



# Want a competitive edge? Build your treasury playbook.

*Financial strategies to give tribal businesses an efficient offense and impenetrable defense*

Some days, running a tribal business can feel like an epic battle on the football field. You encourage your team to stay aggressive and fight for every “yard” of profit, but ferocious foes are working just as hard to take back any ground you’ve gained.

“Increasing cybersecurity risks, persistent inflation and overall economic uncertainty are just some of the challenges that tribal businesses are facing,” said Jarrod Compton, executive director of Native American Financial Services for BOK Financial®. “Every tribal business—large and small—is looking for an edge to help them get ahead.”

These businesses’ successes are integral to the health of the larger tribal community, noted Michelle Heckroth, a BOK Financial treasury management officer who works with tribal customers. “Tribal businesses drive generational growth by reinvesting significant resources into essential community services,” she said.

While most tribal businesses are focused on streamlining their core operations, they may be overlooking some relatively easy gains in the finance department. More specifically, enhancements in treasury services could be the “X factor” tribal businesses need to improve efficiency, cut costs and increase investment returns, while also guarding against profit-eating threats like financial fraud.

“To maximize these benefits, you need a financial services firm that understands the unique needs of tribal businesses,” Compton said. BOK Financial, for instance, has treasury relationships with more than 100 tribal gaming operations.

Here are some ways a solid treasury services partnership can help your tribal business gain a competitive advantage on both sides of the ball.

## EMPOWERING YOUR OFFENSE

Optimizing your financial strategies may not create a direct source of revenue, but it can help reduce expenses and put you in a position to seize growth opportunities. In other words, calling the right treasury plays can help your team work smarter—not harder—to put points on the board. For example:

### Cash concentration and zero-balance accounts

Tribal businesses need easy access to liquid funds to meet day-to-day working capital needs and pursue rapid growth. It makes sense to keep things simple, directing all sources of funds into a single account to achieve visibility and accessibility of cash. As your business expands, however, maintaining simplicity can be more difficult. You may have multiple bank accounts for different departments or divisions, with excess cash sitting idle in each one. To make the most of these funds, tribal businesses can establish a cash concentration account with their primary bank, which automatically sweeps cash from disparate accounts into a central depository. Each sub-account is left with a zero balance at the end of each day and funds are aggregated in the master-account to be deployed for working capital needs or invested overnight to earn interest

### Corporate cards

Like a solid Tampa 2 defense in football, corporate cards can serve as an integral part of your tribal business's offensive arsenal. By providing employees with corporate cards, tribal businesses can streamline expense tracking and reporting, reducing the administrative burden associated with processing reimbursements. Additionally, corporate credit cards can improve cash flow management by offering extended payment terms and rewards programs.

### Automation and enterprise resource planning (ERP) integration

The larger and more complex your business becomes, the more time is lost to manual financial processes and human error. However, automated workflow solutions can free your team from repetitive tasks and accelerate processes like payment processing, forecasting and account reconciliations. A treasury partner with technology expertise can help your organization integrate automation tools with your existing ERP system. And as your business grows, automation enables you to easily scale up treasury operations without the need for additional staff.

## FORTIFYING YOUR DEFENSE

Smart financial strategies can help your company fuel a potent, profit-producing offense. Unfortunately, any gains you've made are always at risk. One of the most daunting threats facing tribal businesses today is financial fraud. Building a strong defense against various scams, such as phishing or email compromise, is essential to protect your business's confidential information and safeguard its assets.

"Fraud prevention measures should extend well beyond the IT department," said Compton. "The finance and treasury teams can play a leading role by ensuring their processes are as airtight as possible."

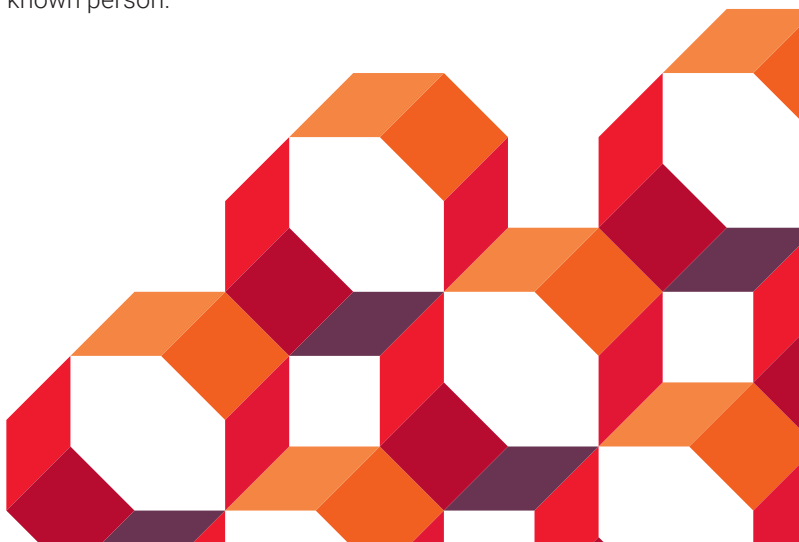
A treasury services partner can help your organization design the best defensive formation to keep the bad guys out of your end zone. Here are several strategies to consider:

### Fewer paper checks

Check fraud is extremely common because it's easy for criminals to intercept checks in the mail and cash them or use the information to create counterfeit checks. Most companies could significantly reduce their risks by moving away from paper checks and instead transferring funds electronically through ACH, paying by corporate card or other methods. If your company does issue paper checks, ensure you're also taking advantage of protections like Positive Pay. With this service, the bank compares each check presented for payment to an approved list of payees, provided in advance by the customer. If a check doesn't match up, it gets flagged for review.

### Zero trust environment

Fraudsters grow more sophisticated—and more convincing—every year, going to great lengths to pose as someone they're not. Make it a priority to educate your team about common scams; affordable online training programs are readily available. Anything that seems out of the ordinary—an urgent email from the CFO, a request for account information, or a vendor changing their payment instructions—should be investigated with a phone call to a known person.







### Separation of duties

Financial fraud isn't always committed by outside perpetrators; it's often a crime of opportunity committed by in-house employees. You can remove those opportunities by insisting on the separation of duties (SoD), which ensures that no financial process can be completely controlled by one person. It's a system of checks and balances that minimizes temptation and makes embezzlement much more difficult. Most leading ERP systems and banking platforms include features to help your company implement SoD based on user roles and tasks. For example, every outgoing financial transaction requires an "issuer" and an "approver" for the payment to be released.

Whether it's defending against dangerous attacks or making smart money moves to maximize returns, treasury management is a total team effort—and it's an essential component of creating and supporting generational wealth in tribal communities.

"Implementing a treasury playbook ensures economic benefits are maximized and protected, strengthening the community's foundation for years to come," Heckroth said.

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**Michelle Heckroth**

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