

Grantee: CHOCTAW NATION OF OKLAHOMA

Grant Amount: \$776,294

Location: Durant, OK

The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma stretches across 11 counties spanning an area in excess of Delaware, Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Washington D.C. combined. The nation itself stands as the second largest tribal area in the lower 48 states, second only to Navajo. However, despite being number two in size, it serves twice as many Native Americans. Unfortunately, many families in the Choctaw Nation live in poverty, residing in homes without running water and telephone service. In addition, there are a large number of Choctaw Nation individuals and entrepreneurs in need of business assistance and job training to increase their economic sustainability. In order to improve the daily lives of Choctaw Nation individuals and families, and reduce the widespread poverty in this community, The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma applied for and received a Rural Innovation Fund Indian Economic Development and Entrepreneurship grant valued at \$776,294.

To date, the \$776,294 Rural Innovation Fund grant has allowed The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma and their partners to make significant strides toward improving the lives of tribal members by fueling The Choctaw Native American Business Resource Center (NABRC) Project. This project works to provide culturally relevant economic development services that support Native American business development, job creation, and ongoing entrepreneurial activities. Together with their partners, Eastern Oklahoma State College (EOSC) and Rural Enterprises Inc. (REI), The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma has also been able to provide educational services as well as give NABRC participants access to a \$500,000 revolving loan fund operated by REI.

In just two short years since the project's inception, The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma has already achieved and exceeded many of the goals it set fourth for the three year project. Some significant accomplishments so far include the delivery of assistance to 24 diverse start-up businesses through business planning, tax registration, one on one counseling and access to capital. Likewise, the NABRC has provided assistance to 45 existing businesses, which has afforded each business the opportunity to expand and grow. Furthermore, the NABRC has provided job training and education in economics and business for 166 individual tribal members that were seeking to improve their lives by running their own business. Overall, just two years into the grant project, several projections have already been met and these accomplishments have resulted in 49 new jobs, a number that will only continue to grow over the remaining life of this grant project.

This grant project has made significant progress so far due in large part to the success of the NABRC Project as well as contributions from the partner organizations EOSC and REI. In addition, the Tribal leaders of The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, who have overseen the establishment of the NABRC, deserve significant praise for the job they have done in creating such a successful program that is generating new opportunities to better the lives for the people of The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. For more information about the continued success and opportunities provided by The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, please visit their web site: <http://www.choctawnation.com/> or contact Ms. Dana Bonham directly by sending an email to grants@choctawnation.com or by calling (580)-924-8280. To learn about the NABRC project please visit <http://choctawcareers.com/nabrc/>.

