

Chapter 28B.126 RCW
NATIVE AMERICAN APPRENTICE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Sections

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RCW 28B.126.005 Intent. The legislature recognizes that Native American people have faced historical traumas that have had a lasting impact in many facets of life, including educational attainment. Historically, education was used as a reformation tactic to strip away Native identity and culture to whitewash the indigenous population and destroy a nation's own first people by separating Native children from their families. The legislature acknowledges the historical use of education as a weapon and the opportunity to partner with federally recognized Indian tribes to establish truth and reconciliation regarding boarding school traumas in order to facilitate change and remove stigmas of how Native Americans view education.

Native Americans face additional challenges in attaining higher education, such as high rates of poverty and lack of postsecondary educational access near reservations. When the state invests in an educated Native workforce, Native communities become more economically resilient, stronger, healthier, and empowered. Robust Native communities help make a more resilient and vigorous Washington state and contribute to alleviating workforce demand by tapping into historically underutilized talent. Therefore, the legislature intends to establish the Native American apprentice assistance program with the recognition that indigenous populations need additional assistance to pursue postsecondary education because of historical actions that have left lasting impacts. [2024 c 203 s 1.]

RCW 28B.126.010 Definitions. The definitions in this section apply throughout this chapter unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

(1) "Eligible participant" means a member of a federally recognized Indian tribe as defined in RCW 43.376.010 who files a financial aid application approved by the office and enrolls in a state-registered apprenticeship program.

(2) "Gift aid" has the same definition as in RCW 28B.145.010.

(3) "Office" means the office of student financial assistance within the student achievement council.

(4) "State-registered apprenticeship program" means an approved apprenticeship program under chapter 49.04 RCW that has been approved to participate in state financial aid programs. [2024 c 203 s 2.]

RCW 28B.126.020 Program established—Office duties. (1) Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this specific purpose, the Native American apprentice assistance program is established and shall be administered by the office. In administering the program, the office has the following duties:

(a) Publicize the program;

(b) Award assistance to eligible participants according to rules and guidelines adopted beginning with the year 2025; and

(c) Adopt any necessary rules and guidelines for the program in consultation with tribes and state-registered apprenticeship programs.

(2) The office shall determine apprenticeship assistance awarding priorities and award amounts for eligible participants in collaboration with the tribes and state-registered apprenticeship programs.

(a) For eligible participants attending a state-registered apprenticeship program, the office shall prioritize funding to cover any tuition costs for related supplemental instruction. Additional funding may be used to provide a grant to cover required supplies, tools, materials, work clothing, and living expenses.

(b) The office may also prioritize funding that secures an eligible participant's grant for the entire length of the participant's program. [2024 c 203 s 3.]