



Organizational Development Grant Narrative

Organization Name: Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association

Organization's Mission Statement:

To preserve and protect the lands and waters of the Wood-Pawcatuck watershed for natural and human communities.

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1. Please describe the organizational need for which you are seeking funds.

We are interested in understanding what kind of organizational development you need and how you have determined that need.

While great strides have been made in a positive direction from recent organizational planning activities, the board continually finds itself challenged by the specter of developing a sustainable fiscal environment for WPWA. Fund development, fund raising, member development, and building the board to be able to profitably work in these areas are all priorities. The complexities that exist—all are intimately linked and intertwined, each with elements that need to be accomplished so that elements in other priorities can be effectively worked on, makes for a daunting landscape to work through. The board, in collaboration with staff, feel that some assistance, by way of facilitated workshops, would, as it has in the past, help us clarify the true priorities and devise a process for us to work through issues in a logical, effective and efficient fashion that we simply cannot seem to find working among ourselves.

Specifically, we need assistance in identifying and prioritizing those things that most need to be done in order to arrange our actions to build towards the holy grail of fiscal sustainability for WPWA. We understand that fund development and member development are two critical aspects of this, and we have nascent committees in action. We also understand that these two efforts are tightly coupled and rife with both opportunity to combine actions and to create conflict and confusion. We need help thinking through, and developing a plan for, how best to approach fund development and member development through committee work. We also realize we need to build board membership in a way that will compliment these efforts; we need some assistance in sorting through the possibilities of building the board and laying out a strategy to get there. We also need assistance in identifying a governance structure—policies for board and committees—that will help ensure that the board has better guidance available to attain its desired fiscal goals and objectives.

2. Please explain why this is the appropriate time for you to undertake this work.

We are interested in understanding why this need is particularly urgent for you at this time. We would like to know how you assess your organization's readiness and commitment to engage in new practices. If you are an established organization, please explain how this project fits into your current strategic plan. Please explain how this proposed project will strengthen the current work of board and/or staff.

WPWA is moving from having a multi-million dollar a year budget supported by major grants—largely federal funds targeted specifically at restoring migratory fish access into the watershed—to one supported by memberships, donations and small grants. Making this funding stream transition offers significant challenges for WPWA board and staff. During the period of large grants for ecological restoration, the population of the board was, and rightly so, dominated by scientists, and the focus of much board work was providing oversight and input to the restoration process. The shift from mega-grants to grassroots support and small grants requires a repopulation of the board to be broader, especially in areas of fund raising, fund development and board governance.



Several years ago the RI Foundation provided assistance to the WPWA board to bring on a consultant who helped reorganize how the association functions so that it could organizationally adapt to this new manner of funding flow. The outcomes of that assistance were instrumental in getting on the right path. Now, WPWA needs a strong governance structure to provide the framework within which to work to build the board to be more successful at fund development and member development so it can achieve the long-term fiscal sustainability of the organization. We need assistance, right now, laying out the processes by which to attain this. Previous assistance of the RI Foundation provided the opportunity for WPWA to develop the tools it needed to reorganize itself so that staff could function successfully within a new funding stream framework. That reorganization has led to a next step in organizational building at WPWA, which is to organize the board and its activities and framework of guidance so that it can work more effectively with staff, and within itself, to attain greater fiscal stability and sustainability for the organization. The "refreshed" WPWA board of trustees is ready, willing, and anxious to find solutions, so now is the time to facilitate the opportunity to get rolling on a profitable path forward.

3. How will you define success in this project?

We are interested to know what success will look like for your organization. What do you expect will have changed at the conclusion of this project? How do you expect you will grow or change as a result of undertaking this project?

The WPWA board of trustees will have a board membership that is nearly double current size, populated with broad expertise, but with emphasis in fund development, fiscal planning, and marketing/public relations. The board will have a "policy document" containing a governance framework and policies that guide its' actions, which will be outlined in an "internal WPWA strategic plan" which objective is fiscal sustainability of the organization. Fund development and member development committees are populated with a mix of board and volunteer members, and each committee is working off of an annual plan of work tied to WPWA internal and organizational strategic plans.

4. What are the anticipated deliverables?

Tell us about the new plans, processes, or systems you expect to have in place after undertaking this project. What tools, resources or newly-acquired expertise will you have?

1. An action plan for the board, developed in consultation with an external consultant (e.g., Lighthouse Consulting), charting a path for building the board of trustees and their ability govern the organization more effectively, with a focus on ensuring WPWAs fiscal health.
2. A Board Policies document that will formalize various board behaviors/duties, such as: process for developing, tracking, and responding to shortfalls/boons in the WPWA annual budget; a succession plan for board turnover, particularly officers; a plan of response in the event of sudden/planned ED loss; a process for identifying, selecting and vetting board membership;
3. A 2016-2018 internal strategic plan (to align with the WPWA organizational strategic plan timeframe) outlining goals and objectives for achieving fiscal stability and longer term sustainability of WPWA.
4. Outlines for an annual plan of work for fund development and member development committees, or a joint work plan if that is found to be a more suitable path forward for the short-term growth of both.