



Sequoyah Fund

Business Development Survey Report

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SequoyahFund.org

Executive Overview

Sequoyah Fund is a non-profit community development financial institution that is certified by the US Treasury. Our mission is to provide training and resources to support entrepreneurship, small business expansion, affordable housing, and community development on the Cherokee Indian Reservation. We work in partnership with the Eastern Band of the Cherokees Tribe and other organizations in the community and beyond to achieve our mission.

Sequoyah Fund honors and pays respect to Sequoyah, one of the great leaders of the Cherokee people who provided the gift of knowledge and inspired others to share their knowledge. We embody the traditional values of the Eastern Band of Cherokees as well as the contemporary principles of the Cherokee people and others living on the Cherokee Indian Reservation.

In 2006, Sequoyah Fund worked with representatives from First Nations Oweesta Corporation, a national Native CDFI, to assist the organization in expanding our capacity to provide quality products and services to achieve our mission. One of our activities was to conduct a business development survey. The survey tool and process used was modeled after a successful survey conducted by Four Bands Community Fund, a Native CDFI serving the Cheyenne River Indian Reservation in South Dakota. We're grateful for the opportunity for the support from our colleagues and are very pleased with the outcome from our survey.

We asked people about the types of businesses and services they thought the Reservation needed more of—either seasonal or year-round. We asked them about their own interest in starting or improving a business and the top 10 services they thought would be most helpful in supporting them to do this. We also explored the need for money management skills.

The survey was widely promoted throughout the Cherokee area using the media, an open house, and a special drawing for prizes available to anyone who returned a completed survey. The prizes include: Palm Pilot, DVD Player, Surround Sound Home Theatre, IPOD, and more. An impressive number of completed surveys were returned by residents and businesses—128! And people who completed the surveys often provided additional comments and recommendations.

The findings summarized in this report not only document the need for new businesses and services on the Cherokee Indian Reservation, they confirm a desire by individuals to start or grow their own businesses. Sequoyah Fund will share the findings with members of the community and others who support community and economic development on the Cherokee Indian Reservation.

We're grateful to each and every individual who completed a survey. Your input is invaluable and it has already influenced our work. We invite others who were not able to respond to the survey to email, phone, or stop by our offices to share your thoughts.

*Nell Leatherwood, Executive Director
Sequoyah Fund*

Survey Results

Introduction

The Sequoyah Fund is an independent, nonprofit Native community development financial institution (CDFI). The organization evolved from a loan fund program of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. The program was managed by the business development department. A decision was made to take this loan fund program through a rigorous reorganization process and establish an independent Native CDFI that could receive CDFI certification from the US Treasury. The Sequoyah Fund obtained this certification in 2005. Sequoyah Fund's mission is to provide training, technical assistance, and resources to support entrepreneurship, business start up and expansion, and community development on the Cherokee Indian Reservation. Sequoyah Fund works in partnership with Cherokee Business Development and other organizations in the community and beyond to achieve our mission.

Responses

1. Prior Knowledge of the Sequoyah Fund

71.7% of the respondents checked that they had heard about the Sequoyah Fund prior to this survey. Respondents who knew of the Sequoyah Fund received the information from the following sources.

39.4%	Family, Friend, or Colleague
36.2%	Member of Sequoyah Fund's Staff
18.1%	Person Who Works for the Tribe
9.6%	Person Sequoyah Fund Served
7.4%	Community Meeting
6.4%	Sequoyah Fund Board Member
18.1%	Other – Additional sources of information identified by respondents include: Newspaper Articles; Work in the Same Building; Mountain Micro Fund

2. Main Sources of Information about Businesses, Organizations or Activities in the Community

The number one source for information was One Feather with almost 80% of the respondents selecting it as the place they go to get the majority of community information about the Cherokee Indian Reservation.

79.5%	One Feather
24.4%	Tribal Email
15.0%	Asheville Citizen Times
14.2%	Local Cable Station
12.6%	Smoky Mountain Times
7.9%	Smoky Mountain News
7.1%	Sylva Herald
8.7%	Tribal Newsletter
18.9%	Other – Additional sources of information identified by respondents include: Word of Mouth; Chamber of Commerce

3. Types of Businesses the Cherokee Indian Reservation Needs More Of

Respondents ranked “entertainment” as the number one most important type of business needed on the Cherokee Indian Reservation. Below is a summary of how respondents ranked all the options provided in the survey.

85.7%	Entertainment
83.3%	Clothing and Shoe Store
77.0%	Department Store
76.2%	Restaurant
75.4%	Furniture and Appliance
66.7%	Automobile Sales and Repair
63.5%	Electronics Sales and Repair
57.9%	Child Care
57.9%	Medical Services
54.8%	Elder Care
54.0%	Home Repair
49.2%	Dry Cleaner
33.3%	Home Cleaning
31.0%	Lawn Care
29.4%	Accounting
24.6%	Graphics/Print Shop
17.5%	Other (*)

4. Other Types of Businesses and Further Descriptions about Businesses Needed

Respondents were also asked to identify other businesses needed that didn’t appear on the survey list and to further describe any of the items they checked on the list. Overall, there was a desire for more businesses and services targeted at residents who live on the Cherokee Indian Reservation, businesses that are open year-round and after hours: “Not just fast, food, gas

stations, and motels.” People want to spend their dollars in Cherokee: “We are spending our income in other towns because of the lack of shopping.” They want stores that remain open after business hours. They want more things to do when the tourism season ends: “There isn’t anything to do in Cherokee during the off season.” They want fewer low-end gift shops: “No more junky gift shops.”

Entertainment was the top vote getter in the survey and respondents frequently went on to explain they want more options for families and for youth who live on the Cherokee Indian Reservation, not just options for tourists. They then provide a long list of examples of the types of entertainment options they’d like to see. Several respondents noted that improving entertainment options for residents can also be good for tourism. “More entertainment activities will influence visitors to extend their vacation.”

“Working at the Cherokee Welcome Center we get a lot of questions about where they can find a swim suit or sandals or maybe an item of clothing they forgot to bring. We also get questions about what they can do at night or possibly something like a water park or an amusement park for older kids and adults.”

The number one comment shared by respondents was their desire for more “nice restaurant” or “upscale restaurants.” They also want fewer fast food restaurants. Many respondents go on to identify their favorite chain restaurant or type of restaurant.

Further market assessment is needed to understand many of these issues better. For example, how many “nice” restaurants or additional entertainment venues will the market support? If the market can only support a “few” additions, what are the top preferences for the kind of food served or type of entertainment? What is the average price for a meal or for entertainment that people will pay? How often do residents think they’d patronize these new venues?

The following section provides the specific items cited by respondents as part of a series of three questions that were asked on the survey. The items have been grouped into several categories. An asterisk (*) or series of asterisks appear in front of items that were cited by multiple respondents as explained below.

- * = 2 responses
- ** = 3-4 responses
- *** = 5-6 responses
- **** = 6-10 responses
- ***** = More than 10 responses

Entertainment

***** More Entertainment Options for Residents (all ages)

** Bowling Alley

** Golf course

** Water Park

* Skating

* Putt Putt Golf

* Movie Theatre

* Public Swimming Pool (for all ages)

YMCA for Youth

Affordable Activities for Youth

Night Time Entertainment

Entertainment Center for Hot and Cold Weather

Demonstration Activities: Crafts, Archery, Native Sports & Culture

Martial Arts School

Options for People Who Don't Play Sports

Spa

Habitat Park

Dirt Bike Track

Natural Science Museum

Laser Tag

Horseback Riding

Guided Hiking Trips

Theme Park

Expand and Improve Santa'a Land

Music Venues (like Dixie Stampede)

Dance & Gymnastics School

Dancing and Cooking Workshops

Restaurants:

***** More Sit-Down/Nice/Upscale Restaurants

* Healthy Eating Places

Tea Rooms

No Buffets

Nice Bakery

Examples of Names or Types of Restaurants: Red Lobster, Olive Garden, Starbucks, Outback Steakhouse, Sonney's, Chick Filet, Chili's, Cracker Barrel, Seafood Restaurant, Sagebrush, Japanese, Fish House, Mexican Restaurant, Texas Roadhouse, Italian Restaurant, AppleBees, Lone Star Steakhouse

Department Store/Outlet Mall

*** Clothing, Basic Items, Shoes

*** Wal-Mart

** Outlet Mall

* More Higher End Shopping Options

* Fewer Craft or Gift Shops

* Sport Equipment Store

* Shopping Options like in Pigeon Forge and Gatlinburg

Target Department Store

Home Depot or Lowes

Hardware Store

Sports Uniforms

Place to Buy Blinds, Shutters, Lighting for Homes and Businesses

Health/Child Care Services

* Dental Services

* Drug Store/Pharmacy

* Child Care

Eyeglass Store

Elder Care

Urgent Care Services (better hours)

Better Medical Care Services (referrals for seizures, cancer, tumors, diabetes)

Family Medical Practice

Medical Supply Service (wheelchairs, walkers, etc.)

Housing/Real Estate/Household Services

- * Home Decorating Assistance
- Realtor
- Apartment Complexes or Other Public Housing
- Plumbing Services
- Electrical Services

Art, Gifts, Books & Magazines

- * Book/Magazine Store (not limited to a theme)
- Art Gallery
- Art Store
- Christian Gift Shop

Industrial/Business Complex/Exports

- Industrial Businesses
- Business Complex (at the mouth of Wrights Creek and US 19)
- Export Businesses

Technology

- Technology/Internet-Related Businesses
- State of Art Cable System
- Cable/Satellite Service
- Internet Provider

Other Misc. Goods and Services

- * Funeral Home
- * Pet Care/Grooming
- * Music Store
- * Car Wash
- * Motorcycle Shop (apparel and parts)
- *Local Attorneys (need expertise working with Tribe)
- * Radio Station (year-round)
- Detailer

Florist
 Barber Shop
 Shoe Repair
 Staffing Agency
 Travel Agency
 Kennel
 Cigar Store
 Natural Food Store
 High Quality Fabric Shop
 Tribal Owned Insurance Agency

5. Improving Money Management Skills

People were also asked about their interest in improving their money management skills. A total of 126 people responded to this question and 77% of them said they wanted better skills. Respondents were then asked about the types of money management areas where they would like to learn more about.

60.6%	Budgeting
29.8%	Banking
62.8%	Saving Money
48.9%	Reducing Debt
30.9%	Getting Credit
33.0%	Improving Credit
18.1%	Credit Counseling
26.6%	Understanding Your Credit Report
20.6%	Other - Additional types of information identified by respondents include: Upgrade Local Landscape; Credit; Help with the Purchase or Lease of Business; Basic Business Economics

6. Interested in Starting Your Own Business

People were asked if they'd like to start their own business and a majority (56.6%) of the 122 respondents indicated that they are interested in starting their own business. And 66.7% of those saying they were interested already have an idea established. A number of respondents went on to identify their ideas, but specific business ideas they shared are not being made public in this survey report. Instead, Sequoyah Fund will follow up directly with respondents to discuss their business ideas. It should be no surprise that many of the business ideas also appear on the list of businesses respondents identify as being needed in the community—shopping and restaurants options top the list.

7. Services Most Helpful in Starting or Improving Businesses on the Cherokee Indian Reservation

Individuals were asked to select 10 items from a list of items provided that they thought would be most helpful in starting or improving businesses on the Cherokee Indian Reservation and 123 people offered their ideas. The responses they gave are rank ordered below starting with the most selected items.

73.2%	Business Loan
72.4%	Financial Management
72.4%	Do a Business Plan
69.1%	Marketing Planning
69.1%	Budgeting
66.7%	Advertising
65.9%	Starting a New Business
54.5%	Employee Training
46.3%	Customer Service
46.3%	Time Management
45.5%	Quick Books/Accounting
43.1%	Business Coaching
43.1%	Tax Assistance
40.7%	Website Design
34.1%	Inventory Management
32.5%	Technology Support
31.7%	Sales Training
23.6%	Database Management
21.1%	E-Commerce
18.7%	Selling a Business
3.3%	Other – Additional types of assistance identified by respondents include: Upgrade Local Landscaping; Credit; Someone to Help Purchase or Lease a Location; Basic Business Economics

8. Business Loan Amount

People were asked to select among a range of loan amounts they anticipated needing to borrow to start or improve their business and 100 people (78.1%) of the total respondents completing the survey indicated a range they thought was needed.

13%	\$1,000 - \$10,000
15%	11,000 - 25,000
27%	26,000 - 50,000
31%	50,000 - 150,000
14%	>150,000

9. Other Comments or Recommendations

In the final question respondents were invited to offer any additional comments or recommendations that they thought would help Sequoyah Fund encourage a thriving and diverse economy on the Cherokee Indian Reservation—an economy composed of many different locally owned businesses, with more of these businesses operating year-round. Sequoyah Fund received suggestions from 57 of the survey respondents. A number of the ideas expressed are similar to ideas shared in previous questions in this survey—no junk shops, get a bowling alley, have stores stay open longer, more year-round attractions, more family oriented activities, better business training, and more services to help people manage their businesses.

A few of the new comments are reflected below:

- ∞ We need reasonable lease rates.
- ∞ Encourage businesses to advertise.
- ∞ Make the Cherokee area more business friendly.
- ∞ See what other state have and offer to their tourists.
- ∞ Make businesses more attractive on the outside
- ∞ Clean up the business property, plant flowers, and landscape.
- ∞ Enforce the no littering law.
- ∞ Businesses need to establish websites which can be used 24/7 to purchase goods and services.
- ∞ Promote better wages so local people would be encouraged to work at small businesses.
- ∞ It would be nice to have a land use plan for the business district with approved commercial development properties on the Rez.
- ∞ Offer classes for the contract negotiations for the small business owner.
- ∞ Give senior citizens free fishing permits to promote the area.
- ∞ Abolish the Business Committee. It is the single greatest hindrance to free enterprise. A significant portion of potential businesses don't want to ask the Chief, VC, Chairman, VC, and BIA bureaucrat for permission to start a business.

A few respondents expressed interest in working together with Sequoyah Fund and put in a good word for Sequoyah Fund's mission and accomplishments thus far:

- ∞ "I'm on the Cherokee Chamber of Commerce Board. We are striving to come up with ideas to increase year-round activity. We would love to work with the Sequoyah Fund and other tribal entities to do this."
- ∞ I'm glad this type of fund program is available to the community.
- ∞ I personally think that the Sequoyah Fund is doing a good job offering business help and training.
- ∞ Thanks for all the help so far that the Sequoyah Fund has given me!

Summary

Overall, survey results indicate that there is not only a need for businesses and services on the Cherokee Indian Reservation, but also enthusiasm among community members to start their own businesses. Sequoyah Fund appreciates the time respondents took to complete this survey and share their ideas about how Sequoyah Fund can best provide services to help people better work their way through the maze of business startup and expansion. Ideas shared will help Sequoyah Fund better understand ways to help small business owners create a better future for themselves and their families.