Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

Media Contact: Nedra Darling, OPA-IA Phone: 202-219-4152
For Immediate Release: August 18, 2015
Print PDF

WASHINGTON – Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Indian Affairs Kevin Washburn today announced that DOI University will pilot an interactive training course for Federal employees and tribal representatives engaged in tribal consultation, and will launch the course at the National Indian Programs Training Center in Albuquerque, N.M., on August 25-27, 2015.

The course, Consulting with Tribal Nations, was developed in response to the mandate found in the Department's Policy on Consultation with Indian Tribes issued in December of 2011. That policy mandates training as a means of improving the government-to government relationship with Federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native tribes and increasing consultation regarding decisions that affect tribal interests. In 2012, DOI University convened a cross-Departmental team of subject matter experts who developed the Consulting with Tribal Nations course and the online prerequisite training to improve Interior's capacity to promote communication, collaboration and consultation with tribes and execute the consultation provisions of Section VII of the Department's Policy on Consultation with Indian Tribes.

"As a Department, we have a great deal of experience in tribal consultation and yet we can continue to improve," said Assistant Secretary Washburn. "The training course will provide the knowledge, skills and tools necessary for tribal and Interior staff to make consultation more productive. The online and classroom work is designed to increase awareness and understanding of tribal sovereignty, the federal trust responsibility to tribes and cross-cultural perspectives. Participants will come away with an understanding of how best to engage in tribal consultation and listen to tribes, improving the Department's ability to make policy for Indian Country and beyond."

The Departmental team, led by DOI University and comprised of representatives from eight Interior bureaus, created a tribal consultation competency model that became the framework for the training. The model includes seven competency clusters: Legal and Technical Expertise; Intercultural Communication; Building Relationships; Effective Consultation Practices; Interest-based Consultation; Decision-making; and Facilitation Skills, and 47 associated competencies. Using the competency model as a guide, the team developed the learning objectives and a draft course outline for the online prerequisite training and the classroom-based course. DOI University contracted with the Falmouth Institute, a consulting and training company dedicated to serving Indian Country, to complete the course development. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's National Conservation Training Center was instrumental in helping with the production of the prerequisite training videos.

Consulting with Tribal Nations is open to Interior and other federal employees and to tribal members and will be offered at a variety of training sites across the country. The course builds on the knowledge gained in the online prerequisite training and provides an opportunity to participate in a mock consultation. The online prerequisite training is a series of three 45-minute videos that cover Tribal Sovereignty, Doctrine of Trust Responsibility, and an Overview of the Consultation process. These online videos are an excellent resource for those employees who are not involved in tribal consultations, but who need to be familiar with Interior's commitment to tribal consultation. The two-and-a-half-day classroom-based Consulting with Tribal Nations is targeted to those who need more in-depth knowledge

of the tribal consultation fundamentals, process and practices. Tuition is $525 per person. DOI employees can register through DOI Learn. Others can register at https://doiu.doi.gov/.

The obligation to engage in meaningful consultations with the Federally recognized tribes is rooted in the United States Constitution and Federal treaties, statutes, executive orders and policies. Federal agencies are required to consult with Federally recognized tribes on actions that will have substantial, direct effect or implications for them, including regulations, rulemakings, policy, guidance, legislative proposals, grant formula changes, and operational activities. The tribal consultation training will reinforce Interior's commitment to strengthen the government-to-government relationship with the tribes and promote a new era of consultation.

Tribal consultations should emphasize trust, respect and shared responsibility; promote enhanced communication; and demonstrate a meaningful commitment to ensure continuity in the process. Enhanced consultations honor the government-to-government relationship between the United States and Indian tribes, and comply with the Presidential Memorandum of November 5, 2009, which obligates Interior to meet the spirit and intent of Executive Order 13175.

Interior's Department-wide policy on tribal consultations seeks the appropriate level of decision-maker in the process; promotes innovative communication; details early tribal involvement in the design of a process that could affect tribal interests; and captures a wide range of policy and decision-making processes under the consultation umbrella. Inclusion of tribes in the Department's decision-making processes help ensure that future Federal action is achievable, comprehensive, long-lasting, and reflective of tribal wisdom.
