

# **PRESENTATION TO I-75 CROSSING TASK FORCE**

Wednesday, Aug, 26, 2009

8:00 a.m.

Otsego County Road Commission  
Gaylord, Michigan

## **SUBJECT: TIGER Grant Outreach Communication**

Good morning, I'm Bob Felt. I have over two decades of experience in communication and would like to make a few points.

However, before I go there, I want to say that I am on my own time right now and I will be speaking as a PR professional and a trained communicator. I do not represent the State of Michigan or MDOT this morning.

With that, if our county is lucky enough to be the recipient of a federal TIGER grant, I would be glad to invest my free time into something that I truly believe in – public health and safety, and connecting with people as both as art and a science.

This TIGER grant application process involves many different stakeholders, agencies, or entities, some with slightly different objectives and methodologies for getting business done but every group has at least one thing in common – the need for more money. You could use a few extra million dollars. Right?

I understand that the application deadline is coming next month (mid-Sept.). That means that not only does the application have to be top notch but you must seriously consider everything you say and do now because others are watching and listening - mainly from news stories that can be found on the internet.

The local paper has already reported on and quoted officials connected with this grant process. Some of what I have read was fine based on fact. Some of it though was questionable related to alignment of messages. The bottom line in my opinion isn't necessarily the money, but how you communicate, cooperate with each other, and coordinate the release of information. It is vital to the success or failure of the award and it's extremely important afterward too.

When it comes time to connect with the general public through the media outlets and other channels, if one person can't be your spokesperson then it's imperative that all other entities speak with key message(s) related to the main objective of the grant. After all, \$35 million isn't a drip in the bucket. This is a high stakes game.

What if all stakeholders aren't in sync with their public messaging? Worst case scenario - another community gets money that may have been targeted for this community. This is serious business.

The application process is based on the merit of the application and on perceptions of those that make the decision or have influence over the award process.

I caution you to move forward precisely and with strategic communication as well as an understanding that what I am talking about is not black or white. It's gray. Just like perception. Perception is subjective. Perception is reality too...whether it is based on facts or not. You have to be very careful. You have to balance the art of communicating with the science of understanding people too.

I can help effectively orchestrate the connectivity between your groups, the media, and the public if Otsego County is given the unique opportunity to win a TIGER grant. The process is sort of a game. You have to know the rules in order to win!

Everything anyone says from this point forward can and will be used against you. You will be more carefully scrutinized than ever. Your words speak volumes.

Your application is being judged even before it is submitted. Again, be careful.

A TIGER grant will improve the quality of life, the safety of our infrastructure enhance the economic activity of this region, and save lives!

GO OTSEGO COUNTY

GO TIGER!!