

Overview of ATALM Funder Forum Survey Responses and Funder Questions

In preparation for an October 10, 2017 “Federal Funders Forum” to be held in conjunction with the International Conference of Indigenous Archives, Libraries, and Museums, ATALM conducted a brief survey of participants and representatives of tribal archives, libraries, and museums. This report summarizes the findings, followed by overarching question for funders, as posed by the respondents.

ORGANIZATIONAL AFFILIATION: There were 160 respondents to the Funder Forum Survey with the majority of respondents representing Tribal libraries (27%), followed by museums (23%) cultural centers (13%), archives (8%), and tribal historic preservation officers (3%). Twenty-six percent of respondents indicated “other” and listed their affiliation as indigenous research center, a combination of archive, library, and museum, tribal college, digital archive, language program, and cultural tourism program.

SIGNIFICANCE OF FEDERAL FUNDING TO ORGANIZATION: Survey results indicated many organizations rely on federal funding, with 28% receiving over 50% of their organization’s budget from federal grant funding, another 30% receiving some support, and 20% receiving no support.

Funder Questions:

1. What percent of your total budget is specifically targeted for Native programs and projects?
2. For programs that do not specifically target Native programs, what is the overall percentage of Native organizations receiving funding?
3. How is the decision made in your agency related to its annual appropriation for Native programs and projects within your total budget?
4. Is there an opportunity for representative Native consultations in the development of programs that address the needs identified by indigenous organizations?

PRIMARY FUNDING NEEDS OF NATIVE CULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS: As ranked by where they fell in the “high priority” category, were infrastructure/facility improvements (51%); digitization projects (47%); community programming (45%); language programs (45%); collections management (43%); collections development (43%); and staff and volunteer development (30%). Seventy comments were received to the question, with many respondents indicating a need for more paid staff positions, youth education, and community outreach.

Funder Questions:

1. Are your agency’s grant funding allocations aligned with these needs?
2. What trends do you foresee coming about in these areas of need or others?

QUESTIONS, ISSUES, OR NEEDS EXPRESS BY RESPONDENTS: This question asked respondents to identify the most important issues they would like addressed by the Funders. The 228 questions are summarized below:

Questions

1. What is the best way for potential grantees to get official advice during their application writing?
2. In these uncertain political and financial times, what can we do to ensure continued support for Native programs?

3. Are state recognized tribes eligible for funding? How about non-recognized tribes?
4. Why is there such a lag between when grants are due and when they are awarded?
5. To keep our tribal museums relevant, we need new and changing exhibits. Is there the possibility of establishing a fund that will help research, develop, and promote new exhibits?
6. How can tribal cultural organizations secure assistance in grant preparation and writing that will enable them to compete against larger organizations with professional grant writing staff?
7. What are the poignant characteristics of the most successful grant proposals/applications for funding within your agency?
8. What is your prognosis for the future of Native program/project funding in your agency?
9. Many tribes are in need of funding for technological infrastructure or new buildings to accommodate their current day needs related to TALMS. Is it possible for your agency to conduct joint ventures with other Federal funding agencies who typically fund such endeavors such as USDA, HUD/ICDBG, Economic Development Administration to make improving or building tribal cultural facilities a priority?
10. Many indigenous cultural institutions struggle with relevancy because collections are held by other non-indigenous institutions. Is there a possibility of funding a program that will help us locate our materials and, at the very least, gain access for our people?
11. Is there a possibility of creating a fund for emerging institutions?
12. Is there a way to identify programs that have proven valuable for Native communities and produce step-by-step tool kits that will help other organizations replicate the model programs? Perhaps provide mini-grants in support?
13. Most Native communities can make a few dollars go a long way, yet federal grants seem to be targeted to mega-institutions requiring large grants. Is there a way to have smaller grants and more of them?
14. What efforts are being made to make media preservation a national priority?
15. Why isn't there a basic grant for museums, similar to the basic IMLS grant for libraries?
16. Why isn't more weight given to Native organizations, rather than mainstream organizations simply involving Native organizations? We are weary of constant requests for help with non-Native projects supposedly targeted to our needs.
17. Grants.gov is a problem for many remote tribal organizations. Is there a way to circumvent it?
18. How much of the deciding factor are the peer review comments and scores? Who carries more deciding power? Staff or peer reviewers?
19. How do you assess the needs of tribal cultural organizations when deciding what grant programs to offer? Do you go into the field and visit with tribal people?
20. Is there a way to fund CAP and MAP programs that are targeted to the relevant needs of indigenous organizations? We don't always agree with mainstream collections care practices.
21. Receiving funding brings such excitement to the community and raises awareness of our work. Is it possible to shorten the grant cycle and perhaps offer multiple rounds of smaller grants throughout the year? For example, ones for exhibit development, adding a new collection to the library, acquiring a specific archival collection?

OBSTACLES TO SEEKING FEDERAL GRANT FUNDING: The overwhelming majority of respondents ranked their most significant challenge to seeking grant funding as: Lack of matching funds (45%); project management staff (45%), need for grant writer (49%); competition with larger organizations (33%); internal tribal government issues (27%); lack of awareness of opportunities (22%). Of note, only 23% (lowest ranking) of respondents indicated that funder programs do not match the needs of their organization.

Funder Questions:

1. While project management staff may be included in most grant requests, tribes typically lack the ability to provide matching funds or cost sharing beyond those included through in-kind services. Could this requirement be changed in your agency’s grant funding requests to ensure more tribes may be enabled to apply for and secure your funding?
2. Has your agency considered implementing an ‘Executive Loan’ program to support assisting small tribes in program development and management?
3. Is it possible for your agency or ATALM to partner with private foundations and corporations to expand funding opportunities to tribes by re-granting their funds?

FEDERAL FUNDING AGENCIES ENGAGED WITH TRIBAL CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS: The majority of respondents (67%) identified the Institute of Museum and Library Services as their major source for seeking funding for their programs followed by the National Endowment for the Humanities (36%), National Park Service (33%), NAGPRA (28%), National Endowment for the Arts (20%), and National Historic Publications and Records Commission (8%). Other responses included seeking funds from NIH, NSF, ANA, ACF, E-Rate, ICDBG, USDA, and private foundations.

Funder Questions:

1. Is your agency satisfied with these participation rates from TALMS seeking funding?
2. Are these rates of participation from TALMS seeking your funding opportunities related to the number of grants for American Indians you have available: are you overfunded or underfunded in these areas?
3. What can TALMS do to help increase the levels of funding from federal agencies for their critically important programs or make changes to the types of use for specific grant project funds?

IMPEDIMENTS FOR SEEKING FUNDING: Organizations were asked to rank five areas that have been identified as impediments to seeking funding.

Federal Agency	Not aware of programs –	Not sure if we qualify –	Application too complicated	Insufficient institutional capacity –	Programs do not meet our needs
Institute of Museum and Library Services	14.71%	38.24%	19.12%	30.88%	8.82%
National Endowment for the Humanities	22.77%	36.63%	13.86%	29.70%	7.92%
National Endowment for the Arts	21.82%	39.09%	9.09%	26.36%	10.91%
National Park Service	28.57%	39.05%	3.81%	15.24%	19.05%
National NAGPRA	26.92%	36.54%	2.88%	16.35%	24.04%
National Historic Publications and Records Commission	43.85%	34.62%	3.85%	11.54%	10.77%

Funder Questions:

1. What can your agency do to increase the information distribution and awareness of your Native program and project funding?
2. Is it possible for federal funding agencies to support an on-line clearing house of information about funding opportunities specific to tribal cultural institutions?

3. The dollar for dollar match for grant funds for NEA and NEH grants and the cost-sharing and in-kind matches for smaller tribes with insufficient capacity is frequently a disqualifier for their application for funding. What can be done to help remedy this situation?

ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE TO GRANT SEEKERS: The majority of survey respondents (66%) affirmed that they seek assistance from program officers when preparing grant applications, but 19% reported they were unaware of this opportunity for assistance. 44% of survey respondents indicated that, where available, preparatory webinars were extremely helpful in their grant application preparation, with 24% indicating they did not know about the webinars. 22% indicated the webinars did not answer all their questions. Many respondents commented that they needed more information especially on specifics of grant changes with the new administration.

Funder Questions:

1. Federal funders are doing a great job responding to inquiries, but there remains a need to inform potential grantees that program officers are available to provide assistance. What can be done to increase the awareness of opportunity and availability of your program officers to assist in grant applications?
2. Do your program officers have experience in the field with Native tribes and peoples?
3. To what extent can program officers provide assistance?
4. Is it possible to create a FAQ based on questions people ask during the webinars and publish it?

OTHER COMMENTS/ISSUES: When asked for additional issues for address at the Funders Forum, participants expressed concerns about reductions in funding for their project opportunities and increased competition for already limited funds and the difficulty in grant writing and the application process.

Funder Questions:

1. Could IMLS consider creating a Basic Museum and Basic Archive Grant in the same manner as the Basic Library Grant that would provide greatly needed equipment and supplies for these respective projects?
2. Can you recommend actions individual professionals might undertake to encourage Congress to more adequately attend to the needs and rights of their Native tribes and supporting TALM programs?
3. Is it possible for your agencies to reevaluate the need for cash and cost sharing matches for their various grants for smaller tribes, perhaps consider a sliding scale based upon annual tribal financial conditions?
4. Does your agency take into consideration the Indirect Cost Rate submitted by a tribe as a factor in their grant funding decisions related to cost-benefit ratios?

FEDERAL FUNDERS REPRESENTED AT THE FORUM:

- **Wendy Clark;** *Director of Museums and Visual Arts*, National Endowment for the Arts
- **Mary Downs;** *Senior Program Officer*; National Endowment for the Humanities
- **Sarah Glass;** *Grants and Notice Coordinator*; National NAGPRA
- **Clifford Murphy;** *Director of Folk and Traditional Arts*, National Endowment for the Humanities
- **Sandra Narva;** *Senior Program Officer*; Institute of Museum and Library Services
- **Sandra Toro;** *Senior Program Officer*; Institute of Museum and Library Services