

A New Strategic Direction

July 24, 2009

A number of things led up to examining our strategic direction. For a national grantmaker and technical assistance provider, our budget was quite small. Over the past four or five years, more and more of our grants came from funders with interests in a single environmental issue, state or region. Each year we found ourselves saying 'no' to more organizations, simply because they were located in the wrong state, or they were working on an environmental challenge that wasn't a particular funder's priority.

Another challenge was how to balance being responsive with being strategic. Most capacity builders offer seminars and training sessions on specific topics—fundraising training, strategic planning, organizing training, etc.—for several participants, on a calendar-driven timeline. Other capacity-builders specialize in one-to-one consulting, usually related to planning, fundraising, and board development. Through our Technology Resources and FUNDS programs and, to a lesser extent, the LEAP program, our staff does offer training, coaching and other direct assistance. But for the most part, we're known as the place to go for the money to help pay for all kinds of consulting and training, provided by scores of independent consultants and management support organizations.

The expansive, responsive nature of our Training and Organizational Assistance program, which helped groups with everything from day-long financial management trainings to consulting on mergers, was one of the Environmental Support Center's most important qualities. But that, combined with our small staff and increasingly restricted funding, made it very difficult to evaluate how our work helped individual groups, the environmental movement or the natural environment.

[Click here to read more on our new strategic direction]

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