

Steps Toward Education Sovereignty: New Tribal Education Funding

The Tribal Education Alliance, in partnership with Representative Derrick Lente, secured new state funding of \$15,715,700 for Indigenous education initiatives (in Senate Bill 377, 2021 legislative session). This is an initial step toward funding and implementing the Tribal Remedy Framework (TRF).

The TRF is a comprehensive plan for meeting the educational needs of Native students. It was created collectively by tribal leaders, community members and Indigenous education experts and has been endorsed by New Mexico's 23 Nations, Tribes and Pueblos. The TRF proposes strategic investments that place tribal communities at the center of education planning, programming and infrastructure. In 2021, the TRF bills requested \$48.9m for programs and \$94.8m for capital investments.

What funds are available now?

The Tribal Education Alliance secured **\$10,615,700 for tribal staffing and programs**, which includes:

- \$4.5m for tribal education departments to develop and implement education blueprints and governance structures, engage in collaborations with school districts, and plan and deliver community-based education programs and social support services;
- \$4.5m for tribal libraries to develop and staff culturally and linguistically relevant after-school student services and community-based summer programs; and
- \$1,615,700 for tribally based Native language programs.

The Tribal Education Alliance also secured \$5m for a regional information technology network hosted at the Santa Fe Indian School, and \$100k to study options for including Tribes in the regular distribution of state education funding.

How can these initial funds advance education sovereignty?

1. Tribes can develop education blueprints that chart a path to greater education sovereignty.
2. Tribes can increase their capacity for collaborating with schools on a more equal footing, as partners in assessing and addressing the needs of Native students, allocating Impact Aid funds, and increasing equity in school culture, instruction and curriculum.
3. Tribes can lay a sound foundation for their own community-based education programs.

How can we access this funding?

- The Public Education Department decided to distribute this money in the form of small annual grants, contrary to legislative intent. Applications are due by July 8.
- The Tribal Education Alliance will offer Tribes free technical assistance in preparing applications and making the most of what's available now, recognizing that this initial funding is insufficient.
- The ultimate goal is to create a permanent source of state funding for Tribes that requires no applications and does not revert back year after year. With the support of tribal leaders, the Tribal Education Alliance aims to advance this goal in the 2022 legislative session.