

Notes from Funding Workshop

Session 1: Local Bonding for Open Space: Methods, Issues, and Case Studies

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- Create a “Funding Quilt” to make project/program happen long-term because there’s no silver bullet to funding land conservation.
- Local public funding crucial to success and proves to private donors that the money exists.
- Winning is absolutely possible on bond issues—get voters and legislatures to vote yes.
- It can often be harder to get people to act before the land is ruined.
- An important framework is not having to get legislature’s approval to create a ballot initiative. Many states have helpful/supportive matching funds initiatives.
- 76% of conservation finance ballot measures have been approved nationwide
- Landvote.org and the Trust for Public Land’s [Conservation Almanac](#) are great resources
- **Reach out to state and local officials to be part of your RCP!**
- The biggest challenge is getting public officials to consider putting environmental or conservation initiatives on the ballot.
- More affluent communities have more chances to vote on these types of ballot initiatives (open space, etc.) but don’t necessarily approve them at higher rates.
- Bond measures create a line of credit—knowing that you have money up-front changes outlook on performing and recommending projects.
- Looking local is a hugely important funding source—already where we’re working. Voters can be pushed along when the town is on board.
- Voters often choose to raise their taxes to support land conservation because they want 1) clean drinking water and 2) to protect water quality of rivers, lakes, and streams.
- “Voluntary preservation agreement for working family farms” polls well.
- State actions and funds have cascading effect—sometimes positive and sometimes negative. There is the risk that if state funds come into play, local towns and municipalities may think they don’t need to include money. However, sometimes the opposite can be true, with local towns/municipalities wanting to add to state contribution.
- Local money is most helpful for “boring” projects—can often be hard to get funders to want to join, so great to start out with guaranteed funds to entice donors.
- Key elements for a ballot measure—are we ready to apply this model in a community or region? Elected leadership (need buy-in from high ranking elected officials or everything is moot), need/growth/lands at risk (sense of a threat—needs to be obvious to the people as well as the conservationists), campaign entity/on-the-ground presence (does a group exist to make it happen?).
- Replicable process for successful ballot measures: feasibility research, public opinion surveys, program recommendations, ballot language, then a campaign.

