DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Indian Affairs

Solicitation of Proposals for Economic Development Feasibility Study Funding from the Native American Business Development Institute

AGENCY: Bureau of Indian Affairs, Interior.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: The Office of Indian Energy and Economic Development (IEED), through its Native American Business Development Institute (NABDI), is soliciting proposals from federally recognized American Indian Tribes and Alaska federally recognized Tribal entities for technical assistance funding to hire consultants to perform feasibility studies of economic development opportunities. These feasibility studies will empower American Indian Tribes/Alaska federally recognized Tribal entities and Tribal businesses to make informed decisions regarding their economic futures. Feasibility studies may concern the viability of an economic development project or business or the practicality of a technology a Tribe or entity may choose to pursue.

DATES: Submit grant proposals on or before July 9, 2018 by midnight. The IEED will not consider grant proposals received after this date. All submissions are date and time stamped when received.

ADDRESSES: The preferred method of submitting grant proposals is to email at IEEDGrants@bia.gov, Attention: Ms. Jo Ann Metcalfe, Certified Grant Specialist, Bureau of Indian Affairs.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: If you have questions about the NABDI grant program or require a mailing address, please contact Mr. James R. West at (202) 595-4766 or jamesr.west@bia.gov.

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A. Background

The IEED established NABDI to provide technical assistance funding on a competitive basis to federally recognized American Indian Tribes and Alaska federally recognized Tribal entities seeking to retain consultants to perform feasibility studies of economic development opportunities. Consultants may include universities and colleges, private consulting firms, non-academic/non-profit entities, or others. The feasibility studies will empower American Indian Tribes/Alaska federally recognized Tribal entities and Tribal businesses to make informed decisions regarding their economic futures. Feasibility studies may concern the viability of an economic development project or business or the practicality of a technology a Tribe or entity may choose to pursue.

The IEED administers this program through its Division of Economic Development (DED), which is located at Room 4138, 1849 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20240.

These grants will be funded under a non-recurring appropriation of the BIA budget. Congress appropriates funds on a year-to-year basis. Thus, while some projects may extend over several years, funding for successive years depends on each fiscal year's appropriations.

The information collection requirements contained in this notice have been reviewed

and approved by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) under the Paperwork Reduction Act, 44 U.S.C. 3504(h). The OMB control number is 1076-0178. The authorization expires on December 31, 2020. An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and you are not required to respond to, any information collection that does not display a currently valid OMB Control Number.

B. Items to Consider Before Preparing an Application for NABDI Technical Assistance Funding

1. Eligibility

NABDI technical assistance funding is available to all federally recognized Tribes, bands, nations, or other organized groups or communities, and Alaska federally recognized Tribal entities (applicants).

2. Applicant's Compliance History

The IEED will monitor all NABDI technical assistance funding for statutory and regulatory compliance to assure that awarded funds are correctly applied to approved projects. Applicants that expend funds on unapproved functions may forfeit remaining funds in that proposal year, and possibly for any future NABDI technical assistance funding. Consequently, IEED may request an applicant to provide a summary of any funds it has received in past years through other projects approved by IEED, and IEED may conduct a review of prior award expenditures before making a decision on current year proposals.

3. BIA Sanction List

Applicants that are currently under BIA sanction at Level 2 or higher resulting from non-compliance with the Single Audit Act are ineligible for a NABDI grant award. Applicants at Sanction Level 1 will be considered for funding.

4. Completion of Previous NABDI Technical Assistance Projects

Generally, IEED will neither support nor recommend additional funding for a project until all project functions scheduled for completion the previous year have been documented by the applicant and reviewed by IEED.

Under some circumstances, delays encountered in performing the project that are beyond the control of the applicant or its consultant will be taken into consideration when making decisions on future-year NABDI technical assistance awards. Such acceptable delays may include late delivery of funding awards to the Tribal project, difficulty in finding appropriate contractors to perform project functions, permitting issues, and weather delays.

5. Multiple Projects

IEED will accept more than one application from an applicant for projects, even if the project concerns the same economic development project, business, or technology. For example, an applicant interested in building and developing a business park could apply for a feasibility study of the business potential of the park, as well as a feasibility study on a particular retail use within the proposed business park. All separately identifiable projects should be submitted in separate applications. Any submissions that contain multiple proposals will not be considered. The IEED will apply the same objective ranking criteria to each proposal.

6. Multi-Year Projects

IEED cannot award multi-year funding for a project. Funding available for the NABDI technical assistance is subject to annual appropriations by Congress and, therefore, IEED can only consider single-year funded projects. Generally, the feasibility studies of economic development opportunities for which NABDI technical assistance

funding is available are designed to be completed in one year. If a NABDI project has not been completed by the end of the year due to extenuating circumstances, the Tribe or entity shall submit a written request for a no-cost extension, with an explanation for non-completion, in order to maintain a good standing status for the purposes of future funding requests.

7. What the NABDI Technical Assistance Funding Cannot Fund

As stated above, these funds are specifically for technical assistance for feasibility studies of economic development opportunities only. Examples of elements or activities that cannot be funded include:

- Establishing or operating a Tribal office, and/or purchase of office equipment not specific to the assessment project;
- Indirect costs and overhead as defined by the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR);
- Purchase of equipment that is used to develop the feasibility studies , such as computers, vehicles, field gear, etc. (however, the leasing of this type of equipment for the purpose of developing feasibility studies is allowed);
- Creation of Tribal jobs to complete the project. The NABDI grant is not intended to create temporary administrative jobs or supplement employment for Tribal members. Its purpose is to provide the applicant with the best possible guidance regarding a potential economic development opportunity;
- Energy or mineral related feasibility projects, such as solar, biomass, and wind energy projects, fossil fuel exploration or development, or mining-related projects. Energy and mineral related projects may be eligible for grant funding under the IEED's Energy and Mineral Development Program (EMDP). If you have questions about the

EMDP program or the application process, please contact Winter Jojola-Talburt, telephone 720-407-0668 or email *Winter.Jojola-Talburt@bia.gov*.

- Legal fees;
- Application fees associated with permitting;
- Training;
- Contracted negotiation fees; and
- Any other activities not authorized by the tribal resolution or the award letter.

8. Who Performs Feasibility Studies ?

The applicant determines who it wishes to conduct an economic development feasibility study. An applicant has several choices, including but not limited to:

- Universities and colleges;
- Private consulting firms; or
- Non-academic, non-profit entities.

There are no requirements or restrictions on how the applicant performs its contracting function for the consultant. The applicant is free to issue the contract through a sole source selection or through competitive bidding. This determination will depend on the applicant's own policies for contracting procedures.

C. How to Prepare an Application for NABDI Technical Assistance Funding

No standardized grant application form is required. Each eligible applicant must meet the criteria in this notice. Please keep all Statement of Work (SOW) portions of the applications to fifteen (15) pages or less. Please do not submit additional attachments or documents that do not directly relate to the SOW such as additional maps, charts, graphs. Please do not include a Tribal history, or any other data not directly related to the SOW. The only pages that will be accepted beyond the SOW 15-page-limit will be the Tribal

resolution, critical information page, budget, and where applicable, consultant information.

Proposals are not rated on length. Therefore, applicants are encouraged to avoid arrangements with consultants that correlate preparation fees with a proposal's length.

A complete NABDI funding request must contain the following four components:

- A current Tribal resolution specific to the application requesting the funding;
- A critical information cover page that includes Project Manager's contact information, DUNS number, and active ASAP number.
- A SOW describing the project for which the feasibility study is requested; and
- A budget indicating the funding amount requested and how it will be spent.

In addition, where applicable, the NABDI funding request must contain a description of the consultant(s) the applicant wishes to retain, including the consultant's contact information, technical expertise, training, qualifications, and suitability to undertake the feasibility study. This may be included as attachment and will not be counted toward the 15-page limitation for the SOW.

IEED will treat as incomplete any funding request that does not contain all of the mandatory components and will return it to the applicant with an explanation. The applicant will then be allowed to correct all deficiencies and resubmit the proposal for consideration on or before the deadline.

1. Mandatory Component 1: Tribal Resolution

The Tribal resolution must be current, and must be signed. It must authorize the applicant's request for NABDI technical assistance funding in the same fiscal year as that of the SOW and must explicitly refer to the SOW that is being submitted. The Tribal resolution must also include:

(a) A description of the feasibility study to be developed;

(b) A statement that the applicant is willing to consider pursuing the economic opportunity which is the focus of the grant;

(c) A statement describing how the applicant plans to retain consultants; and

(d) A statement that the applicant will consider public release of information obtained from the feasibility study. ("Public release" does not mean providing copies of the data or reports to any individual, private company or other government agency without express written permission from the tribal government.)

Note: Any information in the possession of IEED or submitted to IEED throughout the NABDI funding process constitutes government records and may be subject to disclosure to third parties under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), 5 U.S.C. 552, and the Department of the Interior's FOIA regulations at 43 CFR part 2, unless a FOIA exemption or exception applies or other provisions of law protect the information. An applicant may, but is not required to, designate information it submits as confidential commercially or financially sensitive information, as applicable, in any submissions it makes throughout the NABDI funding process. If IEED receives a FOIA request for this information, it will follow the procedures in 43 CFR part 2.

2. Mandatory Component 2: Critical Information Page

The Critical Information Page must include the Project Manager's name, address, phone, and email; correct DUNS number (including a false, invalid, or inactive DUNS number in the application may invalidate the submission); and an active ASAP number (including a false, invalid or inactive ASAP number in the application may invalidate the submission).

3. Mandatory Component 3: Statement of Work.

An applicant may present the SOW in any form it wishes, so long as the SOW describes the project for which the feasibility study is requested within the fiscal year for which funding is being requested. The SOW should be well organized, contain as much detail as possible, yet be presented succinctly to allow a quick and thorough understanding of the proposal by the IEED ranking team. The SOW should not exceed 15 pages.

The SOW should include the following sections:

(a) Overview and Technical Summary of the Work: Prepare a short summary of the work to be contracted for that includes the following:

- Elements of the proposed feasibility study;
- Reasons why the proposed study is needed;
- Total anticipated funding; and
- The applicant's point of contact for the project and contact information.

(b) Technical Summary of Project: Provide a technical description of the project, if sufficient information exists. Existing Information: Acknowledge any existing economic development information and provide references. The proposed new study should not duplicate previous work.

(c) Project Objective, Goals and Scope of Work: Describe why the applicant needs the work to be contracted for. Examples may include:

- Discussion of the short and long term benefits to the applicant;
- Identification of an economic opportunity for possible development; and
- Additional information regarding the economic opportunity required for the applicant's decision making;

- Description of the location of the Native community and focused areas for economic development, if any. Include relevant page size maps and graphs.

(d) Deliverable Products: Describe all deliverable products that the consultant is expected to generate, including interim deliverables, such as status reports and technical data to be obtained, and final deliverables, including the feasibility study. Describe any maps to be generated and how they will help define economic opportunities.

(e) Résumés of Key Personnel: Provide the résumés of key consultants to be retained, if available. The résumés should provide information regarding each individual's expertise. If subcontractors are used, these should also be disclosed. This information may be included as an attachment to the submission and will not be counted towards the 15-page limitation.

4. Mandatory Component 4: Detailed Budget Estimate

A one page detailed budget estimate in Excel format is required for the funding level requested. This will help IEED evaluate the cost-benefit of each project. This line-by-line budget must fully detail all projected and anticipated expenditures under the NABDI technical assistance proposal. The IEED ranking committee reviews each budget estimate to determine whether the budget is reasonable and can produce the results outlined under the proposal.

Each proposed project function should have a separate budget. The budget should break out contract and consulting fees, fieldwork, lab and testing fees, travel and all other relevant project expenses. Preparation of the budget portion of a NABDI proposal should be considered a top priority. NABDI proposals that include sound budget projections will receive a more favorable ranking over those that fail to provide appropriate budget projections.

For information purposes only, NABDI grants averaged approximately $50,000 throughout the program's history. Some grant amounts have been higher and others lower.

The budget page should provide a comprehensive breakdown for those project line items that involve several components, or contain numerous sub-functions.

(a) Contracted Personnel Costs. This includes all contracted personnel and consultants, their respective positions and time (staff-hour) allocations for the proposed functions of a project.

- Personnel funded under the NABDI program must have documented professional qualifications necessary to perform the work. Position descriptions or résumés should be attached to the budget estimate.
- If a consultant is to be hired for a fixed fee, the consultant's expenses should be itemized as part of the project budget.
- Consultant fees must be accompanied by documentation that clearly identifies the qualifications of the proposed consultants, how the consultant(s) are to be used, and a line-item breakdown of costs associated with each consultant activity.

(b) Travel Estimates. Estimates should be itemized by airfare, vehicle rental, lodging, and per diem, based on the current federal government per diem schedule.

(c) Data Collection and Analysis Costs. These costs should be itemized in sufficient detail for the reviewer to evaluate the charges.

(d) Other Expenses. Include computer rental, report generation, drafting, and advertising costs for a proposed project.

D. Submission of Application through Alternative Methods

Submit the application, including the budget pages, in digital form. IEED will return

proposals that are submitted without the digital components. Please keep all SOW portions of the applications to 15 pages or less.

Acceptable formats are Microsoft Word and Adobe Acrobat PDF through email or on compact disks (CDs). The budget must be submitted in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet.

Each file must be saved with a filename that clearly identifies the file being submitted. File name extensions must clearly indicate the software application used preparing the documents (e.g., doc, .pdf).

Documents that require an original signature, such as cover letters, Tribal resolutions, and other letters of Tribal authorization, can be also submitted in hard copy (paper) form or scanned to email.

If you have any additional questions concerning the NABDI program proposal submission process, please contact Mr. James R. West at (202) 595-4766 or jamesr.west@bia.gov.

E. Application Evaluation and Administrative Information

1. Administrative Review

Upon receiving an application, grant management staff will determine whether it contains the mandatory components listed above and does not duplicate or overlap previous or currently funded NABDI technical assistance projects.

During the review of a proposal, IEED may request the submission of additional information.

2. Ranking Criteria

Proposals will be formally evaluated by an IEED review committee using the six criteria listed below. Each criterion provides a percentage of the total maximum rating of 100 points.

(a) Economic Opportunity Potential: 15 points. If the economic opportunity is patently infeasible, then the proposal will be rejected. It is critical that the applicant attempt to provide all pertinent information in its proposal in order to ensure that an accurate review of the proposal is accomplished.

(b) Marketability of the Opportunity: 10 points. Reviewers will base their scoring on both the short- and long-term market conditions of the economic opportunity. Reviewers are aware that marketability depends upon existing and emerging market conditions. Reviewers are also aware of pitfalls surrounding long-term market forecasts; so the proposal should address this element fully. The potential for improving markets may be suggested by market indicators. Examples of market indicators include price history, prices from the futures markets, fundamental factors like supply shortages, and changes in technology.

(c) The Project's Economic Benefits: 45 points. To receive a high score for this ranking criterion, the proposal should clearly state how the project would achieve economic benefits for the applicant with an emphasis on job creation and economic stimulus within a Native community. The IEED review committee will prefer proposals from applicants who can demonstrate that their communities suffer from economic malaise and unemployment, the feasibility studies sought will favorably address these conditions, and their communities lack the financial resources to deal with these conditions absent NABDI grant assistance.

(d) Applicant Commitment to the Project: 10 points. The applicant's willingness to consider implementing recommendations resulting from the feasibility study must be clearly stated in the proposal and the Tribal resolution. Note that this is not a statement for mandatory implementation; rather, it is an affirmation that the applicant is willing to

implement the proposed project. The decision on whether to implement the project will always lie with the applicant. The willingness-to-implement statement should sufficiently explain how the applicant intends to accomplish this task.

To receive a high score for this criterion, the applicant should explain how it will participate in the technical assistance, such as by appointing a designated lead and contact person (especially a person with some knowledge of the technical aspects of economic opportunities who has direct contact with the applicant's economic development department or governing body), and who is committed to the successful completion of the project.

(e) Costs and Technical Approach: 10 points. The overall cost and technical approach will be considered in accordance with the goals stated under the Summary topic herein.

(f) Authenticity: 10 points. The IEED review committee understands that it is often intended that consultants retained by applicants to write the NABDI proposal will also conduct the feasibility study if the grant is awarded. This does not prejudice an applicant's chances of being selected as a grantee. However, the IEED review committee will view unfavorably proposals that show little evidence of communication between the consultant and the applicant or a regard for the unique circumstances of the applicant.

3. Ranking of Proposals and Award Letters

The IEED review committee will rank the NABDI grant proposals using only the selection criteria outlined in this section. IEED will forward rated proposals for approval to the Acting Director of IEED; the Office of the Assistant Secretary, Indian Affairs; and (with respect to grants exceeding $100,000) the Associate Deputy Secretary, U.S.

Department of the Interior. Those applicants not receiving an award will also be notified promptly in writing.

F. When to Submit

The IEED will accept applications at any time before the deadline stated in the **DATES** section of this notice, and will send a notification of receipt to the return address on the application package, along with a determination of whether or not the application is complete. The IEED will not consider grant proposals after this date.

G. Where to Submit

Submit the NABDI technical assistance proposals to IEED at the email address listed in the **ADDRESSES** section of this notice.

H. Transfer of Funds

IEED's obligation under this solicitation is contingent on receipt of congressionally appropriated funds. No liability on the part of the U.S. Government for any payment may arise until funds are made available to the Awarding Officer for this grant and until the recipient receives notice of such availability, to be confirmed in writing by the Awarding Officer.

All payments under this agreement will be made by the U.S. Government by electronic funds transfer (through the Automated Standard Application for Payment (ASAP). All recipients are required to have a current and accurate DUNS number to receive funds. All payments will be deposited in according with the banking information designated for the applicant in the System for Award Management (SAM).

I. Reporting Requirements for Award Recipients

Final Reporting Requirements

- Delivery Schedules. The Tribe or entity must deliver all products and data required by the signed Grant Agreement of the proposed NABDI feasibility study project to IEED's office within 30 days of each quarter and 90 days after completion of the project.

- Mandatory Requirement to Provide Products and Data in Digital Form. The IEED requires that deliverable products be provided in digital format, along with printed hard copies. Reports can be provided in either Microsoft Word or Adobe Acrobat PDF format. Spreadsheet data can be provided in Microsoft Excel, Microsoft Access, or Adobe PDF formats. All vector figures should be converted to PDF format. Raster images can be provided in PDF, JPEG, TIFF, or any of the Windows metafile formats.

- Number of Copies. When an applicant prepares the contract for an economic development feasibility study, it must describe the deliverable products and include a requirement that the products be prepared in standard format (see format description above). Each contract should provide funding for all printed and digital copies to be delivered in accordance to the projects award agreement.

All products generated by the consultant belong to the applicant and cannot be released to the public without the applicant's written approval. Products include, but are not limited to, all reports and technical data obtained maps, status reports, and the final report.

J. Requests for IEED Assistance

The IEED staff may provide technical consultation. However, the applicant is responsible for preparing the executive summary, justification, and scope of work for its proposal. The applicant must notify IEED in writing that it requires assistance, and IEED will then assign staff to help. The applicant's request must clearly specify the type of

assistance desired.

Requests for assistance should be submitted well in advance of the proposal deadline established in the **DATES** section of this solicitation to allow IEED staff time to provide the appropriate assistance. IEED will not accept requests for assistance that are received after the deadline for such requests listed in the **DATES** section of this solicitation. Applicants not seeking assistance should also attempt to submit their NABDI proposals well in advance of the deadline to allow IEED staff time to review the proposals for possible deficiencies and allow time to contact the applicant with requests for revisions to the initial submission.

K. Authority

This is a discretionary grant program authorized under the Snyder Act (25 U.S.C.13) and the 2018 Consolidated Appropriations Act (Public Law No. 115-141). The Snyder Act authorizes the BIA to expend such moneys as Congress may appropriate for the benefit, care, and assistance of the Indians for the purposes listed in the Act. Development of Native American businesses meets two of the purposes listed in the Snyder Act: General support and civilization and industrial assistance and advancement. The 2018 Consolidated Appropriations Act authorizes the BIA to carry out the operation of Indian programs by direct expenditure, contracts, cooperative agreements, and grants, either directly or in cooperation with States and other organizations.

Dated: May 8, 2018