

Context: Since the inception of the Pima Early Education Program Scholarships (PEEPS), First Things First (FTF) has played a crucial role in supporting the PEEPS program implementation and coordination efforts. This document describes key aspects of the partnership between FTF and PEEPS.

About First Things First: As Arizona's early childhood agency, [FTF](#) is committed to the healthy development and learning of young children from birth to age 5. In November 2006, Arizonans created FTF, a voter-initiated, statewide organization that funds early education and health programs to prepare young children to succeed in kindergarten and beyond.

Quality First Framework: Early in the PEEPS planning process, it was determined that FTF's Quality First framework was ideal to serve as the infrastructure for PEEPS.

[Quality First](#), partners with child care and preschool providers to improve the quality of early learning across Arizona. Participating child care providers, such as those in PEEPS, work with Quality First through a star rating system, which measures quality based on a 5-star system. (3-5 stars is considered quality). The ratings are based on assessment tools focused on what research shows are the fundamental components of quality early care and education that help children thrive. Only those providers rated 3-star and above are eligible to participate in PEEPS. A 3-5 star rating also allows for eligible families to receive a Quality First scholarship.

Quality First Scholarships: The PEEPS program uses Quality First to determine eligibility of participating providers throughout Pima County. Currently, early learning providers with a 3-5 Quality Rating may be eligible to receive scholarships to help lower-income families afford preschool. FTF has built an infrastructure for administering scholarships. To support one of the multi-pronged approaches to serve preschool-aged children, PEEPS dedicates a portion of funds to issue scholarships using the Quality First Scholarships infrastructure.

Multiple Funding Streams: Pima County and FTF staff work in collaboration to ensure the maximum number of young children are reached with a scholarship, whether that is a FTF-funded Quality First scholarship, a PEEPS scholarship or funding from another source such as the Arizona Department of Economic Security Child Care Assistance. A PEEPS scholarship is used after it is determined the family is not able to receive support through another form of assistance. Historically, FTF has contributed the administrative costs associated with the implementation of PEEPS scholarships in kind.

Aligning Eligibility and Reporting Efforts: Pima County and FTF recognizes how different applications, eligibility criteria, reporting requirements and reimbursement practices unique to each funding stream can be cumbersome for participating programs and their families. In response, FTF and Pima County staff aligned all reporting, eligibility and reimbursement practices to minimize paperwork and maximize usability and better support to early learning programs and families.