mhp community development

Native Community Development Institute

A collaborative, cross-sector approach to implementing community projects

The Native Community Development Institute (NCDI), created by the Minnesota Housing Partnership, strengthens the capacity of Native communities to reach their community development goals through collaborative, self-styled trainings, peer-to-peer workshops, and customized assistance.

With the guidance of MHP, participating Native communities build teams that convene leaders from across sectors to identify and tackle a project that addresses a pressing need in their community. Over 18 months, these teams participate in MHP-facilitated trainings and meet regularly to create a project plan — and receive individualized guidance from an MHP staff member throughout the process. Past projects include building a supportive housing complex, creating a center for workforce development, and updating a land use plan.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

18-month program

Self-selected tribal teams with 5 to 7 members

Five in-person, 1.5-day workshops rotating among team sites

Training and technical assistance services for each team

Regular check-ins with MHP staff

Travel, lodging, and food costs included



< 2016 NCDI Leech Lake team

OUR MODEL: The Native Community Development Institute is rooted in the belief that, by creating partnerships and working in collaboration, tribal communities are able to:



Identify a critical community need and envision a specific project to meet that need.



Work across a range of areas like housing, job creation, infrastructure and economic development.



Leverage MHP's expertise in housing and community development to build local capacity and leadership.



Connect with other tribes, organizations and funders to turn a community vision into reality.

#1 A TEAM-BASED APPROACH

NCDI relies on a team model, convening leaders across tribal departments. Teams have included staff with expertise in education, gaming, housing development, and more. Each round supports three or four teams with five to seven members each.

"I am a dreamer, and I believe that there is potential on our reservation. I know we have passionate people who look ahead and think we can do something here that is going to be nation building. For me, that's the most exciting part."

~ Patricia Broker, Education Division Director, Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe

"In the past, different departments within the tribe have kept their own information. Almost all [departments] are doing job training, because they have to. Now, by working together, they might be able to consolidate some of those trainings and make them better."

~ Bill Vanderwall, MHP Community Development Manager

#2 WORKING ON A SPECIFIC PROJECT

Each team identifies a critical community need to focus on throughout the Institute. With five in-person workshops and customized assistance, teams get the guidance and support they need to launch their project.

"I truly believe that if we didn't have this Institute, we wouldn't be focusing on this project. We're all so busy with other priorities that if NCDI hadn't brought us to this table, I'm not sure this project would have been considered, even though the need is substantial."

~ Liz Foster-Anderson, CEO, White Earth Enterprises

"The NCDI sessions have really helped us keep moving with the project. It has also helped us make sure we're not forgetting things. It gave us a path to follow, and it's been a major benefit for the project to get through all the hoops we need to move through."

~ Sharon James, Small Business Development Manager, Red Lake Nation

The first round of NCDI included teams from the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe, Red Lake Nation and White Earth Nation

#3 CREATING CONNECTIONS

Ambitious outcomes demand strong collaborative efforts across jurisdictions and sectors at the local and tribal scale. The Institute breaks down divisions of land use, transportation, housing development, and economic development. To meet the needs of the participants, MHP customizes the curriculum for each Institute.

"One of the things we learned through the process is that we don't have to do it ourselves. We have resources out there — individuals and organizations that are able to share and help us through the process...to connect with all of these different departments and individuals, we, in turn, learn a lot about our own community."

~ Sharon James, Small Business Development Manager, Red Lake Nation

"We have a lot of the same goals and issues, so it's nice to use [other teams] as a sounding board."

~ Dawn Sherk, Economic Development Planning Coordinator, White Earth Nation

#4 LEVERAGING RESOURCES

Topics covered by the Institute workshops position Native communities to capture local, state, and national resources to create and preserve community development projects. Teams have the opportunity to network with funders and present projects for feedback. These connections provide greater clarity about the application process and ultimately strengthen funding proposals. Teams leverage resources by:

: : Sharing existing resources

: : Reducing competition for limited funding and other resources through collaboration

: : Identifying and securing new funding sources through a coordinated approach









PHOTOS FROM TOP:
MN State Senator Tom Saxhaug with Sally Fineday of the Leech Lake Nation; MHP's Rosemary Fagrelius with Ben Bement from White Earth Nation; MHP's Bill Vanderwall; David Paquette of the Leech Lake Nation



Participants and MHP staff at the September 2016 NCDI workshop at Leech Lake

White Earth Team Works to House the 'Hidden Homeless'

Homelessness is often hidden. On the White Earth Reservation—where one-third of the population is homeless—people without a place to call home don't sleep on sidewalks or in abandoned vehicles.

"We tend to not kick our people out on the street," says Ben Bement, Director of Human Services for the White Earth Nation. Instead of going outside, people crowd together in homes meant for far fewer residents.

"It's not uncommon in White Earth to find a three-bedroom house with about 18 people living in there," Bement says. "And there are a lot of problems associated with overcrowding. One in three of our kids living in a homeless situation are subject to domestic violence, and one in five are subject to sexual violence."

According to Dawn Sherk, Economic Development Planning Coordinator for the White Earth Nation, many homeless community members find shelter with relatives. "You find hidden homelessness on a lot of reservations because folks are camping on the couch at their sister's, mother's, or aunt's place," Sherk says.

Sherk and Bement, along with four other members of the White Earth Nation, formed a team to address homelessness in their community as part of MHP's Native Community Development Institute. The team chose to build a supportive housing complex with a "housing first" approach.

The complex will include a range of individualized supportive services including case management services, mental health support, chemical dependency interventions, home health care and more. Currently, the team is identifying a site for the complex and hopes to submit an application for Minnesota Housing Finance Agency funding in 2018.

Bement said that working with a team has been one of the most beneficial aspects of the NCDI experience. "This is not our full-time job," Bement says. "This is something extra. It's a big learning curve when it comes to supportive housing and development, so it's a benefit that we have a team working on it."

Bement is already looking ahead to what's next for him and for his teammates after they finish their NCDI project. "The thing I'm most excited about is having the team look at how to do this again," Bement says. "Rather than just one person creating a couple projects, you have a team that can say, 'Hey, we could tackle this.' I think it's very, very promising."

INTERESTED IN PARTICIPATING IN THE INSTITUTE?

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Learn more at **mhponline.org/NCDI** :: MHP is an equal opportunity provider.

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