



OFFICE OF INSULAR AFFAIRS

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Contact: Tanya Harris Joshua 202-208-6008

Tanya_Joshua@ios.doi.gov

Office of the Assistant Secretary for Insular Areas

**Interior Assistant Secretary Releases \$2.4 Million under FY2015
Technical Assistance Program for Health and Education Projects**

*Four Atolls Healthcare in the Marshall Islands, Close Up Foundation and
Partners in Development initiative to help address Compact Impact from
Micronesians in Hawaii*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – This week Interior Assistant Secretary for Insular Areas Esther Kia’aina approved and released a total of \$2.4 million in funding under the OIA Technical Assistance program for fiscal year 2015 to support health, education and social service projects for the U.S. territories and Freely Associated States.

These grants include \$1.3 million for the Four Atolls’ Section 177 Health Care Program in the Republic of the Marshall Islands to help address the medical needs of residents; \$1.1 million for the Close Up Foundation to support civic education programs for Insular Area students; and \$75,000 to the Partners in Development Foundation for a non-governmental initiative to help mitigate the impacts in U.S. jurisdictions of migrants from the Freely Associated States of Micronesia, the Marshall Islands and Palau.

· **FOUR ATOLL HEALTH CARE** – Assistant Secretary Kia’aina has released \$1,253,714 for the Four Atolls’ Section 177 Health Care Program which provides special health program services to the people of Bikini, Enewetak, Rongelap, and Utrôk in the Republic of the Marshall Islands. Funding made available this year will support continued ophthalmic service, dental health care, and train newly hired doctors to support the various health care programs, including a newly integrated diabetes care program. The Four Atolls’ Section 177 Health Care Program partially addresses the medical needs of Marshall Islands residents injured by the U.S. Nuclear Testing Program on those atolls from 1946 to 1958.

“We are now able to release 2015 technical assistance funds for a variety of projects all critical to the livelihood and support of insular area populations,” said Assistant Secretary Esther Kia’aina. “We have important obligations to uphold to the people of the Four Atolls to which we are pleased to provide health care assistance.”

· **CLOSE UP FOUNDATION** – Assistant Secretary Kia’aina has granted \$1,125,000 to the Close Up Foundation to conduct civic education programs for students and teachers in the U.S. territories and Freely Associated States.

“The Close Up Program provides valuable opportunities for civic education about our Federal Government and democracy to youth in our Insular Areas,” said Assistant Secretary Kia’aina. “It is always nice to get assistance for this worthwhile program from the insular areas themselves. Therefore, I would like to commend the family and school donations from St. Croix, and the Thomas Middle and High School programs in the U.S. Virgin Islands for collectively raising \$30,000 to supplement their Close Up activities. The Republic of the Marshall Islands High School has also shown their commitment to youth by providing \$10,000.”

· PARTNERS IN DEVELOPMENT – Assistant Secretary Kia’aina has granted \$75,000 to the Partners in Development Foundation to help stand up a Micronesian non-profit organization in Hawaii to develop a One Stop Center that would provide social adjustment services to help migrants from the Freely Associated States find housing, employment, education and other forms of assistance.

“The final project in our grant awards announcement supports OIA efforts to help mitigate the impact of Freely Associated State migrants on the U.S. jurisdictions where they have chosen to reside,” said Assistant Secretary Kia’aina. “We’d like to support a similar operation for Guam.”

Residents of the Freely Associated States may enter the United States to live, go to school and work under the terms of the Compacts of Free Association which the United States negotiated with the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands and the Republic of Palau.

The Department of the Interior is responsible for coordinating federal policy with respect to the territories of American Samoa, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and administering and overseeing U.S. federal assistance provided to the Freely Associated States of the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau under the Compacts of Free Association. The Office of Insular Affairs mission is to foster economic opportunities, promote government efficiency, and improve the quality of life for the people of the insular areas.

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