

CALIFORNIA TRIBAL FUND STEWARDSHIP OF ANCESTRAL LANDS AND WATERS

Application Deadline: Monday, April 27, 2026 | 5 pm Pacific Time

GENERAL INFORMATION

About First Nations Development Institute

For 46 years, First Nations Development Institute (First Nations), 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 year-end 2025, we have successfully managed 4,405 grants totaling over \$110 million to Native American projects and organizations in 46 states, the District of Columbia, U.S. Territory American Samoa, and Guam. For more information, visit www.firstnations.org.

The **California Tribal Fund**, established in 2020, was created to support California-based, California-Native-led nonprofits and tribal programs in controlling and protecting their food systems, water, languages, traditional ecological knowledge, and land. For more information visit <https://www.firstnations.org/california-tribal-fund/>.

GRANT OVERVIEW

Project Focus Areas

First Nations seeks projects that increase California Native stewardship of lands and waters. Selected grantees under this opportunity must use funding to support projects related to land reparations, reclamation of lands formerly under tribal control, or initiating culturally responsive models for current and future land and water stewardship. Project areas supported by this grant should align with the following goals:

- **Land Restoration & Water Security** – Revitalizing land and water and their support systems.

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- **Land- and Water-Related Traditional Knowledge & Capacity Building** – Revitalizing and strengthening knowledge and land stewardship practices through mentorship, intergenerational learning, and community-led training.
- **Capacity Building** – Strengthening the capacity of tribes and organizations to protect California Native lands and waters and uphold the rights of these communities to steward their lands and waters.

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

- Development of cultural resources, biological, botanical, aquatic, soil, hydrologic, wildlife, timber, plans, or other studies/surveys
- Cultural burning activities
- Native plant reintroduction or invasive species removal
- Riparian and wetland restoration
- Creation of co-management agreements
- Community training opportunities, youth conservation programs, and paid internships related to tribal land and water stewardship
- Capacity building for the organization and staff (e.g., specialized trainings)

These examples illustrate possible project activities but do not represent an exhaustive list of the allowable activities. Participation in any of these activities is not a requirement of this funding.

Examples of **unallowable activities** under this funding opportunity include:

- Purchase of real estate
- Lobbying
- Litigation
- Entertainment
- Capital construction projects (including the construction, purchase, renovation, or furnishing of facilities)
- Funding of individuals
- Development campaigns

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- Endowments
- Scholarships or tuition assistance

Grant Period

The grant duration for this funding opportunity will be one year.

Grant Award Ceiling

First Nations will award up to eight grants. Total requests for project budgets within this funding opportunity can be from \$50,000 up to \$75,000 and must be supported with a budget included with the submitted application. See the *Required Attachments* section, under *Application* information.

Grant Award Timeline

- Application Close: Monday, April 27, 2026, 5 pm PT
- Applicant Notifications: June 2026

Applications are due Monday, April 27, 2026, no later than 5 pm Pacific Time. Unfortunately, First Nations cannot make any exceptions to the application deadline. Partial applications, incomplete applications due to user error, or faxed/emailed/mailed applications will not be considered unless they have received prior approval from First Nations.

ELIGIBILITY

Organizations eligible to apply include California located, California Native controlled, nonprofit 501(c)(3), tribal organizations, and Native §7871 organizations. First Nations defines “California Native controlled” as an organization in which a majority of the Board of Directors and leadership team are California Native persons.

Current grantees: If you have a current grant with First Nations Development Institute that is in good standing you are eligible and invited to apply.

Please refer to [Grantmaking FAQs](#) for further insight regarding applicant eligibility.

SELECTION CRITERIA

First Nations will award grants based on the following selection criteria:

- 1. Focus Area (35 Points):** The project must have a clearly defined primary focus aligning with grant objectives. A strong narrative should connect project goals to California Native Stewardship of Ancestral Lands and Waters.
- 2. Project, Budget, & Timeline (30 Points):** The project summary must outline objectives and scope, with a justified and reasonable funding request. A well-organized, detailed, and realistic budget is required, along with a clear implementation plan that includes key milestones.
- 3. Community Impact (35):** The project clearly defines the community served and demonstrates one or more of the following measurable benefits to Native communities:
 - Increased land and/or water restoration activities and/or outcomes
 - Increased land and/or water knowledge being held by the community
 - Increased ability of community to protect land and water resources

GRANT REQUIREMENTS

Reporting & Evaluation

Grantees will be required to submit one written final report at the end of the grant period summarizing grant activities, budget expenditures, quantifiable outputs, challenges, and lessons learned.

One evaluation survey and/or interview may take place during the grant period to better understand Native community needs and experience.

Reporting and evaluation activities enable First Nations to gain a further understanding of projects supporting the California Tribal Fund program.

A detailed list of requirements will be outlined in the grant agreement letter.

APPLICATION

All applicants must complete the First Nations online grant application, including submission of necessary attachments, no later than **Monday, April 27, 2026, by 5 pm Pacific Time.**

To complete the California Stewardship of Ancestral Lands and Waters application, applicants must register on Fluxx if they have not already, as an organization via the online portal located at: [First Nations | Sign in](#). The registration is located on the right-hand side of the page. Select “Register as an Organization,” complete the contact information section, and click “Submit.” An email will be sent to the contact provided once registration is approved with a link to establish a password. Registrations are reviewed within 4 business hours (Monday through Thursday, 8 am to 5 pm Mountain Time). On weekends (Friday to Sunday) they are reviewed and approved only once per day so response times may vary.

NOTE: Please check your Junk or Spam folder if an email is not received within 24 hours.

Once in the online portal, click on the “Apply for Funding” text in the menu on the left. Listed on the Apply for Funding page will be a section for the *California Stewardship of Ancestral Lands and Waters* application with a green “Apply Now” button. Click on the button to access the application.

All applicants will receive confirmation of submission after completing the grant application form via email from First Nations Grantmaking (do-not-reply.grants07-us-east-1@fluxx.io) to the **submitter’s email address**. Please check junk or spam folders should this email not arrive.

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 two weeks in advance of the application deadline by submitting an email request to grantmaking@firstnations.org. Please include your name, organization, contact information, and the name of the application 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 Team.

Important Note: Please allow enough time to submit a complete application before the deadline, as the online system will not allow you to submit the application after **5 pm PT on Monday, April 27,**

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2026, 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. **Any requests for exemptions to the online system must be received no later than two weeks before the deadline.**

Required Attachments

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

- **Budget.** An estimated budget for the proposed project with a detailed cost breakdown that is reasonable and directly related to proposed grant activities. ([Download Budget Template](#))
- **Timeline.** A detailed project timeline that documents important project goals, milestones, and benchmarks. Include who will be responsible for the steps and when they will be completed.
- **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.
- **Leadership & Staff List.** Tribal programs and governments should submit a list of their Tribal Council in lieu of a Board of Directors. **Native-controlled nonprofits** should submit a list of their Board of Directors, with tribal affiliation (if applicable). **Community organizations** with fiscal sponsors should submit a list of their own leadership team (not the fiscal sponsor's), with tribal affiliation (if applicable). Listing **key staff** and tribal affiliation (if applicable) is optional but recommended.

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APPLICATION ASSISTANCE

Contact First Nations Development Institute

Should you have any additional questions about this funding opportunity, please contact the California Tribal Fund team at ctf@firstnations.org. If you have questions about or need support with the grant application system, please contact the Grantmaking team at grantmaking@firstnations.org or by phone at (303) 774-7836.

Grant Writing Resources

First Nations has compiled several 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 may help with the submission of your application to First Nations.

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

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