

Supporting CPSG's Strategic Plan

Participants

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Aim

To consider ways in which the CPSG community can support the implementation of CPSG's Strategic Plan 2018-2020, particularly through securing additional funding.

Background

CPSG's 2018-2020 Strategic Plan was drafted in 2017, following a creative thinking meeting in Minneapolis of CPSG staff and colleagues, as well as a survey of the needs of SSC Specialist Groups. CPSG's strategic plan includes five goals:

Goal 1: Target species are prioritized, and conservation needs assessed, for conservation plan development; conservation planning efforts are expanded.

Goal 2: Context-specific best practice planning methods are applied, based on a One Plan Approach.

Goal 3: Species conservation planning capacity is increased across SSC Specialist Groups, governments, zoos and aquariums and other conservation organizations.

Goal 4: The ability of governments to achieve international biodiversity targets is improved.

Goal 5: Species conservation planning methods are evaluated for impact and effectiveness, leading to continual improvement.

Much of the work involved in achieving these five goals will require additional support and funding. For the purposes of communication and fundraising around these five goals, two "Fundraising Case for Support" documents have been drafted – a brief, one-page overview and a longer, 12-page document.

Discussion

Jamie gave a quick PowerPoint overview of the 5 strategic plan goals and briefly mentioned the Fundraising Case for Support documents that had been included in the briefing materials for the working group.

Messaging – Keep It Simple

There was a lot of discussion around messaging and the need to keep it concise and simple. We need to have a clear and concise message for prospective donors about what CPSG is, what CPSG does, and why CPSG is important. In this vein, there was a suggestion to review and shorten documents related to the strategic plan, in particular the one-page case for support.

Martin – Jamie, in your presentation, you had to explain the goals, you couldn't just read them. You need to make them easier to understand.

Kevin – This session is about how to convince those that don't know about CPSG to support CPSG's strategic plan. Keep it simple; you should simplify further the strategic plan.

Alex – As a donor, you want to give money to people with plans that are simple and smart. I have seen the one-pager, but as a zoo director, I have not read it. I am overwhelmed by messaging. So how do we get people to read it?

Brad – We created the one-pager, perhaps we need to review this. We also need to work the 5-minute “elevator speech”.

Sanna – I didn't know what the IUCN was before being in the zoo world, and I had no idea about CPSG. If we want money from outside the field, no one knows who we are. Even an internet search does not help to clarify.

Mark – In my experience, colleagues have been not sure about what CPSG is. We need to make CPSG simpler to sell.

Marketing & Communication

There was discussion about marketing and a need to increase CPSG's visibility, and generally to “brag” more about CPSG's accomplishments. There was a suggestion to tap into marketing and communications expertise within CPSG's partner network, i.e. to approach partners and see if they'd be willing to share the expertise of their marketing and communications teams with CPSG.

Alex – We are only as good as our weakest point. Communication and visibility are the weak points for CPSG.

Lance – At our zoo, we discovered we were terrible at selling ourselves. Perhaps CPSG could think about working with a marketing firm?

Taylor – The closest thing CPSG has in terms of marketing materials would be Second Nature.

Onnie – Writing our book Second Nature was a struggle for us. We aren't responsible for the final outcome of a workshop, so it can be hard to identify our part in it. We also didn't want to compete against the people who'd supported us, to take their success and call it ours.

Richard – We need to be more self-assured, we need to go out there and sell ourselves. Rebranding ourselves may be part of the mix. The name gets in the way because you have to explain it.

Mark – CPSG does take a lot to explain, just from the name.

Jim – It seems to be a simple structure. CPSG is the planning part; IUCN is the acting part. Package information that is simple to understand.

Brad – The message has to be simple and you have to show results. Also, there is a lot of talk these days about Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). We need to make sure the CPSG message gets to companies' CSR teams.

Lee – In our elevator talk, our core message needs to be that we are good at training people to be effective and successful in conservation.

Kevin – Project a simple message: CPSG trains and it plans. It does not need to be more complex than that.

Brad – Also, we save animals.

Martin – You can have different messages for different people, for example one message for those that are already donors and a new message for new donors.

Carl – We're talking about capacity building, and capacity building can be sexy. We need to showcase how CPSG's work benefits something bigger/at a higher level, like the IUCN. The pitch could also include that we can provide training capacity tools for emerging economies and mitigate climate change.

Richard – We are doing something bigger than ourselves, CPSG is serving a very important cause.

Jim – CPSG's best resource is the people and the CPSG process. The messaging should be about the CPSG process and its impacts on people.

Kevin – "Catalyst" is an important word; CPSG catalyzes conservation.

Gary – We continue to talk about things at the species level. Do we need to take things to the ecosystem level?

Carl – OPA is the glue to a lot of this.

Bob – We need to make it clear that we are raising the money to support all Specialist Groups with planning.

Jamie – In terms of fundraising pitch, should we also explain what will/will not happen if we do not get adequate funds to achieve our goals?

Richard – We need to tap into marketing expertise within our network.

Fundraising & Development

There was a long discussion about fundraising and development specifically. Ideas were generated around strategies and potential ways to go about fundraising. Developing CPSG's social media presence could be part of this. Additionally, fostering relationships seems crucial. It was suggested that, in addition to working with partners to gain expertise in marketing and communications (including social media), that CPSG should also ask its partner network to share their development expertise. To be clear, it would not be about sharing donor information, it would be about sharing tools and tips in the area of development.

Alex – Your overall fundraising strategy should be that you are fundraising for all activities, not just a subset.

Brad – You can start with initial quiet commitments, and use these to build more support. And generally, don't be afraid of hearing "no".

Lance – Yes, start with quiet commitments, build these up, and then use them to generate more support.

Kevin – As a funding prospect, planning is difficult to fundraise for. Generally with planning, there are no immediate tangible benefits to present. The messenger is important – people will invest in people.

Alex – Who has been successful in international fundraising? People like Jane Goodall and Gerald Durrell; they traveled everywhere, telling their stories. It's all about communication. I agree, the messenger is the most important; people give to people.

Gloria – Yes, charismatic messengers are important. They can help attract support.

Simon – Is it realistic to make Onnie the Jane Goodall of planning? Also, some people don't put funding into CPSG because they feel CPSG should self-fund from services. CPSG is a service organization; you should consider working more on contracts for service.

Kevin – Agreed, consider operating more on a business model, and less on a donor model. Income from training would be your business model.

Onnie – We don't want to be seen a service provider solely, and we do more than training. We don't want to become a species conservation planning factory.

Bob – Also, you could end up becoming a service organization to just the US and Europe.

Alex – I'd say, just explore it.

Carl – Aim high, link to large scale country level funds (e.g. The World Bank) and to those who are presenting at large scale. The IUCN as an entity is the strength we have. It represents a huge opportunity to forge strategic partnerships. Make strategic alliances.

Lee – Identify a hit list of organizations, businesses, etc. Do your research on them. The hit list has got to be 4 times as big as what you hope to get.

Jamie – Should we be going for single big hits?

Alex & Brad – No, take any money offered and build the relationship. A small donor may give more later on.

Onnie – These approaches are not mutually exclusive.

Brad – Professional fundraisers make money when they bring in money. We need to breakdown the complexity of our stories, and then thinking about who would be the messenger/asker.

Onnie – Do we need to think of hiring a professional fundraiser? We don't have good history with this.

Alex – You need to know your clients before they'll come to you. If someone else does the research on who to approach for funding, I am willing to make the ask in some cases.

Lance – At our zoo, we have a Board that organizes fundraising events for us. Could this be an option for CPSG?

Onnie – Who would we invite to the event? Where would we get the invite list?

Lance – Are there experiences you could sell? You've got people around the world working for you.

Lee – What about things like Go Fund Me, where you can raise money through crowd funding?

Lance – The key to crowd funding is having the right audience, and a large enough audience. You have to have the social media presence to start with. Also, some of those sites won't give you the money unless you raise your target amount.

Sanna – To get a benefit from social media, you need to be really active on it. You need to have a presence.

Alex – Presence is important. We should partner with a concrete project to get social media presence.

Brad – Do we need to also ask for help from partners about how to build social media?

Simon – The funding models being discussed here are hard to apply to CPSG. The question is how to connect with people outside zoos?

Taylor – Showcase the individuals that you train.

Brad – Make videos of people after training courses, use them for publicity.

Carl – Capacity building and human development, these are stories you can sell. Capacity is important; link to the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG).

Taylor – In terms of capacity building, there are a lot of organizations that are geared towards the advancement of people (women, minorities, etc). Can you sell this to these groups?

Martin – There are opportunities for funding outside the English speaking community, but CPSG doesn't currently have the network to tap into this. You need to establish relationships at the national level.

Onnie – We will begin to have a presence at the Global Biodiversity Conferences, this should help.

Gary – I don't think zoos should be tapped for increased support, you need to look elsewhere. CPSG needs to have better exposure.

Bob – I think you could tap aquariums, and remember plants.

Gary – Tap fundraisers from partners; they could maybe offer wisdom.

Lance – Yes, perhaps we can create a development team to help us.

GCN & Membership

There was a suggestion to raise money for CPSG through a paying membership. This is not possible within the SSC and CPSG structure. All members of Specialist Groups must be volunteers.

There followed a discussion about whether or not to consider fundraising as Global Conservation Network (GCN), the legal US charity that exists to support CPSG. Should we use the name GCN more widely? Would it be easier to begin by talking about GCN – whose name is simpler and clearer – and then lead into CPSG? Also, could this get around the issue of a paying membership?

Onnie – Focusing on GCN might give us more freedom. We need to keep in mind, however, that our link to the ex situ community makes us special. If we lose the zoo community, then we are no longer CPSG. Our link to the zoo community is important.

Jim – GCN sounds bigger than CPSG.

Sanna – GCN is more understandable.

Lance – If you go the GCN route, could you get past membership issue?

Gary – I'd call members "supporters".

Lee – I like the GCN membership concept.

Onnie – Then GCN donors are members? We need to think this through very carefully before moving forward with a proposal of any kind.

CONCLUSIONS/NEXT STEPS

- Work on communication! Revisit CPSG's core message and consolidate it down to its simplest and most compelling.
- Develop social media presence.
- Revisit the 1-page Fundraising Case for Support and consider how we could shorten it while enhancing the clarity and compelling nature of the proposal.
- Ask key donors and partners to contribute a member of their fundraising/development team to a one-day meeting to help CPSG develop a fundraising strategy. This would not be a request to share donors; it would be a request to share knowledge and expertise.
- Ask key donors and partners with communications experts on staff to allow CPSG to contact those individuals for advise/input.
- Consider fundraising under the GCN banner.
- Consider a paying membership structure under GCN.