Indigenous Housing in Metro-Areas: Leveraging Federal Block Grants for Urban Housing

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**INDIGENOUS HOUSING in METRO-AREAS**

Leveraging Federal Block Grants for Urban Housing

The Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Act of 1996 (NAHASDA) established a single flexible federal block grant for tribes and Tri-bally Designated Housing Entities to provide housing assistance to their tribal members. This shift recognized Native sovereignty of tribal self-determination and self-governance, and it reorganized the mechanism by which Indian Housing Block Grant (IHBG) annually with funds typically prioritized to housing on reservation or in tribally-acknowledged areas. In Oregon, a majority of funds go to the ongoing operation and maintenance of 1937 Housing Act units.

The population of Indigenous people living in metropolitan areas is growing, and within urban areas may include reservations or Alaska Native village areas, most contracts less than 1% of designated tribal lands. In Portland, the Nesika Illahee development is part-funded by an IHBG grant awarded to the Confederated Tribes of the Siletz Indians of Oregon. In this case study in providing multifamily housing in urban areas with units prioritized for Indigenous families, 82 percent of the 561 enrolled members of the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians live within the city of Oregon, but fewer than a third live on its reservation. An IHBG recipient, the State levied the flexibility to leverage their federal dollars to access other sources of funds. In partnership with private developers and culturally-specific community service organizations, Nesika Ilahhee will provide 98 units of housing to families earning 60 percent or less of Portland's Area Median Income.

The Nesika Ilahhee development is the first time a partnership of private developers, a tribal entity, and community service organizations has built affordable housing for Native families in Portland. The funding strategy utilized local, state, and federal funds attached to different programs for their creation and management. The Nesika Ilahhee development is 24/7 hours and days of operations.

While there are multiple programs across Federal, State, and Local levels of government, the understanding that Portland’s 2019 Point in Count indicates that people identifying as American Indian or Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, and Black or African American, in particular, were overrepresented in the IHBG-eligible homeless population. Oregon Health and Community Services ensured that the layered funding would allow for 20 units reserved for enrolled members of federally recognized tribes, while still complying with Fair Housing Law. Nationally, IHBG fund allocations have not kept pace with inflation, with funding decreasing by 27% since 2000, while both the need and cost of serving that need have increased. As a consequence, our case study provides a framework for partnering these funds with local and state financing opportunities.

**2019 Statewide Impact**

**INDIAN HOUSING BLOCK GRANT**

**HISTORY & TIMELINE**

- **Indian Reorganization Act of 1934**
- **Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975**
- **1980s-1990s**
- Decreased federal control of Indian urban and non-tribally-acknowledged tribal lands
- Tribally Designated Housing Entities able to use IHBG funds for their own tribal needs

Since 2000, funding for the Indian Housing Block Grant (IHBG) has decreased by 27%.