TIME SENSITIVE: Due Oct 18, 2024

AIHEC, The Decade Project and cDots Seeking Interested/Committed TCUs in Launching/Expanding Entrepreneurship with EPA Grant

Background: We submitted a major Community Change grant proposal to EPA to ignite entrepreneurship for the new economy with Native citizens by building the capability and outreach at Tribal Colleges or Universities. The first grant was submitted with the College of Muscogee (Creek) Nation as the Statutory partner. We would like to submit a second grant proposal to EPA with AIHEC, The Decade Project (TDP) and cDots and 1-2 other TCUs as Statutory partners. The time frame to respond is lightning fast as the funds set aside for Native Americans is being distributed on a first come, first served basis, dependent on a proposal that EPA is excited about.

The TrE-Hub Program: At the core of the program is the creation – through renovation and programming – of a Tribal Entrepreneurship HUB (TrE-HUB, pronounced tree-hub) on your campus that would focus on entrepreneurship in food systems, clean energy, water, and Tribal lands sectors. Within the TrE-Hub, the program would deliver entrepreneurial growing power through three nodes – (1) a certification or degree program in Entrepreneurship, (2) a Business Accelerator program for existing or nascent business in 1-3 of these sectors, and (3) an upskilling of your Extension or outreach program staff for supporting existing growth businesses.

What Will Be Provided to You: AIHEC will be the lead of the grant and will provide administration support and EPA compliance. Nonprofits, TDP and cDots will provide content creation, including actual class design and syllabuses (in some cases video classes to allow asynchronous, on-demand delivery of the course content if you chose), content and delivery support of the Business Accelerators (not participant recruitment) and business training for your business/extension outreach. We are also working on developing new capital pathways (start-up and growth capital access), which if they can be applied to your campus we will. Assistance in forming public-private-campus partnerships to strengthen and secure longer-term support for your program.

What You Can Request: Up to $2.4 million in renovation funds to create a Tr-HUB, funds to cover an outreach/extension staff person and director of your Tr-HUB, and some staff time by your President or campus leader (5% recommended) as we want them to be the sponsor and involved. All staff funds are for three years only. However, AIHEC, CDots and TDP hope to work together with the TCU to build sustainable capacity and viability of the TrE-Hub .

Invitation: We are soliciting **Letters of Intent (LOIs)** from any TCU that would like to be considered for inclusion in this proposal. A review panel will evaluate the LOIs and make a final selection within seven days of the deadline but likely sooner.

Criteria for Choosing: A major decision criterion for EPA is that applicants are ready to start within 120 days of the grant award. We are looking for a TCU that is committed to starting right away. This does not mean starting to implement the programming. We will be developing the

content over the first year so we recommend that you focus your first year effort on building/renovating space to house the Tr-HUB. Other criteria: how committed are you to launching and supporting an entrepreneurship program at your TCU (we know some have already started which is great but not necessary)? Do you have a staff person who is currently employed by the TCU who will be committed to this program (funds to cover this person or for you to back fill can be included)? Is the college leader (President or similar seniority) committed to this effort? Do you have someone who can help us with the sections of the proposal that cover Community Vision and Engagement in the next 3-4 weeks.

Letter of Interest (LOI): There is a QR code below where you can submit your response by **Friday, October 18, 2024**. Please include answers to the following questions. You can include the answers as an attachment rather than the actual letter.

1. **Proposal Leadership:**
   - Who would be our primary contact and are they available to assist in the next few weeks to customize the proposal to your TCU with us. We want to work directly with an identified and dedicated liaison from your organization who will lead the proposal development process. Ideally, this individual reports directly to a Sr. Executive at the College, at least for this program/proposal.
2. **Getting To Work:**
   - We are looking for grantees who are prepared to begin this work within 120 days after award. Ideal candidates would have staff and previous experiences in order to execute this work timely. We expect the focus for the first year is on the renovation of the space/program planning and year 2 and 3 are the courses, business accelerators and extension/outreach support for existing businesses.
3. **Certification Programs:**
   - Do you currently offer any certification programs that support native entrepreneurship or related academic areas? Totally fine if you don't.
   - Are you interested in developing new certification programs tailored to the needs of aspiring native entrepreneurs in the food/water, clear energy and/or tribal lands sectors?
4. **Space Requirements:**
   - Can you build/renovate space on your campus or close by to be a tribal entrepreneurial hub (Tr-HUB)? We expect between 1,000 to 4,000 sq. ft. for workshops, training sessions, or community gatherings.
5. **Business Accelerator Programs:**
   - Do you have existing business accelerator programs designed for individuals without degrees?
   - We are particularly interested in developing programs that offer practical skills, mentorship, and resources to help these individuals succeed in launching and growing their businesses.
   - Do you have any existing partnerships with the private, public or tribal sectors for entrepreneurial and business development opportunities?

6. **Extension Programs:**
   - Are there any extension programs in place that provide ongoing support and education for entrepreneurs?
   - If not, would your organization be interested in developing extension programs to offer continuous learning opportunities for native business owners?

Questions: You are welcome to contact either John Phillips, AIHEC (jphillips@aihec.org; 573-268-5700), or Maura O'Neill (maura@thedecadeproject.org; 206 605-0790). They are the Principal Investigator and the Project Director respectfully.

Who we are:
The Decade Project, a non-profit with an audacious goal of growing American business ownership and entrepreneurship to look like America by 2035. We estimate that to get there we will need 7300 more Native-owned businesses in America who employ at least 1 or more people besides the founder.

cDots is an organization with the mission of accelerating the Clean Energy Economy by mobilizing human capital readiness and entrepreneurship at the local level. In five years, the goal is to equip and mobilize at least 1,000 leaders with the necessary skills and mindset to impact $1bn+ in climate funding. In December 2023, Digital Harbor (DH), a fiscal sponsor organization, incorporated **cDots** as a project under their 501c3 tax-exempt nonprofit status, funded by the Schmidt Futures Innovation Fellows Program.

AIHEC is a 501(c)(3) organization governed by a board of directors composed of the presidents of the accredited United States-based Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), is celebrating nearly 50 years as the collective spirit and unifying voice of our nation's 35 accredited TCUs and 2 developing institutions—a unique community of tribally and federally chartered institutions working to strengthen tribal nations and make a lasting difference in the lives of American Indians and Alaska Natives.

Link to LOI: https://forms.gle/ksKy7gN8sDGvfG1o8

QR Code for LOI: