



FLATHEAD INDIAN RESERVATION



Montana Department of Commerce Tribal Business Development Grant

Business MT Application Guidelines

Montana Department of Commerce | commerce.mt.gov | montanarelay.mt.gov (711)
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I. About the Program

The Indian Country Economic Development Program, created by the 59th Montana State Legislature, is a State-funded program administered by the Montana Department of Commerce. Between October 2005 and June 2023, the Montana Legislature funded ICED with a restricted, one-time only appropriation. Since July 2023, the Montana Legislature has made a permanent annual appropriation of funds to the ICED Program for Montana's tribal nations and tribal businesses to further business development activities in the amount of \$875,000.

Various programs are administered under the ICED Program, including:

- The Tribal Business Development Grant
- The Tribal Tourism Grant
- The Indian Equity Fund Small Business Grant
- The Native American Business Advisors.

These programs allow the Office of Indian Country Economic Development at Commerce to continue to articulate measurable successes of the program to tribal communities, the Executive Branch and elected leadership.

The Tribal Business Development Grant Program, under the direction of Commerce's Business MT Division, Office of Indian Country Economic Development is intended to assist Montana tribal government businesses in deploying shovel-ready projects for which planning is more or less complete, approval permits are in place and construction crews can begin once sufficient funding is secured. TBDG is designed to aid in the development of for-profit tribal businesses and to create job opportunities within tribal economies.

II. Program Calendar

Beginning in fiscal year 2026, tribes seeking to apply for funding will submit a letter of intent to the OICED within a Commerce-designated 30-day window. The letter of intent will describe the tribe's intent to apply for funding and their proposed project. Letters can be emailed to Program Manager TJ Altekruuse at tj.altekruuse@mt.gov.

The following shows the proposed activities and general timelines for the TBDG process. The timelines may vary a little from year to year. Interested persons are highly encouraged to check the TBDG page on Commerce's website for the annual deadlines: commerce.mt.gov/business/indian-country/indian-country-financial-assistance/the-tribal-business-development-grant.

- Letter of Intent: 45-day window
- Application: 45-day window after the letter of intent deadline
- Application review: 60-day window after the application deadline
- Award notification
- Contract

III. FY26 Tribal Business Development Grant

A. Summary

TBDG is a competitive grant program to connect participating tribes of Montana with the resources necessary to advance a shovel-ready project that will provide a measurable beneficial economic impact for the community. Such projects will create short- and long-term jobs in tribal for-profit businesses and/or a measurable increase in revenue for tribal businesses.

These projects may include commercial real estate development, commercial property purchase, small business centers, retail infrastructure, renovations, rehabilitations or remodeling of existing properties for commercial use, industrial use, business incubators or certain new/used equipment with a defined depreciation schedule. Up to \$240,000 is available to fund projects defined under Section E, “Eligible Activities.”

B. Eligible Applicants

The governing bodies of the federally recognized tribes in Montana are eligible to apply and receive TDBG awards. Any applicant in arrears or default with the State of Montana, including State-administered programs, is ineligible. Applicants who have never received this award are given additional points in scoring.

C. Ineligible Applicants

This program is intended for the governing bodies of Montana’s eight tribal governments. Nongovernmental tribal or nontribal businesses are not eligible to apply. Governing bodies of federally recognized tribes in Montana cannot apply on behalf of a business that is exclusive, private, adult only, requires tribal affiliation, for-members only, a casino or gambling business or a marijuana or marijuana-related products or services business.

D. Funding Availability

Applications will be accepted on an open cycle basis in accordance with the dates posted on the website. Typically, the open cycle begins in the fall and closes near the end of the calendar year. Please check the website for the specific dates for this year’s open cycle.

The total budget for the TDBG Program is \$240,000. Applicants may request a maximum of \$240,000; however, actual grant awards may be less than requested. It

may be helpful to provide a minimum grant amount needed for the successful completion of the project. Commerce encourages applicants to consider contingency funding sources when preparing their project budgets. Actual grants will depend on the number of applications received and the discretion of Commerce.

E. Eligible Activities

Eligible activities include:

- Establishing new or improving existing commercial business
- Commercial building or property purchase, excluding vacant land
- A shovel-ready construction project to build, expand or develop a new or existing commercial asset
- Renovations, rehabilitations or remodeling of existing property for commercial use
- Federal funding match
- Equipment purchase

F. Ineligible Activities

The following activities will not be funded:

- Activities completed prior to application submittal
- Duplicative reimbursement for activities receiving funding for the same service, equipment or improvements through any other local, state or federal grant or funding program, except when approved by Commerce as necessary to fully fund the project
- Sole purchase of raw or vacant land
- Commercial building or property purchase that is in a mixed-use zone where property can be used or rented as residential space
- Prize money, wages, one-time events, advertising or indirect administrative costs
- Operation and maintenance costs or expenses

- Financial expenses, such as interest or bond issuance
- Development of business planning strategies
- Business plan development
- Market analysis
- Feasibility study
- Physical business infrastructure planning, such as zoning

G. Match Requirement

Qualified applicants must demonstrate a combination of cash, equipment and in-kind match of actual and committed funds invested in the proposed project. The match requirement is a minimum of 50% of the award total, \$1 applicant to \$2 award.

Reasonable in-kind services, in-kind labor, grant administration costs and/or volunteer hours may equal up to 20% of the match. Committed cash is eligible for the match requirement; however, cash match must be no less than 80% of the required match. For example: An applicant requesting a \$6,000 grant award must provide \$3,000 in matching funds where at least \$2,400 is a cash match, and up to \$600 in-kind and/or equipment use committed to the completion of the project as match.

Indirect costs are not eligible for reimbursement under the grant award funds.

H. How to Apply

Applications must be completed online through the Montana Grants and Loans Portal located at montana.servicenowservices.com/mtgl.

Applicants will be required to create an OKTA profile which requires a valid email account. OKTA is located at okta.loginmt.com.

The application section should contain a detailed project description and background, an explanation of use of funds, the project objectives and tangible deliverables and a

summary of the economic impact the project would have on the geographic area and its residents.

Tribal resolution or authorization (upload): Appropriate authorization for application to the program by the tribal government according to established tribal governmental procedures (e.g., tribal council resolution or authorization of the chief elected official of the executive branch, whichever is applicable) is required and will need to be uploaded. The resolution should include the name of the project being applied for, the name of the tribal organization or entity that will be responsible for managing the application process and contract and the governing body's approval to apply for the program funds.

To be determined — project timeline (online): Applicants will need to provide a timeline for when the project activities/scope of work will be completed up to a two-year contract period, no later than two years from the contract date. Program staff will evaluate scheduled project proposal dates and delineate a one-, one and a half-, or two-year time horizon for completion, including milestones. Project startup or preparation activities need to be included as well as the timeframe for procurement of professional services, if applicable, and project implementation and execution of activities.

To be determined — project sources and uses of funds (online): A budget will need to be completed listing all sources and uses of funds for the entire project including cash and in-kind match contributions. The budget should include expense assumptions and how costs were derived or estimated (e.g., quotes from contractors, etc.).

Applications considered incomplete or ineligible can be reopened for editing and negotiated from the program back to the applicant through ServiceNow during the open grant cycle. Applicants are encouraged to apply early so that they can make any necessary adjustments or changes before the grant cycle closes.

Receipt or acceptance of an application does not imply a commitment of TBDG funds. Commerce will review the applications for eligibility and suitability with State and program requirements.

I. Application Review Process

1. **Receipt of application:** Once submitted, each application is assessed for completeness and clarity by OICED. OICED coordinates the application review and ranking timeline. OICED may contact the applicant to discuss any concerns or questions or to request additional information or documentation. Site visits by OICED may be made to the proposed project area for the purpose of verifying or further evaluating information contained in the application.
2. **Review:** The review committee makes funding recommendations to the Commerce director, who makes the final funding decision.

J. Application Review Criteria

Because this is a competitive grant, each application will be evaluated for its strengths and weaknesses compared to other applications. Examples of review criteria include:

1. How well does the applicant define the scope, budget and objectives of the project?
 - Is it clear from the application how the grant funds would be used and what the applicant hopes to accomplish?
 - How does the applicant intend to promote the project to the public?
Specifically, where and how will marketing and promotion be undertaken, and will it be featured on a website?
 - Does the applicant provide a detailed budget with reasonable cost estimates and well-defined matching funds in line with the requirements?
2. What challenges must be mitigated to ensure the project's success?

- Has the applicant appropriately considered the factors necessary for a successful outcome?
3. How will the project positively impact the tribal community?
- Will the project have the support of the tribal community?
4. How well does the project align with and support the tribe's greater economic development plans?
- Will the project create any new jobs?
 - How will the tribe or relevant business ensure new positions are filled and associated wages are sustainable?
5. How will success of the project be measured?
- In what ways will the applicant measure the success?
 - What metrics will be captured, and who is responsible for collecting this data?

K. Grant Notification and Contract

Applications will be reviewed in accordance with the timeline set out above by a review committee. Then, recommendations are forwarded to the director for final funding approval. Once applicants have been notified of funding decisions, those applications awarded funding will begin the contracting process initiated by OICED. All grantees must execute a grant agreement with Commerce.

L. Reimbursement of Funds

Up to 20% of the grant funds may be paid to grantees upfront. Otherwise, grant funds are paid on a reimbursement basis. Grant funds are intended to be expended by the deadline included in the contract. Generally, this is within a two-year period from the start of the project.

Grant funds are reimbursed to the grantee with the submission of:

1. W-9 (with first request only if not already on file)
2. EFT form with banking information or mailing address (with first request only)
3. Completion and submission of required forms and related receipts:
 - Request for Reimbursement Form
 - Project Receipt Worksheet with receipts
 - Project Status Update Report

Forms are available for download at indiancountry.mt.gov.

M. Reporting Requirements

Project Completion and Closeout Reporting

Upon self-reported completion of the project, or by the deadline of the project within the contract, whichever occurs first, OICED will email the grantee a final Project Completion and Closeout Form. The grantee must complete and return the final Project Completion and Closeout Form for review by OICED with their final request for reimbursement. The Project Completion and Closeout Form will serve as a final report. It will describe the total costs incurred for the project, identify the final completion date, provide applicable metrics used to measure the success and/or other testimonials statements about the impact of the project, contain diagrams and photos where appropriate, summarize any significant problems encountered in carrying out the project and answer any additional project questions asked of the grantee from OICED. Upon approval of the Project Completion and Closeout Report, OICED will release the final reimbursement so long as proper documentation is submitted as outlined above in Section L, “Reimbursement of Funds.” Then, OICED will issue the Notice of Project Closeout.

N. Program Contact

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