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Minority Business Development Agency Releases Report on Businesses and Workers in Indian Country

Key findings reveal importance of digital infrastructure, access to markets and a skilled workforce, and the role of Tribal self-governance in business development

[Washington, DC | November 23, 2021] - Today, the U.S. Department of Commerce Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA) released a report entitled, “*Keys to Unlocking Business Development in Indian Country*.” The report is the result of an in-depth examination of economic characteristics across 166 tribes in comparison to the broader U.S. economy, including regional and rural areas. The report affirms that a defining feature of most tribal lands is remoteness and the keys to unlocking prosperity are similar to other rural communities. Interviews with Tribal leaders, Native entrepreneurs and business experts reveal Indian Country also faces unique business development opportunities and challenges related to tribal sovereignty.

“This report sheds light on current constraints that must be addressed to stimulate business development and economic growth in Tribal communities.” said Miguel Esti n, Acting National Director of the Minority Business Development Agency. “Despite long-standing challenges, Native communities are expanding business development into the manufacturing sector, professional services, and renewable energy.”

“*Keys to Unlocking Business Development in Indian Country*” examines the impact of remoteness on workforce and business development, business ownership, and unemployment on tribal land. Policies that aim to eliminate barriers to markets and opportunities outside the immediate reservation should be a priority. These policies may include but are not limited to building out digital infrastructure in tribal areas, business capacity building in e-commerce and digital platforms, skills training and workforce development, increasing opportunities for higher education, and maximizing government contract opportunities.

Other interesting findings include:

- The presence of a large gaming facility or natural resource project cannot alone make up for the disadvantages of remoteness.

- Three sectors with the greatest potential to grow and take advantage of access to external markets are mining; arts, entertainment, and recreation; and administrative and support and waste management.
- The results also indicate that, all else equal, self-employment is greater in areas that have more economic activity and employment in agriculture, construction, and manufacturing sectors, and less economic activity and employment in public administration and government.
- There is a need for further in-depth analysis on the different types of self-governance contracts and compacts as well as their effect on business development in Indian Country.

The report, “Keys to Unlocking Business Development in Indian Country” is available on the MBDA website, www.MBDA.gov.

About the Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA)

The Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA) is bureau of the United States Department of Commerce that promotes growth and competitiveness of U.S. businesses owned by African Americans, Asian and Pacific-Islander Americans, Hispanic and Latino Americans, and Native American businesses. Established in 1969, MBDA continues to be a dedicated strategic partner to all U.S. minority-owned businesses, committed to delivering programs and services that provide greater access to capital, contracts and markets. www.MBDA.gov