



IMAGE CREDIT: KEEP IT COLORADO

A NEXT-GENERATION COUNCIL: GETTING STARTED

A TOOLKIT FOR INVOLVING YOUNG PROFESSIONALS IN YOUR LAND TRUST

Created by CSU students in collaboration with Keep It Colorado





IMAGE CREDIT: LA PLATA OPEN SPACE CONSERVANCY

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OVERVIEW

Thank you for your interest in creating a next-generation council! In order to protect and conserve the natural world for future generations, it's essential that the next generation is engaged in the world of conservation and is ready to take on the challenges of the future. As land trusts look to engage younger people, a powerful tool is a next-generation council.

This toolkit defines a next-generation council as a group of emerging professionals who bring fresh perspectives, innovative ideas, and diverse skill sets to a land trust organization, ensuring that the next generation has a voice in Colorado's land, water, and wildlife protection initiatives. While all councils can look different depending on the wants and needs of a land trust, typically, they are comprised of emerging professionals in their 20s and 30s. These councils can provide various benefits to land trusts, such as fresh perspectives and innovative ideas for community engagement.

One key reason to establish a next-generation advisory council is that there is a long-term nature of conservation easements.

By starting to engage young professionals now, land trusts can ensure there is a pipeline of future leaders who understand the work of land trusts and are committed to creating an enduring conservation sector. By getting involved now, they can be well-equipped to take on the responsibilities of conservation for the long term. By bringing in the younger generation, land trusts can benefit from creative problem-solving and effective collaboration, and trusts may benefit by building a connection to a broader community targeting new audiences. Next-generation councils provide opportunities for emerging professionals to contribute to the organization's work and connect with its mission; land trusts can build a stronger base and support among the next generation of conservation leaders.

This toolkit intends to provide a comprehensive guide to creating and managing a next-generation advisory council for the land trust. It will cover a range of topics, from why land trusts should consider using a next-generation council to the challenges they may face in implementing one. The toolkit will also provide insight into what land trusts need to get started, insights into alternative engagement opportunities for young professionals, and strategies to measure success. Finally, it will go over information about support and resources, as well as provide case studies from conservation organizations with successful next-generation councils.

Want to read more about the benefits provided by a next-generation council?

[Click Here or View Page 5](#)

WHY IMPLEMENT A NEXT-GENERATION COUNCIL?

Every land trust has different needs, resources and partners, and plays different roles within their respective communities. The next-generation desires of one organization may be completely different from the aspirations of another. The flexibility in roles and opportunities for next-generation councils allows a council to match the specific needs of any organization. Involving young professionals today is crucial for the future success of conservation.

1. ENSURING PERPETUITY

Despite the effective management and success of conservation organizations, the involvement of the next generation will be crucial to the future protection of natural areas and landscapes. In the case of conservation easements, the primary goal is to conserve these lands to protect agriculture, scenic value, wildlife habitat, and migration corridors forever. If perpetual conservation is to be successful, a younger population must be engaged in implementation today. After all, future generations will be responsible for stewarding and taking care of these easements for a long time to come, so their involvement now creates the ethic, knowledge and expertise that will be needed tomorrow.

Further, the scope of conservation is constantly evolving with political, economic, and environmental conditions, potentially conflicting with the perpetuity of easements.

The involvement of young professionals may allow more modern approaches and a more dynamic view of the future to be considered, which may become increasingly important as research evolves and environmental threats continue.

"If the future generations aren't bought into that [purpose of conservation], then a conservation easement meant to be forever might mean a lot less 50 years, 100 years from now."

- Molly Mazel, Montezuma Land Conservancy

IMAGE CREDIT: CAVEMAN COLLECTIVE



2. TWO-DIRECTIONAL LEARNING AND MENTORING



Collaborating between young and experienced professionals in conservation can provide an excellent opportunity for two-directional learning and mentoring, which can have great benefits for land trusts. Through collaboration, both groups can learn from one another, gaining insights into challenges facing conservation, and develop innovative solutions to address them. When years of experience are combined with young enthusiasm and education, both perspectives can complement one another creating new and realistic ideas for future generations.

Young professionals often have enthusiasm and ideology with the potential to initiate progression in a field, stemming from the newer culture present in younger populations. While their ideas are not always practical or realistic in the real world, they can inspire changes that may not be considered by those who have already grown used to traditional practice. At the same time, experts can mentor these young professionals, educating them on the current best practices in conservation and balancing some of their unrealistic expectations. Through mentoring, young professionals can grow and develop their own skill sets by learning about the challenges and solutions before their time, building on the collective knowledge of those before them.

For this to work, it's important to have mutual respect and a willingness to learn from each other. By creating a culture of learning and development, land trusts can attract and retain talented individuals while also ensuring that they're ready to tackle the challenges facing the conservation sector. Two-directional learning and mentoring can be a powerful tool for land trusts seeking to develop the next generation of conservation leaders. It's all about collaborating, sharing knowledge, and creating a culture of intergenerational exchange.

3. EMPLOYEE PIPELINE

Multiple organizations have spoken of the hardships in finding new and enthusiastic employees to fill the needs of their organization. Involving young professionals before a need for employees arises allows the next generation to gain relevant experience within conservation and specific organizations before positions become vacant.

This increases overall familiarity with your specific organization, local procedures, and feasible practices in conservation.

Additionally, these young conservationists have already devoted time and energy to your practices, indicating their enthusiasm to help conserve the lands important to them, and to your land trust.

This increases the likelihood of successful continuation and minimizes the need for comprehensive training. With a pool of engaged and educated young professionals already involved, filling these missing roles may place less strain on an organization when searching for employees, instead drawing from experienced and committed individuals.

By involving young professionals in a next-generation council within your organization, they can gain familiarity with the practices and values of your specific organization, minimizing the need for comprehensive training down the line.



IMAGE CREDIT: ASPEN VALLEY LAND TRUST

4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND FUNDRAISING



IMAGE CREDIT: CENTRAL COLORADO CONSERVANCY

Due to the flexible nature of next-generation councils, they can fill important roles in a variety of functions from community engagement to fundraising. In fact, some next-generation councils spend the majority of their time organizing community events and the fundraising opportunities associated with them.

Involving young professionals when planning community events allows them to reach more young people and other populations that typically don't interact with land trusts or conservation-focused events. Their perspectives can offer insight into how to include different demographics of

people and the different types of events their respective communities may be interested in. Events can then be catered to reach the widest audience, and different pathways of communication are opened up with the community that would otherwise be left closed.

When this broader outreach is paired with social media expertise, there is the potential for massive community outreach. This will not only increase the number of people familiar with your organization and the land trust movement but increases the likelihood of interacting with potential donors and building a relationship with them.

5. INCREASING DIVERSITY

“Similar to a financial portfolio comprising only a few stocks or a biological community lacking functional diversity, it is unlikely that conservation scientists and practitioners working to protect a subset of values would generate solutions that are relevant across the social and ecological contexts in which they must be implemented.”

- Stephanie J. Green et al. (2015), Conservation Needs Diverse Values, Approaches, and Practitioners

Increasing the diversity of land trusts is essential for creating a more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable future for conservation. Through the implementation of a next-generation leadership council, a more diverse range of experiences and education can be shared on approaches to conservation. Numerous studies have linked the importance of diversity with conservation efforts, and more specifically, biodiversity. For this reason, conservation organizations around the world, such as the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), have begun an effort to mainstream youth involvement in their efforts. This ensures that the voices of all generations contribute to addressing challenges facing conservation across the world.



Next-generation councils also provide an important outlet for relationship-building with traditionally underrepresented communities. With this leadership council, underrepresented groups can have a seat at the table -- increasing their professional development while providing a diversity of perspectives at the same time. Whether your organization prioritizes diversity and inclusion or doesn't, a next-generation leadership council will bring a new perspective and energy that will make a beneficial impact on your practices.

WHAT DO LAND TRUSTS NEED TO GET STARTED?

1. Defining the goals and objectives for your next-generation council is essential in determining what the land trust hopes to achieve through this initiative. By clarifying specific outcomes and the role that the councils will play in achieving them, you can ensure that the council's efforts are aligned with the broader goals of a land trust. Furthermore, clarifying goals early in the creation of the council, the goals are ensured and give both the land trust and the council something to work toward.

2. Choosing a staff member who is able to dedicate the time to create and manage the next-generation council is an essential step in creating the council. Having this staff member ensures that there is someone who understands the council at every level and is able to work as a go-between for the land trust and the council to communicate expectations, goals, and information.

3. Set expectations for the council in terms of time commitment, responsibilities, and communication. Identify the space your next-generation council will fill within the land trust. Clearly communicate the land trust's expectations for what the council's role within the land trust is. Then, define what meetings might look like, how often they would take place, and a general structure.

When getting started with implementing a next-generation council there are a few steps that land trusts should consider:

Define Goals

What specific outcomes do you hope to achieve? What are your land trust's long-term and short-term goals? How could a Next-Generation Council help achieve these?

Devote a Staff Member

Who will be tasked with the creation and management of the council?

Set Expectations

How often will the council meet? What specific responsibilities and tasks will be expected of members?

WHAT DO LAND TRUSTS NEED TO GET STARTED?

Identify Key Qualities

What qualities would the land trust like young professionals to possess?

Develop a Recruitment Process

How will the land trust get the word out about the NextGen Council?
What will the application process look like?

4. Land trusts should identify key qualities they look for when working with young professionals. The council should engage individuals who have a passion for conservation and who represent a wide range of perspectives and experiences. This will ensure that the council is well-rounded and productive. Land trusts can engage with current and former volunteers, donors, and other supporters of the trust in order to understand what the general expectations the base has for members of the council.

5. When developing the recruitment process for the next-generation council land trusts should consider what the application process will look like, including what questions will be asked of applicants and if they will be reviewed under a blind review process or not. Land trusts should also consider using social media, emails, and job postings in order to reach young professionals who would be interested in working on the council.

Image Credit: Crested Butte Land Trust

WHAT DO LAND TRUSTS NEED TO GET STARTED?

Set up

Administration

What will the structure of the council look like? Will committees be used? How will the Next Gen Council fit within the land trust?

Foster

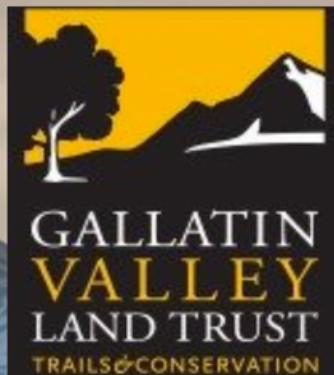
Engagement

What are ways the land trust can implement ideas from the council? What are ways to involve the council in different aspects of the trust?

6. Deciding on the council's structure is an essential aspect of getting started. It is the first step to setting up the administration system for the next-generation advisory council. This means developing by-laws for the council based on your earlier goals, deciding if the council will utilize committees, and identifying the decision-making process for the next-generation council. Land trusts should consider how the council will interact with staff, key stakeholders, and the council of directors.

7. The final step that land trusts need to get started is fostering engagement among next-generation council members. Land trusts should think about ways they can involve members within the work of the land trusts and can encourage members to participate in activities like volunteering, fundraising, and outreach events. Land trusts can engage members of a next-generation council by setting regular get-togethers at local breweries, scheduling group hikes, and having other fun activities that group members can attend. Land trusts might also engage council members by sharing information about the land trust, such as its goals and current efforts.

Case Studies



NATIONAL PARKS CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION

Members: 16 National Members

Ages: 18–34

Goals: Diversity & Engagement

Meeting: Once a month and in-Person Events

Advice: Make Meaningful connections with board members

GALLATIN VALLEY LAND TRUST

Members: 20 Local Members

Goals: Diversity, Increased Engagement.

Meeting: Monthly Meetings

Advice: Ensure there is a clear delineation of the Next Gen Board (it is not a governing organization). Have 1–2 staff members that are specifically devoted to the council ready to provide overview and feedback.

MONTEZUMA LAND CONSERVANCY

Members: 7 local members
Ages: 21–35

Goals: Community engagement, professional development

Meeting: Once per month

Advice: Create a robust orientation process to involve the board with the rest of the organization and be explicit about expectations

To create this toolkit we interviewed multiple organizations with an existing next-generation council. Here are three next-generation case studies highlighting what a next-generation council could look like for a large organization (NPCA) a medium-sized organization (Gallatin Valley Land Trust), and a small organization (Montezuma Land Conservancy).

Click to read more about:

- [National Parks Conservation Association's "Next-Generation Advisory Council"](#)
- [Gallatin Valley Land Trust's "NextGen Advisory Board"](#)
- [Montezuma Land Conservancy's "Next-Generation Advisory Board"](#)

OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

We know that there may be reservations about establishing a next-generation council. As we interviewed conservation organizations to develop this toolkit, we learned that the primary obstacles they anticipate when forming a next-generation council are the difficulty in recruiting new members, maintaining member involvement, ensuring the council's longevity, and managing time constraints. Here are a few potential solutions to assist you in overcoming these challenges.



IMAGE CREDIT: SANDSTONE HOODOOS

THE CHALLENGE OF RECRUITING YOUNG PROFESSIONALS

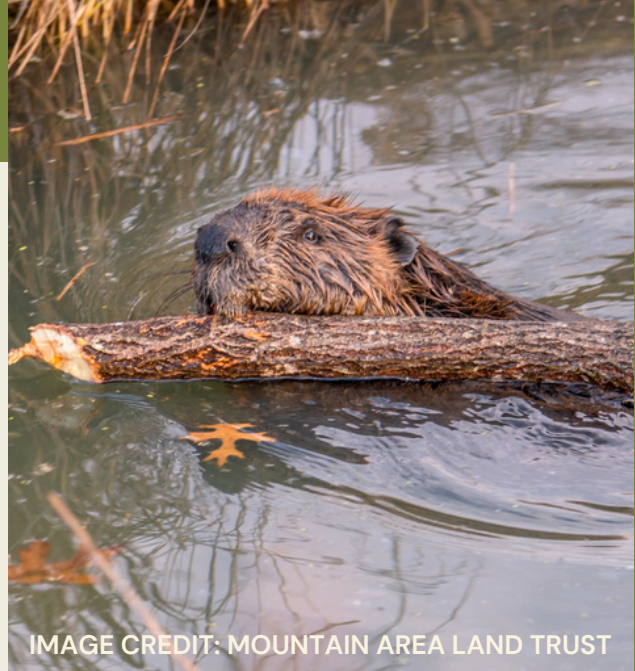


IMAGE CREDIT: MOUNTAIN AREA LAND TRUST

Recruiting members may be a challenge, particularly in finding younger individuals who are interested in joining a land trust next-generation council. The process of outreach may vary depending on what's right for your organization. It can take different forms such as the use of flyers or infographics that can be displayed in community spaces or posted on social media platforms. The utilization of social media platforms, such as Instagram, can also be an effective way of reaching and engaging with younger individuals. Posting information on your land trust's website can also be a helpful tool, making it easily accessible to your target audience.

Using word-of-mouth promotion can be effective in reaching out to potential members, as people are more likely to join an organization when referred by someone they know. Your staff members can reach out to their acquaintances who may be interested in joining the next-generation council during personal time or at community-based events. This approach allows you to connect with audiences already involved with your land trust organization. Posting about the board on university forums, newsletters, blogs, and bulletin boards, as well as reaching out to local outdoor clubs and volunteer-focused websites for promotion, can also be a good way to reach a younger audience.

When reaching out to potential members, it is crucial to provide an overview of the next-generation council's structure, including the frequency of meetings and the events they would be involved in, as well as any additional benefits that come with joining such as professional development opportunities. Even if the council's structure is not yet fully defined, let them know that they can help shape the council based on their experiences and preferences.

Appealing to people's motivations for volunteering in the field of conservation can be an effective way of reaching potential members. Volunteering on a next-generation advisory council is a means for community service and professional development outside of paid work experiences. Highlighting the opportunity to contribute to the environment and make a meaningful difference in their community can resonate with individuals who value environmental conservation. Additionally, emphasizing the social aspect of volunteering on a next-generation council and the chance to connect with like-minded individuals can be an effective strategy in outreach, alongside the potential for networking opportunities and professional development experiences.

THE CHALLENGE OF MAINTAINING LONGEVITY



IMAGE CREDIT: LA PLATA OPEN SPACE CONSERVANCY

Here is a summary of strategies to maintain engagement and retention among members of your next-generation council. First, it is important to establish clear expectations and maintain transparent communication to ensure members' involvement meets their expectations. This is especially important in early councils when you may frequently be reevaluating the council and adopting the council's objectives.

Second, it is crucial to foster a sense of community and social connectivity. This may look like integrating social components into meetings, such as coffee breaks or hosting social events for next-generation council members outside of meetings. Additionally, featuring stories about next-generation council members in newsletters and possibly offering mentorship programs between next-generation council members and board members can help them feel valued and part of the larger organization.

Setting achievable goals that align with the organization's mission can motivate council members and provide a sense of accomplishment. Assigning tasks based on individual skills and experiences can also create a sense of purpose and prevent members from feeling replaceable. Recognizing and celebrating group members' achievements is also a great way to maintain group morale.

Finally, demonstrating to volunteers how their work positively impacts your land trust organization can be a powerful motivator, especially in the ways that their involvement in your next-generation council helps engage with younger generations and keeps your organization up-to-date and relevant. Showcasing their contributions and recognizing their impact can keep members engaged and committed to the cause.

THE CHALLENGE OF TIME CONSTRAINTS

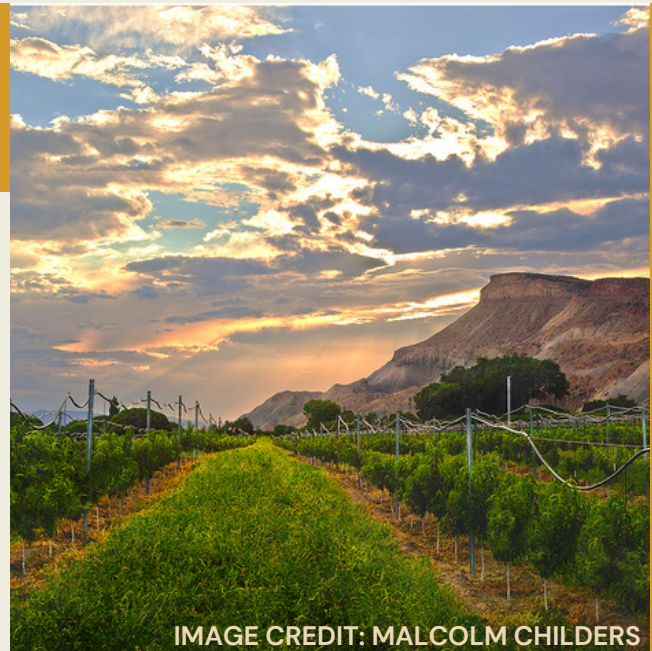


IMAGE CREDIT: MALCOLM CHILDERS

We understand that creating and leading a next-generation council can be difficult for your organization because of the time commitment involved. It requires staff members to take on the responsibility of recruiting and onboarding members, communicating between the next-generation council and the rest of the organization, and acting as a liaison for all things related to the next-generation council.

We don't want to underestimate how busy staff members are in land trust organizations. Adding a next-generation council may seem overwhelming, especially when staff members are already very busy. Here are some solutions that can make the process not only doable but also enjoyable.

First, a next-generation council doesn't have to be all business. Let's have some fun with it! We want your council to be something to look forward to. Meeting in a non-traditional space, like a brewery, could make next-gen board meetings more exciting for both members and staff.

Another way to minimize the time commitment for staff is by delegating other responsibilities and tasks your organization needs to fill to your next-gen council. They can take on tasks like event and outreach planning -- giving young professionals valuable experience while freeing up staff time. After completing these tasks, staff can provide feedback and advice. This also provides an opportunity to get fresh perspectives on tasks that need to be done.

Making your next-gen council self-sufficient can also reduce the time commitment for staff -- while also providing a great opportunity to give members leadership roles. Start small by onboarding people you trust and are excited to work with. Designate a lead within the board. Provide them with clear goals and expectations, and schedule check-ins. Once you feel confident in the board members, you can grow your council and scale-up the tasks they tackle. Next-gen council members in leadership positions can help show new members the ropes as your organization grows.



IMAGE CREDIT: RIO GRANDE HEADWATERS LAND TRUST

MEASURING SUCCESS

Measuring success for a next-generation council will look different based on what your land trust decides the council will look like. Measuring success will start with establishing clear metrics for success based on established goals. This might include increased visibility and engagement, specific fundraising goals, or specific development goals for the next-generation council.

For example, one key goal for many councils is community engagement. This might mean that success is measured through events, including turnout and interest levels. This could also mean tracking the number of emerging young professionals who donate to or become involved with your land trust. Engaging the next generation will help build a pipeline of future conservation leaders that are involved in the land trust, but measuring the success of the next-generation council in their engagement is important and can assess the effectiveness of the council.

An important note when it comes to measuring the success of a next-generation advisory council is that many of the council's benefits are intangible and, therefore, difficult to assign a metric of success. A land trust can best measure the success of a council by setting clear goals and expectations for the council early in the creation process. They can also measure goals by having an exit interview with next-generation council members or meeting with staff members to hear their thoughts on the council. Although the process of creating a next-generation council will be different for each land trust, it is important to measure the success of the council and know that it may take time to see success.

ALTERNATE ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

NEXT GENERATION INCLUSION IN THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

If your organization doesn't have the necessary resources to operate a separate council or is worried about conflict between two separate bodies, involving voting or non-voting young people on your organization's board of directors may be a suitable solution.

This would mean including the next generation in conversations as they are occurring, rather than positioning them as serving in an advisory role. This allows for current organizational models and perspectives to be taught to next-generation members, allowing for a more holistic integration into the organization. With this system, next-generation members could sit in on a real board of directors as non-voting (or voting) members, providing their view as decisions are being made. The role of members looks different in this setting than on a separate council, with different responsibilities, which may be more applicable to some organizations than others. From inside the board of directors, their role may fill any niche that an organization feels is necessary and would provide members with important professional development experience. Along with the flexibility of duties, the number of individuals may vary depending on the board size, ranging from a single non-voting member to 2-3 voting members depending on organizational needs and resources.

Within the board of directors, next-generation leaders have the opportunity to interact with senior members, learning from them as they provide their perspective on the future of conservation. This grants young people the ability to directly collaborate with the organization, rather than a separate branch, increasing the connectivity of younger people to operational procedures in a real-world setting.



IMAGE CREDIT: KEN WALKER

YOUTH-FOCUSED EVENTS



IMAGE CREDIT: MONTEZUMA INSPIRE COALITION

Some organizations don't feel as if they need younger people directly involved in the functioning of their organization, but would rather see youth participation in conservation and community events. There is a vast array of methods to involve the next-generation through events and outreach. Land trust organizations and open space agencies offer organized hikes or educational nature walks with landowners for youth ages k-12, while others have opened up volunteer opportunities on conserved land to increase youth involvement and education from a young age.

These events can also take the form of community engagement opportunities such as movie nights, fundraisers, or bike-to-work challenges. What's important to note about these opportunities is that they can be modified or organized in any way according to organizational needs. Through the use of outreach methods described in the sections above, wider and more age-diverse audiences can be reached than historically seen. Events may occur annually, quarterly, or even monthly, depending on the resources available and collaboration with local landowners and partners.

SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITIES



IMAGE CREDIT: MONTEZUMA LAND CONSERVANCY

Some organizations have engaged local high school students through scholarship opportunities for those hoping to study natural resources, agriculture, conservation, or a related field. These scholarships are typically provided through educational endowments allotted to land trust organizations but may be provided through organizational fundraising if resources allow. This method of engagement not only increases youth awareness of your organization, but also encourages them to pursue a degree in a related field that can then impact the future of conservation, either locally or in another part of the world.

Colorado Headwaters Land Trust has engaged local high school students through their Carolyn Hackman Education Fund Scholarship. This is for students wishing to increase their knowledge in subjects surrounding the environment, agriculture, and conservation. Through the generosity of a conservation easement landowner, CHLT is able to provide \$2,000 annually for this scholarship to help inspire the next generation of conservationists.



Apply TODAY!

Colorado Headwaters Land Trust's
**Carolyn Hackman
Education Fund
Scholarship**

IMAGE CREDIT: COLORADO HEADWATERS
LAND TRUST

APPENDIX



IMAGE CREDIT: CHUCK AND MB MCAFEE

SUPPORT AND RESOURCES: FUNDING

IMAGE CREDIT: MALCOLM CHILDERS

If you feel funding may be a barrier to implementing a next-generation council, you may want to consider exploring grants and other funding opportunities. To the right is a current option for scholarships and funding related to engaging young professionals.

Scholarship for Conservation Leadership Program: The Fellowship Host

- Organization: Land Trust Alliance
- Supported by: U.S. Forest Service
- Amount: \$50,000 to cover the salary of the fellow
- Objective: Have the fellow gain professional experience in conservation and give land trusts the opportunity to host a career development program.

This is a brief example of a potential funding opportunity that may be available. We recommend checking with Land Trust Alliance and other organizations you receive funding from to inquire about other funding options that support youth and young professional involvement. More specific next-generation funding may emerge from a variety of organizations in the future.

SUPPORT AND RESOURCES: CHAT FORUMS



IMAGE CREDIT: MALCOLM CHILDERS

When creating your next-generation council, you don't have to do it alone. Many land trust organizations have already established such councils, and additional land trusts, especially within Keep It Colorado's coalition, have expressed interest in following suit. To facilitate the implementation of next-generation councils, Keep It Colorado has set up chat forums on their member portal where land trusts can ask questions and exchange ideas. Annual in-person Keep It Colorado events also provide an opportunity to talk to other land trust organizations about how they are connecting with young professionals and to discuss ideas and initiatives. Conserving Colorado's natural resources is a collective effort, and integrating young professionals into the conservation field is no exception. We encourage you to utilize the chat forums and in-person events to connect with other land trust organizations, learn about their experiences, and exchange best practices for establishing next-generation councils.

Case Study: National Parks Conservation Association



What is it?

A large conservation organization that has implemented a Next Generation Advisory Council is the National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA). Next generation council members at NPCA are individuals aged 18-34. The mission of this council is to engage a younger generation of professionals with NPCA and to help ensure national parks and resources are conserved, protected, and enjoyed by current and future generations. The council works to increase diversity and engagement in the parks.

How it Operates

Because the National Parks Conservation Association is a national organization, its next-generation council members can be located across the country. Monthly, one-hour-long, next-generation council meetings are held over Zoom, and all next-gen members are expected to attend. NPCA also organizes annual in-person trips for the council to visit national parks and an annual trip to DC for an in-person NPCA meeting. The National Park and DC trips are all-expenses-included for council members, and NPCA specifically sets aside money for this in its annual budget. During the DC trip, there are in-person interpretive education and lobbying days for members to attend. Next-generation council members are also able to attend NPCA's regional council meetings based on where they are located.

Onboarding Process

NPCA has about 16 next-generation council members. Applications are posted on NPCA's website, shared on their social media, and spread by word of mouth by staff, NPCA members and supporters, and current and former next-gen council members. The application period to be on the council is open for about two months and closes in January to give applicants ample time.

NPCA staff review applications and during the first round of scoring, all applications are blinded to remove names and other identifying information to help reduce implicit bias. Staff members rank the applications on a scale of 1-5, and top-scoring candidates move on to interviews. In these interviews, they are asked about why they want to join the council and their previous experiences. The top candidates are then chosen based on how many positions are available. Next-generation council members serve for two-year terms and can apply again at the end of their term to serve for one additional two-year term, so long as they have not aged out of the program. When members age out or decide not to reapply, NPCA conducts exit interviews to get feedback on how to improve the council.

A member of NPCA's Regional Operations team (currently the Outreach & Engagement manager) manages the next-generation council and is responsible for all the duties involved with the council. Normally, the next-generation council only takes up 15% of her time at work, but during the hiring season and when the council has big events coming up, it can take up to 50% of her time

Benefits

NPCA's next-generation council members benefit in a variety of ways from being on the council. For starters, as mentioned earlier, next-gen members get a free annual trip to a national park. This trip, along with other in-person events and online council meetings, gives members the opportunity to socialize with each other and build meaningful connections. Many next-gen members have become very good friends while serving on NPCA's next-generation council board. They also have the opportunity to interact with NPCA staff and build a network in the field of conservation. Some council members can take on leadership opportunities. The next-generation council at NPCA is also very adaptable and can fit what the next-gen council members want to get out of their experience on the council.

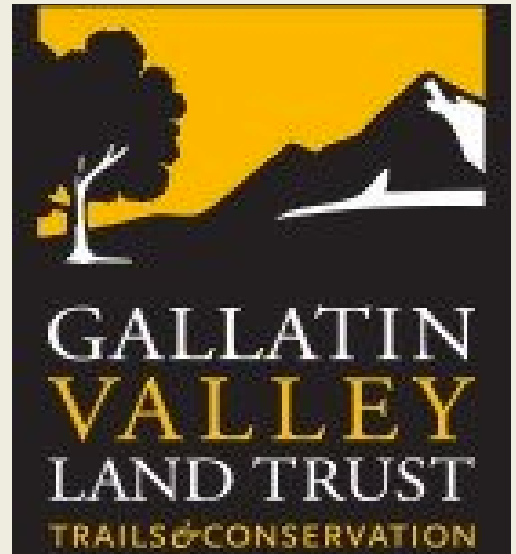
The main focus of the next-generation council at NPCA is to help with engagement in national parks and with the organization. Next-generation council members work hard to create plans and initiatives to reach new audiences, engage people from all backgrounds, and work on increasing inclusion and equity within National Parks and the NPCA. NPCA also benefits from having a next-generation council. Having young professionals involved in NPCA has allowed many of the council members to get further involved in NPCA as opportunities within the organization open up. Many individuals who served on NPCA's next-generation council have gone on to be on NPCA's board of trustees and their regional or national councils. Some members have even been hired as staff members. Next-generation Council members make great candidates for these positions as they are already familiar with the organization. Having a next-gen council has also helped NPCA stay up-to-date and relevant. Young professionals bring a lot to the table, and their ideas can be meaningfully incorporated into the larger organization.

Advice for Creating a Next-Generation Council

One of the most important things that NPCA has found that makes a Next Generation Council run smoothly and become meaningful for NPCA and the young professionals involved is to establish a strong connection between NPCA staff and the Next Gen Council. NPCA has found that it has been incredibly beneficial to have a staff member who can thoughtfully and meaningfully put in the work to make good connections with Next Gen council members and to figure out what works best for them. This is partly done by getting input from the Next Gen Council and actively listening to their ideas and opinions. Feedback is also an essential step in this process. It is vital for the designated staff member to invest the time and effort to build strong relationships with the council. All of this makes the experience of being on a Next Generation Council and having a Next Gen Council worthwhile. Also, note that your Next Generation Council can and should constantly be changing to improve its function. NPCA found that their early Next Generation Council was separate from their main staff members and functions, but as the council grew, they became more connected.

The biggest piece of advice NPCA has for starting the Next-Generation Council is this: just try it. Call it a pilot Next-Generation Council, and if it flops, that's okay. Take what you have learned about what works well and what didn't work well and reflect on whether this is something your organization can use going forward.

Case Study: Gallatin Valley Land Trust: NextGen Advisory Board



What is it?

The Gallatin Valley Land Trust has a NextGen Advisory board that has helped the land trust for the last four years. The mission of the NextGen board is to “[...]ensure that GVLТ’s work remains relevant and meaningful for future generations.” The NextGen members help raise awareness of GVLТ and its community, and GVLТ provides members with important experience in leadership and work in conservation. One of the main goals for the board is outreach to the community.

How it Operates

The board meets as a whole every month with the exception of August and December since they are busier months. The board meets in the GVLТ office and is typically joined by one to two staff GVLТ staff members. Every year GVLТ places one of its governing members of the board of directors on the NextGen board in order to have a better conduit and information exchange between the two. The meetings are focused on deep dives on topics at GVLТ, rather than just reporting out on work that is happening within committees. The board also goes offsite for some meetings visiting different properties and talking to the people that GVLТ represents in order to better understand GVLТ’s work. The NextGen members can sit on the term for one year and stay for up to three one-year terms.

Onboarding Process

The GVLТ’s next-generation advisory board applications are put out in newsletters, on social media, and on the website. Their application process has changed since the board was created. In the past, the land trust has had an incredibly robust application review and interview process. GVLТ typically brings on between five and ten new NextGen members onto the NextGen board each year.

Onboarding Continued:

The application process goes through a committee that is tasked with bringing in each new cohort of board members. Because GVLT aims to review all of its applicants in an unbiased way, the committee uses a blind review process when looking at potential NextGen members. This not only allows the committee to be free from bias by redacting the names and genders of the applicant, but it also provides more freedom for the committee to consider how the applicants can bolster the NextGen council.

Benefits

One of the benefits that GVLT gets from its NextGen Board is additional engagement from a wider range of people within the GVLT community. Community outreach is a core tenet of the NextGen advisory board, and the board helps put people in the door of GVLT through events like getting out on the trails and attracting media attention. The NextGen also hosts educational events that are very important for GVLT.

Another benefit GVLT receives from its NextGen Board is the increased diversity of perspectives and the ability to see things through a different lens. Diversity helps the organization rethink and reshape GVLT's work, how it talks about its work, and how it will continue that work. GVLT talks about diversity in many ways: diversity of thought; diversity of geography, even within the Gallatin Valley; diversity in careers; financial diversity; and more.

Advice for Creating a Next-Generation Council

There are benefits that come from having a secondary staff member who is also involved with the NextGen Council. If anything happens and the primary dedicated staff member is unavailable, the secondary staff member can easily jump in and work with the group. Determining who is going to invest time in a next-generation advisory council is a critically important decision, and having someone who is there in a secondary position ensures that the board is able to continue over time.

GVLT had lots of great insight when it came to giving advice to other land trusts who are looking to implement a next-generation advisory council. One of its main pieces of advice is that because the council is a large staff and time commitment, it's important to have a dedicated staff member or two who can carve out significant portions of their time (which can range from five to 10 hours per work week). A dedicated staff member also helps with oversight, guidance, and feedback for the board, as well as serves as a point person for board members who have questions or concerns.

Another piece of advice is that it takes time to get the board together and reach a point where it is strong and self-sufficient. GVLT advises taking the time to work with the group and make changes to the council so it can fit within the structure of the land trust as needed. Although it is hard work, the councils provide land trusts with many benefits they would not otherwise receive. GVLT is extremely proud of its NextGen board and believes the work they do is absolutely critical for the land trust.

Case Study: Montezuma Land Conservancy



What is it?

Montezuma Land Conservancy (MLC) is a small land trust organization based in Cortez, Colorado. Currently, it has eight employees and runs a next-generation council composed of seven young professionals, aged 21 to 35. MLC founded the “Next-generation Advisory Board” in early 2020, just before the COVID pandemic. After quickly growing to 10 members, the pandemic limited their ability to meet with each other and engage the community. Despite these difficulties, the council has been successful and become an important asset to the land trust.

How it Operates

As MLC is a local organization, council members are all from the surrounding communities, which allows for in-person meetings. These meetings occur 10 months out of the year, most often at a local brewery to create a more social atmosphere and make membership more appealing. The council is mainly focused on public outreach and education, aiming to organize and host at least two events per year highlighting MLC's easements and strategic partner organizations in the community. The focus of the council is flexible, as the goals of the council are driven by the goals of the members. To successfully integrate the council, there is a dedicated staff liaison who commits roughly 10 hours per month to the council, including time spent in meetings.

Onboarding Process

As MLC tries to grow its council, most advertising is done through social media and word of mouth. Members are encouraged to speak with other community members about their role and how it has benefitted them to raise awareness within their communities. Additionally, council accomplishments are shared via social media, highlighting the council and opportunities within it. There is a permanent interest form posted on MLC's website, highlighting the next-generation council.

Onboarding Process Continued

To apply, the form must be filled out completely, consisting of numerous questions such as:

- What skills are you excited to bring to the board?
- Why do you want to join?
- Why is land stewardship important to you?

Applicants are then invited to a meeting to determine if they will be a good fit for the council and its current goals. The council conducts a vote online to determine if they will extend an invitation. Applications are accepted and reviewed on a rolling basis.

Benefits

MLC has seen numerous benefits from its next-generation council. Outreach and events organized by the council have increased community following and attracted more members and donors to MLC. The council has hosted multiple successful fundraisers, raising funds for organizational needs. These funds have also been applied to professional development opportunities and training for its members, increasing their ability to make an impact.

Additionally, gaining a younger viewpoint has helped to drive a different perspective that often isn't reflected in conservation or the work of land trusts. This has brought in new energy and awareness of changing norms.

Future Plans

The main focus for the near future is to continue growing its council. MLC aims to have at least 10 members, which would allow for subcommittees consisting of 3-5 members each to avoid overwhelming members. At the moment, the council members will still focus on community outreach, but this may change to become more hands-on and conservation-focused as preferences change.

MLC also hopes to streamline its communication technologies to allow for better integration with the rest of the organization, potentially creating guidelines on using specific MLC email addresses and document-sharing platforms.

Future Plans Continued

Additionally, the chair of the next-generation council will provide a written briefing program update after each meeting. This briefing will be distributed to the board of directors and employees to enhance cohesion between branches. The chair may also begin to sit in on board of director meetings to gain more experience, and better integrate the council with the more professional board.

Advice for Creating a Next-Generation Council

MLC's main advice to other organizations starting a council is to dedicate a specific staff liaison who can commit a substantial amount of time to the council. Their workload will be higher as the council begins, but as the council becomes more self-sufficient, this responsibility becomes lighter.

Additionally, MLC recommends creating a robust orientation process to make new members more familiar with the organization as well as land trust operations. This helps to better connect the council but also makes them aware of the real practices involved with conserving private land, as many members may have careers or career paths outside of conservation.

CREATING THIS TOOLKIT



**ECOSYSTEM SCIENCE
AND SUSTAINABILITY
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY**

This toolkit was created by Colorado State University students Veronica Casey, Owen Juell, and Amelia Lesnick as their final-year capstone project. All three have specialized in Ecosystem Science and Sustainability and had the pleasure of working with Keep It Colorado.

To create this toolkit, we were lucky enough to speak with 11 land trust and next-generation council leaders from different organizations throughout the country. We compiled a list of interview questions to understand how organizations have started councils of their own, how they have benefited or been challenged, and how they currently operate/could operate within another organization. We recorded these interviews and transcribed them to better examine and understand our results.

Next, we thoroughly reviewed each interview, extracting the main points and actionable items to be included in the toolkit. We read additional peer-reviewed articles, finding specific points and arguments from more thorough studies that could support or refute our own findings.

After much planning and discussion amongst our group and Linda Lidov (our project sponsor representing Keep It Colorado), we began writing an outline for our toolkit, which was then approved by our faculty team lead. Finally, we began the creation of this toolkit.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Questions We Asked Land Trusts with Successful Next-Generation Councils:

Why they started it:

1. Why is it important to you that a younger generation become more involved in land conservation?
2. Where have you found difficulties and successes when trying to get local young people involved?
3. What prompted your organization to start a next-generation council?

How They Started it:

1. What steps did you take (or wish you had taken) that made the process of creating the advisory council more successful and manageable?
2. What were important considerations to your organization when forming this advisory council?
3. What characteristics/qualifications do you look for when considering a candidate for your next-generation board?
4. What advice would you give to other (land trust) organizations thinking about implementing a Nex gen council?
5. What did you find was the biggest struggle in creating this board?

More About the Council:

1. What would you say are the core principles of your next-generation council, and how does this council work towards those principles?
2. Why are board members attracted to joining your next-generation council, and how do you prompt continued involvement despite people's busy schedules?
3. How often does your Next-generation council meet?
4. How does your next-generation council collaborate with stakeholders to achieve conservation goals?

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Questions We Asked Land Trusts with Successful Next-Generation Councils:

More About the Council, Continued:

5. What are common responsibilities that your council has?
6. How do you measure the success of a conservation advisory council?
7. What tools, technologies, capacity, and resources do next-generation councils need to get started? What do they need to find and recruit interested participants? How do they identify whom to engage?

How the organization has benefited:

1. How does including the next-generation impact/ influence your local community?
2. What benefits has your organization received by creating this advisory council?
3. How do you see the role of education and public outreach in promoting conservation and inspiring future generations?
4. What impactful changes have you made to your council since establishing it?

What recruitment strategies were used?

1. Where have you found difficulties and successes when trying to get local youth involved?
2. How did you get the word out about your next-generation council for candidates to apply to be a part of?
3. Does your next-generation council have an application process? If so, please explain it.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Questions We Asked Land Trusts Considering Starting A Next-Generation Advisory Council

Introduction

1. Can you explain to me in your words what [x land trust] does?
2. Do you know what a next-generation council is?
 - a. What are [x land trust] opinions on next-generation councils- if any? Does [x land trust] see value in creating a next-generation council?

Goals/Values:

1. What are some short-term and long-term goals for [x land trust]?
2. What does [x land trust] value?
3. Is it part of your goals to involve the next-generation in conservation? If so, why?

Current Involvement:

1. In what ways does [x land trust] currently get involved in the community and with younger generations?
2. What successes have [x land trust] had in involving a younger generation?
3. What barriers has [x land trust] had in getting a younger generation involved?
4. Are you currently providing, or do you see the benefit in providing, professional development opportunities inside [x land trust]?

What Role could a Next-Generation Advisory Council Fill?

1. Within your organization, do you see a role that a next-generation board could fill?
 - a. What specifically could a next-generation council do to benefit your organization
2. If you were to create a next-generation board, what skills would you look for in recruiting members?

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Questions We Asked Land Trusts Considering Starting A Next-Generation Advisory Council

Barriers and other questions:

1. What current factors would make it difficult to implement a next-generation council at [x land trust]?
2. Do you see any specific boundaries standing in the way of creating a next-generation council?
3. What tools, technologies, capacity, and resources does [x land trust] need to get started?
 - a. What do you feel you need in order to be in a position where a next-generation council makes sense?
4. Does anything make you hesitant to start a council?
5. Have you heard from landowners that they would like to involve the younger generation in conservation?
6. How much value would you see in having a toolkit or guide to help you get started with creating a next-gen advisory council based on the best practices and experiences of others who have created one?
7. Where does [x land trust] post about events/ get the word out about community involvement?

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Our Interviews:

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- Amy Graziano, Douglas Land Conservancy
- Erin Quinn, Aspen Valley Land Trust
- Gary Ryan, Trust for Land Restoration and Colorado West Land Trust Board
- Jake Jones, Crested Butte Land Trust
- Jeremy Krones, Colorado Headwaters Land Trust
- Joanna Maggetti, Estes Valley Land Trust
- Justin Barth, Gallatin Valley Land Trust
- Kathy Woughter, Adirondack Land Trust
- Larissa Walker, National Parks Conservation Association
- Lynn Caligiuri, Mountain Area Land Trust
- Molly Mazel, Montezuma Land Conservancy
- Pam Sjoerdsma, Colorado Open Lands
- Pat Willitts, Trust for Land Restoration

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