

# Choctaw Nation Promise Zone

The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

## Population Size:

189,303

## Lead Organization:

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

## Implementation

### Partners:

Kiamichi Regional Team (KRT) • Oklahoma State University's Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Services • Kiamichi Economic Development District of Oklahoma (KEDDO) • Southern Oklahoma Development Association (SODA) • REI Oklahoma • Oklahoma Department of Commerce • USDA • Center for Regional Economic Development at Southeastern Oklahoma State University • Ki Bois • INCA Community Service, Inc.

## Choctaw Nation Promise Zone Mission

To work collaboratively with community partners at the local, state, and national level to eradicate poverty, increase educational attainment, reduce criminal activity, and pursue economic development in southeastern Oklahoma. The Choctaw Nation Promise Zone Initiative builds and strengthens partnerships at the local, state, and national levels to advocate and promote investment in the people, land, and economy of southeastern Oklahoma and the Choctaw Nation.

## About the Choctaw Nation

The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma (Nation) is a Federally-recognized non-reservation-based American Indian Tribe. The boundary includes 10 counties (11,734 square miles) over an extremely rural continuous region within the Nation's Tribal territory in Southeast Oklahoma. This is the second largest tribal service area (TSA) in the lower 48 states. The effects of poverty, crime, unemployment, high housing costs, and low academic achievement have taken their toll on this region. Many families live in homes without running water or telephone service. 32.3% of children in the TSA live in poverty. This is 9.8% higher than the National rate and 8.4% higher than the rate for the state of Oklahoma.

## Promise Zone Leadership

The Choctaw Nation will address the needs and local priorities of the Promise Zone by achieving the goals of creating jobs, increasing economic activity, improving public safety, reducing poverty and attracting private capital. This will be accomplished by solidly building a planning committee (Revitalizing Our Communities Commission of Southeastern Oklahoma, ROCC) represented by both a regional committee (including implementation partners), as well as local Community Planning Committees, that will continue to support the effort throughout the years. The ROCC will work to implement proven strategies that result in funding of community infrastructure improvement such as water and sewer services, workforce training for skilled trades and professionals, improvements to summer and after school programs to improve educational outcomes, public safety planning, and economic diversification efforts incorporating agriculture, heritage and cultural tourism.



# Choctaw Nation Promise Zone

## Promise Zone Goals

### **Create Jobs**

The Choctaw Nation fosters job creation by focusing on skill sets needed in today's workforce. This is done through partnerships with area colleges, universities, and technical training schools. The Choctaw Nation is the largest employer in southeastern Oklahoma and works with institutions of higher education to train and develop professionals for the major industries in southeastern Oklahoma such as healthcare, manufacturing, education, and agriculture. Leveraging its role as the largest employer in southeastern Oklahoma to create a strong base for economic revitalization by working with partners, like Oklahoma State University, Eastern Oklahoma State College, and the Kiamichi Technology Center to improve workforce training for skilled trades and professionals, with a focus on providing nationally-recognized STEM certifications.

### **Increase Economic Activity**

The Choctaw Nation increases economic activity by improving upon infrastructure in the treaty territory. This includes helping partners leverage federal grants and supporting investment in roads, water and sewer facilities, and technical infrastructure. This foundation helps existing businesses grow, and also creates a base for entrepreneurial development by tribal members. It also helps lay framework for increasing economic investment and growth in the area.

### **Improve Educational Opportunities**

The Choctaw Nation is working to improve educational advancement of all children in the Promise Zone.

The Partnership for Summer School Education program educates both Choctaw and non-Choctaw children. This intense summer program, in collaboration with local school districts and Oklahoma State University, helps students advance to their grade level during the summer. The program focuses on 4 year olds who have never been to school up to third graders. The program has seen huge success in pilot stages, and will eventually be rolled out to all 11 counties encompassing Choctaw Nation, partnering with all 85 independent school districts. The Choctaw Nation is also working all 85 schools to improve data collection to track students' achievement and needs throughout the year.

### **Leverage Private Resources**

The Choctaw Nation works with community partners like CDFIs, banks, and other to spur private investment in the Promise Zone. Partners like REI Oklahoma help train new business leaders, and also help to bring private investment into the Promise Zone via New Market Tax Credits.

### **Reduce Violent Crime**

The Choctaw Nation Tribal Police work collaboratively with state, local, and county police forces to respond to and prevent violent crime in southeastern Oklahoma. Other programs focus on specific crimes that are most prevalent in the area. Choctaw Nation Outreach Services and other offices focus on mentoring youth as a means to crime prevention. Other programs assist victims of domestic violence, and bring awareness to communities on how to prevent and react to crimes.