



**FIRST THINGS FIRST
STRATEGIC PLAN
2017 - 2020**



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

First Things First (FTF) is an early childhood collaborative comprised of organizations, providers and regional partners that are committed to strengthening the comprehensive early childhood system in Summit County. The purpose of FTF is to develop a coordinated and effective early childhood system through four focus areas: early care and education, professional development, family wellness, and coalition development. Since its inception in 2009, a dedicated group of stakeholders has been working together to provide children in Summit County with a better future. The work of FTF has intensified in both focus and momentum since the initiative's last early childhood implementation plan was developed. We have come a long way, but there is still work to be done.

FTF has assessed the needs of the early childhood system and will be utilizing the strength of its coalition and the resources available to link all of the comprehensive elements of early childhood development together in order to create an environment where children are set up for success. This means children arrive at school with all of the tools they need to learn, which means more than providing them with the right amount of knowledge. Children also need quality health care, opportunities for social and emotional development, strong support from their families, and a community that understands the value of investing in early childhood.



Included in this plan are the priorities that FTF has collectively chosen as the most important in the coming years to achieving our goals. An incredible amount of work has been done in the short history of FTF, and now it is time to accelerate that work and finish the job we have committed to do on behalf of our young children and their families.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ilene Shapiro". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Summit County Executive Ilene Shapiro

Our Vision

All children will have supports necessary to ensure their success.

Our Mission

The mission of First Things First is to address system gaps and identify improvements needed to ensure young children in Summit County have the greatest opportunity for positive physical and mental health, early learning, and developmental outcomes.

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

First Things First (FTF) wishes to thank its community partners for their commitment to building, improving, and strengthening the programs and policies that serve Summit County's children and their families. Their ongoing support and partnerships are essential for creating and sustaining a comprehensive early childhood system.

Akron Children's Hospital
Akron Community Foundation
Akron Metropolitan Housing Authority
Akron Public Schools
Akron Summit Community Action Inc.
Akron-Summit County Public Library
Asian Services in Action
Autism Society of Greater Akron
AxessPointe Community Health Center
Bellefaire JCB
Bright Star Books
Buckeye Health Plan
Caresource
Catholic Charities of Summit County
Child Care Connection
Child Guidance & Family Solutions
Cleveland Clinic Akron General
Coleman Behavioral Health
Community Health Center
GAR Foundation
Greenleaf Family Center
Help Me Grow
Info Line, Inc.

International Institute of Akron
OhioGuidestone
Open M
Portage Path Behavioral Health
PNC Bank
State Support Team Region 8
Summa Health System
**Summit County Alcohol, Drug Addiction,
& Mental Health Services Board**
Summit County Board of Developmental Disabilities
Summit County Children Services
Summit County Department of Job & Family Services
Summit County Educational Service Center
Summit County Fatherhood Initiative
Summit County Executive's Office
Summit County Juvenile Court
Summit County Public Health
Summit Education Initiative
The Nest
United Way of Summit County
University of Akron
YMCA



COALITION LEADERSHIP

FTF thanks the community leaders who have committed to guide the work of this coalition to ensure that all children in Summit County have an opportunity to be successful.

Advisory Committee

Ilene Shapiro, Summit County Executive

Jill Hinig Skapin, County of Summit Executive's Office

David Jennings, Akron-Summit County Public Library

Julie Barnes, Summit County Children Services

Judge Linda Tucci Teodosio, Summit County Juvenile Court

Tonya Block, Summit County Public Health

John Garofalo, Akron Community Foundation

Kirstin Toth, GAR Foundation

Gerald Craig, County of Summit County Alcohol, Drug Addiction, & Mental Health Services Board

Chris Yuhasz, Akron Metropolitan Housing Authority

Committee Chairs

Stephanie Carothers, Summit County Department of Job & Family Services

Beth Kuckuck, County of Summit County Alcohol, Drug Addiction, & Mental Health Services Board

Derran Wimer, Summit Education Initiative



PLAN OVERVIEW

This strategic plan was developed during a series of planning workshops between October 2016 and July 2017. The intention of the plan is to provide a broad statement of the direction, goals and strategies for FTF for the next three years. It should be used as a vehicle for informing stakeholders, parents, communities, schools and others of our intentions and commitment to deliver the highest standard of early childhood development. The plan is intended to be a dynamic document which will continue to evolve as necessary to ensure effectiveness and the ability to sustain its efforts.

The core elements of the plan are summarized on the bottom of this page. In the remaining pages, the plan will expand on these focus areas, explaining why they have been selected as priorities and providing more detail on the strategic goals under each priority.

The following goals and strategies provide a framework for the members of the FTF Coalition to prepare their operational plans and activities.

Strategic Plan Focus Areas

Early Care and Education

Family Wellness

Professional Development

Coalition Development

2020 Goals

Early Care and Education– Create opportunities in high quality environments where children can learn to succeed in school and life.

Family Wellness– Improve the accessibility of community-based programs and comprehensive healthcare for pregnant women and children.

Professional Development– Build a skilled and well-prepared workforce that works directly with families and children.

Coalition Development– Build upon the coalition to ensure an effective and efficient early childhood system.



EARLY CARE & EDUCATION

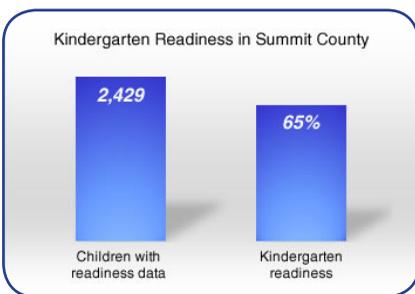
Why Early Care and Education?

The early years are a critical time for building a foundation for future intellectual, emotional, social and physical development. Brains are built by early experiences, and over 90% of development happens from birth to 5 years old. Decades of research shows that high-quality early childhood learning experiences set the foundation to ensure kids are ready for success in school and in life.

Outcome

80% of Summit County children will enter kindergarten on track for success in school. This outcome will include a particular emphasis on developing targeted strategies to close racial and ethnic disparities.

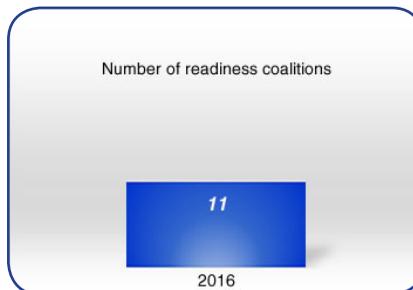
Key Performance Measurement Benchmarks



The number of preschool-age children with readiness data available upon kindergarten entry, as measured by the Transition Skills Summary (TSS) or other developmentally-appropriate screening tool administered within six months of entering kindergarten



The number of preschools and licensed child care providers in Summit County rated three stars or higher by Step Up to Quality (SUTQ)



The number of active readiness coalitions established and those that increased communication and collaboration between elementary principals, kindergarten teachers, preschools and other early learning professionals

Strategies

1. *Align efforts to improve kindergarten readiness*
2. *Empower parents and families*
3. *Increase high quality pre-kindergarten and early childhood programs*
4. *Raise community awareness and engagement*
5. *Lay foundation for comprehensive systems change*

Activities

1. *Support the development of community readiness coalitions*
2. *Broaden and deepen the effective use of Transition Skills Summary*
3. *Develop peer-to-peer models for trusted messaging in family knowledge-building*
4. *Increase teacher capacity by coaching for high quality teacher/child interactions*
5. *Align advocacy as a county*

FAMILY WELLNESS

“The development of society, rich or poor, can be judged by the quality of its population’s health, and how fairly health is distributed across the social spectrum.” World Health Organization

Why Family Wellness?

A healthy start for a child begins in the womb and continues through the first few years of life. Mothers who have access to prenatal care and have their mental health needs met are able to provide their children with opportunities to reach their best potential. Children also need good nutrition, developmental screening, quality health care, and safe environments in which to learn, play and grow.

Outcomes

Early identification of post-partum depression will improve by 25%, as measured by the percentage of women screened. The percentage of children that attend their well-child visit will increase to 75%.

Key Performance Measurement Benchmarks

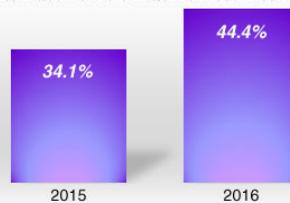
Organizations participating in the ASQ Screening Project



Baseline

Increased number of organizations actively participating in the Ages & Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) Community Development Screening project

Number of Screenings Conducted by the Maternal Depression Network as a Percent of Women Estimated To Have Maternal Mood Disorders



Increase percentage of women screened for maternal mood disorders

Increase percentage of children in the HealthChek database that are fully compliant with Healthcare Effectiveness Data and Information Set (HEDIS) measures

Compliance Rates with HealthChek Well Child Visits



Percent of Children Screened by ASQ Who Were Below Cutoff That Showed Improvement on Follow-Up Screenings



Increased number of children with 'Below Cutoff' scores that have improved on subsequent ASQ screening

Strategies

1. **Expand and enhance current initiatives for developmental screening**
2. **Increase number of agencies and practices screening women for maternal mood disorders**
3. **Increase access to community-based services and comprehensive prenatal care for pregnant mothers and children**
4. **Build capacity for the support systems providing services to pregnant mothers, children, and families**

Activities

1. **Engage more community partners and health systems in ASQ Community Development Screening project**
2. **Provide training and technical assistance to agencies and providers utilizing best practices for screening and referring women at risk for maternal mood disorders**
3. **Provide direct outreach to children that are behind on 15 month and 3-6 year well-child visits**
4. **Provide professional development opportunities and technical assistance to programs and providers**

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

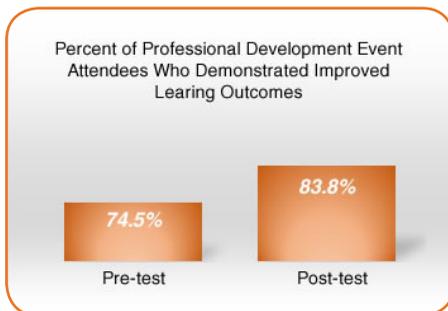
Why Professional Development?

In the field of early childhood, continuing professional development (PD) can make the difference in a child's start in life. Studies have shown that sustained PD for early childhood professionals is associated with more positive and stimulating behaviors and positive child outcomes. Through increasing opportunities for PD, early childhood practitioners are provided with the tools to assist with meeting the diverse needs of children, engage parents, and become active agents for their own professional growth.

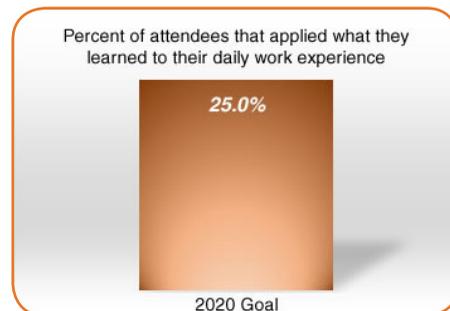
Outcome

Establish a baseline of early childhood professionals that applied what they learned in any FTF professional development event into their daily work.

Key Performance Measurement Benchmarks



Percent of attendees that demonstrated improvement on event pre-test and post-test assessments



Percent of attendees that applied what they learned into their daily work experience, as measured by 60 day follow up survey

Strategies

- 1. Support the development of training events and PD opportunities in Summit County**
- 2. Improve the accessibility of PD events**
- 3. Enhance the knowledge and competencies of early childhood professionals**
- 4. Assess long term impact of PD training events**
- 5. Encourage the understanding and appreciation of working with families with a wide-range of racial and cultural differences**

Activities

- 1. Establish and maintain a mechanism for streamlining the design, development, implementation, and evaluation of early childhood related PD opportunities**
- 2. Develop centralized database for PD opportunities in Summit County targeted at early childhood professionals**
- 3. Provide annual cross-systems training event on specialized and relevant topics**
- 4. Require integration of impact on racial and cultural disparities into all PD topics**

COALITION DEVELOPMENT

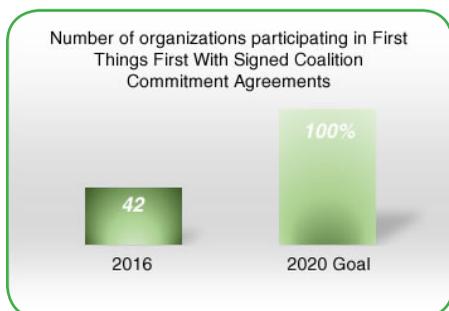
Why Coalition Development?

Community early childhood coalitions, like FTF, play a critical role in improving the lives of children and their families. Promoting the comprehensive health, development, and well-being requires the active involvement of an array of disciplines and organizations. The continued development and engagement of an early childhood system requires stakeholders that understand the strengths, needs, and challenges of the children and families and choose initiatives that address the unique needs of their community.

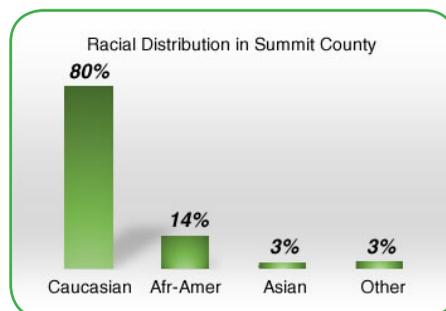
Outcomes

Establish a committed coalition of stakeholders inclusive of racially, culturally, economically, professionally, and religiously diverse populations and increase active membership annually, with a particular emphasis on parent involvement.

Key Performance Measurement Benchmarks



Percentage of FTF members that have signed Coalition Commitment Agreements



Racial diversity of Summit County residents *

* The intent of this graphic is to illustrate the racial make up of Summit County residents. It is the goal of FTF to obtain a diverse Coalition that is reflective of the racial composition of the community it serves, as well as the other diverse demographic traits of the community. Subsequent annual reports will illustrate the demographic composition of the FTF Coalition to illustrate the progress of this goal.

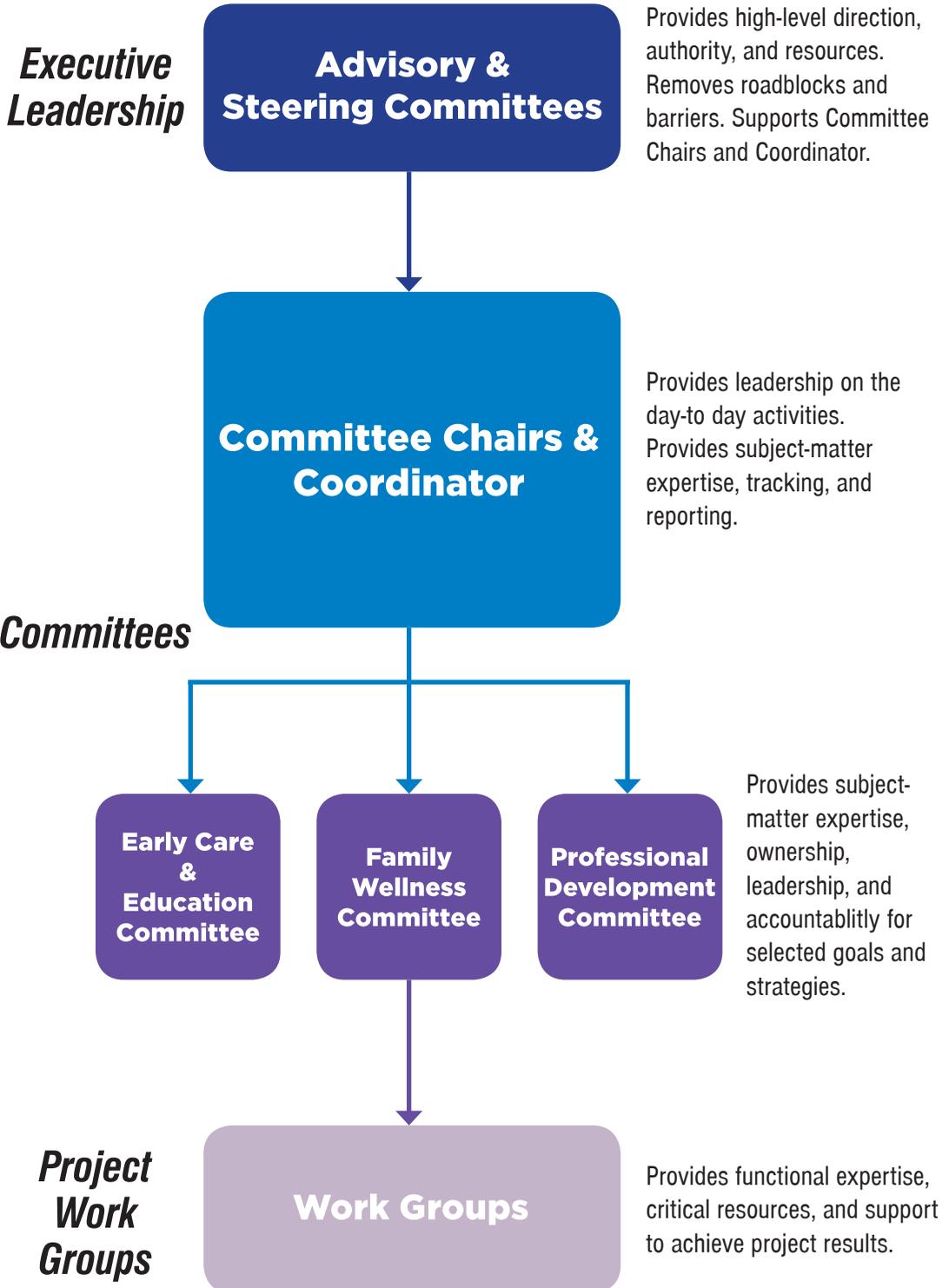
Strategies

1. Improve FTF Coalition effectiveness
2. Increase participation and engagement of members
3. Increase FTF Coalition membership
4. Recruit new diverse FTF Coalition members

Activities

1. Review FTF indicators and data trends annually
2. Revise Strategic Plan every three years
3. Develop quarterly newsletter and increase presence on social media
4. Host quarterly forum meetings for FTF members to discuss concerns, ideas for activities, etc
5. Develop tools for recruitment and retention including commitment forms and new member packets

FIRST THINGS FIRST ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



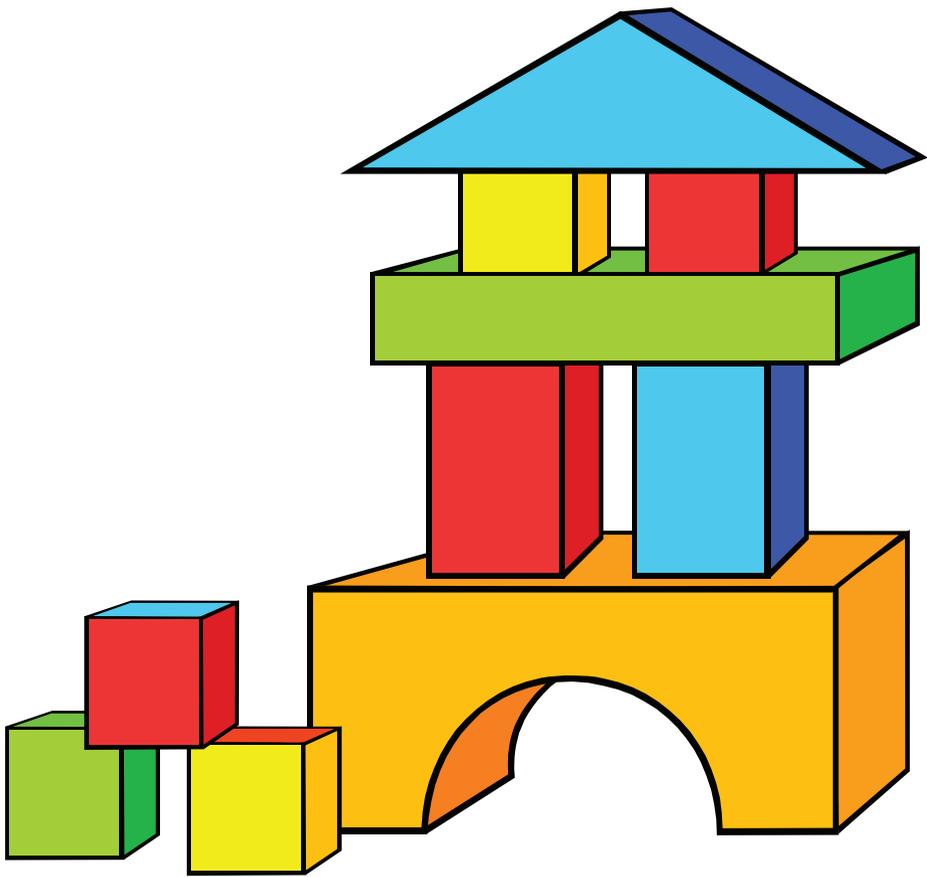
CALL TO ACTION

First Things First and its partners believe that all children deserve access to a high-quality early childhood education, health and mental health services, and family support. Summit County has recognized that now is the most critical time for our community to come together to address the quality of these opportunities for our youngest citizens. Through strong collaborations, FTF and its nearly 50 community partners have worked together to improve the overall early childhood system for children ages zero to five.

For more information on how you and your agency can join First Things First to make Summit County a great place to be a kid, please email:

firstthingsfirst@schd.org





firstthingsfirst@schd.org

