ACTION

Agenda Item #6

Oct. 28, 2026

Subject:	**Tribal Housing Pre-development Fund: Award Recommendations**
Reporting Period:	October 2026
Staff Lead:	Amar Azucena Cid, Deputy Director, Sareena Rai, Senior Tribal Resilient Community Planner, and Marc Caswell, Advisory

Recommended Action

Staff recommend the Council award $51,945,614 of disencumbered Affordable Housing Sustaining Communities (AHSC) funds and funds from Fiscal Year 2024-25 and 2025-26 AHSC to the 19 top-scoring applicants of the Tribal Housing Pre-development Fund, which was established under the Tribal Housing and Capacity Building Initiative.

Summary

The California Strategic Growth Council's (SGC) Tribal Housing and Capacity Building Initiative addresses longstanding barriers to affordable housing development and organizational capacity for tribes through two grant programs: the Tribal Capacity Building Program and the Tribal Housing Pre-Development Fund. The funds support activities for tribal entities interested in affordable housing and related projects that implement land use, housing, transportation, and agricultural land preservation practices.

This Staff Report provides an overview of Tribal Housing Pre-Development Fund (THPDF), including a summary of program guideline development, application process, and staff award recommendations.

The Tribal Housing Pre-Development Fund Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) made approximately $20 million available for grants up to $3,000,000. The program was significantly oversubscribed, receiving 56 applications (all passing threshold review) with a total request of $148 million. Nearly all applicants requested the maximum amount of funding. Contingent on the Council's approval earlier in this meeting of Items 5.a.i through 5.a.ii awarding available funds up to $70 million for the Tribal Housing and Capacity Building Initiative, staff recommend 19 applications for award totaling $51,945,614 in awards.

Background

Tribal Housing Crisis

The lack of affordable housing across California is an acute statewide crisis, as noted in the CA Executive Order N-06-19. Tribal communities continue to face some of the most severe housing shortages in the state, and the number of Indigenous Californians who are unhoused or experiencing homelessness is two times that of the general population. As demonstrated by CA Executive Order N-15-19, the administration is committed to addressing the disparities for

Tribal communities. In line with these executive orders, the SGC is dedicated to enhancing affordable housing and related projects that implement land use, housing, transportation, and agricultural land preservation practices that support infill and compact development for tribal communities via the Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities (AHSC) Program.

At the April 30, 2025, council meeting, the Tribal Housing and Capacity Building Initiative was established and provided funding for Round 2 of Tribal Capacity Building Program and Tribal Housing Pre-Development Fund using accumulated funds from the Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities (AHSC) Program's continuous appropriation. To date, the Council has awarded a total of $5.3 billion to AHSC projects, but only $47,953,555 to three tribe-affiliated AHSC projects (Approximately 1% of all AHSC awards). Despite the significant need for affordable housing, tribes have historically faced challenges accessing critical state funding to support affordable housing development. The Tribal Housing and Capacity Building Initiative was developed largely in response to historically low tribal participation in the AHSC Program and other State Housing programs.

About the Tribal Housing Pre-development Fund

The Tribal Housing Pre-Development Fund (the Fund) is a competitive grant program that provides funding to support activities necessary to build housing and be eligible for state-funded affordable housing programs, particularly the AHSC program.

The program supports planning activities, infrastructure investments, site acquisition and preparation, and/or other associated costs tribes must incur before building housing. The list of eligible project types is not exclusive, and tribes are encouraged to identify similar work that encourages housing development. The program provides flexible funding, relying on tribal communities to utilize their local knowledge and expertise to design and implement culturally responsive solutions that meet the needs of their communities. These investments will provide funding for catalytic investments that help establish the infrastructure foundation necessary to support future affordable housing growth and sustainable community development and investments that enhance, expand, or maximize the public benefit of existing transportation, climate, utility, affordable housing, and community-serving infrastructure assets.

The program was developed alongside tribes through years of intentional outreach, engagement, and formal consultation with tribes through all aspects of program development. This included identifying issues and barriers to housing development, acquiring funding, developing guidelines, releasing guidelines for comment, and application assistance.

Program Timeline

- April 2025, the Council allocated $30 million of AHSC funds to create the Tribal Housing Capacity Building Initiative, which is made up of two programs: the Tribal Capacity Building Program, Round 2, and the Tribal Housing Pre-Development Fund.

- July – August 2025, staff held 10 Key Informant Interviews with tribal-serving organizations and partners to inform program development.
- Late 2025, staff created Draft Guidelines for the Tribal Housing Pre-development Fund
- Jan. 6, 2026 - April 6, 2026, Draft Guidelines were posted for a 90-day Public Comment and Tribal Consultation
    - Staff mailed over 170 letters to request formal Tribal Consultation from every entity listed on the state's Native American Heritage Contact List.
    - Staff held nine workshops, both in person and virtual, and more than 500 people participated.
    - Staff held nine Tribal Consultations with both federally and non-federally recognized tribes.
    - Over 500 new people subscribed to the Tribal Newsletter
- April 29, 2026, the SGC Council adopted the Program Guidelines
- May 11, 2026 – Aug. 11, 2026: NOFA released, 90-day application period
    - Staff mailed over 170 letters to inform every entity listed on the state's Native American Heritage Contact List of the NOFA and funding opportunities.
    - Staff held six Bi-weekly Office Hour sessions
    - Staff held five additional meetings with tribes to provide technical assistance with applications
- Aug. 11, 2026, the program received 56 applications, all passing Threshold Review
    - Totaling $147,955,350.00
- October 28, 2026, the Council voted to increase the available funding for the THCBI to up to $70 million (contingent upon Council approval)

Outreach and Engagement

Key takeaways from engagement with tribes during program development:

- Tribes were in support of both programs in the Initiative, consistently reporting the need for a capacity-building program and housing pre-development funds.
- The Limited Waiver of Sovereign Immunity continues to be a barrier to advanced pay.
- Non-federally recognized tribes expressed a need to be eligible for funding.
- Tribes expressed concerns regarding the limited amount of funding available.

As a result, staff made the following updates to the program guidelines:

- Updated to be a competitive grant program, reflecting the expected interest and limited funds in the program.
- Developed a scoring rubric intended to score projects equitably based on various factors such as housing and socioeconomic needs, demographics, project types, and project impacts.

- Released Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) after Guidelines were posted to allow for flexibility and potential future funding opportunities.

Application Process

The Application Scoring Criteria were developed through extensive engagement with tribes and tribal-serving organizations, who requested an equitable scoring process. Therefore, the goals and objectives of the program are to award a diverse group of applicants based on factors including but not limited to; housing needs, socioeconomic needs, project impact, project implementation experience, and project type, size of tribe, capacity of tribe, geographic location of tribe, and state recognition status.

Applicants were notified if they did not pass threshold review and given up to two weeks to ensure compliance with threshold criteria specified in the Tribal Housing Pre-Development Fund Guidelines. Staff reviewed all 56 submitted applications and provided written feedback to applicants. After resubmitting or amending required materials within that timeframe, all 56 applicants passed threshold review.

Staff coordinated an interagency review panel of 13 reviewers from five different departments, which were the SGC, the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD), the Department of Transportation (DOT), the Department of Conservation (DOC), and the California Air Resources Board (CARB).

Each application was randomly assigned and reviewed by three reviewers from the interagency panel. Reviewers used the scoring criteria rubric in the Tribal Housing Pre-Development Fund guidelines to score applications. Reviewers scored applications individually and attended a reviewer orientation and deliberation session to come to a consensus on application scores. The rigorous evaluation process identified 19 top-scoring applications recommended for award.

Summary of Applications

For the Tribal Housing and Capacity Building Initiative:

The THCBI illustrates the substantial need and potential for transformative investment in tribal communities across California. Across both programs in the initiative, the SGC received 117 applications from more than 80 tribes across California. More than 40% of all tribes in California applied to one or both programs.

The total funding requested exceeds $170 million and has the potential to benefit more than 70,000 tribal members. Applicants varied significantly in size, ranging from six to 6,500 enrolled tribal members. Several tribes reported having little to no paid staff members, underscoring the capacity constraints many tribes face in pursuing funding opportunities.

For the Tribal Housing Pre-Development Fund:

Funding requests for the THPDF totaled $148 million. The program received 56 applications in total. A total of 35 federally recognized tribes, 10 non-federally recognized tribes, and 11 Tribally Designated Housing Entities applied. Many applicants were from the North State and Sierras region, followed by Inland Southern California, the San Joaquin Valley, and the Central Coast regions. On average, applicants requested $2.6 million with the goal of supporting 47 housing units.

The current available funding for this round would support eight projects, with impacts of 9,305 tribal members and 387 housing units in three (3) regions. However, additional funding allocation to this program would support a total of 22,524 tribal members and 900 housing units in four of the total eight (8 regions). Tribes from the Central Coast, Sacramento Area, San Joaquin Valley, and Coastal Southern California would not be awarded. The THPDF didn't receive any applications from Coastal Southern California. The Central Coast, San Joaquin Valley, and Sacramento area regions submitted the least amount of applications, and therefore, were less likely to be awarded.

With the additional funding, the SGC would award 19 applications across 4 regions, including Inland Southern California, North State and Sierras, San Diego Area, and San Francisco Bay Area. Approximately 38% of federally-recognized tribes that applied would be awarded, 10% of non-federally recognized tribes that applied would be awarded, and 42% of Tribally Designated Housing Entities that applied would be awarded.

The allocation of additional funding for the Tribal Housing and Capacity Building Initiative significantly expands the impact, regional distribution of funds, and potential for future investments in tribal communities.

Recommendations

Staff recommend the Council approve Tribal Housing Pre-development Fund awards to the 19 top-scoring applications.

Next Steps

Upon Council approval of the Tribal Housing Pre-Development Fund awards, staff will issue grant agreements to the 19 top-scoring applicants recommended for award. With permission from applicants, staff will also publish applicant project profiles on the Program's webpage.

Council Recommendation

Approve staff recommendation to award $51,945,614 to the 19 top-scoring applicants. Should the Council agree with staff's recommendation, the following motion language is suggested:

"I move that the Council approve staff's award recommendations for the Tribal Housing Pre-development Fund Round 1."

Attachments

Attachment A: Tribal Housing Pre-Development Fund Project Profiles

Attachment B: Tribal Housing Pre-Development Fund Applicant List

Attachment C: Tribal Housing Pre-Development Fund Applicant Map