of the Council and by public vote of a majority of all voting members of the Council. Any proposed addition, deletion, or amendment shall be filed with the Regional **Coordinator** **Director**, in writing, at least ten days before such meeting, and it shall be the duty of the Regional **Coordinator** **Director** to promptly distribute a copy to each member of the Council.*

Amendments to Council policy will require a two-step process to adopt: 1) the draft policy change will receive a first reading at a public meeting, during which Council members may discuss the draft amendment and request that staff make changes as deemed appropriate (a vote to adopt is not taken at this stage) and 2) the draft policy change will receive a second reading at a subsequent public meeting during which the Council may direct staff to make further changes or may vote its adoption.

Motion to Approve: Vice Chair Enos called for a motion to approve the Gila River Indian Community Council Governance Policy as presented by Director Brown. Member Foote moved to approve the Governance Policy with the proposed revisions. Member Franklin seconded. Motion carried.

Regional Director’s Report

Regional Benchmarking Update – Director Brown reported Chair Madrid, Vice Chair Enos, Ina Perez, FTF Tribal Social Affairs, and she met with Governor Mendoza. In order to access Tribal educational and health demographic data, a resolution will have to be drafted and submitted to the Research and Review Committee for approval, The Law Office will review, then present to Education and Health and Social Standing Committees. This process may take up to eight months to complete. Vice Chair Enos further explained the process of presenting such matters to the Standing Committees. Overall, positive discussions were held with Governor Mendoza, and he continues to support the work of the Council and the Children in Crisis Community Workgroup. Director Brown will continue to provide updates as they become available.

FTF Board and Council Meeting– March 27, 2014 – Director Brown reminded and invited the Council to attend the meeting and asked who plans on attending: Member Nasewytewa is “tentative.” Chair Madrid, Vice Chair Enos, and Member Foote will attend. Attendees will provide a discussion summary at the next Council meeting.

Council Member Recruitment– Nominating Committee – Director Brown reminded the Members those who are up for re-election to submit their completed applications on-line or submit a completed application as soon as possible. She informed the Members that staff will provide technical assistant or support in completing the application.

GRIC and Pinal Cross Regional Collaboration Update - Director Brown updated the Council on the Forum slated for June 19, 2014. She will continue to provide updates as the collaborative group meets.

GRIC Home Visitation Programs and MICHVE Forum Update - Director Brown reported the group met for the first time on February 26th. The group will continue to meet and she will provide updates as they become available.

2014 Regional Council Meeting Schedule

Vice Chair Enos informed the Council on the next meeting date and location. FTF Staff will provide additional information once confirmed: **April 17, 2014 – Blackwater Community School**

Adjournment

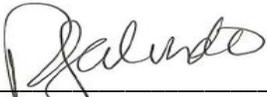
Vice Chair Enos called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Member Foote moved to adjourn the meeting. Member Franklin seconded. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at approximately 5:44 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dated this 9th day of April 2014

ARIZONA EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT & HEALTH BOARD

Gila River Indian Community Regional Partnership Council



Rosemary Galindo, Administrative Assistant



Cathy Thornton Brown, Regional Director

Dale Enos, Vice Chair

COMMUNITY OUTREACH & AWARENESS PLAN

FY2015 Gila River Indian Community Regional Partnership Council

Goals of Community Outreach

1. Educate the Gila River Region about the importance of early childhood broadly and FTF specifically.
2. Motivate Community members and leaders to get involved in the conversation about early childhood health and education in the Region, and to take action to get all children ready for school.

Target Audience for Community Outreach in the Gila River Indian Community

Priority Target Audience:

Regional: Regional Council Members
First Things First Grantees and Partners
Parents and Caregivers

Statewide: K-12
Faith organizations
Business groups
Seniors
Public safety

Community Outreach Tools and Measures

Tactic: Presentations/Outreach/Capacity Building

Target: Quarterly- as needed

FTF Community Outreach Staff will:

- Offer training Session: Early Childhood Everyday including social media to
 1. Regional Council Members
 2. FTF Grantees and partners
 3. Parents and caregivers
- Will assist in the development of Region-specific collateral items.

First Things First Staff and Gila River Regional Partnership Council

- **First Things First staff** and **Gila River Regional Partnership Council** (GRIC RPC) members may be asked to attend outreach events and presentations to represent First Things First. The **Regional Director** is responsible for coordinating and preparing **FTF staff** and GRIC RPC members for these opportunities.

First Things First outreach materials, such as Fact Sheets and Sign-Up sheets, will be used.

Tactic: Site Visits**Target: Annually****Regional Director, Regional Council Members, and FTF Grantees**

- The **Regional Director** will coordinate a site visit to one (1) FTF-funded program once per/year, inviting FTF Regional Council members, FTF grantees and early childhood partner to learn about the importance of early childhood.

Tactic: Earned Media**Target: 1 per month****Regional Director, Regional Council Members, and FTF Grantees**

- **Press Releases** - the **Regional Director** will work with **External Affairs Staff** for the development and dissemination of press releases for the Gila River Indian News (GRIN).
- **Newsletter Submissions**- When applicable the **Regional Director** will secure opportunities for publication of FTF newsletter article submissions concerning early childhood, funded programs, updates or events.

First Things First Grantees

- The **Regional Director** will work to **FTF grantees** to media opportunities within the GRIN when appropriate.

Tactic: Speaker's Trainings**Target: 1 per quarter/ as needed****FTF Community Outreach Staff**

- The **Community Outreach Staff** will offer speaker's trainings to any interested individual or group wishing to receive instruction and practice in consistent messaging to help spread the word about early childhood and FTF.
- The **Community Outreach Staff** will offer the following speaker's trainings:
 - **Basic Speaker's Training:**
 - Early Childhood, Everyday- *Simple ways to spread the word about early childhood and First Things First in your community*
 - **Extended Speaker's Trainings:**
 - The Write Way- *Writing Effective Impact Stories*

- **FTF supporters and community partners** who have attended a speaker's training will also be eligible to distribute educational reinforcements, and will work with the **Community Outreach Staff** to determine where and how these items will be used.
- Educational Reinforcement items will be given to individuals who have first received general information about early childhood and FTF.

Working with the Gila River Regional Partnership Council

- **Grantee Meetings- Regional Director** will work with **Phoenix FTF staff** to provide speaker's trainings, communications guidance, and updates to **FTF grantees** at grantee meetings. **Grantees** may provide feedback, recommendations.

Community Outreach & Awareness: Role of Gila River Regional Partnership Council

1. Provide input and expertise in the development of the community outreach plan.
2. Work with **Gila River Regional Director** and **Community Outreach Staff** to identify, attend and/or present at local events, media opportunities and event participation opportunities, etc.
3. Provides ongoing feedback and guidance to both the **Gila River Regional Director** for leads, next steps, and recommendations for the successful implementation of the Community Outreach Strategy.

Requests of First Things First Grantees

1. **Success Stories- First Things First grantees** are asked to work with the **Regional Director** to invite program participants to be interviewed for a success story.
 - **First Things First grantees** are requested to communicate good story opportunities in person, through email and phone to the **Regional Director**.
2. **Outreach Opportunities- FTF Grantees** are encouraged to recommend presentation opportunities to the **Regional Director**, to participate in FTF Speaker's Series trainings, and to engage in the conversation about early childhood on their personal social media platforms.
 - **FTF Grantees** are expected to follow grantee protocol as it pertains to First Things First branding. As a reminder, First Things First must be mentioned as a funder within every press release, on grantee collateral material and at grantee events.



FIRST THINGS FIRST

Gila River Indian Community Regional Partnership Council Conference Scholarship Strategy

First Things First Mission: To increase the quality of, and access to, the early childhood development and health systems that ensures all children entering school comes healthy and ready to succeed.

First Things First Vision: All Arizona children birth through age five are afforded opportunities to achieve their maximum potential to succeed in school and life.

Locally Driven: The First Things First delivery system is rooted in local communities. Thirty-one Regional Partnership Councils have been designated across the state. Each Regional Partnership Council is comprised of eleven volunteer council members and staffed by a Regional Director. They are responsible for conducting a comprehensive regional needs and assets assessment and setting funding priorities for their region based on the outcome of that assessment.

Request for Applications

Description of Strategy: Increase knowledge and awareness around early childhood by providing trainings and conference opportunities to parents and professionals within the Gila River Indian Community. Professional Development/Staff Training will include opportunities for education or health programs throughout the Community who have little or no professional development budgets. **The Regional Partnership Council is accepting proposals from programs, departments or agencies interested in funding sponsorship to attend but not limited to the following conferences:**

- 2014 Intertribal Circle of Caring and Sharing Conference
- Head Start Infant Toddler Mental Health Conference

TO APPLY:

Please submit a Letter of Proposal from your program director or administrator to include the following: program name, short description of your program services to children 0-5, description of who will attend (staff positions), expected outcomes of attending, total amount requested, and a narrative description of the expenses to be included under the request (number of attendees, expenses). Include a signature, name and title of person requesting.

Request may include costs of conference registration, travel and lodging. Funding to be available through reimbursement of expenses paid.

Submit to: First Things First, Gila River Indian Community Regional Partnership Council, c/o Cathy Thornton Brown **via email at cbrown@azftf.gov**.

Funding is limited. All proposals will be considered and responses provided to applicants. If you have further questions or are in need of additional assistance please contact Cathy Brown at 480-297-4815.

FOR GILA RIVER INDIAN COMMUNITY REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP COUNCIL CONSIDERATION:

Strategy: Conference Scholarships – FY2014 Allotment: **\$10,000**

Approved Request: Gila River Health Care \$ 1,245

Approved Request: Early Childhood Education Center \$ 6,326

Estimated Strategy Balance: **\$ 2,429**

Proposed Request: Tribal Social Services

John L Zerilli, Family Services Case Manager
Gila River Indian Community Tribal Social Services
P.O. Box 427
Sacaton, Arizona 85147
(520) 610-9932

April 9, 2014

Cathy Thornton Brown
Regional Director
Gila River Regional Partnership Council

Dear Mrs. Thornton Brown,

I am writing from the Gila River Foster Care program to request a scholarship funding for the upcoming 20th Arizona Child Abuse Prevention Conference taking place from July 16th – 18th at the Glendale Renaissance hotel. We have three staff and several foster parents who are interested in attending the conference. We learned about the conference from Rosemary Galindo, assistant to Jennifer Johnson, Senior Regional Director Phoenix & Gila River Indian Community Regional Directors. Rosemary suggested we apply for a scholarship to allow our staff and foster parents the opportunity to attend.

The Arizona Child Abuse Prevention Conference is a great opportunity to learn new ways to prevent and recognize the warning signs of child abuse and neglect. Unfortunately, child abuse and neglect is a common problem and many of the children in the child welfare system are at risk for further abuse and or neglect due to past trauma and a lack of secure relationships. Learning how to prevent and detect abuse is critical to ensuring the safety of these children.

Attendance at the Prevention Conference will allow foster care staff and parents the opportunity to work collaboratively to learn new skills. The staff and foster parents who attend will share the information and knowledge obtained at the conference with other child welfare workers and foster parents who were unable to attend. We would greatly appreciate the opportunity to send representatives from Gila River to this conference in the hopes of acquiring preventative skills. This will benefit the entire Gila River Indian Community as the new skills and information is brought back and what is learned is shared with other agencies with the goal of collectively furthering the prevention of child abuse and neglect throughout the community.

Your consideration of the attached budget proposal meeting would be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,



John L Zerilli

Sincerely,



Sara Bissen

Family Services Case Manager

Case Management Supervisor

Attachment: Scholarship Budget Proposal for Child Abuse Prevention Conference



GILA RIVER INDIAN COMMUNITY

TRIBAL SOCIAL SERVICES

Post Office Box 427 • Sacaton, Arizona 85147
Children / Family Services / Family Assistance: 520-562-3396
480-899-9565 Fax: 520-562-3633
West End Office: 520-550-2606

To: Cathy Thornton Brown
Regional Director
Gila River Regional Partnership Council

April 9, 2014

Gila River Indian Community Tribal Social Services Foster Program would like to request funds for three staff and foster parents to attend the 20th Arizona Child Abuse Prevention Conference on July 16th thru July 18th, 2014. The conference will be held at the Glendale Renaissance in Glendale, Arizona.

Registration: \$195 pp (early registration through April 30th)
 \$225 pp (late registration May 1st thru July 7th)

Room/Lodging: \$99 per night (plus tax)

Meals: \$50 PP (for 2 days)

Expense	Qty	Fee	Total Cost
Registration	7	\$195	1365
Room/Lodging	3	\$225 (approx.)\$99 per night/plus tax 2 nights	675
Meals	7	\$50	350
Grand Total			2390

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration.

Sincerely,

John L. Zerilli
Family Services Case Manager

Sincerely,

Sara Bissen
Case Management Supervisor



FIRST THINGS FIRST

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Chair

Melissa Madrid

Vice Chair

Dale Enos

Members

Priscilla Antone
Sandra Nasewytewa
Mary Tatum
Priscilla Foote
Kim Franklin
Emily Warburton
Brooklyn Dee
Hon. Judge Kami Hart

April 10, 2014

To: Education Standing Committee
Health and Social Standing Committee

From: Cathy Thornton, Regional Director, First Things First Gila River Indian
Community Regional Partnership Council

Re: Update on Children in Crisis Workgroup Meetings

Dear Chairwoman Antone:

On January 14, 2013 the First Things First Gila River Regional Partnership Council met jointly with the Education Standing Committee and Health and Social Standing Committee to share their completed Needs and Assets Report on the state of children 0-5 years old living in the Community. The FTF Regional Council also received guidance from the Committees' on priority areas for their future work.

During the Joint planning meeting *Children in Crisis* was brought up as a focus area for both Committees. Additionally, Governor Mendoza has highlighted system development around Children in Crisis as a priority in the Community's Annual Report.

From the guidance of both ESC and HSSC the First Things First Gila River Regional Partnership Council partnered with Children's Court Judges Pedro and Hart to establish the Children in Crisis workgroup.

Membership of the workgroup includes Department leaders from across the Community (see attached documents).

Goals of the workgroup include:

1. Establishing a vision of care for very young children (0-5) known to the courts. Create strong partnerships between programs to better triage children in crisis.
2. Identifying service gap areas which to work on and strengthen protocol within programs and between programs so very young children don't fall through cracks.
3. Make recommendations to ESC and HSSC around policy's which could strengthen the Children in Crisis system and support children and families.

The FTF Gila River Regional Partnership Council is acting as a convening partner in this project with the lead partner being the GRIC's Children's Court. **It is the intent of the Regional Council to report out semi-annually on the progress of this working group until work is complete.

Respectfully,

Cathy Thornton Brown

Regional Director, Gila River Indian Community Regional Partnership Council
C.C. First Things First Gila River Indian Community Regional Partnership Council



FIRST THINGS FIRST

Ready for School. Set for Life.

Sustaining Arizona's Commitment to Young Kids

Finance Committee Recommendation to the Board - Summary

Tobacco taxes are a declining source of revenue; in fact, funding for First Things First has decreased from almost \$171 million in fiscal year 2008 to \$132 million in FY2013, a 23% drop in five years. By statute, the Board is ultimately responsible for ensuring that FTF funds are used as Arizona voters intended. Therefore, one of the Board's primary responsibilities is to set a fiscal policy that allows FTF to: sustain program funding for the longest term possible; maximize current and future revenues; and, promote thoughtful and proactive planning for future funding reductions so as to minimize the impact to children and families statewide.

In setting a fiscal policy direction, the Board has focused specifically on trends in tobacco tax collections – which led to revenue projection models researched by Arizona State University – and analysis of expenditures. The initiative that created FTF was written so that an organizational fund balance would accrue for a period of time before expenditures began. This was an intentional, strategic move on the part of the initiative's authors to ensure that funds would be available to sustain FTF's efforts over a longer period of time.

What were not anticipated were sizeable regional carry-forward balances. The Board noted the reasons for and monitored the regional carry-forward balances in fiscal years 2010 and 2011. In 2012, when the total regional carry-forward balance exceeded \$90 million – the Board looked more closely at the regional carry-forward balance and set fiscal policy that focused on spending down that balance.

While fiscal year 2013 was the first year in which the regional fund balance did not grow, the reduction was minimal. As regions complete the last year in the current funding cycle (FY13-15) and begin planning for the next three years (FY16-18), it was a logical next step for the Board – through its Finance Committee and with support from FTF staff – to undertake a deeper review of revenue, organizational fund balance and regional carry forward and to establish the fiscal policy direction that regional councils can use as a basis for discussion of the next three-year strategic direction and budgeting.

Recommendation of the Finance Committee

To expand the discussion and ensure a diverse set of views on the matter, the Chair of the Finance Committee, member Nadine Mathis Basha, invited special guests to both meetings to participate in the conversations. The additional participants represented both Board and regional council members.

Over the course of two meetings the Finance Committee reviewed how allocations are set; discussed the variables involved in the allocation process; examined how future allocations would support current spending budgets; looked at how regional fund balance is related to and impacts spending; reviewed how the organizational fund balance can be used to support a targeted spending level; and, developed recommendations for the Board on future program spending budgets and how the regional fund balance should be used.

Two formal recommendations have been made to the Board. These will be discussed at the April 2014 Board meeting and voted on at the June 2014 Board meeting. They include:

- 1) Beginning in FY16, the start of the new three-year Funding Plan Cycle, allocate \$126.6 million in revenues to support Program spending (statewide and regional combined), and keep this amount constant for successive years.
- 2) In FY16, the total means of financing available to support regional allotments should equal the targeted \$126.6 million level, and so regional allocations should be adjusted such that each region's projected fund balance (regional carry forward) is part of the allocation level rather than being in addition to.

These recommendations are based on reasonable (neither overly optimistic nor pessimistic) revenue projections and will allow FTF to maintain its program spending at a consistent level for an estimated 9-15 years.

The alternatives reviewed included the following:

1. Allow regional councils to spend down their carry forward, hitting fiscal cliffs at varying points between fiscal years 2015 to 2018. Under this proposal, regional councils would need to initiate a round of cuts because – even with their carry forward balance spread out over the next several years – their total revenue would be less than their projected FY15 allotments. Then, regional councils would need to initiate another round of cuts when their carry forward is fully exhausted and only the base-level allocation (based on the \$126.6 million recommended amount) is available.
2. Using large-scale draw-downs of organizational fund balance to maintain spending levels that have been set using regional carry-forward balances. The organizational fund balance would be exhausted within three years and, therefore, resulting in radical reductions in services at that point.

The Finance Committee acknowledged that moving to the recommended allocation methodology will raise questions from regional councils as it will mean an almost 30% reduction in total regional funds available for spending in FY16 (impact to individual regions will vary around this average amount). While this will be a challenge for regional councils to absorb initially, the following points were discussed by the Committee and include:

1. All regions are looking at significant funding reductions in the near future (as a result of spending down carry-forward), and in most cases, would need to make those cuts in FY16 or shortly thereafter.
2. Updating the fiscal policy at the beginning of a three-year planning cycle gives regional councils time to thoughtfully and proactively plan spending that reflects available revenues at the onset of a strategic planning process.
3. The funding available for each region will be very stable over time (with population and/or regional boundary changes being the only real drivers for change).
4. The recommendation sets a targeted spending level and, in FY16, uses regional carry forward in combination with new Board-allocated revenues to achieve that targeted spending level. Therefore, regions will be spending their regional carry-forward balances. In futures years, the targeted spending level will be fully achieved with new Board-allocated revenues.
5. Regions may still experience carry-forward balances, but these will be significantly lower and much more easily managed.

In addition, the Finance Committee discussed whether guidance should come from the Board on how regional councils plan to align programming to available revenues – for example, Board strategy or indicator priorities.

In the first of two meetings, the Board's Policy and Program Committee reviewed this issue at its April 3 meeting. Outlined below are questions the Committee was asked to consider and provide feedback on by the next meeting on May 15. In addition, feedback will be solicited from the regional Chairs and Vice Chairs at their May 1 meeting. All of the feedback obtained will be summarized and presented to the Board for consideration at its June 2014 meeting, so that complete guidance can be provided to the regional councils as they begin their three-year planning cycle.

Items the Program Committee members have been asked to provide feedback on include:

- Should guidance come from the Board on how regional councils plan to align funded programming to available revenues – for example, Board preferred strategy(ies) or School Readiness Indicator priorities?
- Currently, regional funding plans are developed by regional councils and are submitted for Board approval. If and when the Board has concerns with a funding plan presented for approval, they address these concerns on an individual basis and final approval is held until both Board and regional council concerns are resolved. As such,
 - Should this practice continue?
 - Should all regional councils be allowed to prioritize independent of each other, and/or Board priorities?
- Should the Board provide parameters for how a funding plan should be constructed? For example:
 - Should the number of strategies be limited?
 - Are there School Readiness Indicators which should be prioritized?
 - Should X% of funding have to be committed to the Board’s signature Quality First strategy?
 - Should only Y% of funding be committed to strategies for which other state agencies have primary or statutory responsibility?
- The Quality First program and Quality First Scholarships collectively comprise the largest funding investment of FTF. Should FTF research whether the QF model can be adjusted in ways that lower the cost but still preserve the overall design and policy intent?
 - One such example would be reducing the number of scholarships made available to providers receiving them by some amount. If that amount were 1/3, a potential savings of \$15.7 million could be yielded.
 - Another example is considering a decision made by regional councils to fund additional scholarships, which is a significant investment of resources beyond that “required” under the Quality First model. As regional councils make choices to fund additional scholarships, it increases the total investment and in many cases, these additional scholarships are under-utilized.
- Are there other FTF program costs that FTF should research to see if they can be lowered while still preserving the design and policy intent?



EARLY CHILDHOOD SUMMIT 2014

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The First Things First Early Childhood Summit brings together professionals, stakeholders and supporters of early childhood education and health to share innovative strategies, research and best practices that help kids be ready for school and set for life.

Ensuring that our youngest kids arrive at kindergarten prepared to succeed requires all parts of the early childhood system to work together, and the Summit offers an exciting opportunity to build both the knowledge and relationships critical to our collective success.

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