

# Advancing Interagency Collaboration to Enhance Equity in Federal Programs and Policies for Native Communities with and without Disabilities

*A Summary Report of the October 4, 2023, Convening:*

*Advancing Interagency Problem Solving and Capacity-Building in Native Communities*

**August 2024**

## Table of Contents

<b>Executive Summary .....</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>About the Convening .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Issue-specific Findings .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1   Economic development partnerships .....	1
2   Transitions from secondary to postsecondary education and work.....	2
3   Inclusive workforce development policies and practices .....	3
<b>Overarching Themes.....</b>	<b>4</b>
1   Improve the quality and effectiveness of federal investment and funding policies and practices.....	5
2   Build cultural competency on the history of Tribal Nations for stronger relationships and trust.....	6
3   Expand engagement with Native American people with disabilities.....	7
4   Strengthen collaboration among and within federal agencies to create greater efficiencies and sustainability.....	8
<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Appendix A: Federal Department/Agency Participation .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Appendix B: Convening Brochure .....</b>	<b>12</b>

## Executive Summary

On October 4, 2023, the **U.S. Department of Labor's (DOL) Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP)** hosted an all-day hybrid interagency convening in partnership with the White House Initiative on Advancing Educational Equity, Excellence, and Economic Opportunity for Native Americans, DOL's Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Affairs (OCIA), and the U.S. Department of Education (ED). The aim of the convening on ***Advancing Interagency Problem Solving and Capacity-Building in Native Communities*** was to identify collaboration opportunities, policy gaps, and intersections to enhance equitable access to economic development, education, and workforce development programs in Native American communities (Native communities) from a whole-of-government approach.

Participants included 80 representatives from 30 federal agencies spanning 11 departments as well as several federally funded Technical Assistance and Policy Development Centers. Together, these participants represented a range of financial, technical assistance and training programs, divisions, and initiatives serving Native communities. This report summarizes their perspectives shared on the day, with recommendations mapped to three main issues:

### **Economic Development Partnerships**

- Recognize the lack of infrastructure support to Tribal governments, presently and historically.
- Broaden labor markets on reservations while protecting Tribal sovereignty.
- Allow use of federal grant funding for building maintenance costs on reservations.
- Increase investments in Native American-owned small businesses.
- Understand that a singular approach to economic development is not possible given that Tribal governments and local contexts are relatively distinct.

### **Transitions from Secondary to Postsecondary Education and Work**

- Involve Tribal colleges and universities in federal programs' conception and design, invest in Tribal colleges and universities and primary and secondary education systems, and mitigate barriers to accessing Federal Government programs, including funding for education.
- Increase the [Perkins V rate of flow-through](#) to Tribes from the current 1.4 percent to 2 or 3 percent with legislative change.
- Address gaps in the transition from secondary to postsecondary education for Native youth.
- Make available joint grants between ED and DOL.
- Ensure education and training are portable to and from Tribal colleges and universities.

### **Inclusive Workforce Development Policies and Practices**

- Utilize American Job Centers, Registered Apprenticeships, and the AmeriCorps service models to develop job seekers' work skills, facilitate real-world work experiences, and improve employment outcomes for Native communities.
- Tap into growing economic sectors to fill labor market gaps.

- Ensure federal programs and their staff liaisons are known and accessible to Native communities.

Four overarching themes emerged throughout the day's discussions:

1. Improve federal funding processes: design programs *with* Native communities rather than *for* them; simplify applications and data collection; address capacity limitations such as lack of connectivity and smaller-scale operations; and acknowledge the gaps in how the Federal Government supports Native communities.
2. Build cultural competency on the history of Tribal Nations for stronger relationships and trust.
3. Expand engagement with Native American people with disabilities.
4. Better align investments and strengthen communication among and within federal agencies to increase collaboration and sustainability.

In his remarks at the convening, the Executive Director of the White House Council on Native American Affairs, Anthony Morgan Rodman, encouraged advancing equity, civil rights, racial justice, and equal opportunity in alignment with President Biden's [Executive Order \(EO\) 13985](#) on *Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government* and other EOs and Presidential Memoranda including:

- [EO 13175](#) – Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments
- [EO 14049](#) – White House Initiative on Advancing Educational Equity, Excellence, and Economic Opportunity for Native Americans and Strengthening Tribal Colleges and Universities
- [EO 14091](#) – Further Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government
- [EO 14112](#) – Reforming Federal Funding and Support for Tribal Nations to Better Embrace Our Trust Responsibilities and Promote the Next Era of Tribal Self-Determination (released on December 6, 2023, shortly after the convening occurred)
- [Presidential Memorandum of January 26, 2021](#) – Tribal Consultation and Strengthening Nation-to-Nation Relationships
- [Presidential Memorandum of November 30, 2022](#) – Uniform Standards for Tribal Consultation

Overall, the convening represented a pivotal step toward answering the following questions posed at the beginning of the day by the Director of the Office of Indian Education, Julian Guerrero: “How do we make all our many efforts, one single effort, to support and demonstrate that the federal family can, and will, do everything in its power to craft a unified strategy? [How can we] yield the power of policy and power of grantmaking to address gaps in such a way that truly reaches all Native Youth no matter their abilities, identities, and realities?”

It is now important to continue these discussions, review the recommendations, and implement processes to enhance equitable access to education, workforce, and economic development programs in historically underserved Native communities and ensure they receive support and resources to thrive going forward.

## About the Convening

The purpose of the convening on ***Advancing Interagency Problem Solving and Capacity-Building in Native Communities*** was to identify gaps, strategies, and opportunities to enhance equitable access in programs and policies to improve the coordination of federal investments in Native American communities (Native communities). A whole-of-government approach was taken to identify opportunities to do so through the lenses of economic development, education, and workforce development.

Attendees included a diverse group of officials from 30 Federal Government agencies. (See *Appendix A* for a comprehensive list of federal departments and agencies). Facilitators supported small group discussions in-person and among virtual attendees. (See *Appendix B* for the convening brochure with biographies of speakers and facilitators, and specific discussion questions they posed).

All information presented in this summary was gathered from both in-person and virtual discussions and presentations that took place during the event. The summary is divided into findings under three specific issues (economic development, education, and workforce development), followed by four *overarching themes* that emerged across the presentations and discussions.

## Issue-specific Findings

### 1 | Economic Development Partnerships

Alejandra Castillo, Assistant Secretary of the Economic Development Administration (EDA), U.S. Department of Commerce, gave opening remarks and shared highlights from EDA's existing work to close opportunity gaps and foster economic mobility in Native communities. EDA has awarded \$489 million across 128 grants to projects serving American Indigenous communities. The U.S. Treasurer, Chief Lynn Malerba, welcomed participants to the first discussion by recognizing the importance of cross-agency collaboration for economic development, stating, "It is essential for all agencies to collaborate and work together to ensure that all are considered and appreciated when developing strong, healthy economies to ensure we all thrive equally."

Chief Malerba also stressed focusing on solutions that fit the unique circumstances of developing economies on tribal lands. Participants echoed Chief Malerba's comments and recommended the following:

**Recognize the lack of infrastructure and support to Tribal governments and historical underfunding of infrastructure in Native communities.** Some reservation economies are severely economically depressed, with few businesses operating successfully, creating circumstances that neither sustain existing businesses nor support new ones.

Participants urged federal partners to become deeply informed about local contexts and to work with local people to form and deploy effective strategies for economic development.

**Change regulations to allow the use of federal grant funding for building maintenance and facility costs on reservations.** Tribes cannot buy, construct, or renovate buildings with grant funds, which limits their ability to achieve goals for infrastructure investments when other options don't exist. Tribes are working in condemned buildings and buildings that do not meet accessibility standards. A participant commented that there are buildings with exposed and unabated asbestos.

**Increase investments in Native American-owned small businesses.** Identify which types of Native American-owned businesses and entrepreneurship need support. Participants named applicable examples such as manicurists, pedicurists, pet groomers, and artisans. Supporting farming and teaching youth about farming on Tribal lands was also mentioned.

**Broaden the labor market to give people more options for earning a living on reservations while protecting Tribal sovereignty.** In collaboration with Tribal governments, encourage more businesses and organizations to bring their services to reservations by taking advantage of federal incentives offered to develop private businesses on reservations. Work with Tribes to identify best practices to further empower Tribal leaders to take on business development initiatives independently. Create local training and hiring agreements for infrastructure, construction, and other federal grants to ensure that they benefit Native Americans and residents of the area. Some examples include:

- Tribal and non-Tribal corporations could create rotational work for Tribal members.
- Tribal and non-Tribal corporations could arrange for hybrid or remote jobs so that Native people can stay in their communities while working for off-reservation employers.
- The NANA Regional Corporation, a large Alaska Native corporation owned by 15,000 Iñupiat shareholders, used their land as leverage to encourage companies or the government to utilize Tribal contractors. To protect Tribal sovereignty while encouraging new business activity, federal agencies are encouraged to look at how the U.S. Agency for International Development incentivizes local business development while respecting national sovereignty in other countries.

**Understand that a singular approach to economic development is not possible given that Tribal governments and local contexts are relatively distinct.** Conduct outreach to Native American communities to ensure that unique local Tribal needs are considered and addressed.

## **2 | Transitions from Secondary to Postsecondary Education and Work**

Education was the second discussion session of the day, introduced by Robin Utz, the deputy director of ED's Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education. Participants stressed the need for close involvement with Tribal colleges and universities in federal programs' conception and design, smoothing transitions from secondary to postsecondary education, and mitigating barriers to accessing federal funds.

**Involve Tribal colleges and universities in program design, invest in Tribal colleges and universities and primary and secondary education systems, and mitigate barriers to accessing Federal Government programs, including funding for education.** The wide range of

opportunities to leverage includes DOL, ED, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), and other federal funding sources that invest in a variety of career and technical education and other postsecondary education and training programs. Additionally:

- Offer more discretionary and flexible resources for education.
- Expand education spending accounts funding.
- Ensure Tribes have access to Perkins V Act funding.
- Lower compliance costs that result from Perkins V Act funding being heavily regulated.

**Increase Perkins V resources [to Tribes by increasing the rate of flow-through from states to Tribes from the current 1.5 percent to 2 or 3 percent with legislative change](#).**<sup>1</sup> Doing so would allow Tribes to cover the costs of time and materials acquired for the grant, equipment, and other expenses. Federal employees should be aware that states may not always reach out to Tribes and Native communities about federal opportunities. Therefore, direct outreach may be needed. Amy Loyd, Assistant Secretary of ED's Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education, said, "We have states that are now working on re-imagining their Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) plans; states that are now re-imagining their Perkins plans. How are they doing so in partnership with our Tribes? What is our role to support states to honor their government to government? ...What can our (federal) role be to help support states as they need to better engage our Tribes, to have the voice that we know Tribes have and deserve to have at the tables?"

Include Tribal input as a part of a [notice of proposed priorities](#) through Perkins legislation.

**Address gaps in the transition from secondary to postsecondary education for Native youth.** Assistant Secretary, Office of Disability Employment Policy, DOL, Taryn Williams stressed in her opening remarks that it is critical to address the gaps in the transition from secondary to postsecondary education for Native youth.

**Make available joint grants between ED and DOL.** Ensure a strong ED/DOL partnership exists for future Native educators. Encourage education [apprenticeships](#). Ensure that Tribal communities are aware of the various pathways to certifications and degrees.

**Ensure education and training are portable to and from Tribal colleges.** The education and training that Native people receive after high school are sometimes not connected or transferable to and from Tribal colleges and universities. This creates barriers to accessing and earning accredited degrees and certifications. College courses should be accredited, wherever they are offered so that credit hours and certifications earned are transferable and count toward further education and training.

### **3 | Inclusive Workforce Development Policies and Practices**

Workforce Development was the third discussion session of the day. August Martin, Program Specialist for American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services, Rehabilitation Services

---

<sup>1</sup> In The Perkins Act, SEC. 111. ø20 U.S.C. 2321ç RESERVATIONS AND STATE ALLOTMENT. All state recipients of Perkins V funds must reserve 1.5% of the allocation directly to Tribes to carry out Career Technical Education investments.



Administration (RSA), ED, provided the welcoming remarks. In small group discussions, participants then emphasized the need to fill labor market gaps in growing economic sectors and consider a broad range of possible federal actions, activities, and partnerships with Native communities to make a difference.

**Utilize American Job Centers, Local and State Workforce Boards, [Registered Apprenticeships](#), and the AmeriCorps models to support job seekers' work skills, facilitate meaningful, culturally responsive work experiences, and improve employment for Native communities.**

Determine the workforce needs of Native people who could utilize these workforce partner entities. Increase Native American representation on WIOA-mandated local and state workforce development boards and other applicable boards and commissions. Work with [AmeriCorps](#) to identify new connections and opportunities. Assistant Secretary Taryn Williams said that unemployment levels for Native youth “are nearly double those of non-Native youth and need culturally responsive approaches to workforce development,” further emphasizing the need for support.

**Tap into growing economic sectors to fill labor market gaps.** Leverage opportunities for employment in emerging and in-demand industries such as healthcare, renewable energy, and artificial intelligence, and develop skills training to prepare Native Americans for these jobs. Attract Native youth to aviation occupations, including piloting and air traffic control, the coding industry, teaching, and education. Assistant Secretary Alejandra Castillo offered that EDA's new Indigenous Economic Development Community of Practice would be ideal for collecting information regarding employment participation of Native youth and adults, with and without disabilities.

**Ensure that education and workforce-related programs and their staff liaisons are known and accessible to Native people.** Make sure educational opportunities within various federal agencies are widely known. The Department of Defense, for example, offers internships and advanced degree programs that can be completed within five years. Connect with DOL's Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) as a resource that offers free outreach and consultation to employers and workers in Tribal communities. Use the enforcement powers of the Tribal Employment Rights Office on reservations to support the marketability and enforcement of contracts and regulations in conjunction with other efforts. Connect with Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) representatives as a part of building a coalition; all federal agencies have initiatives that focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion of racial and ethnic minority groups and/or other marginalized people.

## **Overarching Themes**

Across the three issue-focused areas, several overarching themes emerged. Based on their direct experience with federal programming, participants suggested ways federal partners could improve the quality and effectiveness of their program investments and funding practices. For example, federal programs could reduce the burden of compliance by simplifying program applications and data collection requirements. Participants also stressed the need to increase



the cultural competency of federal employees who work with Tribal nations to improve all stages of public investment cycles, including program design, funding requirements, implementation, and reporting. Expanding federal supports for Native people with disabilities was also emphasized, along with the suggestion to understand what “disability” means to Tribal nations. Finally, in line with the goals of the convening itself, participants urged continued strengthening of collaborations among and within federal agencies to improve efficiency and sustainability.

## **1 | Improve the quality and effectiveness of federal investment and funding policies and practices.**

**Conceptualize and design federal investments and corresponding measures of success *with* Native communities rather than *for* Native communities.** From the program conceptualization stage to implementation, understand the local economic drivers, basic needs, interests, sovereignties, and priorities of Native people to invest appropriately on reservations and other locales where Native Americans reside. Consult and engage Native communities consistently to inform program design and impactful investments. Involve and consider Tribal viewpoints from the beginning of program design. Anthony Morgan Rodman, executive director of the White House Council on Native American Affairs said, “regular and meaningful Tribal consultation creates better and more responsive federal policy and programs, which, in turn, promotes a more equitable federal government for Tribes.”

Learn how Native communities define success and which data outcomes are realistic to collect; consider this when outcome measures are being established and *before* they are included in requests for proposals or requests for qualifications. Consult field research, data sources from Native communities, and other evidence to invest in those efforts that maximize successful outcomes. Create efficiencies to reduce the percentage of time that must be dedicated to reporting and compliance rather than implementation. The Biden-Harris administration’s December 6, 2023, [EO 14112](#) aligns with these findings from the convening, stating: “far too many of the federal funding and support programs that Tribes rely on are difficult to access, have overly burdensome federal reporting requirements, have unnecessary limitations, or impose requirements on Tribes that drain Tribal resources and undermine their ability to make their own decisions about where and how to meet the needs of their communities.”

Ensure access to funding opportunities to support local efforts to increase innovative strategies and resource development and delivery in Native communities for youth and adults, with and without disabilities. A participant suggested creating a centralized information source, such as a Tribal newsletter, for all federal opportunities to be announced across agencies, accompanied by a regularly updated directory of contact information to communicate, and inform agencies of each other’s activities and investments. Also, use funding opportunity announcements to require states to consult with Tribes and Tribal entities regarding Federal Government funding that flows through states and localities.

Participants echoed throughout the convening the need for federal agencies to work to promote diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility. Assistant Secretary Taryn Williams,

of the Office of Disability Employment Policy, DOL said we need to “acknowledge the gaps in how the Federal Government supports Native communities.”

**Increase access to resources to simplify the application process and requirements for federal investments for Native communities and consider technological limitations on Tribal lands.**

Participants characterized federal investments as vital for Native communities, yet they were also viewed as often mismatched with local circumstances (i.e., where Native Americans live and work), overly complicated and burdensome, and largely inaccessible. Many Federal Government investments are not designed in such a way that Tribes can benefit, and grants may be designed for a much larger-scale project than appropriate for potential Tribal applicants. Also, when considering costs and benefits, Tribes may determine that the required level of data collection and other compliance measures do not make the funds worth receiving. Given limitations in resources for research, data collection, and grant writing for some entities that serve Native Americans, federal applications and grant implementation management should align with local capacity. Further, internet access is limited in many rural areas and Tribal Nations; federal agencies must also account for connectivity and communication issues and address these limitations. Unrealistic funding match requirements are another application barrier. This recommendation is consistent with [EO 14112](#) requiring that “federal agencies take action to ensure federal funding for Tribes is accessible, flexible, and equitable.” As stated in the [White House Fact Sheet](#) regarding EO14112, “Tribes will spend less of their resources cutting through bureaucratic red-tape to apply or comply with federal administrative requirements and use federal dollars more effectively.”

## **2 | Build cultural competency on the history of Tribal Nations for stronger relationships and trust.**

**Increase federal agencies’ cultural competency about the history of Tribal Nations.** For meaningful and impactful outreach efforts, federal workers and partners need a fuller understanding about Native American history and culture. Ongoing training will help to ensure that new staff are adequately onboarded, and existing staff receive continuous education. President Biden’s “[Presidential Memorandum on Uniform Standards of Tribal Consultation](#)” can be used to establish uniform minimum standards to be implemented across all agencies regarding how Tribal consultations are to be conducted, including how agencies initiate, provide notice, conduct, record, and report on Tribal consultations. Agencies are directed to require annual Tribal consultation training for all employees who work with Tribal Nations or on policies with Tribal implications. Develop training in partnership with Tribal Nations.

**Strengthen interpersonal relationships and build trust with Tribal Nations.** Gaining a better understanding of historical trauma, cultural traditions, and societal factors will help provide important context that is necessary to strengthen economic development, education, and workforce development on Tribal lands. Understanding Tribal Nations’ historical traumas builds empathy for the atrocities Native Americans endured. Recommendations on ways to build relationships and trust include site visits, requesting consultations, and forming collaborations. For example, it was suggested that a workgroup could be formed from the convening to serve as

a conduit for reaching out to Tribal Nations to ensure resources are shared broadly and reduce duplication of efforts.

Consistency in building personal relationships is important in building trust over time. For example, when agencies establish a consistent contact person, each encounter with a Tribe will build a more sustainable relationship, and this will strengthen potential transitions (during staff turnovers) and ensure continuity across the federal spectrum.

Cultural competency requires the ability to meet Tribal Nations where they are. This means “taking a listening ear” and being respectful of the needs of the Tribal community so that agencies can reflect on what they offer and co-create appropriate supports. As one participant describes, “We cannot just show up and say we are here to help.” Federal programs can only lift and sustain Tribal Nations when relationships are strong.

**Tribal Nations are sovereign nations.** Having cultural competency is respecting that Tribes are [sovereign nations](#). Therefore, federal agencies should not diminish this reality by intertwining them when referring to state/local/municipal entities, but instead should highlight Tribes as their own category. While Tribes are unique, federal program employees should work to identify common challenges across these communities, for example, food insecurity and generational poverty. As Tribes are sovereign nations, respect the data they provide and trust their expertise. To create a working economy, understand the conditions of the labor markets within Tribal Nations by learning what is needed and in demand and the industries that are not needed, which will be different across Tribal Nations.

### 3 | Expand engagement with Native people with disabilities.

**Understand what disability means in Native American contexts.** Many Native people who participate in Federal Government programs do not disclose having disabilities, resulting in widespread undercounting.<sup>2</sup> Many Native people would not apply for disability services due to stigma and/or cultural or linguistic barriers. In fact, one participant said that there was no word for “disability” in his Native American language, Lakota.

The challenge is to define disability in a way that protects the dignity and integrity of Native people without alienating them. Building relationships and listening to Native Americans means understanding what language Tribal Nations use and don’t use. To design effective programs and understand disability in the context of Native communities, include qualitative information from organizations engaged with people with disabilities. Disabilities can be visible or invisible. Listen and be respectful of Tribal needs; include people with disabilities in conversations and program planning and implementation.

I really appreciate the call-out that even the consideration of disabilities is a different one in our Tribal communities, and how we think about and talk about and engage with disability may be different. I want to honor and recognize that, but we are disproportionately often overrepresented. How might we better collaborate to leverage both public and private capacity to better engage our

---

<sup>2</sup> The Americans with Disability Act defines disability [here](#).

people who have disability(ies) or who are served by our Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, for example, at the Department of Education? I just think about how important it is to center equity in all that we do. - Amy Loyd, Assistant Secretary, Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education, ED

**Collaborate to build capacity to better engage and serve Native people with disabilities.** This is important, given that [American Indians and Alaska Natives experience disability at higher rates](#) than non-Native people. Use Federal Government funding opportunity announcements to encourage the development of strengths-based strategies for serving people with disabilities.

**Leverage Perkins V Act, WIOA, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and other federal funding sources that address education and postsecondary labor force transitions to enhance and expand opportunities for Native youth and adults with disabilities.** Make sure it is communicated clearly that Tribal colleges and universities are eligible. “We want to ensure that people with disabilities have access to [competitive integrated employment](#) opportunities. We want to ensure that we center everything that we do with an eye towards equity. And we want to ensure that youth and young adults with disabilities are able to successfully transition from secondary environments into postsecondary education and employment,” said Taryn Williams, Assistant Secretary, Office of Disability Employment Policy, DOL.

**Ensure that ED’s Office of Indian Education (OIE) programs are known by and accessible to people with disabilities.** Build awareness within Native communities about the prevalence of [individualized education programs](#) (IEP) among their own students and what resources to support IEPs exist. OIE’s program to recruit Native teachers to transition from postsecondary schools into the labor force could highlight the experiences of people with disabilities who have gone through this program.

**Engage the U.S. Access Board to share its information with Tribal Nations.** [The U.S. Access Board](#) is an independent agency devoted to accessibility for people with disabilities. Explore opportunities for it to help Tribes obtain grants/microgrants.

#### **4 | Strengthen collaboration among and within federal agencies to create greater efficiencies and sustainability.**

The importance of federal interagency collaboration also emerged as one of the main themes of the day, regarded as critical to creating attainable, resource-driven goals to support inclusive policy and practices and advance equity in decision-making processes. “I think when we work together, and this is very much a cultural thing from my Tribe, when we work together, we can make a difference. In O’odham, our saying is, ‘Tohono O’odham.’ That means, together we can do it, or together we can make things happen,” said Naomi Miguel, executive director, for the White House Initiative on Advancing Educational Equity, Excellence, and Economic Opportunity for Native Americans and Strengthening Tribal Colleges and Universities.

The convening was described as a promising practice as it provided an opportunity for federal agencies to come together, some for the first time, to identify collaboration opportunities,

policy gaps, and intersections to enhance equitable access to economic development, education, and workforce development programs in Native communities. Participants noted that the more agencies talk to one another, networks will grow stronger and give agencies more resources to stretch and sustain investments.

Participants mentioned several committees and workgroups that could be leveraged to advance the cause of racial equity for underserved communities and promote principles of Tribal self-governance and sovereignty, including the [White House Council on Native American Affairs](#), DOL's [Indian Working Group](#), Native Youth Educational Services Workgroup, and equity committees within Federal Government departments, among others.

Funding alignment has already been made easier by [Public Law 102-477](#) (referred to as “the 477 law”), which allows for blending federal investments to achieve overlapping outcomes. Director, Julian Guerrero, Jr., Office of Indian Education, ED, stated, “we are convinced that to break our collective silos and embrace true collaboration, we need to identify gaps, and maybe we find out ‘even though you are short here, over here I have these resources that help address what you are looking to do.’ Perhaps a piece of one solution to my issue is only partially met by my resources, but if I combine my efforts with yours, we together can make a whole attempt to address the issue.”

The 477 law was also mentioned often by participants as an effective policy and model approach for Tribes and Federal Government agencies that lessens reporting burdens and decreases unnecessary requirements.

While the convening had participation from 30 federal agencies, participants pointed out that there were some not represented and encouraged further collaboration and braiding of funding across departments.

## Conclusion

This report highlights recommendations made by convening participants for informing and improving access to federal investments in economic development, education, and workforce development in underserved Native Americans, with and without disabilities. Going forward, ongoing discussions between different federal agencies will be crucial in reviewing and expanding upon these recommendations, with the goal of promoting equitable access for Native communities to federal programs and policies. “What we've learned, what we've shared with each other, this should provide the rich context and content, yes, for future convenings, but really to help us do a reset as we think about our work moving forward. We see this report as a keystone to a larger conversation and larger collaboration across our federal agencies, who are ultimately like we are, responsible for living up to the promise of what we need to do to serve our Native people and our Tribes,” said Amy Loyd, Assistant Secretary, Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education, ED.

## Appendix A: Federal Department/Agency Participation

Departments	Federal Agencies/Offices
Department of Agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rural Development and Tribal Relations</li> </ul>
Department of Commerce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economic Development Administration</li> <li>• National Telecommunications and Information Administration</li> </ul>
Department of Defense	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Defense Human Resources Activity</li> <li>• Defense Human Resources Activity; Defense Support Services Center; Computer/Electronics Accommodations Program</li> <li>• Pentagon</li> </ul>
Department of Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Institute of Education Sciences</li> <li>• Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education</li> <li>• Office of Indian Education</li> <li>• Rehabilitation Services Administration; American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Services</li> <li>• White House Initiative on Advancing Educational Equity, Excellence, and Economic Opportunity for Native Americans and Strengthening Tribal Colleges and Universities</li> </ul>
Department of Health and Human Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administration for Community Living; Office of Aging</li> <li>• Administration for Children and Families</li> <li>• Administration for Children and Families; Administration for Native Americans</li> <li>• Administration for Children and Families; Children’s Bureau</li> <li>• Administration for Children and Families; Office of Childcare</li> <li>• Administration for Children and Families; Office of Child Support Services</li> <li>• Centers for Disease Control and Prevention</li> <li>• Indian Health Services</li> <li>• Health Resources and Services Administration</li> <li>• Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration</li> </ul>
Department of Homeland Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Federal Emergency Management Agency; Center for Domestic Preparedness</li> </ul>

Department of Housing and Urban Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Office of Native American Programs</li> </ul>
Department of Interior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bureau of Indian Affairs; Office of Indian Economic Development; Division of Economic Development</li> <li>• Bureau of Indian Affairs; Office of the Assistant Secretary</li> <li>• Bureau of Indian Education</li> <li>• White House Council on Native American Affairs</li> </ul>
Department of Labor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employment and Training Administration; Office of Apprenticeship</li> <li>• Employment and Training Administration; Office of Workforce Investment; Division of Indian and Native American Programs</li> <li>• Employment and Training Administration; Office of Workforce Investment; Youth Programs and Services</li> <li>• Occupational Safety and Health Administration Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Affairs</li> <li>• Office of Disability Employment Policy</li> <li>• Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs; Indian and Native American Employment Rights Program</li> <li>• Veterans' Employment and Training Service</li> </ul>
Department of the Treasury	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Office of Tribal and Native Affairs</li> <li>• Treasury Office</li> </ul>
Department of Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tribal Government Affairs</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environmental Protection Agency; Office of Environmental Justice and External Civil Rights</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access Board</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Equal Employment Opportunity Commission</li> </ul>





# Advancing Opportunities with Native Communities

A Federal Interagency  
Convening

## WELCOME: A Call to Action

The White House Initiative on Advancing Educational Equity, Excellence, and Economic Opportunity for Native Americans and Strengthening Tribal Colleges and Universities, in partnership with the Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy and the Department of Education, welcomes you to *Advancing Interagency Problem Solving and Capacity-Building in Native Communities*. During today's interagency convening among 18 federal Native-serving agencies, we hope to craft strategies to address the following two overarching questions:

1. How might federal agencies better collaborate to improve education, workforce, and economic development opportunities for Native Americans in urban, rural, and tribal settings?
2. Given that American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians report disability at high rates<sup>1</sup>, how might we collaborate to build grantees' and businesses' capacity to better engage people with disabilities?

The convening starts at 9:00 AM with check-in and networking until 9:25 AM. After introductions and welcoming remarks, federal colleagues will share current federal agency collaborations and innovations and identify gaps in serving Native communities. Next, in-person attendees will work in small groups by table, and virtual participants will work online, to strategize actions to address identified gaps. We will close the day with reflections and next steps.

We look forward to building upon our shared work to sustain and expand inclusive economic growth and employment access for Native communities. We hope that this convening will reenergize your work and renew collaborative efforts among federal agencies.

<sup>1</sup> American Community Survey 2022

## CONTENTS

Agenda	4
Strategize	6
Participating Agencies	8
Speakers	9
Background Information	17
Thank you	18

## AGENDA

- 9:00 AM**                    **Check-in and Networking**
- 9:25 AM**                    **Welcome and Introductions**
- Jimmy “Jim” Warne**
- Convening Moderator, Community Engagement Director, University of South Dakota Center for Disabilities, Oyáte Circle, Sanford School of Medicine; Administrative Affiliate, Circle of Indigenous Empowerment, Arizona College of Medicine
- 9:35 AM**                    **Opening Remarks**
- Naomi Miguel**
- Executive Director, White House Initiative on Advancing Educational Equity, Excellence, and Opportunity for Native Americans and Strengthening Tribal Colleges and Universities (WHI-NA TCU)
- 9:40 AM**                    **Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) Remarks**
- Taryn Williams**
- Assistant Secretary, Office of Disability Employment Policy, DOL
- 9:45 AM**                    **Foundational Overview**
- Julian Guerrero Jr.**
- Director, Office of Indian Education
- 10:05 AM**                    **Fostering an All-Government Approach**
- Alejandra Castillo**
- Assistant Secretary, Economic Development Administration
- Anthony Morgan Rodman**
- Executive Director, White House Council on Native American Affairs
- 10:25 AM**                    **Break**

## AGENDA CONTINUED

- 10:40 AM**                    **Session #1: Economic development partnerships**
- Chief Lynn Malerba**  
U.S. Treasurer, Department of the Treasury
- Theresa Lujan**  
DOL Career Liaison to the WHI-NA TCU
- 11:30 AM**                    **Session #2: Transitions from secondary to postsecondary to the labor force**
- Robin Utz, Deputy Director**  
Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education, U.S. Department of Education (ED)
- Nadia Mossburg (VF)**  
Senior Policy Advisor, Office of Disability Employment Policy
- 12:20 PM**                    **Lunch**
- 1:30 PM**                    **Session #3: Inclusive workforce development policies and practices**
- August Martin**  
Program Specialist, American Indian VR Services Administration (RSA), ED
- Fredricka “Kawehi” Brandow (VF)**  
Workforce Development Specialist, Division of Indian and Native American Programs, DOL
- 2:20 PM**                    **Reflections**
- Jimmy “Jim” Warne**  
Convening Moderator
- 2:40 PM**                    **Final Remarks and Next Steps**
- Dr. Amy Loyd**  
Assistant Secretary, Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education, ED
- 2:50 PM**                    **Closing**
- Jimmy “Jim” Warne**  
Convening Moderator



## STRATEGIZE

We hope to craft strategies to address the following two overarching questions during today's convening:

1. How might federal agencies better collaborate to improve education, workforce, and economic development opportunities for Native Americans?
2. Given that American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians report disability at high rates<sup>1</sup>, how might we collaborate to build grantees' and businesses' capacity to better engage people with disabilities?

In-person attendees will work in small groups by table, and virtual participants will work online, to strategize actions to address some of the identified gaps shared during the "Foundational Overview" and "Fostering an All-Government Approach" presentations. Facilitators will guide attendees in discussing the following questions.

### **1) Stronger Together: Embolden Economic Development Partnerships**

1. How might federal agencies work better together to support State and Local governments to improve resources and infrastructure for urban Native and Tribal Native communities?
2. How can federal agencies support a Tribal Nation's economic vision for community members with disabilities?

<sup>1</sup> American Community Survey 2022

## STRATEGIZE CONTINUED

### 2) Leverage Resources to Support Transitions from Secondary to Postsecondary to the Labor Force

1. How can we leverage Perkins, WIOA, IDEA, and other legislation that address education and postsecondary labor force transitions to enhance and expand opportunities for Native youth and adults, especially those with disabilities?
  - a. The Biden Administration’s Investing in America strategy aims to recruit and train diverse young people for the hundreds of thousands of new infrastructure jobs; how can we leverage grants to maximize this opportunity to tap employment for Native American youth and adults?

### 3) Further Inclusive Workforce Development Policies and Practices

1. How can federal agencies develop or modify policy to ensure that U.S. government and State agencies allocate resources and partner with Tribal governments to improve the labor market in Tribal communities?
2. Are there opportunities to modify existing or develop new policies to incentivize businesses and industries to work more effectively with Tribal Governments to support employment for Tribal communities and Indigenous people, especially those with disabilities living on and off reservations?



## PARTICIPATING AGENCIES

Federal Agencies	
<p><b>Department of Commerce</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economic Development Administration</li> <li>• National Telecommunications and Information Administration</li> </ul>	<p><b>Department of Transportation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tribal Affairs Office</li> </ul>
<p><b>Department of Education</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education</li> <li>• Office of Indian Education</li> <li>• Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services</li> <li>• White House Initiative on Native Americans and Tribal colleges and Universities</li> </ul>	<p><b>Department of Labor</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Office of Disability Employment Policy</li> <li>• Office of Apprenticeship</li> <li>• Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Affairs</li> <li>• Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs</li> <li>• Division of Indian &amp; Native American Programs</li> <li>• Division of Youth Services</li> </ul>
<p><b>Department of Health and Human Services</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administration for Native Americans</li> </ul>	<p><b>Department of Housing and Urban Development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Office of Native American Programs</li> </ul>
<p><b>Department of the Interior</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bureau of Indian Affairs</li> <li>• Bureau of Indian Education</li> </ul>	<p><b>Department of Treasury</b></p>

## SPEAKERS



**Alejandra Castillo**

*Assistant Secretary, Economic Development Administration, Department of Commerce*

Assistant Secretary Castillo has served in senior level positions in three presidential administrations. As Assistant Secretary of Commerce for the Economic Development Administration, she oversees the sole federal agency focused on economic development, workforce development, technology and innovation to ensure our nation's global competitiveness. She guides the implementation of over \$5 billion dollars in funding to make transformational investments in America, resulting in more than 200,000 jobs secured across the nation. As the daughter of immigrants and small business owners, her own experiences have helped affirm her commitment to EDA's number one funding priority: equity.

## PRESENTERS

**Julian Guerrero Jr.**

*Director, Office of Indian Education, Department of Education*



An enrolled citizen of the Comanche Nation and affiliated with the Kiowa Tribe, Director Guerrero has been a civil servant at the Department since 2020. He is responsible for the oversight and administration of \$195 million dollars in Title VI, Part A programs including: 1,300+ formula grants across the country, 400+ competitive discretionary grants, the National Indian Education Study, and the National Advisory Council on Indian Education. Director Guerrero's vision emphasizes the importance of how Tribal consultation and data-driven collaboration can bring authenticity to the work of the U.S. Office of Indian Education.

## SPEAKERS



**Dr. Amy Loyd**

*Assistant Secretary, Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education, Department of Education*

Assistant Secretary Loyd, of Zuni descent, has an extensive background in designing and implementing programs and policies that improve education and workforce development outcomes. As a vice president at Jobs for the Future (JFF) she focused on state and regional policies, practices, and cross-sector partnerships that engaged K-12 education, community colleges, adult education, workforce development, economic development, and employers to build systems of college and career pathways. She also oversaw JFF’s work in workforce development with a lens on economic advancement, state and federal policy, and diversity, equity, and inclusion. She previously was the director of education at Cook Inlet Tribal Council, leading a network of schools providing culturally responsive education, training, and wraparound services to the Alaska Native and Native American communities.



**Naomi Miguel**

*Executive Director, White House Initiative on Advancing Educational Equity, Excellence, and Economic Opportunity for Native Americans and Strengthening Tribal Colleges and Universities*

Director Miguel, Ba’ag Nei’dam O’ks (Eagle Singing Woman), is a citizen of the Tohono O’odham Nation. The White House initiative she leads seeks to support activities that will strengthen the nation by expanding education opportunities and improving education outcomes for all American Indian and Alaska Native students. She most recently served as the Staff Director for the Subcommittee for Indigenous Peoples of the United States on the House Committee on Natural Resources at the United States House of Representatives. Prior to this position, Director Miguel served as the legislative assistant for Representative Raúl M. Grijalva where she helped co-found the Congressional Native American Staff Association and hosted roundtable discussions about the importance of diversity and inclusion of Native American staffers in Congress.

## SPEAKERS

**Anthony Morgan Rodman**

*Executive Director, White House Council on Native American Affairs*



A member of the Cherokee and Osage Nations, Mr. Rodman is Executive Director for the White House Council on Native American Affairs at the Department of Interior (DOI). He previously served as the Acting Director for the Office of Indian Economic Development and in the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Management – Indian Affairs, as the first Executive Director of the White House Council on Native American Affairs and a Senior Advisor on Tribal Relations in the Land Buy-Back Program for Tribal Nations. Rodman began his federal career in the Tribal trust litigation office of the Office of the Special Trustee for American Indians. He has a bachelor's degree from Harvard University and a law degree from the University of Arizona with a certificate in Indigenous Peoples Law & Policy.



**Jim E. Warne**

*Convening Moderator*

A member of the Oglala Lakota, Jim Warne earned a BS from Arizona State University and a MS from San Diego State University. Jim created continuing education programs at SDSU Interwork Institute from 1993-2015. He has written over \$50 million in grants and contracts for universities and Tribal Nations. Currently, Jim is the Community Engagement Director at University of South Dakota Center for Disabilities, Oyáte Circle Sanford School of Medicine and an Affiliate Administrator with Arizona College of Medicine Sonoran Circle of Indigenous Empowerment.

## SPEAKERS



**Taryn Williams**

*Assistant Secretary, Office of Disability Employment Policy,  
Department of Labor*

Taryn Mackenzie Williams is the Assistant Secretary of Labor for Disability Employment Policy. In this position, she advises the Secretary of Labor on how the Department's policies and programs impact the employment of people with disabilities and leads the Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), which works with employers and all levels of government to promote evidence-based policy that improves employment opportunities and outcomes for people with disabilities. Previously, Williams was the managing director for the Poverty to Prosperity Program at American Progress. Before joining American Progress, she worked at ODEP on a variety of issues related to education and workforce policy.

## SPEAKERS

### SESSION THOUGHT LEADERS



**Chief Lynn Malerba**

*US Treasurer, Department of Treasury*

Chief Mutáwi Mutáhash (Many Hearts) Marilynn “Lynn” Malerba, serves as the custodian and trustee of the federal government's collateral assets and the supervisor of the Treasury Department's currency and coinage production functions. Chief Malerba, the 18th Chief of the Mohegan Tribe since August 15, 2010, is the Tribe's first female Chief in modern history, appointed for life by the Council of Elders. She previously served as Chairwoman of the Tribal Council and Executive Director of Health and Human Services. Prior to her tribal leadership, Malerba had a distinguished nursing career, including her role as Director of Cardiology and Pulmonary Services at Lawrence + Memorial Hospital. She holds honorary doctoral degrees from Eastern Connecticut State University and the University of St. Joseph, a Doctor of Nursing Practice from Yale University, a master's degree in public administration from the University of Connecticut, and a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from the College of St. Joseph.



**August W. Martin**

*Vocational Rehabilitation Program Specialist, Rehabilitation Service Administration, Department of Education*

August W. Martin is a member of the Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska. Mr. Martin has maintained a commitment to improving vocational rehabilitation services for American Indians and Alaska Natives with disabilities and has worked in American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Services since 1999.

## SPEAKERS



**Robin A. Utz**

*Deputy Director, Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education, Department of Education*

In an effort to close America’s workforce skills gap, Robin Utz leads a team that promotes programs to transition students into postsecondary education and career success. As Deputy Director to the Division of Academic and Technical Education, she oversees the work on all issues pertaining to Career and Technical Education (CTE) under the Perkins V Act and any related federal statutes, regulations or policies at the U.S. Department of Education in Washington, DC. Robin’s professional portfolio includes serving as a CTE state director and education consultant, teacher, and student advisor. She maintains her professional teaching license in Kansas and holds a certificate as a Global Career Development Facilitator. On a personal note, she coaches and volunteers for Special Olympics in Virginia and serves as a civil celebrant in Virginia.



## SPEAKERS

### VIRTUAL FACILITATORS

#### Kawehi Brandow

*Federal Project Officer, Division of Indian and Native American Programs, Department of Labor*



Kawehi Brandow supports urban non-profit organization and tribal grantees to provide quality employment and training services for American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians. She is from Hilo, Hawai'i, and has also lived on the Navajo reservation and in New Mexico. Her mother was full-blood Kanaka Maoli (Native Hawaiian) from Lā'ie, O'ahu, and her father is Diné (Navajo) from Coyote Canyon, New Mexico. She attended the Native American Preparatory School in New Mexico for high school, and completed her BA at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa in Native Studies. She is currently completing her Masters of Business Administration, with a focus on Native American leadership, from Southeastern Oklahoma State University. Kawehi's background is in Leadership, Coordinating, Training and Education.



#### Theresa Lujan

*Career liaison for the White House Initiative on Native Americans and Equal Opportunity on Advancing Educational Equity, Excellence and Economic Opportunity for Native Americans, Department of Labor Administration, Department of Education*

Theresa Lujan is Mescalero/Chiricahua Apache and Picuris Pueblo. She has extensive experience as a career public servant in the federal government. For over 29 years, Ms. Lujan has worked in the Department of Labor's Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs serving in key positions.

## SPEAKERS



**Nadia Mossburg**

*Senior Policy Advisor, Office of Disability Employment Policy*

Nadia Mossburg leads the State Exchange on Employment and Disability (SEED). Since 2016, the SEED team has delivered direct policy assistance to 38 states by engaging with governors' offices, state legislators, as well as city and county officials. In her 17-year tenure with the Federal Government, Ms. Mossburg has advanced disability policy issues within the U.S. Departments of Defense, Labor, and Health and Human Services.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The following reports and initiatives represent recent investments and strategies to improve U.S. and Tribal Nation relationships and resources to support Native Americans living on reservation and in Tribal villages.

- [Tribal Funding: Actions Needed to Improve Information on Federal Funds That Benefit Native Americans](#), Government Accountability Office, May 2022
- [Fact Sheet: Building A New Era of Nation-to-Nation Engagement](#), White House, November 2021
- [The White House Tribal Nations Summit Report](#), White House, November 2021
- [Memorandum on Tribal Consultation and Strengthening Nation-to-Nation Relationships](#), White House, January 2021
- [White House Council on Native American Affairs](#)
- [Supporting Executive Orders](#)
  - [EO 13175](#) - Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments
  - [EO 13985](#) - Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities through the Federal Government
  - [EO 14049](#) - White House Initiative on Advancing Educational Equity, Excellence, and Economic Opportunity for Native Americans and Strengthening Tribal Colleges and Universities
  - [EO 14091](#) - Further Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government

# THANK YOU

## Summary Report

As part of the convening, we will gather your valuable feedback about your experiences to inform and shape a *Summary Report* that will include:

- Purpose, goals, and objectives
- Key points and recommendations
- Collaboration opportunities
- Issues and gaps
- Policy considerations/implications

The **convening** is a **"closed" press event** restricted to federal employees, federally funded technical assistance providers, and policy development providers supporting Native communities.

## Thank you!

We value your participation and look forward to taking action together on the strategies we collectively brainstorm. We appreciate your engagement and know that our departments and programs are stronger when we work together.

