



The Navajo Nation Office of the Controller

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 7, 2021

CONTACT:

Pearline Kirk, *Controller*
info@nnooc.org
www.nnooc.org

Navajo CARES Act Hardship Assistance Program currently 90% funded, federal extension has not modified expenditure strategy

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — The Navajo Nation Office of the Controller reports a total expenditure of Navajo CARES Act funds of \$414,179,819 and a total amount of open commitments of \$15,571,454 as of Jan. 5. The amount transferred to the Navajo CARES Act Hardship Assistance Fund is \$254,964,179 as of Jan. 6. Once projects are closed out, the Office of the Controller expects the total amount available for the Hardship Assistance Program to be approximate \$322 to \$324 million.

In the latter part of December, the U.S. Congress and White House approved an extension for the spending of the Coronavirus Relief Funding (CRF) appropriated through the CARES Act which was originally set to expire Dec. 30. The extension now allows for the expenditure of funds through Dec. 31, 2021.

The federal extension has not modified the Navajo Nation's expenditure strategy.

"The Navajo Nation Council had resolved for certain deadlines for the funding allocated to specific projects and divisions. When these deadlines lapsed, the funding was reverted to the Hardship Assistance Program," said Pearline Kirk, Navajo Nation Controller. "The final expenditure deadline was December 28 at noon. The extension provided no changes to the scope or expenditure timeline for the projects that were approved in previous legislations."

Kirk explained the total amount of funding in the Hardship Assistance Program is influenced by a number of factors.

"Divisions and subrecipients, such as funds that were granted to Navajo Tribal Utility Authority or other organizations by the Navajo Nation, are still reconciling their final expenditures and awaiting invoices from vendors to be able to close out their grants," said Kirk. "As such, the amount of \$324 million is estimated for the Hardship Assistance fund based on the information provided to the Office of the Controller that is expected to be reverted. The Controller's Office is working diligently with vendors and subrecipients to expeditiously receive the unspent funding allocated to the Hardship Assistance Program."

The federal extension on spending is having a positive impact on the Navajo Nation, specifically on the Hardship Assistance Program. It was previously reported there were more than 73,000 applicants that would not have been eligible for payment due to missing or incorrect data from the Navajo Office of Vital Records' database. The extension provides more time for the Controller's Office to work through

these exceptions beyond Dec. 30 allowing for payment to these individuals if their exceptions can be cleared. The extension does not modify the anticipated check distribution date or delay it.

There are approximately 10,000 individuals that still have exceptions or issues with their Certificate of Indian Blood (CIB) or date of birth information that would prohibit them from getting a check. There are 41,000 other exceptions for such things as name mismatch which typically is due to a maiden name or name change.

So far, there are approximately 225,000 applicants that have passed all eligibility determinations. Verifications of mailing addresses listed on applications is also being conducted to ensure they are valid addresses in an effort to reduce the amount of checks that may be returned as undelivered which may further delay an individual's receipt of payment.

The total funding required to fully fund the Hardship Assistance Program is approximately \$356 million and the program is approximately 90% funded right now. The approximate maximum individual payments are up to \$1,300 per adult and up to \$400 per minor with the current estimated \$324 million funding amount.

"We expect to begin processing payments starting the week of January 18," said Kirk. "The Controller's Office is working closely with the Health Command Operations Center to ensure the safest distribution of checks possible to reduce crowding both at banks and shopping centers. The discussions with the Health Command Operations Center are focused on ways to reduce crowding by cutting checks in waves and revisiting the will-call option."

If applicants previously selected the will-call option meaning they want to pick up their checks in-person, they may receive a delay in getting their payment. If an applicant has a mailing address, they can send an email to NNCaresHelp@nnooc.org or call the support center to make the update. This will allow for faster processing time.

###