

NPAC Newsletter

Powered by the National Indian Youth Council, Inc.

Your local Native American Workforce and Employment Training Program

February 2, 2026 | Vol. 2.2

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"If January is the month of change, February is the month of lasting change. January is for dreamers... February is for doers."
~Marc Parent

In the coming year, the Native Professional Advancement Center/National Indian Youth Council will celebrate **65 years of service**. Since 1961, we have worked to create an environment where our participants can thrive—grounded in self-determination, self-sufficiency, and the well-being of our Indigenous communities.

On behalf of our entire organization, we would like to express our pride in you. **You are special.**

Darius Lee Smith, *Executive Director*

Don't Miss Out on What's Next

Albuquerque, New Mexico

- **New Mexico Outdoor Adventures Show** - February 13-15, 2026
 - *EXPO New Mexico - Home of the State Fair*
- **National Fiery Foods & BBQ Show** - February 27, 2026-March 1, 2026
 - *Sandia Resort and Casino*

Gallup, New Mexico

- **7th Annual Valentine's Craft Fair** - February 7, 2026
 - *Rio West Mall*

TIMESHET DUE DATES AND OFFICE CLOSURES

Timesheets	Pay Date	Office Closures
• February 13, 2026	• February 6, 2026	• February 16, 2026 - President's Day
• February 27, 2026	• February 20, 2026	

Investing in Native Workforce Development Is Investing in New Mexico's Future

By Darius Lee Smith and Deanna Aquiar

New Mexico's strength has always come from its people — from their resilience, creativity, and ability to adapt in the face of change. Nowhere is that more evident than in our Native communities. For decades, Native-led workforce development programs have quietly but powerfully helped build strong families, skilled workers, and local economies across our state.

Today, that work faces uncertainty.

Federal funding for Native workforce programs remains unstable, putting proven pathways to education and employment at risk. But here in New Mexico, we are not powerless. Our state has an opportunity — and a responsibility — to act now to protect and expand workforce development programs that are already delivering real results.

At the Native Professional Advancement Center (NPAC), powered by the National Indian Youth Council now on its 65th anniversary, we've seen firsthand how culturally grounded, community-based workforce programs change lives — not just for individuals, but for entire communities.

Take Preslie Sherman, a recent graduate of the Solar Technician Program offered through the UNM-Gallup Community Education and Workforce Development Program in partnership with NPAC and Purpose Focused Alternative Learning. Preslie entered the program after hearing about it on the radio. Like many New Mexicans, his barrier wasn't motivation or ability — it was transportation.

Through NPAC's support, Preslie received help with transportation, materials, and training costs. Today, he is the first graduate of the program, holding a nationally recognized solar installation certification. That credential opens doors to a growing clean-energy sector — one that keeps talent local while supporting New Mexico's transition to renewable energy.

Or consider Alysha White, who participated in the NBCUniversal Traineeship Program in Albuquerque, gaining hands-on experience as a Props Trainee on the feature film *HIM*, produced by Monkeypaw Productions and filmed right here in New Mexico. Through this opportunity, Alysha learned essential on-set skills — from prop organization and actor preparation to post-production wrap-out — in an industry that continues to bring millions of dollars into our local economy.

For Alysha, this traineeship was more than a job. It was the realization of a dream she had held since high school — and a clear example of how targeted workforce pathways can connect Native talent to high-wage, high-growth industries already thriving in New Mexico.

These stories are not exceptions. They are outcomes of intentional investment in programs designed to meet people where they are, remove barriers, and align training with real job opportunities.

When workforce development works, families gain stability. Employers gain skilled workers. Communities retain talent. And the state benefits from a stronger, more resilient economy.

The uncertainty at the federal level should not be a reason to retreat. It should be a reason for New Mexico to lead.

Through agencies like the Department of Workforce Solutions, the state can ensure that Native workforce programs — especially those with a proven track record — are protected, funded, and included in long-term planning. Doing so honors our state's commitment to equity while recognizing that Native-led programs bring expertise, trust, and cultural understanding that cannot be replicated elsewhere.

NPAC stands ready to continue this work — and to partner with state leaders, policymakers, and employers to build the workforce New Mexico needs today and tomorrow.

Investing in Native workforce development is not charity. It is a smart policy. It is an economic strategy. And most importantly, it is an investment in the people who have always been at the heart of this land.

Deanna Aquiar is the Director of Programs and Development, and Darius Lee Smith is the Executive Director of the Native Professional Advancement Center (NPAC).

NPAC Celebrates Tera Frank's Completion of the Albuquerque Workforce Leadership Academy

ALBUQUERQUE, NM — The Native Professional Advancement Center (NPAC) proudly celebrates Tera Frank, NPAC's Office Manager, for successfully completing the Albuquerque Workforce Leadership Academy — a prestigious, yearlong leadership development program hosted by the City of Albuquerque's Economic Development Department, Central New Mexico Community College (CNM), and the Aspen Institute.

The Academy ran from April through December, bringing together a diverse cohort of professionals committed to strengthening workforce systems, advancing collaboration, and building equitable economic opportunity across the region. Participants engaged in intensive leadership retreats, collaborative learning labs, policy discussions, and applied project work designed to prepare leaders to shape the future of workforce development in Albuquerque and beyond.

Tera Frank's selection and completion of the program reflect NPAC's ongoing commitment to investing in internal leadership capacity and ensuring Native-led organizations have a strong voice at regional and state workforce tables.

"This experience challenged me to grow as a leader and to see my role through a broader systems lens," said Tera Frank, NPAC's Albuquerque Office Manager. "Being part of the Albuquerque Workforce Leadership Academy affirmed that the work we do at NPAC matters — not just to our community, but to the future of New Mexico's workforce. I'm proud to bring these lessons back to our organization and continue serving our community with intention and confidence."

Throughout the Academy, Fellows participated in multi-day retreats, leadership assessments, collaborative projects, and stakeholder presentations, building relationships across sectors while tackling real-world workforce challenges. The program emphasized equity-centered leadership, cross-sector collaboration, and practical solutions — values that align closely with NPAC's mission.

"Tera's accomplishment is a reflection of NPAC's belief that strong organizations are built by investing in people," said Deanna Aquiar, NPAC's Director of Programs and Development. "Workforce development doesn't happen in isolation—it requires leadership, coordination, and a deep understanding of community needs. Tera brings all of that to her work, and this achievement strengthens our entire organization."

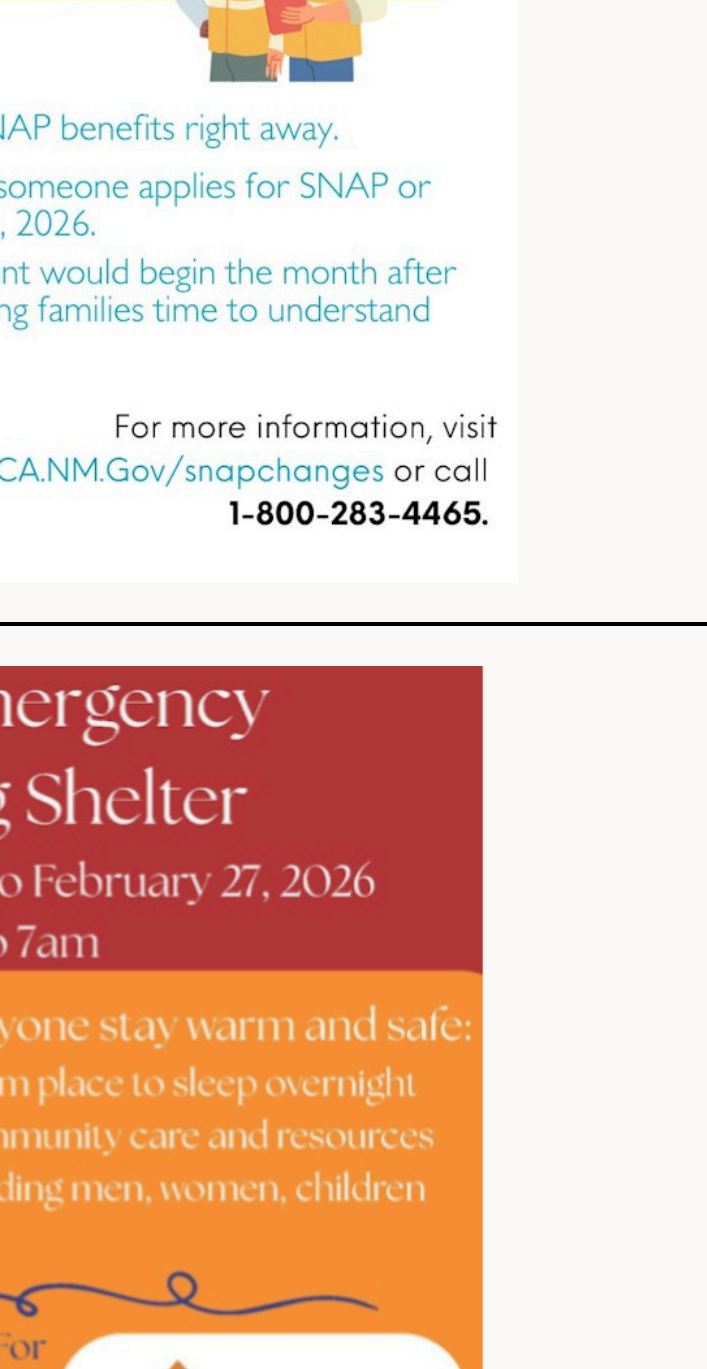
NPAC has long served as a trusted workforce development leader for Native communities in New Mexico, offering job training, education pathways, supportive services, and leadership opportunities rooted in cultural understanding and community accountability. Investing in staff leadership development ensures NPAC remains effective, innovative, and prepared to respond to evolving workforce needs—especially during times of uncertainty around federal funding.

"As conversations about workforce policy and funding continue at the state and federal levels, it's critical that Native-led organizations are not only present, but prepared to lead," said Darius Lee Smith, Executive Director of NPAC. "Tera's completion of the Albuquerque Workforce Leadership Academy strengthens NPAC's voice in these conversations and reinforces our role as a key partner in building a resilient, inclusive workforce for New Mexico."

Smith added that NPAC's investment in leadership development is directly tied to its broader mission: ensuring Native communities are not left out of economic opportunity, decision-making, or policy development.

The Albuquerque Workforce Leadership Academy is designed to cultivate leaders who can bridge sectors, advance equity, and drive systemic change—goals that mirror NPAC's six-decade legacy of advocacy, workforce innovation, and community empowerment.

NPAC congratulates Tera Frank on this milestone and looks forward to the continued impact her leadership will have on the organization, its partners, and the communities it serves.



Be Prepared for ICE

Operation Rainbow Bridge

What every Relative should know:

- Carry a valid state ID.
- Stay calm, do not resist or escalate.
- If detained, say: "I am exercising my right to remain silent. I want to speak to an attorney."
- If agents show up at your home, ask for a signed warrant by a Judge, do NOT open the door without one.
- Document the encounter: video, audio, names, dates, details.
- Report it immediately: info@operationrainbowbridge.com, Office of Navajo Nation Human Rights, (202) 871-7436

Additional Contact
Yolanda Alzua
Yolanda.alzua@nynjv-rnsn.gov

Office of Navajo Nation Human Rights: (928) 871-7436

Navajo Office of Vital Records (928) 871-6884

Operation Rainbow Bridge
1-855-HELPOBB
1-855-435-7473
info@operationrainbowbridge.com

More Info
www.operationrainbowbridge.com

SNAP Work Requirement: What to Know

New SNAP work rules are coming.

Some adults ages 18 - 64 who do not meet an exception will need to **work or volunteer** to keep their SNAP benefits.

If you're **not sure whether** an exception applies to you, **we can help you check.**

Need help finding a job?
Visit www.dws.state.nm.us

Important timing note:

- ▶ These changes will **not affect** SNAP benefits right away.
- ▶ The new rules **only apply** when someone applies for SNAP or renews their case on after Jan. 1, 2026.
- ▶ For most people, the requirement **would begin** the month after their renewal or application, giving families time to understand and prepare.

For more information, visit HCANM.Gov/snaphchanges or call **1-800-283-4465**.

Pueblo Action Alliance

In 2026, PAA will be selecting their next cohort of Cultivating Roots and Resistance (CRR) fellows, **4 Pueblo youth** who are ready to engage in shared learning spaces! These youth will get month learning stipends of \$300 and a \$500 scholarship awarded upon completion of the fellowship. PAA is asking that applicants are able to meet all eligibility requirements and complete the application in its entirety.

All applications and recommendation letters must be submitted by Sunday February 15, 2026 at 10pm MST.

If you have any questions or trouble with link please email Youth Justice Organizer Kira Padilla at kira@puebloactionalliance.org with subject line "ATTN: CRR Fellowship".

[Apply Here!](#)

2026 CULTIVATING ROOTS & RESISTANCE FELLOWSHIP

CALLING PUEBLO YOUTH AGES 18-25!

- 9-month fellowship starting March 8, 2026 - December 6, 2026
- Earn a \$500 monthly learning stipend and a \$500 scholarship upon completion
- Develop Leadership Skills, Experience field days to Chaco Canyon, Cap de Rio, and more!
- *NM students can gain college credit!

LEARN MORE & APPLY WITH THE QR CODE!

FOR MORE INFO CONTACT: kira@puebloactionalliance.org 1680

Scholarships for Native Students in STEM Fields

AISES

ADVENTURE IN SCIENCE PEOPLE IN STEM

Scholarship applications close April 30, 2026.

If awarded, award notification will be sent out in the Fall of 2026

[Apply Here!](#)

Career Pathways Scholarship

Career Pathways Scholarships are for individuals who have a specific career in mind and are committed to earning an associate's degree or certification in any field or trade.

These scholarships are available to high school students and adult learners with a high school diploma or GED/High School Equivalency (HSE).

The Career Pathways Scholarship application will be open from **January 5, 2026 to April 3, 2026**.

For more information or if you are interested: [Click Here to Apply](#)

Forge Project opens applications for 2026 Indigenous fellowships

"Forge Project has announced an open call for its 2026 funded fellowship program, inviting Indigenous artists, scholars, organizers, cultural workers, researchers, and educators to apply for the prestigious annual cohort. The application period closes Sunday, February 15, 2026, at 11:59 p.m., with selected fellows to be announced in late spring....." [\(Read more\)](#)

[Apply Here](#)

Prosperity Works - Efficiency Upgrades

Many homes could use help becoming more energy efficient — which saves energy and money! Prosperity Works offers energy assessments through our partner, Energy Works, to low-income households. These energy assessments help us determine which retrofits your home needs most.

[Learn More](#)

Looking for Scholarships?

Scholarships360 is a scholarships website dedicated to finding great scholarship opportunities for students & providing financial aid advice.

[Learn More Today!](#)

New Mexico Rural Water Association (NMRWA)

New Mexico Rural Water Association (NMRWA) has a 2-year Water/Wastewater Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP) where an apprentice can attain their Level 2 operator certification to operate a water and/or wastewater treatment plant. Apprentices work alongside a mentor, earn money while working at a utility and do most classes online.

This career path will never go away. Apprentices can gain practical skills they can take anywhere and make a real difference in their community.

To qualify, applicants must be at least 18 years old, have a valid driver's license, graduated from high school, or have a GED and be physically capable of performing the essential functions of the apprenticeship program, with or without a reasonable accommodation, and without posing a direct threat to the health and safety of the individual or others.

To graduate from this program, the apprentice must complete:

- At least 4000 OJT hours,
- At least 288 RTI (Related Technical Instruction) class hours,
- Earn 2 satisfactory evaluations from a mentor (one every 12-months),
- Attend 4 scheduled conferences (Annual Conference in April at the Isleta Resort and Casino; Fall Conference at Las Cruces Convention Center) and
- Pass the New Mexico Environment Department Levels 1 & 2 exams.

Funding may be available for books and online classes to apprentices.

To apply for this career opportunity, click this link: [NMRWA](#)

JOB OPENING: PROGRAM MANAGER

The Indigenous Journalists Association (IJA) is seeking a Program Manager to join our growing team and help steward programs that uplift Indigenous journalists, storytellers, and media workers across Turtle Island and beyond.

This role is grounded in relationship-building, collaboration, and service to community. The Program Manager supports the vision, care, and coordination of IJA's programs, including the Indigenous Media Conference (IMC) and newsroom training through the Indigenous Media Initiative (IMI). Working closely with staff, board members, volunteers, and partners, this position helps ensure our programs are responsive, accountable, and rooted in Indigenous values.

This is a full-time, remote position with a flexible 40-hour work week. Regular domestic travel is required, with some international travel possible.

[APPLY HERE!](#)

WIOA Youth Hiring Program Manager

Lead. Impact. Empower.
Shape the future of Northern New Mexico youth!

Youth Development, Inc. (YDI) is hiring a WIOA Program Manager to oversee career training and support services for young adults ages 14-24 across 10 Northern NM counties.

Santa Fe, NM | Travel Required | Full-Time | \$33,200/hour

YOU WILL:

- Manage youth workforce programs across 10 counties
- Lead a team providing paid internships, mentoring & career readiness
- Build partnerships with employers and community agencies
- Ensure youth gain skills, finish school, and launch careers

WE'RE LOOKING FOR:

- Bachelor's degree + 3 years' experience (or equivalent)
- Supervisory skills & heart for youth development
- Strong communicator & community builder

MAKE AN IMPACT:
Last summer, we placed 47 youth in paid jobs, partnered with 80+ employers, and provided 12 months of follow-up support.

READY TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE?
Apply today at: ydim.org/northern-resources

Youth Development, Inc. | Northern Region WIOA
Empower youth. Strengthen community.

Work Experience Program: Farmington Job Openings

- **Alta Dance Academy** is seeking an on-site Social Media Manager to assist with strategizing, help with content creation, as well as networking and communicating with various communities/companies through social platforms.
- **Capacity Builders** is seeking an on-site Administrative Assistant — HR, Administrative Assistant, Transport Dispatcher, and an Accounting Specialist to assist with general office and administrative work, communicate, organizing and conduct activities and day-to-day route with transportation service providers, as well as provide accurate general accounting and data entry services.
- **Northwest New Mexico Arts** is seeking an Art Assistant who will assist with promoting different community projects/events, assists and performs afterschool/summer art camp activities for community youth and adults. Assists with statistical data collection and reporting for grant/funding sources. Attend any training/meetings mandatory for position.
- **ECHO Food Bank** is seeking a Warehouse helper who will assist in packaging, stocking, working the drive-thru, completing paperwork, cleaning and any other duties as assigned.
- **Top Cool Automotive** is seeking a Automotive Technician, Automotive Tech Trainee, Shop Hand/Helper and an Administrative Assistant who will assist in clerical duties, maintaining and keeping the shop/office clean, as well as being able to create work orders, vehicle repair quotes, take vehicle information and manage vehicle service and repairs.
- **Roots Home Health Care** is seeking a receptionist who will assist staff with appointment scheduling, answering calls/questions, inform staff members of meetings and perform other duties as requested.
- **Beehive Homes** is seeking a Personal Care Attendant who will conduct activities of daily living, assist with cooking, carry out housekeeping duties, attend to laundry, complete vital checks and record documentation.

****Please note: The Albuquerque and Gallup offices do not have any Work Experience openings at the moment.****

Did You Know...

As February approaches, widely known as the month of love, it is essential to also highlight the significance of Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month and Dating Violence. This period provides us a chance to reflect and remind ourselves about the importance of fostering safe and respectful relationships.

Dating violence is a serious concern that affects many individuals across all demographics. Raising awareness and understanding the signs of unhealthy relationships can make a substantial difference. Providing support to those who need it and having open conversations about these issues can pave the way for healthier relationship dynamics.

As always, if there is anything you need or if you wish to discuss further how you can be more involved in awareness activities, please feel free to reach out to these resources below:

National Teen Dating Abuse Hotline Teen Abuse and Sexual Assault 1.866.331.9474 Love is respect	988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline Suicide Prevention 988	Coalition to Stop Violence Against Native Women (CSVANW) Abuse and Sexual Assault 505.243.9199 NM CRISIS
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SPOTLIGHT OF EXCELLENCE: GALLUP

Tristi Jumbo

My name is Tristi Jumbo. I am from Arizona, and I moved to New Mexico to further my education. When I entered the NPAC program I was trying to figure out what I wanted to do career-wise in the future. NPAC has helped me figure out what I want to do. The motivation in accomplishing my future goals is being able to help others with pursuing a career.

Congratulation to Tristi she graduated from the University of New Mexico with her Associate of Arts in Criminal Justice.

SPOTLIGHT OF EXCELLENCE: ALBUQUERQUE

Shaina Tahy

I am proud to share that I have graduated with my bachelor's degree as a single mother—a journey that tested my strength, resilience and determination every step of the way. Balancing parenthood, work, and studies was not easy, but each challenge taught me the power of perseverance and the importance of believing in myself. I am deeply grateful to NPAC for the unwavering support, guidance and encouragement. Your belief in me gave me the confidence to keep going, even on the hardest days, and your resources helped me make this achievement possible. This accomplishment is not just mine—it is a reflection of the community, mentorship, and support that lifted me up. I hope my journey can inspire others facing similar challenges to pursue their dreams with courage and determination.

SPOTLIGHT OF EXCELLENCE: FARMINGTON

Preston Tom

Being a part of Native Professional Advancement Center (NPAC) has allowed me to connect with staff members and to really allow myself to grow and advance as an individual. NPAC was able to assist me with the financial burden that comes with higher education and classroom training. NPAC has allowed me to be the first in my family to receive a bachelor's degree and to pursue an MBA. My goal for the future is to open my own coffee shop and to give back to my community. NPAC was the light that I needed to see to stand beside me and they opened doors that seemed impossible.

Farmington 106 W Main St., D. Farmington, New Mexico 87401 505-327-5341 NYJC Farmington	Albuquerque 6201 Uptown Blvd. NE Ste. 203 Albuquerque, New Mexico 87110 505-247-2251 NYJC Albuquerque	Gallup 407 S Cliff Dr # B, Gallup, NM 87301 505-863-6639 NYJC Gallup
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