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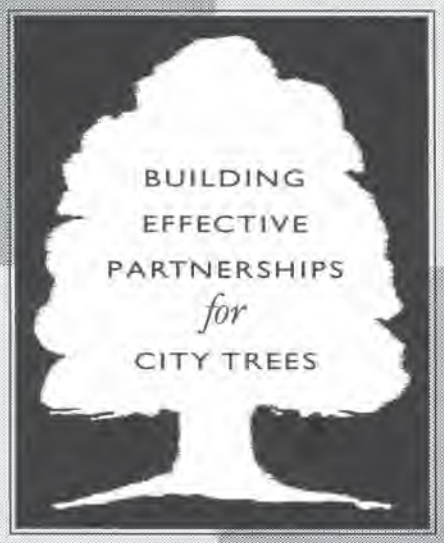

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chapter ONE

RATIONALE FOR PARTNERSHIPS *for* CITY TREES

Across the nation, communities are experiencing constraints on municipal budgets, personnel, and resources. Priorities compete for scarce resources, adversely affecting the condition of city trees, parks, and open space, even though new scientific, technical, and economic information prove that municipalities save money when the urban forest is abundant and healthy. From reducing solid-waste and stormwater runoff, from energy efficiency to air quality, aesthetics to human health, the benefits of urban forests are being redefined as essential components of the economic, social, and environmental well-being of our communities.

Communicating the Message

The benefits our urban trees provide must be clearly understood by political decisionmakers. When the government and community sectors are able to credibly convey benefits vs. costs, it offers the best chance for a sustainable urban forestry program. Moreover, other studies show how partnerships among the nonprofit, for-profit, government, utility, education, and community sectors most effectively support the health of the urban forest.

The condition of any urban forest depends on public awareness and support (the community sector), adequacy of the city's urban forestry budget (the political sector), and the technical/scientific ability of the management agency (the government sector). When these sectors operate cooperatively they create a resilient support system. If a city is especially strong in one area, it can compensate for weakness in another, but the long-term health of an urban forest system is almost always dependent on the health of all three components. Collectively, these three produce political staying power that ensures the urban forest resource will continue to thrive.

The Value of Urban Forests

Urban trees provide communities with an impressive list of benefits *(see Benefits—Benefits of Community Trees, page 4.)* Surveys indicate people like trees and prefer communities with adequate tree cover.

Unfortunately, official support is less forthcoming. Public funding for tree maintenance and planting new trees is inadequate to maintain robust urban tree canopies. While trees are appreciated, they generally are not assigned dollar values.

Public support for trees has been mostly an aesthetic concern. Lady Bird Johnson, while First Lady, championed the U.S. beautification movement in the 1960s. Tree, shrub, and flower planting were promoted, especially along the nation's roadways, and became part of federal legislation. Although trees gained some status in the public's eye through this beautification movement, it was not enough to change the general condition of urban trees, which, according to AMERICAN FORESTS surveys, started to decline in the 1960s.

By the early 1980s it was clear that the health of our city forests didn't depend on good looks alone. Community leaders were making decisions based on tangible, measurable factors and the value of trees was not being communicated effectively. The most direct approach to measuring tree values would be to put trees into the marketplace and to establish dollar values for the contributions they make to a community.

INCREASING PROPERTY VALUE

In the late 1970s, Brian Payne, a USDA Forest Service employee, studied the value of homes around Amherst, Massachusetts. His findings are still considered relevant today. Homes in his study that had trees around them were commonly worth 7 to 10 percent more—and sometimes as much as 20 percent more—than homes without trees. The accuracy of Payne's study has been demonstrated over and over in recent years. Today, homebuilders all over the country recognize that trees add to the selling price of their homes.

An appraisal method for calculating the value of trees has been developed by a committee of experts in conjunction with the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA). Although this value is not generally accepted by property appraisers, when properly used by an expert tree appraiser, it provides an assessment of overall value to help compensate an owner when a tree is damaged or killed.

SAVING ENERGY

In the mid-1980s several USDA Forest Service and Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory scientists, as well as Jack Parker of Miami International University, were able to measure the energy savings trees and landscaping provided to individual homes. Their measurements calculated the cost of energy avoided as a result of having trees shade homes (direct savings) or cool urban areas (indirect savings). They found that strategically placed trees can save homeowners 10 to 40 percent on their cooling costs. Gordon Heisler, a USDA Forest Service researcher in Pennsylvania, found that trees also provide significant savings on the costs of winter heating by blocking the home from prevailing winter winds.

Using trees for energy savings also reduces carbon emissions because trees store carbon in wood as they grow, and because it reduces the amount of carbon emitted into the atmosphere by the generation of electric power. A strategically placed urban tree can prevent 25 times as much carbon from entering the air for cooling as it can sequester.

PREVENTING EROSION

One study conducted north of Baltimore, Maryland, demonstrated the ability of trees to filter sediment from stormwater. In the Gunpowder Falls Basin, part of the Chesapeake Bay watershed, the study showed that forestland produced about 50 tons of sediment per acre per year compared to 1,000 to 5,000 tons for farmland. Land stripped for construction produced upwards of 25,000 tons per acre per year. If you have ever bought topsoil and recognize its critical role in the environment, you can easily understand the value of trees in preventing erosion.

REDUCING STORM FLOW

During a storm, trees slow the movement of water across the land; conversely, when trees are removed, storm flows and the risk of flooding increase. To reduce flooding risk, new construction in urban areas must establish an engineering solution to the stormwater problem. A value can be assigned to trees on a construction site, based on the cost of building stormwater containment structures to hold the additional flow that results when trees are removed. In addition, stormwater collected in storm sewers receives a chemical treatment before it is allowed to flow back into natural water areas. The cost of this chemical treatment can also be measured.

IMPROVING AIR QUALITY

Although the formation of smog is complex, part of it is temperature dependent. Trees' cooling properties reduce smog formation by about 30 percent. The heat produced by the rock-like city center makes the city hotter. Dark surfaces and sparse vegetation make it worse. The heat island effect is like a bunsen burner heating a chemistry experiment; the hotter the burner makes the test tubes, the more the experimental brew mixes. In the air above the city, the mixing of sulphur and nitrogen produces smog. For every 1 degree increase in temperature over 72 degrees F, the possibility of smog increases by 6 percent, according to scientists at Lawrence Berkeley Lab.

These specifics are just some of the ecological benefits trees bring to a community; the values of wildlife and recreation enhancement also must be added. Social benefits have only just started to be measured but already are significant.

Roger Ulrich, a geographer at Texas A&M, has looked at the impact of trees on hospital patients. He found patients whose rooms looked out on trees had shorter hospital stays and needed fewer painkillers. Another study, by Sullivan and Kuo in the Chicago area, found a correlation between trees and a reduction in domestic violence. Trees offer a long list of values to a community. Measuring these values and presenting the case for trees to community leaders at public meetings is a challenge that must be addressed if trees are going to survive the ever-urbanizing environment.

A new computer software program called CITYgreen, developed by AMERICAN FORESTS, provides people with a relatively simple way to calculate the community-wide values of trees. This PC program, which can operate on a desktop computer, is an application program for ArcView, a Geographic Information System (GIS) that operates in a Windows environment.

"BENE*fits*"

The Benefits of Community Trees

Oxygen Replenishment
During photosynthesis, trees convert carbon dioxide and water into carbohydrates and oxygen.

Carbon Dioxide Sequestration
To photosynthesize and release oxygen, trees absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

Groundwater Filtration
Trees' hair-like root fibers help filter groundwater by trapping contaminates such as nutrients and pollutants.

Pollution Control
Tree leaves and roots act as natural filters for air and for rainwater and groundwater, removing particulate matter.

Aesthetics
Trees beautify such urban and community areas as parks, streets, and schoolyards.

Education
Forested areas offer numerous resources as outdoor classrooms.

Mental Health
Trees provide soothing green scenery that has been shown to speed up patient recovery in hospitals.

Floodwater Control
Tree root systems hold in place soil that, if washed away by heavy rains, would flow into streams and rivers, making them shallower and allowing floodwaters to overflow protective banks.

Mineral and Nutrients Cycling and Retention
Through growth, transpiration, and death, trees tie up minerals and nutrients from the air, water, and soil.

Climate Control
Trees work as natural barriers to wind, snow, rain, and solar rays, controling climate in micro-areas.

Habitat for Wildlife
Trees and forests provide homes for many different species of animals and birds.

Physical Health and Recreation
The forest makes a great exercise area for hikers, hunters, and skiiers, and provides natural areas for those who like to birdwatch.

Natural Source of Medicines
Trees provide substances that have medicinal value, such as the active ingredients used in asthma medications and cough remedies.

Economy
The urban forest provides jobs for city foresters, park managers, and the arboricultural industry. Studies also show that trees create a welcoming environment that attracts shoppers to downtown business districts.

Soil Retention and Rejuvenation
Tree roots hold soil in place so it cannot easily be washed away by wind or water; the decaying of dead tree parts returns nutrients to the soil.

HOW THINGS GET DONE *in* COMMUNITIES

Communities are made up of government agencies, community organizations, and a political structure that all have a role in the growth and development of urban forests. In reality, there are many conflicts and barriers that prevent total harmony, but the ideal community model program has a balance of the three.

A Balance of Power

POLITICAL SECTOR: Cities are divided into voting districts represented by councilmembers or commissioners. They have direct access through the Mayor's office to get things done in their districts. It is often their requests for tree maintenance, removals, and plantings that become the main concern of the departments that manage and maintain trees.

GOVERNMENT SECTOR: Several agencies may have urban forest responsibilities, including the public works department, the engineering department, the department of transportation, the parks and recreation department, city utility or municipal electric company, land-use planning or community development agency, and legal department. Large cities have detailed organizational charts that separate departments according to hierarchy. Each may have its own set of ordinances, regulations, and budgets that control the way in which it does business in the community.

COMMUNITY SECTOR: Citizen tree groups can maintain a high profile and develop strong communication links within the political structure through their district representatives. If groups are well organized, informed on the issues, and have a basic understanding of tree care and natural resources conservation, they can articulate their appreciation and concern for urban forest resources and support their claims with accurate scientific-based data and information. When skillfully done, this can be a powerful influence on the city's political and management structure.

It is often up to citizen tree groups to forge a partnership between the public and private sectors. But to build alliances, you have to know where to go and whom to see.

THE POLITICAL SECTOR

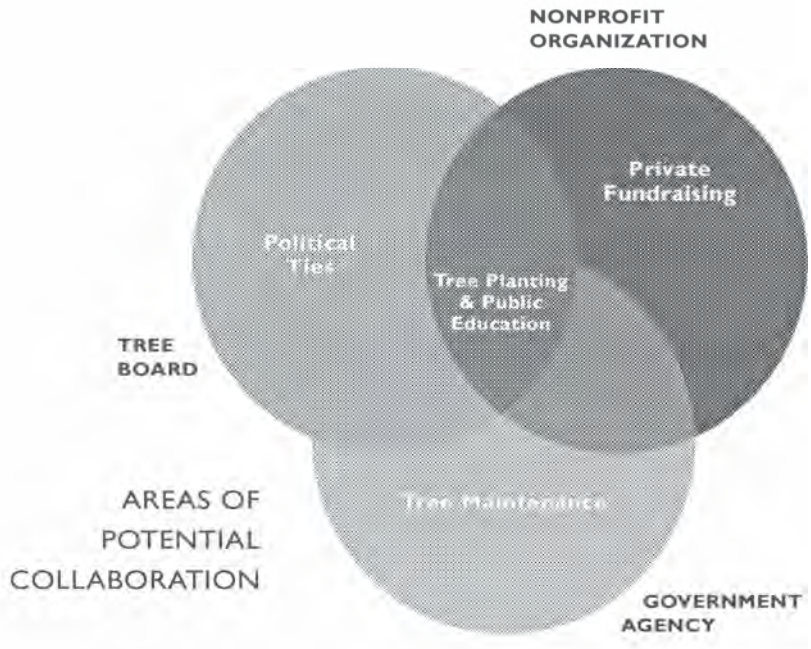
Cities and towns are managed by a political structure. There may be a city manager, city clerk, and/or executive officer, as well as a mayor. Jurisdictions will have either a city council or board of commissioners that makes policy and has administrative authority over local government. The members are elected in some areas and appointed in others. These decisionmakers hold the key to changing public policies on the urban forest and set budgets for the agency or agencies that maintain it. Their meetings, and the minutes from them, are public, providing an opportunity for citizen influence.

THE GOVERNMENT SECTOR

Public agencies are tax-supported units of government. Responsibility for the care of street trees, parks, greenspace, and the urban fringe may fall to one or several agencies: the community development or land-use planning agency; department of transportation, department of public works or engineering; or the parks and recreation department.

Cities with room to expand or increase density have a land-use planning department, and the key contact there is the city planner. In larger cities the department is usually part of the community development agency; in this case, the director or land-use planner is the best contact. The community development agency provides a structure for growth and development. The local land-use plan controls zoning and development and is therefore a primary revenue source. Set by the state constitution, it determines the property tax level and creates the tax base and tax revenue. The land-use plan details rules and guidelines for zoning, building codes, streets, tree boards, parks, schools, and infrastructure.

The key contact at the department of transportation (DOT) is the landscape architect or engineer. The DOT is responsible for building new roads (part of the capital budget) and/or maintaining existing ones. Trees are planted as part of the capital budget during road construction or reconstruction. The landscape easement or tree lawn (between the sidewalk and the curb), and the size, shape, and composition of rights-of-way are all decided by the DOT. It may issue permits for local government or private groups to plant trees on DOT easements and often requires a commitment for maintenance. While usually a county- or state-level agency, the local DOT is tied to federal agencies because much of its funding comes from the Federal Highway Administration.



AREAS OF COOPERATION

Public agencies with official responsibility for trees have an overlapping concern with public interest groups. Citizen tree groups and municipal foresters may have the same goal—a healthy and abundant urban forest—yet not recognize the significance of their partnership.The shaded area in the chart shows the potential for overlapping interests and opportunities for partnerships. Strengthening this partnership improves the effectiveness of their common concerns.

At the department of public works (DPW), the key contacts are the engineer, park superintendent, or urban forester. Often responsible for the planning, planting, maintenance, and removal of all trees on community-owned property, the DPW may also ensure code enforcement on private property. Larger communities may have an urban forestry department that provides or contracts out services. In smaller communities, the city engineer may be responsible for all tree-related activities. Trees frequently are planted as part of the public works budget, separate from the capital program.

Smaller communities may have an engineering department that performs the duties of either the DOT or the DPW or may be part of one or the other. Better public works programs have new construction or reconstruction projects that pay for tree planting with capital funds, in addition to ongoing maintenance and tree replacement.

The key contact at the parks and recreation department may be called the park manager, urban forester, arborist, or horticulturist. This department takes care of planning, planting, and maintenance of parks and parkways. It may also be responsible for the community's street tree program if the DPW does not have the expertise or the budget. In small communities, planning may be done in either the department of public works or the parks and recreation department.

If your community has a city utility or municipal electric company, the key contact is usually a line clearance supervisor or manager. The utility generally maintains all the existing trees that are within the municipal electric system. Utilities often get involved in cooperative tree planting and tree replacement efforts, and are great partners for public awareness or educational efforts.

THE COMMUNITY SECTOR

There are myriad citizen groups that care about trees—from politically appointed tree boards to independent, nonprofit tree groups to civic organizations.

Tree Boards—A legally constituted tree board or commission formed through city council ordinance acts as an advisory group to the community government. Board members may be appointed or elected and may have policy-making powers. Representation from various agencies and interest groups should be reflected in the membership and increases the board's credibility. Its primary responsibility is oversight, but duties may include an assessment of the community's forestry program or a presentation of its budget to policymakers. A legally constituted tree board is closer to the planning and budget process than are citizen groups. While a tree board or commission is not independent of the political leadership, this connection makes it an effective ally in the public policy arena.

Urban Forest Councils—An urban forest council is a broad-based coalition that addresses urban forest interests but without the potential policymaking powers of a politically appointed tree commission. The most common council has two tiers: the main body, which includes all interested parties, and a smaller executive committee, usually responsible for management and day-to-day policy decisions. A diverse mix of members provides a better vision of urban forests as urban ecosystems, not to mention the skills and cultural diversity needed to be most effective. Particularly effective to have as members are citizen activists, urban foresters, elected officials, and businesspeople.

Nonprofit Tree Groups—Nonprofit tree groups generally operate at the local or state level and are usually creat-

ed by a person with a passion for planting and caring for trees. The typical staff consists of an executive director and an assistant director or project coordinator. The all-important support of community volunteers, or members, is critical. Nonprofit tree groups are governed by a board of directors, which sets policies for the staff to act upon. The board has fiduciary responsibility and should lead fundraising efforts. Unlike government, nonprofit organizations must raise their own revenue. There are no guarantees that their funding will continue from year to year, although their tax-deductible status helps encourage financial support from individuals, foundations, and businesses. Nonprofit tree groups need not have an urban forester on staff. Their influence within the community comes from their autonomy and how well they represent the community. The greatest advantage of nonprofit tree groups is the considerable volunteer power they can harness for the cause of urban forests.

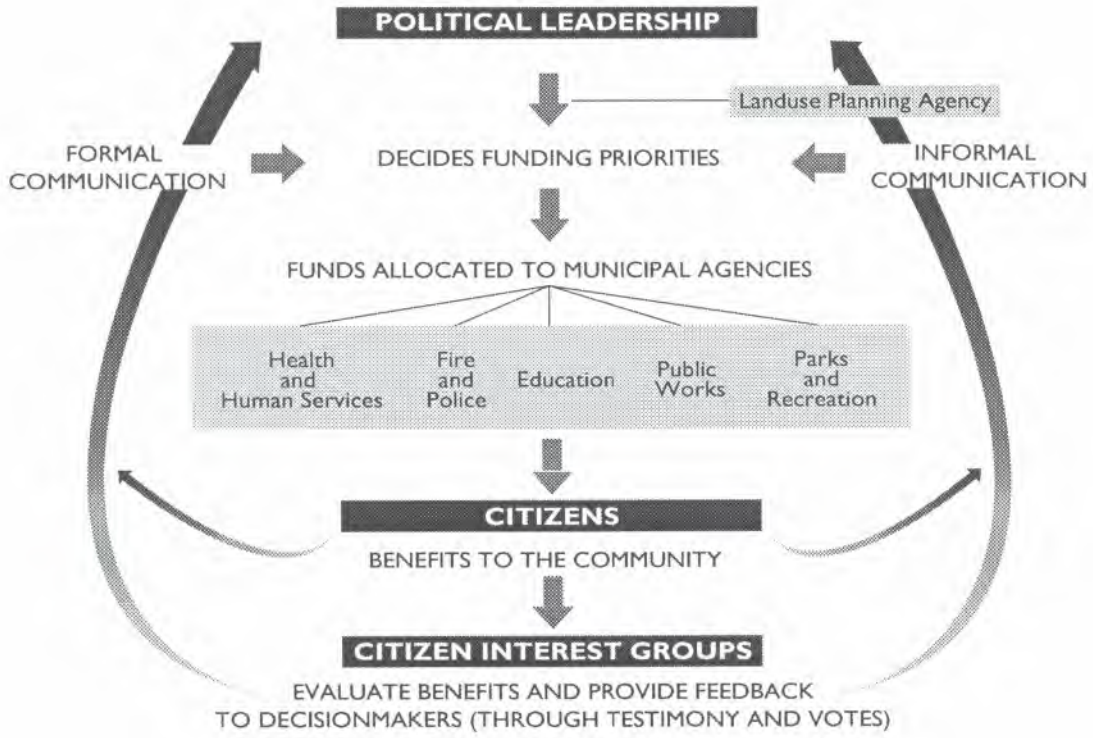
Civic Groups and Neighborhood Associations—Civic, school, and church groups are generally created to help a particular institution. Neighborhood associations are open to all residents or homeowners in a specific community and can be nonprofit organizations or coalitions. Neighborhood associations' responsibilities may include maintaining common property, which would include tree planting and care; creating and enforcing covenants; and encouraging improvements. The neighborhood may have established codes, covenants, and restrictions connected to property deeds.

Trees are just one of the items of concern for civic groups and neighborhood associations, so their interest may be fleeting. Even if their interest peaks only a couple times a year, their activities increase public awareness of trees and community service, and can help identify local activists.

Your best assurance of a healthy urban forest is a partnership between the community, political, and government sectors. While government agencies have the budget, authority, and responsibility to care for urban trees, it is private, community-based organizations that are best able to broaden public involvement and leverage political support for healthy urban forests.

HOW THINGS GET DONE IN COMMUNITIES

Elected officials have the strongest voice in directing what goes on in a community. Much of their work is carried out in public meetings, which allows citizens and the media to be aware of their actions.The leadership decides funding priorities and allocates money to various agencies. Citizens and citizen groups with specific public concerns keep an eye on these agencies' work. They interact directly with the agencies and use the power of their voice to influence public policy.This public voice can be expressed on the record in a public meeting, or informally at social events or in private conversations.This formal and informal communication network is the process by which things get done.



THE GARDEN *of* GOOD, PART 1:

City of Savannah

Established in 1733 on what was once a barrier island, the city of Savannah was founded by General James Edward Oglethorpe, who designed a unique city plan of squares and parks that remains nearly intact. Savannah was one of the first cities in America to plant trees in an organized manner along streets and in parks, and that planting kept pace with city development from the late 1800s into the mid-1950s, as the growing city expanded.

This long history of caring for its trees is still evident in Savannah today under Mayor Floyd Adams. A professional urban forestry staff led by Don Gardner works out of the Park and Tree Department within the municipal government. Staff members keep up-to-date on tree management techniques by attending workshops and conferences hosted by national organizations, such as the International Society of Arboriculture.

Savannah's Park and Tree Commission was created by the Georgia General Assembly in November 1895 and has been a strong force for planting, pruning, and enhancing the city's trees and parks throughout its 100-year history. A newly revised charter challenges the Commission to continue to develop a vision for Savannah's urban forest and to strengthen its ties to the City Council, its advocacy for the urban forest, and its partnerships with community tree groups.

In 1982, local resident Page Hungerpiller organized a group of citizens concerned about the widespread and indiscriminate destruction of trees due to development. This organization, called the Savannah Tree Foundation, partners with local, county, and state agencies and organizations to evaluate city and county tree ordinances. Its "State of the Trees" report provides recommendations for public policy and direction for its own action and education programs. Savannah's urban forest is well positioned for the future because it has the necessary components to build a sustainable program—major players in the political, government, and community sectors.

CHANGING THINGS FOR THE BETTER: *Affecting* PUBLIC POLICY

Government agencies need to show moderation, but nonprofits can push the envelope on what is accepted, leveraging support from the political structure and being proactive in achieving a vision for the future. Most positive changes in the social, economic, and environmental life of Americans have come through the collaborative efforts of all sectors, led by community nonprofits. Advances in health care, safety, and America's enviable system of national parks and forests were all created through the efforts of nonprofit organizations. In these cases, government agencies or departments were created or their responsibilities shifted to serve the collective needs of the people.

When government responds to the needs of the people, good public policy is at work. Recycling is a familiar example. Not long ago recycling was the talk of visionaries. Then it became voluntary. Now many local governments operate mandatory curbside pick-up programs. The opportunity to positively affect public policy by educating the political sector is one of the most important roles filled by a partnership between local urban forest agencies and nonprofit tree groups.

Government agencies have the expertise and management know-how on the needs of the urban forest; the nonprofit knows the needs of the community. When these two groups work together, policymakers listen.

Get to Know Your Local Government

Do your homework before advocating. Find out the legal set-up of your local government (charter, constitution, statutes, etc.). Discover its limitations, what functions and services it is responsible for, and how changes are made to these functions and services.

HOW IS YOUR LOCAL GOVERNMENT ORGANIZED?

Get a pen and paper and answer the following:

- Who makes policy and who has administrative authority?
- How many members are on the local governmental body?
- Are they elected or appointed?
- What qualifications are required?
- What is the term of office and salary?
- How often does the body meet?
- Are meetings open to the public?
- Are minutes made available to the public?
- What are the opportunities for citizen input?
- What are the responsibilities of the governing body?
- Is there an executive officer? A city clerk?

Get specific on your issue. Again, pick up your pen:

- What local government departments have responsibilities for trees and other natural resources?
- Are they headed by appointed or elected officials?
- What advisory boards or commissions are there?
- What are their functions and responsibilities?
- Do they report to the governing body, make recommendations, and conduct hearings?
- Are their meetings open to the public?
- Do their responsibilities overlap?
- What are their budgets, sources of revenues, and major expenses?

Organize a Government Relations Committee

Members of a government relations committee should represent the entire urban forest constituency. Staying focused on the priority issue (like ordinance revision or an increased management budget) is critical to the success of the advocacy effort. If your group has more than one issue, rank them in order of priority.

Set Up a Legislative Network

A grass roots network is an organized, systematic means of communicating on short notice with local volunteers who have agreed to be the contact for their legislators. Develop a means of quick communication with your committee. Work hard to keep the network viable, and remember: *Volunteers are more influential with legislators than are staff.* Keep a list handy of your legislators and their grass roots contacts.

Identify Legislative Leaders

Get to know the names and faces you want to influence on the legislative body. You will need to recruit a strong advocate in the legislative committee that has jurisdiction over your cause. The staff members of decisionmakers are very important. Senior staff often wield enormous power and can greatly assist your efforts.

Know Your Stuff

You are the expert on your issue when you communicate with legislators, so be well versed. Your presentation materials should anticipate the major concerns and interests of your audience. The better you can link your issues to the concerns of legislators, the more receptive they will be.

Practice the ABCs of Communicating

WRITING LETTERS

When writing letters to legislators, use personal or business letterhead. Be accurate. Be brief. Be clear. Ask the legislator to reply and ask directly if you can count on support. Be timely. Your communication must arrive in time to allow your grass roots network time to contact legislators before a vote. Follow up; most people don't respond to written communications without a follow-up call. Acknowledge all responses.

HOLDING MEETINGS

Meetings are the best way to get your point across. Make an appointment and be prompt. Bring a delegation, if necessary. Discuss your issue from the legislator's perspective. Leave behind a fact sheet on your issue. Write a "thank you" and remind the legislator of agreements reached during the meeting. Site visits by legislators are effective when well planned.

TESTIFYING

When preparing and providing testimony, keep your statement brief and provide a one-page summary. Have the testimony presented by a high-ranking, well-informed volunteer. A senior staff member is a good second choice. If appropriate, have other groups sign on to your testimony. Plant questions with friendly legislators, and be courteous, but direct, to hostile questions. If you can't answer a question, say so, and offer to get the information.

GETTING AND GIVING GOOD PR

The media is a powerful tool for advocacy. Legislators take note of organizations quoted in news stories on key legislative issues. (Congressional staff rank news articles and editorials in daily newspapers very high among the forces that influence members of Congress.) Provide accurate, newsworthy information to the media through press releases, press conferences, letters to the editor, op-eds, and public service campaigns.

Build Coalitions

Almost all legislation is enacted as a result of coalition efforts. While coalitions are fragile, they have enormous potential to influence legislation. The main function of a coalition is to build a sense of trust and openness. Every coalition must have an organization that serves as a clearinghouse to quickly get information to coalition members. Coalition membership and commitments change, so plan to get information to the government relations committee quickly and accurately. Congratulate coalition members on the role they played in a successful effort.

THE GARDEN *of* GOOD: PART II

The Savannah Tree Foundation

After attending the Second National Urban Forest Conference in 1982, Page Hungerpiller organized a group of citizens concerned with the widespread and indiscriminate destruction of urban trees in Savannah. As was true of many urban communities in the 1970s and 1980s, the city of Savannah and Chatham County area experienced tremendous spatial growth as roads, subdivisions, and commercial developments were built, leading to widespread removal of trees. Such a loss would be devastating in any urban landscape, but perhaps was more obvious in Savannah where the tree canopy in the historic downtown area had been nurtured for more than 200 years. The need for an organization such as the Savannah Tree Foundation (STF) was clear.

STF promotes, through direct action and education, an awareness of trees as a vital natural resource and an important part of its heritage. The Foundation seeks—by preserving, nurturing, and planting trees—to enhance the quality of life for present and future generations.

The Foundation has grown into an innovative organization whose counsel, expertise, and leadership are highly regarded and sought. For the first 10 years the Foundation focused on education and advocacy and worked at the local and state level to preserve trees during the widening of a historic city road. The result: a median strip that protects many large live oaks and allows future planting sites. STF convinced a developer to grant a conservation easement to protect Candler Oak, the largest live oak in the historic district, then removed asphalt around its roots and developed a maintenance plan. STF has also sponsored public workshops to increase tree expertise, particularly in the building community, and worked to establish a tree ordinance for the city and county.

In 1992 STF published its first "State of the Trees" report, which identified a critical need to recognize trees as an integral part of the community infrastructure. Based upon a qualitative survey of local professionals whose work impacted or was affected by trees, the report made specific recommendations for changes needed to better protect Savannah's urban forest. They included better enforcement of the existing tree ordinance, which resulted in the hiring of a city landscape architect. A broad-based Tree Advisory Committee was formed to focus on the need for a strengthened tree ordinance.

In 1993 a matching grant from the Georgia Forestry Commission allowed the Foundation to conduct a study of land cover changes over the past 20 years to assess the rate and causes of tree loss. Drawn from Landsat satellite data and GIS technology, the study was the basis for "State of the Trees II" and became the cornerstone of a campaign to educate the public and build community support for strengthened ordinances.

The Tree Advisory Committee, with representatives from the building community, utilities, city and county, and other related professions, produced specific recommendations that were adapted unanimously by the City of Savannah and Chatham County. The ordinances included subdivision development for the first time and called for an increase in green space during commercial development from 10 to 20 percent.

STF has organized community tree plantings resulting in working partnerships with a utility company, homebuilders, a volunteer fire department, a car dealer, a road contractor, and others. This year the Foundation worked with the county engineer's office to secure permission from landowners to plant trees on easements along a recently widened road. And advocacy efforts continue: STF members are now working to save 100 year-old trees in an historic park mall and are using a Georgia Forestry Commission grant to assess data and vision for a heavily forested 38-acre city park that had first been designated as a sports complex.

AFFECTING NATIONAL PUBLIC POLICY: URBAN FORESTRY AND THE 1990 FARM BILL

National support for urban forestry surged with the establishment of an urban forestry title in the 1990 Farm Bill. Congressional recognition of the importance of urban forestry was no accident. Several years of hard work by many people and organizations led to the urban forestry title. The process is a model for how nonprofit groups, businesses, and government can work together to achieve important public policy goals.

Changing public policies and moving a bill through the legislative process to become law is a lengthy process and requires a wide range of support. Two important factors were at the heart of the urban forestry bill's passage: a compelling issue and a conservation organization around which public support was articulated.

The effort started in 1981 when the National Urban Forest Council (NUFC) was established under the auspices of AMERICAN FORESTS. NUFC, a national communication network for urban forestry enthusiasts, became the lightning rod for attracting public interest. Its goals were to advance the science and practice of urban forestry and to elevate the value of this resource in community leaders' eyes.

In 1985 the NUFC and AMERICAN FORESTS devised a strategy to estimate the health of urban forests by surveying 20 cities. *The State of Our City Forests*, published in *American Forests* magazine, showed that the condition of these cities' publicly owned trees had been declining for 20 years. Four trees were dying for each one planted, and budgets to plant and care for trees were dwindling. The survey provided the data needed to back up the Council's advocacy efforts and add momentum to the urban forestry movement.

With survey data in hand, Council members had the foundation they needed to take their concerns to community leaders. This information provided local areas with data that could strengthen their arguments for promoting local programs. There was also an opportunity to advance national concerns. The leaders of AMERICAN FORESTS suggested organizing a hearing for the U.S. Congress so that national leaders could learn about the urban forest resource and consider legislative options to improve it.

Organizing a national hearing took about six months. The first key person to take an interest was Representative Jim Jontz of Indiana, a member of the Forestry and Family Farm Subcommittee, part of the Agriculture Committee. The legislative staffer on the Agriculture Committee was Jim Lyons, a member of the National Urban Forest Council and now the undersecretary for agriculture. Together, Jontz, Lyons, and AMERICAN FORESTS' Gary Moll, the NUFC chair, organized a public hearing for the subcommittee. Representatives from local, state, and national organizations and agencies testified.

The hearing was a success. The information supporting urban forests was compelling, and as a result, new legislation was introduced which became the Urban Forestry Act of 1989. The bill, which had no opposition, was so popular with Congress that the Agriculture Committee moved it to a higher status and included it in the 1990 Farm Bill. Urban forestry became one of the many titles in this massive bill, passed in 1990. This authorization bill allowed the Appropriations Committee to consider urban forestry in a new light, and funding for the national program increased tenfold. Through its efforts, the National Urban Forest Council demonstrated the value of urban forests and elevated their role as a national resource.

The Farm Bill is reviewed and revised by Congress every five years and appropriations are determined each year as part of the federal budget. The USDA Forest Service, which implements the urban forestry title, provides technical support and passes funds through to state agencies. Under the original urban forestry title, the state agencies established state urban forest councils and hired both state forestry coordinators and volunteer coordinators to communicate with citizen groups. The number of state urban forest councils subsequently grew from about seven in 1989 to 50 in 1994.

The reauthorization of the Farm Bill in 1995 was slowed by a budget battle in Congress, but the bill was renewed with the urban forestry title intact. The Farm Bill has been compared to a train with a series of box cars, each representing a section of the bill. The train passes through the legislative "station" every five years and if a particular "boxcar" or section is deemed open, legislators can go in and rearrange its contents. If not deemed open, the "boxcar" remains an unchanged part of the bill. Because the urban forestry title did not require substantial changes, AMERICAN FORESTS successfully urged legislators to review our past reports and support it in its existing form.

by Gary Moll of AMERICAN FORESTS

MAKING THE URBAN FOREST RELEVANT *to* POLICY MAKERS

COMMUNITY ISSUES	REGIONAL	NEIGHBORHOOD	INDIVIDUAL	NATURAL RESOURCES
Community Development/ Environmental Quality	Retain natural forest cover where possible and revegetate especially in areas with high impervious surfaces.	Regreening vacant lots, yards, and streets; Plan adequate open space associated with redevelopment.	Increase amount of individually owned property; improving individual property.	**Ecological stability: retain water and nutrients.**
Public Health: sanitation, dumping, burning, lack of open space	Convert vacant lots to functional open space; plant for diversity.	Community action to clean up vacant lots, riparian areas, assume responsibility of neighborhood environment.	Participate in neighborhood activities—recycle oil and toxics.	**Ecological health: water quality, air quality, habitat diversity.**
Community Pride	Compare one neighborhood with another.	Group planting empowers neighborhoods—take back vacant lots, improve property value.	Plant a tree to improve property and communications with neighbors.	**Increased canopy cover: improved watershed quality.**
Crime	Tree planting as symbol of increased community involvement.	Symbolically plant trees for every child that gets killed—brings neighborhood together.	Plant trees for defensible space—take back drug corners.	**Community actions result in increased canopy cover.**

Here is an example of how one community created important links between natural resource issues and community issues. By producing a matrix, they were able to identify important issues.The far *left column* represents community issues viewed important by the decisionmakers and concerned citizens.The far *right column* represents the natural resource issues viewed important by the environmental professionals.The *middle columns* represent the geographic scope (regional, neighborhood, and individuals).After developing the matrix, the community leaders and environmental professionals were able to draw a logical path between community and natural resources issues, and see how the urban forest is relevant to both.

SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIPS

People often use the words "partnership," "collaboration," "coalition," and "joint efforts" interchangeably to mean any time people work together to achieve a common goal. Regardless of which term you use, how you form this working partnership depends on the people and the situation. There are some principles and processes you can follow, though, that can increase your chances for success.

The process outlined here involves separate entities in the community, political, and government sectors working together while still retaining the identities of the organizations they represent. Participants in this process bring these separate organizations into a new structure with full commitment to share a common mission. In all cases, the participants are partners that either pool or secure the necessary resources to achieve their common vision and share in the results and rewards.

Collaborative efforts change the way we work:

WORKING

Individually	In Partnership
Competing	Building consensus
Working alone	Working with others from a diverse array of cultures, fields, and sectors
Thinking mostly about activities, services, and programs	Thinking about larger results and strategies
Focusing on short-term accomplishments	Demanding long-term results

Partnerships offer a new way to effect change in communities. If done properly, they promote more diverse interests and the participation of all parties. Rather than using the traditional methods of power, structure, and exclusion to reach decisions, partnerships rely on inclusion and trust to achieve shared goals.

The rewards are many, including:

- Quality solutions, which are improved by a broad comprehensive analysis of the problem.
- Minimized risk of impasse.
- A process that ensures each stakeholder's interests are considered.
- Parties retain ownership of the solution.
- Broader acceptance of a joint solution and the willingness to implement it.
- The potential to discover novel, innovative solutions.
- Improved relations between stakeholders and more opportunities to reopen deadlocked negotiations.
- The establishment of mechanisms for coordinating future actions among stakeholders.

CHARACHTERISTICS *of an* EFFECTIVE MEETING

- **Clear Roles.** Participants know what's expected of them.
- **Real Issues.** Hidden agendas are brought into the open.
- **Process Tools.** The facilitator has a wide repertoire of techniques to help the group achieve its ends.
- **Agenda.** Process and content are outlined and time allocated.
- **Outcomes.** Results are clear and agreed upon.
- **Room Set-up.** Room and seating arrangements support the meeting's purpose.
- **Decisionmaking Power.** Power issues and decisionmaking procedures are made explicit ahead of time.
- **Follow Up.** Accountability (who/what/when) and action items are clearly established for meeting decisions.
- **Diversity.** A variety of opinions are sought and respected.
- **Ownership.** Participants "own" the agenda and take responsibility for the success of the meeting.
- **Evaluation.** The process analysis at the end of the meeting is productive and a good use of participants' time.

Ingredients for Successful Partnerships

Two of the most important ingredients for successful collaboration are good timing and clear need. There must be a sense of urgency that provides the initial momentum for the stakeholders to act in response to a need. As we saw in the case of the Savannah Tree Foundation *(see Chapter 4),* the accelerated loss of tree canopy to development provided this "call to action." Other ingredients can include the following:

MEMBER INGREDIENTS

- Commitment and involvement of community leaders. Leaders such as the mayor, city council members, chamber of commerce members, and executive directors bring credibility to the effort. Their support helps implement recommendations.
- Broad-based involvement by community members. An adequate cross-section is needed to implement recommendations. Representatives who will be affected by the group's activities should be sought from each segment of the community
- Sufficient incentives. Individuals believe their interests will be protected and advanced.
- Mutual respect, understanding, and trust. Participants learn to understand each other and the organization represented (its culture, values, limitations, expectations).
- Mutual benefit. Participants believe the benefits will offset costs such as loss of autonomy and turf.
- Ability to compromise. Participants accept that not all decisions will fit their needs and interests.

PROCESS INGREDIENTS

- Shared vision. Participants have a clearly agreed-upon mission, objectives, and strategy.
- Ownership. Members share a stake in both process and outcome.
- Agreement on scope. Agreement up front prevents differing expectations from derailing the process.
- Good faith. Mediator, facilitators, and/or conveners maintain a climate of mutual trust.
- Good relationships with member organizations/agencies. Have a mechanism built in for participants to confer with and gain their organization's commitment before final agreements are reached.
- Credibility and fairness of process. The procedure is not dominated by a particular group or person.
- Careful management and leadership. Participation, ownership, and power-sharing are incorporated in the process. Skills include keeping participants at the table, working through conflicts, and negotiating difficult situations.
- Interim successes. These help build and sustain the momentum and provide encouragement.
- A shift to broader concerns. Participants focus less on organizational interests and more on broader community concerns.
- Open and frequent communication. Group members interact often, update one another, discuss issues openly, and convey information to one another and those outside the group.
- Concrete, attainable goals and objectives. Goals are broad statements that guide programs and help the organization achieve its purpose. Objectives are specific, measurable, and realistic statements.

Overcoming Obstacles

Partnerships can exceed expectations or they can fall flat. For every good reason there is to collaborate, there's another reason why partnerships fail.

In working to overcome obstacles, be prepared for the following: We humans are resistant to change; we don't like uncertainty. While we may not like the existing system, we are at least familiar with it. (The devil you know is better than the devil you don't.)

Many individuals view the process of negotiating as a sign of weakness. Many organizations, especially advocacy groups, see reaching consensus as a compromise. They believe it will hurt their credibility with the public (not to mention their dues-paying membership) to "sell out." In addition, organizations with limited resources believe they will not be treated on an equal basis with better funded, more powerful players. They also see this process as a drain on their time and finances. Lastly, different organizations have different cultures—ways of doing business—and this can create many misunderstandings between participants as they try to work together.

COLLABORATIVE PROBLEM-SOLVING

Each phase in the problem-solving process is a problem in itself. The techniques described in one phase can also be used in any other phase. Problem-solving, like life, doesn't work in a linear fashion. In group problem-solving, it is important for everyone to be focused on the same problem in the same way at the same time. Once there's agreement on the problem, the solution can often appear much clearer, so allow a lot of time to define and analyze the problem.

The steps include:

1. Reaching agreement on the problem. Defining, researching, and analyzing it.
2. Exploring options. Generating and evaluating ideas.
3. Choosing the best solution and giving the green light. Creating and implementing an action plan, as well as evaluating and revising the plan when necessary.

Reaching Agreement on the Problem

DEFINE THE PROBLEM

Without a clear, agreed-upon definition, the group can flounder, spin wheels, or spend time solving the wrong problem. One of the most important phases in group problem-solving is to get the group to agree on the problem.

State What the Problem Is/Is Not. This technique helps the group identify and agree on what constitutes the problem and what does not. Make a list with two columns. In one column list what is known to be part of the problem (i.e. where it is, when it happens, who is involved, etc.); in the other list what is not part of the problem. This technique helps build a definition of the problem and eliminate assumptions.

State the Problem as a Question. Ask individuals in the group to state the problem as an open-ended question such as "How do we get more funding for tree planting?" or "What is the best way to...?" Each question gives a different slant on what the problem might be. Do not allow yes/no questions such as, "Should we get more funds for tree planting?"

Find Key Words. After you have a working definition, tighten it by circling key words and asking the group for clarification. Each time you clarify a key word, you sharpen the definition. For example, if the group is exploring the problem of how to improve the urban forest in your community, they will need to decide what "improve" means. Does it mean plant more trees, get more funding for trees? What is the urban forest—street trees, parkland, or both?

RESEARCH AND ANALYZE THE PROBLEM

This is where the problem gets broken down into the who, what, where, why, and when. Sometimes the group doesn't have the factual information it needs for proper analysis. (Either the members can't agree or don't know, or they don't want to admit they don't know.) At this point it is probably best to have the group identify a person or organization that can provide the necessary expertise.

Exploring Options

GENERATE IDEAS

This part of the process—brainstorming—should be fun, because it values creativity and originality. Be sure to keep the creative juices flowing by simply producing alternatives. Don't evaluate at this point; it can inhibit the stream of ideas. To help ensure a successful session, remember to:

- Verify that everyone has the same understanding of the topic.
- Tell participants when the brainstorming starts.
- Have everything ready----paper, pens, person(s) to act as recorder(s).
- Set a time limit.
- Give a pep talk—encourage and compliment the group.
- Set an objective such as "let's come up with 25 ideas."
- Do not evaluate—anything goes, no matter how weird.
- Give notice before ending.

Variations on Brainstorming

1. Give each participant a number of 3x5 cards. Set a time limit and have participants work silently, putting one idea on each card. Collect the cards. Either appoint someone to sort and categorize by topic during a break or have the entire group hear each idea and sort by category.

2. Divide the group into two or more teams. Have each team brainstorm and report back to the group as a whole.

Sorting by category. Sometimes a brainstorming session generates so many ideas it is difficult to proceed. If this is the case, identify commonalities or natural groupings under which the ideas will fit. An idea may be dropped if it is captured elsewhere.

Ranking. Often you can ask the group for a quick show of hands to discover which idea they believe is most valid. Always allow each member a certain number of votes (1-3). Remind them that this is not a final decision but rather a way to rank ideas.

EVALUATE IDEAS

Most evaluations are done by establishing criteria and using them to test ideas. The key is to establish the criteria *before* conducting the evaluation.

Advantages and Disadvantages. This technique allows for quick evaluation, often eliminating the need to develop criteria. List each idea and discuss its positive and negative aspects. Many might fall by the wayside right here.

Checkerboard Approach. This helps evaluate potential solutions against agreed-upon criteria.

1. Generate a list of criteria (i.e., easy to do, low cost, fulfills mission).
2. List the criteria across the top and the ideas down the left-hand side.
3. Mark with an X each time the idea meets one of the criteria. The one with the most Xs is ranked highest. (Or you can assign a value to each of the criteria and use it as a weight to multiply.)

Choosing the Best Solution and Giving the Green Light

It's time to review the results of the evaluation and commit to a course of action. If the group is having difficulty making a decision, perhaps it moved too fast or skipped a previous phase. Don't assume you must choose a single idea; sometimes several can work together. Strive for consensus before resorting to voting or executive decision. Consensus does not necessarily mean that everyone believes the right decision has been made but rather that the decision is one everyone can live with. Take one idea and ask the group if this is a solution all members can support. (Note: Don't ask if this is the best solution; someone will always think something else is better.) If the group answers yes, Congratulations! You are done! You have reached consensus.

SETTLE ON A 'BEST SOLUTION'

Build Up and Eliminate. If one or more participants has strong reservations, focus on what can be added to make this idea acceptable to everyone. If the idea just isn't workable, try another.

If building up isn't working, try seeing which ideas you can eliminate. Focus on what people do not want. Ask if an idea can be eliminated. If everyone agrees, out it goes.

Visual Voting. Each person gets a set number of votes, depending on how many people and ideas there are. They then place marks (using stickers or colored markers) by the idea(s) they like best. Tally the votes for a quick visual representation of their feelings. You can force consensus by asking if everyone can live with the top choice.

Straw Polling. Participants raise hands and vote to make quick decisions about minor issues. This technique saves time and allows the facilitator to gauge the mood of the group.

CREATE AND CARRY OUT AN ACTION PLAN

Often the group spends so much time and energy coming to agreement, it loses steam and interest in implementing its decision. An action plan increases the likelihood that the agreed-upon solution will be put into place effectively and on time.

Cut Up and Move Around. Write each of the proposed activities on a small card. Group similar activities together and arrange in sequential order. Once the activities are written on individual cards, it is easy to move them around.

Work Backwards. What is the end result or final activity that needs to be accomplished? What are the things you need to do to get there? List activities, time to complete, who is responsible, and what additional resources are necessary.

EVALUATE AND REVISE PLAN

Group members often resist this phase. They fear the information collected in the evaluation might be negative and the solutions they worked so hard to develop and carry out won't be as wonderful as they had hoped.

Success Indicators. Either individually or as a group, determine the time frame for determining the success of your efforts (i.e., six months, one year, two years). List factors that will indicate success (i.e. planted X more trees, budget for tree care increased by X dollars). Whenever possible, make these factors measurable. Success indicators should be compiled in a list, with similar ideas weeded out or combined, and the list prioritized. Review it periodically and use the information gathered to make any necessary modifications.

BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER

For a partnership to be successful, all players must share a similar vision of the condition and needs of their community urban forest. Everyone must feel the partnership has a fair chance of producing results and is receptive to different viewpoints. It is critical to identify and recruit the right people at the start and establish their commitment to collaborate. An Urban Forestry Summit *(see Appendix A)* is a possible first step.

Identify Stakeholders

The partnership must be broad-based. It must involve each segment of the community by including representatives that care about trees and who will be affected by the group's actions or outcomes. Those individuals are called stakeholders and should represent all viewpoints on urban forestry issues. If the participants are not widely seen as credible, the agreements they make also will not be credible.

A large number of stakeholders can make the partnership difficult to manage and consensus difficult to achieve. Conversely, if "legitimate" stakeholders are left out, recommendations and agreements may be difficult to implement.

Consider the following factors to help identify participants:

Size of Group. Up to 15 people is an ideal size for group planning and problem-solving. More than that makes it difficult to schedule meetings, have everyone participate fully, and come to consensus.

Roadblocks. Don't exclude those who may oppose or block the project or are just difficult to work with. Although it may be time-consuming to listen and address their concerns, it will be much easier later on if they are part of the collaborative process. If they choose not to get involved, you'll have a good idea of impediments you might face later.

Power/Resources. Include people who have power or influence. This includes political, business, or social leaders who have name recognition and prominence in the community and are willing to directly participate or lend their names.

Expertise Invite those with recognized skills and background in urban forestry and community issues. You will need individuals with experience not only in tree planting and maintenance but also organizational issues such as communications and facilitation.

How can you be sure the people you've identified have the skills, expertise, and power needed? Create a grid. List potential candidates at the top, qualities you need down the side. As you make your check marks, you'll see where you're covered and where the gaps might be *(see Participant Profile Grid below).*

PARTICIPANT PROFILE GRID

	ALISON	TOM	MARY
Skills/Expertise			
Urban Forestry			
Fundraising			
Communications			
Contacts/Influence			
Business			
Media			
Forestry			
Nonprofit			
Government			
Education			
Demographics			
Male			
Female			
Local			

Get Commitments to Participate

Take time to personally invite participants. Be prepared to address the following issues:

- Why you chose this person. Explain why her/his skills or experience are needed. Flattery will get you somewhere.
- Why this partnership is important to this person.
- What this person or organization can expect to gain. Self-interest is the strongest motivator for participation. Sharing a common understanding of the problem often is not enough to get people to work together.
- What the commitment will be. Describe the time involved, including the number of meetings and types of responsibilities.

Consider different ways to organize your effort:

- Establish an initiating committee. The committee will identify the stakeholders, design the process, and help recruit leaders. The participant profile grid is a good tool for this committee.
- Choose a convener. Select someone who has the trust and respect of stakeholders but may or may not personally be a stakeholder. The convener will help identify and bring all stakeholders to the table.

It is essential to build trust. Create ownership by involving everyone in the meetings. Good planning and preparation is critical to the success of a meeting. Some factors to consider:

- The reason for holding the meeting. Participants have similar expectations and agreed-upon outcomes for the meeting.
- The topics that will be covered. Before the meeting begins, give participants a chance to review the agenda, including the list of topics, how they will be discussed, and how long it will take.
- Define roles. Participants must know what is expected of them before, during, and after the meeting.

STAGES *of a* GROUP

Forming, Storming, Norming, Performing and Adjourning

Groups generate a tremendous amount of energy when first formed. As the group matures it goes through stages of development similar to stages of individual growth: infancy, childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and old age. Numerous classifications of group development stages exist. Bruce Tuckman and Mary Ann Jensen in "*Stages of Small Group Development Revisited*" identify the following five stages:

FORMING: Members are polite and may be reluctant to participate. Serious topics and personal feelings are avoided. At this stage, the group needs to get acquainted, share personal information, explore similarities, and orient themselves toward their task. To move on, group members must be willing to confront threatening topics and risk the possibility of conflict.

STORMING: Members begin asking questions such as: Who is responsible for what? What are the rules? Are there hidden agendas? During this stage, boundaries are tested and power struggles or conflicts may develop. Some members may remain silent while others attempt to dominate. Members must now be willing to give up personal preferences in favor of the requirements of the whole group. They need to listen, confront others in a positive way, and be willing to influence and be influenced.

NORMING: The group becomes more cohesive; there is more cooperation and understanding. The group has negotiated roles, managed differences of opinion, and recognizes the need for interdependence. It is now ready to begin the real work and make effective decisions. Unfortunately, many groups do not make it to this stage because they were unable to establish positive relationships or to resolve earlier conflicts.

PERFORMING: This stage is characterized by a high level of trust as members are encouraged to use their skills and knowledge. However, in some groups that have existed for a long time and are highly cohesive, members may fall prey to "group think." Group think occurs when members lessen their criticism of other's ideas so that the group can reach agreement with minimal conflict. As a result, the group will make less thoughtful and innovative decisions.

ADJOURNING: In this final stage the group prepares to disband because the work is complete or group members no longer feel challenged by the task.

- Preparation for the meeting. The room should be set up to support the meeting's purpose, with necessary materials on hand and a trusted facilitator prepared to run an effective meeting.

As work begins, participants should share a sense of common purpose and believe they can make something happen.

HOW TO PLAN *your* MEETINGS

Ask yourself these questions:

- What do you want to achieve?
- What topics need to be covered?
- Who needs to attend?
- How can these topics best be discussed?
- How much time should be allotted to each topic?
- What materials are necessary?
- When and where should the meeting take place?

Create a Vision

How do you want your community to look in ten years? List all the factors the group can agree on to describe its vision of the ideal future. Create an image that is as clear and detailed as possible. This is your vision statement, and creating one will make it easier for you to know when you have achieved success. As much as possible, break your definition of success down into smaller, more manageable components. For instance, if part of your vision is additional tree canopy, consider breaking it down like this: preserving existing trees by improved maintenance or more sensitive development; planting new trees. Being able to show even small successes along the way helps build confidence and encourage participants.

Reach Agreement on the Problem

What problems stand in the way of creating this shared vision? Most people are not interested in spending time identifying and analyzing a problem. They just want to solve it immediately. However, without initial analysis, the group can waste time solving the wrong problem.

After identifying it, break the problem down into who, what, where, when, and why. A majority of the time spent in coming to an agreement is spent on defining and analyzing the problem. Let's say the problem is lack of sufficient funds for tree planting and care. The example below shows that only the nonprofit is raising private funds and only the agency is advocating for a larger city budget. A collaborative effort could solve the problem. Remember, while crossover between groups can mean conflict, it can also point to areas of partnership.

AREAS OF POTENTIAL COLLABORATION

	TREE BOARD	TREE NONPROFIT	TREE AGENCY
Tree Maintenance			x
Tree Planting		x	x
Political Ties	x		
Public Education		x	x
Private Fundraising		x	
Public Budget Advocate			x

HELPING PEOPLE WORK TOGETHER

You have now spent time identifying appropriate people and having them agree on the problem and work together. But it is necessary to remember that most participants represent an organization or agency with a vested interest in the outcome. Each organization is structured differently. Where programs are similar or overlap, conflict and turf issues may result.

Organizations also must realize how much time and effort it will take to form a partnership. Spend time initially getting agreements and planning. This will shorten your implementation time.

WHY PEOPLE *hate* MEETINGS

Many people have numerous complaints about why meetings don't work. Take extra pains to ensure your meetings avoid these common traps:

- **Unclear Roles.** Participants are unsure what they are supposed to be doing.
- **Cheap Shots.** Personal attacks on an individual's character instead of her/his ideas.
- **Information Overload.** An overabundance of data, facts, and figures can be confusing.
- **Wheel-Spinning.** Going over the same thing again and again.
- **Unclear Expectations.** Different understanding among participants on the reason for and outcome of the meeting.
- **Poor Meeting Environment.** Space is too hot, too cold, too big, or too small.
- **Unclear Decisionmaking Authority.** Participants have no power and rubber-stamp decisions.
- **Cacophony.** Everyone going off in different directions and not listening to each other.

Confirm Organizational Commitment

Each organization must re-examine its commitment by asking the following questions:

- Is there a fit with our mission and goals? Does the vision of the new partnership complement our existing mission?
- What do we expect to gain? (If we believe we can gain more from the partnership than it will cost in terms of staff time and resources, it's in our best interest to participate.)
- Why are we collaborating? How will the partnership benefit us and the community?

Define Roles

One way to minimize conflict is to clarify roles and responsibilities, including initiating, setting up, and running meetings; resolving problems; recording and distributing information; and managing logistics.

In addition, there are four roles that participants may assume to help work run more smoothly:

Facilitator: The facilitator helps the group focus on the task by suggesting ways members can work together. She/he ensures that everyone has an opportunity to participate and protects members from attack. The facilitator does not evaluate or contribute ideas but acts as the neutral servant of the group. "How to Resolve Conflict in Groups," on page 24, lists facilitative techniques.

Group Participants: The group participants make sure the facilitator keeps a neutral position and that their ideas are accurately captured by the recorder. In many meetings, the fear of appearing stupid or the reluctance to disagree, for example, can hinder participants from contributing fully. This issue is diminished when all participants believe they share equal responsibility for the success of the meeting.

Chair: The chair or manager is an active participant in the group and fights for her/his ideas along with all the others. The chair/manager may retain all the powers as final decisionmaker if the group cannot come to consensus.

Recorder: The recorder captures the group's ideas on large sheets of paper so they can be recalled and reviewed at any time. It sometimes helps participants let go of an idea if it is put in writing in front of the group. Using large sheets of paper that everyone can see also can help focus the group. In traditional meetings a secretary takes notes and circulates the minutes later. However, using the recorder method ensures that no important points are missed.

Resolve Conflicts

The new partnership must establish a new culture distinct from that of the individual organizations. Remember, each participants will have her/his own style of working, communicating, and decisionmaking, and conflict often can arise from these differences.

A good facilitator can help avoid problems by structuring the meeting appropriately.

BEFORE THE MEETING

- Prepare an Agenda. Ask participants to describe what topics they think should be covered (content) and how the topics should be handled (process).
- Set Up the Room. Make sure the setting is appropriate for the type of meeting being held.

WHEN THE MEETING BEGINS

- Establish Ground Rules. Define roles for facilitator, group members, chair, and recorder.
- Get Agreement on the Agenda. Although an agenda was prepared in advance, check with the group for any changes or additions.

DURING THE MEETING

- Use recorded notes to reinforce and regain focus.
- Don't talk too much; have the group take responsibility for its actions.

AFTER THE MEETING

- Coordinate post-meeting logistics.
- Distribute materials.

There are many different ways to solve problems. Members will eventually need to decide how they will work together and make decisions. These agreements are called ground rules and cover issues such as whether the group will agree to vote and let the majority rule if it can't come to consensus *(see "Typical Issues Covered in Ground Rules").*

TYPICAL ISSUES COVERED *in* GROUND RULES

What is the role of the participants?

Do participants have authority to take binding action on behalf of their organization or agency?

Can alternates serve in a participant's place?

Is there a deadline for completing the work?

What is the timetable for meetings?

What happens if an agreement is not reached?

How will confidential information be handled?

How will publicity be handled?

When and in what form will information be released?

Will individuals receive compensation and/or reimbursement for expenses for their participation?

How will a record of the proceedings be kept?

What will be recorded? By whom?

Who will have access to it?

How will consensus be determined?

Must all parties reach agreement on all issues before decisions are presented to others?

(Adapted from Gray, 1989, p. 78)

TIPS ON BECOMING *a* FACILITATOR

There is no one right way to facilitate. It depends on your personality and the type of group you are working with. As a facilitator, your main focus should be to:

- Get the group to focus on a common problems and process.
- Protect members and ensure equal participation by all group members.
- Stay neutral and build trust.

Start out slow; let the group struggle before suggesting a process. Facilitators assist groups in problem solving and decision making. In many cases, the facilitator is a person from outside of the group. Her/his role is to assist with the process by helping participants work through their difficulties and come to decisions.

Organize and Structure Activities

Try to create the most effective mechanism to make decisions and ensure everyone's input. If the number of participants is under 15, decisions can be made as a whole. However, if the number exceeds 15, the process becomes too cumbersome and you may want to organize subgroups:

Task Forces. Task forces allow the group to address several issues simultaneously. Each explores the issues and prepares a report with recommendations. Membership should be diverse and represent all possible perspectives on an issue. Task forces do not have decisionmaking ability, but they are a good way to gather lots of information.

Caucuses. Caucuses are two or three subgroups that share distinct positions on an issue. Each side meets separately, allowing members to vent and draw support for their position before presenting it to the full group.

HOW TO RESOLVE CONFLICT *in* GROUPS

When a group gets stuck or a conflict arises, good facilitators use the following techniques:

- **Boomerang.** Don't make decisions for the group. Instead, boomerang the question back by asking, "What do you think?"
- **Play Dumb.** When things get off-track, ask someone to explain what's happening.
- **Describe What's Happening.** Identifying disruptive behavior is sometimes enough to change it. Check to see if others agree with your observation.
- **Check for Agreement.** When you propose a process or make an observation, be sure group members agree with you.
- **Suggest a Process.** If a dead-end is reached or a process is not working, suggest something else the group might try.
- **Enforce a Process.** Once a process is agreed to, make sure individual members adhere to it. (For example: We agreed to brainstorm; let's not evaluate the ideas now.)
- **Encourage Participation.** Everyone should participate equally; discourage or redirect individuals who monopolize, and encourage silent types to speak up.
- **Deal with Problem People.** When someone is disrupting the meeting, begin by acknowledging that person's actions and let them know their concerns are important. Sometimes that is enough to deal with the problem. (For example: It sounds like you are angry; is that right?) If the issue can't be resolved on the spot, ask if you can defer it until later. Make sure you capture the issue in the group memory and move on.
- **Don't be Defensive.** If you are challenged, don't argue or become defensive. Accept the criticism and boomerang the issue back to the group.
- **Use Your Body Language.** Move toward the group to get attention or move toward a disruptive person to help calm things down.

chapter NINE

PREPARING PEOPLE *for* ACTION

You have created your partnership. You've reached agreements. The final product is a plan describing the specific tasks.

Create and Carry Out a Plan

WHO SHOULD DO WHAT BY WHEN?

Identify the activities and the necessary tasks and steps that need to be accomplished. Establish a deadline and state who is responsible for meeting it.

Involve those who will be carrying out these tasks, especially if they are not the original participants. In most cases, their time and talents are not solely devoted to building this partnership. While your issue may be important to them, it may not be their first priority. They will need to be consulted for a reality check; can they accomplish the tasks by the given deadline?

Below is one simple way to list activities:

By When	Who	Activity
9/I	MA	Identify potential participants
9/30	BB	Send invitations
10/30	SH	Coordinate all logistics for event
11/15	TT	Evaluate and follow up

This is very clear and easy to understand. However, it doesn't show how tasks are related or give an overview of the entire process. In some cases, a bar chart, like that shown below might be more appropriate.

HOW MUCH WILL IT COST?

After there is agreement on task sequence and time required, analyze the resources needed and produce a budget. Look at the various tasks and estimate the amount of time needed by each individual involved. List all the people individually and determine a value for their services regardless of whether they are paid or volunteer. Then list all the other costs involved. See budget worksheet for more information

BUDGET WORKSHEET

	Total	Cash	Donated	Description
Personnel				
Joe	$1,000	1,000		10 days @ $100 per day
Sue	500		500	5 days @ $100 per day
Other Costs				
Space rental	1,500	1,500		
Supplies	250		250	paper, pens, name tags)
Copying	250	250		
Printing	1,000		1,000	
TOTAL	$4,500	2,750	1,750	

Whenever possible, seek donations. It may take a lot of someone's time to get something donated, but it builds relationships in the community, and the same source can possibly be tapped in the future.

Once the budget is completed you will have a clear idea of the costs involved. If you don't have that much money on hand, you have two choices: reduce expenses or raise new monies. A budget gives you this knowledge before the nonexistent money is "spent."

Build Support

You've done it! Now you and the other participants must sell these plans to your organizations--especially if some of your colleagues are responsible for implementing activities. It is also important to build community support. If you believe there might be opposition, best to identify it now and decide how you might transform it into support.

BAR CHART FOR FUNDRAISING PLANNING

Task	Who	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June
1. Identify fundraising strengths & weaknesses							
a. Review fundraising efforts and issues	BB	▒	▒				
b. Review organizational plan and budget	DG	▒	▒				
c. Determine changes to be made	BB			▒			
2. Identify fundraising potential							
a. Consider range of potential sources	SM		▒	▒			
b. Research other funding programs	DG			▒	▒		
c. Determine best prospects to pursue	BB					▒	

Evaluate and Revise

Many people think the job is done when they've decided how to proceed. The problem isn't solved, though, until you begin carrying out the plan and seeing if it actually works. The partnership, in recognizing that difficulties can arise, should make arrangements to monitor the action plan and identify and solve new problems as they appear.

Monitoring and evaluation create the feedback loop in the problem-solving process. Information on both success and failure will help revise your plan and aid in future planning.

THE GARDEN *of* GOOD: PART III

The Savannah Park and Tree Commission

The Savannah Park and Tree Commission has been a strong force for planting, pruning, and enhancing the city's trees and parks throughout its 100-year existence, thanks to strong, dedicated leadership. Members sought the professional guidance of the Citizen Forestry Support System (CFSS) when they realized a need to update and expand the Commission.

CFSS evaluated Savannah's assets and problems and called for an Urban Forest Summit to bring together community organizations, agencies, and individuals concerned about Savannah's urban forest and interested in helping define the role and future of the Savannah Park and Tree Commission.

With CFSS's help, the Commission redefined its vision and decided what role it would play in redrafting its ordinance. CFSS was also able to help foster effective partnerships with other city and county departments and with public utilities.

It was decided the ordinance did not clearly state the Commission's role and responsibilities in policy formulation, advice, administration, representation, and advocacy. With CFSS's help, the Commission revised the ordinance to increase membership from five to nine people and to assist the Mayor and Council in diversifying the skills, backgrounds, and demographics represented on the Park and Tree Commission.

Qualified nominees were recruited to form a strong supportive constituency. The Advisory Council that grew out of this effort continues to meet monthly with the Park and Tree Commission and has formed essential committees to assist its work. The quarterly bulletin *Treebark*, now being published, details not only the Park and Tree Department's accomplishments and Commission events, but also news of other Savannah urban forest and historic groups.

Individuals from this active Advisory Council were recommended for consideration by the Mayor and City Council for appointment to the reorganized Commission. Commissioners were selected in July and were sworn in in January 1996.

These new, enthusiastic members will join the Commission in the array of challenges that face it, including:

- Updating the existing Master Tree Plan.
- Continuing to develop a vision for urban forests for both Savannah and Chatham County.
- Continuing to develop its own organizational planning, i.e., vision, goals, and objectives.
- Strengthening lines of communication between the Commission and City Council.
- Being a stronger advocate and supporter of the Park and Tree Department, which is meeting the current need for restructuring but continues to need further support.
- Strengthening its partnership roles with the Chatham Tree Coalition, Chatham County Tree Commission, utilities, neighborhoods, garden clubs, and the Savannah Tree Foundation (for example, to support the Foundation's Geographic Information System project, which helped in the development of the Tree Ordinance).
- Continuing to educate citizens and youth about protection, perservation, and enhancement of Savannah's tree resource.
- Educating City Council on the costs and benefits of trees and future parks and their value to the urban ecosystem.

The Park and Tree Commission believes its 100th birthday will be a greater celebration now that it is better prepared to meet the challenges of the 21st century. And since Savannah has been nominated to the World Heritage List of Cities, city leaders cannot afford to take its unique green heritage for granted. Its continued preservation demands enlightened guidance, professional assistance, and widespread dedication.

Mary Helen Ray, Chairman Emeritus
Savannah Park and Tree Commission

Assessing Your Organization

This questionnaire is designed to help you examine many organizational issues. Record honest and realistic responses on an answer sheet. For different perspectives, copy this questionnaire and distribute to board members, staff, and key volunteers. For greater efficiency, recruit a volunteer to solicit answers by telephone.

Call the Citizen Forestry Support System if you need help interpreting the results of your assessment. It offers advice on how to proceed, sends information on a particular topic, or refer you to a resource that can provide additional assistance.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

1. Does your organization understand and communicate the economic, environmental, and social benefits of trees and urban forests?
2. Do you have access to technical expertise either in-house or through connections with government, business, or universities?
3. Do you coordinate activities with other tree, environmental, or community organizations?
4. Does your organization work well with local government on permits and tree ordinances?
5. Does your organization work well with private or corporate sponsors?

LEADERSHIP

6. Do board members understand and carry out their legal and financial responsibilities?
7. Does the board have an effective committee structure?
8. Is there a process for recruiting new board members, based on current needs?
9. Are there clear job descriptions for board members and an orientation for new members that covers their responsibilities?
10. Do board members appear interested and attend board and committee meetings regularly?
11. Are board meetings well-run with agendas, reasonable time limits, and clear decision-making mechanisms?
12. Are materials such as the agenda, minutes, and background reports mailed to board members before the meeting?
13. Is the current size and structure of the board appropriate for accomplishing its work?

PLANNING

14. Is there agreement on the mission of the organization?
15. Is there a written plan that accurately reflects the goals, objectives, and time frame for conducting activities?
16. Does the plan specify who is responsible for implementation, and is that person involved in the process?
17. Does your organization evaluate its programs?
18. Do the staff and board come together annually to review, revise, and approve plans?
19. Do staff members develop work plans and set priorities based on the organizational plan?

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

20. Does the board have a committee that oversees and understands your finances?
21. Is the annual budget developed to reflect the organizational plans and activities?
22. Does your organization have a system of checks and balances to safeguard its finances?

PEOPLE MANAGEMENT

23. Does your organization have written personnel and operating policies?
24. Do staff members receive job descriptions?
25. Do staff, board, and volunteers understand their responsibilities and the lines of authority?
26. Are staff evaluations conducted annually? Do they provide a positive forum for evaluating and improving performance?
27. Are conflicts addressed openly and positively?
28. Is there a plan for orienting and training volunteers?
29. Are board, staff, and volunteers recognized and appreciated for their contributions?
30. Can volunteers offer suggestions for developing or improving programs?

MARKETING AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

31. Do you effectively communicate program ideas and results to local decisionmakers?
32. Do you have a public relations plan?
33. Are printed materials (flyers, newsletters, brochures, and annual reports) used effectively?
34. Do you use the media effectively?
35. Is your public image accurate?

FUNDRAISING

36. Do board members financially support the organization?
37. Are board members active and willing participants in raising funds?
38. Do you have committed individuals with knowledge and experience in fundraising?
39. Do you have a fundraising plan that identifies the amount to be raised, types and sources of funds, and who is responsible?
40. Are your programs adequately funded?
41. Do you have diverse funding sources?
42. Is your organization making the most of its fundraising potential?
43. Do you involve small donors through a membership program?

For more information call Citizen Forestry Support System at 11800-323-1560.

Assessing Your Organization Answer Form

Record your answers to the assessment questionnaire below. There are four possible answers for each question.

Y= Yes, this is true for my organization
NW= We do this, but it needs work.
N= No, this is not true for us.
? = I don't know.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS				
	Y	NW	N	?
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
SUBTOTAL				

LEADERSHIP				
	Y	NW	N	?
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				
11				
12				
13				
SUBTOTAL				

PLANNING				
	Y	NW	N	?
14				
15				
16				
17				
18				
19				
SUBTOTAL				

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT				
	Y	NW	N	?
20				
21				
22				
SUBTOTAL				

PEOPLE MANAGEMENT				
	Y	NW	N	?
23				
24				
25				
26				
27				
28				
29				
30				
SUBTOTAL				

MARKETING & PUBLIC RELATIONS				
	Y	NW	N	?
31				
32				
33				
34				
35				
SUBTOTAL				

FUNDRAISING				
	Y	NW	N	?
36				
37				
38				
39				
40				
41				
42				
43				
SUBTOTAL				

SAMPLE AGENDA WORKSHEET

NAME OF GROUP _____

TO _____
(participants, list individual names or committee)

FROM _____
(leader/facilitator, who to call for more information)

TOPIC _____
(subject of meeting)

DATE _____

TIME _____

LOCATION _____
(and directions, if necessary)

ATTACHMENTS _____
(list enclosed background materials)

REMINDER _____

OF NOTE _____

EXAMPLE AGENDA

AGENDA ITEMS	WHO	TIME
APPROVE MINUTES	ALL	8-8:10
PROGRAM UPDATE	SB	8:10-8:30
OVERVIEW OF FUNDRAISING EFFORTS	LB	8:30-9:00
FINANCIAL STATUS	DG	9:00-9:15
NEXT STEPS AND ASSIGNMENTS	GM	9:15-9:30
ADJOURN	ALL	9:30

CITIZEN FORESTRY
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