Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – Eight federally recognized tribes will collectively receive nearly $2.5 million in grant awards from the U.S. Departments of Education and Interior to bolster their educational programs and advance self-determination goals through the development of academically rigorous and culturally relevant programs.

William Mendoza, director of the White House Initiative on American Indian and Alaska Native Education, and Dr. Charles "Monty" Roessel, director of the Bureau of Indian Education announced the awards today, during the 7th annual White House Tribal Nations Conference. The grants are funded through the Department of Education's State-Tribal Education Partnership (STEP) program, and the U.S. Department of the Interior's Bureau of Indian Education's Tribal Education Department (TED) program.

"Through these partnerships, we will be putting tribes in the driver's seat by designing culturally responsive programs to help Native children reach their education potential," Mendoza said. "These efforts will help reduce the achievement gap and make our Indian students more college and career-ready."

"These competitive grants will help strengthen tribal education departments as they set high academic standards and incorporate tribal culture, language and history into their curriculum," said Roessel. "This program reflects our commitment to tribal self-determination. It expands tribes' roles in developing educational goals for their communities and ensuring they have the resources to operate these systems designed for their students."

The goal of the STEP program is to build the capacity of tribal education agencies to assume state and local administrative functions based on policies formed under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. The TED grant program was created to improve the quality of education in BIE-funded schools under the auspices of a Blueprint for Reform, a guide put forth by President Obama and developed in the White House Council on Native American Affairs. The report was developed based on contributions from tribal governments and key federal and tribal officials.

The STEP program provides $1,766,232 to five Native American communities in Idaho, Montana and Oklahoma to assist tribal schools in partnering with states and local school districts to develop culturally sensitive teaching strategies, curriculum materials and data-sharing that can improve attendance, raise graduation rates and reduce dropouts among Native youth. STEP's pilot program, featuring tribal-state-local educational partnerships was conducted from 2012 to 2015, and today's announcement marks the first new round of funding for the STEP program. The grants provide funding from 2015 to 2019. For more information about the STEP program, visit www2.ed.gov/programs/step/index.html.

The TED program provides $700,000 in grants to support the efforts of four tribal nations to strengthen their education departments, restructure their school governance, assume control over their BIE-funded schools, and develop curriculum for their students' unique academic and cultural needs. With today's

announcement, 10 tribal governments have received a total of $2 million in TED grants this year. This is the second round of TED program grants the Interior Department has awarded this year. The first round of awards in August 2015 provided a total of $1,350,000 to six tribes: the Acoma Pueblo, Santa Clara Pueblo, Hopi Tribe, Navajo Nation, Rosebud Sioux Tribe, and Standing Rock Sioux Tribe. For more information on TED grants, please visit http://bie.edu/Programs/TribalEduDeptGrantProgram/index.htm.

The following tribes will receive STEP funding. (One tribe, the Muscogee Creek Nation in Oklahoma, was awarded the STEP and TED grants):

- The Chickasaw Nation, Okla. ($500,000)
- Nez Perce Tribe, Idaho ($330,000)
- Coeur D'Alene Tribe, Idaho ($330,000)
- The Muscogee (Creek) Nation, Okla. ($318,463)
- Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, Mont. ($287,769)

The following tribes will receive TED funding:

- Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians, Mich. ($300,000)
- Leech Lake Band, Minnesota Chippewa Tribe, Minn. ($200,000)
- Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, Miss. ($150,000)
- The Muscogee (Creek) Nation, Okla. ($50,000)

As part of the Interior Department, the BIE oversees 183 elementary and secondary schools located on 64 reservations in 23 states, serving more than 48,000 students. Of these, 54 are BIE operated and 129 are tribally operated.

In conjunction with President Obama's Generation Indigenous or "Gen-I" initiative, the Interior Department is leading an effort to provide students attending BIE-funded schools with a world class education and transform the agency to serve as a capacity-builder and service-provider for tribes in educating their youth.
