

Developing Native Workforces: Engines for Sustainable Economic Development

Unveiling NCAI's New "Tribal Workforce Development" Toolkit (Version 2.0)





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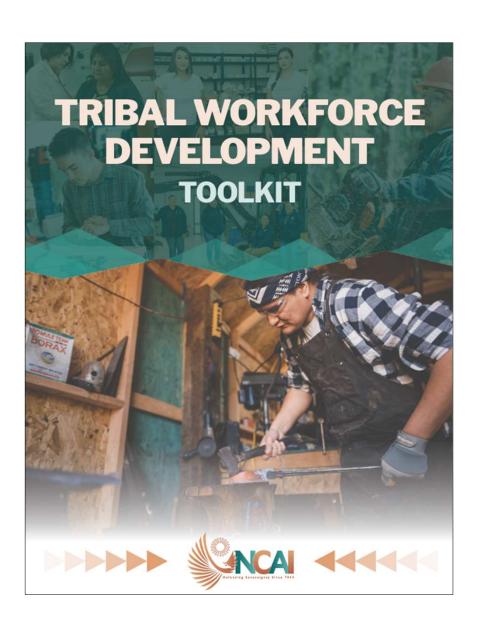
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Purpose of Session:

The session delves into the seminal role workforce development plays in building sustainable tribal economies, 15 strategic considerations for building effective workforce development approaches, and the distinct roles tribal leaders, program staff, and citizens must play in designing and implementing those approaches.

Attendees will learn how to use Version 2.0 of NCAI's "Tribal Workforce Development" toolkit (and its 30 tribal success stories) to inform and drive best-practice strategies in this critical area of tribal governance.



Tribal Workforce Development: A Decision-Framing Toolkit (Version 2.0)



https://www.ncai.org/workforcedevtoolkit

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WHO SHOULD USE IT

NCAI developed this toolkit as a collaborative resource for:

- Tribal, intertribal organization, Native nonprofit, and tribal college and university leaders
- Native "workforce development practitioners" (see definition in Glossary on page 3)

- Tribal TERO staff
- Tribal citizens
- Tribal enterprise CEOs and staff
- Other tribal/local employers
- Native small business owners



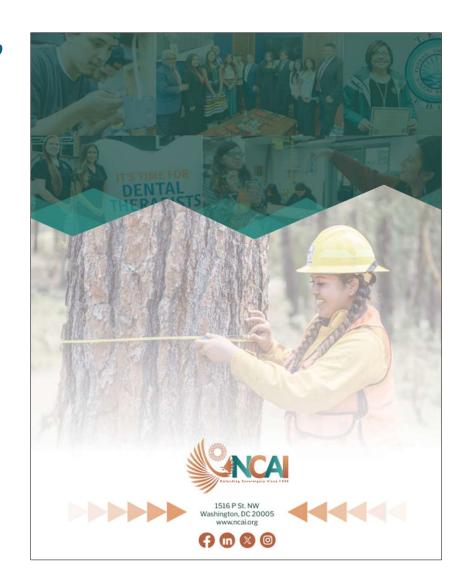
TRIBAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

TOOLKIT

- Partners/prospective partners of Tribal Nations and other Native-led workforce development entities
- Federal/state policymakers and staff

"Tribal Workforce Development" Toolkit (Version 2.0)

- 15 strategic considerations
- 75+ "Ask Yourself" self-assessment questions
- 75+ "Policy Tips" (policy recommendations based on extensive research)
- 30 "Indian Country Snapshot" summaries
- "Visualizing Workforce Development" infographics



Tribal Workforce Development: 15 Strategic Considerations

- SELF-GOVERNANCE
- CULTURE
- CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT
- STRATEGIC VISION
- INTEGRATION
- INSTITUTIONS
- LEADERSHIP
- FUNDING

- DATA
- REMOVING OBSTACLES
- TARGETED SOLUTIONS
- CLOSING THE LOOP
- CAREER ADVANCEMENT
- PARTNERSHIPS
- SUSTAINABILITY

Tribal Workforce Development: 15 Strategic **Considerations**

FRAMING THE DISCUSSION:

A short summary of the strategic consideration and the role it plays in the design, implementation, and growth of a strategic approach to developing Native workforces.

INDIAN COUNTRY SNAPSHOTS:

Two leading examples of innovative Native-led solutions to workforce development that exemplify the strategic consideration in question.

TRAMING THE DISCUSSION

SUSTAINABILITY

10 INDIAN COUNTRY SNAPSHOTS

ASK YOURSELF: Five to seven key strategy-informing questions addressing the specific strategic consideration that tribal leaders, workforce development practitioners, and other key decisionmakers must ask of their current workforce development approaches based on lessons learned through NCAI's ongoing research on workforce development.

POLICY TIPS: Five to seven

recommendations addressing the specific strategic consideration that tribal leaders, workforce development practitioners. and other key decision-makers should consider integrating into their workforce development approaches based on lessons learned through NCAI's ongoing research on workforce development.

DEVELOPING NATIVE WORKFORCES: WHO SHOULD DO WHAT?

In a self-determined, holistic Native workforce development system, everyone involved plays their distinct roles, working together in a coordinated fashion.

TRIBAL CITIZENS

- Help Tribal Nation craft its definition of "workforce development" and set strategic priorities to enact it
- · Work for tribal departments and programs to advance those priorities
- Support Nation's system providing citizens the workforce development and related services they need
- Fulfill the obligations of the workforce development and related services they receive
- · Inform the integration of tribal culture and core values in those services

TRIBAL LEADERS

- · Set strategic workforce development priorities with citizens' input
- Ensure priorities align with/advance Nation's overarching nationrebuilding goals
- Develop tribal laws, policies, and administrative mechanisms to advance those priorities
- Build Nation's data capacity and develop tribal laws to protect/advance its data sovereignty
- Create/support an impartial mechanism for resolving personnel grievances
- Ensure equitable delivery of workforce development and related services to all tribal citizens
- · Hire and delegate authority to qualified staff to administer services
- Grow/retain staff through professional development and merit-based career advancement
- Work with staff to break down programmatic silos that hamper efficiency and effectiveness of services to ensure their coordination in a participant-centered, "wrap-around" system
- Encourage/reward program administrators and staff to develop and implement innovative workforce development solutions
- Co-design with programmatic leaders a process for regular reporting and communication featuring clear roles and accountability between the two groups
- Make targeted workforce development investments in key fields needed to grow Nation's economy (and secure funding for those investments)
- Institute tribal service and/or employment requirements for citizens who receive financial support from Nation for higher education/training

TRIBAL YOUTH

- Complete secondary education and pursue post-secondary education (college/trades)
- · Embrace opportunities to explore future careers at a young age
- Obtain degrees/certifications to secure jobs in Nation's priority fields
- · Start businesses catering to their passions and community needs
- · Create/participate in tribal youth councils

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

- Uphold Public Law 102-477's mandate supporting self-determined Native workforce development
- Adequately fund growth of Native-led workforce development efforts based on the Native population's particular education, training, and related needs
- Generate and share accurate, timely Native workforce data in partnership with Tribal Nations and Native organizations



PROGRAM ADMINISTRATORS AND STAFF

- Evaluate/redesign workforce development programs to ensure they advance Nation's priorities, integrate and strengthen tribal culture/values, and foster participants' mental/spiritual wellbeing
- Secure diversified funding base to drive workforce development priorities (and avoid funding that undermines them)
- Build Nation's capacity to generate/analyze data to assess workforce development landscape, citizens' needs, and effectiveness of programmatic solutions (using partners where needed)
- Grow partnerships with tribal colleges, universities, and other partners to provide workforce development and related services in the fields and ways the Nation needs
- Continuously educate community to deepen its understanding of available services and how they foster individual/familial self-sufficiency

TRIBAL TERO OFFICES

- Enforce tribal TERO laws to ensure qualified tribal citizens receive hiring preference for local jobs
- Coordinate with Tribal Nation and other Native workforce development entities to ensure their education/training programs align with local/regional employers' needs
- Partner with federal, state, and local workforce development entities and unions to expand citizens' access to training and jobs

TRIBAL COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

- Partner with Tribal Nation and other Native workforce development entities to align curricula, degrees, and certifications with their workforce development priorities.
- · Assist with design/implementation of Native workforce data efforts

NATIVE CDFIS

- · Train/invest in Native entrepreneurs to start and grow businesses
- Enhance financial capability of Native workers and future workers through financial literacy and asset-building trainings

OTHER TRIBAL NATIONS

- Partner with Tribal Nation to jointly provide certain workforce development and related services where it makes sense (ex: intertribal consortia and joint 477 Programs)
- · Share effective strategies with Nation that it can adapt to its own purposes

TRIBAL/AREA EMPLOYERS

 Help design Native workforce education and training programs to ensure participants can successfully compete for their job openings

STATE GOVERNMENTS

- Provide Tribal Nations and other Native workforce development entities their fair share of state and federal pass-through funding
- · Supply them with training and technical assistance to plug service gaps

PHILANTHROPY

 Provide Tribal Nations and other Native workforce development entities with long-term, flexible funding to develop innovative solutions tailored to Native people's distinct needs

TRIBAL CITIZENS

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Best Practice "Snapshots": SELF-GOVERNANCE

Swinomish Indian Tribal Community (SITC)

For decades, Swinomish confronted an oral health crisis of epic proportions: 68% of its community members saw their dental problems go untreated, the rate of tooth decay among youth was four times that of white people, and SITC members who were treated received care from "traveling dentists performing painful procedures in a doublewide trailer." In response, SITC exercised its sovereignty and self-regulation of healthcare services to bring a solution established by Tribal Nations in Alaska to its community in the lower 48 states: dental health aid therapists (DHATs). SITC spent two years redesigning the Swinomish Dental Program and developing the first tribal Dental Health

Provider Licensing Code.³ The first Swinomish DHAT started seeing patients in 2016, and a year later Washington State recognized Tribal Nations' authority to license DHATs on tribal lands.⁴ Over the past decade, SITC has become "a state leader in access to dental hygiene," with its DHATs providing roughly 50 primary dental prevention and treatment services under the supervision of a licensed dentist, dramatically increasing SITC members' access to routine and preventative care and reducing wait times for patients from months to same-week and even same-day appointments.⁶ To develop its DHAT workforce, SITC initially partnered with the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium⁷ to train its DHAT providers, and in 2022 it launched the *dəxwxayəbus* Dental Therapy Education Program, a rigorous, accredited, three-year DHAT training curriculum delivered with Skagit Valley College.⁸ SITC also expanded its regulatory authority⁹ to not only license *everyone* who works in its clinic – including its dentists, DHATs, and dental hygienists – but also those who *train* its dental therapy providers.¹⁰ SITC provides regular trainings to maintain "competent provider" status for all of its licensed providers that emphasize cultural responsiveness and meet state requirements for continuing education and license renewals.¹¹ Growing a template any Tribe can follow¹², SITC has drastically improved access to "high quality, culturally competent, primary oral health care," eliminating the traumatic treatment experiences members long endured.¹³

Best Practice "Snapshots": INTEGRATION



Red Lake Nation (RLN)

A leader in the tribal self-determination movement, RLN established its own workforce development programs in the mid-1970s.¹ However, for the next 25 years, these programs remained largely disconnected from one another due to their different federal and state funding sources; they also struggled to holistically address RLN members' distinct workforce development needs or fully align with their cultural values and lifeways. In response, in 2000 RLN launched Oshkiimaajitahdah ("A New Path"), a consolidated approach that educates families "to discover their strengths as individuals"² by "breaking down the barriers" that stand in the way of self-sufficiency.³ Under

Oshkiimaajitahdah's umbrella are 22 programs – six within RLN's 477 Plan and the other 16 seamlessly run as side-by-side programs.⁴ A "true one-stop"⁵, Oshkiimaajitahdah provides "fully integrated" workforce development and related services "at all stages" through a single, centrally located facility "where community members who are unemployed or underemployed can prepare for work."⁶ These services are coordinated through weekly meetings of all connected programmatic leaders and Oshkiimaajitahdah's universal TribeVue case management system, which enables all staff to update and track each client's progress in real time. Oshkiimaajitahdah heavily emphasizes facilitating "the growth of business, investment and jobs," which receives "the highest priority for the use of all available employment and training resources."⁷ Its streamlined approach flexibly channels resources into solutions tailored to community needs, such as the hiring of a career development specialist who connects clients with area off-reservation employers and teaches them how to start their own businesses.⁸ It also has launched targeted trainings in auto repair through its full-service auto shop (where clients learn the trade servicing tribal vehicles) and food production through food producer trainings and its Ashangewin Catering (where they learn about food-based businesses).⁹ Oshkiimaajitahdah recently expanded TANF to a four-county service area surrounding RLN.¹⁰

Best Practice "Snapshots": FUNDING



Nez Perce Tribe (NPT)

Like other Tribal Nations across the country, NPT operates a Tribal Employment Rights Office (TERO) that enforces tribal laws and provides services to ensure "Nez Perce citizens have their rightful share of employment, training, and other economic opportunities." Exercising NPT's sovereignty, its TERO charges a fee of 3.5% on constructionand forestry-related project contracts and subcontracts exceeding \$15,000 within its jurisdiction. Unlike many other Tribal Nations whose TERO fee revenues go into their general funds with a portion then reallocated back to their TERO offices, NPT law mandates all funds "received from TERO fee payments shall go into a revolving fund

to be used by the TERO Office to pay for the implementation of [NPT's] Ordinance." This approach has helped NPT TERO to be 100% fiscally self-sufficient, enabling it to use 5% of its annual budget to support its TERO Commission and 10% of its TERO Fee revenue on "Service to Participants," which includes purchasing work attire and safety gear for clients and covering the costs of their Heavy Equipment and Commercial Driver's License trainings and training-related lodging and meals. With its TERO FEE revenue covering its base operating budget, NPT TERO strategically pursues other funding sources to launch targeted workforce development initiatives that NPT leaders and citizens have deemed most important. These include the Tribal Youth Apprenticeship Program (TYAP), which NPT TERO established in 2023 to advance NPT's strategic priority to "expand Career Technical Education (CTE) and academic credit offerings for area secondary students." Funded in part by TERO Fee revenue and heavily supported by recurring grants from the State of Idaho, TYAP runs a five-week heavy highway construction academy twice a year that provides local youth ages 16 to 24 with hands-on, industry-relevant skills; many are subsequently hired by local employers, including NPT's Housing Authority and several construction companies. NPT's budgetary approach also has enabled NPT TERO to build up a \$4 million reserve fund, which can cover its annual operating budget for three years should other funding sources dry up.

Best Practice "Snapshots": REMOVING OBSTACLES



Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI)

A decade ago, EBCI confronted an epidemic of overdose-caused fatalities among its members. In response, in 2015 EBCI's Cherokee Indian Health Authority (CIHA) commenced universal screening of its patients to determine the prevalence of substance misuse and launched Analenisgi (an integrated behavioral health program) and Kanvwotiyi (a residential substance abuse treatment center) to treat them. In tandem, EBCI TERO established the Mother Town Healing Program (MTHP), a groundbreaking, "recovery-centered" workforce development program to "assist EBCI enrolled members in recovery by providing a safe and supportive working environment, training for necessary

job skills, and discipline to re-enter the workforce in a positive manner." MTHP recognizes job readiness and steady employment as essential to *sustained* recovery⁴, accepting individuals who are 90 days sober and enrolled in Analenisgi's therapeutic services. For the first 5-9 months, participants are paid to work five days per week on community projects such as landscaping, home improvement projects for EBCI members, and tending to MHTP's community garden; time not working is spent in recovery classes, learning life and job skills, developing adaptive behaviors, and goal setting. Those who demonstrate "progress and readiness" are then placed in three-month paid internships with EBCI programs and other MTHP partner entities. Successful interns are often hired by their internship sites; some also become Peer Mentors to incoming MTHP cohorts. MTHP provides participants with modest financial assistance to initially help them make ends meet, work clothes and boots (through a partnership with Cherokee Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation Services), and two nutritious meals each day (through a partnership with CIHA); it also helps them remove common employment barriers. MTHP boasts a 74% program completion rate, with 86% of program graduates still working and in recovery, building on the firm foundation of job skills, healthy life skills, community/cultural reconnection, and sense of purpose that MTHP instilled in them. To strengthen MTHP clients' odds of success, EBCI TERO is spearheading Project Phoenix, an initiative to amend the EBCI Code of Ordinances to expunge clients' non-violent and drug-related convictions so they can more easily obtain tribal employment.

Best Practice "Snapshots": PARTNERSHIPS



Native Workforce Partners (NWP)

Like the rest of Indian Country, COVID-19 severely disrupted service delivery by Native workforce development entities across New Mexico. Determined to enhance and expand their services as Native communities recovered economically from the pandemic, these entities banded together in 2022 to form NWP.¹ Established through a LANL Foundation seed grant, NWP consists of 12 WIOA Section 166 programs in New Mexico and at Ysleta

del Sur Pueblo in Texas and four New Mexico-based 477 programs.² Its purpose is to empower its members' institutional capacity and know-how and leverage its collective voice to strengthen state policy and increase available resources through structured collaboration.³ With funding from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and technical assistance from New Mexico Community Capital, in 2023 NWP developed a strategic plan with key goals, among them: (1) supporting the professional development of its members' program staff; (2) increasing knowledge sharing between members about effective program design, administration, and evaluation; and (3) increasing members' access to funding opportunities to enhance and expand their programs.⁴ NWP launched its regular training series in 2024, with topics including strengths-based leadership, project management, case management, organizational-level critical thinking, and team building (future topics include understanding labor market trends and data analysis/reporting).⁵ Meanwhile, through quarterly meetings, NWP has fostered a solid partnership with the New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions, targeting 2025 for an MOA signing to create a mechanism for regular, genuine consultation between the parties with an eye towards ensuring NWP members receive an equitable share of state workforce development dollars.⁶ NWP also plans to develop specialized Native youth programming and produce videos and digital stories educating philanthropy about the impacts its members make and how it could grow those impacts (e.g., increased high school graduation, credential attainment, and long-term employment rates) through greater investments in them.⁵



"Ask Yourself" Self-Assessment Question: CULTURE

What core cultural competencies do our programs instill in their participants? When they complete the education and training programs we provide, do they understand how to apply them personally and professionally?



"Ask Yourself" Self-Assessment Question: INTEGRATION

Is/how is the "silo effect" currently impacting our workforce development approach, and what can we do to address it?



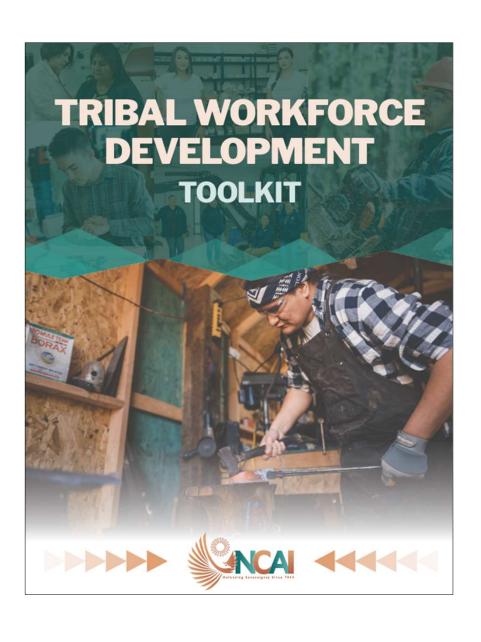
"Ask Yourself" Self-Assessment Question: LEADERSHIP

Are our Nation's political leaders dedicating adequate time – and do they have adequate information and data – to make informed, strategic decisions about how best to develop our workforce and in what specific fields?



"Ask Yourself" Self-Assessment Question: CLOSING THE LOOP

How are we providing our citizens opportunities to pursue careers working on the Nation's behalf using the education, skills, and experience we are supporting them in obtaining? Are we training them to leave our community when we need them to stay?



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