

Agriculture Secretary Vilsack Announces Funding To Increase Economic Opportunity in Rural, Native American Communities

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack recently announced that USDA has selected 27 projects to receive grants to help fund rural businesses, start new businesses, save and create jobs, and train workers in Native American communities in 12 states.

"USDA is working to ensure that members of tribes have the tools they need to create a livelihood, expand economic opportunity and improve their quality of life," Vilsack said. "The grants announced today represent USDA's ongoing commitment to strengthen tribes and support sustainable business opportunities."

For example, the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians Economic Development Corporation, in Polk, Ore., is being selected to receive a \$150,000 grant to provide technical assistance to tribal businesses involved in fishing, transport and processing of Indian-caught salmon. The funding is expected to help the Salmon People Value-Added Salmon Market Project create or save an estimated 106 jobs.

The Makah Tribal Council in Neah Bay, Wash., received a \$150,000 grant to implement a geoduck clam aquaculture small business training program through the Makah Fisheries Management Department. Aquaculture is vital to the tribe's economic future and this training program will educate new entrepreneurs on all aspects of this industry and help bring economic development opportunity to tribal members. This project is expected to create 21 jobs on the Makah Indian Reservation. A separate grant of almost \$100,000 was awarded to the Alaska Rural Community Assistance Corporation, which is working with the Organized Village of Kake, the Alaska Shellfish Growers Association and the Alutiiq Pride Shellfish Hatchery to establish a geoduck nursery in Southeast Alaska.

The \$3.4 million in grants announced today is administered through USDA Rural Development's Rural Business Enterprise Grant (RBEG) program. This program provides grants for rural projects that finance the development of small and emerging rural businesses, help fund distance learning networks, and help fund employment-related adult education programs. More information about this program can be found at www.rurdev.usda.gov/BCP_rbeg.html.

USDA's Rural Business Enterprise Grant program has a long record of bringing economic opportunity to rural businesses and communities. One recent successful undertaking involved a project that assisted with infrastructure costs associated with the construction of a 150-seat restaurant adjacent to the tribally owned Moenkopi Legacy Inn in the Upper Village of Moenkopi on the Hopi Reservation in Tuba City, Ariz. The project is expected to create 65 jobs when it is finished.

Funding is contingent upon the recipient meeting the conditions of the grant agreement, and is not provided through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. The following is a complete list of organizations that have been selected to receive RBEG grants.

Alaska

- Rural Community Assistance Corporation, \$99,956
- University of Alaska Anchorage, Small Business Development Center, \$200,000
- University of Alaska Anchorage, Center for Economic Development, \$150,000

California

- California Indian Manpower Consortium, \$141,016
- California Indian Manpower Consortium, \$119,498
- Dry Creek Rancheria, \$40,000
- Susanville Indian Rancheria, \$199,990

Idaho

- Nez Perce Tribe, \$30,000

Maine

- Passamaquoddy Tribal Council, \$30,000

Montana

- Native American Community Development Corporation, \$53,400

Nebraska

- Ho-Chunk Community Development Corporation (HCCDC), \$114,615

Nevada

- Walker River Paiute Tribe, \$43,435

North Carolina

- The Sequoyah Fund, Inc., \$200,000

Oregon

- Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians Economic Development Corporation, \$150,000
- Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians, \$90,000
- Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians, \$65,000
- Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, \$95,760

South Dakota

- Four Bands Community Funds, \$50,000
- Hunkpati Investments, Inc., \$99,000
- The Lakota Fund, \$99,500
- Oglala Oyate Woitanan EZ, \$20,000
- United Sioux Tribes Development Corporation, Inc., \$548,468

Wisconsin

- Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Council, \$99,999
- Nijjii Capital Partners, Inc., \$74,257
- Northwoods Nijjii Enterprise Community, Inc., \$396,481

Washington

- Lummi Nation Service Organization, \$99,068
- Makah Tribal Council, \$150,000

USDA, through its Rural Development mission area, administers and manages more than 40 housing, business and community infrastructure and facility programs through a national network of 6,100 employees located in the nation's capital and 500 state and local offices. These programs are designed to improve the economic stability of rural communities, businesses, residents, farmers and ranchers and improve the quality of life in rural America. Rural Development has an existing portfolio of more than \$134 billion in loans and loan guarantees. ♣