



U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

Office of Native American Programs

**National Best Practice Webinar (April 29, 2025)
South Dakota Native Homeownership Coalition (SDNHOC)
Construction Internship Program Webinar**

Featured Speakers: Justin Williams, Tanisha Swanson, and Nicole Pourier

Welcome and thank you for joining today's conference, the HUD-ONAP Best Practice Webinar featuring the South Dakota Native Home Ownership Coalition's Construction Internship Program. Before we begin, please ensure you have opened the WebEx chat panel by using the associated icon on the bottom right corner of your screen. Please note that all audio connections are muted until the Q&A portion of the call.

You may submit written questions throughout the presentation and these will be addressed during the Q&A. To submit a written question, please select all panelists from the drop-down menu in the chat panel, enter your question in the message box provided, and send. If you require technical assistance, please send a chat to the WebEx host and teller, Events.

With that, I'll turn the conference over to Erna Reeves, Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary, HUD Office of Native American Programs. Please go ahead.

Erna Reeves, Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary Office of Native American Programs

Welcome and thank you for joining today's National Best Practice Webinar featuring the South Dakota Native Home Ownership Coalition Construction Internship Program. I'm Erna Reeves. I'm a citizen of the Cherokee Nation.

I'm from Oklahoma and I'm currently the Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary of Native American Programs here at HUD Headquarters. Welcome to our first installment of our 2025 National Best Practices Webinar series where we share housing stories from across the country. In previous webinars, we featured tribes from across Indian Country and covered innovative programs such as the Lummi Nation's Transformational Housing that was financed through the Title VI Loan Guarantee Program and the Swinomish Tribes Section 184 Single Closed Construction Loans.

Our Best Practice Webinar series seeks to highlight the important work being done in Indian Country to develop housing and raise awareness about housing issues that may go unaddressed. Today, we're very excited and honored to feature and highlight the Construction Internship Program created by the South Dakota Home Ownership Coalition. The coalition was formed in 2013 and is comprised of a diverse group of members who support increased home ownership opportunities for Native peoples.

They have had great success in forming work groups and committees to strengthen infrastructure development efforts and increase housing stock on Native land and to implement strategies to help housing practitioners increase homebuyer readiness in the communities they serve. They also just brought on a new Executive Director, Ms. Christy

O'Rourke. We're happy to partner with you and your team and look forward to our continued partnership.

As we get started with today's presentation, I encourage you to think about questions you'd like to ask. We provided plenty of extra time for discussion so there's an opportunity here to really engage and learn from their experience. Now, let me introduce our special guest and the team behind the Construction Internship Program.

Justin Williams is the Workforce Development Program Manager for the South Dakota Native Home Ownership Coalition. He previously served as the coalition's Workforce Development Training Coordinator. A native of Oglala, South Dakota, Justin earned a Bachelor's Degree in Information Technology from Oglala Lakota College, where he also worked as an Assistant Registrar.

Tanisha Swanson is the Workforce Development Training Coordinator for the South Dakota Native Home Ownership Coalition. She also worked as a Program Coordinator for the coalition. Prior to joining, Tanisha worked at the Crow Creek Housing Authority as an Occupancy Specialist.

Now, I'll turn it over to Justin to provide some background information on the South Dakota Home Ownership Coalition and get us started. Justin.

Justin Williams, Workforce Development Program Manager

Thank you, Erna. Before we dive into the internship program, I want to give you a little background on our organization, the South Dakota Native Home Ownership Coalition. Our mission is to increase home ownership opportunities for South Dakota's Native people to build strong and healthy communities.

The coalition was founded in 2013 to address serious barriers Native Americans face when trying to own a home in South Dakota. We bring together a wide range of partners, federal, state, agency, non-profits, TDHEs, which is Tribal Housing Authorities, and all nine tribes in South Dakota to strategically pool resources, share expertise, and drive change. Through collaboration, we work together to increase Native home ownership rates, build local economies, and support long-term community growth.

Our coalition has five working committees that help guide our efforts, home buyer readiness, veterans, physical issues, sustainability, and policy committees. Each one plays a role in achieving our core goal, giving Native people access to home ownership. We also offer membership, and our members include non-profits, lenders, tribally designated housing entities, CDFIs, federal and state agencies, appraisers, architects, inspectors, and just anyone who supports Native home ownership in our mission.

The coalition work centers around three main programs, which is membership, home ownership, and workforce development. So, let's talk about the construction internship program came to life. In the early days, we sat down with contractors across the state to talk about the housing shortage and how we can boost housing development.

The number one issue they brought up, a lack of skilled, reliable workers. They needed people with hands-on construction experience, folks who could show up ready to work. At

the same time, we were seeing an aging construction workforce on the reservations, and not enough younger workers stepping into those roles.

That's when we started working with our partners to create what is now the Construction Internship Program, or CIP. Internship model inspired was inspired by Four Bands. We modeled our program off the Youth Internship Program from Four Bands Community Fund in Cheyenne River.

The program focused on hands-on experience, financial skills, and real-world job readiness. With that as our foundation, we developed participation agreements, applications, MOUs, and started recruiting both contractors and interns. Our goal was simple but powerful.

Give interns real experience on a job site, teach financial literacy, help them open a bank account, and pair them with contractors for mentorship and skill building. This is just one of the photos that you see here is our interns working on a house. The program started in 2017, and nearly half of all interns was able to find full-time employment or starting their own business.

We launched our pilot with Lakota Funds and Pine Ridge Reservations and Four Bands Community Fund in Cheyenne River. These organizations already had a strong relationship with local contractors, which helped us get things off the ground quickly. We also worked closely with Oglala Lakota College and met with their trade students to talk about the internship opportunity.

Year one was a success. Nearly half our interns were offered jobs. We also learned some important lessons, like needing to improve recruitment beyond trade schools, offering more support services, and addressing major barriers like transportation.

Transportation is a huge issue in South Dakota, as for me, I travel about an hour just to get to work. So for interns, they travel half an hour to work, half an hour back to their work site, and sometimes longer. Not having a ride to the job site can be a difference between finishing the program and dropping out.

Interns gain valuable skills like grading, demolition, framing, roofing, drywall, flooring, and so much more. In year two, we built on that momentum. We focused on solving the problems from year one, and it paid off.

Seventy-eight percent of interns completed the program, and over half received job offers. In year three, we expanded to two new sites, Rosebud and Sisseton Wahpeton. We partnered with SWA Corp in Rosebud, Tatanka Funds in Rosebud, and Sisseton Wahpeton Housing Authority in Sisseton Reservation.

Lakota Funds and 4-Band supported the new partners with technical assistance and logistics support. Local employment and training programs help with funding for equipment and stipends. With our sites now spread across the state, we started doing monthly check-ins to keep everyone on track and share lessons between partners.

The construction internship program kept evolving, and it was clear this program was helping to grow the construction workforce in our Native communities. Thanks to the EDA

grant, the Economic Development Administration, we were able to get funding for tools, safety equipment, site support, OSHA, and first aid training. We used this funding to expand to two more reservations, Crow Creek and Yankton Sioux Tribe.

As you can see in this slide, we were able to offer this construction internship program in six out of the nine tribes in South Dakota. And if you look at this map on the slide, you can really see the impact. We're building something powerful here.

We're building people's skills, we're building capacity for contractors, and most importantly, we're giving our communities a chance to rebuild themselves. Even if an intern doesn't land a job right away, they leave with skills that they can use to help their families and neighbors, skills that matter. This is one of our contractors in Sisseton Wahpeton Reservation.

He said that without this internship, I probably won't be at a phase I am right now. It provides opportunities in places where there haven't been enough, and I am completely grateful for all the opportunities I've been given. Now, we will see Daniel Kirk in future slides after this.

Here's how the program runs over a full year. We see phase I is the planning phase from September to January. We do all the planning, monthly meetings, reviewing what worked, what didn't, getting logistics ready for the upcoming internship.

We talked about timelines, financials, reports, MOUs, start dates. We try to get a clear picture of how the next CIP is going to be for that year. We just ask ourselves what worked, what didn't, how could we run this program smoothly, and also with financials, like who's going to pay for stipends, who's going to do our OSHA 10 training, who's going to do first aid training.

It's just a lot of logistical planning in phase I. Phase II, from February through May, we recruit. Site managers go to job fairs, visit schools, run radio ads, post flyers, you name it.

Once site managers get enough applications and the application deadline is passed, they do interview candidates, select interns, and also talk to contractors about choosing equipment. We order general tools like hammers, tape measures, speed squares, and get interns geared up with safety equipment like high-vis shirts, steel tool boots, hard hats, and gloves. We want to make sure interns have the tools necessary to do their jobs at the work site.

A lot of job fairs and career fairs, a lot of our site managers handle all of those. They visit schools. They let schools know that, hey, we're recruiting for this construction internship program.

It's a great program. You can read more about it. You can apply, and we got a lot of feedback from schools.

We seen that a lot of schools were interested in this program, and we did receive a lot of applications from high schoolers that just finished school. That's a really sight to see that a lot of people want jobs as soon as they get out of high school. In phase III, from May through August, the internship kicks off.

We run orientation sessions to set expectations, go over schedules, intern sign agreements, get bank accounts set up for direct deposit, and receive training calendars. Usually, we also line up OSHA 10 and first aid training in the first weeks and sometimes bring in trade instructors. For example, on the Pioneer Ridge work site, we work with a trade math instructor from Oglala Lakota College, and he was able to teach our interns trade math skills.

He also showed them how to read a tape measure, how to just almost everything that they need to learn that they can use at the work site. In phase IV, which is post-CIP from August to December, we do reporting. We create resumes for our interns so they become employable.

We check what worked and what didn't for this year. We have our meetings. We update our program needs.

It's just trying to make sure interns are also good to go in a job. If an intern was not hired with a contractor that they worked with, we try to contact other contractors to see if they're willing to hire that person. Usually, interns get between 200 to 400 hours of hands-on experience, and financial literacy has also been a big factor for them.

We'll speak more of that later. Usually, on a six-month checkup, we call interns, ask them how they're doing, if they still have a job. If they don't have a job, we call our contractors.

Whatever contractors is working on those reservations, we call them up and say, hey, are you looking for more workers? We have someone that's interested in working. He is hardworking.

He already got 200, 400 hours of hands-on experience. Will you be willing to take on this person? Just six months, even if they don't have a job in those six months, we try to help them out.

Even when the CIP ends and the six-month period, in between that period, interns can still call us, and we try to place them with other contractors that are hiring. This is the managing organization role. These are CIP site managers across South Dakota.

We have sites in Pine Ridge, Rosebud, Cheyenne River, Yankton, Crow Creek, Sisseton. All of them have a role to play. CIP site managers conduct outreach to interns and contractors.

They manage the application and selection process. They also make placements. They carry out orientations for interns and contractors.

They manage stipends and monitoring on-site work. They troubleshoot whatever problem comes to them at the time, if something comes up throughout the internship. Some site managers hire or they also present financial skills and life skills.

Our CIP site manager does mentoring, and they also equip interns with equipment and uniforms. I will pass it on to Nicole. She will talk about the role of a CIP site manager.

Nicole Pourier, Site Manager, Lakota Fund

Hi, good afternoon. My name is Nicole. I'm from the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation.

This will be my third year as a site manager here at Lakota Funds. When I first started, we jumped in and we did 30. We ended up with 25, and most of them had jobs or went back to college.

Last year, we had 25 start. We ended with 21, with over 12 of them getting hired, and the rest, one was a high school senior and another one, the other rest went to college. The role that I play as being the site manager here is recruitment, and that is one of the big things because we have nine districts, and we're spread far out.

We put it on a local radio station on Kili. We put it on Facebook. We hang up flyers.

We go out to the local high schools. We leave it open for an amount of time, and then we'll do the interviews. We'll do the selection process.

Throughout this part of CIP, you really get to know and understand your kids, I call them, because you're there to support them. You're there to help them, encourage them, and one thing that we do do with our kids, I like to say, is that we do offer them financial literacy, personal finance, and then resume building, so when they come and meet with us once every two weeks, they have those skills to go so that they can go on and further themselves with their employment. Also, we do reporting.

We have meeting site visits. I like to go out to the sites, check on them just to see what's going on. This past year, the first year I started, I had Chaz, and he is still employed at one of our construction sites, and he's just recently got a tool loan, and now he's saving to buy his first home, so that is one of my very, very good success stories, and that's because of this program.

This program helped him reach those goals. Another one is one of my ladies got, she wanted to learn electricity, so we put her with a contractor with Murdoch's that does electricity. She's still working there and learning all the ways about how to become an electrician, and so we have boys and girls that are still hired, still working in this construction.

We have a solid support system with our construction contractors that we have, so that's really good. What else? Also, we do their stipends, so this year, since Lukorapan will be funding their funding, we're only going to take on seven interns, and we will be doing their stipends for the 10 weeks, and then their wages for the 10 weeks, and we're only going to do stipends for the first two weeks, since we'll be going on financial literacy, budgeting, and personal finance, and they open up their checking accounts downstairs at our local native CDFI with Lakota Federal Credit Union, so that we're teaching them money management, so that they can understand that they need to save that money to get to work every week.

Is there anything else, Justin, that you'd like me to add?

Justin Williams

Thanks, Nicole. Can you tell us more about financial literacy, and how it impacts our interns?

Nicole Pourier

Financial literacy is very beneficial, especially for the kids that are coming straight out of high school, and some that are in their 20s. They don't have any financial literacy, so with teaching this, it helps them understand budgeting. It helps them understand money.

It helps them understand savings. It helps them understand the importance of keeping a job. It helps them understand a lot, and so we take our time, and we work with them to have them understand that financial education is literally, it's really needed.

They need to understand, because a lot of them are like, what do you do when you get money? A lot of them say spend it, but as with this program, what we do is we have them opening up a savings account, and with the match savings account, we can match them and help them with their taxes, or help them buy a new laptop, help them further their education, help them with tools, so that we're teaching them how to be more financially aware. Another thing that we do with this is that we do an exit survey, so they do have to come in and do an interview.

After they're selected, we do inside interviews with them. After the interviews, we put them out in the workforce. I do check-ins with them all the time.

Before it's over, they have to have their resume done. They have to have their exit interview done, and we just go from there, but financial literacy is of very big importance on all of our reservations, and this year, I will be teaching it for Rosebud, Yankton, and Oglala Country, so it's going to be busy.

Justin Williams

Thank you, Nicole. I will pass it on to Tanisha, who will talk more about our wraparound service.

Tanisha Swanson

Hi. I will discuss some of our services we offer for all of our construction internship sites. We offer wraparound services that address the real-world barriers many of our participants face.

These services improve retention and prepare individuals for long-term employment in the trades. We also want to help ensure our interns stay focused, safe, and productive throughout their internship experience. We do offer transportation assistance, and we understand that getting to and from job sites can be a barrier.

We want our interns to be able to have gas funds, so a couple of our sites, they estimate about \$30 a week per intern for gas assistance, and a few of our other sites try to, I think it's Yankton, they're going to set up, they have like a transit program. That will be an option for interns to get to their work sites, and another one of our construction internship program sites recently purchased a van for this sole purpose to ensure transportation for their interns. Each of our sites is different.

We provide work gear and safety equipment. Construction work requires the right gear for our interns to do their job safely. We provide work boots, safety gear, like helmets and vests, and other essential tools they may need for the job they're doing that day.

We make sure no one is left behind because of cost or access. We do offer meal assistance, so that includes vouchers for daily meals. It's typically budgeted out to about \$20 per day per intern, and it's just another way we want to support our interns to be healthy and focused and ensure that that's not another barrier of coming to work and just trying to support them in any way we can.

We do offer child care assistance. We know some interns are also parents, and balancing child care and work can be difficult. We offer this assistance to help ease that burden.

This may include help with covering part of the cost or connecting them with resources of child care in their area. Another thing we help with is driver's license and identification assistance. So, having proper identification is often the step to employment instability.

If interns need help obtaining or reinstating a driver's license or getting a state ID, we can support them through the process, and that includes covering the fees and paperwork guidance and transportation to their DMV appointments. Together, these services ensure that our interns are not just enrolled in the program, but fully supported throughout the program, which our main goal is to eliminate barriers, build confidence, and help our interns succeed.

Justin Williams

Thank you, Tanisha. As we move on to reflect what Nicole said, we have an intern named Chaz. As you can see right here, he's the left person on this photo.

He still has a savings account, and he is still saving for a home. He's still working at Saws Mechanical, and in this photo, they were working on a new gymnasium for Lakota Tech or Wolf Creek School. I don't know what school they're building.

There's like three gyms over there, but it was hard finding them. But when I did find them, they were working hard, and they were just sweating. I said, hey, let me take a photo of you guys, but they were all over, so we just had to make it look good.

Nicole Pourier

Two out of those three boys are still currently working with Saws, and I couldn't be more proud because when they started with us, they didn't have checking accounts. They didn't have IDs, and after the program, they really had their goals shared where Chaz put his money to save for the down payment of his home, which he's still working towards, and the other one put his down towards a vehicle so that he would have dependable, reliable transportation to get back and forth to the work site. Sometimes they need to travel over 40 miles a day to get to their site, so I'm really proud of these boys.

Justin Williams

Yes, it's inspirational. Moving on, Tanisha, can you explain more of partnerships and evolutions?

Tanisha Swanson

Sure, so in 2017, our program operated largely with private funds, but we did begin outreach with the Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act through the South Dakota Department of Labor and Regulation. In 2020, private funders shifted their focus with the

pandemic, and the program looked to greater local support. Our focus also grew from primarily placing interns with local contractors to substantial increased placement with TDHEs, which began our growing partnership with our TDHEs across the state.

Currently, I think it's grown because we have so many common goals, so our goals include addressing housing shortages, building community infrastructure, and creating career pathways for tribal members. We have seen more interest from contractors that want to take in interns outside of reservations as well, and then another partnership that has grown recently is the 477 Program. Just a brief overview, the 477 Program allows federally recognized tribes to combine multiple federal funding streams into a single integrated plan that supports employment training and related services.

Currently, the 477 Program is helping fund intern stipends for Rosebud interns, and in the past, this program has helped Sisseton-Watson interns as well with stipends. Another partnership is one of our OSHA 10 trainers. His company was recently bought, and it resulted in his training ending with that company.

He was still a certified OSHA trainer, and he admired our program so much. He has since continued to offer OSHA 10 trainings for our interns.

Justin Williams

Thank you, Tanisha.

Justin Williams

Moving on, we have Shaped by Unique Organizations and Communities. As Nicole and Tanisha said, our sites are unique from each other. From Pine Ridge, we have our interns do 400 hours of hands-on experience, while another site in Rosebud do 200 hours of hands-on experience.

Each site is tailored to the needs of their communities. Like Tanisha said, Rosebud was using a 477 Program to support their intern stipends, while another Rosebud site used the wraparound service funding to purchase a van because each of their interns were placed at different work sites. Most interns over there at that site didn't really have a vehicle to go to those different work sites, so they got a van.

This van was able to transport all those interns to those work sites. CDFIs have existing relationships with some contractor organizations, such as with Lakota Funds. They have clients that are loan borrowers that are contractors.

We work with them to say, hey, we can build your capacity. Let's have our interns work with you on some projects. Just like Sisseton Wahpeton Reservation, they also use TANF to get tools, work gear, and provide financial literacy and support intern stipends over there.

We have a contractor that was an intern at Sisseton Wahpeton Reservation that took in interns. We'll speak more of that later. You can just see how every site is different.

Sometimes sites just have interns be placed with a housing authority, and that housing authority hires those interns, and they create more jobs. Such as Rosebud, they didn't really

have a resource to provide first aid training, so they worked with their local ambulance service to provide first aid and CPR training. Just like Nicole said, we had an OSHA 10 trainer.

His company that he worked for got bought, and they stopped training, but he was still certified in training OSHA 10. He was interested in this program. He said it was amazing, and he wants to continue this work.

He's still been doing our OSHA 10 trainings at all sites. We sometimes catch him at the Lakota Construction Summit because he's so involved in this internship program. The Pine Ridge Housing Authority offered interns a life mapping class in addition to their financial literacy, and that participation grew in 2020.

Moving on to sources and uses. On this slide, we're showing the sources of funding and how these funds are used to support our construction internship program. Our primary funding sources include federal grants, private grants, and support from native CDFIs such as Lakota funds and bands.

These organizations often help cover intern stipends, although that support isn't always guaranteed. We also receive support from tribal entities such as TDAGs, for example SWA Corporation in Rosebud, which has helped fund stipends in the past. Additionally, I want to note I forgot to include the 477 program in this in Rosebud, which also plays a role in supporting these stipends.

As you can see from the chart, the majority of our funding comes from federal and private grants. When we look at how the program costs break down, stipends make up the largest expense, followed by site support, tools, and safety equipment. With our EDA funding coming to an end this year, we've been holding additional meetings to identify new sources of support for intern stipends.

We're always actively searching for additional grant opportunities to sustain and grow our workforce development program. These combined funding sources allow us to support approximately 45 to 50 interns each year. We distribute these interns across sites.

For example, Pine Ridge might get around 10 interns, Cheyenne River around 10, Rosebud each split between 10, so they each get five, so we can ensure equitable impact across communities. Moving on, this is a picture of our Pine Ridge interns. These interns were doing foundation work at a new development in Pine Ridge.

They were creating, I guess you can call them small homes. When I went over there, they were all dirty. I was like, hey, I'll come back next day.

I'm gonna take a picture of you guys. I don't know if I want to catch you guys with a bunch of concrete on your faces. They were just laughing.

Seeing these guys grow up, getting the experience, learning everything that they could from the CIP, they were excited. They wanted to come back and do the internship program again. I said, no, this internship program was to help you get jobs.

They took it. The guy on the left with the New York hat, he is working maintenance at Prairie Wind Casino. The guy with no high-vis shirt, I believe he's working, but not in the construction industry.

The two on the right just now got out of high school, so I believe they're still job searching. I still talk with all four of them every now and then. They ask me when the internship starts or if I have resources to give them to look for jobs on a reservation.

Moving along, we have additional programs, which Tanisha can talk about. Tanisha.

Tanisha Swanson

We do have our ICC certification training. That is the International Code Council Inspector certification training. Residential building codes are essential for Native communities as they ensure structures are resilient to natural disasters.

They also play a crucial role in providing access to clean water, sanitation, ventilation, and promoting health within Native communities. Additionally, building codes support cultural preservation by incorporating traditional building techniques and materials contributing to the sustainability and energy efficiency of structures. Compliance with codes is a legal requirement, reducing risks and liabilities while fostering community development through improved infrastructure.

A few examples of our ICC trainings we have offered are mechanical, residential, property maintenance, energy conservation, and plumbing. We typically offer these during, I believe it's like March through August. We take about maybe 13 to 15 participants max and we do provide all of their training materials and cover their mileage, hotel, as well as food.

The only thing they have to do is study and participate for the contractor capacity building training. We have offered one so far and we have another scheduled for this August. But the purpose of this training is to build Native contractors capacity and growth to help increase housing stock on reservations.

This training typically involves helping contractors with building financial success, marketing, license permits and business names, tools of trade, insurance and bonding, accounting and overflow leasing, building codes and business growth. Native contractors are at a disadvantage compared to other contractors throughout the state and this helps them grow to have an effect on Native homeownership as Native contractors because they can understand the needs of Native homeowners through experience. For appraisal cost approach training, we have been unable to offer that this year.

We've had some setbacks but appraisals are a key part of building capital on Native trust lands. They help unlock access to financing, guide smart investment decisions and improve how properties are managed. A solid appraisal can attract partners, support tax planning, and increase the credibility and market value of Tribal assets.

Overall, we have been able to successfully certify inspectors in six out of nine Tribal reservations. Before, there were no certified inspectors and now six Tribes in South Dakota has a certified residential inspector. We also worked with our ICC trainer on building a new

ICC Native chapter and it was presented at the International Code Council Annual Conference as the first ICC Native chapter in the country.

Justin Williams

Thank you.

Justin Williams

Thank you for that, Tanisha. Yes, just what Tanisha said, these additional workforce development programs are also making an impact in our communities. With ICC trainings, we were able to certify different individuals across South Dakota Tribes to be certified in mechanical code, our residential code, our energy conservation code.

We, it's typically a four-day training, sometimes three days, but in those trainings, as you can see in this photo, they're in like a classroom setting. It's an open book test at the end of the last day of training, they test on a computer. Most of the individuals that you see are like anybody that's in construction, from housing authority staff to contractors to people that are into energy conservation.

So there's not much of requirements to do these ICC trainings as long as they have a background in construction or just know the general idea of building codes. We did have success over the last two years in certifying individuals. The residential code book is a big, comprehensive book.

It's so many pages, it includes everything on there. That takes a lot of studying, but we were able to certify individuals in residential ICC certification. Same as contractors, we are contacting native contractors all across the South Dakota tribes.

We just like to recruit small or medium-sized contractors so we can help them with financial management and then bidding and bonding. We plan on making a contractor capacity building training 101 and 201, where 101 is beginner-friendly, 201 is more advanced learning type of skills that they need to learn to build their capacity. Appraisal cost approach training, like Tanisha said, it's been paused for a while, only because the appraisal institute made a national recognized training for this, as most appraisers can use that training.

Usually with our appraisal cost approach training, appraisers get a four-credit continuing education for college. A lot of these programs kind of branched out. Like Tanisha said, we were able to work with our ICC instructor who created an organization called NACO, Native American Code Officials.

They're building an ICC tribal chapter. Like Nicole said, it's the first in the country. Such as appraisals, the coalition is working to build a database of post sales of tribal property on South Dakota reservations.

All these programs are really impactful and they're just expanding more into what it is now. It's really great. Moving on to success stories.

The first one, we have Henry Tubuz. He was a CIP intern on the Pine Ridge Reservation in 2023. On his application, he had no trade experience.

He had no equipment. He was telling us that he applied everywhere in the reservation and that's all he wanted. He just wanted a job.

He just wanted to work. He said, I just want a job to support my family and my kids. Now today, he's a laborer with Lake Creek Development Corporation.

I don't know why it says reservation, but now he has two years hands-on experience. He's a new car and his goal was to get to an apprentice program to become a journeyman. Quote, he said, this program literally got me back on my feet financially and got me a year-round job.

The reason I am where I am is because of the internship I did at Locoto Funds. And the other quote, which is recently, I was in a bad place and bad environment. I just wanted to support my daughter and have a positive life.

This internship helped me and now I'm working full-time, made great friends, and just want to keep furthering this career. So seeing these stories and quotes that interns tell us shows how impactful it is running this construction internship program. It's, I don't know, for me, it's really nice.

It's awesome to see interns having no job, no experience, to having full-time job, gaining experience, making friendships, becoming more ambitious to further their career. Another success story is Daniel Kirk. He was an intern for our construction internship program back in 2018 or 19.

And now he is a contractor in the Sisseton-Wappington Reservation. At first, he wanted to start a construction business. He graduated in building trades program at Sisseton-Wappington College.

And then later on, down the road in the year, he created his construction company called Arrow Construction and Lumber. And now with his construction company, he recruits CIP interns in Sisseton-Wappington tribe. And when he first started, he was only doing metal roofs.

But since he built his capacity, now he's doing full house builds with the housing authority in Sisseton-Wappington. And he hires all the CIP interns. Like with that quote, without the internship, I wouldn't have been able to bring on college students.

100% have stayed on. So this is one of the great examples of what we see as a success story of him completing the internship site, gaining more experience, and now he's a contractor. And it's like a full circle.

He interned contractor. Now he hires interns, which is really great to see. Moving on to voices of CIP interns.

So as you can see, we have Tanisha Fast Dog. She was an intern last year with Tatunka Funds in the Rosebud Reservation. She has said, this internship helped me with a job.

I applied everywhere. It's hard finding a job in this reservation. But I seen the internship on Facebook and applied, finished the program, and now I'm a full-time laborer with OHDC.

I interviewed her for a success story. She said that she applied at the ambulance service, the tribe, the gas station in Mission, South Dakota, two gas stations in Mission, South Dakota, a grocery store in Mission, South Dakota. She said she applied at Taco John's.

She got no phone calls back. She didn't receive anything back. And then she told me that she seen the flyer on Facebook about the CIP program.

And she said, I always liked construction. My dad always taught me how to fix doors, how to change logs, how to do foundation and all that stuff. So she said she thought this program would be fit for her.

She applied. She got selected. And now she is still a full-time laborer with OHDC.

Another one was a Pine Ridge intern. I was unemployed for years and I just wanted a job. I had no experience and it's hard finding a job here.

So thank you for accepting me into this program. And I have a job now. And I want to give everyone a hug who helped me through this journey.

So you kind of see the pattern here that almost a lot of reservations in South Dakota, it's hard finding a job and it's hard being selected for a job. But with this internship program, we was able to recruit these individuals in our program. And now we was able to get them a job.

So that's really impactful for interns because they get to support themselves, their families, and they get to have a full-time job. Another one was this program was great. I was working with Arrow Construction.

I learned a lot from them. I recommend all our youths to try this internship program. This was a couple of slides back.

That was an intern that said that with for Daniel Kirk. I haven't given his name. We usually give interns option if they want to show their name or not.

And the majority of them like to not show their name. Going back to Nicole's comments about Chaz Rodriguez. He said, I learned a lot from this internship.

We worked on a new gym at Wolf Creek School. Me and my co-workers learned a lot doing that gym. We got hired on and financial literacy was good.

I opened a savings account and I am saving some of the money I make to put into a savings account to get a house. So all these stories are really heartfelt because every time I read them, I get emotional because they're speaking from them. They're learning what it means to get a job and to have a job and to learn the financial skills to move themselves up out of not having a job, staying at home and all that.

Nicole Pourier

One thing that I would like to touch on too about the internship. Whenever we do our exit survey and we get to hear their stories throughout these 10 weeks, we become really close

because I'm checking in on them. I'm wanting the best for them, wanting to know what's working for you, what's not working for you.

How can we help you? And then even though a year goes by, I still check in on them. I see what's going on.

How are they? What are they doing? Do they need help with anything?

And some of them still need little help like maybe getting a loan or asking questions about taxes, wondering if there's any jobs hiring. So I would go out and I look to find whatever just to help them because they are determined. They are motivated.

They just need that chance. And so I really want to thank this program for bringing this opportunity to Native country so that our Native people have the opportunity to build these skills, to learn new skills. And it's a huge, huge opportunity for them, especially to learn their financial literacy, learn about taxes, learn hands-on.

And a lot of our contractors are Native owned. So they're willing to take on these labors to give them this test run to see how they're going to do and if they want to hire them or if they don't. So it's a really good program and I'm really proud of it.

Justin Williams

Thank you, Nicole. Moving on to results. What you see here are the results from 2017 to 2024 last year.

Since 2017, we enrolled 376 individuals in the construction internship program. 272 of them completed the internship program and 175 of them received job offers and 127 of them got job placements. Thanks to the EDA grant, as you can see in this graph, we got the EDA grant in 2022.

And with the EDA grant, we was able to support more interns in the construction internship program. So we got a big jump in job offers and placements. We was able to find contractors that needed workers.

So we worked with those contractors, placed them with them. They did their 200, 400 hours and they got job offers. So seeing this big jump was really impactful in all the interns that got jobs, showed that they were thankful.

They were glad that the contractor hired them and now they make great friends. They make money to support themselves. Moving on to another success story, we have Raymond Roulard.

He was one of the earliest Pioneer Ridge interns in our program. He said this internship built my resume, helped me get a job with IHS in Wagner, South Dakota. I'm learning about financials and was able to become a homeowner.

So at the start of his internship journey, he didn't have a job experience. He was placed with a contractor and after the internship, he worked with a different contractor and he created or he met someone and they created a family. So he had to move to Wagner, South Dakota and he found a job at IHS in the maintenance department in Wagner.

And just keep moving forward and learning his financials, he was able to purchase his first home and I believe he was maybe 28 or 27 on this picture. Moving on to lessons learned. Lessons learned, we expand and grow the program carefully.

We ensure adequate staffing is to provide the critical time needed to support interns for retention. Sometimes staff can be overloaded since they have other duties with their own organizations. Like I said, every time we add a new site, we try to do additional meetings with our new sites to make sure all their logistical planning is in place, that they have everything ready to go when the internship starts.

We work with them. We try to have other sites partner our work with them, such as Nicole said that she is going to do financial literacy in Pine Ridge, Rosebud and Crow Creek in Yankton. Nicole is our financial literacy person in those areas.

She's been teaching financial literacy for two years now, or a year?

Nicole Pourier

Yes, it'll be coming up on two and a half years.

Justin Williams

Yes. So, with Nicole's financial literacy skills, she was able to offer that help to other new sites. Other lessons learned is to commit to strong data collection and evaluation from early on, early on collecting data to support document success and evaluate to enable thoughtful, timely changes.

We want to be able to catch everything in the internship program with just basically almost a variety of data. We want to make sure if they were placed with those contractors, we want to make sure we capture all their information just to strengthen our program for future years. We lean into local innovation.

Sites have tailored programs to their own needs and strengths, such as I said earlier, SWA got a van and they were able to transport their interns to other sites. Sometimes interns might carpool, as in last year in Pine Ridge, we had some interns riding with other interns to the same job site. So, if they were placed with the same contractor, they ask each other if they can get a ride and they meet up and go to the internship site.

As I said before, some sites offer 400 hours of experience, while others have 200 hours. It just matches their needs in their communities and also the contractor needs. We usually like asking contractors for their input, like what tools they have, how can we work with them, are they hiring people.

It's just a lot of logistical planning. The other lessons learned is local financial support and buy-in. Some of our most committed resources are the most local.

These local partners include THGs, such as Sisseton, Wahpeton Housing Authority, Crow Creek Housing Authority, Pine Ridge Housing, a lot of housing authorities across South Dakota. Tribes, Tribal 477 Program, Employment Programs, and CDFIs, such as Lakota Funds and Forbans Community Fund. Tips for success.

Interns need to fully understand the program structure, so they can plan for child care, transportation, and other issues. Our application includes questions about transportation, backup transportation, if they have tools, if they have other experience, but they should also know that we will try to work with them, work with those issues when they come up. This usually happens during orientation.

We let them know how this internship works. We give them calendars to say, hey, this is when you submit your time sheets. These are holidays, but you need to ask your contractor if you are getting that day off.

If not, you need to go in. We tell them where to submit time sheets.

Nicole Pourier

Can I mention something, Justin?

Justin Williams

Yes.

Nicole Pourier

One thing, too, that we offer for these young and upcoming adolescents is that we are making them more aware and becoming problem solvers where they need to figure out how they're going to get their time sheet to us, what they're going to do, who do they contact if they're going to be late, what do they do if they need child care, who's all going to that site so that you guys can ask each other, like what Justin said, can we write together?

We're making them problem solvers. We're making them independent. We're making them adults.

That's one thing that I'm really, really proud of. They have to manage their own time sheets. They have to manage their time.

They have to figure out how they're going to get there. I had an intern walk to work one year. He would walk to work or walk over from Porcupine, that's like 40 miles maybe, to here to make it to his trainings.

That's how dedicated he was. He was not going to miss. He found a way to make it work.

Sorry, I just wanted to add that.

Justin Williams

Thank you, Nicole. Another tip is managing organizations need adequate staffing. We know that our CIP managers have other work with their organizations.

We try to, me and Tanisha do support our CIP managers. If a CIP manager is out and their orientation is next week, we travel down there and help them do their orientation, even if they're not there. We're just ensuring program support throughout the internship.

It plays a key role in retention and improved experience. Similar contractor organizations are small businesses. Having enough employees may not be their own challenge.

Supporting small businesses with stipends or financial management software can allow them to focus more attention on the interns. Another tip is logistical planning and monthly meetings have played a vital role in shaping the future success of this program by ensuring it remains responsive to evolving needs. Just a couple of slides ago, I mentioned that logistical planning is a need to keep this internship going because every year there's a different need.

Every year there's a different concern that we address and we work around it. It's a lot of logistical planning between post-CIP to logistical planning part of the phase, or just phase one and phase four. Our future goal is to expand the construction internship program to all nine tribal reservations in South Dakota, increase career paths, career pipelines, explore and expand partnerships, increase female participation, strengthen evaluation and impact tracking, and secure sustainable funding.

The coalition and our partners see that this CIP program is really beneficial to Native communities in South Dakota and I'm sure it will be beneficial in Native communities across the U.S. We want to expand to all tribal reservations in South Dakota because it gives Native individuals opportunities in each tribal community to become a laborer or become a journeyman in the construction field. It helps strengthen the construction industry in those communities. We want to increase career pipelines.

We want to partner or see if we can get interns into an apprenticeship program or see if we can, like Nicole said, we had a contractor that's doing electrical work and the intern wanted to do electrical work. So, we try to get more partners and increase the career pipelines throughout South Dakota. Explore and expand partnerships.

We want to partner with others that support this internship program. These partnerships can just be like a housing authority wanting these interns and they can provide tools or we can provide stipends, just vice versa. Increase female participation.

These past few years we did get females in our construction internship program, but we just want to get more because it's not just an all-male construction industry. A lot of women, such as Tanisha Fast Dog, she was interested in becoming a contractor. She wants to get this experience to be a contractor because her dad taught her everything about fixing the house up.

Strengthen evaluation and impact tracking. We want to work with our partners who do our tracking and who do our evaluation. We want to make sure we get the right questions and the right data in to help strengthen our construction internship program.

We want to secure sustainable funding. As you can see, the sources and uses, it takes a lot to support this construction internship program. Yeah, I believe that is all.

I am going to pass it back to the hosts.

Justin Williams

Thank you.

Jad Atallah, Director, Office of Performance and Planning

Well, thank you all. My name is Jad Atallah. I'm the Director of Performance and Planning here in the Office of Native American Programs at HUD.

This has been a fabulous presentation. I definitely want to thank Justin, Nicole, and Tanisha. So much good information.

I was sitting here and I took four pages of notes here just listening to you guys. Thank you so much for your presentation. I'm going to say a couple of quick things.

Then I'm going to have a couple of questions for you guys. Then I definitely want to leave some time for all of our great attendees to get their questions in because there are some questions in the chat and then some possible verbal questions as well. The first thing I want to say is that it's just so great to see a program like the CIP program because we think of our HUD programs here as not just housing programs, but they very much could be programs that help people gain skills, learn a craft, learn a skill, learn a trade, and become financially stable, self-sufficient, and have a career.

It's just incredible to see the possibilities here of not just housing programs, building homes for families, but also the people who build those homes could very much be young people who are learning a new skill. That's only possible because of all three of you guys. Thank you for everything you do.

I think it's certainly a model, the CIP model in South Dakota that can be replicated across the country. I hope part of the reason why we wanted to do this webinar today was to get more tribes and TDHEs to think about seeing if this is possible in their community because it just has so much potential. It's really nice to hear you guys talk about the skills building.

It's nice to see how important and learn about financial literacy for these kids. I think we all said the further we get away from being kids, the more we forget how we didn't know anything about financial literacy when we were 18 years old. A lot of these guys and ladies are all coming out of high school, and they're still kids.

I agree with you guys. It's just so important to understand that just the basic things like establishing a bank account and investing in yourself and investing in tools and equipment and things like that could just pay off for decades. It's cool to hear about the resume building, the wraparound services that you provide.

That's so important, especially for people who are just coming out. They don't have the savings and the resources to be able to pay for gas, transportation, child care, all those things that are just initial barriers to just getting to work and learning a new skill, especially in the beginning when it's an internship and not a job that pays a ton of money necessarily. Listening to you guys, I wasn't planning on talking about this, but it's a bit personal because I have a nephew who in two weeks is going to be moving into my basement.

He looks exactly like your CIP kids, and he's coming to move into my basement. He lives in Montana. He's a tribal member in northern Cheyenne, and he's coming to move into my basement so that he can enroll in one of these kinds of programs locally here.

He's always really good. As a kid, he was really good at Legos, was super handy, knew how to build things, but always struggled to pay attention in school and couldn't really finish high school. He just couldn't pay attention.

But if you give him anything, he's incredibly handy, and he's truly driven to learn a trade. We found him a company that's just like these contractors that you guys were talking about that's willing to take him on. They're giving him a \$4,000 stipend this summer to get him a toolbox.

It's a three-month summer internship program to see if this is going to work out. If it does, he can enroll in an apprenticeship program and eventually become a journeyman. His goal is to do either electrical, plumbing, or HVAC work.

He's going to be great, but right now he has no options and things are tough. As I was watching your guys' presentation, I just kept thinking of my nephew who looks like these kids and is exactly like these kids. I hope his outcome in the end will be just as positive as many of these men and women in your program.

Keep doing what you're doing. I just have a couple of quick questions, but I mainly want to get to the chat. I think my main question for you guys is that most of the folks who are joining these webinars are tribes and CDHEs that receive annual funding from HUD to administer housing programs.

Do you have some words of wisdom to offer them in terms of what's the best way to get started setting up this kind of construction internship program? You guys talked a lot about partnering federal and state and local private grants and Native CDFIs playing a role in 477 programs, maybe philanthropy, but is there just a one-minute spiel on how you can set up a program like this in a state outside of South Dakota for some of the tribes that are located around the country?

Justin Williams

It's just like you said, it's building up your partnerships, finding funding. It kind of goes hand in hand because if a CDHE, like say a housing authority, is going to do the internship program, they would need funding for stipends. I believe some housing authorities can use rebate to get tools and stuff, so that can be a startup for them to get off to start this internship program.

For people that are outside a CDHE, they would need to build partnerships, get local support, partner with contractors, partner with CDHEs, partner with anybody that supports the construction internship program. It's really a lot about partnerships, I guess you can say.

Jad Atallah

A question about interns, and you guys showed the figure of how many people enrolled in the program, how many people finished the program, how many people got jobs. It's impressive numbers, for sure. Can you just say a word or two on what contributed most to interns being able to successfully complete the program and also find a job after the program?

Justin Williams

We got to thank our CIP managed site managers for that. They're the ones, they're the boots on the ground. They mentor these interns, they help find contractors that they can work with, they help find them, they help interns find jobs with these contractors.

Usually, we try to partner with contractors that want to hire interns or they're looking for workers. Contractors and interns can build the relationship with this internship program. Once the internship is over, these contractors have a relationship with interns and they'll most likely hire them.

Jad Atallah

Especially since they know their work and their work ethic and so forth. Yeah, it makes sense. Okay, thank you guys.

I'm going to turn it over to Linda, and if you guys want to start taking some questions from both the chat and from anyone who wants to raise their hands.

Executive Producer

Okay, go ahead. I was going to reiterate the instructions to our audience. If you have any to ask a question verbally, please go ahead and click on the raise hand icon at the bottom center of your Webex screen.

You can also submit questions through the chat and address them to all panelists.

Lynda Lantz

Thank you for those instructions. We did have a couple of questions following up on what you were just discussing about the contractors. There was a question about how motivated are the contractors to hire the interns?

Do you have more to say about that?

Justin Williams

A lot of contractors are interested in this internship program. They see it as a pathway for interns to work with them. We did get a lot of positive feedback from contractors.

Most of them were just excited. They said, yeah, we can take interns. We will teach them everything they know.

We will build relationships with them and we'll see if they're hired at the end of the program. Like I said, if some interns don't get hired by that contractor, we talk with other contractors and say, hey, are you guys looking for workers? We have an intern that has 400 hours of experience with so-and-so contractor.

Will you be willing to have them join your crew? Usually, we do get a lot of positive feedback from contractors for this internship program. They think it's beneficial for our community and for their business.

Lynda Lantz

Thanks for adding that. There was another question about whether the interns were exempt from Davis-Bacon wage requirements.

Justin Williams

Usually, with the funding that we have, we found a ballpark of only offering our interns \$15 an hour. We think that's sustainable for them to get gas, save, and to support themselves or their family. It's just funding restrictions that we can't offer to Davis-Bacon wages.

We just keep it at \$15 an hour, which is really good in South Dakota.

[Speaker 10]

Thank you.

Lynda Lantz

Another question was, what was the journeyman to apprentice ratio?

Justin Williams

We haven't really partnered with apprentice programs to have them become journeymans, but we do work with the South Dakota Department of Labor. I have a guy that has apprenticeship programs, and if interns are looking for apprenticeships, I give that apprentice program manager the intern's contact information. They can contact him, and they can get themselves into an apprenticeship program.

Lynda Lantz

There also was a question about how long is the internship program?

Justin Williams

Depending on the CIP sites, like with Pioneer Ridge, we have 400 hours, which is 10 weeks, Monday through Friday. They do 40 hours a week. Another site, Rosebud, they do 200 hours, Monday through Friday, 40 hours a week.

It just depends on each CIP site, but the majority of the ballpark is 10 weeks or five weeks. We have four sites doing 10 weeks and then two sites doing five weeks. It's usually during the summer when the construction season is happening.

Lynda Lantz

The final question that was in the chat for now is, does the program offer assistance to students completing scholarship applications?

Justin Williams

When we work with Oglala Lakota College, they have an internship credit class. Usually when interns complete our internship, they can get that internship credit under transcripts. I don't know too much about with scholarship applications, if you can elaborate more on that.

Lynda Lantz

The attendee who asked about the scholarship applications, did you want to unmute and ask any more about that? In the meantime, there was also a question about, and I think you did talk some about different funding sources. This one is about who's paying the interns, if it's a housing authority or what funding is used for salaries.

Maybe you want to talk about that again a little bit.

Justin Williams

Again, it depends on each site. Each site is unique. Sometimes some housing authorities will pay the intern stipends, like in Rosebud, SWA Corporation pays for the intern stipends.

Other sites like Pine Ridge, we use private grants to fund our stipends. Another site in Rosebud, they use the 477 program, which is a tribal employment training program. They use them to fund the stipends.

Other sites, mainly just private grants to fund stipends. It's kind of variety just to support the stipends. We usually have meetings before we start the CIP to make sure each site has funding or if we need to look for funding to support stipends.

It really just depends on the site and where they can pull together and what works best for them. It's very individualized. Those are all the questions that we have in the chat right now.

Executive Producer

I just want to remind folks that if you want to ask a question verbally, please feel free to raise your hand and the producer will unmute you so you can ask your question. While we're waiting for folks to raise their hands, it looks like Al has raised his hand.

Audience Questions

I work with the Pueblo Zia here in New Mexico as a project manager moving rehab and other things. I'm sort of curious because I came from private industry where we ran a business and worked in many different reservations. When I came here as an employee in Zia, what's still strongly in my mind is self-sufficiency.

How does this internship program tie into that?

Or do you guys even pursue that avenue?

Justin Williams

I don't think we went that avenue.

For example, it sounds to me like you're picking up mostly young people.

Justin Williams

This internship program just recruits anybody that's 18 and over. Usually it is mainly young people, but we do get other individuals in there. Last year, we recruited a veteran who started working with Red Cloud Renewable.

She finished the program and she became a solar installer with Red Cloud Renewable. I believe she was maybe in the late 30s.

With these contractors that the internships work with, they're being funded through federal monies to commercial residential projects?

Justin Williams

Yes. The contractors receive funding from tribes, and we work with these contractors to see if we can get our interns in there. They will most likely agree and take an intern and train them while they're doing those tribal projects.

So, they're not necessarily obligated to pick up any interns?

Justin Williams

No.

Because there is some tribes here in New Mexico that part of the contractual agreement through the TARO, Tribal Employee Rights Office, is to pick up a percentage of natives from that tribe.

Justin Williams

I believe we have something like that here in South Dakota, where if it's just an outside contractor, like a non-native contractor, they have to get a percentage of native workers in projects that they're working on in the tribes.

And then these interns, they're covered liability with insurance through the stipend?

Justin Williams

It depends on the contractor. So, if contractors don't have interns, we usually have interns on a liability form. But if contractors have a blanket insurance, those interns can get underneath that insurance.

Thank you.

Iris Friday

Nicole, did you want to talk a little bit more about some of the financial literacy classes that you all offer and then some of the homeownership success and small business development that you all have seen? Sure.

Nicole Pourier

So, one thing that another one of my hats is that I do teach financial literacy once a month here in Kyle. And I also teach homebuyers once a month, and I teach business planning once a month here in Kyle. We were offering it in Pine Ridge and Kyle for twice a month, but it just wasn't getting that much of a turnout.

But I do notice that a lot of people, they need that education on the homeownership part, the business planning, the financial literacy, because being in such a low poverty state that a lot of us don't have that financial capability of understanding a lot like a credit score, interest rates. And that's one thing that I always try to make sure that I let them know is pay attention to that interest rate. Because just because you approved you doesn't mean you have to say yes, because you're not looking into the detail of how much interest you're going to be paying for how long and to look out for predatory lending.

And that's one thing that I focus to with our CIP adolescents is that even some that were in their late 20s and 30s wasn't aware of that. So, getting them while they're young and ready that we are helping them prevent getting themselves into a financial situation where it would be hard to get out of. They're more financially aware.

And we do have some that will come and take the business classes whenever they feel like maybe construction wasn't their part, but they want to try something else. You know what I mean? But they have that opportunity to learn it.

And that's what's good.

Iris Friday

And it sounded like there were some folks, some past interns that have started their own business. Is that correct? Can you talk about that a little more?

Justin Williams

Yes, we had an intern in Sisseton Wahpeton Reservation. It's in the northeast corner of South Dakota. He started out as an intern back in 2018 or 19 whenever the Sisseton Reservation or Sisseton Housing Authority became a CIP site.

After he completed the internship program, he went and started his own construction business. Before he started the internship site too, he got a degree in building trades at the college, their local college over there. After he made that business, he started taking projects from the housing authority over there.

And he just only started with metal roofs and siding. That was his main projects when he first started his construction company. And like maybe a little less than a year, he was asked to take on interns from Sisseton.

And he said yes. And he built his capacity with those interns. He hired all of them and they all stayed.

And then the housing authority gave him full house builds contracts. So him and those interns that he hired are building those full houses in the Sisseton Wahpeton Reservation. So seeing that full circle of that intern is great to see.

It's awesome to see him become an intern to a contractor.

Iris Friday

Some of the stories of empowerment and self-sufficiency and financial literacy and goal setting and planning for the future. You all talked about folks that were saving for homeownership. And then you mentioned something about match savings programs too.

Can you guys talk about how that is working?

Nicole Pourier

So one thing about our match savings, it's a two-to-one. So whatever they put in will match the two to their one. And we pay with a stipend.

So that stipend isn't taxed. And when I first started, a lot of my kids, because I do taxes, volunteer doing taxes during the year also, they were getting in trouble because they didn't understand the tax part of not paying taxes or understanding the 1099. So what we did this past year was set up a match savings account to pay their taxes.

So we asked them to at least put 250 in there and we would match the rest so that when they filed, they wasn't in trouble with the IRS and they had money to pay their taxes. And so they came to me and then some of them got it back because they're still working. And some of them had to pay it all in.

So it was a good learning experience for them. And the years prior, we used it for if they needed to buy. I had an intern, the one that I mentioned earlier, that would walk to work.

What he wanted to do was open up his own tire shop because there's hardly any tire shops. So he used his match savings to buy an air compressor and all these tools to have at his house to change tires, to start a little tire business in his little community. And so that was profitable for him.

And he didn't have to go get a loan to buy \$3,500 worth of tools because he had saved it. And some of them use it towards college where if they're going back to college, they'll use it to buy a laptop, a printer, down payment on a vehicle like Chaz is keeping kids for a home, you know, that's just a variety. But the main thing is that we are focusing on is the taxes because I want them to understand that part.

So that's why we also throw in personal finance with their financial literacy so they're more self-aware.

Iris Friday

Yeah, that's an amazing service to be able to have that to fall back on and to understand as there's nothing worse than like getting caught up in a like owing money before you even get started. So I love that you guys have those supports built in place.

Nicole Pourier

Yeah, because a lot of them don't understand taxes. Like some are fresh out of high school or some are 20 something and it's their first time and they're like, I don't know. And so that's where throughout the year, I'm still there for them.

If they call and text me and say, what do I put on my W-9? I'm like, well, what are you going to claim? Are you going to claim zero?

You're going to claim one, like finding capital and get out. So I was like, okay, so let's just helping them become more sustainable, more independent, just to be, I'm just proud of them. I'm really passionate about it because I just see the growth in them and I love it.

I love it when they're little like bubbles off.

Iris Friday

Yeah, I know. And Justin, when you're reading those success stories and quotes, I had to go grab a tissue because it's just so, I just got so emotional over their successes and the impact. So thank you guys.

Justin Williams

Yeah.

Nicole Pourier

On our reservation, there's a lot of hardship that our young people have to deal with and a lot of them overcome it. And there's some that will try to just take the easy way and be like, well, I just want to quit because I can't do this. I can't do that.

And I'm like, let's find a solution. How are we going to make a problem? So how are we going to problem solve it?

Because there's always a way, so that's one thing that we focus on is trying to break that and make them be problem solvers to figure out those solutions on their own instead of giving up.

Iris Friday

Yeah, great work. Absolutely great work. Tanisha, is there anything you wanted to add to the conversation?

Things we might've forgot to mention?

Tanisha Swanson

For the most part, I don't think the construction internship program would be as successful if without our teamwork and our site managers.

They carry most of the load and we appreciate them. How do you guys find the site managers?

A couple of our site managers work at the RTDHEs or they have other roles that they're employed on. So being a CIP site manager is just an added role for them. So they do make time to fulfill all the duties that it takes to be a site manager, which is reporting, working back and forth with me and Justin and recruiting their interns.

Justin Williams

Yep. And then to add to that, these last two sites like Crow Creek in Yankton, we try to partner our work or visit these organizations. Like for Crow Creek, we met with them.

They were interested in the program when we had our tribal site visit over there and we met with them in person. We talked about the construction internship program. We told them a checklist of what needs to be done in our program and they became interested.

And we made Crow Creek our fifth site and it kind of just went the same way with Yankton. Yankton attended our annual convening and tribal site visit in Sisseton. It was kind of back and forth.

We was going to recruit Standing Rock or Yankton and we finally chose Yankton. But it was mainly we try to look for maybe a native CDFI or tribal housing authority for our CIP sites.

Iris Friday

Great work. It's just exciting to see how you're building out the economies of communities where you guys are working and have these programs and changing the lives of the individuals that are going through the internship program and then creating capacity for housing development and maintenance programs and then really delving into some of the

deeper topics like the appraisals and the construction programs. It's just an incredible amount of work and I just want to applaud you all for the work that you're doing and your commitment to community and building this program and building up the participants in the program.

It's just very exciting to see the great work that you all have done and just the vision for the communities that you're working in and the people that you're working with. Are there any other questions from the audience at this point? If so, you can raise your hand and the producer will unmute you.

And Jad, if you are on, I'm not seeing any additional questions at this point. So, Justin, Tanisha, Nicole, do you guys have any last comments before Jad closes us out?

Justin Williams

I believe for everyone in this webinar, if you are interested in replicating this construction internship program, you can contact us. We can help you and we will be creating a toolkit for the CIP or the construction internship program in the future so you guys can replicate it in your native communities and help build the construction industry in tribes.

Thank you.

Jad Atallah

Well, thank you, everybody. I think what we'll certainly do is do what we can to get your guys' contact information out to all the attendees as well so that if they do want to learn more or replicate this model in their communities, certainly can easily reach out to you all. Fabulous webinar.

Thank you to everybody who presented, everyone who participated, all the participants, all the presenters, Linda, Iris, and our producer. Really appreciate everybody. Keep doing the great work that you're doing.

It's very inspiring. So, thank you all.

Event Producer

Thank you to our speakers and everyone for joining. The call has concluded. You may now disconnect.