

Interior's Bureau of Trust Funds Administration Established

Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs Tara Katuk Sweeney recently announced the establishment of the Bureau of Trust Funds Administration (BTFA), which will report directly to her office. The new BTFA will assume responsibility for financial operations and functions currently performed by the Office of the Special Trustee for American Indians (OST) effective today. The new Bureau will maintain the current OST fiduciary functions and reflects the Department of the Interior's efforts to reform and modernize its accountability and management of Indian funds held in trust.

"Twenty-six years after Congress enacted the American Indian Trust Fund Management Reform Act of 1994, this Administration has finished the work necessary to modernize and professionalize the federal government's handling of its fiduciary responsibilities for tribal and individual Indian trust fund accounts," said Tara Sweeney, Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs. "These reforms – the higher standard of care and best practices necessary for fulfilling the Secretary's trust responsibility – must be institutionalized and made permanent."

Assistant Secretary Tara Sweeney Announces \$5.5 Million Available for IEED Energy Mineral Development Program Grants

Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs Tara Katuk Sweeney recently announced that approximately \$5.5 million is available for Office of Indian Energy and Economic Development (IEED) Energy Mineral Development Program (EMDP) grants to help federally recognized American Indian tribes, Alaska Native entities and tribal energy resource development organizations identify, evaluate or assess the market for energy or mineral resources to be developed. EMDP will fund about 25 to 30 grants. The application deadline is December 2, 2020.

EMDP grants fund resource inventories and assessments, feasibility studies, or other pre-development studies related to energy and mineral resources. Assessments and studies funded through EMDP focus on biomass (wood and waste) for heat or electricity; transportation fuels; hydroelectric, solar or wind generation; geothermal heating or electricity production; district heating; other forms of distributed energy generation; oil, natural gas, geothermal and helium; and sand and gravel, coal, precious minerals and base minerals.

"Revenues from the development of energy and mineral resources are second only to gaming as a source of revenues for tribes," Assistant Secretary Sweeney said. "The feasibility studies and resource assessments funded by EMDP are a necessary first step in developing those resources. I encourage

Established by the American Indian Trust Fund Management Reform Act of 1994 (Public Law 103-412), OST was created to improve the accountability and management of Indian funds held in trust by the federal government. As trustee, DOI has the primary fiduciary responsibility to manage both tribal trust funds and Individual Indian Money (IIM) accounts.

In evaluating the potential transition of these functions, the Department engaged in multiple meetings and forums with tribes and stakeholders. In addition, numerous formal government-to-government consultations were conducted and one Listening Session held throughout Indian Country as part of the implementation of the Indian Trust Asset Reform Act (ITARA) Section 304(a), codified at 25 U.S.C. § 5635, which requires that the Secretary prepare a transition plan and timetable for the termination of OST.

The mission of the Bureau of Trust Funds Administration is to manage the financial assets of trust beneficiaries. This effort is integrally related to DOI's goal of meeting its responsibilities to American Indians. BTFA carries out its mission in pursuit of the following vision – We Excel, Native America Prospers.

all those interested to submit proposals for this important funding opportunity."

IEED's solicitation for EMDP funding and details on how to apply can be found in the Federal Register notice published on September 3 and at the *Grants.Gov* website.

EMDP is a competitive, discretionary program. To qualify for funding, applicants must submit a proposal and a supporting tribal resolution to IEED by December 2, 2020, using the standard Application for Federal Assistance Form SF-424 and the Project Narrative Attachment Form, both of which can be found at *Grants.gov*.

Applications will be evaluated chiefly on the basis of a project's potential to attract financing, create jobs, generate revenues, and foster other long-term benefits to a Native community, as well as the clarity and completeness of the application's scope of work, deliverables and budget.

IEED is administering this program through its Division of Energy and Mineral Development (DEMD).

Questions about EMDP may be addressed to: Winter Jojola-Talbur, Deputy Chief, Division of Energy and Mineral Development at 13922 Denver West Pkwy, Suite 200, Lakewood, CO 80401; by telephone at (720) 207-8063; or by email at winter.jojola-talbur@bia.gov. ♣