

STRENGTHENING THE COMMITMENT TO NATIVE AMERICAN, ALASKA NATIVE, AND NATIVE HAWAIIAN EDUCATION

Education is key to building strong, prosperous tribal communities. President Obama has made it a priority of his Administration to support tribal communities in improving the education of Native American students. The Administration continues to be committed to enhancing the role of tribes in the education of their youth through demonstrated strong support of formula and competitive grants to help meet the unique needs of American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian students. The President's fiscal year 2015 budget request reflects suggestions from the Native American community, particularly on issues related to Native American language and culture and increased tribal participation over education. The request includes support for the following initiatives:

- **\$100.4 million for formula grants to school districts and Indian tribes** to address the unique educational and culturally related academic needs of Indian students through activities such as after-school programs, tutoring, and dropout prevention. These funds support enrichment programs that benefit more than 475,000 Indian students nationwide. Under the Administration's proposal to reauthorize No Child Left Behind, more tribes would be able to access these funds and grantees would have greater flexibility to carry out Native language restoration and Native language immersion programs.
- **\$18 million for competitive grants to improve school quality** to States, school districts, Indian tribes and organizations, and institutions of higher education to improve school readiness and college preparation for Indian students; to increase the number of Native American teachers, school leaders, and administrators by supporting tribal post-secondary institutions and recruiting heavily among Native American paraprofessionals; and to improve the skills those individuals through pre-service training and pre-administrator training.
- **\$5.76 million for national activities to support Native American schools**, including research into effective practices for improving outcomes of Indian students, data collection on the educational status of Indian students, technical assistance on implementing successful programs, and support for the Department's tribal consultations to ensure that tribes continue to have a voice in the development of policies that impact Native Americans. The Administration's national activities request also includes \$2 million to strengthen the role of tribal educational agencies (TEAs) through the State Tribal Education Partnership (STEP) program. In 2012, the new program funded four TEAs that, in partnership with States, allowed those TEAs to build their capacity to administer select ESEA programs in public schools on tribal lands. The fiscal year 2015 request will enable the Department to make a new round of STEP awards to further this mission.
- **\$32.4 million for the Native Hawaiian student education program** to provide supplemental education services to the Native Hawaiian population through competitive grants. These competitive grants include activities such as teacher training, family-based education, gifted and talented education, special education, and community-based learning centers. The program also supports the activities of the Native Hawaiian Education Council to facilitate its coordination of the educational and related services and programs available to Native Hawaiians. In addition, the program provides administrative support and financial assistance to island councils authorized by the statute.
- **\$31.5 million for the Alaska Native student education programs** to improve the educational achievement of Alaska Native students. Activities supported by these competitive grants include the development and implementation of curricula and educational programs that address needs of the

Alaska Native student population, professional development activities for educators, the development and operation of home instruction programs for Alaska Native preschool children that help ensure the active involvement of parents in their children's education, family literacy services, student enrichment programs in science and mathematics, and dropout prevention programs.

- **\$1.2 billion for the Impact Aid program**, which provides assistance to school districts impacted by Federal activities, including school districts serving students living on tribal lands. This program gives districts flexibility in the use of these funds, while requiring them to consult with parents of Indian students and tribes about the education of their children.
- **\$25.2 million for tribally controlled colleges and universities, \$12.6 million for Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian-serving institutions, and \$3.1 million for Native American-serving non-tribal institutions** to help these institutions improve and build their capacity to serve Native American students. With these investments, the Administration hopes to improve the college access and college completion rates of Native American, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian students.
- **\$7.7 million for tribally controlled postsecondary career and technical institutions** to provide high-quality career and technical education to Native Americans, including by training teachers, purchasing equipment, and providing services to students.
- **\$40.5 million for Indian tribes to provide vocational rehabilitation services** for Native Americans with disabilities who live on or near reservations. These funds help tribes build their capacity to provide culturally relevant services that help Native Americans with disabilities prepare for and engage in gainful employment, particularly those with the most significant disabilities.
- **\$5 million in Funding for Language Acquisition Grants** to schools operating predominantly for Native American and Alaska Native children to help English Learners learn English and reach high academic standards. In fiscal year 2015, the Department (with a combination of fiscal year 2014 and fiscal year 2015 funds) would make 25 continuation awards for grants serving this population that were made in fiscal years 2011 and 2013.
- In addition, **ESEA flexibility** has brought remarkable changes with direct benefits to Native students. The performance of many American Indian students was previously not counted in school performance ratings. Under ESEA flexibility, states have taken steps to include the performance of more students in calculating school performance. For example, an adjustment in South Dakota has increased the number of schools accountable for reporting American Indian/Alaska Native achievement from 71 to over 300. States have also submitted plans for how to translate higher academic standards into practice for all students, especially for English Learners and students with disabilities. Given the disproportionately high English Learner and special education identification rates within the American Indian student population, these plans will have a significant impact by improving the college- and career-readiness of these students.
- **Race to the Top Equity and Opportunity (\$300 million)**. This new initiative is designed to drive comprehensive change in how States and Local Educational Agencies identify and close educational opportunity and achievement gaps, including for Native American and Alaska Native children. Building on previous Race to the Top competitions, RTT-Equity and Opportunity (RTT-Opportunity) aims to support, spotlight, and drive systemic changes at the state and local level. Grantees would enhance their data systems to place sharp focus on the districts, schools, and student groups with the greatest disparities in opportunity and academic performance, while also being able

to identify the most effective interventions. They would develop thoughtful, comprehensive strategies for addressing these gaps, and use the data to continuously improve. Grantees would invest in strong teaching and school leadership, using funds to develop, attract, and retain more effective teachers and leaders in high-need schools through strategies such as individualized professional learning and career ladder opportunities. States would collect data on school level expenditures, make that data transparent and accessible, and use it to improve the effectiveness of resources and support continuous program improvement. Participating districts would be required to ensure that their state and local funds are distributed fairly by implementing a more meaningful comparability standard based on this school level expenditure data. Grant funds could also be used, for example, to provide rigorous coursework; improve school climate and safety; strengthen students' non-cognitive skills; develop and implement fair and appropriate school discipline policies; expand learning time; provide mental, physical, and social emotional supports; expand college and career counseling; and identify and carry out strategies that help break up and mitigate the effects of concentrated poverty. The program also will help states and districts to improve the use and effectiveness of resources from other federal programs.