

NATIVE LANGUAGE IMMERSION INITIATIVE GRANT

Application Deadline: MONDAY, MARCH 4, 2024, 5 pm Mountain Time

GENERAL INFORMATION

About First Nations Development Institute

Since 1980, First Nations Development Institute ([First Nations](https://www.firstnations.org)), a Native-led 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, has worked to strengthen American Indian economies to support healthy Native communities. First Nations invests in and creates innovative institutions and models that strengthen asset control and support economic development for American Indian people and their communities. First Nations began its national grantmaking program in 1993. Through mid-year 2023, we have successfully managed 3,052 grants totaling \$65 million to Native American projects and organizations in 45 states, the District of Columbia, and U.S. Territory American Samoa. For more information, visit www.firstnations.org.

Because Native cultures and languages are, collectively, key assets for all Native communities, First Nations has long included a concentration on supporting their preservation and proliferation. Since 2002, First Nations has supported tribes and Native communities working to maintain and strengthen cultural connections, identities and practices maintained through language, land/place, food, traditional art mediums and other forms of cultural expression.

Grant Overview

First Nations originally launched the [Native Language Immersion Initiative](#) (NLII) in 2017 as a three-year project to build on longtime efforts to support the revitalization and perpetuation of Native languages. The NLII program is designed specifically to build the capacity of and support Native language immersion education programs in tribal communities. With generous support from several foundations and numerous individual donors across the U.S., the NLII program has continued beyond the initial investment. Support for the 2024 grant cycle is made possible through funding from the [Sunderland](#)

[Foundation](#), [Pendleton Woolen Mills, Inc.](#), and the CSAA Insurance Group (a [AAA Insurer](#)) and through a generous gift from the Diane Mott Estate.

During this funding cycle, First Nations will award **10 grants ranging from \$45,000 to \$75,000** to build the capacity of and directly support Native-controlled nonprofit organizations and tribal government programs actively advancing Native language immersion programs.

Language is the foundation through which traditions are deeply rooted and values – such as respect for elders, community, and the Earth – are taught. Research has shown that learning a language increases the social, emotional, intellectual, cultural, and physical development of children. Fortified by learning their Native language, Native youth build a positive cultural identity and resiliency to face life’s challenges.

Since the NLII program began, more than 30 Native organizations and tribes have received over \$4 million in funding to build the capacity of and directly support their Native language immersion programs. In addition to providing direct financial resources, this initiative seeks to build a dialogue and community of practice among Native language immersion grantees and momentum for supporting Native language programs.

Funding under this grant will support capacity-building activities designed to improve and enhance the language immersion program’s ability to achieve its mission. This may include curriculum development, technology access, instructional courses and materials, mentorships, teacher training and other kinds of organizational infrastructure.

Grant Period

The grant period for this funding opportunity is **May 1, 2024, to April 30, 2025**.

Grant Award Ceiling

Total requested funds in project budgets under this funding opportunity should not exceed \$75,000.

Grant Submission Deadline

Applications are due **MONDAY, MARCH 4, 2024, no later than 5 pm Mountain Time.**

First Nations recognizes that some of our most rural and remote applicants may have limited access to high-speed internet. Any exceptions to use of the online system must be made at least two weeks in advance of the application deadline by submitting a request to grantmaking@firstnations.org. Please include your name, organization, contact information and the name of the RFP for which you are applying. If you do not have access to email you can call our office at (303) 774-7836 and ask to speak with a member of the Grantmaking Department.

Unfortunately, First Nations cannot make any emergency exceptions to application deadlines. Partial applications, incomplete applications due to user error, or faxed/emailed/mailed applications will not be considered unless they have received prior approval.

Download instructions for First Nations' Online Application System [here](#). Access First Nations' Online Application system [here](#).

ELIGIBILITY

Type of Eligible Entities

Tribes, Native-controlled nonprofits, and Native-controlled community organizations with active Native language immersion programs located in the United States or U.S. territories are eligible to apply. First Nations considers "Native-controlled" to mean that the majority (more than 50%) of the organization's Board of Directors is tribally-affiliated.

Types of eligible applicants include, but are not limited to:

- Federal- and State-Recognized Tribal Governments and Departments

- Native-controlled 501(c)(3) nonprofits
- Native-controlled community organizations with fiscal sponsorship
- Native §7871 Organizations

Please refer to the [FAQ](#) section for further insight regarding applicant eligibility.

Language Immersion Program Requirements

Native language is multidimensional and interdisciplinary in its nature, requiring a holistic community approach where intergenerational knowledge transfers can exist. To that end, Native language transmission may be found in agriculture, art & culture, conservation, economic development, education, healthcare, job training, public safety, tribal government, etc.* Therefore, eligible programs must fit **at least two or more** of the following criteria for Native language immersion:

- Have an existing language immersion program (one-year minimum)
- Provide at least 20 hours of Native language instruction per week in a year
- Serve a minimum of 10 students; open for all age groups but youth serving and intergenerational teaching is preferred
- Have a community vision for the future of their language

Programs should be actively growing new speakers and have assessment and evaluation plans to identify progression in student Native language acquisition. **Preference will be given to programs with long-term, community-based language plans.**

* U. S. Department of the Interior, Indian Affairs. (2022). *White House Council on Native American Affairs Education Committee ... 10-year National Plan on Native Language Revitalization.* <https://sites.ed.gov/whiaiane/files/2023/04/Framework-For-10-year-National-Plan.pdf>

Allowable Grant Activities

Administrative, programmatic, and organizational capacity-building activities must support language immersion programs. Matching funds are not required under this grant.

Examples of **allowable activities** under this funding opportunity include, but are not limited to:

- Curriculum development

- Language and culture summer and after-school camps
- Professional development
- Mentorships
- Internships
- Leadership succession planning
- Strengthening technological and informational systems
- Conducting audits
- Program evaluation consulting

Optional activities may include, but are not limited to, program development, implementation, and ongoing support. All activities will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis in correlation to proposed project objectives.

Selection Criteria

First Nations seeks projects that meet the spirit of this initiative and demonstrate:

- Proper alignment with stated funding priorities and eligibility guidelines.
- A clear plan of action with specific, measurable and realistic goals and objectives.
- Accurate, reasonable and consistent project or program budget.
- Feasibility and sustainability of proposed projects or programs.
- Partnerships and/or direct engagement of target audiences to understand their needs and facilitate planning/implementation of activities.
- Sufficient organizational capacity to implement the proposed project or programs.
- Previous success, progress, and/or innovation in providing Native language immersion.

To see a list of previous NLI recipients, please visit First Nations' website at:

<https://www.firstnations.org/projects/native-language-immersion-initiative>.

GRANT REQUIREMENTS & EXPECTATIONS

Language Revitalization & Networking Sessions

One to two team members from each selected grantee organization will be required to attend one language revitalization and networking event designed to strengthen grantee organizations and build a Native language community of practice among grantee cohort members. This convening is tentatively scheduled to occur in Fall 2024.

Should travel and in-person gatherings be deemed unsafe for any of these capacity-building and networking events, grantees will instead meet virtually in place of an in-person event.

Evaluation and Reporting

Grantees will be required to complete one progress report, either verbally or electronically, halfway through the grant period and one final report one month after the end of the grant period. Each report will consist of three main items: (1) a narrative section updating on project objectives, successes and challenges; (2) a financial expenditure report; and (3) a data-tracking spreadsheet capturing demographic information on students served and language instruction hours offered.

First Nations will provide grantees with instructions for submitting these reports at the beginning of the grant period and before each report is due. The reports will enable First Nations to (1) tell grantee stories, including accomplishments, challenges, impact, and programming practices; and (2) measure the impact of funding support on grantee programs.

APPLICATION & REQUIRED ATTACHMENTS

All applicants must complete the First Nations' [ONLINE](#) grant application, including submission of necessary attachments by **MONDAY, MARCH 4, 2024, no later than 5 pm Mountain Time.**

Proposal Requirements:

- A brief history of the organization, its mission and primary programmatic focus.
- A concise description of the project and purpose.
- How your program or project meets the immersion requirements under this opportunity.
- An overview of who your program or project will serve.
- At least three specific goals or objectives to be accomplished with the funding.
- A program narrative of 1,000 words or less that describes how goals and objectives will be achieved, and how the activities will benefit your community or increase organizational/ Tribal department capacity.
- Plans for data collection and evaluation of grant activities.
- Additional funding sources and previous work completed through First Nations' NLII funding.

The following attachments must be uploaded during the online submission process:

- **Tax-Status Documentation.** A copy of the organization or fiscal sponsor's IRS Determination Letter if the applicant is a 501(c)(3) organization or a community organization using a fiscal sponsor. Tribal programs and governments may submit proof that they are a federal- or state-recognized tribe. This document should be uploaded as a PDF file.
- **Description of Board of Directors.** Native-controlled nonprofits should submit a list of their Board of Directors, with tribal affiliation of each director where applicable. Community organizations with fiscal sponsors should submit a list of their leadership team, with tribal affiliation of each team member where applicable. Tribal programs and governments should submit a list of their Tribal Council in lieu of a Board of Directors. This document should be uploaded as a PDF file.
- **Description of Key Leadership Staff.** Native-controlled nonprofits and community organizations with fiscal sponsors should submit a list of key staff who will be responsible for overseeing and implementing the proposed project. Tribal programs and governments

should submit a list of key staff responsible for overseeing and implementing the proposed project. This document should be uploaded as a PDF file.

- **Budget.** ([Sample Budget Form](#)) A budget for the proposed project with a detailed cost breakdown that is reasonable and directly related to proposed grant activities. This document must be uploaded as a PDF or Excel file.
- **Timeline.** ([Sample Timeline Form](#)) A detailed project timeline that documents important project activities for each identified objective. Include staff who will be responsible for the implementation of the project activities and when they will be completed. The document must be uploaded as a PDF or Excel file.

If you require a PDF writer, there are many free options available including [Cute PDF Writer](#) and [BullZip](#). Or you may do a web search to find a writer that fits your needs.

Applicants will be notified to the week of April 1, 2024 regarding the status of proposals. Notifications will be e-mailed to the project contact listed in the application. If you do not receive an e-mail by then, please contact grantmaking@firstnations.org.

Important Note:

Please allow yourself enough time to submit a complete application before the deadline, as the system will shut down automatically at **5 pm Mountain Time on MARCH 4, 2024**, and no data may be entered thereafter. Partial, faxed, emailed or mailed applications that are not received on time due to user error will not be considered.

HELP

Application Q&A Webinar

First Nations will host one informational Question & Answer (Q&A) webinar for applicants prior to the application deadline. The Q&A webinar will provide an opportunity for applicants to ask questions about the application, selection criteria, guidelines, or other related questions. Participation in this webinar is NOT mandatory; however, applicants are strongly encouraged to register and attend.

APPLICATION Q&A SESSION WILL BE HELD ON:

Tuesday, January 30, 2024, at 1 pm Mountain Time. Register at:

https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_3a8KsPzuR9aDjm5SlzNBzg

The informational webinar will be recorded and posted to First Nations website for those unable to attend. The recording can be accessed at: www.firstnations.org/knowledge-center/webinars/.

Grantseeker Resources

First Nations has compiled a number of free resources related to the grant writing process. Whether you are a small organization new to grants or an organization with extensive experience, these resources will help with development of your application to First Nations.

Please click [here](#) to access First Nations' free grantseeker resources.

For additional information or questions, please contact:

Michelle Gauthier, Program Associate, at (303) 774-7836 or mgauthier@firstnations.org.