



## **OVERVIEW OF THE STEP PROGRAM AND DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION'S PROPOSED CHANGES**

### **TEDNA**

The Tribal Education Departments National Assembly (“TEDNA”) is a non-profit membership organization for the Education Departments of American Indian and Alaska Native Tribes across the country. TEDNA was instrumental in advocating for and developing the State Tribal Education Partnership (“STEP”) Program in coordination with the Department of Education (“Department”), the National Indian Education Association, and the National Congress of American Indians. Of course, the STEP Program could not have come to fruition without the perseverance of our Tribal Education Departments and Agencies (“TEAs”) across the nation, and specifically those that were awarded the very first STEP grant.

### **STEP**

The Department’s fiscal year 2012 appropriation included, for the first time, new funding for TEAs through the STEP pilot program under the Indian Education Act National Activities Section authority, 20 U.S.C. 7451(a)(4). Under the STEP program, the Department awarded competitive grants to five TEAs to increase their role in the education of tribal students, including meeting the unique educational and culturally related academic needs of tribal students and improving their academic achievement. The initial purpose of the STEP program was to (a) promote increased collaboration between TEAs and State Education Agencies (“SEAs”) in the administration of certain State-administered formula grant programs; and (b) build the capacity of TEAs to conduct certain State-level administrative functions under those programs for schools located on the tribe’s reservation. The initial STEP Grantees were the Chickasaw Nation and Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes; the Nez Perce Tribe; the Navajo Nation; and the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation.

### **Department of Educations Proposed Changes to the STEP Program**

The Department has proposed changes that broaden the STEP program. The main proposals are:

- To create two priority areas: a priority for established TEAs and a priority for limited prior experience TEAs. The idea would be that a group of TEAs from each priority would get a grant.
- To include BIE schools and off reservation public schools in the grant.
- To include Title VII as one of the programs that can be utilized for the grant. This will enhance the relationship between TEAs and their local school districts.
- To highlight that Local Education Agencies (“LEAs”) and SEAs can authorize TEAs to obtain student data without parental consent forms. This will streamline access to student data so that real time interventions can be applied.
- To allow TEAs to perform LEA or SEA functions, thereby giving more flexibility in the program.
- There are other requirements and changes that the Department proposes and those can be seen at TEDNA’s website here: <https://tribaleddepartmentsna.wordpress.com/2014/11/04/call-for-comment-proposed-priorities-requirements-definitions-and-selection-criteria-state-tribal-education-partnership-program/>