

What's The Forecast? Budgeting and Planning for Conservation Funding

Peer to Peer Learning Session Notes

Session Introduction: See PPT slide deck

Case Study Presentations:

1. Big Thompson Watershed Coalition-Courtney Gutman

2. Coalition for the Upper South Platte-Jonathan Paklaian
 - Brief intro to Coalition for the Upper South Platte (CUSP)
 - How do we approach financial management
 - Primary sources of revenue - what are the dominant sources
 - Secondary sources of revenue - are there other significant sources
 - Alternatives for long term sustainability
 - How CUSP approaches fund raising
 - How are progress and results measured
 - Threats to CUSP long term financial sustainability
 - Connectivity of financial management and fundraising

Session Discussion:

Questions for Panelists:

- Brief overview of the organization.
- How do you approach financial management for your organization? Best practices? Hurdles?
- How do you approach fundraising? How do you set targets- for types of funders? For amounts? How are progress and results measured?
- How are financial management and fundraising connected in your organization?

Question for Attendees (introduce at beginning of session/discuss at end of session):

- What resources, tools and training do you need to do better budgeting and financial planning?

Session Outcomes

Key Points of Discussion & Takeaways: (insert final key points of discussion --- bold the top three)

- Plan to weather boom and bust years-lessons and tips from similar organizations who have weathered the storms

- Build Use creative financial workarounds-e.g., partnerships, fiscal sponsors, loans for cash flow, contract employees, etc.
- Need for longer term funding and planning. Especially from funders; understand impact on grantees from grant vehicle and timeline-e.g., reimbursable grant cash flow issues

Common Obstacles:

- Competition-how to turn competition into partnership
- Struggling partnerships-how to evaluate and reconsider struggling or taxing partnerships
- Apathy-dealing with apathy-communicate prevention ahead of crisis
- Cash flow-cash flow regarding reimbursement grants, consider fiscal sponsor
- Staffing-consider building a stable of consultants or contractors until you can make the leap to full-time employees
- What to do when you project a deficit?
 - Diversify sources
 - Adjust operations
- Event and donation timelines are tough to plan around and manage
- What's our risk appetite around revenue generation?
- Challenge planning operations and programming beyond 2-3 year grant cycles