



RE: American Indian Center Food is Medicine Initiative

To Whom it may concern,

I am pleased to present this letter for your consideration. The American Indian Center (AIC) of Chicago is proud to support the cultural, social, and educational needs of native community members of the Chicago metropolitan area. AIC hopes to partner with you in the extended facilitation of their Food is Medicine initiative. The objective of this program is to support indigenous food sovereignty in Chicago by helping community members access fresh traditional Indigenous foods.

Over the past 3 years, AIC has been running their Food is Medicine program with great success. Through the program, AIC distributes monthly food boxes containing healthy indigenous foods, hosts cooking and gardening workshops, organizes field trips to indigenous food producers, and hosts monthly fresh cooked lunches for senior community members. These activities ensure access to and deep understanding of culturally significant ingredients.

With the high success and community engagement AIC has received in the aforementioned activities, they are now seeking to expand this program to engage and teach younger community members as well as expand indigenous food access into a new community garden space. AIC is requesting \$11,066 in funding to support obtaining equipment and compensating expert training and instruction in community gardening and traditional food uses over the next calendar year.

AIC's mission and this project in particular are highly aligned with the goals of First Nations' Native Food Security Grant emphasizing a strong focus on native food distribution and strengthening of the native food life cycle. AIC appreciates your consideration in supporting indigenous food sovereignty in their community through traditional food access and education. Please reach out for any further information needed.

Thank you,
American Indian Center (AIC) Inc.



Food is Medicine: Achieving Indigenous Food Sovereignty for the Chicago Community

Submitted to: First Nations Development Institute, Native Food Security Grant

Date: June 3, 2026

Jaden Southern
Nativeam123: Tribal Food Sovereignty



Date of Application: June 3, 2026

Legal Name of Organization: American Indian Center Inc.

Year Founded: 1953 **Current Annual Operating Budget:** \$ –

Executive Director: Dr. Nataka Moore, Sarina DiMaso **Email:** info@chicagoaic.org

Address (principal/administrative office): 3401 W Ainslie St

City: Chicago **State:** IL **Zip:** 60625

Phone: 773-275-5871 **Website:** <https://aicchicago.org/>

Project Name: Food is Medicine: Achieving Indigenous Food Sovereignty for the Chicago Community

Purpose: Support indigenous food sovereignty through education about and providing access to healthy traditional foods.

Amount Requested: \$ 11,066 **Total Project Cost:** \$11,066

Project Goals:

- a. Establish an indigenous food community garden space operated by Chicago community members
- b. Develop youth education curriculum in traditional indigenous food and run youth - community oriented workshops

Beginning and Ending Dates of the Project/Campaign: September 2026 - September 2027

Geographic Area to be Served: Chicago Metropolitan Area

Organizational Information

In the Chicago metro, AIC aims to uplift and perpetuate Indian cultural values along with fostering the welfare and economic advancement of the American Indian community. The American Indian Center was established in 1953 in response to federal policies which brought Native Americans of all backgrounds to the Chicago metro. Through educational, social, and cultural services, AIC continues to support and help urban Natives connect with their culture. Current initiatives include providing volunteer opportunities in workshop facilitation, gardening, and operations, hosting cultural ceremonies, and weekly cultural classes in beadwork and sewing. The recent establishment of their Food is Medicine program has supported the distribution of native food boxes to community members and the preparation of weekly lunches for senior community members which center healthy traditional foods and knowledge.

Purpose of Grant

In response to the success of their work so far, the Native Food Security grant will allow AIC to further build their community capacity for food sovereignty and continued access to traditional foods. While the Food is Medicine program currently provides invaluable services, it is lacking an intergenerational connection to younger community members along with robust access to food production for the broader community, an essential component of food security. A survey of Native American community members in the Chicago region conducted at the start of the program found that “88 percent of respondents had little to no access to fresh, healthy, traditional Indigenous foods” demonstrating the need for robust programming for the native Chicagoans.

This grant would fund 1. The construction and start up costs of a new native foods community garden in the Chicago metro and 2. Development of youth education programming on local indigenous food practices. The first goal builds on the AIC’s Food is Medicine program which created a community and rooftop garden at the center. Grant funding would go toward the materials needed to start up a second community garden in the city in a new location. This is in line with the grant’s and the AIC’s objectives of community empowerment and native control over their food systems. Key activities include:

- ❖ Determination of optimal site location
- ❖ Construction of garden beds, obtaining water access, purchasing of equipment and other start up essentials
- ❖ Solicitation and confirmation of community member commitment to garden plot maintenance

The second objective would seek to expand the youth involvement in the project in line with the grant’s objectives of increasing intergenerational wisdom and ensuring the transmission of knowledge across generations. This would also be critical to the continued flourishing of the AIC over time. Key activities include:

- ❖ Curriculum development related to topics with demonstrated community interest
- ❖ Hiring of elder or otherwise expert in local traditional food practice and collaboration on curriculum development
- ❖ Actualization of a youth-focused workshop resulting in increasing youth awareness of local indigenous food practices.

Both elements of this program expansion would be facilitated by a short-term startup manager role who would be hired before project implementation. Majority of project costs will be accrued in the first year related to start up activities with minimal maintenance costs needed. After the termination of the grant, future grant applications will go toward these maintenance costs.

Evaluation

Project outcomes will be evaluated on a quarterly basis through voluntary surveys and records from community members. For the community garden component, successful project outcomes include an established garden space within the city with at least 4-6 regularly maintained garden plots by the end of the grant year. Garden plot managers will be expected to regularly manage their plots using communal tools. They will also be expected to complete regular surveys on their progress which will be included in the grant evaluation reports. For the educational component, surveys will be conducted throughout the curriculum development process in soliciting information of interest. A pre and post survey will be distributed to workshop participants to gauge their learning and interest in the program. Successful results will include demonstrated community interest in the workshop and demonstrated learning in the post survey results.

Attachments

1. Verification of 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status
 - a. Letter of determination
 - b. Form 990
2. Organizational Structure

Program Budget

Budget Period: September 1, 2026 - September 1, 2027

Amount Requested: \$ 11,066 **Total Project Cost:** \$11,066

BUDGET SPREADSHEET		
Personnel activities : <i>Personnel, include hourly rate X estimated hours</i>		
Project Startup Manager Salary	70 hrs x \$30/hr	2100
	Subtotal	\$2,100.00
Equipment & Supplies: <i>Quotes for items required, computer equipment, printing, publication costs and other materials</i>		
Example: Printing Costs	100 flyers x .10/flyer	\$10
Flyer Printing	100 flyers x .10/flyer	10
Online advertising and volunteer recruitment		
Land Rental	1000/yr * 2 yrs	2000
Fencing		1200
Irrigation System Setup	1000	1000
Garden bed construction	\$100/bed * 8 beds	800
Soil and Amendments	100/bed x 8 beds	800
Seeds and Plants		400
Misc Garden Tools		700
	Subtotal	\$6,910.00
Travel*: <i>Estimated mileage, airfare, hotel, parking, registration, and meals & incidental expenses</i>		
Workshop Instructor Travel Expenses	500	500
Workshop Instructor Hotel	1 night x 200/night	200
	Subtotal	\$700.00
Consultant Services**: <i>Estimated expenses from consultants, such as marketing firms or other agencies</i>		

	<i>Subtotal</i>	\$0.00
Other: Instructor honorarium, translation of materials, licenses, and other materials		
<i>Example: Software license</i>	<i>\$300 for one year</i>	\$300
Instructor Honorarium for educational workshop	350	350
	<i>Subtotal</i>	\$350.00
Direct costs (sum of all categories listed above)		
	<i>Subtotal</i>	\$10,060.00
Indirect Costs (IDC) or Facilities and Administrative (F&A)***		
	<i>Subtotal</i>	\$1,006.00
Total costs of project (total direct costs and indirect costs combined) (must not exceed maximum amount of award)		
	<i>Total</i>	\$11,066.00

This budget allocates funding for 8 8'x4' garden beds and a 2 year land lease. This funding accounts specifically for community garden startup costs.