

Standing Rock Sioux Tribe



Project Title:	Standing Rock Sioux Tribe Entrepreneur Development Project
Award Amount:	\$963,292
Type of Grant:	Social and Economic Development Strategies
Project Period:	Sept. 2005 – Sept. 2009
Grantee Type:	Tribe

PROJECT SNAPSHOT

- 16 jobs created
- 7 businesses created
- 1 Native American consultant hired
- 386 elders involved
- 675 youth involved
- \$1,476,371 in resources leveraged
- 962 individuals trained
- 35 partnerships formed

BACKGROUND

The Standing Rock Reservation, located in contiguous counties in North and South Dakota, has a land base of 2.3 million acres and a population of approximately 8,225. The Standing Rock Sioux Tribe (SRST) is comprised of the Hunkpapa Lakota, Santee Dakota, and Yanktonai Dakota, and is divided into eight political districts.

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this project was to facilitate the start-up or expansion of businesses on the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation through the establishment of a business

incubator on the Sitting Bull College (SBC) campus in Fort Yates. The incubator, to be called the “Entrepreneurial Center,” would utilize the combined knowledge and skills of project staff, personnel from the Tribe's Business Equity Loan Fund (BELF), and the SBC Tribal Business Information Center (TBIC), to provide advice and training for 12 business owners located in the incubator and other SRST small business owners and entrepreneurs in the community.

During the project’s first year, the project team had various objectives, including: developing incubator center operating policies and procedures; completing curriculum changes with the SBC Business Department; creating small business development training materials, devising retention and recruitment methods; and beginning outreach efforts. To create policies and procedures, project staff, along with BELF and TBIC staff, studied business incubators in the region, learned about their best practices, developed a shared understanding of what was involved in creating a business incubator, and drafted policies and procedures to guide the Center. These policies and procedures addressed

recruitment and retention of incubator tenants, how tenants should be evaluated, and how SRST partners should facilitate this process. These policies effectively brought together all tribal business development services under one roof.

After operating procedures were in place, project staff amassed a substantial small business resource library, including hundreds of business start-up guides, to provide incubator clients with training materials for business development. Then, project and TBIC staff designed new courses for SBC students and interns. These courses enabled them to learn about business development, entrepreneurship, financial and credit planning, marketing, business projections, and other topics, giving the students knowledge they would later use to provide services for project clients.

Through radio ads, community meetings, and other forms of outreach, project staff shared information on project services and training and the function of the business incubator with 3,950 community members. Because construction of the center was not completed until late in the third year of the project, however, project staff could not recruit tenants in years one and two as planned. Moreover, funding restrictions limiting the space allowed for commercial endeavors meant that only 6 businesses, rather than the 12 intended, could be located there. To compensate for this, project staff opened a second business incubator in McLaughlin, South Dakota and requested a no-cost extension to allow Fort Yates area small businesses more time to settle into the primary facility.

The next project objective was for staff to conduct community training sessions and provide one-on-one technical assistance to entrepreneurs and small business owners, particularly to incubator center clients. Throughout the project period, 962 people

attended trainings on various topics, such as entrepreneurship, budgeting, product pricing, website development, QuickBooks, tax preparation, and agricultural borrowing; and 362 people benefited from technical assistance and credit counseling.

The final objective was for project staff to coordinate six classroom focused study groups at SBC, allowing students to assess the feasibility of Tribal members' small business ideas. Because the majority of the clients coming to the project already had clear ideas on the types of businesses they wanted to start, these studies did not significantly influence business decisions for the clients. Five student interns, however, provided one-on-one training and services for prospective entrepreneurs and business owners, enhancing business skills and facilitating an increased understanding of business management among these clients.

OUTCOMES AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

The newly-developed Entrepreneurial Center in Fort Yates and the Satellite Center in McLaughlin gave the tribe the capacity to provide business incubation services for nine small businesses in the community. At project's end, there were seven such businesses receiving these services. Throughout the project period, project staff helped facilitate the start-up of 7 businesses and expansion of 13 businesses through \$2.73 million in BELF equity grants and private loans.

In addition to fostering the development of small businesses on the reservation, the project has infused the community with a more active interest in business development, and has laid the groundwork for increased business activity. This, project staff feel, will lead to an increase in products and services available to the community, and to real economic growth on the reservation.