

Gila River Indian Community- BIE Sovereignty in Education Grant

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

SIE Grant Summary

The Sovereignty In Education Grant is a grant funded to the Gila River Indian Community by the Bureau of Indian Education to promote tribal control and operation of BIE funded schools on our reservation. The funds are designed to support development of a tribal school reform plan with the goal of improved educational outcomes for students and improved efficiencies and effectiveness in operating and managing our schools. The Gila River Tribal Education Department has completed year one of the grant where we studied the feasibility of carrying out this project. The Tribal Education Department requested and received permission to continue our study for a second year.

As part of our work during this second year, we are focusing on communication and collaboration with all stakeholders. Toward that end we are providing this list of Frequently Asked Questions. As more questions emerge we will continue to add to this list.

- **Has the decision has already been made and the school systems will change next year?**

No. After the reporting of Year I BIE SIE results in Washington DC, the Bureau of Indian Education recognized the need for an additional year of communication and collaboration within the communities undertaking the study.

- **Would the GRIC take control of the Grant Schools (BWCS, CBCS, and GCCS) under the One Grant System?**

No. The three Grant School boards would merge under one Gila River Community Schools (GRCS) Governing Board. The GRCS Governing Board would be elected by Community members and would report to the Gila River Indian Community TED, ESC, and Council regularly.

- **If the One Grant System was implemented in the GRIC, would current employees of the Grant Schools be let go or terminated?**

No they would not. The only change would be re-assignment of some administrative positions as the data shows keeping the current GRIC Grant School structure would result in redundancy. **NO TEACHERS, PARAPROFESSIONALS OR STAFF MEMBERS WOULD LOSE THEIR JOBS BECAUSE OF THIS CHANGE.**

- **How can parents and Community Members share their opinions on the One Grant System?**

In Year I of the BIE SIE Study, surveys were collected garnering opinions on the GRIC Grant Schools from Teachers, Administrators, and Community Members. In year II there will be much more opportunity for everyone to collaborate to improve educational outcomes for students of the GRIC. There will be more surveys collected and reporting of data to districts each month. In addition, the creation of two committees (Governor's Ad Hoc Committee and Curriculum and Steering Committee) require input from teachers, administrators, community members, parents, and council representatives.

- **Will the Grant Schools lose funding or will money be diverted to the GRIC for admin costs?**

No. The GRIC ESC and Council have been very adamant about there being no loss in funding in any way for each Grant School. Any One Grant implementation plan would have to meet the needs of students at the current federal funding levels.

- **Would academics in the Grant Schools suffer as a result of the One Grant Implementation in the GRIC?**

No. Currently, the academic results in the 3 Grant Schools give us all an opportunity to collaborate to create a better way to serve the students of the GRIC. They deserve our best efforts in analyzing ways to help them realize their potential.

- **What evidence is there of the One Grant Concept being successfully implemented?**

There are several American Indian communities that manage their own schools directly, including some who have implemented the One Grant School Concept. In Year II of the BIE SIE study, GRIC TED, ESC, Council Representatives, and Grant School Board Members will visit American Indian Communities where implementation has taken place to gather information and bring back for analysis for the ESC, GRIC Council, and Community.

- **Has the GRIC Tribal Education Department (TED) been working to collaborate with GRIC Grant Schools to get feedback and opinions on the One Grant implementation?**

Yes. The GRIC TED has been working to collaborate with all three GRIC Grant Schools since April 2015. The BIE SIE Grant is an opportunity for all stakeholders to study the school systems in place and the results they have produced without bias. It is our duty to the students of the GRIC to study ways to improve outcomes for students in the GRIC.

- **Will the change to a one grant system result in a loss of local control of schools?**

As a matter of fact local control of schools will be significantly enhanced. Through the collaborative efforts of the community and based on surveys and feedback from the community, a Site Based Management approach will be employed giving school teachers administrators and parents the opportunity to manage their schools within the structure of the grant.

- **When the One Grant Concept is implemented, will the tribe receive and manage all the funds and will they fund schools as they see fit?**

The current thinking is that there will be a Tribal School Board. This board would receive the funds and manage schools. It is very possible that under the One Grant system, schools would be allocated more operational funds than they are currently receiving

- **What will be the role of locally directed and locally accountable school boards?**

All members of the local community will have the opportunity to be involved in the direction of their local school by actively participating on site councils that will be in place at each school.

- **What evidence is there that the One Grant approach produces better academic, social, and or cultural results for students?**

The One Grant Concept is a new approach for BIE operated and BIE Funded Schools. Tribes have been asking that their status as the Sovereign Nations they are, be recognized by the United States Government. The BIE recognizes that the current system of operating schools for Indian children have not resulted in quality education for students. We do know the student achievement results our schools have produced are not acceptable. We also recognize that it is not the fault of the teachers or the parents. Schools have not come together to pool their resources to plan an effective staff development plan, they have not come together to share their student data in an effort to improve instruction across the reservation, they have collaborated on very few endeavors related to increasing student achievement.

- **Will increased jobs at TED be funded with BIE Education Funds?**

No! The Tribal Education Department is a department of the Gila River Indian Community. The funds for adding staff to the department will come from the community and NOT this BIE Grant.

- **Will there be as net loss of funds to the three schools if the One Grant Concept is implemented?**

Because of the formulas used to calculate costs associated with the grants, there could be a net loss of funds if the funds came to the tribe but would be insignificant and would not affect the schools. Any potential loss would be in administrative costs and not in operational costs. If funds are granted to GRIC Schools, there would be no loss of funds.

- **Will the tribe withhold administrative fees if the One Grant Concept is implemented?**

The tribe will not withhold administrative fees. Administration will be direct funded by the grant. The overall costs of administration under the One Grant System will be less than the administrative cost in the current structure.

- **If the One Grant is implemented, who will be accountable for compliance with audit requirements, IDEA requirements, and other legal and regulatory requirements?**

GRIC Schools would be responsible for compliance with all IDEA, financial and legal and regulatory requirements.

- **How does the One Grant impact the federal trust responsibility for the education of Indian children?**

There is absolutely no change in the federal trust responsibility for the education of Indian children. In fact the federal government is recognizing each tribe's right to make decisions regarding the education of it children. The federal trust responsibilities remain intact.

YEAR II OF THE BIE SIE

The Bureau of Indian Education changed the process for the One Grant Implementation Feasibility Study for American Indian Communities undertaking the research. Previously, the BIE wanted grantees to have a completed Implementation Plan ready for enactment in Year II of the Grant. Issues surfaced during the Year I reporting process that led the BIE to include a buffer year for communication and collaboration.

Year II of the BIE SIE Study will be focused on collaboration within the GRIC to achieve a couple aims. First, more data and information must be processed and shared in order to provide stakeholders an opportunity to make decisions in the best interests of students in the GRIC. Secondly, an executable One Grant Implementation Plan must be completed by the end of Year II.

At the end of Year II, the GRIC Council will decide if the Community wishes to move on to full implementation in Year III by Tribal Resolution.

For questions and concerns feel free to contact the Gila River Tribal Education Director, Mr. Isaac Salcido at 520.562.3662 or Isaac.Salcido@gric.nsn.us

For more information:

- <http://www.bie.edu/cs/groups/xbie/documents/document/idc1-027407.pdf>
- <https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2014/07/24/2014-17397/sovereignty-in-indian-education-grant-program#h-6>
- <http://blog.nativepartnership.org/bie-schools-sovereignty-in-indian-education/>

For more information please contact the Tribal Education Department at (520) 562-3662