



Council of the Cherokee Nation

Cherokee Nation Tribal Council
17763 S. Muskogee Ave.
Tahlequah, OK 74464

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Title: THE CAREER READINESS ACT OF 2019, 2026 AMENDMENTS

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1/12/2026	1	TRIBAL COUNCIL	Approved	Pass
1/12/2026	1	EDUCATION COMMITTEE	Approved and Referred	Pass

THE CAREER READINESS ACT OF 2019, 2026 AMENDMENTS

BE IT ENACTED BY THE CHEROKEE NATION:

Section 1. Title and Codification

This legislative act shall be titled and codified in Title 70, Chapter 4 of the Cherokee Nation Code Annotated as the “Career Readiness Act of 2019, **2022, 2026 Amendments**, or **“Career Readiness Act, as Amended.”**”

Section 2. Findings

The Council of the Cherokee Nation finds that additional funding is needed to assist Cherokee citizens in obtaining training for job opportunities and workplace advancement.

Section 3. Purpose

The purpose of **this Act these amendments to the Career Readiness Act of 2019, as amended, is to increase funding available for health career programs, to consolidate all Career Services programs within the meaning of “Career Readiness Program” regardless of funding source under a single “Career Readiness Fund,” and to strengthen planning, prioritizing and reporting requirements, beginning in FY 2026, including a requirement of Three Year Plans and Annual Reports.**

Section 4. Substantive Provisions

§1 A. Definitions.

- ~~1. A.~~ Career Readiness Program: Any program of study, other than college degree programs, which prepares students to achieve marketable skills for job opportunities or workplace advancement, administered by the Career Services Department.
2. Career Readiness Fund: All funds from any source used to fund or support Career Readiness Programs administered by the Career Services Department.

§2 B. Career Readiness Fund Amounts and Programs Authorized.

1. Federally or Other External Funding: Federal funding, or funding other than that sourced by revenue from Nation or its entities, for the Career Readiness Fund is authorized to the extent of annual appropriations and periodic modifications thereto and for any program, services or activities prescribed by the relevant federal funding agency.
2. General Revenue Funding: General revenue funding funds is authorized at no less than \$3.75 million annually in excess of fiscal year 2020 Comprehensive Budget Act general fund revenue appropriations for Career Readiness Programs associated with Cherokee Nation's Career Services Department, provided:
 - a. Career Readiness Act - Career Readiness Support: No less than \$1million annually in general fund revenue is authorized to fund Career Readiness Support, provided
 - (1) Effective FY 2027, the use of said funding for administrative support shall not exceed 15%
 - b. PHW Health Career Readiness: No less than \$1 million annually from general fund revenue authorized by the Public Health and Wellness Fund Act, as amended, is authorized to fund "Public Health and Wellness Career Readiness Program," with such geographical limitation determined by the Principal Chief to maximize healthcare workforce development within the geographical region of the Cherokee Nation Reservation but not limited to the exterior boundaries of the Cherokee Nation Reservation.
 - (1) Effective FY 2027, the use of said funding for administrative support shall not exceed 15%
 - c. Work Experience: No less than \$1 million annually in general fund revenue is authorized to fund the Work Experience Program, a stipend based on the job training program
 - (1) Effective FY 2027, the use of said funding for administrative support shall not exceed 15%
 - d. Coming Home Reentry Program: Beginning in Fiscal Year 2025, no less than \$750,000 in general fund revenue is authorized to fund the Coming Home Reentry Program
 - (1) Effective FY 2027, the use of said funding for administrative support shall not exceed 15%
 - e. PHWFA Opioid Settlement Funds Excluded: Career Services programs funded using "Opioid Settlement Funds" under the Public Health and Wellness Act, as amended, for "Addiction Recovery Employment Program Fund," having been separately authorized by said act, are excluded from the authorization provisions of this act or appropriations thereto, but are included for the purposes of the Annual

Report and Three Year Plan and Annual Report provisions of this act.

- (1) Effective FY 2027, the use of said funding for administrative support shall not exceed 15%

f. Other Programs: All other “Federally or Other External Funding” or General Fund funded programs in effect as of January 1, 2026, operating within the meaning of “Career Readiness Program” are authorized under the Career Readiness Fund, as well as all future programs within the meaning of “Career Readiness Program,” if so designated by the Principal Chief.

g. Geographic and Residency Eligibility Policies: Nothing herein limits the geographic and residency scope of any Career Readiness Program under the Career Readiness Fund, provided that the Principal Chief must determine participant residency requirements that are:

- (1) Not arbitrarily limited to the Cherokee Nation Reservation;
- (2) Consistent with any requirements imposed by federal law, rule or policy or otherwise imposed by an external funding agency; and
- (3) Determined in a manner that maximizes the development of the workforce within the geographic region of the Cherokee Nation Reservation.

3. B. The Cherokee Nation Career Readiness Campus is hereby authorized to be located at approximately 16430 US Highway 62 (Muskogee Avenue), Tahlequah, Cherokee Nation Reservation, on approximately twenty-four acres; said campus to provide space for career readiness instruction to effectuate the purposes and policies of the Act; **authorization for funding for said campus is \$10,000,000** and further expansion of said campus by amendment to this Act or other legislative authorization.

4. B.C. The funding source is dividends received from those governmental revenue entities in which Cherokee Nation is the sole or majority shareholder, and that are organized under Cherokee Nation law. Other sources of funding, such as grants, miscellaneous sources and contributions, revenues of enterprises, taxes, and special and general fund sources, and **American Recovery Plan Act funds under the Cherokee Nation Respond Recover and Rebuild Plan** may be used to supplement this funding in order to maximize the beneficial impact through a cohesive strategy to achieve the Purpose as identified herein.

5. D. The Principal Chief is authorized to execute memoranda of agreement with Cherokee Nation Businesses to effectuate the funding requirements of this Act.

6. Three Year Plan, Annual Report The Executive Director of Career Services is authorized to develop, with the approval of the Principal Chief, assistance programs to meet market demands, employing flexibility in establishing Career Readiness Program eligibility requirements to maximize opportunities for Cherokee citizens living within the Cherokee Nation reservation boundaries. Such Career Readiness Programs may include, but may not be limited to, the following priority areas: building trades, HVAC repair and maintenance, healthcare and information technology.

a. Career Readiness Act Three Year Plan: Beginning in FY 2026 and no later than May 31, 2026, and no later than December 31 of each third fiscal year thereafter, subject to an extension of time granted by the Speaker of the Council not to exceed 30 days, the Principal Chief shall provide to the Council and for public inspection the “Career Readiness Act Three Year Plan,” which shall include but may not be limited to the following elements:

- (1) **Priorities and Goals for Career Readiness Act - Career Readiness Support**

Programs: The Principal Chief shall utilize and analyze data and forecast resources to determine the priority career fields for Career Readiness Act - Career Readiness Support programs based on labor market demands and salary levels within the geographic region that includes the Cherokee Nation reservation, such prioritization shall include forecast program and services and objective measures of career training success, provided:

A. Such priority career fields shall be no less than three and no more than seven.

(2) **Priorities and Goals for PHW Career Readiness Programs:** The Principal Chief shall utilize and analyze data and forecast resources to determine priority health industry related career fields for PHW Health Career Readiness Programs, such prioritization shall include forecast program and services goals and objective measures of participant success, provided:

A. Such priority health industry related career fields shall be no less than three and no more than seven.

(3) **Priorities and Goals for Work Experience Program:** The Principal Chief shall report on the priorities and goals for the Work Experience Program, which shall include forecast service goals and objective measures of participant success.

(4) **Priorities and Goals for Coming Home Reentry Program:** The Principal Chief shall report on the priorities and goals for the Coming Home Reentry Program, which shall include forecast service goals and objective measures of participant success.

(5) **Priorities and Goals for the PHWFA Opioid Settlement Funded Programs:** The Principal Chief shall report on the priorities and goals for programs administered within the meaning of “Addiction Recovery Employment Program Fund” of the Public Health and Wellness Fund Act, as amended, which shall include forecasting program and service goals and objective measures of participant success.

(6) **Priorities and Goals for All Other Programs:** The Principal Chief shall report on the priorities and goals for all other programs within the meaning of the Career Readiness Fund, which shall include forecasting program and services goals and objective measures of participant success.

(7) **Priorities and Goals for Career Services Outreach and Access:** The Principal Chief shall report on the Career Services Departments goal and objectives for conducting program outreach and expanding access to information, programs and services for citizens through in person and virtual means.

(8) **Administrative Expenses:** The Principal Chief shall report on the proportion of the Career Readiness Fund used for administrative expenses, with such sub-set of program administrative expenses as the Principal Chief deems warranted to illustrate the relevant use of funds.

b. Amendment to Three Year Plan: In the event the Principal Chief amends the Three-Year Plan, the Principal Chief shall notify the Council of said amendments within 30 days of amendments.

c. Career Readiness Act Annual Report: Beginning in the reporting period of FY 2026, and no later than December 31 following the conclusion of each reporting period, subject to an extension of time granted by the Speaker of the Council not to exceed 30 days, the Principal Chief shall issue a report to the Council and for public inspection outlining performance of the efficacy of Career Readiness Programs under this Act, as measured against the Three Year Plan provided for in

- d. this Act in effect during the reporting period.
Public Notice: The Three-Year Plan, and any amendments thereto, and Annual Report described in this section shall be made available for public inspection within 30 days of execution or amendment, including through the Nation's official website.

7. F. All funds, irrespective of source, appropriated for programs and services administered by the Cherokee Nation Career Services Department, and any capital projects related to such programs, shall be deemed for all purposes as having been funded pursuant to this Act and any amendments thereto.

8. G. All funding set forth herein is subject to the Council appropriation process.

C. § 3. Policy of Accountability

1. A. All funds pursuant to this Act under the care of the Cherokee Nation shall be expended as authorized by this enactment unless amended.
2. B. Any official who intentionally and willfully misuses, misapplies, diverts or embezzles the application or use of any public funds entrusted to the care of the Cherokee Nation from any sources may be prosecuted according to applicable criminal statutes.

D § 4. Reporting Requirements.

1. A. Prior to the end of each calendar year commencing with calendar year 2022 ~~fiscal year~~, the Principal Chief shall designate an official to compile a report to be delivered to his office and to the Speaker of the Council on the efficacy of the Cherokee Nation Career Readiness Program, which shall include recommendations for changes and improvements to program design and organization covering the previous fiscal year.
2. B. The report submitted pursuant to subsection A of this Section shall for calendar year 2022 shall include an assessment of any geographic gaps in access to Cherokee Nation Career Services offices and the Department of Career Services shall establish a goal of making access to its offices available to all Cherokee citizens within the reservation with an approximately thirty-2-mile drive.

Section 5. Provisions as cumulative

The provisions of this act shall be cumulative to existing law.

Section 6. Severability

The provisions of this act are severable and if any part of provision hereof shall be held void the decision of the court so holding shall not affect or impair any of the remaining parts or provisions of this act.

Section 7. Effective Date: Emergency Declared

It being immediately necessary for the welfare of the Cherokee Nation, the Council hereby declares that an emergency exists, by reason whereof this Act shall take effect immediately upon its approval and signatures.

