

**FY2027 FUNDING PRIORITIES  
FOR  
INDIAN COUNTRY BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

**DEFENSE-RELATED PROGRAMS**

**1. APEX Accelerators Program**

Priority: "\$70,000,000 shall be made available for APEX Accelerators, of which not less than \$6,000,000 shall be available for centers defined in 10 USC 4951(1)(D)"

Description: Funds for procurement technical assistance cooperative agreements are provided for 90+ APEX Accelerators across the United States, Program, with funding set-aside for cooperative agreements with six Native American APEX Accelerators that serve one or more Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Service Areas, many of which include multiple states. The set-aside funding needed is \$6 million based on the authorized funding eligibility of the Native APEX Accelerators. Requested FY27 NDAA amendment language would increase the funding eligibility cap for each type of APEX Accelerator. Supporters include NCAIED, NCAI, NACA, and the National Alliance of APEX Accelerators (NAPEX).

**2. Indian Incentive Program**

Priority: \$35,613,000 for Indian Incentive Payments

Description: The Indian Incentive Program (IIP) provides funding for incentive payments to eligible prime or sub-tier prime defense contractors for 5% of the value of defense work that they subcontracted to and was performed by Native subcontractors. Many Native contracting companies receive IIP payments as prime or sub-tier prime contractors that subcontract to other Native-owned subcontractors. The funding enables the OSD Office of Small Business Programs (OSBP) to make timely payment of approved IIP requests from eligible prime and sub-tier prime contractors. Return on the IIP investment is significant (e.g., roughly \$400 million in Native subcontract performance for \$20 million in IIP funding). Supporters include NCAIED, NACA, NCAI, and a dozen other leading national and regional Native organization partners.

**INTERIOR-RELATED PROGRAMS**

**1. Indian Loan Guarantee and Insurance Program**

Priority: \$25 million, or double the FY26 Enacted Level of \$13,329,000

Description: The BIA's Office of Indian Economic Development, Division of Capital Investment, administers the Indian Loan Guarantee and Insurance Program that supports a 90% guarantee on

private bank financing extended to a Tribe or Indian borrower if the borrower has met the requirements of: 1) 20% equity in the business or project seeking the loan; and 2) an economic impact to the tribal community or BIA service Area. Funding covers: 1) the credit subsidy backing loan guarantees; 2) the program's administrative expenses; and 3) the total value of loan principal that can be subject to guarantee. The program is unique among – not duplicative of other -- federal loan guarantee programs because it is specifically tailored to address Tribal Nations' capital access needs by leveraging limited federal funding that facilitates (by reducing risk) substantial private financing for Tribal Nation, Tribal enterprise, and Tribal citizen borrowers for business and economic development projects. The program has proven essential to get private sector banks to consider lending to Native borrowers, and Native CDFIs have increased their lending with support from the guarantees. This key program delivers a hefty return on the federal investment. In each of the last several years, the meager funding level of only \$13 million has been exhausted well before the end of the fiscal year. The program must receive more robust funding to meet Tribal communities' extraordinary, pent-up needs for capital for: Tribal economic, utility and community development, tourism, and commercial infrastructure development; and Native business expansion. Priority to double the FY2026 enacted level (\$13.3 million to guarantee up to at least \$227 million in total loan value) is supported by NCAIED, NCAI, NAFOA, Native CDFI Network and their 11 other national and regional Native organization partners.

## **2. Economic Development and NATIVE Act Grants**

Priority: \$35,000,000 for BIA's Community and Economic Development Account, with \$5,000,000 for the Indian Incubators Program and \$5,000,000 for NATIVE Act grants.

Description: The BIA's Office of Indian Economic Development, funded from the Community & Economic Development account, manages the solicitation, award and oversight of several grant programs to enhance business and economic development in Indian Country. Among these programs are Indian Business Incubators, NATIVE Act, Native language immersion and feasibility study grants. Many Native communities have received these grants and associated financing (often supported by the Indian Loan Guarantee Program) to complete successful economic development projects. Demand always exceeds the supply of funding for these important grant programs. In particular, funding must continue for the BIA cooperative agreement under its new MOU, required by the NATIVE Act, entered into with the Department of Commerce and a qualified Native-led non-profit organization with an established record of managing a national program providing outreach, training and support to Native communities in the development, growth and enhancement of cultural tourism. This priority enjoys support from NCAIED and NCAI.

## **COMMERCE-RELATED PROGRAMS**

### **1. Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA)**

Priority: At least level funding of \$50,000,000, including \$5,000,000 to continue grants to Tribes and American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian entities to address barriers to economic development and enhance Tribal tourism in coordination with the Department's Office of Native

American Business Development and the Department's MOU with the Bureau of Indian Affairs pursuant to the NATIVE Act.

Description: President Nixon established the MBDA by Executive Order in 1971, and Congress statutorily authorized it in 2022 and substantially increased its responsibilities. MBDA has supported business development centers and provided grants for entities qualified to provide business, financing and procurement technical assistance services that Native businesses need to develop stronger private sector capabilities. Level funding of MBDA would support the continued work of the MBDA Business Centers, Specialty Centers and similar business assistance entities that may receive grant funding, including Native American-focused centers that provide tailored assistance to tribes, tribal enterprises and other Native American owned businesses to start up or expand their enterprises, address their financing needs, navigate federal, state, local or tribal procurement opportunities, and develop stronger private sector capabilities. At least \$5,000,000 should be allocated to grants to AIANNH entities qualified to assist Tribes and Tribal businesses, in coordination with the Office of Native American Business Development, to fulfill the Secretary's duties prescribed in the Native American Business Development, Trade Promotion and Tourism Act (PL 106-464) and Indian Community Economic Enhancement Act (PL 116-261). Supporting this priority are NCAIED, NCAI, NACA and their 12 other national and regional Native organization partners.

## **2. Office of Native American Business Development**

Priority: Level funding of \$2,500,000 for the Office of Native American Business Development

Description: Finally, for FY2026, Congress provided \$2,500,000 for operation of the Office of Native American Business Development (ONABD), which had never received more than about \$200,000. This important Office must be led by an experience Native professional appointed at the Director to carry out the Commerce Secretary's statutory obligations to: coordinate activities of Commerce agencies (e.g., those responsible for economic development, export promotion, fisheries, broadband deployment, etc.) and other federal departments; conduct Tribal Consultations; and promote Indian Country business and economic development, trade promotion and tourism. Supporting this priority are NCAIED, NCAI, NAFOA and their 12 other national and regional Native organization partners.

## **FINANCIAL SERVICES-RELATED PROGRAMS**

### **1. Native American CDFI Assistance Program**

Priority: \$50,000,000 for Native American CDFI Assistance

Description: Congress has consistently supported Tribal Nations' demand to preserve Native CDFI funding based on federal treaties and statutes that established federal obligations to support Tribal Nations for their prepayment with their lands and resources for the federal government's trust and treaty obligations. Federal funding delivered to Tribal Nations and Tribal organizations serving Tribal Nations is provided in furtherance of the federal trust responsibility. Pursuant to this trust obligation, the CDFI Fund has allocated some of its funds to its Native American CDFI Assistance (NACA) Program, also known as Native Initiatives. The NACA Program has been successful and

effective in infusing desperately needed financial capital into low-income Native communities through technical and financial assistance grants, the CDFI bond guarantee program, and the New Market Tax Credits program. Native CDFIs provide: a wide range of loans to micro enterprises, small businesses, consumers and homeowners; financial education and entrepreneurial development training; small business planning, and homebuyer education; counseling on credit, foreclosure prevention, debt relief, and other ways to improve financial capacity. The success and growth of Native CDFIs and their desire to expand their lending capacity reinforce longstanding federal policy to promote Tribal self-determination and self-sufficiency. Native CDFIs' success stems from their roots in and understanding of Tribal Nations' sovereignty, community needs and unique challenges of accessing financing and doing business on Tribal reservations and other trust lands that cannot be used as collateral for mortgages and loans -- traditional financing methods -- because of the restricted status of trust lands. The unmet capital needs of Native CDFIs for homeownership, small business, and consumer lending are significant and growing: For example, a 2022 Native CDFI Network survey of 16 Native CDFIs (just one quarter of the country's 64 Treasury-certified Native CDFIs) found their projected three-year unmet loan capital needs collectively totaled \$166 million. For FY2024, the CDFI Fund awarded 70% (\$43.2 million) of the total NACA Base-Financial Assistance (FA) funding of the \$61.6 million requested by applicant Native CDFIs, and just 67% (\$3.7 million) of the total NACA Technical Assistance (TA) funding requested by applicant Native CDFIs (\$5.5 million). Native CDFIs can and want to engage in more native lending, and the Treasury Department reports that CDFIs produce a terrific return on investment (ROI) of \$8 for every \$1 of federal funding. Supporters of this priority include NCAIED, NCAI, and Native CDFI Network, and their 12 other national and regional Native organization partners.

## **2. Small Business Administration – Native American Outreach**

Priority: At least level funding \$5,300,000 for SBA's Office of Native American Affairs

Description: The SBA budget for Entrepreneurial Development Programs includes a line item for Native American Outreach that funds the Office of Native American Affairs (ONAA), managed by an Assistant Administrator who coordinates all SBA program activities to facilitate assistance to tribes and Native-owned businesses in navigating the SBA's contracting, business assistance and lending programs. For FY2026, Congress provided \$5.3 million to enhance outreach to Tribal Nations, coordinated by the ONAA to assist Tribal recipients and applicants of SBA loans, engage in multi-agency workshops and Tribal supplier initiative events around the country, and facilitate Tribal contractors' participation in the SBA's 8(a) Business Development, HUB Zone and other small business contracting programs. Supporters of this priority include NCAIED, NCAI, NACA, and their 12 other national and regional Native organization partners.

## **3. Treasury Office of Tribal and Native Affairs**

Priority: \$3,000,000 for the Office of Tribal and Native American Affairs

Description: The Office of Tribal and Native Affairs, established in September 2022 and overseen by the Treasurer of the United States, advises Treasury on Tribal policy and program implementation, coordinates Tribal consultations, and manages the Treasury Tribal Advisory Committee (a seven-member Tribal advisory committee that advises the Secretary on Tribal tax

matters pursuant to the Tribal General Welfare Exclusion Act of 2014). To support coordinated departmental Tribal policy, the Office works across Treasury and IRS offices to advise on economic and recovery programs, tax policies, and other policy matters that impact Tribal and Native communities. The Office has contributed substantially to numerous extensive reports on Federal Initiatives on Access to Capital in Indian Country, Tribal Housing Stability, a Single Audits and Compliance Supplement for Tribal Entities, and State, Local and Tribal Fiscal Recovery Funds deployment. Supporting this priority, including making the Office permanent, are NCAIED, NCAI, NAFOA, Native CDFI Network and their 12 other national and regional Native organization partners.

## **ENERGY-RELATED PROGRAMS**

### **1. Office of Indian Energy Policy and Programs**

Priority: \$75,000,000 for Office's operations and technical assistance

Description: The Office of Indian Energy Policy and Programs offers financial and technical assistance to Indian Tribes, including Alaska Native villages, and eligible Tribal entities for: advancing Tribal energy development, efficiency, and use; reducing or stabilize energy costs; enhancing and strengthening Tribal energy and economic infrastructure; and bringing electrical power and service to Indian land and homes – with the ancillary benefit of creating jobs in American Indian and Alaska Native communities. The Office provides funding opportunities to support energy development and electrification in Indian Country, and technical assistance to American Indians and Alaska Natives in overcoming barriers to project development. Multi-year initiatives include: 1) assisting the nation's Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) in expanding their energy resources; and 2) electrifying the roughly 20,000 Tribal homes that currently lack electricity. The Office also offers a Tribal Energy Webinar Series designed to provide Tribal Nations with the technical knowledge needed to best utilize the resources available from the Office. These webinars provide a comprehensive look at energy development, innovative approaches and best practices, with workshops and specialized online curricula. Supporting this priority are NCAIED, NCAI and their 13 other national and regional Native organization partners.

### **2. Tribal Energy Loan Guarantee Program**

Priority: \$6,300,000 for administrative expenses to implement Tribal Energy Loan Guarantees

Description: This program supports outreach, origination and monitoring related activities for Tribal Energy Loan Guarantees to invigorate economic opportunities in tribal communities through the development of energy projects. The Loan Program Office (LPO) and Office of Indian Energy Policy and Programs have worked hard to make the Tribal Energy Loan Guarantee Program more user-friendly and easier to access debt capital for energy projects that lead to economic development and reduction of energy costs in Native communities. To fulfill the intent of Congress and the first Trump Administration to implement TEFP to increase Tribal energy project investments in part through loan guarantees, DOE must continue its efforts to make the program more flexible and use the funding for direct loans for smaller tribal energy project as well

as conduct more outreach to promote energy development projects that can qualify for larger loan guarantees. DOE also should heed the Government Accountability Office recommendations to “reduce the length and complexity of the application process for Tribes” and “provide additional training to build tribal competence and knowledge of tribal energy finance.” This priority enjoys support from NCAIED, NCAI, NAFOA and their 12 other national and regional Native organization partners.

## **HHS’ ADMINISTRATION FOR NATIVE AMERICANS - PROGRAMS**

Priority: \$65,000,000 for ANA Grant Programs

Description: The Administration for Native Americans (ANA) operates within the Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families. Through its various grant programs, the ANA assists Tribal and village governments and Native American institutions and organizations in their efforts to support and develop stable, diversified local economies. Tribes and non-profit organizations use awarded funds for a wide range of projects that promote economic development, capacity-building, entrepreneurial activities, financial education, social services support, wellness, cultural and language preservation, as well as the implementation of environmental laws, regulations, and ordinances. In 2006, Congress passed the Esther Martinez Native American Languages Preservation Act (Public Law 109-394) to help revitalize Native American languages through native language immersion and restoration programs. Subsequent amendments in the Indian Community Economic Enhancement Act (Public Law 116-261) enabled ANA to enhance its competitive grant programs and deploy half of its funds for Socio-Economic Development Strategies grants, prioritizing proposals for: 1) development of a tribal code or court system for purposes of economic development, including commercial codes, training for court personnel, and development of nonprofit subsidiaries or other tribal business structures; 2) development of Native CDFIs, including training and administrative expenses; or 3) development of a tribal master plan for community and economic development and infrastructure. Increased funding will fulfill Congressional intent to deploy half of the ANA’s grant funds to support more SEDS grants in the priority areas as well as focus attention on ANA Native language immersion and preservation grants.