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Multi-Institutional Collaborative Grants: Managing Institutional and Geographic Diversity

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Multi-Institutional Collaborative Grants: Managing Institutional and Geographic Diversity

Development

Tribal Connections Four Corners (TC4C) is a three year project funded by NLM through an NN/LM subcontract with the goal of improving access to health information for tribal communities.

The TC4C project represents the collaborative efforts of 7 institutions in the Four Corners states (AZ, CO, NM, UT), as well as CA, and TX.

The first challenge for the 7 collaborating institutions was to develop a proposal in 11 days.

Lessons Learned

- ◆ Agreeing on project values and goals is essential.
- ◆ Identifying a leader to take responsibility and keep the process moving forward is critical.
- ◆ Involving too few or too many people in the development process may affect productivity.
- ◆ Matching institutional priorities with project priorities can be a challenge.
- ◆ Developing a proposal at a distance is less difficult in today's electronic age, with email and telephone proving to be communication lifesavers.

Management

Management of the TC4C project was dispersed among the partners, with the project manager in AZ and the Tribal Liaison Librarian in NM. Additionally, each state had its own outreach librarian(s) who worked in support of the project.

Funding for the Tribal Liaison Librarian was shared by 6 institutions, requiring interlocking contractual relationships.

Lessons Learned

- ◆ Physical distance between project management and key personnel may result in project priorities ranking below the priorities of daily work.
- ◆ Identifying institutional roles is important (who can contribute funds, supervise, do the work, sign agreements).
- ◆ Universities are not set up to contribute to a shared budget for a formal project, requiring the development of individual subcontracts.
- ◆ Working closely with people can be difficult when you do not know them well, so occasional in-person meetings are important.

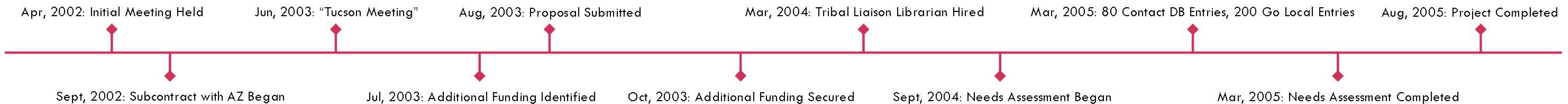
Implementation

The TC4C project conducted an information needs assessment of health professionals, developed a Tribal Four Corners Go Local presence in MedlinePlus, and created a contact database.

This work was carried out by 11 representatives from 4 institutions, organized into work groups to complete project objectives.

Lessons Learned

- ◆ Implementation requires skills in meeting management, group decision making, accountability, and organization.
- ◆ Various communication tools are necessary to share information, make decisions, and resolve questions.
- ◆ Good communication is necessary to prevent goals from being interpreted differently between institutions and over time.
- ◆ Multi-institutional collaboration requires a significant time commitment from each partner.



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