



## News Release

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A local economic development organization that focuses on asset development and self sufficiency was awarded two significant grants to promote small business development.

The Latino Economic and Development Center (LEAD) was awarded \$75,000 from the Northwest Area Foundation to work with the growing Latino and immigrant community in rural Idaho. The funding is to be used for a 15-month program to provide training and assistance to start-up businesses, improve access to credit, expand partnerships that will increase micro-loans to Latino small businesses, and develop networking opportunities. LEAD was created with the help of its fiscal sponsor, Partners for Prosperity, in response to challenges that Latino community members face in accessing mainstream financial resources related to small business development.

“Latino immigrants living and working in our region often have to work very hard to overcome language and cultural barriers in order to integrate their skills in the job market. That can make it hard to access the training and credit they need to start or establish a business. It’s even more difficult when they live in rural areas that are disconnected from mainstream financial institutions,” said Kevin Walker, President and CEO of Northwest Area Foundation. “This grant is designed to provide low-income Latinos with access to capital and training that will build sustainable prosperity,” noted Walker.

In addition to the grant awarded from the Northwest Area Foundation, LEAD was also recently included in a multi-state award from the U.S. Department of Commerce as part of the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP). The Mission Economic Development Agency (MEDA), served as the lead applicant for a national consortium that was awarded more than \$3.7 million to create a network of public computer centers across the nation. As part of that consortium, LEAD will receive \$154,560 to establish a computer center in Blackfoot over a three year period. The center will serve the needs of the Latino community and more specifically Latino micro-entrepreneurs, through public access of bilingual technology training. Although the center will be based in Blackfoot, it will provide access to surrounding rural communities in eastern Idaho.

This access to technology will help stimulate local economies by creating jobs and self-employment opportunities. All of the organizations that make up this consortium predominately serve Hispanic/Latino communities and provide bilingual/bicultural services. This award represents a major

investment in “Main Street” America, through a collaboration of high capacity, community-based institutions that have been on the front lines of rebuilding neighborhood economies.

Individuals who are interested in further information may contact Jayson Meline, Executive Director, Latino Economic and Development Center at (208) 782-3665 or 705-3290 or visit the website at [www.idaholead.org](http://www.idaholead.org).