

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Office of the Assistant Secretary, Indian Affairs

Solicitation of Proposals for Funding from the Native American Business Development Institute (NABDI) Feasibility Study Program

AGENCY: Office of the Assistant Secretary, Indian Affairs, Interior.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: The Office of Indian Energy and Economic Development (IEED), Division of Economic Development (DED), is soliciting applications from American Indian tribes to participate in a grant program to furnish them with funding for economic development feasibility studies. Proposals to participate in the program will be selected through a competitive process.

Entities eligible to submit proposals to participate in the program include Indian tribes, bands, nations, or other organized groups or communities, including Alaska Native villages or regional or village corporations as defined in or established pursuant to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (85 Stat. 688; 43 U.S.C. 1601 et seq.) (Tribes).

The IEED seeks proposals from Tribes for projects, for-profit businesses and enterprises, and technologies that warrant feasibility studies before they are pursued. Proposals may also involve market and demographic studies to identify which businesses are likely to prosper in a particular Native American community. Excluded are proposals for energy or mineral assessments or inventories as IEED already administers grants for these kinds of studies under its Energy and Mineral Development Program (EMDP). Also excluded are studies involving the feasibility of any gaming enterprise or project.

These economic development studies will empower Tribes to make informed

decisions regarding their economic futures. They may also serve as third-party due-diligence documentation for Tribes seeking capital to finance a project, business, or technology based on an economic development study.

Any award under this announcement does not guarantee future funding of any kind, including funding associated with future IEED economic development feasibility study announcements. Overall project costs may exceed the amount of the IEED contribution. Funds provided under a NABDI grant may be used to meet matching or cost participation requirements under other federal and non-federal programs.

IEED will support the full spectrum of diversity with respect to geographic location and tribal representation.

Tribes currently under Bureau of Indian Affairs sanction resulting from noncompliance with the Single Audit Act will not be eligible for consideration of a grant award.

DATES: Submit applications on or before 9:00 PM EST, July 8, 2016. The IEED will not consider applications received after this date.

ELECTRONIC ADDRESS: Applications may only be submitted electronically. Email applications to Ms. Rebecca Naragon, Attn: Economic Development Feasibility program at IEEDgrants@bia.gov

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: If you have questions about the NABDI funding, please contact Ms. Rebecca Naragon (202) 208-4401.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

- A. Background
- B. Items to Consider Before Preparing an Application for NABDI Grant Funding
- C. How to Prepare an Application for NABDI Grant Funding
- D. Submission of Application in Digital Format
- E. Application Evaluation and Administrative Information

- F. Award Notification Process
- G. Funding and Transfer of Funds
- H. Post-award Requirements
- I. Submission of Proposal
- J. When to Submit
- K. Where to Submit
- L. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Control Number and Compliance with the Paperwork Reduction Act.

A. Background

The objective of the NABDI economic development feasibility study program is to enable any Indian tribe, band, nation, or other organized group or community, including any Alaska Native village or regional or village corporation as defined or established pursuant to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (85 Stat. 688) [43 U.S.C. 1601 et seq.], which is recognized as eligible for the special programs and services provided by the United States to Indians because of their status as Indians, or any authorized Indian organization, to conduct a feasibility study on the viability of an economic development project, opportunity, enterprise, business or technology.

All economic development projects and businesses pose some element of risk. Economic development feasibility studies weigh these risks to determine whether a project is worth pursuing. They empower tribes to make informed decisions regarding their economic futures by distinguishing viable economic opportunities from investments and enterprises that have a high likelihood of failure. They may also serve as third-party due-diligence documentation for Tribes and tribal businesses seeking capital, federal or state grants, or other kinds of funding for a project.

An economic development feasibility study which recommends pursuing a project can be used to help persuade lenders and investors to provide financial backing. Before making a loan or investment, a lender or investor must conduct a “due diligence” examination of the project for which credit is sought. When a lender or investor concludes that there is a chance

that the project will not succeed, they may avoid financing it altogether or adjust the loan repayment terms to reflect the perceived higher risk of failure. An economic development feasibility study performed by a reputable third party can often fulfill many of the lender's or investor's due diligence requirements by answering all of the questions they might have about a project's chances of success. If an economic development feasibility study concludes that a project is worthwhile and financially sustainable, this may persuade a lender or investor that financing the project does not involve untoward risk. This could result in a more rapid approval of the loan or better loan terms.

Economic development feasibility studies may be used to eliminate investment in projects hampered by logistical, technical, and market problems. They may also assess a project's market feasibility, identifying and quantifying expected costs and benefits, while examining the current and anticipated market for a product or service, identifying expected competitors and buyers, assessing a project's timing, and projecting cash flow and profitability.

They may also evaluate the technical feasibility of a project, whether the proposed service or product can be provided with existing materials, and the adequacy of the tribal management team, labor, and infrastructure.

They may address a project's financial feasibility, whether sufficient capital is likely to be available for start-up and whether return on investment will be adequate to pay financing costs. In addition, they can anticipate the potential impact on debt repayment of project delays, less-than-expected sales, cost increases, and shifting economic conditions.

Finally, economic development feasibility studies may investigate a promoter's reliability and the credibility of his or her claims.

For more information about the importance of economic development feasibility studies, please consult IEED's online "Economic Development Principles at a Glance" series on this topic: <http://www.bia.gov/cs/groups/xbia/documents/document/idc1-032810.pdf>

B. Items to Consider Before Preparing an Application for NABDI Grant Funding

1. Eligibility

NABDI grant funding will be available to Indian tribes, bands, nations, or other organized groups or communities, including Alaska Native villages or regional or village corporations as defined in or established pursuant to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (85 Stat. 688; 43 U.S.C. 1601 et seq.).

2. Reporting

Tribes that are selected to participate in the program will be required to submit a report to IEED within 30 days of the completion of an economic development study or plan.

3. Completion of Economic Development Studies within one Year

All projects that are selected for assistance through the NABDI program must be completed within one year of selection.

4. Multiple Projects

The IEED will accept more than one application from a Tribe, so long as they do not concern the same economic development project or business. All separately identifiable projects should be submitted as separate applications. Any submissions that contain multiple proposals will not be considered. The IEED will apply the same ranking criteria to each proposal.

5. Multi-Year Projects

The IEED cannot award multi-year funding for a project. Funding available for NABDI grants is subject to annual appropriations by Congress. Therefore, the IEED can only consider single-year funded projects.

6. What the NABDI Program Cannot Provide Assistance For

As stated above, this program is specifically for development of economic development studies described in the SUMMARY herein. NABDI grants cannot be provided for:

- Paying salaries or fringe benefits for tribal employees;
- Gaming or gaming related projects;
- Establishing or operating a tribal office/ and/or purchase of office equipment;
- Purchasing or leasing equipment or hardware such as computers and vehicles;
- Paying legal fees;
- Paying application fees associated with permitting;
- Academic research projects;
- Training;
- Conducting studies related to meeting NEPA requirements for project development;
- Attending conventions or travel to foreign countries;
- Assessments or inventories of energy resources conducted either *in situ* or at remote

laboratories or other testing facilities; or

- Any other activities not authorized by the selection letter.

C. How to Prepare an Application for NABDI Grant

Each application must meet the criteria in this notice. Applicants must limit their electronic applications to twenty (20) pages or less. A complete NABDI grant request must contain the following components:

1. The Tribe's name and location and contact information, including the point of contact, email address, and telephone number;
2. A detailed description of the economic development study which the Tribe seeks to have conducted. This description should emphasize why the economic development study is

sought and how the project or business to which it might give rise will create jobs, alleviate poverty, and stimulate the economy within the Native community.

3. A duly-adopted tribal or board resolution authorizing the Tribe's participation in the NABDI program;

4. The amount of funding requested for the study and a line-by-line budget including all itemized costs for all contracted personnel and consultants, their respective positions and time (staff hour) allocations for the proposed functions of the project. The budget should contain itemized travel estimates by airfare, vehicle rental, and lodging and per diem, based on the current Federal government per diem schedule;

5. Resumes of the consultants or others that they tribe wishes to retain to conduct the study and documentation that clearly identifies their qualifications and expertise;

6. Objectives of the proposal describing how the study may stimulate job growth and economic activity in the tribal community; and

7. Completion date for the study, dates for quarterly progress reports, and date for final report.

The IEED will consider incomplete any funding request that does not contain all seven of these components and will return it to the tribal applicant with an explanation. The applicant will then be allowed to correct any deficiencies and resubmit the proposal for consideration on or before the deadline.

Note: Any information in the possession of the IEED or submitted to the IEED throughout the NABDI grant process constitutes government records and may be subject to disclosure to third parties under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), 5 U.S.C. 552, and the Department of the Interior's FOIA regulations at 43 CFR part 2, unless a FOIA exemption or exception applies or other provisions of law protect the information. A tribal applicant may, but

is not required to, designate information it submits as confidential commercially or financially sensitive information, as applicable, in any submissions it makes throughout the NABDI grant process. If the IEED receives a FOIA request for this information, it will follow the procedures in 43 CFR Part 2.

An applicant may present the description in any form it wishes, so long as the description is well organized, and contains as much detail as possible, so as to provide the IEED Review and Ranking Panel with a quick and thorough understanding of the applicant's need for NABDI competitive technical assistance. The description should not exceed 20 pages.

D. Submission of Application in Digital Format

Submit an application in digital form. Acceptable formats are Microsoft Word and Adobe Acrobat PDF on compact disks (CDs) or floppy disks.

Each file must be saved with a file name that clearly identifies the file being submitted. File name extensions must clearly indicate the software application used preparing the documents (e.g., doc, PDF).

If you have any additional questions concerning the NABDI program proposal submission process, please contact Ms. Rebecca Naragon (202) 208-4401.

E. Application Evaluation and Administrative Information

1. Administrative Review

Upon receiving an application, the IEED will determine whether it contains the mandatory components listed above and does not duplicate or overlap previous or current NABDI grant projects.

The IEED staff may return an application that does not include all information and documentation required within this notice. During the review of a proposal, the IEED may request the submission of additional information.

2. Ranking Criteria

Proposals will be formally evaluated by a Review and Ranking Panel using the six criteria listed below. Each criterion provides a percentage of the total maximum rating of 100 points.

(a) Economic Opportunity Potential: 10 points. If the economic opportunity is patently not feasible, then the proposal will be rejected. It is critical that the eligible recipient provide all pertinent information in its proposal in order to ensure that an accurate review of the proposal is accomplished.

(b) Marketability of the Opportunity: 20 points. Reviewers will base their scoring on both the short- and long-term market conditions of the economic opportunity. Reviewers are aware that marketability depends upon existing and emerging market conditions. Reviewers are aware of pitfalls surrounding long-term market forecasts, so the proposal should address this element fully. The potential for improving markets may be suggested by market indicators. Examples of market indicators include price history, prices from the futures markets, fundamental factors like supply shortages, and changes in technology.

(c) Economic Benefits Produced by the Project: 35 points. To receive a high score for this ranking criterion, the proposal should clearly state how the project would achieve economic benefits for the eligible recipient with an emphasis on economic stimulus and reservation job creation.

(e) Tribal Commitment to the Project: 5 points. The eligible recipient's willingness to consider implementing any recommendations resulting from the feasibility study must be clearly

stated in the proposal and the tribal resolution. Note that this is not a statement for mandatory implementation, but just that the eligible recipient is willing to implement. The decision on whether to implement will always lie with the eligible recipient. The willingness-to-implement statement should sufficiently explain how the eligible recipient intends to accomplish this task.

(f) Costs and Technical Approach: 20 points. The overall cost and technical approach will be considered in accordance with the goals stated under the Summary topic herein.

(g) Need: 10 points. Proposals will also be evaluated and ranked in terms of a project's potential to address communities of need and ameliorate economic hardship. Deference will be given to applications from eligible recipients representing communities where NABDI grants are most likely to improve economic conditions.

3. Ranking of Proposals and Award Letters

The Review and Ranking Panel will rank the NABDI technical assistance proposals using the selection criteria outlined in this section.

F. Award Notification Process

1. The NABDI grant evaluation team will forward the ranked proposals to the Acting Director of IEED for approval.
2. The Acting Director of IEED will notify in writing tribes of their selection or non-selection of proposals for awards. Annual funding decisions are final.

G. Funding and Transfer of Funds

IEED's obligation under this solicitation is contingent on receipt of congressionally appropriated funds. No liability on the part of the U.S.

Government for any payment may arise until funds are made available to the Contracting Officer for this grant and until the recipient receives notice of such availability, to be confirmed in writing by the Contracting Officer.

All payments under this agreement will be made by the U.S. Government by electronic funds transfer (through the Treasury Automated Standard Application for Payment ASAP system). The recipient must submit an official invoice to the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Division of Fiscal Services, 12220 Sunrise Valley Drive, Reston, VA 20191. After the invoice is reviewed and approved, payment will be processed. Invoices should be based on progress and should not be submitted more than once a month. All payments will be deposited in accordance with the banking information designated for the applicant in the System for Award Management (SAM).

H. Post-award requirements

Applicants awarded grants for NABDI studies must adhere to the following requirements:

1. Expend NABDI grant funds only on approved project functions. Tribes are subject to forfeiture of any remaining funds in the project year as well as sanctions against award of any future year NABDI grant funding for expenditures which are not approved;
2. Prepare and submit quarterly financial and narrative reports (which may consist of a summary of events, accomplishments, problems, and/or results) to the NABDI Grant Coordinator Rebecca Naragon by the due dates in the award document;
3. Complete the NABDI feasibility study within one year of the award date;

and

4. Prepare and submit a final report, including all deliverable products generated by the NABDI project within two weeks of completion of the NABDI project or the anniversary of the award date, whichever comes first.

I. Submission of Proposal: Submit proposals in digital form to the following electronic address: IEEDgrants@bia.gov. Save files with filenames that clearly identify the file being submitted. File extensions must clearly indicate the software application used for preparation of the documents, (i.e., wpd, doc, pdf).

J. When to Submit

The IEED will accept applications at any time before the deadline stated in the **DATES** section of this notice, and will send a notification of receipt to the return address on the application package of the applicant, along with a determination of whether the application is complete. The IEED will not consider NABDI grants after this date.

K. Where to Submit

Submit the NABDI applications to the IEED at the email address shown in the **ELECTRONIC ADDRESS** section of this notice.

L. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Control Number and Compliance with the Paperwork Reduction Act

The information collection requirements contained in this notice have been reviewed and approved by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) under the Paperwork Reduction Act, 44 U.S.C. 3504(h). The OMB control number is 1076-0178, which expires on September 30, 2017. It is estimated that responses to this request will take approximately 40 hours per application and approximately one and one-half hours to complete the progress reports per

response. An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and you are not required to respond to, any information collection that does not display a currently valid OMB Control Number. Please send any comments regarding the burden estimates or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing the burden to: Information Collection Clearance Officer, Office of Regulatory Affairs – Indian Affairs, 1849 C Street, N.W., Mail Stop 3071, Washington, D.C. 20240.