

10-Year National Plan on Native Language Revitalization

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PREPARED BY
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Executive Summary

The 10-Year National Plan on Native Language Revitalization (“the Plan”) calls for historic action to address the United States government’s role in the loss of Native languages across the lower 48 states, Alaska, and Hawai’i. The Plan directly confronts the systematic and deliberate campaign by the United States to forcibly assimilate Native peoples and eradicate Native languages and cultures—a campaign extensively documented in the *Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative Investigative Reports*,¹ enshrined in legislation such as the Civilization Fund Act of 1819, and formally acknowledged by President Biden in his October 2024 apology to Native communities.²

The legacy of forced assimilation continues to threaten the existence of many Native languages, and the legacy of the boarding school era echoes in today’s educational experience for Native students. Congressional action is required now to preserve Native languages. Without such action, some estimates suggest that by 2050, fewer than 20 Native languages may still be in use in America, down from about 167 that are currently spoken.³

Investing in Native languages can have significant benefits for Native students’ educational experiences.⁴ The Native American Languages Act, 25 U.S.C. §§2901-2906 (1990), states “there is convincing evidence that student achievement and performance, community and school pride, and educational opportunity is clearly tied to respect for, and support of, the first language of the child or student.” Native language instruction improves student engagement, persistence, and academic performance.⁵ This plan calls on the federal government to make strategic investments to support core content instruction in Native languages, with the goal of improving overall educational outcomes for Native youth.

Congressional authorization and funding of this Plan will reduce the number of vulnerable and endangered Native languages and increase the number of proficient Native language speakers, as defined by Native Americans.

This Plan identifies potential investment opportunities that will help to inform the Federal budget development process, but it is not a budget document and does not imply approval of any specific action or investment. All activities and recommendations included in this Plan are subject to resource constraints and weighing of priorities as part of the annual budget formulation process, as well as the authorities and availability of appropriations provided by Congress.

¹ Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs Bryan Newland. *Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative Investigative Report Volumes I & II*. Department of the Interior, May 2022 – July 2024.

² The White House. “Remarks by President Biden on the Biden-Harris Administration’s Record of Delivering for Tribal Communities, Including Keeping His Promise to Make This Historic Visit to Indian Country | Laveen Village, AZ.” 25 Oct. 2024.

³ Bureau of Indian Affairs. “Native Language Revitalization: Literature Review.” Aug., 2023.

[bia.gov/sites/default/files/dup/inline-files/bia_native_american_revitalization_lit_review_draft_08182023.pdf](https://www.bia.gov/sites/default/files/dup/inline-files/bia_native_american_revitalization_lit_review_draft_08182023.pdf)

⁴ S.2167 - 101st Congress (1989-1990): *Native American Languages Act*. 30 Oct., 1990, www.congress.gov/bill/101st-congress/senate-bill/2167.

⁵ William G Demmert. “Improving Academic Performance among Native American Students: A Review of the Research Literature.” ERIC, 1 Dec. 2001, eric.ed.gov/?id=ED463917.

Implementation of the Plan will:

Expand Access to Immersion Language Environments

- Support **100 language nests**—educational programs that provide childcare and instruction in a Native language for children under the age of seven—to create a new generation of first language speakers.
- Fund **100 new K-12 Native language immersion schools**, educational institutions where at least 50% of instruction is conducted in a Native language.
- Support the creation of **37 centers dedicated to language preservation, instruction, and cultural studies** to revitalize and support language and culture.
- Provide **scholarships for families** to access language and cultural resources.

Support Community-Led Revitalization Efforts

- Support **100 mentor-apprentice programs**—initiatives pairing fluent speakers with adult learners for intensive language transmission—to ensure fluent speakers can pass on their knowledge to other adults in the community.
- Restructure the way federal funds are allocated to support Tribal sovereignty and self-determination through **flexible funding models that flow money directly to Native Nations** using mechanisms such as P.L. 638 contracts and compacts and P.L. 477 agreements, allowing Native communities to determine how to best use resources for their language priorities.
- Fund **community-based summer, supplemental, and after-school programs** to increase learning opportunities outside of traditional classrooms.

Develop, Grow, and Sustain Native Language Support Networks

- Recruit and train **10,000 Native language teachers** to meet the need for educators.
- Establish a **\$100 million innovation fund** to encourage tribes, individuals, and the private sector to develop new solutions for language revitalization through curriculum and technology.
- Support **technical assistance providers** for schools and programs, including those with specific expertise in urban Indian settings and with the Native Hawaiian Community.

Implementation of this plan would require an investment of \$16.7 billion between 2025 and 2035 – \$1.5 billion per year. This is proportionate to the need *and* the historical harm. Between 1871 and 1969, the U.S. government allocated at least \$23.3 billion (adjusted for inflation) to the federal Indian boarding school system and related assimilation policies. This \$16.7 billion proposal reflects the United States’ current policy to preserve, protect, and promote the inherent rights of Native Americans to use, practice, and develop their own languages.

The Plan addresses a chronic under-investment in Native language revitalization to date. For instance, despite being the agency tasked with providing Native children with a culturally relevant high-quality education, the Bureau of Indian Education did not receive any funding to support Native language revitalization until 2017. Current funding for Native language revitalization programs totaled only \$41.5 million in FY2024, split across three agencies administering competitive grant programs—

HHS, DOI, and the Department of Education. While this represents progress, it remains insufficient compared to the deliberate and strategic actions taken by the federal government to isolate Native children from their families and forcibly suppress their languages, cultures, and traditions.

The Plan encompasses American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian communities, collectively referred to as “Native,” “Native Americans,” or “Native Nations.” It voluntarily aligns with the *United Nations International Decade of Indigenous Languages 2022-2032*, and builds upon existing Native language revitalization efforts.

Key aspects of the Plan include:

- Supporting Native language learners from birth through adulthood.
- Shifting significant funding for language revitalization efforts from competitive grants to direct funding for Tribes through mechanisms such as Public Law 638 contracting and compacting and Public Law 477 work force development agreements.
- Providing comprehensive support structures for school development, teacher preparation, and curriculum.
- Supporting a wide range of institutions, including tribal schools, Bureau of Indian Education schools, public schools, higher education institutions, scholarship programs, community-led programs, and Native American serving urban organizations.
- Establishing an Office of Native Language Revitalization within the White House Council on Native American Affairs to maintain and coordinate implementation of this Plan.

The United States has an obligation to ensure that Native Nations continue to exist and flourish. Past U.S. policies are responsible for the eradication or near eradication of many Native languages. Tribal and other Native efforts to protect, preserve, and promote language revitalization have been heroic, and the country should grow these models of success. By proposing investments in these initiatives, the Plan aims to fulfill treaty obligations—including those provisions that promised education for Native children—and trust responsibilities to Alaska Natives and other tribes which did not enter treaties with the U.S. government. The Plan also acknowledges trust obligations to Native Hawaiians, whose language also was severely affected by forced U.S. Government federal assimilation policies.

By taking the actions proposed in this plan, the United States can help ensure Native languages thrive over generations.

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Statement of Policy

The Native American Languages Act, 25 U.S.C. §§2901-2906 (1990) declares that “it is the policy of the United States to preserve, protect, and promote the rights and freedom of Native Americans to use, practice, and develop Native American languages.” Additionally, the Federal government has a nation-to-nation relationship with the 574 federally-recognized tribes fulfilled through an affirmative treaty and trust responsibility. The treaty and trust responsibilities are duties born by the entire federal government and its branches and agencies.

For many years, Native leaders and communities have cited language revitalization and preservation as important to their individual and collective identity, self-preservation, self-determination, and sovereignty. They are critical priorities because language is at the heart of a Native community’s unique cultural identity, traditions, spiritual beliefs, knowledge, and self-governance.

The Native American Languages Act stipulates that “the status of the cultures and languages of Native Americans is unique and the United States has the responsibility to act together with Native Americans to ensure the survival of these unique cultures and languages.” Other clear policy statements of current law under the Native American Languages Act include:

It is the policy of the United States to—

...

- (2) *allow exceptions to teacher certifications requirements for federal programs, and programs funded in whole or in part by the federal government for instruction in Native American languages ...*
- (3) *encourage and support the use of Native American languages as a medium of instruction in order to encourage and support—*
 - (A) *Native American language survival,*
 - (B) *educational opportunity,*
 - (C) *increased student success and performance,*
 - (D) *increased student awareness and knowledge of their culture and history, and*
 - (E) *increased student and community pride;*
- (4) *encourage state and local education programs to work with Native American parents, educators, Indian tribes and other Native American governing bodies in the implementation of programs to put this policy into effect;*
- (5) *Recognize the right of Indian tribes ...to use the Native American languages as a medium of instruction in all schools funded by the Secretary of the Interior;*
- (6) *Fully recognize the inherent right of Indian tribes ... to take action on, and give official status to, their Native American languages for purposes of conducting their own business;*

Inaction is no longer acceptable. Many Native American languages are endangered as a direct result of past federal policies. Today, the U.S. government is called upon to work urgently and boldly to invest in and support Native communities in revitalizing their respective languages so that they are once again vibrantly spoken, heard, practiced, and normalized in everyday use.

Drawing attention to “the critical loss of Indigenous languages” and “the urgent need to preserve, revitalize and promote Indigenous languages” through “urgent steps at the national and international levels,” the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution proclaiming the period of 2022-2032 the International Decade of Indigenous Languages (IDIL).⁶ With the United States’ support for the IDIL, and its 2023 decision to rejoin the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)—the UN agency directing IDIL—the initiative provides the federal government with a welcome opportunity to consider, share, and enhance its support for Native language revitalization. Tribal governments and Native leaders in the U.S. are already active in the IDIL, participating in its Global Task Force and hosting their own IDIL events.⁷ Tribal governments and Native communities also have called for each nation to take responsibility for harms to Indigenous languages that they perpetrated through assimilationist policies. Further guidance for language rights is available in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007), which the U.S. has supported since 2010.

The Administration is committed to undoing a legacy of forced assimilation by developing and implementing this 10 Year National Plan, which signifies a necessary step on the path toward an era of Native language revitalization.

⁶ UN General Assembly (2020). *Rights of Indigenous Peoples: Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 18 December 2019*. Retrieved: <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n19/426/26/pdf/n1942626.pdf>

⁷ See Principal Chief Chuck Hoskin, Jr., <https://celj.cu.law/?p=929> and Shawnee Chief Ben Barnes , <https://celj.cu.law/?p=923>

The Importance of Native Language

Native languages comprise part of the vibrant cultural tapestry of Native American communities. They are woven into traditional ways of life and shape contemporary perspectives. The path to community revitalization includes reconnecting Indigenous children and communities to their languages, which embed many concepts that shape the foundation of Native cultures.

The health of Native languages in the United States, though, endures constant and serious threats, with some Native languages having no fluent speakers and others facing similar prospects. A 2016 joint analysis by the U.S. Department of Education, U.S. Department of the Interior, and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services found:

There are fewer languages spoken today in the United States than at any time in previous history. In fact, many of the languages Indigenous to North America are on the “endangered languages list.” Estimates of current Native American languages spoken in the United States range from 155 to about 175. According to the Linguistic Society of America, out of hundreds of languages that were once spoken in North America, only 194 remain, and over three quarters of them are endangered. Thirty-four (34) of the languages are spoken by adults, but by few children; 73 are spoken almost entirely by adults over 50; 49 are spoken only by a few people, mostly over 70; and five (5) may have already become extinct. The relatively “safer” Native languages include 33 languages that are spoken by both adults and children, but even many of these are seeing declines in the percentage of children who are speakers of their Native language. The languages that are not being transmitted to children, or that are being learned by only a few children, are endangered and more likely to become extinct.⁸

Without comprehensive and concerted action, these languages—and the cultural practices and Indigenous knowledge tied to those languages—may cease to exist. Some estimates suggest that by 2050, fewer than 20 Native languages may still be in use in America.⁹

For more than a century, the United States imposed policies to deliberately dispossess Native people of their lands, initially situating Indian Education efforts within the War Department as part of a strategy to target children through forced assimilation.

“Congress acknowledged that from ‘the beginning, Federal policy toward the Indian was based on the desire to dispossess him of his land. Education policy was a function of our land policy.’” - Department of the Interior, Federal Indian Boarding School Investigative Report Vol. I, quoting from the Kennedy Report.

⁸ U.S. Department of Education, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and U.S. Department of the Interior. “A New Chapter for Native American Languages in the United States: A Report on Federal Agency Coordination and Support.” Oct., 2016. [acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ana/a_new_chapter_for_native_american_languages_in_the_united.pdf](https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ana/a_new_chapter_for_native_american_languages_in_the_united.pdf)

⁹ Bureau of Indian Affairs. “Native Language Revitalization: Literature Review.” Aug., 2023. [bia.gov/sites/default/files/dup/inline-files/bia_native_american_revitalization_lit_review_draft_08182023.pdf](https://www.bia.gov/sites/default/files/dup/inline-files/bia_native_american_revitalization_lit_review_draft_08182023.pdf)

These assimilation policies devastated Native American communities, families, and children with disastrous and destructive multi-generational consequences still felt today. Beginning with the Indian Civilization Fund Act in 1819, the United States enacted laws and implemented policies establishing and supporting Indian boarding schools across the nation. From 1871 onward, federally run Indian boarding schools stole Native American children from their families, homelands, and communities. The government forcibly removed Native children without parental consent and relocated them to distant residential facilities where their Native identities, languages, traditions, and beliefs were forcibly suppressed. The conditions in these schools were usually harsh, abusive, and sometimes deadly. Federal records “indicate that the United States viewed official disruption of the Indian family unit as part of Federal Indian policy to assimilate Indian children,”¹⁰ to make it easier for the federal government and settlers to gain access to Native lands.

“The Federal Indian Boarding School policy and the pain it has caused will always be a significant mark of shame, a blot on American history” - President Biden, October 25, 2024.

Much work remains to address the ongoing consequences of past federal actions, even though official U.S. policy no longer aims to assimilate Indian children or separate them from their languages and cultures. Additionally, further work remains to end unintended and unintentional policies harming Native communities. These past and ongoing policies have resulted in trauma felt by individuals and communities that have deep and far-reaching socioeconomic consequences such as low life expectancy, loss of and disconnection from culture and land, and persistent poverty. Tribal communities and Native people today are dealing with the historical trauma of boarding school abuse and being displaced. Tribal communities are seeing fewer and fewer fluent speakers pass the languages on to future generations.

In creating this Plan, the Education Committee of the White House Council on Native American Affairs (WHCNA) held consultation sessions with Native language revitalization subject matter experts, community members, educators, and tribal leaders. Consultations consistently stressed the importance of supporting Native language revitalization, with Tribal leaders making clear that their Native languages serve vital purposes in all aspects of sovereignty, culture, governance, education, health, and identity. The framework for the Plan is based on four interconnected components: awareness, recognition, integration, and support. These pillars were developed during the 2022 Tribal Leader Consultation sessions.

¹⁰ Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs Bryan Newland. *Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative Investigative Report Volume I*. Department of the Interior, May 2022. Page 38.

Pillar	Description
Awareness	Create national awareness of the importance of Native languages to Native Americans and the country, the current crises of Native language loss, and the urgency for immediate action.
Recognition	Formal policy recognition of the role the U.S. government played in erasing Native languages, the state of crises, and the need for federal resources and support for Native language revitalization.
Integration	Integrate Native language revitalization in mainstream American society, including U.S. federal policies, and outline the need for the creation of Native language revitalization ecosystems.
Support	Identify supporting policies, resources, and funding, including federal and philanthropic, for Native language revitalization.

The Education Committee recognizes the United States’ historical role in endangering Native languages¹¹ and commits to partnering with Tribes and Native American communities to foster a renaissance of languages to begin to correct an ongoing wrong. The Education Committee views the Plan as a long-term, all-of-government strategy for the revitalization, protection, preservation and reclamation of Native languages, and will work with Native Nations and appropriate partners, including non-profit organizations serving both on reservation and off-reservation, rural and urban Native communities, and subject-matter experts.

Enacting a plan to remediate the effects of forced assimilation is a matter of federal Indian policy and would help fulfil the government’s trust obligations to Tribes and Native communities. Over the past century, since the 1924 Snyder Act recognized American Indians as U.S. Citizens, a few seminal reports and acts—the Meriam Report (1928), the Johnson O’Malley Act (1934), the Kennedy Report (1969), the Indian Education Act (1972), the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (1975), the Indian Nations At Risk Report (1991), the BIE Blueprint for Reform (2014)¹², and the Department of the Interior Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative Investigative Report (Vol. I in 2022 and Vol. II in 2024)—have edged the U.S. forward to reconciling federal Indian policy and language loss by recommending a policy shift away from assimilation and toward embracing Native cultures, languages, and keeping Native families intact. At a time of near Native language extinction, however, the country needs more than a nominal-steps-forward approach.

¹¹ Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs Bryan Newland. *Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative Investigative Report Volumes I & II*. Department of the Interior, May 2022 – July 2024.

¹² <https://www.bia.gov/as-ia/opa/online-press-release/secretary-jewell-announces-plan-improve-achievement-promote-tribal>

Goals

*Through this 10 Year National Plan on Native Language Revitalization, it is **the goal of the United States government to reduce the number of vulnerable and endangered Native languages, increase the number of proficient Native language speakers by 25% before 2036 (as defined by Native Nations), and create a network of resources led by Native Nations to ensure Native languages can thrive for generations to come.***

Current data on Native language speakers is limited and inconsistent across Native Nations and on the federal level. No comprehensive database tracks the number of speakers for each Native language. This data gap stems from variations in how Native communities define and measure speaker proficiency, limited resources allocated to tracking this information, and geographic dispersion.

Despite data limitations, we are setting an ambitious and measurable goal—a 25% increase in the number of proficient Native language speakers in the next 10 years. Recognizing that proficiency is different in each context, and that each Native community will need to define what constitutes a proficient speaker, this is a goal comparable to some of the most successful language revitalization efforts in history.

By adopting this plan the United State Government will state, clearly, that it is committed to reversing centuries of language loss and will work urgently and boldly to invest in and support Native communities in revitalizing their respective languages so that they are once again vibrantly spoken, heard, practiced, and normalized in everyday use.

To meet this goal, the Plan proposes a significant new investment in Native Language Revitalization across three primary areas: **expanding access to immersive language learning environments, supporting community led revitalization efforts, and developing Native language support networks.**

Priorities and subgoals

Priority 1: Expand Access to Immersion Language Environments

- Support **100 language nests**—educational programs that provide childcare and instruction in a Native American language for children under the age of seven—to create a new generation of first language speakers (Subgoal 1.A)
- Fund **100 new K-12 Native language immersion schools**, educational institutions where at least 50% of instruction is conducted in a Native language (Subgoal 1.B)
- Support the creation of **37 centers dedicated to language preservation, instruction, and cultural studies** to revitalize and support language and culture (Subgoal 1.C)
- Provide **scholarships for families** to access language and cultural resources (Subgoal 1.D)

Priority 2: Support Community-Led Revitalization Efforts

- Support **100 mentor-apprentice programs**—initiatives pairing fluent speakers with adult learners for intensive language transmission—to ensure fluent speakers can pass on their knowledge to other adults in the community (Subgoal 2.A)
- Restructure the way federal funds are allocated to support Tribal sovereignty and self-determination through **flexible funding models that flow money directly to Native Nations** using mechanisms such as P.L. 638 contracts and compacts and P.L. 477 agreements, allowing Native communities to determine how to best use resources for their language priorities (Subgoal 2.B)
- Fund **community-based summer, supplemental, and after-school programs** to increase Native language learning opportunities outside of traditional classrooms (Subgoal 2.C)

Priority 3: Develop, Grow, and Sustain Native Language Support Networks

- Recruit and train **10,000 Native language teachers** to meet the need for educators (Subgoal 3.A)
- Establish a **\$100 million innovation fund** to encourage tribes, individuals, and the private sector to develop new solutions for language revitalization through curriculum and technology (Subgoal 3.B)
- Support **technical assistance providers** to create schools and programs, including those with expertise in urban Indian settings and with the Native Hawaiian Community (Subgoal 3.C)

Priority 1: Expand Access to Immersion Language Environments

Many promising approaches to language revitalization focus on creating spaces where Native languages are the primary medium of communication.¹³ The Plan proposes a significant investment in expanding immersion learning environments where most of the instruction occurs in Native languages in order to develop new fluent speakers, with proposed investments across the age continuum, from early childhood to adulthood, to reach multiple generations.

Subgoal 1.A: Support 100 language nests to create a new generation of first language speakers.

Language nests are a powerful tool for revitalizing Native languages, offering an immersive environment for the youngest learners. These early childhood programs, inspired by successful models which originated in Māori communities in New Zealand and spread around the world, create spaces where children from birth to age seven are surrounded by their Native language and culture. In language nests, fluent speakers—including elders from the community and trained educators—interact with children, passing on language and cultural traditions during a critical period for language development. These programs provide Native language exposure in natural settings, fostering first language proficiency.

The importance of language nests was recognized by Congress in the Esther Martinez Native American Languages Preservation Act (42 U.S.C. 2991b-3(b)(7). Pub. L. 109-394), which provides

¹³ Reinhardt, M.J., Moses, T., Arkansas, K., Ormson, B., Ward, & G.K. (2020). Culture and Language. National Comprehensive Center at Westat. <http://www.nationalcompcenter.org/>

competitive grants to support language nests. The Plan proposes dramatically expanding the federal investment in language nests to support 100 such language nests across the United States over the next decade. Existing language nests could receive per-pupil funding, while also allowing the establishment of new additional nests. Some experts estimate there are currently less than 50 active language nests in the United States.¹⁴ Communities interested in launching new nests would partner with a technical assistance provider (as described in Subgoal 1.E) to engage in a two-year planning process before the nest opens. Each nest would be unique, tailored to the community's needs and cultural context. At an estimate of 15 students per nest, the 100 nests supported by the Plan would serve approximately 1,500 children annually by 2035.

Subgoal 1.B: Fund 100 new K-12 Native language immersion schools.

Currently, there are approximately 40 K-12 Native language immersion schools operating across the United States. They provide environments where at least 50%—and ideally, at least 80%—of instruction occurs in Native languages. These existing schools would be eligible for funding under the Plan, which aims to support the establishment of 100 additional schools across the United States over the next decade, opening an average of ten schools per year. These could be traditional public schools, tribally controlled schools, new “wings” of existing BIE schools, or other Native-serving institutions.

Immersion schools develop strong language skills while reinforcing cultural identity and promoting academic achievement. New immersion schools would be developed through collaborations between technical assistance providers, founding school teams, and the local community, ensuring that each school's mission, vision, and curriculum align with the community's unique language goals and cultural practices. Each school will undergo a 2-to-3-year planning process to address curriculum development, school design, facilities, and operations, receiving a \$1.5M startup grant to cover expenses during the planning period.

Once operational, immersion schools would be funded at a rate of \$25,000 per student per year, in line with the amount spent by federally operated schools through the Department of Defense¹⁵, via new Congressional funding. The Plan also proposes \$15 million per school for facilities expenses. Historically, BIE schools, tribally controlled schools, and Native American charter schools have struggled to establish adequate facilities, with many schools naming facilities as the greatest barrier in providing access to an excellent education. The Plan's investment, upon approval and funding by Congress, would ensure each immersion school has the resources to build or renovate a facility to serve Native students well.

Schools may serve students from kindergarten through 12th grade, with each school determining the exact grades through a design process. Based on the small, rural nature of many Native communities, many schools will be small, with an estimated average enrollment of 75 students per school at capacity. When fully operational, the 100 K-12 immersion schools will serve a goal of approximately 7,500 students per year. The Plan intends for the schools to integrate with other

¹⁴ Interview with Kara Bobroff, Chair, National Fund for Excellence in American Indian Education. Oct., 2024.

¹⁵ Mervosh, Sarah. “Who Runs the Best U.S. Schools? It May Be the Defense Department.” *The New York Times*. December 10, 2023. <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/10/10/us/schools-pandemic-defense-department.html>

efforts, including the language nests (Subgoal 1.A) and teacher training programs (Subgoal 3.A), creating a seamless pathway for language learning from early childhood through adulthood.

The Plan points the way to establishing 100 immersion schools in 10 years. There are outstanding questions about how to achieve this goal, and policy makers will need to address:

- The legal authorization and certification structure for immersion schools, which may be traditional public schools, tribally controlled schools, new “wings” of existing BIE schools, or other Native-serving institutions. In the long term Congress may need to remove language in BIE’s annual appropriations that prevents BIE from opening new schools or expanding existing schools, but doing so needs to be done carefully to avoid unanticipated funding consequences for existing BIE schools.
- Which agency will be responsible for funding immersion schools.
- How to gather data from immersion schools.

Subgoal 1.C: Support the creation of 37 centers dedicated to language preservation, instruction, and cultural studies to revitalize and support language and culture

The Plan proposes to invest in language revitalization institutes, including those at Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), creating a network of higher education centers dedicated to Native language preservation and instruction.

Through a new grant program, each institute would receive an annual grant of \$1.5 million to support its operations and programs. The institutes will cover two-year intensive language learning programs, at various levels of fluency, focusing on conversational proficiency and developing academic vocabulary necessary for professional and educational contexts. Each center, including those at TCUs, will work in partnership with the Native Nation(s) representing the language group(s) it teaches to define goals related to proficiency and fluency, as these concepts differ depending on circumstance. Language institutes may, at their discretion, also choose to launch efforts in curriculum development and teacher training, combining traditional approaches with modern pedagogical techniques.

Subgoal 1.D: Provide scholarships for families to access language and cultural resources.

While the proposed investment in language nests and K-12 immersion schools is substantial, these programs can only serve a fraction of Native youth each year. Urban Indigenous youth and those living in communities not served by a language nest or immersion school deserve the opportunity to learn their language as well. To meet this need, the Plan proposes a comprehensive scholarship program for Native people in the United States which will make \$500 scholarships available to 200,000 Native individuals annually, at an investment of \$100M per year. Scholarships may be used to pursue learning opportunities in Native language and/or to support traditional cultural activities. The National Fund for Excellence in American Indian Education could administer the scholarship fund through a cooperative agreement with the Department of the Interior. The scholarship funding process could be similar to how the Native Forward Scholars Fund (formerly known as the American Indian Graduate Center) administered Cobell Scholarships, assuming such action is allowable through the National Fund’s enabling legislation. The scholarship program would prioritize supporting individuals and families who are not reached by investment in educational immersion programs.

Priority 2: Support Community-Led Revitalization Efforts

Native leaders and subject matter experts had a clear message throughout listening sessions: Native communities must lead their own revitalization efforts. Therefore, the Plan proposes investing in direct funding for Native Nations and sustainable, community-organized initiatives.

Subgoal 2.A: Support 100 mentor-apprentice programs to ensure fluent speakers can pass on their knowledge to other adults in the community

Mentor-apprentice programs are a proven method for language transmission, pairing fluent speakers with adult learners in an immersive, hands-on environment.¹⁶ When the mentor and apprentice are together, they speak only in the Native language. These programs can be particularly effective for languages with fewer remaining speakers, allowing for intensive, one-on-one language instruction.

The Plan proposes to invest \$640.4 million between 2025 and 2035 to establish and support 100 mentor-apprentice programs across Native communities which will support the rapid development of adult speakers who can, in turn, become teachers or mentors themselves, creating a multiplier effect in language revitalization efforts. Each program will pair two mentors with approximately four apprentices. Both the mentors and the mentees will receive a salary or stipend to engage in a period of intensive language learning.

Typical mentor-apprentice programs run for one to three years, with pairs spending 10-20 hours per week together, conducting daily activities in their Native language. Each program will support approximately 4 mentor-apprentice pairs per year. The average annual budget for each program is estimated to be \$500,000, adjusted for anticipated inflation.

Each interested tribe and Native community will have the flexibility to design their mentor-apprentice program to suit their local context. Selection criteria for participation will vary from community to community, but generally, mentors will be fluent speakers with a strong desire to pass on the language, while apprentices will be committed adult learners with the potential to become future teachers or community leaders.

Subgoal 2.B: Restructure the way federal funds are allocated to support sovereignty and self-determination through flexible funding models that flow money directly to Native Nations using mechanisms such as P.L. 638 contracts and compacts and P.L. 477 agreements, allowing Tribal communities to determine how to best use resources for their language priorities

One of the Plan's most substantial investment is a proposed \$624M annual program that will send money directly to tribes and Native Hawaiian Organizations to support their language revitalization efforts.

The inconsistent and fragmented system of competitive grants for Native language revitalization, split across DOI, HHS, and ED, often struggles to meet the needs of Native communities. Competitive programs pit Native Nations against each other for limited resources. Grants often come with restrictive conditions, and the short-term nature of many grants makes it difficult for

¹⁶ Hinton, L., Florey, M., Gessner, S., and Manatowa-Bailey, J. (2018). The Master-Apprentice Language Learning Program, pp. 127-136. *The Routledge Handbook of Language Revitalization*.

Native Nations and community-based organizations to pursue, implement, and sustain long-term language revitalization strategies.

To address these issues, the Plan proposes a fundamental shift from competitive grants to a more flexible and reliable funding model, an approach inspired by successful models in other areas of Tribal governance. Under the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (ISDEAA) of 1975 (Public Law 93-638), the U.S. has committed to self-determination in the direction of Federal services, including those in education. Through self-determination contracts outlined in Public Law 93-638 (often known as “638 contracts”) and broader self-governance compacts (“638 compacts”), the federal government transfers responsibility for federal programs, functions, services, and/or activities to the tribe. Tribes have used these mechanisms broadly. Current FY 2024 estimates from DOI show that there are 526 tribes utilizing self-determination contracts, 295 with self-governance compacts, and nearly 3,200 active contracts and/or compacts.¹⁷ Similarly, Tribal 477 Programs enabled by Public Law 102-477, the Indian Employment, Training and Related Services Demonstration Act of 1992, allow Tribes and tribal organizations flexibility to exercise self-determination in utilizing federal funds for employment, training, and related service programs, with twelve federal Departments authorized to participate in the 477 program.¹⁸

Providing funds via contracts and compacts provides advantages over competitive grant funding:

- Consistency and predictability in funding, allowing for long-term planning around language revitalization
- Autonomy in decision-making in how funds are used, respecting tribal sovereignty
- Reduced administrative burden, freeing up time, energy, and resources currently spent on grant applications and reporting

The proposed shift towards contracts and compacts for language revitalization is in alignment with *Executive Order 14112: Reforming Federal Funding and Support for Tribal Nations*, which requires federal agencies to take action to ensure federal funding for Tribes is accessible, flexible, and equitable.¹⁹

To facilitate this transition, the Plan recommends:

1. Tasking WHCNA with determining how to integrate the Plan with Public Law 93-638 and/or Public Law 102-477, or proposing another approach to ensure tribal self-determination in utilizing funds.
2. Securing Congressional authorization and appropriation for dedicated funding for Native Nations for language revitalization.

¹⁷ See memo to the House Committee on Natural Resources re: “Advancing Tribal Self Determination: Examining Bureau of Indian Affairs’ 638 Contracting.”

https://naturalresources.house.gov/uploadedfiles/hearing_memo_-_sub_on_ia_ov_hrg_on_638_contracting_03.06.24.pdf

¹⁸ Spike Bighorn, Statement on Tribal 477 Programs to the Senate Committee for Indian Affairs. Nov. 6, 2019. <https://www.doi.gov/ocl/tribal-477-programs>.

¹⁹ <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2023/12/11/2023-27318/reforming-federal-funding-and-support-for-tribal-nations-to-better-embrace-our-trust>

3. Providing training and technical assistance, via the Office of Native Language Revitalization and technical assistance providers, to Tribal governments to support the transition to the new funding model and to develop language policy, programs, and education initiatives.

The Plan proposes that all 574 federally recognized tribes receive funding on a non-competitive basis to support language revitalization, a shift which would respect Tribal sovereignty and allow each community to allocate resources according to their specific language needs, supporting self-determination and removing bureaucratic barriers to effective revitalization.

Subgoal 2.C: Fund community-based summer, supplemental, and after-school programs to increase learning opportunities outside of traditional classrooms

To complement the immersive language environments provided by language nests and immersion schools, the Plan proposes \$672.4 million over 10 years to support community-based summer, supplemental, and after-school programs. This funding will maintain at least 50 summer programs annually and 500 after school programs across the nation.

These programs would extend language learning beyond the classroom, offering opportunities to integrate language acquisition with traditional cultural practices and reinforcing classroom learning. The programs are an important way to reach urban Indigenous youth who may not have access to full-time immersion schools.

Programs can be implemented nationwide, either in conjunction with existing language nests and immersion schools or as standalone initiatives. Native Communities will have autonomy in designing and implementing these programs to meet their needs.

Priority 3: Develop, Grow, and Sustain Native Language Support Networks

To support new schools, language nests, and community-based programs, the plan proposes investing \$3.27 billion in activities that create the conditions necessary for these institutions to succeed.

Subgoal 3.A: Recruit and train 10,000 Native language teachers to meet the need for educators

The growth in immersion schools under the plan requires an unprecedented investment in recruiting, training, and supporting Native language teachers. To meet this need, the plan proposes to recruit and train 10,000 new Native language teachers over the 10-year period, with an investment of \$2.88 billion. This ambitious goal would address one of the most significant barriers to Native language revitalization: the shortage of qualified teachers who are fluent in Native languages and trained in effective pedagogy. The Plan intends to recruit, train, and support 1,000 new teachers per year.

1,000 new teachers per year would exceed any similar teacher training effort but is an achievable goal. Consider:

- With 574 federally-recognized tribes and the Native Hawaiian Organizations, this is an average of less than 2 new teachers per tribe, per year.

- The 100kin10 initiative, launched by the White House in 2011, trained more than 108,000 STEM teachers in 10 years.²⁰ Success in language revitalization requires less than 10% of that number of new teachers.

This number of new teachers exceeds the amount that will be needed by the language immersion programs and language nests proposed by the Plan, ensuring enough Native language teachers to staff traditional public and BIE schools.

Under this approach, aspiring teachers will complete a two-year training process, including preparation in both their Native language and effective teaching methods, and will receive ongoing support following the completion of their training. Training will specifically prepare teachers for immersion settings, and training programs will work with relevant certification agencies to ensure graduates meet all mandatory certification requirements. Some programs may be developed in partnership with TCUs. Certain programs may be housed at other colleges and universities. While the specifics of each program will need to be developed by Native communities, the Plan encourages the creation of flexible training models that can accommodate smaller cohorts and distance learning for smaller language communities.

Subgoal 3.B: Establish a \$100 million innovation fund to encourage new solutions for language revitalization

Technology can be a powerful tool for language revitalization. As one example, many Native Nations have experimented with technological approaches to language learning, including partnerships around Sitimaxa (Chitimacha); Iñupiaq (Coastal) and Iñupiaq (Kobuk/Selawik); Iñupiaq (North Slope); and Diné Bizaad (Navajo).

Recent improvements in generative artificial intelligence (AI) systems, such as large language models, bring the possibility that AI could be used to document, preserve, translate, and teach Native languages. For language families with more written and recorded data, it may be possible to train large language models that understand and speak only a given Native language. As the field of virtual reality (VR) improves, it may also be possible to create immersive language learning environments. Companies may not choose to build these technologies independently, given market dynamics, but the federal government can spark breakthroughs in language learning.

The Plan proposes a new \$100 million innovation fund to initiate public-private partnerships that can create innovative approaches to language revitalization, including the development of online-based tools for off-reservation learners. This fund, which could be administered by the National Fund for Excellence in American Indian Education, a congressionally-chartered organization, will encourage collaboration among Native Nations, nonprofits, and the philanthropic and private sectors to help communities find new ways to sustain and grow their language efforts.

Subgoal 3.C: Support technical assistance providers to create schools and programs, including those with expertise in urban Indian settings and with the Native Hawaiian Community

Establishing new schools is difficult. Revitalizing endangered languages may be even harder. To do both at the same time, building successful immersion schools and language nests, educators will

²⁰ <https://beyond100k.org/100kin10-has-surpassed-their-goal-to-support-and-prepare-100000-excellent-stem-teachers-for-american-classrooms/>

need the opportunity to learn from others who are further along in the process. The Plan proposes to fund three to ten technical assistance providers specializing in Native education and language revitalization to meet the need for this sort of expert guidance and support.

These providers will offer support in areas such as strategic planning, curriculum development, school design, budgeting, facilities planning, and operations. They will run professional development programs, including fellowships, to provide opportunities for educational leaders to learn from the successful models and experiences of other Native language schools, creating a network of language revitalization programs. Recognizing the unique challenges faced by urban Indian populations and the Native Hawaiian Community, at least one provider will specialize in supporting language revitalization efforts in each setting. Technical assistance providers will work directly with founding school teams to provide capacity throughout the school design and launch process.

The technical assistance providers would be funded based on the number of immersion schools and language nests they support. During the planning phase of each program, providers will receive \$200,000 per year per project. Once schools and language nests begin operations, support will be reduced to \$100,000 per year per project.

An important part of the providers' work will be supporting schools and communities in developing culturally appropriate definitions of language proficiency, recognizing, and valuing various levels of language competence and the unique status and history of each language.

Service providers will be selected through a competitive process. Given their role in incubating innovative programs, these technical assistance providers need to be funded in the first year of the Plan implementation to support the initial round of planning for language nests and immersion schools.

Implementation

The implementation of the 10-Year National Plan on Native Language Revitalization requires a coordinated approach across multiple federal agencies, tribal governments, and community organizations. We propose two bodies be responsible for coordinating implementation: a newly established Office of Native Language Revitalization within the White House Council on Native American Affairs and the revitalized National Fund for Excellence in American Indian Education.

Establishing the Office of Native Language Revitalization

The Plan is ambitious and needs a federal office tasked with ensuring its success. The small amount of existing Native language funding is spread across eight programs in three departments. The federal government has already recognized the challenge posed by this fragmented approach, and the Durbin Feeling Native American Languages Act, which became law on January 5, 2023, mandates that the government “improve interagency coordination for purposes of supporting revitalization, maintenance, and use of Native American languages” and “reduce duplication, inefficiencies, and barriers Native American language communities face in accessing Federal programs to support efforts to revitalize, maintain, or increase the use of Native languages.”²¹

We recommend that Congress authorize and fund a new Office of Native Language Revitalization within the White House Council on Native American Affairs in the Department of the Interior. The Office of Native Language Revitalization would be responsible for ensuring the success of this Plan and aligning the federal agencies supporting language revitalization. The Office would coordinate Native language programs across federal agencies, establish and oversee funding mechanisms for Native Nations, and enter into agreements with Tribes and other entities. As part of this process, the Office of Native Language Revitalization would create plans to implement all programs envisioned in this Plan and ensure the Plan is inclusive of existing programs such as NAL@ED.

Implementation of this Plan would require \$2.5 million annually (inflation-adjusted) to support the staffing and operations of the Office of Native Language Revitalization within WHNCAA in DOI.

As one of its first actions, the Office should establish an Interagency Working Group including representatives of all current programs to discuss aligning existing funding:

Department of the Interior, Indian Affairs		FY 24 Enacted
Office of Indian Economic Development	Living Languages Grant Program	\$6.50 M
Bureau of Indian Education	Native Language Instruction	\$7.50 M
Department of Health and Human Services		
Administration for Native Americans	Esther Martinez Immersion	\$5.44 M
	Preservation and Maintenance	\$11.87 M
	Durbin Feeling Native Languages Act of 2022 (Survey)	-
Department of Education		
	Native American Language Grant (NAL@ED)	\$2.89 M
	Native American Language Resource Center (NALRC)	\$2.97 M
	Native American and Alaska Native Children in Schools (NAM)	\$5.00 M

²¹ see <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/senate-bill/1402>

In the meantime, the Administration should designate at least one current WHCNA staff member to coordinate across agencies to advance the Plan's goals.

National Fund for Excellence in American Indian Education

The National Fund for Excellence in American Indian Education (the National Fund), established by Congress in 2000 to improve educational opportunities for Native students, can serve as an important implementation partner. As a congressionally chartered organization, similar to the National Parks Foundation, the National Fund has the ability to receive and distribute both federal and private funds. Although dormant for decades, the National Fund relaunched in 2022 and is authorized to operate as a nonprofit corporation.

While most of the proposed funding would flow to Native Nations, the National Fund has the potential to manage competitive grant programs that leverage public-private partnerships, which could include funding for summer and after school programs, mentor/apprentice programs, technical assistance providers, Tribal Colleges and Universities, and the \$100 million innovation fund. Congress should consider direct appropriations to the National Fund to administer grant programs in these areas, and the Office of Native Language Revitalization should consider how to position the National Fund to minimize the administrative burden of the Plan on federal agencies. In particular, the National Fund may be helpful in selecting, vetting, and funding technical assistance providers.

The authorizing legislation for the National Fund tasks it with improving educational opportunities for students attending Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) schools. Recognizing that less than 10% of Native children in the United States attend a BIE school and that many strategies in the Plan extend beyond the BIE, the plan recommends that Congress expand the National Fund's purview, allowing it to support all Native students in the country. Unlike other congressionally-authorized funds, the National Fund for Excellence in American Indian Education receives no annual appropriation. The Plan recommends Congress appropriate annual funding of at least \$2 million annually (inflation adjusted) to staff and run the National Fund.

Technical Assistance Providers

As outlined in subgoal 3.c, technical assistance providers play a significant role in supporting the Plan's successful implementation outside of the government. The Office of Native Language Revitalization and National Fund should select providers early in the Plan's implementation process, with an emphasis on finding partners with experience in school design, financial planning, facilities planning, Indigenous languages, and curriculum development. Under the Plan, technical assistance providers would be responsible for supporting a portfolio of schools and communities. Each will design its own approach to supporting the creation and launch of language nests, immersion schools, teacher training, and mentor-apprentice programs. Communities will opt into support from a technical assistance provider, with a requirement that each supported language nest and immersion school must have a technical assistance partner.

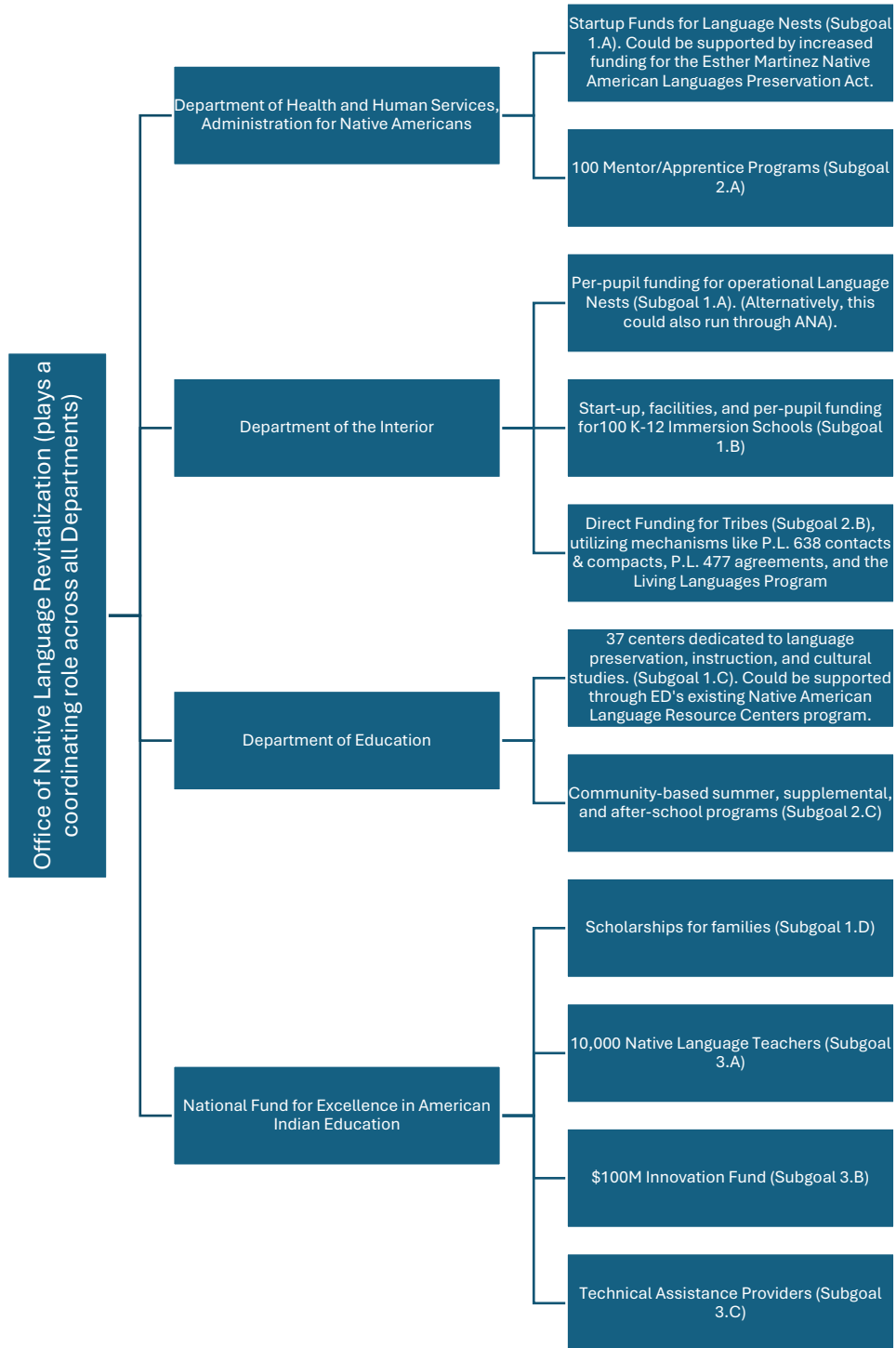
Role of Technical Assistance Providers in Accreditation

Existing immersion schools and language nests are spread across the country and have a variety of legal statuses, including tribally-operated programs, traditional public schools, tribally-controlled schools, public charter schools, and private nonprofit corporations.

Technical assistance providers can play the role of developing standards for schools and language nests to meet to receive federal funding. While the Plan does not propose specific standards, it recommends that they should at a minimum ensure that students are receiving a high-quality education with at least 50%, and ideally 80%, of the day in a Native language. The Plan envisions technical assistance providers partnering with the federal government to develop these standards, taking inspiration from those used by existing language revitalization grant programs, K-12 charter school authorization processes, and 638 and 477 grants and compacts, with an emphasis on promoting tribal sovereignty and self-determination among Native communities. In developing the standards, Technical Assistance Providers may want to consider whether Tribal Education Agencies (TEAs) can play a role in accrediting or certifying that a school meets a certain threshold. Both existing and new immersion schools and language nests developed under the Plan should meet these standards.

Possible Division of Responsibilities Across Federal Departments

The following diagram shows one way that the strategies proposed by the Plan could be implemented within existing federal departments. It is provided for illustrative purposes only. Ultimately, the proposed Office of Native Language Revitalization should coordinate an Interagency Working Group to align efforts across the federal government.



Given the fragmented nature of current funding, some programs could live within multiple departments. For instance, funding for immersion schools and language nests could be located within DOI, the Administration for Native Americans, or potentially within ED via the NAL@ED and Native Hawaiian Education program. The Administration should task the Office of Native Language Revitalization with determining the most suitable mechanism for funding each strategy within the Plan.

While not indicated on the chart, the Office of Native Language Revitalization may also consider learning from, and possibly partnering with, the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center, which has significant expertise in language education.

Activities and Timeline

What follows is a high-level overview of proposed Plan implementation activities and timelines, with more detail outlined in Appendix A. The recommended Office of Native Language Revitalization would play a significant role in building out the implementation details.

Immediately

Laying the Foundation

- The current administration should take steps to lay the foundation for the Office of Native Language Revitalization under the White House Council on Native American Affairs, including detailing a current member of WHCNAA to serve as the lead for implementing this plan.
- The administration also could establish interagency working groups and a cooperative agreement with the National Fund for Excellence in Native American Education.
- The identified WHCNAA lead for the Plan can begin consultation sessions with Tribes and members of Congress to secure further input.

2025-2026

Program Development

- Congressional approval for the Plan.
- Fund and staff the Office of Native Language Revitalization, which begins coordinating across departments.
- Select technical assistance providers.
- Identify initial schools and communities to begin the planning process for creating immersion schools and language nests. Begin funding the first cohort of schools.
- Begin direct funding for Native Nations, mentor-apprentice programs, language institutes, and 10 existing immersion schools and language nests.

2026-2028

Initial Implementation

- Technical assistance providers each support a cohort of immersion schools and language nests in their planning process.
- Office of Native Language Revitalization revises the Plan with detailed implementation benchmarks and activities.
- National Fund begins to play an important implementation support role, managing competitive grant programs.
- Complete facilities master planning and establish accountability frameworks.

2028-2035

Ongoing Implementation

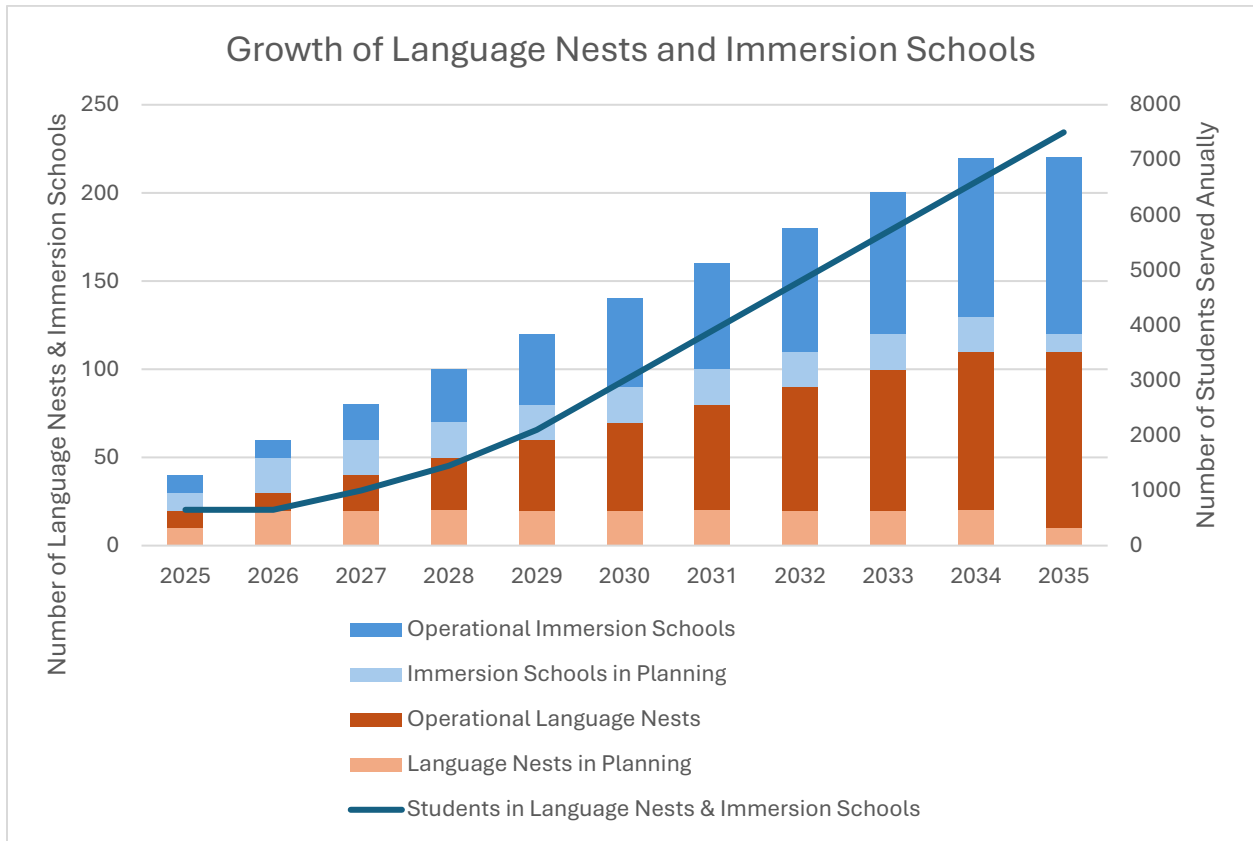
- The number of seats in immersion schools and language nests grows each year, with approximately 10 new immersion schools and language nests becoming operational annually.
- Mentor-apprentice programs, scholarships, language and culture centers open and expand.

By 2036

Key Metrics

- 100 operational language nests
- 100 operational immersion schools
- 37 language and culture institutes
- 10,000 trained Native language teachers
- Mentor-apprentice programs in 100 communities
- 25% growth in Native language speakers

Growth Plan

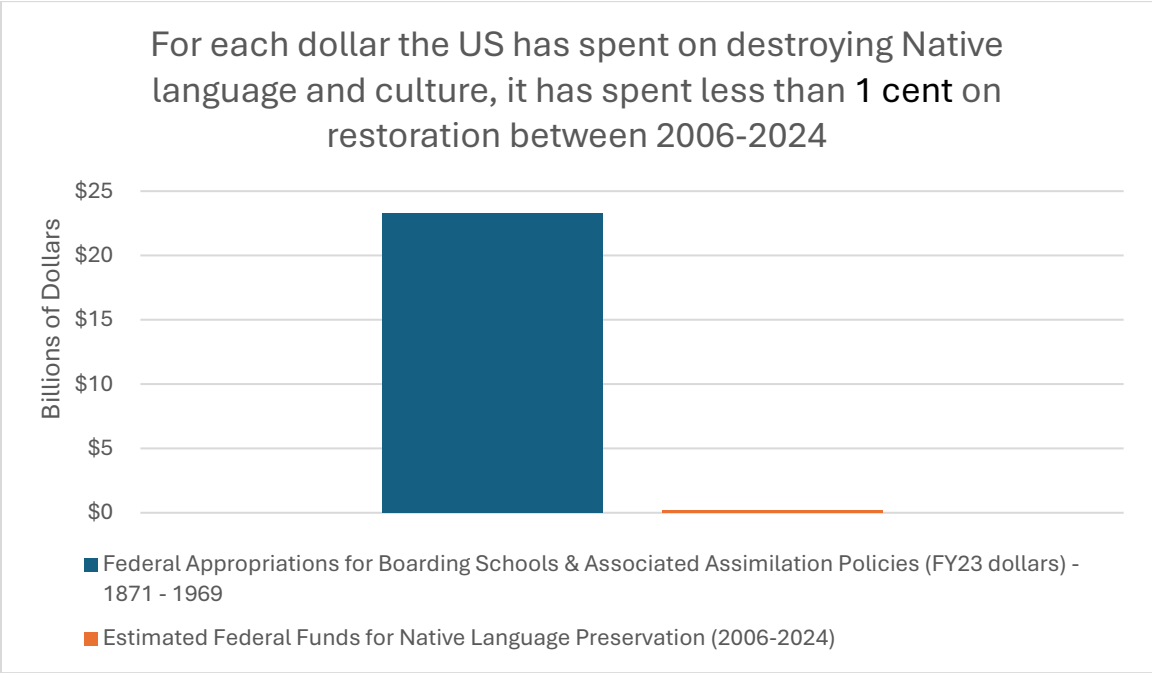


Budget

“Tribes...estimate it to take 2,880 total immersion contact hours to become conversational in their language. There is no shortcut.” –Tribal consultation participant

Implementation of the Plan would require a significant investment of \$16.7 billion over 10 years, proportionate to the need and the historical harm. Between 1871 to 1969, the U.S. government allocated at least \$23.3 billion (adjusted for FY23 inflation) to the federal Indian boarding school system and related assimilation policies. The Plan’s proposed investment reflects the United States’ current policy to preserve, protect, and promote the inherent rights of Native Americans to use, practice, and develop their own languages.

In doing so, the Plan addresses a chronic under-investment in Native language revitalization to date. No comprehensive assessment of U.S. government language revitalization spending exists, but by piecing together grants made across programs managed by the Department of the Interior, Health and Human Services, and the Department of Education, the best estimate is that the federal government has spent less than 1 cent on language revitalization for every dollar spent on boarding schools and assimilationist policies. The implications are devastating. The Bureau of Indian Education, for instance—the agency tasked with providing Indigenous students with a culturally-relevant high-quality education—reports that it received no funding for language revitalization until 2017, that current funding levels do not allow for hiring a single full-time language teacher in most schools, and that no BIE schools have a full immersion or dual-language program.



In recent years more funding has been appropriated for language revitalization—funding for FY2024 totaled \$41.5M million, split across three agencies administering competitive grant programs (HHS, DOI, and the Department of Education), an important step forward but insufficient compared to the magnitude of the challenge and historical harm.

Budget Overview

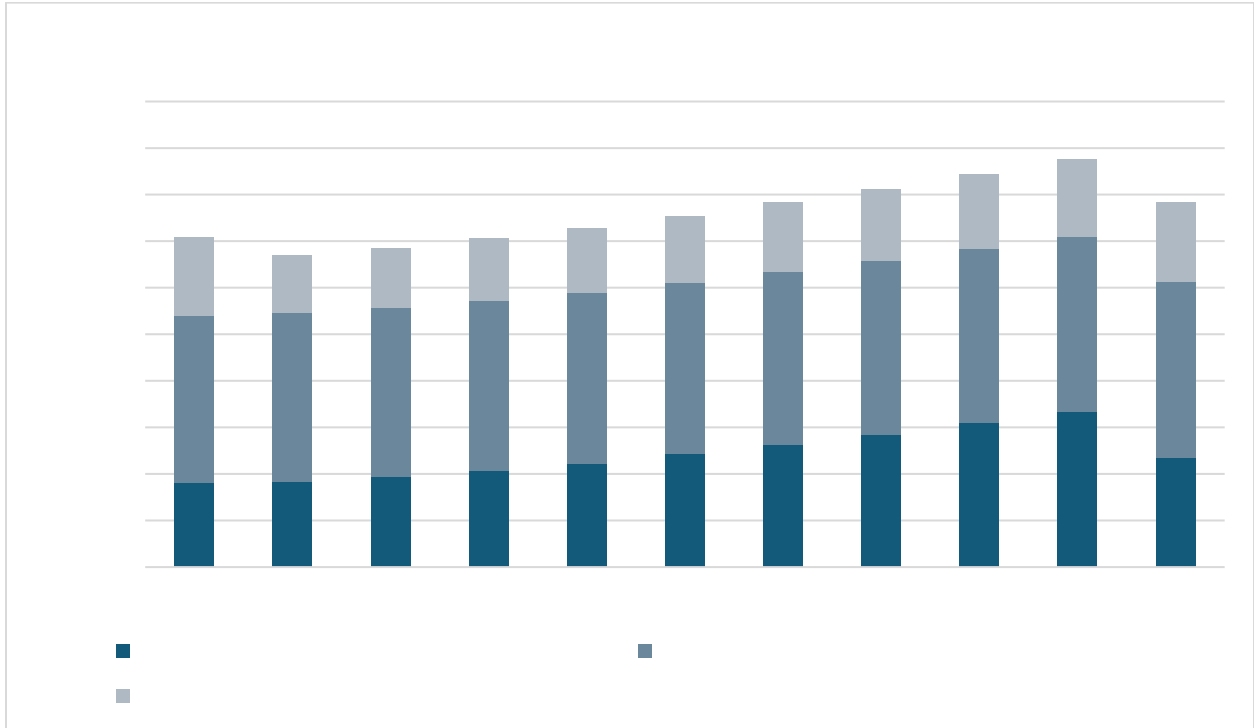
“Our tribal community-based Lakota immersion school does not receive yearly funding like the BIE and public schools do. It is funded through grants and private donations. It costs about \$1.2 million a year to run the kindergarten through third grade immersion and an additional \$100,000 per grade for a total of \$2.1 million a year.” –Tribal consultation participant

It takes an estimated 2,000 to 3,000 hours to become a proficient Native language speaker,²² so considerable support and investments are needed to achieve the goals of the Plan. Due to chronic underinvestment, many Native language revitalization programs will need to be built from scratch.

10 Year National Plan on Native Language Revitalization	
Priority 1: Expand Access to Immersion Language Environments	
Language Nests	\$ 711.0 M
Language Immersion Schools	\$ 2,790.4 M
Language Institutes	\$ 710.8 M
Scholarships for Families	\$ 1,100.0 M
Priority 2: Support Community-Led Revitalization Efforts	
Mentor-Apprentice Programs	\$ 640.4 M
Grants for Tribes and Native Hawaiian Organizations	\$ 6,864.0 M
Summer & After School Programs	\$ 608.4 M
Priority 3: Build and Sustain an Indigenous Language Ecosystem	
Recruit and Train Native Language Teachers	\$ 2,881.8 M
Innovation Fund	\$ 100.0 M
Technical Assistance Providers	\$ 230.7 M
Administrative Costs	
Office of Native Language Revitalization	\$ 32.0 M
National Fund for Excellence in American Indian Education	\$ 25.6 M
Total 10-Year Investment in Native Language Revitalization	\$16.70 B

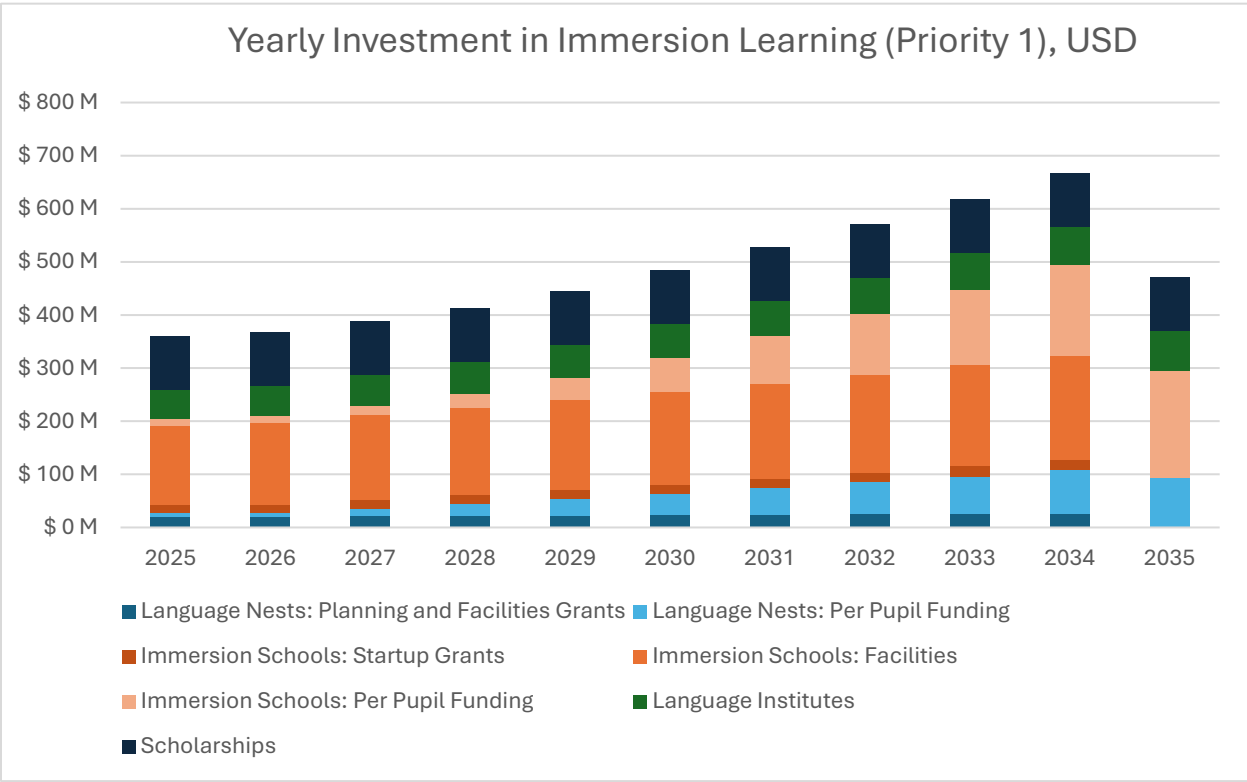
²² Figure drawn from testimony from Native Language experts in community engagement outreach sessions.

These investments are spread over a period between 2025 and 2035 (11 calendar years), for an **average annual investment of approximately \$1.5 billion.**



Investments in Immersion Language Environments

During tribal consultation sessions, numerous tribal leaders requested funding for language immersion programs. Language immersion is the most successful approach to developing new language speakers and can formally be done through language nests and K-12 immersion schools. These small schools are powerful tools for language learning and can be expensive to establish and operate.



The Plan proposes a staggered approach, with ten new language nests and K-12 immersion schools beginning the planning process each year, while others grow their enrollment. As a result, the cost structure for immersion learning ramps over time.

Costs drop in the Plan’s final year when there are no new school startup grants or facilities grants.

Language Nests

Under the Plan, it would cost \$711 million from 2025 to 2035 to establish and fully fund 100 language nests, with 10 new nests being added to the plan each year. This funding would be allocated to building new nests and, where appropriate, funding existing ones. In the first two years (2025 and 2026), the Plan envisions funding 10 already-established language nests that have been vetted. The plan estimates that the average language nest takes \$2 million to start and \$700,000 to operate annually, with anticipated enrollment of 15 students. The Plan recommends setting aside \$2 million to planning grants for 100 new nests, anticipating a 2-year planning period to establish the mission and vision for the nest, train teachers, obtain curriculum, secure a facility, and hire the staff. This is a comparatively low startup cost; most language nests are small, so they can usually operate out of existing buildings, minimizing facilities expenses. Nests will be supported by technical assistance providers during this time. The Plan recommends that 10 new nests will enter the planning process each year, beginning in 2025. By 2035 planning grants have been made to all 100 nests created under the Plan, so the expenses for nests in that year are only the per-pupil costs.

Immersion Schools

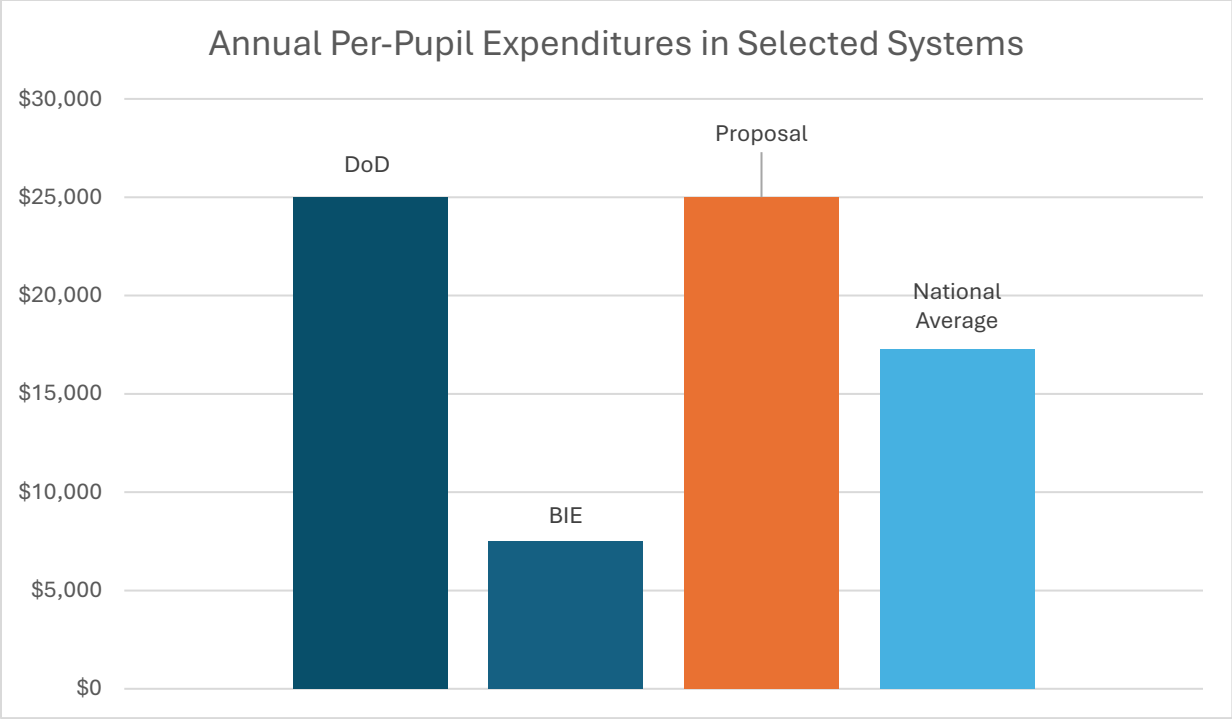
K-12 immersion schools represent the Plan’s largest recommended investment in immersion learning, at \$2.79 billion from 2025 through 2035.

Facilities are the largest cost driver for new immersion schools. In the experience of many in the Native education space, facilities are one of the greatest barriers establishing new schools in tribal communities, and DOI states “sufficient stable or permanent sites and structures for Hawaiian-immersion or Hawaiian-focused schools” are the top barrier in developing new schools serving Native Hawaiian students. Given the added expense of construction in rural communities, the Plan identifies the need for \$15 million per new school (inflation-adjusted for future years) to build, procure, and/or renovate and furnish a facility. Some schools may be able to achieve cost-savings on facilities by leasing space from existing public or BIE schools, or by creating new immersion schools that are embedded within existing BIE schools.

The proposed budget for immersion schools also includes a one-time startup grant of \$1.5 million (again, inflation-adjusted for future years) to cover the school’s first two years of operation, before it has students. In the experience of new school operators, this is sufficient to pay a small founding team to plan for the school, launch it, and develop the necessary curriculum and materials, when supported by a technical assistance provider.

Once each immersion school is operational, the Plan estimates and recommends per-pupil expenditures of \$25,000 per year. This amount exceeds the amount of funding received by the BIE, but is appropriate compared to other state and federal systems. Notably, while most public schools in the United States are funded primarily by state and local tax dollars, there is already a proven model for federal funding of schools when the federal government has decided investment is worthwhile: Department of Defense schools. Schools operated under the Department of Defense Education Activity average approximately \$25,000 in expenditures per student, and achieve strong results. According to the *New York Times*, DoD schools may be “the best U.S. schools.”²³

²³ <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/10/10/us/schools-pandemic-defense-department.html>



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In contrast to the BIE, which is under-funded, the plan recommends funding K-12 Native language immersion schools at the same level as DoDEA schools, to ensure a strong educational experience for Native children.

Language Institutes

Implementation of the Plan would require \$710.8 million from 2025-2035 for 37 Language Institutes, many of which may be hosted at Tribal Colleges and Universities, funded at \$1.5 million per year annually (inflation-adjusted for future years).

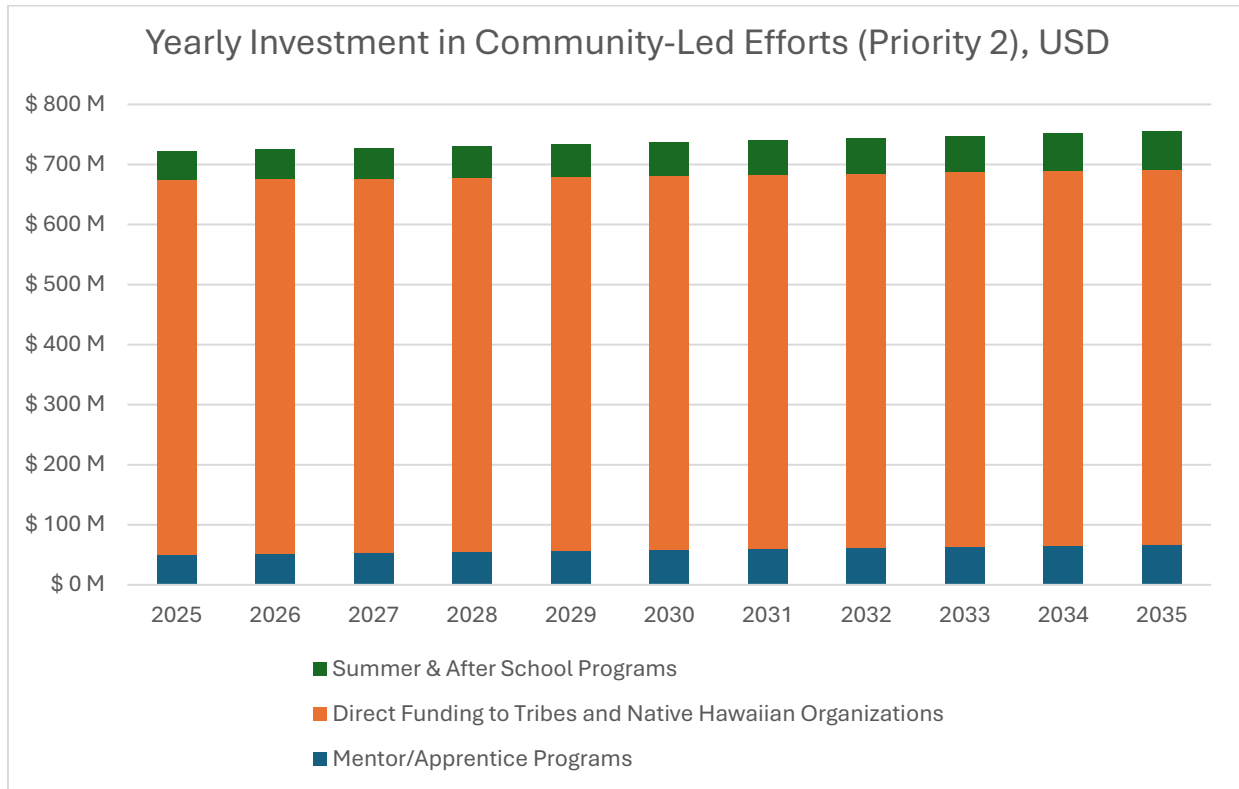
Scholarships

Under the Plan, an investment of \$1.1 billion in scholarships for families would establish a scholarship program to make 200,000 annual scholarships of \$500 each. Scholarships will first go to young people who other aspects of the Plan do not reach, and can be used for educational expenses, cultural activities, and enrichment. As an example, this funding could be used to allow Native Hawaiian children to attend private preschools with a Hawaiian-immersion focus, as the Office of Native Hawaiian Relations with DOI notes that many parents must decide between state-funded preschool or language-focused schools which charge tuition. Scholarships can also support urban Native youth who may not have access to language nests or immersion programs in their city.

²⁴ The BIE reports a per-pupil figure of \$7,500. This number does not include facilities or related expenses.

Investments in Community-Led Revitalization Efforts

The Plan recommends over \$700 million annually be allocated to investments in community-led revitalization efforts. Most of these funds are directed to Tribes and Native Hawaiian Organizations.



Mentor-Apprentice Programs

The plan recommends supporting 100 mentor/apprentice programs each year, at a cost of \$500,000 per program, inflation adjusted. This amount is intended to provide salaries or stipends for at least six individuals in each program: at least two mentors and at least four language learners. The total investment over the Plan period would be \$640.4 million.

Direct Funding for Native Communities

“Every federally recognized tribe in this country, and even the ones that aren’t federally recognized, ought to receive base funding for language revitalization as part of their compact with the federal government. It shouldn’t be something we have to apply for. It shouldn’t be some competitive thing. There should not be restrictions for how that money can be spent in achieving these goals.” –Native language subject matter expert

Across listening sessions conducted to inform the Plan, participants underscored the need to move away from reliance on limited competitive funds for Native language revitalization programs. Several advocated for a system where every federally recognized tribe receives base and formula funding for language revitalization, integrated into their self-determination and self-governance federal funding. Tribes emphasized the need for unrestricted funding, with minimal strings attached, so they can develop their own programs.

“I just think that the federal government ... should be providing unrestricted funding to language revitalization programs.”—Native language subject matter expert

As a leader within the Office of Indian Economic Development put it, “‘give the Tribes the funds and get out of their way’ is a common phrase.”

The Plan proposes to do just that. In alignment with *Executive Order 14112 on Reforming Federal Funding and Support for Tribal Nations to Better Embrace Our Trust Responsibilities and Promote the Next Era of Tribal Self Determination*, the Plan sets aside \$624 million per year, or \$6.86 billion from 2025-2035, to support Native language revitalization efforts within Tribes and Native Hawaiian Organizations. Within the Plan’s first year the proposed Office of Native Language Revitalization will collaboratively determine key questions about how to allocate these funds—how to structure them, the amount per tribe, how to ensure support for the Native Hawaiian Community whose funding is generally appropriated separately from the Tribes on the continent, and how to best support non-federally recognized tribes.

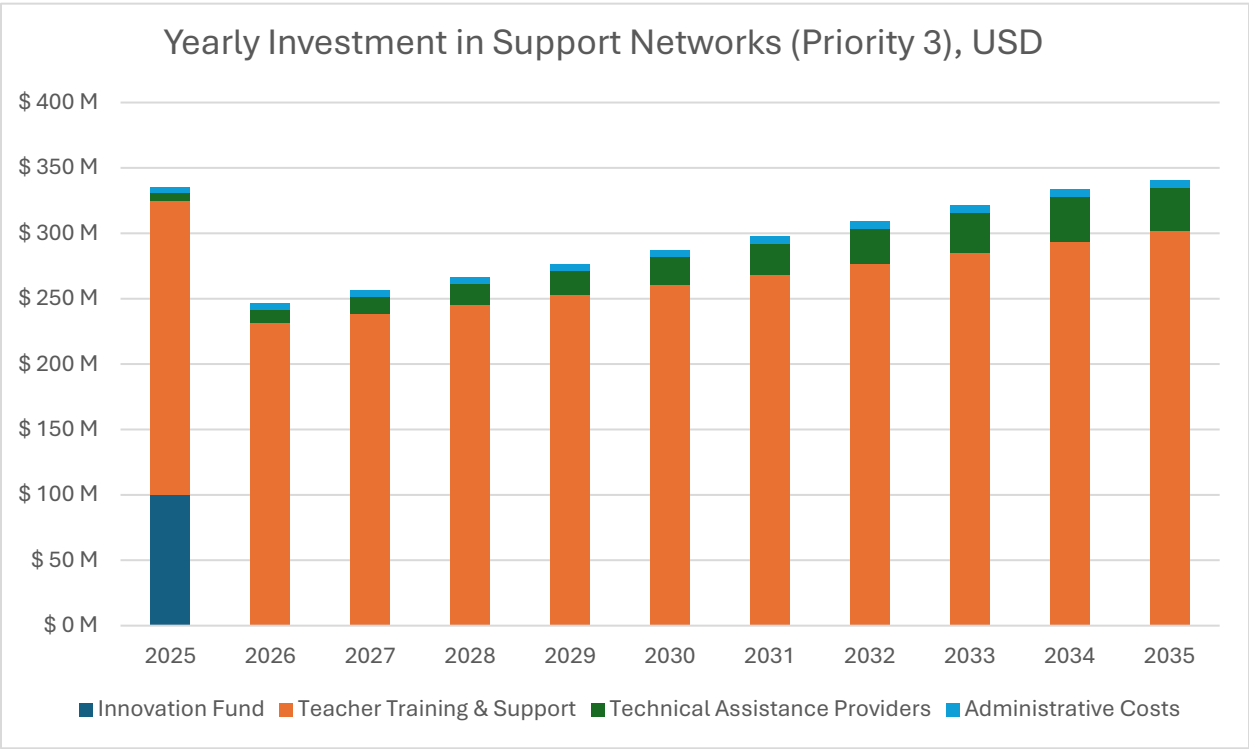
Supplemental, Summer, and After-School Programs

Under the Plan, we recommend the allocation of \$608.4 million, covering the period from 2025 through 2035, to support community-based summer, supplemental, and after-school programs. This funding is designed to extend language learning beyond the classroom, offer opportunities to integrate language acquisition with traditional cultural practices, and reinforce classroom learning. This amount assumes 50 summer programs, at \$200,000 per program, and 500 after school programs, at approximately \$75,000 each year, and includes an inflation adjustment for future years.

The budget allocation would allow for flexibility in program design and implementation, recognizing that each community will have unique needs and approaches to language revitalization.

Support Networks

An investment of \$3.2 billion would build capacity to support language revitalization, including teacher training and support, the innovation fund, technical assistance providers, and limited administrative costs.



Teacher Training

To address the shortage of first language speakers with teacher training and certification, the Plan identifies a need for \$2.88 billion to recruit and train Native language teachers. While the Office of Native Language Revitalization would be tasked with identifying and funding teacher training programs that support this goal, the estimated cost is based on a goal of training 1,000 new teachers per year, at an estimated all-in multi-year cost of \$225,000 per new teacher, including training expenses and salary offsets. This amount is adjusted for inflation in future years.

Innovation Fund

We recommend Federal support for the \$100 million innovation fund in the Plan’s first year, to enable initial long-term investments that may take multiple years to realize their value. Additional future funding for the Innovation Fund could come from the private sector.

Technical Assistance Providers

The Plan recommends \$230.7 million for technical assistance providers, ramping up from \$6 million in Year One to \$32.3 million in the final year of the plan. This funding will allow the proposed Office of Native Language Revitalization to contract with 3 to 10 technical assistance providers who will support the launch of language nests, immersion schools and TCU institutes.

Administrative Expenses

As indicated above, the Plan recommends investing \$2.5 million annually (adjusted for inflation) to establish the Office of Native Language Revitalization within the White House Council on Native

American Affairs, and \$2.0 million annually (adjusted for inflation) for administrative expenses of the National Fund for Excellence in American Indian Education. Total administrative expenses are less than 0.5% of total Plan spending for each year of the Plan.

Sustainability

“We see a world in which Indigenous Peoples will entrust their languages to future generations creating a better society for everyone.” - Global Action Plan of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages, (IDIL2022-2032); abridged version. UNESCO, 2022.

We may have only one generation remaining to protect, revitalize and promote Native languages. This Plan lays the foundation to establish an ecosystem of language learning within the next decade. Its success will depend on ongoing dedication, resources, and flexibility.

At the heart of the Plan’s theory of change are two interconnected ideas:

- The federal government must take immediate action to invest in supporting new Native language speakers at all age levels.
- All Native communities, language learners, and speakers must lead the efforts for revitalization, within their unique contexts.

Successful revitalization efforts across the world demonstrate that as language users become conversationally proficient, they integrate language into the day-to-day fabric of their lives and become equipped to teach the next generation of youth during the formative years of language acquisition. The ecosystem outlined by the Plan—immersion schools, language nests, adult education programs, and associated support structures—will support more individuals in using Native languages, creating an environment in which Native languages can thrive.

Collaboration is crucial for the Plan’s long-term success. Tribes and Native communities will need to learn from one another, facilitated by technical assistance providers. These providers will create a network of continuous learning, connecting communities, sharing successful approaches, and offering support to emerging programs. They will also help create pathways between language nests, K-12 immersion schools, TCUs, and mentorship programs, so that language learners experience a coherent, cohesive approach to learning.

Role of Philanthropy

The federal government bears responsibility for supporting Native language revitalization. While it is the responsibility of the federal government to support Native language revitalization, philanthropic organizations can play an important role in advancing the Plan’s goals. Philanthropy can provide flexible funding for innovative projects and pilot programs that may fall outside the scope of federal funding. For example, philanthropy can supplement the \$100 million innovation fund, providing seed money for investments that may be more appropriate for philanthropic funding. The National Fund can serve as the vehicle for philanthropic support.

Measurement and Evaluation

Self-determination is at the heart of sustainable language revitalization. Under the Plan, Native communities will have control over key aspects of planning and implementation, including how to define and measure proficiency. It is crucial to have such measures, and equally important that the tribes determine these metrics and evaluation processes themselves, respecting their sovereignty and the unique cultural contexts of Native communities. Each community can define what success looks like for their language revitalization efforts.

The proposed Office of Native Language Revitalization would be responsible for tracking progress towards the Plan's headline goals. It will establish a process for regular assessment and reporting across the main funding streams. As outlined in the implementation timeline, the Office of Native Language Revitalization will partner closely with tribes and technical assistance providers to develop measurement and evaluation mechanisms towards the Plan's headline goals.

Continuity of Existing Programs

In recent decades, Native language advocates have secured essential funding for language revitalization. While experts agree this funding is not sufficient for successful language revitalization, it is important to ensure the stability and continuity of existing programs. The Plan does not propose to replace existing language revitalization grants, such as those funded under the Esther Martinez Native American Languages Preservation Act, the Living Language Grant Program, or NAL@ED. Instead, it seeks to integrate and expand these initiatives within a more comprehensive framework, and tasks the Office of Native Language Revitalization with establishing recommendations for how to ensure existing programs fit cohesively within an overall national language revitalization strategy.

Congressional Recommendations

To support the successful implementation of this 10-Year Native Language Revitalization Plan, Congress should consider the following actions:

- **Fund the Plan:** The most important action Congress can take is to invest in the long-overdue Native language revitalization efforts outlined in this Plan.
- **Expand the Purview of the National Fund for Excellence in American Indian Education:** As previously noted, Congress has authorized the National Fund to improve educational opportunities for students attending Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) schools. Successful implementation of the Plan requires strategies that extend beyond BIE schools, so Congress should expand the National Fund's purview, allowing it to support all Native students in the country.
- **Lift the Moratorium on new Bureau of Indian Education Schools:** Congress should remove language that prevents BIE from opening new schools from the legislation accompanying BIE's annual appropriation, allowing tribes to propose new tribally-controlled BIE schools that can serve as centers for language revitalization. The moratorium, while originally intended to manage resources, now poses a significant barrier to expanding educational opportunities in Native communities. Additional funding for BIE to provide oversight to these schools may be necessary.

- **Establish an Accountability Framework for School Quality:**

To ensure the effectiveness of both existing BIE schools and new schools funded under this plan, we recommend that Congress mandate the Office of Native Language Revitalization create and implement an accountability framework. This framework should assess school quality and progress in language revitalization, respect and uphold tribal sovereignty, and align with the unique cultural and linguistic goals of each Native community.

Conclusion

A priority of U.S.-Indian relations is Indian education, a treaty right, demonstrated by the 171 Treaties that the U.S. entered into with Indian Tribes and ratified by the Senate that implicate the Federal Indian boarding school system or education generally. - Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative Investigative Report, Vol. II. U.S. Department of the Interior, 2024.

The right to maintain distinct tribal languages is fundamentally about self-determination and cultural survival. Languages are inextricably bound to self-identity, social and community values, and the weakening of tribal languages weakens tribes as nations and people. If the United States is going to make good on their treaties with Indian Nations, their trust responsibility, and with laws passed by Congress, the United States must fully support Native American language efforts. – A New Chapter for Native American Languages in the United States: A Report on Federal Agency Coordination and Support. U.S. Department of Education, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, & U.S. Department of the Interior, 2016.

The United States has ratified approximately 374 treaties with Native Nations,²⁵ of which 171 implicate the federal boarding school system or education generally, and has established a special political and trust relationship with the Native Hawaiian Community through over 150 statutes.²⁶ Native Nations rightfully expect the federal government to honor its treaty and trust obligations by allocating funding for language revitalization that is noncompetitive, mandatory not discretionary, and insulated from political fluctuations.

Languages are fundamental to the cultural identity, sovereignty, and resilience of Native communities. Federal policies played a devastating role in endangering these languages, and the federal government has a responsibility—stemming from the special status accorded to Native Americans through treaties between Native Nations and the United States government—to act together with Native communities to ensure their survival. This Plan reaffirms the federal

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<https://americanindian.si.edu/nationtonation/#:~:text=The%20treaties%20featured%20in%20Nation,United%20States%20and%20Native%20Nations.>

²⁶ <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2016/10/14/2016-23720/procedures-for-reestablishing-a-formal-government-to-government-relationship-with-the-native>

commitment to supporting language revitalization as a matter of federal policy and outlines a framework by which the US Government can meet this responsibility over the next decade.

The 10-Year National Plan on Native Language Revitalization represents a commitment to fulfilling the United States' treaty obligations and trust responsibilities. By investing \$16.7 billion over the next decade, the Federal Government can create an environment in which Native languages can thrive for generations to come. The Plan's approach—expanding immersion learning environments, supporting community-led initiatives, and building sustainable infrastructure—reflects the input of Tribal leaders, language experts, and Native communities. It outlines the path for a significant federal investment that can create a long-term partnership between the federal government and Native communities to revitalize Native languages.

The proposals in the Plan position Native communities to lead revitalization efforts, acknowledging that historical circumstances have put different tribal languages in distinct positions. Some languages are still being actively spoken as first languages and transmitted to youth, while others have only a handful of remaining speakers. Regardless of a language's status, the Plan commits resources to support the needs and aspirations of each language community.

Revitalizing Native languages is not just about preserving heritage; it is about ensuring a vibrant future for Native cultures and communities. As the federal government acknowledges the truth about the Indian boarding school system, it must pair that acknowledgement with action. The concrete investments recommended in the Plan outline the specific steps needed to revitalize Native languages, based on extensive consultation.

Now is the time for action. Every day that passes puts Native languages at greater risk. We call upon Congress, federal agencies, and Tribal governments to work together to support this investment, for the benefit of Native people in this generation and those to come.

Appendix

Detailed Recommended Timeline

PHASE	YEAR	KEY WORK STREAMS AND OUTCOMES
FOUNDATIONS	IMMEDIATELY	<p>Establish the new Office of Native Language Revitalization under the White House Council on Native American Affairs and staff it with a leader.</p> <hr/> <p>Hire an initial staff of 5 FTEs to support finance, program development, accountability, and facilities development at the Office of Native Language Revitalization</p> <p>Launch the interagency working group.</p> <p>Review existing grant programs for all Native Language programs and schools and consult with Native Nations to identify what works, what are the challenges, and ways in which agencies can reform their grant structures to be more flexible and accessible.</p>
	2025 - 2026	<p>Establish an authorizing body to create an authorization process to accept, review, and approve or disapprove school applications beginning in 2026.</p> <p>WHCAA Office of Native Language Revitalization opens applications for current Native Language programs and schools who are not receiving per pupil funding currently to apply for per pupil funding for School year 2025-2026 directly from the OILR.</p> <p>Create Cooperative Agreement with the National Fund for Excellence in Native American Education to fund strategies outlined in the 10 Year Plan</p> <p>Assess the number of current teachers in the pipeline of existing schools and nests and Mentor Apprenticeship Programs, Tribal Colleges and Universities and currently in the Native Language Ecosystem.</p> <p>Launch a national recruitment effort to identify school design teams, educators, current speakers and interested families and communities for the launch of this initiative in 2026-2027</p> <p>Provide Strategic Planning and Technical Assistance and Coaching to the new office of Indigenous Language Revitalization and National Fund for Excellence in American Indian Education.</p> <p>Dissemination of funding Language Institutes</p> <hr/>
PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT	2026- 2027	<p>Select the initial cohort of new schools and language nests</p> <p>Flow Per Pupil funding to existing and all qualifying existing schools and language nests</p>

Complete a Facilities Master Plan Process and onboard schools and Tribes to the process for existing and new schools and language nests to meet their unique facility needs.

(2026-2027) Outcomes/Deliverables

3,000 students receiving per pupil funding among established programs

Creation of 350 new seats through new schools and nests

Enrollment of 100 new adults via Mentor Apprenticeship programs

Selection of 10 new schools from Tribes and Urban Indian communities to start planning for immersion, language nest or charter school.

Establishment of Accountability Framework for BIE and New Schools

Publish status report

(2027-2028) Outcomes/Deliverables:

2027-2028

Creation of 800 new seats through new schools and nests

Enrollment of 200 new adults via Mentor Apprenticeship programs

Selection of 20 new schools from Tribes and Urban Indian communities to start planning for immersion, language nest or charter school.

Publish status report

(2028-2029) Outcomes/Deliverables:

2028-2029

Creation of 1450 new seats through new schools and nests

Enrollment of 200 new adults via Mentor Apprenticeship programs

Selection of 30 new schools from Tribes and Urban Indian communities to start planning for immersion, language nest or charter school.

Publish status report

(2029-2030) Outcomes/Deliverables:

2029-2030

Creation of 2,350 new seats through new schools and nests

Enrollment of 200 new adults via Mentor Apprenticeship programs

Selection of 40 new schools from Tribes and Urban Indian communities to start planning for immersion, language nest or charter school.

Publish status report

(2030-2031) Outcomes/Deliverables:

2030-2031

Creation of 3250 new seats through new schools and nests

Enrollment of 200 new adults via Mentor Apprenticeship programs

Selection of 50 new schools from Tribes and Urban Indian communities to start planning for immersion, language nest or charter school.

Publish status report

2031-2032

(2031-2032) Outcomes/Deliverables:

Creation of 4150 new seats through new schools and nests
Enrollment of 200 new adults via Mentor Apprenticeship programs
Selection of 60 new schools from Tribes and Urban Indian communities to start planning for immersion, language nest or charter school.

Publish status report

2032-2033

(2032-2033) Outcomes/Deliverables:

Creation of 5200 new seats through new schools and nests
Enrollment of 200 new adults via Mentor Apprenticeship programs
Selection of 70 new schools from Tribes and Urban Indian communities to start planning for immersion, language nest or charter school.

Publish status report

2033-2034

(2034-2035) Outcomes/Deliverables:

Creation of 6850 new seats through new schools and nests
Enrollment of 200 new adults via Mentor Apprenticeship programs
Selection of 80 new schools from Tribes and Urban Indian communities to start planning for immersion, language nest or charter school.

Publish status report

2034-2035

(2034-2035) Outcomes/Deliverables:

Creation of 7350 new seats through new schools and nests
Enrollment of 200 new adults via Mentor Apprenticeship programs
Selection of 90 new schools from Tribes and Urban Indian communities to start planning for immersion, language nest or charter school.

Publish status report

By 2035

Success will be measured via surveys, formal and informal consultations with Tribes, Tribal orgs., NGOS, and others who have received funding to assess if funding has become more accessible, flexible, and equitable,

Established network of 100 Indigenous Language schools who share best practices

Established network of 100 Indigenous Language Nests who share best practices

Localized Ecosystem is fully established and able to operate autonomously to grow the number of Indigenous Language speakers annually by 25%

Established Native Language Hubs/Departments among Tribes and Communities

Established Mentor Apprentice and Native Language Teacher Pipeline programs in place

AI has broad and scalable solutions and products for Indigenous Languages and Preservation