

# COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIGEST

COVERING THE LATEST TRENDS IN COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

## **CDE Finds Special Niche Serving Native American Tribes**

In addition to financing development projects in urban areas, the New Markets Tax Credit (NMTC) program is being utilized in rural areas -- and especially within Native American tribal communities.

Travois New Markets, a Certified Community Development Entity (CDE), specializes in housing and economic development financing in Indian Country, and has done more than \$200 million in NMTC transactions. Travois launched in 1995 and specializes in financing the creation and rehabilitation of affordable housing.

Ariana Miller, New Markets Project Manager for Travois, shared some insights into the unique challenges facing development within Native American communities. In her role, she works with the NMTC program full-time.

As a CDE, the organization provides a lot of technical assistance to projects as a way of ensuring the process runs smoothly. Because of its good relations with tribes, the group often hears about potential projects before they are ever put to paper, Miller tells CDD.

"Relationships have been built over many years. A lot of it is word of mouth," adds Communications Coordinator Eden Rensing.

That same level of relationships enables the company to customize presentations for tribal councils which authorize resolutions allowing for use of the NMTC program and designating the tribe to act as its own developer, Miller says.

Receiving a NMTC allocation is incredibly competitive -- which is largely due to the limited pool of available NMTC allocations. "There are many more projects that are deserving of funding than there are tax credits available," Miller says.

Miller's views echo those of practitioners around the country who lament the stiff competition for projects that could use funding. Indeed, the Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI) Fund recently released data on the program showing the demand for credits far outweighs the supply.

### ***NMTC Used to Finance School on Tribal Land***

Educare of Winnebago is a project that recently received financing from Travois through the NMTC program and Chase Community Development Bank. With a focus on early childhood education, the Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska created an early learning school to provide education to at-risk infants, toddlers and preschoolers.

Over \$11 million in New Markets Tax Credits was invested through Travois' NMTC allocation. The project is expected to create 59 full-time jobs with salaries averaging twice that of the area's living wage.

### ***CDE Works to Raise Awareness of Development Challenges***

Miller says that doing development within a Native American community can be challenging because most projects are done on trust lands. This can make it difficult to find funding which isn't coupled with high interest rates.

But such factoids are not commonly known by policymakers, much less ordinary citizens, says Miller, which is why Travois is working to increase public awareness about the need for development in Native communities.

"We would love to see a greater awareness and interest in the Native American community," Miller says. "This [NMTC] is a great program. The projects speak for themselves. They create jobs and help communities becoming better places to live."

Also Miller thinks that reservations need to be specifically named as underserved areas in the NMTC program, noting that most tribes are located in very isolated and rural areas, which makes it difficult to put all the development pieces together.

**Info:** For more on Travois New Markets, visit <http://travois.com/>. Ariana Miller can be reached at 816/994-8970 or [ariana@travois.com](mailto:ariana@travois.com)

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