



2010-2011 GOOD TO GREAT PROGRAM

PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS

'Good to Great' is a two year organizational capacity building program funded by the Ontario Trillium Foundation that focuses on 6 community based environmental NGOs and helps them consider, develop and implement strategies to significantly increase their impact. Direct Management Assistance supports organization-specific efforts while Learning Networks provide an opportunity to share results and build a peer network.

The goal of the DMA program is to help build the organizational capacity of environmental not-for-profit organizations so that they are better able to sustain themselves and meet their missions over the long term. The program provides Good to Great organizations with support to enable them to work with an experienced consultant or resource person over many months on processes that build organizational capacity and enhance organizational effectiveness. The DMA program provides management assistance or consulting help. The specific amount of resources allocated to each intervention was determined beforehand and each participating organization contributed 20% of the total at the outset. DMA recipients will document and report on the assistance and evaluate its usefulness.

Three day Learning Network gatherings are also a key part of the Good to Great program. Board/staff teams are assembled at a retreat centre for 3 days of learning, sharing and relationship building. The inaugural session took place outside Couborg in May 2010 and then groups were convened in the middle of their DMA projects outside Bolton in March 2011. A final gathering will take place in late 2011 or early 2012.

What follows is a brief description of each of the six projects. We hope you will find inspiration here to undertake similar work in your organization and any of the contacts listed below would be pleased to describe how their projects came about.

COUCHICING CONSERVANCY

The Couchiching Conservancy is a land trust in central Ontario with more than 9,500 acres under management. With years of sound leadership, it benefits from a small, full-time staff, a sturdy membership base and reasonable reserves. From that solid position, the Conservancy is seeking to ensure its long-term sustainability with less dependence on project-based grants. To that end it has embarked on a project to develop a major endowment fund. Using a peer-to-peer learning network as a springboard, we were able to identify this project as a critical piece of the organization's future, one that has the potential to provide a degree of financial stability and sustainability.

The Conservancy's past presidents, two former treasurers and the executive director have formed a working group to design and execute the campaign. Using funding acquired for Direct Management Assistance through the Sustainability Network, the Conservancy has retained the consulting services of a professional fundraiser who is assisting the organization through this process and helping to create a long-term strategy to build the Conservancy's fundraising capacity. Because funding did not allow for a full feasibility study, the consultant has helped the group create and carry out a feasibility survey, providing us with a questionnaire and training. The survey has yielded opinions from 24 core supporters about the support that we might expect, the shape the campaign should take and other key perceptions of strengths and weaknesses that will help us build a case for support upon which the campaign will be based. The consultant has analyzed the responses and is now working on a series of recommendations. Out of those recommendations will flow an overall fundraising development plan, the creation of fundraising teams, a strong case for support and the appropriate development tools.

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BAY AREA RESTORATION COUNCIL

The Bay Area Restoration Council (BARC) works to ensure the restoration and protection of Hamilton Harbour and its watershed, home to over 740,000 people. With delisting of the Harbour being not too far away (5 to 10 years), it seem imperative to begin to look at the current and the future role of BARC, so BARC used Sustainability Network's Direct Management Assistance program to begin its strategic planning project in December 2010.

The first half of the project consisted of data-gathering from diverse stakeholder groups including Board members, former Board members, staff, funders, politicians, industry partners, Remedial Action Plan representatives, etc. Current findings indicate that BARC is a highly-respected organization that performs an invaluable communication function by translating the scientific information emanating from the harbour remediation activities in such a way that the community can understand what is happening and what are the impacts of those activities on the broader health of the harbour. The majority of

people interviewed give BARC high marks for raising awareness of harbour and watershed issues (especially among students); pulling diverse environmental and industrial entities together to discuss issues and solutions; linking volunteers from the community with harbour and watershed remediation projects; and generally acting as an independent voice on the ongoing state of the harbour as it moves towards delisting. The future role of BARC will likely look very much like its current role because those interviewed expect that once the harbour is clean, it will need ongoing monitoring to ensure it remains a valuable economic and natural resource for all of its communities.

The remaining work consists of presenting gathered data in a format that allows the directors to assess current environmental factors affecting BARC and to make choices about strategic directions to pursue for the next 5 years. The project is expected to wrap up on early May, 2011.

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CENTRE FOR SUSTAINABLE WATERSHEDS

The Centre for Sustainable Watersheds (CSW) incorporated in 2002, working principally in the lake district of eastern Ontario. Many of its initiatives have reached farther afield, through association with a variety of provincial and national partners. In recent years, the organization has been guided by a strategic plan developed in 2005. There have been considerable changes since this most recent guiding document was developed and the leadership have declared that facilitating a new long term planning process is a priority.

In 2010, through Sustainability Network's Good to Great program, CSW initiated a process to develop a new strategic plan and fundraising strategy. To this end, the organization has engaged French Planning Services Inc (FPSI) to facilitate. They will lead two workshops (one internal with Board and staff, the other accommodating external partners), prepare a SWOT analysis, as well as the strategic plan and funding strategy. The strategic plan will identify goals for 2011–2015 and will set clear and measurable targets, against which the organization will gauge success. The complementary funding strategy will flow from the recommendations of the strategic plan and will contain both long term and project-based targets, strategies and tools for monitoring progress.

CSW is currently the middle of the first of three phases and expects to complete the entire process in early September, 2011.

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ECOSUPERIOR

EcoSuperior Environmental Programs has been promoting environmental stewardship in the Lake Superior Basin since 1995. They develop and deliver a wide range of programs including water and energy conservation, waste reduction, active transportation, pollution prevention and much more.

After 15 years of operation and numerous successes behind it, EcoSuperior wants to raise the bar and push the organization to new levels. Already, they are off to a good start with an investment in real estate made early this year. The next five years will be a crucial time for Ecosuperior as it aims to grow its programming and extend its operations to surrounding communities along the north shore of Lake Superior. Through the Good to Great project, EcoSuperior has engaged an Ottawa-based firm, Stratos, to help them develop a 5-year strategic plan. The first stage is to gather information from key stakeholders through a series of interviews and an on-line survey. Additional research is being carried out as a joint-effort between staff and Stratos. A day-long retreat with board and staff members will follow in early April.

The new strategic plan will be a practical, grounded document that communicates the program's vision and mission and what needs to be done over the next five years. This will include identification of clear priorities in program and infrastructure development, staffing and funding. These priorities, objectives and milestones will assist with reporting to the board and strategic partners, and help shape the future of the organization.

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LEAF (Local Enhancement and Appreciation of Forests)

LEAF is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to the protection and improvement of urban forests. We actively engage residents in urban forest stewardship through planting, education and training. In order to determine what project we should undertake through the Good to Great Program, ideas generated by staff brainstorming were considered by a board-staff committee who have overseen the effort since.

LEAF offers programs and services that involve thousands of diverse clients including hundreds of volunteers, many partners and a small base of donors. Providing quality service and effectively managing these relationships are high priorities and therefore the project is designed to:

- Improve the design, navigation and utility of the website
- Adopt a CRM (Constituent Relationship Management) software system to aid in effective communication and relationship building

We also want to ensure that our new website and the CRM are integrated, ensuring maximum efficiency for a wide range of online transactions including event registrations and donations.

A consultant first mapped how the organization currently communicates with constituents, and how other transactions like event registrations and receiving payments are tracked. This informed the web redesign which can be viewed at www.yourleaf.org. CRM systems were investigated; cost and expert support were key considerations. Two systems have been shortlisted and after a preferred system is selected in April, the process of transferring data and training staff will begin.

These two improvements will allow LEAF to greatly improve how we communicate with our many constituents and how we track those communications. It will allow us to maintain detailed communication records that can be accessed by all staff. It will also ensure that we have the system in place to solicit and properly manage more donors.

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OTTAWA RIVERKEEPER

Ottawa Riverkeeper is a registered charitable organization dedicated to protecting, promoting and preserving the Ottawa River and its' tributaries. Since 2001, Ottawa Riverkeeper has worked to encourage responsible decision making, empower individuals to take action to protect our river, and increase public awareness and participation in issues that affect our ability to safely swim, drink and fish from our local waterways. Ottawa Riverkeeper has a small full-time staff and a large network of dedicated volunteers. The organization has relied heavily on grant support in previous years, but is actively seeking more stable and sustainable funding. Ottawa Riverkeeper's DMA project goal is to develop a long-term funding strategy and create financial reserves to sustain the work of the organization.

Ottawa Riverkeeper has retained the services of a professional consultant to develop a strategy and program to diversify funding, generate public interest in the organizations' work and increase 2011 revenue. The immediate focus of the project will be the development and delivery of a membership program to increase individual donor support. The consultant is working closely with staff to strengthen Ottawa Riverkeeper's case for support, create widespread awareness of organization (and the membership program) and develop the process and communications tools needed to market the new "levels of giving" and related membership benefits. The consultant has conducted interviews with key staff, board members, volunteers and community partners, and will use this feedback to tailor a membership campaign. By moving towards a community-based/people-based funding model, Ottawa Riverkeeper hopes to build a large network of water stewards, strengthen the groups ability to take action on issues that affect the health of the river, and support the growth of the organization and its' projects and programs in future years.

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