

# Native

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*economic Development Guidance and Empowerment*

# eDGE

**<http://nativeedge.hud.gov>**

**1-877-807-9013**

Unemployment in some American Indian communities and Alaska Native villages is over fifty percent. This is double the rate of unemployment experienced at the height of the Great Depression. Due to the severity of this problem an interagency initiative of eighteen federal agencies has been developed to address unemployment in American Indian communities and Alaska native villages. The initiative is entitled Native eDGE for Native economic Development Guidance and Empowerment. The purpose of Native eDGE is to serve as an Internet portal for federal and private grants, loans, loan guarantees, and technical assistance for American Indian and Alaska Native organizations and individuals. Native eDGE has the following components:

## **Web Site**

Native eDGE has a fully interactive web site (<http://nativeedge.hud.gov>) with access to a user-friendly search engine. The site is designed to allow users to define a project and the type of assistance they are seeking by searching a database of federal and non-federal resources. This information is obtained by registering a project in the eLab portion of the web site which serves as an electronic filing cabinet for clients of Native eDGE. Once a project is logged into eLab, an economic development specialist is assigned responsibility for follow-up and assistance. This relationship is maintained as long as the user requests assistance from Native eDGE.

The web site also contains a "Guided Tour" that leads users through the site, a "Partnership Center" with descriptions of federal, educational, and organizational resources along with links to their web pages, a "New(s)" page that links to "What's New" pages of major federal agencies, a "Contacts and Publications" section where contact information can be obtained along with documents and publications, and a detailed "Help" section to assist users with navigation and the attainment of information.

## **Publications Clearinghouse**

The Clearinghouse provides downloadable informational brochures, pamphlets, and promotional materials on economic development. An electronic library of federal information has been set up and it is being expanded as user requests dictate. This library contains multi-agency publications that are directly related to economic development in tribal communities and each participating agency updates this information on a regular basis. More specific requests (i.e., requests for statutes or regulations governing a program) are forwarded to appropriate federal agencies and links have been added to other useful libraries.

## **Technical Assistance Call Center**

The Native eDGE Call Center has a toll-free number (1-877-807-9013) that tribes, tribal entities, individuals and others can use to obtain technical assistance for economic development projects. The range of eligible users has been expanded to include federal economic development practitioners, non-profits, private lenders, and private businesses seeking to establish enterprises that employ Native Americans. The Call Center staff use a developed “script” to ask a series of questions about the inquiry, the caller, and any proposed projects or programs. The answers to these questions are used for a database search to identify both federal and non-federal resources that can be used for a particular project.

Native eDGE staff members also provide information concerning other technical assistance products or services provided by federal agencies, educational institutions, employment organizations, non-profit entities, and others. In addition, economic development specialists work with eDGE users to facilitate the advancement of projects from the concept stage to actual operation. This is accomplished through regular contact and follow-up with users of the eDGE Call Center or Web Site.

The on-going mission of Native eDGE is to facilitate the attainment of sustainable economic development within American Indian and Alaska Native communities. The primary goal is to accomplish this mission through the provision of information and guidance that empowers Native Americans, tribes, and tribal entities in their pursuit of self-sufficiency and self-determination. A major objective leading to the goal is the promotion of collaborative efforts between federal agencies, lenders, foundations, and the private sector to find innovative solutions to recurrent economic development problems such as unemployment. America’s bankers can help in this process by:

1. Seeking partnerships with native serving groups to develop win/win services and new products.
2. Serving as mentors to emerging financial organizations such as Community Development Financial Institution funds.
3. Assisting in leveraging the capital resources of tribal businesses.

4. Identifying other capital providers as part of a public/private partnership.
5. Initiating dialogue on the problems of equity capital in rural and tribal areas.

Native eDGE

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