

## ***Proposed Sole Source Purchases – Document 2025-03***

### ***- To support an urban indigenous center in Albuquerque.***

The Mid-Region Council of Governments intends to make a purchase for which it believes there is no competition. MRCOG issued RFP2025-05 Element 1 and received no responses. This will be a "Sole Source" purchase made in accordance with State of New Mexico 13-1-126 NMSA 1978. The purpose of this notice is to attempt to identify possible alternatives.

#### ***How to Comment/Respond***

Any potential vendor who does not agree that this product or service is available only from the intended source must contact this office within thirty (30) calendar days from the date posted.

Your response must be in writing and a description of the product or service you are offering as an equivalent must be included.

Please send your response, via e-mail by sending an email to [ppino@mrcog-nm.gov](mailto:ppino@mrcog-nm.gov). Please reference the Document Number of the Sole Source/Emergency Procurement you have interest in.

A sole source **determination** is not effective until the **sole source request for determination** has been posted for thirty (30) calendar days without challenge, and subsequently approved in writing by the MRCOG Chief Procurement Officer.

I. Name of Agency: Mid-Region Council of Government

Agency Chief Procurement Officer: Phil Pino

Telephone Number: 505-247-1750

II. Name of prospective Contractor: Americans for Indian Opportunity

Address of prospective Contractor: 1001 Marquette Ave NW, Albuquerque, NM 87102

Amount of prospective contract: \$200,000.00

Term of prospective contract: To support an urban indigenous center in Albuquerque.

III. Please thoroughly list the services (scope of work), construction or items of tangible personal property of the prospective contract:

Response - To support an urban indigenous center in Albuquerque.

IV. Provide a detailed, sufficient explanation of the reasons, qualifications, proprietary rights or unique capabilities of the prospective contractor that makes the prospective contractor **the one source** capable of providing the required professional service, service, construction or item(s) of tangible personal property. (Please do not state the source is the "best" source or the "least costly" source. Those factors do not justify a "sole source.")

Response – Due to the legislative language listed in Section III and after discussion with the Legislator on their intention of the appropriation, it has been concluded that the funds should be directed to Americans for Indian Opportunity.

V. Provide a detailed, sufficient explanation of how the professional service, service, construction or item(s) of tangible personal property is/are **unique and how this uniqueness is substantially related to the intended purpose of the contract.**

Response – MRCOG publicly solicited the appropriation in RFP No. 2025-05 under Element 1. The RFP was posted on the MRCOG and Rio Metro website on September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2024, and closed October 11<sup>th</sup>, 2024. The RFP was advertised in the Albuquerque Journal, Valencia County Bulletin, and Rio Rancho Observer. The appropriation received zero responses. MRCOG reached out to the sponsor of the appropriation and was informed of the intent of the appropriation. Due to the lack of responses to the RFP, legislative language listed in Section III, and after discussion with the

Legislator on their intention of the appropriation, it has been concluded that the funds should be directed to Americans for Indian Opportunity, which has the capacity and expertise to fulfill the duties of the appropriation.

- VI. Explain why other similar professional services, services, construction or item(s) of tangible personal property **cannot** meet the intended purpose of the contract.

Response – MRCOG publicly solicited the appropriation in RFP No. 2025-05 under Element 1. The RFP was posted on the MRCOG and Rio Metro website on September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2024, and closed October 11<sup>th</sup>, 2024. The RFP was advertised in the Albuquerque Journal, Valencia County Bulletin, and Rio Rancho Observer. The RFP received zero responses.

- VII. Provide a narrative description of the agency’s due diligence in determining the basis for the procurement, including procedures used by the agency to conduct a review of available sources such as researching trade publications, industry newsletters and the internet; reviewing telephone books and other advertisements; contacting similar service providers; and reviewing the State Purchasing Agent’s vendor list. Include a list of businesses contacted (**do not state that no other businesses were contacted**), date of contact, method of contact (telephone, mail, e-mail, other), and documentation demonstrating an explanation of why those businesses could not or would not, under any circumstances, perform the contract; or an explanation of why the agency has determined that no businesses other than the prospective contractor can perform the contract.

Response – MRCOG publicly solicited the appropriation in RFP No. 2025-05 under Element 1. The RFP was posted on the MRCOG and Rio Metro website on September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2024, and closed October 11<sup>th</sup>, 2024. The RFP was advertised in the Albuquerque Journal, Valencia County Bulletin, and Rio Rancho Observer. The appropriation received zero responses. MRCOG reached out to the sponsor of the appropriation and was informed of the intent of the appropriation. Due to the lack of responses to the RFP, legislative language listed in Section III, and after discussion with the Legislator on their intention of the appropriation, which has the capacity and expertise to fulfill the duties of the appropriation.

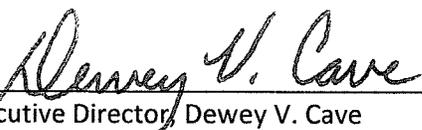
Certified by:

Date: 11-1-2024

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Chief Procurement Officer

Agency Approval by:

Date: 11-1-2024

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Executive Director, Dewey V. Cave



**LaDonna Harris, Comanche**  
Founder and President

October 22, 2024

**Eddie Tullis, Poarch Creek**  
Senior Vice President

Marisa Esquivel via email mesquivel@mrcog-nm.gov  
Mid-Region Council of Governments  
809 Copper Avenue, NW  
Albuquerque, NM 87102

**Ivan Posey, Eastern Shoshone**  
Vice President

Re: Sole Source Justification for Americans for Indian Opportunity;  
GRO Fund Professional Programs and Services;  
Providing Services for Engaging, Educating and Supporting Local  
Communities;  
Albuquerque Urban Indigenous Center

**Gilbert H. Thompson,**  
Mississippi Band of Choctaw  
Secretary/Treasurer

John Beaver,  
Muscogee Creek Nation

Dear Marisa:

Kate Cherrington, Māori

Americans for Indian Opportunity (AIO) is justified in a sole source award for the above referenced services for the following reasons:

Anathea Chino, Acoma Pueblo

Alexander Christakis, Cretan

Andrew Ebona, Tlingit

Valorie Johnson,  
Seneca/Cayuga/Eastern Cherokee

Grace McCullah-Ryan, Navajo

LeeAnn Muntz, Māori

Bentham Ohia, Māori

Teresa Peterson,  
Dakota Upper Sioux Community

Faith Roessel, Navajo

Terry Tanner,  
Salish/Kootenai Nation

- ✓ AIO has led the effort to launch an urban Indigenous Center in Albuquerque since 2016.
- ✓ AIO has engaged 34 Native led organizations and businesses in Albuquerque through the creation of the Native Leadership Collective (NLC) of Albuquerque which has been meeting monthly since 2029 with the foundational goal being the launch of an urban Indigenous Center in Albuquerque.
- ✓ AIO and the NLC have engaged over 2500 Native community members in structured dialogue in order to determine the need for an urban Indigenous Center and the possible scope of services a center may provide.
- ✓ AIO has secured additional funding to support the planning, creation and implementation of an urban Indigenous Center.
- ✓ AIO has developed relationships with and secured commitments from stakeholders outside of the Native community including local and state governments, tribes, non-Native organizations, and non-Native small and large businesses.
- ✓ AIO has the capacity to engage with key stakeholders in all stages of the development, planning, and implementation of plans for an Indigenous center.

James Washinawatok  
Menominee/Akweasne Mohawk

Judy Winchester.  
Pokagon Band Potawatomi



- ✓ AIO has in place the infrastructure to maintain ongoing communication and dialogue with the leadership of Albuquerque's Native organizations and businesses through the NLC of Albuquerque.
- ✓ AIO has and will utilize the proprietary systems software Indigenous Leaders Interactive System at all stages of the planning, development and implementation of the Albuquerque urban Indigenous Center which will ensure an Indigenous approach to the development, planning and implementation of a center in early 2025.
- ✓ AIO is at approximately 80% completion of this project.
- ✓ AIO is a Native woman led non-profit community organization. The AIO Board is 100% Native American. AIO has seven staff members and is 85% Native.

AIO is a 54 year old Native American non-profit organization based in Albuquerque, New Mexico. AIO envisions a world that celebrates the contribution of Native Americans, respects our right to be self-governing, and implements Indigenous values in a contemporary context for the good of the whole while advancing the rights of Indigenous peoples through Indigenous values-based leadership development, transformative community organizing, hosting collaborative action networks, and sharing Indigenous worldviews and positive contemporary Indigenous narratives.

AIO is a national organization that specializes in community capacity building and community organizing through an Indigenous values-based approach. For the last several years, AIO has taken the lead in building community amongst the Native peoples residing in the Albuquerque/Bernalillo County metro area and building the capacity of the community to create positive change. AIO's efforts will directly benefit Native American families in Albuquerque. AIO has a clear mandate from the Albuquerque Native American community to continue the planning, development and implementation of an Albuquerque urban Indigenous Center.

Urban Native youth and young adults can thrive when they are connected to community and are grounded in their cultural identity. When young people are engaged in community and culture, they are better able to contribute their *Medicine* (talents and personal strengths) to the whole. Experts agree that strong cultural identity instills pride and self-esteem which has a significant positive impact on education and career success. Urban Indian centers can provide direct support and cultural connection for Native youth and young adults.

Native peoples in Albuquerque are still directly impacted by colonization and the erasure of our culture. Native Americans living in the metro area make up 8.2% of the population (2020 Census). Yet, we are nearly invisible. For example, city officials currently use a 3% community count when determining appropriations for services. Nationally, at least 70% of AI/AN live in urban/suburban areas. This statistic is not by accident, but the result of federal policy to relocate Natives to the cities. Nearly every major city in the country has a long established and fully functioning urban Indigenous Center. Albuquerque has the largest percent of Native Americans than any other major U.S. city. However, Albuquerque does not have a centralized space or voice to facilitate systemic change, and we lack a true sense of community.

In 2016, AIO joined several Native-led organizations to catalyze a local movement to mobilize/organize the urban Indian community aimed at building communal power and to address the lack of a centralized space and voice for urban Indians. We held a series of community

engagements, over several years, involving more than 2,000 stakeholders. Consensus from the gatherings was for the convening organizations to move forward in establishing an “Indigenous Resource Center.” The community identified and prioritized expectations and with AIO’s leadership, the NLC was created and organized and will lead the community’s work.

Native Americans make up 10% of the Albuquerque Public Schools student body. The research is clear--Native students overall are not doing well in school. The latest APS Indian Education Program report demonstrates that Native students have the highest absentee rates and the lowest college enrollment rates. Only 58% of Native students graduate high school, compared to 70% statewide. Just 21% of Native students in APS have reached reading proficiency, 12% are proficient in math, and 24% in science.

More than 400 tribes are represented in Albuquerque. About 70% of APS students are from surrounding tribes located in New Mexico and 30% are from tribes outside the state. After Navajo and Pueblo, the largest represented tribal group is Lakota. The community has diverse socio-economic backgrounds, including a professional middleclass and folks who need assistance. Guided by community, Americans for Indian Opportunity (AIO) proposes to build the capacity of the Albuquerque urban Indian community through the formation of an intergenerational community engagement group and an emerging leaders development initiative for young adults—AIO’s Albuquerque Ambassadors Program, while striving to establish an urban Albuquerque Indigenous resource. As a result of our community-building activities, the community agrees and is poised to begin to develop a centralized voice and establish space for a variety of functions and to provide diverse resources. A resource center can advance the success of Native students and provide space to support the cultural, spiritual, economic, physical, mental, and educational wellbeing of Native Americans.

Through our work in collaboration with the NLC, AIO anticipates that a community-driven resource center will address challenges and provide opportunities and economic security for families. The resource center can establish a food bank. With a centralized place to gather and strategize, the resource could facilitate a policy agenda that can be shared with government officials that address issues, like clean water, climate change remediation, and equitable social services. Additionally, the center can be a hub for community broadband internet access.

AIO is directly accountable to the communities we partner with, the leaders we support, and our board of directors who represent their Indigenous constituencies. For this project, AIO will report to and be guided by the Native Leadership Collective of Albuquerque. The NLC is made up of the executive directors and owners of 34 Native-led organizations and Indian owned businesses. Our collective constituencies inform and hold accountable institutions and governments regarding the local Native American community.

The AIO Albuquerque urban Indigenous Center project is facilitating the creation of an Indigenous approach to community relationships, participation, and responsibility. AIO has supported a community-driven movement to organize and mobilize the Albuquerque Native community so that they will have the capacity to provide meaningful and effective support for urban Native families. Implementing Indigenous approaches, AIO has hosted a leadership development training for 12 emerging urban Indigenous leaders and established an intergenerational community engagement

team who will be a sustaining force that can provide vision and contribute community input to building an entity (an urban Indigenous resource Center) that demonstrates a sustainable structure. These efforts will help to strengthen community capacity, promote civic participation, and build political power. The organized and active community has resulted in the improved wellbeing of the community and increased skill in addressing current and long-term community needs and advocating for policies that promote the wellbeing of Native youth, build regenerative economies, and sustainable communities, and that defend Mother Earth.

AIO's *indigenized* approach has centered on building and strengthening deep and trusted relationships with and among community members and organizations—relationships that connect us beyond a moment of action. We strive to provide opportunities for individual and community transformation, support new leaders, build capacity, continuous community engagement and networking to avoid fragmentation, and process for reflection and evaluation.

Part of this indigenized approach includes the Indigenous Leaders Interactive System (ILIS). ILIS is a proprietary software system which uses Indigenous values and system sciences to make consensus-based decisions which affirms the value of diverse opinions, identifies underlying causes of complex issues, incorporates an Indigenous worldview and communal approach, and fosters ownership in collective outcomes.

At this time, AIO is the only Native American entity licensed to use this product.

We believe that AIO through our work with the NLC is the only organization/entity in Albuquerque capable of performing the services as outlined in the solicitation referenced above. The services requested are unique and require a unique approach to working with a very specific population. AIO meets those requests and requirements. AIO has an extensive record of delivering projects on time and within budget. It is in the best interest of the MR-COG and the taxpayers of Albuquerque/Bernalillo County and the State of New Mexico to award these funds to AIO.

Thank you for this opportunity to work with MR-COG. Please let us know if we can provide any further information.

In community,



Laura Harris  
CEO  
Americans for Indian Opportunity

# Albuquerque Urban Indigenous Resource (AUIR)

an **urban Indigenous center** that will serve the  
Native American population of the Albuquerque Metro Area



**75% of Native Americans  
live in urban areas**

**8.3% of the Albuquerque  
population is Native American**

Source: 2020 Census

**Driven by the COMMUNITY towards ACTION, we are  
planning for the resources needed to open our doors.**

"When we moved to Albuquerque, I sought out a place where my family could find community with other urban Indigenous families. Where we could find programs or services like what the Santa Fe Indigenous Center has to offer. We were disappointed that this did not exist - yet - in Albuquerque"  
-Tammie Touchine (Navajo)



**We are engaged with community through partnership with the Native Leadership Collective of Albuquerque (NLC), comprised of 31 Native-led nonprofit organizations and Native-owned businesses.**

**Through community engagements, feedback has been heard - and will continue to be heard as we take these crucial next steps to securing the resources that will ensure the wellbeing of our urban Native families.**

**We need your support!**



## VALUE

Applying Indigenous knowledge and implementing our core cultural values, Native peoples have the wisdom to find creative solutions to old problems, build resilient sustainable community, create regenerative economies, and take collective action to make systematic changes.

## MISSION

The Albuquerque Indigenous Resource will be a space to collectively reinforce a sense of community, reaffirm our cultural identity, and build community capacity to solve problems, influence policy, and ensure equitable access to resources for all our relatives. Harnessing the collective wisdom and power our community will enable all members to contribute their Medicine (personal strengths and talents) for the benefit of the whole.

### The Albuquerque Urban Indigenous Resource will:

- Provide space to come together as a community.
- Reinforce our cultural identity.
- Care for our relatives in need and ensure equitable access to resources through service navigation.
- Build community capacity to solve problems.
- Bring economic opportunity and jobs to our community.
- Be an influential presence at all levels of government.

**“Everybody has Medicine – our unique talents and personal strengths.”**

**-Ladonna Harris, Urban Native Activist (Comanche)**



### How you can support the urban Native community of Albuquerque?

1. Encourage your State Legislators to support AUIR's funding requests in the 2024 NM Legislative Session -both Capital Outlay the GROW NM Fund.
2. Thank them if they already support.
3. Educate other key decision makers about AUIR and the benefits of an urban Indigenous center for Albuquerque Native families.
4. Join us! It will take all of us to make AUIR a success and sustain it for future generations. To get involved, contact us through the information below:

**Americans for Indian Opportunity - (505) 842-8677 - [aio@aio.org](mailto:aio@aio.org) - [www.aio.org](http://www.aio.org)**