

Request for Proposals

# **Nimiipuu Community Development Fund Feasibility Study and Business Plan**

RFP Issued by:



## **Nimiipuu Community Development Fund**

95 Agency Road / P.O. Box 114, Lapwai, ID 83540

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## REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS FOR FEASIBILITY STUDY AND BUSINESS PLAN

Nimiipuu Community Development Fund “Nimiipuu Fund” is seeking proposals from planning professionals to complete a feasibility study and business plan for an Business Incubator and Office space for areas in the Lapwai, Idaho or on the Nez Perce Indian Reservation. This space will serve as a venue for co-working space for economic development agencies, start-up and existing firms, and a location for business programs to launch and expand business activity. The Business Incubator will contribute to community economic development by providing incubator space for small businesses, programming to assist entrepreneurs, Nimiipuu Fund CDFI operations, and providing a location for “remote workers.”

Nimiipuu Fund is a certified Native Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) by the U.S. Treasury Department. Incorporated in 2013 by the Nez Perce Tribe, Nimiipuu Fund is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization, governed by a 7-member Board of Directors, whose mission is “The Nimiipuu Fund facilitates financial independence by enhancing the personal and entrepreneurial capacity of the Nez Perce Reservation and surrounding communities. We promote economic growth while embracing our cultural values and traditions by providing tailored financial products and services.” More information on Nimiipuu Fund and its products and services can be found at [Nimiipuu Fund website](#)

This project contract will not exceed \$32,000 and will be completed over five (5) months. This project is funded by the USDA Rural Business Development (RBDG) grant program and Nimiipuu Fund.

### **Project Background**

This concept for business incubator space has been an interest and need on the Nez Perce Indian Reservation and arose again during development of the Nimiipuu Fund strategic plan in 2020. The space would both meet the needs for Nimiipuu Fund growth, its development services, and expressed needs for businesses to have infrastructure to house their businesses or space to occupy or use.

The Nimiipuu Incubator Feasibility Study will respond to identified needs of Nez Perce Tribal entrepreneurs who are interested in starting their own businesses and to similar needs of other Tribal owners of emerging or micro- businesses. These entrepreneurs face several barriers, including a need for learning best practices in business management and a need for back-office support. The costs of marketing and advertising for a single business is out of reach for some, and the severe lack of available business locations on the reservation is also an impediment.

As Idaho's only seaport and with accessible rail and air transportation, the nearby City of Lewiston creates significant opportunities for entrepreneurs in the region, but Tribal members have been less able to capitalize on these opportunities. No Community Reinvestment Act loans were provided to low or moderate income persons in Clearwater or Nez Perce counties in 2019, demonstrating the inability of such individuals to access credit and the need for technical assistance support.

The Nimiipuu Fund has grown exponentially over the past few years and is in need of a business location as well for its expanded operations and services to business owners, including financial literacy and business development workshops.

Development of the feasibility study will benefit both the NCDF and area entrepreneurs in the short term follows:

- Information gathered in the feasibility study will be used to inform later decision-making needed for achievability of the first business incubator to serve area Tribal entrepreneurs;
- The study will present the Nimiipuu Fund with a clear efficiency plan and cost estimates for incubator development;
- The study will also explore optimal property locations and/or property development for the incubator to house new businesses and for the Nimiipuu Fund to establish its permanent home in north central Idaho
- Interviews and surveys conducted as part of the feasibility study will add momentum to economic development efforts on the Nez Perce Reservation.

Incubator development following the study would focus on supporting industries of strength in the region, supporting tribal member owned startups and expansion to create quality jobs for the Tribal community. The proximity of the Nimiipuu Fund to Tribal entrepreneurs will bring a robust presence with direct technical assistance available on site to help them succeed in their initial operations, while providing cost efficiencies for all under one roof.

Long term benefits from development of the Tribal Business Incubator would include:

- A centralized resource center for entrepreneurs and those considering starting a business;
- A vibrant entrepreneurial hub with the user-friendly familiarity of Tribal values and cultural support through the presence of Tribal mentors and shared experience on site;
- A user-friendly setting for business development meetings, regional workshops, and workforce development;
- A visible manifestation of the Tribe's presence in the region and the importance of the Nimiipuu Fund as an economic engine for the benefit of the Tribe and Tribal communities.

## **Project Partners**

Project partners in the facility and their anticipated roles are listed below:

- Key Tribal leaders in areas of economic development and enterprises that support entrepreneurial development as part of economic development.
- Nimiipuu Fund Staff and Board leadership team

- Private sector businesses are interested in providing donated services and infrastructure to support the project

## Scope of Work

Nimiipuu Fund is seeking a business and economic development consultant or team to conduct a feasibility analysis and create a business plan for the development and operation of the business incubator. The consultant must have demonstrated experience in planning and evaluating public-private initiatives to launch, grow and mentor businesses, and building synergy between project partners to create a long-term successful venture.

The project components will include:

1. **Feasibility analysis:** A feasibility study establishing the market demand for the specific start-up companies proposed for incubation/acceleration and the presence of necessary resources and community support. The analysis should demonstrate how the Innovation Hub generates benefits to the Nimiipuu Fund CDFI, entrepreneurs, and region.
  - a) Market research on potential users who would pay rent to access the space, including economic development agencies who may be “anchor tenants,” related entrepreneurs, startups, and other interested businesses or community organizations.
  - b) Information gathering regarding the facilities, facility characteristics, amenities, and types of spaces that potential co-working space tenants would be interested in renting.
  - c) Information gathering on the type of entrepreneurial ecosystem social gathering that entrepreneurs would want to occur, and with what regularity, in the incubator.
2. **Business Plan:** A business plan with detailed demonstration that the facility and sponsoring agencies have the financial capacity to operate the facility and reach a positive cash flow within three years.
  - a) Evaluation of similar facilities in our region and a break-down of how they operate, including ownership of the space (or lead tenant status, if applicable), staffing, financial management and risk management.
  - b) Recommendation of which type of management approach (operation and organizational structure) would best fit the Downtown Lewiston Innovation Hub concept.
  - c) Prospective revenue of the incubator, between anchor tenants, and coworking tenants, other organizations, and special events.
  - d) Prospective expenses of the incubator, including initial outfitting costs, annual operating costs, and ongoing payroll costs if staff is recommended.
3. Within the business plan, provide a guide/outline of a management plan for operation that includes:
  - a) Tenant/client selection policy that includes a description of the types of businesses sought and any established selection criteria
  - b) Tenant lease or license agreement (if applicable) that enumerates the shared services to be provided; delineates the business assistance policy, including the provision of management, technical, and training assistance, and the graduation policy; and

establishes periodic access to the tenant's business records to permit assessment of the financial and operational viability of the tenant's business

- c) Business assistance policy that outlines the various types of assistance that will be provided to start-up firms, including how support will be provided to tenants/clients with access to capital needed to grow their businesses successfully
- d) Staffing plan that details the talent and resources that will be dedicated to supporting the startup companies accepted
- e) Tenant graduation policy that is documented as a provision of the tenant lease or license agreement (if applicable) with clear requirements for tenant graduation from the facility or services; and
- f) Performance plan that includes how the entity will track the success of tenants/clients, specifically identifying what performance measurement data are proposed to be collected from tenants/clients and for what period of time during and after the service period the data will be collected. This should also include members of any oversight or policy board that will be responsible for setting performance,

The project will be guided by a Steering Committee, under the direction of the Nimiipuu Fund Executive Director, to provide input and feedback to the consultant. The Steering Committee includes Nimiipuu Fund Executive Director and steering committee.

## Deliverables

The consultant shall be responsible for providing each of the following as the project deliverables.

- 1) Draft feasibility analysis and business plan
- 2) Slide deck of any public presentations related to the project
- 3) Final feasibility analysis and business plan

In creating the feasibility and business plan, the consultant will:

- a. Negotiate and sign a contract for service
- b. Interview at least 10 stakeholders identified by the Steering Committee as having knowledge of entrepreneurial ecosystem development
- c. Complete the Scope of Work identified in the RFP
- d. Develop a draft feasibility analysis and business plan and review it with the Steering Committee and
- e. Make no more than two presentations of the draft feasibility analysis and business plan to interested stakeholders or elected officials
- f. The final feasibility analysis and business plan will be presented to the project Steering Committee, which will make a recommendation to approve the deliverables and present that recommendation in writing to Nimiipuu Fund

## Project Schedule

October 1, 2021	RFP Announcement
November 3, 2021	Deadline for Submissions to Nimiipuu Fund
November 10-12, 2021	Interviews at Lapwai or may be conducted remotely
November 19, 2021	Projected date to select consultant
November 29, 2021	Projected date for project to be under contract
February 1, 2022	Complete Research and Draft feasibility analysis and business plan
February 15, 2022	Presentation of draft feasibility and business plan to Steering Committee
March 15, 2022	Final feasibility analysis and business plan due to Nimiipuu Fund
March 25, 2022	Final plans submitted to the USDA (grantor) by Nimiipuu Fund

## Evaluation Criteria:

Respondents will be evaluated according to these criteria:

**Capability to Perform Project** (i.e., ability to perform work in Idaho; firm history; areas of expertise; commitment to provide necessary resources to perform & complete project). (25 pts.)

**Relevant Project Experience** (i.e., description of other projects executed by the firm that demonstrate relevant experience. List of all public sector clients for whom you have performed similar work in the past five years, which should include name, address, and phone number of a person who can be contacted regarding the firm's performance on the project). (35 pts.)

**Qualifications of Project Team** (i.e., resumes for the key people assigned to the project including sub-consultants. Key personnel roles and responsibilities on this project. Identify project manager who will be responsible for the day-to-day management of project tasks and will be the primary point of contact). (25 pts.)

**Project Approach and Schedule** (i.e., the tasks that must be accomplished to complete the project. How the firm proposes to execute the tasks. Unique aspects of the project and alternative approaches Nimiipuu Fund might wish to consider). (15 pts.)

Total Written Proposal Points Possible = 100

The Selection Committee may choose to interview the highest-ranking architects. If this option is exercised, an additional maximum of 25 points will be added to those interviewed based on presentations. In person interviews or remotely, will be scheduled and done by the committee. (25 pts.)

Total Proposal Points Possible = 125

## Award

Award will be made to the most qualified offer or who is deemed most advantageous to Nimiipuu Fund, all evaluation criteria considered. Unsuccessful offers will be notified as soon as

possible. Nimiipuu Fund reserves the right to reject all proposals if one is not found to be responsive to this project.

## **Proposal Format & Submission**

Electronic proposals in PDF format will be accepted. Proposals should not exceed 20 pages (cover letter, resumes, etc. are included in the 20 pages). Email file size delivery cannot exceed 10 MB.

Proposals should be submitted to:

Jonelle Yearout at [jonelle@nimiipuufund.org](mailto:jonelle@nimiipuufund.org). 208-621-3729

## **Proposal Deadline:**

All responses must be received by **12:00 pm (PDT), November 3, 2021**.

## **Type of Contract:**

The agreement will be on a fixed price basis, with payment terms to be negotiated with the selected offer. The contract form will be an approved and negotiated owner/consultant form.

*This solicitation is being offered in accordance with 2 CFR Part 200. Nimiipuu Fund reserves the right to negotiate an agreement based on fair and reasonable compensation for the scope of work and services proposed, as well as the right to reject any and all responses deemed unqualified, unsatisfactory or inappropriate.*