
AK-CHIN INDIAN COMMUNITY



Project Title: Ak-Chin Community Economic Empowerment Project

Award Amount: \$177,651

Type of Grant: Social and Economic Development Strategies

Project Period: 9/30/2004 – 6/30/2006

Grantee Type: Tribe

PROJECT SUMMARY

- 1 job created
- 20 elders involved
- 10 youth involved
- 1 person trained
- \$143,214 in resources leveraged
- 9 partnerships formed
- 3 codes developed

BACKGROUND

The Ak-Chin Indian Community is a federally-recognized tribe that governs the Ak-Chin Indian Reservation, 36 miles south of Phoenix. Current tribal enrollment is 729 members and almost 50 percent of the Tribe's population is under 21 years of age. In recent years, income levels have improved, but continue to be well below the local and national averages. Educational levels have also improved substantially, creating a need to provide employment opportunities to a younger and more skilled population.

In 2003, to meet the needs of the growing Community and to maximize their economic opportunities, the Ak-Chin Tribal Council adopted a General Plan. This Plan recommended removal of Ak-Chin

agricultural lands from agricultural production for commercial use. The Plan had other goals which this Project proposed to address.

PROJECT PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The Ak-Chin Community Economic Empowerment Project's four objectives focused on developing Ak-Chin's chief asset – its expansive and geographically advantageous land base. Unfortunately, the Project suffered a late start due to a four-month delay in hiring the Economic Developer – the principal responsible for grant administration and implementation. Upon his successful hire, the Economic Developer faced a steep learning curve since he was not an enrolled tribal member and not privy to the recent development decisions of the Ak-Chin Tribal Council.

The first objective was to create an Economic Development Model to identify the economic needs of the Ak-Chin people and provide a manual for the generation of revenue to fund infrastructure, construction and business development on Ak-Chin lands. Since few prototypes for the economic development in Indian Country exist, the Economic Developer pursued numerous partnerships, conducted research, and enrolled in a university course which

delayed the Project's progress. The Project also encountered difficulties gathering supporting statistics due to the reluctance of a few Tribal programs that feared disclosing sensitive information on educational achievement and income would portray them negatively. Despite these delays and setbacks, the Project presented the Economic Development Model to the Ak-Chin Community Council and it was approved in September 2006.

The second objective was to create conceptual Master Plan designs for the commercial and public use areas of Ak-Chin lands. The Project consulted with the community, incorporating their comments into the designs. The Council approved the Commercial Master Plan design for 260 acres and 1.5 million square feet of retail space. The Project presented the Public Use Master Plan to the Council and it was approved in June 2006.

The third objective was to create a Business Board Plan defining procedures for handling business matters on Ak-Chin lands. The Council approved the Business Board Plan which would control the development of Ak-Chin tribal enterprises (i.e., Kui Veco Enterprises). At the Project's conclusion, they were commencing the search for and appointment of Board members.

The fourth objective was to detail the expansion of Tribal revenue-generating services. The Enterprise Plan, in a departure from the original Work Plan, was not completed as a stand-alone product, but instead was included in the Economic Development Model. This was due to the Council's reluctance to disseminate financial information of tribal enterprises.

PROJECT OUTCOMES AND IMPACT ON COMMUNITIES

The Project enabled the development of key plans and designs to lay infrastructure in

designated areas. The development of Ak-Chin lands is anticipated to bring 7,000 jobs to tribal members and the surrounding population. Ak-Chin members will have the opportunity to become entrepreneurs. New businesses have the potential to provide local retail services and existing tribal services will have the opportunity to become tribal enterprises serving the Ak-Chin community.

The Project positively influenced the Ak-Chin Tribal Council. The creation of a Business Board independent from the Tribal Council spurred some Ak-Chin government officials to enroll in a tribal leader's economic development seminar.

Key dialogue has emerged from the Project's continued consultation and involvement with the community. Despite rising educational levels within the tribe, there are concerns that rapid economic development will leave tribal members assigned to menial tasks. James Cadena put this anxiety more succinctly, "We don't want our people mopping floors." The Project addressed this concern by including an entrepreneurial program, yet there is acknowledgement that this program will not ground all fears. Therefore, the Project included within the Economic Development Plan a strategy to direct a portion of the financial gains into social development programs, including expanding current social services available at the Community Center and forming a scholarship fund for tribal members.

Overall, there is a keen sense of excitement and anticipation within the community. Bart Smith brimmed with enthusiasm when he declared, "Wait until you see this place in five years."

DINE BE IINA, INC.



Project Title: Sheep is Life
Award Amount: \$303,438
Type of Grant: Social and Economic Development Strategies
Project Period: 7/1/2003 – 6/30/2006
Grantee Type: Native Non-Profit

PROJECT SUMMARY

- 2 jobs created
- 210 youth involved
- 1,070 elders involved

BACKGROUND

Diné bé iiná, Inc. is a non-profit organization that is working to restore the Navajo Churro sheep and to revive the Navajo's historic self-sufficiency on sheep, wool, and fiber arts. The Navajo acquired the Churro over 300 years ago, and they became an important part of the Navajo economy and culture. A series of federally-sponsored flock reductions and cross-breeding decimated the Navajo flocks until the Churro sheep nearly disappeared. Restoration of the breed began in 1991 when the Churro sheep were brought back to the Navajos. At the time of the grant application, the sheep's numbers had increased by almost 200 percent.

Although there was an increase in stock, the financial gain derived from the sheep remains small. The community's concern was the sustainability of the Navajo sheep culture.

PROJECT PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The "Sheep is Life" (Project) purpose was to develop infrastructure for processing and adding value to the Churro sheep and their derivative products on the 27,000 square mile Navajo reservation. To achieve this, the Project developed an ambitious plan that included four unique goals, 17 objectives, and numerous related activities.

The first goal was to initiate the Project by hiring staff and setting up a Project office. Although the Project achieved this goal, on-going project administration presented unanticipated challenges. During the three-year Project, there was some Board of Directors turnover and every change required Project staff to spend time orienting the new Board member about the Project. The larger challenge was due to the geographically-extensive area that the Project targeted. As a result, travel for Project participants was difficult. The Board had difficulty convening and getting Project updates and this frustrated both staff and Board members. The distance was also blamed for meetings, workshops and presentations that were not as well attended as had been hoped. The Project's partners were also unable to devote as much time to the Project as originally planned. The

Project worked to overcome this challenge by planning further in advance for events and assisting with travel. The two-person staff could not cover such a large geographic area characterized by unpaved roads and a poor communication infrastructure.

The second goal was to build capacity of Diné pastoralists, fiber artists, youth and community by hosting workshops, seminars, and discussion forums. The Sheep is Life Fairs held hands-on demonstrations of the different processes including shearing, wool processing, dying, spinning, and weaving. Youth learned how to properly care for the sheep and some youth have started their own herds. In addition, some young men, introduced to weaving by the elders, are now artisans.

The third unique goal was to connect the Project's participants with resources and create a network by initiating a shepherds' association, identifying sources of materials and equipment for fiber artists and developing a list of organizations and agencies that can assist the Diné pastoralists and fiber artists. The fourth goal was to foster micro-enterprise and business development by establishing a pilot artisan market and demonstration site in Tsaile, increasing financial literacy of the Project's participants, and implementing a sustainable pilot-wool processing project. There is no documentation indicating whether these objectives were met.

PROJECT OUTCOMES AND IMPACT ON COMMUNITIES

There have been many articles in Tribal and local newspapers highlighting and praising the Project. At the end of August 2006, the Project Director, whose position had officially ended, was in San Francisco collecting donated Churro sheep for distribution to other community members. This reflects the high level of commitment to the Project and its continued success.

The Project benefited the fiber artisans who discovered niche markets that were previously unknown. The Project also positively impacted the Navajo families who worked together to improve the sheep stock and welfare – reinforcing traditional Navajo values. The knowledge gained from the Project workshops and presentations enabled the fiber artisans to increase the value of their Churro products. The market value for Churro wool prior to this grant was five cents per pound, increasing to \$2.50 per pound by the grant's end. The fiber artisans' businesses are now able to sustain themselves because this particular fiber is cultivated from a rare breed.

Additionally, the Project has had a positive impact on the youth and elder fiber artisans. The two groups have gained immensely from the intergenerational activities this Project encouraged. Elders shared their knowledge of traditions and cultural ways with the youth. Some of their teachings included the gathering and preparation of traditional food. Using Churro sheep as a traditional food product helped improve their diets and may assist in lowering the diabetes rate. Youth also learned how to properly care for the sheep and about the medicinal value of plants – key components in the Navajo culture. This Project created intimate and unique intergenerational events.

The Project also positively impacted the environment. The communities learned how to sustain and manage the land in a culturally-appropriate way. The pastoralists moved the sheep according to cultural traditions – rotating grazing locations and then herding them back to corrals. The Churro's hooves picked up natural seeds and replanted seeds allowing plants to be reintroduced into the new ecosystem. Some participants are now growing these berries for consumption and for wool dye.

NATIVE AMERICANS FOR COMMUNITY ACTION, INC.



Project Title: The Ray of Hope Project

Award Amount: \$92,809

Type of Grant: Social and Economic
Development Strategies

Project Period: 9/30/2004 – 6/30/2006

Grantee Type: Native Non-Profit

PROJECT SUMMARY

- 1 job created
- \$3,325 in resources leveraged
- 70 youth involved
- 10 elders involved
- 4 partnerships formed
- 3 Native American consultants hired

BACKGROUND

Native Americans for Community Action, Inc. (NACA) is a non-profit human services agency that orients its programs and services to the health and wellness needs of Flagstaff's urban Native Americans.

Nationally, Native American youth aged 12 to 17 years have the highest rates of alcohol and substance abuse of all population groups. NACA and local partners (Flagstaff Medical Center and the United Way of Northern Arizona) concluded that alcohol and substance abuse is increasing among Flagstaff's youth. While NACA offered substance abuse prevention and education services to Native youth in first through eighth grade and to adults, programs serving Native teenagers in Flagstaff were non-existent.

PROJECT PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The Ray of Hope Project's purpose was to assist Flagstaff's Native teenagers in developing positive relationships with their families and peers and in practicing healthier lifestyles. The Project's first objective was to complete 60 screening and intake assessments (i.e., individual interviews) of court-ordered or self-referred youth. The Project completed 70 intake assessments from Juvenile Court Services of Cococino County and Kinlani Dorm referrals. From these assessments, the Project formulated 67 individualized treatment plans.

The second objective was to provide culturally-appropriate outpatient substance abuse counseling and treatment, estimating that 70 percent of the screened and assessed clients would complete their plans. By the final quarter of the project, 38 clients had completed their plans and 13 active cases neared completion – a 76 percent success rate. In-home counseling was not completed as originally anticipated due to the Project's under-estimate of personnel required for in-home counseling.

The third objective was to provide continuing care and follow-up to clients who completed outpatient treatment. The Project

expected to provide 17 Native youth with follow-up care upon the conclusion of their primary treatment. By the final three months of the Project, 14 clients had been provided continuing care with no active cases pending.

The fourth objective was to offer community education and prevention activities. For prevention, the Project conducted Talking Circles with a Navajo medicine man twice a week. For community education, the Project held family nights quarterly. Family night activities included a traditional Native American dress fashion show, potlucks, a Christmas dinner, and presentations on Navajo family dynamics and parenting techniques. The quarterly activities were well-attended.

The fifth objective was to work with youth and their families to strengthen the family by offering family-oriented activities and parent-training. Most of these events were lightly attended, although a weekend rafting excursion was a particular success. To complete this objective as originally intended, the Project requested, and ANA granted, a no-cost extension through June 2006 to stage a family conference at the Project's conclusion celebrating Project success. They expected over 100 attendees, with four generations committed to attend.

PROJECT IMPACT

NACA waived their standard \$40 screening and assessment fee to reach out to the most marginalized clients. This was an effective exercise as NACA exceeded its target number for the first objective. In addition, the Project reached out to the University of Northern Arizona's School of Social Work. Students were brought in to assist with assessments and treatment plan compliance, providing valuable experience for future careers in their chosen field. This enabled the Project to successfully meet its second and third objectives.

The inclusion of traditional activities in client treatment plans also appears to have been a valuable decision, as the Talking Circles were well attended and the sweat lodges so popular that the enrolled Native youth built an additional lodge to accommodate all. During exit interviews, youth shared that they are more self-confident, specifically in dealing with peer pressure. Finally, by incorporating activities to strengthen family bonding, the Project proved that a strong social network is a preventative and curative measure to substance abuse problems.

Flagstaff now has a successful option for youth referrals, an option that did not previously exist. The Project's success has compelled NACA to commit to continued funding upon the completion of the ANA funding period, ensuring its sustainability.

The Juvenile Court Services of Cococino County and the Kinlani Boarding School, will continue to have a culturally-appropriate substance abuse program available. Antoinette Jensen, Dorm Manager of the Kinlani Boarding School, stated "This program has been a lifeline for us. There was a large gap before this program and it is one that has been filled." Sam Tso, a Navajo medicine man explained the reasoning and approach behind the Talking Circle, "I teach traditional values through traditional stories. Most of these children did not have the opportunity to hear these stories from their families. So I bring life back to their culture and give them the means to help them find their way."

"NACA is one of my first calls because this program works for the teenagers that come through my doors... Without this program, there would be a huge problem."

David Howard,
Juvenile Court Services, Cococino County