**Program Summary-** The Real World Working Challenge (RWWC) is an innovative recruitment and engagement program designed to familiarize high school students with the workings of a particular state government agency. The program gives students a “behind the curtains” look at what the agency does, what its mission is, and the nature of the various divisions and roles that compose it, all directly from the industry professionals themselves. In the second phase of the program students are asked to apply what they’ve learned in the program towards a related “Real World” problem in their home communities. The Real World Working Challenge launched in March 2017 through the collaborative efforts of the New Mexico State Personnel Office (SPO), the New Mexico Department of Transportation (DOT) and the Santa Fe Indian School (SFIS).

Eighteen 11th grade students from SFIS participated in the pilot program between March and May of 2017. In the course of the eight weeks, the students learned all about the DOT, its mission, scope and structure, as well as the many divisions that compose it. In each session, students met with DOT professionals and learned about the roles and responsibilities within each division, gaining important insights into how the various divisions collaborate on projects ranging in scope from small to large. Students learned about the different types of jobs and careers at the DOT, ranging from vocational to highly technical, as well as the various educational and training pathways for each. They also learned about which jobs have the most room for growth and which jobs will likely be in high demand in the future. The program culminated in student projects for which students were asked to identify a “Real World” transportation problem in their home community and to research and propose a solution under the guidance and direction of DOT RWWC program mentors.

As part of the program field trips were taken to the main DOT campus in Santa Fe as well as to the Mid Regional Council of Governments (MRCOG) and Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) headquarters in Albuquerque. Students received guided tours of engineering and surveying offices, materials labs, maintenance and sign shops, the central offices for the “Rail Runner,” the state’s regional commuter train, and the ITS control room. Students also met with SPO and DOT representatives who gave presentations on subjects such as Soft Skills, Bridges and Drainage, Survey and Geographic Information Systems (GIS), Tribal Involvement and the DOT, and the ENDWI the DWI Prevention Program. Please watch our video outlining the program on YouTube: [https://youtu.be/IcfUlWzq-VE](https://youtu.be/IcfUlWzq-VE%20)

Final Project topics included:

* Speed Bumps in the Pueblo of Okay Owingeh
* Bridge/on-ramp safety in Kewa Pueblo
* GIS update for Santo Domingo Pueblo
* Pedestrian Safety in front of the Governor’s office in Cochiti Pueblo
* DWI and Texting While Driving info video, cause and effects for teens in NM
* Intersection culvert/curve safety review in Nambe Pueblo
* Sidewalk design in CADD at SFIS
* Drainage, flooding improvement for the road from Santo Domingo Pueblo to San Felipe Pueblo