

Stewardship Works! Project

Final Report 2008: Year One of the Two-year Pilot

A Developmental Evaluation Report on the *Stewardship Works! Pilot Project*



For: **Stewardship Centre for BC**
Naomi Tabata
583 Island Highway,
Campbell River BC V9W 2B9

From: **Sue Staniforth**
Staniforth and Associates
Environmental Education & Evaluation Consultant
1248 Laurel Road,
North Saanich, BC V8L 5K8
(250) 655-6300
sstan@shaw.ca

March 18, 2009

“The general view of donors, the media, and even many of the organizations that evaluate and rate nonprofits is that overhead is bad and therefore less overhead is always better. While understandable, such thinking is self-defeating – and it represents one of the major obstacles to remedying the leadership deficit.”

– Thomas Tierney, The Bridgespan Group (as quoted: GEO, 2007)

Background

The *Stewardship Works!* (SW!) Initiative is a two-year pilot project overseen by the Stewardship Centre of BC, which provides core funding to selected stewardship groups across the province. Core funding or general operating support is

... “funding directed to an organization’s basic operational needs as a whole, rather than to particular projects”. (Brest, 2003).

The amount of overall granting funds devoted to core funding is very small – no specific data is available for British Columbia, but a major U.S. study found that less than 20% of grants from the largest 1,200 private and community foundations were for general operating support (Foundation Center, 2007). The SW! funding specifications were quite unrestricted as to how they could be spent, and stewardship groups spent the monies primarily on administration costs, office expenses, salaries, fund raising and marketing/outreach.

The project is being tracked and evaluated by Sue Staniforth, to measure successes, capture process decisions and document lessons learned. The main objectives of the SW! evaluation are to:

- collaboratively document the two-year pilot program,
- conduct baseline data survey and needs assessments for select stewardship groups,
- quantify the effects of core funding on the capacity of community stewardship organizations through developing qualitative and quantitative indicators
- assess the overall impacts of the programs on stewardship organizations,
- provide a standardized reporting and assessment mechanism for stewardship groups applying for funding grants, and
- set the stage for measuring the overall implementation of large scale provincial environmental/ stewardship outcomes.

Participant Reporting

One of the obligations of the participating groups was to provide the Stewardship Centre with both an interim and final report during Year One of the project: 2008. As the groups submitted an interim report in October 2008, it was felt that requesting a full final report would create excessively arduous reporting conditions. Therefore, a Final Report template was developed that provided the groups with their interim report data and requested updates and additional qualitative and quantitative impact information. The final reports’ questions and indicator elements were developed from work completed at the November SW! meeting in Kamloops, where project stakeholders were brought together to share learnings and collaboratively develop project impacts and indicators. The participant groups were also asked for stories and photographs, highlighting the work they are doing and the specific ways in which the SW! funds have assisted them. The photos and stories will be used in publications, Powerpoint slide shows and presentations that Stewardship Centre of BC

(SCBC) staff will develop, to canvass funders and other stakeholders to help ensure that the SW! initiative is sustained for many more years.

This report summarizes the participating groups' final reports and draws some preliminary conclusions and learnings from this first year of the pilot. The group data has been summarized and assessed under the main themes of the final report questions, and salient quotes are included to highlight specific findings, using the number identification system in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Stewardship Organization Information

<i>Stewardship Group Name:</i>	<i>Grant Amount (over two years)</i>
1. Delkatla Sanctuary Society	\$10,000
2. Scout Island Nature Centre	\$10,000
3. Sea Change Marine Conservation Society	\$5,000
4. Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Alliance	\$10,000
5. Christina Lake Stewardship Society	\$10,000
6. Como Watershed Group	\$10,000
7. Mid Vancouver Island Habitat Enhancement Society	\$5,000
8. Alouette River Management Society	\$10,000
9. Salmon River Watershed Society	\$10,000

Final Report Data Compilation: 2008

Theme 1: Impact of the Grant on Volunteers

As in the interim report, groups were asked to outline the main ways that the SW! core funding impacted their ability to attract and retain volunteers and directors. Eight of the nine participating groups highlighted two main areas where the grants directly supported their volunteers:

- an increased ability to attend and host public events, tree plantings and programs, meaning more public presence to attract and engage both new and current volunteers, and
- funding to host appreciation events and gifts for volunteers, to recognize and celebrate their accomplishments.

We sponsored five Christmas Bird Counts (Masset, Tlell, Port Clements, Rose Spit and Skidegate Inlet) this winter. These events attracted 50 volunteers island-wide. (1)

One of the task-specific approaches under the 2008 SW! project was to engage local participants in cutting collection in such a way so as to involve local ranchers and dairy farmers, SRWR Executive members and local citizens. SW! core funding was used to cover costs such as volunteer insurance, materials (biodegradable twine, gloves, tree wrapping wire, coffee and hot chocolate refreshments etc) and tool cost (cutting clippers) token awards (locally produced cheese given as a token of appreciation..(9).

In September, as a thank-you to Society members 'for helping us survive', the board hosted a barbeque at the Centre. Voluntary contributions included fresh fish, baked goodies, and lots of veggie dishes. Over fifty people attended and the food was delicious. (1)

We used volunteers for a Christmas sale and a public outreach event. (4)

With the remaining SW! funding, ARMS was able to purchase gift certificates as a thank you for our fall volunteers who counted spawning salmon once a week for 8 weeks. In previous years, we have only been able to give out gift certificates to our spring and summer camp volunteers, but this year we were able to give out more. (8)

Increases in Volunteer Numbers

Six of the nine groups noted a small increase in the number of volunteers this past year. It will be interesting to see if the more commonly experienced impacts generate further increases in volunteer numbers by the second year of the pilot.

Yes. We have gained 2 new Directors and 2 new volunteers (7)

A number of opportunities have occurred that have resulted in the recruitment of 58 local residents and ranchers who volunteered time through Stewardship Works liaison activities ..by year end a total of 70 new volunteers... (9)

ARMS has one volunteer who will be helping our administrator with tasks in the office. ARMS has never had a consistent office volunteer before. (8)

Most of the groups spoke about the importance of supporting and recognizing their “long-time” volunteers and directors as an important retention strategy.

With the lessening of pressure to constantly fundraise to just keep the Nature Centre at Delkatla going and the ensuing burn-out of our volunteers we find that we have attracted a much more relaxed core group of between fifteen to twenty committed volunteers who help out at all our events. (1)

Funding Volunteer Training:

Six groups put some of the funds towards volunteer training, which is an important aspect of retaining and supporting stewardship volunteers.

Our “Christina Lake Mapping and Inventory Project provided training to our Volunteer Coordinator (and three volunteers). DFO partnered with ... our staff to provide training. (5)

...a couple of directors were able to attend some key events (Watershed Watch Marine Conservation workshop and the Ecotrust State of the Salmon Conference) as a direct result of the funding. (6)

The SW! funding supported the training of volunteers to conduct fall salmon spawner surveys. ARMS put on two 2-hour training sessions. (8)

Theme 2: Positive Impact on Grant Writing

One of the biggest uses of the SW! funds was for supporting stewardship group staff in researching and writing grant proposals. Almost all the groups used funds for this purpose, through either directly compensating staff for the time it takes to write the proposals, or through freeing up staff time to apply for the grants by funding a Volunteer Coordinator position to run the groups’ programs and workshops. The grant provided a precious gift of “compensated time” to staff members – to research programs and funding opportunities and solicit and complete applications.

We researched the City of Surrey’s model of Winter Programs and Events out of the Surrey Nature Centre, and (contacted people there). (1)

We received a one time grant from the Weston Foundation to help with our "Students Working and Learning in Their Watersheds"--This happened because the Environmental Educator had the time to react quickly to a phone request from a director on their board. We are currently researching capital funding for classroom expansion. (2)

In total, (staff) wrote seven complete funding proposals and five letters of inquiry, and completed three funding reports for 2008 activities... the most we have ever been able to do. (4)

The SW! funding put towards administration allowed our Administrator/Executive Director to successfully complete her first gaming application (although not first for the organization). (8)

SW! Matching Dollars

All grants from the *Stewardship Works!* Program had to be matched on a 1:1 basis with cash, donated materials, volunteer labour, and other contributions. There was some concern initially that if this matching contribution had to come out of project-based funding or activity, it would detract from the grants' purpose to offset core funding costs. However, all participating groups were successful in acquiring the matching contributions, and reported that none of the funds had to come out of project-based funding.

Theme 3: Measuring the Value of the SW! Project

The Evaluation Process – A Collaborative Effort

One of the challenges of assessing the impact of providing core funding is measuring its impact on a stewardship group without setting up onerous reporting conditions that negate the monetary value of the grant. When collecting baseline data on the groups and designing the interim reporting template, the evaluator conducted telephone interviews with all participants to reduce the reporting time they had to commit to the pilot, and also to further engage them in the evaluation process.

In November 2008, ten participants representing six of the nine groups, a funder and the SCBC attended a half-day workshop in Kamloops, BC that was facilitated by the evaluation consultant. The objectives of the meeting were to review the evaluation process and research to date, share successes and challenges with the project, and collaboratively develop a set of indicators of project success. This process also helped to further engage participants in the evaluation, and in collectively participating to refine and improve the pilot program.

High Value of the Stewardship Works! Grants

Both the interim and final report templates asked the groups if the project had been valuable for their organization, and asked them to detail the qualitative and quantitative indicators of success that they had noted. On both the interim and final reports, all participants stated that the SW! project had been very valuable to their organizations, with two stating that the initiative was critical to the survival of their group.

One activity that doesn't fall under any other category is financial planning. The SW funds allowed us to prepare budget forecasts, cash flow projections, and financial templates for each of the programs we run. (4)

ARMS has a difficult time holding on to staff for longer than a year (maybe two). The SW! funding has enabled an increase of hours for our Education Coordinator, and therefore, she has a greater desire to stay with ARMS. (8)

Yes, it has provided the opportunity to take action on specific opportunities to involve volunteers willing to make meaningful contributions toward the long term watershed sustainability plan (9).

Stewardship Works! funding has given the Society the financial confidence to continue. Without it, we would have had to close our doors. (1)

Theme 4: Short and Long Term Impacts of the SW! Grants

The November workshop had participants develop lists of short and long-term impacts of receiving the core funding grants, as well as quantitative and qualitative indicators of success. These were developed into checklists and provided as tables on the final report template, to help reduce the amount of reporting that participants had to complete. The checklists have been summarized below, with salient comments included to highlight key findings. The lists have been re-ordered to display the most to least frequently noted impacts.

Table 2: Short Term Impacts of the SW! Grants

Table 2 lists the short term impacts collaboratively developed by the stewardship groups (in blue text), and summarizes findings and important examples from the final reports from most to least reported impacts.

Short Term Impacts	Changes noted
<p>Ability to fund those things most others won't – e.g. website, coordination and administration tasks, things people don't volunteer for: media relations, evaluation, book-keeping, data entry, attending meetings, etc.</p>	<p>All 9 groups noted this impact. Paying accountants to complete audits, developing web pages, supporting staff in writing media releases and articles, hosting an AGM, monitoring membership lists, writing reports and supporting volunteer coordinators were all activities funded by the grants.</p> <p><i>Yes! We have to pay professionals, as a Registered Charity we have to have financial transparency. A CA does our annual financial report and we continue to work on our web page. (1)</i></p> <p><i>Newspaper articles and media notices of programs have noticeably increased attendance.(2)</i></p> <p><i>We used funds to advertise and hold our AGM with a guest speaker (7)</i></p> <p><i>Administration hours paid for: bookkeeping, maintenance of Rivers Heritage Centre, attending workshop meetings. (8)</i></p>
<p>Increased output from the organization, including more efficient sourcing and completion of grant and project tasks, work on groups' mission and vision, planning</p>	<p>Seven groups noted this impact (1 2 3 4 5 8 9). Outputs included more brochures, more connections with other organizations, more grants applied for, more project planning and field work enabled, and a more relaxed staff and board.</p>

	<p><i>More funding applications completed to new agencies (not the standard agencies who give us support each year).(4)</i></p>
<p>More security for a group, as basic costs such as rent, insurance, phone bills, etc. are covered.</p>	<p>Seven groups noted this impact (1 2 3 4 6 7 9) Almost all the groups noted the reduction in stress that having core funding provided them <i>ED is more relaxed because much of her time for community/stewardship outreach is paid. (3)</i> <i>We can continue to afford a book keeper so as to not overwhelm volunteer treasurer (2)</i> <i>We feel more confident about future plans because some of our accounting costs have been taken care of (7)</i> <i>Insurance and basic field expenses paid – encouraged volunteers (9)</i></p>
<p>Core funding supports staff, enables more community presence</p>	<p>Seven groups noted this impact (1 2 3 5 6 8 9). Comments stressed the importance of being able to support staff in attending community meetings and events. <i>Some of the funds are used to pay the ED for her time to participate in stewardship and networking within the community. (3)</i> <i>Volunteer Coordinator scheduled a summer long ...booth with our Young Stewards, so community was made much more aware of stewardship initiatives (5)</i> <i>ARMS had a mall display in November as a part of a family community resource day (8)</i></p>
<p>Enables staff and volunteers to attend more community /regional meetings.</p>	<p>Five groups noted this impact (2 3 5 6 8) Being able to attend community meetings, committees and event planning increases a groups' profile and overall authority. <i>Because of SW!, ED is able to attend all day meetings and be paid for her time. Thus her ability to participate and engage fully is much higher. (3)</i> <i>Volunteer Coordinator provided a continued presence in the office and in the field so that volunteers and Stewardship Coordinator could participate in more various events and meetings – time not stretched (avoidance of burn out) – shared tasks (5).</i></p>
<p>Provides hope for the groups' longevity which increases participation, provides opportunities for skills transfer and building local support for projects.</p>	<p>Five groups noted this impact (1 2 4 5 9) The psychological effects of knowing that the basic core costs are covered supports staff, encourages volunteers and lets community members know that the group is viable. <i>Yes – definitely, the longer we are viable, the more volunteer support we receive (1)</i> <i>SW funds enabled us to have more events,</i></p>

	<i>training opportunities, increased memberships and donations (5)</i>
Better volunteer management capabilities, as expressed by happier, more productive volunteers	Four groups noted this impact (1 2 5 8), and commented on their increased ability to organize, train and support their volunteers. <i>Members are more willing to have ownership in a successful operation. (1)</i> <i>Volunteer training more streamlined and coordinated (5)</i> <i>8. Began a volunteer database with the ability to track volunteer hours. (8)</i>
Removal of capacity barriers for the stewardship organizations	Four groups noted this impact (2 4 5 9). Core functions such as website development and funding volunteer coordinators were noted. <i>WLFN website online, nature centre website in progress (2)</i> <i>Volunteer Coordinator increased Volunteer recruitment and participation (5)</i>
Other impacts:	Two groups (2,4) noted other impacts not listed in the table; increasing a groups' members leads to new skills coming to the group and therefore more volunteer possibilities; and the ability to do more extensive financial planning. <i>The number of WLFN members has increased and this widens the base of volunteer possibilities. (2)</i> <i>Financial planning with board members, staff and book-keeper (4).</i>

The impact that all groups noted was the SW! grants' ability to fund activities that most other funders would not. It is interesting that this was highlighted by all the participating groups, as these core or general operating expenses are at the root of why the SW! initiative was developed. Paying the rent, phone bill, financial audits and insurance costs, monitoring membership lists and buying gifts for volunteers are activities that are essential to a groups' mission, yet rarely covered under specific program or project-based funding.

It follows logically then that the second most reported impacts were increased output from the organization, more security for staff and members and increased community presence: having the core operating costs covered means that a group can then focus on its mission. Outputs included more brochures, more connections with other organizations, more grants applied for, more project planning and field work enabled, more meetings and community events attended and a more relaxed, less stressed staff and board of directors.

Improvements in volunteer management was also seen as a significant impact by four of the groups, as support for volunteer coordinators, and more training, resources and recognition all contributed to happier and more productive volunteers. This also speaks to the sense of sustainability of a group - the psychological effects of knowing that basic costs are covered supports staff, encourages volunteers and lets community members know that the group is viable over the long term.

Table 3: Quantitative Indicators of Success

As discussed above, at the November 2008 workshop, participating groups were also asked to brainstorm quantitative and qualitative measurements or indicators of what the core funding has enabled them to do differently. Table 3 lists the main quantitative benefits of the SW! grants, as summarized from the final reports. The table has been arranged to display the most to least frequently noted indicators.

Quantitative measurements might include	Note changes / increases during 2008
Increased number of public planning processes participated in	Seven groups (1 2 3 5 6 8 9) noted that they were able to attend more public planning processes in their communities, with numbers ranging from one to seven meetings. <i>7 public processes attended (1)</i> <i>...ability for new directors with less experience in the conservation realm to participate in processes (6)</i> <i>one public planning process attended (8)</i>
Increased number of public events / workshops held	Seven groups noted they hosted more workshops and events through the SW! grants: (2,5 9) <i>Two more workshops (2)</i> <i>Did two events a week in the summer months (5)</i>
Number of grants a group gets / applies for	Six groups noted this impact (1 2 3 4 5 8), with two of the groups describing five additional grants being applied for. <i>5 more major applications applied for. \$50,000 over 2 years received.(4)</i> <i>5 more...grant applications are ongoing (5)</i> <i>In December, we applied for a grant ARMS has never applied for before and ...received \$5000 for our education programs.(8)</i>
number of meetings and events attended / presented at	Six groups (1 2 4 5 8 9) noted that they were able to attend more events, with numbers ranging from 3 through to 31. <i>12+ events (1)</i> <i>31 meetings (5)</i>
Increased number of new relationships	Six groups (1 2 3 4 5 9) noted an increase in their relationships with other groups, ranging from 2 to 45: <i>Parks Canada; Haida Hereditary Chiefs; BBA; IBA; SCBC; Laskeek Bay Society (1)</i> <i>Community Sustainability Coordinator; Thompson Rivers University (2)</i> <i>Yes. City of Penticton and Regional District.(4)</i> <i>45 new relationships (5)</i>
The percentage of media releases / coverage	Five groups (1 2 5 6 9) noted an increase in the amount of media coverage and releases. <i>50% increase (1)</i> <i>30% increase (2)</i> <i>16 articles, media releases for all events (5)</i> <i>assisted in special events advertising (6)</i>

Increased membership	Five groups noted an increase in their membership (2 5 7 8 9). +28 (32%) (2) 225 (5) <i>more people signed up as members at our AGM which was supported by SW! (7)</i> 6 volunteers & 3 landowners (9)
Increased volunteer base	Five groups noted this as an impact (12 5 8 9), with from 1 – 22 new volunteers recorded. <i>19 new multi event volunteers (5)</i> <i>6 new volunteers in this watershed and 16 in a neighbouring watershed (9)</i>
Local knowledge of stewardship issues increased	Five groups (1 2 3 5 9) saw an increase in local stewardship knowledge, through presentations at meetings and public events and media releases. <i>We attended the Sport fishers AGM and they were surprised at the number of dead eagles (50+) attracted by fish waste thrown on the beaches in town for a 'photo op' of eagles feeding. Some will reconsider this practice.(1)</i> <i>- enhanced Eco Print packages so others may use (2)</i>
Number of volunteers trained	Four groups (1 2 5 9) noted numbers of volunteers trained (from 1 – 19)
the number of people group attracted to meetings	Four groups (1 2 5 9) noted increases in the number of people attracted to their meetings, ranging from 20 to 172.
Increase in number of new programs	Four groups (2 4 5 9) developed new programs as a result of the grants: <i>3 new programs developed (2)</i> <i>Biodiversity Conservation Initiative (4)</i> <i>Young Stewards of the Boundary (5)</i>
Increase in number of partnerships	Four groups (2 3 5 9) noted from 2 to 10 new partnerships: +2 (2) 10 (3) <i>56 existing, 5 new professional partnerships established (5)</i>
Evaluations done properly and repeatedly	Three groups put the grant to use in conducting evaluations/surveys (1 5 8): <i>SHIM 614, Kokanee Enumerations, 3 Creek systems 15 H2O quality monitoring (5)</i> <i>Second year of conducting fall salmon spawner surveys.(8)</i>
Ability to secure multi-year funding	Three groups (4 5 9) were able to use the grants to secure multi-year funding. <i>monitoring activity through AAFC WEBs was extended 4 years (9)</i>
The numbers of land owners contacted	Two groups (5 9) estimated they were able to contact from 21 (9) to 1000 (5) more landowners due to the SW! grant.

The most commonly cited quantitative indicators of the success of providing core funding to a stewardship group were increases in the number of public planning processes participated in, and in the number of events and workshops held. These activities are at the core of stewardship groups' sustainability and mission - public outreach and engagement.

Being able to apply for more grants, building relationships and partnerships with other groups, attracting new members and volunteers, and increasing public awareness of stewardship issues were also cited, and speak to groups' overall sustainability – attracting more funding – and main mission and objectives.

It seems from this preliminary data that providing core funding to the stewardship groups enabled them to “get on with their work” – the business of public engagement in stewardship activities.

Table 4: Qualitative Indicators of Success

Participants were also asked to list relevant qualitative indicators of the success of providing core funding – activities that are harder to measure, but perhaps more indicative of long term sustainability. Indicators are ordered from most to least frequently noted.

Qualitative indicators may include:	Note changes / increases during 2008
The level of profile a group has in the community	Six groups (1 2 3 4 5 9) noted an increase in their profile: <i>more media coverage. Media contacting us for info (2)</i> <i>ED has had more time to network with other groups in the environmental ngo sector (3)</i> <i>Accelerated by summer booths, media releases, training of new volunteers, workshops and events. (5)</i>
Positive perspectives of long-time stewardship volunteers as to how the success and culture of a group has changed,	Five groups (1 4 5 8 9) felt that their volunteers were more positive and optimistic: <i>OSCA board is better able to chart its course during difficult financial times due to better planning. (4)</i> <i>Board of Directors given a sense of confidence and pride in delivery as well as giving volunteers a better understanding of their natural surroundings and community. (5)</i>
Members and volunteers express satisfaction	Five groups noted happier and more enthusiastic volunteers (1 2 5 8 9). <i>Volunteers keep asking for more involvement/ excited about new programs (1)</i> <i>We have received positive feedback from members, volunteers, increase in membership, increase in donations.(5)</i> <i>more positive comments and trust from community than in the past (9)</i>
Long term relationships increase	Five groups (1 2 3 5 9) noted an increase in their long term relationships. <i>City fully supporting restoration ideas and new</i>

	<p><i>trail proposal (2)</i> <i>new landowner and volunteer relationships initiated, multigenerational (9)</i> <i>Because capacity to spend time networking has increased, long term relationships are increasing. (3)</i></p>
<p>Changes in OCP's, bylaws, policy to support sustainability and conservation values.</p>	<p>Four groups noted some impact on local governments through their involvement in planning processes and meetings. (1 2 5 8) <i>Hope to have increased participation with Municipality as part of the 'Climate Change Action Group' (1)</i></p> <p><i>Participation in civic ICSP planning (2)</i> <i>We have a new council which seems to be development focused. We attended a public forum in December to ensure they know the value of Environmentally Sensitive Area mapping that has occurred... and ...needs to be considered when Maple Ridge is developed. (8)</i></p>
<p>Skills and knowledge transfer from stewardship work to job and home life.</p>	<p>Four groups (1 2 5 9) noted information transfer from their programs, outreach and events to home. <i>Children take eco-footprint home to parents (2)</i> <i>Annual Watershed Plan review, Rural Fire protection plan, Mail outs, Brochures (5)</i></p> <p><i>local volunteers practiced what was taught on their own after stewardship field days (9)</i></p>
<p>Increase in skills of staff</p>	<p>Four groups noted an increase in staff skills (2 4 5 9): <i>Computer skills, photo-documentation, assisting with school programs; media relations (2)</i> <i>Yes - financial management (4)</i></p>
<p>Increase in skills learned in the volunteer community</p>	<p>Three groups saw an increase in their volunteers' skills (1 5 9) <i>cutting collection, monitoring, sharing information with other watersheds (9)</i></p>
<p>Documenting success stories and case studies as models to learn from.</p>	<p>Three groups (1 5 9) noted an increase in documentation: <i>Media releases, reports completed (5)</i></p>
<p>Other funders "get" the benefits of core funding and offer core and endowment funding</p>	<p>Two groups (5 9) noted changes in how other funders are supporting core funding: <i>RDKB has written stewardship into the parks function, Phoenix Foundation has supported the endowment fund (5)</i> <i>DFO and AAFC partnered and benefited from SW! (9)</i></p>
<p>Establishment of social marketing programs</p>	<p>None of the groups noted a change here. This may be a longer term impact to examine.</p>

Six of the participating groups noted that their level of profile in the community was higher. This is understandable due to the quantitative indicators cited: groups' increased participation in public meetings and events, and more media coverage, press releases, and workshops held. Increased community awareness is beneficial for attracting volunteers to stewardship projects, as well as increasing a groups' efficacy and overall authority around stewardship issues.

Positive perspectives of long term volunteers, directors and members were cited by over half the groups: this sense of security, accomplishment and positive action is critical for volunteer-run groups to survive and flourish. Volunteer training, skills development, recognition and accomplishments were noted as some of the quantitative indicators, and have a direct impact on these qualitative measures of success.

Four groups noted some impact on local governments through their involvement in planning processes and meetings. Impacting local governments, plans and regulations is more of a long term indicator of a groups' success that is better measured in another years' time, but this data shows a positive trend.

Table 5: Measurement Indicators

A list of indicators that track specific impacts of receiving core funding on stewardship groups was also included in the final report template. Groups noted which indicators applied to them through checking off applicable boxes. These have been summarized below, and the table is arranged in the order of most to least frequently reported impacts.

Groups Responding	Measurement Indicator
Eight groups (1 2 3 4 5 6 7 9)	More community partnerships encouraged and supported
Seven groups (1 2 3 4 5 7 8)	More grant applications written
Seven groups (1 2 3 5 6 7 9)	Community profile increased through more attendance at events
Six groups (1 2 4 5 6 7)	Directors better informed, supported
Six groups (1 2 3 5 6 9)	Community profile increased through more press contacts, media articles, press releases.
Six groups (1 2 5 7 8 9)	Increased volunteer numbers
Six groups (1 2 5 7 8 9)	Volunteer training
Five groups (1 2 3 4 5)	Time to do some forward planning / strategic planning
Five groups (2 3 5 6 7)	Website development enabled
Five groups (2 5 6 8 9)	Volunteer Coordinator paid
Five groups (1 5 6 7 9)	Volunteers supported through special events, food, equipment.
Four groups (1 2 5 7)	More community projects supported

Four groups (3 6 7 9)	Travel Costs covered to meetings and regional gatherings, enabling more representation of our group
Three groups (3 6 7)	Rental Costs paid
Three groups (2 3 6)	Conference fees / travel covered
Three groups (1 6 9)	Insurance Costs paid
Three groups (1 6 9)	Phone / Utility Costs paid

The results of these indicator choices parallel the other tables' findings. Almost all reporting groups noted that they had been able to encourage more community partnerships as well as apply for more grants – two critical activities for non-profit sustainability. Supporting directors and increasing the community groups' profile were the next two most commonly noted indicators – again, important activities to sustain and broaden a groups' reach.

Theme 6: Other Indicators of Success

Groups were asked to add any other indicators of success regarding the provision of core funding that were not listed in the template tables. Some interesting indicators were discussed, including a perceived increase in community awareness of nature and the environment, the use of the funds to support the development of a fundraising campaign, the use of the grant to fund an financial audit and for recognizing volunteers, and an increase in local awareness of the ability to generate funds from non-resource extraction activities. See quotes below:

Funding from SW! proved, in this northern community, that funding can also be generated for non-resource extraction activities; i.e. protection and enhancement through education and public awareness. (1)

Increased community awareness of the "wonder" of nature and understanding the role of humans as part of healthy ecosystems (2)

The main focus of the SW funds for this year are for funding a person to develop the 1% for the Planet fundraising campaign for SeaChange. (3)

Watershed donors were also recognized for cutting contributions to the Salmon River projects using SW! funds to provide small gifts and cards of thanks and recognition (local cheese and beef products) (9)

We will have improved financial stability and more opportunities for grants once we are able to get an audit of our financial statements (7)

Year Two: Use of the SW! Funds

The second allotment of SW! funds was received by the stewardship groups upon submission of their final report (Winter 2009). Groups were asked how they planned to spend their Year Two dollars, in order to track any future planning that a group may have accomplished due to the security of knowing the core funds were provided for a second year. Six of the nine reporting groups noted that they would spent their dollars on the same activities as in Year One. The basic necessities of running a Centre, paying rent and phone bills, maintaining a membership list and a web site, fundraising and supporting a Volunteer Coordinator don't seem to change much annually. However almost all the groups noted that due to the security of knowing the funds were available for these

Formatted: Bullets and Numbering

core needs, they were able to look ahead to further program planning, outreach, research, and networking.

It has been very interesting to have the rare opportunity to reflect on how best to support the stewardship activities of this organization. One of the major difficulties has been the amount of unpaid time spent on networking and stewardship activities. When the ED is paid, she is more relaxed and creative and more involved in community building processes. (3)

We may have to use SW funds to pay rent and phone in 2009 if our annual festival does not raise as much funds. (4)

Focus on necessities (physical services such as phone and similar costs) and direct human resources - administrator fund raising person. (2)

Yes - audit, website, fundraising, volunteer appreciation. (7)

Further Comments

Participants were asked for any further comments about the program, the reporting templates and the impacts of the SW! grants. All the groups were very appreciative and positive about the core funding support

Sincere thanks for your support! We could not continue without it. (1)

We really congratulate SCBC on this innovative pilot project, and appreciate what it's done for us! (2)

I appreciate the simplicity of the questionnaires, the phone interview and the concern for engo's in these harrowing times! (3)

The SW funds were invaluable for allowing this (financial) planning time. It also made us aware that we need to cover more operating expenses through creative fundraising since project funding often only covers the project. (4)

Thank you for the opportunity the SW! funds have afforded our organization. (8)

Receiving this funding from Stewardship Works has helped us immensely. It provided leverage core funding in which we were successful in obtaining matching funding to extend our Volunteer Coordinator position .. really able to enhance youth participation (5)

Year One Conclusions

All the short term and long term measurement indicators, as well as the qualitative and quantitative impacts noted by the participants point to a range of positive and far-reaching outcomes of providing core funding to stewardship groups. Everything from increasing a group's viability through enabling it to apply for additional grants, to increasing its community profile and volunteer satisfaction support the main objective of the *Stewardship Works!* initiative – to provide core funding in order to build healthier stewardship groups that will be more successful at delivering a wide range of projects.

Grants are Supporting Groups' Basic Work

The most commonly cited quantitative indicators of the success of providing core funding were increases in the number of grants applied for (and received), increases in the number of public planning processes participated in, and in the number of events and workshops held. These activities are at the core of stewardship groups' sustainability and mission. Building relationships and partnerships with other groups, attracting new members and volunteers, and increasing public awareness of stewardship issues were also cited, and also speak to groups' main mission and objectives. It seems from this preliminary data that providing core funding to the stewardship groups enabled them to “get on with their work” – the business of public engagement in stewardship.

Positive Impact on Volunteers

Eight of the nine participating groups highlighted two main areas where the grants directly supported their volunteers:

- an increased ability to attend and host public events and programs, meaning more public presence to attract and engage both new and current volunteers, and
- funding to host appreciation events and gifts for volunteers, to recognize and celebrate their accomplishments.

Improvements in volunteer management was also seen as a significant impact by five of the groups, as support for volunteer coordinators, and more training, resources and recognition all contributed to happier and more productive volunteers. This also speaks to the sense of sustainability of a group - the psychological effects of knowing that basic costs are covered supports staff, encourages volunteers and lets community members know that the group is viable over the long term.

Overall Well-Being Increased

Positive perspectives of long term volunteers, directors and members were cited by over half the groups as important qualitative indicators of the grant's success. Volunteer training, skills development, recognition and accomplishments were noted as some of the related activities, and have a specific impact on these qualitative measures of success: these activities served not only to get project work done but to also support members and volunteers by ensuring positive experiences with the stewardship group. This sense of security, accomplishment and positive action is critical for volunteer-run groups to survive and flourish.

Long Term Impacts - Next Year?

Four groups noted some impact on local governments through their involvement in planning processes and meetings. Impacting local governments, plans and regulations is more of a long term indicator of a groups' success that is better measured in another years' time, but this data shows a

positive trend. The financial stability of four of the groups was also noted as a long term impact of the funding: hiring an auditor to prepare financial statements, enabling a group to do long term financial planning with its staff and board members, researching a marketing strategy to raise funds, and paying a bookkeeper to ensure continuity and consistency were activities that the SW! grants supported.

Bolstered Groups Mission

Six of the nine groups have public outreach and education as their main focus. All these groups noted increases in their level of profile in the community. This is understandable due to the quantitative indicators cited: groups' increased participation in public meetings and events, and more media coverage, press releases, and workshops held. Increased community awareness is beneficial for attracting volunteers to stewardship projects, as well as increasing a groups' efficacy and overall authority around stewardship issues.

For all the pilot groups, the next most frequently reported impacts included increased output from the organization, more security for staff and members and increased community presence: having the core operating costs covered means that a group can then focus on its mission. Outputs included more brochures, more connections with other organizations, more grants applied for, more project planning and field work enabled, more meetings and community events attended and a more relaxed, less stressed staff and board of directors.

Flexibility of Funding Important

A major challenge that all the groups spoke to at the start of the pilot is the "project-based funding focus": having to write grants around projects, and then get the projects completed and reported on, leaving little time for any long term strategic planning, assessment, or administration. The SW! funds were the first time most of these groups had money to put towards basic core tasks. All the groups expressed great appreciation for the SW! core funds, as they are not tied to project delivery and are fairly unencumbered in terms of where they can be used. All nine groups noted the short term impact of being able to "pay for things most others won't", and were thankful for the grants' flexibility.

The wide range of indicators and impacts described by all the participating groups further underlies the necessity for the core funding grants to be unrestricted in how they are offered. The specific core needs of different stewardship groups are unique at any given time and location, and to dictate how the funds should be spent would compromise their usefulness and adaptability.

These core funds are the "working capital" that stewardship groups need to sustain their day-to-day operations. In the business world, working capital is the difference between an organization's assets and liabilities, and it is a key barometer of the health of a business (GEO, 2007). The challenge that most non-profits face is that their working capital comes from funders who focus on supporting projects and not core expenses.

Grant Funds Not a Drain on Project Resources

SW! grant funds were required to be matched on a 1:1 basis with cash, donated materials, volunteer labour, and other contributions. There was some concern that if this matching contribution came out of project-based funding or activity it would detract from the grants' purpose to offset core funding costs. However, all participating groups were successful in acquiring the matching contributions, and reported that none of the funds had to come out of project-based funding.

Collaborative Developmental Evaluation Process

The involvement of stakeholders in the collaborative development of qualitative and quantitative indicators of core funding success has been very positive. Due to their direct involvement, these indicators and impacts are more relevant and appropriate to the stewardship groups that will be measuring them. They will be used in tracking and documenting group capacity changes throughout Year Two (2009) of the SW! pilot. They will also provide a standardized reporting and assessment mechanism for stewardship groups applying for funding grants, and set the stage for measuring the overall implementation of large-scale provincial environmental/ stewardship outcomes. And finally, stakeholder participation in this developmental evaluation process through setting indicators and impacts for measuring their progress and documenting changes helps to build evaluation capacity in the stewardship groups.

Year One of this pilot project has had many successes to celebrate, and all stakeholders look forward to next years' accomplishments.

References

Brest, Paul (2003) "Smart Money: General Operating Grants Can Be Strategic – For Nonprofits and Foundations", *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, Winter 2003.

Grantmakers for Effective Organizations (GEO). (2007). *GEO Action Guide: General Operating Support*. Washington, DC 20005. www.geofunders.org