

FUNDER COLLABORATIVES IN MARINE CONSERVATION

Philanthropic Cooperation for Scoping, Projects and Assessments

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The Basics. There are three situations ideally suited for a cost-saving cooperative approach among private funders with a common commitment to marine conservation:

1. Shared Scoping. When two or more funders are interested in a particular issue, place, or strategy, but are not ready to commit to a major institutional investment, it makes sense to share the costs of an investigation by a disinterested outsider who enjoys the confidence of all concerned. Depending on the breadth of common funder concerns, the investigator(s) could examine the scientific literature and make a prima-facie evaluation of the importance of the ecological factors at play; describe the relevant socioeconomic influences; weigh the possibilities of cost-effective intervention; assess the relative capacities of potential grantees and their opponents; and suggest the time and money that would be required to reach Objectives A, B, or C.

2. Shared Projects. If Foundation X has decided that the protection of the Patagonian Toothfish is an important objective but has also decided that a save-the-toothfish effort would not constitute a signature Foundation X program, a reasonable next step is to confer with like-minded colleagues at Foundation Y and Foundation Z to create a shared effort.



2A. Shared Project to Induce Collaboration.

The usual model in this case is for Foundations X, Y, and Z to pool funds that are then allocated to organizations that agree to dedicate more time and resources to the protection of the Toothfish and to do so in cooperation with other recipient groups. Funding and communications often pass through a Project Coordinator chosen by the funders in consultation with the grantees.

2B. Shared Project to Establish a New

Entity. Foundations X, Y, and Z could also decide to induce the birth of an entirely new organization – The Toothfish Center. Until such time as The Toothfish Center can obtain 501(c)(3) status from the IRS, the funders channel their donations through an already-existing 501(c)(3) that assumes legal and financial-reporting obligations. A committee of donor representatives customarily provides oversight until the new entity establishes its institutional autonomy.



3. Shared Assessments. Funders are thinking more about the impact of their work. Are their investments implementing their vision and achieving broader goals? Most not-for-profits adequately manage their funds and track their activities, but often do not have the processes in place to know if their work is advancing larger conservation goals. This effort to build more robust metrics into philanthropy is a move away from the old standard of merely comparing organizational overhead to program expenditures as a proxy for efficiency and good management. We now want to address how effective are we, and what impact are we having? This means funders must take a step back and evaluate whether their funding is really making a difference. A few funders have found it convenient to share the costs of an independent review of program successes, failures, and lessons learned. Shared assessments are sometimes built into the design of shared projects. They are also undertaken when a community of donors wants an outsider assessment of the effectiveness of major philanthropic strategies within a particular region or on a particular issue.



Shared Scoping and **Shared Assessments** rarely consume more than one year. Two-to-six months assignments are the norm. The funders can pay for the work either by contract with an individual or a consulting firm or by a grant to a 501(c)(3) organization which can either deputize a staff member to take on the scoping or hire a consultant of its own.

Shared Projects usually last much longer. Both contracts and grants are used. One typical arrangement for a **Shared Project to Induce Collaboration** involves a two-to-three-year renewable agreement among three to five foundations. In most cases, a 501(c)(3) recipient agrees to receive grants and perform fiduciary obligations. Funders typically develop an oversight mechanism in which each donor is represented. A **Shared Project to Establish a New Entity**, on the other hand, is usually funded in its early stages by grants through an already-existing 501(c)(3), but in most cases, independent 501(c)(3) status for the new entity is sought as soon as practicable (unless there is a clear reason not to do so).



Recent History. Once rare, marine funder collaboratives are now commonplace. One pioneer effort was the Marine Fish Conservation Network (MFCN) of the mid-1990s, when a small group of foundations induced the birth of a multi-stakeholder coalition to push for marine conservation measures to inform what became the Magnuson-Stevens Act of 1996. When it became apparent that the implementation of Magnuson-Stevens – through the novel polity of regional fisheries management councils – presented precedent-setting dangers and opportunities, the MFCN was reconstituted as the home office of a national network of local efforts to help the regional councils do the job right. An important element of that task was to underline the importance of the regional councils' consideration of scientific information and

scientists' recommendations. MFCN's patient pro-science persistence was instrumental in the development of a broad middle-of-the-road consensus on the need for the councils to take science into account, and that consensus was ultimately reflected in the language of the Magnuson-Stevens reauthorization of 2006. MFCN continues today as an independent 501(c)(3) organization supporting local groups advocating the ongoing scientific education of the regional councils and their multiple stakeholders. MFCN's success has prompted the creation of new funder collaboratives on seafood certifications, California marine reserves, and Chilean aquaculture.

Shared Scoping collaboratives started in the 1990's with a look at how aquariums might be engaged in conservation education (and motivation to action); and a look at how funders might address the effects of shrimp and salmon aquaculture on critical ecosystems in Southeast Asia, British Columbia and Chile at the end of the 1990's, among others. And grew by significant numbers in the first decade of this century. Multi-funder scoping of ecological issues and grantmaking opportunities by strategy (voter education, seafood markets, marine protected areas, ocean planning), by place (Arctic, Antarctic, Coral Triangle), by species (pelagic fishes, corals, sea turtles), and by harm (acidification, bottom trawling, plastics) had become commonplace by 2011. In many of these cases, the scoping collaboratives had been prompted and facilitated by the helpful interventions of the Consultative Group on Biological Diversity (CGBD).

Additional **Shared Projects** then appeared. Marine funders pooled resources for collaborative activities on the Oregon Coast, the High Seas, the MesoAmerican Reef, the Raja Ampat archipelago, the Southern Ocean, and the Sargasso Sea; on migratory seabirds, tunas, and sharks; and on overfishing, illegal fishing, shipping, ocean acidification and offshore oil drilling.

Shared Assessments have focused on lessons learned. There have been both single funder evaluations shared with multiple funders, and the kinds of shared evaluation assessments we have described here. The extent of the use of shared assessments is less well known, as some hard-headed **Shared Assessments** are not made public.



The Ocean Foundation

The Ocean Foundation provides significant value added for any funder collaborative dealing with marine conservation. There are two basic reasons for saying so: one is TOF's track record of success in each of the three realms of collaborative activity; the other is the high quality of its human resources.

TOF's Record. The Ocean Foundation has turned in a series of influential **scoping exercises** at the behest of key marine funders. Subjects have included ocean acidification; seagrass restoration; aquaculture; and shark protection. Most recently, the Pew Charitable Trusts commissioned TOF to conduct a major assessment of deep-sea mining: where and when it will take place and by whom; how regulations will be developed and enforced; how the major players can be influenced and through what means; and how Pew might make the most effective and efficient interventions.

TOF also has long experience in managing **shared projects**: current multi-donor projects funded through and administered by TOF include the **Oregon Marine Reserves Partnership**, the **High Seas Alliance**, the **Friends of the Global Ocean Acidification Observing Network (GOA-ON)** and the nascent **Magnuson-Stevens Reauthorization Coalition**. In addition to the analytic and managerial capacities that TOF offers, donors can be assured of reliable compliance with all legal and fiduciary obligations.

Environmental conservation benchmarks have been neglected in much of the newer literature regarding monitoring and evaluation of grantmaking (which has focused more on the much bigger health care sector). Designed for the coastal and marine conservation community, The Ocean Foundation's unique specialized toolkit enables the robust assessment of projects and grants that goes beyond narrative reports. We apply it to ourselves, to our more than 50 fiscally hosted projects, and to our grantees. Our third party **shared assessments** conducted with these carefully selected and field-tested metrics can highlight for funders where their spending has been most effective, where there funding gaps remain, and what work actually moved the needle on a chosen issue. Using our toolkit's metrics to measure impact and applying the outcomes helps to ensure effective investing. In other words, each philanthropic dollar in the field will do more to support the people and organizations that are doing the best work to restore the places we love, the coasts and ocean, so those ecosystems can provide vital ecosystem services for all who depend on them.

TOF's Human Resources. The Ocean Foundation can count on the services of many talented and experienced professionals, both at TOF headquarters and through TOF's network of Senior Fellows. Donors can rely on the fact that a TOF work product has been subjected to critical sharpening and professional management. The talent starts at the top. Mark J. Spalding, TOF president, brings a well-earned reputation as an

author, researcher, legal analyst and general coastal and marine polymath. His experiences in Latin America, Europe, Asia, and Oceania lend TOF a distinctive international capacity. Mark oversees a core team of professional managers, researchers, and communicators, all experienced in scoping, project management, and grantee evaluations.

In addition, TOF can count on a cadre of distinguished Senior Fellows available for scoping and assessments. They include Conn Nugent (seabed mining and high seas governance); Brooks Yeager (Arctic policy); Charlotte de Fontaubert (Africa and the Caribbean); Josh Horwitz (ocean acoustics); Bill Eichbaum (Arctic and MPAs); Dominique Callimanopulo (ocean tourism); and a long list of other distinguished scientists and analysts. Even if a particular field of expertise isn't represented on the TOF Senior Fellow roster, Mark Spalding and the Fellows will be able to identify the ideal candidate within a few hours.

Conclusion

The Ocean Foundation is an unusually well qualified source of assistance for marine conservation funder collaboratives. TOF offers both top-flight analytic capabilities and a suite of back-office management skills for reporting, bookkeeping, and all pertinent legal matters. TOF handles projects within and outside the United States, and can easily link donors and recipients to colleagues around the world. We are at your service.

