



CLIENT STORY

SPIRIT MOUNTAIN COMMUNITY FUND

PROFILE

Type: Tribal Foundation

System: GIFTS

Modules: IGAM

Managing charitable contributions from Oregon's Spirit Mountain Casino

Indian gaming has grown dramatically into an estimated \$20 billion dollar industry, with more than 225 tribes operating more than 400 gaming facilities in 30 states since the passage of the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act of 1988. Indian "gaming" includes a wide range of activities from minimal value contests and lotteries, to expansive casinos and resorts. The Act established regulatory oversight of the Native American gaming and mandated that a portion of net profits from gaming be donated to charitable organizations.

The Indian Gaming Regulatory Act does not specify the percentage of profits that must be donated to charity, leaving that to agreements or "compacts" between individual or collective groups of tribes and the state in which they reside. To manage and disperse these funds, most tribal groups establish foundations, and like their foundation counterparts elsewhere, many of these groups turn to MicroEdge for their grantmaking and giving program management solutions.

Background

The Spirit Mountain Community Fund www.thecommunityfund.com is the philanthropic arm of the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde, a group of Native American tribes from areas west of the Cascade Mountains in Oregon. Shelley Hanson is the Director of The Spirit Mountain Community Fund, and states "The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde honor a tribal tradition of sharing and giving back to



the community through the fund, dedicating 6% of the profits from Spirit Mountain Casino to a variety of organizations in 11 counties in Western Oregon."

According to Shelley, "Our tribe was the first in Oregon to create a foundation, starting it in 1997. Since then, we have distributed more than \$35 million to non-profit organizations targeting issues of public safety, health, education, culture, environment, problem gaming and historic preservation." The Spirit Mountain Community Fund makes approximately 200 grants annually, totaling nearly \$5 million.

User Friendly Solution

Shelley states that MicroEdge's GIFTS and Internet Grant Application Module (IGAM) solutions had been chosen by her predecessors, but the Internet functions hadn't really been implemented to its fullest potential. She said one of her first tasks was to learn GIFTS and then begin creating an online grant application process. "As a fairly new GIFTS user," says Shelley, "I actually read the product manual. Typically manuals are not overly helpful, but this one was very well written."

Shelley adds that not everything can be learned from a manual and MicroEdge has helped her "fill in the gaps." In addition to support directly from

MicroEdge, Shelley says there are other foundations in the area that use MicroEdge products and she has had help from them as well. There is already a GIFTS users' group in the area, and she conveys some of the foundations have recently discussed sharing new ideas for the Internet Application Module.

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Successful Implementation, Increased Efficiency

The Fund has approached online applications implementation in two phases. “The first stage was successful and the data we collected was very helpful,” adds Shelley, “Now we are working on a few modifications to make it even better.”

As with all new process implementations, Shelley points out that it takes time to change old habits. “We were doing some data work in Excel, but now that we have our data in GIFTS and we can present numerous views of what we have without recreating everything, it is going over very well with everyone. We are also now working on implementation of the mailing list functions, which had not been used previously.”

Shelley concludes that as in any organization like theirs, people get pulled in a multitude of directions, but GIFT helps keep them focused. “GIFTS is a great tool. The accessibility and flexibility of data is very helpful, when, for example, our trustees ask for information about how we have distributed funds. There are many ways to present that information that is meaningful to all of us.”

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