
LAC VIEUX DESERT TRIBE OF LAKE SUPERIOR CHIPPEWA



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| Project Title: | Lac Vieux Desert Tribal Real Estate Office Program |
| Award Amount: | \$82,920 |
| Type of Grant: | Social and Economic Development Strategies |
| Project Period: | 9/30/2006 – 9/29/2007 |
| Grantee Type: | Tribe |

PROJECT SNAPSHOT

- 1 job created
- 4 elders involved
- 4 youth involved
- 2 people trained
- 8 partnerships formed
- 1 product developed

BACKGROUND

The Lac Vieux Desert Indian Reservation is located in the Watersmeet Township of southeastern Gogebic County, in the western part of Michigan's Upper Peninsula. The reservation encompasses 328 acres of land and is home to approximately 135 of the Tribe's 535 enrolled members.

The main need addressed by this Project was the lack of affordable housing for Lac Vieux Desert tribal members. Between 2000 and 2005 the Tribe's population increased from 450 to nearly 540 members. One-third of this population is under 21 years of age, and will likely need housing as it enters adulthood. During the same period, the Tribe's casino increased the number of tribal members it employed, thereby increasing the number of tribal members with the means to purchase houses.

PROJECT PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this Project was to create a tribally-owned real estate office that could purchase existing housing in the areas surrounding the reservation, negotiate sales to the Tribe, and coordinate the implementation of a home building program on tribal lands.

The Project's first objective was to establish a real estate office as a tribal enterprise and train staff to buy, sell and develop tribal lands for the benefit of the Tribe. Project staff hired a Real Estate Manager and Real Estate Technician, both of whom received 40 hours of training in preparation for a Real Estate Certification Test. However, only the Technician passed the exam.

A major obstacle arose as Project staff realized that to legally buy and sell homes for the Tribe, at least one of the Real Estate Office's staff members would need to be mentored by a real estate broker prior to becoming an agent. The Manager and Technician were unable to affiliate with a broker to mentor the Project. Without the broker, the Real Estate Manager and Technician were unable to conduct purchases or sales and thus could not become Brokers themselves.

Objective 2 was to develop a comprehensive real estate marketing strategy and office policies to ensure the real estate office's sustainability by the end of the Project. The Project's main tangible achievement was the database of the Tribe's property holdings. Project staff inventoried and compiled the Tribe's landholdings, which was more time consuming than anticipated due to the lack of an existing standardized record-keeping system. Project staff also successfully developed a contact list of potential tribal homeowners, identified and secured the necessary real estate documents for the office and purchased most of the office's necessary supplies.

But without affiliation to a certified Broker, the marketing plan's strategic direction could not be fully determined. As such, determination of principle clients for the new real estate office, either tribal or non-tribal members, could not be decided until a relationship with a real estate broker was established. This delay froze the Project's progress and hindered staff's ability to ensure the real estate agency's survival.

PROJECT OUTCOMES AND IMPACT ON THE COMMUNITY

Due to the aforementioned challenges, the Project's impact was limited. By the Project's end, the broker had not been secured and the Tribal Council discontinued pursuit of the real estate office.

The Project's main beneficiaries were the Real Estate Manager and Technician. The two women received real estate and small business training from a variety of local and regional sources, including the Great Lakes Intertribal Council, SCORE Counselors to America's Small Business and a local business management firm.

Project staff members conducted one community-focused First-Time Homeowners class for five community

members. The class offered education on credit repair and credit scores. Project staff also conducted a community-wide logo competition for the agency, *Indian Country Realty*.

Staff hoped events such as these would both enhance tribal members' knowledge of topics that affect their ability to purchase homes as well as increase the community's awareness of the business. As evidence of the potential for a successful tribal real estate agency, Project staff assisted three tribal members to apply for home mortgages and one tribal member to apply for a small business loan.