2015 Tribal Consultation – Discussion Guide

TOPIC ONE

Public Policymaker Engagement – The on-going active engagement of policymakers at all levels is crucial to ensuring that our youngest children have the support and tools they need to arrive at school prepared for success. Policymakers make laws, facilitate relationships between government agencies and community partners, and establish priorities for the use of government resources, both human and financial.

Arizona's Indian tribes and nations have been important to the establishment, sustainability and effective implementation of First Things First: from support during the initial voters' ballot initiative in 2006 and subsequent referral to the ballot in 2010, to the establishment of working relationships with their community's regional partnership councils to build more effective local early childhood systems.

First Things First is expanding its efforts to engage elected leaders to enhance the resources – both financial and in terms of effective public policy – to support the education and health of children birth to 5 across Arizona. The 300+ members of our regional partnership councils are crucial to those efforts, since they have the first-hand knowledge of the needs of young kids in their respective communities, as well as the greatest opportunity to develop relationships with their local policymakers.

The goals are:

- to support our regional council members' efforts to educate local, state and federal policymakers on the importance of early childhood and act as a resource to those policymakers, generally, on early childhood issues; and, specifically, on the needs of young children in their communities; and,
- to cultivate community leaders who are aware of the importance of early childhood and prepared to take action in a variety of ways to support young children.

First Things First recognizes the status of Indian tribes as sovereign nations, and understands that there may be nuances to policymaker engagement in tribal communities. To that end, First Things First seeks consultation surrounding the following questions:

- Recognizing that relationships between tribal leaders and their local FTF regional partnership councils vary from nation to nation:
  - What can First Things First do to support elected tribal leaders and other policymakers in your community in their on-going awareness of the importance of early childhood, the needs of young children, the work of First Things First, and the link between early childhood and other issues the tribe may be working to address (for example, improving high school graduation rates or promoting a more employable workforce)?
  - How can the local First Things First regional council strengthen its relationship with the Tribal Council and other tribal policymakers to ensure a comprehensive, coordinated approach to addressing the needs of young kids in your area? Please share any examples of related current collaborations in your community.
- Recognizing that elected tribal leaders are among the most effective, compelling and credible messengers with state and federal policymakers on the needs of their communities:
  - What can First Things First do to support tribal leaders in their efforts to engage federal and state policymakers on early childhood-related issues?
  - What is the appropriate role for regional council members – all of whom live/work in their region, but the vast majority of whom are not elected leaders in their communities – in supporting the effective engagement of state and federal policymakers on early childhood?

TOPIC TWO

Cultural Responsivity – First Things First recognizes the role of cultural responsivity in the provision of effective early childhood services in tribal communities. Among the steps FTF takes to promote cultural responsivity in our work are: annual tribal consultation to which all tribes are invited; one-one-one consultation with tribes on region-specific early childhood topics/issues; inclusion of tribal perspectives in regional strategic planning; comprehensive policies related to tribal ownership of data; highlighting the need for cultural responsivity in scopes of work for funded programs; and, training on cultural issues, either within specific programs (Quality First) or generally as part of our systems work (such as the Tribal Gathering and sessions specifically geared toward work with tribal communities as part of our annual Early Childhood Summit). Additional steps may be taken by individual grantees who contract with FTF to provide specific early childhood services in various communities.

Because FTF regions include those specific to tribal communities and regions in which the tribal lands are treated as part of the overall region (individual tribes determine which governance structure applies to their area), FTF-funded early childhood services in tribal communities are provided in a number of ways: the tribe itself may provide the services through an inter-governmental agreement; an organization that already provides human services in the tribal community may be contracted to provide the FTF-funded service; and/or an organization outside the tribal community may be contracted to provide services in the geographic area, with the expectation that families within the tribal community be included among the families served.

There are a variety of issues that may arise when it comes to providing culturally responsive services in a state as expansive and diverse as Arizona (with 22 federally recognized tribes, 19 of which participate in FTF). Among these issues are: the small number of research-based or evidence informed early childhood program models specific to tribal communities; and, the lack of individuals with BOTH the early childhood content knowledge AND with the cultural knowledge, skills and values needed to work in specific communities.

In order to inform our efforts for continuous improvement in the provision of culturally responsive early childhood programs, FTF seeks consultation on the following questions:

- In terms of human service programs the tribe is implementing (e.g. education, health, family support), has your tribe found it necessary to modify programs or program models to address issues of cultural responsivity? If so, how were those addressed?
- If your tribe has modified existing programs or program models to be more culturally responsive, how did you balance fidelity to the existing program model (in terms of achieving the expected outcomes) with the necessary cultural changes?
- In terms of ensuring that programs are delivered by highly qualified staff, what steps does the tribe take to recruit and retain human services staff with both program knowledge and the requisite cultural knowledge, skills and values?
- In contracting with non-tribal organizations for the provision of services to tribal members (particularly human services), how does your tribe/nation address issues of cultural responsivity (e.g, do you require/provide specific training, do contracts include specifications on staff, etc.)?