



## Chapter 15— Working With Funders and Volunteers

Sometimes, projects can be planned and constructed more quickly with outside help, such as volunteer assistance, funding, and partnership agreements. Researching such opportunities increases the likelihood of success and often builds support for the project. *Chapter 16—Learning From Others* includes several case studies that illustrate successful projects involving interagency cooperation, volunteer labor or materials, and grants.

### Funding and Partnership Opportunities

Funds for trails, recreation sites, and bridges are available from government agencies and the private sector. Developers, associations, foundations, corporations, organizations, private companies, and individuals often fund trail systems or segments.

Sometimes, land developers build and dedicate recreation amenities—such as trail segments—on their developed lands. To do so, the developer or owner submits detailed improvement plans for approval to a land management agency, such as a municipality or county planning department. After

completion, some developers dedicate trails and other improvements to the managing agency. These types of projects generally require a legally binding agreement that secures the easement of the trail route, access, and connections with other facilities.

### Funding Proposals

Securing funds for well-planned projects or programs requires some form of proposal, application, or written request. Successful funding applications clearly state program goals, effectively substantiate need, and include reasonable budgets.

Identify potential funding sources for all or parts of the project. A coalition of partners can diversify and disperse funding responsibilities. Many private grants come from individuals as direct gifts or bequests. Many large corporations also have grant or assistance programs for projects that relate to their interests or geographic areas. In addition, government funding is often available from Federal, State, or local agencies.

Search the Internet, public libraries, and grant libraries for funding opportunities and possible

partnerships. Focus the search to match resource eligibility requirements with project qualifications and needs. Prioritize funding sources by degree of match and the chance of success.

Each funding source has its own grant application process with a set of instructions and accountability requirements. Federal and State funds usually require a matching revenue source and have strict guidelines. Many grant applications require detailed supporting documents—budgets, timelines, monitoring plans, project justification reports, and anticipated outcome statements. Many funding agencies or organizations require a specific document format, completion of standardized forms, or a prescribed set of materials. Many funders provide guidelines and directions to help applicants complete the paperwork.



#### Write That Grant

#### Resource Roundup

The Grants Information Collection at the University of Wisconsin has a Web page devoted to *Proposal Writing: Internet Sources*: <http://grants.library.wisc.edu/organizations/proposalwebsites.html> with links to nongovernmental and governmental online resources, research articles, cooperating collections throughout the United States, and a list of printed materials.



Before beginning a grant request, verify that the grantor is still interested in funding trail or recreation site projects. Determine the current fiscal cycles and required submittal dates and get the latest application requirements. Grant and funding information changes constantly—contact the agency or visit the Web site for the most current information.



Resource Roundup

Online Funding Resources

Appendix B—Trail Libraries, Trail Organizations, and Funding Resources lists some organizations and agencies that offer databases or links to funding and partnership resources.

Creative Fundraising Ideas

When matching funds are required, organizations may have to supply 50 percent or more of the project's total cost. Read the funding source's definition of allowable matching funds carefully. Sometimes contributed labor and materials count as matching funds at specified rates. Many private groups hold fundraising events to augment financial resources and to build project support and awareness. In many cases, sponsorships offset fundraising expenses or underwrite specific portions of projects. Only imagination limits the possible fundraising activities. Choose a variety of events that will energize the entire community to support the project.



Fun With Fundraising

Many organizers of fundraising events charge an entry fee or admission price, offer sponsorships, or do both. Possible sponsors include local media, retailers, equipment manufacturers, recreation or health organizations, schools, and private individuals. Here are some fundraising ideas:

- ☆ Hoofs, heels, and wheels—Arrange a relay race between teams of riders, mountain bikers, and hikers. This event has the added benefit of building positive relationships.
- ☆ Benefit trail rides—Arrange events around a theme, such as riding with a celebrity, or plan a ride to follow a special route, such as an endurance course or historic trail.
- ☆ Fund-a-foot or trail catalog sales—Offer sponsorships for proposed sections of trail. Sponsors purchase, for example, a portion of the tread or a trail gate. Offer various cost levels to encourage broad support.

Resource Roundup

- ☆ Equine Expo—Showcase the world of horses and their kin through public demonstrations, exhibits, and educational offerings. An equestrian art exposition is a variation of this idea.
- ☆ Limited edition or specialty sales—Raise money with royalty programs for specialty license plates (figure 15–1), trail products, or services. These approaches may be a good way to help pay for recurring expenses such as trail maintenance.

For even more ideas that can be adapted to local or regional projects and funding, refer to *Eighty-five Creative Funding Ideas for Trails and Greenways* (Macdonald 2003). The information, along with other fundraising articles, is available at <http://www.americantrails.org/resources/funding>.



Figure 15–1—Specialty license plates appeal to many people who otherwise might not participate in a fundraising activity.



## Volunteer Opportunities

Many equestrian clubs arrange special events that foster partnerships with agencies, landowners, developers, and others that can help create trails, trailheads, and campgrounds.

Volunteer equestrians generally have a great sense of stewardship and respect for the natural environment—a reflection of their desire to preserve riding habitats for themselves and future generations. Riders and their stock are particularly well suited to help on trail and recreation site projects, in part because the stock can haul heavy items (figure 15–2). Volunteers also assist with funding, construction, cleanup, and similar efforts. Such contributions supplement the resources of land management agencies and increase public awareness of volunteer stewardship projects.



Figure 15–2—Equestrian volunteers and their stock can contribute significantly to the success of a trail project.

## The Three Rs of Volunteer Stewardship

One approach to an equestrian volunteer program includes a three-part, continuous cycle of activity—recruiting, retaining, and rewarding volunteerism. Each of these activities enhances the ongoing availability of well-informed, trained volunteers and stewards.

### Recruit

The first phase of any volunteer program is to recruit groups or individuals who are willing to work. A volunteer recruitment campaign might:

- ☆ Distribute fliers, posters, and announcements to public land management offices, equestrian businesses and facilities, outdoor retailers, and equestrian publications.
- ☆ Announce volunteer opportunities through Web sites and e-mail notices.
- ☆ Post volunteer signup forms at equestrian events and distribute the forms to community organizations.
- ☆ Distribute videos to public schools, libraries, and community organizations.
- ☆ Distribute announcements to youth groups—4-H clubs, Scout programs, pony clubs, youth corps, junior equestrian organizations, and so forth.

### Retain

Successful volunteer programs provide activities that keep volunteers interested and increase their skills and knowledge. They might:

- ☆ Provide information about available levels of volunteer activities.
- ☆ Provide a stewardship orientation program for new volunteers.
- ☆ Ask volunteers to sign a stewardship agreement formalizing their commitment.
- ☆ Establish a mentoring program that encourages an experienced volunteer to work with a new volunteer.
- ☆ Conduct construction, maintenance, and safety workshops to educate volunteers about proper techniques.
- ☆ Establish a program to train trainers and reach more volunteers.
- ☆ Provide fun rides and events to sustain volunteer interest.
- ☆ Record volunteer hours accurately and offer incentive rewards or acknowledgement.
- ☆ Inform volunteers about changes that affect communication.



### **Reward**

Volunteers enjoy recognition for their efforts—particularly by their peers or the media. There are many ways to recognize a volunteer's contribution:

- ☆ Provide a signature item that designates a level of accomplishment, such as a special pin, badge, bandanna, hat, saddle pad, saddlebag, bridle ornament, or jacket.
- ☆ Provide written recognition using newsletter articles, media releases, Web site articles, and magazine interviews.
- ☆ Provide certificates of appreciation or recognize a volunteer at regular community or organizational meeting.
- ☆ Arrange an interview between a local radio personality and the volunteer to promote an event or to recognize a successful volunteer effort.
- ☆ Post volunteers' hours in newsletters, at meetings, and at other locations that provide opportunity for recognition.
- ☆ Establish award levels, such as the *Most Outstanding Volunteer Work Event* or *Volunteer of the Year*.
- ☆ Install a recognition plaque along the trail or in the recreation site.

