



# United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

Washington, DC 20240

**APR 13 2020**

Dear Tribal Leader:

I am pleased to announce our plans for distribution of Operation of Indian Programs and Operations of Indian Education Programs funding appropriated in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act), P.L. No. 116-136, to address coronavirus (COVID-19) prevention, preparedness, and response in American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) communities.

The CARES Act authorizes \$522 million in additional direct appropriations resources for COVID-19 response activities through the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and Bureau of Indian Education (BIE). Of the total funding, \$453 million was provided through the BIA and \$69 million was provided through the BIE.

Of the \$453 million provided for BIA, \$420 million will be utilized for direct payments to tribes. Of this total, \$380 million will be distributed to all Tribes through Aid to Tribal Government, \$20 million will be provided through Welfare Assistance and the remaining \$20 million will be held in temporary reserve to address unexpected surges in need for areas such as Welfare Assistance or elsewhere.

Tribes participating in Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (ISDEAA) contracting or compacting will receive these one-time, non-recurring non-base funds through modifications to their existing ISDEAA agreements. These funds must be used for the purposes of prevention, preparedness, and response to COVID-19 and must be used within the allowable confines of the program, function, service, or activity (PFSA) in which they are received. Aid to Tribal Government (ATG) funding will be allocated based on tribal enrollment data which will "group" tribes by enrollment numbers into funding levels. The amounts allocated to each funding level will increase as tribal enrollment increases. Tribes with the lowest enrollment numbers will receive at least \$60,000. Welfare Assistance will also be allocated by Tribe based on enrollment data for a pro-rata distribution of the \$20 million appropriated; this, along with waivers of the regulations governing eligibility in areas such as pool of eligible applicants and payment thresholds, will allow a greater number of AI/AN individuals and families to receive assistance.

Tribal leaders are encouraged to engage their BIA Regional Directors and Office of Self Governance (OSG) contacts. For example, not all tribes currently have funding agreements which include Aid to Tribal Government or Welfare Assistance as a PFSA. For ISDEAA Tribes in this situation, it will be necessary to engage in discussions with your BIA Region or Self Governance office to document the Tribe's ability to add a new program line item to their contract/compact in accordance with 25 U.S.C. § 5321. Indian Affairs stands ready to assist with this requirement to ensure a smooth process for Tribes.

Tribes not participating in ISDEAA contracting or compacting who wish to receive Aid to Tribal Government or Welfare Assistance as a direct service will receive their allocation of these funds according to normal direct service processes.

Of the remaining \$33 million provided in the CARES Act, the BIA will direct funding toward needs related to facility deep cleaning, quarantine of inmates, overtime costs, and IT investments to enhance telework capabilities and Wi-Fi connectivity.

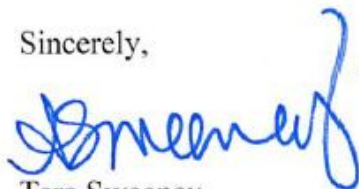
Of the \$69 million provided to BIE, \$23 million will be provided to Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCU), with the remaining \$46 million used across Bureau Operated and Tribally Controlled Schools to address operational needs. The TCU funding will be distributed on a pro-rata basis across institutions. The operational funding of \$46 million will be used to enhance online distance learning for students, IT hardware capacity and Wi-Fi connectivity, as well as provide resources to support unexpected services directly associated with COVID-19.

To help explain our approach for allocating funding, we will hold a call with Tribal Leaders on Wednesday, April 15, 2020, from 3:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m. EST. Below is the call-in information.

Conference Call: 1-888- 452-9848  
Participant Password: 3081480

Thank you for your continued partnership as we work collectively to support our AI/AN communities during this COVID-19 public health emergency.

Sincerely,



Tara Sweeney  
Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs