

MONTANA

NAAF GRANTEE IMPACT AND STATE AGRICULTURAL OUTLOOK



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MONTANA AGRICULTURE

Agriculture is one of Montana's leading industries. Each year the state's farms and ranches sell about $4.5 billion in agricultural products, which is roughly $2.5 billion in crops and $2 billion in livestock. The industry supports billions more through the businesses that process, handle, and move those goods. Montana's farms and ranches cover about 57.6 million acres, close to 62% of the state.

Native producers steward a substantial share of that landscape. In 2022, the Census of Agriculture counted 1,796 American Indian and Alaska Native producers across 1,501 farms, working roughly 11% of Montana's total farmland, yet generating only about 4% of its agricultural sales. On reservations across the state, 3 out of 4 producers are non-Native.

Between 2019 and 2026, NAAF invested more than $7.7 million across 46 awards to 17 Tribal governments, Tribal colleges, nonprofits, and Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI) in Montana. Those grants strengthened Native-led lending and access to capital through CDFIs like NACDC Financial Services, the Montana Native Growth Fund, and the Nakoda Aaniiih Credit Agency, funded agricultural education at Tribal colleges and universities (TCU) including Little Big Horn College and Stone Child College, and supported producer associations, youth programs, food sovereignty, and technical assistance across the state.

Montana is home to eight federally recognized Tribal Nations representing 12 distinct Tribes and seven reservations.

Tribal Nation	Reservation	Enrolled members (approx.)
Blackfeet Nation	Blackfeet Indian Reservation	~17,300
Crow Nation	Crow Reservation	~11,000
Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes	Flathead Reservation	~7,750
Chippewa Cree Tribe	Rocky Boy's Reservation	~7,700
Fort Belknap Indian Community	Fort Belknap Reservation (includes the Gros Ventre and Assiniboine Tribes)	~7,000
Fort Peck Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes	Fort Peck Reservation (includes Assiniboine, Lakota, Nakota, and Dakota Tribes)	~12,000
Northern Cheyenne Tribe	Northern Cheyenne Reservation	~12,226
Little Shell Chippewa Tribe	No Reservation - Headquartered in Great Falls, Montana	~4,500



MONTANA

NAAF NATIVE AGRICULTURE INVESTMENTS

Montana is home to determined, passionate producers from across the state's eight federally recognized Tribes. Montana's Native producers operate 1,501 farms spanning more than 6.1 million acres and selling nearly $184 million in agricultural products annually. Across the state, NAAF's investments are helping expand and grow agriculture through Native-serving CDFIs, Tribes, educational institutions and 501c3 nonprofits.

In fact, Montana holds one of the densest networks of Native-serving CDFIs in the country that are providing tailored loans and services. Examples include:

- The Peoples Partner for Community Development deploys agricultural loans and financial coaching on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation, reaching as much as 90% of the Tribe's agriculture community through drought, fire, and pandemic assistance programs, and loans.
- NACDC Financial Services pairs loans with equity injections and multiplies every dollar; one grant turned direct lending into more than $950,000 in additional capital.
- Montana Native Growth Fund, an emerging CDFI at Fort Belknap, redirected its award into direct subgrants when producers needed resilience funding fast.
- The Intertribal Agriculture Council (IAC) built its Regenerative Economies program into a permanent credit-focused arm, and helped producers secure $10.6 million in pandemic relief nationwide.
- Stone Child College opened a Tribal Agribusiness Support Services Office so Chippewa Cree producers have somewhere to build credit and become loan-ready.



While this is a start, more support is required to fill the gaps and further producer success.



Helping producers capture more of the food dollar requires access to facilities, fences, water, and processing. NAAF grantees across the state are supporting agricultural infrastructure development and systems. For example, Piikani Lodge Health Institute advanced a Blackfeet-owned multi-species processing facility from feasibility study to secured land, a producer-owned LLC, and major federal funding leverage.

Some 400 miles east, in the state's far corner, NAAF funding helped the Fort Peck Tribes' Fish and Game Department expand its buffalo quarantine facility, moving more genetically pure Yellowstone buffalo through the system and out to Tribes across the country. Southwest of there, in Crow Country, Little Big Horn College launched a haying program for Crow landowners, and over in the Mission Valley, an FFA chapter rebuilt community stockyards into a learning space that also earns revenue.

In northern Montana, Fort Belknap installed two weather stations for real-time drought data, while to the west, on the Flathead Reservation, the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes broke ground on the Bison Springs farm to revitalize foodways through land-based learning.

Sometimes the most durable infrastructure is not physical. On the Rocky Boy's and Fort Belknap reservations, the Chippewa Cree Tribe and Fort Belknap negotiated the first two Tribal Alternative Funding Arrangements (AFAs) with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in the nation, and Montana NRCS adopted a Tribal prescribed grazing standard that could benefit as many as 1,500 Native ranchers statewide. And from its Billings headquarters, reaching well beyond the state, the Intertribal Agriculture Council (IAC) redefined conversations on equitable Indian agriculture finance, from the Credit Working Group to instruction at the Agricultural Lending Underwriting School.



MONTANA IS WHERE CAPITAL, LAND, AND KNOWLEDGE MEET

On the Blackfeet Reservation, the Blackfeet Nation Stock Growers Association awarded ten $4,000 scholarships to students pursuing ranching, veterinary work, conservation, and market development. From its Missoula base, American Indian Business Leaders carried the same mission nationally, training 60 youth in agri-business and access to capital.

Closer to the ground, that classroom-to-career path took shape on the reservations themselves. On the Flathead Reservation, the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes' Good Food Project links hands-on production to loan-ready business plans, while at Rocky Boy's, Stone Child College's HATCH program moves students from growing food to becoming credit-ready producers. NACDC Financial Services and the Peoples Partner for Community Development put livestock and equity directly into young producers' hands. Additionally, MSU Extension's Tribal (FRTEP) programming reached more than 1,290 young people with agricultural education.

These programs are building a generation of producers who are ready to farm and ranch. What happens next depends on whether the capital and infrastructure are there when they are ready to start. Philanthropy can help start this work, but it cannot finish it alone. Montana’s banks and credit unions can partner with Native lenders that already know how to make agricultural loans work in Indian Country. Ag organizations can bring Native producers to the table, and state leaders can treat processing, water and rural infrastructure on Tribal land as what they are: investments in Montana’s agricultural and rural economies.

The producers who will carry Montana agriculture into the next generation are already in these classrooms, internships and loan programs. Many will raise cattle and buffalo on land their families have stewarded since time immemorial. Give them the same access to capital every operation needs, and the whole state will feel the return.

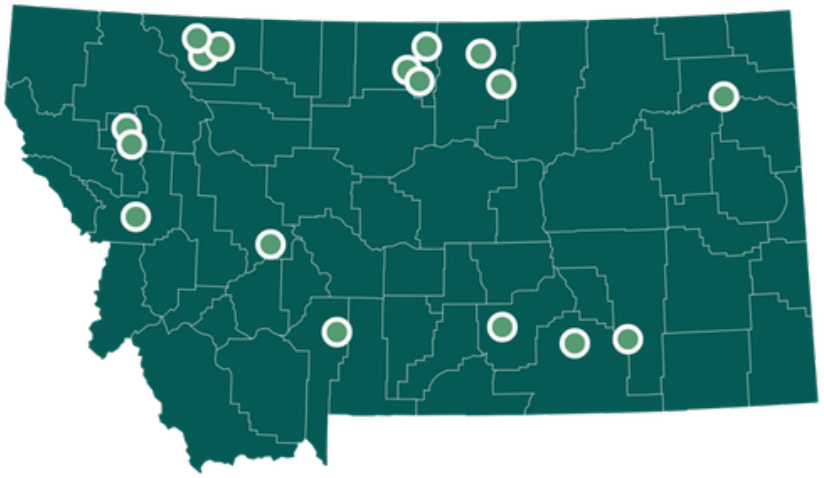


NAAF'S MONTANA GRANTEES

MONTANA NAAF GRANTEES:

- American Indian Business Leaders
- Blackfeet Nation Agriculture Development Foundation
- Blackfeet Nation Stock Growers Association
- Chippewa Cree Tribe
- Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes
- Fort Belknap Indian Community
- Fort Peck Tribes Fish & Game Department
- Intertribal Agriculture Council
- Little Big Horn College
- Mission Valley FFA
- Montana Native Growth Fund
- Montana State University Extension
- NACDC Financial Services, Inc.
- Nakoda Aaniiih Credit Agency
- The Peoples Partner for Community Development
- Piikani Lodge Health Institute (Blackfeet)
- Stone Child College

GRANTEE LOCATIONS:



GRANTEE PRODUCER IMPACT NUMBERS:

46 PROGRAMS FUNDED

735 HARVESTERS SERVED

2,871 FARMERS SERVED

7,710 STUDENTS & YOUTH SERVED

4,458 RANCHERS SERVED

656 FISHERS SERVED



AMERICAN INDIAN BUSINESS LEADERS

Overview:
American Indian Business Leaders (AIBL) is a national nonprofit based in Missoula, Montana, the only American Indian organization dedicated solely to empowering business students across the United States. AIBL equips students with the business, entrepreneurship, and leadership skills to build economic futures for themselves and their communities.

TOTAL FUNDING: $35,000

NAAF GRANT

2021 - Youth - $35,000
NAAF funding powered AIBL's 24-month youth initiative equipping youth ages 14–24 with agri-business skills. Drawing from AIBL chapters across Indian Country, the program trained 60 young leaders through the "Business of Indian Agriculture" curriculum and workshops at the AIBL and Reservation Economic Summit (RES) conferences, which covered business planning, credit, and access to capital. AIBL's program provided networking that opened mentorship and internship opportunities, and served 30 youth farmers, 30 youth ranchers, 30 students, and 30 general youth.



NAAF'S
MONTANA
GRANTEES

BLACKFEET NATION AGRICULTURE DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION

Overview:
The Blackfeet Nation Agriculture Development Foundation is a Native-led nonprofit on the Blackfeet Nation working to grow the next generation of Blackfeet agricultural producers and professionals. The Foundation invests in youth pursuing agricultural education, helping them build the skills, credentials, and vision to strengthen agriculture across the Blackfeet Nation.

TOTAL FUNDING: $40,000

NAAF GRANT

2022 - Youth - $40,000
NAAF funding supported the Blackfeet Nation Agriculture Development Foundation in awarding 10 scholarships to students pursuing degrees in agriculture-related fields. The Foundation selected recipients through a committee review that asked applicants to reflect on their agricultural experience, their understanding of agriculture in the Blackfeet Nation, and their goals as future producers. By easing the financial path to higher education, the program encouraged youth to pursue careers in production agriculture and additional industry-related roles. Program served seven teens and three youth community members.



NAAF'S
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GRANTEES

BLACKFEET NATION STOCK GROWERS ASSOCIATION

Overview:
The Blackfeet Nation Stock Growers Association is a rancher-led membership organization on the Blackfeet Reservation in Montana, uniting the Nation's cattle producers to tackle the shared challenges of ranching in Indian Country.

TOTAL FUNDING: $45,000

NAAF GRANT

2020 - Youth - $45,000
With NAAF youth grant funding, the Blackfeet Nation Stock Growers Association created a scholarship to open agriculture's doors to Blackfeet youth, benefiting both future producers and the next generation of agricultural professionals who will build systems that serve the community and Blackfeet farmers and ranchers. The Association awarded ten $4,000 scholarships to students pursuing paths from ranching and veterinary services to conservation and market development. Funding helped the organization directly serve 37 youth.



CHIPPEWA CREE TRIBE

Overview:
The Chippewa Cree Tribe is based on the Rocky Boy's Indian Reservation in north-central Montana, where grazing and dry-land farming are the principal land uses. The Tribe advances the self-determination and economic well-being of its members, with agriculture central to both its economy and its stewardship of the land.

TOTAL FUNDING: $275,892

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CHIPPEWA CREE TRIBE

NAAF GRANTS

2019 - Special Emphasis - $74,816

NAAF's Special Emphasis funding let the Chippewa Cree Tribe explore hemp as an economic-development opportunity on the Rocky Boy's Reservation. After research, the Tribe completed a feasibility study, business plan, and implementation plan centered on processing hemp into biodegradable pellets for single-use products, such as forks, spoons, and knives, as a plant-based alternative to petroleum plastics. The Tribe also wrote hemp-growing regulations and, on the strength of the plan, secured a follow-on implementation grant. Served one farmer, one harvester, and four community members.

2020 - Rapid Response Fund - $26,250

NAAF funding supported the Chippewa Cree Tribe's 8-acre community garden and greenhouse. Working through the Chippewa Cree Food Sovereignty Coalition, community members grew fruits and vegetables, which they shared with families and made into products like homemade salsa. The grant also added a grain bin and high tunnel, serving one farmer and three community members.

2020 - General - $50,000

NAAF funding supported hands-on conservation technical assistance for Chippewa Cree ranchers, teaching producers to install grazing infrastructure to NRCS specifications and boosting participation in federal conservation programs. The grant also powered advocacy that helped the Chippewa Cree Tribe and Fort Belknap Indian Community secure the nation's first two Alternative Funding Arrangements (AFAs) with NRCS, and funded an emergency hay-purchase program that kept producers from selling off their herds. Served 50 ranchers.

2022 - Special Emphasis - $124,826

With NAAF Special Emphasis funding, a dedicated conservationist delivered the hands-on grazing and conservation training, directly serving 40 ranchers and bringing Chippewa Cree producers into compliance with federal grazing plans. Its biggest legacy reaches statewide: Montana NRCS adopted a Tribal prescribed grazing standard for all ranchers, potentially benefiting up to 1,500 producers across the state.



CONFEDERATED SALISH AND KOOTENAI TRIBES

Overview:
The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT) on the Flathead Indian Reservation in northwestern Montana is leveraging NAAF funding to revitalize traditional foodways, build agricultural capacity, and prepare the next generation of producers through land-based learning, capital access, and cultural knowledge.

▶ TOTAL FUNDING: $449,989

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CONFEDERATED SALISH AND KOOTENAI TRIBES

NAAF GRANTS

2025 General - $250,000

With NAAF funding, CSKT's Bison Springs Project: *Revitalizing Foodways through Land-Based Learning* is developing a culturally grounded farm on the Flathead Indian Reservation. The project supports producers through training, technical assistance, and capital access while repairing existing infrastructure and delivering traditional-foods education. By fostering intergenerational knowledge transfer and building skills in financial management and agricultural production, CSKT is strengthening both food sovereignty and the next generation of producers.

2026 Youth - $199,989

CSKT's *Xest Sʔiłn (Good Food) Project* builds hands-on educational opportunities, connecting students to careers in agriculture. Through hydroponic and traditional farming, business planning with Eagle Bank, and a student-run farmers' market, participants develop loan-ready business plans and real micro-enterprise experience. Scholarships for post-secondary agriculture degrees and professional mentorships round out a cycle of cultural learning and workforce development preparing the next generation of producers.



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FORT BELKNAP INDIAN COMMUNITY

Overview:
The Fort Belknap Reservation in north-central Montana is home to more than 650,000 acres of plains and grassland. Agriculture anchors the reservation economy, from small cattle ranches and dryland farms to the Tribes' buffalo herd and Little Rockies Meat Packing Company, the first Tribally-owned, USDA-inspected meat-packing facility in the country.

▶TOTAL FUNDING: $204,937

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FORT BELKNAP INDIAN COMMUNITY

NAAF GRANTS

2022 - Special Emphasis - $125,000

With NAAF Special Emphasis funding, the Fort Belknap Indian Community (FBIC) set out to give producers timely drought and weather information, exceeding its goal. Through connections made during outreach, FBIC partnered with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to install two functioning weather stations on the reservation's north and south borders, delivering real-time data to producers. Served five community producers, two farmers, two ranchers, and one harvester.

2023 - General - $79,937

Fort Belknap's NAAF-funded program provided stipends for producers to attend agriculture conferences and events where they explored new and emerging markets. The connections built opened doors to multi-year funding opportunities, helping producers expand operations, improve commodity production, and strengthen profit margins, while also laying groundwork for future capital investments and supplemental grants. The grant directly served 28 ranchers, 10 farmers, six community producers, five harvesters, and two students and youth.



NAAF'S
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GRANTEES

FORT PECK TRIBES' FISH & GAME DEPARTMENT

Overview:
The Fort Peck Tribes' Fish and Game Department manages the wildlife, fisheries, and natural resources of the Assiniboine (Nakoda) and Sioux Tribes on the Fort Peck Reservation in northeastern Montana. It is best known for leading one of Indian Country's premier buffalo restoration programs.

TOTAL FUNDING: $36,316

NAAF GRANT

2020 - General - $36,316
NAAF funding helped the Fort Peck Tribes' Fish and Game Department expand its buffalo quarantine facility from three holding pens to four, each with water troughs and electric fencing. The added capacity lets the facility hold multiple cohorts and age groups at once, moving more genetically pure Yellowstone buffalo through quarantine and out to Tribes nationwide faster. NAAF funding directly served 67 students and youth and 15 community producers.



NAAF'S MONTANA GRANTEES

INTERTRIBAL AGRICULTURE COUNCIL

Overview:
The Intertribal Agriculture Council (IAC) is a Native-led national 501c3 nonprofit, founded in 1987 and based in Billings, Montana, that pursues and promotes the conservation, development, and sustainable use of agricultural resources for the betterment of Native people. Through on-the-ground technical assistance, USDA program access, and policy advocacy rooted in the principle of Indian use of Indian resources, IAC empowers producers and strengthens agricultural economies across Indian Country.

TOTAL FUNDING: $1,856,426

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INTERTRIBAL AGRICULTURE COUNCIL

NAAF GRANT

2019 - General - $275,495

NAAF funding empowered IAC's American Indian Foods program with resources that helped the organization guide producers through the COVID-19 pandemic's uncertainties, connecting them to domestic markets and providing tailored technical assistance. Additionally, funding supported marketing campaigns, trainings, and events, including a single luncheon event that directed nearly $20,000 to producers. These efforts raised the national profile of Native foods. The program served 39 farmers, 35 ranchers, 58 fishers, 69 harvesters, 22 students and youth, and 20 community members.

2020 - Rapid Response Fund - $42,500

NAAF's Rapid Response Fund enabled IAC to ensure producers weren't left out of pandemic relief. Skilled technical assistance, including webinars and hands-on guidance through federal disaster programs, helped Tribal producers secure 699 successful COVID relief applications totaling $10,604,500. The effort served 300 farmers, 300 ranchers, 25 fishers, 74 harvesters, 86 students and youth, 200 elders, and 400 community members, while sharpening IAC's advocacy for Indian Country.

2020- General - $939,568

With NAAF's support, IAC advanced its regenerative finance model, mobilizing its national Technical Assistance Network and Regenerative Economies Team to guide producers and Tribes through agribusiness challenges across Indian Country. Reflecting the full reach of that network, year-round education and outreach served 1,706 farmers, 2,535 ranchers, 517 fishers, 359 harvesters, 199 community, and 1,526 students and youth as producer demand for technical assistance continued to climb.

As a national serving organization, IAC's impact numbers reflect producers from across the country and are not exclusive to Montana.

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INTERTRIBAL AGRICULTURE COUNCIL

NAAF GRANTS

2021 - General - $399,997

NAAF's support launched IAC's Regenerative Economies program, which is now a permanent part of IAC's Stakeholder Services. The program expands producers' access to credit. Additionally, a new Financial Solutions Specialist led financial-literacy training, loan packaging, and producer-to-lender matchmaking, logging 350+ events and helping IAC land a $2 million+ USDA Risk Management Agency agreement. The work served 487 farmers, 362 ranchers, 56 fishers, 208 harvesters, 395 community members, and 4,067 students and youth.

2025 - Youth - $198,866

IAC's Young, Beginning & Small (YBS) Capital Enhancement Project, a partnership with Native Agriculture Financial Services (NAFS), is expanding access to capital across Indian Country. Youth ages 14–26 receive startup grants and hands-on support, then graduate into NAFS YBS loans offering lower rates and flexible terms. Paired with coaching, business-planning, and conservation training, the project builds financial skills and connects producers to mentors and markets.



NAAF'S MONTANA GRANTEES

LITTLE BIG HORN COLLEGE

Overview:
Little Big Horn College (LBHC) is the Tribally chartered, land-grant community college of the Crow Tribe located on the Crow Indian Reservation. Founded in 1980, LBHC grants associate degrees and certificates while preserving language, history, and culture and preparing students for opportunity across Crow Country.

TOTAL FUNDING: $100,000

NAAF GRANT

2020 General - $100,000
NAAF funding equipped Little Big Horn College with a tractor, attachments, and a hay swather to launch a haying program serving Crow landowners. The college teaches students to cut and bale hay, which they help with on Crow-owned fields and contract with private landowners to hay their acreage. Program served three students and youth, one farmer, and one harvester.



MISSION VALLEY FFA

Overview:
Mission Valley FFA is a school-based youth organization that helps develop young people's potential for premier leadership, personal growth, and career success, giving the next generation the hands-on skills, confidence, and connections to lead in agriculture and beyond.

TOTAL FUNDING: $60,000

NAAF GRANT

2021 - Youth - $60,000
NAAF funding helped Mission Valley FFA turn its community stockyards into a hands-on learning space and revenue source. The upgrades drew more paying users and showed students the value of agricultural education and FFA. Student loans, repaid after the fair, also backed young producers and their projects The funding served 75 students and youth, 12 ranchers, and five farmers.



NAAF'S MONTANA GRANTEES

MONTANA NATIVE GROWTH FUND

Overview:
The Montana Native Growth Fund is a CDFI serving producers across Montana. Its mission is to create economic opportunity by expanding access to credit and growth capital.

TOTAL FUNDING: $225,000

NAAF GRANT

2022 General and Special Emphasis - $225,000
Through NAAF funding, producers were awarded 11 subgrants for drought-resistant seed, emergency livestock feed, loan payments, and disaster response, while expanding financial-literacy and loan-documentation assistance. The organization's programming served 39 ranchers, and Ranchers Round-Up at the Fort Belknap Mid-Winter Fair drew more than 50 producers.



NAAF'S
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MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION

Overview:
Montana State University (MSU) Extension is the outreach arm of Montana's land-grant university, delivering research-based education in agriculture, natural resources, and youth development to communities statewide.

TOTAL FUNDING: $100,000

NAAF GRANT

2020 - Youth & Special Emphasis - $100,000
Across four Montana reservations, Fort Peck, Fort Belknap, Flathead, and Blackfeet, Federally Recognized Tribes Extension Program (FRTEP) agents delivered locally tailored agricultural safety and 4-H learning to youth, while food-sovereignty efforts ranged from commercial kitchens and local meal kits to a CSKT elk-depredation hunt feeding elders. Together the grants served 1,292 students and youth, 563 community producers, 33 ranchers, seven farmers, and four harvesters.



NACDC FINANCIAL SERVICES, INC.

Overview:
NACDC Financial Services is a Native-led CDFI based in Browning, Montana, on the Blackfeet Indian Reservation, expanding access to capital across Montana's eight Tribal communities and beyond. NACDC pairs lending with financial literacy education and one-on-one credit counseling and creates lending opportunities for entrepreneurs, producers, and families that mainstream banks often overlook.

▶ TOTAL FUNDING: $1,501,186

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NACDC FINANCIAL SERVICES

NAAF GRANTS

2020 - General - $323,097

NACDC Financial Services used NAAF's support to pair loans with equity injections—a combination that helped producers seize new pandemic-era opportunities or weather the downturn. Over the two-year grant, NACDCFS deployed $1,221,900 in loans and $79,300 in equity injections, delivering hands-on technical assistance throughout the application process. The project served 90 ranchers, eight farmers, and two youth, with most reached through one-on-one coaching.

2020 - Youth - $35,000

With NAAF funding, NACDC equipped 33 young producers with the financial skills to grow real ag businesses. This included teaching cash-flow projections, credit, and record-keeping across online and in-person classes. Each student built a written ag business plan, and then received grant funding to invest directly in their operation, with many purchasing bred cows. The equity and financial projections position these young producers to access youth ag loans going forward.

2023 - General - $350,000

In 2023, NACDC used NAAF funding to deploy youth and operating loans, leveraging that capital into 19 additional loans totaling $950,946. The grant also funded Ag Resource Days at two reservations, connecting producers with federal and Tribal agriculture partners, plus a community Food Sovereignty Assessment to guide future local-food investment. The project served 56 ranchers.

2026 - General - $793,089

NACDC’s Montana Native Agricultural Producer Capacity and Capital Access Initiative supports start-up and established farmers and ranchers across Montana's reservations. Through a suite of wraparound services, the project strengthens producers' business and financial skills, expands access to affordable capital, and builds operational resilience. This includes providing personalized technical assistance, credit-building, agriculture loans and regrants, workshops, youth and community engagement, and food sovereignty efforts.



NAAF'S
MONTANA
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THE PEOPLES PARTNER FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Overview:
The Peoples Partner for Community Development (PPCD) is a Native-led CDFI located on the Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservation, serving the Northern Cheyenne Tribe, the Crow Nation, and the Fort Belknap Reservation in Montana.

TOTAL FUNDING: $2,035,500

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THE PEOPLES PARTNER FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

NAAF GRANTS

2019 - General - $200,000

NAAF funding supported PPCD's Agriculture Program, helping 15 Northern Cheyenne farmers and ranchers secure agriculture loans and one-on-one financial guidance. This included navigating loan applications, leasing range units, and making cattle market decisions. Paired with financial literacy, credit-building, and range management planning, the program's workshops and coaching served 12 farmers, 75 ranchers, 13 harvesters, 13 students and youth, and 100 community members.

2020 - Rapid Response Fund - $25,500

NAAF's Rapid Response Fund expanded technical assistance supporting Northern Cheyenne producers. This included providing guidance and consultation on pandemic-related relief programs. Funding also equipped two ranchers with mobile routers and a laptop to stay connected and reduce business disruptions. This support brought over $500,000 back to the community and helped businesses sustain operations through uncertainties, serving 62 farmers, 62 ranchers, 21 elders, 18 students and youth, and 71 community members.

2020 - General - $335,000

Through NAAF funding, PPCD guided producers through weather-related obstacles, conducting outreach with 90% of the Northern Cheyenne agriculture community. Additionally, PPCD expanded operating loans and provided risk management, cash flow, disaster-program, and financial literacy support, serving 12 farmers, 92 ranchers, 4 community producers, and 30 students and youth.

2020 - Youth- $35,000

NAAF funding helped PPCD launch beginning agricultural projects for youth ages 10 to 21. Community members offered cattle and infrastructure, and parents learned alongside their kids. PPCD served 20 youth ranchers, 24 students and youth, and two community producers.

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THE PEOPLES PARTNER FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

NAAF GRANTS

2021 - General - $40,000

PPCD's NAAF-funded grant addressed two of the most pressing issues facing Northern Cheyenne producers: access to capital and access to education. PPCD utilized NAAF funding to put loan capital and financial readiness into the hands of established, startup, and young producers, directly serving five farmers, 62 ranchers, seven community producers, and 24 students and youth.

2023 - General - $200,000

With NAAF funding, PCCD's direct capital injections enabled farmers and ranchers to rebuild herds, sustain operations, and develop livestock water access systems in the wake of drought and fires. Additionally, a youth business class introduced the next generation to agriculture and financial literacy. In 2023, PPCD served six farmers, 62 ranchers, 73 community producers, and 12 youth.

2024 - General - $400,000

PPCD's NAAF funding supports its Ag Genetic Enhancement Project, pairing genetics education and one-on-one technical assistance with $2,500 breeding-bull grants and optional loans. This direct access to capital enables Northern Cheyenne ranchers to improve herd quality and profitability. The grant also supports a full-time agricultural loan officer and summer youth internships at the local butcher shop.

2025 - General - $800,000

PPCD's Agriculture Program seeks to deploy direct loan capital to qualified producers while also increasing the number of qualified loan applicants through financial education and wrap-around services and business support. Additionally, PPCD provides continuous financial coaching to successful loan applicants, helping clients successfully manage capital and further positive outcomes.



PHOTO BY PIIKANI LODGE HEALTH INSTITUTE

PIIKANI LODGE HEALTH INSTITUTE

Overview:
Piikani Lodge Health Institute (PLHI) is a Native-led 501c3 nonprofit based on the Blackfeet Nation in Montana, working to strengthen community health through food sovereignty, agricultural development, and reconnection to the land. Its projects span youth agricultural education, regenerative grazing, food and agriculture policy, and the development of a Blackfeet-owned multi-species meat processing facility.

TOTAL FUNDING: $338,500

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PIIKANI LODGE HEALTH INSTITUTE

NAAF GRANTS

2019 General & Youth Grants - $200,000

NAAF funding supported PLHI's food-sovereignty work, including a community greenhouse and producing 20 gardening and traditional-foods education modules and videos that reached 176 students and youth and 197 community members. NAAF also funded a completed multi-species meat processing facility feasibility study, the launch of Tribal food and agriculture code development, and support for 30 ranchers transitioning their operations, engaging 800 community members across the Blackfeet Nation.

2020 Rapid Response Fund - $38,500

Rapid Response Funding helped PLHI connect Blackfeet Nation producers to COVID-19 relief resources, using print, radio, and in-person outreach to reach producers regardless of internet access. PLHI assisted producers in filing 196 applications, securing $1,594,277 in Coronavirus Food Assistance Program funding. The effort served 151 farmers, 109 ranchers, 197 elders, and 151 community members, and launched a Blackfeet Producer Directory including 35 local producers.

2020 - General - $100,000

NAAF's 2020 award advanced PLHI's multi-species processing facility on the Blackfeet Nation, funding the producer input and market analysis behind it. The team formed a Blackfeet-led producer LLC, secured Tribal Council–granted land, and completed facility drawings—impacting 300 ranchers, 5 farmers, and 105 students and youth. This groundwork leveraged major federal support.



NAAF'S
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STONE CHILD COLLEGE

Overview:
Stone Child College (SCC) is the tribally controlled, land-grant community college of the Chippewa Cree Tribe, located on the Rocky Boy's Indian Reservation in Box Elder, north-central Montana, and serves as one of the state's seven Tribal Colleges. Chartered in 1984, SCC delivers post-secondary education, workforce training, and agricultural programming rooted in Chippewa Cree culture and the needs of its rural community.

TOTAL FUNDING: $349,202

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STONE CHILD COLLEGE

NAAF GRANTS

2024 General - $149,990

Stone Child College's Agribusiness Capital and Credit Enhancement Support Services (ACCESS) Project is establishing a Tribal Agribusiness Support Services Office to close capital-access gaps for producers on the Rocky Boy's Reservation. Through a dedicated Financial Services Coordinator, one-on-one counseling, and quarterly workshops, the project builds financial literacy, credit repair, and risk-management skills. NAAF funding served 21 farmers, 28 ranchers, and 14 students and youth.

2026 General - $199,212

With active NAAF funding, Stone Child College's Hands-on Agriculture Training & Community Husbandry (HATCH) Project creates a community-based pathway for youth and adults to enter and succeed in agriculture. By linking hands-on agricultural production with entrepreneurship, financial literacy, and access-to-capital training, HATCH prepares Chippewa Cree participants to become credit-ready producers, and advances food sovereignty and economic opportunity on the Rocky Boy's Reservation.

BEYOND *the* GRANT

The scale of the opportunity across Montana is clear. Native producers operate 1,501 farms across more than 6.1 million acres, and although those farms are larger on average than non-Native ones, they sell roughly a third less per farm. According to the 2022 Census of Agriculture, Native producers also have lower net farm incomes than non-Native counterparts. The land, the herds, and the determination are all here; what's missing is the capital and infrastructure to close that gap.

That shortfall begins with credit. Montana's Native CDFIs are making real strides, but need more capacity to meet the full scale of demand. For example, the Federal Reserve Bank of New York's Credit Insecurity Index found that between 2007 and 2018, roughly 62% of people living on reservations had very low access to affordable credit, nearly two and a half times the national rate of 26%, and many Montana reservations still fall within its most credit-insecure tier. Grantees describe the same reality from the ground, with a stark disparity between community lenders and larger institutions. The infrastructure to move capital across Native agriculture in Montana exists, but what it needs now is stable, patient funding.

Even where credit begins to move, structural barriers hold producers back. Many cannot use trust land as collateral, lack a credit history, or face jurisdictional hurdles some lenders will not navigate. Pair that with only about 79% of Montana's AI/AN farms reporting internet access, some are cut off from digital banking and online applications altogether. Closing these gaps takes flexible, culturally grounded lending combined with sustained credit-building.

However, capital rarely works without the readiness to use it. Nearly every grantee found the same thing: producers need financial literacy and loan-readiness before capital can move, and every dollar invested in coaching and education multiplies the lending that follows. Capital also has to reach producers at the moment of change, not just at the finish line.

Building a processing economy means asking ranchers to change how and when they raise cattle, which are transitions that carry real risk and require financing and technical support to de-risk. And the ground beneath those decisions keeps shifting: drought, wildfire, pests, and hard winters have repeatedly forced grantees to pivot into emergency response, making water infrastructure, emergency feed, and disaster-flexible funding ongoing needs rather than one-time fixes.

Much of this progress also depends on strong partnerships, and efforts across the state are working to widen program access for producers. Shifting conditions and mounting pressure on Tribal Colleges could raise new barriers precisely where the work is building the bench for Indian Country agriculture. Philanthropic capital that can bridge and stabilize matters more than ever.

Montana's grantees have shown what is possible when investment meets leadership and good old-fashioned producer determination. The capacity for continued growth and momentum across Montana’s agricultural space exists, but what is missing is adequate, responsive capital at the scale of the ambition already on the ground.

APPENDIX A: COMPLETE GRANT TABLE

Year	Grantee	Grant Type	Amount Funded
2019	Chippewa Cree Tribe	Special Emphasis	$74,816
2019	Intertribal Agriculture Council	General	$275,495
2019	The Peoples Partner for Community Development	General	$200,000
2019	Piikani Lodge Health Institute	General	$175,000
2019	Piikani Lodge Health Institute	Youth	$25,000
2020	Chippewa Cree Tribe	Rapid Response	$26,250
2020	Intertribal Agriculture Council	Rapid Response	$42,500
2020	Piikani Lodge Health Institute	Rapid Response	$38,500
2020	The Peoples Partner for Community Development	Rapid Response	$25,500
2020	Blackfeet Nation Stock Growers Association	Youth	$45,000
2020	Chippewa Cree Tribe	General	$50,000
2020	Fort Peck Tribes Fish & Game Department	General	$36,316
2020	Intertribal Agriculture Council	General	$900,000
2020	Intertribal Agriculture Council	General	$39,568
2020	Little Big Horn College	General	$100,000

APPENDIX A: COMPLETE GRANT TABLE

Year	Grantee	Grant Type	Amount Funded
2020	Montana State University Extension	Special Emphasis	$50,000
2020	Montana State University Extension	Youth	$50,000
2020	NACDC Financial Services, Inc.	General	$272,828
2020	NACDC Financial Services, Inc.	General	$50,269
2020	NACDC Financial Services, Inc.	Youth	$35,000
2020	The Peoples Partner for Community Development	General	$335,000
2020	The Peoples Partner for Community Development	Youth	$35,000
2020	Piikani Lodge Health Institute	General	$100,000
2021	American Indian Business Leaders	Youth	$35,000
2021	Intertribal Agriculture Council	General	$200,000
2021	Intertribal Agriculture Council	General	$199,997
2021	Mission Valley FFA	Youth	$60,000
2021	The Peoples Partner for Community Development	General	$40,000
2022	The Blackfeet Nation Agriculture Development Foundation	Youth	$40,000
2022	Chippewa Cree Tribe	Special Emphasis	$124,826

APPENDIX A: COMPLETE GRANT TABLE

Year	Grantee	Grant Type	Amount Funded
2022	Fort Belknap Indian Community	Special Emphasis	$125,000
2022	Montana Native Growth Fund	Special Emphasis	$125,000
2022	Montana Native Growth Fund	General	$100,000
2022	Nakoda~Aaniiih Credit Agency	General	$100,000
2022	Nakoda~Aaniiih Credit Agency	Youth	$40,000
2023	Fort Belknap Indian Community	General	$79,937
2023	NACDC Financial Services, Inc.	General	$350,000
2023	The Peoples Partner for Community Development	General	$200,000
2024	The Peoples Partner for Community Development	General	$400,000
2024	Stone Child College	General	$149,990
2025	Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes	General	$250,000
2025	Intertribal Agriculture Council	Youth	$198,866
2025	The Peoples Partner for Community Development	General	$800,000
2026	Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes	Youth	$199,989
2026	NACDC Financial Services, Inc.	General	$793,089
2026	Stone Child College	General	$199,212

APPENDIX B: AI/AN FAST FACTS FOR MONTANA



1,796
American Indian/
Alaska Native Producers



6,170,809
Acres Farmed by AI/AN



1,501
AI/AN Farms

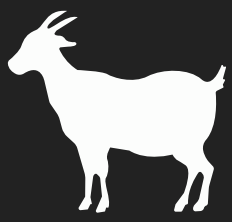


$183,852,000
Market Value of AI/AN
Products Sold

SHARE OF SALES TYPES:



48%
CROP PRODUCTION



52%
LIVESTOCK, POULTRY, AND
PRODUCTS PRODUCTION

SOURCES:

NAAF grant records and grantee reporting, 2019–2026.

2022 Census of Agriculture, USDA NASS.

2022 Census of Agriculture, USDA NASS Demographic Profiles: Montana
https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2022/Online_Resources/Demographic_Profiles/Montana/cpd30000.pdf

Native Lands Information System - Credit Insecurity Dashboard
https://nativeland.info/dashboard/credit-insecurity-on-us-native-lands/

American Indian Higher Education Consortium - Montana TCU Economic Impact Study
https://webassets.aihec.org/FrontPageDocs/Montana_AIHEC%20TCU%20Economic%20Impact%20Study%2009082025.pdf

Bureau of Indian Affairs
https://www.bia.gov/regional-offices/rocky-mountain



NATIVE AMERICAN AGRICULTURE FUND