

FIRST THINGS FIRST

La Paz/Mohave 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 La Paz/Mohave Region, there are **13,469 children** (under age 6) with **31% living in poverty**.

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

FTF La Paz/Mohave Regional Key Impact Highlights [State Fiscal Year 2022]



Strengthening Families and Early Literacy

952 Families of newborns received the Arizona Parent Kit, filled with tips and tools to help support their child's healthy development.

25 Infants and toddlers involved with the child welfare system benefitted from coordinated efforts to meet their unique developmental needs.



Quality Preschool and Child Care

1,725 Children attended preschools and child care programs participating in Quality First.

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

201 Early childhood educators attended a training or session to improve their skills in working with infants, toddlers and preschoolers in child care programs.



Preventive Health

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

Additional Strategies

4,553 Adults attended parenting activities to learn more about the importance of early childhood development.

177 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.



Building language skills with babies and toddlers in northwest Arizona

An early childhood professional development program that is funded by the First Things First La Paz/Mohave Region is helping child care providers better understand how babies and toddlers learn language and how they can help that learning during daily activities.

The La Paz/Mohave Language Development Project, which is part of a larger professional development program that the FTF La Paz/Mohave Regional Council is funding, recently wrapped up its four-year term to great success. There are plans to continue the work for a fifth year.

“There’s a lack of awareness of how early babies begin to develop language skills and how critical it is to their future development,” said FTF Senior Regional Director Ashley Pascual.

“The worry is that early language development is not occurring because children are having less and less quality interactions with their parents and caregivers because of other distractions. This means they are not developing the language skills they need and it will impede their ability to communicate effectively.”

The FTF grant allowed Early Childhood Education Associates Inc., which is based in La Paz and Mohave counties, to work with Renate Zangl, an international child language researcher, to implement science-based strategies from Zangl’s book, “Raising a Talker: Easy Activities from Birth to Age 3.”

Over the course of four years, 12 child care programs from La Paz and Mohave counties participated in the professional development classes that focused on how teachers can help children birth to age 3 learn language skills.

The goal is to close the language gap among children. Researchers say that children from lower socioeconomic families enter kindergarten having heard and knowing fewer words than their more affluent peers, which puts them at a disadvantage once they begin school.

“Dr. Zangl has done the research with the language gap,” said Margee Chieffo, who is president and senior managing associate of ECEd Associates. “Her work is specifically designed to address a child’s brain at the time when it’s learning the fastest.”

“Raising a Talker” was integrated into the culture of each child care center and preschool that participated in the project, Chieffo said. Center directors agreed to have their entire staff take the classes and implement the language program at every level for children birth to age 3 in their care.

“Think of it like a cookbook,” Margee Chieffo said. “You must follow the explicit steps. What happens when you leave out the eggs? The games are based on developmental language skills.”

At the heart of the project are language games that the teachers play with the babies and toddlers and build on each other. For example, the book has communication tips based on the ages of the child. In the baby’s first two months, Zangl encourages caregivers to get the baby’s attention through happy speech, eye contact, smiles and gentle touches and have face-to-face chats.

These are some of the invitations for the baby to look, listen and touch. And there are suggestions on how to do these activities, for example: “Sit with the baby securely placed on your thighs, his face oriented toward yours. Look at home and sing or say his name in a friendly, slightly higher tone than usual as you make eye contact: “Hello, Harry. How’s my little baaaby?”

The project provided precise games for parents to help support language learning at home. The program included developmental checkpoints to progress monitor in real time the language and brain growth of the children cared for by teachers in the training.

In addition to improvement in language skills among children in their care, teachers also saw levels of aggression greatly reduced in the children because they were able to communicate their feelings.

Directors and staff at child care centers across both counties were provided with Zangl’s monthly intensive hands-on training and three times each year. Zangl visited the preschools and centers to observe the teachers in action.



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

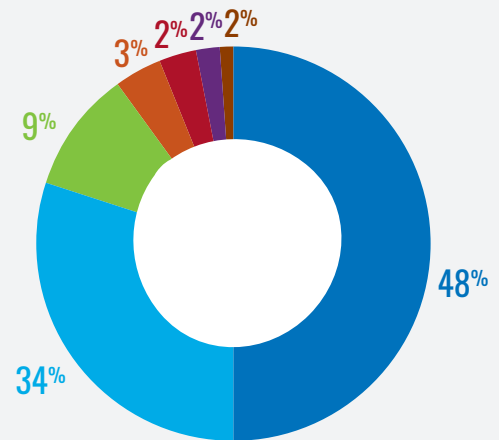
FTF La Paz/Mohave Regional Partnership Council

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 Court Teams, Professional Development and Quality First.

FTF La Paz/Mohave SFY22 Total Regional Program Expenditures

Quality Child Care and Preschool	\$1,556,493
Strengthening Families	\$1,089,307
Workforce Development and Training	\$305,360
Research and Evaluation	\$109,768
Parent and Community Awareness	\$72,543
Preventive Health	\$53,904
Coordination	\$46,922
Total	\$3,234,297



FTF La Paz/Mohave Regional Partnership Council and Staff

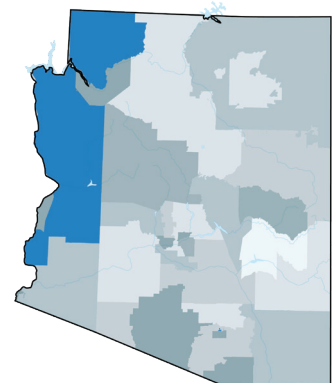
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The **FTF La Paz/Mohave Region** is defined as the combined area of the two counties, not including the lands belonging to the Colorado River Indian Tribes, the Hualapai Tribe and the Kaibab Paiute Tribe. The region does include the Arizona portion of the land belonging to the Fort Mojave Indian Tribe. The region covers about 16,700 square miles, with its northern end separated from the rest by the Grand Canyon. The communities of the region are diverse in population density and demographics, and are often isolated by large areas of unpopulated land. People and services are concentrated in larger places in the region such as Bullhead City, Kingman, Lake Havasu City and Parker.

Learn more at
[FirstThingsFirst.org/Regions/La-Paz-Mohave](https://www.FirstThingsFirst.org/Regions/La-Paz-Mohave)