

ABSTRACT

Oklahoma STEP Project (OK STEP Project)

The Oklahoma STEP Project (OK STEP Project) responds to Absolute Priority 2. It proposes to increase the capacity of early tribal education agencies among three eligible Oklahoma tribes: Absentee Shawnee Tribe, Kiowa Tribe, and Sac and Fox Nation. The OK STEP Project addresses the three Competitive Preference Priorities. Competitive Preference Priority 1 aims to enhance the identification of Native students eligible for the Title VI Indian Education Formula Grant Program. Partnerships between the participating TEAs and LEAs will develop methods to identify and support under-identified Native students. Competitive Preference Priority 2 supports new STEP grantees, particularly the three early-stage TEAs in Oklahoma that have not previously received a STEP award. This priority aligns directly with the OK STEP Project's intent to increase the capacity of early-stage TEAs. Competitive Preference Priority 3 underscores the importance of strengthening cross-agency coordination and community engagement to facilitate systemic change in key areas like college readiness, workforce development, and family engagement, areas capably attended to by the lead applicant. The OK STEP Project does not include direct services to students.

Sac & Fox Nation will be the fiscal lead and contract with the Tribal Education Departments National Assembly (TEDNA) to lead and facilitate the capacity-building among the three tribes, with the Oklahoma State Department of Education (SEA) and LEAs enrolling an estimated 1,139 Native American students. The Absentee Shawnee TEA will partner with Little Axe and Tecumseh Public Schools (enrolling 423 Native American students). The Kiowa TEA will partner with Carnegie and Elgin Public Schools and Kiowa Tribal School (355 Kiowa students enrolled). The Sac and Fox TEA will partner with the Cushing, Prague, and Stroud Public Schools

(enrolling 361 Native American students). TEDNA will lead the Project for the three TEAs and, in association with the Native American Rights Fund (NARF), be instrumental in promoting self-determination, improving education program administration, conducting TEA capacity-building training, and providing training and support to the SEA and LEAs.

The OK STEP Project has four goals with associated objectives. Goal #1 is to promote Tribal self-determination among the Absentee Shawnee Tribe, Kiowa Tribe, and Sac and Fox Nation with the objectives to: (a) empower participating TEAs to shape their education systems and (b) align education programs with cultural values and aspirations. Goal #2 is to improve the academic achievement of Native students among the three TEAs with the objectives to: (a) identify evidence-based practices and culturally responsive approaches and (b) document the specific needs of Native students enrolled in participating LEAs. Goal #3 is to foster coordination/collaboration among the three TEAs, the OK State Department of Education, and nine LEAs to: (a) establish effective collaboration and communication channels and (b) create an informed and collaborative educational environment. Goal #4 is to strengthen community engagement among the participating TEAs to (a) involve Tribal parents and stakeholders and (b) foster a sense of ownership and shared responsibility for achieving desired outcomes.

The OK STEP Project illustrates the unwavering dedication of the Absentee Shawnee Tribe, Kiowa Tribe, and Sac and Fox Nation to support and promote culturally relevant educational opportunities. TEDNA (in association with (NARF) to address legal barriers) has the essential experience and track record of success in promoting tribal self-determination, expanding educational possibilities for Native American students, advocating for equitable access to high-quality education, and striving for the advancement of tribal communities to successfully achieve the stated purposes of this STEP Grant.