

Navajo Nation establishes the Fiscal Recovery Fund office for the American Rescue Plan Act

Written by gallupsun
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On Oct. 4, Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez issued Executive Order No. 008-2021, establishing the Navajo Nation Fiscal Recovery Fund Office dedicated to overseeing and implementing the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds program authorized by the American Rescue Plan Act. The establishment of the office was authorized through Resolution CJY-41-21, which was approved by the 24 Navajo Nation Council and signed into law in August.

On Sept. 23, Nez and Chief of Staff Paulson Chaco presented the plan of operation for the Navajo Nation Fiscal Recovery Fund Office to the Naabik'íyáti' Committee. Council delegates voted 17-3 to accept the report, allowing the Office of the President and Vice President to move forward with the establishment of the office. The office will be located at the Navajo Division of Transportation Emergency Operation Center.

“With the establishment of the Navajo Nation Fiscal Recovery Fund Office, the Navajo Nation is prepared to move forward with the initial distributions of the American Rescue Plan Act funds for defunded CARES Act allocations and appropriations that were funded through the Síhasin Fund and the UUFB, which were previously authorized,” Nez said. “As for new projects, Resolution CJY-41-21 requires that we work with the Navajo Nation Council to finalize and fund them.

We do hear the concerns of our people and we understand the need to expedite the internal processes to expend the funds as quickly as possible, while providing accountability and ensuring compliance with federal requirements each step of the way,” Nez continued. “This is a once in a lifetime opportunity to improve the quality of life for our people now and future generations.”

The NNFRF Office will be a clearinghouse for APRA related activities including educating the public on NNFRF matters, collaborating with Navajo Nation departments and offices, reviewing and approving NNFRF projects, overseeing NNFRF projects and ensure Navajo Nation compliance with Fiscal Recovery Funds provisions of ARPA and Navajo Nation laws.

The NNFRF Office will have a team dedicated to the oversight and implementation of the NNFRF funds that will consist of an Executive Director and staff in three main oversight programs to include: 1) *Central Support* for the financial management, personnel management, reporting, and general accounting; 2) *Infrastructure*

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Delivery Support

with a team of industry specific project managers, schedulers, and technical writers to oversee broadband, water, wastewater, housing, education, economic development, and other related projects; and 3)

Regulatory Support

with a team dedicated to address regulatory reviews for FRF approved projects.

Resolution CJY-41-21 also allocated 10 percent of the Navajo Nation's American Rescue Plan Act funds for central support service and regulatory costs. The Office of the President and Vice President is responsible for apportioning \$36 million, annually over five years, to Executive Branch programs and offices to implement the Fiscal Recovery Funds. The annual five-year allocation will cover administrative and support costs at a rate much lower than the standard 17 percent Indirect Cost that is provided for federal funds for tribes. The Office of the Speaker was also allocated \$20 million for the same purpose.

The Office of the Controller has created a website to help keep the public informed – the website is available at <https://navajonationsarpa.org> and is currently being further developed.

“The Navajo Nation is obligated to account for all American Rescue Plan Act funds,” Nez explained. “The funding that the Executive Branch was allocated is safe and accounted for and will begin to be expended for administrative, central support service, and regulatory costs now that the Fiscal Recovery Fund Office is established.

The funds will be used over a five-year period to fully implement the American Rescue Plan Act funds,” he added.

The Navajo Nation has received its final distribution of Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds funding with a total appropriation of over \$2 billion from the U.S. Treasury. It will take a dedicated team to manage these funds over the next four to five years. The Nez-Lizer Administration is working diligently with the 24 Navajo Nation Council to prepare expenditure plans and legislation for more broadband, water, wastewater, and other infrastructure projects throughout the Nation.

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