

Executive Directors (ED) Forum, 2017 Conference



CCLT's Executive Director reached out to the membership EDs, soliciting the topics they wanted the ED Forum to address. At the conference, those topics were listed on a poster on display, and the membership EDs placed colored dots to vote for their top five areas. Of those five, the top three topics were used for the remainder of the forum. The entire group was divided into 3 groups; each group was assigned one of the top three topics and asked to frame up the issue, concerns and potential impacts – capturing that input on poster paper. Then each group gave their papers to another group who reviewed them, adding things they felt were not included, and began the process of identifying solutions. Next, the groups exchanged the papers a third time, and the final group added value to the work performed by the previous two groups. Lastly, the papers were returned back to the initial group, where they described to the entire group how their initial paper evolved, what new information or ideas they learned, and other similar comments.

The common themes that emerged were are noted below. The 'raw results' compiled from the poster papers follow these overarching themes:

Covering Operational Expenses

- One of the biggest concerns was the fact that capacity grants have dwindled.
- Asset investment strategies and the need for financial experts or professional advisors on boards was noted.
- Responsible stewardship.
- Broadening and diversifying donor bases and programs.

Managing Boards of Directors

- The importance of creating strong, personally connected boards of directors.
- Need for strong executive leadership, including a resilient and connected Executive Director and Chair of the Board relationship.
- Standards for conflict resolution.
- Clear job descriptions and expectations for the board members.
- Fundraising as a key objective.

Local Public Funding & Ballot Initiatives

- Education needed on the basics of what is needed to run local ballot measures, and with that a toolkit or template so local advocacy doesn't need to be recreated.
- Lack of funding for this kind of work.
- Leverage relationships to pool resources for lobbying or developing a local/regional consortium.

Use the LTA model of representing the greatest number of overlapping challenges to avoid opposition between land trusts

Executive Directors Forum Break Out Group Notes, 2017 Conference

'Raw Results'

March 9, 2017 – California Land Conservation Conference 'votes' on topics to discuss

- New federal administration – 16
- California state politics – 18
- Accreditation – 10
- Managing board of directors – 26
- Local public funding & ballot initiatives – 20
- Covering operational expenses – 29
- Tips on managing controversial projects – 18
- Climate adaptation projects – 15
- Update on Conservation Horizons implementation – 16

Process: the 'raw results' of those break out group discussions are noted below

Phase 1: each of the 3 groups were assigned one of the top three topics to frame up the issue, begin the process of things to consider – capturing their group's ideas on poster paper

Phase 2: groups exchanged their poster papers with another group to review, note anything that the first group may have missed and begin developing solutions – adding to the poster papers

Phase 3: groups exchanged their poster papers yet again, the new group added value where they could – adding to the poster papers

Phase 4: the poster papers were returned to the original group to review and report out to the full group how their topic had 'evolved' as it was passed from group to group and any new insights or 'ah ha' moments they had as a result.

Topic 1: Covering Operational Expenses

Phase 1:

- Investment strategies.
- Revenue diversification.
- Where are the capacity grants?
- Where is operations income coming from now?
- Capturing indirect costs.
- Broad and diverse donor base – takes time and investment.
- Stewardship endowment income.
- Mitigation money.
- Planned giving program.

Phase 2:

- Investment: Revenue diversity.

- Capacity grants.
- Legacy Circle – TNC one-third of money from legacy gifts.
- Auto donation program.
- Stewardship of all donors small and large.
- Wealth engine: identify philanthropic background, some information, use discretion.
- Database upgrades as you grow.
- Communicate your donation – impacts on the organization – outcomes. (Bang for the buck/tell the story, i.e., \$1 to 3 times that).
- Index funds per Warren Buffet.
- Finance experts on committee along with professional financial advisor.
- Overhead 20% average CDFW assumes 23.05%.
- Recover on projects as much as possible.

Phase 3:

- Overhead
 - a. Where to include staff, projects, and insurance expenses.
 - b. Allocate to program as appropriate rather than general operating expense.
- Assent Investment Decisions
 - a. Guidelines – investing safely.
 - b. Financial advisor on board is critical or within committee/organization.
- Unrestricted Funds
 - a. Building large number of annual gifts.
- Revenue Diversification
 - a. Founders, corporations, legacy, earned income, annual, campaigns, even fundraising.
 - b. Diversity in programs can help find new sources but careful not to chase the money.
 - c. Analysis of billing rates.
 - d. Capacity grants have dwindled.
- Position Sharing/Mergers
 - a. Not everyone needs to have land management responsibility.

Phase 4:

- Diversify (but don't chase the money).
 - a. Start with indexing current sources.
 - b. Absorb staff costs and overheads in grants as possible.
- Unrestricted Revenue
 - a. Building capacity takes time and investment.
 - b. Bequests (for the future).
- Asset investment strategies.
 - a. Consider an intext strategy to cut fees.
 - b. Financial advisors on committees.
- Smart use of funds (look at lowering costs).
- Raise stewardship endowments (easy legacy ask).

Topic 2: Managing Board of Directors

Phase 1:

- Board should always know they are being managed and should not know they are being managed.
- Executive Director relationship most critical.
- How are staff/directors to work together, classified at different roles (i.e., supporting projects).
- Term limits/advisory council vs. emeritus (some directors do not want to leave).
- Overstep their roles: working board.
- Recognize and make the board shine/appreciated. (need to get to know them personally).
- Fundraising – lack in support for FR (training, champion 2 or 3 directors work with staff, not all about the ask, don't ask, personal touches).
- Bring new projects, initiate staff to follow up (setting priorities).
- Conflict resolution policy.

Phase 2:

- Always one of two members to manage.
 - a. Have members who want to do more than can do.
- Need strong executive leadership.
 - a. Job of board chair is to manage board but it doesn't always happen.
- Never in public disagreement with chair.
 - a. Met with beforehand.
 - b. Set up support coalition of board members where board committee structure is helpful.
- Strong ED – Chair relationship is very important.
- Term limits are critical.
 - a. But small county makes this difficult (consider term limits for officers).
 - b. HAVE to be actively recruiting.
- Fundraising.
 - a. Assume ED or staff who has responsibility but there are some where board has responsibility.
 - b. Train board members to have staff take responsibility from initial contacts, but models vary depending on size of organization.
- Board Members communications in public needs careful selection.

Phase 3:

- Strong up to date personnel policies.
- Board orientation manual/training program.
- Visit other land trust boards.
- Regular engagement activities for every board member.
- Clear job description/expectations for board members.
- Strategic plan/vision up to date.

Phase 4:

- Operational FR: share successes.
- Finger on pulse of legislation.
- State politics.
- CCLT – building leverage board build advocacy.
- Community cons.
- Org. models for business.
- Benefit assessment district.
- Understand collective impact.
- Accreditation.
- Transition planning.
- Endowment planning.
- Sharing tool kit – centralize info of executive director.
- Unified consistent voice conservation community.
- Color it up.
- Conservation horizon welcoming strangers.
- Sister organization.
- Executive director cohorts.
- New executive director training/mentor.
- Young leaders for board and staff.
- Cultural relevancy.
- Contract law for conservation.
- Survive new Fed.
- Collective bargain new Federal Administration.
- CCLT climate help land trusts.
- Mid year regional training workshops, cohorts, and collaboration.
- Assistance organization building.
- Diversity and inclusiveness.
- Incorporate climate resilience.
- Vision share planning.
- Board recruits diversity.
- CCLT priorities from this results of conference - what heard and how heard.
- Success stories volunteers (land, office, board).
- Preventing staff burnout methods.
- Pragmatic sense with project money and administrated.
- Build a diverse and inclusive project to attract diversity and inclusion.

Topic 3: Local Public Funding & Ballot InitiativesPhase 1:Challenges:

- Genesis was loss of Prop 21 – turn to local bonds.
- Education needed on basics/what's needed to run local ballot measures.
- Need for advance work on developing political power.

- Template needed so don't have to recreate to build local advocacy and support.
- Utilize TPL and TNC.
- Steps to build base of support.
- Use firms to help.
- Public outreach for priorities.
- Lack of experience and partners in land trust community.
- Balance mission with funding measure.
- No money for this work.
- Enough people need to feel they have the benefit of local open space and parks; importance of doing urban parks and TIO events in low income communities.

Potential Solutions:

- Land trusts need to participate more in local advocacy.
 - a. Pool resources for lobbying.
 - b. Develop local/regional consortium.
 - c. Leveraging our relationships.
 - d. Local community, city council, BOS.
- Learn from other land trusts who have done it.
- CCLT will use LTA model of representing greatest number of overlapping challenges.
- CCLT provide tool kits/resources to teach us how.
- Tax assessment districts.

Phase 2:

Challenges:

- Looking for money in perpetuity so meet politicians constant contact.
- Renew is easier than new.
- Avoid opposition/keep at it/take the long view; understand it can grow into something bigger that could be good for all including your community.
- Do not presume coalition/avoid cannibalism.
- Urban vs. rural can be different.
- Current impacts can create additional funding (i.e., floods).

Potential Solutions:

- Lobbyist – contacts/network increase at the table for ballots and access grants increase. Co-oping or pooling money.
- CCLT assess resources for lobbying in local advocacy/develop a process (policy committee).
- How to come to an agreement (state and local)
- Long term plan to protect state land preserves (state may sell). Voice.

Phase 3:

- Consultants.
- Need help on how to do/assistance in measure.
- Local partnerships; leveraging local relationships.

- Long term plan and commitment; building the base and visibility.
- Internal policy expertise.
- Resources.