

## Evergreen MPA – Admission Materials

### Public Policy Memo

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Federal agencies soliciting grants to fund public benefits often include heavy administrative language and require undue burdens that smaller agencies, namely tribal governments, are unable to comply with. Notices of Funding Opportunity (NOFO's) contain complex language and require technical specifications for a number of federal awards such as schematics, construction documents, or GIS mapping. All of which require either a field expert on staff or funding to outsource the deliverable. This has become more prevalent recently due to the influx of investment through IRA and BIL appropriations. These burdensome requirements make it difficult for applicants with limited capacity to be successful in these competitions, and often these are the areas that would see the largest benefit.

The legislation supporting these funds often includes language supporting direct investment to communities that are disproportionately affected or located in rural areas. Applicants in these areas have a difficult time recruiting and retaining qualified staff as their local tax base that supports government services is small, and the households within their taxable base are often low-income to moderate income as compared to metropolitan areas. Tribal Government often have limited or no tax on reservation lands, leading to limitation of their discretionary funding. As this tax base has a direct impact on the number of full-time staff, wages, and other resources available to them, this leaves these governments with less capacity to take on a submission of a complex and technical grant proposal.

This issue has been addressed in a few different ways, from creating ranking criteria that provides additional points for tribal or low-income communities, to creating “set-asides” that

directly support these communities. Although this has shown some improvement in bringing equity amongst applicants, it falls short of providing the direct assistance necessary to complete full applications. If the capacity of the applicant is such that they are unable to fulfill the necessary requirements of a solicitation, they are weeded out during review and miss out on the opportunity.

To better direct this investment to those disproportionately affected tribal communities, a substantial investment for technical assistance should be provided by federal agencies. This technical assistance would consist of either existing federal workers with the expertise to assist applicants, or federally contracted services provided directly to applicants. In addition, this should be paired with an additional 90 days to prepare for, plan, and produce the required technical documents necessary for a competitive proposal. This would allow the resources of the federal government to be accessible by applicants free of any funding to support the service, and without need to hire additional staff on their finite funding. By providing better equity to tribal governments, it will create better parity when ranking proposals against a larger, better funded applicants.