

Grantee Best Practices: Advice from Previous Grantees

From 2006-2013, ANA conducted on-site impact evaluations with 614 grantees throughout the continental U.S., Alaska, and the Pacific. During these visits, grantees shared their best practices to pass along to current and prospective grantees. The advice below comes from grantees who exceeded their ANA project objectives and had an exceptional impact on their communities.

Planning a Project for Your Community

- Write your own grant so you know how to accomplish your objectives
- Have a personal and shared commitment to the project purpose
- Do very thoughtful contingency planning before the project
- Get the community involved before the project starts
- Include the department/project director you are writing the grant for in the planning

Managing Your ANA Project

- Take care to create a realistic and achievable OWP
- Keep your objectives doable and focused
- Follow the work plan as a roadmap for the project
- Keep track of in-kind on a quarterly basis
- Make visual guidelines (“Gant” charts)
- Do not wait until last minute to update documents
- Keep a well-organized grant tracking sheet covering what needs to be submitted and when

Community Involvement

- Be familiar with on-going community issues
- Have deep conversations with people about what you are doing. Really communicate with them and they will respond with action. This will give your project momentum.
- Ensure you have face time with people, not just emails and phone calls
- Offer food and personal invitations to bring people to meetings
- Use a community hiring process (i.e. meetings to inform community of hiring process)
- Allow the community to shape the project to ensure buy-in
- Don't underestimate the time needed for communication
- Develop real relationships with your communities - not just superficial relationships to expedite your needs
- Be flexible and accommodate participants' schedules
- Follow up with what you say you will do
- Be credible and reliable
- Keep community members in the loop with project progress

Photo of Chickaloon Native Village staff for ANA grant, “Building Tribal Capacity through the Development of an Ecosystem-Based Plan” from 2005-2008 in Alaska. Staff recommended “Set aside a month at the beginning of the project to get your bearings before you start.”



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Partnerships

- Form necessary partnerships prior to proposal submission
- Reach out to different partners, not only to the obvious ones
- Seek mentorship from state partners
- Continue to educate your partners about the progress of the project
- Get as many partners as possible and keep in close communication with them
- Work with the Native community as partners; it is important for them to own the project and contribute towards its success.

Elder Involvement

- Listen to your Elders. The life people used to live was so much harder. So do not complain; learn from their experience to surmount all the problems you might face.
- Hold an honoring ceremony for Elders; recognize and appreciate the gifts they've given you

Working with Consultants

- Conduct research before hiring consultants
- Do as much as possible yourself to avoid high cost of outside expertise
- Train community members to be your experts so you do not have to rely on (and pay) outside consultants
- Work with consultants that understand your community
- Choose a consultant you are familiar with

Managing Talent

- Praise employees for a job well done. You have to keep employees motivated and appreciated.
- Hire competent and committed staff
- Make sure all staff provide materials and training for transition so that if someone leaves, the new person will be prepared
- Have a director that is dedicated to the administrative side of project implementation (rather than just the programmatic side)

Attitude

- Do not give up; do not quit too soon!
- Respond to the needs and desires of the community without feeling like you had to predict everything at the beginning of the project
- Be flexible by always looking to the future to adjust the project as it moves forward
- Do not be discouraged by project challenges

Photo of Burt Lake Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians' project staff for ANA grant, "Burt Lake Band Traditional Arts Project," from 2009-2011 in Michigan. Staff recommended "getting the community involved before the project even started."

