

Building Capacity Through Core Funding:

Stewardship Works!

Pilot Project

A Participatory Evaluation of Year Three: 2009-2010



A Report produced for the Stewardship Centre for BC

SCBC Stewardship Centre for BC Society

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Stewardship Works! Building Capacity Through Core Funding: A Pilot Project A Participatory Evaluation of Year Three: 2009 - 2010

Executive Summary

Background

The *Stewardship Works!* (SW!) Initiative began as a two-year pilot project overseen by the Stewardship Centre of BC, which provides core funding to selected stewardship groups across the province. *Stewardship Works!* aims to address the basic organizational needs of frontline non-profit groups who provide valuable services to achieve their conservation and stewardship mandates. The goal of this funding is to enable healthier groups that will be much more successful at delivering a wide range of projects. The original project proposal included provisions of small amounts of core funding to ten stewardship groups around British Columbia for a period of two years. In 2009, additional funds received by the Stewardship Centre enabled the pilot project to continue for one more year, extending the pilot project to a total of three years.

The SW! project is being documented and evaluated by an evaluation consultant, Sue Staniforth. The evaluation goals include conducting baseline data survey and needs assessments for the stewardship groups, measuring successes, capturing process decisions, quantifying the effects of core funding through developing qualitative and quantitative indicators, and documenting lessons learned.

This report reviews the preliminary findings of the third year of the SW! pilot in preparation for a final evaluation of the entire three year pilot, to be completed in 2010.

Main Evaluation Activities for 2009 – 2010

The Advisory Committee (AC) is made up of members of stewardship groups, other non-profits, funding agencies, and representatives from government agencies, and has been a key element in the evolution and success of the initiative. The evaluation consultant solicited and retained the group members participation, initiated all communications, set up and provided relevant documentation for committee meetings, continued as an active committee participant, and recorded and distributed minutes of the meetings.

In the first year the SW! pilot was unsuccessful in acquiring a stewardship group from the Upper Fraser region of the province. In 2009, several proposals were solicited and reviewed and a group from the region, the Vanderhoof Fish and Game Club (Murray Creek Rehabilitation Project), was selected and engaged in the project.

The evaluation has provided a standardized reporting and assessment mechanism for the stewardship groups, which decreased the reporting requirements for the project, as well as enabling consistent and equitable data collection and comparison.

The evaluation consultant has been the main contact and communications point for the SW! initiative over the past year. Phone interviews, interim report soliciting and informal

“check-ins” with the pilot groups were conducted, and AC meetings were chaired and documented. She has also been working closely with the SCBC capacity building (CB) project consultants to share findings around the needs for and challenges around capacity, and the impacts of core funding on the pilot groups to date.

It is recommended that a final wrap-up workshop be held with some of the pilot stewardship groups as well as key funding agencies in May of 2010, to collaboratively explore ways to promote the core funding model and sustain and grow the initiative over time.

Findings from Year Three

Core Funding Grants Support and Increase Volunteers

The majority of the pilot groups noted a direct impact of the SW! core funding on their ability to attract and retain volunteers and directors. Furthermore, the funds enabled most groups 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, as support for volunteer coordinators, and more training, resources and recognition all contributed to happier and more productive volunteers.

Group Crisis and Evolution: A New Evaluation Opportunity

The Como Watershed Group lost a key founding member and its board during 2009, and is struggling to rebuild the organization and maintain its core objectives and activities. The SW! Advisory Committee decided to allow the group to continue as part of the pilot, and its challenges and evolution is being documented through this last year of the initiative. The resulting findings will add valuable learning to the evaluation, and provide insights into some of the common challenges that many stewardship groups face.

Positive Impact on Grant Writing

Nine of the ten groups noted an increased ability to acquire more grant funding as a result of the predictable annual acquisition and unrestricted allocation of the core funds. For many groups, the grant provided a precious gift of “compensated time” to staff members – to research programs and funding opportunities and solicit and complete applications. All pilot groups were successful in matching SW! grants on a 1:1 basis with cash, donated materials, volunteer labour, and other contributions, with all groups reporting that none of the funds had to come out of project-based funding.

Flexible Funds: High-Value Working Capital

All ten groups were very positive about the high value of the SW! grants to their organizations, with two stating that the initiative was critical to the survival of their group this past year. Main factors cited were the core funding impacts on stability, volunteer retention, staff and volunteer support, and the consistency that the funds provided in supporting Board meetings, basic expenses and forward planning ability. These core funds seem to become the “working capital” that stewardship groups need to sustain their day-

to-day operations. The challenge that most non-profits face is that their working capital comes from funders who focus on supporting projects and not on core expenses.

Defined Short and Long Term Impacts of the SW! Grants

Participants were asked about both short and long term impacts of the SW! grants, and what specifically the funds enabled them to do differently. The three main *quantitative indicators* noted by the groups were the use of the funds to cover basic costs, being able to apply for more grants through using funds as seed money or to cover a grant writers time, and the ability to attend and/or host more community and regional meetings.

The three most prevalent *qualitative indicators* of the success of providing core funding included a sense of group security and long-term viability, the reduction of burn-out, and the nurturing of greater community connections and partnerships through hosting and attending key events. One new indicator mentioned was a groups' increased ability to offer support and resources to other watershed groups – this “paying it forward” is a sign of increased group capacity and also of the usefulness of core funding to be flexible in where it is targeted.

Positive Perspectives and Well-Being Increased

Positive perspectives of long term volunteers, directors and members were cited by almost all 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. Also, 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.

Longer Term Impacts of the SW! Funds

Six groups noted that they had some impact on local governments over the past year, through their involvement in planning processes and meetings. Impacting local governments, plans and regulations is a long-term indicator of a groups' success that is best measured over the entire three year evaluation. This impact and several indicators will form a main aspect of the final wrap-up evaluation to be conducted next year.

In summary, it seems from this third year of the SW! pilot project that providing core funding to the stewardship groups enabled them to “get on with their work” – the business of public engagement in stewardship. All the short term and long-term measurement indicators, as well as the qualitative and quantitative impacts noted by the participants support a range of positive and far-reaching outcomes of providing core funding to stewardship groups. All participants and stakeholders are looking forward to the final evaluation of the pilot, where impacts and results will be collated and compared across the three years, and long-term outcomes will be assessed.

Background

In 2007, the Stewardship Centre for BC (SCBC) and several partners initiated a new funding program to support the operational and core components of stewardship organizations around the province. The *Stewardship Works!* (SW!) Initiative began as a two-year pilot project overseen by the Stewardship Centre of BC, which provides core funding to selected stewardship groups across the province. *Stewardship Works!* aims to address the basic organizational needs of frontline non-profit groups who provide valuable services to achieve their conservation and stewardship mandates.

The initiative grew out of surveys and interviews spanning the past ten years, which found that acquiring core funding was the number one barrier that community-based stewardship groups currently experience (Anderson, 2003; Gardner, 2003; Harvey, 2004; Smailes, 2006). It addresses the need for core (operational) funding at the local level – a critical barrier to the effectiveness of community-based stewardship groups. The project was designed to give community-based environmental stewardship groups “a hand up instead of a handout”. An Advisory Committee, along with staff of the Stewardship Centre of BC and the BC Ministry of Environment and an evaluation consultant are providing administrative and logistical support to the pilot project.

Providing Core Funding

This funding model is unique in that its goal is to build volunteer capacity of local groups by addressing their basic organizational needs, and not to provide project-based funding. The goal of this funding is to enable healthier groups that will be much more successful at delivering a wide range of projects. The original project proposal included provisions of small amounts of core funding to ten stewardship groups around British Columbia for a period of two years. In 2009, additional funds received by the Stewardship Centre enabled the pilot project to continue for one more year: therefore, the ten stewardship groups received core funding grants for the 2009 – 2010 fiscal year, extending the pilot project to a total of three years. Annual grants of \$2,500 or \$5,000 were provided to the groups in March 2008 and February 2009. The third year of funding grants were dispersed with 50% of the annual grants going to the groups in November 2009, and the remainder in March 2010.

The Evaluation Process

The SW! project is being documented and evaluated by an evaluation consultant, Sue Staniforth. The evaluation goals include conducting baseline data survey and needs assessments for the stewardship groups, measuring successes, capturing process decisions, quantifying the effects of core funding through developing qualitative and quantitative indicators, and documenting lessons learned.

This report reviews the preliminary findings of the third year of the SW! pilot in preparation for a final evaluation of the entire three year pilot, to be completed in 2010. In addition, a workshop is to be held in May 2010, where the projects’ results and lessons learned will be shared, explored and celebrated with proponents and funders from across the province.

Over the first two years of the project, a thorough evaluation framework was developed, and baseline information was collected on all the community stewardship organizations. The consultant collaboratively developed and measured qualitative and quantitative impacts of core funding on participating groups, assessed the overall impacts of the program on stewardship organizations and developed standardized reporting and assessment mechanisms for the initiative. Now that the final year of the pilot is concluding, it was important for this documentation and assessment to continue, to further track the impacts of the SW! program over a longer time period, and consolidate best practices and lessons learned.

Brief Description of Main Evaluation Activities for 2009 – 2010

Convening and Coordination of the SW! Advisory Committee

The Advisory Committee (AC) of experienced and interested stakeholders has been a key element in the evolution and success of the initiative. Made up of members of stewardship groups, other non-profits, funding agencies, and representatives from government agencies, the group has been instrumental in advising on criteria for pilot group selection, reviewing applications and choosing the pilot groups, providing interview and workshop content suggestions, and reviewing reports. The evaluation consultant solicited and retained the group members participation, initiated all communications, set up and provided relevant documentation for committee meetings, continued as an active committee participant, and recorded and distributed minutes of the meetings. This consistent role was especially important during and following the transitions between new SCBC executive directors, Board chairs and board members, and additional time was allotted to the communications portion of the consultants' contract to facilitate this role.

Engaged a Northern Stewardship Group

In the first year the SW! pilot was unsuccessful in acquiring a stewardship group from the Upper Fraser region of the province. In the fall of 2009, several proposals were solicited and reviewed by the consultant and the Advisory Committee, and a group from the region, the Vanderhoof Fish and Game Club (Murray Creek Rehabilitation Project), was selected and engaged in the project. The evaluation consultant conducted an extensive interview with the group to collect baseline data and help determine core capacity needs, provided background information, project updates and resources, and linked them with other groups in the region that were conducting similar projects .

Reporting of Stewardship Group Progress: Tools and Templates

Continuous documentation of a project's progress, successes and challenges is a key element of developmental evaluation. It is important to track decisions, changes, impacts and barriers experienced by the SW! pilot groups over time. The evaluation has provided a standardized reporting and assessment mechanism for the stewardship groups, which decreased the reporting requirements for the project, as well as enabling consistent and

equitable data collection and comparison. The qualitative and quantitative indicators that make up the template checklists, as well as the main activity list where core funding is directed was developed at a collaborative workshop with the pilot groups in Kamloops in 2008. This ensured that the indicators and activity lists were relevant tools that would assist the reporting process while ensuring that the data gathered is consistent and accurate without being too onerous to complete.

Collaboration with the SCBC Capacity Building initiative

The Stewardship Centre for BC initiated a capacity building project in 2009, in order to continue its work of supporting stewardship in B.C. The purpose of this research was to gain an understanding of the current status of capacity building in the stewardship sector in British Columbia in order to identify gaps and recommended next steps. The evaluation consultant has been working to connect the two projects, working closely with the capacity building (CB) project consultants to share findings around the needs for and challenges around capacity, and the impacts of core funding on the pilot groups to date. The CB consultants were invited to join the SW! project advisory committee, and they are working in concert to explore how the newly developed CB Framework could help inform the final evaluation process.

Stakeholder Networking and Feedback to Inform Progress

The consultant maintained regular contact with all participating stewardship groups, documented decisions, AC meeting minutes and progress, and circulated relevant information and articles. She also acted as a conduit between groups, providing contact information, referring groups to one another for project support and sharing examples of project progress with newer groups. Providing regular updates and feedback to stakeholders through a “360 degree evaluation” loop allows emerging issues to be dealt with quicker, and enables emerging findings to be “ploughed back in” to support the initiative as it evolves. This also helped the initiative evolve by ensuring all participants benefited from the entire groups’ experiences, networking and relevant research.

Clarifying Long Term Impacts

The addition of a third year to the SW! pilot provides more time to document both short and longer term impacts and disclose more specific indicators of core funding. For example, over the past two years, four groups noted some impact on local governments due in part to their increased ability to attend planning processes and regional meetings. Impacting local government decisions, policy and regulations is a long term indicator of a groups’ success that is better measured in another years’ time, as is the financial stability of several of the pilot groups. Assisting the groups in collecting both quantitative and qualitative long term impacts has helped build their evaluation capacity and also provided useful information for additional funding proposals and requests.

Summary Workshop May 2010

It is recommended that a final wrap-up workshop be held with some of the pilot stewardship groups as well as key funding agencies in May of 2010. The half day session

will include funders, AC members and other stakeholders, and be reflective of the workshop that the Stewardship Centre and other stakeholders ran in May 2007 which launched the SW! project. The goals of the workshop is to showcase the project and funding model, as well as the on-going capacity building framework and findings, in order to collaboratively explore ways to promote the core funding model and sustain and grow the initiative over time. The workshop will include an opportunity for the pilot groups to share the impacts and outcomes of receiving core funding over two years, and for the evaluation findings to be shared and explored in detail. Workshop results will also help inform the final evaluation process and design.

List of Stewardship Groups Participating in the SW! Pilot

Region	Stewardship Group	Group Contact
1. Okanagan Region	Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Alliance: OSCA	Name: Margaret Holm
2. Vancouver Region	Como Watershed Group: CWG	Name: Tomasz Gradowski
3. Thompson Region	Salmon River Watershed Roundtable: SRW	Name: Michael Wallis
4. Fraser Valley	Alouette River Management Society: ARMS	Name: Amanda Balcke
5. North	Delkatla Sanctuary Society: DSS	Name: Peter Hamel / Margo Hamel
6. Upper Fraser	Vanderhoof Fish and Game Club (as of 2009): VFG	Wayne Salewski
7. Vancouver Island	Sea Change Marine Conservation Society: SCMC	Name: Nikki Wright
8. Vancouver Island	Mid-Van. Island Habitat Enhancement Society: MVIHE	Name: Faye Smith & Michele Deakin
9. Cariboo	Williams Lake Field Naturalists/ Scout Island Nature Centre: SINC	Name: Sue Hemphill, & spoke with Jenny Noble
10. Kootenays	Christina Lake Stewardship Society: CLSS	Name: Brenda LaCroix

Data Compilation: 2009 - 2010

Theme 1: Impact of the Grant on Volunteers

Participating groups were asked to outline the main ways that the SW! core funding impacted their ability to attract and retain volunteers and directors. Nine of the ten groups said the funds enabled them to attract more volunteers and specifically to recognize the existing volunteers, ensuring more retention. Two groups used the funds to support volunteer coordinators, and one group said the funds were not sufficient to support a volunteer coordinator. The majority of the groups (nine of ten) highlighted two main areas where the grants directly supported their volunteers:

- an increased ability to attend and host volunteer stewardship projects and public events, leading to a more visible and sustained community presence which then supports engaging both new and current volunteers;
- funding to host appreciation events and gifts for volunteers, to recognize and celebrate their accomplishments.

SCMC: SW! funds were partially used to hire an Outreach/Fundraiser Coordinator, who has increased our abilities to attract and keep volunteers active and satisfied.

CLSS: To date, for 2009, Stewardship Works core funding has enabled us to continue the Volunteer Coordinator (Rikki Morrison) Position.

SINC: Funding enabled us to attract and train several volunteers for our native species planting project, including 15 high school horticulture students.

DSS: SW! gave us the assurance that we could continue to own and operate the Nature Centre at Delkatla, our main work. With this confidence, we attracted volunteers to the Centre all summer and the Centre was open to the public.

ARMS: With the SW! core funding, ARMS has been able to focus more time on recruiting volunteers for our education and stewardship programs than we would have been able to without the funding. The SW! core funding has enabled ARMS to recognize the effort of our volunteers. ARMS has given gift certificates in appreciation their contribution. We believe this recognition goes a long way in keeping volunteers.

SRW: We used the 2009 SW! funding to support a series of small but strategically important activities in our and other related watershed projects that generated involvement of 97 individuals who provided 677 volunteer hours this year.

CWG: The funds have been used to buy juice and pop drinks for creek clean-up volunteers and more recently to finance some of the activities of the Katimivik group (e.g. purchase of notebooks and pens for the neighbourhood exploration).

VFG: We have been able to support the expense and personal costs for a couple of committed volunteers working on funding applications and out reach on projects by purchasing ink and paper for them. This may not seem like much but with un-employment in our community from the down turn in the forest industry they had time on hand but not extra money for these additional costs. We have value for investment and will actually be able to do this one more time.

Increase in Volunteer Numbers

Nine of the ten groups noted an increase in volunteers and/ or an ability to attract more volunteers, due to a more sustained presence, added projects and capacity.

CLSS: Our Volunteer Coordinator has been successful in recruiting several Volunteers to undertake completion of short term projects, the continuance of long term programs and projects, annual events, and new initiatives...

MVI: Yes, there has been an increase in volunteers because we have had the type of projects that can utilize volunteers.

SINC: yes. 3 more naturalists, a building contractor, a volunteer interpreter is helping this fall, 18 planting helpers (materials obtained through another grant)

SRW: Yes, we have systematically set out over the past two SW! years to increase participation using the SW! resources to trigger events that involved new volunteers
This year we involved 97 volunteers of which approximately 58 were new to us and 39 were previously known to us

VFG: We are now one of the founding fathers of a Volunteer BC group that has set up a community meeting for volunteers (40 individuals at the first meeting) where we will be offering mentorship on funding applications, collecting volunteers names, offering training and co-ordinating volunteers with projects. This holds great possibilities and seems to be well received.

Volunteer Training

The ability to train and develop skills in volunteers is seen as an important capacity building activity, and all pilot groups were asked to report on any training that the core funds supported. Four of the groups noted funds going towards volunteer training; some indirectly through being able to support a volunteer coordinator to do some training.

MVIHE: The volunteers were trained by the coordinator who would have been paid if there had been enough funds.

SINC: yes. The Environmental Educator has trained 3 new key naturalist volunteers as hosts in the Nature House, enabling us to extend our hours for the visiting public. Additional volunteers have been trained to help in our planting projects. Katimavik volunteers received additional training in a variety of tasks.

ARMS: The funds have enabled ARMS to participate in a Fraser Basin Council led program, the Youth Watershed Leadership and Mentoring Program.... We have also held two training sessions for our fall salmon spawner surveys and have trained 9 new people (staff and volunteers) on how to conduct these surveys.

SRW: Yes, there were two juvenile salmon release projects involving 18 volunteer individuals, one watershed planning support event involving the provision of watershed planning information materials, one education and awareness demonstration project in a new watershed showing 29 local landowners and watershed project directors how to undertake streambank restoration activity ,involvement in a watershed wide request for about 60 irrigators to stop watering near the end of summer to protect fish values during critical summer low flow, and assistance to educate water users how to upgrade points of irrigation to meet fish habitat standards involving 11 licensed water users.

Documenting Group Crisis/ Transformation: A New Evaluation Opportunity

One of the original pilot stewardship groups suffered a large loss in 2009, with the departure of its main founding member, and a resulting departure of most of the core group of active members. The group itself faced complete dissolution, but other newer members rallied to form a new board of directors to keep the group alive. The model of a passionate group founder who develops, inspires and drives a group with their energy and commitment is a common one, which is also fraught with potential pitfalls: the loss of the founding member being the largest. The Stewardship Works! AC spent several meetings discussing this groups' difficulties, and debated the decision to drop them from the pilot, since the group structure was so changed from its original state when the pilot began. However, AC members felt that the groups' transitions and difficulties provided a good opportunity for documentation and learning, and it was decided to retain them for the balance of the three year pilot. The predictability and unrestricted nature of the core funding grants is an important aspect of the SW! pilot to track and explore, particularly for a group that is struggling with a crisis.

CWG: Initially the organization had a significant number of active members involved in watershed conservation initiatives. With time, however, the number of members dropped and the set of core activities was significantly reduced. In May 2009 the core group of active members has left the organization, which at that point faced dissolution. During the emergency membership meeting, a

small group of the CWG members (people generally inexperienced in managing an organization) decided to form a new board of directors to keep the CWG alive. Currently, the membership reaction is quite enigmatic. The number of active members of the CWG decreased to 8 people.

Theme 2: Positive Impact on Grant Writing

Pilot groups were asked to track whether core funds enabled them to apply for and/or attract further grants. All but one of the groups noted an increased ability to acquire more grant funding. This was accomplished through various means: using the core funds as seed money, paying staff to write grant proposals, sending staff to attend grant writing workshops, enabling volunteers to be supported in soliciting donations, assisting partner groups in grant writing, and providing a level of security that also encouraged other donors to fund projects. The grant provided a precious gift of “compensated time” to staff members – to research programs and funding opportunities and solicit and complete applications.

SCMC: The funds have enabled SeaChange to increase donations through the 1% for the planet, giving... us a 400% increase from the previous year. Time spent preparing and meeting with donors was paid to the ED from SW! funds.

CLSS: Not only has SW funding attracted other grant funds, it has also enabled us to attract further local donations, donations of services and goods from various businesses (locally and provincially including Alberta), and a two year grant from BP of \$5,000.00 for two years for educational tools.

MVIHE: We were able to attract a person who is willing to get involved with our society in the role of strategic planning, fund raising and grant writing. We paid for her to attend a grant-writing workshop with SCBC funds and we paid some of the expenses incurred when she helped us apply for a gaming grant (not successful because of the reduction in gaming grants recently).

SINC: Yes. The contractor these funds have enabled us to hire has been successful in attracting grants for projects related to ecosystem restoration and social marketing.

ARMS: With the SW! funds, ARMS has applied for a grant from the BC Transmission Corporation. We were awarded \$5000 from BCTC for our education programs.

SRW: we were able to assist two other watershed groups in fundraising (Murray Creek and Bonaparte River) , and a third watershed group (City of Coquitlam) in watershed planning processes.

VFG: Our next proposal will require a fund writer and he or she will need to be a registered professional Bio to give the application the touch required to be successful. Some of that money will need to come out of the remaining funds from this seed money.

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, once again this year, 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.

SCMC: The SW! grant has been matched with funds from Work Source, a federally funded wage subsidy program for the Outreach/Fundraiser Coordinator, through the 1% for the Planet funds (\$5,000 total) and through in-kind labour from the SeaChange staff (~\$2,000).

VFG: The volunteers on the Murray Creek project put in endless amounts of time and own resources to move this project ahead. An estimated 120 hours a month during the winter are put in on just the planning process to move this project ahead.

I personally volunteer 5 days a week for 7 -8 hours a day to move ahead the 4 core projects we are working on along with the development of two projects that have been approved and then the additional watershed idea. I feel that the work we have done to date since this fund was given to us has been well matched and we will continue.

DSS: Yes - We matched SW! funds with our volunteer hours as well and other donations. we also received funds from the Regional District (\$2,000); Flo Perdue (\$1,000) and private donors (\$500). We received funds from Gwaii Trust (\$10,000) which has now been drawn down.

SRW: Yes, funds were levered at a ratio of approximately 3.1:1 - we have found that small amounts of core funding can be levered at a higher ratio than larger amounts in general. Larger projects deliver more total product, but funds are often levered at about 2:1.

Theme 3: Measuring the Value of the SW! Project

All the groups were enthusiastically positive about the value of the SW! grants to their organizations, with two stating that the initiative was critical to the survival of their group this past year. Main factors cited were the core funding impact on stability, volunteer retention, staff and volunteer support, and the consistency that the funds provided in supporting Board meetings, basic expenses and forward planning ability. Specific impacts and indicators are explored further below.

ARMS: Yes! The SW! project has been very valuable to ARMS. As mentioned last year, ARMS has had problems holding on to staff for more than 1-2 years. With the SW! funds, ARMS has been able to slightly increase the wages of our Education Coordinators. Although we are still unable to provide a competitive wage, we hope the increase will help to keep staff at ARMS longer. This year, ARMS has been able to hire our Executive Director on as a full time employee. The Executive Director position has been contracted for approximately the last 8 years. The contribution of SW! funding has also enabled ARMS to hire a fourth staff member this fall, to ensure all staff are properly trained when our Executive Director goes on maternity leave next year. This year is also the first year in at least 4-5 years (longer than I have been with ARMS), that consistent board meetings (every 2 months) were held with the ARMS Board of Directors.

SRW: Yes, the SW! funding was used strategically to trigger opportunities which we encountered during our watershed sustainability planning and restoration activities, both within and out of our watershed over the year which created an opportunity to interface and educate new participants in better ways to support watershed sustainability through a combination of individual and collective understanding and action.

VFG: Yes, very valuable. When I left my past employer to retire, I lost the use of all of their Lap tops and projectors. Just being able to buy these things for the project has enabled us to do many community presentations. We are getting great value for the money invested.

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

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

Participants were asked about both short and long term impacts of the SW! grants, and what specifically the funds enabled them to do differently.

Quantitative indicators noted by the groups included:

- basic costs being covered (administrative, memberships, rent, bills paid) and the relief from anxiety that this provided. One group established a core funding bank account. (10 groups)
- being able to apply for more grants (9 groups),
- attending more community and regional meetings (6 groups),
- hosting more workshops and producing brochures and other outreach materials (5 groups),
- writing and submitting more media articles (5 groups),
- attending training sessions and conferences (5 groups).
- supporting volunteer coordinators both financially and with training (4 groups) ,
- increasing community partnerships (4 groups)
- the ability to do evaluations and monitoring of projects (2 groups),

SCMC: The SeaChange ED was able to participate more fully on the SCBC Board and in several community meetings/events (119 hrs) and the Puget Sound/Georgia Basin 2009 Conference because her labour was paid by SW! funds. Her capacity to be a more active member of the stewardship community was tripled. The funds also reduced stress by covering a month's office rent (\$800) when other funds were not available..

MVIHE: 2 memberships to Volunteer Association; 3 workshops; 2 mailbox rentals; 1 membership Pacific Streamkeepers Association; 1 insurance payment; 2 accounting payments; 1 society dues; 1 telephone/fax bill; 4 expenses re AGM; 2 reimbursements for website expenses; 1 display ad in fishing regulations manual; 3 office expenses including QuickBooks software for new Treasurer; 2 grant writing fees.

ARMS: The \$5000 core funding has been spent on administration (report writing, funding applications written, meeting attended, minutes typed, accounting), volunteer recruitment and training (contacting schools, calling volunteers, water quality testing of streams, and training of volunteers) and education (wages for classroom programs, fieldtrip programs, and spring and summer camps).

CWG: The funds have been used to pay for our phone and mailbox bills, and to finance some of the activities of the Katimivik group (e.g. purchase of notebooks and pens for the neighbourhood

exploration, financing lamination of the artistic photo-collage, and providing a small fee for a professional photographer, who recorded Katimivik's activities in the community).

VFG: We were able to construct an environmental stream trade show backdrop for community presentations and have used it twice within the first week off the printer. We are now working on a "best practices" brochure for the ranching community... they also allowed me to attend a Fraser Basin Stewardship meeting in Lillooet ... I would not have attended the meeting if the cost were to come out of my pension cheque as it is not viable.

Qualitative Indicators

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. The main qualitative indicators cited included:

- Sense of security and a “cushion:” for times when grants still to come in.... (10 groups)
- Reduction of burnout / sense of long term viability (10 groups)
- Ability to participate in events/ community connection (9 groups)
- Increased group profile due to media, attendance at community meetings, new volunteers, and improved web presence (6 groups);
- More thorough forward planning enabled (5 groups)
- Financial planning enabled/ key committees established (5 groups)
- Ability to outreach to other groups to help them with stewardship activities – sense of pride / being recognized as “experts” (2 groups)
- Staff training has enabled smooth transitions, and no loss of history and project information. (2 groups)

CLSS: The profile of the CLSS has expanded substantially due to an increase in media releases, new volunteers coming on board, more events, more handouts of educational tools and better planning and forecasting. A higher level of confidence in Board and Members - continuity leads to a higher level of volunteer recruitment and training abilities

OSCA: In setting priorities for the Stewardship funds, we decided that financial planning was a priority. We have had two financial planning meetings since receiving this year's funds, and have established a fundraising and a finance committee.

MVIHE: The prospect of receiving core funding provides hope for the longevity of the society by reducing burn-out, because there is not the on-going anxiety about covering the necessary administration and coordination expenses that many funders refuse to pay.

SINC: contract security for coordinator frees Environmental Educator to present more programs - long-term funding stability reduces time spent grant-writing and appeals for core operations, increases ability to seek project funding.

DSS: Knowing we had SW! funds gave us more time to participate in projects and events rather than being constantly stressed to find funds to keep the Nature Centre operating. We had time

to train Junior Stewardship Forest Rangers in bird and plant identification, do more Bird Atlas work, monitor the four IBA's we are stewards of, spend time with the Science Alive! group, lead an Earth Day cleanup.... SW! funds allow us to carry on with the work we've always done, but with a lighter heart.

SRW: knowing that the funding was secured for two years provided us an opportunity to continue with watershed planning and restoration, with an eye to using the SW! funds at key opportunities to generate a large return per dollar . In essence the SW! funds were regarded as high value dollars that could be applied based on local experience and discretion of the SRWR Executive, when a clear and substantial opportunity to generate strong return became evident that could not otherwise be funded. These core stewardship funds generated a very large return because they were secure and could be spent incrementally over the year when the greatest opportunities for high value small cash injections into an ongoing process became apparent.

CWG: The fact that the funding exists gives us the hope that the organization will survive the recently experienced slowdown in activity. The current level of income from donations and membership fees would not keep us afloat for long – this is critical transition funding.

VFG: Providing support for further fund-raising and travel. I find that finding the time to apply for the funding to be the most time consuming and sometimes least rewarding part of the projects that I am working on. I also find that being a volunteer is sometimes more expensive personally than it should be, certainly when some of these projects are certainly the role of government agencies, which have been gutted in recent years.

Indicators of Success

Through the participatory processes of the evaluation, specific indicators of success that will track the impacts on stewardship groups of receiving core funding were developed and refined by the pilot groups throughout 2008 – 2009. The resulting table below lists the indicators of impact and progress, and summarizes the areas where SW! funds were used by the organization this past year. The indicators have been listed in order of frequency cited.

Group	Total	Indicator
SCMC CLSS OSCA MVIHE SINC DSS CWG VFG	8	Time to do some forward planning / strategic planning
SCMC CLSS SINC DSS ARMS SRW CWG VFG	8	Community profile increased through more attendance at events
SCMC CLSS OSCA MVIHE SINC DSS VFG	7	More grant applications written
SCMC CLSS MVIHE DSS ARMS SRW CWG	7	Volunteers supported through special events, food, equipment.
SC CL SI DSS SRW CWG VFG	7	More community projects supported
SCMC CLSS OSCA SINC DSS ARMS	6	Directors better informed, supported

SCMC CLSS SINC DSS SRW VFG	6	More community partnerships encouraged and supported
SCMC CLSS MVIHE SINC SRW	5	Website development enabled
SCMC CLSS SINC DSS VFG	5	Community profile increased through more press contacts, media articles, press releases.
SCMC CLSS SINC DSS SRW	5	Increased volunteer numbers
OSCA MVIHE SINC DSS CWG	5	Phone / Utility Costs paid
SCMC OSCA MVIHE CWG	4	Rental Costs paid
SCMC MVIHE SINC VFG	4	Conference fees / travel covered
CLSS SINC ARMS SRW	4	Volunteer training
SCMC CLSS SINC ARMS	4	Volunteer Coordinator paid
SCMC SRW VFG	3	Travel Costs covered to meetings and regional gatherings, enabling more representation of our group
MVIHE DSS SRW	3	Insurance Costs paid

Almost all the groups noted that they had been able to do some forward planning with their organizations, a critical activity for non-profit evolution and sustainability. Writing more grant proposals, supporting volunteer efforts and more community projects, supporting directors and encouraging community partnerships were all frequently noted indicators. All of these indicators describe the core work of a stewardship group – the specific targeted area for the SW! grants.

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. One new indicator mentioned was a groups' increased ability to offer support and resources to other watershed groups – a sign of increased capacity. Other interesting indicators noted were group members' overall perception of greater stability, a more consistent presence in the community, being able to offer sustained programming, and a perceived increase in community awareness of nature and the environment. See quotes below:

SCMC: Even a small amount of core funds makes such a difference to developing organizational capacity.

CLSS: The SWBC funding has helped us obtain leverage funding to extend our Volunteer Coordinator Position which provides a continual coordinated approach to Volunteer recruitment, as well as expansion of funds towards our educational tools program. It has also allowed for further public awareness of our stewardship initiatives. It also must be noted here that increased Volunteer recruitment is important but this funding has also helped us to sustain our programs and events with another staff presence where otherwise we may not have been able to.

SRW: Number of new initiatives sponsored in sister watershed projects by the funded watershed (paying it forward, sharing knowledge and the benefits of multi faceted partnership networks).

CWG: We survived a major breakdown in the group's spirit and we are working to rebuild the membership and the sense of communal responsibility for our watershed. The existence of funding provides us with a "safety rope", which helps us to stand back on our feet – it shows the community we can have a role and a presence.

What About Next Year? (SW! Funds to be received Spring 2010)

The third years' allotment of SW! funds was split in half, with the groups receiving 50% of their grant amount in the fall of 2009, and the other half by March 2010. Once again, groups were asked how they planned to spend their second allotment of 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.

All ten groups stated that they would focus on similar elements for the coming year, with some new areas being added through knowing that core costs were covered. Added activities that are planned for include further planning time (both strategic and financial), more volunteer training, and further web site development.

DSS: Same as this year with added website development and volunteer training

ARMS: Volunteer training, More grant applications written, Volunteer Coordinator paid, Directors better informed, supported, Increased volunteer numbers, Volunteers supported through special events, food, equipment.

SRW: We will use the funds for the same activities, but also to do some linking to and supporting inquiries from sister watershed projects.

CWG: We will use the funds to cover basics like phone, rent, conference and travel costs, but also focus on supporting our directors and volunteers, and developing community events. We plan to conduct a membership questionnaire, and host a planning meeting, where we will discuss the goals and purpose of the group.

VFG: Same as this year - Travel costs, writing more grants, more community projects and volunteers supported, and more time to do some planning.

Additional Comments from the Pilot Groups

All ten groups expressed gratitude for the SW! funds, noting that the challenging funding environment, the increase in job losses across the province and the loss of gaming grants to environmental organizations over this past year has meant that secure core funding is even more valued.

SCCS: Thank you for the opportunity to find out what core funding really means as far as leveraging, capacity building and covering core expenses. One of the most critical difference these funds has made has been to increase the ED's ability to network and contribute to stewardship.!

CLSS: I hope that SWBC is successful in obtaining funds to continue with this program as it is very valuable in so many ways to have core funding on a continual basis to leverage other funding for non-profits groups. As many are aware, and as difficult economic times indicate, it will be getting harder for our groups to continue without support from various agencies of which many are cutting back due to financial losses and less interest available for funding all of the proposals that are submitted each year.

SINC: We appreciate the funding extension for another year, as core funding is a perpetual need. We also applaud Stewardship Works's efforts to educate funders to the importance of supporting basic operations.

DSS: We sincerely appreciate SW! support; we couldn't continue without it. Thank you.

ARMS: ARMS would like to send our appreciation to Stewardship Works! for the time and funds made available to our organization

SRW: Our Roundtable regards the linkage between watershed projects is an important success indicator and value. We regard any capacity to assist other watersheds as a good pay back for all the various partnership support our watershed has received in the past. The SW! enabled our watershed group to share info and expertise at no cost to other like-minded groups looking for inexpensive support

CWG: The SW! funds have enabled us to stay afloat at a critical time for our organization – we lost our board and many members. We would not have survived had not these funds been in place.

VFG: ... we will be able to engage the volunteers we are gathering under our volunteer BC program which should bring both ideas together and into the field. I can not say enough about what this money can do in the right hands. The ink one on my volunteers was going through was over \$100.00 and he has 4 children and no job. This stressed his wife out and the simple purchase of ink and paper made the problem go away... we are changing attitudes in a community that used to be all about logging and not about conservation projects.

Conclusions from Year Three

Core Funding Grants Support and Increase Volunteers

The majority of the pilot groups noted a direct impact of the SW! core funding on their ability to attract and retain volunteers and directors. Increased volunteer numbers, happier volunteers and a more organized volunteer management system were all noted results. Increasing pilot group volunteer numbers was mainly accomplished through attending and hosting volunteer stewardship projects and public events, leading to a more visible and sustained community presence, which then supports further volunteer engagement. Furthermore, the funds enabled most groups to host appreciation events and gifts for volunteers, to recognize and celebrate their accomplishments. Volunteer recognition is a

key factor in volunteer retention, yet is often overlooked in project fund soliciting. (Volunteer Canada: *The Canadian Code for Volunteer Involvement*, 2001)

Improvements in volunteer management was also seen as a significant impact, as support for volunteer coordinators, and more training, resources and recognition all contributed to happier and more productive volunteers. While only four groups put the SW! funds towards volunteer training, four more noted that it was part of their plans for the coming year.

Group Crisis and Evolution: A New Evaluation Opportunity

The Como Watershed Group lost a key founding member and its board during 2009, and is struggling to rebuild the organization and maintain its core objectives and activities. The SW! Advisory Committee decided to allow the group to continue as part of the pilot, and its challenges and evolution is being documented through this last year of the initiative. The annual predictability and unrestricted nature of the core funding grants is an important aspect of the SW! pilot to track and explore, particularly for a group that is struggling with a crisis. The resulting findings will add valuable learning to the evaluation, and provide insights into some of the common challenges that many stewardship groups face.

Positive Impact on Grant Writing

Nine of the ten groups noted an increased ability to acquire more grant funding as a result of the predictable annual acquisition and unrestricted allocation of the core funds. This was accomplished through various means: using the core funds as seed money, paying staff to write grant proposals, sending staff to attend grant writing workshops, enabling volunteers to be supported in soliciting donations, assisting partner groups in grant writing, and providing a level of security that also encouraged other donors to fund projects. For many groups, the grant provided a precious gift of “compensated time” to staff members – to research programs and funding opportunities and solicit and complete applications.

All pilot groups were successful in matching grants from the *Stewardship Works!* on a 1:1 basis with cash, donated materials, volunteer labour, and other contributions. Once again this year, all groups reported that none of the funds had to come out of project-based funding – allaying concerns that matching the funds might detract from project deliverables.

Flexible Funds: High-Value Working Capital

All ten groups were very positive about the high value of the SW! grants to their organizations, with two stating that the initiative was critical to the survival of their group this past year. Main factors cited were the core funding impacts on stability, volunteer retention, staff and volunteer support, and the consistency that the funds provided in supporting Board meetings, basic expenses and forward planning ability. All ten 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 groups noted the

short term impact of being able to “pay for things most others won’t”, and were thankful for the grants’ flexibility.

These core funds seem to become 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 on core expenses.

Defined Short and Long Term Impacts of the SW! Grants

Participants were asked about both short and long term impacts of the SW! grants, and what specifically the funds enabled them to do differently. The three main *quantitative indicators* noted by the groups were the use of the funds to cover basic costs, being able to apply for more grants through using funds as seed money or to cover a grant writers time, and the ability to attend and/or host more community and regional meetings.

The three most prevalent *qualitative indicators* of the success of providing core funding included a sense of group security and long-term viability, the reduction of burn-out, and the nurturing of greater community connections and partnerships through hosting and attending key events.

Almost all reporting groups noted that they had been able to do some forward planning with their organizations - a critical activity for non-profit evolution and sustainability.

Raising a group’s profile within a community has the dual effect of strengthening perceptions of permanence and influence, which can lead to attracting new volunteers to further increase its overall status and strength. Supporting organization directors and encouraging community partnerships were also frequently noted indicators.

One new indicator mentioned was a groups’ increased ability to offer support and resources to other watershed groups - this “paying it forward” is a sign of increased group capacity and also of the usefulness of core funding to be flexible in where it is targeted. For example, it was felt that few traditional funders would support their project-based grant funds being spent in helping develop another group’s capacity or associated project.

Positive Perspectives and Well-Being Increased

Positive perspectives of long term volunteers, directors and members were cited by almost all 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.

There was a lot of emphasis on the long-term predictability of receiving the grants over three years and the sense of relief that provided. 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. This sense of security,

accomplishment and positive action is critical for volunteer-run groups to survive and flourish.

Long Term Impacts and Future Use of the SW! Funds

All ten groups stated that they would focus on similar elements for the coming year, with some new areas being added as a result of knowing that core costs were covered. Added activities that are planned for include further group planning time (both strategic and financial), more volunteer training, and web site development.

Six groups noted that they had some impact on local governments over the past year, through their involvement in planning processes and meetings. Impacting local governments, plans and regulations is a long term indicator of a groups' success that is best measured over the entire three year evaluation. This impact and several indicators will form a main aspect of the final wrap-up evaluation to be conducted next year.

In summary, it seems from this third year of the SW! pilot project that providing core funding to the stewardship groups enabled them to "get on with their work" – the business of public engagement in stewardship. All the short term and long-term measurement indicators, as well as the qualitative and quantitative impacts noted by the participants support 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. All participants and stakeholders are looking forward to the final evaluation of the pilot where impacts and results will be collated and compared across the three years, and long-term outcomes will be assessed.

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