



Barriers to American Indian/Alaska Native/Native American Access to DHHS Programs

a.k.a. the Barriers Study

Prepared for:

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Objectives

- Advise that HHS is aware of barriers and is actively working towards improving the access of AI/AN/NA's to grant competitions.
- Identify the barriers contained in the report.
- Advise that some of the recommendations require reciprocal action from the tribes to be more proactive in responding to grant competitions.





Barriers Study

- In 2004 DHHS the Barriers Study began
- In 2005, the final report titled: **Barriers to American Indian/Alaska Native/Native American Access to DHHS Programs** was submitted to DHHS and is posted on the DHHS Web-site at the following address:
<http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/06/barriers2access/>



Purpose of Study

- The purpose of this study was to gather information
 - on program and regulatory barriers to American Indian, Alaska Native, Native American (AI/AN/NA) tribes and communities
 - identify the most significant barriers to grants access for AI/AN/NAs, and
 - consider strategies for improving access





How was the Study Conducted?

- Survey of officials of DHHS programs;
- Focus groups with staff from a subset of programs;
- Discussions with representatives of AI/AN/NA groups; and
- Consultation with a workgroup of DHHS and tribal representatives at major junctures in the project.



Barrier Categories

- The barriers were classified into 4 groups –
 - Barriers to obtaining information about DHHS grant opportunities;
 - Barriers to the decision to apply for specific grant opportunities;
 - Barriers to preparing grant applications; and
 - Barriers related to DHHS grant review processes





Barriers to obtaining information about DHHS grant opportunities

- Limited resources – computers, staff, other monetary resources, etc.
- The limited resources make it difficult to:
 - learn about grant opportunities;
 - meet matching requirements or limits on indirect costs;
 - prepare a successful grant application; and
 - develop and implement necessary infrastructure.



Barriers to the decision to apply for specific grant opportunities

- Short timeframe.
- Uncertainty about eligibility.
- Inadequate resources and experienced staff.
- RFP not reflective of unique aspects of Indian Country



Barriers to preparing grant applications

- Lack of staff with experience/expertise
- Inability to reach DHHS contact(s)
- Differing application requirements for each agency/application



Barriers related to DHHS grant review processes

- Reviewers with limited knowledge and understanding of AI/AN/NA unique issues and governmental structure.
- Heavy reliance on academic reviewers.
- Small population base of many AI/AN/NA tribes and communities is viewed as too limited for grant objectives.
- Inadequate explanation on the reasons for rejection.





Next Steps

- The Intradepartmental Council on Native American Affairs (ICNAA) is reviewing the final report and developing an action plan to address several of the recommendations.



Feasibility of Implementation

- The feasibility of implementing specific strategies depends on a number of factors, including:
 - The cost in DHHS staff time and additional resources
 - The cost to AI/AN/NA tribes and organizations
 - Whether congressional action is required.





Initiatives Underway Within DHHS to Reduce Barriers

- Standardize the grant application format DHHS-wide.
- Implement the OMB government-wide template to standardize the format for grant announcements.
- Standardize grants management requirements.



Initiatives Underway Within DHHS to Reduce Barriers

- A DHHS-wide policy stating that AI/AN/NA tribes, organizations, communities, tribal colleges, etc. are eligible to apply for grant opportunities, when not prohibited by statute.
- OPDIV policies that ensure that tribes are eligible to compete for grants that are open to state and/or local governments, when not prohibited by statute.





Initiatives Underway Within DHHS to Reduce Barriers

- OPDIVs publish electronic and hard copy compilations of anticipated grant opportunities for the coming fiscal year.
- One OPDIV reported that a new timeline for the grants announcement process is in place that increases the amount of time between the announcement and due dates.
- One OPDIV reported providing orientation for reviewers about unique issues of AI/AN/NA tribes and communities prior to the grant review process.



Initiatives Underway Within DHHS to Reduce Barriers

- Tribal-specific grant programs.
- Videotaped training sessions for pre-application technical assistance available as webcasts or recorded pre-application conference calls.
- Accepting hard copy applications over electronic.





Strategies Requiring Action by AI/AN/NA Tribes/Organizations

- National and regional AI/AN/NA organizations, alone or in collaboration with DHHS, could take a stronger role
- AI/AN/NA tribes and organizations that have experience and success in obtaining DHHS grants could serve as “peer” advisors to assist other tribes and organizations to develop the skills and knowledge necessary to obtain grants.



Strategies Requiring Action by AI/AN/NA Tribes/Organizations

- AI/AN/NA tribes and organizations could designate a specific “point of contact” to receive grant announcements
- AI/AN/NA tribes and organizations could send staff to grant training workshops and technical assistance meetings to increase the likelihood that grant applications would be responsive to requirements.





Strategies Requiring Action by AI/AN/NA Tribes/Organizations

- If the grant program does not send out summary statements or if the reasons for rejection are unclear, AI/AN/NA tribes and organizations could initiate requests for information and an explanation of reasons why applications were unsuccessful.



Contact Information

- Office of Intergovernmental Affairs:
 - 202-690-6060;
 - Tribal Affairs: 202-401-1719
- Grants.GOV training:
 - <http://www.grants.gov/> Click on “Resources”
- Barriers Study Final Report:
 - <http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/06/barriers2access/>





QUESTIONS

