

# Economic Development

## *Guiding Tribes on the Path to Prosperity*

The Division of Economic Development provides assistance to tribes in coordination with other IEED divisions, other federal agencies, and the private sector to foster strong reservation economies.



Sovereignty

Innovation

Jobs

Self-sufficiency

Progress

## The Office of Indian Energy and Economic Development

The Office of Indian Energy and Economic Development (IEED) was created by the Secretary of the Interior to address the overarching issue of economic development in Indian Country so that tribes would have a solid economic foundation to achieve self-governance. The mission of IEED is to enhance the quality of life and promote economic opportunity for American Indians and Alaska Natives in balance with meeting the responsibility to protect and improve their trust resources. IEED believes that vigorous economic development and creation of new jobs are the best antidotes to combat the economic and social malaise in Indian Country through consultation and outreach to Native American leaders, Indian Affairs policy-makers and decision-makers, and Indian people. ●



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To identify persistent obstacles to Indian Country business and job growth as well as approaches that are succeeding, the division conducted the National Native American

Economic Policy Summit in Phoenix, Arizona, in May 2007 in partnership with the National Congress of American Indians.

The Division of Economic Development seeks to create a tribal environment for economic progress, arrange training for tribal members to take advantage of that environment, and provide tribes with strategic advice and planning to make the most of business opportunities.

### Developing a Tribal Environment Conducive to Economic Success

Participants in the National Native American Economic Policy Summit made it clear that economic development in Indian Country is not possible without the rule of law embodied in strong commercial codes that secure collateral and allow the free flow of credit between persons inside and outside the reservation. The division has therefore funded preparation and adoption of tribal uniform commercial code sections dealing with secured transactions and development of a curriculum to train tribal uniform commercial code administrators. With this help, tribes have begun adopting uniform commercial codes based on the model conceived by the National Conference of Commissioners on Uniform State Laws and a working group of tribal officials.

The division is also collaborating with tribal organizations and academia to advance thinking on comprehensive reservation planning, arguably the legal cornerstone of local and regional governance.



Photo: Ribbon-cutting ceremony at the grand opening of the IBM computer-equipped Achievement Center, Ysleta del Sur Pueblo, Texas.

### Training for Success

Summit participants also called for more training to equip Native Americans to succeed in the marketplace. The division sponsors the Tuck School of Business at Dartmouth College to train executives of Indian-owned firms in intensive, one-day and three-day workshops. To address the “digital divide” that prevents remote reservations from enjoying access to the Internet and the global high-technology economy, the division has been working since August 2006 with the Native American Chamber of Commerce (NACC), SeniorNet (the world’s leading technology educator of older adults), and IBM to place IBM-donated computer equipment and software and provide high-technology training at various reservation locations, called Achievement Centers.

The division also sponsors workshops to train Native Americans how to form SBA 8(a) businesses and take advantage of federal procurement opportunities, including those made possible by the Buy-Indian Act.

Summit participants recommended that Native Americans be taught at the earliest educational stages the importance of risk taking, innovation, and individual initiative in fostering dynamic reservation economies. So, in Fiscal Year 2008, the division planned and funded a one-year Entrepreneurial Education Pilot Project for students at five reservation high schools. The division partnered with the Bureau of Indian Education and the National Foundation for Teaching Entrepreneurship, which trained teachers at each of the pilot schools.

### Strategic Advice and Planning

The division has empowered tribes to assess sometimes complex economic options by funding long-term comprehensive economic development planning. The division has also initiated a Native American Business Development Institute (NABDI) to link tribes with advice from some of the most distinguished business schools in the United States. NABDI has arranged feasibility studies for tribes on potential economic development opportunities ranging from a business park, a security business, a medical supply enterprise, and an upland bird hunting operation, to new uses for a dormant tribal wellness/recreation center, and a greenhouse heated by woody biomass.

To guide Native Americans who wish to set up their own businesses, the division has distributed a Tribal Business Structure Handbook throughout Indian Country. It helps tribes determine which business structure will work best to protect tribal assets, preserve tribal sovereignty, minimize tax liability, and maximize the use of incentives available for tribal economic development.

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