

Environmental Grantee Best Practices: Advice from Previous Grantees

From 2006 to 2012, ANA conducted on-site impact evaluations with 47 Environmental Regulatory Enhancement (ERE) grantees throughout the continental U.S. and Alaska. During these visits, grantees shared their best practices to pass along to current and prospective grantees. The advice below comes from a range of tribes, tribal consortia, and Alaska Native villages, most of which met or exceeded ANA project objectives and had a significant impact on their communities. We strongly recommend applicants follow the guidance in the Funding Opportunity Announcement to which they are applying, but provide the following as the opinions, experiences, and suggestions of previous grantees:

Project Planning and Preparation

- Conduct thorough planning and research, and hold a lot of meetings, before the project begins
- Keep your objectives doable and focused
- Set aside a month at the beginning of the project to get your bearings, give yourself time to learn about your project before starting, and review other comparable plans
- Have documentation forms pre-made and readily available
- Get information from other grantees who have done similar projects; call or talk to other people and take advantage of the ANA grantee meeting

Project staff on the “Skokomish Tribe Environmental Research Project” from 2007-2009 recommended: “Build partnerships with other organizations, utilize other resources from the tribe, and share information with your Tribal Council.”



Community Involvement

- Consult the community before implementing anything; leave preconceived notions of how you think things should be done at the door, and allow the community to shape the project to ensure buy-in
- Develop real relationships with your communities, not just superficial relationships to expedite your needs
- Work with kids to ensure positive attitude changes are maintained in the next generation
- Use environmental community surveys to put pressure on tribal members to act on concerns they have

Project Management

- Keep grant files organized, with both paper and electronic copies of all documents used and developed
- Keep track of in-kind on a quarterly basis
- Establish timelines and stay on top of time management by regularly reviewing the Objective Work Plan
- Have separate administrative staff and finance staff to stay organized with reporting and project management; have a director that is dedicated to the programmatic side
- Maintain a feeling of flexibility, so if a side task comes up that seems really worthwhile you can adjust the work plan along the way
- Submit things that need to be reviewed by the Tribal Council early to allow time for it to be approved
- Stay on top of data collection, entry, and organization; data management is the big one

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Partnerships

- Maintain coordination with partners consistently throughout the project, and don't be afraid to really utilize them
- Good environmental partnerships include universities, state archeologists, state historic preservation offices, and local historical societies

Building Staff Capacity

- Build staff capacity through training and by finding committed, culturally knowledgeable staff
- Make visual guidelines for field crews
- If using GIS, it is very important that the staff take at least a one-day GIS training
- In order to deal with staff turnover, make sure that all staff provide materials and training for transition so that if someone leaves, the new person will be prepared

Cultural, Traditional, and Scientific Knowledge

- Use a GIS system to manage spatial data, and connect your database to a spatial component
- Tie the environmental work to cultural effort and events
- Utilize local resources and knowledge; it's the best thing you can do

Responding to Challenges

- Review progress as you go to make revisions as necessary in response to challenges
- Continue different trainings and learning along the way
- Establish an evaluation team that meets quarterly, asks the project director about challenges, and works together to address those as they come up
- Use a multi-pronged approach to completing the project plan

Communication

- Ensure you have face time with people, not just emails and phone calls
- Develop easily accessible contact/communication lists and establish a clear communication plan prior to the project
- Don't underestimate the time needed for communication (estimate 2 .5 times more time than you actually think things will take, in order to take communication into account)
- Prevent barriers between departments and keep communication open



Community participants from the Aleut Community of St. Paul Island's "Development of Environmental Ordinances and Cross Jurisdictional Solutions" project from 2008-2011. The project established environmental codes and engaged the community in environmentally-responsible behavior. Project staff recommended "Keep grant files organized well (with written guidelines)."