



Stewardship Works!

Interview Summary and Recommendations



Ministry of
Environment



'THINK SALMON'



Fraser Basin Council





Why Interviews?

- To learn more about the perceptions, partnership opportunities, perceived barriers to involvement in *Stewardship Works!* and potential ways around these barriers.
- To help develop an agenda for the proposed workshop in May.
- To identify potential champions for the *Stewardship Works!* program once it is launched.



Who Participated?

Brian Clark, BC Ministry of Environment
Dave Clark, BC Ministry of Environment
Patrick Daigle, BC Ministry of Environment
Coral deShield, Fraser Basin Council
Stewart Guy, BC Ministry of Environment
Jeff Jung, Fisheries and Oceans Canada
Rick Kool, Royal Roads University
Andrew MacDonald, BC Hydro
Tim Pringle, Real Estate Foundation of BC
Eva Cheung Robinson, Vancouver Foundation
Dianne Ramage, Pacific Salmon Foundation
Joel Solomon, Endswell Foundation
Brian Springinotic, Habitat Conservation Trust Fund
Carolyn Stewart, Parks Canada
Sylvia von Schuckman, BC Ministry of Environment



What did we ask about?

- **Organizational funding priorities**
- **Opinions on:**
 - Core funding, in general
 - The role of stewardship groups
 - The need for core funding of stewardship groups
- **Advantages and disadvantages of providing core funding to stewardship groups**
- **Funder motivators and barriers to participating in the Stewardship Works! Program**
- **Advice for structuring the program**



Funding priorities

Funders are all over the map with respect to funding stewardship groups:

“We’re in fairly early stages of what the stewardship component will be. It’s a priority but we haven’t done a lot there yet.”

“We have a business plan with seven strategies.”

“Focus is restoration projects, conservation projects.”

“We don’t have money for external groups.”

“We don’t set funding priorities.”

“We invite proponents to submit proposals that do good things for fish, wildlife and habitat anywhere in BC.”

“Our priorities are conservation of biodiversity, species and habitats.”

“We don’t identify funding priorities as such. We have broad goals to engage in solving broad environmental issues.”

“We look at funding stewardship initiatives in a variety of ways.”

“Our priority is to support strategic and focused efforts where people and resources are mobilized.”



Core Funding

Respondents span the continuum, from never providing any core funding to providing only core funding:

“We do not provide core funding but there’s no reason why we wouldn’t; we just need to make the case for it.”

“We don’t provide core funding. We struggle with it. It’s something we hear consistently that they need it. Reality is it’s difficult since you can never support all the organizations that need core support.”

“We provide 10% for administration in all project funding.”

“We don’t have a specific stance on that. We often fund administration and program costs to a ceiling of 12.5% inside any project “

“I’m not sure about whether we fund core.”

“More project funding rather than core funding.”

“We do mostly core funding and have since the public launch of our foundation.”

“We support core funding on a partnering basis. We don’t fund 100%; we would fund a portion that meets our goals and community goals.”



Core Funding

There is a growing awareness of the problems caused by a lack of core funding:

“You can’t run a successful operation without core funding. You drive people into questionable accounting practices.”

“There is a recognition that it’s a real challenge for a lot of groups right now. For the most part, funders want to put money into projects. There needs to be a recognition that money generates money, so you can leverage it.”

“We are looking for ways to help stewardship groups with core funding.”



Matching/challenge grants

Most respondents support matching grants and challenge grants in principle, and participate in them:

“We like them. We are making it clear to people we talk with that they will have better success if we know we are not the only funder.”

“We support the concept in general. When we do give out money, or when we ask for money it usually done in partnerships.”

“We like them. Last time I did an assessment, every dollar we give from our coffers attracts \$3-4.”

“Our program very much places an emphasis on getting other contributions.”

“We usually match unless it doesn’t fit our terms of reference.”

“All three of our programs are all challenge programs.”

“I certainly think the more people and partnerships you have with everyone providing some money to core is a good way to go.”



Matching/challenge grants

However a few respondents are either unfamiliar with this type of funding or do not use it:

“Never heard of it before in the stewardship area.”

“Not familiar with this.”

“On our main pot of money we don’t require matching.”



Stewardship groups

Most respondents are positive about stewardship groups and the work they do:

“They play a vital role especially when the funding is not ongoing.”

“Definitely critical to our work.”

“They are important to the environmental movement of BC.”

“I think they’re essential.”

“They do some of the measurement, monitoring, and conservation work that is critical to communities.”

“(They are) critical to achieving our conservation of natural resources mandate.”

“They have the best potential to get the work done and also maintain it over time.”

“Without them being the face of government law on the ground, undertaking work that needs to be done, through altruistic caring and understanding that the legacy is beyond a generation. You cannot legislate that.”

“They are critical in a lot of ways, We need to have people working at all levels to be really effective.”



Stewardship Groups

Some respondents temper their praise:

“There are some stewardship groups out there for their own glory and don’t care about the rest.”

“Some need some direction.”

“Some are small and well meaning but not consistent.”

“Stewardship groups are so diverse.”

“Some organizations are playing a very narrow role, e.g. conservation of one creek. Then you have others that are working provincially, and they have all kinds of expertise.”

Core Funding for stewardship groups?

Yes:

“Because without core funding people tend to burn out, go from project to project without taking care of broader needs.”

“Yes! I’ve lived it and seen the results of good stuff and what happens when you overextend yourself.”

“Yes, from what you said I can see how it would be outside the funding criteria of many funding sources, that basic infrastructure, if required, is hard to access.”

“Yes. they serve a crucial role and organizations that survive need something other than project funding to make a go of it and exist over time.”

“Yes. I think it’s a big barrier. If you can’t have basic momentum to stay in touch with your members it’s difficult to rally volunteers.”

“Yes. For any organization to be effective you need champions so one of the ways of developing champions is through community groups which need coordination and leadership.”



Core Funding for Stewardship Groups?

Maybe:

“I think some kind of building of capacity for them is necessary but I’m not convinced that core funding is the only answer since frankly it may not be feasible; it’s not a sustainable solution because of the number of groups and amount of money.”

“Yes and no. If the mandate of the group includes activities that have to do with measurement and monitoring, restoration, and land owner contact, interest in land for conservation purposes, then I think they are the best organization for the job. But if their mission is narrower, it might not fit.”

“Do our funders give us money to build expertise and capacity? To date the board has decided that that’s not why the donors give us their money.”



Core Funding for Stewardship Groups?

Maybe:

“I always have a problem with this. I say for how long? They say, “You don’t expect us to do this for free.” But I think it’s volunteer-run; if you want to get paid get a job. Some people turn a hobby into a job and want to get paid. If we paid every stewardship group in the province we’d never be able to do it.”

“I’m not convinced that core funding is the answer since it requires long-term commitment and my experience is that funders such as the provincial government may be in for one year but that can’t leverage other funders since they may not have the funding to remain engaged in the next budget.”



Core Funding for Stewardship Groups?

Maybe:

“Are there other ways to support the groups that’s not core funding? If other funders would support POD, extend support to providing seed money to hire someone to implement plans, that would be another way to support the groups.”

“I think stewardship groups should be supported but there should be enough stewards out there who want to volunteer to do it. If we did it right they wouldn’t need to be paid. But they need support in getting up and running. So there should be base funding for training programs for stewards. But each stewardship group does not need funding.”

“Some groups want money for driving to the corner store to buy tape.”



Core Funding for Stewardship Groups?

The core funding catch-22:

“Let’s say a fictitious group from Fort St James, a resource industry down at the heels, applies to us. They want to do A, B, C. But they don’t have the expertise to compete with other technical proposals. We have lots of questions about their proposal, we compare it to other proposals... confronted with two separate proposals, we’ll pick the better proposal. The group in Fort St. James will say, how can we become competitive if you don’t support us?”



Advantages of providing core funding

Respondents agree that the main advantages are stability and increased effectiveness:

“Overall they’ll be more effective. Less volunteer burnout. Better stability within stewardship sector as a whole.”

“Stability, continuity, recognition of doing good work which is a positive motivator, help maintain a radar presence with website, newsletter.”

“Getting them up and running with the long term idea of getting everyone to be a steward.”

“Primary is building capacity.”

“They can retain adequate staffing to get projects done, which gives stability to the organizations.”



Advantages of providing core funding

Core funding would also free up time and attract volunteers:

“Advantages are that those groups that are in a position where core funding is appropriate, right now they are spending a lot of time fundraising. They would save time that they could spend on their mission. It would recognize their expertise and raise their status in the eyes of others, and allows them to build stronger long range plans.”

“Creating a level of base funding and providing some administrative stability that would allow the groups to better take advantage of opportunities. And to be able to react to issues of the day and to take advantage of volunteer resources.”

“Provides strength and legitimacy to go and get money.”

“Enables a community group to capture and retain knowledge gain over time by providing support to attract, train and maintain volunteers. “



Advantages of providing core funding

Core funding also provides continuity for longer-term and complex projects:

“Great article in Fisheries magazine or journal about the Bonneville power administration, a granting agency for restoration work in Washington and Oregon. One of the biggest challenges they had in making annual grants is there was no continuity on projects. Each year new people would be involved in the project: one year a group of volunteers, one year university students, etc. The premonitoring, doing the work, and postmonitoring stages need continuity. The information has to stay with the project. Without core funding, you don’t realize the full impact of the investment and a grantor.”

“Allows group to participate in complex processes, rather than projects alone. Can you go to City Hall and look at planning and land development? Not if you’re at work, but if you have someone who is paid one day a week to do this work they can make the time to attend the process meetings.”





Disadvantages of providing core funding

Money could be used unwisely:

“If funding was provided to an organization that didn’t have good strategic or administrative capacity it may be used inefficiently. The opportunity cost may be high.”

“But you can also fund an organization that has a bad track record and that comes back to you because the group says we are are being funded by government.”

Core funding is not a magic bullet:

“If that’s the only grant on the table it may not be helpful if there are no project grants. They’ll be stable but limited in their ability to do projects. Core funding can’t be the only solution.”

“There are issues of succession, outreach. Small money to stabilize is just one way to look at solutions. Even if someone gave \$5 million to support core there would be need for other things to make the sector vibrant.”

Disadvantages of providing core funding

It's hard to show return on investment or value for money:

“It's really difficult for flinty-eyed funders to see value for money.”

“We have learned that sometimes core funding can be really good and sometimes it just keeps someone employed.”

“How do you measure the results?”

“But we want tangible product.”



Disadvantages of providing core funding

It's not sustainable:

“Sometimes it's one time, so it's hardly core. There's a potential for hiccups due to the whims of funders that are strapped for money.”

“If we took all our money to support only core grants for stewardship grants, matched by government, that would not be enough to give core grants to all stewardship groups”

It's a disincentive:

“It might lower their incentive to be entrepreneurial. What stewardship groups do is essentially entrepreneurial, but they don't think of it as a product that can be sold. They could sell their services without jeopardizing their status as a nonprofit. They shouldn't lose the incentive to get fees for services.”



Disadvantages of providing core funding

It could cause conflict:

“Core funders may have a conflict with goals of project specific funding. Need harmonizing between core funders and project funders.”





How to encourage funders?

Demonstrated benefits and return on investment:

“If I can show them return on dollars, that’s important. So they can see that the \$5000 seed grant is very useful because it leads to a better funding application.”

“On deliverables, going through a process and defining what we expect them to be. Has to be more than just “10 meetings held” – what can we put forward as concrete deliverables?”

“Very tight link between their investing in the program and demonstrated benefits to meet the interests of that organization. I try to put myself in the position of Mary Jane who gave me \$50 when she bought a fishing license. Will she be happy about this investment? That is one consideration groups must think of: demonstrated benefits to the contributors.”

“We need to see a case study that shows the leverage of putting the money into the community.”



How to encourage funders?

Make a strong case for core funding:

“More exposure and understanding. They hold back because it seems more effective to have your money for special projects.”

“A good business case, clear declaration of principles and goals to understand how well there’s alignment with their agency’s goals is critical.”

“The big thing is that funders need to understand that there is a problem, and that this program is a solution. In the small to mid-level funders, this program might be the solution to their administrative problem of sorting out who to give their modest grants to. With this program they can still get the same credit, but see a bigger bang for their buck.”

“Show the value of conservation organizations and nonprofits. Show what we have done so far going from donation to donation and grant to grant, and show how much more they could do with core funding.”



How to encourage funders?

Bring everyone to the table:

“Notable support by government (but not necessarily monetary) and other funders.”

Plan for the long term:

“I’d say it will be a long-term engagement. That would be the only way to guarantee funders to participate.”

Create a one-stop shop:

“Stewardship Centre might facilitate core funding so NGOs don’t bang on the door in January to the government. Centralized approach. Creates a finite numbers of calls for money.”

“Another thing that funders would look favourably on is a program with a Board of Directors that is made up of the funders. That way you are looking at a one-stop shop so the stewardship groups are not always looking around for where to get funding.”



How to encourage funders?

Give them recognition:

“Maybe an annual funding announcement so we don’t lose sight of that need for public recognition.”

“They get recognized on the letterhead.”

“Maybe groups can add something extra to the AGM that provides profile to the funders.”

“The funder has to get recognition for what they are doing.”



How to encourage funders?

Show leverage value:

“If a funder has limited money and the group can leverage their donation, that’s of value. Ours is between 6 and 12 times the leverage.”

(for businesses) Offset impacts elsewhere:

“If you know your operational footprint can’t be changed, by giving money to stewardship groups, it can help somewhere else... you may be damaging salmon habitat but can create bird habitat, or do flood management to breach dykes. By providing core funding to groups you can do added value to any project instead of single species benefit it could be multi-habitat benefit.”

Increase volunteering:

“Leveraging knowledge and capacity and getting the community engaged and relationship building, getting citizens involved.”



What would hold funders back?

Unclear accountability:

“Lack of deliverables; questions around accountability. You need to develop a good structure where it’s clear how decisions are being made. Ensure a good organization is in place to administer the funding.”

Funding used for advocacy:

“May discourage participation if a funded group with a government logo on their letterhead writes a strongly worded letter to the Minister.”

No long-term commitment from government:

“There’s no guarantee that the government will still be at the table in 3 years. Once we start there’s a moral obligation to continue but if the government walks away that’s a big fear.”



What would hold funders back?

Funders' internal constraints:

“Their own resource constraints: opportunity costs related to getting the best bang for the buck. Timing: often in terms of the annual business cycle there are opportune times to create these requests. Gearing up your communications and being in the right place at the right time.”

“From a government side it's priorities; is this new money or is it coming from other areas?”

Managing expectations:

“They might think there's a floodgate and if they say yes, they'll have 150 organizations coming to them.”

Who makes funding decisions:

“We might not be excited if it was all top-down, e.g. all from Environment Canada.”



How to Structure *Stewardship Works!*

Bring everyone to the table:

“Funders and stewardship groups should sit down together to see how this can be made to work.”

“We want a formal way to ensure the money is spent in the right direction. Be part of a bigger program. Not government’s picture but a picture that stewards, local citizens and government all agree as a shared vision.”

“Having a conference that brings together the funders and the recipients. They don’t always get together in a way that respects both sides. The funders would have to have a significant role in deciding how it works. Have a very clear set of provincial criteria, a panel of people to review applications.”

“Needs people making decisions who have in-depth knowledge about how the programs work on the ground – stewardship groups making decisions, not funders”

“Have a strong consultation/ communication plan. Have to be clear on target audience then make sure they’re engaged on consultation.”



How to Structure Stewardship Works!

Have clear eligibility criteria and application process:

“You would want an application process that has been discussed with all the funders in the field. Uniform application and reporting process, which saves time on behalf of the recipients.”

“Do the planning up front then the allocation of money would be quite easy.”

“Clearly identified goals and objectives, decision making process and accountability.”

“Making sure that the groups were somewhat established, otherwise how can you limit it? Challenge grants that include in-kind. Very little money on bureaucracy to deliver it. Accountability, manageability and effectiveness.”

“Transparent process to allow for equal access.”

“Make sure you don’t have an inordinate amount of reporting back needed, which has been a challenge with some of the federal programs in the past. Enough checks and balances to make sure the money is used properly.”



How to Structure *Stewardship Works!*

Give the program a home:

“The criteria is to structure the program so there’s a logical hub.”

“For grantmakers, the idea that it could be perceived that this agency could take a lot of the grief out of making grants. Give the money to the agency and they will take care of the administration.”



Is core funding happening elsewhere?

“Montana State government has stewardship funding through the Montana State University for land owners who have wooded properties. They want good stewardship of private lands. In place for almost 20 years. Extension effort is part of the university, not an NGO external to some agency.” www.forestry.umt.edu/hosting/extensionforestry/default.htm

“MoE in Ontario funds some programs on an ongoing basis. There is core funding to the umbrella group and incentive funding to the smaller groups. Ontario Naturalist Program. National Trust in England: different approach but they do sustain certain groups.”

“HSP (federal) is a form of core funding. Canadian Wildlife Service does that as well.”

“Ontario, WA, NZ, arts of Australia, some in eastern US (Maine, New York state), Oregon.”

“DFO provides core through Pitt grants to salmon enhancement, up to \$1000/year. Watershed planning in US has examples. I don’t know specifically.”



Suggestions for *Stewardship Works!*

Program development:

- **Bring funders and stewardship groups together to determine the structure of the program.**
- **Set program parameters (eligibility, deliverables, reporting etc.) based on the consensus of funders and stewardship groups.**
- **Promote partnerships/matching funding.**



Suggestions for *Stewardship Works!*

Program positioning:

- **Focus on return on investment and the benefits from a funder's point of view, e.g. that when groups have stability and continuity their projects are more likely to succeed.**
- **Understand barriers that funders feel but don't address them directly in a problem/solution orientation.**

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