

## Federal and State Dollars Aid in Business Development/Training Center

**Outline Of Need:** Economic development leads to building stronger communities and better lives for its residents. Ho-Chunk Community Development Corporation (HCCDC), a Nebraska nonprofit corporation, strives to decrease the barriers between agencies and tribal members and to create and improve the workforce and its skills level.

Past efforts by HCCDC to generate interest in business development from Native American business entrepreneurs in the Thurston County area proved difficult. This was attributed in part, to lack of access to training and startup funds needed in creating and successfully operating a new business. To overcome these obstacles, the HCCDC sought funds to convert a vacant building in Walthill, Nebraska into a small business development center. At the center, individuals who are business owners or employees, or individuals interested in owning a business would be afforded the opportunity to participate in training to become self-sustaining in their business ventures or to become more valuable as an employee.

**How Rural Development Helped:** USDA Rural Development Rural Business Enterprise Grant (RBEG) funds in the amount of \$200,000, leveraged with \$105,000 State (Community Development Block Grant) funds and \$146,122 from Ho-Chunk, Inc. (the economic development arm of the Winnebago Tribe) were used for the renovation of an existing building to create a business development center. Partners such as the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Nebraska EDGE program and Little Priest Tribal College will strengthen the outcome of education and jobs.

Due to this project being funded from the USDA Rural Development Rural Business Enterprise Grant Native American set-aside, 75 percent of the project's services will be targeted to the Native American community.

**The Results:** The renovated 3,900 square foot building into a business development center is completed. The center has the capacity to house five businesses, a state-of-the-art technology-training center and a business library. As of January 2004, two businesses are located in the Center with each occupying two incubator spaces, leaving one space vacant. The center's services will provide the nearly 7,000 rural residents of Thurston County and members of the Winnebago and Omaha Tribes with business development assistance in their own backyard. The potential to create and/or save 20 jobs and to assist 17 businesses will have a direct and positive impact on Walthill.

Planned results include heightened economic, educational and social levels for both the Native American communities and the people of Thurston County, creation of an economically viable community improving unemployment rates and poverty levels, along with expanded training opportunities and development of enterprises in depressed areas. The existing gap in access to entrepreneurial endeavors, business start-up, job skills training in technology fields, e-commerce, business ownership and development will also be addressed. Business skills will be taught including business planning and research, entrepreneurial training, computer technology, word processing and Internet training. (January 2004)



Business Development Center  
Walthill, Nebraska.