



**NAVAJO NATION
DIVISION OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 3, 2012

CONTACT: Rick Abasta
Public Information Officer
Phone: 928-871-6560
Fax: 928-871-7090
Email: rabasta@nndcd.org

Navajo Nation to receive ICDBG maximum for FY 2012



James Adakai, program and projects specialist for Community Development Block Grant, said the Indian Community Development Block Grant process is extremely competitive. The CDBG program has strengthened their grant submissions through the years and received the maximum grant ceiling award eight times in the past two decades. (Photo by Rick Abasta)

The Navajo Nation Community Development Block Grant program was awarded the Indian Community Development Block Grant maximum ceiling amount of \$5.5 million by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for fiscal year 2012.

HUD's Southwest Office of Native American Programs conferred the grant to CDBG on May 2, to complete 10 infrastructure projects on the Navajo Nation.

"The intent of the grant has been carried out by the Navajo Nation each year," said Arbin Mitchell, director of the Navajo Nation Division of Community Development. "We are fortunate to receive this funding, especially with budget cuts at the federal level.

"The division and CDBG will continue to improve the standard of living for Navajo families in FY 2012," he added.

From a pool of 42 projects submitted for funding consideration in Oct. 2011, a committee of construction industry professionals

whittled the list down to 10 projects.

CDBG's selection committee consisted of engineers, architects, project managers, and archaeologists from sister organizations like Navajo Abandoned Mine Lands Department, Navajo Tribal Utility Authority, Indian Health Services, Design and Engineering Services, and Capital Improvement Office.

The FY 2012 funds will cover basic needs like electrical services and reliable water systems for communities on the Navajo Nation.

Nine of the projects funded are for electric power lines in the Ariz. communities of Dennehotso, Jeddito, Kayenta, Wide Ruins, Rock Point, Lechee, Coppermine and Cornfields.

The lone sewer line project is for the Shiprock Farm Area in N.M.

Ella Benally knows the quality of life improvements for Navajo families in need of infrastructure development cannot be measured in simple dollars and cents.

Benally is the community services coordinator for Forest Lake Chapter.

In 20 years as coordinator, she's witnessed the construction of four power line projects lighting up the chapter, which now has electricity for 100 percent of the community.

The CDBG funds will pay for the construction of a six-mile power line extension for seven scattered site homes, she said.

Benally said the chapter will work on waterline development next, because only 30 percent of residents have access to running water.

"We're so scattered. It's hard for us to get money for the waterline," she said.

Scattered site housing often means the chapter cannot meet the IHS requirement of at least five homes per mile for the waterline construction.

"The main thing (chapter members) want out here is infrastructure," she said. "Those are the basic things they want, not gas stations or hospitals."

Such intense focus on the basic necessities is not uncommon, according to James Adakai, program and projects specialist for CDBG.

In the 20 years he's worked for the program, Adakai said the Navajo Nation has received the maximum ceiling grant eight times.

"It gives our people here in the land dispute area hope. They've been forgotten for some time."

Since the inception of the CDBG program in 1981, the Navajo Nation has received \$140 million for the completion of 225 projects.

"It's pretty competitive," Adakai said. "It's not guaranteed each year (to receive the maximum ceiling award) when you apply."

For the FY 2012 funding cycle, Navajo Nation power line projects will stretch a total of 99.3 miles and service 144 homes.

The sewer line project will span 7.1 miles and provide services to 90 homes.

Jeddito Chapter community service coordinator Donna Boyd said after the FY 2012 funding cycle, 85 percent of the community would be lit up.

She said the eyes of community members light up when speaking about the prospect of receiving electricity for the first time.

"It gives our people here in the land dispute area hope. They've been forgotten for some time," Boyd said. "Everywhere else saw

infrastructure development and now we're trying to catch up.

"Jeddito is starting to shine now," she added.

The FY 2012 CDBG construction projects totaled \$4,726,991. Administrative costs of \$773,009 brought the total to \$5.5 million.

Combined with leveraged funds, the total cost for the 10 projects amounted to \$8,610,521.

ICDBG funding was leveraged with revenue from chapters, NTUA, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Salt River Project, Capital Improvement Office, and the Native American Housing Assistance and Self Determination Act.

For the Navajo Nation, the ICDBG has funded a health facility, water treatment plant upgrades, NTUA substations, power line upgrades, fire stations, shopping centers, bathroom additions, planning grants, roads, and housing rehabilitation activities for over 30 years.

A staff of nine work for the CDBG office, each carrying out specific functions, from grant writing, compliance, administration, accounting, grants management, contracts, project management, and grant closeouts.

Adakai commended the staff for their efforts and contributions to improving the quality of life for Navajo families.

"The families with the most needs were served with much needed infrastructure service," he said.

Information: www.cdbg.org



Infrastructure development like this waterline project for the Round Rock community, comprise the bulk of construction activities for ICDBG funding. Electric power lines are the other major projects requested throughout the Navajo Nation. (Photo by Rick Abasta)