

Navajo-Hopi Land Commission Office (NHLCO) FBFA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROJECT Q&A

Questions and Answers
September 2019



Q: Is the Navajo Thaw Just a Plan?

A: No, the Navajo Thaw is not just a plan; it is the implementation of a four-year commitment to getting development projects completed. Economic development planning will take place as part of the implementation of the Navajo Thaw and will set the stage to prioritize projects to implement on an FBFA regional level. This is critical for securing federal funding to implement such projects.

Q: Where is the FBFA?

A: The FBFA comprises all or parts of nine Navajo Chapters: Bodaway-Gap, Cameron, Coalmine Canyon, Coppermine, Kaibeto, Leupp, Tolani Lake, Tonalea and Tuba City.

Q: Efforts to help the FBFA have been tried in the past, how is this one different?

A: Unlike past efforts, which were probably well intentioned, this is a commitment—a long-term commitment for over three years, and probably much more.

The Nez-Lizer Administration recognizes that the Freeze has had a terrible impact on the people of the area. Addressing a 40-50 year problem will take a decade or more to resolve. This effort is the first step.

Q: Why don't we just use the Navajo Thaw funds to fix our roads and homes right now?

A: The source of the Navajo Thaw funding stipulates that the money be used for expansion of economic development capacity, rather than for construction or maintenance activities.

Completing the Navajo Thaw work will open the door to additional funding and resources that can be used for housing improvements, infrastructure, road improvements, community facilities and job-creating projects.

Q: Will Chapters lose their own “sovereignty” by working together as a region?

A: No. Chapters exist for a reason, and this project will help Chapters more effectively help their people. In order to receive funding for the Navajo Thaw, the region has to work together more efficiently and effectively. Funding is less achievable for Chapters working independently. Looking forward, the “Navajo Thaw region” serves as a pilot project to find new and better ways to support existing Chapters by working together as a team. The result should be more funding and benefit to each of the Chapters for priority projects.

Q: Well-intentioned Navajo, county and other officials have visited us before without results, how will this be different?

A: We are adding two elements to the overall approach. First, we are calling for the formation of the FBFA Roundtable. This will be comprised of leaders from throughout the FBFA that can speak on behalf of their respective Chapters and work together regionally. Second, we are committed to bringing economic development professionals to the table to help the Chapters plan, and to help implement their projects. This will be a dedicated team of people who know how to support Chapters and regions, write grants, and manage projects.

Q: If we have our CLUP, why do we need economic development strategic plans?

A: A CLUP (a land-use plan) only addresses the question of *where* land should be developed, and defines which specific development purposes will be allowed for that land. A CLUP does not address broader economic questions, such as how to stimulate job growth, improve the standard of living, and consistently foster economic opportunity.

These are the things that Chapters will do to overcome the effects of the *Bennett Freeze*, and they require economic development—and the foundation of successful economic development is effective planning.

Q: Will our Chapter be required to do an economic development strategic plan?

A: No. Participation in the Nez-Lizer Navajo Thaw implementation process is optional. To receive benefits from the overall initiative, however, Chapters will need to participate in the planning process. Participation by a Chapter allows funding and technical assistance to be channeled to it, to assist in overcoming the effects of the Bennett Freeze.

Q: How do you expect to get extra, special funding for the FBFA?

A: The story of the Bennett Freeze is a unique, national story. The *Forced Navajo Relocation*, the federal abuse of our natural resources and the moratorium on development all belong to a chapter of American history that has never been fully closed. We are not waiting for someone else to close that chapter.

Rather, by requesting and securing federal resources for the Navajo Thaw, we are taking action to see that this chapter does close positively.

Positive action is quicker and more effective than taking the “you owe us from past wrongs” approach, which has historically been very slow and ineffective. Our request of the federal government is not for a “hand out,” but rather for a “hand up” to implement the many projects and initiatives that will come from the Chapter-based and Regional planning effort.

Q: What other Navajo Resources are available to help us?

A: All Navajo resources. It will be the responsibility of the consulting team to understand all of the needs of the FBFA, along with the financial, human and technical resources of the Navajo Nation (and federal agencies) needed to help solve the problem. Once potential Navajo resources are identified, the Nez-Lizer Administration will send a message to all divisions and departments to make supporting the FBFA a priority.

Q: What if our Chapter is only partly in the FBFA boundary?

A: Any Chapter that is in the FBFA (either in whole or in part) is eligible to participate in the Chapter-based economic development strategic planning process that will lead to the Regional Plan. There may be some financial and technical resources derived from the NTIP that can only be directed to the people and locations within the FBFA boundaries. But, in general, all nine Chapters will fully benefit from this project.

Q: Hasn't some of this work already been done by Universities and other technical assistance providers?

A: The people and Chapters within the FBFA have benefitted in the past from support from colleges and universities. Implementation of the NTIP will continue to welcome such expertise and support. Past studies, reports and recommendations made by colleges and universities will be incorporated into the Implementation Plan. What is different about this effort is the 39-month commitment to implementation.

Q: How does this work compare and contrast with the feasibility study work completed by Indigenous Design Studio + Architecture?

A: The Former Bennett Freeze Area Economic and Market Feasibility Study completed in December 2018 is to serve as a guide to strategically identify the potential needs, demands and constraints for commercial, industrial, small businesses and tourism development in the region. The purpose of this study is to assist Chapters to make wise decisions for the future community and economic development initiatives.

The market and feasibility study provides data that can be utilized by the Chapters and the region in the implementation of the Chapter-based and Regional Plans. For business development-related priorities within the Navajo Thaw Region, information from the market and feasibility study can help determine the viability of future business enterprises in various sectors.

In short, the work completed in December 2018 is a resource guide that can serve to assist in the implementation of business development priorities identified through the Navajo Thaw Implementation Plan.

Q: How does this project compare to other economic development strategic plans on the Navajo Nation?

A: Building Communities has assisted seven Navajo Chapters to complete community and economic development strategic plans between the period of 2011-2019. These Chapters included Nahata Dziil, Shonto, Bodaway-Gap, Chinle, Fort Defiance, Ganado, and Many Farms. The plan most similar to the work being conducted for the Navajo Thaw Chapters is the work completed in January 2018 for Nahata Dziil. Usually, the development of such plans are limited in scope, and do not provide implementation assistance. In the case of Nahata Dziil, such implementation assistance has been ongoing for nearly two years and will continue. Implementation assistance will be provided to the Navajo Thaw Chapters through December 2022.

Q: Why is Nahata Dziil Commission Governance involved with this and how do they benefit?

A: Responding to the threatened closure of the Office of Navajo and Hopi Indian Relocation (ONHIR), Nahata Dziil decided to formulate a positive plan for their future in late 2017. The plan identified many viable economic opportunities and led to preparing a successful federal grant application to implement several of their priorities in 2018-2019. Nahata Dziil stands as an example of a Chapter that can build the legal and administrative capacity to receive and administrate grants.

Motivated to support their brothers and sisters in the Navajo Thaw Region, a second successful grant proposal was submitted to USDA Rural Development in 2019. The grant not only supports the Navajo Thaw Chapters, but it also allows continued progress in implementing Nahata Dziil's plan and priority projects.