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## **Native CDFI Network Submits Only Exclusively Native-Serving Application to EPA’s Clean Communities Investment Accelerator Award Program in Historic Indian Country Bid for Clean Energy**

October 11, 2023 – In a historic bid to catalyze clean energy infrastructure development in Native communities across the entire nation, today the Native CDFI Network (NCN) submitted a comprehensive Indian Country application to the [Clean Communities Investment Accelerator](#) (CCIA), one of three award programs under the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund. Featuring an unprecedented collaboration involving 63 certified and emerging Native community development financial institutions (CDFIs) and other CCIA-qualified community lenders covering all 10 EPA regions, NCN’s application is the *only* Native-led, exclusively Native-serving CCIA application submitted for consideration by EPA. NCN is seeking several hundred million dollars as a lead applicant to deploy to its community lenders to finance clean energy projects in Native communities, with financing recipients ranging from tribal governments and enterprises to Native-owned small businesses and Native consumers. NCN also has enlisted the participation of a dozen nationally renowned coalition partners on its application who will provide cutting-edge technical assistance customized for NCN’s CCIA community lenders and the Native communities they will serve.

“The vast majority of Native CDFIs and other experienced lenders serving Native communities came together as one to seize this landmark opportunity to transform the health and resilience of the places our people call home,” said Pete Upton, NCN CEO and Board Chair. “The CCIA and other EPA Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund programs provide a level of funding for clean energy projects in low-income and disadvantaged communities that we are unlikely to see again in our lifetimes. The Native CDFI Network has spent months methodically developing a thoughtful and comprehensive national plan to maximize the environmental, social, economic, and cultural benefits of Indian Country’s fair share of CCIA funding. Our coalition stands ready to deliver on that plan.”

“NCN’s impressive network of community lenders is uniquely positioned to provide clean energy financing to businesses owned by Tribal Nations and individual Native people across Indian Country, making those businesses more environmentally sound, climate resilient, and economically competitive,” said Chris James, President and CEO of the National Center for American Indian Enterprise Development, an NCN CCIA Coalition Member. “We are proud to team with NCN to provide customized technical assistance to its community lenders and their financing partners to deploy clean energy technologies that will sustain Native communities over the long run.”

“A CCIA capitalization grant will increase our capacity to fund robust clean energy projects and provide the technical assistance necessary for successful project design and management. With this grant, the Native communities in Maine will have the ability to transform their energy infrastructure,” said Charlene Virgilio, Executive Director of Four Directions Development Corporation, an NCN CCIA community lender. “NCN is uniquely qualified to receive CCIA funding for deployment into Native communities because they are the only network that understands the nuances of lending in Indian Country, has a strong legacy of partnership with Native institutions and communities, and has meaningful connections to key stakeholders necessary to deploy capital and support critical clean energy projects.”

“We see sustainable and clean energy projects as a means to heal Unci Maka (Grandmother Earth) and at the same time build our economy to heal our people,” said Scott Herman, President of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe. “The Rosebud Sioux Tribe has been active in developing, implementing, and planning clean energy and clean technology projects for over 10 years. Our greatest obstacle has been obtaining funding to implement our plans. NCN is perfectly positioned to coordinate with Tribes and present a strong partnership to best utilize the available funding and create the greatest impact.”

CCIA-qualified priority project categories include: (1) distributed energy generation and storage (rooftop or community solar, microgrids, distributed wind, and stand-alone storage); (2) net-zero emissions buildings (electrification/energy efficiency, school building space and water heating, replacement of backup diesel generators with storage, and community facility retrofits), and (3) zero-emissions transportation (fleet electrification and electric vehicle charging stations).

Featuring \$6 billion in total funding for low-income and disadvantaged communities, the CCIA has the potential to begin significantly closing the clean energy infrastructure gap for Native communities across the country. It can serve as a springboard for future and ongoing financing for expansion of this infrastructure, making those communities climate resilient over the long run while simultaneously making them much more energy independent and self-sufficient. NCN believes unequivocally that Indian Country's clean energy future must be *self-determined* if it is to truly sustain Native communities, economies, cultures, and lifeways for the next seven generations and beyond. This is why it is committed to supporting the ability of its CCIA community lenders to design and provide customized clean energy financing products that meet the distinct needs and goals of Native nations and communities. As the sole national membership organization supporting Native CDFIs' ability to serve the financing needs of Indian Country, NCN is uniquely positioned and equipped to ensure the CCIA's transformative impacts for a climate-resilient future are felt in all regions of Indian Country.

In addition to serving as a lead applicant for the CCIA, NCN also has signed on to support three Indian Country-serving applications for EPA's [Solar for All](#) program as a coalition partner. These partnerships will build on CCIA efforts to provide capital for clean energy financing in Indian Country.

***To learn more about the CCIA, click [here](#).***

***To learn more about how to get involved with NCN's CCIA program, contact: Pete Upton, CEO/Board Chair, Native CDFI Network, [pete@nativecdfi.net](mailto:pete@nativecdfi.net)***