

# # FIRST THINGS FIRST

Navajo Nation Region

## 2022 Impact Report



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

90%

of a child's brain grows before kindergarten.

# Early childhood matters.

First Things First (FTF) 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 Navajo Nation Region, there are **10,894 children** (under age 6) with **51% living in poverty**.

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

“As Indigenous people we value our young children as they are our future. We can take the first step towards ensuring their success and happiness by integrating early childhood development among our homes, tribe and state. First Things First is the first stepping stone we can all take towards a brighter future for our future generation of leaders.”



**Niagara Rockbridge**

*Miss Navajo Nation 2021-2022*

## FTF Navajo Nation Regional Key Impact Highlights [State Fiscal Year 2022]



### Strengthening Families and Early Literacy

129

Families with young children participated in voluntary home visiting programs proven to reduce parental stress levels, increase connections to community supports, and improve children's cognitive, motor, behavioral and social-emotional development.



### Quality Preschool and Child Care

377

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

132

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



### Preventive Health

579

Children benefited from their families receiving food boxes, backpacks and food vouchers to access nutritious meals.

209

Children monitored to receive appropriate screenings to detect vision, hearing and developmental issues to prevent learning challenges later on.

### Additional Strategies

5,327

#### Books

were given to families with children ages birth to 5 years to encourage parent-child interaction and reading.

17

#### Early childhood educators

received college scholarships to improve their qualifications for working with infants, toddlers and preschoolers.



## Quality First program helps Many Farms preschooler improve her speech

Catreina Robertson knew she wanted to enroll her daughter Kaitlyn at the preschool at Many Farms Public School in the Chile Unified School District.

Years earlier, Robertson, who is the registrar attendance clerk at Many Farms School, had enrolled her oldest daughter, Kayley in the preschool, which is part of the First Things First Quality First program. Kayley, now in the fifth grade is doing excellent academically and Robertson said it started with the skills she learned in preschool.

The First Things First Navajo Nation Regional Council funds the Quality First program, which partners with child care and preschool providers to improve the quality of early learning development across the Navajo Nation.

Quality First provides quality improvements that research proves help children thrive, such as training for teachers to expand their skills and to help create learning environments that nurture the emotional, social and academic development of every child. The Many Farms Elementary Preschool recently achieved the highest level of quality rating in the Quality First program.

But right around the time it was time for Kaitlyn to enroll, the world shut down due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which hit especially hard on the Navajo Nation. This unfortunately also caused a personal setback for Kaitlyn's developmental growth.

The Navajo Nation issued a stay-at-home mandate in March 2020, which prevented Navajo families from traveling outside and within the reservation. However, Robertson did her best to teach her children at home during the pandemic, but it was very difficult and family resources were not accessible.

"I had to make do with what was available within our home," Robertson said.

In 2021, after a year of pandemic mandates, Robertson was able to finally enroll Kaitlyn into the Many Farms preschool program and with the same teacher, Roslyn Elliott, who had taught Robertson's older daughter.

Robertson told the teacher her concerns about her daughter's speech difficulties, which included Kaitlyn stuttering and overall unable to speak clearly and with confidence.

"I knew my daughter was in good hands and I was confident that the program would better her speaking skills," Robertson said.

Elliott quickly got to work with Kaitlyn by helping her focus on the words she was trying to say and to pronounce them slowly.

"I gave Kaitlyn time when she spoke," Elliott said. "I encouraged her to have conversations with me and also gave her time to have conversations with other students. And having a speech pathologist at the school is also a great resource for the teachers. All this combined is what helped Kaitlyn improve her speech."

Kaitlyn is now 5 years old and in kindergarten and is able to speak in full sentences. She also is reading at the second grade level, while also being able to count to 100. Robertson credits the skills she learned in preschool for the strong start.

"The program made a big difference in Kaitlyn's development," Robertson said.

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

## FTF Navajo Nation Regional Partnership Council

FTF regional partnership councils are made up of volunteers who study the unique needs of the local community and inform 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 Navajo Nation Growing in Beauty, Community Outreach Patient Empowerment’s Fruits and Vegetable Prescription (FVRx) and St. Jude’s Healthy Beginnings.

### FTF Navajo Nation SFY22 Total Regional Program Expenditures

Quality Child Care and Preschool

\$1,064,608

Preventive Health

\$1,007,790

Strengthening Families

\$715,573

Workforce Development and Training

\$296,497

Parent and Community Awareness

\$143,535

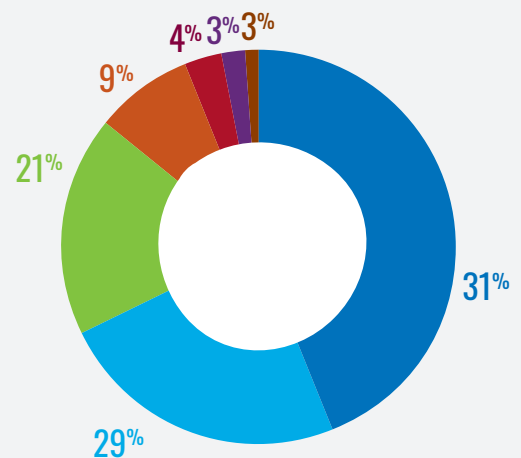
Research and Evaluation

\$111,996

Coordination

\$102,159

**Total** \$3,442,159



### FTF Navajo Nation Regional Partnership Council and Staff

*Chair*  
**Cotillion Sneddy**

*Vice Chair*  
**Rhonda Etsitty**

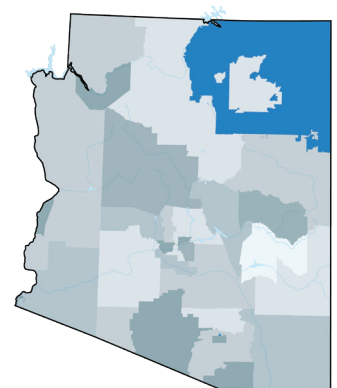
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The **FTF Navajo Nation Region** is defined as the Arizona portion of the Navajo Nation Reservation. The region covers nearly 16,000 square miles in the northeast corner of the state, stretching across Apache, Navajo and Coconino counties. The entire reservation, which dates to the Navajo Treaty of 1868, also includes lands in Utah and New Mexico.

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