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ISSUE

Three decades of research by NCAI and others shows that tribal self-determination/self-governance is the only policy that has ever worked in improving Native people's lives and the quality of life in tribal communities. Nowhere does this finding ring more true than with workforce development. Ultimately, achieving workforce development "success" depends on what *tribal nations do*. Across the country, tribal governments, Native organizations, and tribal colleges and universities are crafting customized solutions to their particular workforce development challenges that (1) transform the lives of Native people in search of employment and the education, skills, and experience necessary to build rewarding careers, and (2) strengthen tribal nations, governments, and communities in the process. Along the way, they are discarding or modifying one-size-fits-all approaches that may work for governments elsewhere and that offer the bureaucratic path of least resistance for the federal government.

The federal government's job, then, is to foster a positive environment for tribal workforce development by removing the obstacles that obstruct tribal innovation. It should endow its systems, processes, programs, and funding protocols with the ease and flexibility that tribal nations and communities need to build their human capacity in accordance with their cultural values and distinct community and economic development goals. Public Laws 102-477 and 115-93 and Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Section 166 represent positive milestones in this regard, but the federal government must fully commit to these advancements, as well as provide tribal nations with adequate financial resources, training, technical assistance, and the freedom to innovate so they can succeed on their own terms.

DATA

## Five key data points to inform policy decision making:

- Sixty-six contractors and compactors, representing at least 225 tribal nations and Native organizations, are successfully deploying the Public Law 102-477 ("477") program in their holistic administration of tribal employment, training, education, welfare reform, and related programs, tailored to the unique needs of those they serve.
- The Office of Management and Budget consistently gives the 477 program one of the highest Program Assessment Rating Tool (PART) ratings among programs under the Department of the Interior (DOI)-Indian Affairs.
- In FY 2018, among the more than 36,000 Native adults and youth served by 477 programs, 80.7 percent of those who listed Employment or Education as a goal achieved their goals; meanwhile, adult 477 program participants generated an average increase of \$8.25 in their hourly wages.
- 170 tribal nations and organizations participate in the WIOA Section 166 program through the Department of Labor (DOL), providing workforce development services to more than 22,000 Native adults and youth.
- For the 2018 Program Year, DOL reported that WIOA Section 166 grantees collectively generated a 64.3 percent entered employment rate and 79.2 percent employment retention rate across all of the Native adult and youth clients that they serve.

POLICY

## Five urgent federal policy priorities of tribal nations:

- Approve significantly increased annual appropriations for tribal workforce development – notably the WIOA Section 166 Program – commensurate with the rapidly growing size of the Native population and rapidly increasing costs of workforce development-related services such as tuition for post-secondary educational institutions.
- In consulting with the 477 Tribal Work Group, amend the Inter-Agency MOA governing the Indian Employment, Training and Related Services Consolidation Act of 2017 to: (1) strike language that impermissibly limits the Act's scope, (2) change language that unlawfully cedes DOI Secretarial decision making authority to other agencies, (3) remove the provision that unlawfully limits the MOA's applicability to only certain competitive grant programs, (4) strike provisions that encourage delays in reviewing 477 Plans, and (5) explicitly declare that waiver requests may only be denied if they are inconsistent with either the Act or the authorizing statute of the specific program.
- Rebuff unjustified attempts by the Administration or members of Congress to transfer WIOA Section 166 programs to the State Adult formula grant program, which would amount to an effective decrease of nearly \$50 million in the already inadequate funding support for Native populations served by 166 grantees.
- Increase the staff of the Department of Labor's (DOL) Division of Indian and Native American Programs from its current six positions to no less than 15 positions to ensure adequate technical assistance and support for WIOA Section 166 grantees. Ensure that all staff have specialized competence in Native workforce programs.
- Amend the regulations governing DOL's Native American Employment and Training Council (NAETC) to allow Council members who have termed out to remain in their positions until their replacements are seated.



## SOLUTIONS

### Five leading examples of successful tribal solutions:

- The Blackfeet Nation's workforce development arm, **Blackfeet Manpower** became the country's first certified Native American One-Stop Center in 2007. Serving 2,200 welfare recipients, it offers "a comprehensive set of services under one roof," collating, analyzing, and sharing data so its component programs know how individual clients are doing, how well those programs are performing, and how they can perform better.
- Recognizing many non-traditional students struggled with career advancement, the **Chickasaw Nation** established its School-to-Work Program to provide access to higher education and valuable on-the-job experience, seeking to create "a nation of educated and highly trained professionals who can meet the demands of today's workforce." Of its 212 successful participants, 89 percent have secured full-time employment, and 68 percent work for the Nation.
- Through 477, **Cook Inlet Tribal Council** merged its job- and career-readiness programs with its Child Care, Community Services Block Grant, General Assistance, TANF, and related programs into a unified approach that meets "people where they are and help them help themselves to achieve their endless potential." In the past five years, it has helped 2,000 participants transition from welfare to employment and produced an average increase of \$7.81 in their hourly wages.
- Concerned the State of Oklahoma wasn't adequately preparing its people who were leaving prison for life outside of it, the **Muscogee (Creek) Nation** established its Reintegration Program (RIP). Believing all participants are capable of becoming positive, productive citizens, RIP provides a holistic array of culturally based support services before, during, and after their re-entry into society, which has sparked a drop in recidivism from 30 percent to 10 percent.
- In 2014, **Owens Valley Career Development Center (OVCDC)** was struggling to get Tribal TANF clients to meet their mandatory work participation rates. In response, OVCDC staff created its Economic Development Initiative Strategic Framework, which has produced a 16 percent decline in its cash assistance caseload over three years, with caseload closures due to employment and/or excess earnings increasing 15 percent over the same period.

## VOICES

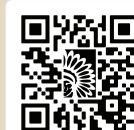
### Five leading voices explaining the policy issue at hand:

- "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." – *NCAI Policy Research Center*
- "We are rebuilding tribal nations by building people." – *Justin Guillory, President, Northwest Indian College*
- "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*
- "Flexibility works – enabling tribes to do what we're good at doing. We know our problems intimately. We also know the solutions." – *Cynthia Lindquist, President, Cankdeska Cikana Community College*
- "Tribes thinking and working outside the box allows for cross-training and streamlined services that facilitate a 'no wrong door' and multi-generation approach that better serves our participants in a more holistic and culturally competent way." – *Lisa Rieger, Chief Legal Officer, Cook Inlet Tribal Council*

## ACTION

### Five actions tribal leaders and advocates should take:

- Oppose the current Inter-Agency MOA governing the expanded 477 law, and call upon the federal government to amend the MOA – in direct consultation with tribal nations and the 477 Tribal Workgroup – so that it fully complies with the law's spirit and letter.
- Contact your Congressional representatives to demand they restore full funding for vital tribal workforce development and related grant programs (WIOA, BIA's Job Placement and Training, Department of Education's Adult and Vocational Education, Tribal TANF, Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation programs, etc.), adjusted to account for the growing size of the service population and cost increases for services such as tuition for post-secondary educational institutions.
- Contact your Congressional representatives to advocate against the transfer of WIOA Section 166 programs to the State Adult formula grant program.
- Call upon the Department of Labor to ensure that all seats on DOL's NAETC remain filled at all times (see page 1), and that the NAETC meets at least two times per year to advance its critical work.
- Contact HHS's Administration for Children and Families to demand that it implement the recommendations of NCAI's Tribal TANF Task Force.



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