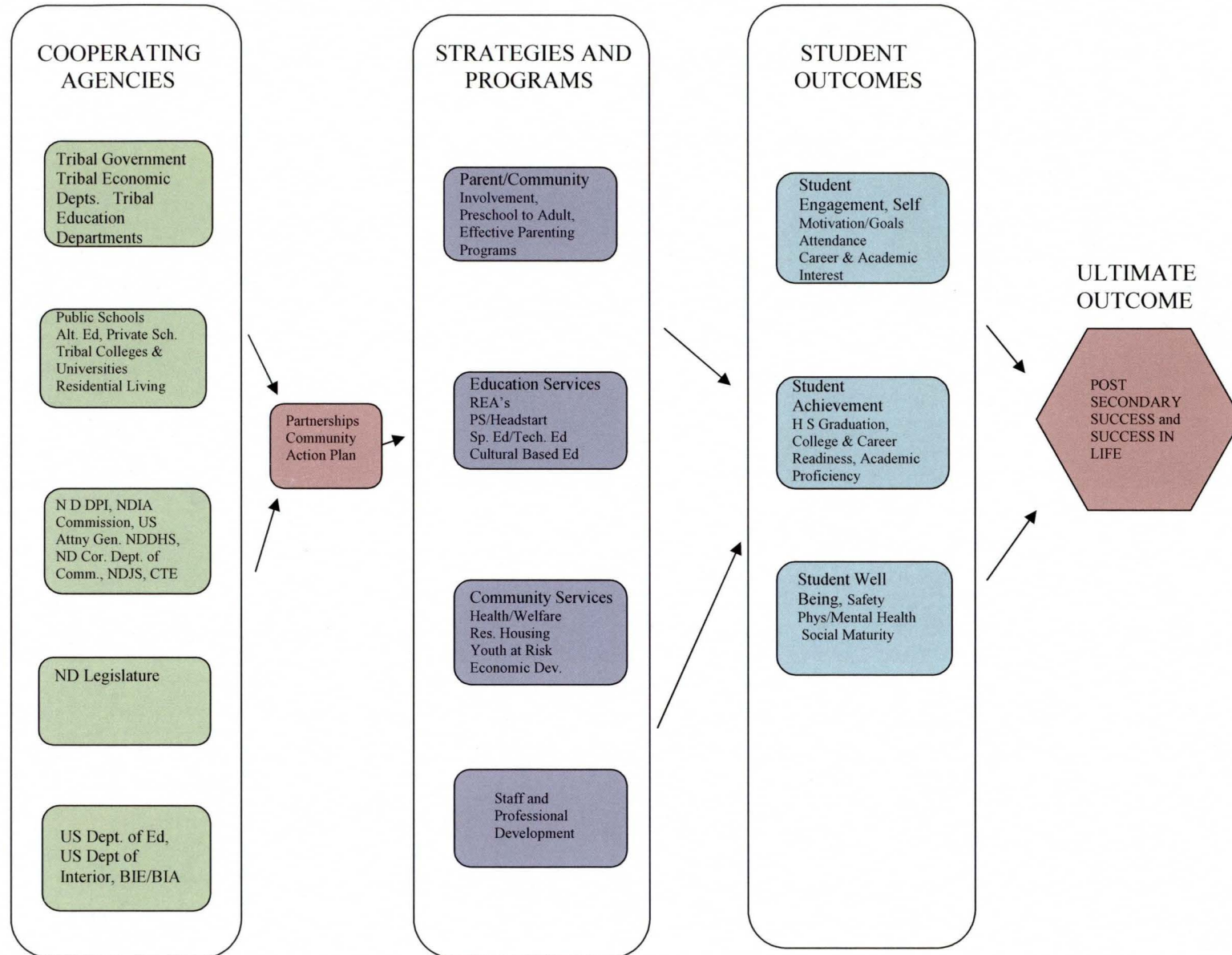


# Community Framework in Support of Native Youth



**A Proposal to Establish a Pilot Grant Project  
To Support Integrated Community Services to At-Risk  
American Indian Students**

**Presented by the  
North Dakota Department of Public Instruction**

At previous meetings of the Tribal and State Relations Committee, the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction (NDDPI) has presented background research, compiled by Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL), regarding

- (1) the generally lower academic standing of American Indian students, especially students on the state's Indian Reservations, and
- (2) the unique socio-economic factors that challenge any quick solutions.

Following these previous presentations and discussions, the Tribal and State Relations Committee requested that the NDDPI prepare a set of proposals, in keeping with the provisions of HB 1049, that might provide a policy and practice response to the research findings and the apparent achievement gap among the state's American Indian students. In response to this request, the NDDPI, in collaboration with the North Dakota Indian Education Advisory Council (NDIEAC), has prepared a summary proposal to address both the student- and community-level deficiencies that must be faced to ensure optimal improvements in student academic, health, and self-sufficiency indicators among our American Indian students.

In the light of research findings, the NDDPI proposes establishing a competitive pilot grant project (1) to aid integrated community services that support identified at-risk American Indian students and their families and (2) to support collaboration among community-based services.

*Summary Findings*

Summative research indicates that within the American Indian subgroup statewide, with specific attention to the state's Indian Reservations, an academic achievement gap exists compared to other demographic subgroups and appears to be directly related to socio- economic factors present in communities where these students live and attend school.

Research gathered nationwide suggests that with appropriate differentiated practices and community level supports, economically disadvantaged students, including American Indian students, can and do reach state-defined achievement standards to levels that rival overall student performance.

*Foundational Principles*

In the presence of these research findings, the NDDPI, in collaboration with the NDIEAC, proceeded to develop a framework that would advance school- and community-based solutions to raise the level of American Indian students' academic achievement and overall well-being. This proposal framework would integrate various tribal, local, state, and federal resources to provide a better coordinated means

- To create, support, and sustain an environment where local interests can identify specific community needs, develop measurable plans, and implement activities to aid at-risk students in meeting the goal of post-secondary success and success in life;
- To provide social and emotional support to at-risk students that will increase the likelihood of enhancing their levels of safety, positive physical and mental health, social maturity, and overall well-being;
- To provide at-risk students and their families with critical economic and life skills that can sustain a family as a viable economic structure and a self-sustaining source of emotional and social support, whose members actively contribute to and invest in the long term improvement of the local community.

### *A Proposal for Action*

Based on these findings and broad principles developed through NDIEAC discussions, the NDDPI proposes to establish a competitive pilot grant project to aid integrated community services that support identified at-risk American Indian students and their families and to support collaboration among community-based services. This proposal would establish criteria for program success, seek funding from the Sixty-third Legislative Assembly, select through a competitive process a primary pilot location, and provide the means to ensure measurable student post-secondary success and success in life.

As a result of discussions with the NDIEAC, the NDDPI proposes to the State and Tribal Relations Committee that a bill and supporting appropriation request be advanced to the Sixty-third Legislative Assembly to establish a single, competitive pilot grant to support integrated community services to at-risk American Indian students and their families. This competitive pilot grant would advance two primary priorities:

1. to provide integrated school- and community-based educational, health, and social support services for identified at-risk students and their families to aid these at-risk students in meeting the goal of post-secondary success and success in life; and
2. to institute local governance partnerships and service delivery models that enhance, support, and sustain an environment where local service providers can identify specific community needs, develop measurable plans, and implement activities to aid at-risk students and their families.

The purpose of this single pilot grant is to develop and adopt a school- and community-level plan for the envelopment of local supports for identified at-risk students and the overall improvement of a school's and community's capacity to deliver and sustain this effort. Such school and community supports might include

- a means of identifying students who are evidencing deficiencies in school attendance, academic achievement, social connections with peers or family members, physical or mental health indicators, or general indicators of concern;
- a means of working closely with families and local service agencies to provide meaningful, appropriate intervention or remediation services that are designed to further advance positive gains, correct or rehabilitate deficient patterns of behavior or health,

provide dedicated academic and career guidance, and provide mentorships or community involvement to actively engage students;

- a means of providing structured case management to advance overall gains in specified student academic, health, social and emotional, and long-term college and career indicators;
- a means to address family and community social or economic conditions that impede individuals' efforts at self-sustaining improvements, and
- a means to establish a system of school- and community-level improvements in the provision of integrated support services to students who are at risk and their families and to advance longer term investments into community improvements, infrastructure, or economic development initiatives that will likely ensure sustainability.

This proposed pilot grant attempts to address both the individual student needs of identified at-risk American Indian students and the structure and efficiency of local service provision by the various public and private agencies that exist to support students and their families. As a primary outcome, the grant seeks increased self-sufficiency of students and their families and the sustainability of local collaboration efforts. This grant opportunity, if determined successful following an evaluation of its overall operations, may prove to be worthy of expanding to additional grant locations, pending legislative review and approval.

The NDDPI offers its assistance to the Committee and its counsel in drafting a bill with a supporting appropriation request to advance this proposal. The NDDPI avails itself to the Tribal and State Relations Committee regarding any aspect of clarifying and advancing this proposal.