



**Native  
Professional  
Advancement  
Center**

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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# **Federal Budget Proposal Threatens to Dismantle Native Workforce Programs**

*NPAC Warns Loss of WIOA Section 166 Would Devastate Urban Indigenous Communities*

**ALBUQUERQUE, NM** — The [Native Professional Advancement Center \(NPAC\)](#), also known as the National Indian Youth Council (NIYC), is raising the alarm over the [Trump Administration's proposed FY 2026 federal budget](#), which could effectively eliminate the Native American Employment and Training Program under Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Section 166. If enacted, this proposal would **strip Tribes and Native-led organizations of direct access to critical workforce development resources, forcing them to rely on state-controlled systems that often lack cultural relevance and accountability to Indigenous communities.**

The administration's proposal would consolidate or eliminate many targeted federal workforce and education programs, cutting WIOA grants and shifting funds into block grants controlled by states. This shift would sever long-standing trust-based funding structures between the federal government and Tribal Nations, and could eliminate the core programs NPAC uses to serve thousands of Indigenous job seekers and students across New Mexico.

"This is not just a policy decision — it's an attack on Tribal sovereignty and the self-determination of Native peoples," **said Darius Lee Smith, Executive Director of NPAC.** "We've spent more than 60 years building pathways to education and employment that are rooted in our communities and traditions. Taking these programs away puts everything we've fought for at risk."

Founded in 1961 as the National Indian Youth Council (NIYC), NPAC has been a national leader in advancing Indigenous civil rights, education, and employment. **Today, [NPAC operates across New Mexico with programs in Albuquerque, Gallup, and Farmington](#), providing culturally relevant training, job placement, case management, educational stipends, and supportive services to Native Americans who are unemployed, underemployed, or economically disadvantaged.**

"The Section 166 program isn't just another government grant—it's the only federally guaranteed workforce lifeline Native communities can count on," **said Deanna Aquiar,**

**NPAC's Director of Programs and Development.** "Eliminating it would devastate the ability of grassroots Native organizations like NPAC to serve our people on our own terms. It would return us to an era when we were excluded, invisible, and left behind."

The proposed budget outlines a sharp shift away from direct Tribal funding, instead favoring block grants to states and large institutions. This undermines decades of progress won by Indigenous advocates and would force Native organizations to compete with states that often lack meaningful consultation with Tribes or understanding of Native workforce needs.

"We work with people every day who are building futures—earning GEDs, getting placed in jobs, or gaining skills through our training programs," **added Smith.** "Ending direct access to these programs is not fiscal responsibility. It's erasure."

### **Take Action**

NPAC urges Tribal Nations, Native organizations, and allies across the country to contact their congressional representatives immediately and demand the protection of the WIOA Section 166 Native American Employment and Training Program in the federal budget process.

The [House Labor and Education Subcommittee will begin marking up this portion of the budget on July 24th](#). Now is the time to act.

### **About NPAC**

The Native Professional Advancement Center (NPAC)—formerly known as the National Indian Youth Council (NIYC)—was founded in 1961 as one of the first national Native-led civil rights organizations in the U.S. Today, NPAC builds on this legacy by providing workforce development, educational access, cultural advocacy, and community empowerment to Native Americans across New Mexico. NPAC operates 76 work sites and has served thousands of students and job seekers with over \$7.3 million in direct wages and educational support.

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*Founded in 1961, the [Native Professional Advancement Center](#), operating alongside the National Indian Youth Council (NIYC), has been a pioneering force in advocating for the rights and well-being of Native American communities. Born out of a desire to see a world where Native peoples can freely exercise their rights to self-determination and sovereignty, we have spent over six decades dedicated to the empowerment and advancement of Native Americans across the United States.*