



ONAC 2016 Mini Grant Final Report
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ONAC is a nonprofit Native asset building coalition that works with Oklahoma tribes and partners interested in establishing asset-building initiatives and programs in Native communities, for the purpose of creating greater opportunities for economic self-sufficiency of tribal citizens.

In January 2014, ONAC released its first-ever request for proposals (RFP) to fund Native asset building projects in Oklahoma. ONAC received seven excellent applications from tribal governments and tribal programs based in Oklahoma. At that time, ONAC had funding for four projects. Thus, ONAC awarded a total of \$14,000 in mini grants to four ONAC constituents. Those awardees have since completed their projects. ONAC eventually secured an additional \$10,500 in mini grant funding, from First Nations Development Institute, and in November 2015, ONAC announced that they had award those funds to the remaining three applicants (the Mvskoke Loan Fund, Citizen Potawatomi Community Development Corporation, and the Eastern Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma).

As of December 2016, those three latter grantees have completed their mini grant projects. With the use of their grant funds, each grantee grew their own capacity to provide asset building programs for their citizens. Through their projects, the grantees reached a minimum of 110 tribal citizens. While this impact was immediate and impressive, ONAC anticipates that the positive effects of these initiatives will continue into the future. For example, one of the grantees, the Mvskoke Loan Fund, through this project, now has a certified credit counselor available to work with their clients. We believe these investments in tribal citizens will strengthen these nations.

Grantee Projects and Outcomes

The Mvskoke Loan Fund had planned to enroll one of their staff members in the credit counseling certification program offered by Rural Dynamics, Inc. in Montana. Rural Dynamics, Inc. was instead able to offer the program in Oklahoma, which allowed the Mvskoke Loan Fund to send three staff members to the training as their travel costs were greatly reduced. As of the end of the grant period, one of the three staff members had passed the Credit Counseling Certification test and the two additional staff members had plans to take the exam. This grant funding increased the capacity of the Mvskoke Loan Fund to directly offer certified credit counseling services to Native entrepreneurs to improve their credit rating and help prepare them to receive business loans from the Mvskoke Loan Fund (awarded \$3,500).



Citizen Potawatomi Community Development Corporation (CPCDC) offered Shonya Mbwaka (Money Smart) to stimulate sustainable economic opportunity for the Citizen Potawatomi tribal community and all past and current clients. Through this project, funded by ONAC, the CPCDC held a reunion for twenty-eight of their Individual Development Account (IDA) program graduates. During the reunion, held on October 11, 2016, participants attended a Financial Empowerment workshop presented by CPCDC staff and an Investment 101 presentation by Rhonda Godwin, Director of Administrative and Investment Operations at the Oklahoma City Community Foundation. On November 16, 2016, the CPCDC held a Lunch and Learn event entitled, “Can Credit Cost Your Retirement?”, presented by CPCDC staff member, Tina Pollard. The session addressed how your credit habits impact your retirement and ability to contribute to a retirement account. Additionally, with mini grant funds, CPCDC provided thirty one-on-one individual credit sessions with clients, seen individually from November 23, 2015 to November 23, 2016. During those sessions, the clients received assistance with basic credit counseling, budgeting, goal setting, credit report review, and planning for retirement. 100% of participants reported that they increased their investing and financial knowledge as indicated on pre- and post-testing and evaluations for workshops. Individual credit session participants were gauged on increased credit scores, comparison to past habits and financial wellness questionnaire. 98% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that the information given was helpful and beneficial (awarded \$3,500).

The Eastern Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma provided employees of the Eastern Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma (ESTO), tribal youth, and tribal families the opportunity to become educated and self-sufficient as they learned from Dave Ramsey’s class entitled, “Financial Peace University.” Through video teaching, class discussions, and interactive small group activities, this financial education program presented culturally appropriate and practical steps toward economic self-sufficiency. Participants were taught how to get rid of debt, manage money, spend and save wisely, and plan for retirement. This program empowered the tribal community with the financial knowledge and tools that would lead to success. With grant support, ESTO provided \$50 to twenty-two participants in startup funds for an emergency savings account for those who completed the financial education program. Twenty-four adults, five teenagers, and five children participated in the program. Ninety-two percent (92%) of the adults (ages 18+) who participated in the program ended up finishing or completing the class. 100% of the teenagers (ages 13-17) and children (ages 5-12) completed the class. As a result of their participation in the class, nearly all the adult participants cut up their credit cards and began saving for an emergency. Others began to use the “envelope system” (cash only) for groceries, gas, and entertainment (awarded \$3,500).

ONAC Mini Grant Lessons Learned and Future Plans

Through this round of mini grants, ONAC has reinforced earlier learning that there is need for flexible sources of funding for asset building projects among constituents in Oklahoma. Additionally, the coalition has learned of, and has been impressed by, the considerable reach of these initiatives in tribal communities. Thus, going forward, ONAC will strive to continue to offer such grants to our constituents.

One of the grantees noted, as a lesson learned, that there is need for continued reinforcement and “refresher” courses for those they serve. Their participants asked for future training in the areas of mortgages, down payment assistance, retirement planning, credit card habits, Investments 201, building a flexible budget, etc.

In April 2017, ONAC will release a request for proposal (RFP) for the next round of mini grants.



ONAC thanks each of these constituents for their willingness to engage with the coalition and for all their work to design and implement these projects. The coalition looks forward to working with these constituents, and others, to offer additional asset building projects in the future.

For more information about ONAC mini grants, please contact Christy Finsel, Executive Director, at (405) 401-7873 or cfinsel@oknativeassets.org.