



CONSERVATION
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Shaking Up the Status Quo: Becoming an Effective Change Agent for Your Organization

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Leigh Youngblood
Executive Director, Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust

Conservation Consulting Group

- Founded in 2009 as a partnership of colleagues/friends
- Strategic Planning
- Needs Assessments
- Guided Organizational Assessments
- Board/Governance Development
- Accreditation Preparation



Conservation Consulting Group

Nancy Moore, Managing Partner

- More than 35 years of experience in nonprofit leadership and management
- Nonprofit consultant for 17 years
- Senior Examiner for *Illinois Performance Excellence*
- International adventure travel Expedition Leader
- Elected member of the Monona City Council

David Allen, Partner

- 30 + years raising money by asking
 - 13 with TNC Chapters in OR, TX, and WI
 - 10 with Sand County Foundation
- Membership Systems to \$18MM Capital Campaign
- Consulting PT since 2004; FT since March 2009

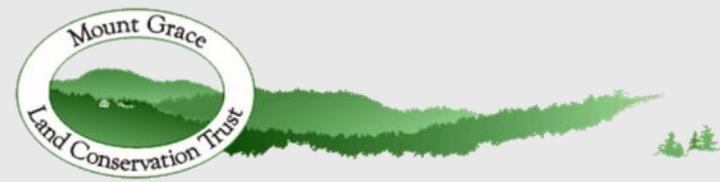


Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust



- An innovative and collaborative regional land trust founded in 1986
- Serves 23 towns in north central MA
- More than 32,000 acres conserved
- Own and manage forestland
- Own and lease farmland, including Whole Farm Forever partnership with Red Fire Farm in Montague, MA

Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust



Leigh Youngblood, Executive Director

- 24 years of nonprofit leadership at Mount Grace
- Executive Director of an Accredited land trust
- Co-founder of North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership
- 7 years experience in municipal planning and wetlands protection
- Conservation consultant in Georgia, Oregon, and New Hampshire

David Graham Wolf, Deputy Director

- Architect of TerraCorps (formerly MassLIFT) an AmeriCorps Program since 2010
- Conservation biologist with an M.S. from Antioch University New England
- Entrepreneur, founder and managing partner of Bluepoint Ecological Services
- Educator with an M.Ed. from UMass-Boston
- Former adjunct professor of natural sciences at Franklin Pierce University





“What if we don't change at all ...
and something magical just happens?”



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Defined

Making fundamental changes in how an organization operates in order to help cope with a new, more challenging environment or ***create opportunity.***

- TQM
- Re-engineering
- Right sizing
- Restructuring
- Cultural change
- Turnaround
- Renewal
- Transformation

**What have been the barriers
to change in your
organization?**



Barriers to Change

- Inertia
- Fear of the Unknown
- Comfort with the Status Quo (known)
- Lack of Trust (in other people or processes)
- If it ain't broke there's nothin' to fix
- Eyesight (i.e. limited vision)
- Investment in “being right”
- Culturally Stuck in the “bad neighborhood”



Steps to Change

1.

- Spotlighting a Sense of Urgency

2.

- Finding the Right Champion(s) to Make (and Carry) the Case

3.

- Creating and Communicating a Vision

4.

- Grounding a Vision

5.

- Empowering Action

6.

- Creating and Communicating Short Term Wins

7.

- Building on Success



Sense of Urgency?

- We have built organizational ***stability*** by developing systems, hiring skills and honing processes that support the status quo
- Management mandate is to minimize risk and keep things operating
- Difficult to drive people out of their comfort zones!

Urgency

The Status Quo has to Seem More Dangerous than Launching into the Unknown

The New Possibilities Have to Initially and Fundamentally Touch, Move and Inspire

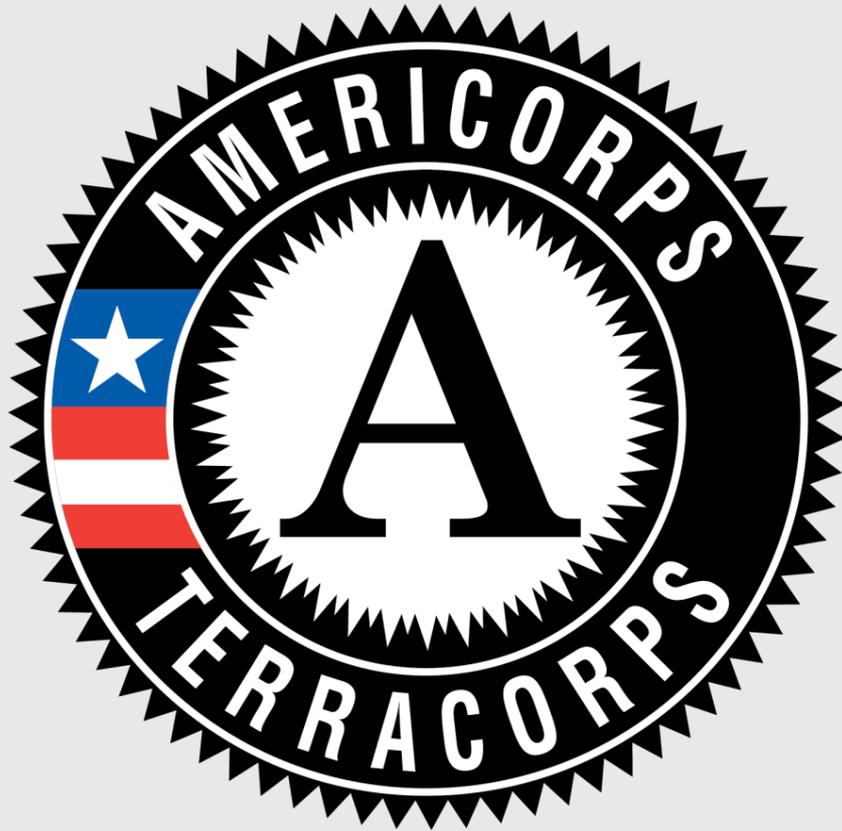
Caused: vacuum (if not crisis) occurs as a result of an unanticipated, shift central to how the organization has been operating

Created: actions deliberately taken to generate an openness to new ways of operating or an actual crisis

Spotlighted: highlight of an immediate threat or significant opportunity



Urgency



- Opportunity in 2006 to double the size of staff from 6 to 12
- Short-term funding meant we had to build fundraising capacity to match conservation capacity
- Several attempts unsuccessful
- Judy Anderson described community-based conservation and community-based fundraising to our Board
- In 2008 staffer David Graham Wolf found and applied to brand new CommonwealthCorps program

The Champion(s)

If You Want to Go Fast, Go Alone

If You Want to Go Far, Go Together

- Fundamental change/transformation only occurs when about 75% of an organization's leadership is honestly convinced that business-as-usual is unacceptable
- **But** it starts and is carried by a chosen few



Champions

- Navigate for the greater good – the good of the organization
- Commit to learning & the application of that learning
- Work to bring out the best in others
- Serve generously
- Lead confidently
- Can facilitate honest discussions/debate



Champions of Change

- **Get it!** : Understand the significant need and/or opportunity as well as the need to transform now
- **Gravitas/strength:** experienced leader(s) with proven record to persuade and inspire – internally *and* externally
- **Trustworthy:** Supporters *and* detractors/doubters confident of motives *and* abilities
- **Balance Patience & Persistence:** with the transformation process *and* (to a point) with those stuck in an old way of being
- **Creator/Builder:** of not only new possibilities but a larger “guiding coalition” to shepherd changes through



Champions



- In 2010 state funding going down while federal Serve America Act promised to increase AmeriCorps funding five-fold
- AmeriCorps required minimum of 15 members; we needed other regional land trusts to participate
- We applied for both – just in case!
- When selected for AmeriCorps, even though it was a giant leap, I decided we were going for it
- Two visionary funders provided start up capital. No cost to service sites in year 1

Creating a Vision

- Picture of the needed future that is easy to communicate and appealing to external stakeholders, Board and staff.
- Not the “what” or “how” but the “why” – attitude/behavior hinges on ***why!***
- Inspirational *and* aspirational

Communicating Vision

- Need to communicate the vision to others early (and often) to begin gaining their understanding and interest
- As pervasive as an invasive weed!
- Behavior/actions of leadership and “guiding coalition” reinforces and is consistent with change envisioned



Grounding a Vision

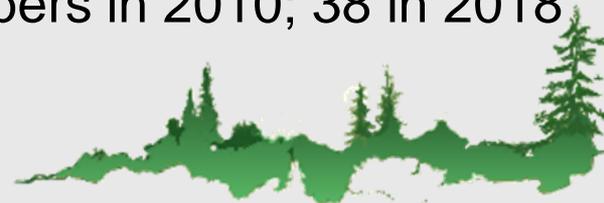
- Clarifying the goal and specific desired outcome
- Developing more specific strategies to change/transform
- Removing barriers/obstacles to change
- Communicating, teaching and enrolling the support of increasing #'s of stakeholders in the “new way of being/operating



Vision



- Explained to partner land trusts that for two years Corps Members had been helping Mount Grace reach our communities in new ways
- Members serve full-time for 11 months
- Showed how serving more sectors of the community broadened membership
- Horizontal collaboration of regional land trusts led by a regional land trust provided confidence
- Program based on 4-member positions adaptable to site specifics:
20 members in 2010; 38 in 2018



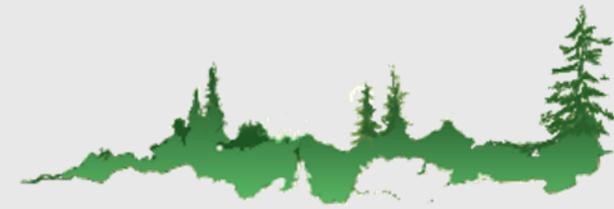
Empowering Action

- Re-engineering of systems, structures, processes that are undermining progress
- Encouraging non-traditional ideas, activities and actions (i.e. co-creators)
- Recognizing/rewarding Board and staff who are embracing change and making it happen

Empowering Action



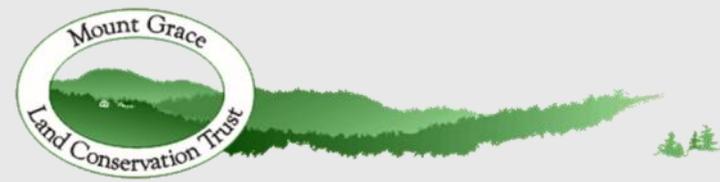
- AmeriCorps programs arrive with built in structure for tracking performance
- Each service site/land trust can modify the four positions to fit their organization and community
- Orientation for service sites and for members builds cohesion
- Quarterly trainings for members create opportunities to check in with counterparts across the state



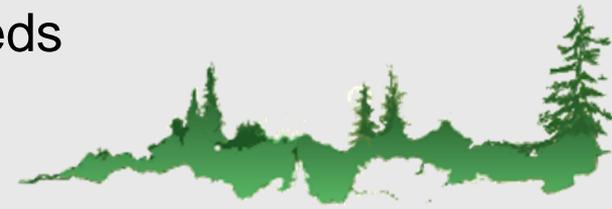
Creating and Communicating Short Term Wins

- Planning and execution for short term gain staves off inertia, fear, resignation, cynicism
- Wins = proof of vision/product
- Communication which articulates progress to all and solidifies confidence in new direction

Short Term Wins



- 3-yr grant awards require annual re-submission
- Refunding dependent on annually reported progress
- Positive results rewarded with funding
- Strict monthly financial and program reports keep program accountable, while being no-one's favorite
- Mid-year and annual program-wide reports summarize successes and program needs

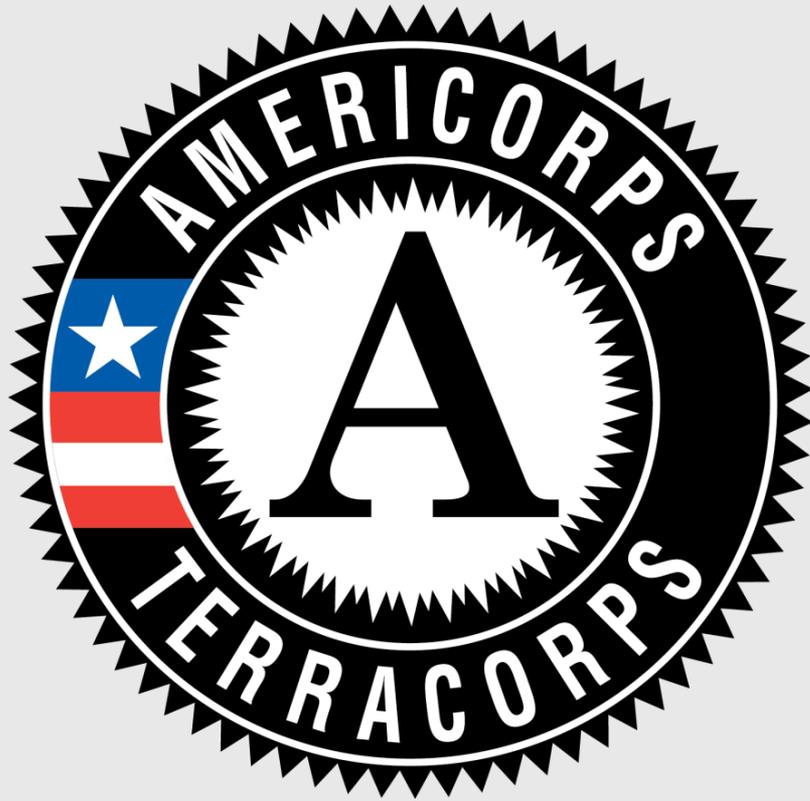


Building on Success

- Anchoring changes in the organization's culture
- Regularly demonstrating and communicating how change...new approach, behaviors, projects have improved performance
- Continuous improvement in systems, structure and policy to ensure they reflect new vision and "program."
- Leadership development and succession planning that is in alignment with change



Building on Success



- Collaboration a basic value of both Mount Grace and AmeriCorps
- Feedback from traditional land trusts and urban peers improves program
- Independent evaluation performed
- TerraCorps poised to be a multi-state independent 501c3
- Impact areas: 1) Capacity building for urban, suburban, and rural land trusts, 2) Professional training for next-gen conservationists 3) Half of service sites traditional and half urban farming

Stepping in to Change

1. Articulate a Change You'd Like to Make
2. Where's the Urgency? - Spotlight or Create
3. Who Can You Enroll as Champion(s)?
4. What's Your Vision?



Thank You!

