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Homecoming: Land Remediation and Buffalo Restoration in Texas

Application Date	5/31/2024		
Applying Organization	Texas Tribal Buffalo Project	Grant Type	Member Directed
Requested Amount	\$50,000.00	Project Name	Homecoming: Land Remediation and Buffalo Restoration in Texas
Contact Name	Lucille Contreras	Project Location (State or Territory)	TX
Contact Title	Chief Executive Officer & Founder	Project State/Province	TX
Contact Email Address	lucille@texastribalbuffaloproject.org	Project Multiple Locations	
Notes		Status	Submitted
		Created By	Lucille Contreras, 5/31/2024, 9:12 PM

Organization Details

Organization Name	Texas Tribal Buffalo Project	Annual Operating Budget	\$1,472,395.00
Applying Contact	Lucille Contreras	Tax Status/Organization Type	501c3 Organization
Staff Size	10	Main Phone	(512) 595-1584
Total Membership		Website Address	https://www.texastribalbuffaloproject.org
BIPOC-led	Yes	Address	FM 1296 Farm-To-Market Road Waelder, Texas 78959 United States
C-Suite Staff	100%		

Proposal Questions

1. Purpose/History Of Organization	The Texas Tribal Buffalo Project (TTBP) emerged in response to the need for healthy food and the revitalization of cultural and spiritual practices among Native Nations throughout Texas. Since the Fall of 2020, TTBP has been instrumental in providing opportunities for individuals to connect to their Native ancestry through cultural youth camps and leadership opportunities, cultural events and powwows, knowledge and resource sharing, business development	2. Final Success	When our project succeeds, it will result in the protection and remediation of 149.5 acres of land, providing ideal roaming ranges for a buffalo herd to engage in rotational grazing, thereby mimicking grazing patterns that restore native grasslands, and preserve biodiversity, soil health, and ecosystems.
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opportunities, and more, in addition to caring for and experiencing the healing presence of the Buffalo. Through a collaborative approach, we are engaging the community in the restoration of Buffalo, catalyzing the reclamation of land, language, food, and culture.

3. Location Details

TTBP is dedicated to a multifaceted mission intertwining the urgent need to address climate change with the restoration of cultural heritage, the revival of bison, the assertion of food sovereignty, and the preservation of ecosystems. As Indigenous peoples, our traditional food systems are deeply intertwined with our ecosystems, biodiversity, and cultural heritage. The 77 acres that TTBP currently stewards maintain a growing cultural herd consisting of 22 bison. Historically, bison served as the lifeblood of our communities, providing sustenance, shelter, and essential materials. Today, we continue to embrace bison as relatives, providers, and keystone species that promote grassland conservation, soil health, biodiversity, water retention, and reduce methane emissions.

We are working to protect the Carney tract in Wilson County (Floresville), Texas, which contains 149.5 acres of quality pastureland within historic Lipan Apache territory and the historic bison range. This property, in the same family since the 1880s and with intact mineral rights, is at high risk for development due to its proximity to San Antonio. The current landowner, eager to see the property protected, approached TTBP after reading about us in a publication by The Nature Conservancy. The Conservation Fund, in collaboration with the Texas Tribal Buffalo Project, proposes to acquire the Carney tract, lease it to TTBP, protect it with a conservation easement, and then sell the property to TTBP using the Buy-Protect-Sell structure.

By protecting this land, we will support Texas Indigenous Lineal Descendants across Texas, Oklahoma, and New Mexico, as well as our buffalo relatives. The Carney tract's preservation will increase access to bison for spiritual, mental, and physical health. Additionally, it will enable our educational programs to mature closer to the urban center of San Antonio, Texas where we can continue growing our happy and healthy herd.

4. Strategy & Timeline For Final Success

The Texas Tribal Buffalo Project (TTBP) is dedicated to the rematriation of land and the restoration of cultural heritage for Texas Indigenous Lineal Descendants (TILDs). By reconnecting TILDs to the buffalo (Iyane'e), we aim to heal historical traumas caused by forced relocations, land theft, and massacres. Through our efforts, we seek to restore the buffalo population, which in turn helps restore our families and communities. Our project goals and objectives are focused on expanding our land base, enhancing the buffalo herd, revitalizing cultural practices, expanding educational programs, fostering economic sustainability, and promoting climate resiliency.

Our strategy begins with the acquisition and protection of the Carney tract, 149.5 acres of quality pastureland in Wilson County, Texas. This land will support our growing herd and educational programs. We plan to secure the Carney tract through collaboration with the Conservation Fund, utilizing the Buy-Protect-Sell structure. Once acquired, we will build the necessary infrastructure, including fencing, water systems, and shelters for the buffalo herd. In tandem with these efforts, we will engage TILD communities in Texas, Oklahoma, and New Mexico to inform them of our expanded programs and opportunities.

Over the next five years, our timeline for achieving final success is structured to ensure steady growth and community integration. In the first year, we will focus on establishing the foundations of our project. This includes securing the land, building infrastructure, and conducting community outreach. By the second year, we will expand operations, beginning rotational grazing on the Carney tract to promote ecosystem health and increase buffalo births. We will also launch additional educational programs closer to San Antonio, making them more accessible to urban populations. Data collection and analysis will be implemented using Formstack and Salesforce to monitor ecosystem changes, buffalo health, and program participation.

In the third year, we aim to integrate our expanded operations with the broader community. We will start selling bison meat to local markets and schools, creating a sustainable income stream for

TTBP. Cultural events such as traditional harvest gatherings, youth camps, and training sessions for Indigenous farmers and ranchers will be hosted to strengthen community ties. Regular environmental monitoring and biannual analyses will be conducted to assess the progress of ecosystem restoration and herd health.

By the fourth year, we will evaluate our progress and refine our programs. An Indigenous evaluation consultant will compile comprehensive reports on project outcomes, including environmental, economic, and cultural impacts. This data will inform improvements in our educational programs, outreach strategies, and land management practices. We will also solicit feedback from TILD communities to ensure their needs and perspectives remain central to our efforts.

In the fifth year, our focus will shift towards scaling and sustainability. We will develop a strategic plan for further land acquisition and buffalo herd expansion, continuing our mission of resilience and kinship within Indigenous communities. Strengthening partnerships with local organizations, government agencies, and educational institutions will broaden our impact and reach. We will maintain and refine our regenerative agricultural methods to ensure the long-term health of our lands and buffalo.

The expected economic and recreational impacts of our project are significant. By selling bison meat and other products, we will create sustainable income streams that support TTBP's operations and benefit local economies. Our expansion will generate job opportunities in areas such as ranch management, education, and meat processing, contributing to local employment. The protected land will offer recreational and educational opportunities for community members and visitors, fostering a deeper connection to the environment and cultural heritage. Additionally, increased access to bison meat will enhance the physical, emotional, and spiritual health of TILD communities, promoting overall well-being.

The Texas Tribal Buffalo Project is committed to a comprehensive strategy that integrates land stewardship, cultural revitalization, economic development, and climate resiliency. Our timeline and objectives are designed to ensure the sustainable growth of our buffalo herd and the continued empowerment of Texas Indigenous Lineal Descendants. Through our efforts, we aim to create a lasting impact that honors our ancestors, supports our communities, and

	<p>5. Key Decision Makers</p> <p>Tribal Leaders: Leaders of Texas Indigenous tribes and communities who have a vested interest in the cultural and ecological aspects of the project. High likelihood, given the project's focus on reconnecting TILDs with their cultural heritage and natural resources. Tribal leaders have expressed support and are likely to support our initiatives that strengthen cultural ties and promote community health. Engagement Strategy: Host community meetings and consultations to ensure the project aligns with the needs and desires of the tribes. Messaging: Emphasize cultural reconnection, community health benefits, and the preservation of Indigenous heritage.</p> <p>Environmental and Conservation Organizations: Leaders and influencers from organizations focused on biodiversity, ecosystem preservation, and conservation of native species, such as the Nature Conservancy and the World Wildlife Fund. High likelihood, due to the shared goals of biodiversity conservation and ecosystem health. These organizations typically support projects that enhance ecological sustainability and have provided previous support. Engagement Strategy: Collaborate on joint initiatives and seek endorsements that underline the project's conservation merits. Highlight the project's role in maintaining biodiversity and promoting regenerative agricultural practices.</p> <p>Funding Bodies and Philanthropists: Decision-makers within foundations and philanthropic organizations that fund environmental and Indigenous-led projects. Moderate likelihood, contingent on demonstrating the project's potential impact on both environmental conservation and Indigenous community health and traditional lifeways. Highlighting successful precedents and potential benefits will be crucial. Engagement Strategy: Prepare comprehensive grant proposals and impact assessments to present the project's scope and benefits. Showcase the impact on environmental conservation, buffalo restoration, and Indigenous community revitalization.</p>	<p>preserves our natural heritage for future generations.</p> <p>6. Elevate Voices</p> <p>Indigenous peoples have been the leaders in lyane'e restoration, land stewardship, and preservation of our grasslands and plant species since time immemorial. The lyane'e (American Bison, Buffalo) are a keystone species and once ruled the southern plains and provided Native Americans living in Texas with food, homes, clothing, medicine, tools and other essentials of living. In an effort to starve Native communities into submission, the U.S. government initiated the policy of removal alongside an all-out military attack on lyane'e to destroy this mainstay of many Native communities on Turtle Island. The attack on the lyane'e populations forced economic dependence, dismantled food systems, and forced a cycle of generational poverty. The effects of their destruction are present today through disproportionate rates of poverty, unemployment, and health disparities that Native Americans experience across the US.</p> <p>The massacre of 60 million Buffalo in the 19th century nearly destroyed an entire Buffalo-based culture, diet, and economy that existed for millennia. However, our lyane'e relatives are experiencing a revitalization and are no longer considered an endangered species as their numbers have grown significantly over the years. As the lyane'e population grows, there is an opportunity to restore TILD's spiritual relationship, food sovereignty, and traditional lifeways. Traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) is Indigenous knowledge that preserves the interconnectedness of our ecosystem and lifeways, the relationship between plants, animals, and people. TEK has accumulated over millennia and been passed through generations. TTBP is building an infrastructure to support a resurgence in Indigenous life and foodways that promote health and vitality for the land the lyane'e occupy and to the people who utilize their resources.</p>
<p>7. Measurable On-Ground Outcomes</p>	<p>By December 31, 2026, expand the herd to Floresville, Texas, land base.</p> <p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secure new Full-Time staff positions. Construct a USDA-certified processing facility to be used for field harvest & voluntary inspection. Grow a happy and healthy herd by at least 15 buffalo. 	<p>8. Evaluate Your Progress</p> <p>To evaluate progress and success, TTBP's CEO and Ranch Manager will lead the implementation of our land acquisition, conservation, and regenerative herd management plans. Data will be collected monthly using Formstack, integrated into Salesforce for analysis, and reported biannually by an Indigenous evaluation consultant. We</p>

Measurement:
 Number of buffalo acquired.
 Acreage of land secured.
 Annual reports on health and growth of the buffalo herds.
 Annual reports on biodiversity, health of ecosystems, etc.

By December 31, 2026, establish partnerships to enhance access of buffalo meat in Indigenous communities.

Activities:
 Implement schedule of meat donations to the community.
 Participate in Business of Indian Agriculture training annually.
 Secure USDA contract to supply meat in schools and federally recognized tribes.

Measurement:
 Number/type of partnerships formed.
 Amount of buffalo meat provided to community partners.
 Feedback/testimonials regarding the impact of partnership/programming.

will track key indicators such as ecosystem changes, native grasses/plant growth, and lyane'e herd health, including vaccinations, births, and illnesses. The Ranch Manager will conduct regular site assessments to measure progress and impact. Additionally, the Executive Director will collect data from events, utilizing Formstack to manage attendance, contact information, and feedback. Post-event evaluations will inform future planning and outreach strategies, ensuring continuous improvement and greater engagement. Quarterly reports generated from this data will provide insights into event effectiveness, educational outcomes, environmental health, and herd health.

9. TCA Funding Plan

TTBP's journey began with the establishment of our headquarters in Waelder, Texas, where we have diligently stewarded a herd of 20 bison on our 77-acre ranch. In Waelde, TTBP has achieved significant milestones like training Indigenous farmers/ranchers, hosting ceremonial buffalo harvests, and conducting state-wide surveys. We are now certified to accept EBT benefits online, making us the sole bison caretaker/producer nationwide to offer this service and traditional foodway.

As we embark on the next phase of our growth, TTBP seeks support to expand our impact and rematriate ancestral homelands in Floresville, Texas. This expansion will allow our educational programs to grow near the urban center of San Antonio, Texas, establish a meat processing facility, and grow our herd. With a proven track record of success, we are poised to scale our impact and continue our mission of resilience and kinship within Indigenous communities.

10. JEDI Efforts and Impact

Through economic and social inclusion, TTBP centers equity for Texas Indigenous Lineal Descendants, Indigenous farmers and ranchers, Veterans, and community members who seek to reclaim and preserve their cultural traditions, restore their ancestral lands, and improve their overall well-being. TTBP certifications from the USDA, SNAP, and EBT ensure buffalo meat is accessible and affordable, thereby advancing equity and promoting food security within Indigenous communities across Texas. TTBP collaborates with the First Nations Development Institute to support future Indigenous leaders through annual Business of Indian Agriculture course offerings that cultivate a new generation of changemakers poised to drive sustainable economic growth and community development. TTBP fosters community engagement, cultural revitalization, and intergenerational knowledge sharing through initiatives such as cultural youth camps, leadership development, and traditional ecological practices workshops.

11. Confidential Items N/A

Other Relevant Application Details