Public Lands Nonprofit Boot Camp

Part 1: Introduction to Public Lands Nonprofits

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Presenter

Charley Money
Independent Nonprofit Consultant

What is a nonprofit?
What is a nonprofit?

35 types of non-profit organizations recognized by the IRS tax code
Only 8 types allow tax deductible contributions, including those meeting the tax code description of 501(c)3

501(c)3
“Religious, Educational, Charitable, Scientific, Literary, Testing Public Safety, to Foster National or International Amateur Sports Competition, or Prevention of Cruelty to Children or Animals Organizations.”

Guided by mission that relates to the “public good” and “mutual benefit”
Regulated by government entities through governing/reporting documents
Governed by volunteers
Revenue generated through non-mission-related activities is taxed
What are the hallmarks of a successful nonprofit?

- Sustainable (tax-exempt vs not profitable)
- Engaged in the community (willingness to partner)
- Impactful
- Transparent
- Adaptable

What are the nonprofits that support public lands?

Cooperating/Interpretive Associations
- Friends Groups
- Educational Institutes
- Others
  - Trail groups
  - Conservation Corps
  - National/Regional Foundations
  - Universities

Cooperating and Interpretive Associations

- All provide educational materials to public lands visitors.
- Some also provide fee-based educational programs
- Allowed to use government facilities and some equipment.
- Primary purpose is to provide educational services, and secondarily, financial support for educational, interpretive, and research.
- All regulated through agency agreement(s).
**Educational Institutes**

- Provide educational experiences on public lands
- Allowed use of lands and some facilities for educational functions
- Complementary to agency programs
- Regulated through agency agreements

**Friends Groups**

- Provide direct support to enhance/protect a public land
- Volunteer services
- Fundraise financial support
- Project funding and management
- Most regulated through agency agreements
- Project funding and management

**How do our nonprofit partners operate?**

**Governance:** Overseen by volunteer board of directors responsible for the sustainability of the organization.

**Management:** Board supervises Executive Director/President/CEO, who, in turn, manages the organization following applicable local, state and federal regulations.
How do our nonprofit partners operate?

**Program Services:** Mission-related activities, such as interpretive sales, educational programs, facility and land improvements, and events. Agency approval and oversight is required for all such activities taking place on public lands.

**Funding:** Must generate own revenue to support administrative and mission-related activities through program service fees, sales, grants and donations.

**Fundraising:** Raising funds on behalf of agency normally requires agency approval and oversight.

**Support:** Agency program support through cash and/or in-kind donation.

Nonprofit Organization Evolution
Current Trends

- Increased demands on partners for program services, delivery and funding
- Mergers between nonprofit partners and mission expansion by current partners
- Growing need to promote non-profit role and identity
- Heightened scrutiny of nonprofit/agency relationship
- Expanded interpretive product categories

Issues

- Nonprofit assumption of roles formerly held by agency staff
- Divergence in funding priorities between non-profit and agency
- Financial transparency
- Growing number of nonprofit staff and increasing cost of operations
- Growing demands on park staff to support non-profit activities
- Covid, Covid, Covid and Covid

Opportunities

- Land management agencies have embraced philanthropy as a way of engaging the public.
- Giving through Friends Groups is recognized as a way of supporting public lands.
- Explaining and enabling the role of your Friends Group is an acceptable way for agency staff to support philanthropy to the public lands.
- Nonprofit partner flexibility heightens importance of partnership to agency
What is the balance?

Questions?

Don’t miss our upcoming webinars:

Publication Development Series, Part 2:
Creating a Virtual Magazine
Thursday, January 7, 2-3 pm ET

Public Lands Nonprofit Boot Camp, Part 2:
Nonprofit Governance
Tuesday, January 12, 2-3 pm ET

For more information or to register, please visit https://www.publiclandsalliance.org/what-we-do/education
Thank You!

Chuck Benjamin  
Education and Training Manager  
Public Lands Alliance  
chuck@publiclandsalliance.org  
301.946.9475 ext. 225