

# FIRST THINGS FIRST

# Tohono O'odham Nation 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 Tohono O'odham Nation Region, there are **1,180 children** (under age 6) with **69% living in poverty**.

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

“The early years are important because the support and surroundings a child has during this time will shape them into the person they will be when they're older—mentally and emotionally. This stage is definitely the most important part of development.”



**Deidre Ortega**

*The 2020 FTF Tohono O'odham Nation Regional Champion for Young Children*

## FTF Tohono O'odham Nation Regional Key Impact Highlights [Fiscal Year 2020]

### **Strengthening Families and Early Literacy**

**29** Families received support coordination to efficiently connect them to services to meet the needs of their children.

### **Quality Preschool and Child Care**

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

**22** Children birth to age 5 received a Quality First scholarship to attend high-quality preschools and child care programs.

**1** Early childhood educator received a college scholarship to improve skills in working with infants, toddlers and preschoolers.

### **Additional Strategies**

**41** **Early childhood educators** received support through professional development opportunities to enhance the quality of teacher-child interactions.



## Professional development program helps Tohono O’odham teacher achieve unique experiences for classroom

As Deidre Ortega prepared for her upcoming graduation from Tohono O’odham Community College (TOCC), she reflected on the valuable skills she acquired while in the college’s Early Childhood Education program.

“The community of practice A’al Ha-Mascam [children and their learning] definitely gave me the confidence to use the tools I’ve gained in a professional setting like working at the Head Start on the Nation,” Ortega said. “It helped me understand how important every little part is during the first five years of a child’s life.”

Ortega was a part of the Tohono O’odham Community College Community of Practice, which is one of the 17 communities of practice developed by United Way of Tucson and Southern Arizona’s Great Expectations for Teachers, Children and Families.

First Things First funds the program, which provides early childhood educators with in-depth professional development that allows them to earn college credit and work toward degrees

in early childhood. It’s a part of the Tohono O’odham Nation Regional Partnership Council’s work to help boost the quality of child care provided to young children in the region.

The community of practice provided Ortega with opportunities she might have not been able to experience elsewhere.

“I feel that early childhood development should be important to everyone because it affects everyone.” - Deidre Ortega, early childhood education student

“They took us to several classes and I was able to talk with current child care providers and hear about their experiences,” she said.

Another perk of taking her early childhood classes at the college was the opportunity to be part of the Early Childhood Education Club.

“The ECE Club gave me real-life examples that I could actually use outside of the classroom,” Ortega said. “School is never easy, but I received a lot of support from the TOCC teachers and staff.”

Now with her associate degree under her belt, Ortega plans to continue her education at Northern Arizona University to work toward a bachelor’s degree. As this year’s FTF Tohono O’odham Nation Regional Champion for Young Children, Ortega feels even more empowered to share awareness about early childhood education.

“I feel that early childhood development should be important to everyone because it affects everyone,” she said. “It’s the basis of what type of person an individual will become.”



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

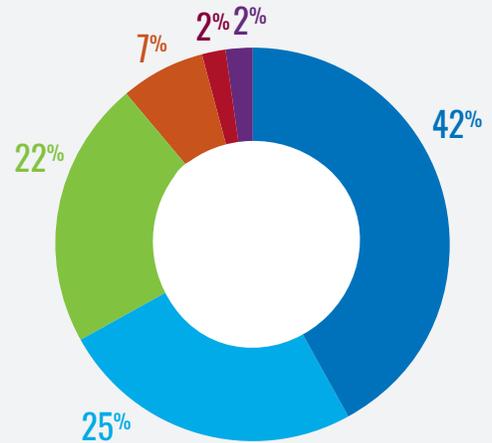
# FTF Tohono O’odham Nation Regional Partnership Council

The FTF Tohono O’odham 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.

## FTF Tohono O’odham FY20 Total Regional Program Expenditures

Quality Child Care and Preschool	\$228,765
Workforce Development and Training	\$134,245
Strengthening Families	\$120,055
Parent and Community Awareness	\$38,558
Research and Evaluation	\$15,045
Preventive Health	\$10,968
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$547,636</b>



## FTF Tohono O’odham Regional Partnership Council and Staff

*Chair*  
**Kymerlii Tenario**

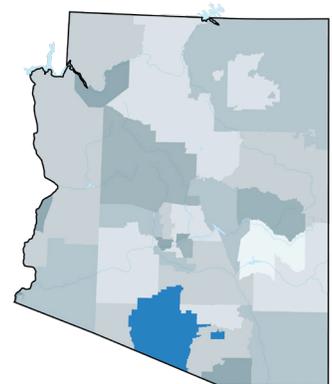
*Vice Chair*  
**Louis Johnson**

*Members*  
**Cheryl Conde**  
**Joseph Mease**  
**Jesse Navarro**

**Elsa Peterson**  
**April Villalobos**  
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*The Tohono O’odham Nation’s lands are located within the Sonoran Desert in south central Arizona. The boundaries of the First Things First Tohono O’odham Region are the same as the Nation’s federally recognized reservation boundaries. These include the noncontiguous San Xavier (Tucson) and San Lucy (Gila Bend & Glendale) districts; Florence Village, a small community outside the City of Florence in Pinal County; and the nine contiguous districts that make up the majority of Western Pima County and small southern portions of Maricopa and Pinal counties. They include Gu Vo, Hickiwan, Sif Oidak, Gu Achi, Pisinemo, Chukut Kuk, Sells, Shuk Toak and Baboquivari districts. The FTF Tohono O’odham Nation Region includes Legislative District 4. (Legislative districts are not necessarily congruent with regional boundaries.)*

Learn more at  
[FirstThingsFirst.org/Regions/Tohono-Oodham-Nation](https://www.firstthingsfirst.org/Regions/Tohono-Oodham-Nation)