



The Navajo Nation Office of the Controller

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Office of the Controller ready to administer Hardship Assistance Program, funds for Navajo Nation Chapters

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — On Oct. 9, Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez approved Legislation No. CS-74-20 which added more than \$49 million to the CARES Fund Hardship Assistance Expenditure Plan and approved Legislation No. CS-73-20 that provides \$90 million for Navajo Nation Chapters for additional coronavirus relief aid. Both programs are funded by the \$714 million Coronavirus Relief Fund.

The Navajo Nation Office of the Controller is ready to help ensure expenditures, monitoring, compliance and reporting of the distributed funds which will provide much-needed relief to members of the Navajo Nation affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

“The Office of the Controller is tasked with deploying the funding programs in a fair, expeditious and compliant manner,” said Navajo Nation Controller Pearline Kirk. “As such, there are a few considerations that we must all bear in mind as we look forward to getting this relief funding to the Navajo people.”

The Hardship Assistance Program’s eligibility criteria and its application process has been in development since the passage of CJY-67-20 by the Navajo Nation Council.

“There is a great deal of effort that goes into ensuring that the funding is being distributed to those that have been impacted the greatest while also ensuring the Navajo Nation remains in compliance with the U.S. Treasury’s guidance for administration of the CARES Act funds,” said Kirk. “The Office of the Controller will need the assistance and collaboration of all Navajo Nation divisions to achieve this objective.”

A brief application for enrolled members of the Navajo Nation will soon be available and once approved, members can apply on behalf of themselves, their family or another individual. The application will also include a request for information and self-certification of the nature of the hardship experienced as a result of COVID-19.

If you have received a copy of the draft form of the application, disregard it. The application period is not currently open and there will be a significant outreach and communications effort very soon to announce when the application period will open and details of how to apply. The final approved application will be the only application accepted as valid for purposes of the Hardship Assistance Program.

“The application period is still being contemplated but rest assured, program information, including the application process, is forthcoming in the coming weeks,” said Kirk. “For applications to be received from enrolled members living within the reservation, we intend to rely heavily on our Navajo Nation Chapters to assist with outreach, education and facilitation of the application process.”

Kirk also explained the application will be administered through an online portal that will allow the Navajo Nation to administer applications in the most efficient manner possible and to allow members the ability to receive a distribution much faster than a manual or paper-driven process thus reducing the need for individuals to apply in-person and promoting social distance per Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines.

“However, we understand there will be a need for individuals to submit a hardcopy application and we are currently working to define that process,” Kirk said.

To prepare for the application process, members are encouraged to register to vote with their local chapter with the Navajo Nation Elections Office. The repository of voter information will assist in confirming member’s information is accurate and tracked at the chapter level. Members are also encouraged to confirm their enrollment with the Navajo Nation Office of Vital Statistics.

“If you or a family member are not an enrolled member and otherwise should be considered for enrollment—do so,” said Kirk. “One of the few eligibility criteria includes being an enrolled member of the Navajo Nation.”

As for the Chapter Distribution Program, Navajo Nation Chapters will have the opportunity to seek reimbursement or funding support for procurement of items that have been incurred or are needed as a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“The decision for the Office of the Controller and the Navajo Division of Community Development to oversee the distribution of these funds was implemented to reduce the administrative burden on Navajo Nation Chapters, to ensure Navajo Nation compliance with CARES Act funds and to allow chapters to focus on serving their communities and to provide them the relief they desperately need,” Kirk said.

The Navajo Nation will also maximize purchasing power by procuring larger quantities of items at discounted rates and reduce the risk Navajo Nation Chapters may experience in competing for similar goods or may overpay for goods they are trying to procure.

The Office of the Controller established an online portal to facilitate the chapter distribution and allow chapters to submit their needs requests directly through this portal. This method helps to facilitate the ability to work collaboratively between chapters, the Division of Community Development and the Office of the Controller to make certain goods, services and reimbursements are deployed as quickly as possible.

“The current deadline to spend CARES Act funds is Dec. 30. The Office of the Controller is committed to ensuring funds are managed and deployed to achieve the greatest impact for members of the Navajo Nation,” said Kirk. “However, the next three months will be critical in ensuring that happens in a compliant manner so the Navajo Nation does not have to return funds back to the U.S. Treasury.”

For more information about the Hardship Assistance Program or the Chapter Assistance Program, visit www.nnooc.org/CARESHelp.html or email NNCaresHelp@nnooc.org.

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