

A portrait of Alma Cota de Yáñez, a woman with long dark hair, wearing a dark blue button-down shirt and pearl earrings. She is smiling slightly and looking towards the camera. The background is a neutral, light-colored wall. A blue diagonal graphic element is on the right side of the image.

**"We want to
support projects
that are sustainable,
and into the
agenda of social
development
versus charity."**

SOCIAL INVESTMENT PROFILE: ALMA COTA DE YÁÑEZ

Name **Alma Cota de Yáñez**

Position Executive Director at Fundación del Empresariado Sonorense (FESAC)

"What's in a name" FESAC represents the Fundación del Empresariado Sonorense. (Translation: the foundation of Sonoran businesses.) FESAC is rooted in the southern tip of Nogales, Sonora. Within the walls of the tiny office, FESAC directors and employees seek potential **donors** who can **invest** in non-profit organizations. Think of it as a relay race: FESAC takes the baton from one runner and figures out the most responsible, efficient, and ethical way to transfer it to the next runner.

What brought you to Nogales? "Alma moved to Nogales in 2000 when her husband was employed by Motorola. At the time, *maquila* factories were the leading industry in Mexican border towns like Nogales, Sonora, hiring thousands of workers at a time. Today, *maquilas* are still the push behind the thriving economy and population growth in Nogales, Sonora.

"My mother was like, 'Oh, I'm so sorry. You have to live in Nogales.' Nogales, Tijuana, Juarez, Matamoros, San Luis Río Colorado, Agua Prieta," Alma said, rattling off the list of Mexico's border towns. "My dad used to say they are the ugliest cities in the country."

But before long, Alma was swept up in the community of Nogales. She organized book clubs, began reading childrens' stories on the radio, and finally crossed paths with FESAC, where she's worked for the past 16 years."

An average day in FESAC "Alma acts as the link between donors and community organizations. She sits down with business owners to discuss how they can **socially invest** in a Nogales non-profit. But it's not about throwing money at a cause. Instead, Alma explains to donors how their investment will help everyone: less poverty leads to less crime, less violence, and more economic flow.

"You're a businessman, you want to say community," Alma explained.

On other days, Alma's working with the non-profits themselves: shelters, food banks, foster care systems, or sewing schools, to figure out how funds can best be distributed toward each cause. Often, she places an emphasis on providing employment, education, and opportunities in Nogales: not just funds.

"It's been fun, because we work with the grassroot groups, and then you go into an office of someone who would write a \$50,000 check without checking their balance," Alma explained. "So you literally move all over the community."

What does social
investment mean
to you?

"I have an issue with 'helping,' because it means we know more, we have more resources and, 'You poor little thing. We will help you,'" Alma explained. "What we really want to do ... is this **social investment** concept."

For Alma, and for FESAC, **social investment** means providing tools for growth. For example, when FESAC works with the food bank of Nogales, the organization doesn't just provide funds for more food. FESAC also helped establish a vegetable garden, and classes for children to learn how to plant their own food. Now, the bank provides more than food: it provides an opportunity for new skills, tools, and experiences within the Nogales community. "

If you would like to donate to cross-border social projects (NGOs) in the FESAC-BCA borderlands network, please visit our website at www.bordercommunityalliance.org/donate or give us a call at (520) 398-3229