



BIE-BIA

WILDLAND FIRE CAREER PATHWAYS



ABSTRACT

The Bureau Of Indian Education (BIE) and the Bureau Of Indian Affairs (BIA) Division of Wildland Fire Management (DWFM) have partnered to deliver Basic Fire School training to Native youth enrolled in high school and college. This initiative integrates culturally relevant education with hands-on fire management instruction, empowering students with foundational wildland fire skills while fostering leadership, career readiness, and community resilience. By bridging academic learning with professional development, the program supports workforce diversification and strengthens Tribal capacity in fire management.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This initiative establishes a formal collaboration between the BIE and BIA Division of Wildland Fire Management (DWFM) to introduce the Basic Fire School Model (BFSM) curriculum into high school education. The primary goals are to promote awareness of well-paying, adventurous careers in wildland fire management, foster leadership skills, and create a direct recruitment pipeline for graduating students into the BIA workforce.

The initiative aims to engage students across the 183 BIE-funded schools, specifically targeting the approximately 55 BIE-operated high schools and leveraging partnerships with tribal colleges like Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute (SIPI) for dual enrollment opportunities.

Currently BIE schools fund or coordinate with 400,000 native youth K-12 as well as 22,000 enrolled students at BIE colleges and universities.



SECTION 7 OF EXECUTIVE ORDER 14191

The collaboration between the BIA Division of Wildfire Management (DWFM) and Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) High Schools supports Section 7 of Executive Order 14191 by expanding career and technical education (CTE) and enhancing Tribal control over education.

Executive Order 14191 promotes educational freedom by encouraging the use of federal funds for diverse schooling options. Section 7 directs the Interior Secretary to enable BIE-eligible families to access their preferred educational choices.

The BIA fire program supports this by:

- **Expanding Educational Choice:** Offers students specialized training in wildland fire management, providing career pathways and college credit options beyond standard curricula.
- **Supporting Locally Driven Programs:** Encourages flexible, community-based learning through integrated or after-school CTE programs, aligning with Tribal consultation priorities.
- **Enhancing Tribal Control:** Involves Tribal governments in curriculum development, reinforcing federal trust responsibilities and enabling culturally relevant, locally tailored education.

By offering high-quality CTE and supporting Tribal-led initiatives, the program empowers families and Tribes to choose educational paths that reflect their needs and values, fulfilling the intent of EO 14191.





PROGRAM VISION, MISSION, AND GOALS

Vision: Excellence in Student-Centered, Indian Education that prepares and empowers students to be healthy, successful, and job-ready leaders in their communities and sovereign nations, particularly within the field of wildland fire management.

Mission: In partnership with Tribal Nations and BIA DWMF, the BIE promotes a culturally based, comprehensive education and career pathway that prepares students for immediate employment and leadership roles in the wildland fire industry.

Goals:

- **Recruitment:** Establish a sustained recruitment funnel into USWFS positions.
- **Education:** Provide high school students with industry-recognized "Basic Fire School Model" certifications (e.g., NWCG S-130/L-180).
- **Career Pathways:** Facilitate dual credit enrollment opportunities with BIE-funded post-secondary institutions.

FEASIBILITY OUTLOOK (1, 5, AND 10-YEARS)

Outlook	Feasibility	Key Milestones & Outcomes
1-Year	High	<p>Finalize Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between BIE and BIA DWFM. Develop and approve curriculum alignment with NWCG standards and high school requirements. Launch pilot programs at 3-5 BIE-operated high schools, potentially including those near SIPI. Secure initial funding and recruit pilot instructors (BIA DWFM personnel/contractors).</p> <p>***currently in progress and established.</p>
5-Years	Moderate	<p>Expand the program to all 55 BIE-operated high schools and engage at least 15 Tribal-controlled high schools via grant/contract agreements. Establish formal dual-credit articulation agreements with Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute and potentially Haskell Indian Nations University. Track 50+ graduates annually entering BIA DWFM workforce pathways (e.g., Pathways Student Internships, apprenticeships).</p>
10-Years	High	<p>Full implementation across all 183 BIE-funded secondary schools. Program recognized as a model for federal inter-agency workforce development. Robust pipeline feeding into BIA, Tribal, and other federal fire agencies (USFS, USWFS). Significant increase in Native American representation within federal fire leadership roles.</p>

STRATEGIC PLAN: IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

Phase 1: Program Design & Pilot (Year 1-2)

- **Months 1-3:** Execute BIE-BIA DWFM MOU.
- **Months 4-6:** Curriculum adaptation and approval process, ensuring cultural relevance.
- **Months 7-9:** Identify and train pilot school instructors and BIA mentors.
- **Months 10-12:** Begin pilot program at initial high schools. Formalize partnership discussions with SIPI for college credits.

Phase 2: Expansion & Dual Credit (Years 3-5)

- **Year 3:** Evaluate pilot results and refine curriculum. Expand to 10 additional schools.
- **Year 4:** Launch full dual-credit program through SIPI and other BIE-funded colleges as available.
- **Year 5:** Expand to all BIE-operated high schools and begin engaging Tribal-controlled schools through technical assistance and funding templates.

Phase 3: Full Integration & Workforce Monitoring (Years 6-10)

- **Years 6-8:** Achieve 90% BIE-funded high school participation.
- **Years 9-10:** Integrate program outcomes into the BIE's strategic performance management system and track long-term career success of graduates.



KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPIs)

- Number of BIE high schools implementing the program.
- Number of students completing basic certification annually.
- Percentage of certified graduates entering the BIA wildland fire workforce within one year of graduation.
- Retention rates of BIE graduates within the USWFS.



BUDGETARY CONSIDERATIONS



Cost: The program operates at a very low cost, primarily requiring staff time to support BIE in accessing NWCG/FEMA materials, providing mentorship and leadership development, and assisting students and high school staff with questions and consultation. Given the minimal investment and substantial benefits, the program offers a strong return for fire management. Potentially becoming one of the most effective recruitment tools managed by DOI Fire.



KEY COLLABORATORS AND RESOURCES

- **Bureau of Indian Education (BIE)**
- **BIA Division of Wildland Fire Management (DWFM)**
- **Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute (SIPI)**
- **Tribal Governments**
- **BIE**: Provides educational infrastructure, student access, and accreditation support via its Strategic Direction website. Currently this collaboration consists of both BIE secondary and post-secondary staff at the director levels as well as administrative staff located at individual institutions, both high school and collegiate.
- **DWFM**: Provides technical expertise, "Basic Fire School Model" curriculum, personal protective equipment (PPE), and access to Wildland Fire Workforce Development Opportunities.
- **SIPI**: Primary partner for developing and offering dual enrollment college credits. This will continue to expand as other native colleges commit to this program, ultimately offering both dual credits to high school students as well as potentially a certificate or an associate degree in fire management.
- **Tribal Governments**: Essential partners in adopting the program for Tribally controlled schools and supporting local recruitment efforts.





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