



Healthy Foods Financing Initiative Project (HFFIP)

WHAT WORKS PROJECT 17 IN MONTANA

GOALS AND ACTIVITIES

This project aims to increase the capacity of local and regional food systems to enable greater access to locally grown, healthy foods for residents living in the food deserts of rural communities on Native American Reservations in Montana, Wyoming, and North and South Dakota.

Project partners will work to develop policies and legal codes that can be adopted by tribal councils to allow local small businesses to sell produce to stores located within their reservation boundaries. A loan fund will provide potential financing for small business that will, in turn, also provide employment opportunities for at least 40 Native Americans.

POPULATIONS SERVED

All of Montana's reservations are located in federally designated food desert areas. The project will initially target residents of Crow, Fort Peck, Fort Belknap, Northern Cheyenne, and Littleshell.

MAJOR PARTNERS AND FUNDERS

Main funder: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families.

Other partners: Native American Development Corporation, Partners with Native Americans, Tribal Colleges, Tribal Community Members, Tribal Councils, Montana State University Extension Office, and other Reservation-wide agencies.

MAJOR OUTCOMES

During the first year, developed necessary infrastructure for the project, including baseline measures and shared goals.

INGREDIENTS FOR SUCCESS

Conducted a Food Assessment survey in impacted communities. Learned that community members were interested in gaining new knowledge about gardening, nutrition, cooking, and canning. Several residents were also interested in the development of a commercial kitchen to help incubate and grow more local businesses.

Communities are empowered by their own decision-making. One of the many ways we engaged the community was to facilitate community meetings and really listen to what the community wanted. The community members became the voice and main contributor to the overall success of the project.

ADVICE FOR OTHERS

“Be sure to involve your community members as partners and key stakeholders.”

— Mitzi Racine, Native American Development Corporation