

USDA Rural Development RCDI Grant in Support of Former Bennett Freeze Area

\$250,000 Rural Community Development Initiatives Grant to Provide Training and Leverage Planning

The Grant at a Glance—Approved May 2016	
Name of Agency USDA Rural Development	Purpose of Grant To provide technical assistance to the people of the Former Bennett Freeze Area
Name of Program Rural Community Development Initiatives	General Description of Grant Activity NAYA to train Native Builders (a Navajo-owned company) to provide training and education to people of the FBFA
Program Purpose Support housing, community facilities, and community and economic development projects in rural areas	Navajo Contact Leonard Chee, OPVP LeonardChee@Navajo-nsn.gov
Amount of Grant \$250,000	NAYA Contact Mike Rasmussen michaelr@nayapdx.org
Matching Funds \$250,000 from Navajo Nation as a part of a \$999,000 FBFA Economic Development Project	Native Builders Thomas Tso thomastso79@yahoo.com
Grant Recipient Native American Youth and Family Center (NAYA)	Type of Grant Train the Trainer


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    graph LR
      A["NAYA  
(Intermediary)"] --> B["NATIVE BUILDERS  
(Recipient)"]
      B --> C["PEOPLE OF THE FBFA  
(Beneficiary)"]
  
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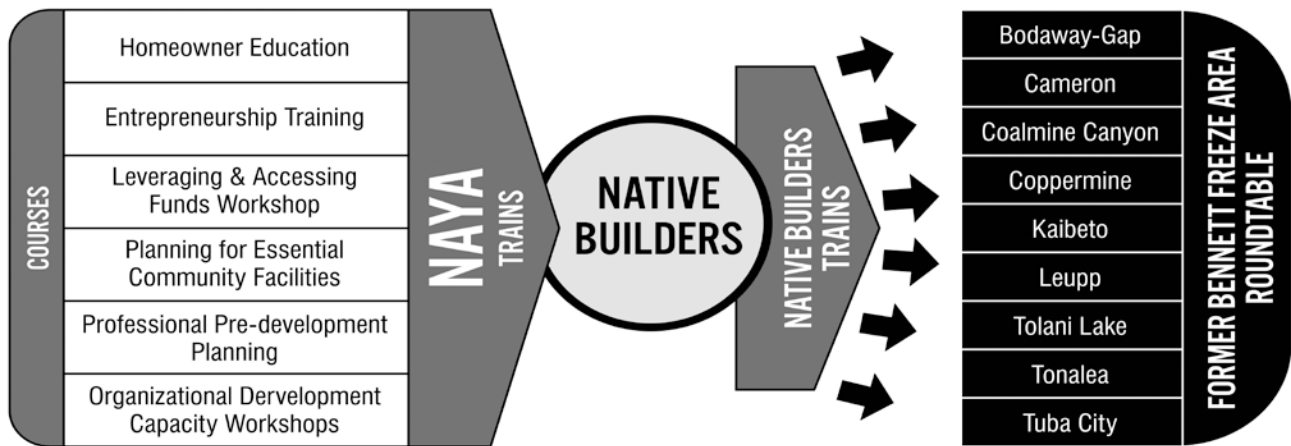
The Four Goals of the Project

Goal #1: Build capacity in the Former Bennett Freeze Area of the Navajo Nation to advance community, economic and housing development projects.

Goal #2: Connect Navajo Nation (and other) financial and technical resources to priority FBFA projects and initiatives.

Goal #3: Improve the economic conditions and overall quality of life for the people of the FBFA.

Goal #4: Create a nucleus of capacity that ultimately benefits all of the Navajo Nation.



Steps to Project Implementation

- Step 1: Grant Award and Contracting
- Step 2: Finalize Work Plan
- Step 3: Notification to FBFA Chapters
- Step 4: Establishment of FBFA Roundtable
- Step 5: NAYA Interviews Relevant Navajo Nation Divisions and Offices
- Step 6: NAYA Trains Native Builders and Building Communities on Six Training Modules
- Step 7: Native Builders Conducts Chapter-based Community and Economic Development Strategic Plans
- Step 8: Targeting Training to Chapter Needs
- Step 9: Scheduling of Capacity Building Training Modules
- Step 10: Administration of Satisfaction Surveys for Capacity Building Modules
- Step 11: Professional Pre-development Planning
- Step 12: Development of Regional Plan
- Step 13: Routine Project Reporting to USDA Rural Development
- Step 14: Project Closeout Reporting

About NAYA

The Native American Youth and Family Center (NAYA) is at the heart of Portland, Oregon’s Native community by offering more than 40 programs and services to support, uplift, and empower the ninth largest urban Indian population in the United States and also to support rural tribal organizations in the Western United States. Established as a grassroots volunteer organization by parent and Elder volunteers in 1974, NAYA achieved 501(c)(3) nonprofit status in 1994.

NAYA has the human and technical capability to train Navajo Nation and Native Builders to offer all six of the technical assistance modules described in this application: Homeowner Education, Entrepreneurship Training, Leveraging and Accessing Funding Workshops, Planning for Essential Community Facilities, Professional Pre-development Planning, and Organizational Development Capacity Workshops.

Additional Context:

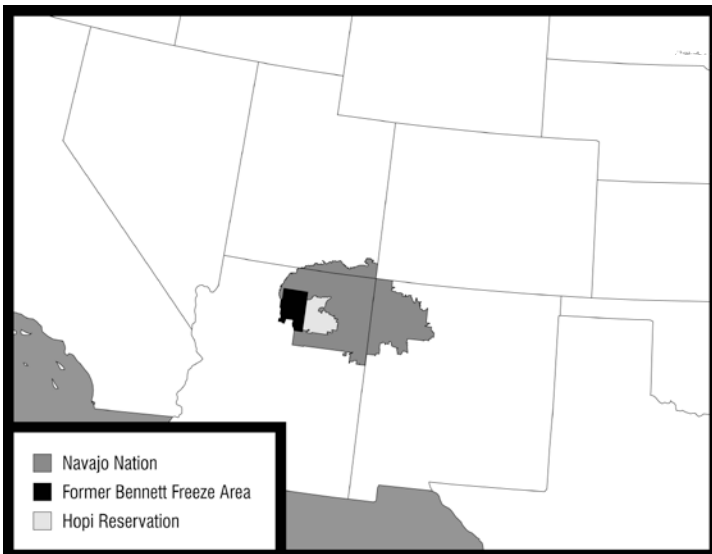
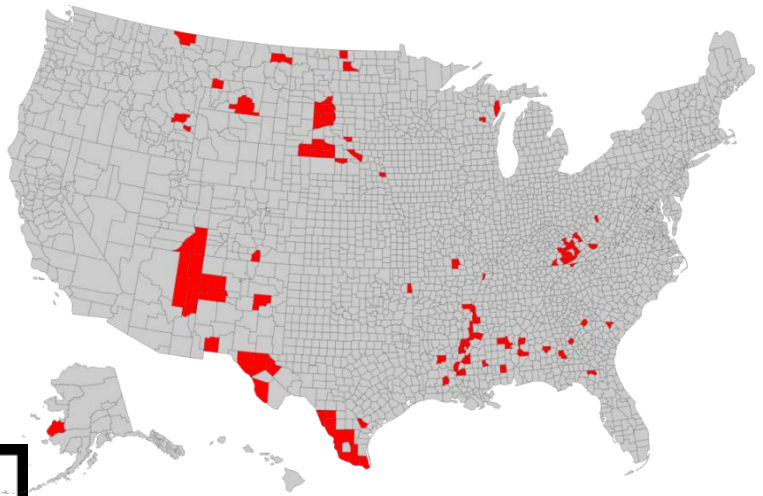
The FBFA, Poverty and the New Navajo Nation Administration

The USDA RD grant application provided broader context for the federally-funded project.

The information below is extracted from the application.

Awakening of a New Dawn

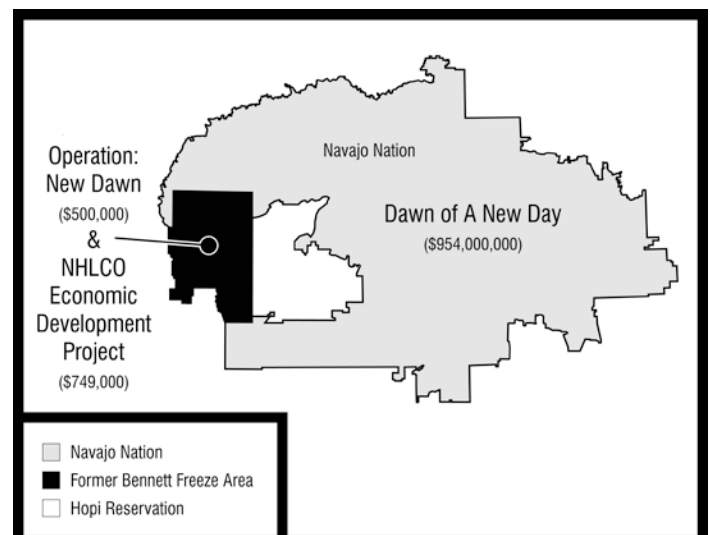
When one fully understands the deplorable economic and housing conditions at the Navajo Nation, it is not surprising to find the largest geographic concentration of poverty in the United States to be centered in Northeast Arizona. The map shows the 3,140 counties in the United States with the lowest 100 per-capita-income counties highlighted. Apache County (10th lowest per-capita-income) and Navajo County (85th lowest per-capita-income) form the heart of the Navajo Nation.



What is even more startling is the fact that the most impoverished portion of the Navajo Nation is actually to the west in Coconino County in a region today known as the Former Bennett Freeze Area (FBFA). When then-Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Commissioner Robert L. Bennett enacted the Bennett Freeze in 1966, it was ostensibly to quell an ongoing land dispute between the Navajo and Hopi Tribes after the Hopi Tribe sued to claim some acreage. The result of the *Freeze* was to place a moratorium on *all development activity on land that covers all or a portion of nine Chapters of the 110-Chapter Navajo*

Nation. Chapters are the local governance unit at the Navajo Nation. Although the “freeze” was lifted in 2006, virtually no investment in community, economic or housing development has taken place since 1966—nearly 50 years!

The purpose of the Operation New Dawn project, (hereinafter “Project”) is to generate the capacity desperately needed at the Navajo Nation to reverse the decades-long effects of poverty, poor housing and the federally-instituted moratorium on development. As such, this project squarely addresses the priority of the 2015 RCDI program stated on Federal Register page 27887, “of



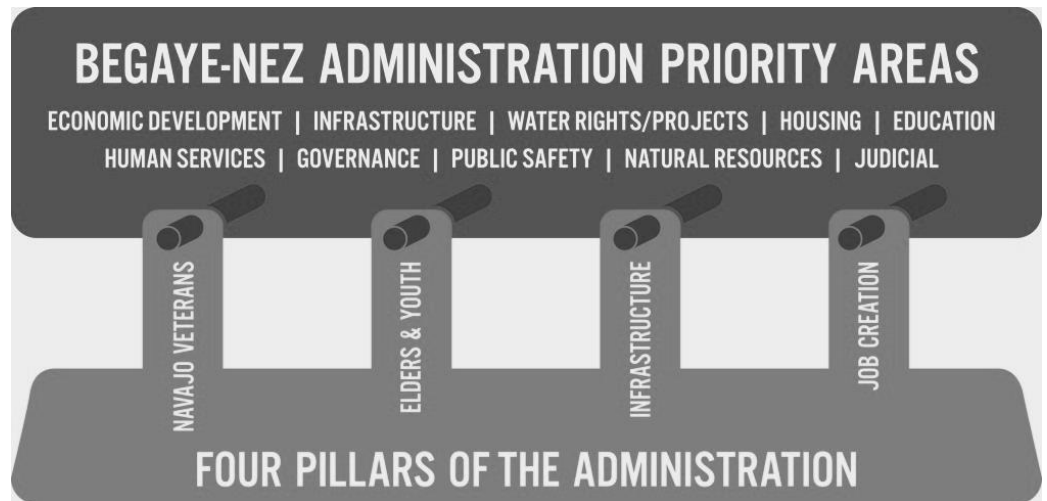
particular note this year, the Agency is encouraging applications for projects based in or servicing high poverty areas.”

At 27,425 square miles, the Navajo Nation is the largest tribal reservation in the United States. The Navajo population, estimated at 300,048, is the second largest Native American population in the United States (second to Cherokee Nation). Yet despite its size and population, the Navajo Nation has rarely availed itself of federal capacity building programming due to a lack of ability to competitively apply for and engage such programming. One outcome of the Operation New Dawn project will be to systematically increase capacity for the entire Nation while focusing on the FBFA.

This project, Operation New Dawn, coincides with a broader initiative by the Russell Begaye/Jonathan Nez Administration of a similar name—*Dawn of a New Day*.

The new Administration assumed office May 12, 2015. The Administration’s initiative identifies four “pillars” and nine “priorities” as shown in the graphic.

The scope of this project will, in effect, fully address the pillars and priorities for the nine FBFA Chapters.



Decades of Nothingness

How do you conduct community, economic and housing development activities in a region which has suffered for nearly a half century from a federal restriction making it *illegal* to conduct such activities?

As noted in this proposal, the result of the Bennett Freeze has been to restrict all forms of development activity. Not only has such development activity been stopped, but the mindset of the people in the FBFA has been to generally accept that no development will *ever* occur.

Houses will never be fixed. Homes will never be built. Roads will never be constructed. Power will never serve residences. Indoor plumbing will never exist. The only housing development that can be expected is the relocation of the outdoor outhouse when such necessity arises.

The federal moratorium on development activity may have ended in 2006, but needed federal and tribal funding has not arrived to reverse the problem. Until now.

More than RCDI Resources Available to Help

Over \$5 million is available specific to the nine Navajo Nation Chapters of the FBFA for housing, community and economic development. Operation New Dawn is the first concerted effort *ever* to address the destitute living conditions of the FBFA.

Operation New Dawn is the proposed USDA Rural Development RCDI project that addresses this need. Fortunately, the \$500,000 two-year project is set within two broader initiatives that serve to address the colossal need.

The broader initiatives include:

- 1) **Dawn of a New Day**—The Navajo Nation is working to deploy two large-scale funding initiatives targeting community, economic and housing development activities. In 2014, the Navajo Nation received the largest federal settlement in the history of Native American tribes, \$554 million available for initiatives that happen to be consistent with the purpose of the RCDI program. Simultaneously, the Navajo Housing Authority has approximately \$400 million unspent, but available for housing improvements throughout the Navajo Nation. With these two funding sources alone, the Navajo Nation has nearly \$1 billion to address housing, community and economic development needs.
- 2) **NHLCO Economic Development Project**—A project scope and purpose that mirrors Operation New Dawn benefitting the FBFA Chapters is set to be implemented (\$749,000 is available—plus \$250,000 matching funds for this application).

Adding to the potential and timing of this Operation New Dawn project are two other complementary initiatives focused upon the FBFA:

- 1) **NHLCO Escrow Housing Funds**—Funding to be distributed in 2015 to the nine FBFA Chapters for housing planning, development and repairs (\$3.6 million)
- 2) **NHA/NHLCO FBFA Housing Needs Assessment Study**—A comprehensive home-by-home analysis of the specific needs of every house/home/trailer in the FBFA (\$2.0 million)

In short, the need is gigantic. Significant financial resources are available for implementation—but local and Navajo Nation capacity to implement the project is virtually non-existent...enter Operation New Dawn.

Capacity will be built through the provision of technical and financial assistance provided by NAYA to Native Builders, a western-Navajo Nation-based entity focused upon housing, community and economic development.

Despite the development moratorium and lack of development capacity, a local governance structure is in place in order to target capacity-building activities. At the Navajo Nation, local governance is managed by Chapters.



There are 110 Chapters across the Navajo Nation. Approximately 30% of the Chapters are “certified,” meaning that they have achieved a basic level of capacity related to management, personnel and accounting. Four of the nine FBFA Chapters are certified.

While the generation of capacity is top-down (NAYA training Native Builders to assist Chapters), the identification of needed training will be bottom-up. That is, each of the nine FBFA Chapters will initiate the **Economic Development Project** by conducting economic development strategic plans. Based upon the strategies and initiatives selected at the Chapter-level, specific technical assistance will be delivered.

Each Chapter will complete a community and economic development strategic plan during the early months of the project, yielding a Chapter-defined set of strategies and initiatives that govern future development activity for five years (beyond the life of the Operation New Dawn project). Chapters that, for example, identify housing development as a priority, may elect to take the *Homeowner Education* training.