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Significant Funding Pledged for U.S. Territories: Health, Education, and Environment to Benefit

Community Center / **Published On May 22, 2023 06:38 PM /**

Staff Consortium **May 22, 2023**

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The U.S. Virgin Islands, along with other Insular Areas, will benefit from a generous funding allocation as the U.S. Department of the Interior's Office of Insular Affairs announced on Monday \$4,279,808 in fiscal year 2023 grants.

These Technical Assistance Program grants will empower key areas such as health, youth education, judicial training, climate change resilience, and natural resource conservation across the Pacific Insular Areas.

"This funding allocation signifies our commitment to supporting programs that address a broad array of vital issues in the Insular Areas," commented Assistant Secretary for Insular and International Affairs Carmen G. Cantor. The support extends to healthcare for populations

affected by nuclear activities in the Marshall Islands, youth education initiatives, judicial training, resilience in the face of climate change, and natural resource conservation.

The breakdown of the grant allocation includes a grant of \$1,302,077 to the Republic of the Marshall Islands Ministry of Health and Human Services, which bolsters previous funding to a grand total of \$2,240,225 for the Section 177 Health Care 4 Atolls Program in FY 2023.

The Government of Guam will receive \$378,078 to support the travel of territorial staff to the Territorial Climate and Infrastructure Workshops (TCIW) for 2023 and 2024. This will include government officials from American Samoa, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Non-profit organizations have also been earmarked for considerable support. The Prior Service Trust Fund (PSTF) Benefit Payments Program will receive \$631,590 for retired employees of the former Government of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, and the Junior State of America Foundation will receive \$520,977 for the Insular Areas Youth Civic Education Program.

Other non-profit grants include \$497,882 for the Pacific Mission Aviation's Helping Our Pacific Economy program, \$250,000 for the Youth Empowerment Center project, \$227,542 for the University of Hawai'i Pacific Islands Ocean Observing System, and \$60,480 for the Tāno Tāsi yan Todu organization's projects that link science and conservation to the community.

Additionally, \$411,182 will be provided through a Reimbursable Support Agreement to the Judicial Council of the Ninth Circuit for the Pacific Islands Judicial Education Programs.

The Assistant Secretary for Insular and International Affairs and the Office of Insular Affairs (OIA) are responsible for executing the Secretary of the Interior's responsibilities for the U.S. territories, which include American Samoa, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

In addition to managing and overseeing federal assistance under the Compacts of Free Association to the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau, the OIA also administers discretionary Technical Assistance Program funds for all the Insular Areas. This significant financial injection stands as a testament to their ongoing commitment to these diverse and crucial territories.