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September 5, 2012

TO: Carmine Mowbray, Chair
State Tribal Relations Committee
Helena, MT

Tribal Council Members
Fort Belknap Indian Community Council

FR: Loren 'Bum' Stiffarm
Chief Administrative Officer
Fort Belknap Indian Community

RE: **Family Economic Security (FES) RFP# 1115096 MG**
Family Economic Security Interim - Tribal Governments Project

The Fort Belknap Indian Community Council signed an agreement on February 8, 2011 with Rural Dynamics, Inc., of Great Falls, MT to provide access to approved education and training programs here at Fort Belknap. The Fort Belknap 477 Employment and Training Program were to provide services to at least 20 qualified participants in education and training programs. ***Rural Dynamics, Inc., was only at Fort Belknap one time***, for the presentation of the agreement by a former employee, Mr. Tim Guardipee. ***No services were ever provided enrolled members of the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation.***

All of this came to my attention in a letter dated January 9, 2012, from Ruby Eagle Feathers of the Flathead Reservation. In the letter sent to the State Tribal Relations Interim Committee she asks that this body to request reports on the RFP# 1115096MG - Family Economic Security Interim-Tribal Governments Project for the years of 2010 and 2011.

Basically the whole agreement was a shenanigan. The Montana Department of Public Health & Human Services, Health and Community Services did fund Rural Dynamics, Inc., of Great Falls under the following funding solicitation and agreement for those years.

- Advertised a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the Family Economic Security (FES) funding for RFP#1115096MG - Family Economic Security Interim-Tribal Governments Project.

- Rural Dynamics, Inc. of Great Falls was originally awarded a six (6) month interim

project in the amount of $273,154 from January 1 to June 30, 2011.

- Without a required Request For Proposals, Rural Dynamics was again funded $341,883 from July 1 to June 30, 2012.

- On January 26, 2012, at a meeting of the State Tribal Economic Development Council (STEDC), the Council requested an in-depth report of Rural Dynamic Inc. (RDI) Family Economic Services (FES) Tribally designated funds including fiscal accounting, Tribal consultations and all job training services provides to the Montana Tribes in their MT DPHHS Delivery Service Plan which included the Blackfeet, Fort Belknap and Rocky Boy Reservations for the FES Interim Contract from January 1 - June 30, 2011, along with RDI's current report of job training services being delivered on these reservations for SFY 2012. No report by RDI was ever received by the STEDC.

- On April 9, 2012, another renewal of this contract between the MT DPHHS, was made by Ms. Delores Brock, State FES/TANF Program Manager and Rural Dynamics for another $348,156 for SFY 13.

- The funded amounts for these three years was $963,193.00, and I can't speak for the Blackfeet and Rocky Boy Reservations, but at Fort Belknap we have not received any services at all.

Questions arise:

1. Why was Rural Dynamics given grant money (i.e. program extensions) without proper RFP's going out to the general public?

2. In actuality the RFP indicated that prior to submitting any proposal the organization had to have a signed MOA with Tribes to be served, Rural Dynamics did not do this as evidenced by the agreement with Fort Belknap signed in February 2011. To date this MOA has expired. No other agreement has ever been signed by Fort Belknap.

3. There was clearly no prior Consultation with Indian Tribes by the DPHHS on this particular program. None occurred at Fort Belknap.

4. To think that Rural Dynamics could provide workforce training to low income FES eligible individuals via the internet as they proposed is ludicrous. There was no planning whatsoever. Very few homes on the reservation have internet, how were they going to accomplish this?

5. Needless to say is that Rural Dynamics is vastly out of touch with Tribes, especially Fort Belknap.

Basically, what this whole scam portrays is the following:

- A review of the FES Tribal funding revealed services were eliminated to the Confederated Salish-Kootenai Tribes on the Flathead Reservation. There was a fully equipped green training center in Northcentral Montana serving the Rocky Boy's and Fort Belknap Indian Reservations that did not receive job training funds.

- DPHHS left these Indian Reservations without funding for job training services and awarded the funding to Rural Dynamics, Inc. of Great Falls for on-line and financial literacy training. As stated earlier FES interim proposal was extended beyond the initial 6 month period without an RFP solicitation, tribal consultation, cooperation and collaboration with all Montana Tribal Governments as required by law.

- In a State Tribal Economic Development Commission has requested annual performance reports from DPHHS and Rural Dynamics on the projects but nothing has been provided to them. Why not?

- Historically, Rural Dynamics does not have a track record in working with Indian Tribes throughout the State of Montana. We need answers, but services as well.

- Now, close to $1 million dollars has been allocated to RDI for work with Indian Tribes and nothing has been accomplished. No services have ever been provided to the Fort Belknap Gros Ventre and Assiniboine Tribes.

In the Montana Code Annotated - 2007, under Section 2-15-142 Guiding Principles - Tribal Relations Policy. In formulating policies or administrative rules that have direct tribal implications, a state agency should consider the following principles:

(1) a commitment to cooperation and collaboration;
(2) mutual understanding and respect;
(3) regular and early communication;
(4) a process of accountability for addressing issues; and
(5) preservation of the tribal-state relationship.

In 2005, Governor Schweitzer established a workgroup of policy advisors designed to build and maintain productive and stable government to government relationships between State and Tribal governments. If this committee allows the aforementioned funding and inaction by giving RDI these funds without serving Indian people of this State then you have breeched and severely damaged our government to government relationship.

We call on your leadership to look into this matter on our behalf as your work on this State Tribal Relations Committee is very important to Indian Tribes in Montana. Please provide justice to our cause by making the recipient of these funds accountable not only to your committee but to all Indian Tribes as well. I thank you in advance.