



GENERATING SUSTAINABLE FUNDING



The Partnership for the Delaware Estuary has always recognized the importance of generating a steady source of unrestricted funding. After creating a successful annual appeal process that now generates about \$30,000 per year, the Partnership decided it was time to move beyond the year-end appeals to identify new ways to increase unrestricted revenue.

In 2007, the group started work on its first-ever Partnership for the Delaware Estuary Fundraising and Development Plan. This plan, which was completed in March 2008, included a comprehensive analysis of the Partnership's current funding, breaking it down by funding categories such as government, corporate, events, etc. It also looked at the balance of government funding (Federal, state, and local), private funding (corporations, foundations, and individual donors), and the ratio of restricted to unrestricted funds. This was done in order to evaluate successes and identify opportunities. The results showed that 17 percent of the Partnership's funding comes from unrestricted sources, a percentage the Partnership wanted to increase to secure the long-term financial health of the organization.

THE NATIONAL ESTUARY PROGRAM IN ACTION

Partnership for the Delaware Estuary

Goals and strategies were established for each funding category, with the overall goal of increasing unrestricted funding while maintaining the current level of grant and contract income. Armed with this plan and a newly invigorated Fundraising Committee, the Partnership began the process of educating its Board of Directors and staff about the importance of fundraising. Roles and responsibilities were set out for individual staff members as well as Board Members to clarify the roles ev-

eryone plays in ensuring the financial health of the organization into the future. Board responsibilities included assisting with the annual appeal process, participating in a major donor campaign, and hosting small fundraising events ("house parties"), while staff responsibilities focused more on grant writing and assisting with the larger fundraising events.

The Partnership has now established clear fundraising priorities for the next three to five years,



and will continue to revisit the Fundraising and Development Plan to revise and update the goals and projections as needed.

Through this process, the Partnership has taken a new approach to unrestricted fundraising:

- Appeals: The Partnership's appeals have worked best when targeted to those who have given in the past, along with a select number of new prospects. Each appeal letter is personalized, and many receive a handwritten note from the executive director, staff, and board members. The Partnership is adding a second full appeal mailing in the spring of 2009 to further increase revenue.

- Corporate Contribution: The Partnership hosts one large fundraising and networking

event each year, which includes corporate sponsorships as a means to raise funds. They also engage corporations within the estuary region to participate in a corporate steward membership program, and pursue corporate funding opportunities where available.

- Small Events: The Partnership embarked on a new area of fundraising with the hosting of their first House Party in 2008. A House Party is a relatively small-scale event, hosted at the home of a board member or friend of the organization. The guest list includes friends and colleagues of the host, along with donors from the nearby area, for a night of conversation, mingling, and fundraising for the organization.

The Partnership has learned that two simple principles can help fuel its success even more: rec-

ognition and engaging the board, fundraising committee and staff. The Partnership lists all donors in its year-end Activity Report. Plans are also under way to introduce a "donor update" bulletin that will be sent to all donors at least twice a year to provide information on Partnership activities and opportunities to get involved.

Measures are also taken to ensure that board members and members of the fundraising committee work in their comfort zones and levels of expertise. The Partnership works to equip members with a variety of options to achieve fundraising success. Some focus on asking for large donations while others help with donor thank-you calls or letters. An active board can be a strong asset in launching new fundraising efforts.

Visit www.delawareestuary.org to learn more about this and other Partnership efforts.

EPA's National Estuary Program (NEP) is a unique and successful coastal watershed-based program established in 1987 under the Clean Water Act Amendments. The NEP involves the public and collaborates with partners to protect, restore, and maintain the water quality and ecological integrity of 28 estuaries of national significance located in 18 coastal states and Puerto Rico.

For more information about the NEP go to www.epa.gov/owow/estuaries.