



NEW MEXICO
OFFICE OF
**AFRICAN
AMERICAN
AFFAIRS**

2026 STATE-TRIBAL COLLABORATION ACT

ANNUAL REPORT

REPORTING PERIOD:
FISCAL YEAR 2026

*Honoring Sovereignty.
Building Relationships.
Strengthening
New Mexico Together.*



RESPECT
for Sovereignty



PARTNERSHIP
in Action



SHARED PURPOSE
for a Stronger

Prepared pursuant to the
New Mexico
State-Tribal



LEADERSHIP PERSPECTIVE

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

It is my honor to present the New Mexico Office of African American Affairs' 2026 State-Tribal Collaboration Act Annual Report.

The State-Tribal Collaboration Act reflects one of New Mexico's enduring principles: public service is strengthened through respectful government-to-government relationships with the sovereign Tribal Nations of our state. While the Office of African American Affairs serves a distinct statutory mission, we recognize that many of the opportunities and challenges facing our communities are strengthened through listening, partnership, and a shared commitment to improving the lives of all New Mexicans.

Throughout Fiscal Year 2026, our Office approached the State-Tribal Collaboration Act not simply as a reporting requirement, but as an opportunity to establish relationships that can endure beyond a single reporting cycle or administration. We recognize that trust is built through presence, consistency, humility, and a willingness to listen before acting.

One of the most meaningful experiences of this reporting year was participation in the 2026 State Tribal Leaders Summit hosted by the New Mexico Indian Affairs Department. Deputy Director Charles Reado and I joined Tribal leadership, Cabinet Secretaries, Tribal Liaisons, and state officials from across New Mexico to better understand Tribal priorities and the importance of Tribal sovereignty in shaping meaningful partnerships.

Those conversations reinforced something that has become central to our thinking: meaningful collaboration does not begin by asking, *What program should we create?* It begins by asking, *What problem are we trying to solve, who should be at the table, and where do our missions intersect?* That question has become an important part of how the Office evaluates opportunities across its four strategic pillars of Education, Economic Empowerment, Health, and Community Engagement.

One issue that has especially shaped our thinking is the challenge of New Mexico's disconnected youth. The Legislative Finance Committee's findings identifying approximately 32,000 young people between the ages of 16 and 24 who are neither working nor engaged in school present a challenge that reaches across geographic, cultural, and economic boundaries. While the experiences of African American youth and Native youth are distinct, there are meaningful opportunities to learn from one another while pursuing solutions that respect the unique history, culture, and priorities of every community. Early intervention, trauma-informed care, educational attainment, workforce development, mentorship, entrepreneurship, and community leadership are all areas where thoughtful collaboration can strengthen outcomes while honoring Tribal sovereignty and the individual missions of our respective governments.

Our visit to Navajo Preparatory School in Farmington further reinforced this belief. Spending time with students and educators reminded us that the future of New Mexico will be shaped not only by the policies we develop today, but by the relationships we invest in with young people who will become tomorrow's leaders. Experiences such as these affirm that education is not simply one of OAAA's strategic pillars—it is one of our greatest opportunities to build understanding across communities.

This report reflects a foundational year. It documents relationships being established, lessons being learned, and an organizational framework designed to guide OAAA's engagement for years to come. Rather than measuring success solely by meetings attended or reports submitted, we believe lasting progress will be measured by the strength of the relationships we build and the positive outcomes those relationships produce for the people of New Mexico.

As New Mexico prepares for a new gubernatorial administration in the coming year, I believe it is especially important that these relationships continue to grow. Respectful collaboration between state agencies and Tribal governments should transcend individual administrations, providing continuity, mutual respect, and a shared commitment to serving future generations. It is my hope that the work reflected in these pages contributes to that continuing effort and provides a foundation upon which future leaders may continue to build.

On behalf of the Office of African American Affairs, I extend my sincere gratitude to the New Mexico Indian Affairs Department, Tribal leadership, community partners, fellow state agencies, and everyone who generously shared their time, experience, and perspective throughout this reporting year. We look forward with optimism to strengthening these relationships, expanding opportunities for collaboration, and working together to build a New Mexico where every community has the opportunity to thrive.

Thank you for your partnership and for the opportunity to serve the people of New Mexico.

Gene Grant

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

New Mexico Office of African American Affairs

Executive Letter

OVERVIEW

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Fiscal Year 2026 marked a foundational year in the New Mexico Office of African American Affairs' implementation of the State-Tribal Collaboration Act. Throughout the year, OAAA strengthened relationships with the New Mexico Indian Affairs Department, participated in State-Tribal collaboration efforts, and continued building the internal capacity necessary to support meaningful engagement with Tribal governments. While this report documents activities completed during the reporting period, it also reflects the institutional foundation being established for stronger collaboration in the years ahead.

CORE GUIDING QUESTION

"Where do our missions intersect?"

Rather than viewing State-Tribal collaboration as a single initiative, the Office evaluates opportunities across its four strategic pillars—Education, Economic Empowerment, Health, and Community Engagement. As new issues emerge, staff work collaboratively to identify where those opportunities align with the Office's mission and how they can be advanced through respectful partnership, shared expertise, and coordinated action.

One example is the challenge of New Mexico's disconnected youth. The Legislative Finance Committee's finding that approximately 32,000 young people between the ages of 16 and 24 are neither engaged in school nor employment presents a statewide challenge that transcends individual communities. While the experiences of African American and Native youth are distinct, both communities share an interest in expanding educational opportunity, strengthening workforce pathways, addressing trauma, supporting families, and creating environments where young people can thrive.

This report reflects a year of relationship building, listening, and identifying areas where collaboration can create lasting public value. It documents OAAA's commitment to strengthening State-Tribal relationships through consistency, mutual respect, and a willingness to work together where our missions intersect.

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AGENCY OVERVIEW

ABOUT THE OFFICE OF AFRICAN AMERICAN AFFAIRS

The New Mexico Office of African American Affairs serves as the state's advocate for advancing opportunities, promoting equity, and improving outcomes for African American communities throughout New Mexico. Working collaboratively with state agencies, educational institutions, community organizations, businesses, and local leaders, the Office advances initiatives centered on four strategic pillars:

1

Education

2

**Economic
Empowerment**

3

Health

4

**Community
Engagement**

These pillars guide the Office's work and provide the framework through which opportunities for partnership and collaboration are evaluated.

STATUTORY FOUNDATION

THE STATE-TRIBAL COLLABORATION ACT

The New Mexico State-Tribal Collaboration Act affirms an important principle of public service: the State of New Mexico is best served when state agencies engage Tribal governments through respectful government-to-government relationships.

The Act recognizes the sovereignty of New Mexico's Tribal Nations and encourages meaningful consultation, communication, and collaboration whenever state actions may affect Tribal interests. Beyond establishing reporting requirements, the Act provides agencies with a framework for building lasting relationships based on mutual respect, transparency, and continued dialogue.

For the Office of African American Affairs, the State-Tribal Collaboration Act represents more than an annual reporting obligation. It provides an opportunity to strengthen relationships, identify shared priorities, and explore areas where collaboration can improve outcomes for communities throughout New Mexico while fully respecting the sovereignty, cultures, histories, and priorities of each Tribal Nation.

"Meaningful collaboration is not measured solely by meetings held or reports submitted. It is built through listening, consistency, trust, and a willingness to work together where our missions intersect."

COLLABORATIVE PRINCIPLES

WHERE OUR MISSIONS INTERSECT

Every community in New Mexico possesses its own history, culture, strengths, priorities, and lived experiences. The Office of African American Affairs believes meaningful collaboration begins by recognizing those distinctions rather than assuming common experiences or universal solutions.

As a state agency, OAAA has a clearly defined statutory mission to improve outcomes for New Mexico's African American community. Likewise, each Tribal Nation exercises its own sovereign authority, establishes its own priorities, and serves its own citizens. Respect for those distinct roles is the foundation upon which meaningful collaboration is built.

Rather than beginning with the question, *What program should we create?*, OAAA begins with a different question:

Where do our missions intersect?

That question has become the framework through which the Office evaluates opportunities for partnership.

When new issues emerge, the Office evaluates each opportunity through the lens of its four strategic pillars: Education, Economic Empowerment, Health, and Community Engagement.

INTERNAL EVALUATION CRITERIA BEFORE MOVING FORWARD:

- Does this issue align with OAAA's statutory responsibilities?
- Does collaboration respect Tribal sovereignty?
- Is OAAA the appropriate agency to participate?
- Which strategic pillar does it support?
- Can partnership improve outcomes?

Only after considering these questions does the Office determine the appropriate course of action. Throughout Fiscal Year 2026, this framework became part of the Office's internal planning process and will continue guiding future collaboration.

AGENCY TRIBAL LIAISON

The Office of African American Affairs has designated a Tribal Liaison to serve as the agency's primary point of contact for communication and coordination with Tribal governments and the New Mexico Indian Affairs Department.

Consistent with the State-Tribal Collaboration Act, the Tribal Liaison supports consultation efforts, facilitates communication, and helps ensure Tribal perspectives are appropriately considered throughout the Office's work.

The responsibilities of the Tribal Liaison extend beyond statutory reporting requirements. Working closely with the Executive Director, Deputy Director, and agency staff, the liaison assists in identifying opportunities for collaboration, coordinating participation in statewide Tribal engagement efforts, strengthening relationships with Tribal governments and organizations, and supporting the Office's commitment to respectful government-to-government engagement.

Participation in the State Tribal Leaders Summit and Tribal Liaison meetings further strengthened the Office's understanding of the liaison's role. These experiences emphasized that successful Tribal engagement depends not only on compliance with statutory requirements, but also on consistent communication, relationship building, cross-agency coordination, and thoughtful planning.

As OAAA continues to strengthen statewide partnerships, the Tribal Liaison will remain an important resource in identifying opportunities for collaboration across the Office's four strategic pillars while ensuring engagement remains respectful, consistent, and informed by the principles of the State-Tribal Collaboration Act.

INSTITUTIONAL STEPS**BUILDING THE FOUNDATION**

Fiscal Year 2026 represented an important first step in the Office of African American Affairs' implementation of the State-Tribal Collaboration Act. While the Office's direct engagement with Tribal governments is still developing, the reporting period established an organizational foundation built upon listening, relationship building, and a commitment to identifying opportunities for meaningful collaboration.

Several activities during the year helped shape this foundation:

State Tribal Leaders Summit

Executive Director Gene Grant and Deputy Director Charles Reado participated in the 2026 State Tribal Leaders Summit hosted by the New Mexico Indian Affairs Department. Bringing together Tribal leadership, Cabinet Secretaries, Tribal Liaisons, and state officials, the Summit provided an opportunity to better understand Tribal priorities, strengthen government-to-government relationships, and reinforce the importance of respectful engagement grounded in Tribal sovereignty.

Tribal Liaison Development

OAAA actively participated in Tribal Liaison meetings coordinated by the New Mexico Indian Affairs Department. These meetings strengthened the Office's understanding of consultation practices, interagency coordination, reporting responsibilities, and action planning while reinforcing the importance of continued communication and relationship building.

Educational Engagement

As part of OAAA's education initiatives supported through the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Executive Director Gene Grant and Deputy Director Charles Reado visited Navajo Preparatory School in Farmington. The visit provided an opportunity to engage with students and educators while reinforcing the Office's belief that educational opportunity and youth leadership remain central to New Mexico's future.

Building an Organizational Framework

Perhaps the most significant accomplishment of FY2026 occurred internally. Throughout the year, OAAA began integrating State-Tribal collaboration into its planning process by evaluating opportunities through the Office's four strategic pillars of Education, Economic Empowerment, Health, and Community Engagement. This framework will continue guiding future collaboration as relationships and opportunities expand.



Executive Director Gene Grant and Deputy Director Charles Reado with students and educators at Navajo Preparatory School in Farmington, New Mexico.

Rather than viewing these activities as isolated events, OAAA considers them the beginning of a long-term commitment to respectful partnership, continuous learning, and strengthened relationships with New Mexico's Tribal Nations.

ENGAGEMENT & RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

During Fiscal Year 2026, the Office of African American Affairs focused on strengthening its understanding of the State-Tribal Collaboration Act through active participation, relationship building, and continued engagement with the New Mexico Indian Affairs Department and Tribal partners.

Recognizing that meaningful government-to-government relationships are developed over time, OAAA approached the reporting year as an opportunity to listen, learn, and establish the foundation for future collaboration rather than simply fulfill statutory requirements.

Participation in the State Tribal Leaders Summit provided Executive Director Gene Grant and Deputy Director Charles Reado the opportunity to hear directly from Tribal leadership and state partners regarding shared priorities, the importance of Tribal sovereignty, and opportunities for strengthened government-to-government relationships. The Summit reinforced the value of approaching collaboration through humility, active listening, and mutual respect.

The Office also participated in Tribal Liaison meetings hosted by the New Mexico Indian Affairs Department. These meetings emphasized practical implementation of the State-Tribal Collaboration Act, including communication, consultation practices, interagency coordination, and long-term planning. They also provided an opportunity to learn alongside Tribal Liaisons from agencies across state government, strengthening OAAA's understanding of its responsibilities within the broader statewide effort.

Educational engagement became an important part of the Office's relationship-building efforts. Through OAAA's education initiatives, Executive Director Gene Grant and Deputy Director Charles Reado visited Navajo Preparatory School in Farmington. The visit reaffirmed the importance of investing in young people and reinforced the Office's belief that education provides one of the strongest opportunities for building understanding and strengthening relationships across communities.

Collectively, these experiences shaped the Office's approach to State-Tribal collaboration. Rather than viewing engagement as a series of individual meetings or events, OAAA recognizes relationship building as an ongoing process that depends upon continued communication, mutual respect, and a willingness to learn from one another while working toward shared public goals.

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

COLLABORATION THROUGH OAAA'S FOUR STRATEGIC PILLARS

The Office of African American Affairs evaluates opportunities for State-Tribal collaboration through its four strategic pillars: Education, Economic Empowerment, Health, and Community Engagement. Together, these pillars provide a consistent framework for identifying where collaboration may strengthen outcomes while remaining aligned with OAAA's statutory mission and respectful of Tribal sovereignty.

Rather than viewing these pillars as independent areas of work, OAAA considers them complementary perspectives through which emerging opportunities can be evaluated. As conversations develop with Tribal partners, community organizations, state agencies, and educational institutions, the Office asks where meaningful collaboration may exist and how those opportunities can best serve New Mexico's diverse communities.

Education

Education remains central to OAAA's mission and to its vision for future State-Tribal collaboration. Opportunities involving youth development, educational attainment, mentorship, workforce preparation, and leadership development represent areas where continued dialogue and partnership may strengthen outcomes while recognizing the distinct priorities of Tribal governments and local communities.

Economic Empowerment

Economic opportunity creates pathways to stronger families and healthier communities. OAAA continues exploring opportunities related to entrepreneurship, workforce development, financial literacy, procurement, and small business growth where collaboration can expand opportunity while respecting the unique economic priorities of Tribal Nations.

Health

Healthy communities depend upon access to information, prevention, behavioral health resources, and community-based support systems. OAAA recognizes that many health challenges affect communities throughout New Mexico and believes respectful collaboration may provide opportunities to strengthen

education, awareness, and community wellness while honoring the distinct approaches and priorities of Tribal governments.

Community Engagement

Community engagement provides the foundation upon which lasting relationships are built. Through continued communication, participation, and outreach, OAAA seeks to strengthen relationships that encourage understanding, foster trust, and create opportunities for future collaboration across New Mexico.

As the Office continues implementing the State-Tribal Collaboration Act, these four strategic pillars will remain the framework through which emerging opportunities are evaluated, partnerships are developed, and collaborative efforts are considered.

STATEWIDE ENGAGEMENT

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS ACROSS NEW MEXICO

The Office of African American Affairs believes meaningful government-to-government relationships are built over time through listening, consistency, and mutual respect. While the missions of OAAA and New Mexico's Tribal Nations are distinct, the Office recognizes that many of the challenges facing communities throughout the state benefit from continued dialogue, shared understanding, and thoughtful partnership.

Throughout Fiscal Year 2026, OAAA strengthened its understanding of these relationships through participation in the State Tribal Leaders Summit, Tribal Liaison meetings coordinated by the New Mexico Indian Affairs Department, and educational engagement with students and educators at Navajo Preparatory School in Farmington. Each experience reinforced the importance of approaching collaboration with humility, recognizing Tribal sovereignty, and understanding the unique priorities of each Tribal Nation.

For OAAA, relationship building is not viewed as a single event or annual obligation. It is an ongoing commitment to maintaining communication, identifying opportunities where our missions naturally intersect, and working together where partnership can improve outcomes while respecting the independent authority and priorities of Tribal governments.

As these relationships continue to develop, OAAA remains committed to strengthening trust through continued engagement, open communication, and a shared commitment to serving the people of New Mexico.

PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

TRAINING & ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

During Fiscal Year 2026, the Office of African American Affairs participated in Tribal Liaison meetings and professional development opportunities coordinated by the New Mexico Indian Affairs Department. These meetings provided guidance regarding the responsibilities of Tribal Liaisons, communication and consultation practices, reporting requirements, action planning, and opportunities for collaboration among state agencies.

Participation in these meetings strengthened the Office's understanding of the State-Tribal Collaboration Act and reinforced the importance of thoughtful preparation, relationship building, and continuous learning as essential components of effective government-to-government engagement.

The knowledge gained throughout the reporting year has been incorporated into OAAA's planning process and organizational framework. As future opportunities emerge, the Office will continue applying these principles across its four strategic pillars while strengthening its capacity to participate in meaningful partnerships with Tribal governments and the New Mexico Indian Affairs Department.

While FY2026 represented the beginning of OAAA's formal implementation of the State-Tribal Collaboration Act, the Office views organizational learning as an ongoing responsibility. Continued participation in Tribal Liaison meetings, State-Tribal engagement opportunities, and collaborative planning will remain an important part of strengthening the Office's capacity to serve as an effective and respectful partner.

FUTURE ORIENTATION

LOOKING AHEAD – FY2027 PRIORITIES

Building upon the relationships established during Fiscal Year 2026, the Office of African American Affairs will continue strengthening communication and collaboration with the New Mexico Indian Affairs Department, Tribal governments, and community partners throughout the coming year.

The Office will continue evaluating opportunities through its four strategic pillars of Education, Economic Empowerment, Health, and Community Engagement, with particular attention given to initiatives supporting educational opportunity, workforce development, community wellness, and youth success.

A priority for the coming year will be continuing conversations around New Mexico's disconnected youth. OAAA believes there is significant value in exploring respectful partnerships that improve educational attainment, workforce readiness, mentorship, and long-term opportunity for young people while recognizing that African American and Native communities each bring unique histories, experiences, and strengths to these discussions.

The Office also intends to continue strengthening relationships through regular communication, participation in State-Tribal engagement opportunities, and collaboration with the New Mexico Indian Affairs Department. As opportunities emerge, OAAA will continue asking where our missions intersect and how respectful partnership can improve outcomes for the communities we collectively serve.

OAAA remains committed to listening first, learning continuously, and building relationships that endure beyond individual programs, reporting cycles, and administrations.

RESOURCE ALLOCATION

FUNDING & RESOURCES

Implementation of the activities described in this report was supported through existing agency resources and staff participation.

Educational engagement activities, including OAAA's visit to Navajo Preparatory School, were supported in part through the Office's W.K. Kellogg Foundation education grant. Existing operational resources also supported participation in the State Tribal Leaders Summit, Tribal Liaison meetings, and other engagement activities described throughout this report.

As future opportunities for collaboration emerge, OAAA will continue identifying responsible ways to leverage existing partnerships, grants, and available resources in support of the Office's statutory mission while strengthening relationships with New Mexico's Tribal Nations.

The Office recognizes that successful collaboration is not solely dependent upon new funding. Consistent communication, shared understanding, and thoughtful engagement remain among the most valuable resources available to any public agency committed to long-term partnership.

DOCUMENTARY REFERENCE

APPENDIX

Agency Information

AGENCY

New Mexico Office of African American Affairs

REPORTING PERIOD

Fiscal Year 2026

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Gene Grant

DEPUTY DIRECTOR

Charles Reado

AGENCY TRIBAL LIAISON

Designated Agency Liaison

Participation Summary

DURING FISCAL YEAR 2026, THE OFFICE OF AFRICAN AMERICAN AFFAIRS PARTICIPATED IN:

- ✓ 2026 State Tribal Leaders Summit
- ✓ Tribal Liaison meetings coordinated by the New Mexico Indian Affairs Department
- ✓ Educational engagement at Navajo Preparatory School
- ✓ Continued coordination with the New Mexico Indian Affairs Department and state partners

Acknowledgements

The Office of African American Affairs extends its sincere appreciation to the New Mexico Indian Affairs Department for its continued guidance and leadership in implementing the State-Tribal Collaboration Act.

The Office also thanks Tribal leadership, Tribal Liaisons, educators, students, community organizations, fellow state agencies, and public partners whose engagement, insight, and willingness to share their perspectives contributed to OAAA's continued learning and relationship building throughout Fiscal Year 2026.

OAAA looks forward to strengthening these relationships in the years ahead through continued communication, mutual respect, and a shared commitment to improving opportunities for all New Mexicans.

New Mexico Office of African American Affairs

Advancing Opportunities • Promoting Equity • Improving Outcomes

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