

In early 2005, the Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development will release a final working paper version of its report, “Philanthropy in Indian Country: Who is Giving? Who is Receiving?” (tentative title) by Sarah Hicks (George Warren Brown School of Social Work, Washington University) and Miriam Jorgensen (Harvard Project).

Using data compiled from Internal Revenue Service records as reported by the Foundation Center, the paper examines grantmaking by the approximately 900 largest foundations in the United States. While the dataset does not capture *all* philanthropy to Native America, it should provide a good picture of trends within the non-Native, formal philanthropic sector.

Key findings from the research, which examined data for the years 1989-2002, are:

- The real dollar value of giving to Native American causes and concerns is increasing. The number of grants rose from 301 in 1989 to 504 in 2002, and combined annual grantmaking rose from \$32.9 million to \$91.9 million (2002 dollars).
- Nonetheless, Native causes and concerns receive a very small share of the pie – it is unlikely that grantmaking to American Indian issues totals any more than 0.5 percent of the U.S. foundation sector’s overall resources.
- There is great “market concentration” in grantmaking to Native America. In the past 14 years, a mere 25 foundations contributed more than 78% of the total resources captured in this analysis; ten foundations contributed 61% of the resources.
- A comparison of the U.S. foundations with the greatest grantmaking resources to the list of foundations contributing the most to Native America reveals that many major players invest little to nothing in Native America.
- Large foundations’ giving was concentrated (in this order) on Indian education, arts/culture/humanities, community improvement and development, and health issues. These four topic areas accounted for 60% of the funds tracked in the data set. Several topic areas critical to Native America are receiving comparatively low levels of support, including tribal government infrastructure development, Native religion, youth programs, and food and nutrition issues.
- Looking at recipients, it is clear that well-established, organizationally capable, and relatively large nonprofits are the typical recipients \$10,000-plus foundation grants.
- From 1989-2002, only 6.5% of large foundations’ Native American grants and 6.7% of their spending were awarded directly to tribal governing bodies, despite the fact that tribal governments often take responsibility for tasks that, outside of Indian Country, nonprofits might perform.