

Empowering Native Youth Through Federal Funding: Overcoming Barriers and Honoring Commitments

A Comprehensive Analysis of Tribal
Access to Federal Resources

For the National Indian Child Welfare Association
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VISION

We envision a nation where all children and youth thrive because all communities maintain equitable, coordinated, and sustainable funding for comprehensive programs and services.




MISSION

Children's Funding Project helps communities and states expand equitable opportunities for children and youth through strategic public financing.



Building a strategic public financing movement with states, localities, and Native nations

- How much funding supports our goals right now?  **Fiscal mapping**
- How much will it cost to fund our goals in full?  **Cost modeling and estimation**
- How do we fill the gap between current funding and fully funding our goals?  **Sources of additional funding**



Native Children & Youth Funding Team

The Native Children and Youth Funding team collaborates with Native communities to harness the power of strategic public financing tools, including fiscal mapping, cost modeling, and emerging funding strategies for culturally responsive and sustainable cradle-to-career programs and services.



Core commitments of this team as a non-Native led organization



Native-Led Partnerships



Continuous Learning



Exploring the Complexities of Federal Funding to Support Native Children and Youth

CHILDREN'S
FUNDING PROJECT



- 1 Acknowledge the context of our work
- 2 Showcase original research
- 3 Outline next steps

Navigating Barriers: Tribal Access to Federal Funding

- **Federal funding is essential** for tribes to support Native youth and their communities.
- **Significant barriers exist** that prevent tribes from accessing these crucial funds—some that are well studied and others that are not.
- The Native Children's Funding Project Team **identified and explored two of these barriers.**

1

Inconsistent and confusing Tribal eligibility criteria

2

Fund underutilization



What do we mean when we say “fund underutilization”?

We use the term “underutilization” to refer to funding that is returned to the federal government. The technical term for this is “deobligation”.

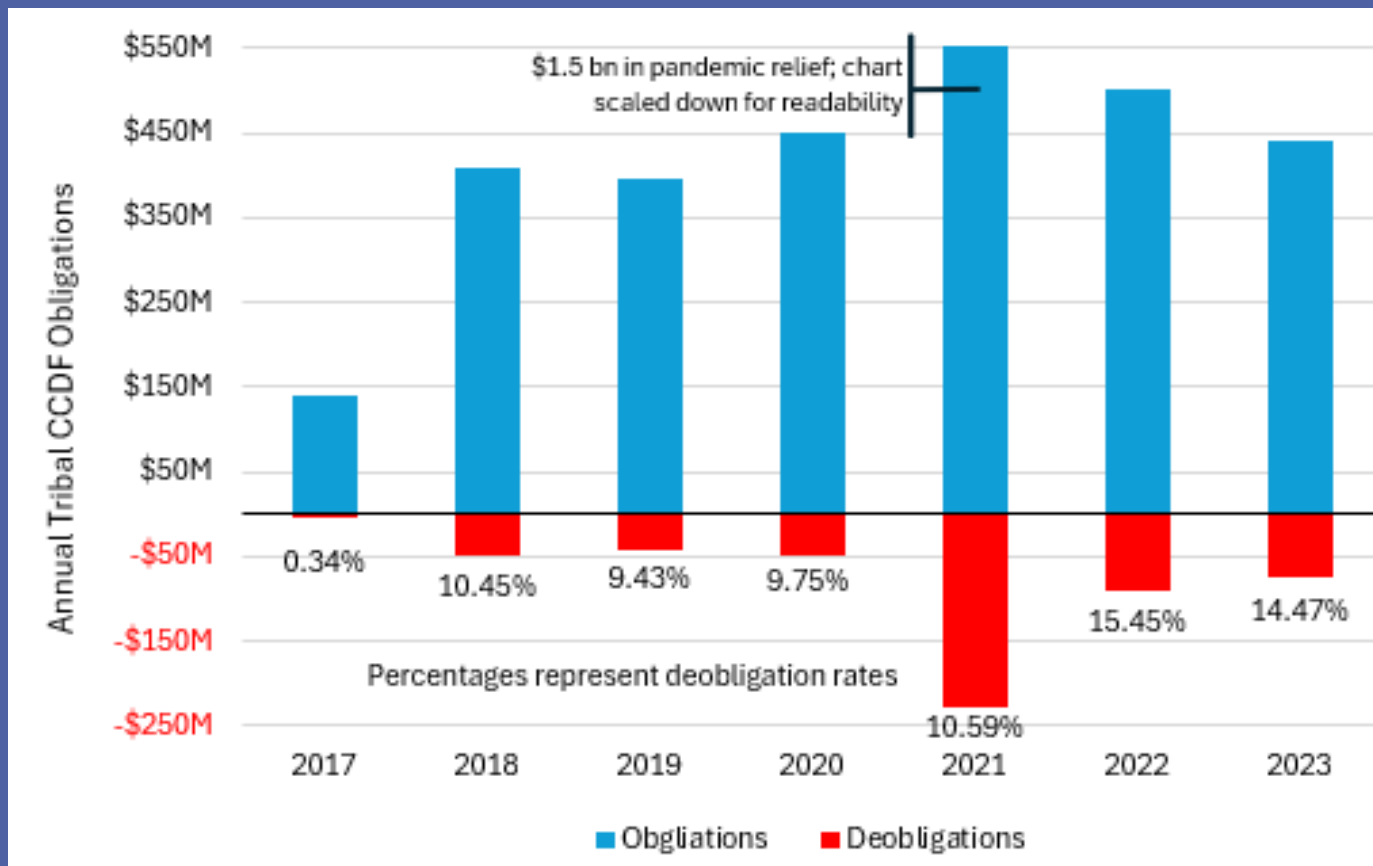
How do we know how much funding is being returned?

The federal government publishes every fiscal transaction on a website called USA Spending. That data shows all the money that goes out and all of the money that comes back.

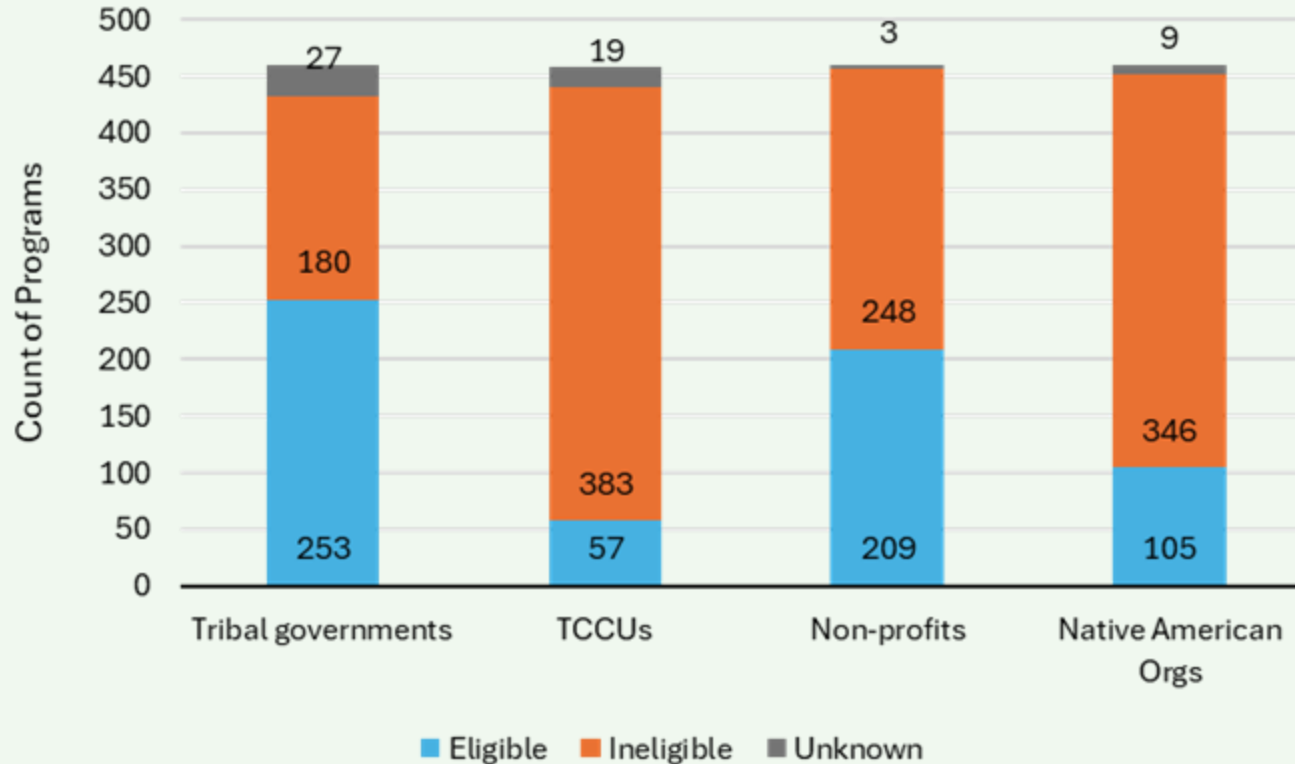
Why is funding returned?

- Grantees not meeting spending deadlines
- Revision of total grant funding by the awarding agency
- Grantee projects cost efficiencies
- Allocation errors
- Grant compliance

Deobligation of CCDF Funding from Tribal Recipients FY2017 - FY2023



Eligibility of Different Entities Across 450+ Federal Funding Streams



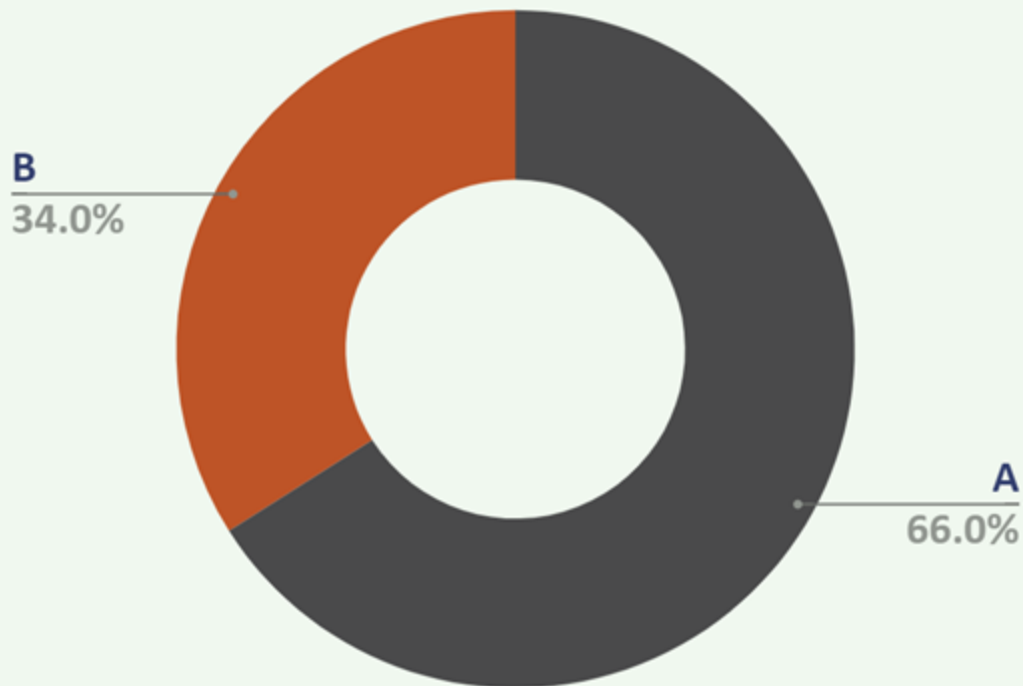
Communication and Application Barriers

A

66% of inquiries received no response

B

34% of inquiries received a response



Inconsistent Eligibility Designations

Inconsistent Eligibility Designations occur when federal program listings provide unclear or conflicting information about which tribes qualify for funding. This leads to confusion, where tribes may apply for grants they are not eligible for or miss out on opportunities due to inaccurate or contradictory eligibility criteria across platforms like SAM.gov. This inconsistency creates significant barriers for tribes seeking federal support.



Issue:

Federal program listings, including those on SAM.gov, frequently show inconsistent or contradictory information about tribal eligibility, causing confusion and inefficiencies.



Example:

In 39 instances, federally recognized tribes received funding despite not being listed as eligible applicants. This inconsistency complicates the ability for other tribes to determine if they qualify for the same funding.



Impact:

Without accurate eligibility listings, tribes may waste limited resources applying for funding they are ineligible for or may forgo applying altogether, missing critical funding opportunities.

Confusing Terminology and Eligibility Criteria

Confusing Terminology and Eligibility Criteria refers to the challenges tribes face due to the inconsistent language federal agencies use to describe eligibility for funding. Without standardized terms, tribes often struggle to determine whether they qualify for specific grants or programs, which adds unnecessary complexity to the application process. This confusion not only creates frustration but also discourages many tribes from applying for the funding they may desperately need. By having to interpret varying terms and eligibility criteria across different agencies, tribes are left navigating a system that is difficult to understand and often inaccessible, limiting their ability to secure essential resources for their communities.

- **Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian Eligibility:**

These groups often face additional challenges, as they are **not always eligible for the same programs** as federally recognized tribes, and available funding opportunities can be difficult to find.

- **Language Inconsistencies:**

Federal agencies use varying terms to describe tribal eligibility, such as “**Indian Tribal Organizations**” or “**Tribal Governments**,” which leads to confusion when determining eligibility for programs.

- **TCCU Challenges:**

Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCCUs) frequently receive **conflicting eligibility information**, further limiting their access to crucial funding for higher education programs.

Questions?

- Children's Funding Project and the Native Children and Youth Funding Project
- Fund underutilization
- Obstacles to determining Tribal eligibility for federal grant programs





Strategies for Addressing Funding Barriers

This section will provide an overview of three of our strategic public financing strategies, along with a discussion of how they might be adapted to Indian Country.

1

Taking advantage of alternative funding streams for child welfare

2

Blending and braiding funding

3

Children's funding coordinators

Funding Streams for Child Welfare

Funding Stream	Federal Administering Agency	Funding Type	Tribal Eligibility
Indian Child Welfare Act Title II Grants	Bureau of Indian Affairs	Project grant	Federally recognized Tribes and Native American organizations
Children's Justice Act Partnerships for Indian Communities	Department of Justice - Office of Justice Programs	Project grant	Federally recognized Tribes and nonprofit organizations
Children Exposed to Violence	Department of Justice - Office of Justice Programs	Project grant	Federally recognized Tribes and nonprofit organizations
Title IV-E Kinship Navigator Program	Administration for Children and Families	Formula grant	Federally recognized Tribes
Title IV-E Prevention Program	Administration for Children and Families	Formula grant	Federally recognized Tribes
MaryLee Allen Promoting Safe and Stable Families Program	Administration for Children and Families	Project grant	Federally recognized Tribes, but only for part of the funding
Foster Care Title IV-E	Administration for Children and Families	Formula grant	Tribes (ISDEA definition)

Funding Streams for System Building

Funding Stream	Federal Administering Agency	Funding Type	Tribal Eligibility
National Family Caregiver Support, Title VI, Part C, Grants To Indian Tribes And Native Hawaiians	U.S. Department of Health and Human Services - Administration for Community Living	Project grant; Formula grant	Federally recognized Tribes and Native American organizations
Child Support Services	U.S. Department of Health and Human Services - Administration for Children and Families	Formula grant	Federally recognized Tribes
Tribal Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting	U.S. Department of Health and Human Services - Administration for Children and Families	Cooperative agreement	Federally recognized Tribes, Native American organizations, and nonprofits
Indian Social Services Welfare Assistance	U.S. Department of the Interior - Bureau of Indian Affairs	Cooperative agreement	Federally recognized Tribes, and individuals belonging to FRTs
Indian Community Development Block Grant Program	U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development - Office of Public and Indian Housing	Project grant	Tribes (ISDEA definition) and Native American organizations
Services to Indian Children, Elderly and Families	U.S. Department of the Interior - Bureau of Indian Affairs	Cooperative agreement	Federally recognized Tribes
Child Care and Development Fund	U.S. Department of Health and Human Services - Administration for Children and Families	Formula grant; Project grant	Federally recognized Tribes
Community Facilities Loans and Grants	U.S. Department of Agriculture - Rural Housing Service	Project grant; Direct loans; Guaranteed/insured loans	Federally recognized Tribes and nonprofits

What is blending and braiding?



Adapted from the National Academy for State Health Policy, June 2016.
<https://media.nasos.org/content/assets/2016/06/CSA-Inspired-Model.pdf>

Blending refers to incorporating funds from two or more revenue streams together to fund a specific initiative. Funds are merged together into one central pot and costs are not necessarily allocated to the separate funding streams.



Adapted from the National Academy for State Health Policy, December 2017.
<https://media.nasos.org/content/assets/2017/12/CSA-Inspired-Model.pdf>

Braiding is a practice in which two or more funding streams are used in a coordinated fashion to support a single initiative, but costs are closely tracked and allocated by funding stream. There may be restrictions as to which funds can be used for which purposes.

Where Blending and Braiding Strategies Can Be Used

- Funding streams can be blended or braided by the granting entity
- Funding streams can be blended or braided by the grant recipient
- Funding can be blended or braided by the direct service providers receiving the funds

Considerations for Blending and Braiding Strategies

- What are the most flexible sources of funding—i.e. the ones easiest to blend and braid?
- How will we integrate the different eligibilities and requirements?
- How will we meet all program goals?
- Who is equipped to handle the complexity and layers of administration, management, and reporting?

Why do we need blending and braiding?

- Enhanced and coordinated service delivery
- Unified service models
- Simplified access for children and families
- Integration along different eligibility criteria

...but ultimately, the core reason is that no single funding stream or program can sufficiently address the needs of every child in a community.

23

What is a Native Children's Funding Coordinator?



A dedicated advocate working every day to secure funding, resources, and opportunities for Native children, ensuring their access to culturally relevant and essential services through strategic public finance planning.

Key Responsibilities

- **Champion of Native Children & Youth**
- **Expert in Strategic Public Finance**
- **Community Collaborator**
- **Capacity Builder**

Why Are Native CFCs Needed in Tribal Communities?

- **Cultural Relevance:**
A Tribal CFC ensures that funding is directed towards projects that uplift and sustain Native traditions, languages, and ways of life, addressing the unique challenges faced by our children.
- **Navigating Complex Federal Systems:**
Federal grant processes can be difficult to navigate. Tribal CFCs specialize in breaking down these barriers and streamlining the process to secure funding for under-resourced tribes.
- **Advocating for Native Children's Rights:**
Tribal CFCs fight for equitable access to the same educational, health, and community development resources available to other children across the country, tailoring these services to align with tribal values and practices.



The Impact of Native CFCs in Rural Tribal Communities

Overcoming Rural Challenges:

Native rural communities often struggle with limited access to funding, infrastructure, and programs that can benefit youth. A Native CFC ensures these communities receive the resources they deserve.

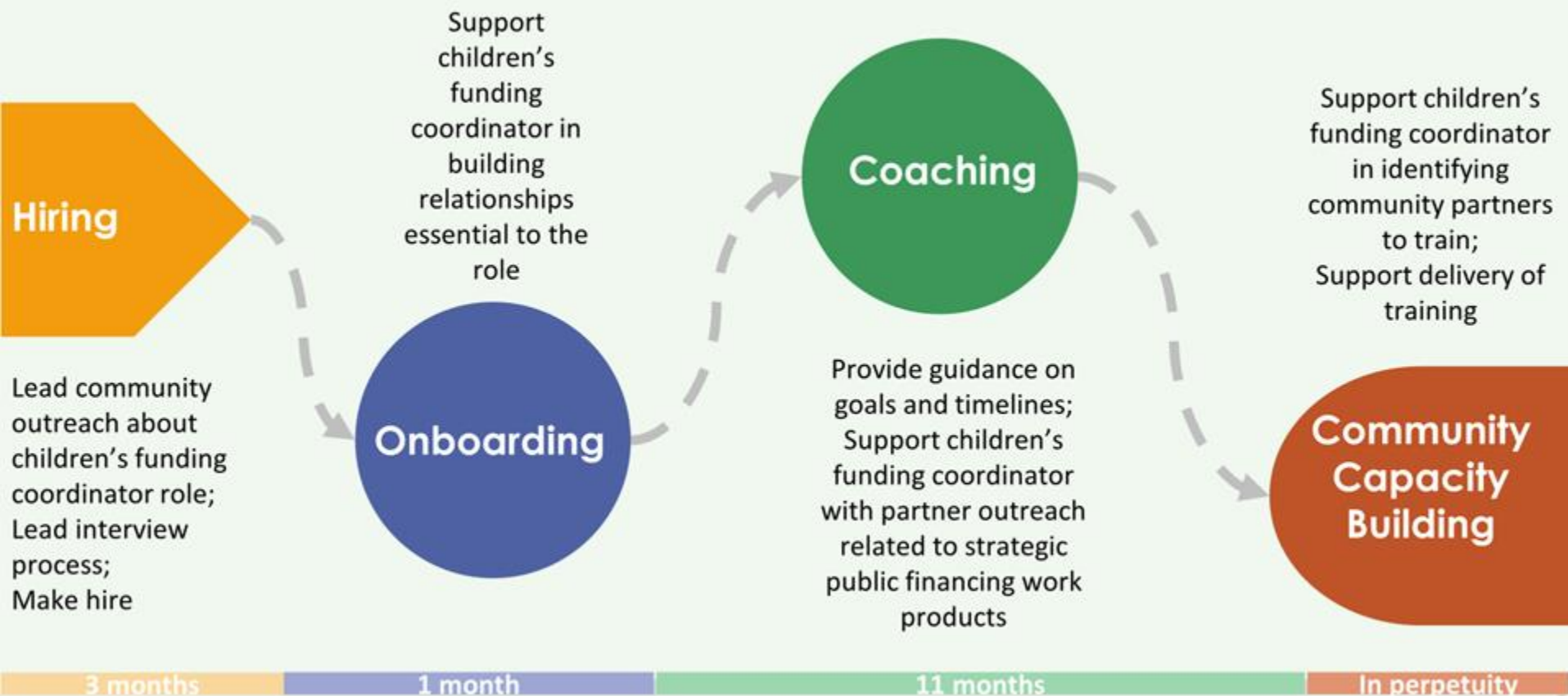
Sustaining Generations:

By securing funding for culturally relevant youth programs, Native CFCs help protect and preserve the cultural identity of future generations, embodying the Seventh Generation principle in their work.

Building Local Capacity:

Native CFCs train community members to become financially strategic, ensuring the community can independently sustain these funding efforts and continue to grow in the long term.

Journey of a Children's Funding Coordinator: Hiring Org Role



Journey of a Children's Funding Coordinator: Coordinator's Role



Co-Creating a CFC Model for Indian Country

- **Recognizing Unique Challenges:**
Indian Country faces distinct obstacles, including tribal governance structures, underfunding, and the need for culturally grounded solutions. These factors require a specialized model for Children's Funding Coordinators (CFCs) that reflects the unique needs of Native communities.
- **Customizing the Approach:**
Our aim is to tailor the CFC model by:
 - Prioritizing culturally relevant funding strategies
 - Respecting tribal sovereignty in financial planning and collaboration
 - Promoting community-led solutions for sustainable resource access
- **Engaging Tribal Voices:**
We invite your feedback and ideas to help refine and develop this model. Your input is essential to ensuring the CFC model addresses the needs of Native youth and communities.



Questions?

- Alternative funding streams
- Blending and braiding
- Children's Funding coordinators



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Discussion Questions

1. What obstacles to funding have you experienced in your child care programs?
2. Have you experienced any obstacles to using all of your funding?
3. Are you aware of your Tribe returning any funding to the federal government?
If yes, do you know why?
4. Have you heard of or considered any of these strategies for your child care program before?
5. Do any of these strategies address issues in your child care program?
6. Does it seem possible for any of these strategies to be implemented in your program?
7. What potential obstacles are there to implementing these strategies in your program?

Quyanaqpak

Chin'an

Wado

Gunalchéesh

Enaa baasee'

Thank you Shonabish

Miigwetch

Qe'ciyew'yew

Quyana

Qaâgaasakuq"

Pilámayaye

lemlmts

Ahéhee

N'doyukshn