



Coalition of Oregon Land Trusts Communications and Engagement Initiative Proposed Work Plan January 2018

Our Approach

This initiative is divided into two discrete phases to achieve the greatest success. **Our overarching long-term vision is to engage one million Oregonians to vote, volunteer, or give for conservation over 10 years.** We can only achieve this if land trusts begin to think and act outside of the boundaries of the individual properties they conserve. The first step to reaching our ambitious goal must start within our own land trust community, which is the focus of this proposal covering years 1-3. The second phase of this initiative extends into a longer timeframe and is where we begin to expand beyond existing relationships to activate new and innovate partnerships (e.g., tribes, affordable housing, public health, equity and inclusion groups) to greatly expand our statewide branding campaign and touch new Oregonians that care about conservation yet have never acted.

The 'one-million Oregonians' goal serves as an outward and inspirational target for our collective efforts in Oregon. This proposal, however, lays the groundwork for long-term success by providing the land trust community with research, expert training and the tools to better understand our target audiences, and make smarter decisions about the values-based connections we can make with them and the most motivating calls to action to spark their engagement. Years 1-3 rely on four central coordinated approaches with associated work plans:

- **Understand where we are** in order to raise the individual and collective capacity of land trusts to tell our story in ways that resonate with Oregonians from all walks of life;
- **Develop statewide messaging** to build greater awareness of the crucial role land trusts play in conserving our communities by developing statewide brand awareness with locally-driven messages and events centered on local land trusts;
- **Build communications capacity** to engage with more people and new audiences to support land conservation by creating avenues that engage land trusts with diverse communities, demonstrating the value of conservation to every Oregonian; and
- **Initiate a statewide communications and engagement initiative** to build a strong, diverse foundation of support to grow the pie for conservation work and programming.

Work Plan: Understanding Where We Are

With the help of DHM Research, there is an exciting opportunity to expand our knowledge about the public's understanding of land trust work and the specific role of land protection within a larger value set. DHM will lead a focused branding and communications effort that begins with an analysis of the best available research nationally and in Oregon.

National Research and Literature Review

The Land Trust Alliance will conduct a national literature review to compile the best available research to inform land trust message development, including conservation polling data and voter attitude and trends. The literature review will include a review of conservation and environmental-focused market studies as well as consumer behavior research, such as the *Good Purpose Study*, which tracks consumer attitudes related to cause-marketing. It will also look at messages and trends that work across the country vs. those that must be adapted regionally, and will consider specific hot-button issues or topics, such as climate change or public lands. Finally, the review will dig into consumer psychographics and demographics to identify trends or attitudes among specific subgroups, based, for example, on political party affiliation, age, urban vs. rural, etc.

Purpose: Inform the design of the Oregon research to reflect insights and trends from national studies.

Statewide Opinion Research

DHM Research will conduct two on-line surveys of Oregon residents. The first survey will baseline public awareness, knowledge level, and the image of lands trusts. The Alliance's national research and literature review will inform the development of the questionnaire for the second survey and will include sections testing messages and messengers for communications about land conservation and land trusts. An online survey allows for the collection of verbatim responses to open-ended questions which are invaluable in identifying the best semantics and imagery to use in communications with Oregonians about land conservation and land trusts, including local and regional commonalities and differences. The survey will:

- Use quotas and statistical weighting to assure representative samples
- Reporting will include demographic and geographic subgroup differences and survey results and relevant findings from other related studies DHM Research has completed (2013 Oregon Values & Beliefs, Outdoor School, etc.)

Purpose: Provide information to assist with evaluation of the initiative's impact over time and to inform the organizational development and the statewide and local communications described below.

Demographic Profiles

DHM will work with COLT's Communications Manager to develop regional reports that allow land trusts to compare the demographics of their larger community with their existing supporters and identify key demographic targets. This will be completed on a regional level to help land trusts see the gaps between their supporters and the larger communities they serve.

Purpose: The profiles will help land trusts identify target audiences.

Communications Assessments

An African proverb states, "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together." The communication assessments are the foundation for going far, as they bring all of Oregon's land trusts together to pursue a common goal. This work is potentially the most critical piece of the entire project as it not only sets a baseline for measuring success, but also meaningfully engages each land trust, and works to raise the communications bar across the state. Each participating land trust will receive a communications audit to understand programs, existing communications capacity, communications/outreach strategies, and messaging. The assessments will inventory existing communication/outreach plans and tools and assess for effectiveness, factoring in A) response rates/success, B) list sizes, make-up and maintenance protocols, C) past media coverage of announcements, releases and events, and D) available content and writing talent (or needs) on a sustainable basis. DHM and the Alliance will work with the advisory team to create a standardized matrix to clearly identify individual organizational and communications assets and gaps. To the extent possible, the assessments will be coordinated and/or combined with the community engagement assessment designed by the Alliance to engage a broader audience in land conservation.

Purpose: The assessments will provide an understanding of a local organization's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (i.e., SWOT) to assist with the development of a cost-efficient and effective communications plans. With help from the Alliance, assessments will be developed to include the Stakeholder Analysis Tool and other engagement tools to provide organizations with an opportunity to see the current and potential scope of community engagement.

Community Discussions

DHM will complete regional community discussions to learn from potential volunteers and donors what the underlying motivations are for the attitudes expressed in the statewide surveys about land trusts. Participants will be asked about land trusts, interest in volunteering or donating, and best reasons to support land trusts with time or money (both unprompted and prompted).

Purpose: The research will inform message development at the statewide and local levels, communications planning and trainings. At the end of the discussions, participants will be recruited to provide on-going assistance to their local land trust; the research should be viewed as an engagement tool and relationship building opportunity.

Active Member Survey

Land trust volunteers and donors are very committed and passionate individuals that can provide important insights to help us recruit new donors and volunteers. DHM and COLT will develop a short survey with mostly open-ended questions to ask loyal and committed volunteers and donors why they give/donate, what they'd like to do for the organization that they haven't had the opportunity to do, and why they have or have not invited their friends in?

Purpose: The research will assist with communications/outreach and the recruitment of additional volunteers and donors. Like with the community discussions, participants in the survey will be asked to be brand ambassadors in their communities.

Work Plan: Develop statewide and local messaging

This scope of work will synthesize existing polling data and survey results to develop new messaging. The statewide messages will be localized based on what is gleaned from the community discussions and active member surveys described above.

Communications trainings

COLT will work with DHM to organize quarterly trainings that incorporate the findings of the Alliance's national literature review and DHM's research results and regional demographic profiles. The trainings will be targeted to needs discovered in the communications assessments and results from the Alliance's stakeholder analysis. COLT members gather quarterly for board meetings and thus will have a quarterly training opportunity to bring information and tools back to their organizations.

Build Communications Toolbox

Throughout this process, COLT's Communications Manager will be working closely with DHM to develop one centralized toolbox with shared communication resources for all COLT members. The toolbox will include talking points, sample press releases, regional press lists and tools to support the needs identified in the land trust communications assessments. Pursuant to the Alliance's national research and literature review described above, some of these tools will be borrowed from other land trust resources elsewhere in the country or replicated from successful examples here in Oregon.

Work Plan: Build communications capacity

As referenced in the previous paragraph, many Oregon land trusts already have communications tools and are making great strides in building their communications capacity, largely supported by the Oregon Advancing Conservation Excellence grant program, administered by the Land Trust Alliance. By working in coordination with the ACE program, COLT will leverage the investments made by the Alliance to increase the individual communications capacity of land trusts and to implement community engagement strategies that engage target audiences, deepen support, and expand the reach of our members. It's essential that land trusts be prepared to own and activate localized strategies in support of a coordinated statewide initiative. COLT will provide ongoing capacity for most of the land trusts through a centralized toolbox and support from COLT's Communications Manager. The advisory team described above will ensure the design of the ACE program meets the goals and priorities of the communications campaign. Kelley Beamer will also provide feedback to the Alliance on ACE communications grant proposals.

ACE will further the initiative by investing in communications capacity projects that:

- 1. Provide dedicated support to meet the internal needs identified in communications assessments**
- 2. Activate a new or target audience to take meaningful action to support land conservation**
- 3. Utilize new messaging to further COLT's statewide campaign**
- 4. Demonstrate innovation that can be shared and expanded to other land trusts**

Work Plan: Initiate Statewide Communications and Engagement Initiative

With the knowledge of where we are and how best to touch the hearts and minds of Oregonians, we will then develop and launch a creative and coordinated statewide communications initiative to translate local land trust communication efforts into a statewide push. A statewide effort will allow COLT to not only meet its ten-year goal of engaging one million Oregonians, but will also help build public support should a near-term opportunity emerge. To share one exciting possibility, in 2017 COLT launched a coordinated "Oregon Walk the Land Day" on June 24th to leverage our collective work connecting people to the land through walks, hikes, educational tours and community events. Oregon Walk the Land Day utilized COLT's statewide network to tell a collective story that no single land trust could tell alone. With a simple logo, website, social media strategy, and press release, the effort united 19 land trusts in one day of celebrating together. The event engaged 11,000 people on social media and connected more than 800 people with land trust events.

Through this initiative, the "Walk the Land Day" (renamed to connect with the National Get Outdoors Day on June 9th) could expand into a robust public-awareness campaign. Critical to our success will be identifying potential partners for the statewide initiative- to help support the program, inform the strategies, and provide opportunities to engage new audiences. Health care providers offer an exciting potential partnership opportunity because health as a message is likely to empower more people to participate in the future success of land trust work.

At its heart, this type of coordinated communications strategy for land trusts will demonstrate knowledge of what they do and why they do it and create a personal connection with each Oregonian who engages. COLT will work with a creative firm and local land trusts to develop programs, events and strategies that can rely on a statewide identity while reaching new audiences in local communities.