

The Virgin Islands Consortium

\$1.7 Million In Technical Assistance Grants Announced For U.S. Territories And Freely Associated States

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Acting Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Insular Areas Nikolao Pula has approved three technical assistance grants totaling over \$1.7 million, the U.S. Department of Interior announced Friday.

“These funds demonstrate, in part, our support for commitments and important programs which continue to benefit people in the U.S. territories and the freely associated states (FAS),” said Pula. “We continue to work closely with the governors of the U.S. territories and the presidents of the FAS to make sure that U.S. taxpayer dollars are used correctly and in the Nation’s best interests.”

All-Island Tax Administrators Association (AITAA)

The third technical assistance grant is for \$139,500 to AITAA for its 2017 and 2018 conferences. Consisting of the four U.S. territories (American Samoa, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands and the Northern Mariana Islands) and two of the three FAS (the Federated States of Micronesia, Marshall Islands and Palau), the AITAA gives territorial and FAS tax agencies a voice to address concerns or promote tax laws to the Departments of the Interior, the Treasury and the Internal Revenue Service. The 2017 conference will take place this June in St. Croix.

Prior Service Trust Fund Administration (PSTFA)

The first technical assistance grant was to PSTFA in the amount of \$865,800. This grant continues funding employee benefits under the terms of the Prior Service Trust Fund, a responsibility assumed by the Federal Government following the dissolution of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (TTPI). . The program allows the three FAS governments and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands pay the benefits to former TTPI employees plus cover PSTFA expenses.

Bikini, Enewetak, Rongelap and Utrik Atoll Health Care Program

Funded at \$697,387, the second technical assistance grant provides continuing health care to the peoples of the four Marshall Islands atolls. Through this program, the Office of Insular Affairs offers the services of full-time, primary-care physicians and nurses to approximately 3000 atoll residents who still bear the consequences of the nuclear weapons tests conducted in these islands from 1946 to 1958.

This grant:

- Improves access to specialty services such as those for diabetes, hypertension, visual impairment and maternal and child care
- Reduces inter-island referrals for secondary care
- Improves overall health
- Utilizes the full potential of physicians for better delivery of services
- Conducts drinking water quality testing for the presence of pathogens

Feature Image: U.S. Department of Interior main building in Washington D.C.