



First Things First Navajo Nation Region

Memarie Tsosie
Regional Director

mtsosie@firstthingsfirst.org



The first five years are when the brain grows faster than any other time in life.

Positive early experiences help young children **learn, grow and succeed**

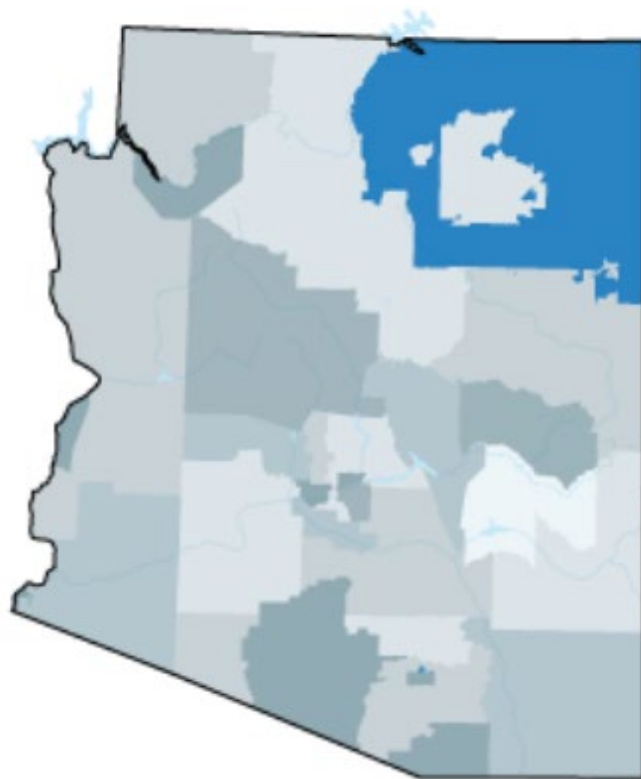
First Things First Background and Governance

- Created by voters
- Locally driven
- Data-based decision-making





Navajo Nation Region



10,894

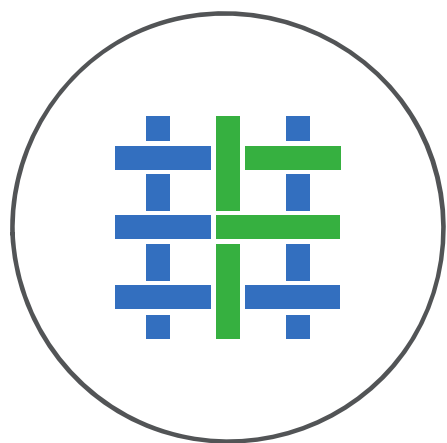
Population of young children (under age 6)

51%

Percentage of young children living in poverty



This is **how we work.**



First Things First



Grantees & Partners



Children & Families

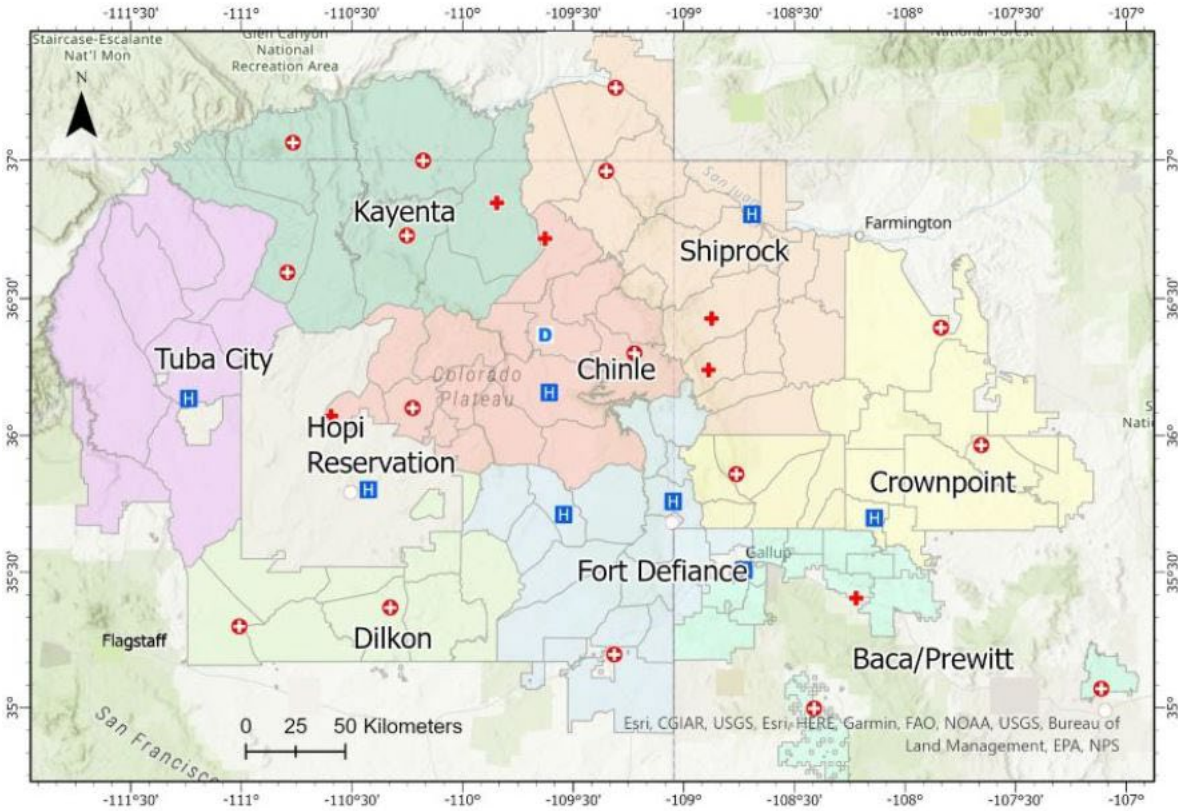


Vision Statement
Navajo Nation Regional
Partnership Council



Collaborate with all Navajo Nation partners to build a strong early childhood system where families have consistent access to quality early care, education & health services rooted in Navajo values.

Health Care Services in the Navajo Nation



Health Facilities

- H Hospital
- B Behavioral Health Facility
- + Health Center
- D Dental Clinic
- + Health Station
- Other

Administrative Regions

- HOPI RESERVATION
- BACA/PREWITT
- CHINLE
- CROWNPOINT
- DILKON
- FORT DEFIANCE
- KAYENTA
- SHIPROCK
- TUBA CITY



Data Source: Indian Health Service. Healthcare Facilities of the Indian Health Service [Feature Layer].
Scale Not Given. February 2021. https://maps.ihs.gov/server/rest/services/OPHS/ihs_health_facilities/MapServer/0

In the Navajo Nation:

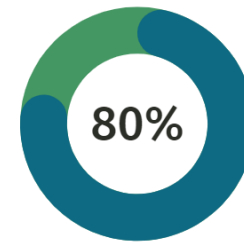
1 in 3

residents do not have access to electricity



1 in 3

residents do not have access to running water



80%

of roads are unpaved.



76%

of families are food insecure.



40 miles

Average distance families travel for services & basic needs

*data from the ADHS 2020 Navajo Nation Maternal and Child Health Needs Assessment

Meet families
where they are.





Importance of Navajo Language & Culture

Research Supports Language & Culture

- Development of two languages from a child's earliest years has positive impacts on an array of cognitive functions apparent as early as seven months of age and persist throughout childhood.
- Enhanced executive function abilities and improved language skills have been associated with early bilingualism when proficiency in each language is balanced. These abilities have been shown as a foundation for school readiness.
- In addition, there is an advantage when comparing monolingual children and bilingual children on tasks that require selective attention, cognitive flexibility, and certain literacy skills
(Espinosa, 2013)

Research Supports Language & Culture

- Culturally-based education programs, with strong native language programs, positively influence a young child's academic, social and cultural development, including an individual's identity (Demmert, 2001; Demmert & Towner, 2003)
- Practice and preparation in their cultural traditions interwoven with language, math, science and the full range of experiences reflecting all early education learning domains help children to understand and participate in the world around them (Rinehart, 2005).



Language preservation and revitalization have been recognized as keys to strengthening a community's culture and encouraging communities to move toward social unity and self-sufficiency

- US Department of Health & Human Services Administration for Native Americans (2017)

First Things First Navajo Culture & Language Initiatives

Cultural Responsivity required or recommended in many funded strategies

- **Quality First Coaching & Incentives:** Coaching incorporates Diné cultural practices where appropriate
- **Professional Development:** New funding to support training specifically focused on early childhood development aligned with Diné cultural practices
- **Scholarships:** For Education majors in Center for Diné Teacher Education
- **Nutrition/Obesity/Physical Activity:** Adaptations aligned with Navajo Wellness Model
- **Food Security:** Food boxes include Traditional Foods, such as blue corn mush with juniper ash
- **Home Visitation:** Diné language in homes, storytelling, songs, and monthly guest speakers

First Things First

Navajo Culture & Language Initiatives

- **Parent Outreach & Awareness Strategy:** Diné Language Early Literacy Kit
- **Community Awareness:** Early Childhood Newsletter – Diné Culture & Language page & Traditional Foods Recipes
- **Community Awareness:** Week of the Young Child Diné Storytime on KTNN
- **Community Awareness:** Baby board books, Toddler and Preschool books, Coloring books in Diné Language
- **Service Coordination:** Annual Diné Early Childhood Summit
- **Native Language Preservation Strategy:** In discussion to implement this year

First Things First Navajo Culture & Language Initiatives

Community Partnerships

- **Early Childhood Speaker Series** – Monthly series aired on KTNN with Diné culture topics for parents and community
- **Early Literacy Kits Virtual Story Time with Miss Navajo Navajo** – Books read in Diné Bizaad, teaching of conversational phrases and words to increase language use and literacy



Thank you