



Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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WASHINGTON – Interior Associate Deputy Secretary James E. Cason today announced that the Indian Affairs Office of Indian Energy and Economic Development (IEED) has approved a \$106,000 grant to the Rosebud Sioux Tribe in South Dakota for the Intertribal Council On Utility Policy (ICOUP) to train tribal members for employment in the wind turbine construction, installation, operation, and maintenance industry.

“The Northern Great Plains tribes have significant wind resources flowing over their lands,” observed Cason. “This grant will support ICOUP’s efforts to increase the technical capacity among tribes to undertake and sustain large-scale wind energy projects that will move them closer to energy self-sufficiency.”

The grant will fund ICOUP’s preparation of curriculum for a two-week intensive course in wind turbine construction, retention of a tribal educator for a wind energy employment training class, and production of a multi-part DVD outlining wind turbine construction and operation methods and digital documentation of the training course for distribution to tribes outside of the Northern Plains area.

ICOUP sought the IEED grant on behalf of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe, which passed a resolution urging the Interior Department to fund a wind employment training program. In its resolution the tribe cited unemployment levels on Indian reservations in the Northern Great Plains ranging from 65 percent to 80 percent and stated that wind energy development “represents an important opportunity for new jobs and a better quality of life for tribal members.”

The tribe plans to install a 30-megawatt wind farm on its reservation in the coming year and has secured a power purchase agreement. ICOUP proposes to design and conduct the wind energy construction training program in anticipation of the Rosebud wind farm development project.

Cason noted that since the majority of trained wind construction crews reside outside of ICOUP member areas, the tribes must contract with such crews to assist with their wind projects. However, training tribal members would create locally available crews to reduce the cost of constructing what amount to large-scale economic development projects both on and off reservation.

“For tribes to undertake wind projects that can bring employment opportunities to their communities, they must have tribal members who possess the necessary skills in wind energy development, operation and maintenance,” Cason said. “Training is essential for ensuring that such projects succeed in becoming independent, self-sustaining business ventures for those they serve.”

The grant will be administered under IEED’s 477 Program. Established in 1994 under the Indian Employment, Training and Related Services Act (Public Law 102-477), the program allows federally recognized tribes to combine funds from up to 12 federal employment, training and welfare reform programs administered by Interior and the Departments of Labor and Health and Human Services into a single, tribally operated program with a single reporting system. Participating tribes, which includes the Rosebud Sioux Tribe, can devote up to 25 percent of their total 477 funding for economic

development projects to provide employment opportunities for their members.

ICOUP was organized in 1994 to provide a tribal forum for discussing utility policy issues, particularly those concerning telecommunications and energy utility operations and services, from both regulatory and economic perspectives. Its member tribes are located in North and South Dakota, Nebraska and Iowa. The nonprofit organization is chartered by the Rosebud Sioux Tribe and has its headquarters on the Rosebud Sioux Reservation.

The Office of Indian Energy and Economic Development was established to provide high-level support for the Department's goal of serving tribal communities by providing access to energy resources and helping tribes stimulate job creation and economic development, and supporting the President's National Energy Policy by fostering development of domestic energy resources to reduce the nation's dependence on foreign energy sources.

For more information, contact Dr. Robert Middleton, Director, Office of Indian Energy and Economic Development, at (202) 219-0740. For information on the Intertribal Council On Energy Policy, visit www.intertribalcoup.org.

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