

2025 ATNI Winter Convention

Economic Development Committee Written Report, Prepared by Josh Gabel & Erin Ross

Day 1 of 2, January 27, 2025 (~45 Attendees)

Agenda Item	Presenter(s)
ATNI-EDC Update	Casey Pearlman, Mark Bowman
WA State Dept of Commerce	Michelle Gladstone-Wade
Regional Infrastructure Accelerator – NW Economic Region Foundation Presentation	J.D. Williams (Not present but had two in his place)
Economic Policy Brief	Dave Tovey

ATNI-EDC Update, Casey Pearlman & Mark Bowman

The Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians Economic Development Corporation (ATNI-EDC) is a non-profit Native Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) that has been supporting Indigenous businesses since 1996. It serves 57 member tribes across the Pacific Northwest, working to promote economic sovereignty by providing access to capital, business training, and community development resources.

Key Services Offered:

- **Lending Services:** Adaptive financing for Indigenous-owned businesses in the region.
- **Technical Assistance:** Culturally relevant business training for Tribal entrepreneurs.
- **Economic Development:** Inter-Tribal economy building and resource gathering.
- **Northwest Native Lending Network (NNLN):** A network of 13 regional Native CDFIs and Tribal loan programs aimed at supporting Tribal economic development.

State Small Business Credit Initiative (SSBCI):

ATNI-EDC administers the SSBCI program for the largest voluntary Tribal consortium, spanning 32+ Tribes across 6 states. The program provides funding to Tribal enterprises and small businesses with a 1:1 match for non-federal sources of capital, focusing on building a sustainable economic base for these communities.

Coalition Building and Community Engagement:

ATNI-EDC is working to strengthen relationships with participating Tribes, local lenders, investors, and Indigenous businesses. The goal is to create a sustainable funding and resource network across the region.

Technical Assistance Program:

In development, the technical assistance program is focused on inspiring business ideation, convening regional partners, and growing a professional service network to provide coaching, accounting, legal, and financial advisory services to Native small businesses.

Partnerships and Ecosystem Building:

ATNI-EDC aims to create an ecosystem of support for Native entrepreneurs, addressing gaps in resources and building partnerships with local providers and professional service networks. The program also seeks to amplify Native business success stories through events and media.

Future Plans and Resources:

- Continued development of the Technical Assistance Program and strategic planning for the>NNLN.
- Ongoing collaboration with national advocacy organizations like NCRC, OFN, and NCN to support CDFIs and their professionals.

Washington State Department of Commerce, Michelle Gladstone-Wade

WA Dept of Commerce highlighted recent developments and initiatives supporting tribal communities, focusing on clean energy, climate resilience, and workforce development, including:

- **Increased Tribal Support:** New staff positions have been added, including Tribal Technical Assistance Lead, Tribal Energy Specialist, and Tribal Outreach and Engagement Manager. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) has been established to streamline contracting processes, ensuring tribal data sovereignty while removing provisions related to subcontracting and insurance. This initiative is part of a broader interagency effort to establish the first Tribal Business Resource Group.
- **Tribal Climate Resilience and Funding:** Tribes played a key role in distributing \$52 million in Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) funds, with a 94% participation rate. There are ongoing discussions to co-design the next round of funding for the 2025-2027 biennium. The Tribal Clean Energy Fund has awarded over \$17 million, with rolling application deadlines for access to 16 consolidated funds. This includes built-in technical assistance for clean energy projects.
- **Legislative and Programmatic Developments:** The Healthy Environments for All Act (HEAL) and ESHB 1753 require tribal consultation on significant agency actions, such as new grant programs or projects exceeding \$12 million. Upcoming briefings and funding opportunities include the Green Jobs Infrastructure Grants (February 17, 2025), offering up to \$19 million for clean energy workforce development. Applications for job creation, planning, predevelopment, and clean technology construction projects will be reviewed continuously until funding is exhausted.
- **Tribal Electric Boats Program:** A \$5 million program is in development for tribes to co-design solutions around clean, electric, or hybrid diesel-electric boats. Commerce is seeking tribal input on workboat eligibility factors, such as propulsion power, vessel size, and fishing methods.
- **Solar and Housing Initiatives:** The focus is on expanding solar access for low-income and disadvantaged communities, with a goal to support residential rooftop and community-serving solar projects. The EPA award offers \$156.12 million, with \$155.7 million dedicated to program funding. Additionally, \$60 million has been requested for a tribal set-aside in the Housing Trust Fund, with \$25 million included in the Governor's proposed budget. A proposed Agency Request Legislation (ARL) aims to allow advance payments to small organizations and tribes, which is still under review.
- **Ongoing Communication:** The Office of Tribal Relations (OTR) regularly sends updates and grant opportunities to tribes, offering subscription options to Commerce Newsletters for further information.

Regional Infrastructure Accelerator – NW Economic Region Foundation Presentation

The Regional Infrastructure Accelerator (RIA), part of the Pacific Northwest Economic Region (PNWER), aims to expedite infrastructure project delivery by offering technical assistance and innovative financing solutions. Funded by the U.S. Department of Transportation's Build America Bureau, the RIA focuses on multistate and multi-jurisdictional initiatives that address supply chain disruptions, reduce transportation-related pollution, and

promote economic and environmental justice, particularly for underserved communities (including several partners in Indian Country).

Key areas of focus include:

- **High Performance Rail:** Enhancing rail systems along Pacific Northwest corridors.
- **Zero-Emission Commercial Corridors:** Developing infrastructure for zero-emission vehicles on supply routes. Pointed to several projects along the I-5 corridor.
- **Critical Connections:** Improving connectivity for tribal and rural communities.
- **Build Northwest Center of Excellence:** Facilitating community engagement and financial education.

The RIA provides workshops, convenes partners, and helps communities navigate federal funding and grant programs to secure the financing needed for infrastructure development.

Economic Policy Brief

Dave Tovey presented the work of several organizations coordinated by Ian Record of NCAIED to provide a joint policy brief on Indian Country's policy priorities for the federal government. Key points of this brief include:

1. Access to Capital & Credit:

- Strengthen community reinvestment efforts to boost access to capital in Native communities through new CRA regulations.
- Collect and share data on small business lending to better support Native-owned businesses, addressing historical lending disparities.
- Allow more flexibility for Native lenders who received Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund (GGRF) awards to reinvest in a broader range of projects, beyond clean energy.
- Grant automatic Minority Lending Institution (MLI) status to certified Native CDFIs for easier access to federal funds.
- Support Native CDFIs in navigating certification challenges and reduce administrative burdens.
- Create a Federal Home Loan Bank program to support economic prosperity and homeownership in Native communities.

2. Tax Fairness for Economic Development:

- Expand the number of Native Community Development Entities (CDEs) and improve their access to New Markets Tax Credits (NMTC).
- Recognize the tax-exempt status of tribally chartered corporations to improve business development and economic growth.
- Modernize regulations around Indian commerce to reduce dual taxation and administrative barriers.
- Increase engagement with the Treasury Tribal Advisory Committee (TTAC) to address tax and capital access issues.
- Provide permanency and funding to the Treasury's Office of Tribal and Native Affairs (OTNA) to support tribal needs.

3. Enhancing Market Competitiveness for Indian Country Businesses:

- Strengthen the implementation of the Indian Community Economic Enhancement (ICEE) Act to increase procurement from Native-owned businesses by federal agencies.
- Revise the Department of Transportation's Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) program to improve participation from tribal firms in transportation.
- Modify SBA rules to allow Native-owned businesses in emerging sectors like cybersecurity to compete more easily for contracts.
- Update SBA's small business recertification rule to prevent barriers for long-term 8(a) contractors, helping Native-owned businesses grow and secure more contracts.

4. Small Business Development:

- Implement the NATIVE Act for better coordination between federal agencies and Tribal Nations to support Native-owned tourism businesses.
- Increase Native-owned business access to SBA loans and improve data analysis for equitable assistance.
- Allocate more funding from the Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA) and SBA to support Native businesses.
- Make permanent the Office of Native American Affairs (ONAA) within the SBA for effective support.

5. Tribal Land & Energy Development:

- Promote the adoption of HEARTH Act leasing regulations for efficient land management.
- Streamline mortgage and title processes for Tribal Nations to speed up housing and economic development.
- Correct DOE's interpretation of energy loan guarantees to encourage Tribal Nations' energy projects.
- Address barriers for Native agricultural producers in accessing loans and energy funding.

6. Tribal Infrastructure & Workforce Development:

- Harmonize treatment of earned income across broadband programs to enhance community development.
- Enforce the Interdepartmental MOA for better integration of federal programs to support Tribal economic resilience.

7. Native Food Economies:

- Expand efforts to promote Native foods internationally through USDA and USTR.
- Strengthen USDA loan programs for Native agricultural producers through new advisory subcommittees.
- Authorize Native-led institutions to administer rural development funding for greater access to agricultural credit.

8. Fostering International Native Commerce:

- Launch initiatives to implement Indigenous provisions in the USMCA trade agreement.
- Join the IPETCA to remove trade barriers for Native businesses.

- Focus on increasing Native Nations' participation in international trade through targeted federal strategies.

9. Key Indian Country Economic Policy Priorities:

- Continue collaboration through the White House Council on Native American Affairs and the White House Tribal Nations Summit.
- Ensure Tribal Nations' involvement in selecting candidates for key federal positions impacting Indian Country.
- The overall aim is to improve economic growth in Native communities through better access to resources, funding, infrastructure, and international markets.

This package of proposals seeks to improve access to capital, reduce tax and regulatory burdens, and promote economic growth for Indian Country.

Day 2 of 2, January 29, 2025 (~45 attendees)

Agenda Item	Presenter(s)
Ecotrust – New Market Tax Credits	Olivia Rebanal
Co-Chair Nominations and Election	Henry Cagey

Ecotrust – New Market Tax Credits

The New Markets Tax Credit (NMTC) Program is a U.S. government initiative designed to stimulate investment in low-income communities by offering a 39% investment tax credit, claimed over seven years. The program helps bridge funding gaps in infrastructure and community development projects, providing crucial financial support, particularly for projects that focus on improving climate resilience and building community wealth.

Ecotrust, a nonprofit organization working across California to Alaska, partners with Community Development Entities (CDEs) to allocate NMTCs to underserved regions, especially on Tribal lands. The organization’s strategy focuses on rural areas, climate-smart projects, and strengthening tribal communities by funding initiatives like healthcare facilities, education centers, and utility infrastructure.

Ecotrust’s Approach:

- **Investment Strategy:** Targets projects that increase stewardship of lands and waters, enhance economic opportunities, and foster climate resilience.
- **Eligible Projects:** Includes community infrastructure (healthcare, education), utility investments (water, broadband, renewable energy), and climate-smart businesses.
- **Tribal Focus:** Ecotrust is particularly committed to supporting projects on Federal Tribal Trust lands, Alaska Native Village Areas, and Hawaiian Homelands.

Case Studies:

- **Nixyáawii Education Center:** A \$27M education facility on the Confederated Tribes of Umatilla Reservation, supporting 81% Native American students and improving high school attendance.
- **San Carlos Apache Healthcare:** A \$9M project providing expanded healthcare facilities for the San Carlos Apache Tribe, serving 21,500 clients annually.

Ecotrust invites Tribes to explore how the NMTC Program can support their community projects, offering expertise in navigating complex funding structures. For Tribal projects over \$10 million, Ecotrust is available to discuss opportunities.

Co-Chair Nominations and Selection

When Co-Chair Henry Cagey asked for interested parties, Andrea Alexander, Joshua Gabel, and Erin Ross indicated as interested and Jonelle Yearout was nominated by Sharon Goudy, ATNI Treasurer. With four candidates, Antone Minthorn was asked if he also wished to step down as Co-Chair – he confirmed. The four candidates spoke about their experience, with Andrea ceding to the other candidates. After the current Co-Chair Henry Cagey spoke, Jonelle ceded to other candidates, citing a busy schedule. Erin Ross and Josh Gabel were named co-chairs via motion with no debate or dissent.