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**EXECUTIVE ORDER
2025-07-CTH**

**EXECUTIVE ORDER CREATING THE CHEROKEE NATION OPPORTUNITY (ᏌᏍᏉᏍᏉᏍᏉ)
ZONE PROGRAM**

1. **AUTHORITY:** The Constitution and laws of the Cherokee Nation, including LA 04-02, “Calling for the Approval of a Trust Authority,” as amended.
2. **POLICY:** It is in the interest of the Cherokee Nation to increase the availability of private business capital across the Cherokee Nation and to encourage entrepreneurship and other strategies for private sector job creation and economic development. Cherokee Nation has been meeting this interest through programs and services administered by its Commerce Department, including through business loans issued by the Cherokee Nation Economic Development Trust Authority (CNEDTA) and through the provision of matching funds through the State Small Business Credit Initiative (SSBCI). Cherokee Nation has a further interest in targeting small business support programs to parts of Cherokee Nation with relatively high levels of poverty and low levels of capital investment. Increased capital investment and job creation in such areas may sustain rural or low-income communities, which include but are not limited to communities relatively rich in Cherokee culture, language and life ways. Existing and in some cases enhanced Cherokee Nation programs and services, under existing executive branch authority, can be leveraged to target support to these communities. These programs and services include Commerce Services and Career Services programs, over which the executive branch has broad authority. Among the Commerce Services is the administration of the SSBCI. Commerce Services also works with the CNEDTA, an independently governed board which provides a variety of small business loans, including micro-loans. Accordingly, Cherokee Nation Opportunity Zones program is hereby established.

3. Principles Guiding Creation of Cherokee Nation Opportunity (ᏌᏍᏏᏁᏍᏔᏅ) Zones (COZ),

COZ Incentives: Cherokee Nation Opportunity Zones (COZ) should include those areas of the Cherokee Nation with the highest rates of poverty and the lowest levels of private capital investment, observed in present and historical terms. Any meaningful targeting of resources requires geographical precision. Geographic precision requires definitional precision. Geographical equity, though not equality, must also inform any understanding of defining and therefore mapping COZs. The economic impact of communities adjacent to Cherokee Nation Reservation borders must inform the creation of COZs. A COZ definition and resulting map which spreads COZs over too wide of an area, or even the entirety of the Cherokee, risks diluting incentives meant for underdeveloped areas to areas where private capital access is relatively plentiful. Finally, COZ maps should ideally be the product of data, a relative analysis of that data across census tracts rather than additions or subtractions to the map based on subjective factors. COZs should include those areas of the Cherokee Nation reservation that by multiple measures are economically “struggling,” in relative and historic terms. Against the backdrop of these principles, the COZ program should include:

a) Basic geographic unit:

- i. United States Census Bureau Census Tracts within the Cherokee Nation Reservation and contiguous counties, provided that
 1. Each county within the Cherokee Nation Reservation and contiguous counties includes at least one COZ.

b) Non-exclusive list of measures which may be considered *in total, in combination or in the alternative*, in defining COZs

- i. U.S. Census Bureau poverty statistics and analysis.
- ii. Income relative to median household income.
- iii. USDA poverty statistics and analysis.
- iv. Relative degree of Cherokee language and culture endangerment.
- v. Relative levels of private capital investment for a representative time period.
- vi. Population outmigration

c) Non-exhaustive lots of incentives to be considered to support COZs


- i. Lower interest rates
- ii. Adjusted borrowing thresholds
- iii. Permitting non-Cherokee Nation citizen access to resources in order to lower barriers to private investment.
- iv. Incentives or lower barriers to combining multiple Cherokee Nation Commerce programs and services.

- v. Targeted public outreach and small business assistance resources.
 - vi. Career Services support for targeted workforce development.
 - d) **Targeted COZ Public Investment Projects to support economic development and job creation:** The COZ program should identify opportunities within COZs for public investment supportive of economic development, including but not limited to the construction of government supported facilities for third party lease to lower barriers to capital investment. Such projects should ordinarily leverage CNEDTA and SSBCI program resource. Such projects should include two pilot communities: Cherry Tree and Marble City.
4. **Exhibit A- The Inaugural COZ Program and Map:** Attached to this Order as Exhibit A is the inaugural COZ program and map, based on the Principal Chief's memorandum of November 16, 2025, and the responsive communications from the Secretary of State, the Senior Advisor to the Principal Chief and the Executive Director of Commerce of November 19 and December 12, 2025. The Opportunity Zone criteria and resulting map reflected in Exhibit A consists solely of high poverty analysis, thereby utilizing some, but not all, of the factors which may be considered for future criteria / map revisions in the future as we collect more data concerning impoverished counties. Exhibit A shall remain in effect unless and until revised by the COZ Steering Committee. To effectuate the purposes and policies of this Act, the program should be immediately implemented, with the caveats that the:
- a) Treasurer of the Cherokee Nation shall draft for submission to the Council of the Cherokee Nation a budget modification for CNEDTA of approximately \$5 million for FY 2026 for the purposes of supporting the "Targeted COZ Public Investment Projects" pilot sites at Cherry Tree and Marble City as reflected above and in Exhibit A and budget modifications of no less than \$500,000 but not to exceed \$2 million in FY 2026 to increase funds available for loan through the Economic Development Trust Authority.
 - b) Executive Director of Commerce develop policies and procedures to administer the COZ program and, no later than December 31, 2025, submit for approval relevant policy and procedure changes to CNEDTA Board of Directors, for CNEDTA independent consideration of such changes.
5. **COZ Steering Committee:** The COZ Steering Committee is established to conduct an annual review of the structure and efficacy of the COZ program, including a review of COZ criteria and the resulting map. Their review should include recommendations as to budget modifications to effectuate the purposes and policies of this order. Their review and recommendations should issue no earlier than 90 days or no later than 90 days from the last day of the fiscal year. Absent the

approval of recommending changes by the Principal Chief, Exhibit A remains in effect indefinitely. Steering Committee members, or their designees or proxies, are:

- a) Secretary of State
- b) Senior Advisor to the Principal Chief
- c) Executive Director of Commerce

6. **Transparency:** Although the COZ Steering Committee an executive branch advisory group and not a public body within the meaning of the Cherokee Nation Freedom of Information Act, its review should be submitted to the Principal Chief and the Speaker of the Council within 30 days of issuance and thereafter made available for public inspection on Cherokee Nation's website: cherokee.org
7. **ORDER:** The Cherokee Nation Opportunity Zones Program is established, subject to a period of 30 days for the adoption of relevant policies, procedures, outreach materials and submission of initial budget modifications to Council for consideration.
8. **EFFECTIVE DATE:** This Order is effective immediately on this 19th day of December 2025 and remains in effect until revoked.



Chuck Hoskin, Jr.
Principal Chief
Cherokee Nation

**Cherokee Nation Opportunity (ᏌᏍᏏᏉᏍᏔᏅ) Zone Program
December 2025**

I. Cherokee Nation Opportunity (ᏌᏍᏏᏉᏍᏔᏅ) Zones

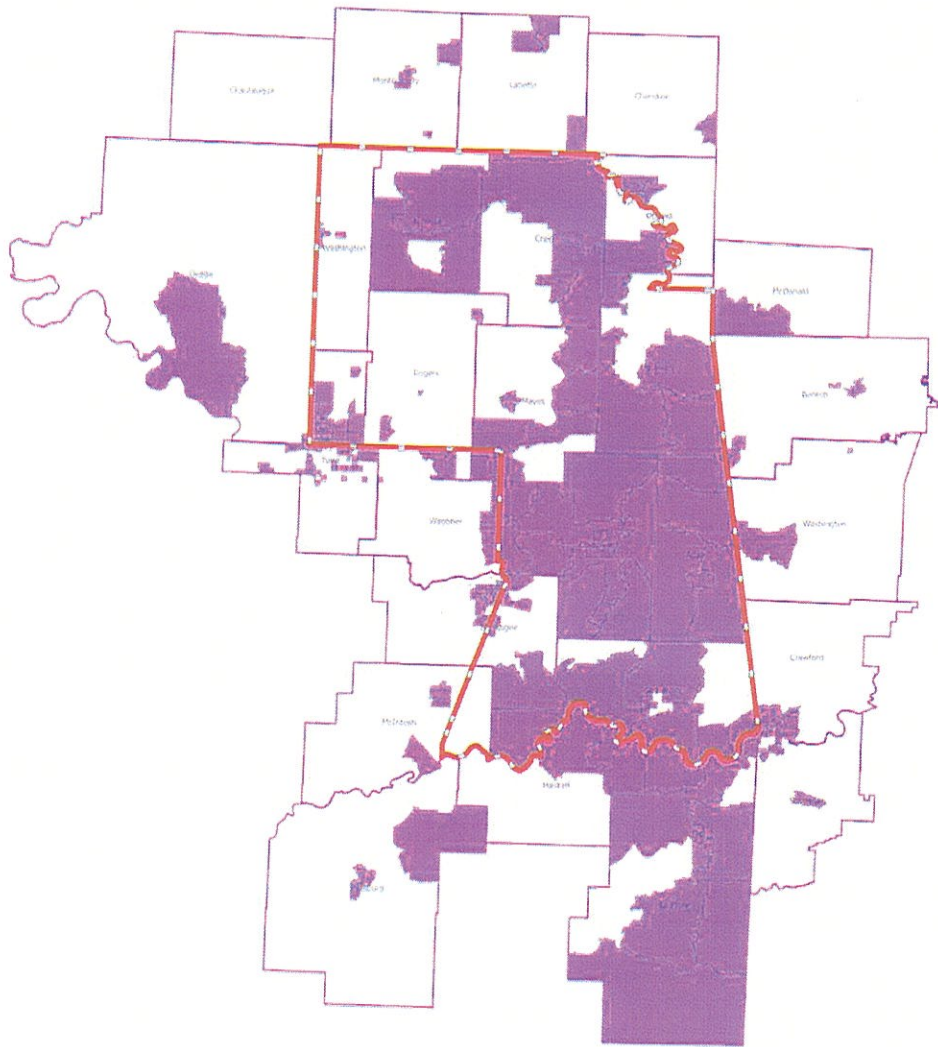
- a. A program to leverage existing Cherokee Nation Commerce and Career Services programs and services to geographic areas of the Cherokee Nation and contiguous counties of relatively high poverty and low capital investment.

II. Opportunity Zone Criteria

- a) United States Census tracts within the Cherokee Nation and contiguous counties which, as of December 19, 2025, are relatively high poverty census tracts as evidenced by any of these factors:
 - 1. Exceeds 19% of reported poverty by the United States Census Bureau, Economic Development Administration
 - 2. Is all census tracts within a “persistent poverty county” as determined by the United States Department of Agriculture.
 - 3. If any county within the Cherokee Nation or contiguous counties thereto lack a census track qualified under Nos. 1 or 2, above, the single census tract with the highest level of poverty within that county.

- a. **Opportunity Zone Map:**
(See next page)

EXHIBIT A Executive Order Establishing Cherokee Nation Opportunity Zones, EO-07-CTH,
December 19, 2025



- Cherokee Nation Reservation
- Census Tracts
- Contiguous County

Map of Cherokee Nation Reservation and Contiguous Counties. The map shows the Cherokee Nation Reservation and the surrounding contiguous counties. The map is for informational purposes only and does not constitute a legal document.

III. COZ Small Business Support incentives and Outreach

Cherokee Nation Opportunity Zone Small Business Incentives				
	CNEDTA Micro Loans (< \$25K)	CN Opportunity Zone Program Micro loans (< \$25K)	CNEDTA/SSBCI Small Business Loans (\$25K to \$5M)	CN Opportunity Zone Program Small Business loans (\$25K to \$5M)
Owner Equity Contributions	15% equity contribution; can be sweat equity	No required equity contribution; 100% project financing	10% equity contribution	No required equity contribution; 100% project financing
Loan Term	Maximum 5 years	Maximum 7 years	Maximum 15 years (up to 20 years amortization)	Maximum 15 years (up to 20 years amortization)
Interest Rate	CNEDTA Base Rate (fixed)	2% below CNEDTA Base Rate (fixed)	CN Base Rate, plus 1% to 3% (based on risk; adjustable annually after initial 3-year fixed)	CN Base Rate, plus 0% to 2% (based on risk; fixed)
Interest Rate - Successive Loans (after first CNEDTA loan)	CN Base Rate (fixed)	2% below CN Base Rate (fixed)	CN Base Rate, plus 2% to 4% (based on risk; adjusted annually after initial 3-year fixed)	CN Base Rate, plus 0% to 2% (based on risk; fixed)
Investment Area	14 counties of CN	CN Opportunity Zones	CNEDTA – 14 counties of CN; SSBCI - nationwide	CN Opportunity Zones
Borrowers	Federally recognized tribal citizens residing <i>and</i> business operating the in the 14 counties of CN	U.S. citizens residing <i>or</i> business operating in a CN Opportunity Zone	CNEDTA – federally recognized tribal citizens residing <i>and</i> business operating 14 counties of CN; SSBCI – U.S. citizens	U.S. citizens residing <i>or</i> business operating in a CN Opportunity Zone
Income Limits	Low to moderate households (< 80% county median income)	No income limits	No income limits	No income limits
Training and Technical Assistance	One-on-one assistance across the 14 counties of CN	Onsite training in CN Opportunity Zones	One-on-one and group training in the 14 counties of CN	Onsite training in CN Opportunity Zones
Payment Deferrals	No payment deferral options	6 months interest-only payments (if warranted)	6 months interest-only payments (if warranted)	6 months interest-only payments (if warranted)
Career Services On the Job Trainees (OJT)	Limited access to CN OJT in 14 counties of CN	Ready access to CN OJT within CN Opportunity Zones	Ready access to CN OJT in 14 counties of CN	Ready access to CN OJT in CN Opportunity Zones, including outside the CN reservation

IV. COZ Public Infrastructure Projects

a. **Definition:** Infrastructure, including facilities, which:

- i. Primarily serve the purpose of supporting economic development or employment within a Cherokee Nation Opportunity Zone *and is*:
 - 1. Constructed by Cherokee Nation or its entities on real property owned by Cherokee Nation or its entities, **or**
 - 2. Constructed by an entity over which Cherokee Nation or its entities exercise substantial control over the entities' governance, including but not limited to by the authority to designate governing body members.

b. **FY 2026-2027 Pilot Projects**

- i. **Cherokee Nation Industrial (Cherry Tree):** Construction of a facility or facilities at the Cherokee Nation Industrial Park, Stilwell, OK (Cherry Tree), through an estimated \$2.5 million CNEDTA and an estimated \$2.5 million SSBCI loan match to Cherokee Affordable Housing (CAH), a non-profit entity affiliated with Housing Authority of the Cherokee Nation, for the purpose of CAH manufacturing modular homes or housing components, and/or conducting building trades education programs and/or providing office space for a lessor or other partner to operate a "Cherokee Nation Industrial Park Authority."
 - ii. **Marble City:** Construction of a facility or facilities at Marble City, OK, through an estimated \$2.5 million CNEDTA loan and an estimated \$2.5 million SSBCI loan match Cherokee Affordable Housing (CAH), a non-profit entity affiliated with Housing Authority of the Cherokee Nation, for the purpose of operating a warehouse and or office space for and under an agreement with HACN and providing space for a third party lease for retail grocery and vehicle fuel operations and/or programs to address food insecurity.
- c. **Future Projects:** Future projects may be determined by the Principal Chief, provided he or she provided written notice of intended projects to the Speaker of the Council for a comment period of no less than 45 days prior to construction.