

Field/District Office: Dillon Field Office

Notice of Funding Opportunity Number: L23AS00269

Project Name: Tribal College/ BLM Native Youth Internship Opportunities

Project Background information:

The BLM and Tribal Colleges have been partnering for this Youth internship since 2012

The average cost per intern per season is \$12,000

The mission of the project is to increase the number of Native Americans pursuing careers with the Bureau of Land Management.

Many BLM administered areas are nearby or adjacent to Indian Reservations and settlements. However, there is a clear underrepresentation of Natives occupying manager-level positions within the BLM (as with other agencies, especially those employing significant numbers of STEM related positions). Because federal lands lie alongside large territories of tribal lands it is critical to better represent Native American viewpoints and perspectives both at the tribal and federal management levels. The conflicts between tribal people and federal resource managers will alleviate as more Native American natural resource professionals find their ways into professional federal careers, bringing the perspective of local history and culture.

OBJECTIVE:

Expose Tribal students to career opportunities in the Bureau of Land Management.

The immediate objective of this program is to expose Tribal students to career opportunities in the Bureau of Land Management. To accomplish this, we will create experiential learning opportunities, pairing interns with BLM mentors at several BLM stations across Montana. Working at BLM field stations and other offices can be a powerful introduction to career options—students get a foot-in-the-door, facilitating future employment through BLM. At the same time, interns will become acquainted with the professional agency culture and day-to-day tasks

of different Bureau positions—this firsthand knowledge helps students envision BLM career opportunities. Native students typically have greater family obligations (due both to traditional cultural values and average student age), and are much less likely to venture away from home to explore career options without personal experiences to open that door. Exposure to BLM careers is also limited by the fact that native communities are often in rural areas and students lack financial resources. **This proposal aims to break these barriers for Native students, through positive first-hand job experience with mentors at BLM sites.**

Recruit for a diverse array of career paths within the Bureau of Land Management

In the past five years, we have offered internships in several background areas, contingent on available BLM host sites, such as Wildland Recreation, Forestry, Historic Preservation & Archaeology, Cultural Resource Management, and Interpretive Guide work. We hope to continue these options and expand student options in the proposed project period. Potential additional BLM internships could include Wildlife Management, Water Resources, Information Technology, Geospatial Science, Realty & Cadastral work, and Program Management (as with the BLM Equal Employment Opportunity office).

TECHNICAL APPROACH & PARTNER ROLES:

APPROACH

The approach of this project directly addresses project objectives of introducing Native Americans to diverse career options with the Bureau of Land Management. As mentioned above, we think that experiential learning—summer and academic year internships—are the best way to engage and recruit students in a meaningful way. Working at BLM stations will give students a foot-in-the-door and a feeling of access to a possible BLM career.

Breaking Barriers

An important consideration for recruiting Tribal students—a fact usually unrecognized by non-tribal employers—is that people in Tribal communities are much less able to explore and pursue job opportunities at any distance from their homes. Internships certainly serve an important role in introducing students to different career options, yet these internships most often involve travel away from home—a definite barrier for financially disadvantaged students &

communities. **Our program will, when needed, provide students with either work housing or transportation compensation, breaking the barrier of non-access to remote BLM field stations.** Native students typically have greater family obligations (due both to traditional cultural values and average student age), and are much less likely to venture away from home to explore career options without personal experiences to open that door. **This internship provides that personal first-hand experience, diminishing that barrier.** Also moving off-reservation to mainstream communities can feel like emigrating to a foreign culture for Native students. This program specifically targets Tribal students and is sensitive to cultural differences

Recruiting Across Indian Country for Diverse BLM Career Paths

Our Internship program has and will continue to offer diverse internships, showcasing several BLM career paths in Natural Resources, Cultural Resource Management, & other professions.

Tribal Colleges and BLM actively discuss ideas for new BLM intern sites—in the proposed grant period, we will pursue expanding internships into BLM careers such as Information Technology, Geospatial Science, Program Management, Reality & Cadastral work, and Engineering.

Program Flexibility

We will continue to be flexible while implementing our Mission of growing Native Americans pursuing BLM careers. In addition to targeting diverse student majors in the Tribal College system, we will also recruit from non-tribal universities, such as Montana State University and Northern Arizona University. We strive to make this BLM career pathway accessible beyond local Tribal Colleges; via our tribal college contacts, a majority of past interns ([12 of the 21](#)) were recruited across the country, from other colleges. We will also consider applications from non-tribal students living in native communities, although tribal students will remain the majority of interns. In addition to recruiting current students, we will accept recently graduated students, transitioning into careers. We will continue to be flexible with internship timing, for example students have been hired both full-time over the summer, or part-time during the academic year. We can be flexible with work duration start and end dates, to fit different school calendars and BLM site needs.

Partner Roles

The Bureau of Land Management will serve as onsite supervisors and mentors for interns. BLM supervisors will direct day-to-day intern activities and duties. .

Marcia Pablo, Tribal Coordinator & Program Analyst, will serve as lead coordinator for BLM, working with Tribal College Faculty, and the BLM Montana State Office Contracting Office. Sara Romero-Minkoff, EEO Manager, may assist in identifying BLM work sites and recruits. The BLM and Colleges will work together in identifying internship sites and topic areas.

College faculty will leverage their extensive professional network within the Tribal College community and Indian Country to attract and recruit student into the program. In addition to connecting students with BLM opportunities, The Tribal College will coordinate payment of interns' wages and payment of program expenses, such as housing and travel.

Evaluation

We will evaluate program accomplishments based from the table of outcomes and criteria below. In addition, we will continue to exit-interview all interns upon completion of their work. Interns will be asked to provide feedback on their overall experience, how likely they are to pursue a BLM career in the future, and how beneficial the program was to their career development. Intern feedback will be used to modify and improve future activities.

Outcomes	Evaluation Criteria
Connect interns with BLM career opportunities	Number of total interns each year
Recruit interns both from Tribal Colleges and other geographic areas	Number of recruits by location
Recruit interns for a diversity of career topic areas	Number of internship topic areas

Milestone / Task / Activity	Dates
Identify BLM sites for summer internships	January each year
Recruit & hire summer interns	March-June each year
Summer internship wrap-up / create poster of activities	September each year
Identify, hire for, and support academic-season, part time internship positions	Year-round as opportunities arise

PUBLIC BENEFIT:

This program will expose and inform Native American students of the types of careers that are available within the BLM as well as providing them the opportunity to work in a professional environment where they can gain valuable on-the-job experience and hopefully consider a career with the BLM. In addition, we will also help to strengthen the faculty and curriculum of Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCU) for the purpose of providing a highly-qualified, diverse pool of candidates for BLM's student employment programs. The public will benefit from a diverse workforce, incorporating native perspectives into federal land management.

PAST PERFORMANCE:

Interns have given very high praise of their experience with the BLM in the past several years. Interns have had especially good experiences with engaged onsite supervisors, such as at Pompeys Pillar National Monument and the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument.