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**Governor Bullock Announces \$1 Million Grant to Support College and Career Readiness Programs in Montana Schools.**

Great Falls, Mont. – At a celebration at Great Falls High School, Governor Steve Bullock today announced that Montana received a \$1 million grant from USA Funds to support college and career readiness programs in high schools, colleges, and tribal colleges. Bullock was joined by Superintendent Denise Juneau, USA Funds President and CEO Bill Hansen, Jobs for American Graduates President Ken Smith, and Commissioner of Higher Education Clayton Christian.

“Our greatest responsibility as a state is ensuring that Montana students have access to the skills, knowledge, and experience that will help them succeed throughout their lives,” Bullock said. “Through this grant, we’ll expand opportunities for veterans, Native Americans, and adult students to gain valuable career skills, workforce experience and college credit. I’m pleased that we’ll be able to build on our state’s efforts to find innovative ways to support student success.”

The grant will support college and career readiness in three ways:

1. Expand the successful Jobs for Montana’s Graduates (JMG) program in tribal communities to support high school graduation and acquisition of employment skills. (JMG is a branch of the national Jobs for America’s Graduates program, for which Bullock serves as vice-chair).
2. Provide prior learning assessments for veterans at a Montana University System institution, ensuring they get academic credit for faculty-validated knowledge, skills and experience gained during their service.
3. Create the American Indian Success-Tribal College Apprenticeship program to bolster career training opportunities at Montana tribal colleges.

“In keeping with our focus on Completion With a Purpose, promoting student success in college and careers, USA Funds is delighted to provide \$1 million to support these initiatives to enhance success in education and employment for Native American residents and military veterans in Montana,” Hansen said. “USA Funds partners with a select group of states, like Montana, that are pursuing new approaches to education and training, tied to

the needs of the state's economy. These three innovative programs will bolster student success, accelerate completion of postsecondary education, and deliver valuable work experience and training to two underserved communities."

After initially meeting with USA Funds last summer to discuss their shared commitment to student success, Governor Bullock partnered with the Montana Department of Labor, the Montana University System, tribal colleges and the Office of Public Instruction to develop the three proposals to support college and career readiness and expand opportunities for veterans and Native American students.

"American Indian students attending a Jobs for Montana's Graduates program are far more likely to graduate -- at a 90 percent rate," Juneau said. "Students who participate in JMG find relevancy in the program that connects them to real-world experiences and prepares them for meaningful careers."

In addition to the \$1 million award, Ken Smith of JAG awarded Montana the JAG National 5 of 5 award on Tuesday. The award recognizes state programs for achieving or surpassing the '5 of 5' performance outcomes including a graduation rate of 90%, positive outcomes rate of 80%, employment rate of 60%, full-time jobs rate of 60%, and full-time placement rate of 80%.

"On behalf of the entire JAG Board of Directors, congratulations to Jobs for Montana's Graduates for receiving the JAG National 5 of 5 Award, our highest performance award, for 8 years. I would like to express great thanks to USA Funds for their critically important efforts to expand Jobs for Montana's Graduates, as well as for their investment in four other JAG State Affiliate programs," said Mississippi Governor Phil Bryant, Chair of the JAG Board of Directors. "Through this investment and the leadership of Governor Steve Bullock, Vice Chair of JAG, we are excited for the launch of this significant expansion in serving Montana's American Indian youth population to support them as they work towards success in academia and career pathways alike."

USA Funds is a nonprofit corporation that supports Completion With a Purpose, building a more purposeful path for America's students to and through college and on to rewarding careers and successful lives. USA Funds pursues its nonprofit mission through philanthropic activities and partnerships, policy research, and programs and services that enhance preparation for, access to and success in higher education. Learn more at [www.usafunds.org](http://www.usafunds.org).

Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG) is a 35-year old non-profit youth development program dedicated to helping at-risk young people graduate from high school and make successful transitions to postsecondary education and meaningful employment. JAG has served one million youth since its inception and is currently helping nearly 50,000 young people each year in approximately 1,000 communities in 32 states to achieve academic, career and life success.

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USA Funds Montana Grant

## **JOBS FOR MONTANA'S GRADUATES EXPANSION (\$350,000)**

Jobs for Montana's Graduates is a class taught in middle and high schools throughout Montana. Students are empowered by the Career Specialist (teacher) to take the lead on planning projects centered on civic responsibility, leadership, social interaction, academic performance and professionalism to prepare students to obtain employment. The program has a 97 percent graduation rate and has positively affected over 12,000 students since its inception in 1992. JMG is currently in 39 High Schools, 14 Middle Schools and 2 Out-of-School programs. USA Funds will support expansion into tribal communities and schools with large American Indian student populations.

New Schools for 2015-16 supported by USA Funds:

- Arlee High School
- Frazer High School
- Great Falls High School
- Hays Lodge Pole High School
- Montana Youth Challenge Academy
- Rocky Boy High School

Programs Expanding in 2015-16 supported by USA Funds:

- Brockton High School
- Paris Gibson High School
- Poplar High School

## **PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENTS FOR VETERANS (\$350,000)**

The USA Funds grant will provide the Montana University System with support to better reach out to Veterans and to more of the State's adult learners. Montana has one of the highest percentages of veterans in the nation. These individuals have received broad levels of training in the military in a wide array of areas from diesel technology, welding, manufacturing to emergency medical response and information technology. Likewise, Montana has a very large population of adults (ages 25-60) who may be interested in increasing their earning potential by pursuing a certificate or a degree from one of Montana's institutions of higher education. The USA Funds grant will help support efforts already underway in the Montana University System to provide opportunities for veterans and adult learners to evaluate whether their past learning experiences can be considered for prior learning assessment. The prior learning assessment process is one which gives veterans and adult learners the opportunity to work with college faculty to demonstrate college level learning that has occurred outside of the classroom.

## **AMERICAN INDIAN SUCCESS - TRIBAL COLLEGE APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM (\$300,000)**

In order to support college completion among tribal college students, support student transition into good-paying jobs, and expand registered apprenticeships integrated with academic programs at tribal colleges, the Montana Department of Labor and Industry (MDLI) will establish a pilot project to assist tribal colleges in establishing apprenticeship programs with area employers. Tribal colleges, in partnership with area employers and with technical assistance from MDLI, will develop and propose a specific project and MDLI will award five project-based grants of up to \$49,000 for implementation.

The pilot will help to strengthen partnerships between the state and tribal colleges, develop a model for apprenticeship programs on reservations and better engage employers in the development of regional education and training programs to meet their workforce demands.