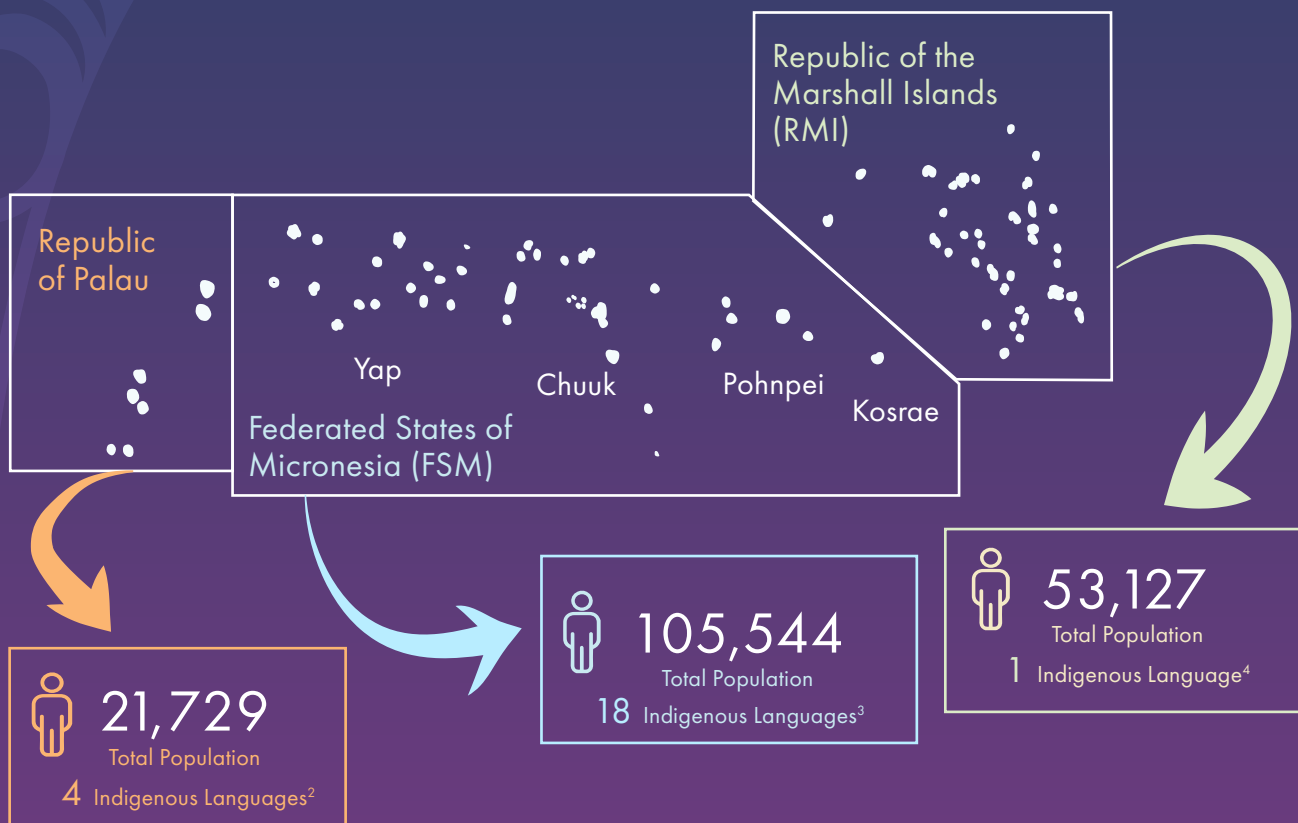


GETTING TO KNOW

PACIFIC ISLAND STUDENTS

FROM NATIONS IN FREE ASSOCIATION WITH THE UNITED STATES

The **Compacts of Free Association (COFA)** are international agreements that allow citizens of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, and the Republic of Palau to freely travel, live, work, and study in the United States, and U.S. citizens to do the same within these nations. These independent countries are known as the **Freely Associated States (FAS)**.¹



ABOUT THE EDUCATION SYSTEMS

Republic of Palau

24 Schools⁵
3,172 Students
326 Teachers

Federated States of Micronesia

Chuuk State

80 Schools⁶
12,307 Students
676 Teachers

Pohnpei State

40 Schools
10,078 Students
530 Teachers

Yap State

59 Schools
3,132 Students
359 Teachers

Kosrae State

8 Schools
2,057 Students
204 Teachers

Republic of the Marshall Islands

112 Schools⁷
15,104 Students
1,049 Teachers

DID YOU KNOW?



How did the COFA begin?

Following World War II, the islands that now make up the Freely Associated States (FAS) of the Pacific were designated as the United Nations Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, which was administered by the United States from 1947 to 1994. The COFA are treaties between the United States and the sovereign nations of the FSM and the Marshall Islands (1986) and the Republic of Palau (1994) which granted the United States permission to maintain a military presence in the Pacific.

The COFA agreements allow the United States to negotiate land usage for military bases and operate armed forces in the region. In exchange, the United States provides economic assistance in the form of programs, grants, and services to FAS governments and their citizens. FAS governments have access to U.S. Government supports such as funding for public education systems, Pell Grants, the U.S. Postal Service, the Federal Aviation Administration, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency.⁸



What programs and services are available to qualifying FAS students and families in the U.S.?

Students and their families who are FAS citizens residing in the United States pay the same federal and state taxes as U.S. citizens, and therefore are eligible for different kinds of federal and state public services. Services that FAS citizens in the United States can access include:

- Public Education
- General Assistance
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
- Aid to the Blind, Aged, and Disabled
- Medical Assistance (by state)⁹



What is the immigration status of FAS citizens in the U.S.?

FAS citizens have a unique immigration status that allows them to freely live, work, and study in the United States; however, they are neither "legal permanent residents" nor "qualified non-citizens." This status often complicates access to government services such as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Medicaid, and non-temporary driver's licenses. Children born in the United States are U.S. citizens by birth; therefore, many families have mixed citizenship.¹⁰



How long will the COFA last?

After more than 30 years since the original Compact negotiations, Compact funding is set to expire in 2023 for Palau and 2024 for the Marshall Islands and FSM, with the option to renegotiate. These negotiations, which will focus on issues of human rights, migration, economic assistance, and defense relations, are expected to have a significant impact on students and their families.¹¹

- 1** Many FAS students and their families have found success in postsecondary education and career fields over decades of migration to and from Hawai'i, including jobs in government, healthcare, interpretation, and construction.¹²
- 2** Nearly one out of every three Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) citizens lives outside the FSM.¹³
- 3** Students from the Freely Associated States (FAS) make up more than 25% of the Guam Department of Education's student population.¹⁴
- 4** Working together to sustain cultural practices in a new context, a group of Pohnpeians in Kansas City formed a chiefdom, or a place-based organized social system, to serve the estimated 1,000 Pohnpeians living in the area.¹⁵
- 5** Springdale, Arkansas is home to the largest population of Marshallese in the mainland United States, with estimates of between 6,000 and 15,000 Marshallese living in Northwest Arkansas and the neighboring region. Pacific Islander students total about 12% of the Springdale School District.¹⁶
- 6** Palau has one of the highest positive net migration rates in the Pacific region, meaning that more Palauans are returning to Palau than the number who out-migrate.¹⁷

Data Sources



1. *Compact of Free Association Act of 1985*, Pub. L. 99-239, 99 Stat. 1770 (1986). Retrieved from <http://uscode.house.gov/statutes/pl/99/239.pdf>
2. World Bank. (2018, April 24). Population, total. Retrieved from <https://goo.gl/osxoRS>
3. World Bank. (2018, April 24). Population, total. Retrieved from <https://goo.gl/osxoRS>
4. World Bank. (2018, April 24). Population, total. Retrieved from <https://goo.gl/osxoRS>
5. Republic of Palau, Ministry of Education. (2017). *Education Statistical Yearbook 2016*. Retrieved from <https://www.palau.gov.pw/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/2016-Statistical-Yearbook.pdf>
6. Federated States of Micronesia, National Department of Education. (2016). *FSM JEMCO Education Indicators Report*. Retrieved from <http://national.doe.fm/PublicDocuments/JEMCO%20Indicators/National%20JEMCO%2021%20Indicators%2015-16.pdf>
7. Republic of the Marshall Islands, Public School System. (2016). *Education Digest 2015-2016*. Retrieved from <http://www.pss.edu.mh/files/PSSDocuments/Education%20Digest/Digest2016c.pdf>
8. *Compact of Free Association Act of 1985*, Pub. L. 99-239, 99 Stat. 1770 (1986). Retrieved from <http://uscode.house.gov/statutes/pl/99/239.pdf>
9. *Compact of Free United States of America in Congress Amendments Act of 2003*, Pub. L. 108-188, 117 Stat. 2720 (2003). Retrieved from <https://www.congress.gov/108/plaws/publ188/PLAW-108publ188.pdf>
10. Hezel, F. X., & Levin, M. (2012). *Survey of Federated States of Micronesia Migrants in the United States Including Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI)*. FSM Office of Statistics, Budget & Economic Management, Overseas Development Assistance and Compact Management. Retrieved from https://prd.psc.isr.umich.edu/files/Resources_Report%20on%20PI%20Jurisdictions.pdf
11. Thomas, E. (2019). *Compacts of Free Association in FSM, RMI, and Palau: Implications for the 2023-2024 Renewal Negotiations*. Retrieved from <http://hrbrief.org/2019/03/compacts-of-free-association-in-fsm-rmi-and-palau-implications-for-the-2023-2024-renewal-negotiations/>
12. Hezel, F. X. (2013). *Micronesians on the move: eastward and upward bound*. Honolulu, HI: East-West Center. Retrieved from <https://www.eastwestcenter.org/publications/micronesians-the-move-eastward-and-upward-bound>
13. Hezel, F. X., & Levin, M. (2012). *Survey of Federated States of Micronesia Migrants in the United States Including Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI)*. FSM Office of Statistics, Budget & Economic Management, Overseas Development Assistance and Compact Management. Retrieved from https://prd.psc.isr.umich.edu/files/Resources_Report%20on%20PI%20Jurisdictions.pdf
14. Office of the Governor of Guam. (2018). *Impact of the Compacts of Free Association on Guam: FY 2004 through FY 2017*. Retrieved from <https://www.doi.gov/oia/reports/Compact-Impact-Reports>
15. Hubbard, C. A. (2016). *Place Out of Place: a Pohnpeian Chieftom in Kansas City*. *Oceania*, 86(2), 151-173. Retrieved from <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/ocae.5130>
16. Hezel, F. X. (2013). *Micronesians on the move: eastward and upward bound*. Honolulu, HI: East-West Center. Retrieved from <https://www.eastwestcenter.org/publications/micronesians-the-move-eastward-and-upward-bound>
17. Index Mundi. (2017). *Palau Net Migration Rate*. Retrieved from https://www.indexmundi.com/palau/net_migration_rate.html

Additional Information



For more information about this infographic, contact REL Pacific by email at relpacific@mcrel.org.

For more information regarding early literacy, visit REL Pacific's website at:

<https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/pacific/partnerships.asp>