



U.S. Department of Justice

Office of Justice Programs

National Institute of Justice

Washington, D.C. 20531

October 3, 2016

Dear Colleague,

This letter alerts all tribal leaders, citizens, researchers, evaluators, and program personnel to the National Institute of Justice's (NIJ) interest in receiving feedback on two new initiatives it is exploring to enhance tribal crime and justice research and evaluation (R&E). Specifically, NIJ is interested in developing a system to understand the effects of culture-based programs and practices, and in creating a tribal investigator development program to enhance tribal R&E capacity. These initiatives would serve to improve the foundation underlying justice systems R&E generally, and R&E with tribal communities specifically.

NIJ has an active and diverse portfolio of R&E projects related to crime and justice in Indian country and Alaska Native villages. Fulfilling its federal trust responsibilities, NIJ works in partnership with tribal nations on a government-to-government level to ensure all of its R&E efforts are designed and implemented in an ethical and engaged manner. For more information on NIJ's work with tribal communities, please visit <http://nij.gov/topics/tribal-justice/Pages/welcome.aspx>.

To improve its R&E work with tribal communities, NIJ would like to receive feedback from tribal leaders, researchers, evaluators, program personnel, and citizens to understand the appropriate scope and approach to pursuing these initiatives:

Acknowledging Culture-based Programs and Practices. NIJ understands and values the significance of culture to tribal communities. As a scientific agency, NIJ also realizes that tribal communities are pressured to provide "evidence" of program and practice effectiveness for grant applications and funding opportunities. Further, the current "evidence-based" paradigm values certain types of evidence—including certain methods for gathering and assessing it—that are not necessarily congruent with tribal cultures or customs. Ultimately, this initiative would help NIJ to determine more broadly how "effectiveness" can be understood and measured, and aid tribal communities in better assessing the effects of their traditional practices and programs on various outcomes in ways that are respectful of the tribe's culture and practices themselves.

Tribal Investigator Development Program. NIJ is interested in cultivating researchers and evaluators who can advance tribal crime and justice R&E priorities through equitable and mutually beneficial partnerships with tribal communities. NIJ's ultimate goal is to ensure that future funding opportunities for tribal R&E are awarded and the projects are successfully completed. This initiative would entail tribal-researcher

partnerships and provide training to both parties on various aspects of the R&E process from the perspectives of both the tribal and research communities.

As part of the development process, NIJ will be hosting listening sessions at the 15th Annual Indian Nations Conference in Palm Springs, California from December 7-9, 2016. Please see the attached flyers for more information on each initiative, including the types of questions on which we would appreciate your feedback. Any questions or input can also be sent to TribalResearch@usdoj.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nancy Rodriguez". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "N" and a stylized "R".

Nancy Rodriguez, Ph.D.
Director
National Institute of Justice