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Photo by Jacob Frank

Funding Challenges for Riparian Restoration Practitioners

Survey Results Summary

Tamarisk Coalition 2014

www.tamariskcoalition.org

In September 2014, the Tamarisk Coalition surveyed restoration practitioners to learn more about the funding challenges they face. The goal of the survey was to collect firsthand information about the components of restoration work that are the most difficult to fund and use this information to communicate with fund programs that support restoration. The online survey was sent to Tamarisk Coalition's entire emailing list and was open to responses for a month. The survey divided restoration work (in this case the focus was on invasive plant removal and re-vegetation in riparian areas) into four components:

Planning, Project Management and Capacity— Inventory, mapping, identifying goals/objectives, plan development, coordination, facilitation, fundraising, project evaluation and reporting.

Implementation— Treatment of woody invasives and secondary invasives, biomass management, active re-vegetation.

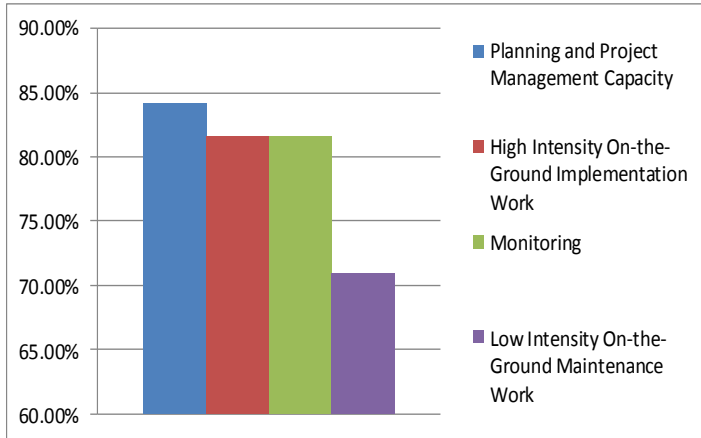
Monitoring— Photo point monitoring, implementation/maintenance site surveys, watershed wide progress monitoring, monitoring to test and compare restoration treatment effectiveness.

Maintenance— Treatment of remnant woody invasive re-sprouts and secondary weeds, active replanting and reseeding when necessary.

We received 41 responses. A majority of respondents were from federal agencies and nonprofit organizations - other respondents were from research institutions, state agencies, and conservation districts. Respondents worked in watersheds in AZ, CO, MT, NM, NV, ND, SD, UT, and WY.

SUMMARY OF KEY SURVEY FINDINGS

Question: Which of the following work components are part of your overall restoration project?



Summary results show that the top most difficult restoration work component to fund is:

MONITORING.

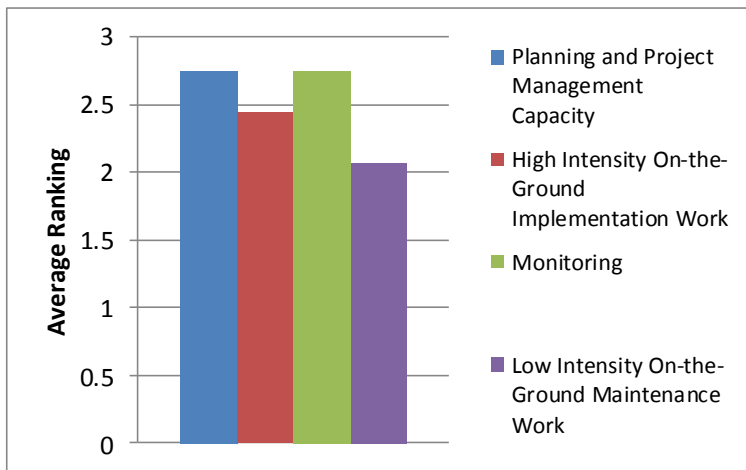
Of the types of monitoring activities, **WATERSHED-WIDE MONITORING** was reported as the most difficult type of monitoring to fund.

The survey also reported that the second most difficult restoration work component to fund is:

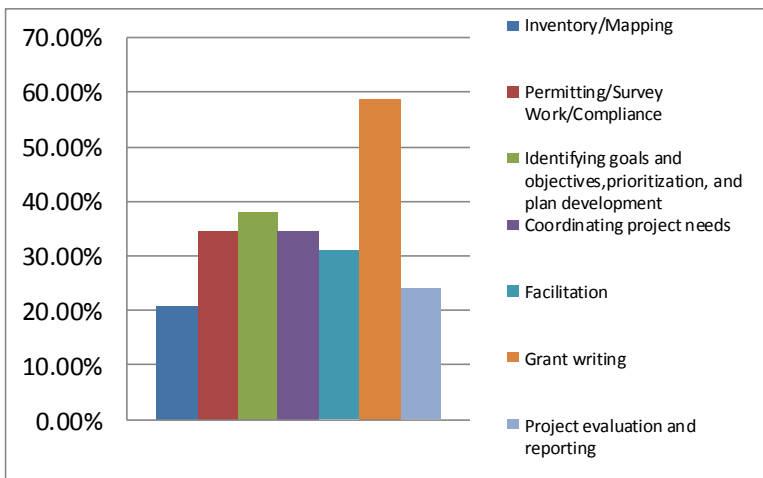
PLANNING AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT.

Of the Planning and Project Management activities, **FUNDRAISING** was the most difficult to fund.

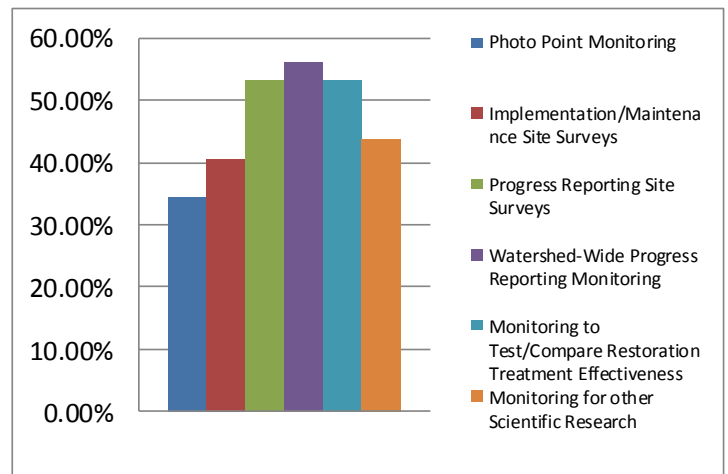
Question: Which of the following work components do you find the most challenging to fund?



Question: Indicate which of the “Planning and Project Management Capacity” needs are most challenging to fund.



Question: If you are having trouble funding monitoring, what kinds of monitoring would you like to have funded?



EVALUATION OF RESULTS

Monitoring is carried out by a high percentage of practitioners (81.58%) and is commonly considered integral to project work, yet it is the most challenging component of restoration to fund.

Watershed-wide monitoring was determined to be the most challenging type of monitoring to fund but both progress reporting site surveys (a less statistically rigorous method) and monitoring to test/compare restoration treatment effectiveness (a more statistically rigorous method) were rated as the second most difficult types of monitoring to fund. Therefore it does not seem to matter to funders whether monitoring is applied or research focused – it is all difficult to fund, even though most funders require monitoring to be a component of project work.

Some possible reasons monitoring is difficult to fund are:

- It is often ongoing and long-term; therefore it is not clear whether it will yield useful results or be a cost-effective activity.
- Applicants do not clearly indicate what type of monitoring they will engage in or how monitoring data will be used and therefore the purpose of this work is not evident to funders.
- Project Management activities are considered the second most challenging aspect of restoration work to fund and of those activities grant-writing (fundraising) is considered the single most difficult to activity to fund.

Some possible reasons funders are reluctant to fund Project Management work and fundraising in particular may be:

- The number of staff hours required to provide adequate capacity for a restoration project is high and can seem like a waste of money.
- It can be difficult to accurately measure the outcomes of capacity activities.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Funders of restoration should consider building funding for **Monitoring, and Planning, Project Management and Capacity** activities into their programs since these components of restoration work are integral to ensuring the implementation work being done is consistent, effective and necessary.

Without adequate and appropriate monitoring, practitioners are unable to **adapt** their methods to the changing realities on the ground and the investments in project work could be wasted. Without proper planning and oversight, restoration activities may not be sequenced appropriately, adequately funded or follow best practices.

General operating costs should not be prohibited activities in restoration funding programs. These activities are necessary for successful work to be completed on-the-ground and are not extraneous to implementation.

Fundraising in particular is essential to ensuring a project can continue as scheduled. By prohibiting these activities funders run the risk of funding one-time projects that will not have the same level of sustainability as projects with an ongoing, and diversified funding streams. Funding general operating costs can be an effective way to ensure that grant monies are maximally leveraged.

Restoration Practitioners and Funders should work together to determine the types of monitoring that are allowable under a given program and to ensure that the proposed monitoring activities are within the scope of a given project and that the data collected will help to inform future restoration strategies. Restoration practitioners should develop indirect cost rates that accurately reflect the costs of implementing grant programs and build them into proposals to ensure basic general operating expenses are covered.

