

*Special Interest Articles:*

- ❖ How to get and stay funded.
- ❖ Don't be scared, it's just your evaluator!
- ❖ Issues in Indian Country.

*Inside stories:*

**SUCCESSFUL**

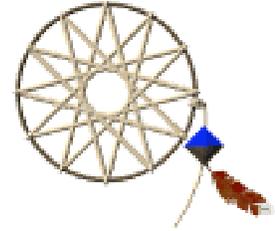
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## Losing odds: When not to submit a proposal

"You mean to tell me you won't write a grant for us, no matter what we pay you?" The school superintendent was on the phone and he was talking very slowly, no doubt because he was assuming that I must be very stupid.

"Well, not exactly. If you really insist on it, I am sure we can give you a contract. However, I have to tell you that I wouldn't recommend it."

Finally, the superintendent hung up after making some nasty comment about how we must be independently wealthy. Why would anyone turn down good money to write a proposal?

There are several reasons I advise clients not to pay me to write a proposal

for them. I am sad to say that being independently wealthy is not one of those.

**Proposals thrown together in three weeks look like it.** On an average grant for one to two million dollars we spend 120-160 hours. At an absolute minimum, we begin four weeks before a grant is due. We work on most grants for six to eight weeks, not continuously, of course. We need unemployment statistics, number of people with disabilities, etc. And the person who has that information is out sick. Or we need to design a survey and collect the data. There are dozens of pieces of information we need to obtain. What is your indirect cost rate? Where is a copy  
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## Quiet! The evaluator is coming!

Being an evaluator is probably not the best career choice for the paranoid. Do people stop talking when you come into the room? Do they act a little nervous around you? And who can blame them, really? An evaluator's job is to write an informed judgment of a project stating whether or not they are meeting the commitments they made in a funded proposal. If the evaluator's conclusion is extremely negative that does not give the project a very good chance for continued funding.

My advice to all of you is – relax! Your

evaluation visit can actually be helpful and pleasant. Most people have not spent their entire grant budget at bingo. Few project staff members are drawing a salary and spending their days smoking cigarettes and fishing in the lake.

A good evaluation will document the work you are doing and remind you to focus on your priorities. Since most evaluators work with many similar projects, they can also often recommend strategies that have worked for other projects like yours.

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*"I really badly need an evaluator. I don't have any idea what an evaluator would do for us."*

## Calm down! It's just the evaluator ! (continued from page 1)

One reason people may be nervous is that they are not really sure what the evaluator is up to. A potential client will call up and say in the same breath, "I really badly need an evaluator. I don't have any idea what an evaluator would do for us."

What this usually means is that their grant required an evaluator, they haven't had one for months and the Project Officer has asked for an evaluation report. Or, the project is having a number of problems and an experienced administrator has said to the new Project Director, "You know, an evaluator could really help you."

So, what DOES an evaluator do? The first thing I do is review your objectives with you. If your grant has ten objectives, I want to know your plan for measuring each one of them. You say that you will tutor 150 low-income high school students. How many have you tutored? Do you have them complete an application? Do you have sign-in sheets when they come to tutoring? How do you know that they are low-income? If you don't have a measure, I help you devise one, for every objective.

If you don't have a measure for each objective, we find one or create one. I am guessing you thought it was important to increase the number of people with disabilities employed or you would not have stated that in your grant.

After we have a measure of each

objective, you need a data collection plan. If you are going to increase employment, then you need to measure employment when your project year begins, or how will you know you increased it.

Once the data are collected and analyzed, we submit a report to the project director. We normally allow ten days for response. Quite often when we show a project has not met its objectives the fact is that the objectives have been met but the staff have fallen behind on data entry. We have no problem with changing a report if data can be produced to show more services have been delivered. This happens far more often than the average person would think. A project database shows only 20 people attended a parent activity, but the sign-up sheets from their parent night shows 45 names. The staff member entering data was interrupted by a phone call and forgot to do the rest.

All the data are entered and you really haven't met your objectives. What then? Contrary to popular belief, we do not kill you and eat you. As evaluators we are interested in seeing your project succeed. We schedule our first data collection and analysis early in your project so that we can identify any problems in plenty of time for you to solve them. Since we evaluate many similar programs, we have often run into the same problem before and can suggest solutions that have worked in the past.

So... next time you see us coming, relax, it's just the evaluator.

## *Coming next time .... How to create data*

Sometimes we have to create data. This isn't what it sounds like! Let me give one example... A client was providing services to low-income families to help their children succeed in school. They had not collected any data all year, they had no database and their report was due in a few months. We interviewed

every staff member. We went through every client file, every sign-up sheet, flyer, every piece of paper we could find in the office.

Check our next newsletter for details on how we created data from scratch and what we found out.

## All about the money: Successful Grantwriting

This is the nerve-wracking time of year when half of our clients are waiting to hear if they have received continued funding or whether they should pack up their desks and move on. To take your mind of your worries for a minute, here are some lessons learned in our decades of experience as grantwriters. Hopefully, reviewing these will assure you that you did everything you possibly could.

The keys to obtaining funding is probably the same as the keys to most things in life; hard work, persistence, having the right people and knowing what you want.

By far the most common mistake that most people make is to write too few grants. If the Miniwakan Project grant is almost up, the Project Director will write one grant. More often, with our clients, she contracts with us to write one grant. This makes me extremely nervous. We at SLC have a great track record of getting over 90% of the proposals we write funded. HOWEVER, most of the competitions to which we submit fund 20-75% of the applications they receive. That means that, at the very best you have a one in four chance of not getting funded. Frankly, we write for a lot more competitions where the odds are 20%, so it is more like a four out of five chance of not getting funded. Of course, we have a history of beating the odds and we do our best.

Personally, when a grant that supports a significant proportion of my income is about to end, I write two or three proposals. Sometimes we get two or three, and we need to hire more people. We always get at least one.

The next, very common mistake is to try to force your project into what the funding agency wants to fund. You have a very good after school program for youth sports. You don't see any grants available for sports but there is a competition with a lot of money for tutoring. You think, "Hey, we could say that our coaches are providing tutoring. After all,

they teach the kids the rules of the sports. Kids learn discipline. You need that in school, right?"

Yeah, right. We have all tried this trick before and it seldom works. **Give yourself enough time.** Don't start looking for replacement funding three months before your grant is going to run out. Start early and keep looking until you find an organization that funds after school sports programs. If the new program would start in October and your old grant expires in December, go ahead and apply anyway. The worst that will happen is that you will end up with two grants for a while – and is that really all that bad?

So, you did the hard work. You knew exactly what you wanted. You submitted a proposal to an agency funding that exact type of program. And they didn't fund you!!! What happened? This month, I received the reviews of a grant I had written. The average score we received was 88 out of a possible 100. In some competitions, that is high enough of a score to get funded. In this one, it wasn't.

In the five months between when I had submitted the grant and when the reviews came in, I had already submitted two more proposals for the same project. Since I had five more months to work on it, I had already addressed most of the issues brought up by the reviewers. Whether or not either of those two grants are funded, I will still **take the reviewers' comments, rewrite the original grant.** I cannot count the number of good projects that never got off the ground because a proposal did not get funded the first time and the writer was discouraged and quit. In the end, that is the most important advice at all – persistence pays off.



*AnnMaria DeMars  
Vice-president,  
Technical Affairs*

*“But our odds of getting funded if we don't submit a proposal are zero. So, we are better off submitting, right?”*

*Not necessarily. Sometimes your odds are zero no matter what.”*



## Losing odds: When not to submit (continued from page 1)

of your letter documenting status as a 501 c 3 non-profit organization?

If I had a dollar for every time I heard this one, I would be independently wealthy..

*“But our odds of getting funded if we don't submit a proposal are zero. So, we are better off submitting, right?”*

Not necessarily. Sometimes your odds are zero no matter what. There are two reasons this is true.

**The organization does not fund programs like yours.** See that period at the end of the sentence? They meant that. The foundation that is dedicated to supporting inner-city youth programs is not going to give you any money no

matter how good your grant proposal might be. You are absolutely right that Native American youth on the reservation are just as needy and deserving as those in the urban areas.

**Your organization is not the right one to do this project.** It is a research project on determinants of water quality. You think that you have a lot to contribute having lived on the lake your entire life. You probably do. However, the agency wants to fund a major research university that has several Ph.D.s and state-of-the-art laboratory equipment. If 100% of the projects in the past had a director with a Ph.D., it is possible that yours will get funded with a director with a B.A. in Education. However, I wouldn't bet on it.

Why wouldn't we take that school district's money? We can only write a certain number of grants per year. Like anyone, we want to be successful. Given the choice, we would rather work on a proposal that is likely to succeed.

**End of story:** The school hired someone else to write the grant. The grant did not get funded. They fired the grantwriter.

## CONGRATULATIONS! Spirit Lake Tribe receives grant to serve Native Americans with Developmental Disabilities

The North Dakota State Council on Developmental Disabilities has awarded \$24,735 to the Spirit Lake Tribe to develop and implement a training program for families and staff members of Native Americans with developmental disabilities. The Native American Family Support Project will create a website and CD-ROMs to be used in training on each of the four reservations.

The training will have two areas of major focus. The first will be on recruitment and retention of Native Americans with developmental disabilities and their

families. This training emphasizes the support services provided by effective programs and the role of respectful communication in family involvement.

The second half of the training provides information on specific types of disabilities, resources for further information, and special considerations for Native American populations. For example, on the reservations, diabetes and obesity are more common conditions, including among persons with developmental disabilities.



## CONGRATULATIONS on their new grant to Volunteerism- “The program with a heart”

The Spirit Lake Volunteerism and Leadership Development Project received notification of a grant award from the United States Department of Agriculture in excess of \$80,000 to provide training and support for volunteers on the reservation. Although the proposal was written by Spirit Lake Consulting, vice-president Dr. AnnMaria De Mars states, "The credit for the success of this program is clearly due to one person, Elaine Guy, who has worked tirelessly to determine the needs of people in the community and find the best materials, methods, and staff to meet those needs."

Many program participants begin classes with no previous employment record. Volunteering offers a way for them to get around the problem that 'you can't get a without experience but you can't get experiences until you get a job'.

Other students in the training classes have had a less than perfect employment history. They may have been fired from or quit several jobs within a short period of time.

Volunteerism, the "program with a heart", provides training in goal-setting, time management, communication in the workplace, and mentored experiences to develop skills needed by volunteer agencies. There is always a need for volunteers to work with children, youth and in the offices of non-profit organizations.

Along with basic job skills and interpersonal training, sessions incorporate Dakota culture and common requirements for volunteer opportunities on the reservation. For example, since many volunteers are interested in working with young children, traditional arts and crafts activities, such as building a miniature tipi, may be practiced.

The program's nickname came from its policy of reaching out to all community members. The message, says the Project Director, is "If you have a heart, there is always somewhere in the community your skills can be used, where you can be useful and wanted. And we have a heart, too, we never turn anyone away that seriously wants to learn."

The program receives high praise from its graduates. Says one, "I just came here hoping to sit through the classes so I could get back on at the casino. I was surprised to find that I learned a lot about solving problems at work, and, as much as I hate to admit it, how I had caused some of my own problems. Elaine really makes you think."

Ms. Guy has two messages she wishes to convey. "Living in such a small community, we are often judged by our families, by our pasts, and it's so hard to get away from that. I tell people, not to judge me by what I might have done twenty years ago or by what my family might do, but as me, by what I can do and am doing now. And I will do the same for them. The other thing I want all of our people to know that they all have leadership skills. We are all capable of being leaders in the community, whether it is on the school board or working with young children in Head Start."

If you are interested in volunteering, or are a non-profit with a need for volunteer assistance, please contact Elaine Guy at (701) 766-1388



*"I want all of our people to know that they all have leadership skills."*

*Elaine Guy, Project Director  
Volunteerism & Leadership*



*Erich Longie,  
SLC President*

## WELCOME TO INDIAN COUNTRY: SOVEREIGNTY, THE BASICS

The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language: Fourth Edition (2000) defines

### SOVEREIGNTY

**1.** Supremacy of authority or rule as exercised by a sovereign or sovereign state. **2.** Royal rank, authority, or power. **3.** Complete independence and self-government. **4.** A territory existing as an independent state.

A misunderstanding of sovereignty is the basis of many disagreements between Indians and non-Indians. Of course everyone knows that when the United States was ‘discovered by various European nations it was already home to a large number of indigenous people. Many of these tribes fought to retain their ancestral lands, and to end the fighting, the U.S. government entered into various treaties. It is common knowledge that the U.S. government has broken every treaty ever entered into with the several hundred federally-recognized tribes. Nearly everyone recognizes this was morally wrong, unethical and illegal.

What does this have to do with us today?

Even though there have been many violations, those government – to – government agreements entered into between the United States and the tribes still stand.

An Indian tribe has the sovereign authority to regulate commerce and

other behavior within the boundaries of tribal lands. Just as the United States can require that people not use certain drugs within the U.S. borders that are legal in other countries, such as Mexico, a tribal government can require that alcohol not be transported, stored or sold within its boundaries.

### TERO – Tribal Employment Rights Ordinance

Most larger reservations have a TERO office. The purpose of TERO is two-fold, first to see that there is no discrimination against Indians in employment on the reservation and, second, to require reservation employers to give preference to tribal members.

Some non-Indians see the latter as discrimination. In fact, it is no different than when the United States, a sovereign nation, requires a visa for employment of non-citizens within its borders. Is it fair that Indians should have preference for employment on the reservation and equal opportunity off the reservation? One might as well ask is it fair that Indians now possess a minute fraction of the land that was once theirs. Both the right of non-Indians to live on what were formerly tribal lands, and the right to sovereignty are guaranteed by the same treaties.

*Both the right of non-Indians to live on what were formerly tribal lands, and the right to sovereignty are guaranteed by the same treaties..”*

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## Spirit Lake Vocational Rehabilitation Receives \$2 million

SLC client Spirit Lake Vocational Rehabilitation received over \$2 million in federal funding to continue their program for the next five years.

Spirit Lake VR will continue to provide services to tribal members with disabilities who are looking for work. During the next five years they will be expanding our services for youth, and begin working more closely with the schools.

It has been a constant problem for people to find jobs on the reservation after they have received training. Spirit Lake VR will be starting a business to buy and sell traditional arts and crafts both within a store on-site and over the Internet. There will also be a coffee shop area in the store, where people can relax, have a cup of coffee and home-made pastries, and then get up and buy more gifts!

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We're on the Web!

[www.spiritlakeconsulting.com](http://www.spiritlakeconsulting.com)

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## Check the Spirit Lake Consulting Website

Check our website for the latest newsletter and updates on news and issues of interest to our clients. What you'll find there:

- Issues in Indian country, including TERO, tribal sovereignty and programs for Native Americans.
- Announcements of recent grant awards to our clients.
- Announcements of grant competitions of interest to our clients
- Information on vocational rehabilitation
- Fact sheets on disabilities, with an emphasis on those found disproportionately in Indian and Latino communities
- Links to sites of organizations providing services to persons with disabilities
- FREE lesson plans and activities for teachers of bilingual students
- Documents and links to websites providing free assistance to small businesses.