



## Research and resources for Tenth District tribal nations

by: Steven Shepelwich

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View of the Cherokee Cultural Pathway in Tahlequah, Oklahoma.

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The economic activities of Native Nations play a significant role in the American economy. Seventy-four Native Nations make their homes in the Kansas City Fed's seven-state District. In Oklahoma, for example, the Native American population as a share of total population is about seven times larger than in the nation as a whole<sup>[1]</sup>. The Kansas City Fed has a long history of engagement with tribal governments and Native American communities. It ensures that the Bank is responsive to community needs and considers them in its activities. The following are a few examples of what this engagement looks like in practice:

### Investment Connection

Investment Connection matches financial institutions, government, corporate enterprises and community foundations with organizations that have community and economic development proposals that seek an investment, grant or loan. Native American organizations regularly participate in the program.

- **Long-term deposit in Native-owned bank spurs investment in Habitat Denver.** The Colorado Housing Finance Agency's [long-term deposit with the Native American Bank](#) laid the groundwork for a \$5 million loan to renovate the headquarters for Habitat for Humanity of Metro Denver.
- **Sunflower Bank and Native CDFI connect to boost opportunities.** Sunflower Bank's [loan to Native Community Capital](#) supports below-market loans for projects that advance the small business, housing or physical infrastructure needs of tribal economies in New Mexico.

### Programs and resources

The Kansas City Fed works with community stakeholders to strengthen local economies and expand opportunities. This is often done through hosting trainings, facilitating convenings, and developing resources such as these:

- **Federal Reserve, partners helping meet credit needs of small businesses.** The Kansas City Fed brought together regional commercial banks, state economic development officials, small business owners and tribal representatives to learn how [the State Small Business Credit Initiative can be used in local communities](#).

- **A Borrowing Guide for Tribal Members.** Obtaining a loan to build, purchase, rehabilitate, refinance, or get a home equity loan on Indian tribal trust land can be a complex transaction. [This brochure](#) is intended to help tribal members navigate the process.

## Research

The Kansas City Fed conducts research on the regional economy to inform monetary policy as well as community development practice.

- **Oklahoma Tribal Area Economies: Rising Incomes, Falling Poverty.** [This analysis](#) outlines the economic progress made by Native Americans across Oklahoma over the past 10 to 15 years.
- **Oklahoma's Rising Labor Force Participation Driven Largely by Native Americans.** Oklahoma's increase in labor force participation since 2021 has been primarily driven by heightened [participation among the Native American population](#), in both metro and non-metro areas.
- **Beige Book Report: Kansas City.** The Community Development team interviewed representatives of Native Community Development Financial Institutions to inform the development of the [June 2025 Beige Book](#), a key input for monetary policy decisions.

## Endnotes

- [1] Wilkerson, Chad and Chase Farha. [Oklahoma Tribal Area Economies: Rising Incomes, Falling Poverty](#). January 7, 2025.
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### Steven Shepelwich

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Steve Shepelwich is a lead community development advisor for the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City in the Oklahoma City Branch Office. Shepelwich's work connects workers with jobs, improves the quality of lower-wage jobs, and helps institutions leverage the Community Reinvestment Act to support workforce development programs. He is currently partnering with the Atlanta Fed on the role of [public benefits](#) in supporting positive employment outcomes. Shepelwich began his community development career in the Peace Corps in Kenya as a small business advisor, then worked with other organizations in the region for six years. Before joining the Kansas City Fed in 2004, he worked for a Washington, D.C. consulting group assisting CDFIs, asset-building and economic development organizations. A Texas native, Shepelwich studied marketing as an undergrad at Texas A&M. A six-month internship with a rural development program in India sparked his interest in community development. Shepelwich received his master's degree from Michigan State University and attended the Graduate School of Banking at the University of Wisconsin. Shepelwich is active with Goodwill Industries and Rotary, part of a community disaster response team, and volunteers with Wildcare Foundation, Oklahoma's largest wildlife rehabilitation program. Shepelwich lives in Norman, Oklahoma, with his wife and two children. Highlights of his work include: ["Investing in America's Workforce."](#) Shepelwich hosted roundtables, the themes of which informed a national workforce development conference. [Engaging Workforce Development: A Framework for Meeting CRA Obligations](#), produced in conjunction with the Dallas Fed. [Small Business of Color Recovery Guide](#) to assist communities develop equitable development strategies. **About the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City** The Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City is one of 12 regional Reserve Banks that, along with the Board of Governors in Washington, D.C., make up our nation's central bank. We work in the public's interest by supporting economic and financial stability. The Kansas City Fed's territory includes Colorado, Kansas, western Missouri, Nebraska, northern New Mexico, Oklahoma and Wyoming. Our headquarters is in Kansas City, with branch offices in Denver, Omaha and Oklahoma City. The Kansas City Fed Community Development Department promotes economic development and public understanding that leads to progress for lower-income individuals and communities. Our focus areas include community development investments, digital inclusion, small business / entrepreneurship, and workforce development.