

A Quarterly Update from the Mesa Grande Business Development Corporation

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Thanks to the Native American Agriculture Fund (NAAF), the BDC was able to award 14 garden "mini-grants" of \$300 each to tribal members interested in planting their own gardens at home or on the Golden Eagle.

Grantees were invited to attend two training sessions, one via Zoom and one live session at the farm, to learn first-hand some basic gardening skills and ask questions of our two "green" consultants, organic farming expert Scott Murray and ethnobotanics expert Richard Bugbee.

The grant budget had originally allowed for 12 mini-grants, but interest was stronger than expected, so NAAF allowed us to make some adjustments within the approved budget to provide for two more awards. The BDC hopes to offer a similar program next year if funded again by NAAF.



First Nations Grant Brings Additional Funding

In January, the BDC received a \$10,000 grant from First Nations Development Institute (FNDI) for the purchase and installation of a greenhouse to enable year-round cultivation of weather-sensitive crops on the Golden Eagle Gardens organic farm.

The BDC has been able to leverage that award by using the FNDI grant to qualify for a program under the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) that subsidizes up to 75% of the cost of high-tunnel greenhouses for produce cultivation. This will enable us to install three greenhouses instead of one to maximize winter production.



In a letter of thanks to FirstNations, BDC President Keely Linton wrote, "This will make a huge difference in our ability to provide fresh organic produce year-round to tribal members and the surrounding area. This is not only important for improved Native diet and nutrition, but also very important to the economics of our farming operation, as it will enable us to offset seasonal fluctuations in production."

The initial First Nations grant was followed in July and August by two more awards totaling \$17,500 from FNDI's California Tribal Fund in recognition of the work being done on the Golden Eagle to build a 20-acre tribal farm from the ground up. The funds will be used to support further garden work, including the installation of the three greenhouses, or "high tunnels," on the Golden Eagle.

While the BDC completes the paperwork on the NRCS greenhouse subsidy, we've installed a temporary greenhouse to shelter the seedlings that are now ready for transplant into the rich soil of the Golden Eagle. Hot chiles, sweet peppers, tomatoes, watermelons and pumpkin seedlings will soon have their permanent home on our farm.

First Nations Development Institute is a non-profit organization that raises and disburses grant funds to help Native American communities throughout the United States develop and enhance their land, human, cultural and natural resources.