



The Montana Indian Language Program Update August 2023

The Montana Indian Language Program (MILP) grant is celebrating its 10th anniversary since its inception in 2013. The program has been updated to flow through the Office of Public Instruction, formerly the Department of Commerce. The novel Covid-19 virus played a particularly devastating role in Indian Country with communities that have few speakers and resources. In that time, our office has taken opportunities to visit with the tribal communities being served, virtually and in person, to take steps forward that align with the well-being of all youth and learners in Montana using the vehicle of heritage language learning.

As we know, each tribal community is distinct. Tribes have different systems and people in place to handle the complexity of education work, both for and in conjunction with the tribes. Some tribes have resolutions in place with their tribal colleges, education, or culture committees, and/or individuals to oversee and produce culturally appropriate work on their behalf. Our offices worked to establish relationships with these cultural leaders to close out the grants that were once overseen by the Department of Commerce.

The Office of Public Instruction included the MILP grant in the Egrants system and our offices have been working to get our grantees enrolled and trained in the basics of the system. The process also includes the coordinated efforts from our accounting, finance, and Egrants teams. The benefits to using Egrants include ease of access to accounting records and additional grants housed by the OPI.

To date, our offices have connected with individuals from each tribal community to initiate the enrollment process into Egrants and we are proud to say every tribe is now approved and most have received their initial cash request. The tedious work is done, and the system is now built to benefit this important work going forward. The tribes' allocations totaled \$168,750 for the biennium.

We are excited to work with the Tribal Nations in developing the guidelines described in HB 287 where we will collaborate with tribal governments to develop and adopt program guidelines for the next round of applications by October 1, 2023. Those funds will be distributed in fiscal year 2024 no later than February 1, 2024.

As the guidelines impact the distribution of funds, they must be adopted as rules under the Montana Administrative Procedures Act (MAPA). To comply with the requirements of MAPA, as well as the publication schedule of the Secretary of State's office for rulemaking, the rulemaking schedule:

September 12.....Filing date for publication
September 22..... Final publication day for adopting rules before the guidelines must be in place
September 29 (Friday) Last business day before the guidelines must be in place
October 1 (Sunday) Guidelines for applications must be in place

