Partnership principles and the stewardship potential of employer supported volunteer programs

by

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Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

Abstract

An emphasis on citizen engagement, which has direct bearing on conservation and community organizations, is emerging within the corporate realm. Businesses are beginning to view local involvement as a strategic component of their corporate social responsibility mandates, suggesting that it provides win-win benefits in branding them as leaders in the field while advancing noteworthy causes. Concurrently, conservation groups are seeking to partner with corporations in an effort to diversify funding sources, accomplish much needed work and find creative methods for outreach to a "non- traditional" support base. This research explores employer supported volunteer initiatives, an emerging facet of corporate community engagement where businesses form alliances with community organizations to facilitate donation of staff time to carry out hands-on conservation activities. Using a literature review, a series of global case examples and data collected from key local (Ontario-based) conservation and corporate-based informants, this study assesses the challenges and opportunities associated with cross-sectoral collaboration while investigating the potential of employer supported volunteer programs to foster conservation stewardship. Respondents from both sectors face such challenges as finding or maintaining suitable contacts, organizing team volunteer opportunities with mutually beneficial outcomes and understanding each other's frames of reference. Despite these hurdles, they also realize that employer supported volunteerism can raise awareness about stewardship and the importance of volunteerism in general, provide opportunities for enhanced collaboration and demonstrate leadership in the arena of corporate social responsibility. Collective experience from both sectors provides the basis to determine thirteen principles for effective partnerships. Accompanied by a set of best practices to forward conservation programs, these principles supply an essential "how to" guide for cross-sectoral partners to work together effectively. The implementation of these principles will assist in providing a stepping stone to tap more fully into the potential for joint partnership and even garner greater capacity for stewardship than could be achieved by civil society or corporate players alone.

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to all those who courageously embark on trail-blazing efforts which create partnership that give hope for a better future.

Contents

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List of Acronyms

ATC	Appalachian Trail Conservancy
CBC	Canadian Broadcasting Company
CCS	Canadian Cancer Society
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
CVA	Conservation Volunteers Australia
ESV	Employer Supported Volunteerism
GTA	Greater Toronto Area
NCC	Nature Conservancy of Canada
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
RSPB	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (UK)
SROI	Social Return on Investment
TNC	The Nature Conservancy (US)
VFN	Volunteer for Nature
VPM	Volunteer Program Manager
WBCSD	World Business Council on Sustainable Development

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. A starting point

The idea for this research arose from my experiences as volunteer coordinator for Volunteer for Nature (VFN), at the time a joint partnership program administered by the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) and Ontario Nature. The program, funded in 2001 for four years by the Trillium Foundation, was designed so volunteers could work outdoors, learn new skills and participate in a series of hands-on conservation projects across the province. We began by organizing volunteer opportunities open to all members of the public. Individuals who signed up were motivated by their shared concern for the environment, interest in learning more about restoration and conservation, genuine desire to help, and enthusiasm for visiting natural areas representing some of Ontario's most diverse heritage.

Soon an expanded program included corporate groups participating in Employer Supported Volunteer (ESV) programs. Though not a new concept, ESV is part of a growing trend towards enhanced corporate community engagement. As a vehicle by which employers/companies provide time and/or resources that enable staff to engage in volunteer activities, ESV is adaptable to a variety of corporate and organizational needs. In VFN's initiative, corporations organized opportunities for employee teams to participate in, and contribute to our cause, giving staff members paid time off to facilitate their involvement.

Through day-long volunteer conservation events, employee volunteers fulfilled tasks such as tree planting, invasive species removal and site preparation for prescribed burns. Like traditional volunteers, corporate volunteers were keen participants, worked hard and enjoyed integrated educational experiences. But corporate volunteers also exhibited differences. Their unbridled enthusiasm and competitive spirit gave impetus to exceptional work energy. Yet, in contrast to regular volunteers attending public work events, corporate participants frequently lacked familiarity with basic conservation and restoration approaches, the demands of outdoor manual labour, and proper methods of implementing tools and techniques demanded by various tasks. From a nonprofit perspective, successfully engaging employee volunteers called for management approaches that could help us, as well as our corporate partners, more effectively integrate

education, skill-building and teamwork in order to achieve our goals in a rewarding, safe and healthy manner.

Working with corporate volunteers eager to "give back" to the community sparked my interest in corporate conservation volunteering. It also highlighted the need to examine this valuable endeavor from additional vantage points beyond the scope of my on-the-ground front-line perspective. Realizing the potential for employee volunteerism to advance within the realm of conservation seemed, for example, to call for exploration within the broader context of the cross-sectoral relationships developed to facilitate ESV. A better understanding of corporate entities, their needs, values and ESV goals would help volunteer coordinators such as myself plan and tailor value-added events. Were their highest priorities focused on developing a sense of team, educating employees, or simply accomplishing a task well? Conversely, working with corporate groups was prompting those of us engaged in conservation work to question how best to maximize returns on the time, resources and energy required to create, develop and deliver ESV events. I suspected that taking a holistic view of those partnerships, wherein businesses and nonprofits facilitate ESV, would afford an essential means of understanding how stewardship can best be fostered for the benefit of both sectors, their employees and the communities they serve.

These interests offered a sense of direction, while my experience established a starting point for developing a more comprehensive rationale by looking at some of the current challenges faced by nonprofits and businesses as the call for corporate community engagement and cross-sectoral collaboration intensifies.

1.2. Broad context and rationale

Public service organizations encounter many challenges in their efforts to seek funding, manage volunteers, secure partnerships and diversify sources of revenue. Government and grant monies upon which they have historically depended are often insufficient, or approved on a non-renewable or term-basis only (Scott and Pike, 2005). Stiff competition from other non-profit organizations hungry for existing resources poses additional obstacles. Within Canada, increased government downloading of responsibility to the conservation/environmental sector increases the burden for these organizations which often extend themselves beyond their traditional roles in order to fulfill their responsibilities. In response, conservation organizations and authorities,

conservancies, land trusts and citizens groups engaged in land and water conservation, securement, protection and restoration are voicing concern (E.C., 2002). These organizations perceive resource paucity as a serious impediment to meeting objectives such as aiding the recovery of declining native species populations, mitigating the effects of habitat fragmentation, educating the public and conveying the need for advocacy through action.

1.2.1. A call for collaboration

While scarcity poses a threat, it also affords an opportunity to build on several current and emerging trends, such as greater corporate environmental stewardship, the increasing use of new voluntary, collaborative environmental tools (Cardskadden and Lober, 1998) and the growing importance of strategic alliances between the non-profit and business sectors (Austin, 2000). Although decades of research have contributed to a theoretical and empirical understanding of interorganizational relationships, the focus has tended to be on nonprofit to government partnerships (Austin 2000). In contrast, within the sphere of environmental responsibility, while there is potential to develop similarly effective working partnerships among corporate and non-profit conservation-based NGOs, thus far it has been less fully realized despite clearly stated needs and desires from both sectors, as outlined below.

- Literature in the field of collaboration is underdeveloped, and there is a need to find a more systematic understanding of the issues involved in forming and maintaining working alliances (Gray and Wood, 1991);
- There has been little systematic research devoted to examining the alleged benefits of corporate community programs (Peterson, 2004), yet business and nonprofits increasingly seek to become engaged in partnerships that they view as a means of helping them enhance their paths towards sustainability (Juniper and Moore, 2002);
- Over 100 nonprofit, philanthropic, government and business leaders from over 19 countries who took part in an International Fellows in Philanthropy Conference identified the building of effective partnerships as key to making serious progress in improving quality of life (including environment and social issues) for all people (1999 Int. Fellows in Philanthropy);

- In light of escalating financial constraints for non-profit environmental organizations, a need exists for a better understanding of alternative sources of funding that can help voluntary organizations reduce their fiscal dependency on government funding.

To date, some groundwork has been done to set the stage for partnership research, though in Canada, environmental stewardship has not been a primary focus. In the area of social responsibility, businesses are increasingly dedicating time, effort and funds to develop programs with objectives that benefit their employees, the communities they serve, and noteworthy charitable causes. From a business standpoint, these companies recognize that demonstrating accountability through commitment to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) improves the quality of their image, shareholder value, contentment and health of employees, while boosting their bottom line (EE and IUCN, 2002; Peterson, 2004).

1.2.2. Employer supported volunteerism (ESV)

Research shows that employers whose employees volunteer profit from the additional expertise – according to estimates, competency increases 14 to 17 percent as a direct result of volunteering (Graff, 2004). Sixty-four percent of organizations surveyed by Imagine Canada support employee volunteerism, reflecting that this aspect of CSR is becoming not only integral to corporate culture but is being manifested by on-the-ground actions (Traves, 2005). Interestingly, the new challenge for corporations is no longer understanding *why* they should be good citizens, but *how* (McKeown and Brown, 2003).

Environmental public service organizations have their own motivations for fostering partnerships that utilize corporate volunteers. For example, those with strong mandates for conservation or stewardship often depend on volunteer work to achieve goals. In addition, these groups appreciate the capacity of effective volunteer programs to raise an organization's profile through word of mouth, cultivate supporters and make the work of the organization more transparent to the community (Grantmaker Forum, 2003).

Despite these benefits, employee volunteers do not present an unqualified blessing to this sector. Besides facing reduced government assistance and increased government downloading of services conservation organizations can find themselves unable to accommodate the influx of requests for volunteer opportunities (Barnycz, 1999; Thompson, 2005). Thus, while some

organizations have trouble accommodating requests for volunteer opportunities due to staff capacity, financial, time or liability constraints, others, paradoxically, need to find more volunteers as the experienced, aging, civic volunteer core upon which they have long depended begins to diminish.

Across sectors, public and private granting agencies and philanthropic organizations increasingly stress the importance of innovative collaboration as a requirement for their proposals (Cousins and Simon, 1996; El Ansari, Phillips, and Hammick, 2001). Grant proposals often highlight projects that foster and deepen civic engagement and strategic partnerships (Charity Village, 1994), while community agencies must navigate an increasingly business-oriented funding landscape. New approaches to philanthropy focus on strategy, market, knowledge development and dissemination, "high-engagement" and maximizing the "leverage of donor's money" (The Economist, 2006, p. 3). In some situations, partnership success is deemed so important that research into long-term partnership models has become a prerequisite for granting agencies considering applications for seed money to initiate volunteer programs.

It is possible that through effective partnerships, corporate organizations could help alleviate some of this financial pressure while gaining various benefits of their own. While environmental protection has typically seemed at odds with economic growth, recent literature calls for more information on the process of developing intersectoral partnerships to further understand this reconciliatory shift. Cardaskadden and Lober (1998) note that these two values, historically viewed as opposites, can be seen as compatible under certain circumstances. Nevertheless, they note a need to back this notion with tangible, supporting examples.

1.3. Research question, goals and objectives

The question, "How can collaboration between businesses and conservation organizations foster highly successful partnerships founded on a commitment to environmental stewardship?" provides an entry point into my research, an exploratory study focused on the multi-faceted phenomenon of corporate volunteerism. My examination of what makes partnerships "successful" involves both recognizing how two partnering organizations might realize mutual gains and forward their individual stewardship-related mandates, and understanding how the environment, including surrounding natural and/or human communities, might also benefit from these achievements perhaps more than it would if both sectors operated in isolation from each

other. A third element of cross-sectoral collaboration, intrinsic to the concept of ESV, pertains to fostering the spirit of volunteerism within the employees who participate. Consequently, this research also explores how partners can provide employees with experiences that are positive and enriching because, for example, they generate enthusiasm, maximize opportunities to learn, build upon experience and instill ongoing values in keeping with key stewardship messages.

In the spirit of formulative research, which upholds the notions of exploration and curiosity throughout (Palys, 1997), this study seeks new insights into partnerships between businesses interested in engaging their employees in hands-on stewardship activities, and their respective public service sector partners. The intent is to focus on the potential of, and dynamics between, partnering organizations as a means of deriving a set of best practices or principles for joint venture development and facilitation that can help each sector realize individual and shared goals. Accordingly, the intended audience includes both corporate and social service organization stakeholders who may be at various stages of partnership development – including those who are currently engaged, those who consider themselves to be fledglings in the process, as well as those who are curious to learn more because they believe the strategic evolution of their organization might point in this direction.

The goal, derived from the research question, is to gain an understanding of how key sets of practices and principles for partnership can help facilitate ESV while fostering long-term stewardship within communities. Six research objectives reflect my intent to use the knowledge I've gained of present conditions to suggest possibilities for future development of these working partnerships. In essence, I aim to:

- Determine how themes within the literature associated with stewardship and corporate social responsibility may augment one another and contribute to an understanding of cross-sectoral partnership
- Show how insights from the literature associated with volunteerism and volunteer management contribute to an enhanced understanding of ESV
- Investigate what key stakeholders within the global community and within Ontario have determined to be best practices in terms of negotiating partnerships, managing and educating volunteers and contributing meaningfully to environmental stewardship

- Explore what practitioners from both corporate and conservation sectors have learned from their partnership experience in terms of maximizing benefits for all
- Understand the extent to which both sectors value the educational aspects of volunteering, and provide suggestions about how they might combine knowledge and resources to better inform and educate employees about the importance of stewardship

This foundational information will help: establish principles for partnering organizations so they can integrate goals, maintain accountability, optimize performance and refine practices to develop sustainable collaborations.

1.4. Scope and focus

This work has practical applications for both the non-profit and for-profit sectors in that the research will enable them to understand each other's frames of reference and help them find common ground upon which they can attain shared goals for environmental enhancement. Specific applications for for-profit organizations include the identification of how businesses can benefit from improved CSR programs, while the research will provide the conservation sector with a renewed understanding of incentives for businesses to engage in dynamic partnerships. The thesis has special relevance for practitioners within environmental stewardship organizations, as well as for large and medium firms interested in creating or enhancing corporate environmental stewardship initiatives.

Originally, it seemed useful to include in this study an examination of working partnerships between corporations and NGOs in the health and humanity sector, such as corporate involvement in the Pink Ribbon Campaign to end breast cancer, or TD's involvement in caused-based partnerships driven by organizations such as Habitat for Humanity. However, since the motivations and incentives for creating these partnerships may differ from those that spur partnerships for environmental stewardship, the focus here is limited to environment and conservation-based partnerships. Thus, while health sector employee volunteering may be referenced occasionally within the broader literature, a detailed study of these initiatives at the case study level is beyond the scope of this work.

There are several apparent and implicit assumptions that provide a basis for this research. The first is that it is possible to enhance environmental stewardship programs through conservation

and for-profit collaborations. The second is that the potential for incorporating ESV into conservation partnerships is currently under-utilized as a program tool. The third is that currently both business and conservation organizations value promoting voluntary action as part of a larger mandate; however, as previously mentioned, these values can easily fail to translate into action because potential partners lack sufficient understanding of how to become mutually well-engaged. Building upon this, a fourth assumption indicates that collaborative partnerships allow for mutual and multiple benefits. For example, while organizations ideally achieve individual goals (e.g. getting work done, building teams, and generating public awareness of an issue or a brand), partnerships also have the potential to achieve greater positive social and environmental impacts together than their individual components could accomplish in isolation (*see* Woodworth, 2005). Testing of these assumptions will occur throughout the thesis development.

Units of analysis and targets: The study looks at both sides of the partnerships: NGOs and their business counterparts. However, the unit of analysis is the program area (including affiliated staff within these organizations that focus on, or participate in the biodiversity-partnerships), as opposed to the entire organization. Targets within these units of analysis include program and/or campaign managers or coordinators and staff who have taken part in employee-supported programs.

1.5. Methodological approach

I chose to accomplish my goal through a qualitative, inductive study. This approach appeared most conducive to answering my research question as it allowed for developing and refining of a suite of partnership principles through a series of successive iterations. The process of analytic induction lends rigour to qualitative analysis, in addition to providing a route which allows the project to grow from "bottom-up" observations that build to larger, theoretical conclusions. This contrasts with the "top-down" deductive reasoning most often associated with quantitative methods (where one begins with broad theoretical generalizations and tests them with specific instances of phenomena) (Trochim, 2006).

Palys (1997) recommends that an inductive approach be fueled by the use of open-ended techniques and flexible strategies which demonstrate wide coverage/range of examples (Palys, 1997). Thus, to answer my question, I utilized a multi-method approach to data collection including a literature review, a series of small case studies (designated here as case examples)

and a series of key informant interviews from individuals representing conservation and corporate sectors. Scholars refer to such a multi-method approach as "triangulation," a research technique essential for corroborating evidence and leading to more confident results (Yin, 2003). A description of study methods follows.

1.5.1. Literature review

The literature review utilizes documented studies of cross-sectoral partnerships and employee volunteering. The review seeks to synthesize and gain new perspectives, identify interconnections between ideas and practice, differentiate between past accomplishments and future needs, understand the extent of the topic, and address areas of current interest (see Hart, 1998). With regard for Palys'(1997) warning not to construe topics much too narrowly or foreclose prematurely on what might be intriguing about a topic, my research and writing process has cast a wide net over the literature. Objectively considering the merits of each information source helped hone in on trustworthy, useful resources (Fink, 2005).

Fink (2005) articulates that literature reviews should be systematic, comprehensive and reproducible. These criteria offer the following benefits: (1) *Systematic*: Information evaluation has employed screening criteria. In some cases, seeking expert guidance from professionals, academics or other experts (e.g. librarians have helped widen the scope of relevant literature; (2) *Comprehensive*: A diversity of sources, reflecting a number of themes and situations, have been closely examined. As per Palys' recommendations, the review constantly works back and forth between the abstract and concrete (1997). In this way, the relationship between idea and practice receives attention (3) *Reproducible:* Fink (2005) recommends the creation of a bibliographic database to help ensure accuracy and reproducibility. My use of an Endnote database has ensured reproducibility, while serving as a virtual filing system.

1.5.2. Global case examples

Interviews with informants from the USA, UK and Australia form the basis for case examples. These individuals, professionally engaged in the development of long-running partnership programs, have contributed an array of lessons and experiences regarding the facilitation of corporate volunteers. Case-based approaches are advantageous, providing insight into how and why partnerships operate as they do within real-life context (Yin, 2003), while strengthening

what is known through previous research (Soy, 1997). Thus, considered together, the case examples build upon lessons gleaned from the literature review, providing a foundation for the development of partnership principles and insight into how they manifest themselves within the research context.

1.5.3. Key informant interviews

Key informant interviews with stakeholders from both conservation and corporate sectors within Ontario provide opportunities to refine and enhance knowledge of cross-sectoral partnerships. In contrast with the more cosmopolitan and sophisticated cases recounted by global informants, local informants have provided insight into partnerships that are relatively new and tenuous. Interview analysis allows for comparison and contrast of local perspectives while indicating the state of employer supported volunteerism in Ontario. It also creates a basis for building upon existing evidence to create a framework for principles capable of reflecting what ideal, contemporary stewardship-based partnerships might look like.

1.6. Chapter overview

Chapter two reviews the literature on structures and strategies to enable cross-sectoral collaboration in fostering environmental stewardship. It brings together perspectives associated with stewardship, community engagement and partnerships and shows how emerging themes augment each other.

Chapter three is a continuation of the literature review. It takes a closer look at employer supported volunteerism and describes partnership benefits and tensions that may arise. It also introduces considerations related to valuing and evaluating volunteers.

Chapter four presents a series of small case studies, from the US, UK and Australia which explore various models for utilizing employer-supported volunteerism within real-life contexts.

Chapter five provides a suit of emerging partnership principles. These summarize the themes within the previous chapters and provide guidance for analyzing local partner perspectives.

Chapter six explains the methodological approach, data collection techniques and associated limitations of the Canadian case research that provides the core empirical evidence for the thesis.

Chapter seven offers in-depth results and analysis of local key informant interviews by comparing and contrasting corporate and conservation organization perspectives.

Chapter eight presents a full suite of partnership principles and describes best-practice guidelines.

Chapter nine highlights conclusions, summarizes finding and limitations and suggests future research opportunities.

Chapter 2: Environmental stewardship and corporate social responsibility (CSR)

You've got to think about the "big things" while you're doing small things,
so that all the small things go in the right direction.
--Alvin Toffler

Author Margaret Mead has empowered many volunteers with her statement, "*Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world*." But when the small group consists of corporate volunteers who require ongoing support from their employer *and* a host organization to carry out their work, not only does "small" undergo considerable expansion, but also a greater number of complexities may arise, posing challenges for even the most "thoughtful and committed people". Issues that frequently require attention include, but are not limited to: What are the implications for the interacting organizations and their staff? What types of investment are needed; and conversely, what types of returns/benefits do each expect? How can corporate volunteer contributions be effective and meaningful? In what ways might corporate volunteering differ from traditional forms of volunteering?

This chapter and the next aim to identify structures and strategies that enable corporate and environmental community organizations to collaborate in fostering environmental stewardship through the protection and enhancement of biodiversity. In particular, this review examines the dynamics of partnerships wherein public sector service organizations host corporate volunteers, utilizing Employer Supported Volunteer (ESV) programs as a mechanism to achieve conservation goals. Bringing together a range of perspectives from the growing bodies of literature related to stewardship, corporate community engagement and cross-sectoral partnerships sheds light upon relevant topics and their interrelationships.

Employer Supported Volunteerism (ESV) refers to the practice of companies encouraging employees to volunteer within the community, often through employer-sanctioned activities wherein businesses provide encouragement, support or even time (within work hours) for employees to volunteer. ESV is becoming increasingly popular within Canada and elsewhere (see Easwaramoorthy, Barr, Runte, and Basil, 2006), especially as a method of community

engagement that extends and enhances Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) mandates (Wilkinson, Cadman, Scott, and Tibbles, 2005). It should be noted here that there is no one way that ESV is implemented; employers operate somewhere within a continuum of support which ranges from low to high involvement (see Appendix A for details). The benefits gained when businesses align with non-profit or public service sector organizations to formalize employee volunteer tasks, often represent a win-win approach to cross-sector partnership (Rog, Pancer, and Baetz, 2004). The concept of ESV has been explored in general (e.g. Cordingley, 2006; Ellis and McCurly, 2005; Hext, 2006; Reynolds, 2001; Solomon, Ragland, Wilson, Plost, and Shannon, 1991), though the focus is usually on a broad range of partnerships between business and nonprofit agencies. ESV's potential for fostering conservation stewardship appears as either peripheral to the primary discussions or as an indirect allusion.

This chapter begins with a general overview of key converging trends associated with partnership creation, CSR and stewardship. Section 2.1 discusses central concepts associated with environmental stewardship, examining in particular community engagement through environmental restoration and effective communication (subsections 2.1.1 and 2.1.2 respectively). Implications for stewardship within cross-sectoral partnership appear in section 2.1.3. Corporate Social Responsibility, including its subset of voluntary initiatives and community engagement is the focus of section 2.2. Section 2.2.1 draws out implications of CSR to this thesis. Finally, section 2.3 notes some key considerations within the literature that help provide direction for developing partnership principles.

Methods: This review draws extensively from journal articles associated with the topics of ecology, stewardship and corporate social responsibility, philanthropy and the voluntary sector. A variety of research strategies have proven fruitful. The use of terms affiliated with these topics yielded substantial information from relevant thesis databases. Online data sources such as Imagine Canada's library and the associated Knowledge Development Centre facilitated access to pertinent articles and reports. Energize Inc. (an extensive, international volunteer manager's website), the online volunteer journal (*E-volunteerism*) and a search through conference proceedings provided additional articles of relevant interest. The volunteer community has an

active and vibrant presence on the web; therefore, subscriptions to electronic list-serves[1] broadened understanding of some of the issues. Finally, dialogue with both nonprofit and business representatives attending an Imagine Canada workshop (Imagine Canada, 2006b) on employee volunteerism and a workshop on nonprofit partnerships hosted by the Sustainability Network (Sustainability Network, 2007) provided access to some other useful information.

A timely topic: In light of the oft-stated need for effective working partnerships, it is useful to review common and relevant themes within the key concept areas of environmental stewardship, corporate social responsibility within the sphere of voluntary initiatives, and strategic collaborations. This in turn leads to an exploration of various criteria and strategies for successful working partnerships, while documenting the developments and challenges to be met if a united and mutually beneficial stewardship commitment is to take shape.

Interrelationships among key concept areas noted above are integral to this research. Underscoring the study, however, are several converging trends and pressures which affect these areas similarly, and in so doing, lend a sense of urgency to the process of facilitating effective partnerships. These include the following:

- Rising numbers of CSR and voluntary initiatives. Businesses are increasingly re-examining their philanthropic practices and seeking new strategies for community engagement (Austin, 2000);
- Well-documented and unprecedented global reduction of biodiversity. This concern often prompts warnings about the increasing fragility of our livelihoods and wellbeing, given our dependence on ecosystem services provided by intact, interconnected and diverse natural habitats and communities (Olewiler, 2004);
- Expansion of NGO biodiversity protection strategies. Land stewardship-focused environmental NGOs are increasingly recognizing that land acquisition is only one of

[1] Some examples include:

- CYBERVPM -the international discussion group for volunteer managers - http://groups.yahoo.com/group/cybervpm/
- OzVPM - the Australasian Volunteer Program Management web site - http://www.ozvpm.com/
- ARNOVA-L – int'l e-forum for those engaged with nonprofit organizations, voluntary action or philanthropy - http://www.arnova.org/
- World Wide Volunteer Web - http://www.worldvolunteerweb.org/

many possible steps that can protect biodiversity and that actively engaging in ecological stewardship is essential to the sustainability of long-term ecosystem health;

- Government downsizing and privatization. This has resulted in a transfer of functions from central governments to local levels, the private sector and civil society, including environmental NGOs) (Austin, 2000);
- Ongoing development of the "business case" for stewardship. Expanded rationales for corporate involvement in biodiversity protection were introduced in the early '90s. The ongoing evolution of this understanding is creating increased focus on businesses as participants in biodiversity protection (Cardskadden and Lober, 1998; Tennyson, Hurrell, and Sykes, 2002);
- Increased attempts to build working partnerships between businesses and NGOs. Establishment of such new partnerships, as a response to conservation concerns, is an emerging trend whose effectiveness as an environmental tool can only be maximized if more research occurs. (Gray and Wood, 1991; Patney, 2000). Austin (2000) predicts that such collaborations will intensify in the future.

The convergence of the political, economic, environmental and social elements driving these trends reveals a timely opportunity to explore NGO/business sector partnerships and their potential capacity for ecological protection. Conversely, failure to capitalize on these intersecting trends may mean that, as circumstances evolve, windows of opportunity may close making it more difficult to do so (Takahashi and Smutny, 2002). Even though the need to protect biodiversity is increasing there is potential that collaborative opportunities will continue to be captured by other sectors in need of assistance.

2.1. Environmental stewardship

Descriptions of stewardship have often focused on a particular attitude (Kool, 1994; Zweers, 2000), a moral ethic (EC, 2002; Raish, 2000), activities (Robert, Rachel, and Robert, 2001), or a blend of these characteristics which also take into account respect for nature and concern for future generations (Lerner, 1993). Brown and Mitchell (2000) discuss stewardship in both broad and narrow terms, stating:

> Stewardship means, simply, people taking care of the earth. In its broadest sense, it refers to the essential role individuals and communities play in the careful management of our common natural and cultural wealth, both now and for future generations. More specifically, it can be defined as efforts to create, nurture and enable responsibility in landowners and resource users to manage and protect land and its natural and cultural heritage (p. 71).

Though many agree that it defies succinct definition, the concept of stewardship often seems embedded in an environmental ethic, or in the moral thought processes underlying environmental responsibility and decision making. Leopold, especially, is credited with advancing the concept of a stewardship ethic by advocating the need to preserve the integrity of the "biotic community", and suggesting that nature has intrinsic value (Brennan and Lo, 2002; Leard, 2004). Such value lends justification to stewardship as a correct course of action to protect nature – regardless of the presence or absence of utilitarian values.

Perceptions of stewardship as an ethical concept often reflect strong connections with activities that involve caring about, and taking responsibility for, the earth. This obligation can arise from a land ethic that includes humans as integral to natural systems; as such, it entails commitment and accountability (Norman, 1999), while being based on a philosophy of knowledgeable caring that requires an attitude of non-possessive dedication to land and water resources regardless of ownership (Kool, 1994). Stewardship embraces a wide range of actions and activities that can be carried out by "individuals, communities, organizations and businesses acting alone or in partnership" (E.C. , 2002, p. 3). These activities include, but are not limited to resource management, educational endeavours, and conservation techniques that can serve to achieve or enhance ecological health while cultivating a sense of responsibility and guardianship (Norman, 1999). Zweers (2000) regards custodianship attitudes as essential for conservation: in accounting terms, humans may utilize nature's "interest" but not diminish the natural "capital" that future generations need to inherit. Sustainability, therefore, is an extension of this idea because it requires an interest in the wellbeing of future generations.

Norman (1999) summarizes elements of local stewardship pertaining to natural capital protection. Often associated with a specific place, community-based stewardship entails working towards assessment, protection, management or rehabilitation of local resources. In addition, it involves commitment, accountability, and educational or community-building components.

Good stewardship requires recognition that conservation extends beyond acquisition of natural areas and their legal protection. Long-term protection may require a variety of stewardship tools summarized by Brown and Mitchell (2000) as environmental education, demonstration projects, recognition of achievement, voluntary management agreements and public-private partnerships – all of which encourage responsible management and create a crucial link between culture and nature. As Lerner (1993) suggests, volunteers play a significant role in on-the-ground stewardship activities, which are manifested in the "concrete results of thousands of volunteer hours logged in monitoring, rehabilitation, research brief preparation, fundraising and myriad other activities (p.5)." Reinforcing this observation, Ryan (2000) claims that the environmental movement would be nonexistent without the dedication of volunteers who donate time and energy to environmental causes, and who play a major role in sustaining the environmental programs of the nonprofit organizations who depend on them.

Those who actively practice or teach about environmental ethics increasingly seek to show how social equity, economic vitality and ecological health are pertinent to stewardship. Thus, neither in concept nor in practice is stewardship strictly limited to the conservation sector. In fact, Brennan and Lo (2002) argue that stewardship is interdisciplinary – bridging the sciences, economics, history, and human ecology. This approach invites diverse players – including businesses or corporate stakeholders – to question their obligations towards the natural world, develop appropriate environmental strategies, and find compelling ways of seeking more sustainable paths (Bourdeau, 2004).

Ideally in the process of their development, conservation-based cross-sectoral partnerships (between public service sector organizations and businesses), would arrive at a common vision of stewardship. Yet, when analyzing charity/business partnership dynamics, Selsky and Parker (2000) mention a recurring underlying theme: nonprofits purport altruistic motives while companies tend to be motivated through self-interest related to corporate image, product marketing and even garnering social capital. Thus, it seems that civil society organizations and companies are at opposite ends of the spectrum when it comes to motivation: non-profits are often centred around a mission to conserve biodiversity and protect land through strategic conservation or wise stewardship (e.g. see NCC, 2006; TNC, 2006; World Wildlife Fund, 2006), while companies might perceive stewardship primarily as a means to tie into existing CSR mandates or strategic corporate philanthropy programs that are not always affiliated with their

core mandate. In fact, many companies derive funds to support partnership programs from their public relations campaigns (Imagine Canada, 2006b). Thus, though both organizational sectors might seek to develop a partnership based on concern for environment, it is noted that their motivations might not necessarily have the same ethical underpinnings (Enderle, 1997).

Realizing the difficulty that many individuals and organizational representatives have in justifying activities based upon nature's intrinsic value, academic and environmental ethicist Andrew Light cultivates the idea of stewardship (or ecological citizenship) based on what he terms "environmental pragmatism." He maintains that today's challenge is "not to find the single holy grail of a theory to the intrinsic value of nature but to articulate as many sound reasons as possible for people to value the environment" (Light, 2004, p. 1). Besides strengthening the concept of nature's utility by developing, and clearly communicating, concrete arguments for environmental protection to the public, Light avers that the best fostering of stewardship engages citizens in *local* restoration projects, thereby linking the importance of local, natural amenities with the significance of broader environmental issues (Light, forthcoming). Some regard public participation as so vital to cultivating ecological citizenship that every restoration process aiming to be considered fully effective should include some level of community engagement (E. S. Higgs, 1997; E. S. Higgs, 2005; Light, 2005). Advocates of environmental education, such as David Orr (1994), view practical engagement with the environment as an essential ingredient for learning.

Critics of these notions argue that citizen engagement only serves to "dilute the conservation agenda" and that measured results of community-based conservation often fall below expectation (Berkes, 2004). Nevertheless, the call for engagement is so strong that it has been incorporated into internationally relevant documents such as the Society for Ecological Restoration's *Guidelines for Managing Ecological Restoration projects* (Throop and Purdom, 2005). The underlying insight – that engagement in a specific environmental issue cultivates greater awareness, which in turn reinforces a deeper commitment to action – is aptly described by Lerner (2006) as a "virtuous circle." It also appears as an underlying theme, emerging in various forms throughout the literature on stewardship and volunteerism.

2.1.1. Lessons on stewardship from the field of restoration

A growing body of literature on restoration augments discussions about stewardship and decision-making as related to active engagement (e.g. tree planting, invasive removal, mitigation of anthropogenic stressors and monitoring). Restoration[2] increasingly appears compatible with the more traditional concept of conservation that historically emphasized land acquisition and preservation as a means to protect nature. Though critics argue that restoration detracts from environmental conservation because it shifts focus from pristine land protection to rehabilitation of degraded areas (Jordan, 1997), stewardship advocates continue to make compelling arguments that restoration not only complements conservation, it is crucial for long-term protection of pristine areas (despite general recognition that restoration alone is never enough in itself). For example, rehabilitation helps create buffer zones, mitigate the effects of invasive species and contribute to ecosystem heath. In most cases, some level of restoration is important for the maintenance and enhancement of areas that receive little direct human impact (such as wilderness sites) (J. Berger, 1990). Jordan (1997) argues that restorative practices should be considered as an essential component of conservation programs. In short, acquisition and legal agreements are only a small part of long-term protective measures.

Stewardship volunteers often engage in activities such as tree planting, seed collection, monitoring and other hands-on work conducted as part of a restoration project. Though the work may seem simple, undertaking the tasks of environmentally literate projects often demands complex decision-making. Therefore, besides engaging communities in stewardship practice (as mentioned above), practitioners venturing into restoration need to undertake their work, of the following considerations:

- Active stewardship is a form of deliberate human intervention to recover natural processes that have been damaged or impacted, often as a result of anthropogenic disturbances. Consequently, those making conscious attempts to mitigate these effects need to be aware of the impacts their actions might have upon an already fragile environment. Successful stewardship also requires "reflecting deeply on appropriate

[2] Broadly defined, restoration includes those "human activities intended to take a landscape towards a more natural condition" (Graber, 2003, p. 34).

action" (E. Higgs, 2003, p. 41) which necessitates an understanding of scale, context (within larger landscapes), history of place and the role of the human community.

- Restorative action requires consideration for ecosystem health, integrity, and awareness of nature's complexity (Daigle and Havinga, 1996). As is widely recognized, ecosystems rarely maintain a fixed state, evolving, succeeding and fluctuating in response to changing environmental conditions and/or cultural influences. Therefore, it is unrealistic to restore a place to an idealized "vignette". Rather, practitioners must manage for ecological processes (moving targets) rather than a fixed state (Schullery and Varley, 2000).
- Fluctuation within ecological and cultural environments may result in unintended consequences for restoration (Graber, 2003), no matter how well-intentioned a project might be. Practitioners must support a precautionary approach to management by acknowledging that outcomes may be uncertain. As Schullery and Varley (2000) caution about working in complex environments, "we don't know enough to know what we don't know" (p. 11).

The challenge of engaging volunteers, therefore, includes reckoning with these underlying considerations while making all necessary and pressing decisions about staff capacity, time constraints, liability issues, training/orientation requirements and any logistical considerations that may impact efficiency or effectiveness. Some organizations consider that volunteer labour is most appropriate when it would not, or could not, be accomplished otherwise (Thompson, 2005) (note: this view is particularly important if volunteers are to work in areas traditionally under the jurisdiction of unionized staff who might otherwise feel volunteers were taking away their work).

Determining whether volunteer engagement should be prioritized over other means of restoration is also at the forefront of the stewardship debate. Increasingly, organizations in charge of restoration programs are faced with deciding between the volunteers, paid labour or technology (e.g. mechanized tree and nut planters, gas-powered seed collectors, chainsaws and brush cutters) as a means of carrying out restoration. In many cases, the arguments against using volunteers are strong: the simultaneous engagement of volunteers and technology prove incompatible because of growing liability concerns; volunteers might lack the qualification/training to use specialized equipment, or on-site machinery might create excessive noise that is not conducive to

community engagement. In other cases, choices may become simply a matter of opinion about how work should be carried out. Higgs (2005), especially concerned with this tension, addresses the growing disconnect between the use of efficient restoration technologies and the desire to involve community in restoration by noting that:

> We are approaching a fork in the road to restoration . . . along one fork is the bumpy, experimental, community-engaged practice of restoration that has typified the growth of the field so far. Another path has opened, along which we find restoration megaprojects and increasingly well-refined, technically adept projects. (p. 161)

Though not condemning the use of technology, Higgs feels that community engagement is an ingredient that contributes to the overall quality of a restoration project. To illustrate, he compares technologically-based restoration to recorded music. He worries that by removing the participatory aspect of restoration,

> . . . we lose touch with the condition of authenticity with which we cherish traditional experience: contrast, for example, the live performance of music, especially music produced by oneself and friends, with recorded music. The latter is a reflection, more or less pale, of the direct experience. (p.161)

With Higgs' argument in mind, Throop and Purdom (2005) caution that restoration practitioners must carefully weigh the benefits of citizen engagement with heightened human ecosystem impacts. This entails considering and contextualizing the broader implications of either type of management regime. In short, those in charge of engaging volunteers in stewardship activities must take a comprehensive approach to developing an appropriate niche for them to fill (Martinez, 1993); they must carefully define how human interactions with nature can be undertaken in a thoughtful and constructive manner.

2.1.2. Advancing participation in stewardship through communication

How public sector service organizations present conservation stewardship to potential partnering organizations and employee volunteers, both prior to and throughout the duration of a partnership, has strong implications for establishing a platform for understanding and providing a context that will help to frame a learning experience. Social scientists understand that volunteers benefit when they make meaningful contributions to a cause (Miles, Sullivan, and Kuo, 1998);

but volunteers, especially those with little or no background in conservation, may have trouble deriving meaning from activities that include tasks whose purpose is vague to them, or which seems contradictory to their preconceived notions of environmental work. For example, many conservation volunteers work to remove non-indigenous or invasive species, a task which often entails cutting down saplings or clearing shrubs. “How many of us have attended a restoration workday where a new volunteer has asked, ‘Why are we cutting down trees on Forest Preserve District land?’" inquires Martez (1993), realizing the prevalence of this confusion and stressing the need for proper participant orientation. Volunteers lacking adequate background on restoration issues and theory can remain very concerned about why they are removing trees rather than planting them.

Communicating clearly why and how specific restoration methods are part of good conservation science is essential for other reasons. It legitimizes stewardship activities. Recent research on values held by conservation volunteers reveals that participants attach significance to the fact that they are carrying out activities that are *science-based.* In fact, “doing science” ranks so highly as to play a role in whether participants will pay for the experience of participating in volunteer-based eco-tourism ventures (Campbell and Smith, 2006). In addition to providing a point of reference with which the public can identify, effective communication of science is a valuable tool for providing background context – a pre-condition for active engagement Zweers (2000).

> Science can, for us, for our culture, constitute a favorable precondition for ecological experience: it can help us in this, it makes it easier for us to see nature in such a way that we feel a part of it, and recognize its specific value and meaning . . . science can assist experience, making it stronger and more precise. (p. 343)

The challenge of presenting the elements and theories behind conservation and restoration in plain language increases when it comes to conveying them concisely to corporate volunteers with limited in-field time. Nevertheless, learning how to integrate work with an educational aspect of restoration provides an opportunity for public service sector organizations to review or test their ability to convey the importance of conservation to a general audience. Achieving this necessitates the development of a “public ecology – creating a language that is accessible enough

to support broad participation and meaningful deliberation in environmental decision-making" (Hull and Robertson, 2000a, p. 113) – a goal towards which many organizations can aspire.

The need for effective public communication and participation remain inextricably linked. Social scientist Paul Gobster best illustrates this challenge in documenting the controversy surrounding the Chicago Wilderness area – a globally significant tallgrass landscape located within the boundaries of Metropolitan Chicago (and, therefore, the "backyard" of 9 million people). During a campaign to gain public acceptance for reverting overgrown woodlands back to native savanna and prairie, Gobster (2005) found educating and engaging the community in protection and restoration was as important as planning and carrying out the work. This restoration was so "culturally, historically and socially complex" (Martin, 2005, p. 114), that Gobster (2005) felt community engagement could not be over-emphasized. In fact, he called for a "new paradigm of participation in nature" (p. 4) in the hopes of achieving greater social and environmental awareness.

2.1.3. Implications for stewardship

The evolving concept of stewardship incorporates the notion of caring for the earth as an attitude and a practice. As an ever-expanding idea, it naturally includes areas of disagreement and fluctuation; however, specific areas of agreement serve to strengthen one another. Such areas include the importance and power of engaged communities, long-term, intergenerational stewardship, and the promise of "virtuous circles" a term that suggests links between or among volunteer experience, learning and commitment.

Stewardship involves protecting land, not only through the creation of legal agreements, but also through activities associated with integrated land management – a component that businesses and conservation groups sometimes overlook in their efforts to protect natural resources primarily by means of land acquisition. Stewardship is a concept that emphasizes the need to consider a holistic view of ecosystem function and processes, and is therefore consistent with literature affirming the need to deliberate upon nature's complexity and dynamism when undertaking or carrying out management decisions. Linked closely to the need to take a holistic approach is the need for cautious management.

In arenas where cross-sectoral partnership agreements aim to foster land care, strategic partners must develop a mutually shared understanding of stewardship that will help create a foundation from which to operate. As Light (2005) recommends, this is most easily achievable when an understanding of the need for stewardship is strengthened by providing concrete examples of benefits rather than discussing it from a moral or ethical standpoint.

Stewardship requires balancing tensions that, despite being diametrically opposed, are nevertheless inherently linked to one another. These include accomplishing work while minimizing the invasiveness of human intervention; engaging citizens in meaningful ways, yet completing jobs efficiently; and managing natural resources for ecological processes while working towards set management targets.

2.2. Corporate social responsibility (CSR) and voluntary initiatives

Most advocates of CSR agree that there is no formal definition of the concept, as the language surrounding it continues to evolve. However, the World Business Council on Sustainable Development (WBCSD) has attempted to capture a concise description, suggesting that "CSR is the commitment of business to contribute to sustainable economic development, working with employees, their families, the local community and society at large to improve their quality of life" (Flaherty, 2006, p. 1). The link between CSR and corporate governance becomes clearer in cases where CSR mandates prompt firms to rework traditional business-based governance models (in which management has been solely accountable to investors and shareholders) to recognize that other stakeholders are interested in, and affected by, an organization's activities. This idea acknowledges that corporate actions shape an organization's relationship with the world, and that businesses must therefore become accountable for the consequences of their activities (Conference Board of Canada, 2006).

CSR has roots in the early 20th century notion of "social philanthropy" – a form of social responsibility which deemed that corporations are not strictly economic entities but have obligations to the rest of society as well (Frankel, 1998). Over the years, the notion of CSR developed through what Frankel (1998) refers to as three broad eras. Within the first period, the "era of regulation", government agencies, aware that industry was not necessarily operating with the public's interest at heart, began imposing stricter regulatory measures. Though pressured to change due to regulation, companies claimed social responsibility simply by obeying these laws.

By the mid-80s, CSR entered the "era of compliance" as the industries were forced to start innovating and reforming practices in reaction to increased public criticism regarding their poor environmental track records. Sectors such as the chemical industry fell under particular scrutiny for unsafe practices resulting in deadly tragedies (a well-known example is the explosion of the Union Carbide Plant in Bhopal, India, which exposed half a million people to deadly pesticides. The final era of CSR – the "era of beyond compliance" – resulted from companies wishing to capitalize on previous successes in pollution reduction, while presenting themselves to the public as competitive innovators (Walley and Whitehead, 1994). This era has generated a mentality of "eco-efficiency" (where companies seek to accomplish more with less) that has evolved to include an increasing number of initiatives which previously would have seemed counter-culture to businesses. As managers began to internalize the need to act in the public interest, businesses attempted to create a new and healthier image of their relationship "between money, morals, profits and principles" (Frankel, 1998 p. 45).

The concept of "voluntary initiatives" arose from the third era as a phenomenon wherein companies seek to achieve green objectives above and beyond current regulation. Firms are motivated to engage in voluntary initiatives because they believe they will benefit from efficiency gains, reduced risk of regulation, opportunities to market a green label and an improved public image, and a more contented work force (Wiser, 2001). Corporate community engagement is a subset of voluntary initiatives; it is a strand of CSR that is progressively gaining credence among the business sector as companies strive to reveal the extent of their corporate responsibility by initiating or taking part in social or environmental community initiatives. Cavill (2006) differentiates community investment (e.g. providing donations to a charity) from community engagement – by noting that companies must actually become involved in the community. Community engagement may arise from a manager's belief that it is the "right thing to do" (I. E. Berger, Cunningham, and Drumwright, 2006), but it is also thought to be a reflection of companies under pressure to show their accountability by demonstrating efforts to improve governance, community life and the local environment (among other things). In this regard, discussion on corporate community engagement parallels the broader literature on voluntary initiatives.

Reynolds (2001) addresses the shift towards community engagement as a product of the desire of business and nonprofits to "move beyond chequebook arrangements and what has been called a

"begging bowl mentality" to partnerships based on deeper, long term relationships (p. 14)." Community engagement is a way for firms to publicize their philanthropic attitude while responding directly to community needs (LBG Canada, 2006). As Tennyson et al. (2002) notes, "the modern world rightly requires power to be accountable – we live in a "show me", not a "tell me", world (p. 5). Currently, businesses participate in various kinds of community engagement including sponsorship, cause-related marketing, employee engagement, strategic philanthropy, and community partnership development (Cavill, 2006).

Within broader discussions on CSR, there lives the notion that companies tend towards utilizing opportunities for engagement in activities costing little time, money or effort to implement – in CSR-speak, this low-effort, high-payoff[3] reward is referred to as the "low hanging fruit" (Hoffman, 2000; Reinhardt, 1999). Having plucked the metaphorical fruit, companies must continually search for new and unique opportunities to demonstrate CSR in order to gain competitive advantage. Though the search for new opportunities leads to innovation, implementation also highlights the need for deeper project analysis, greater cost and potentially higher levels of risk (Hussain, 1999). Thus community engagement, which requires so much planning, organization and thoughtful collaboration, now seems less like a low hanging fruit to be easily plucked, and more like an innovative CSR strategy that holds potential only when carefully and thoughtfully developed.

How and why companies choose to focus on social and/or environmental awareness warrants some attention. The recent inclination of corporations to adopt CSR initiatives voluntarily seems indicative of a positive trend to invest in the community beyond typical business-as-usual scenarios. Nevertheless, scholars warn that corporate activities, seemingly backed by pure intent, are rarely truly altruistic. Gibson (1999) likens voluntary initiatives to the Trojan gift horse, claiming that they are simultaneously "attractive, worrisome and significant" (p. 3) in nature. For example, decisions to adopt corporate greening programs are usually associated with increases in

[3] Analysts within the industry sector note that companies who pluck "low-hanging fruit" (also called "green harvesting") often receive short-term profits; however, research reveals these benefits, in terms of energy savings, tend not to filter down to customers (Peatty and Crane, 2005). It is precisely for this reason that companies are called upon to pursue CSR initiatives that may require more time and thought to implement, but will result in greater rewards for the business and the greater public.

material or energy efficiency, heightened consumer awareness, improved stakeholder relations or even the ability to stave off government regulation; thus, incentives to "do good" are based in interests that are ultimately profitable to businesses themselves. Along this line, critics of corporate alliances point out why it is important to examine increased accountability generated through corporate/community partnerships. For example, Bendell's (2005) research on large-scale partnerships suggests that enthusiasm for partnership engagement may override accountability considerations – with the result that community beneficiaries receive only limited benefits in the long run.

Examination of why individuals within firms engage in voluntary initiatives supports these cautions. As Wiser et al. (2001) observes, altruistic attitudes, while never a key motivation for a business as a whole, can be quite important among individuals within an organization. Flannery and May (2000) also note the power of individual decision making, and remind us that the organizations themselves do not make decisions – individuals do. While organizational leaders do not often act solely from an ethical standpoint to develop CSR codes of practice, they can have some influence in environmentally friendly decision making (Flannery and May, 2000). Perhaps it is the values of these individuals, combined with sound business strategies, that help develop incentives based on "enlightened self interest", a concept that is neither wholly altruistic nor self-serving. One description of this concept – also referred to as a "mixed motive" perspective - is that it exists as a motivation for promoting social or environmental welfare through means that also serve the interests of a company (in business terms, a mixed motives perspective acknowledges the possibility of "mutual gain solutions while simultaneously acknowledging distributive aspects" (Reinhardt, 1999, p. 8). As Bueheler and Shetty (1974) recognize, enlightened self-interest evolves from the corporate need to "blend profit with the need for sharing responsibility for social improvement" (p. 768) and is often ranked highly as a motivational force for developing CSR mandates.

To have impact, business and community organizations must pair enlightened self-interest with transparency and ethical awareness. In addition, community organizations must be wary that the profit-making motives of partnering companies might result in a negative perception of their environmental mission-based initiatives (Reynolds, 2001). Partnership literature voices this concern frequently (Bloom, Hussein, and Szykman, 1995; Juniper and Moore, 2002; Wilkinson, Cadman, Scott, and Tibbles, 2005; Woodworth, 2005). Paradoxically, as public service sector

organizations take ever-stronger governance roles, they are usually forced to find innovative methods of diversifying revenue to boost capacity. In consequence, through growth and evolution, they tend to adopt increasingly business-like approaches to mission accomplishment. This has led, in some cases, to the perceived "commercialization" of the community organizations and has, in turn, invited public scrutiny of business standards and ethics especially with regard to fundraising (Young, 1996). In realizing the importance of accountability, many nonprofits have begun focusing on achieving and gaining public confidence in their ability to maintain high standards of transparency. Through consultation with charity leaders across the country, for example, the Canadian Centre for Philanthropy has developed an ethical fundraising and financial accountability code, now adopted by more than 600 organizations (Imagine Canada, 2006a). In the United States, the American Institute for Philanthropy plays a similar role, as does the Better Business Bureau's Wise Giving Alliance.

Besides adhering to corporate giving and ethical fundraising standards, community organizations should still consider carefully the potential broader implications of corporate partnerships. Recently, The Canadian Cancer Society (CCS) came under scrutiny regarding their partnership with Pfizer, a pharmaceutical giant which funded one-third of the cost of a booklet outlining methods to quit smoking. Some of these methods included nicotine replacement therapies such as patches or gum. The CCS claimed to follow partnership guidelines, including meeting corporate gift acceptance policies, not naming/endorsing a brand, identifying various options for quitting, and developing a document based on sound science. Even these measures failed to dissuade some experts from questioning whether consumers were getting a sales pitch for the nicotine replacement therapies, or unbiased health support. In a Canadian Broadcasting Company (CBC) interview, drug policy researcher, Alan Cassels, raised an important point about the issue. He suggested that even if the CCS is not endorsing a Pfizer brand in the booklet, "What is happening is that they are actually advertising a paradigm – a paradigm in this case being that you can't quit smoking unless you have . . .smoking cessation products. The whole idea that most people quit cold turkey tends to get lost in the mix" (CBC, 2007).

Consequently, adhering to a suite of pre-defined best practices may be insufficient. An underlying theme here warrants some attention: organizations seeking to partner with corporate entities should assess the implications of advertising paradigms, even where no intent to endorse a specific brand or product exists. This includes determining the extent to which products

represented through a partnership are essential, or simply profitable. These considerations become particularly valuable in such situations as developing partnership with a company that makes plastic protective tubing for saplings (expert opinion is beginning to favour the view that planting trees from seeds is just as effective), or partnering with a chemical company to remove invasive species with its herbicide.

Businesses also benefit from strategic quests for potential partners. In her work on partnerships and cause marketing, Gagnon (2002) discovered that alliances were most successful when stakeholders (including consumers) perceived a company's values to match those of the charity, and when the cause endorsed fit well with a company's profile and products. Other researchers confirm this view, acknowledging that a marketing and branding strategy is most effective when it "merges with customers' existing stream of concerns" (Kalra, 2006). Employers attending an Imagine Canada employee volunteerism workshop, underscored this connection, stressing their intent to prioritize support for local initiatives aligning with their corporate image(for example, a hydro company was very keen to provide support for energy efficiency projects which included providing volunteers to collect outmoded incandescent Christmas lights) (Imagine Canada, 2006b).

The more a company publicizes its good work, the more susceptible to criticism it becomes – as the CEO of Home Depot found out after promising to refurbish 1,000 playgrounds in 1,000 days. Media savvy watchdogs divulged to the public that Home Depot actually donated less cash than other companies of similar size (Byrnes, 2005). Avoiding such criticism begins by creating a true "business case" for partnerships that involve giving and volunteering – where the impact of good deeds can be measured and conveyed (Byrnes, 2005). Within the framework of a business case, allied organizations should not perceive collaboration as a means to an end; rather, both partners should focus on communicating about delivering outcomes that align with a shared vision, and where consideration is given for the community and environment beyond a company's narrow market niche (Frame and Taylor, 2005; Patney, 2000; Warshaw, 2006).

With this in mind, it is important to recognize that CSR initiatives can be a positive influence. In some cases, public sector service organizations are willing to recognize that by partnering with a reputable business, they, too can benefit from increased legitimacy (Imagine Canada, 2006b). Especially during the past century, business has emerged as a global force, and while presently

exceeding the limits of sustainability (Conservation International, 2006) it is also potentially the sector whose power may be sufficient to reverse the situation (Lovins and Link, 2001). In fact, Hawken (1993) allows that the potential for businesses to contribute and problem-solve is great enough that they could remedy the crises facing us. Admittedly, corporate community engagement and ESV are only a small piece of this much larger CSR picture. However, a suite of emerging literature suggests that it, too, holds promise for making a meaningful contribution to conservation, addressing local environmental challenges and engendering a sense of stewardship.

2.2.1. Implications for corporate social responsibility

CSR's growing domain has resulted in a large variety of voluntary initiatives that can be associated with unique sets of benefits and pitfalls, making it difficult to discern what aspects may result in true, long-term advantages and what might ultimately prove to have deleterious consequences. The literature tends to present a positive view of the great strides companies have made towards greater environmental sustainability; yet a recurring theme involves the need for businesses to continue a quest for transparency and accountability which will resonate throughout both core business- and community-based actions.

Within cross-sectoral partnerships, the question of creating a "good fit" arises – the greater the perceived fit, the more legitimate a company's philanthropic endeavours appear. Yet strategies for achieving legitimacy have their limits. Where an entire sector's environmentally lax policies have tarnished its image, community-based activities of a single company have little potential for reversing public perception of a sector-wide reputation.

2.3. Discussion: considering stewardship and CSR together

Success in corporate volunteer initiatives begins with partners jointly committing to increasing the culture of stewardship. As this literature review reveals, partnerships require both sectors to work on developing a shared understanding of the dual nature of stewardship. By accepting an ideal of stewardship that includes making applied contributions associated with long-term land protection and ecological land management as well as addressing the need to increase a land-care ethic of good ecological stewardship through education or community building, each sector can help lay the foundation of a joint partnership. Other highlights of this review include the need for companies to be diligent about enhancing corporate social responsibility initiatives in areas

where they might be lagging, especially with regard to conservation-related polices or mandates. Further emphasis in this review focuses on the need for increased stewardship activities that are thoughtfully and carefully developed through a holistic approach whereby companies thoroughly examine how their CSR initiatives can link to, strengthen and enhance community engagement programs. Successful partnerships also require both sectors to take appropriate courses of action to work on nature's behalf, even when such courses of action may not be the most cost-effective or easiest approach. In other words, both sectors may need to overcome self-interest to act as a voice for the "voiceless" natural realm.

This chapter reveals how themes appearing in stewardship and CSR literature can augment one another, and provide direction for developing a broad partnership framework. Nevertheless, adding community engagement into partnership initiatives between stewardship and CSR highlights the importance of reconciling differences in perspective and conflicts of interest.

For example, this review identified differences in perspective and interest, including:

- land acquisition versus stewardship (for conservation organizations)
- meeting core objectives yet accommodating community (for conservation organizations)
- volunteer work versus technological efficiencies (in restoration and stewardship)
- developing business-oriented initiatives while maintaining community trust (conservation organizations)
- profit versus altruism (corporate groups)
- developing partnerships that increase, rather than decrease legitimacy (cross-sectoral partnerships)

These dualities indicate a need for practitioners to balance and review priorities. They also challenge them to settle both intra- and inter-organizational differences, while aligning partnership goals. The following paragraphs outline challenges and considerations in developing a suite of best practices that warrant serious effort.

The mandates of many nonprofits and other conservation-based organizations often prioritize land acquisition, natural heritage protection, scientific research or even advocacy above community engagement initiatives. Thus, for many practitioners stretched to capacity, the development of volunteer outreach programs for community members at-large may seem impractical or more burdensome than current resources can accommodate. Achieving concrete

results directly in line with core mandates may appear to outweigh the less tangible and immediate benefits of volunteer engagement. Conservation organization staff, board members or volunteers who advocate community engagement programs must maintain a clear sense of purpose when entering into the arena of conflicting perceptions in order to avoid dismissing volunteer value. Proponents must prove able to sustain dialogue with opposing stakeholders to define and/or revise appropriate conceptualizations of stewardship. Furthermore, meeting the challenge of becoming sensitive to organizational realities, includes finding niche work for volunteers that contributes to organizational mission (i.e. work that can be done at least as efficiently by groups as by paid staff members in an equivalent amount of time).

Besides promoting and developing intra-organizational understanding of stewardship, partners need to hone exceptional communicating skills, seeking a clarity that is equally effective for all relevant audiences. Both parties need to anticipate which elements of self-interest they are prepared to forfeit in order to achieve a greater good. For example, for conservation organizations this could mean elevating the importance of experiential aspect of volunteering to be just as, if not more significant than the actual work. For corporations, this may entail having volunteers contribute to projects where outcome is not guaranteed. The challenge for these parties is demonstrating the ability to develop equitable, non-calculating relationships, sufficiently free from self interest to ensure commitment to community goals, even in the face of reduced benefits.

In sustaining relationships, partners need the capability to spot both opportunities and potential risks that might compromise their delivery of core objectives and acquisition of public respect. Perhaps more importantly, they must to avoid complacency by viewing relationships as a living process sustained by constructive dialogue and commitments to resolve conflicting issues. Balanced efforts to streamline processes and their costs (time and money) with the need to arrive at carefully deliberated decisions are also essential.

Chapter 3: Employer supported volunteerism at the intersection of stewardship and CSR

The first chapter of this literature review presents a foundation for understanding stewardship and corporate social responsibility by discussing common interests, areas of disagreement or conflict, and practical implications of partnership that help develop best practices.

This chapter examines Employer Supported Volunteerism (ESV) – a rapidly growing aspect of corporate social responsibility that offers companies the potential to direct their charitable commitments into community initiatives that foster environmental stewardship at both individual and corporate levels. This review focuses on partner-based ESV, where a community agency's cause facilitates the work of corporate employees. Section 3.1 builds on the definition of ESV provided in the last chapter, by discussing partnership as well as community benefits and tensions that may arise. 3.2 briefly notes some implications of ESV as it rests at the intersection of stewardship and CSR. Section 3.3 examines approaches to understanding and valuing volunteers, particularly those involved in conservation activities. The following subsection, 3.2.1 points out implications related to evaluation and return on investment. Finally, section 3.3 discusses the two sections together, continuing with the development of a best practices framework.

3.1. Employer supported volunteerism (ESV)

Advocates of partnerships that utilize ESV are quick to point out a host of benefits for partnering organizations and respective staff (see Table 1). Yet while corporate and nonprofit partners rush to publicize success, communications breakdowns, undervaluing of work, and insufficient evidence of mutual benefits create tension between the sectors. A glaring example of a failed attempt at a business/community organization partnership involves a now infamous "painting room" in the interior of a hospital where staff designated a room to be painted by employee volunteers from outside corporations (Cordingley, 2006). Unbeknownst to the corporate volunteers, this room was painted and repainted by consecutive streams of corporate employees hoping to make a difference by providing much-needed assistance. Hospital authorities clearly

hoped this make-work project would eventually result in long-term corporate sponsorship of their facility – though unsurprisingly, they never succeeded.

Table 1: Partnership Benefits

	Staff	Organization
Community Partner	New skills Improved morale, self esteem Increased opportunities for development Increased knowledge of the corporate world Increased opportunities to demonstrate and practice skills New friendships Expanded networks	Increased capability Ability to meet objectives Improved credibility Enhanced profile Valued more in the community Opportunity for influence Opportunities for promotion of messages Opportunity to accomplish much-needed work
Business Partner	Improved morale, self esteem Team spirit New Skills Opportunity to "give back" Increased knowledge of issues in the community Opportunities for staff development Expanded networks Reduced risk	Stronger branding in the community Enhanced reputation More attractive to ethical/socially responsible investors Greater productivity More in touch with community needs Visible demonstration of values Improved staff retention rates Stronger community as customer and employee base
Community/ Environment	Increased profile for the community; positive benefits from partnership projects	

(source: modified from CBP, 2006)

This sobering example of a failed partnership attempt exhibits symptomatic deficiencies of dialogue, transparency and shared understanding between public service and corporate sectors regarding employer supported volunteerism (ESV). Tensions between the two sectors can magnify in cases where public service organizations are awkwardly positioned regarding the need to pursue new avenues for revenue diversification, vie for existing resources, and seek creative methods of engaging volunteers – while maintaining effective management of day-to-day operations. Similarly businesses armed with knowledge that community engagement can effectively demonstrate citizenship, increasingly express the desire to help address perceived needs by "volunteering" their employees to assist with noteworthy community causes.

The arguments against employee volunteering can seem to outweigh the benefits – and closely parallel cautions about CSR initiatives in general. On one hand, public sector service organizations often suggest that hosting workplace volunteers is more effort than it is worth: they lack capacity to accommodate employee volunteer teams, and fear that the demanding process of

partnering with a corporation obscure focus on their original mission. On the other hand, corporate representatives often feel slighted when, for example, winning acceptance of their offers to donate staff time for projects means accompanying such offers with additional funding, or when their ulterior motives in partnering fall under the scrutiny of consumer awareness advocates, or when staff become disillusioned by participating in "make-work" projects that lack genuine value (Imagine Canada, 2006b).

Despite these apprehensions, businesses increasingly seek methods for engaging in ESV, a rapidly expanding movement. In fact, this is one of the fastest growing aspects of corporate community investment – one that is expected to increase given the increasing emphasis placed upon community action by the public sector (Ramrayka, 2001). In assessing the pulse of the phenomenon, Graph (2004) and Ellis and McCurley (2005), authorities in volunteer management, acknowledge its global prevalence. For example, they note that:

- One third of large US companies have formal policies supporting employee involvement, while 40% of medium and large companies offer employees paid leave to carry out community volunteer work.
- Statistics from the UK reveal numbers similar to the US – approximately one third of large companies support ESV. In addition, Business in the Community, a UK charity that supports CSR initiatives found that almost 90% of its 700 members support some form of employee volunteering activity.
- Many European employers of business, public and voluntary sector organizations are becoming increasingly involved.
- Research, commissioned by the UK National Centre for Volunteering, documents ESV as a component of CSR worldwide, including India, Brazil, Lebanon and Russia.
- Organizations such as Volunteers of America and the Centre for Corporate Citizenship state that ESV is likely to expand as businesses seek to integrate volunteer programs into their larger corporate citizenship strategies.

Support for employee volunteerism holds significance for Canadian businesses. The newly released Imagine Canada survey on Giving and Volunteering issued a special highlight on activities of employed volunteers. Among those who took the survey, 29% indicated that their

employer supported programs or policies that encourage volunteerism. 17% percent of volunteers engaged in these supported programs mentioned that that their employer provided matching grants to organizations that also received their donated services (Hall, Lasby, Gumulka, and Tryon, 2006). Subsequent research by Easwaramoorthy et al. (2006), seeking insight into the extent of support for employee volunteering, randomly surveyed almost one thousand businesses across the nation. The resulting report, the first of its kind in Canada, provides a comprehensive portrait of nationwide ESV. Most notably, researchers discovered that 71% of businesses encourage, or accommodate, a spectrum of staff volunteer activities. This tally is explained by the range of provisions that are included within a broad conceptualization of employee volunteerism. Half of businesses encouraging employees to volunteer state that employees do so on their own time, while only one third of companies allow employees to volunteer during company time. Of this third, only 18% of companies actively encourage volunteerism within working hours. These statistics, and the fact that only 3% of the reporting companies have policies on employee volunteering, support the conclusion that formal corporate volunteer programs aided by company resources are still in their infancy in Canada, and that reactive, rather than proactive approaches characterize this support.

As indicated, employers may use a range of means to enable or encourage staff to volunteer. Informally, businesses might provide in-kind support through the donation of office supplies and resources, granting "flex time" for staff to work on charitable initiatives or recognizing employees through award ceremonies or job performance reviews. Organizing team volunteer challenges, arranging for employees to utilize working hours to volunteer, providing staff coordination or financial support, or even mandating voluntary activities are included within the a more formalized approach to employee volunteer programs (Peterson, 2004). As Reynolds (2001) discusses, activities range from informal ad hoc events, to formal, short- or long-term projects. Thus, depending on the programs or policies in places, a business might encourage employees to volunteer for causes in which they already are involved, persuade staff to engage in undertakings that interest them, or request that employees participate in pre-selected initiatives aligned with its own corporate philanthropic mission. Popularity of this latter option, where employees are mandated by employers to volunteer, is increasing as the ESV concept gains momentum. It also holds promise for ensuring mutual benefit – an attribute of partnerships that Graff (2004) notes is inherent within the concept of ESV.

The surge of mandated initiatives has sparked some debate within the voluntary sector about whether ESV (also called corporate volunteering, employee community involvement, employee volunteering or workplace volunteering) is actually a misnomer[4]. Traditionally, volunteering is associated with good citizenship, philanthropy and with unpaid services provided by people who donate their time, energy and skills freely for the betterment of the community. Volunteering thus differs from other forms of community service, such as Community Service Orders and school placements because, although assistance may be coordinated by a nonprofit or public sector organization, it is not mandatory (Cnaan, Handy, and Wadsworth, 1996; Fryer, 2003; Volunteer Canada, 2006)[5]. Others suggest that it is not the employee who actually volunteers, but the employer who donates time, resources and money (Ellis and McCurly, 2002; Reynolds, 2001). Many pragmatists are quick to point out that whether it is labeled "voluntary" or not, the work accomplished by employee volunteers is essentially a donation for community betterment. In a warning about over-analyzing how volunteers get worthy work done, Cronin and Fryer (2006) suggest it is important not to favour traditional volunteers while looking down at those who become engaged through other forms of community service: "We hope we do not see the creation of different tiers of volunteering in our society . . . and that we don't venture down the George Orwell road where all volunteers are equal – but some are just a little more equal than others" (p. 1).

For employees engaged in ESV programs facilitated by the employer, gaining compensation in some form *and* receiving requests to volunteer conflicts with the traditional concept that volunteers act of their own free will while receiving no monetary gain. Graff (2006b) suggests that volunteering and mandatory community work represent opposite ends of a "complex continuum" of services ranging from *choice* to *incentive*, to *coercion* to *obligation*. With this

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[4] Aware of this debate, Hall et al. (2006), differentiated instances where employees were requested to volunteer from "traditional volunteering" activities, placing ESV under the umbrella of "mandatory community service."

[5] The increasing popularity of programs promoting or requiring community service – such as the 40-hours of service necessary for Ontario high-school students to graduate, corporate volunteerism, workfare and even alternative sentencing – is an important trend that is changing the meaning of volunteer involvement (Ellis and McCurly, 2002; Morgan, 2001). Recognizing this, definitions of volunteering are evolving beyond the traditional, idealistic concepts of volunteers as individuals who participate of their own volition. Cnaan (1996) notes that the "unsalaried" aspect of volunteerism is being extended to incorporate work-related imbursement and support, while other experts temper the notion of volunteering as an act of free-will by suggesting that it may be *relatively* uncoerced (allowing that there may be external forces at work that may influence an individual to volunteer) (Graff, 2006a).

perspective she notes that what is, or isn't, true about volunteering may be unclear. However, she perceives the key implication of this continuum to be logistical rather than theoretical: organizations utilizing corporate employees as part of their volunteer programs should understand that participants may have different incentives, motivations and expectations from more "traditional volunteers", and that these variances may require different methods of program planning and design, recruitment and engagement.

In considering the definition of "workplace volunteerism", Ellis and McCurley (2005) warn that it is important that companies should not take credit for employees volunteering with a community organization or group unless these corporations add something substantive to the services of the individuals doing the work – either in the form of financial contributions, a gift of supplies or, at least ensuring that their volunteers receive paid time off for their activities. Ellis (2004) adds that business must also become fully engaged in the effort. ESV should not be used just to develop a "veneer of social conscience," but should demonstrate good citizenship by involving all levels of staff and management, addressing organizational, social and environmental responsibilities, and acting legally and ethically. In short, the voluntary aspect in "workplace volunteerism" should be applicable in a holistic sense, entailing as much engagement of the business as of the individual employee.

It is worth noting that ESV may belong to the same suite of collaborative-governance arrangements identified by Lerner (2006) as "other-organized." Unlike "self-organized" groups whose members mobilize by rallying around a cause in which they are vested, "other-organized" arrangements are more top-down or "tiered" community engagement initiatives, where citizens are recruited to participate for a particular cause. Strongly influenced by organizers' agendas, these arrangements are prone to several weaknesses linked to participants distance from the planning process. For example, volunteers might feel constrained by limited timelines and task choices, and might gain a lower sense of personal achievement than they might had they held a more direct stake the process (Lerner, 2006). At the same time, ESV provides an opportunity for participants to volunteer when they might otherwise not have an opportunity. This is particularly important because work is now a place where people spend most of their waking time and have most of their social opportunities – taking the place of "old institutions such as churches and social clubs that have heretofore provide a key nexus for volunteer involvement" (Ellis and McCurly, 2005, p. 1). In addition, volunteer surveys have long shown that volunteer burnout is a

common problem, in part because much work is done by a few (Hall, Lasby, Gumulka, and Tryon, 2006). Nevertheless, "other-organized" arrangements can be useful in providing a forum for engaging people who otherwise lack the knowledge and determination to become volunteers on their own. In this regard, it strengthens the voluntary sector and contributes to the development of social capital.

3.1.1. Implications – CSR, voluntary initiatives and ESV

Despite generalizations about motives, benefits and the general nature of cross-sectoral partnerships supporting ESV initiatives, unique influences and varying circumstances always play into partnership formation. While a broad understanding of issues surrounding corporate social responsibility and workplace volunteerism can be helpful, it is also important to recognize that issues specific to each partnership deserve consideration on a case-by-case basis: there is no one-size-fits-all approach.

Developing a high level of accountability between respective partners and the public is important enough to rank as a precondition for joint ventures. Rather than trying to develop legitimate partnerships haphazardly, each collaborator must examine a suite of ethical and practical considerations before commitment. For instance, public sector service organizations need to consider the appropriateness of a partnership, especially in relation to their own work obligations, while it behooves firms to be duly diligent in developing a comprehensive understanding of the relevance of the projects to undertaken, the type and quality of the contribution they will be making towards conservation, and even the circumstances (with particular emphasis safety and labour practices) that their employees might experience.

3.2. Understanding and valuing volunteers

Volunteer motivations and benefits provide a recurring leitmotif within the broad literature encompassing stewardship and volunteering. Understanding what motivates volunteers to engage in, and stay involved with community and environmental service has become the cornerstone of building successful volunteer programs and is no less relevant to the advancement of volunteer programs enlisting employee volunteers. Knowledge of motivations is both a pre-condition to collaboration and an aid to developing volunteer retention strategies (Ryan, 2000; Selsky and

Parker, 2005). Consequently, motivations are perhaps the most well-researched aspect of volunteerism, and are consistent enough to be summarized (Christie, 2004).

A significant difference exists between organizational motivations for entering into a partnership, and motivations for volunteers themselves. In fact, Selskey and Parker (2005) quote research suggesting that three motivational levels exist within partnerships – metagoals (or the common cause), the goals of each partner and the motivations of the individuals involved. This section focuses primarily on the motivations of volunteers since they are the ones that carry key messages back to businesses and convey them beyond corporate life. The lack of information about corporate volunteer motivations affecting stewardship engagement directs attention to illumination available from literature pertaining to employee volunteerism in general and stewardship volunteers.

In general, volunteer motivations are thought never to be solely altruistic or self-serving, but a combination of both. For example, among the leading reasons why Canadians volunteer are the desire to make a difference (to "give back"), the fact that they have been personally affected by their cause, and the desire to utilize or gain skills (Hall, Lasby, Gumulka, and Tryon, 2006). Other commonly cited incentives include a sense of achievement or personal wellbeing, feeling part of a group or community, making new friends and receiving recognition (Hall, Lasby, Gumulka, and Tryon, 2006; Hwang, Grabb, and Curtis, 2005; Ottawa Volunteer Centre, 1992). Findings on what compels individuals to participate in stewardship activities echo these motivations, although other factors often include childhood interaction with nature, a previous knowledge of the problems, and a sense of urgency (Christie, 2004; Grese, Kaplan, Ryan, and Buxton, 2000; Wearing, 2001).

Being personally affected by an issue, also a theme within general volunteer literature, often finds parallels within environmental literature, including discussions on the NIMBY syndrome (not in my backyard) where individuals derive motivation from the desire to protect places that are important to them (Christie, 2004). Interestingly, this may expand into the NOPE (not on Planet Earth) syndrome (Hoffman, 2000). Interactions with others can bolster these motivations. For example, researchers propose that while rallying around a common cause, participants' motivations often increase as does their ability to sustain a concerted effort to forward their aim (Whitelaw, 2005). Along similar lines, Shroeder (2000), in studying the publications of volunteer

land stewards, proposes that battle themes within conservation literature (especially with regard to removing invasive species) serve to reinforce a sense of community. He suggests that for some volunteers, restoration activities can be akin to moral war, stating: "The metaphorical likening of restoration work to war has a positive effect of reinforcing volunteers' commitment, dedication and willingness to sacrifice for their cause. (p. 262)."[6] For groups such as volunteer employees, cultivating a sense of cohesiveness through teamwork and active "challenges" may help to generate interest, motivate, and even sustain momentum (even if the conservation issues at hand do not immediately resonate with all the participating company employees).

Through her experience as a conservation volunteer coordinator for the US Nature Conservancy (TNC), Deborah Barber feels that those who volunteer for stewardship activities are, in particular, driven by the benefits volunteers find in developing a sense of place (Barber, 2004). The idea of developing a "visceral connection" with the land also surfaces strongly in Wumkes' commentary about conservation volunteering (Wumkes, 2002). She asserts that volunteers may also discover a sense of place by coming to know an area through their work – even if initially they never felt strongly about it. The natural aesthetics of a place may also play a role in enhancing volunteer motivations; in fact, some philosophers theorize that people struck by the natural beauty of an area may be more motivated to participate actively than those who feel compelled solely from a sense of moral obligation (Zweers, 2000).

Place-based attachment springs from emotions that evoke passion and enthusiasm for participation. In her study of positive emotions, psychologist Kay Redfield Jamison (2004) credits nature as being a primary source from which humans derive enthusiasm that is, in turn, self-energizing and infectious to others. By discussing their positive conservation experiences with others, volunteers offer the more intangible benefit of spreading word about their good work (and the organizations that support it) (Ramrayka, 2001) thereby also helping to bring larger conservation issues to the attention of the broader public (Newman, Buesching, and Macdonald, 2003). Sharing of experience can serve as positive re-enforcement for volunteers, complementing Wumke's belief that volunteers may grow to feel stronger about their work, the

[6] In contrast, Francis Bacon suggested that conquest and dominion over nature was a noble ambition for humankind. Essentially, he positioned conquest over the natural world to be the moral equivalent of war (*see* Carolyn Merchant's *The Death of Nature).*

longer they are engaged. Christie (2004), Hull and Robertson (2000a; , 2000b) and Helford (2000) all contribute to the discussion by reinforcing the idea that through first-hand stewardship experience, volunteers can grow emotionally attached to a geographic space. Furthermore, they suggest that, over time and fortified with an understanding of the meaning of the work at hand, this attachment may evolve to include an understanding of issues linked within the broader landscape context. Besides increasing an individual's understanding of an issue, the concept of attachment to place may also have ramifications at an organizational scale. For example, Whitman and Cooper (2000) suggest that, through workplace community involvement, company managers tend to gain a stronger sense of "personal identification" with an ecosystem that may result in a greater commitment to broader sustainable management throughout their business practices.

Research focusing on individual volunteer motivation also acknowledges that volunteers often seek to achieve personal benefits such as a sense of self-satisfaction, self-renewal or feeling of accomplishment (Christie, 2004; Wearing, 2001). Schroeder (2000), Christie (2004) and Grese et al. (2000) point out that benefits such as experiential learning, a sense of inspiration from nature, and a feeling of enthusiastic discovery are all well-valued aspects of environment and stewardship-based volunteering. Furthermore, employers often engage employees in ESV in part because they hope that their staff – their greatest resource – will benefit from participation, thereby increasing company loyalty, decreasing staff turnover and providing lip service to the company.

3.2.1. Implications for valuing volunteers

Many of ideas presented in this section – developing educational opportunities through experience, cultivating cohesiveness through teamwork, and fostering stewardship through place-based activities – are important for capitalizing on existing volunteer motivations, and for cultivating a suite of benefits important at individual and organizational levels to help forward shared goals.

Individual and organizational benefits, collectively greater than what is achieved separately, all point towards the development of social capital. With its focus on how shared values and behaviors connect communities together through trust, understanding, mutual goals and

cooperation (Sparkes, 2003), social capital is created when individuals with a shared goal generate benefits that extend beyond themselves (Torjman, 2004).

The intangibility of social capital poses some problems for community organizations trying to justify the importance of volunteer engagement. It begs the question: how can one comprehend and convey the full range of volunteering's benefits? Increasingly, some organizations seek to answer this by assigning a dollar value to volunteer work or instigating more complex methods of social accounting that facilitate reporting on value added by volunteers. The volunteer community has often debated the practice of assigning monetary value to volunteer time. Consequently, arguments against this practice abound; critics argue that the data are too difficult to collect, important volunteer activities can be de-valued and that essentially it just doesn't feel right (Ellis, 1999). Nevertheless, in a culture that understands value primarily in monetary terms, volunteer managers increasingly find it necessary to justify this return by quantifying their programs' costs and benefits.[7]

Though quantifying volunteer labour is complex, it ultimately proves useful. As Graff (2005) observes, shifting volunteer programs to a system of social accounting helps to bring accountability and transparency to the voluntary sector. It also helps justify budget requests or highlight areas of need. Assigning value is especially crucial for managers within the environmental sector who rely on sweat-equity to provide a dollar-for-dollar match for funding sources that require the utilization of volunteers as a contribution. In addition, Quarter et al. (2003) agree that, in failing to create accounting statements that attribute value to volunteer services, an organization ignores critical elements of its social impact. As evidence that volunteer labour is undervalued (in this sense), a survey of over 150 nonprofit organizations discloses that only a third kept records of volunteer contributions; only 7% assigned monetary value to these contributions; and only 3% took the next step by including monetary value in their accounting statements (Mook and Quarter, 2003).

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[7] Recently, strides have been made in calculating volunteer value and calculating a return on investment. For example, the Independent Sector, a leadership forum for charities, foundations and corporate giving programs, is widely accepted as the leader in setting the value of a volunteer hour (incidentally, this value has increased from $7.46 an hour in 1980 to $18.04 in 2005) (Independent Sector, 2006). Other studies, done within Canada and Europe have shown that volunteers return between $2.05 and $21.24 for every $1.57 expended (Grantmaker Forum, 2003). It is not clear whether this calculation includes the cost of corporate volunteers.

There are two reasons why organizations creating partnerships with firms who value ESV, need to account for, and monitor volunteer activities. First, the business-like approach to calculating volunteer value provides firms with easily comprehensible material, well-suited to reporting, and thereby facilitating the development of partnership trust. Secondly, studies reveal tension between a desire to take on more volunteers and a commitment to manage and support existing volunteers for quality results (Grantmaker Forum, 2003). This can help broaden the nonprofit perspective, especially when engagement of corporate volunteers calls for different resources and expenditures than traditional volunteers.

3.3. Implications for partnerships

While the previous chapter focuses primarily on partner interaction and partnering roles associated with stewardship and corporate social responsibility, this chapter takes a deeper look at the role of a particular set of players within a partnership scenario – the employee volunteers themselves, whose involvement and participation are clearly crucial to the success of joint partnership. This review highlights the need for partners to implement ESV programs by organizing volunteer opportunities that are meaningful, not only because they allow employees to accomplish hands-on work and thereby fill important roles, but also because they create contexts in which employees can develop social capital, to broaden their awareness of stewardship issues and responsibilities, and enhance their ethic for volunteering. Potential indicators of success here might include employees returning to volunteer on their own time, the development of a sense of place or taking ownership for the work they have done, taking stewardship messages to heart by taking greater individual responsibility for the natural environment, and gaining a more sophisticated understanding of, and commitment to, stewardship.

The trends, tensions and issues discussed in this chapter guide the development of partnership criteria and point to several best practices for cross-sectoral engagement. The example of the failed partnership attempt speaks to the need for partners to meet as equals and involve each other in authentic work wherein participants contribute directly to their mission rather than completing tasks created specifically for volunteers. Ellis discusses the importance of not utilizing employer supported volunteerism as a two-dimensional veneer that looks good but lacks

depth or meaning. Though she targets the corporate sector with this reminder, the need to act authentically has applications for both sectors.

Closely related to the concept of authenticity is the idea of developing a transparent relationship, including clarification of the usually opaque ambiguity of motives pertaining to enlightened self-interest. Since more than one motive generally leads community and corporate organizations to facilitate employer supported volunteerism, this understanding of each other's goals becomes essential for mitigating concerns, deriving mutual benefit, and pursuing shared goals that extend beyond the needs of both partners.

The practical and ethical considerations vital to determining the appropriateness of potential partnerships invoke the principle of accountability. This concept underscores the necessity of employing appropriate evaluative techniques as a step towards overcoming barriers, assessing effectiveness and documenting social/environmental impacts and noteworthy milestones. This evaluative aspect of partnership complements the principle of transparency because it creates a window through which stakeholders (including the public) may view and understand activities.

The need for multi-leveled engagement frequently arises within the literature. The top-down approach to community engagement may seem like a hallmark of most initiatives associated with corporate social responsibility. As Lerner notes, top-heavy or "other organized" forms of governance can easily lose momentum without efforts to engage individuals at different levels. Partners facilitating employer supported volunteering are behooved not only to garner management's support, but also to find ways of forwarding programs by tapping into the interests and expertise of employees, many of whom may contribute to an advanced understanding of community needs.

Chapter 4: Global case examples of employer supported volunteerism

4.1. Introduction

This chapter presents four case examples that contextualize and build upon the concepts presented within the literature review. This second phase of research serves to strengthen and augment key lessons distilled from the literature review. It seeks to reveal how organizations in other countries, with well-developed corporate community engagement programs, have evolved effective practices for partnership and conservation volunteer management. In particular, my objectives have been to understand how others have handled challenges, draw out key lessons from stakeholder experiences and search for thematic patterns that will provide clues for further developing the partnership framework.

The stories comprising section 4.2 help facilitate better understanding of the challenges and dilemmas faced by cross-sectoral partners instituting employer supported volunteer programs. Section 4.3 augments a discussion of the case examples with observations made by the other contacts whose stories did not require presentation in case form.

These brief case studies, or *case examples*, provide the means to explore various models for utilizing ESV within real-life contexts. Yin (2003) advocates using case studies to explore contemporary partnerships for this reason, suggesting that, while each may be technically distinct, it helps shed light on the phenomenon as a whole. Case examples also reveal how partnerships play out in various situations. Assuming that managers of more established programs could share essential ideas about best practices by discussing their own experiences, I chose to look outside Canada for potential cases. This required employing several techniques for finding potential interviewees including web searches, reading corporate social responsibility reports and searching through list-serve databases. Essentially, the process took three stages:

1) Finding Contacts. Posting invitations on three Volunteer Program Manager (VPM) list serves resulted in eight conservation managers from Germany, the UK, Australia and the US providing me with synopses of their experiences working with corporate employee groups (see Appendix B for an example of my posting which welcomed readers to contribute to my research by discussing what worked for them in terms of engaging volunteers and how they overcame

hurdles). Internet searches, corporate social responsibility newswire postings and directly contacting organizations revealed five other potential informants from the US, Australia and the UK. It was more difficult to connect with the foreign corporate organizations who have instituted exceptional conservation-based employee volunteer programs. Corporations such as Alcoa, BASF, Xerox and Cannon have developed interesting conservation-based programs, but representatives were unavailable for interviews.

2) Selecting the Cases: Informal discussions with the contacts revealed several potential candidate case studies. Central to selection were cases that boasted ongoing, partnership-based corporate volunteer programs that had been operating for more than five years. I also wanted representation from both conservation and corporate sectors. Four cases best met these criteria:

1) The Nature Conservancy (TNC), whose key informant reviews progress made in over seven years of restoration work on a Michigan nature reserve assisted by corporate volunteers (see section 4.2.1);

2) four UK-based conservation organizations with combined experience working independently and in partnership to facilitate employee volunteering with numerous company staff (see section 4.2.2);

3) BHP Billiton and Conservation Volunteers Australia whose joint perspective provides key lessons from almost nine years of partnership (see section 4.2.3);

4) L.L. Bean, who has supported staff for over twenty-seven years of voluntarily maintaining Maine's wilderness section of the Appalachian Trail (see section 4.2.4).

3) Collecting and corroborating the data. The responses from the list-serve, organizational documentation, e-mail interviews and semi-structured phone interviews[8] provided data for the case studies. Respondents reviewed the draft cases upon completion, after their comments had been incorporated. This procedure helped to corroborate the essential facts and evidence presented in the reports.

[8] The interview procedure followed the University of Waterloo's strict ethics protocols. List of interview questions is provided in Appendix C.

4.2. Case examples

4.2.1. The Nature Conservancy

"The good news and the bad with Ives Road Fen was that there were so many invasive plants. At one point, it looked like our job would never be done. On the other hand, it made it easy to utilize volunteers and, if we got enough volunteers, we could make a difference." – Brown (2007)former TNC Director of Volunteer and Outreach Programs

The Nature Conservancy (TNC), a US-based charity working to conserve important ecological areas in over thirty countries (TNC, 2006). With a global scope which includes protecting more than 117 million acres of land and 5,000 miles of rivers as well as operating more than 100 marine conservation projects worldwide, TNC is a true heavyweight in the world of conservation. Businesses increasingly choose to partner with TNC in a number of ways including sponsorship, cause marketing and land donation. Employee volunteerism sometimes emerges as a natural component of these partnerships. In addition, TNC strives to utilize corporate volunteer teams on an ad hoc basis. While the charity views overarching partnerships as ideal, no hard and fast models for participation exist. Regardless of partnership scale, most corporate groups work on nature reserves during planned volunteer events or "stewardship days", receiving an hour of orientation and training before tackling tasks such as invasive species removal[9].

This case example focuses on the stewardship work accomplished at TNC's Ives Road Fen located in Lenawee County on Michigan's Lower Peninsula. As one of the State's largest fens, it is exceptional because it is classified as a "Prairie Fen", a globally significant wetland characterized by a substrate of saturated sapric peat which supports the growth of native tallgrass flora species such as prairie dropseed, prairie Indian plantain and prairie rose. Unfortunately, the unique qualities of Ives Road Fen do not make it any less immune to the pressures which degrade so many wetlands and prairie remnants across North America. Invasive species such as purple loosestrife and glossy buckthorn, agricultural management strategies such as ditches and

[9] Methods: Corporate groups are sub-divided into small crews who eradicate invasive species (e.g. buckthorn) using hand tools. One crew member cuts the brush down, while the others are charged with clearing the area. In their wake (and with the right weather conditions) trained TNC stewardship staff apply herbicide on the cut stumps to prevent future growth.

tiling, along with the prevailing acceptance of fire suppression threaten the wellbeing of this preserve.

What sets Ives Road Fen apart from other natural areas perhaps even more than its rare status is the fact that TNC staff continue to put enormous effort into restoring the fen with the use of traditional and employee volunteers. The concerted and sustained effort of those involved means the fen, at one time overwhelmed with ecological threats, is now being restored to its natural state. In fact, since 1987, staff and volunteers have filled in ditches, removed over 100 metres of drainage tiles, weeded "more than 2.5 million adult buckthorn stems, burned nearly 400 brush piles, spot burned 10 million buckthorn seedlings, conducted 31 prescribed burns, removed 1.5 tons of garlic mustard by hand and treated 500,000 purple loosestrife and 10,000 cattails" (TNC, 2008).

It is no wonder that Jill Brown[10], a former TNC Director of Volunteer and Outreach Programs, uses Ives Road Fen to illustrate employee engagement on TNC nature reserves. She describes the invasive species whose thick stands so threaten this spring-fed wetland, including its frogs, prairie grasses and wildflowers, that only "years of work" by volunteers can offer any hope of eradicating them. Because this private preserve's environmental sensitivity restricts public access to scheduled work days or educational tours, people interested in exploring the site often welcome the chance to do so by lending a hand as volunteers. In a fresh approach to evaluating the investment benefits of engaging corporate volunteers, Brown notes that volunteers from this sector not only give much-needed help, they offer a unique opportunity for TNC to raise its profile, providing her with audiences that she feels are beyond her reach "in any other capacity". While coordinating corporate teams requires staff time equal to hosting an outreach exhibit, she suspects that at day's end, captive, engaged corporate teams leave with a more advanced understanding of stewardship than do those who simply pocket a brochure at an exhibit. Brown admits that corporate volunteers take more time to train than traditional volunteers. Nevertheless, she prefers to maintain her focus on engaging and educating new audiences during work events, an investment, she argues, whose benefits outweigh the costs.

[10] Not her real name

Meeting the challenge of introducing corporate volunteers to the daunting task of restoring the fen has led Brown to offer some key recommendations, highlighted below.

- *Focus on a broad vision and track cumulative successes*

Invasive species, particularly buckthorn and garlic mustard, had made Ives Road Fen seem more like a Slough of Despond than a globally significant paradise. Brown notes, "There was a point, for maybe six or seven years where people started questioning whether [our efforts] were actually working". However, perseverance, bolstered by a dedicated focus on end goals rather than on the feat's Herculean nature, is paying off. She explains, "Volunteers are slowly beginning to see a difference: first they could see the corridors they had cleared, and now they can see entire open areas." The slow, complex process of environmental restoration easily frustrates volunteers eager for more immediate results. Stewardship staff face huge challenges to motivate and retain volunteers for such daunting tasks. However, it is clear, says Brown that there is value in consistently upholding the overall vision for the area while informing volunteers when incremental changes become most apparent.

Tracking quantitative results also builds understanding of volunteer roles within a larger context. Ten volunteers spending four hours on-site might seem relatively insignificant; but the cumulative effects of their work can astound. Brown urges careful tracking of volunteer hours and communicating to volunteers how their time and work contributions ultimately fill in the "big picture" consisting of thousands of hours donated statewide. Volunteer tracking not only provides an essential "part of the overall volunteer experience", important for motivation and retention, it is often a prerequisite for many grant proposals, and an incentive for corporations participating in "Dollars for Doers"[11] grant programs.

- *Share expectations, reiterate expectations: ensure staff and volunteers know what is expected on both sides.*

Brown is frank in her ongoing crusade for prompt, thorough and open communication that fosters a shared clarity about expectations: "Staff need to know what their role is, and volunteers

[11] Dollars for Doers: as an incentive for employees who volunteer on their own time, some businesses have instituted "dollars for doers" programs that grant cash contributions to qualifying nonprofits on behalf of employees who volunteer a specific minimum number of hours in service to their chosen organization.

need to know the same thing. This is not a field trip, they are going to work! They need to know exactly what to expect." To make her point, she recalls, "The strangest thing I ever saw was somebody showing up to the fen to do manual labour in heels. I still don't know what she was thinking."

- *Be vigilant while emphasizing teamwork: slow and steady wins the race*

Poor enthusiasm is a rarity among corporate volunteers. By contrast, excessive enthusiasm may prove difficult to curb when, for example, zealous employees, intent on achievement, forge ahead in situations where they lack familiarity with tool use, specific outdoor tasks and potential hazards. Explaining the importance of vigilance, Brown says, "We had an injury when somebody's co-worker was overzealous and caught her in the head with some brush. It was nothing major, but it could have been. These are people doing work they don't normally do." In a time when safety and liability concerns are paramount for non-profits, the following advice resonates: encourage volunteers to work closely in teams, and "pay a little more attention to keeping people in control" because despite their enthusiasm, they might not always be paying full attention themselves.

- *Weather organizational changes by impressing on superiors the importance of maintaining consistent top-down support*

Inevitable management changes can weaken support for stewardship volunteer programs. "You have to have buy-in from the top," Brown says, noting that once she left the organization, her role was never replaced. She adds that once support starts to dwindle, it becomes apparent to others. "The volunteers know; they can tell." The "trickle down effect" of diminished top-down program support can ultimately compromise program development and disintegrate hard-earned relationships with corporate contacts. Once nonprofits lose outreach and point-contacts, they become "hard pressed to keep strong corporate contact going."

Valuing volunteers for what they can offer as individuals, above and beyond their potential as donors, is also important, Brown believes. "If [stewardship management] doesn't see the value of volunteers, then you are not going to have a solid volunteer program," she confides. Corporations will respond positively to nonprofits who deliver the quality volunteer experience they expect. Ensuring that employees have a "positive and safe experience on site" bodes well for future support. Attentiveness to delivering a quality volunteer experience forms a large

component of what Brown terms the "care and feeding of volunteers" a responsibility she regards as pivotal to the reciprocal nature of good stewardship programs.

- *Communicate internally to familiarize peers with the intricacies of stewardship engagement*

Within large nonprofits such as TNC, development staff, charged with facilitating overarching partnerships, tend to work separately from stewardship staff. However, when development professionals start to capitalize on the bourgeoning popularity of employee volunteering by offering employee involvement opportunities as a perk associated with larger partnership agreements, collaborative internal communication is essential. Brown advises sharing ideas about what constitutes appropriate, priority-driven stewardship work. Strong internal communication at this intersection of development and stewardship forms a basis for future program directions while minimizing the problem of having uneducated staff "create work for volunteers so they can engage specific people". Brown warns that developing make-work projects for the purpose of engaging corporate groups defeats the purpose of partnerships and quite simply "doesn't' work".

Summary:

Brown demonstrates the value of service-learning experiences that introduce newcomers to stewardship by communicating to them long-term goals and vision, as well as the purpose and techniques of restoration. Maintaining a balance between work and education depends on stewardship volunteer coordinators' commitment to keep reinforcing knowledge that may be relatively new, especially to well-intentioned volunteers who possess only a rudimentary grasp of the details. Instances such as volunteers arriving ill-equipped for field work underscore the importance of avoiding all assumptions of knowledge, and addressing volunteer awareness on both practical and theoretical levels. Preparing volunteers in advance with a clear picture of what they can expect (e.g. through simple handouts emphasizing *why* certain processes and safety measures are important), and encouraging inquiries via phone, e-mail and at the event could all be helpful. Similarly, on-site reinforcement of educational and procedural information offers a primary strategy for avoiding injuries and accidents. Finally the case demonstrates how consistent top-down and lateral (interdepartmental) support and understanding play a vital roles in enabling volunteer coordinators to focus on their key tasks, rather than struggling to legitimize volunteer programs and maintain relationships with corporate contacts. Thus, the need for

achieving unity of message and motives throughout the organization can scarcely be over-estimated.

4.2.2. Combined experiences: RSPB, National Trust and Wildlife Trusts

"Corporate volunteering gives us an opportunity to educate more people about what we do. We know that is one of the best ways to enthuse and inspire people about environmental issues. It also gives us an opportunity to potentially build links with the corporate sector that we might not already have and provides the opportunity to potentially influence companies about their own environmental policies and practices by talking to them and their staff about what they are doing." Alan Murray (2006), Royal Society for Protection of Birds

A number of conservation–based UK charities have jointly developed models for engaging employee volunteers. Through email and phone interviews, Alan Murray, head of the Royal Society for Protection of Birds' (RSPB) volunteering unit, Anne Inskip former National Trust Employee Volunteering and Placements Officer, and Caty Collier, formerly with the Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts shared key ideas about corporate volunteer management. Well-qualified to speak of their experiences, these individuals represent national charities with heavy reliance on volunteer services. RSPB engages 13,000 volunteers (nine volunteers per paid staff member) (RSPB, 2006); The National Trust, broadly mandated to protect natural cultural heritage, has 3.5 million members and 49,000 volunteers (National Trust, 2007); similarly, the Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts (embracing 47 conservation charities) involves 33,000 active volunteers (Wildlife Trusts, 2007). Under The National Trust's leadership, RSPB, the Wildlife Trusts and several other UK conservation charities joined forces to create the *Employee Volunteering Programme (EVP) and Partnership.* The collaboration, funded from 2001 to 2004, increased opportunities for hands-on involvement, developed formalized processes for engaging volunteer teams, improved cross-sectoral communication and worked to broker environmental employee volunteering within the sector (National Trust, 2004).

Based on respondents' individual and collective experiences, the conservation and nonprofit sector would do well to:

- *Create capacity through networking and collaboration*

Learning what others regard as best practices is a best practice in itself. Meeting regularly with other conservation practitioners who work on similar projects facilitates knowledge transfer and reduces a sense of isolation. Furthermore, tapping into collective resources may provide opportunities that result in greater gains. Murray (2006) acknowledges that such collaboration enabled the conservation sector to present a united front to the corporate sector through the *EVP and Partnership*, helping them to promote and facilitate environmental volunteering opportunities more effectively than they could alone.

- *Work on understanding inherent differences*

Inherent differences in the way corporations and nonprofits function can create frustration or misunderstanding when things do not work out. Overcoming these differences requires work on the part of both sectors. Collier (2007) observes, "Nonprofits need to understand more about corporate needs, and how volunteering fits in (e.g. as part of a learning programme enabling staff to show how they can meet core competencies). Conversely, companies need to understand more about how the nonprofit sector works – it has aims and objectives of its own and is not just another service provider." She recommends partners talk to each other more to understand motivational drivers, resource limitations, and the reasons why expectations cannot always be met.

- *Robustly and proactively identify potential team volunteer opportunities*

Charities frequently have difficulty finding room for large employee groups wishing to volunteer within short timeframes. Instead of scrambling to meet unrealistic expectations in the haste to build a relationship with a corporate partner, Collier emphasizes the need to "balance a professional approach to organizing volunteer events with the needs and restrictions of the charity" (Collier, 2007). Similarly, Inskip (2007) draws upon best practices as guidance, saying that she "makes continual effort to ensure that volunteering is mutually beneficial and remains a balanced "win-win" situation." Conversely, it entails understanding the corporate partners' goals and helping to deliver events that meet those expectations.

In Murray's experience, one practical method of fielding requests and aligning interests involves proactively prioritizing conservation work and identifying team challenge opportunities. RSBP publishes these opportunities online where they are made available for corporations to "come on board if they wish."

- *Suggest donations or ways in which corporations can help offset costs through in-kind assistance*

Suggesting a donation based on the cost of running, managing and organizing a corporate team event is an option if nonprofits are uncomfortable charging an outright fee. As Collier notes, "Most conservation organizations in the UK now have some sort of fee structure for large groups . . . [this helps] the standard of delivery match the corporate partner's expectations." Murray's experience indicates that donation suggestions are generally well-received: "some companies are happy to pay the donation, and others end up doing so in a slightly different way – through in-kind contributions (e.g. by providing tools and equipment that they will leave with us)."

- *Diversify ongoing programs to meet client needs*

In working with Cadbury, Land Rover, Ernst and Young and others, Inskip helps maintain relationships by putting forward a portfolio of volunteer opportunities that can be tailored to suit individual clients. She recommends offering "rolling programs" for team challenges (i.e. two per month for x number of months) because the frequency of visits allows good relationships to grow between corporate employees and Trust wardens, gardeners and volunteers. Offering activity options for audiences such as management, new interns and graduates of previous team challenges is also attractive for partners. She explains, "Graduate challenges usually have a more creative element built in that can push business brains." The National Trust is also working on offering corporations marketing, event planning and research opportunities that align closely with employee skill sets. By broadening the range of volunteering activities and encompassing more staff skills, Inskip attracts companies wishing to offer "continued professional development" options to their staff.

Several conservation organizations have also successfully arranged secondments, where corporations "donate" some employees to the conservation sector for an extended period (usually six months to one year). Hurdles do exist as conservation organizations attempt to draft job descriptions suited to corporate requirements, and businesses seek out employees to "volunteer". Although top management may support the idea, there is no guarantee that someone will come forward, or that middle management can spare staff members. Still, Murray feels that secondments ultimately offer better value than team challenges and are worthwhile pursuing.

- *Find ways to show your appreciation*

Inskip comments that a key element of best practice is to ensure volunteers know how their efforts are helping the Trust, the property and the environment as a whole. Saying thank you is key. "Our biggest challenge is saying thank you to the individual employee volunteers who come to our sites. We present teams with a certificate, a behind the scenes property tour or wildlife walk, and holding a social at the end of the day is something properties try to accommodate." Notes of thanks or recognition certificates help maintain partner relationships when resources are insufficient for more elaborate appreciation ceremonies or awards.

Summary

The first two suggestions, highlighting the importance of interaction and communication, complement the business-like approach recommended throughout. Networking and striving to help corporate "customers" understand the business of conservation can help volunteer programs maintain momentum. Reworking existing processes can increase efficiency and effectiveness. Promoting teamwork and identifying calculated costs addresses several key principles: proactive planning helps conservation organizations set themselves up for more equitable results that avoid the pitfall of pursuing long-term relationships by catering solely to partner requests at the expense of greater conservation gains. Furthermore, reflecting associated costs of work attests to their meaning and importance while lending a quality of transparency to the process. Finally, by expressing appreciation, conservation organizations can reaffirm the meaning and importance of the volunteer work while maintaining contact with workers and their employers.

4.2.3. Conservation Volunteers Australia and BHP Billiton – a joint partnership perspective

Remember what they said in Bridget Jones's Diary: one in three marriages ends in divorce. So we need to remember that if this is a relationship, then it will take work, commitment and transparency. Even then, sometimes it will still not work out! – Sam Robinson (2006), Conservation Volunteers Australia

The potential for relationship breakdown noted by Sam Robinson, CVA's Conservation and Government Affairs Manager, doesn't hinder Conservation Volunteers Australia (CVA) from pursuing corporate partnerships. Australia's largest conservation charity is an exemplary

facilitator of joint ventures that extend beyond sponsorship, broadening the scope of corporate community engagement. Programs such as *Shell Coastal Volunteers*, *Toyota Conservation Connect* and *BHP Billiton Revive Our Wetlands Program* demonstrate the collaborative successes of CVA and its partners in their work with local communities to complete volunteer-driven conservation projects.

CVA's staff have learned so much from navigating partnership complexities that businesses and nonprofits alike now seek their expertise. Yet in commenting about her experiences, Robinson admits that, " . . . most of what we do, we just do!" Like most nonprofits, she and her staff are so committed to servicing ongoing partnerships and seeking new ones that they have little time for knowledge sharing.

Nevertheless, Robinson offered several lessons she and her counterparts at BHP Billiton learned from their first years of collaborating on *Revive Our Wetlands,* a multifaceted initiative to revitalize and monitor Australia's wetlands by engaging school groups, public volunteers and corporate employees. Robinson notes that even nine years of partnering leave no room for complacency in this project. Her foremost advice: "Never forget that the partnership is a *relationship* that takes work, commitment and transparency." On this premise, the following summarizes her recommendations which have relevance for both conservation organizations and corporations:

- *Don't force the partnership*

Partnerships require work and time and shouldn't be rushed. Working on less formal, or trial projects before entering into full scale formal partnerships is a good way to get to know each other and establish common ground. In the case of CVA and BHP, partners valued the experience of working together for a minimum of six to twelve months prior to formalizing large scale partnership (Buckland and Harrison, 2003).

- *If in doubt, over-communicate!*

Consistent communication is vital for building and maintaining partnerships. Robinson's advice: "Put in the time and you'll reap the benefits" She recommends meeting with partners on a regular basis to set concrete goals jointly, quantifying deliverables, developing a brand strategy

and clearly articulating expectations. Despite the increase in up-front activity, pro-active planning and communication ultimately help allay fears, tensions and frustration.

- *Seek out the full potential of partnerships*

BHP Billiton and CVA analyzed what each could offer the partnership in addition to funding. Robinson suggests examining the possibilities of sharing or exchanging resources such as "professional expertise, new networks, staff time, facilities, purchasing power, marketing expertise, health and safety advice and databases". "At the same time," she warns, "be realistic about the need for adequate financial resources."

- *"Work with, not for, each other"*

"It's critical," suggests Robinson, "to develop programs based on mutual interest and need." By contrast, working "for", rather than "with" each other ignores commonality and its potential as an incentive and motivation to work towards goals that serve the community.

- *Reflect on present progress . . . but plan for the future*

Independent evaluators may provide the best monitoring of a program's progress and its goal attainment. Once original goals are met, Robinson suggests "repeating the consultation process to determine 'where to from here.'" Enabling a program to evolve as an independent, sustainable model often depends on integrating similar processes at suitable intervals as the program unfolds.

Summary

Robinson, with her reminder that a partnership is a *relationship,* emphasizes the need for partners to invest essential time and effort in collaboration in order to reap mutual benefits. By advocating trial programs and taking an iterative approach to developing alliances, she encourages a well-grounded effort that allows both parties to become acquainted, while integrating ideas and ideals. This precautionary suggestion raises a cautionary flag for potential partners who might be tempted to collaborate in an effort to find a quick fix for systematic problems that likely cannot be solved through partnership alone (e.g. corporations who wish to clear their name; nonprofits seeking financial backing). Clear, consistent *over*-communication, another component crucial for relationship development, helps practitioners take change in stride, cultivate robust relationships, and assuage tendencies to become complacent or overlook the full potential of partnerships.

Working with, as opposed to working for, each other might theoretically be easy to understand and accept, but in practice can prove difficult if interests diverge or compete. ”Working with” promotes the ideas of achieving greater goals collaboratively than independent effort alone can achieve. It also nurtures equity and mutual respect, and diminishes the need for hierarchical relationships. Throughout and following completion of a project, assessment and reassessment underscore the principle of efficiency, enabling practitioners to learn precisely why and how a relationship works. Finally, developing a program’s future potential as an “independent model” cultivates resiliency, an openness to frequent and objective assessment, and a determination to infuse elements of self-sufficiency into the program so that it can weather change.

4.2.4. L. L. Bean: 27 years of employee volunteering (and counting)

Our work is cumulative: since 1980, 605 different people spent over 34,000 hours maintaining 18.5 miles of wilderness trail. They’ve maintained campsites, cleared the trail, built 13,000 feet of log bridges, worked on 1650 feet of causeway and have even constructed six outhouses. – Laurie Gilman(2007), L.L. Bean Community Outreach

Since launching its outdoor clothing business from a basement 95 years ago, L.L. Bean has become internationally respected in its field. But the company is also noteworthy for other reasons, including its environmental mandates, promotion of work-life balance and capacity to engage employees through participative management. Furthermore, with 27 years of active involvement in staff volunteerism, the company boasts one of the longest running, employee supported conservation volunteer programs in the US.

L.L. Bean takes a strong stance on behalf of CSR, openly advocating for conservation organizations, and even sparking controversy by opposing hydro-electric dams and supporting nuclear power. Past president Leon Gorman acknowledges that such measures put the company at risk of offending opposing stakeholders. Yet this does not prevent him from supporting groups who he believes “possess the expertise and resources to be involved in a credible and effective manner” (Gorman, 2006, p. 180). The company has also increased the standards for charitable giving. In his biography of the business, Gorman, noting the national average for corporate giving was around 1% of pretax earnings, states, “We expanded our giving to the 2.5% level and developed an allocation formula. . . our first major gift was $500,000.00 to the Appalachian

Mountain Club in 1984" (Gorman, 2006, p. 179). Today, Bean partners with, and supports, over 35 conservation and stewardship organizations (L.L. Bean, 2007).

Striving for excellence in social employee programs complements the aforementioned conservation initiatives. By the late 1970s and early 1980s, the company's provisions of comprehensive benefit packages, a health and fitness program, career development incentives and assessments of job satisfaction were improving the quality of employees' lives at work and home. Simultaneously, the company also focused attention on hiring and supporting (via steeply discounted products, for example) staff interested in outdoor pursuits.

In 1980, L.L. Bean adopted a trail section. Shortly thereafter, the company solidified a partnership with the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC). Laurie Gilman, Bean's Community Relations spokesperson says, "It didn't take too long for us to realize that if we were going to support the trail in Maine with volunteers, we should help the organization." Since the company's work on the trail is done without the ATC's direct supervision, Ms Gilman's suggestions focus on employee volunteers, rather than partnership development.

- *Align project with interests of company, customers and staff*

An employee and long-time volunteer on the Appalachian Trail first suggested adopting a section within Maine's rugged 100 Mile Wilderness. The idea took off because trails and nature were important to customers and staff, and the activity aligned closely with company and management interests. Twenty-seven years ago, a strategic Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) plan had yet to evolve. As Gilman, recounts, "Obviously, outdoors is part of our heritage . . . even though it wasn't part of a written strategy at the time. When we first started, we did it because it was the right thing to do, and a good idea. [Furthermore,] our company president, who is now our chairman, is very much oriented to the outdoors. I don't think it was a hard sell."

- *Extend opportunities*

The company organizes a series of three, three-day trips each spring and autumn. With the exception of designated leaders, employees do not receive recompense. However, instead of losing out on valuable family time during weekends or holidays, employees can share the experience with friends and family members wishing to participate. "We've had children grow up through the program," Gilman remarks. Making room for friends and family shows that the

company puts volunteers first by not forcing them to make compromises about other important aspects of their lives.

- *Train, prepare and educate*

Some employees who volunteer have never done activities like this before. Giving due consideration to safety, comfort and treading lightly, the company: organizes meetings to assess capabilities and inform participants about workload and responsibilities; trains designated leaders thoroughly (e.g. first aid, chainsaw certification); promotes and practices low-impact camping techniques, ensures work meets acceptable standards, and continually assesses how the experience could be improved. Such preparation and planning help optimize learning and its long-term benefits. Gilman attests, "I tell you, with everybody I talk to (and it certainly happened to me) – once you walk even a mile of doing trail maintenance, you never walk the trail the same way again."

- *Establish a program that encourages participation of all employees*

Staff who do not own all the necessary equipment can easily participate by borrowing equipment such as tents and sleeping bags from an equipment room. Gilman remarks that they enjoy this informal method of learning about and testing products – a spin-off benefit that she acknowledges "enhances the business in many ways." Other incentives, such as a company-owned trailer with its communal kitchen facilities help ensure that all willing staff members can engage in this volunteer experience.

- *Recognize tangible and intangible benefits*

The company tracks tangible work outcomes in terms of hours donated and projects accomplished. However, benefits less able to be quantified are just as important. Gilman notes that return on investment is perceived when pride and enthusiasm are instilled for "what we are doing in the outdoors." Rather than garnering media attention through this aspect of the company, she notes that Bean values introducing volunteers to a "fantastic experience in a beautiful setting" and focuses on the importance "doing the right thing". Knowing that volunteers will return again is also important. "We get folks who are doing it for fifteen years or more," she says, "so there is something good out there."

Summary

Bean's initiative effectively balances company interests with those of employees. Enabling staff to volunteer with friends and family, furnishing tools and resources, and promoting educational opportunities are all elements of a volunteer program that not only provides sources of motivation but fosters inclusiveness. Moreover, by giving due consideration to the wellbeing of staff and environment throughout the process, Bean's actions suggest a high level of accountability in being duly diligent about health and safety, and taking responsibility for the results of their work. By acknowledging both tangible and intangible benefits, the company demonstrates a broad appreciation for the values of voluntary engagement. Finally, by focusing on "doing the right thing" for its employees and the environment, L.L. Bean strengthens the integrity of its business ethics by allowing its conservation principles to transcend opportunities to capitalize on volunteer successes.

4.3. Lessons from the international cases

The collective points in the case examples draw out several themes and issues. Where appropriate, discussion points receive corroboration from information provided by other correspondents with whom I spoke, but who were not featured in the case examples.

Intra and inter-organizational relationships

The theme of unity, associated with cohesiveness and holism, arise throughout this chapter. The case examples indicate that it is wise to develop a sense of intra- and inter-organizational unity. Intra-organizational unity refers to circumstances where staff and stakeholders within an organization are able to arrive at a shared understanding of what partnerships entail and their respective roles in facilitating or implementing these partnerships. Inter-organizational unity is developed in situations where cross-sectoral partners are capable of understanding each partner's frame of reference as a means of working towards shared goals.

Many aspects of intra- and inter-organizational unity mirror each other. Their presentation in Table 2 profiles their relevance to both conservation and community sectors. The case studies underscore the significance of maintaining support for volunteer programs, from upper management as well as front line staff. This "top-down" influence takes a step beyond what was once known as "leading by following": those in the upper echelons of management have a

crucial role in holding up and supporting the endeavours of those beneath them (as opposed to the conventional idea that the actions of those in less prominent positions support their superiors). Aligning top-down with bottom-up influences is further complicated by the need for organizational stakeholders to develop shared understanding and support among their own colleagues (lateral alignment). In the TNC example, Brown voiced the need for consistent communication with colleagues so they could develop a shared sense of mission and collective aims, thereby presenting a united front.

There is a close relationship between intra and inter-organizational unity. In the TNC example, Brown speaks about the issue of obtaining colleague support. Similarly, Rae Lonsdale, from UK's Yorkshire Dales National Park, reflects these concerns through his own experience. He links closely the challenge of obtaining colleague support with the necessity of developing a shared mission with potential partners. He reports:

> I've struggled to get our rangers to welcome [employer-supported volunteer groups] . . . My difficulty is learning how to sell the mutual benefits to both sides, so that the [businesses] feel their investment of staff time (and perhaps eventually money) is re-paid and my own colleagues can take a more positive and welcoming stance, building mutual confidence, engendering a self-fulfilling sense of achievement. (Lonsdale, 2007)

Thus, the need for *intra*-organizational unity is mirrored by the need for *inter*-organizational unity which requires both sectors to work together, creating a vision that will help develop mutual goals.

Recognizing and respecting points of view helps build trust and create authentic partnerships. While aligning ideas may require some convincing, undermining others' concerns or perspectives becomes detrimental to achieving organizational unity. At both intra- and inter-organizational levels, listening respectfully, and legitimizing the ideas of others enables proponents to exercise their capacities for acceptance and perseverance in working through problems.

Once a joint vision takes shape, implementing it on the ground becomes the next challenge. The Australian case study suggests an *iterative* approach, so partners are not overwhelmed from the start, or tempted to veer too far off course. Similarly, from an intra-organizational perspective, leaders who welcome stakeholders' input at each iterative stage gain more potential to solidify

programs by streamlining processes efficiently and addressing gaps between organizational and community goals.

The process of engaging intra- and inter-organizational stakeholders also requires cultivating a open-mindedness and flexibility. Inter-organizationally, the process of working together to establish a joint vision may require each organization to shed preconceived ideas of exactly how a partnership will play out. For instance, conservation organizations might have to recognize that engaging volunteers will not automatically lead to an overarching partnership; conversely, corporations might have to be flexible about the type of work employees take on. In short, these relationships may require some level of compromise in order to reach shared goals.

Finally, these case experiences indicate the need for organizations to articulate expectations continuously, and to seek means of balancing overarching project goals with organizational interests. As an ongoing process, it requires an ability to balance the tension between adhering to goals and boundaries (i.e. resisting the temptation to become overwhelmed by conflicting interests), and moving forward with the requisite flexibility and adaptability.

Table 2: Aspects of intra- and inter-organizational unity

Unifying Action	Aspects of ***intra***-organizational unity	Aspects of ***inter***-organizational Unity
• Harmonize shared understanding of concepts; crystallize vision and goals	• Effectively convey reasons why partnership and community engagement can be legitimate and useful (this translates in the ability of those involved to create a united front and explain why)	• Jointly cast a vision and develop mutual goals
• Recognize other points of view	• Respect and validate staff/stakeholder concerns; seek to overcome hurdles	• Work on understanding inherent differences
• Legitimize programs by accepting staff input and adhering to goals	• Establish programs that encourage participation and input	• Take ideas from abstraction (or vision stage) and make them a reality.
• Realize potential of new directions and possibilities	• Cultivate a culture of open-mindedness for accepting new, innovative possibilities	• Shed preconceived notions about how a relationship is going to play out by listening to, and understanding the realities/limitations of each other's organization. (some flexibility)
• Equalize power dynamics	• Balance overarching project goals with interests of organization, stakeholders and staff	• Promote equity by articulating expectations, acknowledging (tangible/intangible) contributions, and work on reciprocity.

Working collaboratively

Another theme that became particularly apparent in the UK case study was the value of working collaboratively (e.g. through same sector partnerships where conservation organizations form a collective to achieve common goals). By providing a snapshot of how employer supported volunteerism and partnerships play out, the case examples offer insight into what is going on "out there". Learning what others are doing helps break down the sense of isolation endured by many nonprofit managers (or in this case, proponents of corporate community engagement). Not only do many of them have to contend with scepticism from their colleagues, they often have difficulty in finding assurance through connecting with others involved in similar activities. In a province where 67% of nonprofits have only voluntary staff or part time employees (Jankovic, 2007), barriers to working collaboratively include physical distance and lack of time or money required for research or networking.

The UK case example suggests that there is much value in actively collaborating with similar conservation-based organizations. Among other things, collaborative forums provide an avenue for new participants to learn how to get started, gain familiarity with issues, understand what works/does not work and even work together to facilitate projects and widen the scope of available activities. At minimum, the ability to connect with like-minded practitioners enables volunteer managers to learn strategies for navigating tricky issues.

By requesting input via list-serves, I elicited several requests for information from volunteer managers interested in learning how others were navigating cross-sectoral partnerships. This speaks to the need for more forums and networking. The request from a staff member of a New Zealand-based conservation agency speaks clearly to this need. She mentioned that her organization had just been approached by a major company eager to initiate a country-wide partnership that would include employee volunteering. She realized that unless substantial funds were directed towards volunteer management for this project, the idea would not fly. She expressed her puzzlement, saying, "We're not in a position to offer a nationwide series of volunteer projects for staff unless they contribute towards it. Is this kosher?" (Anonymous, 2007).

While volunteer managers in the UK example indicated that collaborative initiatives seem to work, they are difficult to sustain. For example, while collaboratives may benefit through grants

(grant-makers tend to welcome proposals based on collaboration), they are often short-term. Geoff Brown (G. Brown, 2007), a community partnerships coordinator from the States indicated that a group with which he had been affiliated (Managers of Volunteers in Environmental Resources (MOVERS)), and which was also interested in discussing employee volunteerism, disbanded when the umbrella group, within which they operated, folded.

Understanding return on investment

An alternative view of the investment benefits of working with corporate volunteers was presented in the TNC case example. Because many organizations are still struggling with the tasks of effectively communicating, calculating and selling the tangible and intangible benefits of volunteerism, this topic offers a worthy theme. The case example suggests value in looking at return on investment from as many different angles as possible. It also justifies observing how volunteers internalize values attached to learning and experiencing while remaining engaged throughout the *process* of the work.

Expanding the sphere of influence

The case examples also encourage conservation and corporate practitioners to think about their spheres of influence, and to question what influences stimulate change. For instance, Alan states his belief that employees can be helpful in bringing back messages to businesses that might influence positive change. By having corporate employees participate in conservation, nonprofits and businesses are encouraged to question: How might stewardship messages best be spread (to other employees, families communities)? Will corporate actions encourage other businesses to follow our lead?

Contributing to a larger vision

Conventional wisdom related to motivating volunteers suggests the need to offer concrete tasks with definite outcomes; yet the nature of stewardship work is often not conducive to this approach. Stewardship work frequently requires participants to envision the "big picture" where they must have faith in the fact that they are contributing to restorations goals that may take years achieve. In Germany, Stephen Küppers (2007), manager of volunteers in Nationalpark Harz, agrees that being able to present corporate volunteers with a well-packaged workday

promotes accomplishment most effectively. He says: “I try to find jobs that offer the chance to build team spirit, where [corporate volunteers can] reach a visible aim within a given time.” Yet some places, like TNC’s Fen, do not have these kinds of opportunities. Nevertheless, the longevity and complexity of the tasks may have benefits of their own, allowing volunteers to take pride in their work over time. The long-term nature of this type of work is conducive to developing partnerships that progress iteratively. It also encourages relationships to go beyond transactional contexts, while building awareness and understanding of each other.

Disseminating knowledge

The need to disseminate knowledge is a component of communication that can be easily overlooked. In one of her e-mails to me, Australian Sam Robinson admitted that she was so busy with current commitments that she and her colleagues had little time to share experiences with others. This is frustrating, because she frequently receives requests for “free” consulting to corporations that are not yet partners. Reviewing and documenting learning and experiences may open the door later on for other opportunities. Robinson’s long term goal is to figure out how her group might be able to share their expertise and intellectual property by managing corporate partnerships as consultants.

Chapter 5: Emerging partnership principles

This interim chapter provides a link between the first two areas of focus – background research provided in the literature review followed by the case examples – and the Ontario-based research. My intent is twofold: first to outline principles of good partnership that have emerged within the literature on cross-sectoral and conservation-based partnership; then to use the ideas that have emerged from the literature and case studies to inform and elaborate upon these principles. The resulting suite of principles is meant to guide partnerships to more successful and lasting delivery of benefits by incorporating considerations associated with stewardship, CSR and education. The principles, tailored for application to cross-sectoral partnerships that facilitate employer supported volunteerism, will help guide the methodology and analysis within the following chapters.

Many organizations utilize partnership principles to guide their relationships with others. On their own, the principles may not appear to be unique; in fact, many different kinds of partnerships rely on seemingly similar principles. Section 5.1 draws from the literature a set of principles which most frequently occur in association with cross-sectoral collaboration and conservation-based partnership. This section streamlines and prioritizes principles most applicable to my research, creating a sound, valid framework for development. Section 5.2 serves to refine and elaborate upon this construct, using themes that have emerged from the literature review and global case examples. Such iteration demonstrates how the principles uniquely play out in context-specific partnerships involving employer supported volunteerism.

5.1. Principles from the literature on cross-sectoral collaboration and conservation partnership

Partnership principles here constitute key elements of collaboratively facilitated relationships. Starkey, Durr and Thomas (2001) suggest that partnerships arise as a result of putting into practice sets of principles that "create trust and mutual accountability" (p. 1). Partnerships can exist in a continuum of varying intensity – from ad hoc meetings to long-term collaboration. The degree of partner interdependence is unique in each relationship and context and thus may evolve

(or devolve) over time. Similarly, partnership principles may be utilized to varying degrees, depending upon the situation and needs of participants.

Selskey and Parker (2004), in a comprehensive review of partnership in collaboration literature, find that while there is still an increasing interest in NGO/corporate partnerships, the dynamics of partnership operation especially within cause-based initiatives have been under-explored. Nevertheless, discussions by Murphy and Bendell (1999), Austin (2000), Woodworth (2005) and Tennyson, Hurrel and Sykes (2002) reveal elements that facilitate understanding and evaluation of partnership structures, strategies and dynamics. All four sources focus on slightly different areas or types of partnerships – Murphy and Bendell emphasize international cross-sectoral partnerships; Austin refers to partnerships between non-profits and business; Woodworth discusses general collaboration; while Tennyson et al. concentrate on partnerships that emphasize biodiversity enhancement. –Nevertheless, the commonalities among them outweigh the differences. For example, successful partnerships reflect (1) good fit, (2) clear communication, (3) mutual benefit, (4) sense of equity, (5) reciprocity, (6) an iterative approach, (7) transparency, (8) ongoing assessment, (9) adaptability, and (10) an educational process.

In an attempt to prioritize some of these elements, Tennyson's (2003) *Partnership Toolbook* sums up three recurring guiding principles that the writer claims have gained global acceptance. These include *equity*, *transparency* and *mutual benefit*. These principles can provide a starting point for discussing potential partnerships and are most important for ongoing evaluation and analysis.

One message consistently appearing throughout the literature on cause-based partnerships is that they are not necessarily ends in themselves. Rather, as Frame and Tailor (2005) emphasize, these partnerships "aim to deliver the higher-level social, economic, environmental and cultural outcomes of sustainable development" (p.277). Rather than reflecting the notion of environmental partnerships as ends in themselves, literature pertaining to environment-based partnerships offers a growing suite of references to "sustainability partnerships" (Frame and Taylor, 2005; Juniper and Moore, 2002) or "partnerships for biodiversity" which are associated with the notion of long-term relationships that evolve over time while contributing to multiple conservation goals (Barrington, 2001; EE and IUCN - Earthwatch Europe the IUCN and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development, 2002; Sawhill, 1996; Tennyson, Hurrell,

and Sykes, 2002). To help place stewardship within the context of NGO and corporate partnerships, it is useful to refer to Frame and Taylor's (2005) suggestions for effective sustainable partnerships which are compatible with the aforementioned partnership elements. These include, but are not limited to: a sense of strategic commitment, a sense of place, a sense of personal responsibility (including the value of doing the right thing, not just doing things right), and a sense that the overall educational process and sharing will lead to organizational learning and constructive change.

Collaborative partnerships are not without many challenges. Austin (2000) reminds us that while collaborative frameworks can help us understand alliances, strategies to develop partnerships are still under-developed, inefficient and narrow in scope. For example, potential partners do not often possess established mechanisms of seeking each other out, while neither non-profits nor corporations often have much experience in "developing alliances that transcend charitable check-writing relationships" (p. 99). Woodworth (2005) also notes that such partnerships often fail to become fully developed because they are reactionary – a result of stakeholder pressure – and therefore organizations fail to glean an understanding of long-term collaborative benefits or the skills needed to make them successful.

5.2. An emerging suite of principles for partnership

Table 3 presents a suite of partnership principles. The criteria for partnership presented in section 5.1 provide a basic framework with which to work, while the key findings within the literature review and global case examples make it possible to augment and modify this list of principles[12].

One should note that, owing to their breadth, many principles defy succinct definition. For example, because good communication is essential to all the other principles, it appears first as an overarching concept. Similarly, the close connection between equality and reciprocity justifies treating them as one.

[12] Principles of authenticity, accountability, multiple benefit and multi-level engagement, which have emerged throughout the previous chapters, augment the basic framework. The similar principles of equality and reciprocity have been included as one.

Each principle, though bearing a general meaning, expresses itself differently within varying partnership contexts. Key lessons in previous chapters illuminate how these principles find expression or become implemented by partners utilizing employer supported volunteering (see Table 3, column 2).

In the following chapters, the principles serve a dual purpose: they help guide analysis related to Ontario-based research on employer supported volunteering and conservation-based partnerships. In addition, they constitute a foundation for completing the cycle from which the resulting data will aid in the ongoing refinement and enhancement of a framework for partnership that not only considers the principles themselves but provides some best practices and guidelines to follow.

Table 3: Emerging principles for effective cross-sectoral partnerships

Principles and general descriptions	**How principles manifest themselves within research context**
Communication: An overarching concept. Elements of good communication underlie each of the following principles.	• Convey value/meaning • Sustain dialogue • Work on understanding inherent differences • Develop capacity through networks • Spread key messages/disseminate knowledge
Adaptability: Partnerships should be flexible and open to change, lend themselves to creative problem-solving and resilient in the face of challenges.	• Shed preconceived notions about how partner-based projects will play out • Work on understanding inherent differences • Adjust to unexpected or unpredicted ecological outcomes
Authentic: Authentic relationships involve partners who have sincere intentions and who are motivated to contribute to real, meaningful goals.	• Design volunteer work that fills a niche • Avoid "make work" projects (work is meaningful) • Reflect sincerity (practitioners believe there is value in what is being done)
Accountability: Accountability implies that both partners take joint responsibility for their decisions and actions.	• Adhere to ethical fundraising/partnership codes and standards • Consider broader partnership implications fully • Ensure that community needs and interests direct motives • Exercise sound judgment in delegating work to volunteers • Demonstrate due diligence for health/safety (vigilant leaders) • Assess potential environmental impact (tread lightly)
Education: The partnership process should foster continuous learning (for collaborators as well as volunteer participants).	• Reinforce knowledge • Value work/learning process • Extend opportunities to others (family, community) • Find ways to value incremental change • Communicate a broad vision of stewardship
Equity and reciprocity: Close attention needs to be paid to the balance of power; balance can be achieved when partners actively seek to find ways to advance each other missions	• Work with, not for each other • Maintain a clear sense of purpose, yet recognize which elements of self-interest may be forfeited for the greater good • Measure/value equity in various ways (not simply financial) • Ensure a quality experience for volunteers
Evaluation: Partners must jointly weigh the costs and risks of partnership, relative to their benefits	• Value intangible as well as tangible benefits • Use social accounting tools if possible • Measure success and milestones
Good Fit & Matching Values: Collaborators align interests and develop a shared vision.	• Consider environment within and beyond market niche • Pro-actively identify needs in relation to potential collaboration
Iterative: Partners constantly seek to improve and understand their relationship	• Do not force partnerships ("trial period" potentially necessary) • Diversify opportunities to meet growing needs
Multi-level engagement: Both support provided to partnership from upper/middle management and bottom-up propulsion are necessary to push forward and sustain initiatives.	• Provide ongoing support from management • Fuel project interests from employees and/or community needs • Ensure colleagues are on the same page; develop lateral unity within organizations by addressing concerns
Mutual and Multiple Benefits: Activities arising from the partnership should be mutually beneficial. Partners achieve something together that is unobtainable alone.	• Offer skills and resources to complement one another • Provide an element of interdependence • Develop tasks that provide volunteers with "take-away" lessons or enhance a sense of place
Transparency: Linked closely to communication, accountability and evaluation, transparency helps to ensure that partners fully understand why certain courses of action are taken. It also helps to build trust.	• Share dialogue about underlying motivations • Commit to carry out some form of evaluation

Chapter 6: Methods and organization of Canadian research

This chapter discusses the methodological approach, and provides various contexts for the research presented in the following chapter. Section 6.1 outlines the methodological approach and methods; section 6.1.1 discusses the key informant interviews including selection and recruitment, interview design and the interview process; section 6.1.2 discusses transcription and analysis while section 6.1.3 addresses methodological limitations. The next sections (6.2 onward) contain a descriptive overview and contextual basis for the study. The information was obtained through the first three or four interview questions (see Appendix D) which illuminate the informants' roles, the nature of the organization they represent, and the extent to which conservation-based employer supported volunteerism is facilitated.

6.1. Methods

This study builds upon the criteria developed from the literature review and case examples and thus represents the third iteration of my research. It is inductive by nature, since information gathered from fourteen key informants from Ontario involved in employer supported volunteering, is used to enhance and guide the development of partnership criteria. This approach effectively aids understanding situations (such as cross-sectoral partnerships) within their natural context, as well as decision-making rationales and emergent themes (Palys, 1997). Since my study focuses on partnerships as the unit of analysis, both sectors come under scrutiny. Obtaining a range of perceptions through key informant interviews from various stakeholders in both sectors affords ample opportunity for comparison, and for the discovery of cross-cutting themes and patterns. Furthermore, understanding multiple perspectives enhances the study's vigour, while increasing the potential for corroboration (Yin, 2003), and building a reservoir of compelling evidence for the proposed suite of principles to be developed from this phase.

My preference for qualitative methods arises from their numerous benefits. Besides enriching an understanding of cross-sectoral partnership dynamics, their naturalistic, interpretive characteristics, according to scholars, make them ideal for explaining emerging institutions and programs (Fink, 2005) and the phenomenon of partnerships (Hoepfl, 1997). In contrast to the "tightly prefigured" confines of quantitative techniques that may miss vital data (Creswell, 1994, 2003; Myers, 1997), qualitative methods facilitate in-depth understanding of stakeholder

perspectives, as well as complex human or organizational relationships (Palys, 1997), phenomena specific to individual situations (Hoepfl, 1997), and unequal world views (McCracken, 1988).

6.1.1. Key informant interviews

Selection and recruitment

Key informants are generally individuals who can best reflect the characteristics of the phenomenon being studied. They not only understand their situation, they think deeply about it (U. Illinois, 2007). Thus my study warranted seeking highly involved participants who could articulate their thoughts and perceptions about employer supported volunteering (ESV). It also required participants with different experiences. For instance, since ESV becomes manifest through a range of commitment levels, my study required input from both individuals who had facilitated corporate volunteer teams through ad hoc relationships, and from those who invested in longer-term partnerships. To gain representation from individuals with different affiliations and backgrounds, I also identified individuals from community-based organizations such as nonprofits and conservation authorities who could provide expert opinions on stewardship, volunteerism and corporate community engagement. Similarly, within the corporate sector, I sought representatives from a cross-section of industries involved in developing and implementing community engagement initiatives for their companies.

Identifying appropriate respondents involved web searches, reading corporate social responsibility (CSR) reports, and tapping my knowledge of several organizations within the conservation sector that could provide potential respondents. Often informants provided me with referrals for individuals they felt might amplify my research. This non-random method of "snowball sampling" is useful for identifying hard-to-find populations ((Neuman, 2003; Trochim, 2006), particularly helpful for identifying contacts within the corporate sector (and from organizations with which I had less familiarity).

Data collection focused on the information provided by seven key informants from the conservation sector and an equal representation from the corporate sector. McCracken (1988), in recommending this number, emphasizes the "less-is-more" approach where quality over quantity is key. In reminding us that qualitative interview data is not meant to be generalized, he says that

groups of informants are "not chosen to represent some part of the larger world, but offer instead an opportunity to glimpse the complicated character, organization and logic of culture" (p.17).

Interview design

My research required the preparation of parallel questions – one set for each of the conservation and corporate sectors. A semi-structured interview technique allowed me to remain focused enough to follow my line of inquiry, yet open to the spontaneity of respondents who might be inclined to provide exceptional depth within their answers (Kvale, 1996; Palys, 1997). Rather than asking directly about the specific thematic principles evident in my literature review, I hoped that the themes would arise organically from questions that would motivate respondents to tell their stories at their own pace. To help facilitate this, I followed McCracken's (1988)) suggestion to phrase nondirective questions that would not "overspecify the substance" (p.134) of the talk or overly steer the direction of the conversation. My interview questionnaires also utilized questions developed by Hailey Hext (2006), an Australian graduate student with similar research interests[13]. While she studied nonprofit-corporate partnerships in general, her goal of encouraging discussion on challenges and issues pertaining to cross-sectoral facilitation of employer supported volunteering aligned closely with mine.

Preparation of the interview questions included three stages: pre-testing, obtaining ethical clearance and pilot testing as outlined below:

Pre-testing: Upon drafting interview questions, I reviewed them with my former supervisor at the Nature Conservancy of Canada. Her advice helped ensure not only sound logic and coherence, but also a potential for eliciting answers that would assist with conservation-based volunteer program development.

Ethical clearance: The Office of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo approved recruitment, interview and follow-up processes before the study took place. By following the University of Waterloo's ethics guidelines throughout the research process, I ensured the safety, anonymity and welfare of all participants.

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[13] See Chapter 6 for more details. Aside from the obvious benefit of expediting the process of formulating the questionnaire, her questions justify repetition within the Canadian context.

Pilot testing: I benefited from Yin's recommendation (2003) to use the first interviews with corporate and conservation informants as a pilot test thereby allowing myself time to refine and make final clarifications in advance of the remaining interviews.

6.1.2. Interviewing

Although I made efforts to meet in person at mutually agreed-upon locations, informants were free to choose face-to-face or phone interviews. In total, five of the seven conservation organization representatives and two of the seven corporate representatives gave face-to-face interviews; the remaining informants preferred the convenience of phone. All participants consented to having their conversations digitally recorded, a process I carried out as unobtrusively as possible. Conducting interviews in early spring, 2007, was particularly conducive to discussions about corporate conservation volunteering, as respondents were focused on planning and preparing for the upcoming field season.

As an interviewer, I was mindful of the qualification criteria for interviewing, as outlined by (Kvale, 1996). These include conducting an informed conversation, posing clear questions, allowing subjects to proceed at their own rate, being open, actively listening and managing to clarify and interpret meaning within interviewees' statements. Methodologists generally recommend that interviewers try to establish a rapport with respondents. Since I personally knew only one respondent prior to the interview, I took time to explain my background and purpose before commencing. Length of interviews averaged 40-50 minutes, though some lasted more than an hour. In all cases, interviewees had the opportunity to express additional thoughts about the subject matter both at the end of the conversation and later, when they verified the interview transcriptions as accurate reflections of our conversations.

6.1.3. Transcription and analysis

I chose to use NVIVO, a qualitative data analysis application, because it offers an organized framework for tracking ideas, playing with concepts, concentrating on meaningful interpretations of what was said, and linking and comparing documents (Kvale, 1996; Walsh, 2003). Such software provides readers with guidelines that illuminate what has been termed a "black box" method of interview analysis, while contributing to potential theoretical replication (Kitchen and Tate, 2000; Kvale, 1996).

Interpretive data analysis is a multi-step, iterative process that calls for a detective's skill. Kitchen and Tate , whose rules I adopted to analyze the interview transcripts, aptly use the analogy of an investigator who first gathers complex stories from various sources, before piecing them together to discern the scenario. The process, which entailed breaking apart, and then re-organizing the data in a meaningful way, involved the following steps:

1) *Transcription*: Interviews were transcribed as soon as possible after acquiring a informant's responses. At this stage, I also jotted down ideas about the data related to the conversation. This active remembering aided retention of meanings essential to the study's purpose, while acting as a "selective filter" (see Kvale, 1996 p.161).

2) *Annotation:* Developing an informal coding strategy of annotating my notes in NVIVO helped me organize the data and think of the conversations from more than one perspective. Reading transcriptions in a different order, thinking of the data at various levels, and determining how the information within the transcripts could be compared with previous research were strategies employed in this annotation process (see Dey, 1993).

3) *Open coding:* My annotated notes helped me recognize a series of concepts and topics that aligned themselves with specific categories or themes. Using NVIVO, I labeled and sorted the data within all the transcripts according to these themes. These broad themes related to the partnership criteria found within previous chapters. However, if data did not seem to fit within a particular category, or if new themes emerged, I developed new categories (or even sub-categories) that could relate to the others in a meaningful way.

4) *Refining:* Sifting through the transcripts once more helped me arrange the data from the general to specific. Essentially, NVIVO provided a way to cut up my transcript data and re-organize it into themes and sub-themes, creating a virtual tree of categories. This "splitting and splicing" of data enabled me to create further thematic sub-categories, gain a better understanding of the relationships between themes and sub-categories, and provided me with ideas of how this information could be compared and contrasted.

5) *Focusing, linking and connecting:* Going over data several more times helped with further refinements that focused the analysis. As Kitchen and Tate (2000) suggest, this process allowed me to "play with the data in ways that helped lead to insights that reading transcripts alone might fail to highlight" (p.245). At this point, linking and connecting ideas while

finding appropriate quotations as evidence was more essential than creating more sub-categories.

6) *Corroborating evidence:* The final process of analysis involved cross-checking the data to avoid genuine errors, and assessing evidence that might give validity to explanations.

6.1.4. Methodological limitations

This section acknowledges methodological limitations of the study and describes the steps to minimize adverse effects these limitations may have on the research outcome.

Qualitative research raises concerns about researcher bias, and therefore warrants immediate attention. As a former volunteer coordinator within the conservation field with an interest in forwarding conservation partnerships, I have a considerable relationship with this topic. My personal connection naturally generated some level of bias which probably affected not only my choice of questions, but also how I asked them, and even how I might have unconsciously reacted or responded to the answers. In addition, being a novice interviewer, I may have elicited different answers over time as my questioning delivery matured. Mehra (2002), provides particular insights regarding the significance of these types of biases by suggesting that that no research or other creative process is ever value-free. Her methods enable researchers to deal effectively with their own inherent subjectivity so that it enriches, rather than detracts, from the overall research quality. Thus, in keeping with her suggestions, throughout the interview and methods process, I was mindful to: (1) view my research as a means to achieve continuity with who I am and want to become, by being driven by what I *want* to know as opposed to what I *already* know; (2) use the research opportunity to question existing beliefs; (3) Position myself as learner and the informants as the experts; (4) familiarize myself with established interview protocols (especially those outlined by Berg, 2004; Holstein and Jaber, 2002; Kvale, 1996; McCracken, 1988); and (5) seek to establish relationships based upon trust (e.g. by being honest about my background, by actively listening, and remaining open to ideas).

Although I was interested in learning about how employer supported volunteering in Ontario was facilitated throughout the province, many key informants (especially those representing corporations), work from head offices within major urban centres, specifically Toronto and the Greater Toronto Area. Similarly, the conservation-affiliated informants best able to work with

corporate volunteers tend to do so because of their proximity to interested corporate bodies. As the popularity of employer supported volunteerism increases, it may become easier to find groups working out of smaller towns or more rural areas. For the time being, the nature of the study remains urban-centric. Implications related to geography and urban versus rural conservation work receive attention within the analysis.

Some methodologists question the utility and effectiveness of applications such as NVIVO. For example, some worry that such programs oversimplify complex processes, or only imitate qualitative analysis techniques (see Kvale, 1996). Becoming familiar with the program's features made it evident that it was a useful tool for organizing and exploring data. Like Walsh (2003), I believe that "no software can do the analysis for you" (p. 255). Learning and using NVIVO required time, patience and thorough knowledge of the transcripts in their original and "spliced" forms; thus, contrary to distancing me from the process, the program allowed me to become more involved because I was able to perceive the data from varying perspectives.

6.2. Organizational descriptions

The following organizational descriptions provide context by outlining the background of the key informants and the array of organizations they represent. Much of the information presented here was derived from the first three or four interview questions that pertain to an informant's role, the nature of the organization, how long an organization has facilitated employer supported volunteerism, and the extent to which it is considered "voluntary". Overviews of community organization and corporate characteristics associated with employer supported volunteering appear in Appendices E and F.

6.2.1. Conservation organizations

Conservation organizational characteristics

The seven conservation organizations have various structures and characteristics. For example, five have nonprofit, charitable status, one is a conservation authority (associated with its own charitable foundation) and one is a city-wide stewardship program staffed by civil servants, and operating in conjunction with the local citizen's advisory panel responsible for its creation. In addition:

- Two nonprofit groups have national status. Of these, one focuses on urban areas while the other concentrates on conservation of rural or wild lands.
- Four organizations have mandates centering around the stewardship of specific geologic, watershed or aquatic features
- Of the seven, four organizations have urban jurisdiction. The remainder have jurisdiction over areas within a 1.5 hour drive from a major urban area.
- Three organizations have skeleton staff (one employs only a part-time executive director). These organizations rely heavily on volunteers in their day-to-day operations. The other four organizations have greater staff capacity, although they also rely on volunteers for various aspects of operation and fundraising.

Role of key informants

It seemed important to select key informants who could provide expert opinions on stewardship, volunteerism and corporate community engagement. As the structures of conservation organizations differ, there is some variation within the positions and descriptions of the key informants. Key informants of local and regional organizations are directly involved with on-the-ground stewardship, and have experience interacting directly with volunteers. In these cases, all have helped develop partnerships with corporate counterparts. The key informants representing national organizations have roles that emphasize aspects of development, communication and partnership. These informants are less involved with on-the-ground stewardship, though they maintain constant dialogue with stewardship staff.

It should be noted that, at the time of our interviews, two of the key informants had recently taken on new roles within their respective organizations. The first had moved from the position of volunteer coordinator (including corporate volunteering) to a position that entails the development of a corporate greening program, among other things. The second informant had left a position involving an intensive volunteer program development and communications role in order to undertake program management in another area. In both these instances, the informants were able to combine experiences and lessons from their historic organizational involvement with understanding gained from their new positions. Thus, despite being relative novices in their current placements, these informants posed no detriment to data collection.

Community and volunteer involvement

All conservation organizations have involved various corporate volunteer groups in work that has taken place during field seasons for the last four to six years. In almost all cases involvement occurs on an ad hoc basis (most relationships form for the sole purpose of having teams participate for team-based volunteer events). These groups do not always return on an annual basis and, even when corporations become repeat "customers", the same employees do not always return.

Besides engaging corporate volunteers, each conservation organization also utilizes community volunteers in various capacities. The three groups with skeleton staffing rely on a network of volunteers for their day-to-day operations. One of these groups engages over 900 volunteers a year, with corporate volunteers representing about fifteen percent of the total. The other two organizations, with smaller capacity, have approximately one to four corporate groups attending on an annual basis. This amount of activity is similar to what the city-wide stewardship program, and the conservation authority carry out. Finally, the national urban stewardship organization is somewhat of an anomaly compared with the other organizations studied. It is able to accommodate hundreds of workplace volunteers a year, making up an estimated 30-40% of the volunteer body.

6.2.2. Corporate organizations

Corporate organizational characteristics

Corporate informants represent different sectors including automotive, building supply, household consumer products, clothing, confectionary and financial industries. All are multinational companies, occupying various roles including parent, subsidiary, retailer or parts supplier.

Role of key informants

Five of the seven informants work as full or part time employees to help develop and carry out aspects of CSR and community engagement. As with the conservation organizations, sometimes these roles are associated with an element of external and internal communications. In fact, two of the five are directly associated with their companies' foundations that helped provide strategic

direction for corporate gifts. The remaining two informants represent companies that do not directly employ someone to oversee a volunteer program, although these individuals have assumed coordinating roles on a voluntary basis. All informants either participate in volunteer events or seem to keep in close contact with colleagues who do so.

Corporate community and volunteer engagement

The length of time the corporate groups have promoted employee volunteering within their organization varies. In one case the ethic of volunteering was established at the same time as the company. In several others, volunteer programs emerged as companies developed their Corporate Social Responsibility programs, or had been informally established for five years or more. At the time I spoke with the informants, all organizations had engaged employees in team-based conservation work for the last three field seasons. With conservation volunteering, all of the companies involve their employees as teams.

Participation rates also vary. Five respondents provided estimates of the approximate percentage of volunteers who attend events; these range from around 40% to as high as 60-70%. One organization has only a 4% participation rate (discussion of participation rates appears in the next chapter). In no instance is this work deemed mandatory, though some respondents indicate that it is "highly encouraged". In fact, each respondent has a different perspective on how *voluntary* ESV really is. At one end of the spectrum, one company feels that even though employees contribute through paid time, their work is "completely voluntary" (COR4) because management takes care to avoid pressuring staff to participate, and is unwilling to track attendance as part of performance reviews. Whether or not ESV is included as part of paid work time, most companies try to encourage staff, although efforts have never resulted in 100 percent participation. No interviewee claims that staff are forced to participate, though at the other end of the spectrum, one respondent admits that if an employee decides not to attend an all-employee staff day, he or she would "have to have a pretty good reason not to" (COR7).

Existence of a broader CSR program

Corporate informants were questioned briefly about the existence of a greater CSR program within their company. The questions were posed to gain an understanding of whether employee

volunteerism links into greater company mandates, and whether volunteering is promoted in other ways throughout the company in addition to group volunteering.

All informants indicate that workplace volunteerism is linked in some way to one or more core company values. Five of the seven volunteer programs are strongly associated with valuing and supporting the local community and/or the moral responsibility associated with integrity, doing the right thing or working towards a better world. Two respondents indicate that their companies have a concerted focus on environment as a core value of their mandates. The other companies tend primarily to support charities involved with health and social welfare causes, though conservation and environment certainly could be considered an element intrinsically associated with each of their values. Finally, two of the companies have been designated as "Imagine Canada Caring Companies", indicating that they adhere to strict guidelines in terms of employee engagement and financial support for charitable organizations.

In five of the cases, these employee teams have a formal title for team-based volunteer programs such as "Team Involve". Five companies encourage their employees to volunteer in groups on work time. Three organizations have also instituted a "Dollars for Doers" type of program, where an employee's independent volunteer contributions with a charity are rewarded with a matching grant. In general, recognition programs seem to be informal. A couple of informants indicated that individual employees or teams might receive internal recognition within the company for working on unique projects or having a high level of engagement. One of the seven has an extensive recognition program celebrating employees who dedicate an exceptional amount of their own time to charities of their choice.

Chapter 7: Results and Analysis

Results of the conservation and corporate interviews presented here illustrate the facilitation of employer supported volunteerism (ESV) in Ontario. Responses from fourteen interviewees (seven from each sector) regarding achievements, challenges and best practices associated with cross-sectoral partnership and employer supported volunteering provide opportunities for comparison and contrast, as well as exploration into the extent that stated partnership principles are carried into action.

This chapter offers both nonprofit and corporate entities the opportunity to consider a full range of perspectives covering their own and their partnering sector's positions. Ultimately, it also advances a framework of principles that could benefit evolving of contemporary stewardship partnerships.

Structuring this chapter to reflect the natural progression of partnership through such stages as program development, partnership initiation, event planning, evaluation and assessment has allowed some elements of narrative logic and story-telling to highlight thematic patterns. So that individual respondents can remain anonymous, they are identified by a series of codes denoting their affiliation. Thus "COR" represents corporate contacts while "CON" represents conservation respondents (refer to Appendices E and F for details).

7.1. Prologue: origins of a multi-level corporate approach to stewardship

While my examples point to management as the top-down impetus behind ESV, they also indicate that employees' grassroots support provides a bottom-up positive charge that sustains its momentum.

In the two best examples of predominantly "top down" program integration, company mandates have included, from their inception, various forms of community engagement, entwined with broader philanthropic values. According to one respondent, valuing its skilled workforce as its "greatest resource" (COR3) makes it natural for the company to think of giving back by tapping into the energy of employees. In these cases, management, far from being exclusive in decision-making, encourages employees to take initiative by proposing new project ideas, collaborating

creatively to address program objectives, and developing within their communities enhanced awareness of issues in need of attention.

Respondents from four other companies indicate that formalizing volunteer programs has slowly become part of company-wide transformational processes. In these situations, management's alignment of newly developed volunteer opportunities with existing Corporate Social Responsibility measures helps program mandates resonate with employees and consumers.[14].

Multinational companies, in particular, place much importance on standardizing the development of volunteer programs. Respondents indicate that in the recent past, rapid procurement of subsidiaries has meant that corporate mandates could no longer be presented as a cohesive whole because each acquisition historically expressed CSR and community engagement differently. In two cases, respondents say that management first began implementing ESV across the board because it emerged from an analysis of best practices being carried out by subsidiaries. Comprehensive corporate mandates including employee engagement have arisen by streamlining existing CSR programs and by unifying the best aspects of less focused initiatives.

Though the duties of strategic CSR alignment rest in management's upper echelons, respondents also indicate that employees have influenced decision making via requests for volunteer opportunities or through enthusiastic feedback after participating in trial or pilot programs. Illustrating the first instance, one executive describes the inception of her organization's top-down/bottom up process as follows:

> I would say in our organization, it was like a classic pincer move – a blitzkrieg. Executives were keen to establish a program, but so were our colleagues. It was a mixture of a couple of key people in our executive, and a lot of grassroots movement. (COR1)

Taking measured steps towards developing employee supported volunteer programs, admitted respondents, has allowed them recognize what those with entrenched volunteer programs already believe: volunteer programs effectively harness skills and ignite employee energy. Keen

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[14] It should be noted here, however, that COR7's employee volunteer initiative developed very much from the "bottom up". For various reasons, has never become part of a broader company program and so is a bit of an anomaly. Volunteerism for this company began as a one-off event organized by management in celebration of a landmark anniversary. In this instance, the corporation in question was a subsidiary of a larger parent company with little interest in supporting long-term volunteer projects.

employee responses therefore have helped propel the inauguration of community engagement programs. For example, two respondents quickly implemented ESV in their own divisions when their CEOs learned of staff's "great response" (COR5) within foreign divisions. Furthermore, two others share remarkably similar experiences concerning the ability of volunteer events, staged by management committees during national annual meetings, to garner increased attention for the strategic value of workplace volunteerism. In both cases, executives had organized a half day of community volunteering in lieu of traditional teambuilding exercises. In response to overwhelmingly positive feedback, management decided to formalize volunteer programming within the company. As one respondent puts it,

> We had staff crying about the stuff they were doing, and how great they felt giving back. It mobilized in them a desire to really give back. That was the best part of that meeting. As a matter of fact, it was the best part of any national meeting we've ever had. That day, we tapped into something really good in our colleagues that maybe we didn't know existed in the concentration it does. That was a great way to spur on our own community strategy. (COR1)

These examples denote the strong history of top-down approaches to employee volunteerism. Once a few initiate the idea of creating opportunities for employee involvement, the process continues somewhat methodically through recruitment of middle management and staff willing to carry it out. However, these cases also demonstrate how much engagement programs depend on employees whose enthusiasm breathes life into the concept. The rallying creativity supplied by employees who represent organizational "grassroots" seems to complement managements' approaches, conferring legitimacy to the process and spurring it on.

7.2. Obtaining support

Both conservation and corporate groups responded to questions about how members of their organization perceive the importance of corporate volunteer programs and whether there is support for the idea throughout the organization. By questioning whether respondents obtain support, or "buy-in" from various organizational divisions such as boards of directors or middle management, and by gauging the stability of this support via inquiries about the level of perceived vulnerability/security that respondents attached to their roles, I hoped to gain a sense of how well staff throughout the organizations endorse the program.

Support for ESV within conservation organizations

All conservation representatives perceive increasing significance of corporate volunteer programs to their organization. In fact, the general consensus is that measures or programs put in place to handle corporate volunteers are too important to be eliminated, even if their own role in their development might become subject to organizational shifts. Overall, respondents feel that they have substantial supprt for volunteer programs from other staff, managers, board members and volunteer base, though in most cases support has been earned over time after iterative improvement measures could demonstrate success.

Conservation respondents clearly recognize employee volunteerism as important; in particular, they discuss the value of accomplishing much work in short order through unified teams of employees. Nevertheless, they suggest there is room for improvement, especially in terms of incorporating employer supported volunteer opportunities into existing volunteer programs within their organizations.

Several respondents emphasize that integrating the results of hands-on stewardship work with core organizational mandates could strengthen volunteer programs. They indicate, however, that ongoing short-term planning limits opportunities for focusing on long-term strategic development. Tasks such as planning one-off volunteer events in response to corporate requests, addressing rising stewardship needs, and dealing with the pressure of meeting grant objectives that utilize volunteer hours as in-kind support usurp time allotted to develop volunteer programming.

Volunteer managers (specifically those who are part of large, fully staffed conservation organizations) also struggle to incorporate conservation volunteer programs into larger organizational programming that requires tying volunteering into a various existing inter-departmental initiatives already struggling with complex relationships. For one respondent, this particular challenge has resulted in the volunteer program suffering from neglect.

> Even though we are looking to grow the program further, it is matrixed across a number of different aspects. Thus, though the volunteer program is considered to be one of the important things we do, it is something that can get squeezed. We have not been making enough time for it to be writing policies and doing things to really elevate it. (CON2)

Two other respondents also echo a similar sentiment: complexity and even internal disconnect among various departments hinder piloting of volunteer program initiatives. They recognize that while board and management purport to value and support programs, lack of connectivity challenges efforts to sell new ideas about program advancement.

Another respondent adds that aligning the goals of a newly formed volunteer program with existing organization-wide mandates requires critical evaluation, trial-and-error field testing and subsequent re-evaluation. She states:

> Initially, the volunteer role was uncoordinated . . . there wasn't a larger vision associated with the importance and role of working with community members. The predominant key area needing work was how we could link the recruitment and retention of volunteers to our strategic plan. There has always been a big gap there. What we ended up doing was realigning the focus of the program to be driven by management plans for our properties. (CON6)

This intensive and introspective process has resulted in an evolution of staff perceptions regarding the volunteer program. For example, perceiving stronger ties between community volunteerism and broad organizational mandates, has lead to greater support for conservation volunteering from top management and board members. While intra-organizational support for volunteer programs seems generally positive, one respondent indicates that too much of a good thing, if undirected, may impact negatively. She worries that strong internal organizational support for corporate volunteers can increase management's interest in the potential for corporate volunteer programs to draw in funds, and that this could bring pressure on her division to accommodate corporate teams. She speculates that handling the influx of large volunteer groups could mean creating make-work opportunities. Her concerns underscore the importance of balancing opportunities to widen a nonprofit's support network without eroding the authenticity of volunteer programs or the overall integrity of an organization's stewardship mandate.

Perhaps surprisingly, given the value that volunteer managers place on easily "achievable" results, she suggests overcoming this concern and encouraging corporate volunteers to undertake tasks traditionally perceived as having less tangible or quantifiable outcomes than those routinely requested. For example, she notes that the current high demand for tree planting events is not accompanied by sustained interest in the kinds of long-term maintenance that watering or

invasive removal could provide. Perceiving that internal support for corporate volunteers equates with providing a narrow range of suitable volunteer activities such as tasks that quickly transform landscapes and provide obvious environmental benefit, she is concerned that longer-term stewardship goals of the organization are not yet encompassed within internal support for corporate volunteers. As she sums up, "There will always be money and interest for planting trees, but sometimes I think there is not going to be any money for maintenance" (CON3).

By her comment, this respondent differentiates between types of activities that currently attract volunteers, and other volunteer tasks that could contribute more to the nonprofit's long-term conservation goals. If organizational support seems somewhat dependent on the kinds of activities, such as tree-planting, that do attract volunteers, such a condition presents conservation organizations, as well as corporate entities with a classic opportunity to focus on a broad vision or "big picture" by appreciating the value of creating key maintenance tasks that can help sustain partnership investments in tree planting.

Overall, support within conservation organizations has a close association with stakeholders' and staff members' ability to conceptualize the potential of corporate volunteer programs to contribute to long- and short-term goals such as outreach, education or stewardship. Volunteer programs that become fragmented across multiple departments can face the same risks as community property – though extremely useful at times, they can suffer from poorly defined ownership or lack of broader vision. The challenge here is for proponents of volunteer programs to integrate volunteerism and engender understanding without fragmenting the concept as a whole.

Support for ESV within corporations

Like the conservation representatives, all corporate informants indicate that ESV is here to stay; in more than half the cases, they also feel it is gaining increasing importance. While the majority recognize the vulnerability of these programs to organizational shifts, this is not a major concern, even among interviewees employed to manage them. As one interviewee simply puts it y, "I don't stay up at night and worry about it" (COR1). Another expresses confidence that her company sees ESV as an important asset since her role as a volunteer coordinator has survived significant corporate restructuring that cut 30% of the salaried workforce.

While conservation representatives equate volunteer program importance with the need for increased strategic development, corporate groups focus on grassroots support as an indicator of program value. Echoing their comments about bottom-up approaches, the majority of respondents regard the credibility and direction offered by grassroots support as a pivotal program strength. The following quotes typify this conviction: (1) "I think we will always be vulnerable to shifts in mandates, but we have the support of the grassroots. If it was simply a top-down program, we would be more vulnerable"(COR1). (2) "The idea and the concept were set by upper management, but in terms of maintaining momentum . . . that is much more grassroots within the organization" (COR2) and (3) "The whole focus on volunteering and peoples' interest and desire to be involved, along with their feeling that this firm is supporting them has become really imbedded in our culture. Given the resounding evidence that people care, I don't think the initiative will go away" (COR5).

Further highlighting the importance of employee support, recurring statements about the strategic importance of community engagement as a recruitment and retention tool become a primary motivational theme throughout the interviews. Informants frequently re-iterate that corporate volunteer programs are important for "attracting and retaining the best employees" (COR7), maintaining "work-life balance" (COR5) and boosting morale. One respondent acknowledges that attractive pay cannot replace the credibility of a strong corporate social responsibility program, saying, "You just can't always continually pay people more because that doesn't necessarily motivate them to work for you" (COR3).

Respondents indicate that ESV is very important at an organizational as well as individual level. However, such recognition does not translate to one hundred percent participation, and support varies from one employee to another. Closer examination suggests that rank (or role) seems not to be a limiting factor, since a broad cross-section of employees volunteer. In fact, all except (COR6)[15] claim that all levels of management and employees participate – including salaried and unsalaried staff.

Staff support of volunteer programs is likely associated with perceived authenticity of their employers' corporate responsibility programs overall. One respondent stresses the importance of

[15] In the situation of COR6, employees volunteered on their own time (on the weekends) with very little top-down support. These volunteers tended to be salaried employees (middle management) very interested in the cause

thinking through how conservation-related volunteer programs should operate. She suggests using opportunities to create "teachable moments" above and beyond field work, such as giving money traditionally spent on team t-shirts directly to charity, or requesting re-usable drinking bottles in the field. She realizes,

> [Our employees] are looking to see how authentic we are. Are we saying that we are reducing CO_2 by planting X number of trees, but then everybody is showing up in their own cars. Well, that's not acceptable, right? So we have to think through, because we believe that it is the right thing to do . . . and it's important to our business. (COR1)

By including quality of holistic thought as a measurement tool for employee engagement programs, staff may better appreciate their authenticity.

Three main factors associated with participation rates reflect individual support. The first two revolve around employees' comfort in participating, and their personal interest in supporting a cause. For instance, two respondents feel that among some employees who value workplace volunteering conceptually, active engagement is simply beyond their "comfort level" (COR7). Yet even though these people rank participation as a low priority, they might find other ways to support these causes.

Employees' lack of personal interest in specific causes forms a greater barrier to participation, say respondents. Understandably, six respondents regard providing a variety of volunteer opportunities as crucial for boosting participation rates. Noting how a single focus can be problematic for employers wishing to accommodate everyone, one manager pragmatically says,

> I don't think there is a lot of negative sentiment around [ESV]. Everyone has their own pet cause, so they might be less supportive of some of the initiatives, but are perfectly aligned with what they are interested in. Some are going to care more or less about [our environmental causes] for example. But some have felt very strongly that we haven't been doing enough around the environment . . . It is hard to please everybody. (COR5)

Respondents appreciate the methods by which their nonprofit counterparts meet the challenge of balancing diverse interests with focused dedication to a cause, and in the process engage a greater range of volunteers. In some cases, conservation organizations use employee volunteers to research species at risk or develop fact sheets when field work is not an option. These

respondents believe that an array of different, yet complementary opportunities is beneficial when focusing on a single cause.

The need to address methods of prioritization that frequently rank employee workloads and business-related tasks above volunteer engagement is the third and most reiterated concern related to participation rates. Five corporate respondents feel that work pressure (both perceived work pressure and actual work pressure placed upon employees by their superiors), not lack of interest, is the primary deterrent to employee participation. They are careful not to blame middle management for applying pressure on their employees to volunteer. ("We don't hear a lot that it's because their managers are stopping them . . . a lot of people feel they need to get their work done, and may not have the time to get out there. (COR5)).

Corporate respondents readily acknowledge that "a company is a company" (COR5) and that work does not go away. Nevertheless, some of them express frustration at their inability to convey how much their company supports employee attendance at volunteer events. In the words of one, "This should be considered something that is open to [employees] because we want to make it available to them. There is certainly a willingness to do it, so that is not an obstacle" (COR2).

There is fallout for conservation counterparts in all of this as well. When unanticipated business work, or faulty scheduling that fails to include volunteering time reduces or eliminates the number of anticipated attendees, even slight overbooking of corporate events (as one conservation organization does) may not compensate for poor turnouts. As one conservation organization acknowledges,

> Corporate volunteers tend, in some cases, to be slightly less reliable than your average person because they don't just have your interests in mind; they also have their corporate interests in mind. (CON2)

While dealing with last-minute drop-outs or no-shows is perceived to be a "low level" challenge in this instance, it is clear that this volunteer manager differentiates between "traditional" volunteers and employee volunteers in terms of reliability.

It should be noted that the chief concerns for two companies engaging employees outside of work time occupy opposite ends of the spectrum. The first (COR3), which has had an entrenched

engagement program since its inception, and tries carefully to align employees' skills with volunteer tasks, states that there are no challenges in engaging employees, "The people part is the easy part!" (COR3); in this case, the respondent feels that lack of money to take on more projects is the primary challenge.

In the second case (COR6), low participation levels present the "toughest" challenge. However, his respondent identifies the cause of this as larger, internal company issues that have lead to cutbacks, restructuring and a resulting low staff morale that underlies the unwillingness of employees to participate. This informant admits,

> As a company, volunteering aside, we don't do enough to foster the right kind of spirit. We need to do more of that, too. Not just volunteering within the community, but as a company we need to bring people together. . . . It is really the cultural, internal problem that we have to address. It's not easy. (COR6)

Both the literature and key informants address the usefulness of ESV in furthering goals related to employee retention, recruitment and teambuilding. This conversation indicates that ESV alone is not a means to achieving these goals; rather, the foundation provided by existing workplace culture needs to be one that creates a supportive and stable environment for employees. Securing positive conditions such as these allows ESV a much better chance to achieve its full potential.

7.2.2. Interdepartmental communication – a special issue for conservation organizations

Most references to intra-agency communication relate to organizational support for ESV programs. However, throughout the interviews, some conservation groups also allude to communication issues, suggesting a tendency for interdepartmental communication surrounding employee volunteerism to be inadequate. For instance, two respondents cite a lack of connection between departments or foundations in charge of soliciting corporate sponsorship and those responsible for the stewardship-based approach to corporate volunteerism. Stewardship staff feel that closer work with development staff could enhance their programs; improved internal collaboration could also help them tap into the potential of key corporate business values. Working together, they feel, would facilitate well-developed stewardship programs that, in turn, would maximize the value of corporate services, thereby sparing them from merely "surviving from event to event" (COR2).

Merging databases listing existing members and donors with contact information for corporate volunteers offers hope of increased recruitment, feel a couple of other conservation respondents. Currently, however, interviewees note that communication issues block this development. Assigning responsibility for membership tracking to grantseekers or development staff, while stewardship staff in a different department manage volunteer coordination results in insufficient opportunities to connect, collaborate or share ideas. This inter-departmental gap denies conservation organization employees the opportunity to re-contact individual corporate volunteers regarding future volunteer opportunities or membership. Rethinking communication principles seems vital, not only to addressing these specific problems, but also for determining how volunteer programs can function more effectively within their infrastructure and ultimately within the corporate community.

7.3. A good fit? Understanding partner differences

While this subsection focuses primarily on a single respondent's comments, the individual's viewpoint aligns particularly well with others throughout the chapter, and highlights differences between the business-like approach of the corporate sector and less-structured, or seemingly unprofessional approaches of some groups within the nonprofit sector.

Much of the literature review and global case examples focus on various aspects of communication. One emergent theme concerns the need for community organizations to operate and communicate using a more business-like approach. This theme becomes even clearer here as a corporate respondent recalls the process of establishing an environmentally-based ESV program. Referring to partner contact, the executive describes how she had been taken aback by the aggressive stance of a local stewardship group which wrongly accused her company of impinging upon a natural area. She recalls the disturbing manner in which she was approached:

> It started as hostile. I thought, let's talk about this before you assume we are acting in bad faith. We had a permit [for using the area] because we were doing construction, and we didn't know they were going to be working there. Through dialogue, we got to a happy place. (COR1)

Though the encounter has not arrested this particular relationship's progress altogether, unprofessional communication and actions originating in the nonprofit sector deserve attention

because they have proven to be off-putting in a number of situations. In another instance, as an educational nonprofit was showcasing the results of their environmental program sponsored by the company, children gave a presentation to corporate employees about positive differences they had effected. Unfortunately, the outcome of this event served to bite the hand that fed them:

> As the kids were up there, they also talked about how multinationals suck [she laughs]. You know, it's like, guys, you are actually talking to people who work for a multinational. Know your audience. I don't blame [the conservation partner] for that, but I do kind of. You should really know what they are saying before they say it. (COR1)

The sometimes off-putting experience of working with grassroots organizations new to corporate partnership prompts the informant to conclude that the best advice for environmental organizations is to operate in a business-like fashion, learning to speak the language, because it is not enough to be a "crunchy-granola do-gooder":

> You have to do it without looking like you have a mouthful of s—t. Because, I know that a lot of organizations come from that academic "do good" perspective (it sounds disparaging but I don't mean it that way). They do the, "Oh my God, I can't believe I'm partnering with you! I can't believe that in order to get the money that these people so deserve, I have to partner with you!" (COR1)

COR3 also echoes the frustration and consternation surrounding grassroots' lack of business savvy, noting that some nonprofits seem more interested in garnering funds than in trying to understand the importance and weight the corporate group places on their ability to deliver quality ESV.

> If they don't understand that part of our business, and aren't willing to come to the plate and participate in that, well then, how interested in my money are you? If what they are looking for is a cheque, that's one thing. But we will say no every time. But if they are interested in really working with us because they think we can do some good things together, then that's great. (COR3)

Besides observing the conservation sector's shortcomings with regard to interagency communication, companies also express frustration and disappointment with community organizations' failure to deliver agreed-upon volunteer events effectively (see section 7.5.3). The

sophistication, business savvy, and perceived wealth that characterize the image of many corporations place them in a position of power unmatched within community organizations. In this light, nonprofits too often appear underdeveloped in almost all ways. "Learning the language" of the business community has become an urgent necessity if dialogue is to take place on a more level playing field.

At the same time, understanding partner positions invites corporations to step into the shoes of community organizations. Extending corporate interest towards a conservation partner's circumstances can mean coming to appreciate the ramifications for nonprofits of being able to afford only skeleton staff dependent on volunteers who squeeze their unpaid work into personal free time, and who seldom receive training in the skill set described above. It can also mean coming to recognize that the nature of being nonprofit demands a constant search for grants and donations to remain functional.

In implying that there is room for corporations to set aside temporarily unrealistic expectations and learn how community organizations operate, one nonprofit representative invites corporations to try and learn the language of nonprofits in turn, saying:

> There is a lack of knowledge in terms what is possible and what is not in terms of nonprofits. We work differently from corporations. I think nonprofits are really trying to learn corporate-speak, but corporations don't quite get how nonprofits work and the challenges we face. (CON5)

Especially as businesses begin to recognize how essential a healthier planet is to the manifestation of present and future business goals, corporate partners might find it interesting and useful to reciprocate by learning the language of conservation organizations. Developing conservation programs with nonprofit allies might help corporations take small steps in this direction. For instance, it might seem unusual, and perhaps interesting, for companies to discover how tied both to seasons and weather many conservation organizations are. Developing sensitivity even in this regard could buffer the business community's tendency to assert power by requesting, for example, that nonprofits set up events on short notice with little regard for these particular limitations.

7.4. Understanding motivation and incentive

Because underlying motivations and incentives for partnership play a role in influencing how partners develop effective volunteer programs, evaluate progress and understand return on investment, knowing their various facets can help each sector understand their potential partner and tailor projects effectively.

Conservation Organizations – motivations and incentives

In commenting on their motivations for engaging corporate volunteers, conservation respondents are as interested in accomplishing work as they appear intrigued about using the opportunity to spread word about their mission and create networking opportunities. Some representatives from smaller organizations mention that, at the outset, they are thankful for the opportunity to accomplish tasks. As time progresses, and they host the same corporate groups on an annual basis, they realize how beneficial it would be for their partnerships to progress "to the next level" (CON1) (i.e. the development of overarching partnership). However, over-extended, part time staff have had trouble finding time and resources to determine how to achieve this goal effectively. Nevertheless, even without the means to create a framework for larger partnerships, these respondents still feel that ESV, facilitated through ad hoc partnerships, is beneficial because it helps create informal networks of communication. As one respondent states, "It's all about who you know" (CON5).

Larger conservation organizations, on the other hand, are more often in a position to view corporate volunteerism as an avenue to establish, develop and/or maintain partnerships. Respondents indicate that, while corporate volunteers tend to carry out the same type of work as their traditional volunteers, their involvement often requires more "unanticipated work" (CON6) than traditional volunteers because corporate volunteers need more training and supervision than those already experienced in the field. In addition, event planning often occurs on short notice.

Perception of partner motivation

In admitting that they know little about what motivates companies to engage employees, conservation respondents raise this as a topic worth investigating. One respondent notes that an understanding of each other's motivations is important for how a partnership might be approached:

> Is the motivation [to engage employees] part of their strategic identity, or is it something they do once a year because they want a story in the newspaper? That really changes what a relationship is going to look like, even if you only work together once a year. (CON6)

In speculating about the intent of their corporate counterparts, conservation respondents tend to feel that levels of self-interest or generosity vary from company to company. Certainly, several astute observers suggest that corporations use volunteering to replace traditional forms of costly teambuilding exercises. Others feel that employers focus on providing staff with new experiences and avenues for becoming involved.

Respondents also suspect that growing concern about environmental issues prompts companies to focus increasingly on conservation. They also speak about the environment as "being top-of-mind and big in the media" (CON4), feeling that the concerns of younger generations now entering the workforce probably persuade companies to consider conservation as an area of focus. As one respondent puts it, you are much more "cognizant of the environment than us 40-year-olds, who are way too comfortable with our big cars and our stuff" (CON5).

Interestingly, more than half of the respondents, sensing sincerity in the actions of their counterparts, suggest generosity and the desire to "do good" as prime motivators. Statements such as, "They truly believe they're being generous with their time" (CON2); "I most certainly view it as an act of generosity" (CON4); and "It invariably appears to me as a genuine desire to help out" (CON7) reflect these sentiments. These statements help validate corporate representatives who frequently speak about engaging employees as part of an overall desire to do the right thing.

Marketing volunteer opportunities

When asked how they might "market" volunteer opportunities to potential corporate partners, respondents identify three main areas: (1) responding to environmental and community need - especially when the absence of community engagement would prevent progress for this type of work; (2) contributing to staff work/life balance – giving employees a change via working outside in an attractive setting; providing them the opportunity to do good; and (3) positioning businesses as leaders in the field – by doing good, companies will brand themselves as leaders, enhance their reputation within the community, and increase employee recruitment and retention.

Corporate groups – motivations and incentives

In an attempt to shed light upon what prompts corporations to develop relationships with conservation-based groups, I asked whether there were specific reasons why each company chooses conservation/environment over other charitable causes. The following table lists these answers along with responses to a closely associated question: what aspects or qualities of hands-on work do you think are most important for your employees? While company respondents mention specific motivations while responding to the questions, they also referred to general motives emerging throughout our conversations. I scanned the transcripts to record how many times respondents make general reference to these motivations, and coded these below.

Not surprisingly, respondents indicate that the nature of conservation work aligns with a corporate cause or mandate. Heightened environmental awareness has become another motivation (interestingly, these two points reflect the significance of the top-down/bottom up approach). One respondent notes how, as concern for the state of the natural world increased, the company's focus shifted from away from an anthropocentric definition of the environment (which focused on areas where customers live and recreate) to embrace a more holistic conceptualization which places increased emphasis upon the importance of conservation and protection:

> I would say the focus of the environment has definitely evolved. I think before it used to be more about outdoor [recreational] spaces. . . But I think the environment as a core focus, the way people think of the environment today, probably emerged four to five years ago . . . We recognized a long time ago that this was something that was going to become much bigger and more important, and we were right, which was nice. (COR3)

Interviewees also give importance to the type of work (physically demanding and challenging) – conservation work in particular offers the chance for employees to "get out" and enjoy the outdoors.

Interviewees also note the importance of locality as an important factor, although what constitutes "local" lacks specific definition. One company respondent (COR1) emphasizes the importance of available public transportation to take employees to and from worksites. Some others suggest that they could only commit enough time to drive to places less than an hour away. Corporations also tend to refer to "local" as places where employees *work* and *live.*

In addressing the qualities of hands-on work most important for employees, respondents suggest that teambuilding is extremely important. However, they also speak frequently about the importance of activities that generate enthusiasm and pride (which in turn results in increased recruitment and retention).

Table 4: Reasons corporations choose conservation and environmental causes

Motivations	Aspects of work most important for employees
• Alignment with cause ■■■■◆	• Teambuilding ■■■■■
• Heightened environmental awareness of employees ■■◆◆	• Experiencing/learning something new; being part of something bigger ■■■
• Perceived availability of opportunities (within sector) ■■	• Achieving new goals ■◆◆
• Work is physically demanding and challenging ■◆◆	• Fostering goodwill ■◆
• Partner has ability to provide multiple opportunities ■■	• "Doing good" ■◆
• Working within the *local* community ■◆◆	• Generating enthusiasm/pride ■◆◆◆
• Response to heightened awareness of consumers ■	
• Business responsibility to consumers ■	
• Sector stands out; is not crowded with competition ■	

■ *Mentioned as a reason for specifically choosing conservation/environment*

◆ *Mentioned as a general motivation*

7.5. Partner contact, event planning and program delivery

7.5.1. Finding the one: initiating partner contact

Both conservation and corporate organizations have mirrored experiences when initiating partner contact. Respondents from both sectors have experienced a learning curve, although it is clear that conservation organizations stand to learn the most. For instance, nonprofits often seem to react to partnership from corporations through a trial-and error approach to developing volunteer work events, a process that leaves some appearing to be unprofessional or even adversarial. In contrast, the more experienced organizations with greater capacity exhibit greater development of strategy regarding selection and methods of engaging partners.

Initiation efforts of conservation organizations

Three of the seven conservation organizations (two national organizations and a community-based NGO) utilize a combination of active and passive approaches to garner employee volunteers. Conservation respondents initiate corporate contact by responding to communications or by making cold calls. Over time, as their "client base" grows, this balance shifts, and businesses begin inquiring about volunteer placement opportunities. Most respondents discuss how, over time, they have had a surge in interest from corporate groups. They speculate that businesses likely find out about them through word of mouth (most of them do little to advertise corporate volunteer opportunities), prompted by increasing demand for environment-related placements – a demand driven by rising concern for the environment and a renewed interest in "going green". Due to the burgeoning of interest, several conservation respondents mention that they have progressed from seeking out opportunities to develop partnerships, to being overwhelmed with them. This is captured by the following statement:

> Historically, if there were opportunities for corporate volunteers to participate in one-off events, we would approach a company to see whether there was interest in getting work done. In the last couple of years, however, we are experiencing a "huge wave" of interest from companies; in fact, so much so, we've actually got *too much* interest. (CON4)

The increase in corporate interest creates opportunities and challenges for conservation organizations. On one hand, larger organizations indicate that rather than simply reacting to cold calls, they can begin to develop a more organized approach to partnership by weeding out corporations interested only in short term commitment with no contribution towards broader program development.

One conservation representative discusses how ability to deliver corporate work events professionally plays a role in garnering overarching support. Over time, the group has capitalized on its ability to provide opportunities for engaging employees, if employee volunteerism is added as a "perk" for businesses that have become high level supporters. The respondent feels that this provides win-win benefits: the charity can offer ESV opportunities strategically to corporate groups through a formal process, while company employees can gain deeper understanding and insight into their employers' philanthropic initiatives and charitable causes.

Some of the smaller capacity organizations put few resources into engaging corporate groups specifically, though they try to accommodate incoming requests for volunteer placement. Reasons cited for this include:

- Most seem to have enough requests without seeking out new partnerships (several mention that they have even attempted referring new requests to other groups).
- Word of mouth and web advertising seem to be sufficient even with meager advertising budgets. Interestingly, two organizations mention that they felt they had been found through web searches in "blind outreach" attempts.
- The limited amount of appropriate (e.g. seasonal) work available for groups of volunteers, combined with lack of supervisory/leadership capacity on the part of the conservation organization can make accommodating corporate groups difficult.

A couple of respondents simply state that they do not pursue active outreach because they have not developed a formalized procedure for contacting and/or managing corporate partnerships – either because of internal organizational complexities or because they do not have the time or resources to ensure things could run smoothly if they were to do so. For example, one community representative mentions that, although board members are keen to establish a process, fear that shifts in circumstances might reduce her ability to keep her end of the bargain, make her apprehensive about tying corporate volunteer opportunities to a corporate grant request. Thus she states, "My hope and fear is that we do outreach and then find out we don't really have anything for them to do. As a very small organization, that is something we struggle with" (CON5).

Initiation efforts of corporate groups

Corporate groups also employ active and passive approaches to accommodating their employees. Unsurprisingly, corporations that let employees volunteer only on specific days or dates have the most difficulty finding volunteer placements with community organizations. However, like the conservation groups, they have found this becomes easier over time when greater awareness about their need for finding community organization partners facilitates contacts leading to placements.

Only one of the seven corporate respondents says it is easy to find work for staff within nonprofit projects, noting:

> The [employees] are awesome, they really are. To an extent, they will even come to us and say, "Listen, we have this project. We are already doing a project in the community, but we have another one in desperate need that fits in one of our focus areas." We actually keep resources aside just to be able to fund those ones. We have to turn down way too many. I wish we had more money and more time. (COR3)

In this case, as in the following examples, corporate staff's understanding of community issues proves to be an asset, enabling the business' to become further connected with important matters. One explanation why this respondent has to turn down many requests from communities seeking partnership support is that this business offers substantial grants for community organizations proposing meaningful projects that use the help and expertise of corporate employees.

Experiences of other company respondents confirm suspicions that corporate volunteer placements can be hard to access. Expressing surprise at encountering this difficulty, an interviewee says,

> We will sometimes contact organizations to see if they need volunteers, and they say, "Oh, we already have so many corporate groups!" We thought we were relatively innovative . . . So it sometimes surprises me when we get a big groan on the other end of the line, "We can't accommodate another corporate group! (COR7)

Another speaks at length about frustrating experiences trying to coordinate placements for all employees on a single date set aside for a company-wide community volunteer day. Failing to find an efficient process to link with community organizations, she resorted to examining issues within her own neighbourhood. Noting a need for a coordinated clean-up effort in a park she frequented, she contacted the parks department which placed a large number of employees on clean-up duty. She then situated the remaining employees with NGOs contacted through cold calls and advertising. Ultimately, she feels that luck and perseverance brought about success, commenting: "I had a horseshoe thrown at me that time because it all came together. But it was a lot of work" (COR1).

The previous example illustrates some difficulty in efficiently finding placement for workforce volunteers; however, it also reveals the benefits that companies can experience when their employees know and understand community issues. All respondents indicate that they have mandates to address local issues, "locality" including the areas where employees work *and live*. In these cases, employees play an important role in developing networks between community agencies and their companies. This seems somewhat helpful in easing the onus on company volunteer coordinators to seek out partner organizations through blind outreach.

Two ironies are worth noting in situations such as this. On one hand corporations, often representing some of the greatest sources of environmental degradation, now clamour to participate in conservation activities. On the other hand, the conservation-oriented sector, typically short of money, volunteers and the capacity to handle this type of corporate support, can find itself so overwhelmed by offers that it feels compelled to discourage that which it most esteems – grants and physical labour.

Harnessing volunteer enthusiasm

Levels of enthusiasm for volunteering might vary throughout a company, but the opposite is true for those who take the initiative to volunteer. Respondents from both sectors report unanimously that corporate volunteers exhibit great enthusiasm for projects they undertake, using time efficiently to complete more than anticipated. As one corporate respondent proudly notes, "When we are there, we are taskmasters!" (COR4). Echoing these sentiments are the conservation respondents who offer observations such as, "I find corporate groups are overachievers. I can actually expect, and ask them, to do more than I would a regular group" (CON3) and that "there has never been other than real enthusiasm for doing this" (CON7).

While appreciative of corporate volunteers' energy, a few conservation respondents qualify their remarks by generalizing about several less attractive differences between corporate employee teams and groups of traditional volunteers. For instance, a couple of respondents recommend two to three hours for intensive work as an ideal for volunteer teams to "hold their focus" (CON2). Beyond that limit individuals often unused to enduring hard physical labour in field situations may lose interest and motivation. As noted by the volunteer manager who praises corporate volunteers' surprising overachievements, it is a good idea to plan shorter work events, even if pressured to do more: "We have to tell them that though they are well intentioned, they will be

tired after a couple of hours of really physical work. We have to convince them a half day is more appropriate" (CON3).

In a similar vein, other respondents also suspect that, despite good intentions about attending work events, tight (and changing) schedules can leave corporate volunteers with neither the ability to prioritize attendance nor plan for the work. Consequently, one volunteer coordinator notes with some frustration that reliability is an issue: "They are keen when they sign up, but they back out at the last minute because they have something else in the works. They frequently see us as a low priority" (CON2). In addition, one respondent notes that employees are sometimes ill-prepared for the work in store, despite being warned. For example, "They are usually gung ho, but they probably don't think much about it before they come. Not everyone dresses appropriately . . . some have even arrived in dress shoes, though it is dirty work (CON1).

These observations corroborate evidence from the case example chapter regarding corporate volunteer activities. Employees consistently display a willingness and energy to do the work, often accomplishing more than anticipated. However, after a couple of hours appointed to tasks to which most are unaccustomed, energy can quickly wane. The story of employees arriving on site ill-prepared echoes that of Jill Brown's experience in Chapter Four where workers arrived to the fen in dress shoes. These examples reinforce the need for those planning corporate work events to be prepared for energetic, yet somewhat undirected, enthusiasm. They also imply there are benefits for community organizations to develop ongoing working relationships with company staff so they can more effectively tailor events to skills and abilities.

7.5.2. Arranging a date

When it comes to planning and carrying out on-the-ground work, the conservation sector is vocal in noting room for improvement. The most common complaint, mentioned by six of the seven conservation organizations, is that corporations repeatedly contact them trying to organize work events under tight and restrictive timelines. The conservation respondents feel caught between having to organize a work day for as many as fifty volunteers with only one to three weeks' notice, or losing out on a potential opportunity for networking. The following statement reflects this common experience:

> When we first started [our volunteer] program, we were eager to accommodate any corporation with an interest in volunteering. I'd say we've rarely been contacted by a corporation that provides us with more than three weeks lead time. We had a mandate to engage as many volunteers as possible, and we were interested in developing long-term relationships. (CON6)

In addition to managing expectations about turnaround times, community representatives also struggle with accommodating requests for doing specific types of activities (e.g. tree planting) out of season or when other work is a priority. Conservation staff wish that corporate counterparts could be more "flexible and open-minded" (CON1) about event scheduling and proposed activities; A key informant describes an all-too-familiar situation,

> You have 2½ weeks to put something together, and you don't want to fall down on that relationship; however, you don't have anything you can drop to get that done. Most often [corporate groups] have their own agendas, as opposed to being plugged into something more substantial. It has to be on a designated day, or a certain type of project, even though we don't do that activity during that period. (CON1)

By insisting on only attractive participation options, and resisting less appealing jobs despite their high priority for conservation groups, companies can place nonprofits in the awkward position of either failing the relationship or succumbing to their corporate partner's pressure. Requests for specific dates, times, tasks, locations and large group accommodation further complicate issues surrounding quick turn around. Repeatedly encountering these issues has prompted some conservation organizations to be more prudent about the businesses with whom they work. As a conservation informant testifies, "In the past, we've been willing to bend with the hopes that this group might want to take a step further with us in years to come if we were to extend this opportunity. We now recognize this is costing us money in terms of coordination and staff time, especially with unsolicited interest" (CON4). This comment indicates how her organization is transitioning away from a reactive attitude to partnership, and adopting a more carefully thought-out mode of operation.

A couple of corporate representatives suspect that it has been hard for community organizations to accommodate their needs at short notice, yet they indicate that company restrictions leave

them little choice in the matter. One respondent expresses the sense that the community organization had imposed a deadlock position on her:

> We say we would like to volunteer on a specific date in the afternoon, and they [the nonprofit] say, "Oh, we have this event coming up and it's on a Saturday night, we could really use employees." Sorry. We need something on a Thursday afternoon! You know, it doesn't work all the time. (COR7)

This remark reflects frustration with hard-to-reconcile agendas. Such scenarios can easily devolve into a test of wills as the only apparent way out of a deadlock. It also tends to put nonprofits into a "damned if we do, damned if we don't" quandary. Either they accommodate the corporate request (potentially risking their own credibility by producing a make-work opportunity), or they risk losing the corporate connection altogether.

Potentially one step of learning here could involve both organizations recognizing their particular limitations, and then proceeding in a conciliatory manner. For instance, the business might offer (or agree) to post a notice about the Saturday event to all employees adding that employee participation would be welcome. With this bridge in place, the two sectors might find it easier to look ahead to a mutually agreeable time for scheduling an actual ESV event.

7.5.3. Delivering a quality experience

Respondents from both sectors recall the types of stewardship-related work in which employees have participated. These include a range of activities such as tree/flower planting, invasive species removal, trail/boardwalk work, construction activities, garbage clean up, building bird or bat boxes and even electro-fishing (fish-monitoring) projects. Some respondents also mention that employees had, or were planning to become engaged in educational activities related to research or classroom programming. Drawing from their experiences, respondents from both sectors describe the components that help create a quality experience. Several themes in particular, arise frequently. These include:

Varied: Recognizing the diverse range of employee interests, corporate respondents in a particular emphasize variety as the spice of volunteer programs. Many prefer engaging in a number of causes to avoid reaching a saturation point, especially if tasks are extremely repetitive. Ensuring variety within volunteer events may be problematic for conservation organizations

catering primarily to employees lacking experience in conservation work. One conservation respondent feels that the significance of fostering long-term relationships is "critical to being able to offer employees more exciting and informative events" (CON6) as longevity allows the complexity of activities to evolve while interest and experience in natural heritage grows.

Meaningful: Closely related to variety is employees' perception of meaningfulness in work. Besides being authentic, corporate representatives wish to ensure that the employees connect with the concepts. As one puts it, "you need to know your audience" (COR1), and as another suggests, "we wish to reflect not only the causes our associates care about, but those where their skills can have the most impact" (COR3). Conservation organizations face a particular challenge incorporating various interests and skill-sets in volunteer work. Perhaps appealing to diverse interests also requires incorporating more information into educational materials to help volunteers explore the links between stewardship, green living, health and social issues.

Physical, competitive and conducive to teambuilding: Some debate attaches itself to the physical difficulty of work, since informants recognize the need for all to be involved. However, most note that the physical nature of outdoor work is important to many employees. Says one, "Probably the average age in our company is 35, so we have a lot of colleagues who like to be physical" (COR1). Others are adamant that the physical nature of the work be conducive to teambuilding which tends to occur as groups of volunteers vie with each other to complete tasks first.

Local: The ability to take action where employees live and work is a prime motivation for corporate group involvement. For conservation organizations, working with employees who are also members of the community creates opportunities to instill a sense of place and create future capacity. However, the idea of "local" presents challenges for conservation organizations operating beyond the city's outskirts in rural areas. One conservation respondent whose organization functions primarily in rural areas admits that, even if urban-based volunteers travel outside the city once to participate, distance might create enough of a deterrent to dissuade them from repeating the experience. She adds that this challenge requires "critically looking at who we are recruiting and how, through our recruitment strategies, we could engage volunteers from local communities" (CON6).

Efficient: In addressing complexities associated with corporate group work, this informant perfectly underscores the importance of efficiency: "It has to be really organized. Projects can't run out too quickly and even tree-planting takes a lot of planning. A lot of people want to work around their own schedule and we have to work around our own schedule" (CON7). The need for efficiency also becomes clear in the discussion of valuing employees that follows.

Employees must be valued: Four of seven corporate respondents speak of frustrating experiences where employees have been undervalued by community organizations with which they volunteered as teams. Each story is strikingly similar: employee volunteers arrive on site, but are given very little to do. Sometimes community organizations grossly underestimate how much work employees are capable of handling, but for the most part they are unprepared for speed of accomplishment. This respondent describes two typical experiences:

> We had a group go to a community centre because they needed thousands of envelopes stuffed . . . Well, they had another corporate group that morning who had done 9/10 of the work. So our folks didn't have much to do. You take the time, you travel, you get there thinking you're going to make a meaningful contribution and the work has been done. I was so mad. Again, last year, with an agricultural organization I guess that there was a bit of a misunderstanding, but there was a limit to the amount we could pick, and we had people pick for about half an hour, and all the picking was done. People were supposed to be working for about four hours, so that was not satisfactory. There has to be a sufficient amount of work, and it has to be meaningful. (COR7)

One respondent, noting that these unfortunate opportunities deter participants from ever coming back, laments: "The unfortunate part about it is the volunteer comes back feeling like it was not worthwhile or a good use of their time . . . they may not be the person that participates again (COR2). COR5 feels most employees take their responsibility to the community seriously, saying, "There is a respect for the fact that the firm gave them the day off, and they want to maximize the contribution that they can make."

Having heard of these types of misadventures from corporate employees, a conservation respondent advises community organizations to appreciate the gift of the company and the gift of time supplied by employees:

> Organizations working with volunteers need to have an enhanced appreciation about what it means for a person to give up a day. The relationship needs to be understood as equitable. Both parties are giving and both should be receiving benefits. If you think about it that way, then you are starting on stronger ground. (CON6)

This suggestion serves to underpin this corporate respondent's recommendation: "Develop a program that doesn't underestimate the power of supporting people's involvement within the community and supporting it in general . . . It's a wonderful way to create good-will and to connect to communities where you work (COR1).

7.5.4. Communicating key messages

In an attempt to gauge whether conservation and stewardship messages are communicated successfully, both sectors were asked whether they feel employees eventually gain appreciation and understanding of the work they are doing and the mission of the organization they are helping out. Most conservation groups seem hesitant about whether they are able to communicate key messages. They answer the question by presenting a range of perspectives, from a tentative "I think so" (CON5) and "I hope so" (CON6) to an uncertain "I don't know" (CON1) or a doubtful, "It's probably a mixed, but marginal result" (CON2). One volunteer coordinator feels that corporate volunteers would probably learn something, provided they were "paying attention" and not "dozing off" (CON7), suggesting that corporate volunteers are more interested in the hands-on aspect of volunteering than in listening to an instructor.

Clearly conservation groups regard sending key messages to new audiences as an important aspect of engaging corporate volunteers. In fact, above and beyond reinforcing messages about programs and mandates, some organizations feel it is important to create a higher level of familiarity with natural features such as the "Niagara Escarpment or the Oak Ridges Moraine" (CON6), and with the concept of conservation in general. Because of the pressure to combine education with learning experiences, two informants note that they have had difficulty effectively balancing education and hands-on aspects of work. Though most respondents mention trying to provide written materials in conjunction with events, these two suggest that more could be done to create a lasting impression. Given that one-off work events allow for only brief introductions and instructions, CON4 says, "This is where we have some work to do. . . In

the end, I don't feel there is a lasting impact, other than what they might gain in terms of teambuilding."

In contrast to this uncertainty, corporate representatives seem more confident that employees receive somewhat educational experiences, learning a bit about the partnering organization, while improving their understanding of specific volunteer tasks and their purposes. Ultimately, corporate respondents indicate that the amount employees gain is related to factors such as the amount of background information provided to them, their own level of personal interest, and their attachment to the cause.

Once conservation respondent notes marked differences among corporate teams in the understanding they have of their role, and that such differences can be influenced by differences among charity organizations and variations among situations. Much of their interest, she says, stems from their employers' manner of fostering community work. She remarks:

> A group that [recently volunteered with us] were actually the people who organize and coordinate volunteer events for [corporate] stores across Canada. They had a highly developed understanding of their role in the relationship, and of the need of the nonprofit partner. It was quite a sophisticated interaction compared to some of our past corporate relationships. (CON6)

Suitably impressed with the work of these employees, this respondent implies that such a situation exemplifies a positive relationship between the amount of time invested by the corporation in being a "good community stakeholder, and the enthusiasm and comprehension displayed by the employees in the field" (CON6).

Take-home lessons

Some corporate respondents elaborate upon how they feel new knowledge about the importance of the environment strikes home for certain employees after participating in volunteer events. For instance, one employer cites anecdotal evidence that staff has taken the stewardship message to heart, making extra efforts to clean up litter during daily walks. This respondent also mentions that employees later returned to the natural areas that they had worked on (often with friends and

family) (COR1).[16] A couple of corporate respondents also note that employees began to speak with increased appreciation of what it means to volunteer. They cite greater attachment to the causes for which they have worked, and in several cases have enthusiastically recruited participation by others.

Establishing a balance between education and work

Like their conservation counterparts, corporate respondents want a balance between education and action. While appreciating education's special role, they agree that tight timelines and focused agendas impose strict limits on information sessions. Community organizations need to plan clear, succinct presentations. As one corporate respondent says, "You only have so many hours to attend a community day. . .when you have six hours to volunteer and they take away two hours for educational purposes, it's one third of the time we could be doing more" (COR4).

Acknowledging this need to balance education and work, conservation organizations suggest developing more extensive written manuals or brochures to provide transferable ideas that can be implemented within employees' home communities. In addition, respondents broach the need for corporate groups to become long-term, informal, stewards who adopt specific natural areas. In this way, employee knowledge could expand each time volunteers return to see the long-term results of work. As one respondent summarizes, "It is hard to impress upon people the significance of their work when they may never go to that place again . . . this is a challenge for our organization, and longer-term relationships would provide a richer experience (CON6).

Somehow the reluctance of volunteers to receive education suggests that the manner in which learning reaches them may too closely resemble the worst elements of a school situation. Nevertheless, most comments suggest that lots of activity, even coupled with team challenges, helps make the volunteer experience refreshing. Despite the gravity of some conservation situations, nonprofits might achieve the most positive impacts and learning goals by conveying the education component of their events in playful, humorous ways. Seeking consultation with professional educators skilled in addressing a variety of learning styles might enable conservation groups to hone their teaching strategies.

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[16] Incidentally, conservation respondents CON1 and CON5 corroborate evidence by noting that some employees would return with family or friends on weekends to enjoy the areas they had worked in as volunteers.

7.6. Screening and suitability

Literature on cross-sectoral partnerships suggests that finding an appropriate fit can strengthen organizational brand value and legitimacy. On the other hand, relationships may actually lose legitimacy, especially if partners are hiding any "skeletons in the closet" (e.g. pertaining to their uses of money or questionable labour practices). Respondents from both sectors discuss whether or not they screen potential partners, or have other methods of determining partner suitability.

Conservation organization screening process

When it comes to screening corporate partners interested in employer supported volunteerism, even community organizations who have well-developed corporate giving guidelines in place find partnerships based on donation of time, rather than money, a grey area where the same rules may not apply.

None of the organizations have fully worked out whether screening guidelines would be different for corporations if they were to donate in-kind services rather than money. The majority of the conservation organizations feel that the development of screening guidelines is not yet a priority because their involvement with corporate partners would draw little public scrutiny. However, a couple of respondents recognize the need to address this soon as the popularity of employer supported volunteerism gains momentum. For instance, one respondent mentions relief at avoiding the discussion in the past ("We were once approached by a hard liquor company but luckily the idea just faded away (CON7)). Another notes that she became more cautious after being approached by a consultant representing an anonymous corporate client. She recounts:

> The consultant contacted a number of local organizations saying she had a client interested in working with us[17].We didn't know who the client was or what they were involved in. At the time, we didn't know who else was writing proposals but it turned out that [a couple of our close community partners] wrote them too. This made no sense to us. (CON5)

It turned out the anonymous client was a tobacco company. Although the respondent went ahead and organized a corporate work day, the experience led her to "wonder about" her organization's "image" (CON5) and how the event might be perceived by the community. She also mentions

[17] Note: An honorarium was associated with employees coming out.

that the incident alerted her to further complications when community partners discussed what had happened and realized they had also spent time and energy crafting proposals they ordinarily would have developed collaboratively with one another. This incident has prompted increased wariness on the part of the all conservation organizations involved. It provides incentive for community partners to develop a protocol to help them avoid accidentally competing against, or talking past each other should similar situations arise.

Another respondent indicates how her organization is working to refine existing corporate screening guidelines:

> We're now aiming to partner with companies that are leading their sector in terms of CSR, so we have to be assured through active dialogue with the company that they are at the top, or striving to make changes to get to the top. (CON4)

The development of criteria for corporate partner selection has helped her organization determine what companies might deserve to have first choice of available community conservation work. She also notes that a more rigorous process has helped appease the consciences of fellow co-workers who had their own personal reservations about working with companies with questionable environmental track records.

Perhaps this discussion indicates that conservation groups might do well to question their biases. As this respondent encourages, "Go in thinking good intents, that organizations are doing it for the right reason, not just because they want to improve their reputation" (CON1). It would seem in some instances that nonprofits are unwilling to allow companies with negative images or reputations for counter-ecological activities to begin redeeming themselves by taking a step in a worthwhile direction.

Corporate group screening process

Corporate groups have few criteria for determining suitable partners apart from the standard strong preference, or a mandate for working only with registered charities. Most also mention the importance of collaborating with charities who provide non-discriminatory assistance to populations within whose communities they work. They suggest that partnership with specific lobby groups or politicized groups is extremely unlikely as these would not be registered

charities. Nevertheless, one respondent makes this point by reversing the rejection, saying, "My suspicion is that most advocacy groups would prefer not to partner with us" (COR7).

7.7. Agreements or contracts

Both sets of respondents were asked whether they ever used written agreements or contracts to outline expectations and timelines for volunteer events. The conservation informants testify that agreements for engaging corporate volunteers are "*amazingly* informal" (CON7): expectations regarding corporate contributions are simply conveyed verbally or via e-mail. They admit that they are preoccupied with developing internal protocols for handling corporate volunteers, and are not "organized enough" (CON5) to develop formal agreements or contracts except for ESV activities associated with larger grants. Nevertheless, four respondents indicate that once they progress past this first step of developing internal policies for handling corporate volunteers, they would be interested in looking into the possibility crafting formal agreements.

Like the conservation organizations, the corporate groups usually do not sign written agreements or contracts unless they contribute to conservation projects financially in addition to providing volunteers. In the few instances where contracts are required as part of due diligence measures, corporations may request confirmation that their partners do not discriminate (with regards to race, religion or gender), or require that their counterparts fill out basic applications outlining the purpose of activities. In one case, a respondent stresses that it was important to know that partner organizations had ongoing volunteer needs, because beyond the goal of completing immediate projects, the corporate goal was to give individuals an opportunity to return on an ongoing basis.

After organizing work events with several nonprofit groups, only to have employees complain about insufficient work availability, one respondent suggests that a formal agreement might be useful to offer clear expectations about anticipated workload and timelines. With this exception, corporate respondents do not indicate a need for formal agreements for facilitating ESV.

7.7.1. Recognition and awards

Both conservation and corporate groups have a variety of methods for recognizing voluntary contributions. One larger conservation organization celebrates partnerships through an annual corporate citizenship award (as part of an organization-wide program and not strictly associated with ESV), while two more issue media alerts about pending volunteer work days. Generally

conservation organizations acknowledge corporate contributions by publishing success stories about corporate events and contributions in newsletters or on their websites. In addition to recognizing companies as a whole, some conservation respondents also try to acknowledge the efforts of individuals by providing tokens of appreciation such as team photographs accompanied by descriptions of accomplished tasks. A couple of respondents indicate that they are working on improving individual and team recognition by creating tokens that can help effectively deliver the conservation messages that they have tried to instill as part of the service learning experience.

Like the conservation groups, corporate groups tend to recognize employee contributions through internal publications and newsletters. In two of these four cases, companies also give out formal awards: the first presents awards to the employee team making the most significant contributions, while the other awards employees who volunteer extensively on their own time.

Recognition and awards are particularly valuable because these actions help strengthen partnerships, and provide tangible records of achievement for individuals and groups. They also constitute a way of tracking successes, and, on longer-term projects, can become markers on the way to final goals. Awarding employees for volunteering on their own time demonstrates corporate capacity to extend acknowledgement beyond its own programs while recognizing employees for their personal grassroots initiatives.

7.8. Tangibles and intangibles: perception of return on investment

7.8.1. Conservation organizations – return on investment

Most conservation respondents employ only informal or semi-formal methods of evaluating corporate employee engagement. Usually, this consists of contacting the corporate representative in charge of organizing volunteers and asking for feedback, though some respondents also give out short questionnaires. Of the seven, only three respondents mention that evaluation is something they have recently begun to consider seriously, particularly in terms of return on investment (ROI).

Not surprisingly, conservation organizations that think most about evaluating volunteer programs are those with the greatest capacity for facilitating volunteers through organized events on an ongoing basis. They employ a large, year-round staff and have already garnered corporate support for other areas of their operations. Nevertheless, even within these groups, methods of

evaluation are still in their formative stages, and for the most part they resort to estimating ROI on a case-by case basis when necessary.

Even with rudimentary calculations, these groups note that at the outset, ROI is very low (or non-existent) when calculated solely in financial terms.[18] However, as they have become more adept at handling corporate requests for volunteer placement, they have started to maximize ROI by becoming more efficient and strategic in their approach. Although none of them have utilized social accounting to estimate ROI in terms of intangibles, there is general agreement that engaging corporations provides some return in terms of the social capital creates because it gives an opportunity to "connect with each other" (CON2).

The respondents note that financial gains increase by prioritizing work and being more selective about partnering decisions (e.g. ROI would be higher if partners were easy to accommodate, had potential for a greater partnership, and could influence others in the area to become engaged as well). As one respondent recognizes, an integrated approach requires capacity on the part of the conservation organization to market and deliver a quality program effectively. In speaking about the development of a strategy she comments,

> If we want to see a multifaceted return on investment that leads to better long-term relationships and engagement with those employees . . . we have to learn how to sell that. There would have been no return on investment in the early days. Now, we aren't generating revenue from our corporate program, but we are starting to get to a place where, in the end, we are probably not breaking even, but we're probably a lot closer than we ever have been before. (CON6)

While larger capacity organizations need to plan around developing a tangible return on investment, the same assumption cannot be made for all of the grassroots organizations. When asked whether corporate volunteers fill a niche unmet by traditional volunteers, respondents for the larger organizations indicate that most of the work could well be carried out by the large base

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[18] This is illustrated by one respondent who set out to estimate costs for a potential project by calculating the contribution her organization would have to make in order to complete a project with the assistance of corporate volunteers. She notes that the cost of the project went "through the roof" (CON4) when volunteer management costs were factored in (even though employee volunteer hours were calculated at a standard rate).

of traditional volunteers. However, three of the smaller organizations indicate that retirees provide the bulk of volunteer support. In these instances, the benefits of hands-on contributions provided by younger corporate volunteers seems worth the cost and effort of coordination even at the outset. Respondents with an aging traditional volunteer base regard corporate help as particularly beneficial for straightforward physical tasks such as trail maintenance and tree planting. As one respondent states,

> We would have trouble getting [our retired volunteers] to take wheelbarrow after wheelbarrow of stuff onto the trail. If you get 50 corporate volunteers who all tend to be in their 20s to 40s, then you [have] lots of muscle-power and can get work done. (CON1)

Thus, while some respondents have not grappled specifically with the question of ROI, they have informally noted the value of utilizing corporate volunteers.

7.8.2. Corporate groups – return on investment

Only one respondent mentions trying to express employee engagement in terms of return on investment (ROI). This group's calculations are completed using a model from the London Benchmarking Group to help them understand whether resources dedicated to a project result in an equal amount of social capital. The respondent feels that this model is extremely useful in continually allowing them to assess what aspects of their program "provided the most bang for the buck" (COR3) in terms of making a positive social impact.

The other groups feel they are not at a stage where they can calculate return on investment. However, since publicity could be considered a return on investment, six respondents speak about whether or not they track media uptake related to their engagement programs. Surprisingly, only two of the six put out communication pieces about employee involvement. Of these, only one group actively tracks media response, while two others publicize only occasions that "promoted the value of volunteering" (COR2), rather than the company contributing volunteers. Meanwhile, for the representative of the commodity business, public relations relative to community work is too costly and unaligned with the "nature of the business" (COR3).

In some cases, return on investment in public relations is not worth potentially marring company images. Two respondents indicate that their management has consciously decided not to link

public relations and employee engagement, concerned that their activities could be misconstrued as publicity stunts rather than doing the right thing. While recognizing that positive branding and making money are important, they feel strongly that community involvement is a "separate thing" which they "would like to keep separate" (COR4); media attention could easily cloud the transparency of intent. One respondent grapples with the risk of PR by questioning,

> How much [PR] can you do before it seems like you are blowing your own horn? Let's be careful, do this right, and let the actions speak for us, rather than speaking for ourselves. All those chestnuts of wisdom you try and follow when you are doing the right thing. (COR1)

For most respondents from both sectors (and particularly for smaller community organizations), formal evaluation and calculating return on investment is still not a priority, since it is primarily done intuitively. However, all respondents indicate that evaluation is something they hope to look into further. Depending upon an organization's capacity to include information about volunteer successes in outreach, practitioners could think about tracking over time such elements as: (1) added awareness within a community which could help nonprofits garner future grants and donations (2) donations of special skills (e.g. photography, journalistic, web-page creation) that employees might be able to provide in other capacities (beyond team work) to an organization (3) increased efficiency of returnee volunteers being able to accomplish tasks and in turn teach others (4) gifts, donations or memberships (5) ways in which employees may implement a charity's ideals at home or in their own community (6) number of referrals (e.g. friends, family) who participate as a result of an employee volunteer's experience.

7.8.3. Employees come back: the literal rate of return

Strengthening the capacity of the voluntary sector is a goal considered by nonprofits and corporations alike when developing employee engagement programs. Both sectors realize an element of return on their original investment of program development and management when employees return to volunteer on their own accord as result of their corporate team experiences. Six of the seven conservation respondents, and all seven of the corporate respondents state that employees have gone on to become engaged as volunteers as a result of their experiences. Almost all of these observations are anecdotal; respondents lack detailed information, saying that

the number of returnees seems consistent but not overwhelming.[19] For both sectors, calculating the rate of returnees is a major stumbling block because it requires detailed tracking information whose collection is difficult and time-consuming. In fact, at the time of the interviews, only two conservation organizations and one company were taking steps to gather such information.

Two corporate respondents observe that returning employees appreciate the opportunity to come back and participate in activities that could include their families and children; another touts the importance of having the opportunity for employees to share enthusiasm about volunteering for nature with the younger generation during weekend family time because, "kids like it. They get right into it" (COR6). Similarly, one conservation respondent links their success at spreading the word about a natural area they were promoting to providing employees with simple ideas about how to get children involved (e.g. by contributing birdseed for feeders along trails) because, "It's a way you can be part of nature and kids love it" (CON5). Thus, for groups capable of handling multi-generational volunteers, family-friendly volunteer activities might prove a successful strategy for fostering engagement.

7.9. Maintaining relationships

7.9.1. Who upholds the relationship?

I sought to understand if each sector feels they are interacting with a partner who could help them uphold agreements by asking respondents directly whether or not they perceived their counterparts to be doing their part by upholding the relationship. Community partners took up the question – Would you say your partner has a "champion" who helps to uphold your partnership? – in more detail than did corporate representatives.

Probably because working relationships are generally episodic or ad hoc, conservation representatives address the issue of championship by focusing on whether or not they could ferret out, or maintain contact with, community liaisons within a corporation. Some of them note appreciatively that they have been able to develop a relationship with an attentive corporate representative, "That kind of dedication from a company is extremely amazing, you know. It's great to have a straight line to a person within [a partner company], with whom you can deal

[19] The seventh conservation respondent states that tracking of this information has not been possible.

consistently" (CON4). Nevertheless, more often then not, interviewees claim to be stressed about finding the right person to contact (especially when web searches return no results), They note that the high turnover rates of corporate point people assigned as contacts results in decreased corporate memory and confusion, and a lack of continuity from one year to the next. This problem emerges from one respondent who says, "I'm not even sure who our contact person is at the moment, because our e-mails bounced a while ago" (CON2).

From a corporate perspective, however, maintaining contact with a key point person within a conservation organization is not an issue. One corporate representative chooses to answer the question in terms of how well community partners (who also received funding as part of the agreement) could deliver a quality volunteer experience for staff that meets the needs of both sectors. In this instance, the informant perceives community agencies to be champions based on their ability to think innovatively, "keep things fresh" (COR3) and deliver a program based upon anticipated, agreed-upon results. The respondent recognizes that adhering to the strict program format required by his company could end up being very beneficial to organizations with the right fit, but could be limiting for nonprofits requiring unrestricted funding, or who had set a much different course for action than could be permitted through the grant. The comments made by this respondent point to corporations' needs to partner with organizations that can operate within a business-like environment and that are not fundamentally different in nature or intent.

7.9.2. A question of money: paying to volunteer

Two mirrored questions required both sets of informants to discuss the concept of paying to volunteer. I first asked conservation organizations whether they ever charge for providing corporate volunteer opportunities. This question serves to reveal the extent to which respondents feel that their organizations are delivering a service to the corporate community that requires recompense. The next question required company respondents to discuss whether they would pay for volunteer opportunities, serving to assess receptivity or resistance to the idea.

Conservation organizations – to charge or not to charge?

Most conservation respondents have not thought extensively about charging fees for corporate organizations. In fact, the first respondent expresses surprise at the idea saying, "Do others do that? (CON1). However, most of the other informants have occasionally requested that corporate

participants cover costs of items such as planting stock or project materials. In general, they seem hesitant about asking for more than this, speculating that such requests might deter potential partners, or tempt them to seek better opportunities by looking elsewhere.

Lack of time to properly formulate how to ask corporations for funds likely deters some conservation organizations. As one respondent says, "We've thought about it, but we've not come up with a formal protocol . . . [the corporations] are not paying for the full events and we are always contributing, whether it is staff resources, the maintenance costs et cetera" (CON3). He realizes, however, that these extraneous costs are quite difficult to quantify without a formal protocol and even more difficult to present as legitimate expenses. He says, "You can ask for money to afford trees specifically . . . but when it comes to staff time or maintenance, people aren't interested in contributing that way."

Another respondent had started talking about potential pricing structures only weeks before our conversation. Her organization has begun hammering out a framework for a flexible, tiered[20] pricing structure based on the degree of relationship already established with a company. The protocol deliberately aims to encourage larger, overarching partnerships and sponsorships, while managing the unprecedented number of unsolicited corporate inquiries about volunteer opportunities. However ad hoc team events will not be completely eliminated: the guidelines will allow potential partners to take a "test run" with the organization before agreeing to a larger commitment.

Overall, the concept of charging corporations for the opportunity to participate in conservation work occupies uncharted territory which smaller organizations have not begun to consider. In one case, the idea of charging corporations for their help has been a non-issue, since the corporate volunteers have the ability to carry out work that could not be done otherwise. However, for the most part, lack of know-how and time to develop guidelines (and even perhaps some hesitation about charging for experiences that might not be consistently delivered) are deterrents that might prevent community organizations from attaching such costs to volunteer opportunities.

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[20] E.g. One rate applies to groups of up to twenty people, while twenty plus pay a different rate.

Corporate groups – to pay or not to pay?

The corporate representatives have various thoughts about what it means to pay for volunteer opportunities. The short answer is that none of them seem averse to covering the cost of necessary materials (e.g. tree planting stock) that would be used during corporate work events. All state that they readily contribute when asked (or they even give voluntary contributions) to this end. However, because all companies use different models for their employer volunteer programs, the issue becomes a little more complex.

Only two companies note that, beyond an allotment for materials, giving is not an option. The first simply states that no funds are available to cover additional costs (this organization has little top-down support for the initiative), while the other responds that the idea does not match the company's criteria of working with community organizations in need of volunteers. In further justifying this approach, this respondent notes that, by employing their own volunteer co-ordinator, her company helps offset costs for community organizations. The corporation works only with community organizations that specifically seek in-kind labour.

Most other companies allot honoraria or supply small grants to offset costs of employee volunteer events. One respondent reveals a budget of approximately two hundred dollars for every ten employees per event, but is willing to consider contributing to additional activity costs on a case-by-case basis. The highest contribution involves employees working as volunteers on Habitat for Humanity projects at a cost of around $165.00 per employee per day. She notes that this activity is extremely high in demand because "all kinds of people want to go out with this group, and it's fun to build a house" (COR3).

7.10. Summary of benefits, hurdles and suggestions for improvement

7.10.1. Greatest benefits for both sectors

In discussing what they perceive to be the greatest benefits of their relationships, respondents from both sectors emphasize values associated with education, environmental awareness, personal growth and collaboration.

For example, conservation respondents downplay the importance of accomplishing tasks, instead speaking in detail about the significance of reaching out, educating and promoting transferable

skills. Three respondents simply state they derive benefit in believing that employees gain something from the experience and would leave with a sense of accomplishment and a positive attitude. They indicate that, while this knowledge has value in itself, they also feel that satisfied employees would be very likely to share their experiences and return in the future. One of these interviewees observes that on several occasions volunteer engagement has had an almost immediate ripple effect. She describes how visitors, upon seeing volunteer teams assisting with projects in a park, have enquired how they too could become involved. Conservation organizations often perceive the personal nature of "word of mouth" marketing to be invaluable, and an essential ingredient for ensuring future corporate connections. As one conservation respondent puts it, corporate volunteers eliminate the need for "active marketing" of team volunteer opportunities (CON7).

Like conservation respondents, corporate contacts focus on the positive aspects of community work. In particular they value employees learning and growing from positive experiences which they anticipate would help foster a volunteer ethic. As COR5 points out, "Our hope is that our people will become lifelong volunteers." They also clearly feel pleased to be able to provide opportunities for their staff. As one corporate representative puts it: "We value being able to provide our associates with the opportunity, the motivation, the excitement and enthusiasm it creates" (COR3). Another adds with pride, "I can't even think of an instance where we have received negative feedback from an organization. When [employees] decide to do it, they do their best at it" (COR2). In addition to these, most respondents also recognize the associated "internal" benefits of these experiences that help the company as a whole. These include teambuilding, strengthening internal relationships and creating a strong reputation for the company as a good employer. COR2 recognizes that, "people want to work for us because of what we do" (COR2).

In some instances, the existence of employee engagement and corporate responsibility programs allows for some leniency when errors in judgment are made, suggests one corporate respondent. He recalls how his company, thoughtlessly decided to open its doors on statutory holidays shortly after a shopping act changed. He says,

> Elsewhere it wouldn't be so bad. But in Nova Scotia, 95% of the population is Christian and 90% is Catholic. You can imagine the uproar when people found we were opening on Good

> Friday. We made a decision 24 hours later not to open. And when we did that they said, "We knew you understood . . .we'll let it go. In fact, we are so happy you made your decision we are only going to shop in your stores". We literally generated loyal customers because we reversed a decision we'd mistakenly made. (COR3)

While noting that how quickly one is forgiven is based upon how big the mistake is and what has been done in the past, he acknowledges that unexpected benefits may arise with a good reputation.

Some "internal" benefits derived by conservation organizations are worthy of mention. One respondent observes that corporate volunteer events provide a chance for staff to share their passion about nature with new audiences, saying:

> It's nice to share with people what your passions are. I think of [our staff] being able to work with groups who have no knowledge of Ontario's native prairies, for instance. [They've] got all day to share that love with people. I think that is really important. I think a lot of it, to be honest, comes down to personal enrichment. (CON6)

When stewardship staff are able to generate, and potentially cultivate interest, it affirms they are working in the right direction. The reciprocation of enthusiasm has a positive effect as described here:

> Corporate volunteers are wonderful because there is a lot of energy . . . When you get repeat crews, it tends to build on the experience – once they become familiar with our work, then they just run with it. (CON4)

One conservation contact also describes benefits in terms of the broader sense of environmental promise that corporate partnerships offer. The respondent suggests that partnerships in themselves elicit hope:

> . . . you really start to see this spectrum of [corporate social responsibility] … where companies have invested in their volunteer programs and have worked those goals up through their corporate governance to their highest level. (CON6)

One conservation respondent feels hesitant about describing the greatest benefits of partnership, observing that these could emerge over time. As CON7 says, "I haven't been involved long enough to comment upon what the ultimate benefit might be." Three others indicate that

achieving full benefits depends on the creation of broader partnerships which in most cases have not been fully realized. They tend to view employer-supported volunteerism as a building block for greater relationships that require time to develop. As CON2 expresses it,

> I have a feeling I've been laying the groundwork to take advantage of greater benefits. . . for example, it's a possibility that [the corporations we are working with] might go beyond simple projects to do some larger demonstration projects at their corporate headquarters. . . We could capitalize upon the firm connections based upon the relationships we've built, getting good stuff done where corporations have additional resources . . . I'd like to build relationships with [corporations] and from that say, "Look at your corporate headquarters, let's work there and by the way, we do like your conservation youth corps program where you could actually give sponsorship for X, Y or Z." Our foundation is at the cusp of doing that; after seven years we've finally got there. (CON2)

The corporate representative engaged in the process of developing a title partnership with an environmental nonprofit also expresses how a devoted partnership enables realization of greater benefits, especially by providing an opportunity to focus energy and resources. She describes how concentrating effort on working with one organization achieves more than could be accomplished by spreading effort thinly to help a number of causes:

> I think one of the main things for us is being able to have a greater impact. We could do a lot of things and help a lot of different organizations. But by doing that, we can make only a little blip of a difference. By having a partner, it kind of forces a strategy. . . . In the end this focuses your attention, your money, your volunteer time, your product, your gifts in-kind and you can make a huge difference. (COR1)

In discussing the greatest benefits of partnerships, sectors present two different types. On one hand, organizations are keen to convey the importance of how employee engagement spreads awareness and enriches the personal and professional lives of those involved. These rewards in turn tend to boost organizational capacity by creating social capital and spurring on volunteerism. The creation of these reinforcing cycles or virtuous circles is seen to be one of the *existing* benefits that lead to greater community good. On the other hand (or in some cases in addition to these existing benefits), respondents refer to the types of potential partner and community gains that can only be derived over time through focused effort. These partnerships

utilize informal relationships to create trustworthy foundations for greater partnership. "Greatest benefits" in this sense implies rewards that are simply not possible in the short term. These benefits offer potential for longer-term economic sustainability and imply the possibility of growth and expansion.

7.10.2. Perceived challenges and solutions

Perceived challenges of conservation organizations

In considering what major challenges conservation organizations might face, corporate respondents estimate that their counterparts face difficulties related to:

- Broadening the scope of volunteer opportunities to sustain ongoing interest (COR3; COR6)
- Finding staff to organize/manage large volunteer groups (COR2; COR4; COR5; COR7)
- Operating on tight budgets (COR5)
- Delivering a quality experience/providing enough work to keep volunteers engaged (COR4)

In addition to these day-to-day challenges, COR1 suggests that community groups face a steep learning curve when first faced with handling corporately funded partnerships that require equity in decision-making. She notes, "I think they are used to being able to say, "No. We don't want to do that so we are not going to do it." But [within a larger partnership] they don't just make the decision . . . They have to discuss how they will use the money that has been given them. The company needs to have a say" (COR1).

Stated challenges of conservation organizations

When summarizing the greatest challenges surrounding implementation of ESV, conservation respondents reiterate their frustrations regarding finding and maintaining corporate contacts and dealing with short notice for planning events. They also worry about how best to handle an influx of corporate requests. These challenges and some potential solutions (as recommended by respondents) are presented in Table 5.

In addition to the challenges mentioned in the table, five of seven conservation respondents focus on interconnections among hurdles associated with accommodation of interests, alignment of

mandates and the need to leave a lasting message. Respondents' suggestions center on the need for companies to be more flexible in their approach. They feel companies can afford to be more open-minded about "what they do, how many people come out and the type of activities they take on" (CON1). They also suggest that developing longer-lasting relationships, that foster greater experiential learning for employees than single occasions can offer, would help create a "truly rich experience" (CON6).

For most, the ability to offer corporate opportunities with no financial recompense does not seem sustainable. In speaking about the need to sustain programming that could be mutually beneficial, this respondent says, "we have to get over some biases that are still largely held around volunteerism – that if a group volunteers their time that it is enough. There are expenses associated with these out-of-the-ordinary activities that nonprofits largely just do not have a budget to accommodate" (CON6). Using employee volunteerism as a platform for broader, longer-lasting relationships that include recompense is a highly recommended solution.

Table 5: Stated challenges/solutions for conservation organizations

Challenges for Conservation Organizations	**Suggestions for Companies or Conservation organizations**
Find or Maintain corporate contacts (CON5)*	**Companies: Maintain operation guidelines; alert nonprofits about staff changes** • Make contact information for community-liaison staff readily available on corporate websites • Design partnerships to operate smoothly in the face of change. When corporate community liaisons move on, ensure: (1) conservation partners are introduced to new successors (2) corporations maintain a working file on company-community relationships
Little advance notice for organizing events (CON2, CON6)	**Conservation Organizations: Take a proactive approach in promoting needs** • Develop ideas for volunteering explicitly before corporations approach • Create a corporate package that that discusses options and ideas for volunteering **Companies: Plan far in advance** • Share planned work dates with community organizations far in advance to allow community organizations to effectively fit groups into their schedules.
Large volume of corporate requests CON1; CON4	**Conservation Organizations: Develop protocols** • Develop protocols for handling requests, thereby lending consistency to a process that is otherwise based primarily upon personal judgment • Develop a fee schedule for taking on large groups of corporate volunteers (conservation organizations feel this would show they are providing a service and there is a cost associated with the work involved).
Lack of capacity CON1; CON4; CON5; CON7	**Conservation Organizations: Think about leadership** • Offset costs by developing capacity by training volunteer leaders • Fully understand who really needs to be present at events (e.g. general staff, managers etc.)

Challenges for Conservation Organizations	Suggestions for Companies or Conservation organizations
Absence of long-term planning or commitment CON7; CON6; CON2	**Both Sectors: Develop formal agreements** • Create formal agreements, where a set number of volunteer events can be carried out within a set timeframe. This would add flexibility to programming and foster relationships (companies would benefit because employees can return to see the results of their work) **Better communications and ongoing relationships** • Develop better communications through ongoing relationships. Staff get to know employee "veterans" who come out year after year; they also develop a better feel for how the company can help **Conservation Organizations: Focus on hands-on education** • Convey why actions are important, [volunteers] will feel as if they've done something meaningful. If they leave thinking this is not the case, you've lost them (CON5)

***denote interviewees who suggest this is one of their greatest challenges

7.10.3. Challenges for corporations

Perceived Challenges of Corporations

Conservation organizations describe a couple of challenges companies face in the process of developing partnerships. Three of the seven organizations feel that the corporate representatives who contacted them probably lack significant control over expected timelines. They suspect that corporate senior management most likely dictates these decisions to the community liaisons who then have to organize employee placements to fit these deadlines. Two informants mention that some of their corporate contacts also organize events on a voluntary basis and so have even less time to act as a liaison than paid staff members might have. Other perceived challenges include: (1) lack of time and resources to organize team events and work out details (2) confusion over where to start (3) and lack of knowledge about what is possible/not possible in terms of how nonprofits operate and the challenges they face.

Stated challenges of corporations

While discussing their greatest challenges, companies speak about their need to convince employees to take time to participate in volunteer activities and their hope that somehow their work will help instill an ethic of volunteering within the corporate community. These and other, perhaps more "logistical" concerns associated with the need to offer a variety of meaningful volunteer opportunities to employees, overcome challenges where employees have been undervalued or not given enough work, and avoiding make-work projects (see Table 6 for challenges and potential solutions suggested by corporate respondents).

Should companies seek to develop focused partnership with a single organization, they tend to face increased challenges of matching employees to a variety of opportunities that suit their interests. Several respondents took time to address this conundrum by offering two complementary approaches that deserve some explanation beyond what a table can provide. First, they propose working with conservation counterparts to discover ways employees could help out beyond field work (e.g. by channelling employees' research or marketing skills to assist in other ways). This type of work could make volunteering more accessible to employees who either are unable or uninterested in assisting on on-site activities.

Executives also acknowledge the importance of developing internal awareness to build anticipation and interest in upcoming volunteer opportunities. Currently in the process of developing a dedicated partnership, one respondent admits she presently faces scrutiny from employees questioning why their company has chosen a conservation-based charity above all others. She cites the need for making every effort to educate employees about their role as agents of change within the community. This knowledge is essential to help them "feel empowered because they have a clear path and they know what they are doing." She sees this as an essential step which helps employees identify with their new roles, realizing "If the [ideas] don't sit well with them or make them feel good, they will disengage (COR1).

Table 6: Stated challenges/solutions for companies

Challenges for Companies	**Suggestions for Companies or Conservation organizations**
Encourage sustained engagement COR2; COR4; COR5; COR6	**Companies: Challenge and remind employees about opportunities** • Challenge employees to take the opportunities available to them • Constantly remind staff what is available (through websites, brochures, meetings etc.) • Welcome community organizations to the company information events to raise awareness
Instill ethic/ Create a culture shift – increasing volunteerism COR5; COR1	**Companies: use feedback to improve quality of experience and type of work continually** • Explain why particular activities (e.g. stewardship) are important. Don't rely exclusively on work events to cover educational aspects. • Use feedback to continually improve experiences and types of work offered Work with organizations that can adapt over time to create a complement of activities (people like to learn in different ways and want to do different things)
Maintain variety in available opportunities COR2	**Companies and Conservation Organizations: Encourage and seek out creative opportunities** • Provide opportunities for employees with varying skills and abilities to carry out physical labour • Think outside the box by questioning how employees can volunteer for organizations in different capacities (e.g. mentorship, research, online volunteering etc.)

Challenges for Companies	Suggestions for Companies or Conservation organizations
Ensure volunteers are valued COR4; COR7	**Companies: Foster communication** • Take everything step by step – organization by organization, event by event • Communicate clear expectations • Follow-up throughout planning process to make sure bargains can be upheld
Avoid Make-Work Projects	**Companies: Meet demand with supply** • Have volunteer groups readily available for community organizations when they are needed • Provide opportunity for community organizations to solicit corporate groups with requests for volunteer (group or individual) placement. Letting them drive the demand rather than pressuring them to come up with opportunities ensures demand.

Chapter 8: Partnership principles and best practices

This chapter describes partnership principles in their final iteration by reflecting ways in which employer supported volunteerism (ESV) might be implemented in an ideal, contemporary stewardship-based partnership. Themes and suggestions emerging from the results of the local, key informant interviews corroborate and underscore key messages and best practices previously developed within the literature review and global case examples. They also serve to highlight additional considerations previously undeveloped within the original partnership principles.

As with the emerging principles listed in Chapter Five, these principles are not mutually exclusive but rather complementary to each other. This chapter draws attention to areas of potential overlap where best practices apply to more than one principle.

Many principles manifest in different ways relative to the situation, stage or scale of the partnership. For example, the principle of Education applies not just to the learning process of partners at an organizational level, but also to the importance of spreading stewardship messages to wide audiences. Where applicable, each principle suggests a set of best practices associated with the way it manifests itself in various situations.

Organization of these principles recognizes that some deserve special consideration because, not only do they have significance individually, they also overarch, penetrating many, if not all, other principles. Because of this, their early implementation may spread a beneficial influence throughout the foundation-building that characterizes well-developed partnerships. Thus four overarching principles occupy positions of high priority at the beginning of this list. The remaining principles are presented in an order which reflects a logical relationship that one may have to another within the inductive process of conceptualizing and carrying into action a partnership vision. Yet as this process comes to reflect the unique circumstances and needs of various partnering groups, other valid relationships and intersections may suggest a different ordering of principles.

8.1. Overarching principles

8.1.1. Mutual and multiple benefits

This principle recognizes that partnership-based activities must offer benefits not only to the partners themselves, but also to the community at large. It is thus closely linked to the idea that partners, by working together, can achieve something greater than they could accomplish alone.

At the outset of my research I assumed that, because collaborative partnerships can yield mutual and multiple benefits, achieving this outcome would constitute an ideal towards which both sectors would consciously and actively strive. While the research process continually demonstrated the value of this ideal, it also presented evidence that some partners, especially in the early stages of relationship development, struggle to get to the point of achieving *mutual* benefits, let alone broader, *multiple* benefits. This is perhaps most obvious in those situations where local respondents speak about minimal return on investment and question the balance of equity in their relationships. However, respondents from the global case examples, who discuss more well-developed community engagement programs, acknowledge that evidence of broader environmental benefits becomes clearer over time (e.g. the improved health of the Ives Road Fen habitat).

Despite early setbacks, respondents for global and local cases convey the sentiment that, with perseverance, a range of social and environmental community benefits can be realized. Most of the local respondents recognize that they are still at the early stages of understanding how cross-sectoral partnerships which utilize employer supported volunteering might evolve. Their determination to work through misunderstandings and challenges, and to seek the full potential of partnership provides a testament that they, too, value cultivating relationships that deliver wide-ranging benefits. The following best practices are especially relevant to achieving the broadest benefits.

Offer skills and resources to complement each other: Partnership proponents do well to seek out organizations that offer a range of complementary skills or resources that can be used synergistically to achieve something greater than can be achieved alone. This best practice meshes well with the principle of seeking an organization with good fit and matching values.

Encourage hands-on learning projects to develop virtuous circles: Local respondents in particular spoke about the broad benefits of employer supported volunteerism as the ability of stewardship work to awaken volunteers' enthusiasm, while furnishing them with skills and knowledge valuable to them and society at large. This cultivation of awareness ideally serves to create cycles, or "virtuous circles", where participants' commitment to carrying out stewardship action is continually reinforced (Lerner, 2006). In addition, the literature, global case examples and local interviews point to the significance of encouraging tasks that provide volunteers with kinds of solid take-away lessons and enhanced sense of place that promote a ripple effect by having a positive impact within the greater community. Closely associated best practices are discussed under the Education principle.

Work on moving beyond the transactional nature of partnerships: The stewardship challenge for both partners is to move beyond the conventional, transactional nature of partnership to achieve a greater good. As Sam Robinson reminds us, it is necessary to concentrate on working with, not for each other. Conversely, partnerships for stewardship require examination and re-examination of motives to operate beyond self-interest. Other best practices reflecting motives that extend beyond self-interest appear under the Good Fit and Matching Values principle.

8.1.2. Communication

Communication is a truly overarching principle whose many aspects are integrated into, and addressed within the other principles. How partners interact with each other is largely determined by their ability to convey meaning and maintain dialogue. In the context of this research, the need for good communication applies not only to how partners interact with each other, but how partnership is conveyed to volunteering employees and the general public. Some key communication practices suggestions include:

Constantly emphasize thoroughness and clarity of communication: This summarizes the advice provide by Sam Robinson in the Global Case example on Conservation Volunteers Australia. Her experience partnering with BHP Billiton for over a decade led her to conclude there can never be too much communication. She recommends partners clearly set out concrete goals, quantify deliverables and develop a brand strategy. Tools that can help avoid misunderstanding at future dates include written agreements or memoranda of understanding.

Communicate to the public and employee volunteers in their language: The technical or complex language, terms and concepts utilized by conservation, ecology-based or stewardship organizations are sometimes challenging for staff to convey succinctly to the general public who may have little familiarity with basic concepts. The literature points to a couple of key ideas: Higgs (2003) feels that providing a sense of scale and context helps bring the idea of stewardship into perspective, while Campbell and Smith (2006) suggest that communicating clearly why and how conservation activities can contribute to good science is essential to legitimize activities in the eyes of volunteers.

Communication of stewardship-related concepts requires conservation organizations to be especially dedicated to reiteration and interpretive explanations that fit a variety of volunteer learning styles. Augmenting volunteer-based experiential learning by launching special projects and/or linking activities to significant national or international awareness events such as 2008's International Year of the Frog might also help pique volunteers' interest as well as drive home a sense of scale, context and greater purpose as they participate in local, themed activities that clearly have international significance. (In this spirit, organizations such as the Toronto Zoo, Vancouver Aquarium and Conservation International are launching activities and fundraising campaigns associated with 2008 as a leap year).

There is also opportunity to extend discussion of stewardship issues beyond outdoor classrooms using social media. The advancement of tools such as wiki software and blogs open up new possibilities for interaction where employees, public or other volunteers can ask questions, comment or contribute to online discussions or forums.

Develop capacity through collaborative communication networks: UK's Allan Murray attributes much of his program's success to his ability to work collaboratively with like-minded nonprofits. At minimum, each sector would do well to interact periodically within forums or workshops where they can easily disseminate best practices. Extending these collaborative communication networks to allow for brokering of opportunities can help create good corporate/community matches and engage larger numbers of corporate volunteers.

8.1.3. Authenticity

As an overarching principle, Authenticity speaks to the importance of partners constantly striving to participate in a trustworthy manner, and with a transparency that remains unclouded by factors such as hidden agendas or superficiality. While each sector may need to build authenticity in relation to its own pertinent issues, securing a common ground of trust could well begin with the genuine confirmation by both partners that their shared goal to serve the needs of conservation will radiate into all decision-making. This sincerity of intent cultivates partnership motivations that can contribute to real, meaningful goals. Partnerships that fail in this regard can easily find that their ability to align with each other and accomplish their stated objectives becomes compromised.

Three dimensions of authenticity arise from the research. These include (1) *Authenticity of motives* (Are partners completely honest about why they are involved?) (2) *Authenticity of Work* (Are the volunteers accomplishing work that contributes to conservation while being meaningful to those involved?) (3) *Authenticity of Attitude* (To what extent do practitioners buy into what they are preaching?).

The following points outline best practices relative to these three dimensions.

Authenticity of motives: Authenticity of motives arises as a theme particularly within the local key informant interviews. Respondents from both sectors wonder about the extent to which prospective partners are truly interested in utilizing volunteers to achieve real conservation goals, or whether ulterior motivations play a role. While simple confusion about what companies most want to achieve (for example, education, teambuilding or improving community relations) can breed reservations among conservation interests thinking about a partnering venture, underlying mistrust and suspicion (as described in section 7.3), can lead conservation organizations to embark on partnerships with extreme caution. On the other hand, corporate respondents suspect some community groups are interested more in associated financial incentives than accomplishing much-needed tasks. While both sectors admit they are motivated through enlightened self-interest, assuming that partners are acting in bad faith is likely to have a polarizing effect that significantly inhibits progress towards goals. As one respondent advises, “Go in thinking good intents, that the organizations are doing it for the right reason” (COR1).

Some conservation respondents offer suggestions for ways that this sector can effectively align volunteer activities with authenticity of motive, thereby coordinating volunteer efforts with a larger conservation vision. Among their suggestions are recommendations that nonprofits proactively search for niche work that volunteers can do. Assessing, for example, where groups of volunteers are most efficient, and where volunteers are essential because work demands cannot be met by paid staff alone, as well as where opportunities exist to align volunteer projects with property management objectives, all contribute to sustaining authenticity of motive. Best practices that support authenticity of motivation within companies from the corporate sector include recommendations to let community groups "drive the demand" and involve employees who are currently active in addressing local community issues in discussions about where they might be needed most.

Authenticity also plays a significant role in public relations as they pertain to employer supported volunteer activities. Choosing whether or not, or even how, to communicate such activities to the public prompts heated debate. Local company respondents are quite aware of the pitfalls of engaging in public outreach concerning employee volunteering, explaining they usually limit media alerts to special occasions that promote the value of volunteering because otherwise critics could rightly question their authenticity. As one corporate respondent suggests, it is better to let "actions speak for us rather than speaking for ourselves" (COR1). While both sectors acknowledge how important it is to communicate the value of volunteering, they clearly perceive a need to focus on educational, rather than on self-promotional or marketing benefits when tailoring that public communication about this topic.

Authenticity of work: Sustaining authenticity of meaningful work requires that conservation organizations resist assigning volunteers to "make work" tasks, or activities that fail to align with the conservation needs recognized by both sectors. Therefore, despite pressures such as the demand to accommodate volunteers in out-of-season activities or on short notice, community organizations can only hope to retain the integrity and meaningful nature of their volunteer programs if they assign volunteers to work that reflects the value of volunteer labour, and constitutes a necessary step in achieving a conservation goal.

Authenticity of Attitude: A nonprofit facilitator, who fails to encourage or respect volunteer work efforts undermines the authenticity of the situation. The Nature Conservancy's Jill Brown feels

that volunteers could sense a lack of sincerity and support, referring to it as a "trickle down effect" of poor attitudes.

For conservation organizations, authentic attitude can be displayed as respect, positive encouragement and appreciation at all times – even in the most disheartening scenarios where, for example, novices arrive on-site in office attire, or with no experience in using a spade – an approach Brown refers to as the ongoing "care and feeding of volunteers". Rather than yielding to reactionary responses such as frustration or unprofessionalism, partners will more likely elicit the best in each other by cultivating attitudes of respect, sincerity and a desire to understand the people and situations with which they are dealing.

Companies can show authentic attitudes by maintaining volunteer programs even in the face of restructuring or change (the extent of company commitment is demonstrated by COR2 who noted that corporate volunteer coordinator positions were not cut despite 30% corporate downsizing), by hiring staff to help facilitate company volunteering, and/or providing adequate time, direction and resources for employees to organize their own volunteer opportunities. Local company respondents, many of whom note how employees have trouble tearing themselves away from their formal jobs to participate in volunteer activities, are able to demonstrate authenticity by continually communicating to employees how they consider volunteer efforts to be invaluable, and that attendance is very much encouraged as part of the company ethic.

Cultivating genuinely respectful and positive attitudes is as essential to the collaborative spirit of business-conservation partnerships as attaining the authenticity of motive and work. Overall, authenticity calls upon each partner to examine and address factors within the partnership that elicit the worst and the most authentic of attitudes, and to deepen understanding of the other so that challenging situations can be met with insight that reflects both intelligence and empathy.

8.1.4. Efficiency

Efficiency generally refers to the speed and effectiveness of accomplishing tasks. It warrants inclusion here as a new, overarching principle (in addition to the eleven listed in chapter five) because its importance emerges within many aspects of the local informant interviews.

Efficiency is unique, representing two different, and seemingly opposite, aspects of partnership processes. Efficiency arises in most other principles because partners invest the necessary time

and dedication in honing their own methods, building on shared experiences, and mapping out joint directions. In contrast to this emphasis on efficiency as an outcome of other time-consuming processes, utilizing efficiency in itself as an overarching principle requires partners to balance their deliberative methods with practical activities that can quickly reduce redundancy and streamline actions. The following best practice offers a brief description.

Balance deliberative methods with activities proven to streamline processes: Where possible partners should build upon lessons from successful partnership models and proactively identify conservation work that volunteers can handle. Efficiency on the part of conservation organizations becomes most apparent when events run smoothly through effective organization of volunteers and delegation of tasks in the field. As a conservation organization mentioned, "projects cannot run out quickly, and even tree-planting needs to be organized" (CON7). Corporations can help increase volunteer efficiency by offering conservation organizations ample opportunity to plan events, and by providing corporate volunteers with options to return to the same partner organization and thereby accomplish tasks for which they have already completed training at a previous event. As a local conservation informant recognizes, "When you get repeat [corporate] crews, it tends to build on the experience – they become familiar with our work and then they can just run with it" (CON4).

The results of efficient processes are particularly essential for conservation partnerships, where the urgent need to accomplish conservation goals seems to call for more activity and less dialogue. The challenge for partners to maintain speed and effectiveness as equal components of efficiency involves establishing a balanced pace that can meet the immediate needs of community/environment and counterparts which are pressed to operate within tight time constraints while tending each stage of a growing relationship.

8.2. General partnership principles

8.2.1. Transparency

While naturally following the principle of authenticity, transparency provides an additional perspective that focuses on partners' ability to *demonstrate* authenticity to each other and their stakeholders. In contrast to the concept of authenticity as an inner quality that works its way

outward, transparency draws attention to the need for transactions to be visible from the outside in.

As interest in employer supported volunteerism grows, and both sectors vie for legitimate partnership opportunities, discerning stakeholders will demand increased transparency. Thus, it is advisable for partners (and even those who are considering partnerships) to utilize the following tools which help provide comprehensive insight into their own operations as well as transactions that follow from partnerships. Partners should:

Communicate clearly: Be forthright about any aspects of self-interest that might constitute an underlying motivation or ulterior motive.

Establish clear linkages with broader programs: Reveal how fostering employer supported volunteerism aligns with broader organizational values or programs (e.g. corporations could relate how volunteer programs mesh with broader corporate responsibility initiatives; conservation organizations should be able to explain how employee volunteer contributions link with their mandate).

Commit to conducting and sharing results of evaluation: Use evaluation techniques to measure success. Sharing evaluative reports which reveal strengths, analyze shortcomings, and discuss opportunities for improvement serves to shed an unbiased light on partnerships for interested stakeholders, helping them to understand why certain courses of action might be taken.

Voluntarily remain open to scrutiny: Keep organizational and partnership records meticulously, and allow accessibility without impinging on confidentially. Increasingly, organizations are volunteering to take up best practices such as submitting financial records for auditing (nonprofits) or seeking third party evaluation of corporate responsibility initiatives (corporations). Being open to scrutiny in this manner serves to promote trust and build organizational capital.

8.2.2. Adaptability, flexibility and resiliency

Adaptability emerges as the capability of organizations to adjust in response to change. This theme is closely associated with flexibility and resilience, because partners need to be open to new ideas, lend themselves to creative problem-solving and overcome challenges. It is worth noting that by adopting ESV, both corporate and conservation sectors are striving to adapt to

change[21]. Yet embracing it as an ideal is just a first step – proponents need to approach its implementation openly, demonstrating flexibility with options and alternatives as they emerge.

The need for adaptability, flexibility and resilience appears most evident as respondents discuss the need for their counterparts to adapt to new ways of doing business. The fluidity of these principles characterizes aims such as being receptive to partners' ideas about how ESV can best be implemented, thinking outside the box by re-examining how employees might contribute to conservation, and integrating resilience into long-term planning. However, taking this principle to the extreme could ultimately prove detrimental; while too much rigidity may result in stonewalling, too much flexibility could result in loss of momentum or one partner being co-opted by the other.

Adapt to new approaches to doing business: The need for both sectors to adapt to each other's method of doing business and to speak each other's language emerges as a contentious issue. On one hand, some company representatives see community organizations as unorganized and unprofessional, while conservation staff often become frustrated by their corporate counterparts' inflexible, unrealistic demands. The call for community organizations to adopt a more professional, business-like approach is a clear and necessary step for those interested in developing and maintaining corporate connections. On the other hand, the need for companies to enhance their appreciation of the conservation sector's unique circumstances, limitations and challenges represents an equally important form of adaptation.

Conceptualize how ESV will work within a partner-based context: The interviews illustrate clearly that the way in which one organization conceptualizes ESV is often different from the vision held by potential partners. Respondents from both sectors indicate that working collaboratively requires not only listening to each other, but also remaining flexible enough to shed pre-conceived notions, especially those related to timing, type of activity and number of volunteers best-suited for the jobs.

Look beyond conventional thinking on volunteerism to broaden the scope of volunteer activities and engage volunteers in different capacities: Interviews with both sectors demonstrate how

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[21] For example, community organizations perceive it as an innovative way to develop relationships with corporate counterparts. Similarly, corporations, desiring to demonstrate community commitment but faced with financial restraints, view ESV as a tool that helps them accomplish more with less.

essential it is for community organizations to adapt to corporate needs by broadening the scope of volunteer activities. Company executives repeatedly call for a complement of volunteer activities that allow employees to contribute in a number of ways consistent with their interests and abilities. Similarly, community representatives recognize the need to offer a suite of options that sustain corporate employees' interests by helping them build new skills and enhance learning capacities. Developing a broad scope of activities challenges partners to respond to volunteer feedback as a means of improving upon and directing program development over the long term. It also requires both sectors to think outside the box by questioning how employees might be able to contribute in a variety of capacities. Both sectors can benefit from working together and asking questions about innovative possibilities: (1) Could trained employees be mentors to new volunteers? (2) How could employees volunteer remotely (e.g. online)? or (3) How could employees use existing skills to forward a cause?

Integrate resilience: Achieving the goal of overarching corporate-community partnerships demands that community organizations cultivate resilience by remaining alert to certain weaknesses which, paradoxically, corporate sources of strength may unintentionally magnify. These weaknesses stem from the tendency of nonprofits to become overly dependent on corporate aid, rather than rising, through this help, towards greater and more sustainable security. Conservation organizations need to be continuously mindful that, by nature, most corporate grants are temporary. Achieving positive growth in light of such consciousness requires planning for the future by pursuing avenues of sustainability capable of compensating for losses incurred if and when their relationship with a corporate partner ends. Ideally, as partnerships are inaugurated, both sectors work towards minimizing the community organization's vulnerability to such stresses, and increasing the resilience needed to weather the financial and other challenges associated with partnership terminations. The Australian respondent, Sam Robinson, and a local corporate respondent (COR1) acknowledge the need for community organizations to develop strong program infrastructures that can adapt in the face of change. Robinson reminds practitioners to plan for the future by continually assessing how the next steps to be taken may help volunteer programs become sustainable and self-sufficient. Similarly, the corporate executive recommends partners should not waste time re-inventing volunteer programs, but should "steal with pride" (COR1) the elements of existing, working partnership models to create reliable, credible processes capable of attracting future funding.

While both partners would do well to document successful procedures and processes, nonprofits in particular could cultivate strong resilience by utilizing some of the resources and momentum offered by the partnership to generate income and other resources. They might, for example, take the opportunity to expand their membership bases, showcase and market their demonstration projects, and develop/refine processes for engaging new corporate customers.

8.2.3. Equity and reciprocity

Despite obvious discrepancies in size, power, wealth and capacity, cross-sectoral partners are challenged to develop and maintain equitable relationship based upon mutual respect, but demonstrate reciprocity in the process.

Partners may easily fall into the trap of focusing on their own set of mental models and stereotypes which accentuate their differences and potential incompatibilities. For example, if community organizations perpetuate the notion that companies are cold-hearted through a David versus Goliath mentality or if companies continue to focus on the limited sophistication and experience of community organizations, suggesting that if they were any good they would be in business, they inhibit their potential to move forward. The reality is that each sector possesses qualities deemed undesirable by the other, and that perfection does not exist. As Jantzi (2007) reminds us, "there is not a perfect partner, only things one likes and does not like." As in any good relationship, a key to equity is that partners learn to accept the inherent differences in operating styles by taking time to understand the reasoning behind them.

Partners who focus on relationships in terms of the opportunities they offer, create platforms on which each can gain equal footing. They are challenged to recognize how the characteristics that set them apart contain qualities that are most needed by the other. For example, the brand power and large capacity of corporations and the public trust and community linkages of nonprofits can serve as complements for each other.

One of the best ways to foster an equitable relationship is to adhere to Robinson's simple mantra, *"Work with, not for each other"* (Robinson, 2006). Lindbergh echoes this idea with the timeless advice that the increased partnership strength that develops as a result of "working outward in the same direction" (Lindbergh, 1955, p. 81). Rather than usurping valuable energy in a contest

of wills, remaining focused on joint objectives enables practitioners to direct their efforts efficiently in a non-hierarchical manner.

Other considerations pertaining to developing or maintaining and equitable and reciprocal relationship include:

Maintain a clear sense of purpose, yet recognize which elements of self-interest may be forfeited for the greater good: Expanding upon the concept of working with each other, this suggestion prompts partners to consider giving up some elements of self-interest to benefit overarching objectives. This may require partners to put aside some of their preconceived notions about how relationships might play out while ensuring that joint goals remain uncompromised. For instance, local conservation respondents stress that, as companies increase flexibility about how and when their employee volunteer activities occur, the amount of time and effort required to accommodate corporate needs decreases, while opportunities to focus on essential work increase.

Ensure a quality experience for volunteers: In expressing concerns about engaging employees with community partners, most local corporate respondents cited instances where community groups lacked sufficient work for employees, left them idle for long periods of time, or even cancelled at the last moment. Just as community organizations wish to be appreciated, they need to reciprocate by extending appreciation to volunteers through appropriate planning and organization. According to a local conservation respondent, relationships can be "understood as equitable" if "organizations working with volunteers need to have an enhanced appreciation about what it means for a person to give up a day [. . .]. If you think about it that way, then you are starting on stronger ground" (CON6).

Establish joint decision-making processes: Establishing equality within decision-making is paramount within partnerships, especially as ties strengthen between sectors, and collaborators progress from ad hoc to more focused partnerships. A local corporate respondent senses that this loss of freedom can be challenging, particularly if partners sense a loss of their freedom and autonomy. This respondent emphasizes, for instance, that it is "important to discuss" (COR1) how the money will be used. Without consistency in joint decision-making processes, the redistribution of power can lead to discomfort as practitioners perceive their freedom to be diminished. It can even be dangerous if individual mandates are co-opted in the interest of

another. The establishment of clear written agreements and strategies for negotiation become increasingly crucial as relationships intensify and grow in complexity.

8.2.4. Good fit and matching values

The principle of good fit suggests that by identifying and communicating a common range of shared values and environmental interest, collaborators can most effectively move forward. Furthermore, by aligning their own specific considerations with their counterpart's, they can cooperatively develop a common vision for joint projects that allows each to build upon its own and the other's strengths to attain goals exceeding the sum of individual capabilities.

Literature on cross-sectoral partnerships emphasizes the importance of matching values, stating that partners who share common sets of values are more apt to succeed in their endeavours, and increase their legitimacy in the process (Gagnon, 2002; Kalra, 2006). In partnerships where corporate community engagement is key, the concept of good fit also emphasizes the need for prospective partners to consider how to organize projects around mutual goals to ensure that employee interests, values and abilities match available volunteer opportunities.

Consider "environment" beyond market niche: Seeking success in a cross-sectoral partnership, as in any matchmaking quest, may depend on securing a general, as well as a specific, range of compatibility factors. Within the scope of general qualities that deserve attention is the ability of both potential partners to demonstrate authentic interest in the environment and its well-being, and to recognize that part of what draws them together is a shared commitment to something greater than the immediate and specific aims important to one or the other. Some corporate respondents, for example, note that interest in the environment can fall under varied and broad corporate responsibility themes such as "doing the right thing", "community improvement" or "giving back". Interestingly, more than half of the local conservation informants, sensing sincerity in the actions of their counterparts, suggest generosity and the desire to "do good" as prime motivators. Statements such as, "I most certainly view it as an act of generosity" (CON4); and "It invariably appears to me as a genuine desire to help out" (CON7) reflect these sentiments. These reports help validate corporate representatives who frequently speak about engaging employees as part of an overall desire to do the right thing.

Evidence suggests that, within the corporate sector, such interest has grown significantly enough during the past few years to affect even the way in which "environment" is defined. For one company, historically, "environment" meant where customers worked, lived or engaged in recreation. Now the concept of environment has expanded, so that bettering the environment embraces ecosystem health, air quality, etc. As one respondent notes, "I would say the focus of the environment has definitely evolved …I think the environment, as [it is now understood, has become] a core focus; the way people think of the environment today probably emerged four to five years ago" (COR3).

With an evolving and expanding conceptualization of what the environment includes, possibilities for successful partnerships widen, providing increasing opportunities for companies to focus on conservation, stewardship or environment-centred causes. As cross-sectoral partners incorporate this broader view into volunteer programs, employees are more likely to achieve a holistic understanding of the contribution they are making, and how it fits into the larger picture of environmental well-being. In commenting on a partner whose corporate overarching mission had a specific and growing emphasis on the importance of the environment and volunteerism, one conservation respondent noted the "sophisticated interaction" which characterized this partnership compared with past corporate relationships, crediting volunteers with possessing a "highly developed understanding of their role in the relationship and the nonprofits' needs" (CON6).

Align key values: As another precondition to success, prospective collaborators also benefit from determining the extent to which key aspects of their individual mandates align, or show potential to become aligned, in order to serve as the foundation of an effective, and even extended, partnership. In discussing their reasons for pursuing relationships with conservation-based partners, global and local conservation respondents emphasize how their chosen causes reflect predominant themes within their corporate social responsibility mandates. Global respondents such as L.L. Bean's Laurie Gilman confirm that a close fit between the company's product and cause achieves acceptance, active support and long-term momentum (Gilman, 2007).

Nevertheless cultivating a good fit is more complex than defining common values. While a shared overarching vision is important, both sectors also have a legitimate need to define and communicate to each other, their own suites of criteria and special requirements for partners.

Though each situation is unique, companies are more likely to succeed in nurturing a good fit with community organizations that can work locally, offer a range of volunteer activities, and deliver agreed-upon objectives professionally and consistently. On the other hand, conservation organizations are more likely to perceive the potential for solid alignment in companies that demonstrate interest in prolonged commitment, appreciate the seasonal nature of available work, and are open-minded about the characteristics of proposed volunteer activities.

The challenge of aligning key requirements of cross-sectoral members is further heightened by the search for overarching partnerships with multiple facets and long-term engagement options. Companies are more likely to perceive the potential for a sound match when they engage in a program that has mass appeal, responds to heightened awareness of consumers, brands the company as a leader in the field and establishes it as unique – a feat that is becoming increasingly difficult as the popularity of cross-sectoral partnerships and cause-marketing soars. In the words of one corporate respondent, "We have to go to a place where it is not crowded, especially where our competitors are not playing in the same area" (COR1). While these considerations may seem to be a tall order, they have significance for community organizations striving to increase legitimacy, diversify their own base of potential partners, and provide the kinds of unique opportunities sought by partners such as COR1.

Match employee abilities, interests and values to volunteer opportunities: The concept of good fit also applies to the ability of partners to match employees' interests and values with available volunteer opportunities. Companies that promote team-based volunteering suggest seeking an array of opportunities to meet the challenge of matching employees with causes in which they are interested. Some companies also recommend the best practice of finding volunteer opportunities which effectively utilize employee skills. As a local corporate respondent maintains, "our best resource, and most valuable resource is the volunteer time of our handy and skilled associates" (COR3).

Companies and partnering conservation organizations who are establishing a single, focused partnership face the shared challenge of encouraging employees with a range of interests and pet causes to become involved. Conservation organizations can rise to this challenge by making work highly accessible – for example, by proposing ways in which those unable to engage in hands-on conservation projects could help in other ways by channeling their research or

marketing skills. On the other hand, executives can focus their efforts on increasing internal awareness about conservation. One local company respondent urges businesses to make every effort to educate and empower employees about their roles as "agents of change" (COR1). She sees enhanced education efforts as an essential step for helping employees identify with their new roles so they will buy in, rather than disengage from the process.

Seek out niche opportunities and develop strategies for each unique partnership: Repeatedly, the message from both sectors is that partnerships call particularly on conservation organizations to increase their business-friendly skills. This need emerges throughout this research as imperative for the conservation sector if it is truly interested in receiving the volunteer labour and other gifts waiting to be offered by an enthusiastic corporate sector. Preparing to benefit from a partnership also includes learning how to develop strategies that are unique to the specific work of a nonprofit, and that appeal to corporate partners seeking niche opportunities.

Offer strength without being controlling: Within the processes of aligning values, developing shared visions and building on each other's abilities, both sectors need to maintain balance. Part of being a good collaborator involves moving into relationships with good will, and a readiness to meet, and even serve, a partner's needs. Balance, in such situations involves retaining one's own identity and integrity, as well as resisting the tendency to be either exploited or exploitative.

Make cross-sectoral communication routine: Taking joint responsibility for partnership success demands that both parties foster strong inter-communication. This is as essential for articulating areas of intersection, as it is to defining the capacities of one partner upon which the other can build, or expressing expectations about how values will be reflected and realized. Partnerships that allow inter-communication to take its rightful place in helping to nurture a good fit enable their relationship to evolve beyond wary collaboration to a more confident, well-integrated process of working with one another.

8.2.5. Multi-level engagement

The importance of multi-level engagement, or the involvement of staff at all organizational levels, appears as a recurring motif for both sectors throughout the research. The following recommendations address balancing top-down and bottom-up engagement, both of which are necessary to create and sustain momentum within employer supported volunteer programs.

Complement top down support with bottom up involvement: The significance of top-down/bottom-up support is particularly noteworthy for the corporate sector. Here, top-down managerial presence is necessary for providing vision, administering resources, capitalizing on opportunity, harnessing energy and offering ongoing encouragement for community engagement programs. Yet corporate respondents affirm that bottom-up engagement is likewise an essential component of the equation, acknowledging that "grassroots" empowerment and involvement plays a crucial role in energizing and propelling programs forward.

Researchers agree that employer supported volunteerism occurs within a continuum where employees may volunteer by choice but often feel coerced or obliged to participate (Graff, 2006b). Thus, ESV falls into the category that Lerner (2006) describes as "other-organized" initiatives where the primary organizers (i.e. corporate management) are those individuals *other than* the primary doers (i.e. the general employee base). Corporate organizers need to be aware of, and sensitive to, drawbacks for employees associated with "other-organized" volunteering. Employees may feel distanced from the process, constrained by imposed limitations, concerned about the influence of agendas or simply lack the kind of enduring motivation they might experience should their charitable actions stem from their own impetus (Lerner, 2006).

Corporate organizers can proactively address these potential drawbacks by creating opportunities for employees to have a direct stake in the planning process. Local corporate respondents suggest there are benefits in welcoming, or even seeking out employee input regarding what issues need to be addressed. As one company respondent acknowledges, employees fill a special role in his organization because they feel free to approach management about worthy community projects which are in "desperate need" and that fit well in to key corporate "focus areas" (COR3).

Involving employees from as early as the initial stages of corporate community development helps balance "grassroots" with top-down involvement, providing companies with enhanced ability to align and tie together multiple goals. After crediting the positive reaction employees had to their experiences with company-organized ad hoc volunteer events with "spurring on" the development of an integrated corporate community strategy, one corporate respondent describes how her organization involved all levels of employees in the process: "We established […] a committee made up of colleagues from [our different subsidiaries], from varying levels and varying departments of these businesses." She describes it as an "intense process," but

acknowledges that the end result was the idea of developing a focused partnership with a charity that her company knew was "in line with what our colleagues were telling us they wanted to do, but it also was in line with who we are as a business and our goals from corporate social responsibility perspective" (COR1).

Enabling other forms of bottom-up engagement, such as forming employee advisory boards, establishing focus groups and providing avenues for feedback are other possibilities for encouraging multi-level engagement and creating conditions conducive to sustaining program momentum.

Provide ongoing support from management: There is great need for corporate management to take an ongoing, supportive role in employee engagement programs. The strength of top-down corporate support for employer supported volunteerism is that companies can create new avenues for engaging citizens who might otherwise lack time, determination or knowledge of how to volunteer. By asking employees to volunteer, corporations also take on the role of recruiters, a role that tends to be overlooked. According to a recent Canadian survey on volunteerism, a significant barrier to volunteer engagement is that potential volunteers are simply not asked for their assistance (Hall, Lasby, Gumulka, & Tryon, 2006). Offering ongoing support by volunteer programs through actions such as allotting funds, providing encouragement to employees and maintaining and establishing community contacts are indications of continued investment of management.

Ongoing support from upper management is also highly valued within the conservation community. The Nature Conservancy's Jill Brown, in particular, calls for the enduring support from upper tiers of management. Championing programs can arise through maintaining volunteer programs in the face of organizational change, preserving the position of volunteer coordinators through staff turnover, and by officially recognizing how volunteers contribute to the organization. Actions such as these effectively complement the efforts of front-line staff in charge of volunteer program implementation.

Develop lateral unity through organizations by addressing concerns and ensuring colleagues are on the same page: Uniting colleagues on an inter-organizational scale is addressed primarily by conservation respondents throughout the global case examples and local interviews. In The Nature Conservancy example, Jill Brown voices the need for consistent communication with

inter-departmental staff so they can develop a shared sense of mission. Similarly, Lonsdale (2007), a respondent from the UK's Yorkshire Dales National Park notes the challenge of making a special effort to discuss mutual benefits of corporate community engagement with colleagues so they will adopt a more "positive and welcoming stance" to corporate volunteers. These case examples illuminate the need for adopting best practices such as effectively conveying reasons why partnership and community engagement can be legitimate and useful, as well as the need for respecting different points of view and directly addressing dissenting concerns.

Often local conservation respondents cite their desire to develop greater connection between colleagues and/or departments in charge of fundraising and corporate sponsorship. They suggest conservation organizations that seek to facilitate corporate volunteers would benefit from working closely with development staff to enhance programs. Practical considerations, such as jointly tracking volunteers and merging databases listing existing members and donors with contact information for corporate volunteers may help facilitate recruitment and cultivation of future donors.

8.2.6. Accountability

Accountability entails assumption of responsibility for decisions and actions. Within this research context lies the obligation for organizations to account for their actions by disclosing their methods and mode of operation to stakeholders such as members, shareholders and the general public, ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all participants involved, and demonstrating responsibility to each other through actions that build trust and credibility. The following guidelines outline key considerations associated with accountability.

Adhere to ethical fundraising/partnership codes and standards: In recent years, both company and community sectors have earnestly begun to develop and/or utilize tools which help them arrive at the right decisions regarding who best to partner with, how to distribute funds (or fundraise) ethically, and how otherwise to make and report upon decision processes that identify them as responsible leaders in their field. Accountability requires full consideration of activities including employee volunteerism, but it also extends beyond this scope to include large-scale disclosure and transparency of an organization in its entirety.

In speaking about screening corporate partners, local conservation respondents abided by their organization's corporate giving guidelines (where these were in place) to provide direction for partnerships. However, they admitted these rules were somewhat ambiguous when corporations sought to donate volunteer time without providing accompanying grants or sponsorship. Several cited a growing need for caution in this area, feeling that even ad hoc partnerships might arouse public scrutiny and prompt them to "wonder about our image" (CON5). Further developing standards regarding corporate partnerships based upon employer supported volunteerism would accomplish a joint task. It will provide conservation organizations with an additional standard for accountability and provide an opportunity to leverage their popularity and nudge corporations in the right direction by seeking out partnership only with those who excel at overall corporate environmental and social leadership.

Other tools that assist corporations to increase accountability include ensuring actions associated with conservation science are peer reviewed, working with consultants, such as Toronto's Jantzi Research (see Jantzi, 2005), to evaluate and monitor potential partners' corporate environmental, social and government performance (ESG), and utilizing standard ethical codes (such as Imagine Canada's Ethical Code (see Imagine Canada, 2007) to report on finances consistently and responsibly.

As regards screening conservation partners, companies feel less pressure to justify to the public who they partner with, though most local informants have internal guidelines requiring them to work with non-discriminatory charitable nonprofits with no political affiliation. However, they are acutely aware that employee engagement programs must be firmly embedded within a broader corporate structure of good social and ecological governance in order to win both public and employee acceptance. As one corporate respondent suggests, there is a need to "do right," and make "actions speak" louder than words (COR1). Three of the seven local company respondents voiced the benefits of participating as Imagine Canada's corporate leadership initiative by becoming a "Caring Companies." This type of participation provides both a measure of accountability and a strong connection between community engagement and broader corporate responsibility initiatives.

Other best practices associated with clear corporate demonstrations of accountability involve leading by example through adherence to strong codes of conduct, standards and principles

which provide guidance, credible verification, monitoring and certification. Those provided by the UN Global Compact, the world's largest corporate citizenship initiative (UN Global Compact, 2007) serve as key examples. Similarly, companies can further develop methods to communicate social and environmental initiatives in a way the public can understand and appreciate by working with consulting firms who understand how corporations must measure up to today's social and ethical standards.

Demonstrate due diligence for health and safety, including vigilant leadership: Practicing due diligence on-site to protect the health and safety of volunteers is important for both conservation and company partners. Both global and local respondents perceive that while corporate employees tend to be extremely keen, general inexperience in field situations requires extra vigilance and good leadership. Thus, conservation organizations do well to exercise sound judgment in delegating work to volunteers, and in planning for intense work periods that should not exceed more than a half-day for novices in the field. Due diligence also entails ensuring that volunteers know what to expect, receive adequate hands-on training and work collaboratively in teams whenever possible. One conservation respondent suggests preparatory work may be combined with an on-site "rapid assessment" (CON6) of group-skills which can then be used to fine-tune work days to suit group needs. As a final measure of accountability, both sectors should use standard protocols to assess risk and deal effectively with any emergencies.

Assess potential environmental impact: It is important that partners ensure that the very act of volunteering does not negate the positive value of work accomplished. The Nature Conservancy's respondent, Jill Brown, suggests a need for understanding an areas' carrying capacity when working with large teams of volunteers on ecologically sensitive sites (J. Brown, 2007). Treading lightly, even if it means reducing the number of volunteers who can participate at one time, is paramount. Local corporate respondent, COR1, notes a different approach to assessing potential environmental impact advocating a holistic examination of the net benefits from employee participation through ensuring that items which might detract from the cause (e.g. packaged lunches, disposable water-bottles, team t-shirts and individual car travel) are minimized if not entirely eliminated.

Ensure continuity by maintaining institutional memory: Partners can show accountability to each other by developing and adhering to set work plans, and by incorporating these work plans into

overarching core business and budget documentation. Local respondents pointed out that maintaining institutional memory also needs to be a priority. Thus, each sector should be responsible for thorough record-keeping (even regarding ad-hoc partnerships), briefing new staff about operation procedures, and alerting partners in the event of staff change-over.

8.2.7. Education

The principle of education embraces the extent to which a partnership lends itself to continuous learning for collaborators and volunteer participants. Both sectors have different expectations regarding the definition, place and role of education. For example, often conservation organizations view education as a key aspect of their mandate, organizing volunteer opportunities to balance hands-on work with instruction and interpretation. Conservation respondents recommend collaborating with corporate employees in ways that facilitate learning, convey the importance of stewardship, and instill lasting conservation messages. Conversely companies, recognizing how employees have limited time to donate, measure achievement in terms of work that can physically be accomplished. While generally supportive of educating employees internally about the values of community engagement, businesses regard the experiential, hands-on nature of learning as the essential education component of actual volunteer events.

Reinforce knowledge while conveying the a greater vision: Conservation proponents realize that the very nature of stewardship work poses special challenges for those interested in engaging new volunteers. Literature confirms that volunteers may have trouble deriving meaning from activities such as invasive species removal which may seem contradictory to preconceived notions of environmental work (Martinez, 1993). Furthermore, involving employees in restoration projects where long-term, positive impact takes years to be visible (e.g. The Nature Conservancy provides an example of a volunteer project that took seven years before volunteers could observe the difference), flies in the face of conventional wisdom which suggests volunteers are most likely to be energized through the accomplishment of cut-and-dry, achievable tasks (Christie, 2004; Wearing, 2001).

In light of these challenges, volunteer managers might appreciate the practical advantages of providing succinct, introductory materials beforehand to manage expectations and outline basic stewardship concepts. Providing intriguing descriptions that clarify benefits and provide a “big-

picture" vision helps to market ideas and increase relevancy. Where possible, providing "lunch and learn" type slideshows at the corporate headquarters would go a long way to preparing volunteers for the new experiences. In the field, constant reinforcement of these concepts that apply to hands-on activities as they are being carried out by volunteers will foster greater awareness while maximizing opportunities for practical work.

Increase relevancy (eliminate a classroom approach): In light of the fact that some employee teams might be coerced into volunteering and thus may not initially identify strongly with the cause at hand, practitioners might foster interest by taking advantage of strategies that are known to increase relevancy of the work to wide audiences. These include: teaching by creating challenges and working in teams (Shroeder, 2000) (also suggested by Inskip (2007) and COR1, COR2, COR4, and COR5); instilling a sense of pride about accomplishing small achievements which can be built upon incrementally; establishing a sense of place (as suggested by Barber (2004), Wumkes (2002) and Zweers (2000) by offering opportunities for employee teams to become stewards through "adoption" of natural areas (CON6); and introducing them to various types of work through the seasons so they can come to know an area throughout the year.

Welcome family and friends: Extending opportunities for participation to family and friends is a worthwhile recommendation, especially because Gilman (20007), CON5 and COR6 note how employees enjoy family-friendly volunteer opportunities that allow them to spend quality time with children or companions while sharing their experiences and spreading the word. CON6 and COR6 also note that such opportunities help expand awareness and prompt employees to return to natural areas at later dates either to volunteer again or to observe projects as they progress.

Develop take-away lessons: Local conservation respondents (especially CON2, CON4 and CON6) stress the need to provide take-away lessons that leave employees with a lasting message. CON4 recommends handing out additional learning materials that incorporate thank-you messages (or better-yet, group photographs) with take-home messages. Perhaps these could include educational materials that help volunteers explore links between their stewardship work and green living issues such as tips for naturalizing a garden.

Another local conservation respondent (COR2) believes there is potential for companies to use these experiences as a foundation for future corporate greening and naturalization initiatives. In

cases where this is a possibility, the initial hands-on work could be tailored so employees can understand the transferability of concepts.

8.2.8. Iterative development processes

Adopting an iterative approach allows partners to work towards improving their understanding of each other through step-by-step processes. For cross-sectoral partners, who have historically operated on different planes, iteration is especially relevant as it allows time to adapt to each other's mode of operation. Building relationships by degrees permits partners to adapt, diversifying opportunities as they are needed, and allowing them to grow into new roles without the pressure of having to deliver high-end results immediately. Finally, the foundation of trust and familiarity provided by successive development helps build efficiency which maintains momentum. Global and local respondents impart the following suggestions pertaining to iterative partnership development:

Provide the opportunity for volunteers to be engaged in a "test run": One local conservation organization, in considering to how to engage companies on a trial basis effectively, allows corporate employees to attend one "free" volunteer event, though subsequent attendance must be under the umbrella of larger, ongoing commitment. Encouraging phased commitment from companies is one way conservation groups are able to handle the stream of requests from companies looking for opportunities for their employees to volunteer. Conservation organizations stand to benefit from resulting partnerships, but also must have the means to deliver the type of quality volunteer experiences expected from negotiations.

Think about working together for a trial period before formalizing long-term commitments: Experience in facilitating large, overarching relationships with corporate entities leads Conservation Volunteers Australia's Conservation and Government Affairs Manager, Sam Robinson, to recommend that potential partners ease into relationship by working for a trial period of at least six months to a year to integrate ideas before the formalization of larger-scale partnerships.

Roll out graduated volunteer programs so volunteers may build upon skills: The importance of using relationships to build volunteer capacity is important to respondents from both sectors. Many respondents hope that employees who first participate in introductory-level exercises will

eventually be able to take on more complex tasks over time. Inskip's suggestion to offer rolling and graduated volunteer programs and team challenges that help volunteers build upon skills reflects the importance of iterative volunteer engagement (Inskip, 2007).

Focus on Feedback: The idea of iteration may be deceptively simple in its step-by-step approach; yet effective iterative cycles are best be enhanced by effectively soliciting and responding to evaluation and feedback.

Do not force partnerships: It may be natural that community-based organizations hope to influence change within the corporate community. In the UK global nonprofit case, for example, Allen states his belief that employees can influence their employers by rallying for positive change. However, corporations may have comparable wishes – for instance that they might quickly teach community partners to speak the language of business. That this is a contentious issue is acknowledged by local key informants. In both situations, too much haste in attempting to facilitate even the most beneficial change can be counter-productive.

While it is important that partners constantly seek to improve and understand their relationship, resisting temptations to force a union allows partners to grow into their roles. One corporate respondent, in expressing the desire to have a holistically green employee volunteer program, acknowledges that it cannot be implemented all at once. She says, "We have to walk before we run" (COR1). Similarly, corporations need to have patience with community-based conservation organizations as they learn basic vocabulary before becoming fluent in business-speak.

Value the incremental changes brought about by stewardship efforts: The best practice of communicating, and valuing incremental environmental change is highlighted especially within The Nature Conservancy global case example. Jill Brown points out the need to value stewardship work by understanding and conveying the importance of incremental changes brought about by conservation activities (J. Brown, 2007). Continually reinforcing the importance of small changes is particularly important with restoration and stewardship work that typically takes years to manifest as positive change to untrained observers.

8.2.9. Evaluation

Evaluation is necessary for partners to understand how to improve their activities and effectively weigh the costs and benefits associated with their collaboration. As it pertains to cross-sectoral partnership, evaluation requires partners to adopt the following best practices:

Value intangible in addition to tangible benefits: Companies and community organizations that engage volunteers acknowledge a number of intangible benefits that arise from partnership and volunteer work but cannot easily be measured. These include, but are not limited to, the development of a personal connection to each other and to location, building sense of pride and confidence in accomplishments and spreading information by word of mouth. While these intangibles are perceived by practitioners as an implicit component of volunteerism, those less directly involved, such as administrators, may require more evidence before they can arrive at the same conclusion.

In addition to assessing the tangible benefits of volunteer programs periodically, partners should ensure that they obtain qualitative feedback, including suggestions, opportunities for improvement and even testimonials that create baseline information against which future initiatives can be measured. With volunteers' consent, testimonials and even interviews (which can be written in story format) can be shared with board or other authorities to help constitute a body of information which complements tangible benefits.

Set benchmarks; measure success and milestones: The creation of an evaluative framework which helps organizations collaboratively set benchmarks and measure success is useful for long-term partners, and even for individual agencies wishing to gauge progress over time. A good understanding of financial investment and procedural efficiency is an essential component of the evaluative process, especially for conservation organizations, which generally are strapped for capacity. As one conservation respondent admits, "There would have been no return on investment in the early days (CON6). Now, even with more efficient processes in place, she suggests "we are probably not breaking even, but are a lot closer than before" (CON6).

Understand the phenomenon of levying fees for volunteering, and the role of money in a successful partnership: Pressures to maintain a secure measure of financial success within volunteer programs are leading an increasing number of conservation organizations to examine

the possibilities and implications of introducing a new benchmark; namely, the practice of charging fees for hosting employee volunteers.

Corporate informants take a range of stances on this issue: most businesses accept the need for covering the costs of tools and/or planting materials; some are additionally amenable to contributing above and beyond those costs with funds that most often, especially in the case of overarching partnerships, come in the form of grants, although corporations have been known to pay a per diem cost for each employee volunteer. Others, understandably, argue that, because they want to provide services to organizations that need their help, nonprofits who charge fees likely have less need for such help than those who accept help without levying a fee.

Conservation organizations (especially those whose existing volunteer base consists primarily of retirees not suited to manual labour) may have a desperate need for the kind of energy corporate volunteers can offer. Still, even their budgets may lack the funds to accommodate expenses associated with meeting the needs of corporate volunteer teams who require special organization, training and supervision. Noting this, one conservation respondent urges, it is "important to get over some biases that are largely held around volunteerism – that [corporate donation of time] is enough" (COR6).

This said, the same respondent admits that most conservation organizations need to "learn how to sell" (COR6) volunteer experiences to make them more appealing for corporate customers with the potential to pay for value that their employees and their company will receive from such engagement. Several indicate that they are making strides in this direction, working closely with fundraisers to develop solid public communication pieces and creating well-packaged work events promoting anticipated accomplishments and the professional development aspects of the work. Others, such as the UK's Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), recommend proactively promoting potential "team challenge" events online, accompanying work descriptions by supplying a suggested donation that would cover the costs of materials, organization and volunteer management (Murray, 2006).

Good marketing clearly works: several corporate respondents acknowledged their willingness to pay $165.00/day/volunteer because their highly motivated employees rallied to participate in Habitat for Humanity's popular corporate volunteer experiences.

Besides cultivating an awareness of when and under what circumstances businesses and conservation organizations enter into partnerships that involve the payment of fees or other funds in association with volunteer experiences, both partners need to weigh the costs and benefits that this form of interaction offers. Besides honing their ability to tap into employee motivation, conservation groups need to develop convincing strategies for marketing corporate work experiences, and demonstrate professionalism in delivering the kinds of programs that meet corporate expectations.

Use accounting tools that facilitate an understanding of return on investment: Local informants from both sectors indicated a growing interest in accounting tools that might help them understand broader aspects of social and environmental return on investment, though admittedly, most had not begun using them. Nevertheless, instituting some form of accounting is a worthy consideration. In the corporate realm, calculations which facilitate understanding of return are referred to as social return on investment (SROI). One local company claims the use of SROI models, such as the one offered by the London Benchmarking group are an "excellent" way to assess whether the input of corporate resources results in an equal amount of social capital. In other words, such analysis provides an indicator of what program aspects provide "the most bang for the buck" (COR3).

Guidelines for social accounting worthy of attention are also being developed for the nonprofit and voluntary sector. Social accounting helps community-based organizations measure and audit volunteer performance to capture some of added value volunteers provide to an organization, but which tend to be overlooked during standard financial accounting procedures. In Canada, researchers Mook, Quarter and Richmond are best known for developing social accounting protocols (see Mook & Quarter, 2003; Mook, Quarter & Richmond, 2003).

8.3. Chapter summary

These twelve principles and associated best practices weave together significant observations from a number of interdisciplinary stakeholders representing two radically different sectors. The broad experience and expertise of these informants provides a key opportunity to investigate strategies that have potential to foster partnerships, frame challenges related to forwarding stewardship and volunteerism, and build upon key recommendations that create a foundation for

solid working relationships. Together, the principles create a guide for meeting the demands of real situations, maintaining clarity of purpose, and negotiating successful partnerships that achieve their full potential without yielding to conflicting perceptions and positions.

Chapter 9: Conclusions

The research reported in this dissertation responds to current trends and needs voiced by corporations and community organizations involved in partnership development and community engagement. Businesses increasingly seek innovative approaches to community involvement, employee engagement and staff development, the long-term sustainability of a strong volunteer base, and the type of brand enhancement that volunteering can accomplish. Similarly, conservation organizations want to increase emphasis on stewardship to help uphold responsibilities downloaded to them by governments, mitigate biodiversity decline, accomplish much-needed work, rejuvenate a dwindling, aging volunteer base, and to augment and diversify their revenue. The convergence of these trends creates a window of opportunity to examine the phenomenon of employer supported volunteering (ESV) and the role it can play in addressing the needs of both sectors and those of the community by creating opportunities to foster conservation stewardship.

Guiding the development of objectives for this research has been the question, "How can collaboration between businesses and conservation organizations foster highly successful partnerships founded on a commitment to environmental stewardship?" These objectives embrace both corporate, organizational and individual levels of involvement, and include the need to (1) determine how themes within the literature associated with stewardship and corporate social responsibility (CSR) may augment one another and contribute to an understanding of cross-sectoral partnership; (2) show how insights from the literature associated with volunteerism and volunteer management contribute to an enhanced understanding of ESV; (3) investigate the practices that key stakeholders within the global community and within Ontario have determined to be best-suited for negotiating partnerships, managing and educating volunteers and contributing meaningfully to environmental stewardship; (4) explore the lessons in maximizing benefits for all concerned that the partnership experiences have taught practitioners from both corporate and conservation sectors; and (5) understand the extent to which both sectors value the educational aspects of volunteering, and provide suggestions about how they might combine knowledge and resources to better inform and educate employees about the importance of stewardship.

This chapter summarizes and discusses the broader implications of key conclusions from the research. Section 9.1 discusses key findings by presenting a summary of essential themes in the literature, reviewing important conclusions derived from the primary research, and presenting a final version of partnership principles (including best practices and key recommendations). Section 9.2 discusses ideals versus reality; 9.3 reviews contributions to the literature and 9.4 suggests how the evidence is corroborated. Additional considerations and recommendations are included in section 9.5 followed by recognition of limitations and sources of bias (section 9.6), and areas for future research (section 9.7). Finally, section 9.8 provides some last thoughts regarding future directions for employer supported volunteerism.

9.1. Key findings

9.1.1. Key findings arising from the literature and case examples

An exploration of the literature associated with stewardship, social responsibility and volunteerism (including ESV) reveals mutually reinforcing themes corroborated by the case examples. These themes highlight the need for partners to come to terms with various tensions related to balancing or integrating their own organizational expectations with the needs of their partners, the volunteers and the even the surrounding environment and community. The key findings from the literature review and case studies (chapters two to four) centre on the following four themes:

Organizational challenges. Organizations need to meet their own obligations, and also rise to new challenges by: completing jobs efficiently while enabling volunteers to experience the meaning in their contributions; maintaining effective day-to-day operations while expanding to meet future expectations; and continuing to address fully their organization's core environmental objectives while building enough capacity to accommodate and engage community participants interested in aiding conservation.

Partner relationship challenges. Partners face the challenge of working together and achieving joint goals without compromising each other's mandates by developing proactive rather than reactive approaches to employer supported volunteering; entering into partnership agreements without overriding the need for accountability; and learning how to value fully each other's contributions even if, at first glance, quantifiable evidence of benefits might seem insufficient.

Volunteer engagement challenges. Investing in employee volunteers within a conservation context needs to include understanding and building upon conventional knowledge of motivations and incentives which indicate volunteers highly value quantifiable, visible results, while effectively engaging volunteers in stewardship activities, despite the possibility that this type of volunteering may yield less immediately observable results; adopting a "big picture" approach to volunteering while measuring incremental progress; finding a balance between having volunteers accomplish work while gaining from built-in educational experiences; and rising to the challenge of clearly communicating concrete arguments for environmental protection, while engaging volunteers in a positive way.

Environment and community related challenges. Responding to the above challenges demands recognition of the need to benefit the environment and surrounding community by establishing clear management goals, yet recognizing that environmental processes such as drought or fire, could make these goals unachievable (at least under perceived timelines); weighing the benefits of engaging volunteers with the potential benefits, and even detrimental impact that their involvement might have on the environment; and collaborating with other groups and disseminating results so other groups or individuals may benefit from lessons learnt.

These findings provided the basis to create a draft suite of partnership principles (see chapter five).

9.1.2. Findings from all informant interviews

The research on local as well as global conservation and corporate organizations reveals how the two sectors have slightly different perceptions of what constitutes success in a partnership, highlights areas where joint partnerships can foster stewardship through action and education, identifies challenges and opportunities associated with negotiating and maintaining relationships, and gives rise to a suite of principles and associated best practices.

Perception of success

Both the global case examples and the local key informant interviews reveal that partners have varying perspectives on what constitutes success. While conservation organizations appreciate how concerted efforts of volunteer teams can complete conservation-related tasks effectively, they also emphasize the role volunteering has in creating rich learning experiences for employees

as well as the potential for ESV to open doors for the eventual creation of more ambitious and more lasting partnerships. In contrast, businesses tend to judge success by focusing on measurable results, positive employee feedback and work accomplishments that follow efficient and effective processes.

In a few situations, particularly with the smaller conservation organizations, which employ few hired staff, the benefits energetic corporate volunteers provide in terms of hands-on contributions seem worth the cost and coordination effort associated with short-term, ad hoc work events. Respondents representing these smaller organizations, noting how they depend greatly on an increasingly aging traditional volunteer base, deem ESV successful when employee teams complete physical tasks such as tree planting and trail maintenance. These activities, they realize, are beyond the capacity of their traditional volunteers to sustain. Representatives of larger conservation organizations similarly value the ability of corporate volunteers to complete physical tasks within a short time period (especially when they can accomplish much more than an individual, paid staff person could do at the same time). However, these respondents also suggest that partnerships are most valuable when they evolve and solidify. They feel that by working together over time, the partnership provides more opportunities for a "multi-faceted return on investment that leads to better long-term relationships and engagement with employees" (CON6).

Conservation respondents note that a focus on long-term success, while perhaps not as immediately gratifying as the tangible results of short-term volunteer work, can contribute to mutual and multiple goals. For instance, longer term partnerships have the potential to:

- Strengthen the capacity of the conservation organization to accomplish work (e.g. through the development of a longer-term, potentially overarching partnership)
- Prompt companies to broaden the scope of corporate responsibility mandates in terms of supporting conservation and stewardship
- Provide opportunities for employees to build progressively upon their experience so they gain a sense of ownership over projects

- Create opportunities for future engagement that may also recruit friends and family, and/or inspire employees to return on their own time, or prompt them to register as members of a conservation organisation

For these organizations, success is contingent upon progressive and iterative partnership development which allows both sectors to advance their understanding of each other, as well as for employees to gain a greater knowledge of stewardship. As one respondent concludes, "It is hard to impress upon people the significance of work if they never [return] . . . longer-term relationships would provide a richer experience" (CON6).

The corporate respondents, many of whom work primarily on an ad hoc basis with their conservation counterparts, tend to view partnerships as most successful when employees report back enthusiastically about their positive work experiences, when the nature of the activities meshes with the interests of employees and directly aligns with company values, when work results are quantifiable and when achievements have direct, positive impacts within the communities where employees work and live.

For the most part, company respondents place less emphasis on the need for employees to learn in a formal way about stewardship on the worksite. Companies whose employees participated in ad hoc work days suggest that since time is limited, it is most important for volunteers to provide their services as efficiently as possible. In contrast to the conservation respondents, who highlight the benefits of taking time to complete front-line training and instill stewardship messages, corporate interviewees prefer to have employees focus on getting work done on-site. The corporate preference for such a hands-on approach to serving conservation needs may demonstrate how, for some audiences and in some circumstances, actions (which themselves provide a learning experience) may speak louder than words in the quest to foster an ethic of stewardship and volunteering.

While companies are more apt to view success in terms of direct, immediate results, they also acknowledge the importance of partnerships having a strong social and/or environmental impact within the community. As one respondent commented, it is important for ESV programs to "provide the most bang for the buck" (COR3) in terms of making a positive impact within the community where the work is being done. In considering how to maximize the benefits of partnerships, one Ontario respondent was very adamant that taking an integrated, long-term

approach to working together is crucial. As a representative of the only local company in the study associated with developing a longer-term conservation partnership, she has thought deeply about the potential of this type of approach to better the environment and engender understanding of the cause in her employees. Realizing her company is able to have a greater impact by developing a relationship with a single partner instead of working on an ad hoc basis with a number of different organizations, she remarks, "In the end, this focuses your attention, your money, your volunteer time, your product, your gifts in-kind and you can make a huge difference" (COR1).

Corporate interviewees noted that another indicator of success is the strengthening of ability to recruit and retain talented employees. However, corporate respondents saw that to be effective, ESV programs had to be a component of a larger CSR strategy. They recognize that providing stand-alone volunteer opportunities does little for teambuilding and morale enhancement unless they are founded upon strong mandates connected with greater, legitimate company initiatives.

Extent to which partnership principles can foster stewardship

As partnership and ESV begins to foster stewardship at both organizational and individual levels, it is clear that much of this potential still remains to be realized.

At an individual level, there is potential for employees to make a huge difference that shifts a company towards better corporate citizenship. This can happen, for example, when employees put forward recommendations for involvement and respond favourably when they have positive experiences. As one corporate respondent notes, the positive response of employees to volunteer opportunities serves to "spur on [their] corporate community strategy" (COR1). At an organizational level, conservation respondents speak highly about the potential for well-developed partnerships to provide companies with opportunities to become designated stewards of specific natural areas, "adopt" conservation programs or to utilize lessons learnt to enhance corporate ground greening (or naturalization) programs. Conservation organizations may also drive corporate organizational change to favour the environment when they screen corporate partners and choose to work only with those who have superior corporate social responsibility strategies. Companies that do not fit these criteria may be compelled to develop more stringent environmental operational standards.

Key challenges and opportunities

Key challenges for conservation respondents involve difficulty in: finding and maintaining corporate contacts, understanding what their corporate counterparts want, being asked to organize volunteer events with little advance notice, accommodating large numbers of corporate volunteers, and developing lasting relationships and interacting with business in a language and professional manner that is familiar to corporate counterparts. Overall, these respondents note that employer supported volunteerism provides opportunities to foster stewardship, engage volunteers effectively by diversifying task options, instill lasting conservation messages, and build sustainability into long-term partnerships.

Key challenges for corporations include difficulty finding enough suitable community groups capable of meeting their criteria; maintaining a variety of connections that can offer diverse volunteer experiences, finding successful methods to build internal awareness about volunteer opportunities and prompt a shift towards volunteerism within corporate culture; and ensuring that employee volunteers contribute to meaningful projects. These challenges open doors for companies to break down barriers between corporate and nonprofit sectors, lend their business savvy and expertise to forward conservation, and provide exemplary leadership for other companies interested in following suit.

While key informants did not address the role of government, many of the challenges cited may sometimes seem greater than the individual or combined abilities of corporations and nonprofits to resolve them. Municipal, provincial or federal governments would do well to harness this energy and dedication to change by establishing greater funding and support for volunteer programs within conservation and community based organizations.

Partnership Principles

The discussions of challenges and opportunities presented within chapter seven's analysis of practical experiences provide enough data to corroborate the evidence within the literature and case examples and expand upon the original draft principles to create a full suite of partnership principles reflecting best practices useful for overcoming challenges associated with corporate partnership and conservation-based employer supported volunteering (Table 7). None of these overarching principles are mutually exclusive. On the contrary, the principles include the need

for partners to ensure that they contribute to “mutual and multiple benefits,” work on good “communication”, operate from a place of “authenticity and sincere intentionality” and develop “efficient” processes. Nine other general principles describe various key aspects of cross-sectoral partnership and employer supported volunteerism.

Summary of Partnership Principles and Best Practices

Overarching Principles

Mutual and Multiple Benefits:

Activities arising from the partnership should be mutually beneficial. Partners achieve something together that is unobtainable alone.

- Offer skills and resources to complement one another
- Encourage hands-on learning projects to develop virtuous circles
- Work on moving beyond the transactional nature of partnerships

Communication:

Elements of good communication are underlie each of the following principles.

- Constantly emphasize thoroughness and clarity of communication
- Communicate to the public and employee volunteers in their language
- Develop capacity through collaborative communication networks

Authenticity:

Authentic relationships involve partners who have sincere intentions and who are motivated to contribute to real, meaningful goals.

- Enter into partnerships without judgmental attitudes
- Proactively search for niche work for volunteers
- Ensure that work involved permits a genuine conservation contribution from a stewardship perspective
- Show volunteers respect, positive encouragement and appreciation
- Maintain volunteer programs even in the face of restructuring
- Cultivate genuinely respectful and positive attitudes

Efficiency:

Efficiency refers to the speed and effectiveness of accomplishing tasks

- Balance deliberative methods with activities proven to streamline processes

General Principles

Transparency:

Linked closely to communication, accountability and evaluation, transparency helps to ensure that partners fully understand why certain courses of action are taken. It also helps to build trust.

- Communicate clearly
- Establish clear linkages with broader programs
- Commit to conducting and sharing results of evaluation
- Voluntarily remain open to scrutiny

Adaptability, flexibility and resiliency:

Partnerships should be flexible and open to change, lend themselves to creative problem-solving and find opportunities to face challenges.

- Adapt to new approaches to doing business
- Look beyond conventional thinking about volunteerism to broaden the scope of volunteer activities and engage volunteers in different capacities
- Integrate resilience into program development

Equity and reciprocity:

Close attention needs to be paid to the balance of power; balance can be achieved when partners actively seek to advance each other's missions.

- Maintain a clear sense of purpose, yet recognize which elements of self-interest may be forfeited for a greater good
- Ensure a quality experience for volunteers
- Establish joint decision-making processes

Summary of partnership principles (continued)

Good Fit & Matching Values:

Collaborators align interests and develop a shared vision.

- Consider environment within and beyond market niche
- Align key values
- Match employee abilities, interests and values to volunteer opportunities
- Seek out niche opportunities and develop strategies for each unique partnership
- Offer strength without becoming controlling
- Make cross-sectoral communication routine

Multi-level engagement:

Support provided to partnership from upper/middle management; bottom-up propulsion also necessary to forward and sustain initiatives.

- Complement top-down support with bottom-up engagement
- Provide ongoing support from management
- Develop lateral unity through organizations by addressing concerns and ensuring colleagues are on the same page

Accountability:

Accountability implies that both partners take joint responsibility for their decisions and actions.

- Adhere to ethical fundraising/partnership codes and standards
- Demonstrate due diligence for health and safety, including vigilant leadership
- Assess potential environmental impact
- Ensure continuity by maintaining institutional memory

Education:

The partnership process should foster continuous learning (for collaborators as well as volunteer participants).

- Reinforce knowledge while conveying a broad vision of stewardship
- Increase relevancy (eliminate a lecture-style atmosphere on the worksite)
- Welcome family and friends
- Develop take-away lessons

Iterative Development Process:

Partners constantly seek to build, improve and understand their relationship

- Provide the opportunity for volunteers to be involved in a "test run"
- Consider working together for a trial period before formalizing long-term commitments
- Offer graduated volunteer programs so volunteers may build upon skills
- Focus on feedback
- Do not force partnerships
- Value incremental changes brought about by stewardship efforts

Evaluation:

Partners must jointly weigh the costs and risks of partnership relative to their benefits

- Value intangible in addition to tangible benefits
- Set benchmarks; measure success and milestones
- Understand reasoning behind levying fees for volunteering
- Use good accounting tools that facilitate an understanding of return on investment

9.2. The ideal situation versus reality

This suite of partnership principles and best practices represents an ideal towards which all partnerships may strive, even if its realization may be beyond the grasp of any single partnership. In contrast to these ideals, certain realities faced by conservation organizations and corporations have implications for the way in which they understand and negotiate partnerships.

For example, the issue of communication arises as one of the largest points of contention for both sectors. Ideally, companies and community organizations could meet halfway by learning to speak each other's language. The general reality, however, is that corporations push nonprofits towards speaking the language of business. Those who can achieve this standard will make greater gains than those whose communication fails to meet this standard. Unfortunately, these are often the smaller organizations most desperately in need of funding and volunteer support.

The abysmal track records of many corporations in the area of corporate social responsibility have irrevocably tarnished them, according to the perspective of many community-based organizations. This issue discourages some corporate respondents who feel that their conservation counterparts suspect them of failing to act in good faith. In contrast to these justifiable concerns on the part of each partner, is another reality – that the companies represented here have been diligent about hiring staff who can effectively handle and organize community engagement programs. As representatives of their corporations, these individuals are well-spoken, passionate and committed to fostering the volunteer spirit. It is important to recognize that corporations (or at least individuals and divisions within corporations) do deserve credit for trying to do the right thing regarding employer supported volunteering.

In exemplary partnerships, the actions of each stakeholder remain free from ulterior motives, while demonstrating a sincere intent to foster volunteer stewardship and accomplish much-needed work. Perhaps ironically, given the profit motive that defines corporate life in general, research for this thesis reveals that greed seems most apparent within the conservation sector, many of whose members seem to be implementing corporate voluntary programs primarily for the monetary reasons. For companies, a helpful perspective might be gained by understanding that many nonprofit stakeholders are driven by work loads that are as excessively high as their human and financial capacity is low.

Ideally, corporations will take a broad approach to corporate responsibility, regarding employee engagement as a key element. Key informants consistently indicate that conservation-based corporate employee engagement is not merely a superficial approach to covering up underlying inconsistencies within CSR mandates. In fact, most employee engagement programs studied here exist as components of greater organization-wide CSR strategy, a key indicator that the corporate community exhibits a demonstrated commitment to fostering corporate responsibility across a wide spectrum.

In reality, the unique circumstances, different needs, infrastructure and capacity of each prospective partnership means that there can be no one-size-fits-all approach. While it is tempting to develop partnerships that are modeled according to a set list of principles, practices and even success stories such as that of BHP Billiton and Conservation Volunteers Australia, featured in 4.2.3, there is no template that can, by itself, ensure successful ESV partnerships. Recognizing the potential for examples and guidelines to enrich relationships means being prepared to do some tailoring to allow each unique partnership to prosper.

9.3. Contribution to the literature and understanding of volunteerism

By exploring the linkages between stewardship, corporate community engagement and cross-sectoral partnership within the context of employer supported volunteerism, this research makes a unique contribution to the literature especially in terms of understanding volunteerism within corporate community partnerships.

The thesis also addresses some gaps within the literature, as outlined in section 1.2. McKeown and Brown (2003) suggest that companies understand why they should become involved, but still need to know how this is best done. This research shows that while employer supported volunteerism is one of many avenues for community involvement, it holds special promise because it can engage employees at multiple levels and be spurred on through both top-down and bottom-up processes. Furthermore, this thesis creates a guide for partners to become involved at a level where they can work effectively with each other and move quickly beyond the transactional nature of partnerships to achieve greater good. It does this by identifying best practices which aid in overcoming hurdles created by the problems of communication barriers, ingrained negativity; suspicion regarding each other's limitations and motives; and susceptibility of nonprofits to becoming mired in reactionary activities that provide little return on investment.

The principles of Good fit, Authenticity, Adaptability and Iterative partnership development address the alignment of values as a pre-condition for success; clear articulation of motives as a path towards trustworthy relationships; adoption of flexible attitudes as a key step towards overcoming unforeseen hurdles and allowing small successes to play their part in building a strong, ongoing relationship. By providing clarity and guidance for sectors seeking to sustain alliances, these principles assist in closing an important gap in the literature related to sustaining alliances, as identified by Gray and Wood (1991).

Finally, this thesis contributes to the need to examine the benefits of corporate community programs as stated by Peterson (2004). Not only does the research discuss how both sectors can gain individually from partnerships, but it also discusses broad benefits such as the creation of social and organizational capital, greener corporate leadership and the potential for creating demonstration sites and corporate greening.

9.4. Corroboratory evidence

In general, this research reveals findings that are consistent with, and expand upon the literature and global case experience. The findings also augment the evidence from the most similar study identified in the literature. That is the study by Hext (2006), who looked at cross-sectoral partnerships between a variety of charities and companies in Australia. Hext found that charities face a number of difficulties, the most important of which are developing diverse opportunities able to maintain volunteers and client interest; negotiating who is responsible for the costs of volunteering; accommodating large numbers of volunteers on short notice; and having enough time and resources to manage corporate volunteers professionally. Hext's Australian companies also note that they have often had difficulty finding volunteer opportunities that match the needs of both organizations, motivating employees to participate; and driving cultural change capable of creating unanimous support for ESV.

9.5. Limitations and sources of bias

This subsection addresses the limitations and possible sources of bias within my work. While qualitative researchers understand that some bias is inevitable, it is crucial to address these weaknesses openly and constructively (Mehra, 2002).

One of the biggest limitations of this study was that it became geographically centred around the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), where most companies have their Ontario corporate headquarters. Because employer supported volunteerism is relatively new, it was difficult to find suitable informants elsewhere. Readers should be aware that the study's outcomes, therefore, speak mainly about conservation-related volunteerism as it exists within an urban, or near urban context. For those interested in implementing employee supported volunteering in more rural areas, some of the issues and challenges may differ.

This study is limited to organizations that have already developed some sort of partnership with the opposite sector (whether it be ad hoc or long-term). As such, discussion about the reasons why other groups may not have become involved is limited. Nevertheless, during my search for key informants, I questioned several contacts, who never developed partnerships, about barriers to their involvement. Reasons for their resistance included fears about liability, not knowing where or how to get started, lack of capacity (e.g. point person/funding), and/or lack of appropriate work.

By focusing primarily on key representatives and their observations about partnerships, this study may have been biased more towards examining how these proponents from each sector could forward their own corporate and organizational goals, rather than the full extent of potential multiple benefits. It has been essential, throughout this research, to draw out ideas on how CSR and stewardship can be enhanced by interpreting what key representatives have to say. Nevertheless, it would have been interesting to discuss partnership experiences with corporate employee volunteers or other stakeholders involved in the process whose perspectives may provide additional points of reference able to complement the views expressed by those with whom I have communicated. Unfortunately, time limitations made this impossible. A recommendation to complete future studies in this area follows in the next section.

9.6. Areas for future research

This work opens a flood of new questions for future research. The following points are presented here with the hope that researchers will further document and explore:

- Partnership and stewardship potential from the perspectives of corporate employees and other stakeholders who have closely observed the process

- The potential for conservation organizations to work collaboratively to broker employer supported volunteer opportunities
- Barriers which prevent companies and conservation organizations from participating (this study only addresses organizations involved in partnerships)
- Benefits and drawbacks of various forms of evaluating corporate employee programs (e.g. in terms of social accounting, social return on investment and how corporate volunteer programs impact a companies bottom line)
- Corporations' willingness to pay for volunteer opportunities
- Methods used to screen corporate partners
- Successful (and unsuccessful) case experiences (there is a paucity of concrete cases studies documenting ESV in cross-sectoral partnerships within the literature)

Following up on the progress of the organizations studied in this thesis, after five years or so would also prove useful. In particular, it would be important to determine the extent and manner in which partnerships have evolved, and the range of abilities developed in order to address identified challenges, and thereby realize greater stewardship potential.

9.7. Concluding thoughts

While this research looks specifically at conservation-based partnerships, many of the lessons and principles can be used by organizations within other sectors that seek better employer-supported volunteer programs. Practitioners with broad interests in developing cross-sectoral partnerships as well as those wishing to improve employer supported volunteer programs through social sector organizations may benefit from this work.

Employer supported volunteerism is a unique facet of corporate social responsibility that is becoming an increasingly important way for corporations to demonstrate good citizenship and give charitably, even while under pressure to increase bottom lines by leveraging the energy of employees they are already paying. Some corporate respondents suggest it will move beyond a trend to become integrated into the way businesses operate. As one respondent puts it,

> I think [employee supported volunteerism] will move out of being a phenomenon and will just be a way of working . . .] because we are becoming more post-material in our approach. If I have decent hosts and a good job, now I feel I can give back. In fact, I want to give back.

> I don't think it's going to be a phenomenon ten years from now, I think it's going to be a way of being. (COR1)

Another respondent shares this perspective:

> I think [ESV] will become more and more important, particularly with the new generation coming into the workforce. In all the research I've seen, they are much more interested in what the company stands for, and the opportunities that they are willing to create for them in this area, because they are not interested in just a paycheck. They want to feel good about the company they work for. They know they have a choice. I think it's only going to become more important. I think it is one of the ways it can be important. (COR3)

The results of this research suggest joint partnership programs utilizing employer supported volunteerism have potential for engaging citizens, raising awareness and encouraging stewardship as long as partners develop and foster relationships that adhere to good partnership principles. Yet, as the last respondent suggests, it is only one of many forms of corporate responsibility. While isolated partnering events may seem to take only small steps towards conservation success, they deserve to be measured as indicators of incremental progress which have the potential to become a much larger phenomenon when they find their place within well-planned, well-funded conservation stewardship initiatives.

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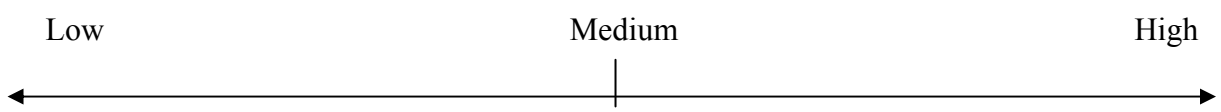
Appendix A: Continuum of Employer Supported Volunteerism



Minimal employer support and involvement	Increasing employer support and involvement	Maximum employer support and involvement
Employee driven and directed	Employee-initiated (but company-supported volunteer projects in place	Employer driven and directed
Recognition program in place	Policy in place regarding time off for volunteering	Multifaceted, integrated programs
Volunteering done on employees' time	Company volunteer events	Volunteering done on company time, on company payroll
Employer tacitly supports employees' volunteerism (for example, when the employer does not object to en employee receiving or making a call relating to her involvement in Girl Guides	Employer gives employees one hour of time off to volunteer, and employees donate an hour of their own time (for example, when an employee donates a lunch hour to tutor at a local school and the employer donates an hour of the employee's time as well	Involves company expenditure Individual or unit designated within company to support volunteerism
For example, approved use of company bulletin boards for posting volunteer activities	For example, matching grant programs, "dollars for doers" programs, special recognition/awards	For example, volunteer events that feature a corporate brand; branded volunteer programs in place.

Source: Cooper, R. (2007, May 1-3). *Corporate volunteering: a win/win/win proposition (Unpublished presentation).* Paper presented at the Celebrating the Profession: Recognizing Administrators of Volunteer Resources, Toronto, ON.

Appendix B: List serve posting

The following message was posted on the US, UK and Australian Volunteer Program Manager List serves:

> A former volunteer manager, I have since returned to school to complete a graduate degree on facilitating environmental NGO/business partnerships. I have become very interested in how employee volunteerism can best be facilitated in the conservation world.
>
> I would love to hear from you to learn a little bit of what has/hasn't worked for you over the years in terms of engaging
> business partners in on-the-ground activities (particularly when they are related to conservation – e.g. trail building, monitoring and restoration).
>
> At this point, it would be extremely helpful hear your thoughts, or learn of any written documentation (if available) you might have developed about employee volunteer partnerships (this would be very helpful to supplement my lit. review).
>
> In particular, it would be interesting to learn what you might be able to share pertaining one or more of the topics below:
>
> -how conservation partnerships are developed and sustained (key
> success factors)
> -how you evaluate the costs/benefits of employee engagement
> -how partnership expectations are managed or communicated (this could
> include to your own staff, to the businesses or even to their
> employees)
> -what challenges or barriers you have worked to overcome with regards
> to engaging businesses in your work
>
> I would be keen to start a discussion in this forum, but would also appreciate anyone who would be interested in contacting me directly, sending leads, or allowing me to peruse their organizational documents.
>
> Regards,
> Bronwen Buck

Appendix C: Questionnaire for global case examples

Questions for corporate representatives are in the left hand columns, questions for community representatives are in the right hand columns[22].

Questions for Corporate Representative	Questions for Community Representative
1. How did the idea of employee volunteerism come about in your company? Probe: did it start with employees, or was it suggested by management?	1. How did you develop a corporate partnership involving employee volunteering? Did the company approach you, or did your organization seek it out?
2. Does your organization have some kind of written agreement or contract with your conservation counterpart? a. If yes, information does the document include (e.g. responsibilities, deliverables, timelines etc.?).	2. Does your organization have some kind of written agreement or contract with the corporate which states responsibilities and expectations on both sides?
3. Do you have a sense of who in your organization "buys in" to the concept of employee volunteering? Probe: Do you get the sense that the various levels of management and staff believe that employee volunteering is useful and/or important? Why/Why not?	3. Do you have a sense of who in your organization "buys in" to the concept of formalized volunteer programs and employee volunteer programs? Probe: Do you get the sense that the various levels of management and staff believe that employee volunteering is useful and/or important? Why/Why not?
4. What aspects or qualities of hands-on work do you think are most important for your employees?	4. How do you market the benefits of employee volunteering to a potential partnering company? What do you emphasize the most?
	Are there plenty of suitable opportunities available for corporate volunteers within your organization? (How might you differentiate a suitable corporate volunteer opportunity vs. one that might be suitable for a traditional volunteer).
5. Have you ever tried to express employee engagement in terms of return on investment?	5. Have you ever tried to express employee engagement in terms of return on investment?
6. What do see as the greatest benefits of the partnership (this could include employees, partners, your organization, broader community)?	6. What do see as the greatest benefits of the partnership (this could include employees, partners, your organization, broader community)?
7. What do you consider to be the major drawbacks/challenges of employee volunteer programs to your organization? When, how and why can it often go wrong?	7. What do you consider to be the major challenges/drawbacks to your organization, staff and clients? When, how and why can it often go wrong?

[22] Some of the questions were developed by Hext (2006) in her study on volunteer programs: I*mproving Employee Volunteer Programs - A View From Both Sides.* Unpublished Research Project, University of Technology Sydney, Australia.

Appendix D: Questionnaires for local interviews

Questions for Conservation Organization Representative
Brief answers:
1. What is your role within the organization?
2. How did you develop a corporate partnership involving employee volunteering? Did the company approach you, or did your organization seek it out?
3. How long has your organization been utilizing corporate volunteers in a formal capacity?
4. Do you engage "traditional" volunteers in conservation activities as part of a broader volunteer program, or do you only utilize the services of corporate volunteers?
5. Describe how employees participate in conservation activities. Do they work in groups or individually? One off events or on an ongoing basis? Do you know if they are volunteering on their work time? What types of conservation work do you feel is appropriate for employees to undertake? Is this different than what you might give "traditional volunteers" to do?
6. How many corporate employees have volunteered at your organization over the past month/year? Or how many activities have taken place?
Partnership Structure:
7. Does corporate volunteering form part of a wider partnership that your organization has with one or more corporate organizations? Probe: does the partnership include other elements such as financial support, in kind products/services, staff donations, marketing initiatives, sponsorship etc. Does the corporate organization allocate a budget to cover their own and your expenses e.g. event organization, materials, food, travel for the volunteering activity?
8. What level of importance does your organization place on volunteering programs (including corporate volunteer initiatives)? a. Do you feel this program is particularly vulnerable to funding cuts/shifts in mandates b. Do you have a volunteer coordinator on staff? Is this a full-time position?
9. Do you have a sense of who in your organization "buys in" to the concept of formalized volunteer programs and employee volunteer programs? Probe: Do you get the sense that the various levels of management and staff believe that employee volunteering is useful and/or important? Why/Why not?
Partner Dynamics

Questions for Conservation Organization Representative
10. Does your organization have some kind of written agreement or contract with the corporate which states responsibilities and expectations on both sides?
11. Would you say that your organization and your conservation partner(s) have a "champion" who helps to uphold the partnerships?
12. Does your organization charge a fee to corporates for providing volunteering opportunities for their staff?
Conservation and Employee Engagement
13. For your organization, is corporate volunteering a way to get work accomplished or a means to develop a relationship with an organization that might assist you financially with your mission?
14. Do you think that your partner organization views employee volunteering as an act of generosity or in terms of the benefits it or its employees will gain?
15. How do you screen corporate organizations to ensure that they would be a suitable partner? Do you have corporate giving guidelines in place?
16. How do you market the benefits of employee volunteering to a potential partnering company? What do you emphasize the most?
17. Do you think that corporate employees can gain a good understanding and appreciation of the nature of the work and your mission from their hands-on experiences?
18. Do you think corporate employees are keen to volunteer?
19. Do you know if individual corporate volunteers have gone on to become involved in other volunteer work as a result of their experiences? Probe: Have they become members of your organization or donated as a result of their volunteering activity?
Accountability/Transparency
20. How does your organization evaluate the effectiveness of corporate volunteering? If it doesn't evaluate, why not? Have you ever tried to express employee engagement in terms of return on investment (ROI)?
21. Are the corporate volunteers servicing a need that was previously unmet by general volunteers?
22. What form of recognition do you offer businesses for their contributions of employee staff time (e.g. joint press release, corporate branding)?
Benefits, Risks and Costs
23. What do see as the greatest benefits of the partnership (this could include employees, partners, your organization, broader community)?
24. Did you find that there were any unexpected benefits arising from the partnership experience?
25. What do you consider to be the major challenges/drawbacks to your organization, staff and clients? When, how and why can it often go wrong?
26. What do you consider to be the major challenges/drawbacks to working with? the corporate organization? When, how and why can it often go wrong?
27. What can both corporate organizations and non-profit organizations do to improve the corporate volunteer experience for all involved?

Questions for Corporate Representatives
Background
1. Can you briefly describe your role within your organization?
2. How did the idea of employee volunteerism come about in your company? Probe: did it start with employees, or was it suggested by management? Does your company tend to approach potential conservation partners, or do they approach you?
3. How long has your organization been engaged in employee volunteering activities with conservation/environmental organizations?
4. Is employee volunteerism mandated? If yes/no: Approximately what percentage of employees participate? If yes/no: Who volunteers? (e.g. upper management, middle management, general staff, board members?) If yes – is it difficult to find suitable opportunities for employees to volunteer? What methods do you currently use to find opportunities?
5. Describe how employees participate in conservation Do they go in groups, or work individually? One off events? Or on an ongoing basis (other roles) Do they volunteer on work time? What type of conservation work do the employees undertake?
6. How many employees have volunteered over the past month/year? Or how many activities have taken place?
Partnership Structure
7. Does employee volunteering form part of a broader community engagement or corporate responsibility program? Probe: does the partnership include other elements such as financial support, in kind products/services, staff donations, marketing initiatives, sponsorship etc
8. What level of importance does your organization place on employee volunteering (i.e. how vulnerable is the program to funding cuts/shifts in mandates)?
9. Do you have a sense of who in your organization "buys in" to the concept of employee volunteering? a. Probe: Do you get the sense that the various levels of management and staff believe that employee volunteering is useful and/or important? Why/Why not?
Partner Dynamics

Questions for Corporate Representatives
10. Does your organization have some kind of written agreement or contract with your conservation counterpart? b. If yes, information does the document include (e.g. responsibilities, deliverables, timelines etc.?).
11. Would you say that your organization and your conservation partner has a "champion" that helps to uphold the partnership? For your organization, do you know if this position is in their job description?
Conservation and Employee Engagement
12. Is there a specific reason your organization might choose conservation/environment over other charitable causes?
13. Do you think your organization views employee volunteering mainly in terms of an act of generosity or in terms of benefits to employees?
14. Within the conservation realm, are there organizations that you would not partner with (or conversely, refuse to endorse as "suitable" for your employees to volunteer at?) (e.g. activist organizations?).
15. What aspects or qualities of hands-on work do you think are most important for your employees?
16. Do you think that employees gain a good understanding and appreciation of the conservation organization's aims and the issues they are trying to address?
17. Do you think employees are keen to volunteer?
18. Do you know if employees have gone on to become involved in other volunteer work as a result of their experiences?
Accountability/Transparency
19. How does your organization evaluate its employee volunteer program? If it doesn't evaluate, why not?
20. Have you ever tried to express employee engagement in terms of return on investment (ROI)?
21. With regards to your CSR initiatives and/or your employee volunteer program, do you have a third party evaluation?
22. Does your organization have an incentive and/or recognition program for employees to volunteer?
Benefits, Risks and Costs
23. What do see as the greatest benefits of the partnership (this could include employees, partners, your organization, broader community)?
24. Did you find that there were any unexpected benefits arising from the partnerships? such as building team work, camaraderie amongst employees?

Questions for Corporate Representatives
25. Do you have a budget for the employee program? If so, where does the budget come from (e.g. PR campaign) c. What does the budget cover? (e.g. supplies, donation to partner, money for a coordinating role, travel?)
26. Has or would your organization pay a fixed amount to a non-profit for the opportunity for its staff to volunteer?
27. What do you consider to be the major drawbacks/challenges of employee volunteer programs to your organization? When, how and why can it often go wrong?
28. What do you consider to be the major drawbacks/challenges to working with? the conservation organization of employee volunteer programs? When, how and why can it often go wrong?
29. What can both business organizations and non-profit organizations do to improve the employee volunteer experience for all involved?

Appendix E: Coding for Community Organizations

CODE	Type of Organization	Staff	How Employees Participate	Has corporate volunteering formed a wider partnership	Length of time engaging corporate volunteers
CON1	Regional or Watershed-Based Conservation Organization	Skeleton staff; operates primarily by volunteers	In groups	No	5-6 years
CON2	Regional or Watershed-Based Conservation Organization	20+ employed staff members	In groups	Not yet, though this organization is working on the idea. To date, many of the same groups participate on an annual basis	5-6 years
CON3	Urban Conservation Organization (strong affiliation with local government)	Employed staff	In groups	No	Unassigned
CON4	National Conservation Organization	20+ Employed staff	In groups	More than one corporation is supporting a broader partnership	5-6 years
CON5	Urban Conservation Organization	3 staff members	In groups	Some corporate representatives have attended fundraising events	3-4 years
CON6	National Conservation Organization	20+ employed staff members	In groups	One corporation has formed a broader partnership	5-6 years
CON7	Urban Conservation Organization	One employed staff member	In groups	No	3-4 years

Appendix F: Corporate Characteristics and Coding

Type of Company /CODE	CSR Theme✦	Formal ESV Name✷	Percent employees participating	Volunteer time allotted (teamwork during work hours)	Dollars for Doers	Recognition /Awards	Connection with wider partnership†
Multi-national Company (Parent) COR1	Environ-ment	Yes	Program in development	8 hours, work time (various events)	Yes	Not currently	Yes – One "Title" Cause
Multin-ational Company COR2	Better World	Yes	Not available	16 hours, work time (various events)	No	Recognition within internal publications	Occasionally
Multi-national Company COR3	Community ; Doing the right thing	Yes	35-40%	own time (various events)	No	Recognition is on a team by team basis;	Funding always associated with volunteering; partnership development in some cases
Multi-national Company COR4	Integrity; Doing the right thing	Yes	70%	half day, work time (all-employee event)	Yes Up to $800.00 per year	No	Funding associated with key charities in focus areas; funding for resources during volunteer events
Multi-national Company COR5	Community ; Imagine Canada Caring Company	Yes	40%	8 hours, work time (each quarter different opportunities are presented)	$300.00 per year (more than 50h personal time)	Extensive volunteer Recognition Program for personal time	Occasionally
Multi-national Company (Sub-sidiary) COR6	Integrity	No	Less than 4%	own time	No	No (only small tokens e.g. mugs) Write-up within an internal publication	Unassigned
Multi-national (Parent) COR7	Stewardshi p; Imagine Canada Caring Company	No	Up to 60% -	3 afternoons/year (one is an all-employee event)	No	No	Occasionally

✦ CSR Theme: Indicates the company's corporate social responsibility (CSR) theme under which employer supported volunteerism falls

✷ Formal ESV Name: Indicates whether employer supported volunteer teams participate as part of a formally named volunteer program (e.g. Team Widget)

† Connection with Wider Partnership: Indicates whether wider partnerships or funding-based relationships have developed between corporations and community counterparts who utilize the services of employee volunteers