We are excited to share updates and highlights from our NEXT-GEN Mini-Grant Program, an initiative aimed at empowering Tribal communities in Wisconsin through sustainable development projects.

This newsletter celebrates the hard work and dedication of our grant recipients and provides insights into their innovative projects.

The NEXT-GEN Mini-Grant Program was established to support projects that focus on natural resources, sustainable foods, and nutrition within Tribal communities in Wisconsin. With a total of $200,000 to be distributed over four years, the program aims to enhance food sovereignty, promote sustainable practices, and build capacity in Food, Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Human Sciences (FANH).
In 2011, the Bad River Tribe launched a Food Sovereignty Initiative to teach community members about Anishinabe food traditions and replace the “food desert” designation with self-sustaining healthy food abundance. Over twelve years, the initiative saw the establishment of community gardens, high tunnels, and educational programs on gardening and food processing. In 2023, new coordinator Katie Koch continued the initiative’s success, integrating produce into community programs and offering popular classes on food and medicine making. Currently, efforts are underway to renovate a commercial building, “The Fish House,” to serve as a food processing and teaching hub while funds are sought to complete the new Food Sovereignty building.

**Bayfield Alternative Education**

The Bayfield Middle School Alternative Education program focuses on experiential learning rooted in Ojibwe culture and place-based education, emphasizing food sovereignty and wellness practices. Students engage in activities like harvesting manoomin (wild rice), gleaning fruit, and experimenting with wild edibles. They plan to expand into tea blending, using medicinal plants to create blends supporting winter wellness, distributed through the Red Cliff Local Food Box program. This initiative aims to integrate intergenerational learning, honor Indigenous knowledge, and foster community health through sustainable gardening and traditional plant medicines.

**Corn Comes Back to Life**

Mandaamin’aabijiibaa (Corn Comes Back to Life) promotes tribal food sovereignty and Indigenous education by growing two corn varieties, red pole beans, and squash on the Bayfield peninsula. The initiative will teach modern corn-growing techniques and traditional practices to the local Ojibwe community, using successful methods from the Menominee Nation and Oneida. The harvested produce will be made into hominy and three sisters soup mixes for distribution in Red Cliff Elders’ food boxes and community food programs, enhancing food security and combating diabetes. Additionally, the project will develop educational resources and support local native students through an emergency grant fund.

**Honey Production**

Bills Busy Bee Honey Farm seeks to expand its honey processing capacity with new extraction equipment, including an uncappping tank, honey pump, bottlers, and a filling machine. Now managing 80 hives after starting nine years ago with just two, the farm aims to streamline, the farm aims to streamline production to meet growing demand while promoting the sustainability and health benefits of raw honey, sold weekly at local markets and supporting community food programs.

**Quote**

“With the funds I received from this grant, I will be able to purchase equipment that will expedite my honey production, which will allow me to provide local honey to my community.”

William Mott
Sterling Schreiber, Jr. operates a sustainable agriculture business on the Stockbridge-Munsee Indian Reservation, focusing on local produce and honey sales, including to the Tribal Elder Food Box Program. The mission emphasizes small-scale agricultural practices to enhance food sovereignty and security within Tribal communities. Through the Northern Climate Honeybee Improvement Initiative, I aim to breed local honeybee queens adapted to northern climates without medications or chemicals, promoting resilience and supporting backyard beekeeping among community members.

The Oneida Language Cooking Video Series is a transformative project combining Oneida language immersion with traditional cooking demonstrations. Featuring recipes like mush, corn soup, kan^stolhale, and Indian cookies, these videos aim to revitalize the Oneida language and preserve cultural practices. By integrating language lessons with cooking, the series promotes sustainable food practices and food sovereignty. Each of the four videos serves as an educational resource, teaching traditional recipes while immersing viewers in the richness of the Oneida language.

Jon Lemieux, a sole proprietor, began producing maple syrup three years ago with a used evaporator and fifty tree taps, yielding 3.25 gallons of syrup in his first year. The following year, he expanded to 100 taps and added a syrup press, resulting in 7.5 gallons. However, the time spent boiling sap conflicted with his spring fishing activities. Funding from the NEXT-GEN mini-grant will be used to purchase a new evaporator or a reverse osmosis machine to increase syrup production efficiency and allow more time for fish harvesting.

Ancient Roots Homestead in Bowler, Wisconsin, is dedicated to researching and preserving traditional Indigenous gardening practices, seed saving, and food preservation techniques. Through workshops, community partnerships, and hands-on experiences, they aim to reconnect community members with ancestral knowledge, emphasizing sustainable living and cultural preservation. By fostering intergenerational learning and promoting traditional trade routes, Ancient Roots Homestead seeks to inspire others to embrace self-sufficiency and honor their heritage for future generations.

“I am very thankful for this grant. Funding helps our projects to keep moving, in a good way. I love to motivate and inspire our Menominee and Stockbridge Munsee community members and beyond- to grow their own food, learn how to preserve it, seed save, exchange knowledge, showcase Indigenous ingredients, and more.”

-Lucy Grignon of Ancient Roots Homestead
The "Nourishing Roots: Indigenous Culinary Partnership and Education" project by Ukwakhwa aims to celebrate and revitalize traditional Haudenosaunee agricultural and culinary practices through educational workshops and hands-on meal preparation. Collaborating with Indigenous chefs, the project will use Ukwakhwa's commercial kitchen to offer accessible, culturally significant meals and cooking classes. Emphasizing local sourcing and sustainability, it seeks to deepen community connections to Haudenosaunee food systems while fostering cultural appreciation and culinary skills among participants.

Skenandore Farm is expanding its capacity by purchasing a second mobile chicken coop, aiming to double chicken production to 2000 birds annually, benefiting the Tribal Elder Box program and WI-LFPA. The coop's automation enhances bird quality while reducing labor, allowing chickens to graze on fresh pasture daily, foraging and fertilizing naturally. This initiative supports our goal of supplying high-quality, pasture-raised chickens to the community, contributing to soil health and sustainability efforts on the Oneida Nation reservation.

The Lot project in Hayward, WI aims to transform an empty city lot into a vibrant community space featuring native Wisconsin plant gardens, local artist showcases, and a variety of food trucks, including Indigenous-owned businesses. Phase I will include a pavilion, seating areas, game spaces, and regular markets and events such as Farmer's Markets, Maker's Markets, and outdoor movie nights. This initiative strives to create a cohesive, safe environment that celebrates local culture and fosters community engagement and enjoyment.

Windy Oak Acres is a pioneering initiative in Wisconsin dedicated to advancing food sovereignty and community development within tribal nations. By integrating ancestral wisdom with modern innovations, the project fosters sustainable food cultivation and nutrition, honoring food security, cultural preservation, and community well-being. It emphasizes reclaiming traditional knowledge through practices like seed-saving and indigenous foodways to build resilient food systems. Through partnerships with local stakeholders and agencies, Windy Oak Acres promotes regenerative agriculture and sustainable practices to nurture ecosystems and support tribal communities' holistic well-being.
HOW TO APPLY FOR 2025

Interested in applying for the next round of Mini-Grants? Visit our website at https://www.menominee.edu/nextgen-grants for detailed application guidelines, deadlines, and resources. Applications for the 2025 funding cycle will open in December.

THANK YOU

We extend our heartfelt thanks to all the participants, partners, and community members who make the NEXT-GEN Mini-Grant Program possible. Together, we are building a more sustainable and resilient future for our Tribal communities.

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