



**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

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**BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT/TRAINING CENTER COMES TO WALTHILL**  
**--USDA Rural Development Assists**

**Lincoln, Nebraska, June 25**—The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development awarded in late April, \$200,000 in Rural Business Enterprise Grant (RBEG) funds to the Ho-Chunk Community Development Corporation (HCCDC). The USDA dollars will be matched by Ho-Chunk, Inc. (HCI). The funding dollars will create a business development center in Walthill that will afford five business incubator spaces and a state-of-the-art technology training center/business library. The center, located at 100-102 Tallman Street in Walthill, Nebraska, will serve the 6,936 rural residents of Thurston County.

Deborah Drbal, business & community programs specialist for USDA Rural Development stated, "The USDA funds and HCI match will be used for the renovation of the 3,900 sq. ft. building owned by HCCDC." "Rural Business Enterprise Grant funds for this project have been made available from a Native American set-aside. As a result of this particular funding availability, HCCDC will strive to provide 75% of the associated project assistance to Native Americans."

Past efforts to generate interest in business development from Native American business entrepreneurs in the area have been difficult. This has been attributed, in part, to lack of access to training and startup funds needed in creating and successfully operating a new business.

HCCDC is a Nebraska non-profit corporation, which was established in December of 2000. HCCDC receives its funding through Ho-Chunk, Inc. (HCI). HCI was established in 1994 as a wholly owned corporation of the Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska. The goals of HCCDC are to decrease the barriers between agencies and tribal members and to create and improve the workforce and its skills level. Implementation of these goals via the business development/training center will provide residents of Thurston County in addition to the Winnebago and Omaha tribal members with assistance in their own backyard.

HCCDC plans to raise the economic, educational, and social levels for both the Native American communities and the people of Thurston County; to create an economically viable community improving the unemployment rates, poverty levels, expansion of training opportunities, and development of enterprises in depressed areas; and to address the existing gap in access to entrepreneurial endeavors, business start-up, job skills training in technology fields, e-commerce, business ownership and development. Business skills that will be taught include business planning and research, entrepreneurial training, computer technology, word processing and Internet training. The program will offer individuals who participate in the program an opportunity to become self-sustaining in their business ventures or become more valuable as an employee. HCCDC's clients will be individuals who are business owners or employees, or individuals interested in owning a business.

For additional information contact Deborah Drbal in the USDA Rural Development State Office, Rm. 152 Federal Building 100 Centennial Mall North, Lincoln, Neb. 68508-3888 or phone (402) 437-5558. Visit [www.rurdev.usda.gov/ne/](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/ne/).

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