



Funding for Indian Country in the CARES Act

April 2020

On Friday, March 27, Congress passed the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, a \$2 trillion emergency relief bill to help buffer the economic downfall of the coronavirus pandemic. The bill is the largest economic rescue package in U.S. history.¹

The provisions of the 335-page bill are wide-ranging. Tribal-specific funding summarized in this report accounts for just more than \$10 billion of the overall \$2 trillion package.² Federal provisions of health care, education, housing, and economic development, for example, stem from the federal trust responsibility established in treaties. This responsibility includes the federal government’s legal obligation to provide assistance. The federal government has never adequately funded treaty provisions.³

Tribal Funding Provided in the CARES Act		
Department	Program	Total Funding
Treasury	Coronavirus Relief Fund	\$8 billion
Health and Human Services	Indian Health Service	\$1 billion
	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention	\$125 million
	Administration for Community Living	\$20 million
	Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration	\$15 million
	Health Resources and Services Administration	\$15 million
	Family Violence Prevention and Services Act	\$4.5 million
Education	Education Stabilization Fund	\$153.8 million
Housing and Urban Development	Native American Programs	\$300 million
Interior	Bureau of Indian Affairs	\$453 million
	Bureau of Indian Education	\$69 million
Agriculture	Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations	\$100 million
Total		\$10.3 billion

Treasury

Program: Coronavirus Relief Fund

Appropriation: \$8 billion

For fiscal year 2020, Congress has reserved \$8 billion of Coronavirus Relief Funds for tribal governments for coronavirus-related spending. The Secretary of the Treasury will work in consultation with the Secretary of the Interior and tribal nations to determine the distribution of funding. Funds are to cover costs (i) that are necessary COVID-19 expenditures, (ii) for which a tribal government’s most recently approved budget did not account, and (iii) that a tribal government incurred for the period beginning on March 1, 2020 and ending on December 30, 2020.

Health and Human Services

Program: Indian Health Service

Appropriation: \$1.032 billion

The CARES Act makes \$1.032 billion available to the Indian Health Service (IHS) until September 30, 2021, for the purposes of preventing, preparing for, and responding to coronavirus. Recipients may use funds for public health support, electronic health record modernization, telehealth and other information technology upgrades, Purchased/Referred Care, Catastrophic Health Emergency Fund, urban Indian organizations, Tribal Epidemiology Centers, Community Health Representatives, and other activities to protect the safety of patients and staff. Of the total appropriation, the bill makes:

- **Up to \$65 million** available for electronic health record stabilization and support;
- **Not less than \$450 million** available for distribution to IHS, tribal health, and urban Indian health programs; and
- The **remaining \$517 million** available for distribution at the discretion of the IHS Director. The Director may transfer up to \$125 million of discretionary spending to IHS facilities.

As of April 1, 2020, IHS is consulting with tribal leaders to determine the distribution of funds.

Program: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Appropriation: \$125 million

Until September 30, 2024, the CARES Act makes \$125 million available to tribal nations, tribal organizations, urban Indian health organizations, or health service providers to tribal nations for reasons that include, but are not limited to, carrying out surveillance, epidemiology, laboratory capacity, infection control, mitigation, communications, and other preparedness and response activities. As of March 31, 2020, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is consulting with tribal leaders to determine the distribution of funds.

Program: Administration for Community Living

Appropriation: \$20 million

Until September 30, 2021, the CARES Act makes an additional \$20 million available for nutrition services authorized under the Older Americans Act of 1965. The program serves elders.

Program: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

Appropriation: \$15 million

The CARES Act makes at least \$15 million available to tribal nations, tribal organizations, urban Indian health organizations, or health or behavioral health service providers through September 30, 2021, to tribal nations for coronavirus-related health surveillance and program support. As of April 1, 2020, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration is consulting with tribal leaders to determine the distribution of funds.

Program: Health Resources and Services Administration

Appropriation: \$15 million

Until September 30, 2022, the CARES Act makes at least \$15 million to tribal nations, tribal organizations, urban Indian health organizations, or health service providers to tribal nations to carry out telehealth and rural health activities. As of April 1, 2020, the Health Resources and Services Administration is consulting with tribal leaders to determine the distribution of funds.

Program: Family Violence Prevention and Services Act

Appropriation: \$4.5 million

The CARES Act makes \$4.5 million available for tribal domestic violence shelters through the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act through September 30, 2021.⁴

Education

Program: Education Stabilization Fund

Appropriation: \$153.8 million

The CARES Act sets aside \$153.8 million for programs operated or funded by the Bureau of Indian Education for coronavirus-related spending. The funds are available through September 30, 2021.

The Education Stabilization Fund allocates an additional \$1.05 billion to minority-serving institutions that include, but are not limited to, tribal colleges and universities (TCUs). The Montana University System estimates that TCUs in Montana will receive the amounts outlined in the below table.⁵ TCUs may use funds (i) to defray expenses, including lost revenue, reimbursement for expenses already incurred, technology costs associated with distance education, faculty and staff trainings, and payroll; and (ii) for grants for students for costs that include food, housing, course materials, technology, health care, and child care.

Montana Tribal College and University Education Stabilization Funding Estimates	
Institution	Funding Estimate
Aaniiih Nakoda College	\$107,763
Blackfeet Community College	\$292,494
Chief Dull Knife College	\$107,919
Fort Peck Community College	\$154,158
Little Big Horn College	\$214,464
Salish Kootenai College	\$958,828
Stone Child College	\$169,512
Total	\$2,005,138

Housing and Urban Development

Program: Native American Programs

Appropriation: \$300 million

Until September 30, 2024, \$300 million is available to Native American Programs of the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Of the total funding, no less than \$200 million is available for the Native American Housing Block Grants program for coronavirus-related costs, including maintaining normal operations and funding eligible affordable housing activities. Recipients may use funds to cover costs incurred prior to the enactment of the CARES Act. Funds in Montana are distributed as outlined in the following table.⁶

The bill makes up to \$100 million of the remaining funding available to tribal nations under the Indian Community Development Block Grant (ICDBG) program for coronavirus-related costs. The program provides funding for housing; community facilities, including infrastructure; and economic development.⁷

Distribution of Native American Housing Block Grant Funding in Montana

Recipient	Funding
Blackfeet Nation	\$1.9 million
Chippewa Cree Tribe	\$767,992
Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes	\$1.4 million
Crow Nation	\$750,004
Fort Belknap Indian Community	\$603,669
Fort Peck Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes	\$1.3 million
Little Shell Tribe of Chippewa Indians	\$613,760
Northern Cheyenne Tribe	\$884,873
Total	\$8,220,298

Interior

Program: Bureau of Indian Affairs

Appropriation: \$453 million

Until September 30, 2021, \$453 million is available to tribal governments for coronavirus-related spending, including for, but not limited to, public safety and justice programs, deep cleaning of facilities, the purchase of personal protective equipment, the purchase of information technology to improve teleworking capacity, and welfare assistance and social services programs.

Program: Bureau of Indian Education

Appropriation: \$69 million

Until September 30, 2021, \$69 million is available for the operation of Indian education programs that includes, but is not limited to, funding for tribal colleges and universities (TCUs), salaries, transportation, and information technology. No less than \$20 million is available to TCUs.

Agriculture

Program: Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations

Appropriation: \$100 million

Of funding for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, \$100 million is set aside for the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations until September 30, 2021. Of the \$100 million, \$50 million is for facility improvements and equipment upgrades, and \$50 million is for additional food purchases.

¹ Grisales, C., et al., "President Trump Signs \$2 Trillion Coronavirus Rescue Package Into Law," NPR, Mar. 27, 2020.

² "Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act," Pub. L. 116-136, Mar. 27, 2020.

³ National Congress of American Indians, "Tribal Nations and the United States: An Introduction."

⁴ National Congress of American Indians, "Third COVID-19 Relief Bill Becomes Law," Mar. 27, 2020.

⁵ Trevor, T., Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education, "Stimulus/Relief Funding," email to Heather O'Loughlin, MBPC, Mar. 27, 2020, on file with author.

⁶ Sukut, J., "Federal aid on way to Montana tribes; reservations ramp up response to COVID-19," Billings Gazette, Mar. 31, 2020.

⁷ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, "Indian Community Development Block Grant Program."