

# Tribal Workforce Development: A Decision-Framing Toolkit

*“We are rebuilding  
tribal nations by building  
people.”*



National  
Congress of  
American  
Indians



## **Workforce Development: Building the Human Capacity to Rebuild Tribal Nations**

This toolkit shares the main findings of NCAI's multi-year research project examining the innovative approaches to workforce development that tribal nations along with Native organizations and tribal colleges and universities are forging, how they are achieving success (as they define it), and why. Titled "Building the Human Capacity to Rebuild Tribal Nations," the project seeks to answer the following questions (among others): How are tribal nations working to create reliable, sustainable career – not just job – opportunities for tribal citizens that directly advance the long-term goals of the nations to which those citizens belong? How are they investing in and preparing tribal citizens to succeed in particular careers that their nations need, and how are they creating pathways for those citizens to provide their nations meaningful returns on that investment? To date, the project has produced a policy brief outlining 28 key ways that the federal government can support and empower tribal innovation in workforce development, as well as four in-depth case studies of leading tribal workforce development approaches.

### **The Toolkit: Where It Comes From**

The learnings presented in this toolkit derive from an array of sources, notably: NCAI's close partnerships with the five tribal nations chronicled in the case studies; the dozens of other tribal nations, Native organizations, and tribal colleges and universities it consulted during the project; interviews and surveys it conducted with tribal leaders and workforce development practitioners; several breakout sessions on workforce development held at NCAI conferences; NCAI's network of tribal workforce development practitioners and collaborating entities such as NINAETC and DOL's WIOA Section 166 Native American Employment and Training Council; NCAI's TANF Task Force and Economic Development, Finance, and Employment Subcommittee; recent media accounts documenting effective tribal workforce development initiatives; and the latest relevant academic research. workforce development project, please email [workforcedev@ncai.org](mailto:workforcedev@ncai.org).

### **How To Use The Toolkit**

NCAI designed this toolkit to serve as an informative guide that can be used in multiple ways. For example, tribal decision-makers can use the entire toolkit to seed their strategic deliberations about how best to develop or strengthen comprehensive approaches to workforce development (see above). Or they can select and "pull out" specific strategic considerations from among the 15 featured in the toolkit and use them to focus discussion and work on those particular key aspects of workforce development. For example, if a tribal nation has determined that it needs to build more partnerships in order to empower its workforce development initiatives, it could pull out and use the "Partnerships Matter" overview on pages 32-33 to assist with that effort. Tribal nations should consider using the toolkit as part of their orientation programming for new tribal leaders and workforce development program staff. For more information on how to use the toolkit, please visit [www.ncai.org/ptg/workforce-development/toolkit](http://www.ncai.org/ptg/workforce-development/toolkit).

### **For More Information**

To learn more about this toolkit, visit NCAI's website at [www.ncai.org/ptg/workforce-development/toolkit](http://www.ncai.org/ptg/workforce-development/toolkit). For questions or more information about NCAI's workforce development project, please email [workforcedev@ncai.org](mailto:workforcedev@ncai.org).



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## Tribal Workforce Development: Glossary and Acronyms

### Workforce Development: A Broad Definition

For the purposes of this toolkit, workforce development refers collectively to the education and training efforts that tribal nations, Native organizations, and tribal colleges and universities (TCUs) deploy to endow tribal citizens with the skill sets and experience necessary to build and sustain careers that enable them to achieve personal and familial self-sufficiency and contribute in meaningful ways to their tribal nations and communities.

### Glossary: Other Key Terms and Definitions

- ◆ **brain drain:** in the tribal context, refers to the tendency of a tribal nation’s highly skilled and educated citizens to leave tribal communities to seek work because of a lack of local job opportunities (or an inability to fairly compete for available jobs)
- ◆ **bureaucratic:** a governmental/organizational/programmatic system that is unduly focused on policies and procedures at the expense of common sense, efficiency, and making a positive impact
- ◆ **citizens:** refers inclusively to the officially recognized “citizens” or “members” of tribal nations
- ◆ **crabs in the bucket:** an unhealthy dynamic in some communities and workplaces where those who pursue professional development/career advancement opportunities are hindered or criticized by others because of jealousy and other reasons
- ◆ **gainful employment:** steady work and income
- ◆ **Indian Country:** refers inclusively to tribal nations and communities and Native people as a whole
- ◆ **programs:** refers inclusively to all of the programs and services that a Native nation government provides to its citizens
- ◆ **self-administration:** refers to tribal *administration* of workforce development approaches and programs designed by outsiders (typically the federal government) and answerable to *outsiders’* priorities and criteria for success
- ◆ **self-governance:** refers to tribal *design, implementation, and refinement* (i.e., governance) of workforce development approaches and programs that advance *tribal* priorities and meet *tribal* criteria for success
- ◆ **silos effect:** characterized by a lack of communication, coordination, cooperation, and/or common goal-setting between governmental departments and programs responsible for workforce development and related activities, and often leads to replication of services, poor quality of services, and inefficient spending of governmental funds
- ◆ **soft skills:** the interpersonal, communication/listening, time management, conflict resolution, problem-solving, teamwork, motivational, and other skills that individuals need to succeed in the workplace (as opposed to job-specific or “hard” skills)
- ◆ **work experience:** limited-term job placements designed to acclimate new workers to professional working environments to improve their chances of obtaining and sustaining permanent employment
- ◆ **workforce development practitioner:** any individual who directs or works for workforce development and related programs
- ◆ **wrap-around services:** comprehensive, coordinated, “person centered” services that take a holistic approach to preparing individuals to succeed in work – and life

### Acronyms

- ◆ **166:** Section 166 (Indian and Native American Programs) of WIOA
- ◆ **477:** Public Law 102-477, the Indian Employment, Training, and Related Services Demonstration Act of 1992
- ◆ **ACF:** Administration for Children Families within HHS
- ◆ **ACS:** American Community Survey
- ◆ **BIA:** Bureau of Indian Affairs within DOI
- ◆ **CDFI:** Community Development Financial Institution
- ◆ **CSBG:** Community Services Block Grant
- ◆ **DOI:** U.S. Department of the Interior
- ◆ **DOL:** U.S. Department of Labor
- ◆ **GA:** General Assistance program (BIA)
- ◆ **HHS:** U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
- ◆ **HUD:** U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
- ◆ **JOM:** Johnson-O’Malley Act (1934) programs that address the distinct educational needs of Native youth
- ◆ **JTPA:** Jobs Training Partnership Act (October 1982)
- ◆ **LIHEAP:** Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (ACF)
- ◆ **MOA/MOU:** Memorandum of Agreement/Understanding
- ◆ **NACTEP:** Native American Career and Technical Education Program (Department of Education)
- ◆ **NINAETC:** National Indian and Native American Employment and Training Conference
- ◆ **STEM:** Science, Technology, Engineering and Math fields
- ◆ **SWOT:** Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats analysis
- ◆ **TANF:** Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program
- ◆ **TCUs:** Tribal colleges and universities
- ◆ **TERO:** Tribal Employment Rights Ordinance or Office
- ◆ **TVR:** Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation, administered by nearly 100 tribal nations and Alaska Native organizations nationwide
- ◆ **WIA:** Workforce Investment Act of 1998, replaced by WIOA in 2014
- ◆ **WIOA:** Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (July 2014)



## Tribal Workforce Development: An Introduction

*“Innovation is the springboard of the good things that have happened in Indian Country for so many years. It’s innovation from the tribal level up that drives development...”*

*– Norm DeWeaver, Former National Representative,  
Indian and Native American Employment and Training Coalition<sup>1</sup>*

A movement is sweeping across Indian Country. Over the past several decades, a growing number of tribal nations have reclaimed their right to govern their own affairs and places, and are slowly but surely charting brighter futures of their own making. Wrestling primary-decision making authority away from the federal government, they are “addressing severe social problems, building sustainable economies, and reinvigorating their cultures, languages, and ways of life.”<sup>2</sup> In the process, they are affirming what Native peoples have always known – that tribal self-determination and self-governance is the *only* policy capable of improving their lives and the quality of life in their communities.<sup>3</sup>

This movement, commonly referred to as “Native nation rebuilding,” has been described by one prominent Native scholar as “a revolution of the spirit.”<sup>4</sup> For most tribal leaders, employees, and citizens, this process requires *decolonizing* and *redesigning* the governance systems and tools upon which their nations have long relied. This is perhaps nowhere more critical than with *workforce development* – how a tribal nation grows the capacity of its people to lead productive, satisfying lives and contribute meaningfully to the cultural, social, and economic life of the nation in order to sustain it for generations to come.

For tribal nations, workforce development is not simply about helping a tribal citizen get and keep a job. It’s not just about reducing the reservation unemployment rate. Certainly, those things are important. However, for tribal nations, workforce development is about so much more. It is about identifying and creating opportunities and then preparing their citizens to seize those opportunities through the forging of difference-making careers that strengthen not just the citizens but their families. It is about revitalizing tribal societies, communities, and cultures. It is about eradicating despair and dependency, and fostering self-sufficiency and hope in their stead.

NCAI’s research confirms that achieving “success” in workforce development comes down, ultimately, to *what tribal nations do*. It depends primarily on a tribal nation’s willingness and ability to claim and exercise true ownership over the initiatives, programs, services, and activities dedicated to cultivating the minds, skills, and expertise of its people, how those things are structured, and for what overarching purposes. It hinges above all else on *tribal innovation from the ground up and the inside out* – tribal nations discarding uniform approaches designed by outsiders such as the federal government, and creating in their place distinctly *tribal* approaches that make sense to them based on their particular cultures, values, challenges, circumstances, and priorities.

The benefits can be transformational. As NCAI’s Policy Research Center concluded in 2012, self-governed “tribal investments in higher education and workforce development have multiple and far-reaching benefits that extend beyond individuals – that equip tribes to exercise their sovereignty as governments and to serve both the socioeconomic and cultural interests of their citizens.”<sup>5</sup>

### The Toolkit: Purpose and Function

This toolkit is designed for tribal leaders, workforce development practitioners, and other key decision-makers responsible for tackling the daunting and complex task of evaluating, refining, expanding, and in some cases, completely overhauling the workforce development approaches for which they are responsible. This toolkit does not focus on how tribal policy makers can more efficiently run individual workforce development programs on a daily basis, better navigate the 477 financial reporting process, develop greater proficiency using WIOA’s BearTracks data management system, or other operational aspects common to workforce development. Instead, it seeks to frame and inform *strategic decision making* by tribal policy makers at a foundational, nation-rebuilding level by providing them a comprehensive lens through which they can identify, develop, and implement effective, sustainable workforce development solutions tailored to their distinct needs and ends.



## The Challenges Facing Indian Country Workforce Development

The workforce development challenges facing tribal governments, Native organizations, and tribal colleges and universities are arguably more daunting and complex than those facing other governments anywhere else in the world. But as this toolkit illustrates, *these challenges are in no way insurmountable*, and a growing number of tribal nations are crafting effective solutions to overcome them.

Below is a categorized list of the common challenges facing Indian Country workforce development. It is a helpful tool in identifying and accounting for specific challenges that tribal workforce development approaches should address. NCAI compiled this list through a survey of nearly 40 tribal leaders and workforce development practitioners in 2015, as well as from other sources. We note that the variety and gravity of challenges that each tribal nation faces is different, and not all contend with every one listed below.<sup>1</sup> To see this list with expanded explanations, visit [www.ncai.org/ptg/workforce-development/toolkit](http://www.ncai.org/ptg/workforce-development/toolkit).

### SOCIAL CHALLENGES

- ◆ Deep, longstanding poverty
- ◆ Low education attainment levels
- ◆ Inadequate/counter-cultural local education systems
- ◆ Lack of preparedness for higher education
- ◆ Lack of industry-required hard skills, credentials, and work experience
- ◆ Limited/lack of soft skills
- ◆ Citizens' low self-confidence in their own abilities
- ◆ Inadequate technological skills
- ◆ Lack of work ethic
- ◆ Few professional role models
- ◆ Substance/alcohol abuse/addiction
- ◆ Mental/behavioral health issues
- ◆ Individual and family health issues
- ◆ Lack of driver's licenses
- ◆ Criminal records
- ◆ Past work experience issues
- ◆ Dependency mentality
- ◆ "Crabs in the bucket" dynamic
- ◆ Entitlement and other negative workplace attitudes
- ◆ Predatory lending
- ◆ Rapidly growing Native populations

### COMMUNAL CHALLENGES

- ◆ Severe unemployment
- ◆ Not enough local job/career opportunities
- ◆ Few private sector job opportunities
- ◆ Inadequate "living wage" job opportunities
- ◆ Low labor force participation
- ◆ Lack of permanent, career-based jobs
- ◆ An aging existing workforce
- ◆ Tribal workforce unqualified for senior positions
- ◆ Limited local higher education, vocational, and professional development training opportunities
- ◆ Lack of apprenticeship opportunities
- ◆ Lack of accessible, reliable, affordable childcare
- ◆ Lack of short-term housing assistance
- ◆ Lack of support for would-be citizen entrepreneurs

### ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES

- ◆ Lack of physical infrastructure
- ◆ Inadequate housing
- ◆ Inadequate broadband internet connectivity
- ◆ Lack of accessible, affordable, reliable transportation
- ◆ Increasing costs of higher education
- ◆ "Brain drain" dynamic

### POLITICAL CHALLENGES

- ◆ Political interference
- ◆ Program turfism and staff turnover
- ◆ Nepotism-based hiring
- ◆ Disconnected leaders
- ◆ Disconnect between the nation's strategic plan and its workforce development activities (or lack of a plan)

### FISCAL CHALLENGES

- ◆ Inadequate federal funding
- ◆ Lack of sustained, discretionary funding
- ◆ Limitations on how outside funding can be spent
- ◆ Lack of awareness about available funding
- ◆ Excessive/irrelevant reporting requirements
- ◆ Limited available funding for training, subsidized work experience placements

### INSTITUTIONAL CHALLENGES

- ◆ Poor/irregular communication
- ◆ Tribal "self-administration" of federal programs
- ◆ Counterproductive/rigid federal policies and regulations
- ◆ Imposition/use of state workforce development models
- ◆ Limited tribal capacity to generate/analyze local workforce and labor market data

### PROGRAMMATIC CHALLENGES

- ◆ Inadequate/inaccurate federal- and state-level data
- ◆ Irregular/non-existent communication/coordination
- ◆ Overly bureaucratic intake processes
- ◆ Lack of qualified/experienced Native instructors
- ◆ Programs misaligned with tribal/local workforce needs
- ◆ Rigid program eligibility requirements
- ◆ Adapting workforce development programs



## 15 Strategic Considerations of Workforce Development: Lessons Learned

In its three-year project examining tribal workforce development approaches across the country, NCAI's Partnership for Tribal Governance (PTG) worked to identify and document the key foundational strategies that are empowering tribal innovation and, in turn, workforce development success.

This toolkit shares lessons learned from that endeavor in the form of 15 strategic considerations that tribal leaders, workforce development practitioners, and other decision-makers must tackle as they craft their own workforce development approaches capable of achieving their own definition of what "success" looks like for tribal citizens and the nation as a whole. These "mission critical" aspects of workforce development have a direct bearing on the ability of tribal workforce development approaches to make a transformative, sustainable difference. They are as follows:

- ◆ TRIBAL GOVERNANCE Matters
- ◆ ASSESSMENT Matters
- ◆ STRATEGIC VISION Matters
- ◆ TARGETED SOLUTIONS Matter
- ◆ INTEGRATION Matters
- ◆ REMOVING OBSTACLES Matters
- ◆ INSTITUTIONS Matter
- ◆ CLOSING THE LOOP Matters
- ◆ CULTURE Matters
- ◆ ADVANCEMENT Matters
- ◆ LEADERSHIP Matters
- ◆ PARTNERSHIPS Matter
- ◆ FUNDING Matters
- ◆ SUSTAINABILITY Matters
- ◆ CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT Matters

Each strategic consideration spans two pages, and each contains the same four components, as explained below.

**CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT Matters**

**FRAMING THE DISCUSSION**  
Creating a tribal and government, tribal workforce development approach and fostering its success over time is no small feat. Often, it requires a sea change in how tribal government works, how it serves its citizens, and the expectations citizens have regarding the role of government plays in enriching their lives. To take root and grow, it must have sustained involvement of those types from all of the nation's key players – its political leaders, programmatic leaders, employees, and most importantly, its citizens. Simply put, the people must be on board before the nation-building train leaves the station, and they must remain on board. As one synopsis of Native nation building summarizes, "citizens' faith in the integrity of their own government is the foundation of their support for that government. Without it, the government is on its own, separated from the people."  
Effective citizen engagement and education is critical to aligning – and maintaining alignment – between the nation's workforce development approach and the will of the people whose job it is to serve. For that reason, more tribal governments are deploying innovative, culturally appropriate strategies to engage and educate their citizens, ensuring that they are learning what they need to learn from and about their people, and teaching their people what they need to know.  
Learning: A tribal nation must go to great lengths to learn about its people (their needs, talents, and aspirations) if it is to provide compassionate, culturally relevant, person-centered workforce development services. Frontline workforce development practitioners committed to going above and beyond can play a key role in this regard, but the nation must design structural mechanisms to ensure that its workforce development efforts are informed by the people so those efforts can meet them where they're at. Such mechanisms also need to provide citizens the ability to share their thoughts about how those efforts are progressing and ideas for how they could do better.  
Teaching: Structured citizen engagement efforts also enables the nation to keep its citizens informed about available workforce development services, job openings in tribal government and business, and the education and skills it most wants to cultivate among them. It also provides the ability to share back with the people how the nation has incorporated what is learned from and about them into the design/refinement of its workforce development efforts. Looking long-term, effective citizen engagement mechanisms and strategies also enables a nation to gradually reform citizens' expectations away from a "poverty" mindset to a "prosperity" mindset by teaching them that they all have inherent potential that the nation is committed to developing; they all have a lot to contribute to the nation (knowledge, skills, experience, and ideas) and an obligation to do so.

**INNOVATION SNAPSHOTS**  
**Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe (CRST)**  
CRST struggles with severe unemployment and poverty. In part due to scarce job opportunities and barriers faced by CRST members seeking work. To tackle this dynamic, CRST launched a community inclusive planning process that gave voice to Cheyenne River Sioux Tribal Veterans (TV), a long-term poverty reduction plan and organization. Based on a vision of prosperity, TV operates on the premise that you can't help the people achieve it unless you truly understand them. To that end, TV has made structures, urging citizen engagement (learning from the people and then sharing what it learns with them) standard practice. Central to its effort to create the story of our own community" is its "Youces" Research Project, which used surveys to generate unprecedented baseline data about CRST's members, families, and economy. TV also partnered with the CDFI Four Bands Community Fund to conduct a reservation-wide workforce development survey. Its findings are being used to "develop a Reservation-wide strategy to increase the skills of individuals seeking permanent employment, while ensuring employees build their capacity to "hire and retain qualified employees"; so far, it has led to a partnership to provide targeted GED tutoring to CRST members and the creation of a day labor program for members who prefer short-term employment.  
LEARNING LINK: <http://www.ncai.org/ptg/workforce-development/cr>  
CONNECT: Karen Duchesneau, Exec. Director, Cheyenne River Sioux Tribal Veterans, [karduch@cheyennesiouxtribe.com](mailto:karduch@cheyennesiouxtribe.com)

**Coeur d'Alene Tribe (CDA)**  
Key to CDA's successful development and growth of its "Education Pipeline" approach to education and workforce development is its concerted effort to raise the Tribe's expectations of its members – and prepare them to meet those expectations. This effort seeks to get CDA members who go to college to return home upon obtaining their degrees, and ensure they have a firm grounding in tribal culture and an abiding commitment "to serve as tribal ambassadors in their home communities" when they do. To that end, CDA partnered with Washington State University to create the "Visionary Leaders" Tribal Nation Building Leadership Program, which teaches four core values that the Tribe is working to instill in all tribal members. Among these values is "Membership," which holds that "we be responsible, informed members, prepared to both lead and serve." CDA also has partnered with the University of Idaho to offer a Federal Indian Law course at CDA's Department of Education headquarters. Open to CDA members and other locals whether they're seeking degrees or not, the course teaches about tribal sovereignty, how CDA exercises its sovereignty, and how CDA members and employees strengthen that sovereignty.  
LEARNING LINK: <http://www.ncai.org/ptg/workforce-development/coeurd>  
CONNECT: Dr. Chris Meyer, Director of Education, Coeur d'Alene Tribe, [cmeyer@cdatribe.com](mailto:cmeyer@cdatribe.com)

**QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER**  
• What is your nation doing to build citizens' ownership in – and support of – its nation-rebuilding efforts generally and its workforce development efforts specifically? Is it working? If it is, how?  
• Do your nation's citizens currently engage tribal government in a constructive way? Do they share ideas for solutions as well as criticisms regarding how the government does it? How could the nation improve that dynamic?  
• How is your nation working to obtain regular input from citizens about their workforce challenges and goals, and feedback from them about the nation's workforce development efforts? What mechanisms does it rely on and are they effective at capturing the will of the people?  
• What are your nation's political and programmatic leaders doing to inform tribal citizens on an ongoing basis about its workforce development approach, how it works, changes to it, etc.?  
• Does/how does your nation share regular reports on the progress its workforce development initiatives are making? Are they written in plain language so that all can understand them?

**POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**  
• Implement multi-pronged marketing campaigns to inform tribal citizens about new and revamped workforce development initiatives, how they work, and how they will benefit them and the nation  
• Hold regular open public hearings, citizen focus groups, and program participant advisory groups to learn how effective your workforce development efforts are and how they could be improved  
• Use "captive audiences" opportunities to obtain key input and information from citizens (mandatory questionnaires when they update their tribal enrollment, booths at community events, etc.)  
• Conduct routine "program enhancement" surveys of program participants and community members and incentivize them to participate by providing modest rewards (gift vouchers, gift cards, etc.)  
• Develop a national social media policy (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) that enables tribal departments and programs to send key program messages/updates and job openings with tribal citizens in real time  
• Deploy concrete strategies to document and share the stories of successful workforce development program participants as professional role models that other tribal citizens can emulate

**FRAMING THE DISCUSSION** (top left page): A short summary of the strategic consideration and the role it plays in the formulation and implementation of transformative workforce development approaches.

**QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER** (bottom left page): 5-7 strategy-informing questions targeted to that particular consideration that tribal leaders, workforce development practitioners, and other key decision-makers must ask of their current governance systems and workforce development approaches, based on lessons learned from the innovative approaches documented through NCAI's research project on tribal workforce development.

**INNOVATION SNAPSHOTS** (top right page): Two leading examples of innovative solutions to tribal workforce development challenges that directly address the strategic consideration in question. Each snapshot includes **Learning Link** and **Connect** features for toolkit users to learn more information about the solutions.

**POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS** (bottom right page): 5-7 recommendations addressing that strategic consideration that tribal leaders, workforce development practitioners, and other key decision-makers should consider integrating into their workforce development approaches, based on lessons learned by NCAI through its research project.

# TRIBAL GOVERNANCE

## FRAMING THE DISCUSSION



Gloria Paiz of Ysleta del Sur Pueblo's (YDSP) AmeriCorps program, which YDSP has "Tigua-fied" to foster civic contributions by its people. (Photo: YDSP)

"No right is more sacred to a nation, to a people, than the right to freely determine its social, economic, political, and cultural future without external interferences. The fullest expression of this right occurs when a nation freely governs itself."

– Joseph DeLaCruz (1937-2000), Former President, Quinault Indian Nation

As the Introduction (page 3) mentions, the growing body of research on Native nation rebuilding identifies "practical sovereignty" – the assertion of *tribal* decision-making power – as among the five main keys to successful, sustained economic and community development.<sup>1</sup> When it comes to workforce development (a key part of economic and community development), sustained success depends, above all else, on tribal *control*: the willingness and ability of a tribal nation to seize and exercise control over the programs and activities that work to develop its human capacity. More and more tribal nations, Native organizations, and TCUs are recognizing this fact – and acting on it.

Taking control is an essential first step, but taking control of what exactly? For many, achieving practical sovereignty in workforce development means taking control of federal, state, and other programs designed by outsiders for other places and purposes that typically ignore reservation conditions and fail to account for tribal priorities.

As one might expect, these uniform, "outside in" approaches have a poor track record for a variety of reasons. Typically, for example, they were not designed with Native people and their specific needs in mind. As one tribal workforce development practitioner explains, "Many of the grants and contracts that we have to administer are framed in what it would look like in a major urban city in America. That's not our reality."<sup>2</sup> These programs also define and measure success based on performance criteria (reporting requirements, metrics, etc.) that often aren't relevant to the particular challenges, values, and goals of tribal nations. In addition, they are, by their very nature, risk-averse, which stifles their ability to adapt in order to find and sustain success over time.

Simply taking over *administration* of these programs won't change how, and toward what ends, they function. And it can improve their effectiveness only so much. The challenge for tribal leaders and key decision-makers is how to build a truly *self-governed* workforce development approach, either from whole cloth or more likely by moving beyond self-administering programs in the same way that others did before them *by fundamentally redesigning them*. As one tribal leader frames it, "What are we doing differently in this time of self-determination, when supposedly we are in control, different from the times that we weren't, that we were critical of?"<sup>3</sup>

For those who have done it, forging such an approach is empowering. As one workforce development practitioner whose nation has embraced this challenge concluded, "We are no longer victims of our history. We are now impacting and directing where we are going as a tribe."<sup>4</sup>

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- Where do your nation's workforce development programs come from? Who designed them?
- Do they currently reflect tribal values and needs and advance tribal priorities?
- Is your nation's workforce development approach truly self-governed? Are its individual workforce development programs? Who has the final say on who they serve and how they operate?
- What will it take to make them self-governed? To make them truly *tribal*? To make them successful based on the nation's own definition of what success looks like and how to measure it?
- Does your tribal nation have its own plan for workforce development? Why/why not? What would it take to develop and implement one, and for tribal leaders, workforce development practitioners, and citizens to truly own, support, and drive it?
- Do you have the human capacity (experience and technical know-how) to claim control of, redesign, implement, and sustain a self-governed approach to workforce development? If not, what steps do you need to take to build it?





## INNOVATION SNAPSHOTS



### Citizen Potawatomi Nation (CPN)

In 1996, CPN took full ownership of the workforce development programs serving its citizens and other local Native people. It established a 477 Plan that gradually merged nine federal grant programs into a single, *tribal* approach that advances CPN's overarching goal of empowering their clients' ability to become self-sufficient. Whereas before CPN had to turn some clients away because of the eligibility and funding restrictions of the federal programs it had been administering, today its self-determined approach flexibly leverages dollars to provide customized services to *all* of its clients based on their particular challenges. It's also led to reduced administrative costs and more money spent on direct services. CPN recently expanded its approach, adding a workforce reintegration program for former felons that boasts a recidivism rate of less than 1%.<sup>1</sup> It also features a fruitful partnership with CPN's CDFI to help tribal citizens become small business owners. As CPN explains, moving its people towards self-sufficiency starts with "understanding your own tribe's distinct needs, the needs of your people, which is something that a federal, uniform approach to workforce development can't possibly account for."<sup>2</sup>

LEARNING LINK: <http://www.ncai.org/ptg/workforce-development-cpn>

CONNECT: Margaret Zientek, Assistant Director, CPN Workforce & Social Services, [mzientek@potawatomi.org](mailto:mzientek@potawatomi.org)



### Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT)

In the late 1990s, CSKT was wrestling with an unemployment rate that hovered at around 50 percent. Its disjointed assortment of federal grant and other social service programs – run by more than 20 separate agencies, each with its own priorities and particular workforce development functions – was failing to make a significant dent in that rate. In response, CSKT's Tribal Council consolidated these programs into a single, new entity: the Department of Human Resource Development (DHRD). Its goal: design CSKT's own, holistic approach to preparing CSKT members to work and then helping them to secure employment. Integral to this effort was DHRD's takeover of state-administered programs that "weren't working and make them work" for the CSKT people.<sup>1</sup> Chief among these was TANF, which CSKT formally took over from the State of Montana through an MOU signed in December 1998. DHRD restructured the TANF program in accordance with CSKT's distinct cultural, social, and economic priorities, and then worked to build the systems and know-how it needed to administer it effectively. In the two decades since, DHRD's transformative work has helped to cut CSKT's unemployment rate in half.<sup>2</sup>

LEARNING LINK: <http://www.ncai.org/ptg/workforce-development-cskt>

CONNECT: Arlene Templer, Director, CSKT Department of Human Resource Development, [Arlene.Templer@cskt.org](mailto:Arlene.Templer@cskt.org)

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Conduct a comprehensive analysis of your current workforce development programs – both individually and as a whole – to determine whether and to what degree they reflect tribal needs and values and meet *tribal* priorities and criteria for success.
- Develop a self-governed, *tribal* plan for workforce development that includes existing programs and creates new ones where identified gaps exist.
- Methodically redesign existing programs to the fullest extent possible in order to tailor it to the nation's current realities and its aspirations for the future.
- Not only allow but *demand* that programs take calculated risks to innovate to develop strategies, initiatives, and networks capable of addressing the nation's distinct workforce development landscape, challenges, and priorities.
- Provide these efforts with the *ongoing* political, programmatic, and financial support they will need to forge and sustain success.

# STRATEGIC VISION M

## FRAMING THE DISCUSSION



Quinault members Larry and Gayle McCord share their thoughts at a March 2016 strategic planning meeting. (Photo: Larry Workman/Nugquam)

A few years ago, the leaders and education directors of several tribal nations met with board members of the local school system that was educating the majority of their nations' youth. Among the nations' pressing concerns was the fact that the school system – despite serving so many Native students – employed few Native teachers. So did the school system have a plan to recruit more Native teachers? “No,” was the answer. But then the question was flipped to the tribal representatives in attendance: “What are you doing to encourage and prepare your own people for careers in education?” They responded, “We don’t have a plan either.”

This conversation made the tribal representatives realize their workforce development activities weren't *intentionally* advancing what they had identified as a strategic priority – and the need to connect the two. Across Indian Country, the success of Native nation rebuilding efforts hinges on such strategic vision, or “strategic orientation.”<sup>1</sup> In workforce development, vision is forged when the nation has a clear, widely understood sense of the future it seeks to create for itself – Native people teaching their own, for instance – and makes and implements decisions about how to build its human capacity based on long-term priorities the nation considers vital to creating that future.

For example, one nation has structured its workforce development activities to advance its overarching goal of creating tribal *citizens* capable of contributing to the nation over the entirety of their lives. Another nation prioritizes on-reservation citizens in its higher education scholarship funding in order to support its strategic commitment to reversing “brain drain” so that it has the local human capacity it needs to accomplish its long-term nation-rebuilding goals.

As a tribal nation crafts its workforce development approach, its success will depend on whether it does so with a greater, *national* purpose in mind. Tethering that approach to its community development imperatives requires addressing some key structural considerations, among them: **(1) syncing the nation's workforce development approach with its economy building effort:** to ensure it has the right human capacity to achieve the latter; **(2) focusing on preparing people to build careers:** as opposed to just getting jobs, thus enhancing upward mobility and community prosperity over time; **(3) diversifying the careers you prepare people for:** beyond public sector careers that typically don't create jobs to private sector careers – like working in tribal enterprises or as small business owners – that can create jobs; **(4) defining the reach of the nation's approach:** and whether/how it will serve tribal citizens living off reservation; and **(5) ensuring the nation's strategic priorities drive funding for workforce development:** and not vice versa.

“I’ve seen sometimes tribal government, as it creates a plan, does not make a correlation between that plan and the capabilities, needs, and competencies of the local tribal population. If we don’t put those two together, then the best laid of plans...are not going to work.”

– David Gipp, Former President, United Tribes Technical College

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- Does your nation have a vision and plan for what it wants its future to look like 25 years now? How about 50-100 years from now? If so, how is your nation preparing its people to help it reach that destination?
- What is the overarching mission of your nation's workforce development approach? What sort of future is it trying to create for the nation and its people, both individually and collectively?
- Is your workforce development approach consciously structured and operated to advance your nation's long-term nation-rebuilding priorities? If not, what do you need to do to ensure that it is?
- As a tribal leader/workforce development practitioner, are the decisions I am making and the work I am doing each day to build the nation's human capacity furthering those priorities?
- How are you working to grow/adapt our workforce development approach over time to ensure that it continues to further the nation's strategic priorities? How are you accounting for the growth of your nation's population?



## INNOVATION SNAPSHOTS



### Nez Perce Tribe

In 1998, the Nez Perce Tribe officially designated education as a strategic priority vital to strengthening its ability to maintain Nez Perce's cultural lifeways. To that end, in 1999 the Tribe aligned its 477 Plan with its overall education strategy to forge a partnership with Northwest Indian College (NWIC). The two soon established an MOA to bring "the delivery of higher education and community development services"<sup>1</sup> to two Nez Perce communities, effectively creating the first tribal college in Idaho. The arrangement provides "place-bound" tribal members – many first-generation college students – access to a quality, culturally appropriate, *local* higher education they otherwise wouldn't have.<sup>2</sup> In addition to a Direct Transfer associate's degree, local students can pursue Tribal Governance & Business Management bachelor's and Native Environmental Science associate's and bachelor's degrees through NWIC – two fields Nez Perce has deemed critical to developing its workforce to preserve its cultural lifeways for future generations.<sup>3</sup> To date, NWIC has awarded 114 degrees to reservation-based tribal members, helping to foster a nearly 70% increase in Nez Perce's higher educational attainment rate since 2000.<sup>4</sup>

LEARNING LINK: <http://www.ncai.org/ptg/workforce-development-nezperce>

CONNECT: Kay Seven, Adult Education Director, Nez Perce Tribe, [kseven@nezperce.org](mailto:kseven@nezperce.org)



### Owens Valley Career Development Center (OVCDC)

In 2014, OVCDC was struggling to get its Tribal TANF program clients across its six-county service area to meet their mandatory work participation rates. In response, OVCDC staff developed its Economic Development Initiative Strategic Framework (EDISF) from scratch. This long-term action plan seeks to end OVCDC clients' dependency on government benefits by preparing them for employment while at the same time fostering partnerships with local organizations and businesses to increase the job opportunities they can pursue. Advancing six overarching goals – from tribal cultural awareness to funding diversification – EDISF delineates concrete action steps for each goal, reinforced by a "logic model" that outlines staff members' activities, outputs, and measurable outcomes that they must achieve.<sup>1</sup> EDISF mandates quarterly data tracking of OVCDC's progress, enabling staff to regularly evaluate and strengthen their work. As OVCDC explains, it allows staff "to communicate, collaborate, and form those internal partnerships that are really the focal point of what we should be doing for the results that our clients need."<sup>2</sup> EDISF is already bearing fruit, as OVCDC's cash assistance caseload has declined by 16% over three years, with caseload closures due to employment and/or excess earnings increasing 15% over the same period of time.<sup>3</sup>

LEARNING LINK: <http://www.ncai.org/ptg/workforce-development-ovcdc>

CONNECT: Ryan Howard, Executive Director, Owens Valley Career Development Center, [rhoward@ovcdc.com](mailto:rhoward@ovcdc.com)

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Develop a long-term strategic plan for the nation and delineate where and how your workforce development efforts will fit into that plan – and further it in concrete ways.
- Define the breadth and depth of your workforce development approach in order to advance that plan (on- versus off-reservation, serving citizens living in urban centers, etc.)
- Treat workforce development as a multi-generational proposition: Don't focus only on citizens who need jobs and income now – ensure your approach fosters the society your nation seeks to create.
- Evaluate your current workforce development programs to determine whether they are oriented to advancing the nation's long-term nation-rebuilding goals.
- Assess the relationship between the nation's approaches to workforce development and economic development and work to strengthen it by developing strategies that make the two work in unison.
- Expand the array of careers your approach supports based on the nation's current and future needs – with an emphasis with seeding careers that can create additional job opportunities.

# INTEGRATION Matter

## FRAMING THE DISCUSSION



Grand Ronde member Daniel Freeman receives auto mechanic training through the Tribes' 477/TVR program. (Photo: Grand Ronde/Michelle Alaimo)

Many tribal nations are plagued by a dynamic called the “silo effect.” A legacy of outsiders calling the shots in tribal communities, the silo effect is evident in a lack of communication, coordination, cooperation, and common goal-setting between the various departments and programs in tribal government. For each new initiative the federal government created to support workforce development and related services, for example, came the establishment of a tribal program or office to administer it (JTPA, NACTEP, TERO, TVR, WIOA, etc.). Over time, this has produced fragmented bureaucracies where programs dedicated to some aspect of developing workforce do their work separately, or worse, at cross-purposes. To complicate matters, in the self-governance era, some nations have taken over “administrative and service provision functions without thinking through how the various pieces of their growing government structure should work together.”<sup>1</sup>

The drawbacks of this dynamic are pervasive, such as duplicating services, poor service quality, and the wasteful spending of limited financial resources. And because programs rarely communicate or work together, they can't comprehensively address community needs or grow what does work across the organization. Conversely, research by NCAI and others finds that nations who develop *integrated systems* which coalesce workforce development and related activities around a singular set of *tribal* goals enhance their ability to make life-changing differences for tribal citizens.<sup>2</sup> This requires eradicating programmatic silos, and often, consolidating programs into larger, centralized programs or “umbrella” departments or divisions. It also demands structural coordination and communication between that system and other parts of tribal government, notably: its economic development arm (and tribal businesses), education department (to ensure a “cradle through career” workforce development continuum), and social service programs (GA, LIHEAP, TANF, etc.).

How a nation creates such a system is *its sovereign choice*, and should be based on its needs alone. If, for example, a federal program can't *legally* be part of 477, it doesn't mean you shouldn't merge it into your system in another way if it makes sense *to you*.<sup>3</sup> Deploying a self-designed system can “eliminate redundant service provision, realize complementarities and synergies among services, gain efficiencies, and leverage savings from more streamlined client processing to expand service provision.”<sup>4</sup> It also ensures that mission-critical staff work in lockstep to advance the nation's big-picture objectives. Most importantly, *it works better for the people*, as an integrated system that provides person-centered, “wrap-around” services enables you to holistically assess all of a client's needs, instantly connecting that person to the suite of services they need to get on the right path.

“It would not have happened if it didn't come from the tribal council, because they had to say, ‘Enough of the turfism. All your programs are going together and you have one goal.’ They gave us just that much of a light, and then we took it from there.”

– Arlene Templer,  
Director, Department  
of Human Resource  
Development, CSKT

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- Are your workforce development and related programs working together to the degree necessary to successfully advance the nation's workforce development priorities? To provide person-centered, wrap-around services effectively to people in need? Why/why not?
- Do key staff members of your workforce development and related programs (GA, TANF, etc.) meet or communicate regularly to discuss, strategize about, and coordinate shared work? What mechanisms can you put in place to enhance that communication/coordination?
- Does the nation have a singular workforce development mission it expects all programs to advance?
- Ask yourself: “If we were to design – from scratch – our own income support, employment and training, and related programs (such as child care, transportation services, low-income health insurance programs, and even economic development), what would the system look like?”
- What steps does the nation need to take to create such a system? And how can it marshal the political will, technical expertise, and community support necessary to take those steps?



## INNOVATION SNAPSHOTS



### **Blackfeet Manpower (BMP) (Blackfeet Nation)**

Established in 1964 as the Blackfeet Nation's workforce development arm, BMP became the first certified Native American One-Stop Center in the U.S. in 2007. It did so to consolidate its resources and be more responsive to the pressing needs of Nation members living on and around Blackfeet's reservation, which contends with a 70% unemployment rate. Serving more than 2,200 welfare recipients, BMP offers "a comprehensive set of services under one roof"<sup>1</sup> (including AmeriCorps, Child Care, Child Support Enforcement, Fatherhood, GA, Medicaid, NACTEP, Teen Pregnancy, Tribal TANF, TVR, Veterans, and WIOA). The linchpin of BMP's system is its universal application, administered by a single case worker who is assigned to each client and assesses his/her job-readiness challenges and then routes that person to the customized suite of services they need. Pooling and leveraging dollars from DOI, DOL, HHS, and other sources, BMP also operates a centralized database that tracks its clients' progress over time, collating and analyzing data from its component programs and then sharing the results with those programs so that everyone knows how individual clients are doing, how well their programs are performing, and how they can perform better.<sup>2</sup>

LEARNING LINK: <http://www.ncai.org/ptg/workforce-development-blackfeet>

CONNECT: George Kipp, Director, Blackfeet Manpower One-Stop Center, [george\\_kipp@yahoo.com](mailto:george_kipp@yahoo.com)



### **Cook Inlet Tribal Council (CITC)**

Years ago, CITC comprehensively examined the overall yet varied needs and desires of its program participants to move from dependency to self-sufficiency. Through 477, it merged its job and career-readiness programs with its Child Care, CSBG, GA, TANF, and related programs to create a unified approach that meets "people where they are and help them help themselves to achieve their endless potential."<sup>1</sup> At its core is CITC's intake form and process, which has enabled it to provide services in a more holistic, culturally competent, and efficient way. The approach offers a "no

wrong door" ease of service for clients seeking assistance, enabling them to tell their story once and then get "cross-referred" to any other programs under CITC's workforce development umbrella that would be helpful to getting them on the road to gainful employment.<sup>2</sup> In the past five years, its integrated approach has helped nearly 2,000 participants transition from welfare to employment and produced an average increase of \$7.81 in their hourly wage.<sup>3</sup> As CITC explains, it's "allowed us to allocate more funding to direct services, and both philosophically and financially better align programs with local needs."<sup>4</sup>

LEARNING LINK: <http://www.ncai.org/ptg/workforce-development-citc>

CONNECT: Lisa Rieger, Chief Legal Officer, Cook Inlet Tribal Council, [lrieger@citci.org](mailto:lrieger@citci.org)

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Evaluate the level of collaboration between your workforce development and related programs to ensure they are coordinating and communicating with one another. Identify gaps and weaknesses, and implement steps to establish/strengthen the working relationships between them.
- Build "inter-agency" teams across programs to enhance your ability to provide holistic wrap-around services to those in need of workforce education, training, and other types of support. They should meet regularly to design joint work, assess progress, and craft solutions to strengthen services.
- Assess how your people access services to gauge how easy/helpful a process it is *for them*. Establish a uniform mechanism through which they can access *all* of their needed services at first contact.
- Develop strong operational linkages between your main workforce development programs and TERO, TANF, and other programs so that you can comprehensively address your people's needs.
- Design a long-range plan for an integrated system. Remember it doesn't need to happen all at once. Build it step by step, program by program, as you learn from experience and build your capacity.

# INSTITUTIONS Matter



Red Lake Nation elder Anna Gibbs completes a survey on what she would like to see included in a new Red Lake Nation constitution. (Photo: *Minneapolis Star Tribune*)

## FRAMING THE DISCUSSION

The institutions (constitutions, laws, codes, policies, procedures, administrative mechanisms, reporting/communications structures, etc.) that a tribal nation uses to govern play a pivotal role in its ability to forge an approach to workforce development that is capable of achieving its definition of success. Simply put, they are the *rules of the road* that a nation chooses to live by as it builds a brighter future for itself, in large part by developing its human capacity to accomplish that task.

When these institutions aren't well thought out – or when they were created by someone else to advance someone else's objectives – they tend to provide a weak or unstable foundation upon which to build workforce development success (or do anything else that the nation seeks to do). Conversely, when these institutions are thoughtfully and purposefully *designed by the nation* with accountability, consistency, culture, fairness, transparency, and the nation's strategic vision in mind, they foster the governmental and programmatic stability and deep institutional memory and knowledge that a nation needs to realize its long-range human capacity building goals.

It follows, then, that as tribal nations engage in “nation rebuilding,” they are dedicating significant time, energy, thought, and action to assessing the origins and functionality of their institutions and taking steps to strengthen them or create new ones so that the nation's governance system is capable of achieving its strategic objectives. Through constitutional reform, code development, new laws, overhauling administrative policies and procedures, and other institutional measures, they are building a firm foundation upon which to craft and sustain innovative, *tribal* approaches to developing workforce. Among its many benefits, such institution building empowers their ability to create “comprehensive social service systems that offer efficiencies, expand available resources, and give [them] greater flexibility and capacity to effectively serve diverse client needs.”<sup>1</sup> It also helps them cultivate and retain the human capital they need to build even more of it. Finding and keeping capable people to develop a workforce depends not just on competitive pay, but “on creating a working environment that encourages professionalism, processes disputes fairly and effectively, and keeps politics in its place...The presence of such a system...can be a critical factor in encouraging top-quality people – tribal citizens or not – to invest time, energy, and ideas in the future of the nation instead of going to work someplace else.”<sup>2</sup> As one tribal leader put it, “Building accountability and transparency of the rules ends up being key to having equitable service delivery and equitable systems. And for our [tribal] members, the expectation that it doesn't matter who you elect, the level of service you receive and your opportunities are the same.”<sup>3</sup>

“Indigenous nations that are doing well economically have strong, effective, and efficient governing systems. They back up sovereignty with good rules, regulations, policies, and they are enforceable. It creates stability.”

– Professor Manley Begay, Applied Indigenous Studies, Northern Arizona University

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- Following tribal elections, is there a seamless transition of authority from one administration to the next, or does it result in mass dismissals of tribal employees who didn't vote for the victors? What institutional changes can your nation make to avoid the latter and sustain the nation's forward momentum on its workforce development and other priorities?
- Are your nation's workforce development services provided equitably to all of its citizens? Or is the fair and consistent provision of those services hampered by interference from political leaders?
- Does the nation have an impartial mechanism capable of resolving hiring and firing disputes and personnel grievances within tribal government and businesses based on the merits of each case?
- Are your nation's education code and its enforcement mechanisms capable of advancing its workforce development priorities? Is the code purposely aligned with those priorities?
- Does your nation's citizens clearly understand how its governing institutions work and why? What can the nation do to make those institutions more transparent and understandable?



# INNOVATION SNAPSHOTS



## **Gila River Indian Community (GRIC)**

In 2012, GRIC became the first tribal nation to receive a DOL Career Pathways (CP) grant. It used the grant to design a workforce development *system* customized to the particular needs and short- and long-term priorities of the Community's workforce, employers, and the entire nation. Eager to maximize GRIC's return on its workforce investments, in 2011 the GRIC Council instituted a human resources policy that gives automatic hiring priority to WIOA participants who complete training and then excel in their Work Experience placements.<sup>1</sup> When GRIC launched CP a year later, the policy covered CP participants (who

also are WIOA participants). Those who meet its criteria bypass GRIC's standard screening process for hiring, providing them a bright-line path from their Work Experience placements to permanent employment working for the Community.<sup>2</sup> This benefits not only those new hires, but tribal employers because they save the cost of advertising open jobs and expending the staff time needed to review applications, conduct interviews, and select top candidates.<sup>3</sup> In addition, hiring WIOA participants enables GRIC to use vocational training dollars and wages paid by WIOA, saving it money it otherwise would have to come up with itself.

LEARNING LINK: <http://www.ncai.org/ptg/workforce-development-gila-river>

CONNECT: Lana Chanda, Director of Employment & Training, Gila River Indian Community, [Lana.Chanda@gric.nsn.us](mailto:Lana.Chanda@gric.nsn.us)



## **Pueblo of Laguna (POL)**

In 2011, POL launched its Workforce Excellence initiative, a Laguna values-driven approach to improve POL's staff morale, service delivery, and workplace environment; enhance employee retention; and ensure that all POL employees have the resources they need to thrive.<sup>1</sup> To implement the initiative, the Pueblo overhauled its Personnel Policy and Procedure Manual, which includes its personnel

grievance policy.<sup>2</sup> Previously, POL's political leadership – namely the Governor and two Lieutenant Governors – served as ultimate arbiters of the policy, which lacked due process and consistency. Sometimes, they were not adequately informed about the particulars of a given case or made personnel decisions outside the scope of the policy. Now insulated from politics, POL's new personnel policy features a "progressive disciplinary process" for minor personnel issues that is handled within the Pueblo's administrative structure; serious personnel grievance issues are now resolved by an objective third-party grievance committee outside of employees' direct chains of command. This shift has brought consistency and fairness to the process, helping to stabilize POL's employment system and enhance the Pueblo's ability to retain and cultivate its human capacity.<sup>3</sup> As an added benefit, it has freed up the time of POL's political leaders to focus on advancing Laguna's big-picture priorities.

LEARNING LINK: <http://www.ncai.org/ptg/workforce-development-laguna>

CONNECT: Jaye Chissoe, Administrative Services Director, Pueblo of Laguna, [JChissoe@lagunapueblo-nsn.gov](mailto:JChissoe@lagunapueblo-nsn.gov)

# POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Assess and revamp your current governing institutions with the nation's overall strategic vision and its long-term workforce development priorities in mind. Develop new institutions where gaps exist.
- Create *inclusive* human resources policies that fairly and consistently address the diverse needs of all of your nation's citizens (college graduates, those with no GED, individuals with disabilities, etc.).
- Develop a strong TERO ordinance that accords tribal citizens top priority for locally available jobs, and appoint an independent body (e.g., an ombudsman) to monitor/ensure its enforcement.<sup>1</sup>
- Enact laws regulating labor and employment relations that advance the nation's values and policy priorities<sup>2</sup>, and ensure you have the administrative/judicial structures in place to implement them.
- Establish strong child support enforcement ordinances and policies to ensure that affected parents have the resources they need to pay for childcare so that they can train for and hold jobs.
- Develop a usury law to protect citizens against predatory lenders, thereby strengthening their ability to grow their financial assets and, in turn, their ability to prepare for employment/stay employed.

# CULTURE Matters



Coeur d'Alene Tribe (CDA) member Angelita Soto fillets a fish for distribution during the CDA Fisheries Program's culturally rooted summer youth internship program, 2015. (Photo: Gina Vaughn)

## FRAMING THE DISCUSSION

As with Native nation rebuilding generally, culture (i.e. “cultural match”) plays a vital role in self-determined, effective workforce development solutions.<sup>1</sup> Tribal nations that integrate their distinct cultures, core values, lifeways, and languages *in concrete ways* into their workforce development approaches enhance their ability to move the human capacity building needle in a positive, sustained direction. As discussed on pages 6-7, this is particularly critical when taking over programs administered by the federal and state government, for those programs don't speak to tribal cultures or tap into their transformative power as mechanisms for overcoming challenges, strengthening families and communities, and guiding clients down paths to prosperous futures.

It's no coincidence, then, that as tribal nations have exerted full control over their governance, more and more have recast their workforce development approaches to place tribal cultures at their functional cores. This can take many forms, from core values-based customer service (“caring for our own”) to providing program participants with tangible options to participate in cultural activities or education along with workforce education/training. For example, one nation's TVR program asks applicants if they would like “the assistance of a person involved with Native healing or Spirituality to be involved with your rehabilitation planning?”<sup>2</sup> Most embrace the opportunity.

Such approaches recognize that those who seek workforce education/training often struggle with psychological trauma and cultural alienation that can only be remedied through a real connection to – and reliance on – their culture as the wellspring for personal and professional empowerment. As one workforce development practitioner explains, “When tribal members were taken away and their families split up and their children sent to boarding schools, they lost their culture. We're finding that the culture can play a huge role in helping people heal and become self-sufficient.”<sup>3</sup>

The culture question not only entails determining where and how to infuse culture *into* your workforce development approach, but just as importantly, the *culture you seek to foster through that approach and what it says to your people about what your nation values and will value moving forward*. For many nations, this involves specific measures designed to uproot the entrenched dependency some citizens have on government and seed personal and familial self-sufficiency in its place. Growing this culture can be achieved in many ways, such as by: giving clients a “hand-up versus a hand-out” by requiring them to give something (community service, etc.) in return for the services they receive; forging work environments rooted in humility, mutual respect, and merit-based advancement; and attaching culture and service requirements to scholarship awards.

“We hear it over and over again the importance of our culture and understanding that in our spirituality and what our roles are...We need to recognize that within the training that we provide.”

– Leander “Russ” McDonald, President, United Tribes Technical College

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- What cultural teachings and values does your nation convey/message through its workforce development approach writ large? Through its administration of particular programs? Are these readily accessible and understandable to your people?
- Where do the curricula your programs use to educate/train your people come from? Does it reflect/teach your nation's culture/values? If not, what steps can you take to ensure that it does?
- Are your educators/trainers steeped in your nation's culture? How can you build their knowledge?
- Do/how do your programs hold clients accountable to the commitment the nation is making in them through the workforce development services it provides? Could they be doing more?
- Are the ways that your clients are using – and benefitting from – the services that you provide appropriate given your nation's culture and values?
- What core cultural competencies do your programs instill in your clients? When they complete education/training, do they understand how to apply them personally and professionally?





# INNOVATION SNAPSHOTS



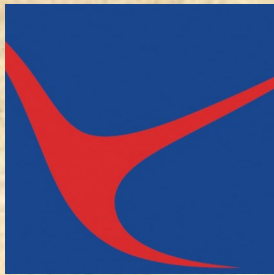
## Round Valley Indian Tribes (RVIT)

Located in rural northern California, RVIT's Tribal TANF program works to stabilize participants' living conditions and remove their barriers to employment through hard skills training, health and wellness training and support, and job interview preparation so that they can get hired, enabling them to move from welfare dependence to independence. A few years ago, many TANF participants were struggling to comply with the program's work requirements because of the time they spent engaged in seasonal subsistence hunting and fishing in order to provide for their families. In response, the TANF program's leadership negotiated with ACF a revised definition of eligible work activities to "accept cultural

participation" as countable work hours, a change that has enabled those participants to stay in program compliance while also fulfilling their cultural obligations.<sup>1</sup> This has led to higher rates of program completion among TANF participants and, in turn, the reduced dependency of needy parents on RVIT government for services. Round Valley also raised the poverty percentage threshold to enable its TANF program to help more of its people in need, particularly its working poor and their families.<sup>2</sup>

LEARNING LINK: <http://www.ncai.org/ptg/workforce-development-rvit>

CONNECT: Cindy Hoaglen, Tribal TANF Director, Round Valley Indian Tribes, [choaglen@rvtt.net](mailto:choaglen@rvtt.net)



## Sealaska Heritage Institute (SHI)

Alaska Native corporation Sealaska and its non-profit arm SHI have developed a comprehensive educational program to promote academic achievement and improve the quality of life among the Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian (THT) tribal members they serve. Undergirding this program are two core tribal values: (1) *Haa Shuká* ("Our Past, Present and Future. We honor our ancestors, and we recognize that we have responsibilities to our future generations"), and (2) *Haa Latseen* ("Strength of Body, Mind, and Spirit. An element of *Haa Latseen* requires that we educate and train our youth to prepare them to care for their families and communities").<sup>1</sup> To enact these values, SHI awards undergraduate

scholarships based on merit (instead of need), and successful applicants must demonstrate a knowledge of and commitment to THT culture. As part of the application process, they answer 25 multiple choice questions about Native history, with applicants' scores determining how much scholarship funding each receives. Many SHI scholarship recipients go on to serve as Sealaska interns, and a number of them have become full-fledged "Language Learners" who take jobs in local school districts as educators who teach their Native language.<sup>2</sup>

LEARNING LINK: <http://www.ncai.org/ptg/workforce-development-sealaska>

CONNECT: Carmaleeda Estrada, Operations Officer, Sealaska Heritage Institute, [carmaleeda.estrada@sealaska.com](mailto:carmaleeda.estrada@sealaska.com)

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Identify the core cultural teachings and values you want to have serve as the basis for how you provide services. Assess and restructure your programs to integrate and advance them.
- Work with clients on long-range personal and professional goal setting (with achievable milestones) as a way of focusing beyond their immediate needs and challenges.
- Make social/emotional development a standard program component to support client resiliency.
- Infuse your nation's history, culture, and values into your workforce education/training curricula. Consult tribal elders and other culture keepers to enrich the curricula's design.
- Hold focus groups to learn if your programming is hitting the cultural mark and refine accordingly.
- Seed a culture of civic obligation by incentivizing program participants to contribute to the nation through assigned community service projects, community-based work experience placements, etc.
- Require that your scholarship recipients gain a prescribed set of cultural competencies; if feasible, give preference to scholarship applicants who can demonstrate fluency in your Native language.

# LEADERSHIP Matters



Students and faculty of the Santa Fe Indian School Leadership Institute's Summer Policy Academy, an award-winning youth leadership development program, meet with NCAI staff, June 2017. (Photo: NCAI)

"An effective leader has to be humble... Surround yourself with people smarter than you. You hire these people to do a job — let them do their job."

— Brian Cladoosby,  
Chairman, Swinomish  
Indian Tribal  
Community

## FRAMING THE DISCUSSION

As explained in "Institutions" (pages 12-13), establishing sound *rules* (and governance structures to administer those rules) is vital to a nation's ability to design, implement, and sustain an effective workforce development approach. But equally important is establishing clearly understood *roles* for those who are leading and driving that approach, namely the nation's **political leaders** and **programmatic leaders** (chief administrative officers, department heads, program coordinators, etc.). What responsibilities do each have in driving the nation's workforce development activities, and how do they work in concert to advance its strategic objectives for human capacity building? Who should exercise what leadership roles, and how should they complement one another?

While defining these roles would seem a simple proposition, for decades many tribal nations have suffered from "role confusion" due in part to federal policies that defined these roles *for* them and the organic, often rapid growth that many tribal governments have experienced since the 1960s.<sup>1</sup> This dynamic is often evident among political leaders, whose roles are "unclear, ill-defined, or simply unlimited."<sup>2</sup> In such situations, political leaders (typically chairs and/or councils) decide and do everything because there is nothing preventing them from doing so; they have done it that way for so long; and the nation's programmatic leaders, employees, and citizens expect them to. Consequently, political leaders' time and energy is spent putting out the day's fires, solving everyone's problems, juggling too many issues, micromanaging tribal programs and businesses, and fixating on every possible detail. Meanwhile, programmatic leaders and their staff wait around for political leaders to act, knowing that any efforts to design and implement better solutions to the nation's challenges likely will be overridden by the political leaders. Overall, no one is forging a "strategic vision" for the nation, leaving it "uncertain of where it wants to go or how to get there."<sup>3</sup>

As the research shows, this is an unworkable formula for Native nation rebuilding generally, and is incapable of fostering the visionary, transformative leadership (from political leaders on down) necessary to craft innovative workforce development approaches that can stand the test of time. Fortunately, through constitutional reform, organizational change, and new policies and procedures, tribal nations are reconsidering and clarifying the respective roles of political and programmatic leaders.<sup>4</sup> As one tribal leader put it, "[Political] leadership needs to understand the tools that we have in our organization and figure out how we can effectively leverage those tools and then help other leadership grow."<sup>5</sup> But the task of growing leadership is not confined to those *currently serving and working in government*; it must also include *cultivating community and business leaders* as well as the nation's *future leaders* (its youth).

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- What is the extent of the involvement of your nation's political leaders in the day-to-day provision of its workforce development services? Do they micromanage/interfere?
- If so, how is that impacting the efficiency/effectiveness of your workforce development activities and your nation's ability to develop more effective solutions?
- Are your nation's political leaders dedicating adequate time — and do they have adequate information and data — to make informed decisions about how best to develop its workforce?
- How is your nation holding its programmatic leaders accountable for good performance?
- Are/how are programmatic leaders role modeling the behavior/performance that your nation needs to see in its staff if it is to advance its workforce development priorities?
- Do/how do your political and programmatic leaders work in concert to set and advance your nation's workforce development priorities? What principles and mechanisms can it put in place to make that relationship more beneficial to the nation?



# INNOVATION SNAPSHOTS



## California Indian Manpower Consortium (CIMC)

Seeking to foster a private sector-based workforce and leadership class among the tribal nations it serves, in 2001 CIMC launched its “Native Entrepreneurs: Creating Opportunities in Our Communities” program. Aimed at cultivating “the skills of Native entrepreneurs to be profitable and sustainable in the larger context of Native culture and sovereignty,”<sup>1</sup> the program trains would-be and existing Native small business owners to start or grow their own businesses, thus expanding the number of job opportunities available to other Native people. Its rigorous curriculum – featuring 200 total hours of coursework and homework – teaches marketing, day-to-day operations, financial management, and human resource management. To be eligible for the program, applicants must be formally endorsed by their tribal government or CIMC staff; those selected emerge with carefully designed and thoroughly vetted business plans to launch or expand their businesses. More than 450 people have completed the program to date, with many returning to take leadership roles as program faculty members. As CIMC explains, “the majority of graduates contribute to economic growth of their respective tribal communities in their business choices.”<sup>2</sup>

LEARNING LINK: <http://www.ncai.org/ptg/workforce-development-cimc>

CONNECT: Teresa Marie Willson, Native Entrepreneur Training Program, CIMC, [teresaw@cimcinc.com](mailto:teresaw@cimcinc.com)



## Ysleta del Sur Pueblo (YDSP)

Dedicated to fostering “wholly educated citizens, able to learn and adapt as economic climates and industries change in order to create a self-sufficient people,”<sup>1</sup> the YDSP Tribal Council consolidated all YDSP programs for education, workforce development, and cultural preservation under one roof in its newly created Empowerment Department in 2007. In addition, the Council relinquished direct control of the Pueblo’s businesses to the newly formed Tigua Inc. board of directors and senior

executives, insulating those businesses from political influence and enabling them to focus on profitability and growth, which in turn has produced more and different career opportunities for YDSP citizens. This decision also freed up the Council to focus its attention on working with the community to forge YDSP’s long-term vision for its future, and then achieve that vision through the implementation of long-range strategic plans across Pueblo government. The Council also demonstrates its commitment to education and workforce development by prioritizing them in YDSP’s annual budget process every year, and by establishing financial reserves to buffer its scholarship funds in the event of economic downturns to ensure continuity in higher education support for Tigua youth.<sup>2</sup>

LEARNING LINK: <http://www.ncai.org/ptg/workforce-development-ydsp>

CONNECT: Anna Silvas, Director, Empowerment Department, Ysleta del Sur Pueblo, [asilvas@ydsp-nsn.gov](mailto:asilvas@ydsp-nsn.gov)

# POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Political leaders:** Make informed, strategic decisions about the nation’s overarching priorities for workforce development and delegate the authority to programmatic leaders to implement them.
- **Political leaders:** Encourage programmatic leaders to take calculated risks to develop innovative programmatic solutions, and ensure their continuity to build institutional know-how and experience.
- **Programmatic leaders:** Hire top-notch staff and delegate them the authority to do their jobs.
- **Together:** Depoliticize tribal workplaces and the provision of workforce development services.
- **Together:** Establish a formal process for regular communication and reporting that sets clear roles and fosters mutual accountability between political leaders and programmatic leaders.
- **Both:** Establish formal policies for succession planning for programmatic leaders and leadership transition for political leaders so the nation can grow its workforce development successes.
- **Nation:** Develop a comprehensive youth leadership training program that incorporates tribal civics and cultural teachings (also consider establishing a youth council if you don’t yet have one).

# FUNDING Matters



Sylvia Aimsback of Sylvia's Store, which is staffed by CSKT Work Experience clients and provides basic necessities to CSKT citizens in need. Donations and in-kind contributions defray the costs of providing this service. (Photo: Eliot Glenn)

"Every single dollar that comes into the nation, we want it to be strategic, we want it to be effective, and we want it to hit those core issues that are top priorities of the nation."

– Fawn Sharp,  
President, Quinault  
Indian Nation

## FRAMING THE DISCUSSION

With limited funding for workforce development, one tribal nation had to get creative. Relying on a modest HUD grant, it established a "workforce crew" to support its housing construction team. Supervised by a licensed contractor, the workforce crew trainees – all nation citizens – receive on-the-job training, helping to construct more than 25 homes to date. This cost-effective arrangement has enabled the nation to build more houses than it otherwise could, and also equipped the trainees with marketable skills that will make them highly employable on/around the reservation.<sup>1</sup>

This story evokes a daunting reality: the challenge of inadequate resources. Federal funding is critical, and the federal government has trust and treaty responsibilities to provide tribal nations with ample funding to enable them to achieve their workforce development priorities, but they rarely receive enough federal dollars to do so. Given the long-term federal budget outlook – not to mention Indian Country's growing population – the situation isn't likely to improve anytime soon. Tribal nations must think and work outside the box to marshal the financial resources they need to build their human capacity – and target those resources for maximum impact. Simply put, tribal ingenuity is the name of the game. Below are some proven strategies for tackling this challenge:

- **Strategic vision:** Tribal nations need to have a strategic vision (see pages 8-9) in place, and use it as a lens to assess what funding sources to pursue, and where and how they should fit together.<sup>2</sup>
- **Discretionary revenues:** Tribal nations can't afford to rely on the federal government alone for funding. While easier said than done, they need to create additional streams of discretionary *tribal* revenue that don't come with the restrictive strings often attached to federal dollars.
- **Funding diversity:** Securing dollars from multiple sources enhances tribal nations' ability to deftly merge small pools of money into a large funding base that can meet their people's needs.
- **Coordinating funding:** Coordinating sources across tribal programs enhances a nation's ability to capitalize on cost-saving opportunities and collectively leverage funding sources with in-kind contributions and volunteerism to strengthen service provision.<sup>3</sup>
- **Supplementing funding:** Many tribal nations task tribal dollars to supplement federal grant funding to expand programs that work well, increasing the number of people they can serve.
- **Reducing administrative costs:** This can be accomplished in many ways, notably by consolidating programs and streamlining federal reporting requirements through 477, etc. (see pages 10-11).
- **Casting a wide net:** Tribal nations should leave no stone unturned in their search for *flexible* funding (federal, state, foundation, etc.) that can enhance their efforts. For instance, there are several DOL grants that they are eligible for, yet few ever apply.<sup>4</sup>

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- What current program costs could be reduced or eliminated through in-kind contributions or donations of goods, services, time, and effort by your existing or potential partners?
- Where and how could your nation strategically supplement federal- and state-funded programs with a modest investment of tribal dollars to expand/enhance workforce development service provision to your people?
- What percentage of the funding that your nation relies on for workforce development comes from external sources? How can your nation generate additional discretionary tribal revenues to make your workforce development approach more self-determined?
- Has your nation done a systematic analysis of the various outside funding sources available for workforce development, and which of them would support what the *nation* seeks to accomplish?
- How can your nation best leverage the cheap labor that on-the-job trainees and Work Experience program participants provide to reduce the cost of community development projects?



# INNOVATION SNAPSHOTS



## **Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT)**

CSKT's path to workforce development success – led by its Department of Human Resource Development (DHRD) – has been strewn with daunting obstacles, such as generating adequate funding and creating viable job opportunities for *all* of its clients. For example, building CSKT's transportation system placed a huge burden on DHRD to gather the dollars it needed to subsidize its growing operation. State grants have helped, but they require CSKT to provide matching dollars, which has been difficult given the Tribes' limited budget and considerable other needs. Eager to grow something that was working, DHRD went to

the CSKT Tribal Council in 2007 with an ingenious proposal: to generate revenue for DHRD Transit to provide matching dollars to its state transit grants, DHRD would become owner and operator of a gas station located next to the Department's offices. The Council approved the plan, green lighting DHRD to facilitate a land swap with a local landowner to gain ownership of the desired location. In addition to cycling its profits back into DHRD Transit, the gas station also has enabled DHRD to provide Work Experience placements to the "unemployable class" (those with poor work histories, former felons, etc.) on the reservation.<sup>1</sup>

LEARNING LINK: <http://www.ncai.org/ptg/workforce-development-cskt>

CONNECT: Arlene Templer, Director, CSKT Department of Human Resource Development, [arlene.templer@cskt.org](mailto:arlene.templer@cskt.org)



## **Ysleta del Sur Pueblo (YDSP)**

In 2002, the State of Texas won a lawsuit against YDSP, which forced the closure of the Speaking Rock Casino, the Pueblo's primary engine of jobs for its people and revenue for its governmental programs and services. Hundreds of government and casino employees were let go due to dwindling funds, causing YDSP's unemployment rate to skyrocket to 30 percent in a few months. Despite the grim outlook, Pueblo leaders and community members didn't panic. Instead of hastily pursuing new

grants and business ventures to offset its sudden losses in jobs and revenue, the Pueblo instead conducted a comprehensive assessment of the entire nation.<sup>1</sup> This led YDSP to (among other things) revamp its tax code. Originally, the Pueblo had simply replicated the state's tax code, which was incredibly dense, didn't address YDSP's particular circumstances and needs, and failed to generate much revenue. So YDSP overhauled and simplified the code to make it useful for Pueblo government, businesses, and citizens. The new code institutes a sales tax and "provides the infrastructure to issue licenses, collect taxes, and conduct audits."<sup>2</sup> With the code, YDSP's tax revenue has increased drastically, providing it key discretionary dollars that it strategically invests in its workforce development priorities, such as higher education scholarships and vocational degrees and certifications.<sup>3</sup>

LEARNING LINK: <http://www.ncai.org/ptg/workforce-development-ydsp>

CONNECT: Anna Silvas, Director, Empowerment Department, Ysleta del Sur Pueblo, [asilvas@ydsp-nsn.gov](mailto:asilvas@ydsp-nsn.gov)

# POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Strategy should drive the money, not the other way around. To avoid "mission creep," review your nation's existing funding sources to determine whether they *enhance* or *restrict* your nation's ability to achieve its strategic priorities in the ways *it* sees fit. Adjust accordingly.
- Create a "grant alignment" committee to assess new funding opportunities against those priorities.
- Encourage your workforce development programs to innovate and strategically allocate additional dollars to grow what works. Provide programs seed money to design and pilot innovation initiatives.
- Identify cost-savings that can be created across your programs through the targeted use of work experience participants, administrative consolidation and streamlining, in-kind contributions, etc.
- Consider establishing sales, gross receipts, and/or other taxes on reservation-based commercial activity to increase the discretionary revenues your nation can use for workforce development.
- Support the growth of tribal citizen-owned small businesses, as they provide jobs and expand your nation's taxable commercial activity, which enables it to increase discretionary revenues.

# CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT



Participants Deanna Gomez and Isabella Swan of the Voices Research Project, a survey initiative of Cheyenne River Sioux Tribal Ventures (CRSTV). (Photo: CRSTV)

## FRAMING THE DISCUSSION

Creating a truly self-governed, *tribal* workforce development approach and fostering its success over time is no small feat. Often, it requires a sea change in how tribal government works, how it serves its citizens, and the expectations citizens have regarding the role of government plays in enriching their lives. To take root and grow, it must have sustained investments of various types from all of the nation's key players – its political leaders, programmatic leaders, employees, and most importantly, its citizens. Simply put, the people must be on board before the nation-building train leaves the station, and they must remain on board. As one synopsis of Native nation building surmises, “citizens’ faith in the integrity of their own government is the foundation of their support for that government. Without it, the government is on its own, separated from the people.”<sup>1</sup>

Effective citizen engagement and education is critical to aligning – and maintaining alignment – between the nation’s workforce development approach and the will of the people whose job it is to serve. For that reason, more tribal governments are deploying innovative, culturally appropriate strategies to engage and educate their citizens, ensuring that they are learning what they need to learn *from* and *about* their people, and teaching their people what they need to know:

**Learning:** A tribal nation must go to great lengths to learn about its people (their needs, talents, and aspirations) if it is to provide compassionate, culturally relevant, person-centered workforce development services. Front-line workforce development practitioners committed to going above and beyond can play a key role in this regard, but the nation must design structural mechanisms to ensure that its workforce development efforts are informed by the people so those efforts can meet them where they’re at. Such mechanisms also need to provide citizens the ability to share their thoughts about how those efforts are progressing and ideas for how they could do better.

**Teaching:** Structured citizen engagement/education also enables the nation to keep its citizens informed about available workforce development services, job openings in tribal government and businesses, and the education and skills it most wants to cultivate among them. It also provides the ability to share back with the people how the nation has incorporated what it learned from and about them into the design/refinement of its workforce development efforts. Looking long-term, effective citizen engagement mechanisms and strategies also enables a nation to gradually reframe citizens’ expectations away from a “poverty” mindset to a “prosperity” mindset<sup>2</sup> by teaching them that they all have inherent potential that the nation is committed to developing, they all have a lot to contribute to the nation (knowledge, skills, experience, and *ideas*) and an obligation to do so.

“In order to change, you really need to know what it is that your community wants and to respect what their thoughts are and what they want for the future.”

– Patricia Riggs,  
Former Director  
of Economic  
Development, Ysleta  
del Sur Pueblo

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- What is your nation doing to build citizens’ ownership in – and support of – its nation-rebuilding efforts generally and its workforce development efforts specifically? Is it working? Is it enough?
- Do your nation’s citizens currently engage tribal government in a constructive way? Do they share *ideas for solutions* as well as criticisms regarding how the government does it work? How could the nation improve that dynamic?
- How is your nation working to obtain regular input from citizens about their workforce challenges and goals, and feedback from them about the nation’s workforce development efforts? What mechanisms does it rely on and are they effective at capturing the will of the people?
- What are your nation’s political and programmatic leaders doing to inform tribal citizens on an ongoing basis about its workforce development approach, how it works, changes to it, etc.?
- Does/how does your nation share regular reports on the progress its workforce development initiatives are making? Are they written in plain language so that all can understand them?



### INNOVATION SNAPSHOTS



#### **Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe (CRST)**

CRST struggles with severe unemployment and poverty, in part due to scarce job opportunities and barriers faced by CRST members seeking work. To tackle this dynamic, CRST launched a community inclusive planning process that gave rise to Cheyenne River Sioux Tribal Ventures (TV), a long-term poverty reduction plan and tribal project.<sup>1</sup> Based on a vision of prosperity, TV operates on the premise that you can't help the people achieve it unless you truly understand them. To that end,

TV has made structured, ongoing citizen engagement (learning from the people and then sharing what it learns with them) standard practice. Central to its effort "to create the story of our own community"<sup>2</sup> is its "Voices" Research Project, which used household surveys to generate critical baseline data about CRST's members, families, and economy. TV also partnered with the CDFI Four Bands Community Fund to conduct a reservation-wide workforce development survey.<sup>3</sup> Its findings are being used to "develop a Reservation-wide strategy to increase the skills of individuals seeking permanent employment, while ensuring employers build their capacity to...hire and retain qualified employees."<sup>4</sup> So far, it has led to a partnership to provide targeted GED tutoring to CRST members and the creation of a day labor program for those seeking one-day, no-obligation employment.

LEARNING LINK: <http://www.ncai.org/ptg/workforce-development-crst>

CONNECT: Karen Ducheneaux, Exec. Director, Cheyenne River Sioux Tribal Ventures, [karenducheneaux@gmail.com](mailto:karenducheneaux@gmail.com)



#### **Coeur d'Alene Tribe (CDA)**

Key to CDA's successful development and growth of its "Education Pipeline" approach to education and workforce development is its concerted effort to raise the Tribe's expectations of its members – and prepare them to meet those expectations. This effort seeks to get CDA members who go to college to return home upon obtaining their degrees, and ensure they have a firm grounding in tribal culture and an abiding commitment "to serve as tribal advocates in their home communities"<sup>1</sup> when they do. To this end, CDA partnered with Washington State University to create the "Visionary Leaders" Tribal Nation

Building Leadership Program, which teaches four core values that the Tribe is working to instill in all tribal members. Among these values is "Membership," which holds that "we be responsible, informed members...prepared to both lead and serve."<sup>2</sup> CDA also has partnered with the University of Idaho to offer a Federal Indian Law course at CDA's Department of Education headquarters. Open to CDA members and other locals whether they're seeking degrees or not, the course teaches about tribal sovereignty, how CDA exercises its sovereignty, and how CDA members and employees strengthen that sovereignty.<sup>3</sup>

LEARNING LINK: <http://www.ncai.org/ptg/workforce-development-coeur-dalene>

CONNECT: Dr. Chris Meyer, Director of Education, Coeur d'Alene Tribe, [cmeyer@cdatriben-sn.gov](mailto:cmeyer@cdatriben-sn.gov)

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Implement multi-pronged marketing campaigns to inform tribal citizens about new and revamped workforce development initiatives, how they work, and how they will benefit them and the nation.
- Hold regular open public hearings, citizen focus groups, and program participant advisory groups to learn how effective your workforce development efforts are, and how they could be improved.
- Use "captive audience" opportunities to obtain key input and information from citizens (mandatory questionnaires when they update their tribal enrollment, booths at community events, etc.).
- Conduct routine "program enhancement" surveys of program participants and community members and incentivize them to participate by providing modest rewards (gas vouchers, gift cards, etc.).
- Develop a formal social media policy (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) that enables tribal departments and programs to share key program messages/updates and job openings with tribal citizens in real time.
- Deploy concrete strategies to document and share the stories of successful workforce development program participants as professional role models that other tribal citizens can and should emulate.

# ASSESSMENT Matters

## FRAMING THE DISCUSSION

Years ago, one tribal nation, unhappy with the lack of progress its citizens who relied on TANF were making, took over administration of the program from the state. It initiated its own assessment of its newly inherited TANF clients, discovering that a full 40 percent of them had disabilities, and most of those had learning disabilities. The data also confirmed that these disabilities often factored into clients' non-compliance with program requirements, which resulted in fines and, in turn, a spike in dire need applications by those clients, who now get routed to the nation's TVR program for the specialized support they need to prepare for employment.

This example illustrates what tribal nations have long understood: assessment – what is being evaluated, how, how often, by whom, and for what ultimate purpose – matters. What results from it can make all the difference between an ill-informed and shortsighted approach to workforce development and a well-informed, strategically driven, and impactful one. A primary reason for the former has been that outsiders – primarily federal and state governments – have long sat in the driver's seat when it comes to generating data about Native people generally, and the progress made by those who access workforce education, training, and related services specifically.

The inherent shortcomings of federal data sources – the Census, ACS, and the various criteria the federal government uses to measure its definition of program “success” – are many and well-documented. For example, they are ill-equipped to gauge the true severity of the challenges facing tribal workforce development, nor do they properly account for those “invisible” tribal citizens who aren't looking for work, what skills and education they may have, and what skills and education they need to gain to secure employment.<sup>1</sup> As one workforce development practitioner explains, “Conditions affecting Indian workers in reservation markets can often be very different than those for non-Indians in urban areas, differences which are not recognized in standard labor market research efforts.”<sup>2</sup> Because federal data doesn't accurately capture Indian Country's labor force realities, federal decision-makers struggle to devise effective solutions to address them.

For tribal nations to develop effective local workforce development approaches, they need to *drive the data* that informs them. Since they know their own communities and conditions best, they are best positioned to collect the data and assess what it means *for them*. Because it's *their* people and futures at stake, they know the right questions to ask – questions that outsiders wouldn't think to pose. Leading in this way also enables them “to incorporate cultural, contextual, and political concerns in program evaluation,” and it enhances “self-determination over program activities.”<sup>3</sup>



NCAI conference attendees complete a survey designed to inform tribal nations' efforts to build their data capacity. (Photo: NCAI)

“We now go above and beyond federal requirements to see what we need to be collecting and analyzing to see the change that we know is needed here.”

– Elva “Cookie” Allan,  
Comprehensive  
Planning Consultant,  
Coeur d’Alene Tribe

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- Does your nation regularly assess the true unemployment rate of tribal citizens in and around your reservation, including those who can work but aren't seeking employment (and why)? What would it take to develop such a mechanism?
- Do/how do your workforce development and related programs collect, analyze, and share data? Are these processes useful? Could they be enhanced to better inform *tribal* decision-making?
- Assess your programs and the linkages between them using a SWOT analysis: Are they doing what your nation needs to achieve its definition of “success”? Are they fostering or inhibiting innovation?
- Considering your nation's long-range economic and community development priorities, what kinds of jobs will it require 5-10 years from now? How many? And are you people prepared to fill them?
- How many people is our workforce development approach currently serving? Is it serving everyone it needs to? Given our growing population and strategic priorities, how many people will it need to serve 5-10 years from now, and how will we pay for it?





# INNOVATION SNAPSHOTS



## Coeur d'Alene Tribe (CDA)

In the mid 2000s, many CDA members faced an “educational achievement gap” that inhibited their ability to enter and advance in the workforce. In response, CDA decision makers created the Tribe’s “Education Pipeline,” a holistic approach fusing education with workforce development. Key to the Pipeline’s success – which has proven effective in closing CDA’s educational gap – is its commitment to own its own data. Whereas before much of the data CDA collected was based on someone else’s criteria and for someone else’s benefit (i.e., the federal government), today CDA’s Department of Education

(DOE) occupies the driver’s seat, ensuring that it’s learning what *it* needs to develop solutions customized to tribal members’ particular needs and the Tribe’s priorities. DOE tracks the status and progress of all members from pre-school through Ph.D., from where they are being schooled to the specific support programs they rely on<sup>1</sup>, and it now asks new and different questions through its data collection processes. Recognizing the data needs strengthening the Pipeline will entail, DOE is partnering with area universities to cultivate degree-bearing “research cohorts” of CDA members who can build its research capacity over time.<sup>2</sup>

LEARNING LINK: <http://www.ncai.org/ptg/workforce-development-coeur-dalene>

CONNECT: Dr. Chris Meyer, Director of Education, Coeur d’Alene Tribe, [cmeyer@cdatriben-sn.gov](mailto:cmeyer@cdatriben-sn.gov)



## Rosebud Sioux Tribe (RST)

Confronting an 83% unemployment rate and 44% poverty rate among tribal members, RST resolved to comprehensively evaluate the current state of its economy, the current state of education among its people, and what they collectively mean for the Tribe’s ability to improve on those rates. RST’s economic development corporation REDCO produced the Tribe’s first “State of Future Workforce” report, what it calls “an honest assessment” that recognizes the “symbiotic” relationship between a well-educated workforce and RST’s ability to build a strong, sustainable economy for the next seven

generations.<sup>1</sup> Among other things, the report found “a high need” to strengthen basic math, writing, and communication skills among RST members to make them workforce ready.<sup>2</sup> The data generated through the report has equipped REDCO and RST with the information they need to develop short-, medium-, and long-range actionable goals for cultivating a stronger workforce and economy, such as establishing robust career and internship program for youth and adults, creating strong partnerships with one another and other entities to “close sustainability gaps such as public transportation and data collection,” and ensuring that RST’s economic activities and the local education system enact and reflect the Tribe’s cultural values.<sup>3</sup>

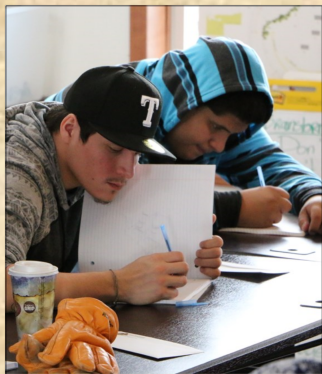
LEARNING LINK: <http://www.ncai.org/ptg/workforce-development-rosebud>

CONNECT: Wizipan Little Elk, CEO, Rosebud Economic Development Corporation, [wizipan.littleelk@sicangucorp.com](mailto:wizipan.littleelk@sicangucorp.com)

# POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Comprehensively assess your programs and what kinds of data they collect, about and for whom, and for what reasons. Determine how useful this data is for informing your nation-building efforts.
- Dedicate permanent funding for staff and operations to drive the nation’s data efforts.
- Build a centralized data system that collates data/shares results among all service components of tribal government/enterprises to create a clear picture of the needs of/services provided to citizens.
- Institute a regular tribal census that gauges your citizens’ current workforce readiness and what education/skills they need to obtain to contribute to the nation’s building of a prosperous future.
- Develop a picture of the current and projected tribal/local labor market – and a process for updating it. Engage tribal/local employers to gather data about their long-range labor needs.
- Driving data poses a resource challenge, but more and more tribal nations have developed creative solutions to learn what they need with limited dollars. Build partnerships with area TCUs – and other nations if possible – to help with data design, collection and analysis and defray the costs.

# REMOVING OBSTACLES



Thunder Valley Community Development Corporation's construction trainees set up bank accounts and receive credit counseling during their 10-month training program. (Photo: Thunder Valley)

## FRAMING THE DISCUSSION

One tribal nation we know of recently launched a new approach to developing its workforce in several fields where its labor needs are greatest. Its excitement was soon tempered, however, by a high dropout rate among its initial training program participants. Its analysis revealed that 68 percent of them did not possess the baseline academic competencies their training programs require. In response, the nation initiated “Coaching,” an intensive approach to case management in which program staff work one-on-one with participants to develop and implement individualized plans to raise them to the proficiency levels necessary to tackle the programs’ academic demands. It also added tutoring to help participants master the course content and also learn *how to study*. And it took another, extraordinary step: it assigned staff to take the same courses as their clients to “get a bird’s eye view of what is going on,” specifically what caused failure and keyed success.<sup>1</sup>

This story is indicative of what NCAI has observed among effective workforce development approaches: tribal nations *doing whatever it takes* to help their people overcome the obstacles (see “Challenges” on page 4) that hamper their ability to complete training, get and keep a job, and build a career. But designing such “outside the box” strategies requires that tribal nations do their due diligence to understand precisely how pervasive these obstacles are among their people, how they manifest themselves in each client’s life, and how programming can be tasked to attack them.

It also demands that tribal nations not get distracted by the symptoms these obstacles produce, but instead target their root causes. For example, if a program client is routinely late for training or work, it may not be the result of poor work ethic. It may instead be due to a lack of reliable transportation, child care, or any number of other factors. Each person’s story and set of challenges is different, requiring a customized solution that empowers that person to overcome them. Consequently, tribal nations must develop *flexible* workforce development approaches that provide their people multiple pathways to reach their chosen career destinations at a pace they can handle. These approaches must acknowledge that for many, the challenge is not just learning how to do a specific job, but *how to work* – and *how to live*. As one workforce development practitioner explains, ultimately it’s “helping people get healthy to deal with opportunity.”<sup>2</sup>

When fashioning creative solutions that neutralize the root causes of the obstacles your people face, start small with whatever resources you can scrounge together internally and through your partnerships, and build your learned experience and a track record of success, which will then enable you to garner additional resources from your nation and elsewhere to grow that success.

“We try to reach to the root of what’s causing people to be unsuccessful in their life and we take our time...We want to [provide] a tool that they can put in their toolbox and use every day of their life.”

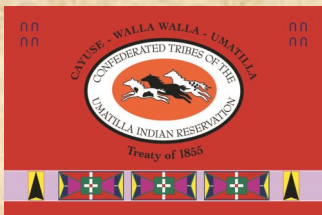
– Joyce Country,  
Former Employee  
Services Social Worker,  
Sisseton-Wahpeton  
Oyate

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- Thinking “Assessment” (pages 22-23), is your nation gauging how particular workforce challenges impact your people? Does it collect data to track exactly how these challenges hinder particular subsets of your citizenry (single mothers, ex-cons, etc.)? How could it strengthen its ability to do so?
- Have you measured how pervasive an issue the lack of transportation is for those needing workforce education/training? For those trying to hold a job? For how many people is it a deal-breaker?
- What kinds of intensive support does each client need to succeed at training and work? Coaching? Mentoring? Supplemental tutoring? Soft skills training? A combination of these and others?
- Do your workforce development programs work closely with your social service programs to triage each client and develop an individualized plan of action in partnership with that client? If not, what structures do you need to develop to ensure they do?
- For newly employed citizens, are you assessing how they are adjusting to work life? How are you supporting them in dealing with the new stresses and workplace adversity they are encountering?



## INNOVATION SNAPSHOTS



### Confederated Tribes of Umatilla (CTUIR)

Located in rural Oregon, CTUIR long struggled with a lack of transportation options that prevented tribal citizens from accessing local training and employment opportunities and made it difficult for reservation businesses to attract employees and customers. As one CTUIR official put it, “In some cases, it was harder for tribal members to get to the job site than to get a job or even housing.”<sup>1</sup> In response, in 2001 CTUIR launched its own public transit and taxi voucher system that provides

service to 10 neighboring towns and cities in four counties across two states. Creatively pooling dollars from various tribal, state, and federal sources, the system – called Kayak Public Transit (KPT) – runs seven free bus routes for CTUIR members and other local residents, increasing its ridership from 47,000 rides in 2008 to more than 78,000 annually today.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, CTUIR employees who use the system report saving between \$130 and \$200 monthly (increasing household disposable income and, in turn, consumer spending at local businesses).<sup>3</sup> By coordinating with area non-tribal transit systems and providing service to non-Natives, KPT also is fostering improved relations and good will between CTUIR and its surrounding governments.

LEARNING LINK: <http://www.ncai.org/ptg/workforce-development-umatilla>

CONNECT: Susan Johnson, Public Transit Manager, Confederated Tribes of Umatilla, [kayak@ctuir.org](mailto:kayak@ctuir.org)



### Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate (SWO)

Long saddled with deep poverty and an unemployment rate above 50 percent<sup>1</sup>, SWO has come a long way in recent decades, operating two successful manufacturing companies and three casinos which – along with SWO government and the local TCU – provide nearly 1,000 jobs to SWO members and other local residents. While SWO is among the largest employers in its region, in the early years of its economic resurgence it encountered an unexpected problem – many tribal members were struggling to keep their jobs, leading to a 70% turnover rate.<sup>2</sup> In response, key SWO government and business

players came together to analyze the issue, leading to SWO’s establishment of a holistic solution called the “Developing Productive Employees” (DPE) program. DPE equips SWO members who have lost their jobs – or are in danger of doing so – with the soft skills and related resources they need to succeed and grow in the workplace. Offered every three weeks, DPE’s intensive two-day training helps participants build a “toolbox” of healthy coping skills that they can use in the workplace, including “emotional intelligence,” managing stress, and “communicating for success.”<sup>3</sup> The award-winning program has led to a decreased employment turnover rate among participants, and their decreased reliance on social service programs like TANF.<sup>4</sup>

LEARNING LINK: <http://www.ncai.org/ptg/workforce-development-swo>

CONNECT: Brenda Uses Arrow, Dakota Nation Gaming Enterprise, [brenda.usesarrow@dakotamagic.com](mailto:brenda.usesarrow@dakotamagic.com)

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Invest in soft skills development to supplement hard skills education/training. Build partnerships with TCUs, online training providers, and others to affordably bring soft skills training to your community.
- Build training cohorts of citizens facing the same challenges to deepen their systems of support. Have successful former clients serve as role models for – and mentors to – current ones.
- Build a “coalition” partnership (see page 32) to create a tribal public transportation system to enable your citizens to commute to training and work. Engage partners to relocate or expand your clients’ needed services to the reservation in order to mitigate the transportation challenge.
- Have your workforce development programs work in lockstep with your child care program and other social services to jointly identify the challenges impacting each client and neutralize them.
- Build mechanisms and partnerships to protect and build tribal citizens’ financial assets, which is proven to strengthen their ability to obtain/sustain employment. If feasible, create a low-interest loan program to insulate them against predatory lenders.

# TARGETED SOLUTION



Targeted investments over the past decade in dental health aide therapists (DHATs) have addressed a major need across Alaska Native communities. (Photo: Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium)

## FRAMING THE DISCUSSION

Wrestling with a high dropout rate among its high school students that hampered their ability to enter and thrive in the workforce later in life, one tribal nation in the Pacific Northwest decided to make a preemptive move. It created a summer “pre-employment” training program for tribal youth ages 13-15 that promotes the development of personal accountability, work ethic, and “pride in community.”<sup>1</sup> This “hands-on” initiative encourages participants to stay in school by teaching them a “multitude of transferable skills they can apply to later employment” for the nation or elsewhere.<sup>2</sup> A growing number are doing so, with many moving on to higher education.<sup>3</sup>

This nation is among many who are realizing that if they are to develop their human capacity in order to create brighter futures of their own design, then they need to start young. Taking action, they are developing “first-chance” academic and workforce preparedness programs<sup>4</sup> that target youth at an early age, providing them chances to: explore different careers (and the hard work involved with building them); cultivate their desire, confidence, and ability to pursue them; and deepen their appreciation of their role as citizens of their nations – and contributors to their nations’ futures. These initiatives (internships, fellowships, summer camps, job shadowing, etc.) help to raise tribal nations’ expectations of their young people, heighten young people’s expectations of themselves, and support young people as they strive to meet those expectations.

If the federal government’s design of workforce development programs has taught us anything, it’s that one-size-fits-all approaches don’t work well for tribal nations given their distinct challenges and objectives. Tribal nations are finding success when they take the reins and develop targeted solutions customized to their needs and their people, from youth to mid-career professionals to aspiring citizen entrepreneurs. These solutions take many forms and serve many purposes, but NCAI’s research illuminates three trends – targeted solutions that: (1) serve particular groups (youth, single mothers, former felons, etc.) by neutralizing the specific workforce challenges that impact them in certain ways; (2) build particular skills and expertise among the nation’s citizenry that address its critical needs and advance its long-range priorities; and (3) identify the structural trouble spots that inhibit workforce development/growth and design structural interventions to tackle them. NCAI’s research also reveals that a nation’s ability to forge such solutions hinges on its creation of a comprehensive workforce development approach that flows from its assessment-informed understanding (see pages 22-23) of its people, their needs and aspirations, the nation’s needs and priorities, and how its approach will deliberately target and address those things.

“We want to reach and teach the young people that are still in grade school, middle school, and high school so by the time they get out of high school they should have an idea, a plan as to what direction they want to go.”

– Alex Yazza, Former Executive Director, Owens Valley Career Development Center

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- What steps is your nation taking to assess the particular workforce challenges of specific groups within the nation and design customized solutions to address them? Could it be doing more?
- What particular skills and careers does the nation need now and in the future, and what steps is it taking to cultivate them among its people?
- What is your nation doing to cultivate tribal citizens to become *employers* as well as employees (by becoming owners and operators of small businesses in and around the community)? What steps can it take to build a system that can prepare them to assume that role?
- How is your nation partnering with local college(s), Native CDFIs, and other partners to develop specialized curricula geared towards particular fields of need or particular groups within the community and their learning challenges? How could it strengthen/expand these partnerships?
- Are there targeted, cost-effective workforce development solutions that your nation could create through partnerships with other tribal nations? How could those partnerships be cultivated?



## INNOVATION SNAPSHOTS



### **Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (CRITFC)**

The Yakama, Umatilla, Warm Springs, and Nez Perce tribes established CRITFC in 1977 to ensure a strong, “unified” tribal voice in managing the Columbia River salmon and the ecosystem upon which they depend.<sup>1</sup> CRITFC advances this mission in part through its multifaceted approach to develop a skilled workforce by creating opportunities for tribal members to obtain the college education and technical expertise needed to work in STEM-related fields at the core of day-to-day fisheries work. Supporting students from elementary school through post-graduate levels, CRITFC’s place-based curriculum “provides hands-on, experiential”

learning, “intergenerational mentoring,” and “positive cultural identity development.”<sup>2</sup> Students witness effective tribal decision making and observe their own innovative tribal programs at work where it matters most: their homelands. To foster a pathway to STEM-based careers, CRITFC launched its Salmon Camp for students to explore these fields at a young age (grades 6-8). Its TRAIL Project provides college students with summer and academic year internships where they gain invaluable research experience. TRAIL’s goal is to propel interns to obtain degrees in fisheries and related fields at universities where the tribes have MOUs. As CRITFC explains, “These aren’t training programs to nowhere. We have jobs waiting at the end of this pathway.”<sup>3</sup>

LEARNING LINK: <http://www.ncai.org/ptg/workforce-development-critfc>

CONNECT: Charles Hudson, Intergovernmental Affairs Director, CRITFC, [hudc@critfc.org](mailto:hudc@critfc.org)



### **Muscogee (Creek) Nation (MCN)**

Concerned the State of Oklahoma wasn’t doing enough to prepare its people who were leaving prison for life outside of it, in 2004 MCN established its Reintegration Program (RIP). Believing all of its participants are capable of becoming positive, productive citizens,<sup>1</sup> RIP provides them a holistic array of culturally-based support services before, during, and after their re-entry into society. RIP case managers work closely with participants to eliminate their barriers to employment through GED acquisition, training, resume preparation, and connecting them with offender-friendly employers. When they are between

jobs, RIP expects participants to volunteer for community service (mowing MCN elders’ lawns and moving families’ furniture are typical projects). RIP also maintains several partnerships designed to help participants address their “life-sustaining needs” such as housing, clothing, and groceries so they have a stable foundation upon which to get and keep a job.<sup>2</sup> Whereas Oklahoma’s recidivism rate for Native offenders is 30 percent, RIP’s recidivism rate is just 10 percent.<sup>3</sup> According to RIP, “We strengthen our sovereignty by addressing the needs of a population that oftentimes are denied basic services because of a felony conviction.”<sup>4</sup>

LEARNING LINK: <http://www.ncai.org/ptg/workforce-development-mcn>

CONNECT: Tony Fish, Manager, Muscogee (Creek) Nation Reintegration Program, [tofish@mcn-nsn.gov](mailto:tofish@mcn-nsn.gov)

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Assess how severely specific workforce development challenges (see page 4) are impacting certain groups in your nation and design/refine your programs to comprehensively combat them.
- Use your nation’s long-term priorities and local/regional economic forecasts as primary decision-making criteria to target the nation’s workforce development investments in specific ways (for example, building your human capacity in the area of business administration).<sup>1</sup>
- Develop stand-alone initiatives that provide Native youth academic and workforce preparedness training and opportunities for career exploration *before they reach high school*. If necessary, develop partnerships to defray the cost of doing so.
- Develop targeted family-based approaches to workforce development that involve clients’ family members to help ensure healthy career planning and career sustainability.<sup>2</sup>
- Develop a coalition-based plan (with academic institutions, CDFIs, etc.) to cultivate aspiring citizen entrepreneurs to become small business owners (which also increases local job opportunities).

# CLOSING THE LOOP



Navajo medical student Shannon Zullo and Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye at the University of Arizona, 2016. (Photo: Navajo Nation Scholarship & Financial Assistance Office)

## FRAMING THE DISCUSSION

Years ago, one tribal nation in the Northeastern U.S. established a higher education scholarship program to help its young people cover the costs of attending college. But there was a catch – if they agreed to accept a scholarship from the nation, they had to return to their reservation community upon obtaining their degrees to work for the nation for at least two years. According to a leader of that nation, “Our underlying goal was that they would come home and during those two years they would find a sweetheart, start a family, settle down, and never leave. It’s working.”<sup>1</sup>

This “scholarship for service” strategy is a growing Indian Country phenomenon. For example, one nation in the Southwest requires students to work for its economic development corporation or one of its subsidiary businesses for one year for each year of financial support they receive. When they are not in school, they are placed in paid internships to gain practical experience learning the business ropes.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, another nation in the Upper Midwest has launched a highly selective program that fully supports three tribal citizens in obtaining a master’s degree in tribal administration and governance on the condition that they work for the nation for two years for every year they are in school. If they don’t complete the three-year degree, then they must repay the nation the tuition dollars it spent on them.<sup>3</sup>

These and other strategies speak to the importance – not just financial, but more importantly economic, social, and cultural – of tribal nations making concerted efforts to get a significant “return” on the investments they are making to develop their people (whether through vocational training, scholarship funding, or in other ways). All things being equal, the majority of those people would prefer to work and live in their tribal communities.<sup>4</sup> Tribal nations can “close this loop” by deploying strategies specifically designed to fully tap into the human capacity they are cultivating with the limited resources they have. For example, tribal nations can create a strong system of incentives (financial support for education, hiring preference, competitive wages, housing, etc.) aimed at keeping tribal citizens at home or attracting them back home. They can take it one targeted step further by supporting tribal citizens in obtaining degrees, certifications, and skills in critical fields and then directly channeling those individuals into specific positions working in tribal government or businesses where they apply what they’ve learned on their nations’ behalf. Doing so not only strengthens tribal nations’ ability to leverage their human capacity in targeted ways that address community needs and advance their nation-building priorities, it enables more tribal citizens to participate in culture and community, enriching and strengthening them over time.<sup>5</sup>

“However long it takes to go to school, you’re going to give those years back to your tribe by signing off on our contract that we have for you. If it takes you four or five years to get that accounting degree, you’re going to give four or five years back to your tribe.”

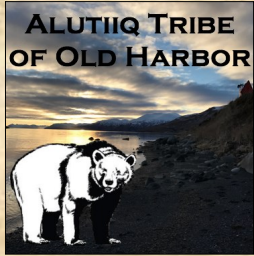
– Christopher Muñoz,  
Human Resource  
Director, Tigua Inc.

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- How is your nation working to provide opportunities for its citizens to pursue careers using the education, skills, and experience that your nation is supporting them in obtaining?
- Where do your higher education scholarship recipients reside? What degrees/certifications are they obtaining, and where are they working post-graduation? Who is benefitting from their newly acquired education and skills? And does your nation have a system to track them in these ways?
- What education, skills, and experience do your nation’s citizens who live off-reservation possess? What would it take (available positions, competitive salaries, quality housing and schools, etc.) to recruit them home to contribute to the nation? How should the nation tackle this complex task?
- What specific positions in tribal government and businesses are most critical to your nation’s future, and does it have a targeted plan to train and designate individual citizens to take those positions?
- Does your nation have a handle on the local, *non-tribal* jobs that are available and will be available? What is it doing to prepare your citizens for – and then connect them to – those jobs?



## INNOVATION SNAPSHOTS



### Alutiiq Tribe of Old Harbor

The Alutiiq Tribe of Old Harbor claims a long tradition of financially supporting tribal members who pursue higher education. It came to realize, however, that many of its scholarship recipients not only grew up outside the Tribe's home village on Kodiak Island, Alaska, but they "also frequently attended college in the lower 48 states and, after graduation, did not come back to the community."<sup>1</sup> To ensure a greater return on the sizable investment it was making of its limited resources, Old Harbor created the Undergraduate Specialized Academic Award (USAA). Incentivizing funded students to return home to apply what they've learned on the community's behalf, USAA requires them to work with Old Harbor youth for at least one summer upon graduation (in exchange for the \$500 scholarship they receive each semester). USAA not only immerses students in their village life and culture (which is critical for those who grew up outside their ancestral homeland), the Tribe also benefits from their education and skills. In addition, by engaging with USAA students, Old Harbor's youth expand their visions of "what is possible," inspiring them to "likewise pursue higher education."<sup>2</sup> The Tribe also utilizes its Specialized Skill Training Award, which funds up to \$1,000 per year for tribal employees to develop professional skills that can further benefit Old Harbor.

LEARNING LINK: <http://www.ncai.org/ptg/workforce-development-oldharbor>

CONNECT: Phyllis Clough, Council Member, Alutiiq Tribe of Old Harbor, [pclough01@kibsd.org](mailto:pclough01@kibsd.org)



### Navajo Nation

In 2016, seeking to address a critical shortage of qualified Navajo doctors to take care of its growing population, the Navajo Nation forged an MOU with the University of Arizona's Colleges of Medicine (UA) to create the Navajo Nation Future Physicians' Scholarship Fund. The agreement, which can be renewed after six years, gives financial aid (provided by Navajo with matching funds from UA) to fully cover the tuition, fees, and academic support costs for up to seven Navajo scholars each year as they work towards obtaining a medical degree.<sup>1</sup> Those scholars who complete the program are then required to return to the Navajo Nation to serve the Navajo people for at least five years once they complete their post-degree medical residency programs. As UA sees Navajo's commitment, "They are investing in you, and the way that you can repay them is serving the community."<sup>2</sup> According to Navajo, "This agreement is historic for us. We have never had a relationship with any medical school anywhere in the country."<sup>3</sup> To further address the underrepresentation of Navajos in the medical field, Navajo Technical University (NTU) is exploring a partnership with UA to expand NTU's healthcare professional programs for Navajo students.

LEARNING LINK: <http://www.ncai.org/ptg/workforce-development-navajo>

CONNECT: Rose Graham, Office of Navajo Nation Scholarship & Financial Assistance, [rosegraham@navajo-nsn.gov](mailto:rosegraham@navajo-nsn.gov)

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Identify and recruit young tribal citizens to consider particular careers that your nation has identified as priorities, and support them in obtaining degrees relevant to those careers.
- Establish tribal service and/or employment requirements for those citizens who receive financial support from the nation for higher education or other professional development programs.
- If aligned with your values, consider giving on-reservation citizens preference for scholarships, as they are more likely to return home to work post-degree.<sup>1</sup>
- Gear your workforce development programs to build human capacity in the particular fields where locally available jobs (including those with non-tribal employers) are (or will become) most plentiful.
- Implement a tracking system to follow degree-seeking citizens and match them to those jobs.<sup>2</sup>
- Foster an environment that honors/welcomes citizens who leave the nation to get an education to return (this involves educating the community about the benefits the nation gains from their return).
- Designate recent graduates to serve as professional mentors/role models to your nation's youth.



Chickasaw Nation STWP participant Rance Gilliam, who plans to contribute the knowledge he has gained through the STWP program “to the growth of the tribe and its citizens.” (Photo: Chickasaw Times)

## FRAMING THE DISCUSSION

For many tribal nations, the challenge of moving their people from the unemployed side of the ledger to the employed side feels like a Herculean task – significant barriers to employment faced by their people, limited employment opportunities for those who overcome those barriers, and limited resources for the nation to work with. For workers and would-be workers in those nations, the idea of building a successful career over the course of decades may feel “out of reach.”<sup>1</sup>

Yet more and more tribal nations are making employment the *first* goal – not the end goal – of their workforce development approaches. Consciously moving from a “poverty mindset” to a “prosperity mindset,”<sup>2</sup> they are working to seed a culture of advancement among their people and throughout tribal government and tribal businesses. They are doing so by not simply preaching its importance, but putting into place concrete mechanisms to incentivize it, nurture it, and create opportunities for it. For example, one nation in Alaska awards up to \$1,000 per year to employees for specialized training related to their work, which represents not just an investment in them, but an investment “in the infrastructure and capacity of the tribe itself.”<sup>3</sup> Another pays most of the cost of employees pursuing master’s degrees in fields “deemed critical to community success.”<sup>4</sup>

Creating such a culture of advancement is easier said than done. It requires fostering the mindset shift mentioned above in both subtle and direct ways, as well as:

- Developing roadmaps for advancement (i.e. “career ladders”) for existing and prospective employees to visualize the professional futures they desire and the clear steps that they must take to achieve that future;
- Setting high expectations and standards of accountability for professional development/ continuing education and advancement in tribal government and business employment;
- Establishing/funding opportunities for committed employees to take advantage; and
- Defusing the “crabs in the bucket” dynamic that exists in some tribal communities.

Creating this culture benefits tribal citizens who follow these roadmaps as well as the nation as a whole, expanding its human capacity to do its work, create more jobs, and achieve the nation’s long-term goals. It strengthens tribal government and businesses because everyone knows what they *need to do* in the organizations to advance. They will be more likely to stay because they know their commitment to working hard, performing well, and learning on the job will pay off. This, in turn, enhances the nation’s ability to grow the proficiency of its workforce over time.

“We really have to think about how we incentivize and support our people to grow within our own nation.”

– Tanya Fiddler,  
Executive Director,  
Native CDFI Network

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- How is your nation incentivizing and nurturing career advancement among its employees?
- What types of professional development/continuing education opportunities does your nation currently provide its employees? Does the nation cover all/part of the costs? And how could it develop partnerships to expand those opportunities or make them more affordable?
- If an employee chooses to do professional development or continuing education, does your nation provide that person release time or paid time off? Is it organizational policy, or case by case?
- What criteria does the nation currently use to determine who should get promoted, receive salary increases, be assigned greater responsibilities, etc.? Is it length of service and perhaps job performance? Does/how does professional development factor in?
- How pervasive is the “crabs in the bucket” dynamic in your nation’s workplaces? What are its effects? What strategies can you implement to neutralize it so that advancement is encouraged and honored by all?





## INNOVATION SNAPSHOTS



### Chickasaw Nation

Recognizing many of its non-traditional students were reaching a point where career advancement was limited, the Chickasaw Nation established its School-to-Work Program (STWP) to offer them access to higher education as well as valuable on-the-job experience.<sup>1</sup> Seeking to create “a nation of educated and highly trained professionals who can meet the demands of today’s workforce,”<sup>2</sup> STWP provides opportunities for participants to earn the degrees and certifications they need to advance by enabling them to spend one-half of each work day attending classes and the other half receiving on-the-job

training within Chickasaw government departments and businesses. To ensure they have the financial resources to support their families, students are paid for a full 40-hour work week and provided with the same benefits as other employees, including sick leave, vacation time, holiday pay, and health insurance. According to one participant, “The hours I put in at school are part of my 40-hour week. I have more hours to give to my family now.”<sup>3</sup> Of the 212 people who have completed STWP, 188 of them (89%) have secured full-time employment, and 144 of them (68%) now work for the Nation.<sup>4</sup>

LEARNING LINK: <http://www.ncai.org/ptg/workforce-development-chickasaw>

CONNECT: Danny Wall, Director, Chickasaw Nation School-to-Work Program, [Danny.Wall@chickasaw.net](mailto:Danny.Wall@chickasaw.net)



### Pascua Yaqui Tribe (PYT)

Located adjacent to Tucson, Arizona, PYT operates two successful gaming operations that provide the Tribe critical revenue and tribal members hundreds of jobs. For years, PYT wanted to increase the percentage of casino management positions that are held by tribal members. The Tribe set out to make that happen through its Future Leader Program (FLP). Employees selected to participate in FLP make a one-year commitment, during which time they are assigned two-month rotations across six key casino departments. Upon finishing each rotation, they must complete a project where they apply what they

have learned. FLP participants also engage in job shadowing and ongoing professional development during their tenure, all for the purpose of PYT growing “our own future executives rather than recruiting outside of the organization.”<sup>1</sup> PYT recently took it up a notch with its highly competitive, three-phase Executive Succession program, which features university-level coursework, rotational exposure to the executive-level responsibilities of the six key casino departments, and participation in a student exchange program with other tribal casinos across the U.S. to learn “best practices and different management styles.”<sup>2</sup> Through this program, one or more tribal members are slated to move into the casino’s top executive positions in the next few years.<sup>3</sup>

LEARNING LINK: <http://www.ncai.org/ptg/workforce-development-yaqui>

CONNECT: Miguel Roman, Director of Tribal Development, Casino Del Sol, PYT, [Miguel.Roman@casinodelsol.com](mailto:Miguel.Roman@casinodelsol.com)

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Assess your nation’s existing workforce development activities and initiate new strategies to prioritize professional development for the purposes of fostering a culture of career advancement.
- Presuming limited resources, prioritize creating career ladders in key departments and businesses to develop the nation’s capacity in accordance with its strategic goals.
- Create a merit-based system of advancement that rewards exceptional performance and engaging in professional development/continuing education (as opposed to job tenure or seniority alone).
- Dedicate stand-alone funding for professional development and continuing education so it doesn’t become a periodic luxury of departmental budgets, provided only when times are good.
- Create formal apprenticeship opportunities that enable tribal citizens to gain critical skills necessary for moving beyond entry-level positions.
- Revise position descriptions to set nation’s expectations for professional development and advancement, and how employees’ specific roles directly advance nation’s long-term priorities.

# PARTNERSHIPS Matter



Tribal Workforce Crew Manager Joe Ochoa trains a tribal crew member for the Lomakatsi Restoration Project, which partners the non-profit organization with three California tribal nations. (Photo: Lomakatsi Restoration Project)

“Our ultimate goal is to build relationships with employers so that when they have opportunities for hiring people or want to talk subsidized employment, we’re the first place that they call.”

– Ryan Howard,  
Executive Director,  
Owens Valley Career  
Development Center

## FRAMING THE DISCUSSION

Tribal nations can’t go it alone if they are to achieve their workforce development priorities. They need to forge partnerships of varying scale and composition with key players within the nation and around it. Below are the common partnerships they’re building and the common reasons why:

- **Tribal enterprises:** to coordinate education/training and ongoing professional development of tribal citizens to take jobs in those businesses and advance through the ranks.
- **Other tribal nations:** to pool resources to provide ample education/training opportunities to their citizens; share program, labor force, and labor market data; share qualified labor for available jobs; learn program best practices; and develop MOUs to consolidate service provision.
- **Other governments:** such as federal, state, and county agencies to access their data, share tribal needs and data, connect citizens with support mechanisms and employers, provide them access to education/training services they otherwise can’t get, and bring those services to reservations.
- **Colleges/universities:** to craft post-secondary education/training regimens and industry-recognized credentials customized to citizens’ distinct needs and tribal nations’ priorities, provide online learning, and assist with tribal needs assessments and data design, collection, and analysis.
- **Local/regional employers:** to inform them about tribal citizens who have skills they need, and align workforce education/training curricula to cultivate the skills they require.
- **Native CDFIs:** to coordinate workforce education/training efforts, provide targeted training and ongoing support for tribal citizen entrepreneurs, and strengthen financial management skills of employed tribal citizens and those seeking work.
- **K-12 schools:** to share data/assessments about tribal students and provide a quality, culturally relevant curriculum and supportive environment to ensure continued learning.
- **Families:** of the clients and students your programs serve to support/ensure their success.
- **Non-profits:** such as with organizations to expand internship/fellowship opportunities and labor unions to provide targeted training for in-demand fields and job placement upon graduation.
- **Coalition partnerships:** featuring multiple partners to create comprehensive support systems for citizens and holistic solutions tailored to the nation’s distinct workforce needs and goals.

These partnerships provide tribal nations with greater policy and decision-making control; expand education, training, and job opportunities; better leverage limited financial resources; enhance tribal nations’ institutional and human capacity to engage in workforce development; and strengthen their ability to advance their long-term workforce development priorities.

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- What partnerships do you need to forge to create an effective workforce development approach capable of achieving your nation’s nation-building priorities? What will it take on the part of your tribal government and workforce development and related programs to create and sustain them?
- What is/should be the role of your nation’s political leaders in stewarding these partnerships?
- Evaluating your partners and potential partners, do you have a firm grasp on what they are capable of contributing and where that should fit in your workforce development approach?
- In what ways could your workforce development efforts be enhanced through formal partnerships with other tribal nations? What structures would be required to create those partnerships?
- Is your nation working in unison with your local Native CDFI(s) and TCU(s) to coordinate tribal workforce development? What does it need to do to strengthen/formalize partnerships with them?
- Is your nation’s TERO office aggressively working to forge partnerships with area employers to increase the likelihood they will hire qualified tribal citizens? Why/why not?



## INNOVATION SNAPSHOTS



### Hopi Tribe (Kaibab Springs Restoration Project)

In 2014, the Hopi Tribe's Cultural Preservation Office and Cultural Resources Advisory Task Team (CRATT) forged an agreement with Kaibab National Forest to work together to preserve a system of natural springs within the North Kaibab Plateau.<sup>1</sup> At CRATT's request, the partnership features a training component for Hopi youth – specifically WIOA participants ages 16-24 – that exposes them to careers in environmental management and related fields, builds their work ethic, and gives them the chance to learn land stewardship and traditional ecological knowledge directly from their elders.<sup>2</sup> To marshal the

necessary resources to support the initiative, the partners have enlisted a growing coalition of other partners to offset certain financial costs and provide in-kind contributions in the form of staff time, technical expertise, and professional mentoring of the youth. Since 2014, 44 Hopi youth have participated in four collaborative projects, and their success prompted the Tribe and U.S. Forest Service to launch plans to replicate the approach in three other national forests, and also expand the youth training component to include longer-term internships that will deepen participants' exposure to careers caring for the natural world.<sup>3</sup>

LEARNING LINK: <http://www.ncai.org/ptg/workforce-development-hopi>

CONNECT: Everett F. Gomez, Case Manager, Hopi WIOA, Hopi Tribe, [egomez@hopi.nsn.us](mailto:egomez@hopi.nsn.us)



### Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa

A few years ago, the Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians (LDF) and ten other tribal nations in Wisconsin launched a formal partnership with the state's Department of Transportation (WDOT) to create a State-Certified Apprenticeship program specifically for their tribal citizens. An outgrowth of WDOT's Tribal Labor Advisory Committee, the program prepares Native participants for and connects them to available construction-related jobs working on state and federal highway projects across Wisconsin through job training, job matching, and ongoing technical support. Program apprentices engage in supervised, structured on-the-job learning, which is sponsored by employers, employers'

associations, and labor unions "that have the ability to hire and train in a working environment."<sup>1</sup> The pilot phase of the program saw Native apprentices constitute more than 17% of project hires, and to date 16 LDF tribal members have completed the program and landed jobs on WDOT-based projects.<sup>2</sup> According to LDF, "We were reading and hearing that local employers increasingly were unable to find skilled workers in the transportation industry. This initiative represents an effective solution to this problem, and it's putting our people to work."<sup>3</sup>

LEARNING LINK: <http://www.ncai.org/ptg/workforce-development-ldf>

CONNECT: Jerome "Brooks" Big John, TERO Director, Lac du Flambeau Band, [bbigjohn@ldftribe.com](mailto:bbigjohn@ldftribe.com)

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Do a "partnership audit" to identify: (1) where you have informal and formal partnerships, (2) how they could be strengthened and for what reasons, and (3) where you need new ones and why.
- Create a "resource bank" of education, training, and support services that your partners/potential partners provide which your people can rely on to prepare for, obtain, and sustain employment.
- Engage area non-tribal employers to determine what skills they need and design your workforce education/training curricula to build those skills. Offer them incentives (i.e. tax breaks and other subsidies) to hire tribal citizens for work experience placements or permanent employment. Have your TERO office build partnerships with them to channel qualified citizens into available positions.
- For each partner, identify and cultivate its "champions" through intensive personal relationship building and education about the nation's long-term priorities and how they are advancing them.
- Institutionalize partnerships to ensure their sustainability through formal MOU/MOAs, regular meetings/information sharing, and ongoing education about the partnership's purpose.

# SUSTAINABILITY Matters



Gila River Firefighter Apprentice trainee Jessica Lewis learns how to ventilate a building during a fire training drill. (Photo: Gila River Employment & Training Department)

“You’re battling all the time, but you have to keep looking at ways that you can set the infrastructure and the ways your workforce development [approach] will continue to grow.”

– Margaret Zientek,  
Assistant Director,  
Workforce & Social  
Services, Citizen  
Potawatomi Nation

## FRAMING THE DISCUSSION

It’s one thing to develop an effective workforce development approach that addresses the needs of a tribal nation’s citizens and advances its strategic priorities *today*. It’s quite another to sustain that approach *over the long haul*. As tribal nations build track records of workforce development success, more and more are now tackling the challenge of how to systematically grow that success so that it benefits the nation not just today, but well into the future.

As they engage this critical task, some common ingredients for “sustainability” are emerging that stand to shorten the learning curve for other nations that will follow in their footsteps:

- **Accountability:** Workforce development success – and the ability to sustain it – hinges on the accountability mechanisms (regular program assessments, employee performance agreements, outcomes-based budgeting, etc.) that a nation puts in place to ensure *everyone* (leaders, employees, clients, citizens) that contributes to or relies on its workforce development approach lives up to their end of the bargain. This matters not just for meeting the requirements of new grants, but more importantly for achieving the nation’s long-term workforce development goals.
- **Adaptability:** A nation’s workforce development programs must adapt in real time to meet the distinct needs and goals of each client it serves to be *effective*. To be *sustainable*, a nation’s overall workforce development approach must be *institutionally adaptable* over time to: stay synced with the nation’s evolving strategic vision and priorities, refine programs based on new info and data, expand what is working, neutralize emerging obstacles, capitalize on staff’s deepening experience and know-how, account for a growing population, and forecast and adjust to changing labor market conditions and needs to ensure that the workforce itself is adaptable.
- **Communication:** Building effective mechanisms for regular communication between political leaders, programmatic leaders, program staff, and community members fosters a common, well-informed understanding of – and support for – the nation’s approach, why it works the way it does, how it’s changing to better serve the people, and how it advances the nation’s larger goals.
- **Institutionalizing innovation (and success):** No nation gets it exactly right out of the gate with its new approach. A *bedrock institutional commitment to innovation* enables a nation to determine what’s not working and design better ways forward. Cultivating and retaining top-notch programmatic leaders and program staff equipped with the technical expertise, institutional memory, and confidence from learned experience to achieve, sustain, and grow success across the organization by innovating is vital.

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- What accountability mechanisms and metrics does your nation currently use to drive exceptional performance across its workforce development programs?
- What mechanisms and metrics does it use to evaluate the effectiveness of those programs and determine how to strengthen them? Are they tribally designed? What else should it be using?
- Does your nation have a long-range strategic plan for the growth and sustainability of its workforce development approach and its component programs? What would it take to create one?
- Does the nation have a firm handle on how rapidly its population is growing? If so, what does it mean for how it needs to grow its workforce development approach? If not, what steps should it take to track that growth and use that data to inform decision making on an ongoing basis?
- Does/how does your nation currently educate new tribal leaders and employees with direct roles in its workforce development approach about how that approach works and why? Does it provide them an initial orientation? What about a refresher training for existing leaders and employees?



# INNOVATION SNAPSHOTS



## Cherokee Nation

Regarded as a leading innovator in 477, the Cherokee Nation is working to expand its 477 program while simultaneously strengthening its collaboration with other departments and programs across tribal government, all in an effort to “enhance service delivery” to those it serves.<sup>1</sup> Led by its Career Services (CS) Department, the Cherokee Nation operates a growing suite of cross-coordinated initiatives for 477 participants, from its Day Training Program to Career Skills Training classes. As CS further expands its 477-connected efforts (it will soon take on Tribal TANF with a focus on training and jobs), it is making a concerted effort to ensure that staff have a deep institutional knowledge of the Cherokee Nation’s 477 program and their roles in growing its success.<sup>2</sup> To that end, CS developed a set of instructional videos that teach about the history of the 477 program and its evolution to date, how the program has transformed lives (through the words of participants themselves), and the new 477 law and how the Cherokee Nation will customize it to bolster its ability to move its people “toward self-sufficiency.”<sup>3</sup> CS uses the videos as a standard part of its ongoing trainings for existing staff, and in the mandatory orientation for all new hires.

LEARNING LINK: <http://www.ncai.org/ptg/workforce-development-cherokee>

CONNECT: Kim Carroll, Grants & Compliance Director, Career Services, Cherokee Nation, [Kim-Carroll@cherokee.org](mailto:Kim-Carroll@cherokee.org)



## Gila River Indian Community (GRIC)

By all accounts, GRIC’s Career Pathways (CP) initiative is an emerging success. From the outset, GRIC’s Employment & Training Department has been working to sustain that success. For example, the Department has established a permanent advisory council to engage in long-term strategy development.<sup>1</sup> Composed of the chairs of CP’s multiple industry sectors and key stakeholders in education and workforce development, the council meets monthly to evaluate the initiative’s overall progress and refine the sector training programs to enhance their accessibility, effectiveness, and cultural synergy.<sup>2</sup> In addition, the CP team is partnering with GRIC’s MIS Department to develop a system to track the educational and professional advancement of current and former CP participants, which will strengthen Gila River’s ability to provide transition services to those leaving and re-entering CP programs.<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile, GRIC has expanded CP by introducing formal post-program apprenticeships within GRIC government to provide CP participants with bridge opportunities in advance of permanent employment, a first for the Community. Last but not least, Gila River’s “forward-thinking” design process produced the GRIC Career Pathways Toolkit, which provides a system framework that GRIC uses to orient new staff and partners as they join the initiative.<sup>4</sup>

LEARNING LINK: <http://www.ncai.org/ptg/workforce-development-gila-river>

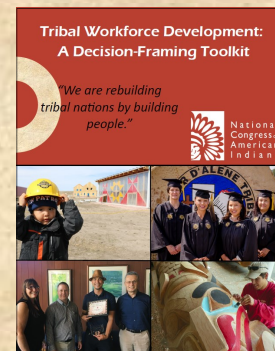
CONNECT: Lana Chanda, Director of Employment & Training, Gila River Indian Community, [Lana.Chanda@gric.nsn.us](mailto:Lana.Chanda@gric.nsn.us)

# POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Conduct regular/annual assessments of workforce development programs based on how effectively they are advancing your nation’s strategic priorities.
- Based on those assessments, target additional resources to replicate the success of well-performing programs across the organization, and design innovative solutions to refine and strengthen those programs that aren’t performing as well.
- To sustain successful workforce development initiatives, incoming political leaders should develop strategies to grow those initiatives (instead of tearing them down simply because they were the brainchild of their predecessors).
- Assess the growth rate of your tribal population and design a plan for expanding the services provided by your workforce development programs to meet that growing need.
- Develop a concrete sustainability plan for your workforce development efforts that grows funding and staff, provides higher quality services to more people, and pushes the innovation envelope.

## Conclusion and Resources for Further Learning

NCAI's Partnership for Tribal Governance (PTG) designed this toolkit to serve as a *living resource* for tribal nations, Native organizations, TCUs, and other tribal workforce development stakeholders to use on a regular basis well into the future. To that end, we invite you to share with PTG: (1) your feedback about the toolkit's contents, (2) your suggestions regarding how to strengthen and expand the toolkit so that it continues to serve your needs, and (3) the ways you have been using the toolkit and their outcomes so that PTG can integrate that information into future updates of the toolkit. To share your thoughts with NCAI's Partnership for Tribal Governance about the toolkit, please email PTG at [workforcedev@ncai.org](mailto:workforcedev@ncai.org) and use the subject line "Toolkit Feedback."



### Endnotes and Research Citations

To provide a concise toolkit that is broadly accessible to those tribal leaders, workforce development practitioners, and others who use it, PTG features the endnote numbers in the toolkit itself, but provides the actual endnotes and accompanying research citations on its website. To access the section-by-section endnotes and research citations for the entire toolkit, please visit <http://www.ncai.org/ptg/workforce-development/toolkitnotes>.

### Resources for Further Learning

In tandem with this toolkit, PTG has built a comprehensive suite of resources for further learning to provide a deeper level of understanding to tribal leaders and workforce development practitioners who are committed to making and implementing strategic, informed decisions about how best to approach developing their nation's human capacity. PTG has developed a set of resources for further learning about each of the 15 strategic considerations featured in the toolkit, as well as each of the 25 tribal nations whose innovative approaches and strategies are shared in the toolkit. Below is a representative sampling of some of the key resources:

- NCAI Policy Research Center Tribal Insights Brief: [Higher Education & Workforce Development](#)
- NCAI PTG "Innovation Spotlight" Case Study: [Coeur d'Alene Tribe](#)
- NCAI PTG "Innovation Spotlight" Case Study: [Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes](#)
- NCAI PTG "Innovation Spotlight" Case Study: [Gila River Indian Community](#)
- NCAI PTG "Innovation Spotlight" Case Study: [Ysleta del Sur Pueblo](#)
- NCAI Federal Policy Brief: [Empowering Tribal Workforce Development](#)
- Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis: [Spanning the spectrum of Native workforce development](#)
- *Tribal College Journal*: ["Workforce Development" Resource Guide](#)

To access the full catalogue of resources, please visit <http://www.ncai.org/ptg/workforce-development/resources>.

### Staying Connected

To keep informed about the latest news, emerging best practices, and upcoming webinars about tribal workforce development, join PTG's Workforce Development email listserv by emailing [workforcedev@ncai.org](mailto:workforcedev@ncai.org) and use the subject line "Listserv Subscribe."

## About this Publication

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