

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
STATE OF MONTANA

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**Governor Bullock Announces Indian Country Economic Development Grant Awards**

HELENA – Governor Steve Bullock and Montana Department of Commerce Director Meg O'Leary announced recipients of Indian Country Economic Development (ICED) grant funds. The recipient tribes include the Confederated Salish & Kootenai, Little Shell, Blackfeet, and Fort Belknap Indian Community. Each received \$65,000 for their economic development projects.

"It is essential that quality of life, opportunities to innovate, and the ability to provide necessary goods and services exist in every Montana community," said Bullock. "The Indian Country Economic Development program not only honors our government-to-government relationship with every tribal nation in Montana, but also allows us to continue this valuable collaborative process that supports sustainable and effective solutions to create new revenue and entrepreneurial opportunities in tribal communities."

The recipient tribes intend to use their awarded funds in the following ways:

- The Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes plan to provide small grants to qualified tribal member business owners and start-ups to assist them in job creation and retention.
- The Little Shell Tribe is purchasing a custom-built narrow belt block saw for the Tribe's travertine quarry development.
- The Blackfeet Tribe will hire contractors for electrical, earthwork, mowing, painting, cleaning, management, water infrastructure upgrades, light carpentry, and signage to improve the infrastructure, roads, lighting, electrical hook-ups, and recreational activities available on tribal recreational properties (RV parks & campgrounds).
- The Fort Belknap Indian Community intends to upgrade their existing weight scale facility to meet expanded and increased use of the weigh scale by local producers.

"As a key and intentional outcome of the Governor's Main Street Montana Project, we are strengthening our relationships to and connectivity with each tribal community across the state and working together on their economic development priorities," said Director O'Leary. "We are always looking for ways to challenge each other to think outside the box to find new solutions and new initiatives to grow reservation economies."

The [Main Street Montana Project](#), Gov. Bullock's flagship economic development initiative, sets clear priorities to increase capital and encourage growth of new and existing businesses throughout tribal nations. Since the

rollout of the Project, members of Bullock's administration have met with tribal governments, tribal colleges and tribal economic development organizations to create action plans and work teams that are now working to implement the goals and objectives identified in the plan.

The governing bodies of each of Montana's eight tribal governments are the only eligible applicants for tribal priority economic development projects, with a maximum of \$65,000 per governing body each fiscal year. Eligible entities may use ICED funds to support a business enterprise if it will produce a positive economic benefit for the tribe(s). In this context, a positive economic benefit is defined as the near-term creation or retention of job opportunities for tribal members in Montana.

Representatives of the Fort Belknap Livestock Marketing Co-op Board of Directors noted in a statement that the upgrades they will be able to make "will ensure that the small dynamic family operator can have access to the same economic advantages as a large producer," and that they are "truly grateful for the opportunity that the ICED grant will give us to develop a long-lasting economic impact on our community and neighbors."

The ICED grant program is intended to improve economic opportunities for the eight tribal governments in Montana. Since its inception in the 59<sup>th</sup> Montana State Legislature, the ICED program has supported tribal government priority economic development projects, the Montana Indian Equity Fund, and the Montana Indian Entrepreneur Training program.

For more information about the Indian Country Economic Development grants, please contact Heather Sobrepena-George, Program Manager, at (406) 841-2775 or visit <http://iced.mt.gov/>.

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