



NEIGHBORWORKS AMERICA'S
NATIVE STRATEGY:

Exploring Partnerships and New Opportunities for Achieving Impact in Native Communities

March 2020





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Acknowledgments

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

NeighborWorks America is undertaking a stakeholder engagement process to better understand the Native housing and community development landscape and identify ways to leverage its strengths to achieve long-term impact in advancing housing and economic conditions for Native people. This report summarizes the engagement process and synthesizes the data gathered in order to inform the development of a corporate strategy that scales NeighborWorks America's work and impact in Native communities.

To explore opportunities that NeighborWorks America might consider to achieve long-term impact, Seven Sisters Community Development Group, LLC conducted qualitative data gathering over a four-month period from September through December 2019.

Based on these findings, there are three core recommendations central to the development of NeighborWorks America's new Native strategy:

- 1. Cultivate cultural competence and a respectful understanding of sovereignty within NeighborWorks America.**
- 2. Integrate Native perspectives into NeighborWorks' and NeighborWorks Organizations' (NWOs') management decisions through senior staffing, boards and advisory groups.**
- 3. Institutionalize a permanent Native Initiative within NeighborWorks America.**

Respondents also offered the following suggestions about the general approach to advancing housing and economic conditions for Native people in a way that builds credibility with Native partners:

- Allocate time and resources to listen, develop relationships and build trust with national, regional and local Native entities,
- Build relationships and set goals together,
- Recognize lessons learned from previous efforts to serve Native communities, and
- Build on existing capacity in Native communities.

Finally, throughout the information gathering process, specific recommendations emerged for NeighborWorks to consider incorporating into its Native strategy. They included recommendations to:

- Engage and empower NeighborWorks Organizations interested in expanding their services to Native communities,
- Promote opportunities to collaborate with Urban Indian organizations,
- Expand training opportunities for organizations serving Native communities,
- Prioritize key training topics to build capacity within Native organizations,
- Expand NeighborWorks's existing funding opportunities for Native organizations,
- Expand collaboration on education and awareness opportunities around policy issues impacting Indian Country,
- Consider capacity building efforts to enhance Native organizations' ability to qualify for NeighborWorks affiliation, with the goal of affiliating at least one Native organization in every state with a significant Native presence,
- Support increased access to external capital and other resources for housing and community development efforts in Native communities,
- Develop an evaluation program on the local and national levels customized for measuring success metrics in Indian Country, and
- Convene thought leaders to tackle systemic challenges in Indian Country.

Throughout the information gathering process, stakeholders and NeighborWorks and NWO staff expressed enthusiasm and strong commitments to supporting and engaging in NeighborWorks America's exploration of a new strategy. As NeighborWorks moves forward with its deliberations on how to implement its plans, stakeholders urged decision makers to continue to consult with and engage Native partners and NWOs, through mechanisms like a Native advisory group and/or memoranda of understanding with Native organizations, to help to shape this work.



OVERVIEW OF NATIVE STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

NeighborWorks America's Strategic Plan calls out the need to better assist underserved populations and to support diversity, equity and inclusion in its programs. Specifically, one of its FY 2019 strategic objectives includes a goal to develop and resource a Native strategy and to identify opportunities to increase awareness about Native communities including cultural competency and sovereignty.

Accordingly, NeighborWorks America is undertaking a stakeholder engagement process to better understand the Native housing and community development landscape and identify ways in which to leverage its strengths to achieve long-term impact in advancing housing and economic conditions for Native people. This report summarizes the engagement process and synthesizes the data gathered in order to inform the development of a corporate strategy that scales NeighborWorks America's work and impact in Native communities.

After synthesizing and analyzing the findings from each of these data gathering channels, the following items emerged: three core recommendations for developing a new corporate Native strategy; a recommended general approach to strategy development; and specific recommendations for possible strategy components.



DATA GATHERING PROCESS & METHODOLOGY

To explore strategies that NeighborWorks America might consider to achieve long-term impact in advancing housing and economic conditions for Native people, the Seven Sisters team conducted qualitative data gathering over a four-month period from September through December 2019.

As a first step, Seven Sisters met with members of an internal NeighborWorks America working group called *Akwe:kon*, which means “all of us” in the Mohawk language. During this virtual discussion on September 11, 2019, the group shared their perspective on their approach to gathering data from partner organizations to inform their planning process. They also discussed and came to a consensus about a framing question to guide this assessment. This framing question was:

What more can NeighborWorks America do to achieve long-term impact in advancing housing and economic conditions for Native people wherever they live?

To answer this question, the Seven Sisters team undertook a range of data collection activities, which included:

- A one-day, in-person listening session with key stakeholders on October 24, 2019,
- A series of telephone interviews with key stakeholders from Native and non-Native organizations, and
- Two virtual focus groups held on December 2, 2019 and December 3, 2019.

To analyze the data, all the notes from the data gathering efforts were reviewed and then themes were constructed.

In-person Listening Session

On October 24, 2019, 20 representatives from national, regional and local Native organizations and 15 NeighborWorks America staff met for one day in Washington, DC in a session facilitated by Seven Sisters to explore approaches to expanding NeighborWorks America's work in Native communities. The session focused on two-way information sharing and hands-on strategy development that could lead to tangible and meaningful impacts. Participant work groups developed hypotheses to vision for the future. The agenda from the listening session along with a list of session participants are provided in Appendix A and Appendix B.

Stakeholder Interviews

Stakeholder interviews were conducted with representatives of both Native and non-Native organizations to explore ways that NeighborWorks can strengthen outreach and services to Native communities, understand the organization's strengths as perceived by partners, and identify strategies that can serve to leverage the organization's assets and build partnerships to maximize its impact. The stakeholders interviewed included individuals from national Native nonprofits representing a broad geographic range, national intermediary organizations, and federal agencies with long-standing experience in Native housing and economic development. Seven Sisters conducted interviews with 15 key stakeholders who provided valuable feedback to guide NeighborWorks' efforts moving forward. The interview protocols can be found in Appendix C, and Appendix D includes a list of stakeholders interviewed.

NeighborWorks America Organization Focus Groups

Online focus groups using a virtual meeting platform were conducted on December 2, 2019 and December 3, 2019 with NWOs that currently serve Native communities. Representatives from 11 NWOs attended the focus group sessions and four submitted feedback to the questions in writing. These groups discussed ways NeighborWorks America could contribute most to the training, capacity building, resource, and/or policy needs in Native communities, and highlighted potential tools and resources that could enhance possible partnerships between NWOs and Native organizations in their service areas. The focus group interview protocol and list of focus group participants may be found in Appendix E and Appendix F.

Summary and Synthesis of Findings

This report summarizes and synthesizes the findings from these data gathering efforts. Throughout this document, direct quotes, hypotheses and suggestions from stakeholders are noted in italics.

The stakeholders that NeighborWorks America seeks to engage through its new Native strategy include representatives from American Indian, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian populations. While each of these Indigenous populations has unique cultures and histories of federal and state policies, this report refers collectively to these sectors as “Indian Country.” The sovereign entities that represent each sector are Indian tribes, Alaska Native Corporations and Hawaiian Homestead Associations. The report may reference each sector individually or collectively as “tribes.”

Similarly, the report refers to the three populations together as “Native people” and the places where they live as “Native communities.” The places could include Indian reservations, Alaska Native Villages or Hawaiian Homesteads. Given historical federal and state policies and economic conditions, “Native communities” could also include: communities near reservations, Alaska Native Villages, Hawaiian Homesteads or urban settings with concentrated populations of Native American, Alaska Native or Native Hawaiians.



CORE RECOMMENDATIONS

The three core recommendations and possible activities to implement the recommendations are described below.

► **1. Cultivate cultural competence and a respectful understanding of sovereignty within NeighborWorks America.**

An important theme emerging from all data sources was the need for NeighborWorks America and its affiliates to educate themselves about Native communities. Respondents emphasized that cultural competence needs to be operationalized and institutionalized within NeighborWorks' corporate policies, practices and proposed outcomes.

In addition to taking into account the cultural practices of Indigenous people, respondents communicated that cultivating a meaningful cultural competency involves learning about sovereignty, appreciating the diversity across Indian Country, adjusting to a different way of doing business, getting up to speed about the unique institutional players and dynamics in Native communities and exploring opportunities in both reservation and urban settings.

Culture. Because respondents acknowledged that NeighborWorks staff cannot be expected to know everything about Native cultural beliefs and practices, they encouraged the organization to partner with those that do and who can support their work. They stressed that cultural competency needs to carry through all areas of business including culturally relevant curriculum and trainers. In addition, NeighborWorks' cross-cultural training and inclusion efforts should incorporate Native culture along with other minority groups. Respondents shared:

- *Native issues should not be invisible within NeighborWorks as a corporation.*
- *This work should be diverse and inclusive generally, which means it should also be inclusive of Native examples, even though it is a small part of the overall population.*
- *Any time NeighborWorks speaks about rural economic development initiatives or racial justice, NeighborWorks should train its staff to include reference to tribal communities.*

Sovereignty. All respondents, including non-Native stakeholders with experience working in Native communities, encouraged NeighborWorks to expand the corporation's knowledge of sovereignty. Because Native people are a political class, rather than a racial classification, they said it is critical to educate staff about American Indian, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian policies and history, including tribal sovereignty, the federal government's trust responsibility to Indian tribes and Alaska Native Corporations and the role of the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands in managing trust land and federal resources for Hawaiian Homestead Associations. As sovereign entities, these groups have a right to engage in community economic development on their own terms and pursuant to a complicated mix of tribal, state and federal laws. Housing and economic development in Indian Country may not mimic approaches that work in other rural communities without adaptation.

Diversity Across Tribes. Because there are 574 federally recognized tribes and Alaska Native Corporations and 35 Hawaiian Homestead Associations in the United States, respondents urged NeighborWorks to recognize the diversity of Indian Country and understand that there may be different nuances in each Indian reservation, Alaska Native Village, Hawaiian Homestead region and urban Indian community.

A Different Way to Do Business. Respondents provided a range of suggestions about doing business in Indian Country.

- *Recognize that capacity in Native communities is different, not better or worse, just different.*
- *Get comfortable with organic and flexible timelines. Sometimes you'll invest a lot of time and energy in a project or program and there can be staff turnover and you must start over. You have to be comfortable with that.*

They also cautioned against assuming that all Native community development efforts are operating at a deficit, suggesting that there are many successful models that can be replicated not only in other Native communities but in mainstream America. However, they stressed that working with tribes takes time and may require that you modify your expected outcomes:

- *Given the heavy challenges of working in Indian Country, especially the cultural hurdles to overcome regarding investment and debt, significant changes may be generational in length.*

Institutional Players. Respondents advised NeighborWorks to learn about the institutional players in Native communities to determine how to best add value, steer clear of political landmines and avoid becoming a competitor for resources:

- *The biggest thing is identifying and understanding who and where the experts are and engaging them in a way where you can learn how to enhance their services or what can be provided to supplement and leverage what they are already doing.*

Stakeholders emphasized the need to navigate the “different centers of control” and “political dynamics” in Native communities, which may look different in every place. All of the players should be at the table when designing new programs and outreach, including elected tribal officials, tribal departments, nonprofits and state housing finance agencies, which could be more than one because some tribes cover more than one state.

Urban Indian v. Reservation. Because about 78 percent of Native people live in urban or suburban settings, respondents encourage NeighborWorks to take this population shift into account as it develops its Native strategy. While rural NWOs have most actively sought out partnerships with Native organizations, many opportunities exist for NWOs in larger cities to expand their services to Urban Indians, who may have difficulties accessing resources because they transition frequently between urban and reservations settings.

Possible Activities

Respondents offered specific examples about how to implement the overarching recommendation to cultivate cultural competence and a respectful understanding of sovereignty:

- **Native Partner Engagement.** Expand the knowledge base of NeighborWorks and NWO staff about Native culture and community development strategies by engaging national Native intermediaries and regional Indian tribal and housing associations. This could be achieved by convening regional listening sessions for stakeholders working in Native communities including NWOs, organizing site visits to reservation communities, and participating in Native conferences.
- **Staff Training.** Identify opportunities to train key NeighborWorks and NWO staff about the history of Indigenous people in the United States, federal policies, the federal government's trust responsibility and tribal sovereignty. Examples of existing curricula include *NA250 Developing Successful Partnerships with Native Organizations*, developed through a partnership between NeighborWorks America's training division and Seven Sisters; *Tribal Nations and the United States: An Introduction*, a guide developed by the National Congress of American Indians; and other similar trainings developed by Native Hawaiian organizations.

▶ 2. Integrate Native perspectives into NeighborWorks' and NWOs' management decisions through senior staffing, boards and advisory groups.

According to respondents, NeighborWorks must have some accountability to Native communities by recruiting Native representation into senior management positions and advisory groups. They suggested hiring a Native staff person with relevant housing and community development experience and recommended that NWOs with Native communities in their targeted service areas include Native representation on their boards.

- *If NeighborWorks established a Senior Vice President of Native Initiatives, then that leader could coordinate work in Native communities across the corporation, and it would send a message that it's a long-term commitment.*
- *If NeighborWorks added tribal members to its senior leadership ranks and governance structure, then it could lead to programming which is more responsive to the needs of Indigenous people.*

Several respondents called out the role that Steve Barbier plays as a relationship manager in NeighborWorks' Western Region and how he has served as a bridge-builder in his region between NeighborWorks and Native communities. They recommended formalizing and replicating this function in all of NeighborWorks' regions.

Possible Activities

Respondents offered the following suggestions:

- Make a commitment to hire qualified personnel from underserved backgrounds.
- Recruit Native personnel to serve in senior management and relevant staff positions throughout NeighborWorks.
- Create a national Native advisory group to guide the development and implementation of NeighborWorks' expanded Native strategy.
- Dedicate a relationship manager in every region of NeighborWorks to focus on working with the Native communities located in that region.
- Encourage NWOs serving Native communities to have Native representation on their boards.
- Utilize a Memorandum of Understanding to formalize partnerships with national Native membership organizations, such as National American Indian Housing Council and the Native CDFI Network.

▶ 3. Institutionalize a permanent Native Initiative within NeighborWorks America.

While respondents were complimentary of NeighborWorks' historical efforts to support homeownership, housing counseling and capacity building for Native community development financial institutions (Native CDFIs), another prevalent theme was the need to institutionalize programming for consistency and longevity.

- *If NeighborWorks establishes a Native initiative, then it would have a direct impact on Indian Country in an honorable way.*

The following sections outline recommendations for the general approach to creating the Native Initiative and specific components that could be incorporated into the strategy.

"WHAT MORE CAN
NEIGHBORWORKS AMERICA DO TO ACHIEVE
LONG-TERM IMPACT IN ADVANCING
HOUSING + ECONOMIC CONDITIONS FOR
NATIVE PEOPLE WHEREVER THEY LIVE?"

GENERAL APPROACH TO NATIVE STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

Stakeholders offered the suggestions described below about the general approach to developing a strategy to improve housing and economic conditions for Native people in a way that builds trust and credibility with Native partners.

- ▶ **Allocate time and resources to listen, develop relationships and build trust with national, regional and local Native entities.**

Respondents across the board underscored the need to dedicate time to relationship building to learn about what the issues and barriers are in Native communities. They recommended setting clear expectations with community partners.

Also, the necessity for flexibility, patience and strong listening skills were frequently recommended along with humbly recognizing that there is always more to learn. Because trust must sometimes be built over many decades, one respondent suggested that it may be helpful to identify trusted organizations and then determine how to build their capacity and expand local partnerships to achieve shared goals.

- *If NeighborWorks listens to the needs of Indian Country to learn about and identify barriers, then they can work together towards better solutions and technical assistance.*
- *There are many issues to overcome in terms of community perception. You have to be thoughtful, slow and intentional so you can meet expectations.*

Many noted that this approach to building strong relationships often necessitates a large travel budget and management that understands and recognizes deeper relationships as an important outcome. They stressed the importance of relationship building in advance of program development so that when opportunity strikes, it takes less time to start building and creating together.

- *Sometimes you have to just sit and listen, though hard, expensive and time-consuming.*

It was also recommended that NeighborWorks make a concerted effort to educate Native organizations about what NeighborWorks and its affiliates have to offer. In addition, one veteran stakeholder with experience working on Native community development issues shared the following advice:

- *I maintain a network of folks across Indian Country that I do regular check-ins with so when we need an answer to something, they are more likely to respond. Being intentional and building email listservs that you can regularly message out updates about work you are doing or funding opportunities that folks might be interested in can be hugely helpful. It is impactful to share information and opportunities, even though it might not benefit you directly, because folks see that you have been paying attention to their interest and are invested and interested in their success.*

► **Build relationships and set goals together.**

Participants at the October 24, 2019 listening session were pleased to have the opportunity to help NeighborWorks to conceptualize its Native strategy. Many of the national Native intermediaries, including the National American Indian Housing Council, Native CDFI Network and First Nations Oweesta Corporation, offered to continue to partner with NeighborWorks to provide feedback and guidance as the organization works through its strategy development process.

Because Native communities are so unique, they felt it was important to have their voices in the mix as they work with NeighborWorks towards the common goal of advancing housing and economic conditions for Native people.

- *It's critical for the groups you are serving to have input and buy-in from the beginning. Let's build this relationship together and achieve something together. Honestly, that sounds pretty simple, but by the time you layer in intermediaries, big federal agencies, and local partners and issues, that can be hard to do.*
- *Native representation is a must. We know our constituents. We know the difficulties and successes of working in the industry. It's pertinent that these voices are at the forefront of this initiative.*

► Recognize lessons learned from previous Native strategies.

Respondents encouraged NeighborWorks to harvest lessons learned from previous successes in Indian Country. For example, a partnership between the National Congress of American Indians and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) that involved a series of joint conference calls with regional administrators resulted in productive outcomes including USDA staff overcoming initial fears, open communication channels and more confident partnerships with Native communities. Other successful models cited were partnerships in Montana and Alaska with the NWOs in those states.

Another lesson from previous efforts showed the need to identify individuals within partner organizations with personal commitments.

- *This work in Indian Country is heart driven. You need to find those who care. Non-Native intermediaries who have been successful with this work have individuals with a personal commitment to get it done. It makes good business sense, but it's hard, intensive work, and it takes more effort to be successful.*

Respondents also encouraged NeighborWorks to study efforts that may not have been as successful, including other attempts to support Native organizations as NWO affiliates (Sicangu Enterprise Center on the Rosebud Sioux Indian reservation in South Dakota and the Nanakuli Housing Corporation in Hawaii).

Finally, respondents encouraged NeighborWorks to determine its priorities and to set realistic expectations at all levels.

- *Don't bite off more than you can chew.*
- *I appreciate the attention being paid to this issue. There is nothing easy about working in Indian Country. Please be patient in expecting results. While investment is exciting, all tribal projects battle the headwinds of poverty, addiction and re-victimization. Small wins are too often dwarfed by forces outside the funders' control. Manage your expectations and your definition of "winning" from the outset for best results to keep your team leaning in.*

► Build on existing capacity and strengths in Native communities.

Respondents warned against designing a strategy that would be too prescriptive. They encouraged maintaining enough flexibility to leverage existing capacity and resources at the local level rather than coming in with a "formula."

- *Native communities know what they need. They don't need people to come in and tell them, "Here's what you need, and here's how to do it." They just need either more money or some access to models and capacity building opportunities.*
- *If we leverage relationships, then we will develop leadership skills and empower communities to identify solutions and utilize resources.*
- *We need advocates and partners who empower Native communities, not organizations who simply overpower and denigrate our sovereignty.*



POSSIBLE STRATEGY COMPONENTS

Throughout the information gathering process, specific recommendations emerged for NeighborWorks to address in its new Native strategy. They include:

► **Engage and empower NeighborWorks Organizations interested in expanding their services to Native communities.**

There was strong interest from NWOs and their potential partners in Native communities to explore ways to work together more effectively. All agreed that NeighborWorks should empower NWOs with more knowledge, best practices and resources to expand their services to Native communities.

- *If NeighborWorks trains non-Native affiliates about how to support Native organizations, then it would allow the network to expand outreach in Native communities.*
- *If NeighborWorks identified the 326 reservations and 574 tribes across the nation and specifically asked NWOs how they are reaching out to those communities, then it could improve NeighborWorks focus on Native issues.*
- *If NeighborWorks dedicated more resources to peer-to-peer learning over a period of time, then NWOs would be able to convene Native organizations to learn more about their needs.*
- *If NeighborWorks provided access to Community Leadership Institutes (CLIs) training slots which would allow for several tribal leaders to attend and learn together, then NWOs that provided the slots would have better relationships and could build trust and new avenues for communication and services in Native communities.*

Possible Activities

- Provide training to NWOs to increase their knowledge about partnering in Native communities.
- Set up a specialty unit staffed by Native American staff to advise NWOs on tribal issues.
- Offer NWOs the opportunity to invite and provide scholarships to Native organizations to attend NeighborWorks Training Institutes (NTIs), place-based trainings (PBTs) and CLIs.
- Develop and share a database of best practices about how NWOs are providing services to Native people in rural and urban areas.
- Organize regional convenings for NWOs and Native organizations in each NeighborWorks region.
- Create peer sharing and mentoring networks between Native organizations and NWOs.
- Host quarterly conference calls for NWOs working in Native communities and create a listserv to share relevant information with interested NWOs and their partners.
- Incentivize NWOs to partner with Native organizations in their service areas by offering additional points in the scoring process for funding from NeighborWorks.

▶ Promote opportunities to collaborate with Urban Indian organizations.

As discussed earlier, 78 percent of Native people are “Urban Indians” who live in urban or suburban areas. Respondents suggested that NWOs beyond rural areas have the potential to expand their services to target Urban Indians by partnering with Urban Indian Centers or other direct service providers. One NWO shared that they had a successful collaboration with a Native American service agency that resulted in the organization taking ownership of a health facility after the 15-year tax credit period was over.

- *If there were ways to connect the services of NeighborWorks organizations to groups like Native American Health Services, there can be a stronger connection with Native people in urban areas.*

► **Expand training opportunities for organizations serving Native communities.**

One of the most discussed possible components of a corporate Native strategy was the expansion of NeighborWorks' training offerings to include a permanent Native track at NTIs as well as regional PBTs. They noted that NeighborWorks already has a history of offering training to Native organizations, especially Native CDFIs, and its training department has a catalog of existing Native-focused curriculum to use as a starting point. They encouraged NeighborWorks to build on that foundation and to deepen existing partnerships with national Native intermediaries who offer community development training, including National American Indian Housing Council and First Nations Oweesta Corporation.

- *If NeighborWorks collaborates with existing Native “training institutes,” consults with Native representatives on an advisory committee and offers place-based training, then their training will be more impactful.*
- *If NeighborWorks wants to execute training initiatives, it would be best to identify Native curricula that are already available and to use those sets of curricula. It would also be great to have standardization of curricula and resources and to have a site where tribes could go and find topics of interest and learn about those core principles.*
- *If NeighborWorks entered into training partnerships with NAIHC and NCN (two national organizations that are coalitions in the field of NeighborWorks), then training to TDHE's and Native CDFIs would be more impactful and NeighborWorks would know annually and efficiently where Indian Country is and is headed.*

Several respondents recognized that it would be easier to customize training for Native audiences with training cohorts and specialty convenings, which could happen either at NTIs or PBTs. This approach would create an environment conducive to learning in a cultural context.

- *Given the uniqueness of Native funding and the comradery that exists among Native practitioners, special trainings or meetings with Native groups should be considered.*
- *If NeighborWorks can connect regional offices with tribes and non-governmental organizations to coordinate place-based training, then we would have more informed, impactful training and local landscape review.*

Practitioners working in Native communities who have achieved NeighborWorks certifications recommended that NeighborWorks consider how comparable, Native-focused courses could meet standard certification requirements.

► Prioritize key training topics to build capacity within Native organizations.

In addition to discussions about how best to deliver training to Native communities, respondents recommended key training topics that should be prioritized. These included training that would build the capacity of Native organizations to improve financial capacity in Native communities such as financial education, financial coaching, homebuyer education, housing counseling and post-purchase education.

- *If NeighborWorks invests in building financial capacity in Indian Country, then it could lead to significant improvements in housing in some of the poorest areas of the country.*

Other areas of strong interest include building the capacity of Native CDFIs, particularly in the area of housing products and services, manufactured housing, affordable housing development financing, energy efficiency and rural economic development initiatives.

- *From my experience. Native housing organizations often do not have the experience or training to leverage their federal dollars to build more housing. NWOs and NeighborWorks staff have a lot of skills to do creative financing that the tribes and Native orgs could benefit from.*

► Expand NeighborWorks's existing funding opportunities for Native organizations.

Many respondents raised the need for NeighborWorks to dedicate funding for non-affiliated Native organizations.

- *If NeighborWorks established a Native set-aside like the CDFI Fund, then there would be more impact and reach in Native communities.*
- *If NeighborWorks added a non-affiliate small grant program, then NeighborWorks would efficiently learn what capacity levels exist nationally to become relevant in training.*

Capital for housing development, especially pre-development funds, was cited as an area where NeighborWorks could have significant impact.

- *In most cases there is a funding gap to make projects work in Indian Country. Financial investments from NeighborWorks, foundations and other sources in the form of loans, grants and guarantees are often necessary to make projects pencil.*
- *If NeighborWorks created a capital set-aside for funding one or more housing developments on reservation land, then it could serve as a model for development for other NWOs and housing developers.*
- *If NeighborWorks creates a pre-development grants pool for Native projects, then it could lead to increased capacity and increased housing/economic development.*

► **Expand collaboration on education and awareness opportunities around policy issues impacting Indian Country.**

Native stakeholders expressed a strong interest in collaborating with national intermediaries to educate federal, state and tribal policymakers about issues impacting Indian Country. By strengthening collaborations in these policy arenas, respondents felt like they could more effectively help to remove policy impediments and make the case for new resources dedicated to innovative community development and housing programming designed specifically for Indian Country.

- *If NeighborWorks sets a goal of 35 Native affiliates within the 35 states where trust lands are located, then it would have 70 Senators that strengthen its support.*
- *If Native CDFIs advocate for increased Congressional appropriations to create a Native set-aside in the funding that NeighborWorks America receives, then NeighborWorks could achieve long-term impact in advancing housing and economic conditions for Native people.*

► **Consider capacity building efforts to enhance Native organizations' ability to qualify for NeighborWorks affiliation, with the goal of affiliating at least one Native organization in every state with a significant Native presence.**

During the Native listening session as well as in stakeholder interviews, there was a great deal of discussion around NeighborWorks affiliation. One line of discussion centered around increasing the number of Native-controlled NWOs from one to 35, striving to have at least one Native NWO in every state with a Native presence. Many respondents explained that it will be necessary to invest in capacity building efforts to help Native organizations meet the certification criteria.

In addition, some respondents recommended more of a tiered approach to funding support as Native organizations grow into affiliation. This could include travel scholarships for training and capacity building technical assistance first and then bigger grants. Others recommended defining "Native NWO" through features such as mission to primarily serve Native communities and/or Native control through leadership and board composition.

A second area of discussion was to develop unique affiliation criteria specifically for Native NWOs.

- *If NeighborWorks developed new criteria for Native affiliates (e.g., Native specific evaluation criteria, Native to Native organization comparisons, etc.), then Native entities could be compared to other Native organizations and NeighborWorks would be more successful reaching Native communities.*

► **Increase access to external capital and other resources for housing and community development efforts in Native communities.**

Stakeholders indicated that one of the biggest challenges in Native communities is finding pre-development funds to initiate for affordable housing and economic development. NeighborWorks could play a role in bringing together outside funders and other intermediaries to be more strategic to layer resources. Other suggestions included bringing together a cohort of local Native organizations and more mature organizations to expand capacity through joint ventures.

One NWO respondent contemplated whether NWOs could provide hands-on technical assistance to nearby Native organizations to demonstrate how leveraging of housing dollars could be accomplished. Yet another suggestion was for NeighborWorks to collaborate with Native intermediaries on project-based financing, New Markets Tax Credit and Capital Magnet Fund deals, stacking capital and big investment deals.

- *If NeighborWorks creates a cohort of Native organizations to support each other in building capacity, it could make the pre-development projects more successful.*
- *If NeighborWorks sponsored grant writing scholarships, then tribes would be able to go after grants they can't now.*

► **Develop an evaluation program on the local and national levels customized for measuring success in Indian Country.**

As previously discussed, respondents in several forums raised the need for NeighborWorks to think strategically about establishing realistic impacts and success indicators in Native communities. Since NeighborWorks operates within a framework of production, it will be critical for impact indicators to take into consideration what it takes to create housing and economic development in Indian Country versus outside of Indian Country. Both are challenging, but NeighborWorks will have to understand the baseline and success indicators in each type of market. A suggestion was made to explore the shared evaluation platform created by First Nations Oweesta Corporation called Opportunity Through Impacts System (OTIS) to learn more about culturally relevant success measures in Native communities.

In addition to customizing measures on the local level, respondents encourage NeighborWorks to set national goals to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the new Native strategy. Possible goals could center around funding levels, training and technical assistance delivery, engagements and capacity building.

► Convene thought leaders to tackle systemic challenges in Indian Country.

An area identified as a NeighborWorks strength was its convening power. Respondents noted the organization's ability to bring together the right stakeholders in the housing and economic development fields to identify gaps and develop solutions. They encouraged NeighborWorks, and NWOs on the local level, to expand this practice to thought leaders in working in Native communities, especially around Native homeownership, similar to the work they have done with the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis' Center for Indian Country Development.

For example, NeighborWorks could co-host lender forums with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, USDA, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Department of Hawaiian Homelands to collectively train the field on the homeownership process on trust land.

- *If NeighborWorks, Tribally Designated Housing Entities, lenders and the Bureau of Indian Affairs got together at the table, then it would lower time to approve loans and increase the number of loans in Indian Country.*

Possible Activities

- Convene federal agencies to address the residential leasing and title issues on trust land.
- Consult with Native Hawaiian housing organizations to determine how best to support their efforts to streamline the residential leasing process on Hawaiian Homelands.
- Cross-train with federal agencies to collectively serve Native communities better and more efficiently.
- Convene lenders to educate them about lending in Native communities.
- Educate appraisers about working on trust land.
- Support the development of residential construction industries on trust land including surveyors, appraisers, contractors and inspectors.
- Convene housing and community development intermediaries (e.g., LISC, Enterprise Community Partners, PolicyLink, RCAC, Grounded Solutions, Habitat for Humanity, etc.) with Native housing practitioners and leaders to align resources and coordinate activities.
- Partner with Native Americans in Philanthropy to convene funders investing in Native housing and community development activities and outcomes.



NEXT STEPS & CONCLUSION

Throughout the information gathering process, stakeholders and NeighborWorks and NWO staff expressed enthusiasm and strong commitments to supporting and engaging in NeighborWorks America's exploration of a new strategy. As NeighborWorks moves forward with its deliberations on how to implement its new Native strategy, stakeholders urged the decision makers to continue to consult with and engage Native partners and NWOs to help to shape this work. In addition to continuing to engage its internal working group *Akwe:kon*, they recommended that NeighborWorks consider creating an advisory group with whom to vet its future plans and to reassess their strategies as they are tested and implemented.

Given NeighborWorks' strengths and the strong interest and support from its affiliates, many opportunities are on the horizon for NeighborWorks to achieve long-term impact in advancing housing and economic conditions for Native people wherever they live.

NOTES



APPENDICES

- Appendix A: Native Strategy Listening Session Agenda
- Appendix B: List of Native Strategy Session Participants
- Appendix C: Stakeholder Interview Protocols
- Appendix D: List of Stakeholder Interview Participants
- Appendix E: NeighborWorks Organization Focus Group Protocol
- Appendix F: List of NeighborWorks Organization Focus Group Participants

APPENDIX A

▶ Native Strategy Listening Session Agenda

NeighborWorks America Listening Session
October 24, 2019 | 9:00 am – 3:00 pm
Hilton Garden Inn, 1225 First St NE, Washington, DC

Framing Question

What more can NeighborWorks America do to achieve long-term impact in advancing housing and economic conditions for Native people wherever they live?

Objectives

- To hear from the field of Native community development practitioners about ways to strengthen outreach and services to Native communities.
- To explore NeighborWorks strengths as perceived by partners.
- To explore ways NeighborWorks can leverage its strengths and build partnership to maximize its impact in Indian Country.

A G E N D A

8:00 – 9:00	Breakfast and Registration
9:00 – 9:45	Welcome, Prayer, Land Acknowledgement, Meeting Purpose, Introductions
9:45 – 10:45	Sharing Intermediary Stories and Insights
11:00 - 11:15	<i>Break</i>
11:15 – Noon	Understanding NeighborWorks America’s Service Delivery Model
Noon – 1:00	Lunch - <i>Brief Remarks from Marietta Rodriguez, NeighborWorks CEO</i>
1:00 to 2:15	Identifying Strategies and Opportunities to Advance Native Housing and Community Development
2:15 to 2:45	Navigating the National Intermediary Ecosystems
2:45 – 3:00	Reflections and Next Steps

APPENDIX B

▶ List of Native Strategy Session Participants

Name	Organization
Mike Attocknie	Kiowa Tribe
Shane Begay	National American Indian Housing Council
Jackson Brossy	Native CDFI Network
Tawney Brunsch	Lakota Funds
Dave Castillo	Native Community Capital
James Colombe	Center for Indian Country Development
JC Crawford	CBJ Producers, Inc.
Robin Danner	Sovereign Council of Hawaiian Homestead Associations
Susan Hammond	Four Directions Development Corporations
Jackie Johnson Pata	Tlingit Haida Housing Authority
Tomie Peterson	Intertribal Agriculture Council
Ted Piccolo	Northwest Native Development Fund
Katie Miller	Salish Kootenai Housing Authority
William Miller	Native American Youth and Family Center
Joey Nathan	Northern Ponca Housing Authority
Linda Lee Retka	National American Indian Housing Council
Lanelle Smith	First Nations Oweesta Corporation
Lahela Williams	Hawaiian Community Assets
Rollin Wood	Native Partnership for Housing
Denise Zuni	Sh'eh Wheel Law Offices

NeighborWorks Staff

Lee Anne Adams
Steve Barbier
Jayna Bower
Randy Gordon
Leon Gray
Lisa Hasegawa
Chris Helmers
Bree Herne
Robyn Hudson
Elena Kaye-Schiess
Suzanne Letendre-Oakes
Sheila Rice
Doug Scott
Kathryn Watts



APPENDIX C

▶ Stakeholder Interview Protocols

Native Stakeholder Interview Questions

Interview Objectives

- To hear from the field of Native housing and community development organizations that currently serve Indian Country about ways non-Native intermediaries can strengthen outreach and services to Native communities.
- To explore NeighborWorks strengths as perceived by partners.
- To explore ways NeighborWorks can leverage its strengths and build partnership to maximize its impact in Indian Country.

Interview Questions:

1. As mentioned earlier, NeighborWorks is trying to strengthen the work they do in Native communities, to that end, what key factors does NeighborWorks need to understand to be effective in contributing to housing and economic development in Native communities?
2. Thinking about non-Native intermediaries working with Native communities, what approaches to outreach and engagement have you seen be successful?
3. To the extent that your organization works with intermediaries and funders that are not familiar with Indian Country, how have you helped them to understand the need to modify their traditional success measures?
4. Where have you struggled the most working to partner with non-Native intermediaries? How have you worked with non-Native intermediaries to help them understand your work in Indian Country?
5. Can you tell us about your experience working with NeighborWorks? What comes to mind about what NeighborWorks does well?
6. Thinking about NeighborWorks strengths and the needs in Indian Country, where could NeighborWorks America contribute most to the training, capacity building, resource and/or policy needs in Indian Country?
7. To be effective contributing to Native community housing and economic development success, which organizations on a national level would you recommend they collaborate or develop partnerships with? Do you have any thoughts about the types of local organizations that make good partners?
8. Do you have any additional ideas or thoughts that you'd like to share?



Non-Native Stakeholder Interview Questions

Interview Objectives

- To hear from the field of non-Native and governmental entities that currently serve Indian Country about ways to strengthen outreach and services to Native communities.
- To explore NeighborWorks strengths as perceived by partners.
- To explore ways NeighborWorks can leverage its strengths and build partnership to maximize its impact in Indian Country.

Interview Questions:

1. As mentioned earlier, NeighborWorks is trying to strengthen the work they do in Native communities, to that end, what key factors does NeighborWorks need to understand to be effective in contributing to housing and economic development in Native communities?
2. In your work with Native communities, what approaches to outreach and engagement have had the most success?
3. To the extent that your organization provides services in Native communities, have you had to modify your metrics to measure your success with that work? If yes, how?
4. Where have you struggled the most working in Indian Country?
5. Can you tell us about your experience working with NeighborWorks? What comes to mind about what NeighborWorks does well?
6. Thinking about NeighborWorks strengths and the needs in Indian Country, where could NeighborWorks America contribute most to the training, capacity building, resource and/or policy needs in Indian Country?
7. To be effective contributing to Native community housing and economic development success, which organizations should they collaborate with or develop partnerships with?
8. Do you have any additional ideas or thoughts that you'd like to share?

APPENDIX D

▶ List of Stakeholder Interview Participants

Name	Organization
Susan Anderson	Enterprise Community Partners
Suzanne Arnade	Rural Communities Assistance Corporation/Rural LISC
Tedd Buelow	US Department of Agriculture Rural Development
Beth Castro	Office of the Comptroller of the Currency
Kellie Coffey	Fannie Mae
Colleen Dushkin	Association of Alaska Housing Authorities
Lorraine Griscavage-Frisbee	US Department of Housing and Urban Development
Stan Keasling	Rural Communities Assistance Corporation
Shalynn Kellogg	Shoshone Bannock Tribes
Krystal Langholz	First Nations Oweesta Corporation
Jerry Mayer	US Department of Housing and Urban Development
Kim Pate	NDN Collective
Lori Pourier	First Peoples Fund
Maheen Qureshi	Freddie Mac
Ian Record	National Congress of American Indians
Doug Ryan	Prosperity Now



APPENDIX E

▶ NeighborWorks Organization Focus Group Protocol

Framing Question

What more can NeighborWorks America do to achieve long-term impact in advancing housing and economic conditions for Native people wherever they live?

Focus Group Objectives

- To hear from NWO orgs that currently serve Indian Country about ways to strengthen outreach and services to Native communities.
- To explore NeighborWorks strengths as perceived by NWOs.
- To explore ways NeighborWorks can leverage its strengths and build partnership to maximize its impact in Indian Country.

Focus Group Questions:

1. How can NeighborWorks America contribute most to the training, capacity building, resource, and/or policy needs in Native communities?
2. Think about how NeighborWorks has helped your NWO organization to succeed. Which of those programs would be beneficial to Native orgs?
3. What tools or resources would be most helpful to support NWOs to be an effective partner with Native communities?
4. How have you struggled the most working in Native communities?
5. How have you had to modify your metrics to measure your success working in Native communities?
6. Share your top recommendations in this format: If NeighborWorks does _____ (an action), then it could lead to _____ (an impact).
7. Do you have any additional ideas or thoughts that you'd like to share?



APPENDIX F

▶ List of NeighborWorks Organization Focus Group Participants

Name

Tom Collishaw
Scott Cooper
Brent Ekstrom
Jamie Erickson
Marcia Erickson
Susan Hammond
Matt Lewis
Reina Miyamoto
Alonzo Morado
Jim Nordlund
Vonda Poynter
Juan Rivera
Dena Sherill
Joshua Simon
Hanna Tester

Organization

Self-Help Enterprises
NeighborImpact
Lewis and Clark Community Group
Midwest Minnesota CDC
Grow SD
Coastal Enterprises, Inc.
Penquis Community Action Program, Inc.
Hawaii Homeownership Center
The Primavera Foundation
NeighborWorks Alaska
FAHE
NeighborWorks Sacramento
REI Oklahoma
East Bay Asian Local Development Corporation
NeighborWorks Montana



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