

Beyond Border 2012: Improving Border Environmental Quality

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In working with border communities for over 25 years, I have discovered it is very important to assist communities with understanding the funding opportunities that are available to them. This requires an extensive amount of outreach and hand holding to explain how the funding can meet the needs of their community. In today's times, it requires multiple funding sources to accomplish this, and it takes years for staff to understand all the eligibility and compliance requirements with each funding source. Unfamiliarity with these requirements could lead to inefficient use of dollars and time. Limited resources and staff pose difficulties for these communities to take advantage of the programs. These communities face issues; from meeting matching requirements to determining if their projects meet the eligibility. One of the most difficult issues we face is finding planning dollars for engineering and design of projects. In most cases, the local governments have to take a loan to begin the engineering and design until the funder can reimburse them.

In summary, I want to advocate for the need to increase outreach, technical assistance, flexibility and in programs. It is important understand what rural communities face on a daily basis with staffing, dollars for match, and technology.