

FIRST THINGS FIRST

Colorado River Indian Tribes Region

2020 Impact Report



From birth to age 5, a child's brain grows more than any other time in life.

90% of a child's brain growth happens before kindergarten. Early childhood matters.

First Things First partners with families and communities to help our state's youngest children prepare for kindergarten and beyond.

Many young children in Arizona face challenges that threaten their healthy development and learning. In the FTF Colorado River Indian Tribes Region, there are **739 children** (under age 6) with **57% living in poverty**.

Here is how FTF is working to support young children and their families in this region.

“ In the FTF Colorado River Indian Tribes region, high-quality child care is a critical need, especially for children from six weeks old to 3 years old. Influencing the literacy and learning of our most vulnerable little ones, while they are in a safe and caring environment, will give each child a good start to succeed in school and life.”



Norma Ray

Vice Chair of FTF Colorado River Indian Tribes Regional Council

FTF Colorado River Indian Tribes Regional Key Impact Highlights [Fiscal Year 2020]

Strengthening Families and Early Literacy

379 Books getting into the homes of infants, toddlers and preschoolers through a local distribution program.

145 Adults who attended parenting activities to help support children.

Quality Preschool and Child Care

207 Children attended preschools and child care programs participating in Quality First.

24 Children participated in a summer transition program to prepare to be successful in kindergarten.



New grant provides quality early learning to kids of working families living in Parker

When the only child care center serving children ages 6 weeks to 5 years old closed, it left a child care desert in western Arizona, Parker Valley. Local families faced the stress of working and caring for their children without child care.

For Irma Alvarado, and her daughter, Susy Alvarado, the closing sparked the realization of a dream that had been in preparation for 25 years.

“My mom was a teacher at Head Start for 25 years. I worked at Head Start for 12 years,” said Susy Alvarado. “Our dream was to open up our own child care center to provide high-quality care. When Sunshine Daycare closed, we inquired about it. We didn’t think we’d be able to get the building, but then we found out about the grant through First Things First. We were in tears because our dream could come true.”

The First Things First Colorado River Indian Tribes Regional Partnership Council identified the closing of Sunshine Daycare, in partnership with the Colorado River Indian Tribes Tribal Council, as a critical challenge for the community and acted quickly to support the provision of quality early care and education.

The FTF regional council set aside \$100,000 in grant funding for State Fiscal Year 2020 and another \$100,000 for State Fiscal Year 2021. They partnered with the Colorado River Indian Tribes Tribal Council to identify an individual or organization to start up or expand an early learning setting in the area and administer the grant.

Irma, an early education professor and advisor at the local community college, and Susy, a seasoned early educator, applied for the grant subcontract and received it. In April 2020, the Early Learning Academy opened in Parker.

The Alvarados used the grant to pay for renting a building, staff salaries and purchasing playground equipment, classroom furniture and making other building improvements. Although FTF funds helped establish their early learning setting, Alvarado said the ongoing costs will be met by tuition fees and Arizona Department of Economic Security subsidies. The center opened with 30 children, but by August 2020, increased to serving 50 children even in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“I feel comfortable leaving my child here, because Susy and Irma have had so much experience.” - Annahi Vindiola, working mother

“In May, we closed the center for two days because of COVID-19, but then opened back up,” Alvarado said. “We had 12 families after that, and felt worried about the survival of our center, but now they have all returned and more families have enrolled their children.”

Annahi Vindiola, a working mother with a 1-year-old son, said that she feels better leaving her son Alonzo with trained caregivers during the day.

“With this whole COVID thing, I trust them,” Vindiola said. “They are taking temperatures, wearing masks, washing hands and sanitizing. I feel comfortable leaving my child here, because Susy and Irma have had so much experience. I feel like they teach my kid throughout the day. He wasn’t walking, but they worked with him and taught him to walk. They taught him to feed himself. He’s becoming more independent. They are providing a higher level of care in the area.”



Read more FTF stories at
[FirstThingsFirst.org/Region-Stories](https://www.FirstThingsFirst.org/Region-Stories)

FTF Colorado River Indian Tribes Regional Partnership Council

The FTF Colorado River Indian Tribes Regional Partnership Council is made up of volunteers who study the unique needs of the local community and decide how funds should be used to best support the healthy development and early learning of young children birth to age 5. FTF invests in proven programs and innovative strategies through

grants to community organizations that provide services to children and families. Some of the programs in this region include Colorado River Indian Tribes Early Literacy, Transition to Kindergarten and Start-up, Expansion and Learning Lab (Early Learning Academy).

FTF Colorado River Indian Tribes FY20 Total Regional Program Expenditures

Quality Child Care and Preschool

\$178,580

Strengthening Families

\$73,353

Preventive Health

\$46,972

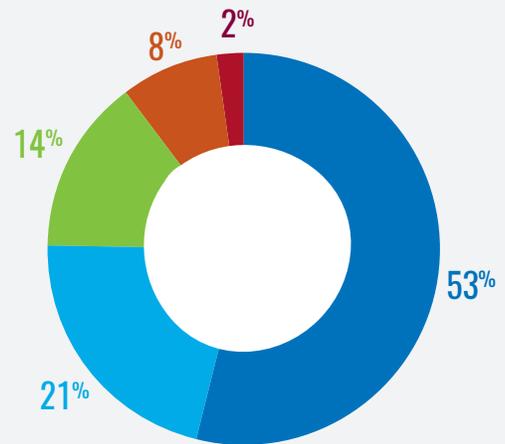
Coordination

\$28,470

Research and Evaluation

\$8,006

Total \$335,381



FTF Colorado River Indian Tribes Regional Partnership Council and Staff

Chair
Elvira Aspa

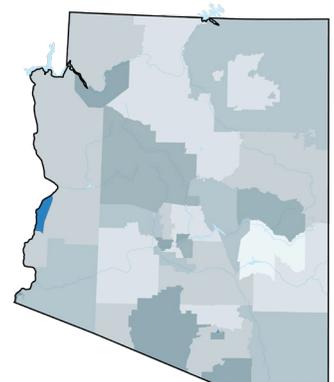
Vice Chair
Norma Ray

Members
Delise Beavers
Gloria Flores-Lopez
Daris Laffoon
Monica Rosnagle

Brad Sale
Penny Swarhout
Brian Wedemeyer

FTF Regional Director
Tara Gene
tgene@firstthingsfirst.org
928.854.8732

FTF Program Coordination Specialist
Vanessa Sandoval
vsandoval@firstthingsfirst.org
928.854.7321



The **FTF Colorado River Indian Tribes Region** is defined as the Arizona part of the Colorado River Reservation, including the town of Parker. The region lies entirely in La Paz County. The FTF Colorado River Indian Tribes Region includes Legislative District 4. Legislative districts are not necessarily congruent with regional boundaries.

Learn more at
[FirstThingsFirst.org/Regions/Colorado-River-Indian-Tribes](https://www.firstthingsfirst.org/Regions/Colorado-River-Indian-Tribes)