

Santee Sioux Nation



Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

2025 - 2030

Created by the Santee Sioux Nation
CEDS Committee

(in alignment with U.S. Economic Development
Administration guidelines)



Prepared By
The Project Team, LLC

Date Created
08.13.2025



Executive Summary

The Santee Sioux Nation Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) 2025–2030 establishes a structured roadmap aimed at fostering sustainable economic growth, enhancing community well-being, and reinforcing cultural values.



Developed through an inclusive, community-driven planning process—featuring a comprehensive survey with over 800 respondents, —this strategy directly incorporates community priorities and local stakeholder insights. The robust stakeholder engagement process not only articulated the Tribe’s collective vision but also shaped five strategic goal areas:

1. Improving Infrastructure & Housing
2. Advancing Agriculture & Food Sovereignty
3. Promoting Health & Environmental Stewardship
4. Expanding Business, Tourism & Workforce Development
5. Strengthening Governance & Resilience

The objectives outlined in the plan respond to the critical needs identified by community members, including the expansion of affordable housing, road improvements, increased healthcare access, job creation, cultural revitalization, and enhanced environmental protection. Implementation of these objectives is expected to yield measurable outcomes such as reduced unemployment and poverty rates, improved health indicators, expanded local business opportunities, and a more resilient community infrastructure. Guided by this shared vision and grounded in Dakota values, the Santee Sioux Nation’s CEDS represents a unified commitment to achieving long-term economic resilience and prosperity for current and future generations.

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Acknowledgements



Maunka Morgan, MBA

President and CEO, Isanti, LLC

CEDS Committee Chair

A Message from Maunka Morgan – CEDS Committee Chair:

Dear Friends and Relatives,

On behalf of the Santee Sioux Nation Tribal Council and the CEDS Committee, I am proud to welcome you to the Santee Sioux Nation Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for 2025–2030. This plan is more than a document—it is a commitment to our future. Grounded in Isanti culture, informed by community voice, and designed with resilience in mind, this strategy sets forth a vision for sustainable growth and intergenerational prosperity.

I want to personally thank every Tribal Council member, committee representative, and community partner who gave their time and perspective to make this effort meaningful. Your contributions helped ensure this plan speaks to our people’s true needs and aspirations.

As we move into implementation, I look forward to continued collaboration and success. Together, we will make lasting change for our people, our lands, and the generations yet to come.

Maunka Morgan, MBA
President and CEO, Isanti, LLC

The development of the Santee Sioux Nation Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) 2025–2030 was made possible by the dedication and collaboration of our Tribal Council, CEDS Planning Committee, department leaders, community members, and funding from the Tax Commission. This strategic plan reflects a unified vision—rooted in Isanti values and community input—to advance economic resilience, sovereignty, and prosperity for generations to come.

Santee Sioux Nation Tribal Council

We recognize and express heartfelt gratitude to the individuals and partners listed below who contributed their leadership, time, and expertise to this effort.



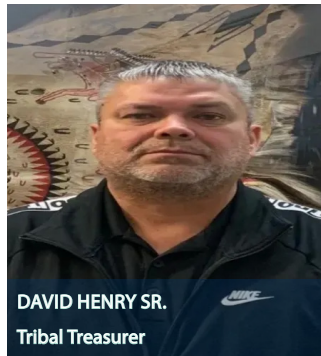
ALONZO DENNEY
Tribal Chairman



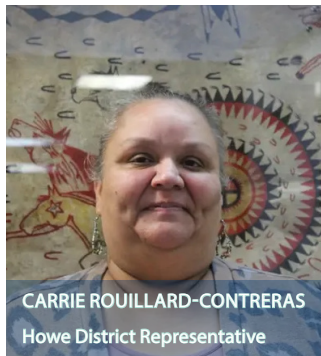
KAMERON RUNNELS
Tribal Vice Chairman



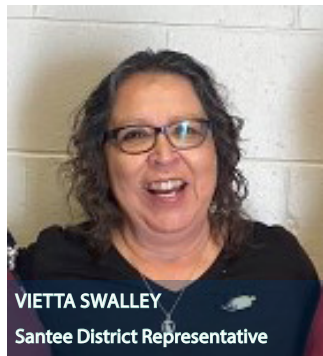
ANDREA MCBRIDE
Tribal Secretary



DAVID HENRY SR.
Tribal Treasurer



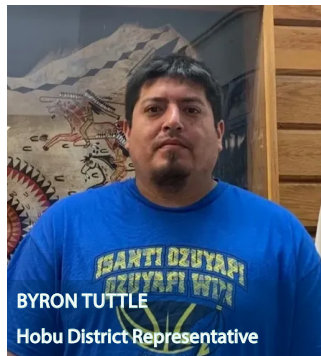
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Page Hingst	Brownfields Program		

01.



Planning Process Summary.

Methodology

The Santee Sioux Nation's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) 2025–2030 was developed through a highly inclusive, community-driven approach that prioritized extensive stakeholder engagement and transparent planning processes. This effort aligned closely with Economic Development Administration (EDA) guidelines, tribal best practices, and proven methods from other successful tribal CEDS initiatives.



1. Project Kickoff & Visioning (February 2025)

The planning process began with a CEDS Committee meeting at Nebraska Indian Community College. Tribal leaders and community members participated in a visioning exercise to articulate aspirations for the future of Santee, identifying key priorities:

- Improved housing
- Youth employment opportunities
- Cultural revitalization
- Safe, drug-free community
- Reliable infrastructure (roads, utilities, broadband)

A comprehensive SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis was conducted, highlighting community strengths such as cultural resources and cohesive governance, and critical challenges including infrastructure deficits and limited economic opportunities.

Methodology

2. Community Outreach & Input Gathering (March-April 2025)

An extensive community survey was distributed, yielding a remarkable response of 801 completed surveys. Top priorities identified were housing, infrastructure improvements, job creation, healthcare, and youth services. Desired new amenities included a grocery store, gas station, restaurant, and community center.

Targeted input highlighted detailed perspectives from:

- Youth: Emphasized education, recreation, and substance abuse prevention.
- Elders: Highlighted cultural preservation, language revitalization, and elder care.
- Entrepreneurs: Discussed economic barriers, local business opportunities, and the need for financing.
- Tribal Staff: Provided insights on programmatic barriers, technical issues, and departmental needs.

3. Strategic Planning & Plan Development (May-June 2025)

The Santee Sioux CEDS Committee—comprised of Tribal Council members, enterprise leaders, department directors, and community representatives—met to translate community input into actionable strategies. Five strategic goal areas were distilled from extensive discussions:

- Infrastructure & Housing
- Agriculture & Food Sovereignty
- Health & Environment
- Business, Tourism & Workforce Development
- Governance & Resilience

These sessions focused on prioritizing initiatives, considering feasibility, and aligning projects with community aspirations and practical realities. Key initiatives included improving Lindy Road, expanding broadband, enhancing healthcare services, establishing food sovereignty projects, developing tourism infrastructure, and expanding workforce training.

Methodology

4. Review, Refinement, and Approval (July-September 2025)

A draft CEDS and Implementation Matrix were circulated among stakeholders and presented at community meetings for feedback. The Santee Sioux Tribal Council reviewed and refined the draft, ensuring alignment with tribal governance and resource management priorities.

Final feedback from a 30-day public comment period led to adoption by the Tribal Council in September 2025, signaling official commitment and support.

Role of the Santee Sioux CEDS Committee

The committee played a pivotal role throughout the planning process by:

- Reviewing demographic and economic data to ground planning in reality.
- Participating in visioning and SWOT sessions to ensure culturally-informed strategies.
- Guiding strategic goal-setting and prioritizing community-driven objectives.
- Helped develop the detailed Implementation Matrix, identifying timelines, responsible entities, and potential funding sources.

Community Engagement & Stakeholder Collaboration

Engagement activities were strategically designed for broad and deep community involvement, including:

- Community survey to capture wide-ranging input.
- Stakeholder consultations for detailed insights.
- Active participation and feedback loops with tribal leadership and external regional partners.

Alignment with Best Practices & EDA Guidelines

The methodology adopted exemplified EDA's emphasis on community-driven, place-based strategies. The process drew on proven tribal planning frameworks from Yurok, Rosebud Sioux, and Ho-Chunk Nations, particularly emphasizing inclusive engagement, cultural alignment, and strategic resilience planning.

Summary of Engagement Outcomes

Through this inclusive planning process, the Santee Sioux Nation successfully developed a CEDS deeply rooted in local community values, priorities, and aspirations. Community buy-in and stakeholder commitment have established a strong foundation for effective implementation, ensuring sustained progress toward economic resilience, improved quality of life, and cultural preservation over the next five years.

02.



Vision Statement.

Vision

By 2030, the Santee Sioux Nation envisions a thriving, self-sufficient, and resilient economy that balances modern development with Dakota cultural values. The community foresees improved housing, infrastructure, and broadband connectivity, yielding quality jobs, healthy lifestyles, and educational opportunities for all generations. The CEDS reflects this vision by emphasizing self-sufficiency, cultural preservation, and sustainable growth in every strategy.



Vision Statement

The Santee Sioux Nation will be a strong, culturally rooted, and sovereign nation with a healthy, educated, and multi-generational community empowered to live self-sufficient lives. Guided by respect for natural law and the Seven Generations Principle, we will rebuild our nation on a foundation of harmony, peace, and balance—ensuring well-being, inclusivity, and shared prosperity for all. Through high-quality housing, infrastructure, education, and mental health support, we will cultivate opportunities for entrepreneurship. By leveraging our rich arts, culture, tourism, and natural resources, we will create a vertically integrated economy that uplifts both our people and our neighbors. With drug-free communities, sustainable water management, and strong institutions, the Santee Sioux Nation will thrive—rooted in tradition, strengthened by unity, and driven toward a future of economic and cultural prosperity.

03.



Strategic Framework.

Strategic Framework

The CEDS was developed through a process of surveys, public meetings, and stakeholder interviews. The SWOT analysis distilled community input into core Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. These insights directly shaped the plan's five strategic goal areas:



Goal 1: Improving Infrastructure & Housing

addressing critical needs in transportation, utilities, and housing availability.



Goal 2: Advancing Agriculture & Food Sovereignty

utilizing tribal lands for farming, ranching, and local food security.



Goal 3: Promoting Health, Wellness & Environmental Stewardship

bolstering healthcare services, healthy lifestyles, and protecting the land for future generations.



Goal 4: Expanding Business Opportunities, Tourism & Workforce Development

diversifying enterprises (both on- and off-reservation), growing the visitor economy, and equipping tribal members with skills and jobs.



Goal 5: Strengthening Governance & Resilience

building tribal government capacity, financial management, partnerships, and the ability to withstand economic or environmental disruptions.

04.



Community Background.

Historical Context

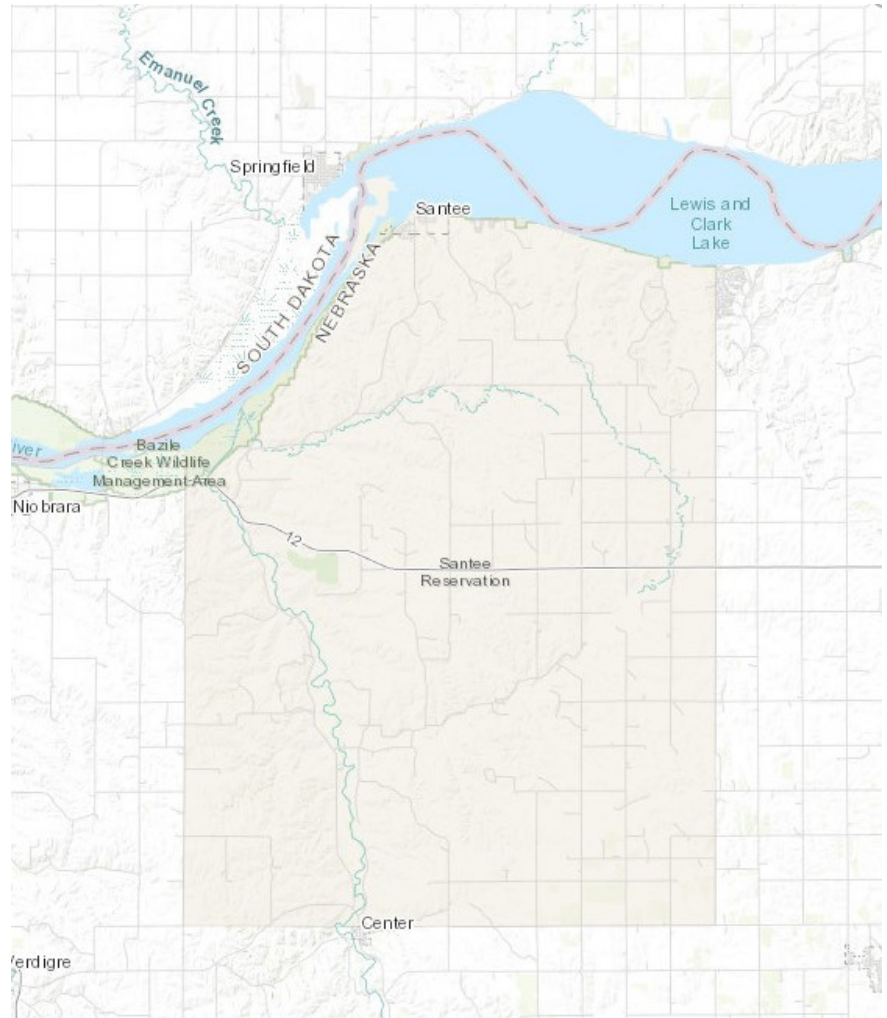
The Santee Sioux Nation (Dakota: Isányathi or Eastern Dakota) has a history marked by hardship and resilience. In the mid-19th century, the Santee Dakota people were forcibly removed from their Minnesota homelands following the U.S.–Dakota War of 1862. That conflict culminated in the mass execution of 38 Dakota men at Mankato – the largest one-day execution in U.S. history. After the war, surviving Santee families were exiled from Minnesota and initially relocated to a reservation at Crow Creek in present-day South Dakota, where hundreds perished due to harsh conditions. By 1866, the U.S. government moved the Santee again to a reserve along the Missouri River in northeastern Nebraska (on lands set aside by treaty and executive order), establishing what is today the Santee Sioux Reservation. Despite the trauma of broken treaties, displacement, and decades of federal assimilation policies, the Tribe endured and rebuilt in this new homeland. In the 1990s, the Santee Sioux asserted their self-determination through new economic ventures – notably opening Ohiya Casino & Resort, Nebraska’s first casino, and developing a tribal buffalo ranch. These early enterprises showcased the Tribe’s drive toward economic independence. This legacy of perseverance through adversity informs current development efforts: having survived colonization, allotment, and neglect, the Santee Sioux Nation approaches economic planning with a determination to restore prosperity while honoring Dakota traditions. The historical context of tragedy and endurance provides the foundation upon which this Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) is built, ensuring that development is pursued in a culturally grounded and resilient manner.



Painting depicting the 1862 US-Dakota War

Geography

The Santee Sioux Reservation is located in rural northeastern Nebraska, along the southern bank of the Missouri River at the Nebraska–South Dakota border. It spans roughly 173 square miles (about 448 km²) of rolling prairie and wooded river bluffs in Knox County. Within this area, the Tribe retains approximately 9,000 acres of tribal trust land centered around the village of Santee (the rest of the land base having been reduced by historical allotment and land loss). A map of Nebraska would highlight the reservation's remote position: the nearest town of significant size lies over 25 miles away, and major cities like Sioux Falls, SD or Norfolk, NE are over 100 miles distant. This geographic isolation means the community must be largely self-reliant for services, jobs, and emergency response. If the single major highway serving the area (State Route 12) or the primary access road into the reservation is closed by flooding or snow, the village can be temporarily cut off. At the same time, remoteness has fostered a tightly knit community with a strong sense of identity and mutual support.



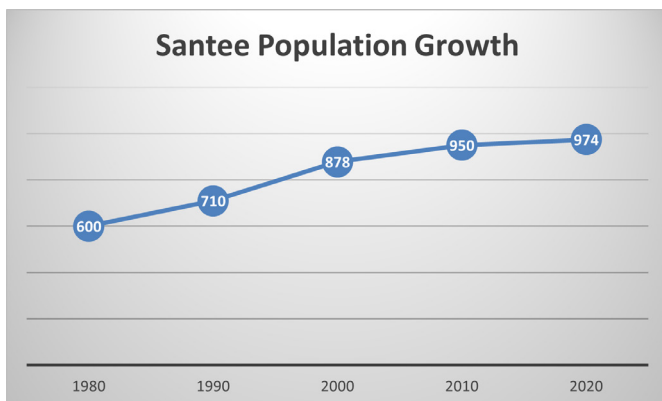
Santee Reservation Boundary

Geographically, the reservation's natural environment is both a blessing and a challenge. The Missouri River and the Lewis & Clark Lake reservoir are defining features, providing opportunities for fishing, recreation, and tourism, but also posing flood risks and ongoing shoreline erosion. Steep hills and unpaved roads make internal travel difficult in bad weather, and parts of the reservation lie in a floodplain vulnerable to periodic Missouri River flooding. The climate of the northern Great Plains – bitter winters, hot summers, and severe storms (including floods, tornadoes, and droughts) – further tests local infrastructure. Environmental stewardship and disaster preparedness are therefore important themes in the Tribe's planning.

Demographic Profile

Population

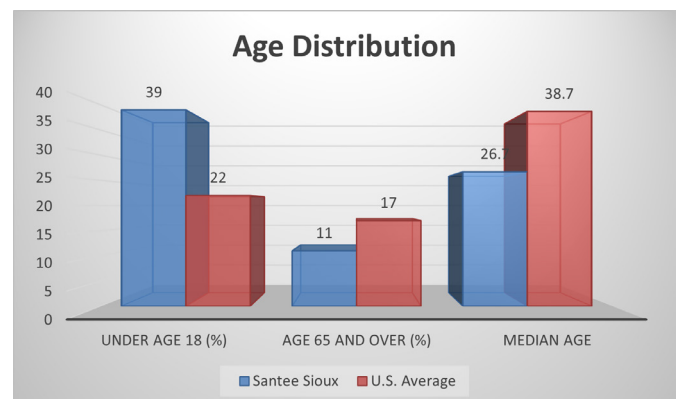
According to the 2020 U.S. Census, roughly 974 people reside on the Santee Sioux Reservation. Of these, about 850–900 are enrolled tribal members (the remainder being non-member residents, such as spouses, employees, and others). The Tribe’s total enrolled citizenship is larger – approximately 2,662 members – but most live off-reservation in other communities. Notably, the on-reservation population has grown modestly in recent decades, reversing earlier declines. In 2000, the resident population was 878; by 2020 it had increased to 974 – roughly an 11% rise over two decades. This growth has been driven by a high birth rate (natural increase) and some families returning as new housing and services become available.



Age Distribution

The Santee Sioux population is exceptionally young. Over one-third of residents are under the age of 18 (around 39%, compared to ~22% in the U.S. as a whole) – creating a pronounced youth bulge. By contrast, only about 11% of the community is seniors 65 or older, versus roughly 25% of the surrounding Knox County’s population being senior citizens (and about 17% of the U.S.

population). The median age in the community is in the mid-20s (around 26–27 years), compared to about 38 years nationally. All data sources indicate a far younger population than state or national averages. This youthful demographic represents a potential future workforce and a source of cultural vitality, but it also creates urgency for investments in education, job opportunities, and youth services today. With a high dependency ratio (many children supported by relatively few working-age adults), tribal leaders emphasize that supporting youth – from quality schooling and recreation to career pathways – is critical for the community’s long-term well-being.



Households and Families

There are an estimated 250–300 households on the reservation. The 2020 Census recorded 345 occupied housing units (including non-Native households) out of about 348 total units. The average household size is about 3.3 persons, significantly larger than the U.S. average of ~2.5. Large extended families living together are common – reflecting both cultural norms of kinship and the practical reality of a housing shortage (discussed below). Over half of households include children under 18, and a high proportion are single-parent families (estimated

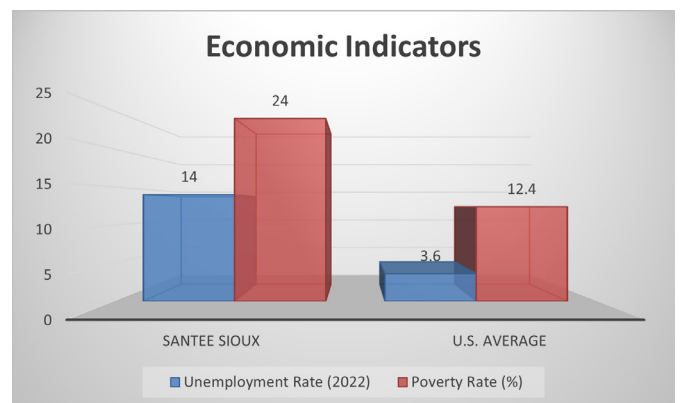
Demographic Profile

around 35%, well above the national rate of ~25%). These patterns demonstrate strong family networks but also the stresses on young parents, highlighting the need for childcare services and family support programs. The community’s gender distribution is roughly equal (about 52% male, 48% female). Ethnicity: The reservation is majority Native American: approximately 77% of residents identify as American Indian or Alaska Native (predominantly Santee Sioux, with some members of other tribes), about 18% as White, and the small remainder as other races or multiracial. (This contrasts sharply with the surrounding Knox County, which is about 87% White and ~10% Native – the Native share being largely attributable to the Santee community’s presence.) Santee stands out as a majority-Indigenous community with a rich cultural identity, coexisting alongside a minority non-Native population often working in local institutions (school, clinic, etc.). These demographic characteristics – a young, family-oriented, predominantly Indigenous population – underscore the importance of education, childcare, youth programs, and cultural preservation in local development plans. Investments in human capital (schools, vocational training, health and social services) will pay off by empowering a large cohort of emerging young workers and leaders in the coming decades.

Economic and Workforce Conditions

The Santee Sioux reservation community faces persistent economic challenges characterized by limited local employment and low incomes, though there are signs of gradual progress. Unemployment on the reservation has long been extremely high – as of 2022 it stood around 14%, several times higher than the Nebraska and U.S. rates (which were around 2% and 3–4% that year).

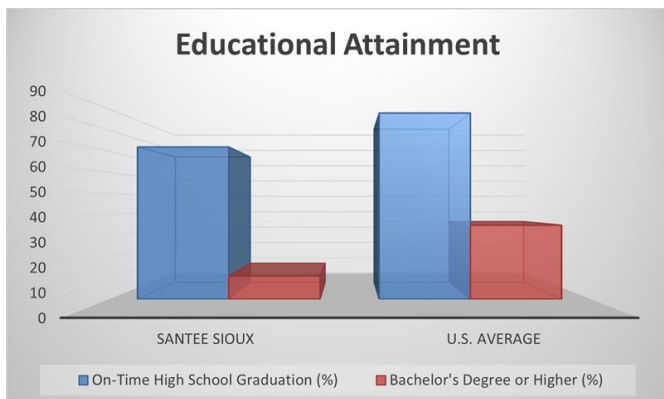
Many working-age adults lack stable employment, in part because the local economic base is so small: aside from tribal government and a handful of tribal enterprises, there are few private businesses or industries to absorb the labor force. As a result, poverty is widespread. Approximately one-quarter of Santee residents live below the federal poverty line (around 24%, which is more than double the U.S. poverty rate of 12%). The median household income on the reservation is only about \$55,000 per year – significantly below the Nebraska state median (\$68,000) and the U.S. median (~\$75,000). Per capita income is around \$24,000, which is roughly half of the national per capita income. Government transfer programs provide a vital safety net for many families – nearly half of households receive some form of public assistance such as SNAP food aid. This socioeconomic picture paints a community that remains economically distressed and highly dependent on external funding and federal program support.



At the same time, there have been improvements in education and workforce preparedness that offer hope. High school graduation rates have been rising in the community (though still below average – the on-time graduation rate at the local high school is around 72%, compared to

Demographic Profile

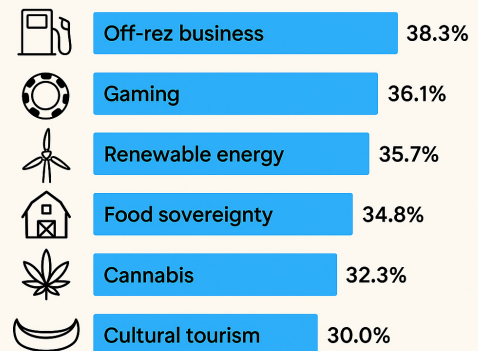
about 88% in the state and nation). The Tribe’s investments in education – through the Santee Community School (K-12) and the local Nebraska Indian Community College (NICC) campus – have helped more adults obtain a diploma or GED over time. Still, only about 11% of local adults hold a bachelor’s degree or higher (versus ~35% U.S.-wide), indicating a continued gap in higher education. Ongoing efforts by the Tribe and partners like NICC aim to increase vocational training, professional certifications, and college enrollment among youth and young adults. Building workforce skills is a priority, as is job creation through business development.



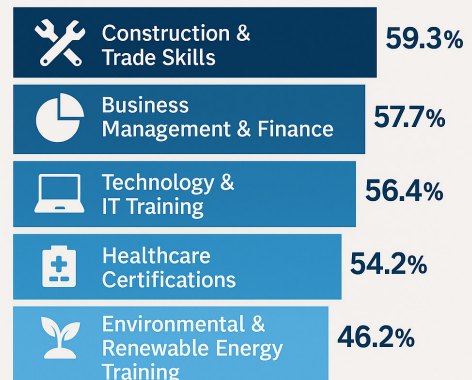
These economic realities – high unemployment and poverty coupled with low average education levels – directly inform the CEDS priorities. Creating jobs, expanding workforce training, and reducing poverty are central goals of this strategy. For example, Goal 4: Business & Workforce Development focuses on diversifying the economy with new tribal enterprises, supporting entrepreneurship, and expanding job training to build a skilled workforce (mirroring how the Ho-Chunk Nation in Wisconsin has launched an economic diversification strategy to reduce over-reliance on gaming and grow new sectors like agriculture, renewable energy, IT, health, and education).

CEDS Survey Key Economic Indicators

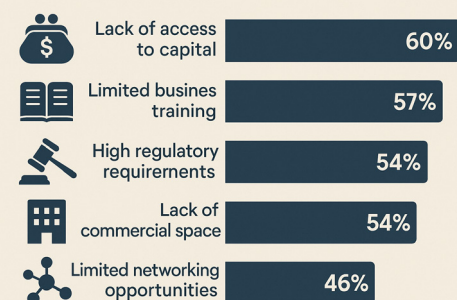
Top Economic Priorities



JOB TRAINING NEEDS



What barriers do Tribal Members face when looking to start businesses?



Demographic Profile

Housing and Infrastructure

Severe housing shortages and infrastructure gaps are fundamental constraints on the Santee Sioux Nation’s quality of life and prospects for economic growth. The reservation has only a couple hundred habitable housing units available for tribal members, far below the number of families who need homes. (By comparison, the 2020 U.S. Census counted about 345 occupied housing units on the reservation, including non-member households, but many of those units are substandard or not truly available to tribal members in need.) Overcrowding is common – it is typical for multiple generations or several families to share a single home. (One study found that about one-third of Santee reservation homes were overcrowded, far above the single-digit rates in the U.S. overall.) The Tribal Housing Authority’s waitlists are long, and it is not uncommon for young families to “double up” with relatives due to the lack of available houses. Moreover, many existing homes are in poor condition – aging, with substandard construction or maintenance issues – and some still lack complete plumbing or reliable heating. In fact, incomplete plumbing facilities remain a serious issue: earlier surveys indicated a very high percentage of homes on Santee lacked full plumbing, whereas only about 0.4% of homes nationwide are without complete plumbing. Most tribal members cannot afford private-market home construction or purchase, so the Tribe relies heavily on HUD programs and grants to build new housing. This housing crisis not only causes hardship (and contributes to out-migration of some families), but also impedes economic development – without adequate housing, it is difficult to retain skilled professionals, grow the local workforce, or attract new businesses to the area.

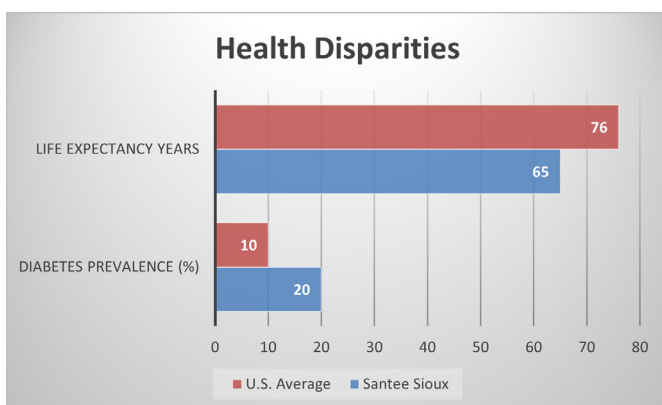
Basic infrastructure needs are similarly pressing. The primary access road to Santee (County Road 263, known locally as Lindy Road) is mostly unpaved and often becomes impassable in winter or wet weather, temporarily isolating the community. Internal village streets and many secondary roads are in disrepair, hampering mobility and emergency access. Parts of the reservation lack adequate water and sewer service – for example, some outlying homes still rely on cisterns or aging septic systems that are failing. While the Tribe has made recent investments in broadband internet (including erecting new communications towers and fiber backhaul), the network remains spotty, with not all households yet connected to high-speed service. Notably, in 2021 the Tribe secured a grant from the NTIA’s Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program to expand internet access – plans included constructing three new 195-foot communications towers on reservation lands to provide enhanced broadband coverage. As of 2025, this project is underway, aiming to substantially improve internet speeds and reliability across the community. Electrical power is generally reliable, but there are concerns about capacity and the lack of backup generators for critical facilities like the health clinic or emergency shelter. These infrastructure gaps – in transportation, utilities, and communications – have been identified by the community as urgent priorities. In a 2025 community survey, over 80% of respondents flagged road improvements and infrastructure upgrades (alongside housing) as top needs.

Health and Social Conditions

Health and well-being indicators for the Santee Sioux community reveal serious challenges that interlock with economic and infrastructure issues.

Demographic Profile

Chronic diseases are widespread: for example, the diabetes prevalence is roughly 20% – about one in five adults – nearly double the U.S. average prevalence of the disease. Related conditions such as obesity (with nearly half of American Indian adults – roughly 40% – classified as obese) and heart disease are also significantly more common here than in the general population.



These health disparities are driven by factors including poverty (which limits access to nutritious food, quality housing, and exercise opportunities) and the lack of local healthcare services. The reservation has no hospital; a small Indian Health Service (IHS) clinic in Santee provides only basic primary care and is under-staffed, lacking many specialty services. Residents must often travel long distances – often 60+ miles one-way – for most hospital care or specialist appointments. This results in unmet health needs when travel isn't feasible, and dangerous delays in emergency treatment. Overall, life expectancy for tribal members is estimated to be 10–15 years lower than the U.S. average. (For perspective, in neighboring South Dakota the median age at death for Native Americans in recent years was just 58 – a full 22 years younger than for White residents.) Such statistics reflect the cumulative impact of chronic disease and inadequate healthcare access. Public

safety and emergency services are strained by frequent health crises and the challenges of reaching a dispersed rural population.

Mental health and substance abuse are acute concerns as well. Community leaders and law enforcement report ongoing struggles with alcohol and drug abuse (notably opioids and methamphetamine), which contribute to crime, family breakdown, and tragic outcomes like overdose deaths. Currently there is no local addiction treatment center on the reservation and only very limited counseling services. The community has identified the lack of a detox or rehabilitation facility as a major gap (this was prominently noted as a Weakness in the SWOT analysis). The rise of fentanyl has only heightened the urgency of this issue – American Indian/ Alaska Native populations now suffer the highest drug overdose death rates of any racial/ethnic group in the country. In addition, the social impacts of historical trauma and poverty manifest in problems like domestic violence and youth suicide, putting further strain on families.

Despite the hardships, the Santee community possesses social strengths to build on: strong kinship networks and a tradition of caring for one another. Extended families often take care of elders and children collectively, and there is a deep culture of mutual aid in times of need. This social cohesion is a vital asset for improving health and social outcomes – community-driven initiatives can leverage trust and kin networks to effectively disseminate health education or support recovery programs.

Demographic Profile

Cultural Assets

The Santee Sioux Nation’s cultural heritage stands out as key strength – and represents opportunities for future development. The Tribe has a rich Dakota cultural legacy and, in recent years, has invested heavily in preserving and revitalizing that culture. Many Santee citizens are artisans, traditional singers, Dakota language speakers, and keepers of spiritual knowledge. Community events such as the annual Oyáte Wacága (annual powwow) and the Sun Dance ceremony celebrate Dakota traditions and draw participants from near and far. A Tribal Language & Culture Program offers Dakota language classes, and elders emphasize teaching the “Dakota way of life” to the youth. These efforts address the threat of cultural loss and also create economic niches (for example, cultural tourism or arts markets built around Dakota crafts, foods, and performances). In fact, leveraging culture for economic gain is a potential strategy to promote heritage tourism (improving the powwow grounds, developing a small cultural center/museum, etc.) and marketing of Santee arts, which align with community values while bringing in revenue.



Demographic Profile

Environmental Assets

The reservation's natural resources are another pillar to build upon as well. Bordered by the Missouri River and encompassing forested hills, wetlands, and prairie, the area is rich in wildlife (deer, turkey, fish, waterfowl) and scenic landscapes. Tribal members engage in hunting, fishing, and gathering of traditional foods and medicines – activities that not only support food security and cultural practices, but also hold potential for eco-tourism ventures. The Tribe manages parks, a buffalo pasture, and a marina/RV park on the lake, which already attract some visitors for camping, boating, and fishing. These natural amenities, coupled with cultural offerings, form the basis of a possible tourism niche economy focused on heritage and outdoor recreation.



05.



SWOT Analysis.

SWOT Analysis

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats

The CEDS committee conducted a comprehensive SWOT analysis. Input was gathered from a broad cross-section of stakeholders: tribal members (of all ages), program staff, elected leaders, and local partners. The SWOT analysis ensured that the strategy builds on local strengths, addresses internal weaknesses, capitalizes on external opportunities, and mitigates threats.

Below is an outline of the key SWOT factors identified:



SWOT Analysis

Strengths

A rich Dakota cultural heritage and identity, with strong language and artistic traditions.

A cohesive, close-knit community with strong family ties and communal support networks.

Growing educational resources on the reservation (presence of Nebraska Indian Community College and improved K-12 school programs).

Established tribal enterprises (casino, farm, bison ranch, etc.) that generate jobs and revenue.

Abundant natural resources (Missouri River waterfront, timber, wildlife) offering subsistence opportunities and tourism potential.

A Tribal Council and leadership committed to progress and responsive to community needs.

Weaknesses

Severe housing shortages and overcrowding, which drive youth and families to leave the reservation.

Aging or inadequate infrastructure (e.g. unpaved roads like Lindy Road that often wash out, limited high-speed internet, and some areas lacking reliable water/sewer service).

Limited local economic base and high unemployment (few businesses and jobs on-reservation; heavy dependence on the casino and federal program funds).

Social challenges including drug and alcohol abuse and associated crime, which strain families and public safety resources.

Limited healthcare and social services locally (under-staffed medical clinic, and minimal specialty care or mental health services available on-site).

Opportunities

Significant tourism potential given the reservation's cultural assets (Dakota heritage, annual powwow, proposed cultural center) and natural setting on the Missouri River (fishing, boating, camping).

Agricultural expansion by utilizing more tribal land for farming and ranching, and pursuing food sovereignty initiatives (community gardens, farmer's market, local bison herd products).

New industries such as cannabis (if legalized) or renewable energy (e.g. a tribal solar farm or wind project) to diversify income streams.

Partnerships with neighboring tribes and local governments for regional planning, joint ventures, or shared services (e.g. joint tourism promotion or inter-tribal business collaborations).

Availability of external funding sources and grants that can be leveraged for priority projects.

Threats

A continuing drug/substance abuse crisis that endangers community health and safety, contributing to family instability and crime.

Potential loss of Dakota language and cultural knowledge, especially among youth, if not actively preserved and taught to the next generation.

Jurisdictional and legal challenges – such as state or county regulations that complicate tribal projects, or the need to negotiate gaming compacts and other agreements with outside governments.

Environmental risks such as flooding (the reservation has flood-prone areas along the river), erosion of riverbanks, severe weather events, and the impacts of climate change (droughts, extreme storms) which could damage infrastructure or disrupt livelihoods.

Broader economic shifts outside the Tribe's control (e.g. regional declines in the gaming industry, downturns in agriculture commodity prices) that could reduce tribal revenues and employment.

06.



Strategic Direction + Action Plan.

Goals and Objectives

The following five strategic goal areas were identified through the CEDS planning process. Each goal responds to the priority issues raised in the community survey and meetings (housing, jobs, health, etc.), addresses the weaknesses and threats from the SWOT, and capitalizes on noted strengths and opportunities. Each goal is supported by specific objectives and initiatives to achieve the community's vision. For each goal, we outline the objectives, key projects, and expected outcomes. Measurable performance indicators are defined (and later summarized in the Evaluation Framework) so that progress can be tracked. Together, these five strategic goals tackle the community's highest priorities and move the Santee Sioux Nation toward the 2030 vision of a thriving, self-sufficient, and resilient economy rooted in Dakota values.



**GOAL 1:
IMPROVE HOUSING
AND INFRASTRUCTURE**



**GOAL 2:
ADVANCE
AGRICULTURE AND
FOOD SOVEREIGNTY**



**GOAL 3:
PROMOTE HEALTH,
WELLNESS &
ENVIRONMENTAL
STEWARDSHIP**



**GOAL 4:
EXPAND BUSINESS,
TOURISM &
WORKFORCE
DEVELOPMENT**



**GOAL 5:
STRENGTHEN
GOVERNANCE &
RESILIENCE**

Goal 1: Improve Infrastructure and Housing

Greatly enhance the reservation’s physical infrastructure and housing stock to meet current needs and enable future growth. This includes upgrading transportation and utilities, expanding housing availability, and improving basic community facilities.

Objective 1.1 Upgrade Transportation Infrastructure

Reconstruct and improve critical roadways and associated infrastructure to ensure safe, reliable mobility and connectivity

Rebuild Lindy Road (CR 2630)	Pave or add all-weather gravel surfacing to approximately 12.5 miles of this key access road connecting Santee Village to Highway 12. Lindy Road is the lifeline to the reservation; improving it will prevent washouts and maintain access during bad weather. Planning and engineering design will be completed by 2025, with phased construction in 2026–2028 (leveraging BIA Tribal Transportation Program funds, EDA infrastructure grants, and possible county/state support).
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Improve Village Streets and Drainage	Repair and resurface the main streets in Santee Village, fix chronic drainage problems (install culverts, re-grade where needed to prevent flooding), and add sidewalks or streetlights in high-pedestrian areas. These upgrades will enhance safety and quality of life in the community’s population center. An initial phase addressing the most critical streets is targeted for 2025–2026 (a HUD ICDBG grant for infrastructure was submitted in 2025), with further improvements and ongoing maintenance through 2030.
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Expand Tribal Transit Services	Acquire additional shuttle vans or buses to support expansion of micro-mobility program to assist elders, students, and workers with transportation on and off the reservation. Expanded tribal transit will provide mobility for those without vehicles, reduce isolation for elders, and connect residents to jobs, school, and healthcare. The goal is to have a new transit van in service by 2026 and a regular route or on-demand service operational by 2026 (funding via FTA Section 5311(c) Tribal Transit Program and state transit aid).
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Best Practice Example:

Successful tribal transit programs such as Blackfeet Transit in Montana demonstrate the impact of demand-response services, providing over 24,000 rides annually by operating multiple vehicles and leveraging FTA 5311 funds.

Goal 1: Improve Infrastructure and Housing

Objective 1.2 – Expand Housing Availability and Quality

Greatly increase the quantity and quality of housing on the reservation over the next decade.

Develop New Housing Units	<p>Pursue multiple housing development projects to add urgently needed homes. The Tribe will seek funding (HUD Indian Housing Block Grants, Low-Income Housing Tax Credits, USDA Rural Development programs) to construct at least 20–30 new housing units by 2030. Plans include a proposed “Six-Pack” six-unit apartment building (target construction in 2026–27, pending ICDBG or HOME funds), additional duplexes or fourplexes for families, and an assisted living facility for elders (a 10–12 bed facility planned for 2026–2028). A large land parcel (80 acres at Feather Hill) is being set aside for a master-planned residential community (“Isanti Village”), based on a recent Housing Needs Study calling for 82 new homes by 2032. Infrastructure for Isanti Village will be installed by 2027, with home construction in phases through 2030.</p>
Renovate and Weatherize Existing Homes	<p>Invest in a housing rehabilitation program to fix up older homes – improving roofs, plumbing, insulation, electrical systems, mold remediation, etc. – and expand the Tribe’s “tiny homes” initiative for transitional housing. This will improve living conditions and extend the life of the current housing stock. The goal is to rehabilitate at least 3–5 homes per year from 2026 onward (leveraging HUD rehab grants, USDA Housing Preservation grants, and DOE Weatherization funds), reducing the number of homes with critical repair needs by 50% by 2030.</p>
Infrastructure for New Housing	<p>As new homes are built, ensure infrastructure like water, sewer, and electricity is extended to those housing sites. Include broadband connectivity in all new housing developments by partnering with the Tribal IT department. Plan and build all-weather access roads within new housing areas (like Isanti Village) to ensure year-round, emergency vehicle access. For example, any new subdivision will have paved or all-weather gravel internal roads, and utilities will be stubbed to each lot – with projects coordinated alongside Goal 1.3 (utility system upgrades).</p>

Best Practice Example:

The Yurok Tribe’s Woo-Mehl Housing Project in California illustrates how leveraging Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) can jump-start new housing development. That project developed 17 new homes (and rehabilitated others) once a state tribal set-aside for tax credits was established. Santee can draw on such models, using LIHTC and other financing tools to jump-start housing development. The Tribe’s goal of at least 30 new units by 2030 is ambitious yet achievable, considering other tribes have scaled up production similarly once funding was secured.

Goal 1: Improve Infrastructure and Housing

Objective 1.3 – Improve Utilities and Community Facilities

Modernize the reservation’s utilities and community infrastructure to support growth and improve quality of life

The tribe has completed the build out of an entire Wireless Network that covers substantially all of Knox County. This was completed over the years 2021 through 2025 with final completion of the network with the construction of the last tower in July of this year. Santee Communications is now a fully operational ISP (Internet Service Provider) operating a network of 5 towers located throughout Knox County with a fully operational Central Office equipment located at the Santee Sioux Nation Clinic. We are now updating all the books and records and expanding the marketing efforts of the company. The goal is to expand the business to capture a larger market share of the region. The goal is to expand the customer base by 10% by 2026.

Broadband Expansion

Drill a new community water well (to increase capacity and serve new housing areas) and expand the water distribution network. Upgrade the wastewater treatment lagoon to handle increased usage (target ~30% more capacity by 2027) or evaluate the feasibility of a new wastewater treatment plant if needed for future growth. Extend sewer lines to areas currently using septic systems, to protect groundwater quality. An IHS Sanitation Facilities Construction project for a new well is already funded and scheduled by 2025, and a lagoon expansion feasibility study is underway (with construction by 2027 pending USDA or EPA funding).

Water and Wastewater Improvements

Pursue grants to add solar panels on tribal buildings (such as the clinic, school, casino) to reduce energy costs and improve resilience. Investigate developing a community-scale solar farm (~2 MW capacity) by 2028 that could power tribal facilities or generate revenue – potentially via a partnership with a renewable energy developer and utilizing new federal clean energy incentives (the Inflation Reduction Act allows tribes to monetize tax credits via direct pay). Also explore adding solar-powered streetlights or backup generators/ battery storage for critical infrastructure (clinic, water pumps, emergency shelter) as part of resilience measures.

Renewable Energy Installations

Construct or renovate key community facilities to meet social and safety needs. A top priority is a new Multi-Purpose Community Center by 2027 that would house a gymnasium, fitness center, community meeting space, and serve as a storm shelter. This center (estimated cost ~\$3 million) is planned for 2026–27 construction, with funding being sought from EDA Public Works and USDA Community Facilities programs. Additionally, pursue funding for a new Justice Center (tribal police station and court) to replace outdated facilities, and consider expansion of the tribal daycare or a new Head Start center if needed as the population grows. These projects will enhance quality of life and the Tribe’s capacity to deliver services. (Planning for the community center is already underway – a concept and site have been identified – and other facility projects are in the feasibility stage.)

Community Facilities Construction

Goal 2: Advance Agriculture & Food Sovereignty

Utilize the Tribe's land resources to boost agriculture production, create agribusiness jobs, and strengthen local food systems so the community can feed itself and generate income from farming and ranching.

Objective 2.1 – Expand Tribal Farming and Ranching

Increase the acreage of tribally operated or managed agriculture and expand livestock operations

<p>Implement the Agricultural Resource Management Plan (ARMP)</p>	<p>The Tribe completed a comprehensive ARMP in 2024, which identified at least 500 additional acres of tribal land that could be brought into production (either currently fallow or coming out of CRP leases). For this plan we targeted 100 acres to be brought into production. The plan will be rolled out starting in 2026: preparing soil on priority tracts, improving irrigation on existing fields, and investing in farm equipment. By 2028, the goal is to have those 100+ acres actively producing crops (such as corn, soybeans, or hay) or supporting grazing. Necessary infrastructure like fencing and irrigation will be pursued through grants (e.g., BIA agriculture program funds and USDA NRCS cost-share programs such as EQIP for high-tunnel greenhouses or wells). This expansion will increase tribal agricultural revenue and provide feed for the tribal bison herd.</p>
<p>Grow the Bison Herd</p>	<p>Expand the Tribe's buffalo herd and grazing program as a keystone of both economic and cultural revitalization. Currently numbering around 50 head, the herd will be grown to approximately 100 head by 2030, which will require developing additional pasture. By 2026, construct fencing for an additional ~2,000 acres of range and install water infrastructure (wells, stock tanks) on grazing lands. Utilize grants from the InterTribal Buffalo Council (ITBC) and USDA EQIP to fund these improvements. A herd management plan will guide sustainable herd growth, with periodic harvesting for tribal use (buffalo meat for the community) and potential commercial sales. The larger herd will support food sovereignty (providing traditional meat locally) and could become a tourist attraction (buffalo viewing tours) in conjunction with Goal 4.</p>
<p>Pilot Specialty Crops and Value-Added Processing</p>	<p>Diversify beyond commodity crops by piloting small plots of specialty or traditional crops. For example, in 2026 launch a 10-acre test plot to grow high-value vegetables or traditional plants (supported by a USDA Specialty Crop grant). Concurrently, conduct a feasibility study in 2026 for a tribally-run meat processing facility (or mobile processing unit) to process bison and cattle locally. This study (seeking ~\$50k via a USDA Value-Added Producer grant) will assess costs and markets for a small processing plant that could create jobs and enable the Tribe to sell packaged meat directly. By 2027, based on the results, decide whether to pursue building a processing facility (which could also serve other tribes or local ranchers, perhaps leveraging USDA grants or partnerships).</p>

Goal 2: Advance Agriculture & Food Sovereignty

Objective 2.2 – Promote Food Sovereignty and Community Nutrition

Decrease reliance on imported foods and improve access to healthy, traditional foods for tribal members

Community Gardens and Greenhouses	<p>Establish community gardens in each district or population cluster where families can grow vegetables. By spring 2026, at least one additional community garden will be launched (building on a pilot garden started in 2024 that involved 10 families). The plan is to have three gardens by 2027 (e.g., one in Santee Village, one in an outlying community area, and one managed by the school or youth program). Provide fencing, tools, seeds, and training through partnerships with Nebraska Extension/NICC and grants from First Nations Development Institute or USDA community food programs. In addition, secure funding for a year-round greenhouse by 2026 – the greenhouse (estimated cost ~\$100k) could be built at the school or another central site, allowing cultivation of produce (like leafy greens) even in winter for use in the school lunch program or elders’ meals.</p>
Farmers’ Market and Food Hub	<p>Start a seasonal weekly farmers’ market in Santee by summer 2026 to enable local growers (and gardeners) to sell or trade produce, eggs, honey, and traditional foods. This market will provide fresh foods locally and stimulate small-scale entrepreneurship (families earning income or trade goods from their produce). By 2027, evolve this into a modest food hub or co-op – a system to aggregate produce from local growers to supply larger buyers (the school, the clinic’s diabetes program, the casino restaurant, etc.). To support this, seek a USDA Farmers Market Promotion Program grant or an ANA grant to help with start-up costs (tents, EBT payment systems, marketing). The target is that by 2030, at least 20% of families participate in local food production (gardening or farming) and the farmers’ market runs 20+ weeks per year with growing sales each season.</p>
Traditional Foods & Nutrition Education	<p>Integrate food sovereignty initiatives with health programs by promoting traditional and healthy foods. Continue and expand programs like the Traditional Foods Class (monthly classes on wild foods, canning, healthy cooking) and community workshops on gardening and nutrition. In partnership with the Tribal Diabetes Program (Good Health & Wellness grant) and elders, organize events such as seasonal group foraging and annual fall harvest feasts featuring bison meat and produce from community gardens. A key outcome is not only improved diet (aim to reduce diabetes rates), but also cultural reconnection through food (e.g., teaching youth to gather chokecherries or prepare traditional dishes). By 2030, the goal is to see measurable reductions in reliance on food assistance programs as more families have access to local, healthy foods and knowledge to prepare them.</p>
Traditional Foods Harvesting Program	<p>In addition to classes, establish an annual community bison harvest and other group harvesting outings (like community hunts for deer/turkey or foraging for wild fruits and herbs). Ensure that each year at least one bison is harvested with ceremonies and distributed to families (especially elders), and organize events for intergenerational knowledge-sharing around hunting, fishing, and preserving food. These activities bolster food security and cultural practice simultaneously.</p>

Goal 2: Advance Agriculture & Food Sovereignty

Objective 2.3 – Build Agribusiness Capacity and Training

Develop the human and institutional capacity to sustain agricultural initiatives and create ag-related businesses

Agriculture Entrepreneurship & Incubator	Encourage tribal members interested in farming, ranching, or food businesses. Once the tribal CDFI is operational (see Goal 4.1), designate a portion of its microloan funds specifically for agriculture startups (e.g., small loans for feed, equipment, or seed for beginning farmers). By 2026, start offering an “Agripreneur” training program in partnership with NICC Extension – covering business planning for agriculture, basic financial literacy, and agronomy/husbandry skills. Aim to graduate at least 10 new Native farmers or ranchers by 2030. Explore creating an Agribusiness Incubator (possibly a shared facility or equipment co-op) that can provide access to resources like a community tractor, commercial kitchen space for food processing, or cold storage for produce and meat. If feasible, seek USDA Beginning Farmer-Rancher Development grants or other funding to support this. The desired outcome is that several new family-run farms, gardens, or food businesses (like a market garden, small poultry operation, or beekeeping venture) are established by Santee members, enhancing self-sufficiency and generating income.
Tribal Member Financing & Support	Offer small grants or low-interest loans (potentially via the planned Tribal CDFI or through tribal revolving loan funds) to tribal members who want to start or expand farming and ranching operations. This includes ventures like cattle ranching, row-crop farming, beekeeping, or specialty crop cultivation. Pair these financial tools with technical assistance by partnering with USDA agencies (NRCS, Extension, FSA) to help applicants develop business plans and adopt best practices.
Explore Hemp/Cannabis Cultivation	If legally and culturally acceptable, investigate piloting industrial hemp cultivation on a small scale or preparing for potential medical cannabis cultivation. This would be contingent on legal framework developments by 2026. Planning would involve feasibility studies, developing regulations, and community consultations. If pursued in later years of the CEDS, hemp could be grown for fiber or CBD markets, and medicinal cannabis could create revenue, though the Tribe will approach this cautiously with an emphasis on legal compliance and community health.
Agri-Tourism Development	Coordinate with tourism efforts (Goal 4) to develop agri-tourism offerings that tie agriculture with visitor experiences. For example, by 2026 launch a buffalo tour program where visitors can ride on wagons or vehicles to see the bison herd and learn about its cultural significance. Other possibilities include a U-pick orchard or pumpkin patch if fruit trees or pumpkin fields are established, or workshops for visitors on traditional foods and medicines. Agri-tourism can provide supplemental income to farmers and enrich the tourism portfolio of Santee.

Goal 3: Promote Health, Wellness & Environmental Stewardship

Improve the health and wellness of the Santee Sioux community by expanding healthcare services, promoting healthy lifestyles, addressing social challenges, and protecting the environment for future generations.

Objective 3.1 – Expand Healthcare Access and Quality

Increase the availability of local healthcare and preventive services so community members can get the care they need on the reservation

<p>Clinic Enhancement and Tribal Management</p>	<p>Complete an analysis of moving towards a fully tribally managed healthcare facility. This may involve assuming control of the IHS Santee Health Center via a 638 contract or compact (target by 2026–2027) and then expanding its services. By 2028, expand services like dental, optometry, and mental health counseling. To achieve this, the Tribe will pursue an IHS Tribal Management grant to plan the takeover, and apply for IHS Joint Venture or Small Ambulatory Program funding to construct or expand the clinic (for example, adding a dental wing, which could be a ~\$3 million project if funded in FY2026). In the long term, the Tribe will also assess the feasibility of a small inpatient facility or birthing center, possibly in partnership with regional hospitals, to eliminate the need for long drives for emergency or specialty care.</p>
<p>Telehealth and Mobile Services</p>	<p>Invest in telehealth infrastructure at the clinic and in the community, leveraging the broadband improvements from Goal 1. By 2026, ensure the clinic has private telehealth consultation rooms and equipment (telemedicine carts) so that patients can remotely see specialists (e.g., a psychiatrist or endocrinologist) without traveling off-reservation. Also, partner with regional providers to bring mobile health services on a regular schedule – for instance cancer screening drives. The Tribe will apply for USDA Distance Learning & Telemedicine grants and work with programs like Avera eCare or UNMC’s telehealth network to support these efforts. Success will be measured by a significant increase in patient visits/utilization at the local clinic (target +50% by 2030) and a reduction in unmet health needs (e.g., shorter wait times or referrals for specialty care).</p>
<p>Strengthen Tribal Health Programs</p>	<p>Expand public health and preventive programs focusing on key issues. For example, bolster the Special Diabetes Program for Indians (SDPI) efforts to reduce diabetes incidence: examples include hiring a diabetes educator, offering weekly fitness classes (walking groups, aerobics, etc.) and nutrition workshops, and conducting regular screenings for complications. Establish a Maternal and Child Health (MCH) initiative by 2026 to support prenatal care, parenting classes, and well-baby clinics (potentially funded by HRSA or an ANA SEDS grant). For elders, collaborate with IHS and tribal Senior Programs to introduce home-based care services by 2027 (e.g., home nursing visits, medication checks for elders living alone). Each of these expansions will be pursued via specific grants (SAMHSA for behavioral health integration, CDC’s Good Health & Wellness for lifestyle programs, Administration for Community Living for elder services, etc.). The expected outcome is improved health indicators by 2030: for instance, lower average blood sugar levels among diabetic patients (target a 1% reduction in A1C), higher immunization rates, and community feedback that healthcare access and quality have improved.</p>

Goal 3: Promote Health, Wellness & Environmental Stewardship

I Objective 3.2 – Combat Substance Abuse and Strengthen Families

Greatly expand efforts to address substance abuse (especially methamphetamine and opioid use) and related social challenges to improve community wellness and safety

Treatment and Recovery Infrastructure	<p>Establish an on-reservation Wellness & Recovery Center. The initial step is expanding outpatient counseling center by 2025–2026 (renovating an existing building if available, or adding on to the clinic). By 2027, explore developing a residential treatment facility (perhaps 8–10 beds) either run by the Tribe or in partnership with a nearby program (for example, collaborating with Omaha or Winnebago Tribes if they have inpatient treatment capacity). The Tribe has already secured a Tribal Opioid Response (TOR) grant that in 2024 funded two counselor positions and peer support training. Additional funding from SAMHSA and state opioid response grants will be sought to sustain and expand these services. By 2030, the aim is that at least 100 individuals per year are receiving treatment or recovery support through tribal programs, and the number of drug-related arrests/overdoses drops by 25%.</p>
Prevention and Youth Education	<p>Expand prevention programs targeting youth. Starting in the 2025–2026 school year, partner with the Santee Community School to deliver evidence-based curricula (such as the Healing of the Canoe program or a culturally adapted DARE curriculum) in middle and high school that teach about the dangers of drugs and alcohol in a way that resonates with Dakota values. Simultaneously, increase positive youth activities: utilize Boys & Girls Club for after-school and weekend programs (expanding sports leagues, culture classes, tutoring) that give young people healthy, engaging alternatives. Launch an annual Youth Wellness Camp by summer 2026 – a week-long program with outdoor recreation, cultural teachings, and life skills training. The Tribe will seek DOJ Tribal Youth Program grants and SAMHSA prevention grants to fund these activities. Success will be indicated by improved school attendance and graduation rates (as substance issues decline), and by youth surveys showing increased awareness and resistance skills regarding drugs.</p>
Family Support Services	<p>Expand social services to support families affected by addiction. This includes training more tribal members as certified counselors or peer support specialists (goal of 5 new certified addiction counselors by 2028, potentially through NICC programs or online courses). Create support groups or talking circles for specific groups: for example, establish a “Grandparents Raising Grandchildren” support circle by 2026 (since many elders are caretakers due to the drug crisis). Coordinate the tribal court’s drug court with these services so non-violent offenders can enter diversion and treatment plans. Strengthen collaboration with Knox County for child welfare cases to prioritize keeping children within the community or with kin when parents are struggling (perhaps via expanding the tribal foster care program or agreements with state agencies). By 2030, the aim is a more integrated system where individuals seeking help can access treatment promptly, and families have resources to heal together – contributing to safer neighborhoods and healthier homes.</p>

Goal 3: Promote Health, Wellness & Environmental Stewardship

Objective 3.3 – Promote Active Lifestyles and Community Wellness

Create more opportunities and infrastructure for healthy living to combat lifestyle-related illnesses (like diabetes and heart disease) and improve overall quality of life

Recreation Facilities	<p>Develop new and improved recreational infrastructure. The flagship project is to expand the Community Wellness Center by 2027–2028 (in tandem with the Goal 1 multi-purpose community center project). Additionally, ensure each district or neighborhood has outdoor recreation spaces: build at least one new playground by 2026 (utilizing grants like KaBOOM! or NDNspark for community-built play structures), maintain and mark walking trails (one trail along the lake was cleared in 2023 and will be improved with signage and benches), and explore adding a splash pad by 2030 if feasible. These facilities will encourage exercise for all ages. The target outcome is that by 2030, to expand the membership by 50% who are regularly utilizing the Wellness Center or participating in fitness programs, helping reduce obesity and related health issues.</p>
Traditional Wellness Programs	<p>Integrate cultural practices into modern wellness programming. For example, hold monthly sweat lodge ceremonies for spiritual and physical cleansing (this was restarted in 2024 and will continue), and start a “Powwow Aerobics” class by 2025 where community members dance to powwow songs for exercise, linking culture with fitness. Host annual traditional games (like moccasin games or horse races) and at least two cultural events per year that emphasize healing – e.g., a community powwow fun run/walk or an elders’ day at the lake. Partner the Tribal Health and Culture Departments to run Dakota language classes that incorporate health topics or even light exercises (target enrollment: 50 youth and 20 elders each year by 2030). The idea is to heal not just the body but the spirit – using culture as prevention and treatment. Over time, success would be reflected in improved mental health outcomes (like lower youth suicide attempts – ideally zero) and community feedback that cultural pride and cohesion are increasing.</p>
Nutrition and Food Initiatives	<p>Coordinate with Goal 2’s food projects to promote healthy eating. Utilize the produce from community gardens and the farmers’ market in tribal programs: for example, by 2026 ensure that the Senior Center and Diabetes Program incorporate fresh vegetables from local gardens into their meal programs. Offer healthy cooking classes quarterly (leveraging IHS Diabetes program funding) to teach recipes that use local produce and traditional foods like bison or wild game in a diabetes-friendly way. Continue health screenings at community events (blood pressure and glucose checks at powwows or health fairs) and provide one-on-one dietary counseling as needed. Aim for measurable health improvements: for example, reduce the tribe’s adult obesity rate by 5% and reduce diabetes prevalence by at least 10% by 2030. These metrics will be tracked by the clinic and health programs. By coupling better nutrition with physical activity and cultural wellness, the Tribe hopes to see a holistic improvement in well-being.</p>

Goal 3: Promote Health, Wellness & Environmental Stewardship

Objective 3.4 – Environmental Stewardship

Protect and restore the natural environment of the reservation, recognizing that a healthy environment supports community health and cultural survival

Land and Water Conservation	<p>Implement erosion control and reforestation projects in vulnerable areas. A priority is stabilizing riverbank erosion near the main village – by 2028, complete at least 1 mile of riverbank stabilization (using approaches like rock armoring, willow plantings, etc.) in partnership with the Army Corps of Engineers or through a BIA Tribal Resilience grant. Plant native trees and grasses on hillsides prone to erosion (target 500 trees planted by 2027, possibly via community tree-planting drives and NRCS assistance). Continuously monitor water quality in wells and in Standing Bear Lake (the Missouri River reservoir) – the Tribal Environmental Department conducts quarterly testing under an EPA Clean Water Act §106 grant. Address any contaminants identified (for example, if nitrates are high in certain wells, extend rural water lines or provide household filtration; if E. coli is detected at the swim beach, implement livestock exclusion or other upstream measures). By 2030, the goal is 100% of tested water sources meet safety standards (no boil advisories needed). Also, clean up illegal dump sites and explore establishing a Tribal Conservation Area – for instance, designating 50–100 acres as protected land for wildlife habitat and cultural plant gathering by 2030.</p>
Clean Energy and Sustainability Initiatives	<p>Encourage environmentally friendly practices among both tribal operations and community members. Expand the recycling program – by 2026, set up a recycling drop-off center in Santee where residents can bring plastics, aluminum, and e-waste (possibly in collaboration with the county or a nearby town’s recycling service). Promote energy efficiency: weatherize tribal buildings and homes (coordinate with DOE grants and the housing rehab program to replace old furnaces, add insulation, etc.). Aiming for 50 homes retrofitted by 2030 will reduce heating costs for families and lower emissions. Transition the tribal vehicle fleet to more efficient models: as vehicles age, replace them with hybrids or EVs where practical (taking advantage of BIA or VW settlement funds for tribal vehicle replacement by 2025–2027). Also, educate the community on sustainable practices – host annual Earth Day events for trash clean-up, tree planting, and workshops on composting or installing solar panels at home. These efforts will not only protect Mother Earth but can create a cleaner, more attractive environment for tourism and for future generations.</p>
Cultural Resource Protection	<p>As development accelerates, ensure that cultural and sacred sites are respected. Strengthen tribal laws and procedures for cultural resource protection by 2026 (the Tribal Historic Preservation Office is drafting improved standard operating procedures for reviewing projects that might disturb burial grounds or sacred areas). Provide cultural sensitivity training to any outside contractors working on the reservation. Maintain an inventory of known important sites and work with elders to identify any that are not formally recorded. Additionally, preserve access to traditional natural resources: for example, designate certain prairie or woodland areas where medicinal plants grow as off-limits to development. Consider establishing a Tribal Heritage Park by 2030, which could protect a culturally significant landscape (and possibly serve as an eco-tourism destination for teaching about Dakota heritage). Pursue grants from the National Park Service or private conservation groups to fund cultural landscape studies and land acquisition if needed. The measure of success here is largely qualitative: no significant cultural site is lost or damaged during the CEDS implementation period, and community members report that their sacred places and resources are being cared for.</p>

Goal 4: Expand Business, Tourism & Workforce Development

Diversify and grow the Santee Sioux Nation’s economy by fostering new businesses (tribal enterprises and member-owned), attracting tourism revenue, and equipping the workforce with education and skills for gainful employment.

Objective 4.1 – Support Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development

Create an enabling environment for tribal members to start and grow businesses, both on the reservation and in nearby markets

Establish a Tribal CDFI (Community Development Financial Institution)	By 2026–2027, launch the Santee Sioux Nation’s own CDFI or similar loan fund to provide microloans and financial training to Native entrepreneurs. Work done in 2025–26 (drafting incorporation documents, applying for CDFI Fund technical assistance) will come to fruition with certification by 2027. The CDFI will start making small business loans (e.g., \$5,000–\$50,000) to support start-ups like home-based crafts, trades services, food businesses, etc. A goal is to issue at least 40–50 loans by 2030, seeding 8+ new Native-owned businesses. In addition to lending, the CDFI (in partnership with SBA and other TA providers) will offer workshops on business planning, credit building, and bookkeeping. This fills a critical gap in access to capital on the reservation and will nurture grassroots economic growth.
Small Business Incubator/ Co-Working Space	Identify a facility (such as a currently vacant building in Santee) to renovate into a business incubator by 2027. This incubator can provide affordable office or retail space for new entrepreneurs, with shared services like internet, meeting rooms, and mentorship from established businesspeople. One idea is to repurpose the old BIA agency building; a renovation cost of ~\$300k could be sought through an EDA Economic Adjustment Assistance grant or HUD community development funds. By housing, say, 5–10 small ventures (from a quilting cooperative to a tech startup or a coffee shop), the incubator will create a supportive ecosystem. It will also serve as a co-working hub for remote workers and freelancers (taking advantage of improved broadband access). The incubator’s success will be measured by occupancy rates and the graduation of businesses to standalone status after a few years.
Streamline Business Regulations and Build Capacity	Improve the regulatory environment to make it easier to do business on the reservation. By the end of 2026, the Tribal Council will update the Tribal Business Code – simplifying the business licensing process, clarifying tax policies, and creating legal structures (like a tribal LLC code) that give entrepreneurs confidence. The Tribe will also establish clear rules for outside investors or joint ventures, protecting tribal interests while welcoming partnerships that bring capital and expertise. Additionally, create a “one-stop shop” within the tribal administration (perhaps in the Planning/Economic Development Office) for anyone seeking to start a business – providing guidance on permits, connections to financing (CDFI loans), and training resources. These steps, while less tangible, are crucial: an increase in new business registrations and positive feedback from business owners will indicate that Santee is becoming a business-friendly community.

Goal 4: Expand Business, Tourism & Workforce Development

Objective 4.2 – Develop Tourism and Cultural Enterprises

Capitalize on the Tribe's cultural and natural assets to build a modest but vibrant tourism sector that generates income and jobs

Build the Santee Cultural Center & Museum	<p>By 2028, construct a tribal Cultural Center/Museum that will showcase Santee Dakota history, art, and culture for visitors and serve as a community heritage hub. Planning in 2025–26 (funded by an ANA museum planning grant) will solidify the design and curation plan. The facility (expected cost ~\$2.5 million) will likely include exhibit space, a small theater, and a gift shop for local crafts. Funding will be sought from a mix of sources: federal (EDA travel & tourism grants, HUD ICDBG), state (Nebraska tourism development funds), and philanthropic (foundations or crowdfunding for specific exhibits). Once open (target 2028), the museum is projected to draw 3,000+ visitors/year by 2030, including school field trips and tourists, and create several jobs (curator, guides, gift shop manager). Importantly, it will be a point of pride and education for the community as well.</p>
Enhance Marina/RV Park and Add Cabins	<p>The Tribe operates recreational facilities at Lewis & Clark Lake (Missouri River) which include a marina, campground, and RV park. A phased improvement is underway: electrical hookups at the RV park were upgraded in 2024, and the next steps (2025–2027) include adding 5 rental cabins and upgrading the bathhouse. The cabins will cater to families who want a comfortable stay by the lake (cabins have been proven revenue generators in similar tribal parks). Additionally, extend or improve hiking trails and install signage about Dakota history and nature along them. By 2030, these upgrades aim to double annual visitor numbers (from roughly 5,000 tourist visits now to ~10,000) and increase campground occupancy in peak season from ~50% to >80%. The revenue from camping, cabin rentals, and marina fees could grow by an estimated \$200k/year, helping fund other tribal services.</p>
Promote Cultural Tourism and Events	<p>Establish an official Tribal Tourism Office or Coordinator (even part-time to start) in 2026 to lead marketing and event development. Create branding (“Visit Santee”) and a tourism website by 2026 – this is already in progress with an ANA grant. Develop at least one new annual event to draw visitors – for example, expand the existing annual powwow into a “Santee Powwow & Cultural Festival” each summer, adding extra days, more craft and food vendors, and intertribal dance or drum contests. Also consider niche events like a Missouri River kayak race or an ice-fishing derby to capitalize on outdoor recreation. By 2026, start a Buffalo Tours program on the reservation, where visitors can take guided tours to see the bison herd and learn about its cultural significance (this could be supported by an ITBC agritourism grant). Partner with the state tourism division for promotion and with nearby attractions (e.g., Niobrara State Park, Fort Randall Casino) to create regional itineraries. The goal is to make Santee a known stop in regional tourism, evidenced by increased visitor inquiries and longer stays (e.g., more overnight bookings at the casino hotel or campgrounds). Social media followings (target 5,000 followers on a Santee tourism page by 2027) and visitor surveys will help gauge marketing success.</p>

Goal 4: Expand Business, Tourism & Workforce Development

Objective 4.3: Expand Tribal Enterprises & Joint Ventures

Grow and diversify the Tribe’s enterprise portfolio to create jobs and generate revenue, with a focus on expanding gaming/hospitality offerings and enhancing tribal retail businesses. This update emphasizes near-term casino improvements, travel plaza expansions, and future industries, all phased based on feasibility and data driven approach.

Ohiya Casino & Resort will implement gaming and loyalty upgrades to boost visitation and spending. A comprehensive CRM system, personalized promotions, and revamped player tiers aim to increase gaming revenues by 3–5%. These enhancements improve retention and support revenue growth for broader enterprise development. An effort is underway to evaluate the feasibility of Class III gaming (table games, sports betting), which requires a state compact. Based on findings, tribal leadership will decide by early 2026 whether to negotiate a compact. If approved, new offerings could launch by late 2026. The Tribe will also exploring additional amenities such as an RV park and facility expansion, contingent on feasibility. Mobile gaming opportunities are also under review to expand reach and modernize offerings. Class III gaming is viewed as a long-term opportunity to enhance Ohiya’s competitiveness and profitability. If favorable compact terms can be secured with the State of Nebraska, Class III games could substantially increase visitation and revenue. However, the Tribe will not rely on Class III projections in the short term. This cautious approach ensures growth continues through Class II enhancements while laying the groundwork for rapid Class III implementation if conditions become favorable.

Ohiya Casino & Resort: Gaming & Loyalty Enhancements

The Tribe plans to transform Feather Hill Express and Shop EZ into full-service travel plazas to capture more highway traffic. Enhancements include:

- Expanded Truck/RV Access: Diesel pumps, high canopy lanes, ample truck/RV parking
- Retail & Dining: Larger indoor retail spaces, quick-service restaurants/coffee shops
- Driver Amenities: Showers, lounges, picnic areas
- “Gasino” Gaming Areas: Class II gaming machines (electronic bingo/slots)

Class II gaming is compact-free and can be introduced quickly; 22% of tribal c-stores nationally have implemented the “gasino” model. These plazas would provide new income streams with low staffing and operational costs. A new Highway 12 travel plaza is also under evaluation with development targeted by 2027, potentially using joint ventures or New Market Tax Credits.

Travel Plaza Expansion: Feather Hill, Shop EZ, and New Development

Lakeview C-Store will be upgraded to better serve residents through enhanced grocery offerings (fresh produce, dairy, meats), a deli counter, and extended hours. Class II gaming may also be added. As the primary on-reservation store, profits from Lakeview improvements will be reinvested to support affordable access to quality goods.

Lakeview C-Store Modernization

Goal 4: Expand Business, Tourism & Workforce Development

Enterprise ROI & Tax Advantages	Class II gaming offers high ROI with low overhead. No state fuel or excise taxes give tribal stores a price advantage, attracting more traffic. Coupling this with gaming increases per-visitor revenue. For instance, Shop EZ already advertises the lowest cigarette prices in the area. Integrating Class II gaming and offering tax-free products can significantly boost profitability while supporting tribal programs.
Feasibility-Driven Phased Implementation (2025–2027)	All initiatives will proceed based on data from feasibility studies. In 2025–2026, strategic reviews and site-specific assessments will inform Tribal Council decisions. By 2026–2027, phased construction will begin with Shop EZ and Feather Hill upgrades, followed by Lakeview and new plaza development. The CEDS Implementation Matrix will track progress, e.g., “2025: Complete C-store feasibility; 2026: Begin construction.” Opportunities for construction enterprise development will also be explored in tandem to support these and future infrastructure projects.
Future Enterprise Development: Cannabis Industry (Conditional)	If community consensus and a legal framework are established, the Tribe could launch a cannabis enterprise (cultivation, dispensary) by 2027. Key steps include a tribal regulatory code (2025–26), investment planning, and workforce training. Potential returns are high (\$1M+/year in other tribes) but subject to legal clarity.
Renewable Energy Projects	The Tribe will pursue a ~2 MW solar array (feasibility study in 2025). If viable, the project could leverage Inflation Reduction Act tax credits to finance up to 40% of costs. By 2028, a solar farm could supply 4 GWh/year, reduce utility costs, and generate income (estimated \$100k+/year). Additional opportunities include wind turbines, carbon credits, and USDA prairie restoration programs.

Objective 4.3 establishes a clear, study-driven plan to grow tribal enterprise revenues, targeting a 25% increase in non-gaming income by 2030. Enhancements to Ohiya Casino, retail travel plazas, and C-stores, coupled with new industries like cannabis, renewable energy, construction, and mobile gaming, aim to create jobs and retain economic activity on tribal lands. The approach prioritizes feasibility, regulatory compliance, and community benefit to strengthen the Santee Sioux Nation’s economic sovereignty.

Goal 4: Expand Business, Tourism & Workforce Development

Objective 4.4 – Enhance Workforce Development and Education

Invest in human capital so that tribal members are prepared to fill jobs created and to pursue careers both on and off the reservation

<p>Vocational Training and Certification Programs</p>	<p>By 2026, ramp up partnerships with Nebraska Indian Community College (NICC) and regional trade schools to offer courses and certifications in high-demand skills. Focus areas based on community interest and job prospects include: Construction trades (carpentry, electrical, plumbing – aligning with housing projects in Goal 1), Commercial Driver’s License (CDL) training for trucking/heavy equipment jobs, Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) and other health tech training (to staff the expanded clinic and elder care programs), and IT support or fiber optic technician training (to maintain the broadband network). The Tribe will fully utilize federally funded programs like WIOA Section 166 for Native workforce development and apply for competitive grants like DOL’s YouthBuild (to train youth while building homes – a YouthBuild application was submitted in 2024 for a 2025 start). The goal is to have 100+ individuals complete vocational training or certificate programs by 2030 (cumulatively). To support this, the Education Department increased the tribal scholarship fund in 2024 and will continue to boost it (aiming for an extra \$50k per year by 2027 dedicated to trade school students as well as college). By 2030, unemployment should drop to ~10% or below (from ~14% now) through these efforts.</p>
<p>Higher Education and Adult Education</p>	<p>Continue encouraging college education for youth while also supporting adult learners. The Tribe will maintain its higher-ed scholarship program (with a goal of increasing the number of students in college from ~30 currently to 40+ at any given time by 2030). It will also support those returning to school or pursuing GEDs by strengthening the Education Department’s adult education outreach – for example, holding GED prep classes at the community center and partnering with NICC on remedial education offerings. An educated citizenry is crucial for staffing the tribal government and enterprises with skilled professionals. By 2030, aim for an increase in the high school graduation rate to above 90% and an increase in the proportion of tribal members with post-secondary credentials (through college degrees, vocational diplomas, or technical certificates).</p>
<p>Job Placement and Career Services</p>	<p>Starting in 2026, expand the Tribe’s TERO (Tribal Employment Rights Office) and job placement program capacity. Hire or designate a Job Developer/Placement Specialist who will work with local employers (tribal departments, casino, school, IHS clinic, as well as nearby off-reservation employers) to place trained tribal members into jobs. Hold annual job fairs (especially as new businesses open or projects start – e.g., a construction job fair in 2026 for the Lindy Road project). Develop partnerships with regional employers for apprenticeships and on-the-job training (for instance, link with union apprenticeship programs in construction trades or with healthcare providers for nurse training). A key metric is to facilitate at least 50 job placements per year by 2030 (up from perhaps a dozen per year now). Furthermore, encourage entrepreneurship as a career path: as the CDFI’s microloans seed micro-businesses, many individuals will effectively be “creating their own job” through self-employment, which also contributes to reducing unemployment.</p>

Goal 5: Strengthen Governance & Resilience

Build the Tribe's institutional capacity to effectively implement the CEDS and ensure long-term resilience. This includes strengthening tribal governance, financial management, intergovernmental partnerships, and emergency preparedness to withstand economic or environmental disruptions.

Objective 5.1 – Enhance Governance Capacity and Collaboration

Improve the Tribe's ability to manage projects and finances, and foster partnerships to support development

CEDS Implementation Committee and Coordination	Form a dedicated CEDS Implementation Committee in 2025 (this will be proposed via a Tribal Council resolution in September 2025). The committee, comprising representatives from various tribal departments along with community members, will meet quarterly to monitor progress on the CEDS (as detailed in the Evaluation Framework section). They will coordinate across departments to break down silos. Additionally, institutionalize annual joint meetings between the Tribal Council and program managers to review strategic goals and projects. Essentially, CEDS implementation will become a standing priority in the tribal administration's agenda, ensuring continuity and accountability beyond election cycles.
Staff Training and Professional Development	Invest in building the skills of tribal staff and leadership. Starting in 2025, allocate a portion of the budget (or indirect cost funds) for sending staff to trainings and professional certifications each year. Priorities include: grant writing and management (so staff can better pursue and administer the funding needed for CEDS projects), financial management (for finance staff to stay current on best practices – e.g., the Finance Director obtaining a Certified Public Finance Officer credential by 2026), project management (so that project leads can effectively execute infrastructure projects on time and on budget), and leadership development for Tribal Council members (e.g., participation in the Native Nations Rebuilders program or similar governance leadership trainings). By 2030, the goal is to have 20+ staff trained or certified in key areas, and to cultivate a pipeline of younger tribal members ready to step into management roles. Well-trained personnel will greatly increase the success rate of all initiatives.
Improve Data Management and Evaluation Systems	Develop better systems for tracking data related to CEDS goals (e.g., economic indicators, project status, grant outcomes). By 2026, decide on a centralized data tracking solution – whether it's a simple Excel-based dashboard or a more robust project management/database system – and implement it. This will help in monitoring performance measures annually (e.g., tracking number of houses built, jobs created, etc. in one place). Also, produce an Annual CEDS Progress Report (as mentioned in the Evaluation Framework) to institutionalize evaluation and transparency. This ties directly to EDA requirements and ensures leadership and community stay informed of progress.
Inter-governmental Partnerships	Actively engage with neighboring governments and organizations. Aim to sign at least 3 new Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) or partnership agreements by 2030. Examples could include: an MOU with Knox County to collaborate on road maintenance or law enforcement assistance; an agreement with the State of Nebraska on emergency response cooperation or workforce training programs; and partnerships with other tribes (e.g., a joint tourism marketing effort with Yankton Sioux, or a shared lobbyist for state/federal advocacy with the other Nebraska tribes). The Tribe will also maintain representation in regional bodies like the Northeast Nebraska Economic Development District (NENEDD) – Santee joined NENEDD's board in 2025 – to stay connected to regional initiatives. These partnerships multiply resources and political influence, and they are a form of resilience (ensuring the Tribe has allies to call on when needed).

Goal 5: Strengthen Governance & Resilience

Objective 5.2 – Ensure Financial Stewardship and Transparency

Strengthen the Tribe’s financial footing and maintain transparent, accountable governance

Establish and Grow a Financial Reserve (“Rainy Day Fund”)

In 2025, the Tribe adopted a formal Reserve Fund Policy requiring that a portion of tribal revenue (e.g., 5–10% of annual net gaming profits, or a portion of any one-time settlements) be deposited into a reserve account each year. The goal is to build cash reserves equal to 6 months of operating expenses by 2030. Roughly, if critical monthly expenses are ~\$100k, accumulate ~\$600k in reserves. This fund is crucial for financial resilience – it provides a cushion in case of emergencies or revenue shortfalls. An initial deposit of \$50k was made in FY25. The plan is to grow it steadily (e.g., \$50k–\$100k per year) so that by 2030 the target is met. These funds will be kept in a secure, interest-bearing account and only accessed by Council approval for true emergencies.

Clean Audits and Improved Financial Management

The Finance Department will continue to improve internal controls and accounting systems to achieve annual audits with no findings. By 2026, implement any remaining recommendations from past audit reports, invest in training for finance staff (e.g., updates on Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) rules, advanced use of accounting software), and consider acquiring a modern tribal financial management software if needed. The metric is zero material weaknesses in audits each year and prompt resolution of any minor comments (within 3 months). Demonstrating strong financial management will ensure funds are used wisely and boost the Tribe’s credibility with funders and investors.

Diversify Revenue and Strengthen Grant Management

Develop a Grants and Revenue Diversification Plan by mid-2026. This plan will map out how to replace funds when certain grants end and identify new revenue opportunities (e.g., exploring modest tribal taxes on certain activities, new enterprise profits, or pursuing federal contracts and compacts). Also, invest in grant writing capacity: possibly hire a dedicated grant writer or contract one regionally by 2026, or train existing staff to specialize in grant writing. The CEDS committee set a goal to secure at least 10 major grants (>\$50k each) for CEDS projects by 2030; by late 2026, at least two such grants are already in hand (the TOR grant for the wellness center and the NTIA broadband grant for infrastructure). Each year the Tribe will target specific grant competitions aligned with its priorities (EDA, HUD, USDA, DOJ, etc.). Additionally, strive to create at least one new revenue stream for the Tribe by 2030 outside of grants – for instance, a tribal tax on a future cannabis business, or income from a cell tower lease on tribal land, or dividends from an investment fund. Smoothing out and growing revenues will reduce dependency on any single source.

Transparency and Community Engagement in Governance

Starting in 2026, the Tribe will publish an Annual “State of the Economy” report or CEDS Progress Report to the membership. This report (and/or a presentation at General Council meetings) will detail what has been achieved each year, how funds have been used, and what’s next – enhancing accountability. It will include easy-to-read metrics and infographics (for example, number of houses built, jobs added, etc.) to keep citizens informed. The Tribe will also update its website and social media regularly with project updates and create channels for community feedback (such as an annual community forum on CEDS progress). The target is that by 2030, at least 50% of citizens feel satisfied with tribal services and informed about development efforts (as measured by a survey). Transparency builds trust and ensures community support for sometimes difficult decisions (like saving money in a reserve rather than spending it immediately).

Goal 5: Strengthen Governance & Resilience

I Objective 5.3 – Build Economic Resilience and Emergency Preparedness

Ensure the Tribe has plans, savings, and systems in place to handle economic downturns or sudden disruptions (natural or man-made)

Economic Resilience Planning	<p>Incorporate economic risk assessment into CEDS implementation. The CEDS Implementation Committee will identify “what if” scenarios and develop contingency strategies by 2027 (mid-term of the plan). For example, what if gaming revenue drops 20% due to new competition? – the Tribe might plan budget adjustments or alternate income strategies (like focusing on tourism and agriculture to compensate). Or, what if a flood destroys homes? – have a relocation and rebuilding strategy ready (including relationships with FEMA and HUD for disaster aid). By considering such scenarios in advance, the Tribe can respond faster and smarter if they occur. These plans will be documented as part of a Resilience Addendum to the CEDS in 2027. Importantly, the Tribe will also use this to inform its Hazard Mitigation Plan update (due by 2027) – ensuring alignment between economic goals and hazard risk reduction measures.</p>
Emergency Operations and Training	<p>Establish a functional Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and improve emergency response capacity. In 2025, designate a space (perhaps a room in the tribal police station or old council chambers) as the EOC. By 2026, equip it with communication tools (radios, satellite phone, backup generator) possibly via a FEMA BRIC grant or Tribal Homeland Security funds. Train a core team of at least 5–7 staff in Incident Command System (ICS) and emergency management – for example, have them complete ICS-100, 200, 700 courses by 2026, and send key staff to advanced training by 2028. Conduct annual emergency drills: one full-scale exercise per year (rotating scenarios like flood, blizzard, or hazardous spill) and additional tabletop exercises. Aim for at least one drill each year involving tribal responders and partners (county emergency management, volunteer fire departments, etc.). Also finalize mutual aid agreements: by 2026 have MOUs with Knox County for fire and law enforcement assistance and with neighboring tribes for sharing emergency resources. These efforts ensure that when disaster strikes, the Tribe can protect lives and infrastructure, minimizing economic setbacks.</p>
Sovereignty and Jurisdictional Resilience	<p>Strengthen legal and sovereignty measures that underpin economic resilience. Continue land consolidation and trust land acquisition efforts – reclaim fractionated parcels or purchase key lands as they become available (target: add at least 100 acres of new trust land by 2030), which strengthens the land base for future development and housing. Explore self-governance compacts: for instance, consider entering a Self-Governance Compact for law enforcement or other federal programs by 2030 if capacity allows (to have more local control and flexibility in critical services). If the Tribe can assert more jurisdiction (like implementing its own tax code or civil regulatory codes for new industries), it can derive more benefit from economic activities and reduce external barriers. While these are longer-term governance moves, they contribute to resilience by solidifying the Tribe’s ability to respond on its own terms in the face of change.</p>

Goals and Objectives

- By achieving Goal 1, the Santee Sioux Nation will address fundamental needs for infrastructure and housing that underpin all other economic development efforts. Improved roads and utilities will enable business activity and safer living conditions. New and better housing will help retain population and attract talent back to the community. Progress under Goal 1 is measurable – miles of road improved, houses built, internet subscriptions increased – and forms the literal groundwork for a stronger economy.
- Realizing Goal 2 will diversify Santee’s economy by reviving its agrarian roots. Success will be measured in acres cultivated, increased availability of local foods, new farm-related jobs created, and improved health outcomes (as more fresh and traditional foods become available). Achieving greater food sovereignty also has intangible benefits – pride in self-sufficiency and resilience against external food supply disruptions.
- By implementing Goal 3, the Tribe aims to see measurable improvements in community health statistics (such as lower substance abuse incidence, reduced diabetes complications, and higher life expectancy) and a cleaner environment (e.g., meeting water quality standards, improved wildlife habitat). Just as importantly, these initiatives ensure that economic development does not come at the cost of community well-being or the environment. Instead, health and environmental stewardship are treated as foundational assets that all economic gains must support and enhance. A healthier, happier community with a protected homeland will be more capable of achieving the Tribe’s long-term economic and social goals.

Goals and Objectives

- By pursuing Goal 4, the Santee Sioux Nation will cultivate a more self-sufficient and robust local economy. The combined outcome by 2030 should be evident: several new Native-owned businesses operating successfully, a growing stream of tourists visiting each year (bringing outside dollars into the community), more tribal members working (some in new tribal enterprises, others in their own businesses or in external jobs obtained through training), and higher average household incomes. This goal directly addresses the community's calls for jobs and economic opportunities. It also reduces dependence on a single industry (gaming) by broadening the economic base – which is crucial for long-term resilience. In quantitative terms, progress will be tracked via metrics such as the unemployment rate (target $\leq 10\%$), number of businesses and jobs created, tourism revenue increased, and workforce participation rate (aim to raise from $\sim 50\%$ to 60% or higher). Just as importantly, success will be felt in the community as people have the chance to work, earn a good living at home, and celebrate their culture with visitors.
 - By accomplishing Goal 5, the Tribe will have significantly enhanced its governance foundation – a competent workforce, prudent financial management, strong partnerships, and prepared emergency systems. This will ensure that the gains from Goals 1–4 are sustainable and protected against setbacks. In other words, Goal 5 knits the entire CEDS together and “future-proofs” it. When the Tribe can effectively govern itself and has a plan for hard times, it can weather storms (literal and figurative) and keep advancing the community's well-being for generations to come.
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Overall, Santee's resilience strategy is about anticipating risks, building capacity to manage them, and creating flexibility in our economy. From financial reserves to diversified industries, from sturdy infrastructure to trained emergency responders, each piece contributes to the ability to absorb or bounce back from setbacks. This resilience mindset is woven throughout the CEDS so that development gains are not only achieved but also sustained in the face of adversity

07.



Economic Resilience Strategy.

Economic Resilience Strategy

Building economic resilience – the ability to withstand or recover quickly from economic shocks – is a critical thread running through the CEDS. While many resilience measures are embedded in the strategic goals above (particularly Goal 5), this section highlights specific strategies the Santee Sioux Nation is undertaking to safeguard its economic future against volatility and crises. These efforts recognize that steady progress can be easily derailed by disasters or downturns if resilience isn't built in.

Diversification of Income Streams

The Tribe is actively working to reduce over-reliance on any single revenue source. By 2030, Santee aims to have multiple robust income streams: gaming & hospitality (casino, lodge), agriculture (tribally produced bison meat, crops, or lease income), retail enterprises (tribal grocery, fuel station, etc.), service contracts (tribally owned companies securing government or private contracts, such as construction or IT services), and potentially renewable energy generation (solar farm revenues). The idea is that if one sector falters (e.g., a downturn in casino gaming or a bad crop year), other revenue sources can buffer the impact. For example, increased agricultural output or federal contract income could help offset a dip in tourism revenue. The planned Tribal CDFI and business incubator (Goal 4) will also support diversification by seeding a variety of small businesses. By “not putting all our eggs in one basket,” the Nation becomes more resilient to market fluctuations.

Workforce Resilience

Investing in people increases adaptability. A more educated and skilled workforce can adjust to changing job markets. If one industry falters – say, fewer casino jobs due to regional competition – Santee community members with portable skills (trade certifications, college degrees, or remote work capabilities) can find or create new employment. The CEDS promotes remote work (through broadband expansion in Goal 1) so local workers aren't tied solely to local employers; they can tap into national job markets via the internet, cushioning the community against local downturns. By nurturing entrepreneurship and home-grown businesses, individuals can generate their own livelihoods even if a major employer leaves. The Tribe will encourage a mindset of continuous learning and skill development (Goal 4's training initiatives) so that the workforce remains agile and able to seize new opportunities or shift careers as needed. In short, human capital development is a buffer – people with skills have options, making the overall community more resilient to economic swings.

Economic Resilience Strategy

Infrastructure Resilience

Protecting and hardening critical infrastructure against disasters is essential to economic resilience. The Tribe's plans acknowledge vulnerabilities like having only a single all-weather access road- hence the priority on improving Lindy Road and exploring redundant routes. Measures include elevating or reinforcing flood-prone road segments, upgrading culverts and bridges, and improving drainage systems in the village to prevent washouts. Ensuring backup power for key facilities is another strategy – installing generators or solar + battery backups at the clinic, water wells, tribal offices, and emergency shelters so operations can continue during grid outages. The broadband project is incorporating multiple pathways and backup systems to avoid communication blackouts. By investing in these measures (many described under Goals 1 and 3), Santee can avoid or minimize downtime in essential services when natural disasters or extreme weather strike. This keeps the economy running (businesses open, government functions ongoing) even during adverse events, which in turn speeds up recovery and reduces losses.

Emergency Preparedness and Response

A cornerstone of resilience is the ability to effectively respond to and recover from emergencies. The Tribe has developed a Disaster Response Plan (with FEMA/BIA input) and will keep it updated and actionable. Regular drills and training are part of the strategy – for instance, conducting an annual flood evacuation exercise each spring (before the high water season), and periodic wildfire or tornado drills at the school and clinic. Coordination with county and state emergency management is maintained so that Santee is integrated into regional alert systems and can receive mutual aid when needed. (For example, tribal officials receive county flood warnings, and agreements are in place for the county to assist if a major wildfire or law enforcement emergency occurs on the reservation.) The Tribe is also establishing its small Emergency Operations Center and getting more staff ICS-certified (see Goal 5.3). Additionally, Santee is exploring formal mutual aid agreements with neighboring tribes – knowing that if one community is struck by disaster, others will come to help (sharing equipment, sheltering evacuees, etc.). This networked approach increases overall resilience: collectively, tribes and local partners can handle crises better than any single community alone.

Economic Resilience Strategy

Financial Resilience


On the financial side, the Tribe's plan to build reserve funds acts as a buffer to keep government and essential services running even if revenue dips temporarily. By 2030, having a significant emergency fund means that if, say, casino income suddenly drops or a major employer shuts down, the Tribe can use reserves to avoid immediate program cuts or layoffs. Additionally, improved access to insurance (making sure tribal properties are insured for hazards, possibly exploring business interruption insurance for enterprises) and building contingency budgets into projects (so cost overruns or delays won't immediately derail progress) are being emphasized. The CEDS Implementation Committee will annually review risk factors and ensure mitigation measures are on track – for example, if a key grant is ending, plan ahead to either replace the funding or wind down the program responsibly, instead of facing a sudden gap. Moreover, diversifying funding sources (grants, enterprise profits, partnerships)

Regional and External Collaboration

The Santee Sioux Nation recognizes that resilience is also about connections outside our community. By being an active part of the regional economy and emergency planning efforts (through NENEDD, regional health coalitions, etc.), the Tribe can tap into broader support when needed. If a disaster overwhelms local capacity, state and federal agencies (like FEMA or EDA's disaster recovery programs) will be engaged – and prior relationship-building will help speed assistance. Economically, aligning some development efforts with regional trends means Santee benefits from and contributes to regional resilience, rather than being isolated. For example, if northeastern Nebraska is focusing on value-added agriculture or eco-tourism, Santee can plug into those supply chains and marketing networks. By sharing knowledge and resources with other tribes and neighboring towns (as happened during the 2019 floods when tribes shared equipment and shelters), all parties become stronger.

Importantly, this is not a one-time effort but an ongoing process. The Tribe will continuously identify vulnerabilities and address them – this iterative approach is built into the evaluation framework (with annual reviews of risks and mid-course corrections as needed). By doing so, the Santee Sioux Nation will enhance not just its economic durability but also the overall security and well-being of the community

08.



Evaluation Framework.

Evaluation Framework

To ensure the CEDS is implemented effectively and yields results, a robust Evaluation Framework has been established. This framework will be used to track progress, measure outcomes, and allow for adjustments to strategies over time. It creates a feedback loop between planning and outcomes, promoting transparency and accountability. The framework meets EDA's requirements by defining how we will monitor the plan and evaluate success. Rather than letting the CEDS "sit on a shelf," this approach treats it as a living document that is regularly consulted, reported on, and updated.

Monitoring and Oversight

The Tribe will convene the multi-stakeholder CEDS Implementation Committee (as mentioned under Goal 5) to oversee implementation. This committee meets quarterly to review progress on each objective and initiative. They will maintain an Implementation Timeline (a Gantt-chart style schedule) mapping out all initiatives from 2025 to 2030 with start/end dates and responsible parties. At each meeting, the committee will update the timeline: mark tasks completed or delayed, identify any bottlenecks, and assign follow-up actions. After each quarterly review, the committee will report to the Tribal Council and community (via a newsletter or public meeting) summarizing progress and any issues needing leadership attention. This regular monitoring ensures the plan stays on track and that emerging problems are flagged early.

Performance Measures and Targets

For each strategic goal, the CEDS defines specific metrics or indicators to gauge success. These metrics translate objectives into measurable targets to hit by certain dates.

- Infrastructure (Goal 1): Miles of road improved – target ~12.5 miles of Lindy Road paved or upgraded by 2027; number of new housing units built – target at least 30 by 2030; percentage of households utilizing broadband access – target 95%+ by 2026 (en route to near 100% by 2030); completion of key infrastructure projects – e.g., expand tribal transit service by 2026, community center built by 2027.
- Agriculture (Goal 2): Acres of tribal land in active production – aim to increase by 33% (from ~300 to ~400 acres by 2030); size of bison herd – target roughly double (from ~50 to ~100 head by 2030); community food initiatives – e.g., farmers' market running weekly during summers by 2026, and at least 3 community gardens operating by 2026; reduction in food assistance needs – track if fewer families rely on the food pantry by 2030 (a qualitative indicator of improved food security).

Evaluation Framework

- Health/Wellness (Goal 3): Health outcomes – e.g., diabetes prevalence reduced by 10% by 2030 ; youth obesity rate reduced; healthcare access – number of patient visits at the local clinic increased by 50% (from ~2,000/year to ~3,000/year by 2030); substance abuse – opioid/drug overdose incidents down 25% by 2030; increased participation in wellness programs – 50% increase in regular users of the fitness center by 2030, and an increase of 50 youth and 20 elders participating in language/cultural programs annually.
- Business/Workforce (Goal 4): Unemployment rate – decrease to ~10% by 2030 (from ~14% baseline); number of new tribal or member-owned businesses – target at least 8 new businesses by 2030; tourism metrics – e.g., annual visitors to the cultural center >3,000 by 2030, tourism-related revenue up by \$200k/year; workforce development – number of individuals completing job training programs – target 100+ certificates or trade graduates by 2030 (with an interim target of ~50 by 2027).
- Governance/Resilience (Goal 5): Reserve fund balance – target approximately 6 months of operating costs saved by 2030 ; emergency preparedness – number of emergency drills conducted annually – at least 1 full-scale and 1 tabletop per year; land base and sovereignty – acres of land placed into trust – target +100 acres by 2030; grants secured for CEDS projects – target ≥10 by 2030; audit outcomes – target 0 major audit findings yearly; community satisfaction – improved satisfaction with tribal services as measured by surveys (target majority of respondents feel progress by 2030). Another measure is revenue diversification: by 2030 no single revenue source (like gaming) should account for more than ~50% of tribal income.

Baseline values for many metrics have been documented using current data (see community background stats). For each metric, the committee will set target values for mid-term (2027) and final (2030). For instance, if currently 10 homes are overcrowded, the target might be to reduce that to 5 by 2027 and 2 by 2030; if the current labor force participation is 50%, target to raise it to 55% by 2027 and 60% by 2030. These targets make the plan's desired outcomes concrete and measurable. Progress toward these targets will be checked at least annually, and results will be publicly reported to maintain transparency and momentum. (For example, a visual scorecard might compare baseline vs. 2030 targets: "Houses built – baseline 0 vs. target 20"; "Unemployment – baseline ~18% vs. target 10%"; etc., to illustrate the measurable goals the Tribe is striving for.)

Evaluation Framework

Data Collection and Reporting

The Tribe will utilize both quantitative data and qualitative feedback to evaluate progress. Quantitative data sources include: U.S. Census/American Community Survey (for population, income, employment stats), tribal program records (e.g., Housing Authority records on homes built or rehabbed, clinic patient visit counts, Education Department data on training completions and school outcomes), and project-specific monitoring data (each project lead will report outputs like “miles of road completed” or “number of business loans issued”). To ensure consistency, the CEDS Implementation Committee will clearly define each measure (for example, what counts as a “new job created” or how we define “households with broadband”) so that tracking is accurate and meaningful.

Qualitative feedback will come from community input – through periodic surveys, public meetings, or focus groups. For example, an annual CEDS Check-in Survey might ask community members questions like “Do you feel job opportunities have improved in the last year? (Rate 1–5)” or “What is the biggest positive change you’ve seen this year?” to capture perceptions and anecdotal outcomes. Such feedback can highlight impacts not fully captured by numbers (e.g., improved community pride, or persistent concerns about issues that the data might not reveal).

Each department or entity responsible for a part of the CEDS will be expected to report on their relevant metrics. To facilitate this, by early 2025 the Implementation Committee will develop a simple reporting template so that every quarter (or at least semi-annually) each goal area lead can submit updates on each initiative’s status and metrics. Over time, the Tribe may invest in a basic database or tracking software to compile these indicators. Consistency in data definitions is crucial – the committee will clearly define measures (e.g., what counts as a “new job created” or how we measure an “overcrowded home”) so that trends are accurate and meaningful.

Annual Progress Report and Community Presentation

The Implementation Committee will produce an Annual CEDS Progress Report (likely each fall, to align with the Tribe’s annual meeting or budget planning cycle). This report will outline:

- Accomplishments: What was achieved in the past year (projects completed, milestones reached, grants received, policies enacted).
- Key Indicators: Data on key indicators (e.g., unemployment dropped by 2% this year; 5 new homes were built; 10 people earned certificates or degrees; broadband access rose to 80% of households; etc.).
- Challenges: Any challenges or delays encountered and proposed solutions or adjustments.
- Changes in Conditions: Any changes in assumptions or external conditions (e.g., “State opened a casino nearby affecting our gaming revenue” or “Major flood occurred and diverted resources for six months”).
- Recommendations: Recommendations for course corrections if needed (e.g., if an approach isn’t working, suggest an alternative or propose a new initiative).

Evaluation Framework

This annual report will be shared with the Tribal Council and made available to the community (distributed at the General Council meeting and published in the tribal newspaper and/or website). In addition, the Tribe will host an annual community meeting or town hall specifically to discuss CEDS progress – this could be part of a General Council meeting or a special “economic summit.” This keeps the community informed and involved, and allows members to voice satisfaction or concerns. Community feedback from these meetings (for example, “our roads in district X still aren’t fixed” or “we need more focus on youth activities”) will be formally recorded and considered by the committee in refining implementation.

- Mid-Term Evaluation and Plan Update: Around the mid-point of the five-year period (during 2027), the Tribe will conduct a comprehensive mid-term evaluation of the CEDS. This will be essentially a mini-update of the strategy. The mid-term review will evaluate:
- Are the goals and objectives still relevant? Have there been major changes (economic, political, environmental, or community priorities) that warrant shifting focus or adding new goals?
- Which strategies have been most successful, and which have lagged behind? Analyze why: were there resource shortfalls, unrealistic timelines, implementation issues?
- Progress toward the 2027 interim targets for each metric: which targets have been met or exceeded, and which are behind?
- Community satisfaction and input at mid-point: possibly conduct a community survey or meetings in 2027 to gather perceptions on how CEDS implementation is going.

Based on this evaluation, the planning committee will formally update the CEDS document if needed – this could mean revising strategies, adding or removing initiatives, or re-prioritizing projects for the 2028–2030 period. The outcome could be an updated CEDS or an addendum that refines the plan for the remaining years. This flexibility ensures the CEDS remains aligned with current realities and emerging opportunities (for example, if a new federal infrastructure bill passes in 2026, the mid-term update might pivot to capitalize on that).

09.



Implementation Plan and Matrix.

Implementation Matrix

The following Implementation Matrix translates the CEDS Action Plan into a practical roadmap for execution. It lists each initiative by Strategic Goal and Objective, along with key details including the lead agency or responsible party, the timeline, estimated cost, current status (as of the CEDS finalization in late 2025), potential funding sources, and partner organizations. This matrix will be used by the CEDS Implementation Committee to track progress and ensure accountability. It is organized by goal for clarity, but many initiatives have cross-cutting benefits and shared resources.

Key to Timeline:

- Short-Term (ST) – slated to begin or be completed in 2025–2026
- Mid-Term (MT) – slated for 2027–2028
- Long-Term (LT) – slated for 2029–2030 (or beyond, if noted)

Status is as of CEDS finalization (Q4 2025) – many initiatives are “Not started” (new projects) or “Planned” if in active development, while a few ongoing efforts are noted as “Ongoing.” The Committee will update the status quarterly (e.g., moving items from Planned to In Progress or Completed, as appropriate).

Goal 1

Strategic Goal 1 - Improve Infrastructure and Housing

Objective / Initiative	Lead Party	Timeline	Estimated Cost	Status (2025)	Potential Funding Sources	Key Partners	
Upgrade Transportation Infrastructure	Rebuild Lindy Road	Tribal Roads Dept. Knox County	MT completion by 2027	~\$10-12 million (can be phased)	Planned (FEIS done)	BIA Tribal Transportation Program (increased formula funds under IIA); FHWA Tribal Transportation Program Discretionary grants; USDOT RAISE grants (competitive infrastructure funding for rural/tribal roads); Nationally Significant Federal Lands & Tribal Projects (NSFLTP) Program (BIL-funded, 50% set-aside for tribal projects with 100% federal cost share); EDA Public Works grants (road infrastructure);	Knox County (road jurisdiction); Nebraska Dept. of Transportation (technical assistance, state highway coordination); Northeast Nebraska Economic Development District (grant development support); BIA Division of Transportation (engineering/standards guidance); Nebraska Department of Economic Development
	Improve Streets & Drainage	Tribal Roads/ Utilities Dept.	ST (2026 phase 1; ongoing maintenance)	~\$1.5 million (phase 1)	Not started	HUD Indian Community Development Block Grant (ICDBG) – Infrastructure; USDOT Safe Streets for All grants (for safety improvements like sidewalks); BIA Road Maintenance funds; USDOT Transportation Alternatives program via NDOT (for pedestrian paths/trails); Nebraska Transportation Innovation Act funding (if available for local projects); Nebraska (state allocation) Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Village of Santee eligible applicant.	Knox County (drainage and culvert planning); Nebraska Dept. of Transportation – Local Assistance Division (safety/sidewalk design input); Nebraska LTAP (Local Technical Assistance Program for training/tech support); Local contractors (construction); Nebraska Department of Economic Development
	Expand Tribal Transit	Tribal Transit Program	ST (expanded service by 2026)	~\$200k capital; ~\$100k/yr operating	Planned (proposal stage)	FTA Section 5311(c) Tribal Transit Program (ongoing annual grants for tribal transit); FTA Low/No Emission Vehicle Program (for newer or electric transit vans); Nebraska Department of Transportation Public Transit Aid (operating assistance); VW Settlement funds via Nebraska DOE (for vehicle replacement, if available);	Nearby tribes’ transit programs (mentor on operations); Tribal Elders Program (coordinate rider needs); Nebraska Department of Transportation – Transit Division (training, route coordination with regional transit); Local health center (align transit for medical transport)
Expand Housing Availability and Quality	Develop new housing units (Six Pack project, duplexes, assisted living, etc.)	Tribal Housing Authority (SSN Housing)	ST planning (2025-2026); MT/LT construction (2026-2030)	~\$8-10 million (for ~30 units total)	Planned (site identified; seeking funds)	HUD Indian Housing Block Grant (IHBG) formula funds (FY25 at record \$1.1B nationally for tribal housing); HUD IHBG Competitive grants (competitive NAHASDA funds for new construction); Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) – Nebraska Investment Finance Authority (NIFA) allocation (state LIHTC set-aside for tribal projects); USDA Rural Housing programs (Section 502 direct loans for homeownership; Section 515 for rental housing); Nebraska Affordable Housing Trust Fund (NAHTF) grants (state funding for affordable housing development – tribes eligible via nonprofit entities); Federal Home Loan Bank Native Housing grants (e.g. FHLB Topeka Native American Housing Initiative)	HUD Office of Native American Programs (ONAP technical assistance); Nebraska Dept. of Economic Development – Housing Division (NAHTF program coordination); Travois, Inc. (LIHTC consultant for tribal projects); Nebraska Housing Developers Association (statewide affordable housing support); Private developers or nonprofit housing partners for LIHTC projects; FHLB member banks (sponsors for housing grants/loans); Northeast Nebraska Economic Development District (NENEDD)
	Master plan & infrastructure for Isanti Village (80-acre housing area)	Tribal Housing & Planning Depts.	ST planning (2025-2026); MT infrastructure (roads, utilities by 2027)	~\$2 million (infrastructure)	Planned (land reserved)	EDA Public Works grants (for roads/utilities in new subdivisions); USDA Community Facilities program (loans/grants for infrastructure supporting housing); IHS Sanitation Facilities Construction (water/sewer for new housing); EPA Clean Water/Drinking Water State Revolving Funds (via Nebraska, for sewer/water expansion – leveraging tribal set-asides in BIL); HUD ICDBG – Imminent Threat (for critical infrastructure gaps); Nebraska Affordable Housing Trust Fund (eligible if part of nonprofit-led development)	Engineering firm (site master planning and design); IHS Office of Environmental Health engineers (water/sewer system design); Nebraska Dept. of Environment & Energy – Drinking Water program (technical advice, regulatory permits); Rural Utilities Service (USDA) state office (funding guidance); Knox County (permits, platting if needed)
	Rehabilitate & weatherize existing homes (2-3 units/year)	Tribal Housing Dept. (Rehab Team)	ST and ongoing (2025-2030)	~\$50k/home; ~\$150k/yr program	Ongoing (limited capacity)	HUD ICDBG – Housing Rehab grants; HUD HOME Investment Partnership (through state for rehab if accessible); DOE Weatherization Assistance Program (via Nebraska’s Weatherization network for tribal homes); USDA Section 533 Housing Preservation grants (for rural housing rehab); HUD Title VI loan guarantee (leveraging future IHBG to finance large rehab projects); Nebraska Affordable Housing Trust Fund (supports homeowner rehab for low-income households)	Tribal Maintenance Dept. (skilled crew); Local contractors and tradespeople; Nebraska Housing Services (regional nonprofit or CAP agency involved in weatherization/rehab for the area); Nebraska Commission on Indian Affairs (liaison to state housing resources); Habitat for Humanity or Rebuilding Together (potential nonprofit partners for repairs); Northeast Nebraska Economic Development District (NENEDD)
Improve Utilities and Community Facilities	Broadband expansion	Tribal IT Dept. / Telecom Committee	ST (2025-26 rollout)	~\$1,488,352	In progress (Completed Build Out; Expanding Marketing Efforts)	NTIA Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program (2nd round funding under IIA for tribal broadband projects); USDA ReConnect grants (rural broadband deployment funds); BEAD Program (Broadband Equity, Access & Deployment – Nebraska’s state broadband grants, with tribal coordination) – note: BEAD will invest heavily in rural broadband 2025-2028; FCC E-Rate (for connecting tribal school, library, etc.)	Great Plains Communications (ISP partner for backhaul or operations); Hopti Telecommunications Inc. (peer mentorship on tribal telecom); Nebraska Broadband Office/PSC (state broadband office coordinating BEAD and digital inclusion, ensuring tribal areas are served); Village of Nebraska or NDIA (digital inclusion training for residents); Atto/NebraskaLink (regional fiber providers, as needed for interconnection)
	Drill new community well and extend water lines	Tribal Utilities Dept.	ST (2025-2026)	~\$500k	Not started	IHS Sanitation Facilities Construction Program (BIL augmented funding for tribal water systems); USDA Water & Waste Disposal grant/loan (Rural Utilities Service funding for water infrastructure); EPA Drinking Water State Revolving Fund – Tribal Set-Aside (federal funds for tribal water projects); FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant (for backup well if justified as emergency supply); Nebraska Dept. of Environment & Energy – Drinking Water (technical assistance for well development); Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program, Village of Santee eligible applicant	IHS Office of Environmental Health (engineering support); Nebraska Rural Water Association (technical training on water system); Nebraska Department of Environment & Energy (water quality testing, regulatory interface); Adjacent Rural Water Districts (coordination if intertie or emergency backup needed)
	Upgrade wastewater lagoon (expand capacity by ~30%)	Tribal Utilities Dept.	MT (2027 design; 2028 build)	~\$800k-\$1M	Not started	USDA Water & Waste Disposal grants/loans; EPA Clean Water State Revolving Fund (via state of Nebraska, which can fund tribal projects in coordination with EPA); EPA Tribal Clean Water Section 319 grants (for related nonpoint source pollution control if lagoon impacts water quality); BIA Water Resources program (if available for design/feasibility); U.S. Army Corps of Engineers assistance (if wetlands or discharge issues align with Corps programs)	IHS Sanitation Program engineers; EPA Region 7 Tribal Wastewater Program (oversight and tech support); Nebraska Dept. of Environment & Energy (permitting, compliance); Knox County (permits/regulatory coordination); Nebraska Natural Resources District (NRD) – Missouri River NRD (consult on environmental impact)
	Assess Facilities for backup generators and install for critical facilities (clinic, water system, etc.)	Tribal Emergency Mgmt & Utilities	ST (by 2025-2026)	~\$150k (for ~3 large generators)	Not started	FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (competitive funding for generators at critical infrastructure); FEMA Building Resilient Infrastructure & Communities (BRIC) grants (supports resilient power projects for critical services); DOE Office of Indian Energy grants (for tribal energy resilience, e.g. solar+storage as backup); HUD ICDBG – Imminent Threat (for emergency generators to protect health/safety)	County Emergency Management (coordinate inclusion in county mitigation plan for funding eligibility); Facility managers (clinic, well fields – to plan hookup logistics); Nebraska Emergency Management Agency (support tribal hazard mitigation projects); Nebraska Public Power District (local utility coordination on interconnection for generators)
	Construct new multipurpose community center (with gym, storm shelter)	Tribal Council; Community Services Dept.	MT (2027-28 construction)	~\$3 million	Not started (concept only)	EDA Public Works or Economic Adjustment Assistance (for community facilities with job-training or economic multipurpose use); HUD ICDBG (Community Facilities construction); FEMA Safe Room grant (for the storm shelter portion); USDA Community Facilities direct loan and/or grant (for essential community buildings); Nebraska Civic and Community Center Financing Fund (CCCCF) – state program supporting community center capital projects (requires political subdivision applicant, could partner with county); Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program, Village of Santee eligible applicant	Architectural design firm; Tribal Emergency Management (ensure shelter design meets FEMA specs); Nebraska Dept. of Economic Development (administrators CCCCFF grants – if county/tribe joint application); Local schools and college (for shared use agreements or support letters); NENEDD (regional development district, help packaging funding); NDED
	Expand tribal fitness center (equipment, space expansion)	Health Dept. / Diabetes Program	ST (2025 equipment); MT (facility expansion by 2027)	~\$100k equipment; TBD building expansion	Ongoing (using clinic space for now)	IHS Special Diabetes Program for Indians (SDPI) grants – ongoing funding for wellness equipment; CDC Good Health and Wellness in Indian Country (competitive grant focusing on holistic wellness, could fund fitness activities/equipment); Private wellness grants (e.g. Nike N7, which has funded Native youth sports/fitness); AARP FitLot or similar grants (fitness parks for all ages); Notah Begay III Foundation grants (Native youth sports/wellness)	Local hospital/clinic (donations of fitness equipment); National Indian Health Board (training on community wellness programs); Great Plains Tribal Leaders Health Board (regional support for wellness initiatives); Nebraska Department of Health & Human Services – Chronic Disease Prevention (coordination on diabetes education resources)

Goal 2

Strategic Goal 2 - Advance Agriculture & Food Sovereignty

Objective / Initiative	Lead Party	Timeline	Estimated Cost	Status (2025)	Potential Funding Sources	Key Partners	
Expand Tribal Farming & Ranching	Activate 100+ additional acres for farming	Tribal Land Dept.; Tribal Agriculture Program; Isanti, LLC Crop - Hay operation dept	ST (2025 fencing, planning, & prep); MT (by 2028 full use)	~\$300k (fencing, irrigation, equipment)	Not started (ARMP completed)	BIA Agriculture Program grants (for tribal farming capacity); USDA NRCS EQUIP cost-share (for fencing, irrigation, high-tunnels); USDA Conservation Reserve Program Transition incentives (if converting former CRP land to production); Intertribal Agriculture Council (IAC) resources or mini-grants (supports tribal producers); USDA Climate-Smart Commodities funding (through partnerships, for climate-resilient ag)	Local NRCS office (on-the-ground technical assistance); UNL Extension - Nebraska Extension & NICC Extension (soil prep, crop management training); Intertribal Agriculture Council (peer networking, technical experts); Nearby farmers/ranchers (equipment-sharing or mentorship agreements)
	Expand bison herd from ~50 to ~100 (fencing, water, management plan)	Tribal Agriculture Program	ST (2025 herd plan); MT (incremental growth through 2030)	~\$200k (fences, wells, herd mgmt.)	Planned (grant app submitted to ITBC)	InterTribal Buffalo Council (ITBC) herd expansion grants (ongoing support for member tribes); USDA NRCS EQUIP (for range fencing, stock wells specifically for grazing); WWF (World Wildlife Fund) and/or National Wildlife Federation tribal bison program grants (for ecological and cultural herd restoration); New: Tribal Herd Conservation Program (emerging philanthropic fund focused on tribal buffalo conservation)	ITBC network (other tribes sharing surplus bison, best practices); Nearby tribes with bison herds (Sisseton, Flandreau, etc. for mentorship); U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (if any coordination on grazing on refuge lands or conservation herds); World Wildlife Fund (technical guidance on prairie habitat for bison)
	Feasibility study; tribally-run meat processing facility	Tribal Agriculture Dept. & Economic Dev.	ST (2025-2026 study); MT (2026-27 decision, possible build)	~\$50k (study); ~\$1M (if plant construction)	Not started (seeking TA)	USDA Value-Added Producer Grant (for planning study); New: USDA Meat & Poultry Processing Expansion Program (MPPEP) - grants for developing regional meat processing capacity (launched 2022 to support projects in underserved areas); First Nations Development Institute grants (Native agriculture/food system planning); Nebraska Independent Processor Assistance Program (IPAP) - state grants to expand small meat processors (historically funded through ARPA to strengthen local meat supply); EDA Economic Adjustment Assistance (if part of regional food infrastructure development); Center for Rural Affairs (CFRA) Meat Processing Program and Community Development Block Grant - Economic Development	First Nations Development Institute (technical assistance, connections to funding); Crow Creek Sioux Tribe's Hunkpati Processors (peer learning from their tribally-run plant); Nebraska Dept. of Agriculture - Meat & Poultry Inspection (regulatory guidance for state-inspected facility); UNL Meat Science Extension (technical advice on plant design, training workforce); CFRA and Nebraska Department of Economic Development
Promote Food Sovereignty & Nutrition	Establish community gardens (at least 2 new garden sites)	Tribal Extension Program (NICC)	ST (2026 launch first new garden)	~\$20k per garden site (tools, fencing, supplies)	Not started	USDA Community Food Projects Competitive Grant (supports community-led gardening and nutrition projects); USDA NRCS High Tunnel Initiative (cost-share for seasonal high-tunnel greenhouses); First Nations Development Institute "Gather" Food Sovereignty grants (for Native community gardens and traditional foods); Nebraska Department of Agriculture Specialty Crop Block Grant (could fund fruit/vegetable garden supplies, via an eligible nonprofit); Center for Rural Affairs, Food Systems and Native Communities programs	Nebraska Extension (UNL) & Nebraska Indian Community College (ag educators for training); 4-H clubs and school ag programs (youth involvement); Tribal Diabetes Program (incorporate gardens into nutrition education); Master Gardener volunteers (assist families in garden techniques); Center for Rural Affairs, Food Systems and Native Communities programs
	Build community greenhouse for year-round growing	Education Dept. (school garden program)	MT (by 2026)	~\$100k (mid-sized greenhouse)	Planning (site identified at school)	USDA Tribal College Extension Grants (NICC-led greenhouse project); HUD ICDBG (if greenhouse is part of community facility or education facility); Nebraska Environmental Trust grants (state lottery-funded, could support community/school greenhouse as an educational conservation project); USDA Community Facilities (small grant/loan for greenhouse structure if tied to food security)	Nebraska Indian Community College (ag program support); Santee Community School (land, student participation); Nebraska Dept. of Education - Nutrition Services (support using greenhouse produce in school meals); Local FFA chapter or 4-H (if applicable, to involve youth in greenhouse management)
	Launch weekly farmers' market in Santee	Tribal Health/Nutrition Program	ST (Summer 2026 first market)	~\$10k (marketing, EBT setup, supplies)	Planned (surveying interest)	USDA Farmers Market Promotion Program (start-up funds for new farmers' markets); USDA Local Food Promotion Program (if expanding into a cooperative or food hub); DHHS SNAP Farmers Market Support (for EBT machines, nutrition incentives); First Nations Development Institute community food grants (for market infrastructure/marketing); Nebraska Department of Agriculture - Ag Promotional Grant (for marketing Nebraska produce, could assist tribal market promotion)	Local producers (tribal gardeners and farmers contributing produce); Farmers Market Coalition (nonprofit providing TA on market management); Nebraska Extension (community garden program can tie into market supply); Nebraska WIC & Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program (coordinate to allow vouchers use at market)
	Traditional foods harvesting program (annual bison harvest, group hunts/foraging)	Culture Dept. + Fish & Wildlife Dept.	ST (first harvest event by 2026); annual thereafter	~\$5k/event (logistics)	Ongoing (informal hunts occur)	USDA Community Food Systems grants (support integrating traditional foods into community food security); IHS SDPI (can fund traditional foods education and events as diabetes prevention); Administration for Native Americans (ANA) SEDS grants (for projects blending cultural practice with community well-being); Private donations or tribal funds for elders' meat distribution (continue local support)	Elders Committee (guidance on traditional harvesting); Youth Program (engage youth volunteers); Nebraska Game & Parks Commission (hunting/fishing permits coordination); USDA Forest Service/Nebraska Forest Service (if foraging includes forest products, they can offer education on sustainable harvesting)
Develop Ag-Related Enterprises	Small grants/loans for Native farmers & ranchers (via CDFI)	Tribal CDFI (once established)	MT (program start by 2026)	Initial capital ~\$200k for loans	Not started (CDFI not yet operational)	U.S. Treasury CDFI Fund - Native American CDFI Assistance (NACA) program (technical and financial assistance to capitalize loan funds); USDA Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program (RMAP) (loan/grant funding for micro-loan programs in rural areas); State Small Business Credit Initiative (SSBCI) Tribal Allocation; USDA Farm Service Agency loan guarantees (to back loans made by the CDFI to beginning farmers)	Oweesta Corporation & Native CDFI Network (mentorship in CDFI start-up); USDA FSA and NRCS offices (to refer tribal producers and provide training); Nebraska Enterprise Fund (existing Nebraska CDFI that can partner or co-lead); Local banks (participation loans or referrals)
	Explore hemp/cannabis cultivation (pilot project, if legal)	Economic Development Dept.	MT (2027 plan if legal); LT (implement by 2029?)	~\$100k (feasibility, legal framework)	Concept only (contingent on legal status)	USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant (through Nebraska Dept. of Agriculture, could fund a hemp pilot since hemp is a legal "specialty crop"); BIA Hemp & Cannabis Program (emerging technical assistance as tribes navigate legal cultivation - if federally legalized, new funding may arise); Private investors/partners for medical cannabis (joint ventures once tribal and state law permit - no federal grants currently for marijuana)	Legal counsel (navigate state/federal law); Tribes in states with legal cannabis (consult on regulations and business operations); Nebraska Dept. of Agriculture - Hemp Program (for licensing and compliance on hemp); Omaha Tribe of Nebraska (who in 2024 became the first in-state tribe to fully legalize and regulate cannabis, offering a model)
	Develop agri-tourism offerings (buffalo tour, U-pick farm, etc.)	Tourism Dept. + Agriculture Program	MT (start tours by 2026 season)	~\$30k (wagon/trailer, marketing)	Not started	USDA Rural Business Development Grants (RBDG) - can fund small business development in agritourism (e.g. farm-tour equipment, marketing); Nebraska Tourism Commission grants (tourism marketing and small attraction development; includes agritourism mini-grants); USDA Value-Added Producer Grant (if creating farm products or experiences that add income); DOI/BIA Tribal Tourism Grant Program (a new federal program started 2022 supporting tribal tourism planning and development); Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Tourism	Nebraska Tourism Division (state assistance marketing agritourism); Lewis & Clark Scenic Byway organization (to include Santee agri-tourism sites in regional itineraries); Nearby ranchers or farms (best-practice exchange and possibly joint events); American Indian Alaska Native Tourism Association (AIANTA) (technical assistance and promotion for tribal tourism ventures); Nebraska Department of Economic Development

Goal 3

Strategic Goal 3 - Promote Health, Wellness & Environment

Objective / Initiative	Lead Party	Timeline	Estimated Cost	Status (2025)	Potential Funding Sources	Key Partners	
3.1 Expand Healthcare Access & Quality	Assume management of IHS Clinic (638 compact) & expand services	Tribal Health Board; Tribal Council	ST (negotiate in 2025-2026); MT (tribal operation by 2026-2027)	n/a (IHS funds reallocated to Tribe)	In discussion with IHS	IHS Self-Governance Compact funding (reallocate IHS operating funds to Tribe upon 638 contract); IHS Tribal Management Grant (planning grant to prepare for 638 takeover); IHS Joint Venture Construction Program (for facility expansion – Tribe builds, IHS staffs); IHS Small Ambulatory Program (if re-funded by Congress for new small clinics); USDA Community Facilities loan/grant (for clinic expansion, especially for equipment or building improvements not covered by IHS)	IHS Great Plains Area Office (guidance on compact process); Winnebago Tribe (peer mentorship from their successful hospital 638 compact); Great Plains Tribal Leaders Health Board (support on governance and healthcare administration); Nebraska Dept. of Health & Human Services (ensure state Medicaid/Medicare billing agreements post-638)
	Expand hospital or ER clinic (feasibility study)	Health Dept. / Planning Dept.	MT (2027 feasibility study)	~\$75k (study)	Not started	HRSA Rural Health Network Planning Grant or Rural Hospital Planning Grant (for studying new facility viability); USDA Emergency Rural Healthcare Program (funds telemedicine and urgent care pilot projects – ARPA-funded program); HHS Indian Health Service – Health Care Facilities Feasibility funding (if available for planning new service units); Economic Development Administration (EDA) – if the facility is tied to job creation (health sector) EDA grants could assist planning/construction	University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC) – technical assistance or assessment support; Avera Health telehealth division (advice on small rural ER partnerships); Nebraska Office of Rural Health (state-level insights on licensing and rural hospital viability); Regional hospitals (e.g. Yankton or Sioux City hospitals for referral patterns data)
	Expand telehealth and mobile clinic services	Health Dept. (IT & Clinical teams)	ST (implement in 2026)	~\$50k (telehealth equipment)	Grant submitted (telehealth project)	USDA Distance Learning & Telemedicine (DLT) grants (fund telehealth equipment and network expansion); FCC Telehealth Pilot Program (if renewed, funds telehealth technology); IHS Office of Telehealth funding (for telemedicine carts and training); HRSA Mobile Health Solutions grants (for mobile clinic vans or outreach); Tribal Broadband Connectivity (NTIA) – integration with broadband project to ensure connectivity for telehealth	Ponca Tribe Health Dept. (sharing a mobile health unit or lessons learned); Nebraska DHHS Telehealth Network (state-supported network linking rural providers); Avera eCARE or UNMC telehealth programs (to provide specialty telemedicine consults); Local internet provider (ensure priority broadband quality for clinic)
	Enhance tribal health prevention programs (diabetes, MCH, elder care)	Health Dept. (Wellness Program)	ST and ongoing (2025+)	~\$100k/yr (program costs)	Partially ongoing (diabetes program funded)	IHS Special Diabetes Program for Indians (renewed multi-year funding through 2027); HHS Administration for Community Living Title VI grants (Elder Nutrition and Caregiver support – ongoing formula plus competitive dementia care grants); HRSA Maternal & Child Health (MCH) mini-grants; CDC Good Health and Wellness in Indian Country (supports lifestyle and wellness programs – new 5-year cycle launched 2023); SAMHSA Behavioral Health Integration grant (for integrating mental health/substance abuse into primary care)	Santee Health Center (IHS clinic, to coordinate care); Great Plains Tribal Epidemiology Center (data support for program planning); CDC Tribal Support Unit (technical assistance for wellness initiatives); Nebraska DHHS Chronic Disease and Aging Divisions (for training, immunizations, etc., in collaboration); Local senior center (collaborate on elder exercise or home-visiting programs)
3.2 Combat Substance Abuse & Strengthen Families	Enhance Santee Wellness & Recovery Center (outpatient & plan for future inpatient)	Behavioral Health Dept.	ST (2025 planning); MT (open outpatient by 2026; explore inpatient by 2028)	~\$500k (renovation + 2 staff/yr)	Not started	SAMHSA Tribal Opioid Response (TOR) grants (annual competitive grants for opioid/simulant abuse treatment programs); DOJ Coordinated Tribal Assistance Solicitation (CTAS) – Purpose Area 3 (Justice and Mental Health: funds substance abuse prevention/treatment and Healing to Wellness Courts); IHS Substance Abuse Prevention, Treatment, and Aftercare (SAPTA) funding (if available through IHS for tribes); Future: USDA Community Facilities (for building renovation if moving to inpatient)	Omaha Tribe Healing Center (referral partnership for intensive treatment); Local behavioral health providers (region mental health services for staff training or client referrals); Regional Behavioral Health Authority (Region 4) – Nebraska’s regional behavioral health system (coordination of state-funded services to tribe); Great Plains Area Tribal Chairmen’s Health Board – Tribal Opioid Technical Assistance (TA and training)
	Implement enhanced youth prevention programs (in school, Youth Center)	Education Dept. + Youth Center	ST (2025-2026 curriculum launch); ongoing	~\$50k/yr (staff, materials)	Not started (some awareness programs exist)	SAMHSA Native Connections grant (funds tribal youth substance abuse prevention, mental health promotion); DOJ Tribal Youth Program grants (supports prevention activities, cultural approaches for at-risk youth); NIH or CDC Native youth resilience grants (e.g. Ichihūka project or similar – research-based programs for building resilience); Boys & Girls Clubs of America – if a club is re-established, access to BGCA funding streams for programs	Santee Community School (integrate curriculum-based prevention); Boys & Girls Club (national organization, if affiliated, for program models); Tribal elders and cultural mentors (to incorporate traditional teachings in prevention); Knox County Juvenile Services (coordinate on any court-referred youth for prevention programming)
	Expand social supports (counselor training, family support groups, drug court coordination)	Social Services Dept. + Tribal Court	ST (train counselors 2025-26; start support groups by 2025-2026); ongoing	~\$100k (training + 1 FTE counselor)	Not started (identifying candidates)	BIA Indian Alcohol & Substance Abuse Program (IASAP funding, if available, for law enforcement/social service coordination); SAMHSA Treatment Enhancement grants (to integrate behavioral health with primary care or wraparound services); DOJ Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) funds for Children/Family Services (support groups for families affected by substance use); DOJ Adult Drug Court Discretionary Grant – Tribal Healing to Wellness Court funding (supports court coordination with treatment)	Tribal Court Judge & Prosecutor (on Healing to Wellness Court development); Nearby treatment centers (for patient referrals when residential treatment is needed); Nebraska State Patrol & County Sheriff (collaborate on enforcement referral to treatment vs. incarceration); Tribal elders or faith-based groups (help lead family support talking circles)
3.3 Promote Active Lifestyles & Community Wellness	Expand Wellness Center (gym, indoor recreation facility)	Community Services Dept.	MT (2027 design; 2028 build)	(included in community center cost – see Goal 1)	Not started (combined with community center plan)	(See Goal 1 Community Center – multipurpose facility includes wellness center)	(See Goal 1 partners; project will leverage the same partnerships)
	Develop walking trail and outdoor recreation areas	Parks & Recreation Committee	ST (2025 trail plan; build in 2026)	~\$100k (trail + park equipment)	Not started	National Park Service Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) program – provides technical help (staff experts) for community trail planning; FHWA Transportation Alternatives (via NDOT, for trail construction funding); Federal Recreational Trails Program (administered by Nebraska Game & Parks, grants for trail development); Land & Water Conservation Fund state grants (Nebraska Game & Parks pass-through for outdoor recreation projects); AARP Community Challenge grants (small grants for age-friendly walking paths/equipment)	Knox County (trail easements on county or trust land); Missouri River Natural Resources District (outdoor rec support, tree planting along trails); Nebraska Game & Parks Commission (guidance and possibly joint projects if near state recreation areas); National Park Service – Missouri National Recreational River staff (technical aid, promotion of trails as part of river recreation); Tribal Youth Conservation Corps (engage youth in trail building)
	Expand Youth Center programs (sports, after-school activities)	Youth Center Director	ST (scale up programs in 2025); ongoing	~\$50k/yr (staff, equipment)	Ongoing (limited activities currently)	DOJ Delinquency Prevention grants (support tribal after-school and mentorship programs); Boys & Girls Club of America funding (if the Youth Center affiliates as a Club, access to BGCA program funding streams); Private foundations (e.g. N7 Fund for youth sports equipment, local community foundations for youth programs)	Santee School (coordinate use of gym, schedules); Local volunteers (coaches, mentors); Nebraska Commission on Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice – Juvenile Services division (state funding that could support tribal youth programs via county collaboration); Regional non-profits (e.g. YMCA of Sioux City, if willing to provide program models or joint events)
	Launch annual health fair & fitness events	Health Dept. + Diabetes Program	ST (2025-2026 first events; then annual)	~\$5k/event (supplies, incentives)	Not started (planning stage)	IHS Health Promotion/Disease Prevention funds (for community wellness events); CDC Tribal Practices for Wellness grant (supports culturally-informed health events, e.g. powwow runs, traditional games); Local healthcare sponsors (tribal clinic, regional hospitals might sponsor booths or screenings); Small grants from American Heart Association or American Diabetes Association (for community health fairs)	Tribal Council and leaders (to champion and attend events); Local IHS clinic staff (set up screening booths, flu shot clinic); Great Plains Health Administration (could bring a mobile screening van to the fair); Community organizations (e.g. schools for hosting, tribal college nursing program for volunteers)
	Elder activity program (gardening, outings, exercise for elders)	Elder Services Department	ST (initiate in 2025-2026); ongoing	~\$10k/yr (transportation, supplies)	Not started	HHS Administration for Community Living Title VI grants (Elder Nutrition & Caregiver Support – can be used to fund social/activity programs for elders); AARP Community Challenge grants (fund small projects that engage seniors in the community – e.g. community gardens, park benches); CDC falls prevention grant (via state or tribal injury prevention funding) – to support elder exercise classes; First Nations Development Institute – Supporting Elder Engagement mini-grants (occasional funding for intergenerational activities)	Elder Advisory Board (provides input on preferred activities); Title VI Elders Meal Program (coordinate transportation to activities around meal schedules); Local Senior Center or Area Agency on Aging (for joint outings or resources); Tribal Youth Program (partner to have youth help in elder garden or tech help classes, fostering intergenerational ties)

Goal 3

3.4							(occasional funding for intergenerational activities)
Environmental Stewardship	Erosion control & reforestation project (riverbank, ravines)	Environmental Dept.	ST (2025 plan); MT (2026 implement pilot)	~\$200k (for pilot project on key areas)	Not started (Hazard Mitigation Plan identifies need)	EPA Clean Water Act Section 319 grants (tribal nonpoint source pollution funding for erosion control planting, streambank stabilization); NRCS PL-566 Small Watershed Program (provides financial/technical help for watershed protection projects); BIA Tribal Resilience Program (grants for climate adaptation – could fund planning of erosion mitigation in face of flooding); FEMA Hazard Mitigation (if erosion threatens structures or roads, could fund mitigation project); Arbor Day Foundation or Nebraska Forest Service grants (for reforestation/tree planting efforts in riparian areas)	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (advice or potential support if project aligns with Missouri River bank stabilization); NRCS engineers (technical support for terraces, plantings); Community volunteers (tribal youth and families for tree planting days); Nebraska Department of Water, Energy and Environment (coordination if project impacts state waters downstream)
	Enhance recycling program (drop-off center on reservation)	Environmental Dept.	MT (center operational by 2027)	~\$50k (bins, hauling trailer/truck)	Not started	EPA General Assistance Program (GAP) grants (flexible tribal environmental funding – can be used to start recycling initiatives); USDA Solid Waste Management grants (rural funds for improving solid waste disposal and reducing waste); Nebraska Dept. of Environment & Energy – Litter Reduction & Recycling Grant (state program offering grants to communities to establish recycling and education) – tribes are eligible via interlocal or nonprofit partnerships; Keep America Beautiful/Coca-Cola grants (donation of recycling bins for community programs)	Knox County Waste Department (coordinate waste hauling or bin placement); Nearby city’s recycling facility (for accepting collected materials or advising on operations); Keep Nebraska Beautiful affiliate (Nebraska Recycling Council or similar, for technical assistance); Local schools (engage students in recycling drives to kick-start usage)
	Energy efficiency initiative (retrofit buildings, upgrade vehicle fleet)	Planning Dept. + Facilities Mgmt.	ST (2025-2026 energy audit; upgrades through 2030)	~\$200k (for multiple building retrofits)	Not started (seeking energy audit)	DOE Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) – newly reauthorized via IIJA, provides formula grants to tribes for energy audits, building retrofits, etc. (DOE announced tribal EECBG allocations in 2023); USDA REDL&G (Rural Economic Development Loan & Grant through local utilities – could fund energy efficiency projects via NPPD); EPA Diesel Emissions Reduction Act (DERA) grants (for replacing older vehicles with more efficient/clean models – tribal set-aside each year); Utility rebates from Nebraska Public Power District (NPPD EnergyWise incentives for HVAC, lighting, etc.); DOE Office of Indian Energy grants (for comprehensive tribal energy plans including efficiency and renewables)	Nebraska Public Power District (local electric utility – partner on audits, rebate programs); Energy Service Company (ESCO) or NREL technical team (to conduct energy audits and performance contracting); Nebraska Department of Water, Energy and Environment – State Energy Office (state technical aid and potential funding for energy projects); Other tribes’ energy programs (share best practices on retrofits, electric fleet adoption)
THPO cultural site protection protocol (improve procedures)	Tribal Historic Preservation Office (THPO)	ST (2025-2026 finalize protocol, ongoing reviews)	Minimal cost (staff time)	Ongoing (case-by-case reviews happening)	NPS Tribal Heritage Grant (Historic Preservation Fund grant for tribes to survey, map, and protect cultural sites); State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) sub-grants (some states pass through small Historic Preservation Fund grants to tribes for cooperative projects); National Trust for Historic Preservation funds (e.g. Preservation Fund grants for planning or training); Native American Graves Protection & Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) grants (if protocol includes NAGPRA implementation)	Nebraska State Historic Preservation Office (technical support, data sharing on sites); Tribal elders and culture bearers (site knowledge and guidance); Nearby tribes’ THPOs (coordination on shared heritage areas); National Park Service experts (advice on best practices for site monitoring)	
Pursue Tribal protected area (feasibility of a Tribal Park)	Tribal Council Land Committee	MT (2027 feasibility study)	~\$30k (study)	Not started	NPS Tribal Heritage grants (for planning studies involving cultural/natural preservation); The Conservation Fund small grants (for Native land conservation initiatives); U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Tribal Wildlife Grants (for habitat conservation planning on tribal lands); Private conservation philanthropy (e.g. Walton Family Foundation or Nature Conservancy partnerships for tribal conservation)	U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and NPS (advice on establishing and managing protected areas); Trust for Public Land (expertise in land acquisition for parks); Nebraska Game & Parks (if collaboration on wildlife management or tourism potential); Neighboring landowners (if land acquisition or co-management is involved)	

Goal 4

Strategic Goal 4 - Expand Business, Tourism & Workforce Development

Objective / Initiative	Lead Party	Timeline	Estimated Cost	Status (2025)	Potential Funding Sources	Key Partners	
4.1 Support Entrepreneurship & Small Business	Establish Tribal CDFI and create Isanti CDC 501c3 (South Dakota and Nebraska) (loan fund & technical assistance services)	Economic Dev. Dept. / new CDFI Board	ST (2025 planning; 2026 launch)	~\$500k initial capital; ~\$100k/yr operating	Not started (charter drafted)	U.S. Treasury CDFI Fund – Technical Assistance (TA) grant for start-up planning, and Financial Assistance (FA) grant for capitalization; SBA Community Advantage loan program (in partnership with a bank until CDFI is SBA-certified); State Small Business Credit Initiative (SSBCI); USDA Rural Business Development Grants (for building CDFI's technical assistance capacity for entrepreneurs)	Oweesta Corp. and Native CDFI Network (for mentorship in launching and certifying the CDFI); Local banks (referral partnerships, participation loans); Nebraska Business Development Center (SBDC) (to collaborate on trainings for borrowers); Neighboring tribal CDFIs (e.g. Winnebago's Ho-Chunk Community Capital) for sharing policies and potential loan participation
	Open business incubator/commercial space	Economic Dev. Dept. + Planning Dept.	MT (open by 2027)	~\$1 million (renovation & equipment)	Not started	EDA Public Works or Indigenous Communities grant (for renovating a facility into an incubator, equipment, etc.); USDA RBDG (to fund incubator setup and entrepreneurial training programs); Nebraska Department of Economic Development CDBG – Economic Development category (state Community Development Block Grant funds, via Knox County or regional entity, to rehab a building for business use); Nebraska Business Innovation Act grants (state grants for business incubators/innovation hubs – if tech-focused entrepreneurs are served)	Northeast Nebraska Economic Development District (NENED – technical assistance for grant and incubator planning); Nebraska Business Development Center – NBDC state office is located at the University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO)Santee is served by the Wayne State College office location; NICC (college can offer small business classes or student entrepreneurs); Local chambers or development corps in the region (for mentor networks)
	Update tribal business code (streamline permits, add incentives)	Tribal Council (Economic Dev. Committee)	ST (2025 code revision)	Minimal (legal review costs)	In progress (draft ordinance in review)	N/A (policy action; primarily staff/legal time) – Possible TA providers: SBA Office of Native American Affairs (provides technical assistance on business code development); First Nations Development Institute (occasional funding or legal TA for tribal economic policy)	Legal advisor (e.g. University of Nebraska Indigenous Law program or Native American Rights Fund for model code input); Tribal business owners (provide input on needed changes); Nebraska Indian Affairs Commission (facilitate introductions to state programs that could align with code incentives); Nearby tribes' economic development offices (share their business code frameworks)
4.2 Develop Tourism & Visitor Attractions	Build Santee Cultural Center & Museum	Culture Dept. / Museum Task Force	MT (2026 design; open by 2028)	~\$2.5 million	Not started (concept phase)	Administration for Native Americans (ANA) Facilities Grant (for tribal cultural facilities); EDA Tourism grant (if available in future rounds, for developing tourism infrastructure); Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) – Native American/Native Hawaiian Museum Services grants (for planning exhibits, collections management, and museum programming) – Note: IMLS has an ongoing program dedicated to tribal museums; Nebraska Humanities Council grants (exhibit planning and storytelling); USDA Community Facilities (possible loan for construction if other funds secured); Civic and Community Center Financing Fund (CCCCF) and Community Development Block Grant	Nebraska State Historical Society (consultation on curation, potential artifact loans); Museum professionals (e.g. UNL anthropology or local museum consultants for exhibit design); Adjacent tribes (partner on regional draw, rotating exhibits of shared history); American Alliance of Museums – Indigenous Peoples Museum Network (for best practices and mentorship); Nebraska Department of Economic Development
	Enhance Marina/RV Park (add cabins, improve facilities)	Parks & Rec Dept. / Tribal Enterprise Board	ST (2025 add cabins; 2026 utilities upgrades)	~\$500k (5 cabins + upgrades)	Planned (seeking funds)	USDA Rural Development Community Facilities or Business & Industry (B&I) Loan Guarantee (for recreation facility improvements – e.g. cabins, amenity upgrades); EDA Tourism or economic adjustment grants (if job creation from expanded recreation site); Nebraska Tourism "Attraction Development" Grant (state grant for new tourism attractions like cabins, with matching requirement); U.S. Bureau of Reclamation or NPS grants (if on federal land lease, possibly support recreational improvements); Financing: New Markets Tax Credit financing (could be pursued through a CDE to help fund cabins/lodging – as done in some tribal tourism projects)	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (landowner of lake shoreline – ensure lease/permits for expansions); Tribal Tourism Dept. (marketing support to increase visitors); Nebraska Game & Parks Commission (if coordinating with nearby state recreation areas or fishing access); Local contractors (construction of cabins and utilities)
	Develop hiking trails & outdoor recreation amenities	Parks & Recreation Committee	ST (2025 trail design; 2026 construction)	(cost included under Goal 3 trail project)	Not started	(See Goal 3.3 "walking trail" – funding sources overlap.) Additionally: Federal Recreational Trails Program (via Nebraska Game & Parks – supports trail construction); NPS Lewis & Clark National Historic Trail Challenge Cost Share (small grants for interpretation or trail links along the historic trail corridor); NDOT Transportation Alternatives (for trail linking community to attractions)	(See Goal 3.3 trail partners.) Missouri NRR National Park (could help with interpretive signage if trails highlight river history); Tribal Youth Corps (trail construction labor/training)
	Expand annual Powwow & create new events ("Santee Days" festival)	Culture Dept. + Tourism Dept.	ST (2026 expanded powwow; 2026 new event launch)	~\$20k/yr (event costs)	Ongoing (powwow is annual)	Nebraska Tourism Commission marketing grants (to promote the powwow and new cultural festival); NE Arts Council or NE Humanities mini-grants (for cultural event programming, artists, storytellers); National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) "Our Town" or Challenge America grants (support arts and cultural events in communities); Tribal enterprise/casino sponsorships (continue to allocate a portion of revenue to sponsor community events)	Powwow Committee (local planning); Regional Chamber of Commerce (joint promotion to draw visitors); Nebraska Arts Council (could provide performers or publicity through state arts networks); Nearby towns/County (coordinate on scheduling to avoid conflicts, maybe co-host certain Santee Days events to draw wider crowd)
	Tourism marketing campaign (website, signage, advertising)	Tourism Department	ST (2025 develop materials; then ongoing)	~\$50k initial; ~\$10k/yr upkeep	Not started	Nebraska Tourism Commission Marketing Grant (funds development of websites, brochures, signage for attractions); DOI/BIA Tribal Tourism Grant Program (new program supporting tribal tourism development and marketing – could fund the "Visit Santee" campaign materials); USDA RBDG (for tourism marketing as part of rural business development); In-kind: Google Ad Grants for nonprofits (free advertising credit if tourism is run under a nonprofit arm)	Nebraska Tourism Division (state will feature Santee in statewide tourism guides); Lewis & Clark Scenic Byway organization (include Santee sites on byway maps and signage); AIANTA (American Indian Alaska Native Tourism Assoc.) – provide training, include Santee on NativeAmerica.travel site; Local media and travel bloggers (to boost promotional reach once campaign launches); Knox County
4.3 Expand Tribal Enterprises & Joint Ventures	Maximize profits at casino through analysis of existing operations and enhancements in marketing, database management, and gaming floor product review	Gaming Enterprise Board	ST (2025) ongoing technical support	~\$30k upfront analysis; ~\$100k (annual ongoing technical support)	Not started	N/A (primarily regulatory and enterprise-funded) – Implementation will be financed by casino operations or vendor financing for new gaming equipment.	Gaming consultants (market analysis and gaming floor design)
	Analysis of existing operation and feasibility of expanding to Class 3 gaming and expanding casino amenities (RV park, meeting space, hotel expansion)	Gaming Enterprise Management	ST (2025) Feasibility Analysis; MT (2026-27 construction)	~\$50k Feasibility Analysis	Planned (concept drawn)	Self-financed by casino profits or bank loans (primary route for revenue-generating amenities); USDA Community Facilities loans (possible for motel if framed as community asset for tourism); USDA B&I Loan Guarantee (support bank financing of an on-site motel or major RV park expansion); New Markets Tax Credits (work with a Community Development Entity to attract NMTC allocation for significant construction – yields ~20% subsidy via tax credit equity)	Local contractors (for construction of pads or structures); Travois New Markets (CDEs experienced in tribal NMTC financing); Regional tourism bureaus (to help market new facilities to travelers)
	Establish new subsidiaries under Isanti LLC	Isanti LLC, Gaming Enterprise Management, Econ Dev	ST (2025-2026) Business Plan Development MT (25-27) Business Start-up	In house	Initial Planning Started	Internal Funding; Financing	Business Partners; Technical Assistance Providers; Investors
	Expansion and Enhancement of existing C-Stores Feasibility Analysis	Isanti LLC, Gaming Enterprise Management, Econ Dev	ST (2025) Feasibility Analysis MT (2026 Construction Implementation)	~\$75k Feasibility Analysis	Not Started	New Market Tax Credits; Financing	Consultants, Gaming, Legal Counsel
	Tribal cannabis enterprise (if legalized by Tribe/State)	Economic Dev. Dept. / Cannabis Board (to be formed)	ST Feasibility Analysis MT (2026-27 planning/regulation); LT (open by 2027)	~\$50k Feasibility Analysis ~\$1 million (grow operation + dispensary setup)	On hold (legal status uncertain)	Primarily tribal investment or private partners, since federal funds cannot be used for cannabis businesses while federally illegal. The Tribe may seek a Joint Venture with an experienced private operator to provide capital and expertise in exchange for revenue share. Note: Hemp-related aspects could use USDA funds (as above in 2.3), but medical/recreational cannabis will rely on self-funding or investors.	Legal counsel (to draft tribal regulatory code and negotiate compacts if state law requires); Tribes in legal-cannabis states (for operational mentorship); Nebraska Legislature/NCIA (advocacy if state law changes needed – Nebraska Indian Affairs Commission can help voice tribal position); Potential private sector partners (dispensary chains or cultivation companies, once legal context allows)
	Renewable energy enterprise (1-2 MW solar farm on reservation)	Economic Dev. Dept. / Utility Authority	MT (2025 feasibility; build by 2028)	~\$3-4 million (for ~1.5 MW capacity)	Not started (need feasibility study)	DOE Office of Indian Energy grants (can cover up to 100% of tribal renewable project costs in some cases – BIL and IRA infused new funds for tribal clean energy); Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) direct-pay clean energy tax credits (30% Investment Tax Credit paid as cash to tribes for solar projects); BIA Energy & Mineral Development Program (EMDP) grants (for feasibility study and planning of energy projects); USDA Rural Energy Program for America Program (REAP) grants (if partnering with a tribal business or utility for smaller renewable installations); Tribal Energy Loan Guarantee Program (TELGSP) (DOE loan guarantees for larger projects, newly expanded by IRA).	Nebraska Public Power District (potential Power Purchase Agreement off-taker for solar power); Solar project developer/EPC contractor (for design-build and possibly co-financing); NREL (National Renewable Energy Lab) – technical assistance on project sizing and storage options; BIA Office of Indian Energy & Economic Development (support navigating regulatory approvals for tribal utility projects)

Goal 4

4.4 Invest in Workforce Development & Education	Vocational training programs (construction trades, health, etc.)	Education Dept. + NICC (college)	ST (2025 launch construction training); ongoing cohorts	~\$150k/yr (instructors, equipment)	Planned (NICC welding program starting)	U.S. DOL Indian Employment & Training Program (WIOA Section 166) – ongoing funding for tribes to provide job training and employment services; State of Nebraska Worker Training Program (grants for workforce projects, possibly accessible via partnerships for Santee-specific training if state includes tribes); NACTEP – Native American Career and Technical Education Program (U.S. Dept. of Education grants to tribal colleges for vocational training – NICC could apply to expand trades training); Trade unions’ apprenticeship support (in-kind instructor time or curriculum for construction trades);	NICC (developing curriculum, e.g. welding program already planned); Santee Community School (introduce CTE programs for high schoolers, pipeline into NICC); Trade Unions (e.g. local Laborers, Carpenters unions – help establish apprenticeships); Nebraska Department of Labor (Job Center can assist with recruitment, possibly provide WIOA or State grant funding)
	Apprenticeship placements (carpentry, electrical, etc.)	Employment Assistance Program (TERO)(Creation and Expansion)	ST (Identify apprentices in 2025); ongoing	Minimal direct cost (staff coordination)	Not started (to begin after training programs launch)	DOL YouthBuild grants (if Santee sponsors a YouthBuild program, combines education with construction apprenticeships for young adults); DOL or State Apprenticeship Expansion grants (Nebraska Department of Labor often has U.S. DOL funds to expand registered apprenticeships, which could include tribal partnerships); Employer wage subsidy programs – e.g. TANF or WIOA On-the-Job Training funds (to reimburse a portion of apprentice wages)	Local construction contractors (agree to take on apprentices); Habitat for Humanity (as a project site where apprentices can get practical experience building homes); Nebraska Dept. of Labor – Office of Apprenticeship (help register programs and link to state incentives); Trade unions (for placing Santee participants into union apprenticeship programs after pre-training)
	Expand higher ed scholarships & internships	Education Dept. (Scholarship Office)	ST (budget increase in 2025-2026); ongoing	~\$50k/yr for scholarships (to total ~\$150k/yr)	Ongoing (need additional funding)	BIA Higher Education Grant (ongoing base funding for college students); Tribal revenue allocation (commit a portion of new enterprise revenues to scholarships/internships); American Indian College Fund scholarships (national program that many Santee students already access); AIHEC partnerships – e.g. STEM scholarships through tribal colleges or NSF grants (NICC could funnel STEM funds to student stipends); Internships: ANA SEDS grant (could fund a structured tribal internship program), and BIA Pathways Program (places students in internships leading to fed jobs)	AIHEC member colleges (NICC and others for scholarship opportunities); Internship host organizations – tribal departments, Ho-Chunk Inc. or other Native businesses (to provide positions); Nebraska Indian Affairs Commission (they facilitate a state government internship for Native students that Santee youth could utilize); Local employers (build MOUs to take interns and possibly hire after graduation)
	Strengthen job placement services (résumé help, job fairs)	Employment Assistance Office (TERO)(Creation and Expansion)	ST (2025-2026 set up enhanced office); ongoing	~\$80k/yr (1-2 staff)	Not started (grant pending for staffing)	BIA Job Placement & Training Program (funds job counseling, placement, some direct employment assistance); HHS TANF program funds (if the Tribe administers TANF, can use for work readiness activities); Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation grant (if applied for, would support counseling and placement for Natives with disabilities); DOL Reentry or dislocated worker grants (if specific populations need help, though would likely go through state or regional providers)	Nebraska Department of Labor NERworks (state job service listings and career center support); Regional employers (MOUs to notify tribe of openings, consider Santee applicants); Tribal enterprises (commitment to utilize tribal placement office for hiring needs); Southeast Community College or other workforce programs (coordinate referrals for any short-term trainings needed for placements)
	Track employment outcomes (job database, follow-up system)	Employment Assistance Program (TERO)(Creation and Expansion)	ST (2025-2026 develop tracking system); ongoing	Minimal (could use Excel or simple database)	Not started	(Covered by above program funds – primarily a low-cost initiative using internal resources). If software purchase is needed, could use a portion of an EDA Technical Assistance grant or HUD administration funds from related grants.	Tribal IT Dept. (help set up database); Tribal HR Department (share internal job placement stats); NENEDD or DED (the regional or state economic development entities may have labor market data tools to share); Other tribes’ TERO offices (to benchmark outcome tracking practices)

Goal 5

Strategic Goal 5 - Strengthen Governance & Resilience

Objective / Initiative	Lead Party	Timeline	Estimated Cost	Status (2025)	Potential Funding Sources	Key Partners	
5.1 Enhance Tribal Administration & Capacity	Form CEDS Implementation Committee (quarterly meetings)	Tribal Council (appoint members)	ST (Q4 2025 first meeting)	~\$40k/yr	Not started (to form after CEDS approval)	EDA Partnership Planning grant (the Tribe can utilize a portion of any EDA planning funds or seek EDA implementation support grants if offered); Tribal general funds (small stipend and meeting costs – likely the primary source); Note: The committee's work fulfills EDA requirements for plan implementation monitoring.	All tribal department heads; Community representatives (youth, elders on the committee); Nebraska Indian Affairs Commission (could be invited ex-officio to help align state resources); NENEDD (regional planning representative participating to advise on resources)
	Staff training (grant writing, project management, finance)	Human Resources Dept. (Training Officer)	ST (2025 develop training plan); ongoing through 2030	~\$50k/yr (workshops, travel)	Not started (training needs survey done)	BIA Tribal Management Grant (for building administrative capacity – can fund training for finance, grants management); ANA Institute for Tribal Program Management or other ANA TTA (Administration for Native Americans often provides or funds training and technical assistance for tribal staff); HUD Native Housing Professional Development funds (NAIHC offers trainings for housing staff that Tribe can leverage); Scholarships for tribal professionals (e.g. Falmouth Institute or NAIHC training scholarships)	National American Indian Housing Council (NAIHC) – provides finance/grant management training for tribal staff; Falmouth Institute (training provider for Indian Country); Local colleges (offer accounting or management courses for staff); Nebraska Commission on Indian Affairs (can coordinate inter-tribal trainings within Nebraska)
	Upgrade data/project management systems (for tracking CEDS progress)	IT Dept. + Planning Dept.	ST (2025 select system); MT (2026 operational)	~\$50k (software & training)	Not started	EDA Local Technical Assistance grant (could fund procurement of planning/project tracking software); HUD Systems Enhancement funds for Tribally Designated Housing Entities (if housing software is part of upgrade); DOI Technical Assistance (if any, via self-governance funding flexibility to purchase management software); In-kind: Open-source solutions (low-cost databases)	Software vendor (to customize tribal project tracking); Other tribes' planning offices (share best practices on data tracking); Great Plains Tribal Chairman's Association (if any regional data system initiatives the tribe can join); Tribal Council (ensure use of system for reporting to leadership)
	Strengthen external partnerships (NENEDD, state, federal)	Planning Dept. Director	ST and ongoing (quarterly outreach)	Minimal (travel costs for meetings)	Ongoing (participating in NENEDD)	N/A (coordination activity – mostly travel and outreach). The Tribe may use EDA planning/administrative funds for travel to partner meetings, or I/A (Indian Trade & Commerce) funds if available for intergovernmental collaboration.	Northeast Nebraska Economic Development District (regional planning liaison); Knox County Board (county-level collaboration); Federal agency liaisons (EDA, USDA Rural Development, BIA, etc. – maintain regular check-ins); Nebraska Commission on Indian Affairs (state-level partnership facilitator for economic and community development initiatives)
5.2 Financial Management & Sustainability	Establish Emergency Reserve Fund (policy & annual deposits)	Tribal Treasurer & Council	ST (Policy in FY2025); buildup through 2030	Target 6 months operating cost by 2030 saved	Not started (policy drafted)	N/A – this is an internal fiscal policy (set aside portions of enterprise profits, windfalls like ARPA funds, etc.). The Tribe may use any surplus (e.g. a good casino year or lease income) or one-time funds to seed the reserve. Trend: Many tribes post-COVID are prioritizing "rainy day" funds for resilience.	Finance Committee (to draft policy); Enterprise Boards (agree on profit transfer percentages); Investment advisors (to safely invest reserve funds for growth).
	Diversify revenue streams (implement new enterprises per Goal 4)	Economic Development Dept.	MT (by 2027 achieve more balanced revenue mix)	(captured in Goal 4 project costs)	In progress (gaming dominates now)	N/A (outcome of projects in Goal 4 – no separate funding, more a strategic effort). Emphasis that each new enterprise (ag, tourism, cannabis, etc.) will contribute to a more balanced revenue base by 2027.	Gaming, Agriculture, Tourism enterprise boards (coordinate diversification efforts); Tribal Council (to support policy that reinvests some enterprise profit into new ventures); Possibly external joint venture partners (to jump-start new revenue sectors).
	Sustainability plans for grant-funded projects (O&M budgets)	Each Dept. (project leads)	ST (2025 – each new grant proposal includes O&M plan)	Minimal (planning task)	Ongoing (new practice in grant planning)	N/A (part of internal planning – incorporate O&M into each grant proposal). Trend: Federal agencies (EDA, USDA, etc.) now stress long-term operations/maintenance planning in grant applications.	Finance Dept. (help include O&M in budgets); Grant writers (ensure proposals have realistic post-grant plans); Tribal Council (commit to support successful projects beyond grant period if needed).
	Improve financial transparency (annual CEDS budget report to community)	Finance Dept. + CEDS Impl. Committee	ST (2025 first report); then annually	Minimal (report prep time)	Not started	N/A (uses internal capacity – primarily staff time to compile reports). Transparent reporting will sustain community support and meet EDA's performance reporting expectations.	Tribal Council (to disseminate report, host Q&A at General Council); Community members (feedback to improve accountability); Auditors or finance consultants (could assist in presenting data clearly if needed).
5.3 Build Resilience & Emergency Preparedness	Develop Economic Resilience Plan (risk scenarios, continuity)	CEDS Implementation Committee (subgroup)	ST (2025 plan creation; update annually)	Minimal (staff time)	Not started	EDA requirement – likely covered under EDA planning/TA funds (the 2025 CEDS already requires a resilience component); Could seek EDA Technical Assistance grant specifically for developing a detailed resilience or recovery plan. Additionally, DHS/FEMA preparedness grants might fund related continuity planning.	Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC – coordinate with county LEPC); SBA (resources on business continuity for local businesses); Tribal enterprises (ensure their emergency plans feed into overall economic resilience plan); Regional resilience coalitions (e.g. multi-county economic development districts focusing on disaster prep).
	Create Emergency Ops Center (designate space & equip)	Emergency Management Coordinator	ST (2025 set up basic EOC)	~\$20k (communications gear, generator)	Not started	FEMA Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG) – tribes can get a share through state to support EOC equipment and operations; DHS Tribal Homeland Security Grant Program (competitive, can fund EOC communications gear); USDA Community Facilities (for EOC equipment or building renovation, low-interest loan); Tribal funds (if repurposing an existing building, minimal cost)	County Emergency Management & Nebraska Emergency Management Agency (to integrate tribal EOC with county EOC plans); State Homeland Security Office (for communications interoperability support); Local first responders (police, fire – to coordinate use of EOC in joint incidents)
	Annual emergency drills (flood, fire, etc. exercises)	Emergency Mgmt., Police & Fire Depts.	ST (start drills in 2025, then yearly)	~\$5k/drill (logistics, supplies)	Not started (tabletop held in 2024)	FEMA Tribal Homeland Security grant (can fund planning and execution of exercises); BIA Emergency Management funds (if available for tribal preparedness); American Red Cross and tribal insurance providers (sometimes provide small funding or equipment for community drills).	Knox County EM; local volunteer Fire Departments; Red Cross (invite as observers/participants for mass care drills); Nebraska State Fire Marshal Training Division (could assist with exercise design for fire scenarios); Neighboring tribes' EM teams (do joint drills for mutual aid).
	Update Hazard Mitigation & Disaster Response Plans	Emergency Mgmt. Dept. + Planning	ST (2025–26 update HMP); then every 5 yrs	~\$40k (covered by grant)	In progress (County HMP update 2024)	FEMA Hazard Mitigation Planning grant (already in progress via county multi-jurisdiction plan); FEMA BRIC or HMGP Post-Disaster funds (if available, can cover plan updates beyond 5-year cycle); Potential DHS Tribal Homeland Security grant (allows funding for planning as well).	County & State Emergency Management (for inclusion in regional plan); Mitigation plan consultant (to write the plan update); Tribal Council and community (provide input on priorities and approve the final plan).
	Mutual aid agreements (fire, law enforcement, health services)	Tribal Police & EMS; Tribal Council	ST (MOUs by 2025); ongoing joint drills	Minimal (legal work)	Some exist (fire)	N/A (legal coordination – minimal cost). The process may use existing staff and legal counsel time.	Village of Niobrara and Knox County Sheriff (for law enforcement MOU); Local rural fire districts (fire suppression aid); Neighboring tribes' EMS/police (cross-deputation or mutual aid agreements); Indian Health Service and nearby hospitals (patient transfer agreements for medical emergencies).
	Regional resilience initiatives participation	Emergency Mgmt. Dept. + Tribal Council	MT (by 2026 join regional coalition)	Minimal (travel)	Not started	Possible DOE or USDA regional resilience pilot funding (if a multi-jurisdiction project in Northeast Nebraska emerges); Otherwise, minimal travel costs covered by existing budgets or FEMA preparedness grants.	Omaha Tribe & Winnebago Tribe (coordinate on regional resilience, share resources); Nebraska State Emergency Management (include tribe in state resilience initiatives); FEMA Region VII (facilitates regional tribal emergency collaboration).

Notes: The estimated costs above are rough order-of-magnitude and will be refined in project-specific grant applications or plans. “Lead Party” indicates the tribal department or entity with primary responsibility; many initiatives involve multiple departments (only key leads are listed here). Partners include external agencies or organizations that will be consulted or collaborating. Funding sources listed are potential options – actual funding will be pursued based on availability and fit, and many projects will blend multiple funding sources (grants, tribal funds, loans, etc.). The CEDS Implementation Committee will use this matrix to monitor progress: each quarter they will update the “Status” (e.g., moving a project from Planned to In Progress or to Completed) and note key developments (for example, “Grant X awarded for this initiative in Q2 2025”).

This Implementation Matrix is designed to be a dynamic management tool. It provides a snapshot for the EDA and stakeholders of how the Santee Sioux Nation will go from strategy to action. The matrix will be kept up-to-date to reflect the evolving journey of CEDS execution from 2025 through 2030.

Conclusion

The Santee Sioux Nation CEDS 2025–2030 is more than a document – it is a mandate for action shaped by the voices of our people. Through an unprecedented community-driven planning process, including an 801-person survey, visioning sessions, and extensive stakeholder engagement, this strategy reflects a truly community-owned vision for our economic future. In alignment with U.S. EDA guidelines, the CEDS has been developed with broad participation and local leadership at its core. This inclusive approach has built strong momentum and unity: the plan carries the weight of our collective aspirations and the confidence that it truly belongs to the community that created it.

Five strategic goals now stand as the pillars of our Nation’s path forward. By focusing on Infrastructure & Housing, Agriculture & Food Sovereignty, Health & Environment, Business & Workforce, and Governance & Resilience, we address our most fundamental needs and leverage our greatest strengths. These goals – forged directly from what tribal members identified as priorities – will guide development in a holistic way. Together, they ensure that economic growth goes hand-in-hand with improved well-being, cultural preservation, and environmental stewardship. Each goal is not just an abstract idea but a commitment to tangible progress: better roads and homes, healthy families and lands, new jobs and enterprises, and stronger governance. Grounded in Dakota values and the resilience and sovereignty that have always defined the Santee Sioux Nation, these pillars form a comprehensive framework for implementation. They are ambitious yet achievable, technically sound yet culturally grounded – a balance that gives this plan its strength.

With the planning phase complete, the Tribe is fully prepared to move into implementation and monitoring. A dedicated CEDS Implementation Committee will carry this work forward, coordinating efforts across programs and partners to turn goals into reality. Guided by a robust Evaluation Framework, the committee will track performance measures, report on progress, and adapt strategies as needed. This commitment to ongoing evaluation and adjustment means the

CEDS will remain a living document – continuously aligned with community needs and responsive to changing conditions. Regular monitoring and annual updates will not only keep us on course but also demonstrate accountability and transparency to our people (and meet EDA’s standards for maintaining an active strategy). In short, we are ready to implement, and we have built the oversight structures to ensure that this plan delivers results.

There is a powerful sense of momentum and shared responsibility as we embark on the next chapter. Implementation is not the task of a single department or council alone – it is a shared responsibility of the entire Santee Sioux community. Tribal leadership, program staff, elders, youth, entrepreneurs, and partner organizations all have a role in this journey. The energy and unity that drove the planning process will now fuel action. By working together in the spirit of kinship and mutual accountability, we will turn strategies into real improvements on the ground. Every new house built, every business launched, every acre conserved, and every student trained will be a testament to what we can achieve together. Our Nation moves forward as one, determined to create opportunities and prosperity that benefit everyone.

Finally, as we conclude this CEDS and move into implementation, we reaffirm the core values that anchor our development. As a sovereign Nation, the Santee Sioux exercises its self-determination to shape its own destiny – on our own terms and guided by the wisdom of our ancestors. We will build a resilient economy that can withstand adversity, just as our people have always done. We will do so without compromising who we are: our language, traditions, and sacred connection to the land will remain central in every step we take. In the spirit of the Seven Generations, we undertake this work not only for today but for our children and grandchildren, so that the future generations of Santee Sioux will inherit a homeland of opportunity, dignity, and cultural vibrancy. The journey will not be easy, but our history shows that we are a people of great perseverance and unity. Armed with this strategy and the determination of the Oyate, the Santee Sioux Nation stands united, resilient, and ready – ready to implement our vision, protect our sovereignty, and achieve a future of shared prosperity and well-being for all our people.



Santee Sioux Nation
CEDS Plan
2025

Appendices

Santee Sioux CEDS Committee Meeting #1 Summary – February 18, 2025

Meeting Objectives

The first meeting of the Santee Sioux CEDS Committee convened on February 18, 2025 at the Nebraska Indian Community College (Santee Campus). It aimed to achieve several goals in launching the CEDS process. Specifically, the meeting objectives were to:

1. **Review existing conditions and initial data collection**, establishing a baseline understanding of the Tribe's current demographic and economic situation.
2. **Conduct a visioning exercise** to articulate long-term economic and community development goals for the Tribe.
3. **Conduct a SWOT analysis** to identify the community's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.
4. **Begin developing strategic goals and objectives** that will guide economic growth and support funding pursuits.

Participants

Approximately a dozen committee members and stakeholders attended the meeting. It began with participant introductions and a traditional opening prayer offered by Mr. Maunka Morgan. Attendees represented a broad range of the community, including Santee Sioux tribal council members and staff, economic development officials, local government representatives (such as the mayor of nearby Springfield, SD), Nebraska Indian Community College personnel, and other community members. This diverse participation ensured that multiple perspectives – tribal leadership, education, neighboring municipalities, and the public – were involved in the planning process.

Key Discussions

Existing Conditions Review

A significant portion of the meeting was devoted to reviewing **existing conditions** data and gathering local insights. Participants noted serious concerns about data accuracy, particularly the undercounting of tribal populations in official Census figures. This undercount can directly translate into reduced funding for the Tribe's programs. For example, one discussion highlighted how the Red Lake Nation successfully challenged its Census count and secured an additional \$2 million per year in housing funds, illustrating the potential impact of correcting data inaccuracies. The committee acknowledged the need for alternative data sources and improved local surveys to capture a more accurate picture of community conditions.

The group also discussed current **tribal assets and infrastructure**. Recent broadband investments were identified as a strength and opportunity: the Tribe has erected broadband towers on reservation lands, which could generate revenue through leasing agreements with providers. Plans are underway to expand internet connectivity to benefit local businesses and residents. In the healthcare sector,

participants explored options for greater tribal self-governance – for instance, leveraging Public Law 93-638 to transition the health clinic to Tribal management. By doing so, the Tribe could potentially open specialized services (like dialysis or MRI facilities) to serve non-Native clients as well, creating new revenue streams. Funding sources for such initiatives were discussed, including USDA community facility loans and federal technical assistance.

Housing and land development needs emerged as another focal point. The committee noted a lack of adequate housing on the reservation and identified a prospective site for new development (a mixed-use project along Highway 12). To proceed with this and future housing projects, investment in critical infrastructure (water, sewer, roads) was deemed necessary. Overall, the existing conditions review confirmed many known challenges (from data limitations to infrastructure gaps) while also spotlighting assets like broadband and land resources that can be built upon.

Visioning Exercise

Following the data review, a **visioning exercise** invited attendees to brainstorm the question: “*Where do we want the Tribe to be in 20 years?*”. In this facilitated discussion, participants collectively outlined a long-term **vision** for Santee Sioux economic and community development. Several priority themes emerged from the vision brainstorm:

- **Housing & Infrastructure:** A future with expanded, high-quality housing options and modern infrastructure was a top priority. This included improving broadband internet access community-wide and ensuring clean water supply for all residents. Safe, affordable homes – especially to serve elders and families – were seen as foundational to community well-being.
- **Workforce & Education:** Participants emphasized developing the local workforce through education and job training. In 20 years, the vision is to have more job opportunities on the reservation and a workforce equipped with the skills to fill them. Higher education attainment and vocational training programs (leveraging institutions like the tribal college) are part of this goal.
- **Elders & Youth:** Ensuring a **healthy, safe community** for all generations was a recurring theme. For elders, this means adequate housing (e.g. assisted living facilities) and accessible healthcare, including mental health services. For youth, the vision includes robust engagement through education, recreation, and cultural programs that create hope and reduce problems like substance abuse.
- **Cultural Preservation:** The group stressed the importance of maintaining and strengthening **Lakota/Dakota culture and language** over the coming decades. A successful future was defined as one where traditional knowledge, spiritual practices, and self-sufficiency values are alive and guiding the community’s development.
- **Economic Self-Sufficiency:** A key economic vision is for the Tribe to achieve greater **self-sufficiency**. In practice, this means expanding tribally-owned businesses and enterprises so the Tribe is less dependent on federal funding. Participants cited models of other tribes’ success (for example, the Ho-Chunk Village development was mentioned as an inspiration) and discussed pursuing business ventures that the Tribe can own and profit from directly.

- **Tourism & Marketing:** Many saw sustainable tourism as an opportunity to diversify the economy. The vision includes promoting the Tribe's unique attractions – such as eco-tourism along the Missouri River, the tribe's golf course and hunting areas, and cultural heritage tourism – to attract visitors. This would be supported by improved marketing and possibly hospitality training for the local workforce.
- **Connected & Sustainable Community:** Finally, the vision encompasses being a **connected, sustainable community**. “Connected” refers not only to broadband internet connectivity (enabling telework, online business, and education) but also to improved transportation links. “Sustainable” highlights green initiatives like renewable energy and environmental stewardship, ensuring a healthy environment for future generations. Participants spoke of balancing modern connectivity with the ability to live off the land in traditional ways, aiming for a community that can do both.

Through this visioning discussion, the committee articulated an aspirational picture of the Tribe in 2045: a thriving, self-reliant community with quality housing and infrastructure, educated youth and secure elders, a strong cultural identity, and a diversified economy that includes tourism, tribal enterprises, and innovation. These vision themes provide a guiding star for the CEDS planning process moving forward.

SWOT Analysis Workshop

In the late morning, the meeting shifted to a **SWOT analysis** exercise, which was conducted via individual worksheets followed by a group discussion of results. This process allowed the committee to systematically catalog the Tribe's internal **Strengths** and **Weaknesses**, as well as external **Opportunities** and **Threats**. The facilitated SWOT workshop elicited a wide range of observations from participants:

- **Strengths:** The Santee Sioux community possesses a number of strengths to build upon. Attendees noted the Tribe's existing enterprises and assets, such as the **Ohiya Casino & Resort, the Tatanka Golf Course, and Isanti LLC (the tribal economic development corporation)**, which provide jobs and revenue. The **Nebraska Indian Community College (NICC)** and other educational programs were cited for improving local educational attainment. Abundant **land and natural resources** (including tribal lands along the Missouri River) and rich **cultural heritage and traditions** were highlighted as enduring strengths. Participants also praised the **community's cohesion and resilience** – people are invested in improving the community and there is **progressive tribal leadership** in place. An active Tax Commission and the Tribe's exercise of its **sovereign powers** (e.g., tax compacts) were additionally mentioned as institutional strengths.
- **Weaknesses:** The SWOT identified several internal challenges. **Infrastructure deficits** were a primary concern – for example, **poor road access** (essentially one major road in and out of the reservation) limiting connectivity, and a **shortage of housing** (especially lack of elder care facilities, no nursing home or homeless shelter available). Participants noted **limited local services**, such as the absence of a local postal facility and no on-reservation addiction treatment center. **Human capital challenges** were discussed, including high workforce turnover, a lack of skilled job candidates, and low rates of residents pursuing higher education. Organizational and governance issues were also flagged: siloed programs and fragmentation among departments have hampered efficiency, and some felt that many prior community plans have not been fully

implemented. Social issues like **alcohol and drug abuse** in the community were acknowledged as ongoing weaknesses, compounded by limited local treatment options. Overall, the weaknesses discussion underscored critical needs in infrastructure, capacity building, and social services that the CEDS must address.

- **Opportunities:** Despite the challenges, the committee saw numerous opportunities on the horizon for economic and community development. **Broadband expansion** was repeatedly mentioned as a major opportunity – with the Tribe’s telecom infrastructure, there is potential to **build out high-speed internet** to serve the region and even to create revenue by providing services to others. Enhancing **tourism and recreation** is another key opportunity: the Santee Sioux reservation’s natural beauty and cultural sites could support eco-tourism (birdwatching, ATV trails, camping, Missouri River recreation) and cultural tourism, especially if better marketed. The highly rated golf course and abundance of wildlife for hunting were cited as assets that could draw more visitors with improved facilities and promotion. **Business development and “vertical integration”** opportunities were identified, meaning the Tribe could start or expand tribal enterprises to meet community needs and keep profits local. Ideas included establishing tribally-owned construction and broadband companies (similar to the Ho-Chunk Village model), developing a **retail convenience store/truck stop** on a major highway to capture passing traffic, and pursuing **land acquisition** for future development projects. The Tribe’s **land holdings and trust land** status were seen as an advantage that can be leveraged for new ventures. In addition, participants noted the opportunity to **tap into external funding and grant programs** more strategically. For example, the Tribe can pursue grants through the EDA and USDA, and make better use of programs like **Public Law 93-638** (which allows tribes to assume management of federal programs) to build facilities such as healthcare centers that generate revenue. Strengthening **food sovereignty** (through community gardens and ranching) and expanding agricultural initiatives were also mentioned as long-term economic opportunities. Overall, the committee recognized that many positive initiatives are possible by leveraging the Tribe’s strengths, resources, and partnerships.
- **Threats:** The SWOT exercise also addressed external threats that could impede the Tribe’s progress. One concern is **demographic decline** – a **stagnant or shrinking population**, exacerbated by young people leaving the community (“brain drain”), would threaten the workforce and cultural continuity. **Environmental and climate threats** are significant for Santee Sioux Nation: the area faces risks such as Missouri River flooding and erosion, extreme weather events, and wildfires (smoke from 2023 wildfires already impacted air quality). Long-term climate change could bring more frequent droughts or severe storms, affecting agriculture and infrastructure. The community also confronts ongoing **public health and social threats** like the drug epidemic, which was noted as a serious challenge (“Drugs” and related crime were listed among threats). On the economic front, participants noted **external competition and market forces** as threats – for instance, the Master Settlement Agreement concentrating tobacco business into a few large companies, which can undercut smaller tribal tobacco enterprises. Finally, **political and legal uncertainties** at the federal and state level pose a threat. Changes in federal policies or court decisions (a pending U.S. Supreme Court case was mentioned) could impact tribal sovereignty or funding. Historical jurisdictional conflicts between the State of Nebraska and the Tribe remain a backdrop that could resurface. These threats underscore the

importance of proactive planning and diversification in the Tribe's strategy – the CEDS will need to include risk mitigation and resilience measures to address such challenges.

By the end of the SWOT workshop, the committee had compiled a comprehensive overview of the Tribe's internal situation and external environment. This candid assessment of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats will directly inform the next stages of strategic planning – helping to focus the CEDS on bolstering strengths, addressing critical weaknesses, seizing high-potential opportunities, and preparing for threats.

Outcomes

In summary, the February 18 meeting accomplished its objectives and laid a strong foundation for the Santee Sioux CEDS. The committee reached consensus on key issues in the Tribe's current economic condition (including the need to improve data accuracy and address infrastructure gaps) and generated a clear set of **long-term priorities** through the visioning exercise. The collaborative SWOT analysis produced a wealth of information that will guide the formulation of strategic goals. Importantly, this initial meeting fostered stakeholder alignment around a shared vision of **self-sufficiency, sustainable growth, and cultural preservation** for the community. The outcomes of Meeting #1 – a preliminary vision framework, an agreed understanding of strengths/challenges, and heightened engagement among partners – will inform the drafting of the CEDS document's goals and action plans.

Next Steps

At the conclusion of the meeting, the facilitators and committee members outlined the immediate next steps in the CEDS planning process. These included both follow-up tasks and plans for the subsequent committee meeting:

1. **Vision Statement Development:** The planning team will synthesize the brainstormed vision themes into a draft Vision Statement for the CEDS. A follow-up **survey** will be circulated to committee members and other key stakeholders to gather feedback and additional input on the draft vision. The goal is to ensure the Vision Statement truly reflects the community's long-term aspirations before it is finalized.
2. **Existing Conditions Report:** The data and community feedback from Meeting #1 will be incorporated into a detailed Existing Conditions Report. This report will refine any inaccurate data (addressing the identified Census undercount issues) by integrating local research and updated information. The completed report will serve as a factual baseline for planning and will be shared with the committee for review prior to the next meeting.
3. **Draft Goals and Objectives:** Based on the vision priorities and SWOT findings, the planning team will develop an initial set of **strategic goals and objectives** for the Tribe's economic development. These draft goals will target the major needs and opportunities identified (such as housing, workforce, enterprise development, and infrastructure) and will include potential strategies or projects. The draft goals and objectives will be circulated for committee input, laying the groundwork for more in-depth strategy discussions in Meeting #2.
4. **Next Committee Meeting:** The second CEDS Committee meeting is tentatively scheduled for **April or May 2025**. In that session, the committee will review and **confirm the Vision**

Statement, refine the draft goals and objectives (informed by the survey results and the Existing Conditions Report), and begin formulating the strategic direction and action plan for the CEDS. Interactive exercises at Meeting #2 will likely focus on prioritizing projects and initiatives, based on the foundation established in the first meeting.

These next steps ensure continuity in the strategic planning process. Between meetings, the CEDS project team will maintain communication with committee members, keep momentum on research and drafting, and prepare materials so that Meeting #2 can build directly on the insights gained on February 18. By documenting the outcomes and following through on these agreed next steps, the Santee Sioux Tribe is progressing methodically toward a comprehensive economic development strategy that reflects community input and sets actionable goals for the future.

Santee Sioux Nation CEDS Committee Meeting #2 Summary

Date: May 22, 2025

Location: Nebraska Indian Community College – Santee Campus

Overview

On May 22, 2025, the Santee Sioux Nation CEDS Committee convened its second strategic planning meeting to review and refine draft goals and objectives for the Nation’s 2025–2030 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). The meeting was held at the Nebraska Indian Community College Santee Campus and facilitated by the project team. **Maunka Morgan**, CEO of Isanti LLC, opened the session with a prayer and guided key portions of the discussion alongside the facilitation team. Chairman **Alonzo Denney** provided opening remarks and participated in strategic planning discussions throughout the session.

The meeting was structured around the CEDS’s five strategic goal areas, with participants engaging in open dialogue and providing feedback on proposed objectives and draft initiatives. The project team led coordination and recorded live input, which will be used to produce the draft CEDS document.

Committee Participation

The meeting was attended by representatives across sectors vital to tribal development and governance, including:

- **Santee Sioux Tribal Council:** Chairman Alonzo Denney, Vice Chairman Kameron Runnels, Tribal Secretary Andrea McBride
- **Tribal Enterprises & Corporate Leadership:** Maunka Morgan, Michelle Desjarlais, Mylisha Robinson, Jerry Noonan (Isanti LLC)
- **Education & Youth:** Michael Oltrogge and Carlton Edwards (Nebraska Indian Community College)
- **Agriculture & Ranching:** Norman Andino (ST Bar Ranch)
- **Economic Development & Regional Partners:** Sheryl Hiatt (Nebraska Department of Economic Development), Denise Wilkinson (Northeast Nebraska Chamber)

- **Finance & Banking:** Dave Gilles (First Dakota National Bank)
- **Land & Infrastructure:** Mike Crosley (Santee Sioux Land, Road & Transit Program)
- **Local Government:** Mayor Scott Kostal (City of Springfield)
- **Small Business Development:** Anthony Warrior (APEX Accelerator Consultant)

Focus Areas and Discussion Highlights

Committee members reviewed draft objectives across the five strategic goals and provided direct input, with notable takeaways in each area:

- **Infrastructure & Housing:** Emphasis was placed on Lindy Road upgrades, expanding housing supply (including mixed-use development near Feather Hill), and improving signage, utilities, and broadband. Members discussed the long-term importance of a construction company and potential master planning models, referencing successful efforts like Ho-Chunk Village.
- **Agriculture & Food Sovereignty:** Committee members affirmed the goal of activating at least 500 acres for tribal agriculture, expanding bison herds, creating food processing capacity, and teaching intergenerational subsistence skills. Interest in USDA partnerships, youth involvement, and establishing a food sovereignty plan were shared priorities.
- **Health & Environment:** The group prioritized the development of a tribal behavioral health and substance abuse treatment center, expansion of local clinic services, and environmental resilience. Water quality, flood planning, and IHS compacting under Public Law 93-638 were discussed in depth.
- **Business, Tourism & Workforce Development:** Discussion focused on diversifying the tribal economy through entrepreneurship, cultural tourism infrastructure, and workforce training in construction, agriculture, and hospitality. Ideas included establishing a Tribal CDFI, tourism strategy, and youth intern programs.
- **Governance & Resilience:** Members emphasized breaking down departmental silos, building internal staff capacity, and enhancing emergency preparedness through plan updates and training. Interest was also expressed in strengthening MOUs with regional partners and pursuing policy tools to reinforce tribal sovereignty.

Next Steps

The Committee closed the session with agreement on immediate next steps, including a timeline for review, public engagement, and final adoption:

- **Send out the CEDS Implementation Matrix** for review by relevant stakeholders representing each of the five strategic goal areas.
- **Coordinate targeted outreach** to tribal departments and programs to vet the draft objectives and action items within their areas of responsibility.
- **Present the draft CEDS** to the Santee Sioux Tribal Council on **August 13, 2025**, for review and discussion.

- **Publish the draft document** for a **30-day public comment period** immediately following the Council presentation.
- **Finalize the CEDS document** in **September 2025** and host a public-facing **Final Presentation** with implementation guidance and next steps.

This meeting served as a critical milestone in developing a community-centered CEDS that reflects the values, needs, and aspirations of the Santee Sioux Nation.

Santee Sioux Tribe CEDS Survey Results Summary

High-Level Summary

The Santee Sioux Tribe conducted a comprehensive community survey (801 respondents) to inform its Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). Overall, respondents showed strong interest in expanding tribal business ventures and improving economic self-sufficiency, while also emphasizing community well-being, cultural preservation, and housing needs:

- **Top Economic Priorities:** Participants most commonly identified off-reservation business expansion, gaming enterprise growth, renewable energy development, and local food sovereignty initiatives as priority industries for tribal growth – each selected by roughly one-third or more of respondents. These were followed by interest in the cannabis industry and cultural tourism, among others (see detailed results below).
- **Employment & Entrepreneurship:** A large majority of respondents (76%) are themselves business owners, and over half (56%) are interested in starting a business within the next five years. However, they face significant barriers such as lack of access to capital (about 61% cited this) and limited business training (59%). Many also pointed to regulatory hurdles and insufficient commercial space as obstacles. In terms of employment opportunities, community sentiment is lukewarm – only about one-third rated current job opportunities as “Good” or better, while over one-third said they are “Poor” or “Very Poor.”
- **Workforce Training Needs:** There is high demand for expanded job training and certification programs. In particular, skills training in construction trades (59%), business management/finance (58%), technology/IT (56%), and healthcare (54%) were frequently mentioned. Environmental and renewable energy training (46%) is also a notable need, reflecting interest in developing sustainable industries.
- **Cultural & Community Programs:** Respondents strongly support enhancing cultural and recreational programs for the tribe. Language revitalization programs received the highest support (57%), closely followed by traditional arts and crafts workshops (57%), youth mentorship and leadership programs (56%), and more frequent powwows and cultural events (55%). Improving outdoor recreational facilities (parks, trails, sports) was also supported by over half of respondents (53%). These results highlight a desire to strengthen cultural identity and provide positive outlets for youth and the community.
- **Tribal Sovereignty & Policy:** In terms of governance, the top policy priority is strengthening tribal law enforcement (62% selected) to enhance community safety and sovereignty. Expanding tribal economic enterprises (58%) is also seen as critical for self-sufficiency, as is increasing tribal

control in key areas like healthcare (54% for healthcare self-governance) and securing more tribal land (54% support efforts to place additional land into trust). Environmental protection policies (52%) are similarly important to respondents, aligning economic growth with stewardship of natural resources.

- **Defining Success:** When asked how to define “success” in economic development, the most common responses were achieving economic self-sufficiency for the Tribe (56%) and creating jobs for Tribal citizens (55%). Half of respondents also emphasized diversifying tribal businesses to increase economic stability, and nearly as many stressed aligning economic growth with Dakota/Lakota cultural values (47%). Providing direct financial support to citizens and ensuring growth is sustainable and climate-resilient were each priorities for about Forty to forty-five percent of respondents. This suggests that success is viewed in multifaceted terms: not just revenue, but jobs, cultural integrity, and long-term sustainability.
- **Housing Needs:** Housing is a critical concern. Around 60% of respondents identified a need for more affordable single-family homes, and a similar percentage called for additional senior and assisted-living housing to care for elders. A majority also indicated demand for more rental apartments (57%) and home repair assistance programs (53%), reflecting both housing availability and upkeep issues. Nearly half (49%) see the need for a homeless shelter or transitional housing program to support community members in crisis. These responses underscore housing shortages at multiple levels, from elders to low-income families to the unhoused.
- **Economic Development Strategies:** For strengthening the economy and community well-being, the top recommendation was to develop a long-term comprehensive economic growth plan (selected by 40% of respondents). Closely related, 39% urged strengthening workforce development programs to build local skills. About 36% want to establish a Tribal Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) to improve access to capital for tribal projects and entrepreneurs. Respondents also support expanding incentives for tribal entrepreneurs (33%) and increasing tribal self-governance in areas like healthcare and education (33%). Other strategies receiving significant support include investing in renewable energy and environmental sustainability projects (31%), improving infrastructure and transportation (31%), securing additional land for development (30%), promoting cultural tourism (29%), and strengthening partnerships with other tribes (29%). This broad array of strategies indicates a holistic approach to development, balancing immediate economic initiatives with capacity-building and sovereignty-enhancing actions.
- **Job Creation:** To generate employment, respondents favor a mix of internal and external approaches. Nearly 60% believe expanding vocational training and certification programs will prepare tribal members for good jobs, and a similar proportion advocate for partnering with regional employers to create job opportunities for tribal members. Just over half (55%) support creating local business incubators and entrepreneurship programs to foster new tribal-owned businesses. Developing new industries based on natural and cultural resources (52%) is also seen as an opportunity for unique, homegrown employment. Additionally, about half (49%) say the Tribe should improve access to funding and incentives for small businesses, which would help spur job growth by enabling entrepreneurs.

- Community Resilience:** Building community resilience and self-sufficiency is another major theme. About 60% of respondents called for improvements in mental health and substance abuse treatment programs, highlighting urgent health and social needs. Similarly, 60% want to increase local food production and food security initiatives, which ties into both economic and health resilience. More than half also emphasized promoting financial literacy and homeownership education (57%) to empower families, as well as developing emergency preparedness and disaster response plans (56%) to protect the community. Strengthening programs for youth and elder engagement (46%) was also noted, reflecting the importance of social cohesion across generations.
- Respondent Profile:** The survey reached a broad cross-section of the tribal community, though responses skewed toward younger, working-age adults. The vast majority of participants (97%) are Santee Sioux Tribal citizens or descendants, and 89% reside on the Santee Sioux Reservation (with most others living elsewhere in Nebraska). Nearly half of respondents (48%) are between 25–39 years old, and about 23% are ages 15–24; only 3.5% are over 55, indicating that youth and young adults were heavily represented. Notably, 78% of respondents were male, suggesting that men (particularly business owners) were more likely to participate in this survey. Education levels varied – roughly one-third hold a bachelor’s or graduate degree, another 19% have an associate’s degree, and 23% attended some college, while about 25% have a high school diploma or less. Employment was very high among respondents: 87% are employed full-time, with under 6% total unemployed and only a few students or retirees. These participants work in a wide range of industries, especially tribal government or programs, healthcare, retail, manufacturing, and agriculture, with no single sector dominating. Household incomes were mostly modest: the largest group (around 30%) earns \$30,000–\$50,000 annually, another ~29% earn \$50,000–\$75,000, and 24% earn \$15,000–\$30,000. Very few reported incomes above \$100k. Housing stability is an issue for some respondents – while 37% own their home and 28% rent, a significant share either live with family/friends (18%) or are in temporary housing situations (16%), and a handful are currently homeless.

In the following sections, we provide a question-by-question breakdown of the survey results, including the full response percentages for each option. This detailed data is intended for the CEDS plan appendices and offers deeper insight into community preferences and needs.

Business and Industry Growth Priorities (Q1)

Question: *What types of businesses or industries should the Santee Sioux Tribe prioritize for growth?*
(Select up to 6)

Respondents showed the greatest support for expanding tribal business ventures beyond the reservation and growing gaming-related enterprises. Renewable energy projects and local food production (food sovereignty) were nearly as high priorities. Development of a tribal cannabis industry also garnered significant interest, followed by cultural tourism and technology-based businesses. Construction and manufacturing were selected by roughly 27–30% of respondents. Fewer people prioritized creating media or insurance companies. The full breakdown of responses is as follows:

- Off-reservation business expansion – 38.33% (307 respondents)

- Expanding gaming operations (casino, sports betting, table games) – 36.08% (289 respondents)
- Renewable energy and water resources – 35.71% (286 respondents)
- Food sovereignty initiatives (local food production) – 34.83% (279 respondents)
- Cannabis industry development – 32.33% (259 respondents)
- Cultural tourism & agritourism – 29.96% (240 respondents)
- Cloud-based services and technology businesses – 29.96% (240 respondents)
- Construction Company – 29.46% (236 respondents)
- Manufacturing – 27.34% (219 respondents)
- Media Company – 23.47% (188 respondents)
- Insurance Company – 22.85% (183 respondents)
- Other (please specify) – 1.75% (14 respondents)

Total Respondents: 801

Satisfaction with Economic Opportunities (Q2)

Question: *How satisfied are you with economic opportunities in your community?*

Opinions on local economic opportunities were mixed. A little over half of respondents expressed some level of satisfaction, but most of those were only “somewhat” satisfied. Only 18% reported being very satisfied. Meanwhile, about one-quarter of respondents were dissatisfied to some degree, and roughly 17% were neutral. This suggests that while many see positives in the community’s economic opportunities, there is substantial room for improvement. Full results:

- Satisfied – 19.60% (157 respondents)
- Somewhat satisfied – 19.60% (157 respondents)
- Very satisfied – 18.10% (145 respondents)
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied – 16.60% (133 respondents)
- Somewhat dissatisfied – 13.23% (106 respondents)
- Dissatisfied – 11.61% (93 respondents)
- Very dissatisfied – 1.25% (10 respondents)

Total Respondents: 801

Interest in Starting a Business (Q3)

Question: *Are you interested in starting a business in the next 5 years?*

There is considerable entrepreneurial interest in the community. More than half of all respondents (56%) said **yes**, they are interested in starting a business in the next five years. About 37% are not interested in doing so, and a small group (7%) are unsure. This indicates a strong pipeline of potential new entrepreneurs, provided the right conditions and support. Responses:

- Yes – 56.18% (450 respondents)
- No – 36.95% (296 respondents)
- Unsure – 6.87% (55 respondents)

Total Respondents: 801

Barriers to Entrepreneurship (Q4)

Question: *What barriers do tribal members face in starting or expanding businesses? (Select up to 3)*

When asked about challenges to launching or growing businesses, respondents most frequently cited financial and knowledge barriers. Lack of access to capital was the top issue (around 61% of respondents chose this), closely followed by limited business training or education (59%). Just over half of respondents pointed to high regulatory requirements and bureaucracy, as well as a lack of available commercial space on the reservation, as significant barriers. Nearly half also noted limited networking opportunities and mentorship. Clearly, improving access to funding, training, and infrastructure would help tribal entrepreneurs. Key barriers identified:

- Lack of access to capital – 60.80% (487 respondents)
- Limited business training – 58.68% (470 respondents)
- High regulatory requirements – 54.06% (433 respondents)
- Lack of commercial space – 54.81% (439 respondents)
- Limited networking opportunities – 46.44% (372 respondents)
- Other (please specify) – 0.75% (6 respondents)

Total Respondents: 801

Perception of Current Job Opportunities (Q5)

Question: *How would you rate the current job opportunities in the community?*

Community members' ratings of local job opportunities were lukewarm on average. On a scale from "Very Poor" to "Excellent," the most common rating was "Fair." About one-third of respondents gave a positive rating ("Good" or "Excellent"), while roughly 36% rated job opportunities negatively ("Poor" or "Very Poor"). The remaining ~29% felt opportunities were neither especially good nor bad ("Fair"). The weighted average rating was 2.87 out of 5, which is just below a neutral midpoint, indicating moderate dissatisfaction overall. Detailed ratings:

- Very Poor – 15.60% (124 respondents)
- Poor – 20.88% (166 respondents)

- Fair – 29.43% (234 respondents)
- Good – 28.68% (228 respondents)
- Excellent – 5.41% (43 respondents)

Weighted average rating: 2.87 (out of 5)

Total Respondents: 795 (6 skipped)

Job Training and Certification Needs (Q6)

Question: *What job training programs or certifications are most needed? (Select up to 3)*

There is strong interest in a broad range of workforce training programs. Trade skills and construction training topped the list (about 59% of respondents chose this option), reflecting demand for skilled trades like carpentry, electrical, plumbing, etc. Nearly as many respondents see a need for business management and finance training (58%) to help people run enterprises or manage organizations. Technology and IT training was also highly ranked (56%), indicating a desire to build digital skills in the community. Just over half of respondents highlighted healthcare certifications (54%) – for example, training more nurses, medical aides, or other healthcare workers. Environmental and renewable energy training was selected by 46%, which aligns with interest in sustainable projects. These priorities suggest the Tribe could focus on vocational education in these key areas. Full responses:

- Construction & trade skills – 59.25% (471 respondents)
- Business management & finance – 57.74% (459 respondents)
- Technology & IT training – 56.35% (448 respondents)
- Healthcare certifications – 54.21% (431 respondents)
- Environmental & renewable energy training – 46.16% (367 respondents)
- Other (please specify) – 0.50% (4 respondents)

Total Respondents: 795

Cultural and Recreational Program Priorities (Q7)

Question: *What cultural or recreational programs should be expanded or introduced? (Select up to 3)*

Survey participants showed enthusiastic support for strengthening cultural programs and youth activities. A majority of respondents chose language revitalization programs (57%), underlining a desire to preserve and teach the Dakota language. Traditional arts and crafts workshops were nearly as popular (57%), as were youth mentorship and leadership programs (56%). Over half also want to see more powwows and cultural events (55% selected this), which are key for celebrating and maintaining cultural heritage. Additionally, improved outdoor recreation facilities (such as parks, trails, and sports facilities) were supported by 53% of respondents, indicating an interest in healthy recreational outlets. Essentially, **all** the listed program areas received support from more than half of respondents, demonstrating a broad consensus for cultural enrichment and community activities. Response breakdown:

- Language revitalization programs – 57.45% (455 respondents)
- Traditional arts and crafts workshops – 56.82% (450 respondents)
- Youth mentorship and leadership programs – 56.19% (445 respondents)
- Powwows and cultural events – 55.05% (436 respondents)
- Outdoor recreation facilities (parks, trails, sports) – 53.16% (421 respondents)
- Other (please specify) – 0.76% (6 respondents)

Total Respondents: 792

Policy Priorities to Enhance Sovereignty (Q8)

Question: *What policies should be prioritized for the Santee Sioux Tribe to enhance tribal sovereignty and self-sufficiency? (Select up to 3)*

Respondents were clear that strengthening tribal law enforcement is the top policy priority for reinforcing sovereignty and safety – about 62% picked this option. The Tribe’s economic independence is also in focus: 58% of respondents said expanding tribal economic enterprises (tribally owned businesses) should be prioritized, which would increase revenue and jobs under tribal control. Just over half (54%) want to enhance tribal self-governance in healthcare, reflecting a desire for greater control over health services. Similarly, 54% support efforts to increase the amount of land held in trust for the tribe, which is a foundation for sovereignty and future development. Environmental stewardship is another important policy area, with 52% urging stronger environmental protection policies to safeguard land and resources. These priorities indicate a balanced approach: improve security and governance, grow the tribal economy, reclaim land, and protect the environment. Full results:

- Strengthening tribal law enforcement – 61.74% (489 respondents)
- Expanding tribal economic enterprises – 57.83% (458 respondents)
- Increasing land into trust status – 53.54% (424 respondents)
- Enhancing tribal healthcare self-governance – 54.04% (428 respondents)
- Strengthening environmental protection policies – 51.77% (410 respondents)
- Other (please specify) – 0.88% (7 respondents)

Total Respondents: 792

Defining Economic Success for the Tribe (Q9)

Question: *How would you define “success” for the Tribe’s economic development? (Select up to 4)*

Tribal members define economic success in ways that extend beyond just profit – focusing on self-sufficiency, jobs, and aligning with cultural values. The most selected definition of success was achieving **economic self-sufficiency for the Tribe** (56% of respondents), meaning the Tribe can financially sustain its programs and services without outside dependence. The second-most common measure was **job creation for Tribal citizens** (55%), underscoring that providing employment to the community is a key

goal. Half of respondents believe success includes **business diversification** (51%), ensuring the tribal economy isn't reliant on any single industry. Many also highlighted **business alignment with cultural values** (47%), indicating that how money is made is as important as how much is made. Similarly, 47% defined success as providing **financial support for Tribal citizens** – suggesting profits should be reinvested into the community (e.g., via dividends, social programs, or per capita payments). Finally, about 41% included **sustainable and climate-resilient growth** in their definition, reflecting concern for long-term environmental and economic health. All these aspects form a holistic vision of economic success. Full responses:

- Economic self-sufficiency for the Tribe – 55.70% (440 respondents)
- Job creation for Tribal Citizens – 55.19% (436 respondents)
- Business diversification to increase stability – 50.51% (399 respondents)
- Business alignment with cultural values – 46.96% (371 respondents)
- Financial support for Tribal Citizens – 46.58% (368 respondents)
- Sustainable and climate-resilient economic growth – 41.14% (325 respondents)
- Other (please specify) – 0.63% (5 respondents)

Total Respondents: 790

Urgent Housing Needs in the Community (Q10)

Question: *What are the most urgent housing needs in the community?* (Select up to 3)

Survey results demonstrate critical housing needs across multiple categories. The two most urgent needs – each selected by about 60% of respondents – are **affordable single-family homes** and **senior/assisted living housing**. This highlights demand both for young families and for elders' housing and care. A majority of respondents (57%) also indicated a need for more **rental apartments**, suggesting a shortage of general housing stock and options for those not ready to buy homes. Additionally, 53% pointed to **home repair assistance** programs, meaning many existing homes may be in disrepair or homeowners need help with maintenance and upgrades. Nearly half of respondents (49%) saw a need for a **homeless shelter or transitional housing**, reflecting concern for community members who are unhoused or in unstable living situations. In sum, housing is a top priority, ranging from new development to maintaining existing homes and providing safety nets for the most vulnerable. Full breakdown:

- Affordable single-family homes – 60.13% (475 respondents)
- Senior and assisted living housing – 60.63% (479 respondents)
- Rental apartment housing – 57.22% (452 respondents)
- Homeless shelter and transitional housing – 49.24% (389 respondents)
- Home repair assistance – 53.16% (420 respondents)
- Other (please specify) – 1.01% (8 respondents)

Total Respondents: 790

Strategies for Economic Development & Community Well-Being (Q11)

Question: *What strategies should the Tribe implement to strengthen economic development and community well-being? (Select up to 5)*

Respondents were presented with several strategic initiatives, and results show support for a multi-pronged approach. The most popular recommendation was to **develop a long-term comprehensive plan for economic growth** (chosen by ~40% of respondents), indicating a desire for proactive and coordinated economic planning. Nearly as many (39%) support efforts to **strengthen workforce development programs**, reflecting the importance of job training and education in the community's eyes. Establishing a **Tribal Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI)** – a tribal lending and financial support entity – was backed by about 36% of respondents, highlighting interest in improving access to capital and financing for tribal projects and businesses.

About one-third (33%) of respondents believe the Tribe should **expand business incentives for Tribal entrepreneurs**, such as grants, loans, or tax breaks to encourage small business growth. A similar proportion (33%) call for **increasing self-governance in healthcare and education**, which would mean taking on more control (and possibly funding) for these services from federal or state agencies.

Several other strategies were also endorsed by significant numbers: **developing renewable energy and environmental sustainability projects** (31% support) aligns with earlier priorities on renewable energy and climate resilience. **Improving transportation and infrastructure** (31%)—for instance, better roads, internet, or utilities—was seen as important for both businesses and residents. **Securing additional land for economic and residential development** (30%) remains a priority, in line with the land-into-trust emphasis noted earlier. Enhancing **cultural tourism and promotion of Tribal heritage** (29%) is viewed as an economic opportunity that also educates others about the Santee Sioux culture. Finally, **strengthening inter-tribal partnerships** (29%) suggests that collaborating with neighboring tribes on economic or social initiatives is seen as a promising strategy. The diverse support across these options indicates that the tribe's development plan may need to incorporate many of these elements. Full response frequencies:

- Develop a long-term comprehensive plan for economic growth – 39.75% (312 respondents)
- Strengthen workforce development programs – 38.98% (306 respondents)
- Establish a Tribal Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) – 36.43% (286 respondents)
- Expand business incentives for Tribal entrepreneurs – 33.38% (262 respondents)
- Increase self-governance in healthcare and education – 32.87% (258 respondents)
- Develop renewable energy and environmental sustainability projects – 30.83% (242 respondents)
- Improve transportation and infrastructure for businesses and residents – 30.70% (241 respondents)

- Secure additional land for economic and residential development – 29.81% (234 respondents)
- Enhance cultural tourism and promote Tribal heritage – 29.30% (230 respondents)
- Strengthen inter-tribal partnerships and collaboration with other tribes – 28.54% (224 respondents)
- Other (please specify) – 0.13% (1 respondent)

Total Respondents: 785

Priority Sectors for Long-Term Investment (Q12)

Question: *What economic sectors should the Tribe prioritize for long-term investment? (Select up to 3)*

When considering which industries to invest in for the future, respondents did not single out just one area but rather indicated several key sectors of almost equal importance. The most frequently chosen sector was **gaming, hospitality, and entertainment expansion** (50% of respondents) – building on the tribe’s casino and related ventures. Close behind was **technology and digital services** (49%), suggesting interest in developing businesses like IT services, software, or online enterprises that can diversify the economy. **Renewable energy and climate resilience projects** were selected by about 48% of respondents, reflecting the earlier emphasis on pursuing solar, wind, or other green energy ventures that not only create revenue but also align with environmental values. Healthcare services and facilities were prioritized by roughly 46% of respondents, indicating a need for investment in clinics, hospitals, or specialty care that can serve the community and potentially generate jobs. **Agriculture and food sovereignty initiatives** (46%) also ranked high, which could include farming, ranching, community gardens, or food processing endeavors that reduce dependence on outside food sources. Finally, **manufacturing and industrial development** was chosen by about 41% – somewhat lower than the others, but still a significant portion – suggesting some support for light manufacturing or industrial projects if feasible. In summary, the Tribe’s investment portfolio might span entertainment, high-tech, sustainable energy, healthcare, agriculture, and manufacturing, with the first four of those receiving the strongest endorsement. Full results:

- Gaming, hospitality, and entertainment expansion – 49.81% (391 respondents)
- Technology and digital services (e.g., cloud-based businesses) – 48.92% (384 respondents)
- Renewable energy and climate resilience projects – 47.77% (375 respondents)
- Healthcare services and medical facilities – 46.11% (362 respondents)
- Agriculture and food sovereignty initiatives – 45.73% (359 respondents)
- Manufacturing and industrial development – 40.89% (321 respondents)
- Other (please specify) – 0.13% (1 respondent)

Total Respondents: 785

Strategies to Increase Job Creation (Q13)

Question: *What strategies should be used for the Santee Sioux Tribe to increase job creation in the community?* (Select up to 3)

To spur job growth, respondents favor both developing local talent and leveraging external partnerships. The top two strategies, each chosen by roughly 59–60% of respondents, are to **expand vocational training and certification programs** and to **partner with regional employers** to secure job opportunities for tribal members. Expanding vocational training aligns with earlier findings on workforce development needs – it suggests creating or enlarging trade schools, apprenticeships, or certification courses to skill up the workforce for in-demand jobs. Partnering with regional employers could involve agreements or programs with nearby companies (or government agencies) to hire Santee Sioux citizens, perhaps facilitated by the Tribe.

Over half of respondents (55%) also supported **creating business incubators and entrepreneurship programs**. This strategy focuses on cultivating homegrown businesses and startups, by providing resources such as training, mentorship, and possibly workspace or seed funding to tribal entrepreneurs. Slightly more than half (52%) recommended **developing new industries based on natural and cultural resources** – for example, expanding sectors like agriculture, bison ranching, forestry, or cultural arts that draw on the Tribe’s land, traditions, or unique assets. Additionally, about 49% of respondents said the Tribe should **improve access to funding and incentives for small businesses**, such as through grants, loans, or tax incentives, to enable business expansion and new ventures that will create jobs. These responses indicate that job creation can be tackled by both improving the supply of skilled workers and stimulating demand for those workers through new businesses and external job placements. Full response details:

- Expand vocational training and certification programs – 59.75% (469 respondents)
- Partner with regional employers to provide job opportunities for tribal members – 59.36% (466 respondents)
- Create business incubators and entrepreneurship programs – 55.29% (434 respondents)
- Develop new industries based on natural and cultural resources – 52.48% (412 respondents)
- Improve access to funding and incentives for small businesses – 49.04% (385 respondents)
- Other (please specify) – 0.38% (3 respondents)

Total Respondents: 785

Strengthening Community Resilience and Self-Sufficiency (Q14)

Question: *How should the Tribe strengthen community resilience and self-sufficiency?* (Select up to 3)

In terms of building a more resilient and self-sufficient community, respondents highlighted health, food, and preparedness. The two highest priorities (each selected by about 60% of respondents) are to **improve mental health and substance abuse treatment programs** and to **increase local food production and food security**. This underscores urgent concerns: addressing the ongoing impacts of substance abuse and mental health issues, and ensuring the community can feed itself in times of crisis or supply disruption. Both areas are critical for a strong, self-reliant community.

Additionally, a majority of respondents (57%) believe **promoting financial literacy and homeownership education** is important. By educating tribal citizens on managing finances, credit, and the process of buying homes, the Tribe can help families become more economically stable and build assets, which in turn strengthens community resilience. Nearly as many respondents (56%) said the Tribe should **develop emergency preparedness and disaster response plans**. Given experiences with floods, blizzards, or other emergencies, having plans in place (and resources like shelters or generators) can greatly improve the community's ability to withstand and recover from disasters. Finally, about 46% of respondents called for **strengthening programs for youth and elder engagement**. Keeping youth connected, supported, and involved in the community, and ensuring elders are cared for and their wisdom is integrated, both contribute to social resilience and the passing on of cultural knowledge. Each of these strategies addresses a different facet of community well-being, from health to food to financial stability to social cohesion. Full responses:

- Improve mental health and substance abuse treatment programs – 60.25% (473 respondents)
- Increase local food production and food security initiatives – 60.13% (472 respondents)
- Promote financial literacy and homeownership education – 56.69% (445 respondents)
- Develop emergency preparedness and disaster response plans – 55.54% (436 respondents)
- Strengthen programs for youth and elder engagement – 45.73% (359 respondents)
- Other (please specify) – 0.13% (1 respondent)

Total Respondents: 785

Respondent Demographics (Q15–Q24)

Note: 801 individuals answered at least one survey question. 744 respondents provided demographic information in the final section of the survey (57 people skipped the demographic questions).

To understand the context of these responses, it's important to know who participated in the survey. The demographic profile of respondents is as follows:

- **Tribal Citizenship (Q17):** 96% of respondents are Santee Sioux Tribal citizens or descendants. Only about 4% identified as not being tribal members, indicating the survey input is overwhelmingly from the tribal community itself.
- **Race/Ethnicity (Q18):** 74% of respondents identified as Native American/Alaska Native. The next largest group was White (11%), followed by Black/African American (8%), Hispanic/Latino (3.5%), and Asian (2%). A few respondents identified as Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (<1%) or other (<1%). *(Multiple selections were allowed, but most respondents chose a single primary ethnicity.)*
- **Residence (Q19):** 88.6% of respondents live on the Santee Sioux Reservation. An additional 9% live elsewhere in Nebraska (off-reservation), and about 2% live in other states or locations. This shows that the vast majority of input comes from those living in the tribal community or very nearby.

- **Age Group (Q20):** The survey reached a younger demographic overall. The largest age group of respondents was 25–39 years old (48%). Youth and young adults (15–24 years) made up 23% of respondents, and those aged 40–54 comprised about 24%. Elders (55 and over) were only around 3.5% of the sample. Very few respondents (less than 1%) were under age 15 (likely because the survey targeted adults).
- **Gender (Q21):** 77.7% of respondents were **male**, 20.8% **female**, and about 1.3% identified as **non-binary** or other. This indicates a skew toward male participation. It may reflect the high percentage of business owners responding (as noted earlier, many business owners might be male), or possibly greater interest or availability among men to take the survey.
- **Education Level (Q22):** Education levels among respondents were varied. About 11% have less than a high school education, and 14% have a high school diploma or GED. Nearly a quarter (23%) have attended **some college** without obtaining a degree, and 19% hold an **Associate’s degree**. Around 21% have a **Bachelor’s degree**, and about 12% have a **Graduate or professional degree**. In summary, roughly one-third of respondents have a bachelor’s or higher, about another one-fifth have associate degrees, and the remaining have high school level or some college.
- **Employment Status (Q23):** The vast majority of respondents are employed. 86.6% reported being **employed full-time**, and 4.4% are **employed part-time**. Only about 3% are **unemployed and looking for work**, and another 3% are **unemployed but not currently looking**. A small number of respondents were **students** (2.3%) or **retired** (0.7%). This indicates that most respondents were working adults, which aligns with the age distribution and high rate of business ownership in the sample.
- **Industry of Employment (Q24):** Respondents work in a wide array of industries, reflecting a diverse local economy. The most common field of employment was **Tribal programs or services** (10.4% of respondents), which could include education, social services, housing, etc., run by the tribe. Close behind was the **Healthcare** sector (9.7%). Retail/sales (9.4%) and Manufacturing (9.0%) were also frequently reported. Other notable industries include Natural Resources (forestry, mining, energy – 7.7%); Government (6.9% in federal, state, or local government roles outside the tribe); Agriculture/Farming/Ranching (6.9%); Tribal Government administration (6.7%); Tribal Gaming operations (6.7%); Food service or restaurants (6.2%); Tourism/Recreation/Hospitality (6.1%); and Arts/Entertainment/Cultural services (5.9%). Additionally, about 5.1% of respondents are **self-employed or freelancers** (which corresponds with the high rate of business owners noted earlier). No single industry dominates employment, which may help buffer the community from downturns in any one sector but also indicates the local labor market is spread across many small sectors.
- **Annual Household Income (Q25):** Household incomes among respondents tended to be in the low-to-moderate range. Only a very small share of respondents (around 2%) reported incomes under \$15,000 per year, suggesting most have some source of steady income. The largest income bracket was **\$30,000–\$49,999** (30.5% of respondents). The second-largest was **\$50,000–\$74,999** (29.4%). About 24.3% reported **\$15,000–\$29,999**. Thus, roughly 84% of households represented in the survey earn between \$15,000 and \$75,000 annually. A smaller group (7.1%) earn **\$75,000–\$99,999**, and about 5.1% are in the **\$100,000–\$150,000** range. Only 1.9%

reported making over \$150,000. These figures suggest many families are in a modest income range that might qualify as low- to middle-income by national standards, highlighting the importance of economic development efforts to boost income levels.

- **Current Housing Situation (Q26):** Housing stability varies among respondents. Just over one-third (37.1%) **own their home**. Another 27.7% **rent their home**. A considerable portion of respondents (18.2%) live **with family or friends without paying rent**, which may indicate multigenerational housing or individuals who cannot afford independent housing. Additionally, 16.3% reported living in **temporary housing** arrangements – such as a shelter, motel, or transitional housing program – which is a substantial indicator of housing insecurity in the community. A small number of respondents (0.8%, representing 6 individuals) said they were currently **homeless**. These results reinforce the urgent housing needs identified in Q12, showing that many community members lack stable, long-term housing solutions.
- **Survey Participation and Incentives (Q27):** As a final note, at the end of the survey respondents were invited to enter a drawing for a \$50 gift card as a token of appreciation (“Wopida” means thank you). A high proportion of participants chose to provide their contact information for this drawing – **717 people**, which is about 89% of all survey respondents, entered their name and email (and 623 provided a phone number as well). This strong participation rate indicates the community’s engagement with the survey and willingness to be involved in follow-up communications.

Conclusion: These survey results offer valuable insights for the Santee Sioux Tribe’s economic development planning. Community members have clear priorities for business growth (especially in gaming, energy, and agriculture), and they emphasize the need for jobs, training, and stronger tribal enterprises to achieve self-sufficiency. At the same time, fundamental community needs like housing, healthcare, cultural preservation, and social services (youth, elder, mental health, etc.) feature prominently, suggesting that economic development strategies must be holistic. The data also highlight the community’s strengths – such as widespread entrepreneurial spirit and a young workforce eager for opportunities – as well as challenges like limited access to capital and housing instability. This comprehensive feedback will guide the CEDS plan in crafting initiatives that align with the community’s vision of success and address the barriers identified. By following these community-driven priorities and strategies, the Santee Sioux Tribe can work toward a more prosperous, self-reliant, and culturally vibrant future.

Stakeholder Engagement and Planning Process Summary

The Santee Sioux Nation's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) 2025–2030 was developed through a highly inclusive, community-driven approach that prioritized extensive stakeholder engagement and transparent planning processes. This effort aligned closely with Economic Development Administration (EDA) guidelines, tribal best practices, and proven methods from other successful tribal CEDS initiatives.

Planning Phases and Activities

1. Project Kickoff & Visioning (February 18, 2025)

The planning process began with a community-wide kickoff meeting at Nebraska Indian Community College. Tribal leaders and community members participated in a visioning exercise to articulate aspirations for the future of Santee, identifying key priorities:

- Improved housing
- Youth employment opportunities
- Cultural revitalization
- Safe, drug-free community
- Reliable infrastructure (roads, utilities, broadband)

A comprehensive SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis was conducted, highlighting community strengths such as cultural resources and cohesive governance, and critical challenges including infrastructure deficits and limited economic opportunities.

2. Community Outreach & Input Gathering (March-April 2025)

An extensive community survey was distributed, yielding a remarkable response of 801 completed surveys. Top priorities identified were housing, infrastructure improvements, job creation, healthcare, and youth services. Desired new amenities included a grocery store, gas station, restaurant, and community center.

Targeted outreach to key stakeholders, groups, and an analysis of data subsets of the different demographics from the survey gathered detailed perspectives from:

- Youth: Emphasized education, recreation, and substance abuse prevention.
- Elders: Highlighted cultural preservation, language revitalization, and elder care.
- Entrepreneurs: Discussed economic barriers, local business opportunities, and the need for financing.
- Tribal Staff: Provided insights on programmatic barriers, technical issues, and departmental needs.

3. Strategic Planning & Plan Development (May-June 2025)

The Santee Sioux CEDS Committee—comprised of Tribal Council members, enterprise leaders, department directors, and community representatives—met to translate community input into actionable strategies. Five strategic goal areas were distilled from extensive discussions:

- Infrastructure & Housing
- Agriculture & Food Sovereignty
- Health & Environment
- Business, Tourism & Workforce Development
- Governance & Resilience

These sessions focused on prioritizing initiatives, considering feasibility, and aligning projects with community aspirations and practical realities. Key initiatives included improving Lindy Road, expanding broadband, enhancing healthcare services, establishing food sovereignty projects, developing tourism infrastructure, and expanding workforce training.

4. Review, Refinement, and Approval (July-September 2025)

A draft CEDS and Implementation Matrix were circulated among stakeholders and presented at community meeting for feedback. The Santee Sioux Tribal Council reviewed and refined the draft, ensuring alignment with tribal governance and resource management priorities.

Final feedback from a 30-day public comment period led to adoption by the Tribal Council in September 2025, signaling official commitment and support.

Role of the Santee Sioux CEDS Committee

The committee played a pivotal role throughout the planning process by:

- Reviewing demographic and economic data to ground planning in reality.
- Facilitating visioning and SWOT sessions to ensure culturally-informed strategies.
- Guiding strategic goal-setting and prioritizing community-driven objectives.
- Developing the detailed Implementation Matrix, identifying timelines, responsible entities, and potential funding sources.

Community Engagement & Stakeholder Collaboration

Engagement activities were strategically designed for broad and deep community involvement, including:

- High-response community surveys ensuring extensive quantitative input.
- Open public meetings and interactive SWOT sessions.
- Targeted outreach to key stakeholders and groups enabling deeper, detailed qualitative feedback.
- Active participation and feedback loops with tribal leadership and external regional partners (e.g., Knox County, Nebraska Department of Economic Development, NENEDD, IHS, USDA).

Alignment with Best Practices & EDA Guidelines

The methodology adopted exemplified EDA's emphasis on community-driven, place-based strategies. The process drew on proven tribal planning frameworks from Yurok, Rosebud Sioux, and Ho-Chunk Nations, particularly emphasizing inclusive engagement, cultural alignment, and strategic resilience planning.

Summary of Engagement Outcomes

Through this inclusive planning process, the Santee Sioux Nation successfully developed a CEDS deeply rooted in local community values, priorities, and aspirations. Community buy-in and stakeholder

commitment have established a strong foundation for effective implementation, ensuring sustained progress toward economic resilience, improved quality of life, and cultural preservation over the next five years.