

Outdoor Recreation Alliance

Campaign Readiness Study | Executive Summary

January 2023

In 2001, the organization Human Powered Trails was formed. Over the years, the name of the organization with a now broadened mission was changed to Outdoor Recreation Alliance, and it began completing a series of projects as it worked to fulfill its mission. These projects, spearheaded by the ORA team, its Board of Directors, and volunteers, were completed to fulfill the mission of trail development to serve citizens of the La Crosse area.

ORA Trails is dedicated to building happy, healthy, and resilient communities by providing access to equitable and sustainable outdoor recreation experiences.

Twenty years later, ORA Trails Board of Directors began exploring the idea of the Trail Farm

project with a fundraising campaign to build the next phase of it's vision for land ownership and management. The first step will require purchasing 277 acres of farmland just one mile east of La Crosse in Shelby, Wisconsin to build a Community Trail Farm, which includes:

- \$2.5M to secure site ownership
- \$1.5M for trail construction and restoration
- \$1.2M for site sustainability and amenity development
- \$800,000 for project planning, management, and execution

The total proposed goal is \$6M.

Fundraising Potential:

During the study, Crescendo Fundraising Professionals, LLC, received feedback from 128 individuals who provided key information to support the findings of this report. Of this number, 78 completed an online survey.

The results of the study show the proposed campaign has merit, is justifiable, and has the leadership ability and financial capacity to fundraise \$6M using a methodical fundraising strategy, approach, and timeframe. (The full comprehensive report may be found on the ORA website.)

Favorable Factors:

- A purchase agreement is secured for the land through April 2023
- The La Crosse area boasts incredible wildlife, natural and scenic beauty, and bountiful outdoor recreational opportunities
- There is excellent leadership, financial capacity, and philanthropic propensity in the La Crosse area

Challenging Factors:

- Donors will not be inclined to make either pledges or outright contributions to the campaign without ownership of the land
- ORA does not currently own assets serving as collateral to purchase the land for the proposed Farm Trail project

100%
of respondents
believe the mission
and vision are
important

71%
of all respondents
(online and in-person)
said they would or
would possibly give to
the campaign

85
persons
were identified for either
short or long-term volunteer
commitments and 43
individuals self-identified to
serve on the campaign

A \$6M
capital campaign
goal is recommended due
to the high trust in the ORA
organization, leadership,
and philanthropic
propensity with a multiple-
lead gift strategy

Campaign Readiness Study Report

Trail Farm



January 2023

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Project Details

Introduction to the Outdoor Recreation Alliance Community Trail Farm Project

In 2021, Outdoor Recreation Alliance Trails (ORA) Board of Directors and Executive Director began seeking to purchase a farm to provide expansion and a continuation of its mission: “building happy, healthy, and resilient communities by providing access to equitable and sustainable outdoor recreation experiences.”

ORA Trails is seeking to leverage the momentum of the past five years and increase organizational impact and agility through land ownership and management. ORA Trails has cultivated an opportunity to purchase and protect a large parcel of land just one mile east of La Crosse in the town of Shelby. The 277 acres of forest and farmland provides stunning views, Class A trout stream frontage on Pammel Creek, and 500 feet of elevation. Its close proximity to neighborhoods, businesses, schools, public transit, and other public land provides opportunities to explore the region’s historic and prehistoric cultures.

With a focus on conservation, recreation, and education, the proposed \$6M project will protect and share landscapes with ecologic, cultural, recreation, and historic value and significance. The project will revolve around a robust network of shared-use trails and the amenities needed to lower the barriers to getting outside. It will allow a wider audience to embrace nature. With up to fifteen miles of world-class hike, bike, and ski trails for all levels, as well as opportunities to play, learn, and celebrate outdoors, the project will strengthen La Crosse’s outdoor community. It will improve connections to natural areas, expand the connections between existing and future public lands and trail access points, strengthen the area’s outdoor ethos and community identity, and increase the quality of life and the area’s appeal as a destination for residents, students, businesses, and visitors.

Benchmark Components

This site will:

- Advance the goals of The Blufflands - A Plan for Conservation and Recreation Throughout the La Crosse - La Crescent Region.
- Preserve 250+ acres of forests, streams, prairies, and bluffs for public enjoyment.
- Use 10-15 miles of world class trails to connect the La Crosse area community to nature and to each other.
- Provide a platform to welcome users into nature and to provide education on cultural, historical, and ecological significance of the site and surrounding area.

Site Significance

Amenity	Details	Notes
Pammel Creek – Class A Trout Stream	2890' of creek (5780' total frontage)	Opportunity for stream restoration
Hardwood Forest	200+ acres	Various species and varied quality of forest habitat
Potential Goat Prairie	Up to 15 acres	South/southwest facing dry hillside appropriate for prairie restoration
Agricultural Fields	40 acres	Rolling terrain provides for a wider range of activities than many of our other park and trail areas.
Former Site of State Road School	Brick country schoolhouse constructed in the 1860's	Louis H. Pammel went to grade school here. He went on to be an agricultural pioneer and founded the Iowa State Park System (38 parks).
Former Site of Chas Hass Dairy		Chas Hass's milk truck and milk wagon is preserved as historic artifacts.
Former Site of the Sno Bowl	La Crosse's first downhill ski operation	Operated from the 1930's until 1959. The chalet chimney is still standing on the property.
Brick and Stone Operations	Adjacent to Schnell, Mader, and Boma Brickyards and Knobloch Quarry	Bricks from the yards were used for Holy Trinity Church, St. Rose Chapel, and many other La Crosse buildings.

Indigenous and Pre-Historic Significance	Along Pammel Creek and State Road 33	These sites served as significant features of the overland trade route west, connecting the Mississippi to the Great Lakes.
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Amenity and income development opportunities

Education programming and facilities	School forest, group campsites, interpretation center, field lab/demonstration center
Camping and lodging	Walk-in camping, group campsites, guest house lodging, hut camping with trails to existing and future hike and bike routes
Equipment rental	Skis, snowshoes, bikes, hammocks, etc.
Sustainable transportation	MTU bus stop, pathway connectors between Shelby and La Crosse
Public Art	Sculpture gardens/trail, outdoor performing arts venue
Athletic Venues	Cross-country running, skiing, and bike racecourses and training facility, athletic fields
Event and Social Venue	Weddings, family/group gatherings,

With a verbal commitment to purchase a 277-acre farm, ORA Trails Executive Director Jed Olson began conversations to complete a fundraising feasibility or campaign readiness study with Crescendo Fundraising Professionals, LLC. This fundraising consulting firm specializes in campaign management for organizations that have not previously completed a capital campaign and for municipal and recreation-focused campaign goals.

ORA Trails Board of Directors sought to determine whether a \$6M capital campaign to provide a stronger recreational impact through land ownership and management would be accepted and supported by regional philanthropic leaders:

- \$2.5M to secure land/site ownership
- \$1.5M for trail construction and restoration
- \$1.2M for site sustainability and amenity development
- \$800,000 for project planning, management, and execution

The total proposed Capital Campaign goal is \$6M.

Introduction to the Campaign Readiness Study

In 2001, the organization Human Powered Trails was formed. Over the years, the name of the organization with a now broadened mission was changed to Outdoor Recreation Alliance, and it began completing a series of projects as it worked to fulfill its mission. These projects, spearheaded by its Board of Directors and volunteers, were completed to fulfill the mission of trail development to serve citizens of the La Crosse area. (See the complete project list on the next page.)

Twenty years later, ORA Trails Board of Directors began exploring the idea of the Trail Farm project with a fundraising campaign to build the next phase of ORA's vision for land ownership and management. The first step will require purchasing 277 acres of farmland, which is located just one mile east of La Crosse in the town of Shelby, Wisconsin.

Project Tested by the Campaign Readiness Study

This study is the result of years of exploration to identify the capacity to raise the \$6M goal to move ORA Trails forward into its next phase of service.

ORA Trails provides a progressive model of private and public partnerships. The organization empowers community members to bring added value to their communities by championing new projects, participating in construction and restoration projects, creating educational opportunities, and building relationships with other community members. The organization has also established training programs, becoming a regional leader in volunteer lead trails and forest work. In addition, ORA provides competitive and casual programming to get more people outside, making nature part of their daily lives. ORA creates and improves parks and trail systems that leverage existing community assets through volunteer work, private fundraising, and efficient execution of project management.

The proposed project tested by this Campaign Readiness Study is deemed to connect and protect the La Crosse area's special places while building community through natural experiences.

This study report outlines the findings of Crescendo Fundraising Professionals, LLC, regarding the possibility of fundraising the determined goal. Additionally, recommendations by the consulting firm provide a strategy and road map for volunteers, the Board of Directors, and local and regional business/corporate leaders and philanthropists who are interested in the project.

Findings identified that there is a desire to provide expanded outdoor recreation access to La Crosse area residents, offering more space and different features for various activities and programs for public recreation.

Organizational Accomplishment

The following descriptions offer specific details about the various projects and partners that ORA Trails works together with in the La Crosse area.

The Bluffland Traverse is a point-to-point route running from the northern to the southern end of La Crosse County, following the Mississippi River and the bluffs that overlook it. The route utilizes a combination of road, gravel bike path, shared-use trail, and other single-track trails on public property to connect the county and its various communities. This route was identified in the Bluffland Plan as a desired goal and ORA Trails is working with various members of the Bluffland Coalition to accomplish this goal. This trail is in its infancy with many opportunities to continue to improve the connections and experience.

The Gateway Trail System on Grandad Bluff offers six miles of shared-use trails with neighborhood access points on 29th Street and Ebner Coulee Road. The project was initiated as a way to safely get hikers and bikers to the top of the bluff from La Crosse. By developing 160 acres of underutilized parkland into world class shared use trails, the project connects multiple neighborhoods to natural spaces and to each other. The top of the bluff offers a variety of outdoor amenities with family-friendly limestone trails, rock climbing, and access to endless adventure on neighboring public land.

The Lueth Park Bicycle Playground and Skatepark is a project that got its roots in 1999 with the construction of an innovative concrete skatepark. After 20 years the park needed updates and repairs. This is when ORA Trails was able to partner with the City of La Crosse to repair and rebuild the skatepark, creating a better experience for all abilities as well as creating a first of its kind pump track and skills park for bicyclists. The improvements have brought new life to the neighborhood and engaged new generations of skateboard and bike enthusiasts.

The La Crosse Community Forest is located between State Road School and Chad Erickson Memorial Park. ORA continues to improve access, usability, and knowledge of outdoor opportunities and wellness strategies in this area. ORA has included features such as a paved connector trail, natural surface exploration trails, activity metrics, inclusive stations and features, interactive educational media, and permaculture landscaping. The park saw its latest additions in 2020, right in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic. Teams worked hard to install an outdoor classroom made from locally sourced boulders, as well as a quiet meditation zone complete with affirmation prompts and a natural timber-covered bench. ORA is working with various partners to bring a wheelchair-accessible treehouse project to the Community Forest in 2023. Neighbors

and park users continue to embrace new opportunities and amenities that create equity for residents and enhance the quality of life.

The Miller Bluff Trails complete a 25-year effort to expand Hixon Forest to the north, connecting additional neighborhoods and public lands. The newly constructed trail provides a linkage from the Lower Hixon Trailhead to neighborhoods at the top and bottom of the bluff through lands that were protected in the 1990's.

West Salem Bike Playground is a concept that utilizes established park spaces to create more community opportunity to engage in a wider variety of outdoor activities. A paved pump track, skills features, and a "stroll and roll" path will provide recreation opportunities for all ages and abilities of users.

The Trempealeau Bike Park has created a refreshed outdoor space for the community to enjoy. This project compliments the nearby community pool and Great River Bike Trail that connects Trempealeau to La Crosse. It is a series of small rolling hills and berms creating a joyful ride for users of all ages and levels of riding experience. Bike parks by nature are multi-generational playgrounds and have the unique ability to bring people of all ages, genders, races, and socioeconomic classes together, interacting in a positive way; something we could all use a little more of.

The Bud Hendrickson Nature Loop compliments the existing wheelchair-accessible paved path that sees a wide variety of users daily. The trail stretches for one mile between Logan High School and the pedestrian connector bridge near the Industrial Park. The Nature Loop will add a trail near the north end of the paved path that will establish a looped half mile of natural surface trail through wooded marshland, giving users an interactive outdoor experience.

Programming

ORA Trails has become a leader in recreation advocacy and activation by keeping a focus on educating and empowering volunteers to do great things in the community. Over the last 20 years ORA Trails has partnered with the Wisconsin DNR to train hundreds of DNR and city staff alongside volunteers that have gone on to become community and industry leaders in recreation.

Through various community activities, ORA Trails continues to engage thousands of community residents, students, and visitors. With events and programs that range from neighborhood candlelight walks to interscholastic cycling teams and everything in between, the entire community benefits from the motivation and opportunity to connect with nature and neighbors.

Community Demographics and Partnerships

As the largest city in Western Wisconsin and a hub for healthcare and education, La Crosse benefits from a vibrant and diverse cultural scene with great access to the woods and waters that make the Driftless Region so special. As a literal crossroads for both land and water routes and with abundant natural resources and beauty, this area has been a special place for many generations of residents and visitors. La Crosse continues to top “best places” lists from a wide range of organizations and publications.

Based on the 2021 statistics from The U.S. Census Bureau, La Crosse County had a population of 120,433. The top demographic information was reported as 90.7 percent white, 1.7 percent African American and 0.5 percent American Indian, and a small percentage of other races. The median household income was \$60,307.

Outdoor Recreation Alliance has strong partnerships across multiple industries that support outdoor recreation. Those partners include:

608 Investment Group	La Crosse Community Foundation
Altra Federal Credit Union	La Crosse County
Beer By Bike Brigade	La Crosse Public Library
Bluff View Bank	La Crosse School District
Bluffland Coalition	Professional Trail Builders Association (PTBA)
Citizens First Bank	Rock Solid Trail Contracting
Citizens State Bank	Rotary East and Lobsterfest
City of La Crosse Park, Recreation and Forestry Dept	Rotary Downtown
Dairyland Power	Rotary Valleyview
Dirt Monkey Excavating	Smith's Bike Shop
Great Lakes Trail Builders	Trane
Gundersen Health	Viterbo University
IMBA Trails	Whole Trees
Johnson & Block Accounting	Wisconsin DNR
McLoone Graphics	WisCorps
LADCO	

Purpose of the Campaign Readiness Study

The purpose of the Campaign Readiness Study was to determine if private individuals, donors, area foundations, and La Crosse businesses/corporations would support the \$6M Trail Farm campaign to reach the fundraising goals and provide a space for community connections through nature, recreation, education, and conservation.

The study contained the following goals to:

1. Outline the most effective fundraising strategy for meeting the proposed goal or a successful goal range
2. Identify favorable conditions for the fundraising campaign
3. Identify potential conflicts with the fundraising campaign
4. Outline any challenges that could inhibit or slow the fundraising process
5. Assess the level of financial support available
6. Cultivate prospective contributors
7. Identify and cultivate potential campaign leaders
8. Provide an opportunity for stakeholders to voice their opinions
9. Educate philanthropic leaders about the campaign status

Procedures of the Campaign Readiness Study

The Campaign Readiness Study focused on a Summit event which was held on November 15, 2022, at The University of Wisconsin–La Crosse. The day-long event featured two different participant groups that consisted of either private, confidential interviews or focus groups of approximately eight to ten persons each.

The proposed project details were presented to participants by Jed Olson, Executive Director. Following this short overview presentation, participants representing stakeholders, donors, and volunteers attended the confidential interviews and focus groups to share their feedback, opportunities, questions, comments, concerns, and potential interest or support for the proposed project. A follow-up survey was emailed to twenty-one focus group participants, of which two completed the survey.

Following the Summit, Crescendo Fundraising Professionals, LLC, advisors completed eight additional telephone interviews with current volunteers, local philanthropists, and corporate owners who also relayed their opinions, questions, or concerns about the proposed project.

The study used the following methodologies to obtain its conclusions and subsequent recommendations:

1. Reviewed history of the organization and its fundraising/development efforts
2. Conducted fact-finding with staff, Board of Directors, and key stakeholders
3. Held the Summit with 128 respondents, donors, and area leaders to assist in viewing the scope of the project, which resulted in two focus group respondent conversations about the project (Note: Not all respondents answered every question.)
4. Conducted twenty-eight confidential, telephone, and Zoom interviews. (Note: Not all respondents answered every question.)

5. Reviewed results of online surveys from seventy-seven community members (Note: Not all respondents answered every question.)
6. Held many general discussions with staff and volunteers

Input from the survey responses is detailed in the findings section of this study. Survey questionnaires can be found in the study addendum. Participant responses have been grouped by category based on the main topics requested by respondents, as well as issues or concerns focus groups members wished to discuss. In some cases, responses have been split into different categories to reflect the multiple topics shared with the interviewers. Sample comments are shared in the following findings section. Crescendo Fundraising Professionals, LLC, chose those comments which closely mirrored the most consistently mentioned responses per topic.

Campaign Readiness Study Committee

As part of the Summit, a Pre-study Committee was formed which identified individuals who should be interviewed in regard to the organization's desire to impact recreational opportunities through the proposed Trail Farm project.

Crescendo Fundraising Professionals, LLC, is grateful to ORA Trails and Pre-study Committee members whose dedication assisted in completing an effective review of stakeholders' views and ideas. Their dedication to the study planning process and assistance in engaging key individuals to interview was extremely helpful.

Study Committee Members

Sam Bachmeier
Rick and Julie Diermeier
Dave and Barb Erickson
Morgan Farmer
Beth Franklin
Clara Gelatt
Charlie Handy
Ralph Heath
Tim Kabat
Josh/Meredith Miner/Thompson
Jay Odegaard
Josh Shively
Walt Smanski
Marvin and Michelle Wanders

Thank you, Jed Olson, and Jillian Olson. Their dedication to helping create a well-organized and well-executed Campaign Readiness Study Summit was most appreciated.

Crescendo Fundraising Professionals, LLC, advisors are grateful to all those who took the time to participate in the on-site Study Summit, those who participated in the telephone interviews, focus groups, and completed the online surveys. Their responses provided excellent input and thought-provoking questions, which will need to be addressed during the pre-campaign planning if a capital campaign is initiated.

Case Summary

Study respondents reviewed the following Mini Case Study in preparation for their interviews and focus group meetings:

For the last twenty years, Outdoor Recreation Alliance Trails (ORA Trails) has been focused on “getting people outside and building happy, healthy, and resilient communities” by providing sustainable and equitable access to outdoor recreation activities. As the organization has grown to serve a more diverse area and population, ORA has kept a focus on improving the human condition through access to nature. Now, more than ever, the need for opportunities to spend time outside is evident with benefits that span from personal lives to the national economy.

“We in the United States are leading such busy, strenuous lives that recreation has become an absolute necessity. We are in a hurry all the time. There can be no doubt of it that the worry and bustle of our modern living leads to a great many premature deaths. Many useful lives are blotted out because they did not take time for recreation. If we are going to keep pace with our civilization, we must give the public an outlet in the great outdoors.” -Louis H. Pammel, 1924

ORA Trails has cultivated an opportunity to purchase and protect a large swath of land within the La Crosse Area Blufflands. The vision is to develop a community Trail Farm. With hundreds of acres of forests, fields, and streams and in close proximity to neighborhoods, businesses, schools, transit, and other public lands, it will connect the community to itself and the outdoors.

With a focus on conservation, recreation, and education, the proposed \$6M project will protect and share landscapes with ecological, cultural, recreational, and historical significance. The project will revolve around a robust network of shared-use trails and the amenities needed to lower the barriers of getting people outside and embracing a wider audience in nature. With up to 15-miles of world-class hike, bike, and ski trails for all levels and opportunities to play, learn, and celebrate in the outdoors, the project will strengthen La Crosse’s outdoor community. Its goals are designed to improve connections of neighborhoods to natural areas, provide continuity between existing and future public lands and trail access points, strengthen the area’s outdoor ethos, build community, increase quality of life, and highlight the area’s appeal as a destination for residents, students, businesses, and visitors.

ORA Trails wishes to fundraise the following:

- \$2.5M to secure site ownership
- \$1.5M for trail construction and restoration
- \$1.2M for site sustainability and amenity development
- \$800,000 for project planning, management, and execution

The total approximate Capital Campaign goal is \$6M.

Plans are underway to assess the viability of raising \$6M over the next three to five years. The Campaign Readiness Study Summit will secure needed feedback from the area's philanthropic and business community. This study will examine the capacity and strategy for the goal.

Through innovative projects like this one, ORA Trails has become a leader in cooperative impact. The organization works toward the shared goals of the Blufflands Plan, a community document that lays the foundation of the collaborative efforts needed and the resulting impact of protecting and celebrating unique blufflands. Out of this plan, the Bluffland Coalition has formed as a group of non-profit and municipal partners who are working through a concerted effort to raise awareness and value of the natural landscape by protecting blufflands and providing recreation opportunities.

ORA continues to implement a progressive model of public-private partnerships, empowering community members to bring added value by championing new projects, participating in construction and restoration projects, creating educational opportunities, and building relationships with community partners. By focusing on education and empowerment and with over 700 volunteers contributing thousands of hours each year, ORA has become a regional leader in volunteer-led trail and forest work. ORA continues to provide high-impact programming to get more people outside, making nature part of their daily lives. This progress can be seen in many recent ORA efforts like the Trempealeau Bicycle Playground, Miller Bluff Hiking Trail, La Crosse Community Forest Connector Trail and Outdoor Classroom, the Gateway Trails on Grandad Bluff, Lueth Park Bicycle Playground and Skatepark Improvements, and many sustainable additions and improvements in Hixon Forest.

ORA has partnered with the team at Crescendo Fundraising Professionals to complete the Study Summit, determining and assessing the interest in and capacity for reaching the \$6M goal. Crescendo has been assisting municipalities and nonprofits to build capacity and raise capital funds for 25 years in the tri-state area.

During a one-day summit on Tuesday, November 15, focus groups, confidential interviews, and surveys were conducted to secure needed input. Recommendations on the potential success and recommended strategies to achieve the campaign goals will be presented to the Board of Directors.

Study Participants

Personal Interview Respondents

Sam Bachmeier

Katie Berkedal

Mike Borst

Dawn Burg

Scott Cooper

Andrew Dahl

Terry Erickson

Dave and Barb Erickson

Morgan Farmer

Beth Franklin

Brian Fukuda

Ralph Heath

Tim Kabat

Rick Kyte

Amy Lorentz

Anne Meyer

Josh Miner

Steve O'Malley

Jay Odegaard

Jed Olson

Joan Parke

Randi Pueschner

Josh Shivley

Paul Siegersma

Walt Smanski

Dennis Vogel

Marvin Wanders

Jennifer Meschenicz

Jeff Sexauer

Kurt Schroeder

Andrew Steeger

Sarah Strassman

Mario Yoakim

Online Survey Respondents

Kathy A

AC

Geoffrey Akins

Greg Aleckson

Kristin Allbright

Amanda

Anonymous

Jacob Bentzen

Jean Brady-Gillies

Brett

TJ Brooks

Zach Brown

Dirk Bruxvoort

Joe Carlson

Jenna Cavey

Emily Cerny

Dustin Cherney

Sarah Clements

Laura Cochrane

Greg Cochrane

Stephen Cohen

Cole

Jansen Dahl

Rick Diermeier

Anja Drogseth

Leigh Eck

Ellyn

Jesse Emlet

Mark Flottmeier

Chance Fuller

Scott Gabriel

Brandon Gritt

Adam Hatfield

Shawn Hauser

Kelly Hemmer-

Rondestvedt

Steve Hoff

Kelly Holger

Curtis Hottinger

Brady Howe

Heidi Inabnit

Jackie

James

Kristy

Matt Kuennen

Jake Larkin

Alexandra Larsen

Mark

Laura Meyer

Brian Miranda

Mark Moesch

Shane Murphy

David Nash

Deborah Nerud

Bode Nesler

Caden O'Rourke

Matt Oswalt

Charlotte Parker

Paul

Trent Ping

Isaac Pischke

Evan Rasmussen

Rebecca

David Ronsman

Jerry Salomonsen

Joseph Sampson

Mike Samson

Carson Schneider

Scott

Shannon

Focus Group Respondents

Ander Steeger

Annie Berendes

Gabe Berendes

Angela Binsfeld

Betsty Binsfeld

Stephen Cohen

Carey Falkenberry

Clara Gellat

Carl Green

Clint Howard

Chad Juel

Ava Shively
Michelle Skemp
Alex Theisen

Tim
Dennis Vogel
Bill Walters

Chris Welnetz
Brian Werner
Ben Wilde

The Value of The Project and Outdoor Recreation Alliance: Findings

The average child in the United States is said to spend four to seven minutes a day in unstructured play outdoors, and over seven hours a day in front of a screen. Recent studies have exposed the benefit—even necessity—of spending time outdoors both for children and adults. Most of the studies agree that children who play outside are smarter, happier, more attentive, and less anxious than children who spend more time indoors. While it's unclear exactly how cognitive functioning and mood improvements occur, there are a few things we do know about why nature is good for kids' minds: it builds confidence, it promotes creativity and imagination, it teaches responsibility, it provides different stimulation, it gets children moving, it makes them think, and it reduces stress and fatigue.

Being outside in green spaces supports an active and healthy lifestyle, which has shown to increase life expectancy, improve sleep quality, and reduce cancer risk. In addition, access to nature can benefit entire communities such as reducing environmental stressors commonly found in cities: air pollution, noise, and heat. Whether it is a park in your neighborhood or exploring the vast landscapes of national forests and grasslands, there are benefits to be had when we step outside.

Increasing outdoor recreation opportunities adds to the economic benefit for the community. The Trail Farm will increase the overall reputation of La Crosse as having recreational opportunities which are a draw for employers and employees alike, especially workers who value amenities like trails and other recreational and cultural attractions. Many respondents detailed that, unlike previous generations, young families and workers expect to have more opportunities to partake in cultural and recreational activities. These respondents also spoke to the project as adding to this perceived quality of life. Providing these opportunities will not only attract more young workers to the area but will retain young people and their entrepreneurial spirit in the community where they grew up or where they attended college.

Interviewees identified many positive quality-of-life attributes in relation to the project. The historic riverside towns, natural beauty, and recreational opportunities along the mighty Mississippi combined with a rich civic life, strong educational and public services, and long-time family ties are all reasons that people truly love the La Crosse area and surrounding communities. And these are the reasons that residents wish to continue to improve and expand access to the region and draw visitors from around the tri-state area and nation. In short, residents know that this project is worth their continued support and investment.

One hundred percent of the 128 study respondents affirmed the importance of Outdoor Recreation Alliance to the community. The need of this campaign has been made evident, but ORA is essential to the betterment of the community. As noted, providing opportunities to get outside has shown to be a key component in creating a healthy community for generations to come. Access to green space is crucial to the health and well-being of the community. Outdoor activities and events help attract not just tourists but also businesses and industries, as well as new residents to the community. ORA gives citizens the opportunity to be healthier and happier and to make the La Crosse area a more interesting and compelling place to be. The La Crosse area was always beautiful, but there weren't ways to access it, now ORA has provided access to it. ORA is going to continue to preserve the beauty of the area by conserving the land. By conserving this parcel of land, it will give more opportunities for individuals to explore the outdoors.

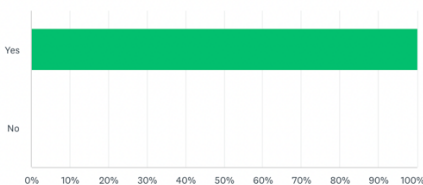
The Value of The Project and Outdoor Recreation Alliance: Conclusions

General support for the ORA Trail Farm effort is consistently strong. In general, La Crosse area community leaders embrace the region striving toward continual improvement by providing outdoor recreation opportunities for citizens and attractions to encourage tourists and visitors to the area to increase economic impact. This initial support, however, does not go without concerns. Chiefly, respondents were questioning the details of the project costs and ongoing maintenance plans.

Mission Importance is Deemed Strong

Do you feel the mission and vision of Outdoor Recreation Alliance (ORA) is important to the area?

Answered: 78 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	100.00%
No	0.00%
TOTAL	78

Sample comments about the importance of the work of the organization include:

- Getting people outside and continuing to provide accessible world-class opportunities in our city
- Spending time outdoors is good for physical and mental health, so making this possible (and enjoyable) for more people benefits our community. Experiencing and appreciating nature also makes people more likely to protect it, which is good for the environment.

- Mental and physical health overflows into the rest of life, so the more outdoor experiences available, the better the community will function.
- Unequivocally! I worked with 350 people to bring them to the area. 95% want an outdoor activity or is of great interest to them! This is a paradise for an outdoors person. This will continue to attract people that want to engage in those activities.
- As an employer, having additional recreation opportunities for our team. Teammates and families use the trails. Continue to attract talent to the area as an employer. Personally, having more access has come a long way. Excited to see it continue to grow.
- Think of youth and family development. Getting kids off screens and outside. Being able to be close to home but outdoors and accessible for everyone. Having a nature center or environment center.

Benefits of the Project: Findings

When asked about the project, respondents' comments mainly focused on the expanded access for all, with more space, more trails, and opportunities available for outdoor recreation. Offering more space and a range of activities/programs helps expand access to multiple users and skill sets and creates a stronger community and connection to the outdoors.

Comments also addressed the way in which the project offers the opportunity to secure land versus solely volunteering and maintaining land not owned by ORA. Many addressed the importance of ORA establishing one centralized location versus being spread across multiple cities and locations. It was also noted that ORA's strengths are better harnessed on land owned by ORA versus municipality projects.

The following lists the top three groups of comments regarding the benefits of the Trail Farm project as proposed and shares some representative quotes. A full list of quotes from respondents follow:

1. More space equates to more trails and opportunities for outdoor recreation (twenty-eight out of 128 total responses).
 - a. Existing trail systems are being loved to death, so we need to expand them. I use the trails at Hixon a great deal. The improvements ORA has done have been exceptional. There is a lot of confidence that they know what they're doing.
 - b. It could be used to expand the types of recreational uses the ORA offers.
 - c. It would further legitimize ORA's efforts to build trails, and it would be a great asset to the community to have a private trail system that is free from rules and other regulations.
 - d. More trails, more land protected from development, the better.
2. The expanded access for all throughout La Crosse County (nineteen out of 128 total responses)

- a. The project is another way to connect different ways and places in the community. If we can provide access for more people. It will help keep people around but also show people what this area has to offer. Many people don't know trails are available. Having a space where there aren't a lot of restrictions.
 - b. The benefits from such a project would get so many people outside, and active. It would make for a more physically active population, keep the youth out of trouble, provide spaces for all ages, and user groups.
 - c. There are many economic impacts via tourism.
 - d. Increasing equitable access to outdoor recreation for all income levels.
3. The importance of securing the land and maintaining it (fifteen out of 128 total responses)
 - a. Securing land that can be developed and used in a well thought out manner.
 - b. Land conservation and shared enjoyment for the future.
 - c. Continue to put La Crosse and the Coulee Region on the map for being a premiere location for outdoor rec in the area. The Driftless Region destination – and knowing that as an opportunity to really drive economic success in the community from tourism and investing in different types of equipment and activities. Trail Farm is going to be another significant spotlight for the public eye to drive the notoriety and public awareness in the Coulee Region.

Comments on the benefits and importance of ORA as indicated by personal interview responses were as follows:

Private Interviews - 28

Comments:

- The project is another way to connect different ways and places in the community. If we can provide access for more people. It will help keep people around but also show people what this area has to offer. Many people that don't know trails are available. Having a space where there aren't a lot of restrictions.
- Increase the number of trails that we have in the area and increase the presence on the south side of La Crosse. What we have is on the south side and this is on the north side, so more people will be able to use it.
- Provides yet another experience for people to get together with their families on trails. The terrain is so complex here that it's still hard for some people. We need to expand the offerings a bit more. This affords us the opportunity to provide intermediate and beginner experiences to continue to expand to more complicated experiences.
- From the personal, holistic perspective. Wellness is elemental to who we are and how we should be as humans. These types of outdoor rec opportunities increase the opportunity for people to engage in wellness activities.
- Increasing opportunities - having more trails for an area is never a bad thing. The level of trails compared to Hixon are a lot more beginner and intermediate trails. For people who are just getting into it. Hixon can be intimidating. Having a wider variety of trails is important for people who aren't as steady on their feet or maybe a bit older.

- In line with the mission and vision of the organization – get people outside enjoying these areas in an accessible, sustainable way. This project continues the process of making La Crosse a destination for those activities.
- Continue to put La Crosse and the Coulee Region on the map for being a premiere location for outdoor rec in the area. The Driftless Region destination – and knowing that as an opportunity to really drive economic success in the community from tourism and investing in different types of equipment and activities. Trail Farm is going to be another significant spotlight for the public eye to drive the notoriety and public awareness in the Coulee Region.
- Community awareness. Community benefits (bike rentals, mountain biking trails, free things, picnic areas, amphitheater) Keeping people in the community.
- Good to encourage people to get outside, but location so close to other opportunities to do it. Different if it wasn't a \$6M price tag.
- For someone that has supported many campaigns, the strength of this campaign is that it's unlike any I can remember. The vision! It's a gem. It's not a building or program. It's a way of life and wellness. It's a really unique campaign. Because of that, it will strike a chord with people to understand mental health and being outside.
- Improving accessibility to everyone in the community is important. Having a mini-Bentonville means it will be a destination place. Increase culture, diversity, tourism. La Crosse will become a destination place and help businesses. The more we are outside the more we benefit the community, especially for little kids.
- Providing a beacon of light on how beautiful this area is and how it stands out among other communities.
- Having more neighborhood access to families that can easily walk, ride, or drive to the trail. Having more access to trails. Noticed during COVID that the trails were crowded and needed to have more. Also having "USE" specific trails for just biking or hiking or families. Would love to see the connectivity of trails. Even from Onalaska, Mathy Quarry. Could be something similar to the Ice Age trail or a "destination challenge."
- Primary benefit to have the money to do the same thing to other areas that they've done elsewhere to unlock the whole area. The community would gain access to this environment (Hixon and other trail areas are extremely popular) so this would be something the community enjoys and would enjoy more that this trail would provide.
- Biggest benefit is for them to have a home. They're able to use the City of La Crosse property and the Shelby property. They have a lot of strengths that are better harnessed on their own property. Would eliminate a lot of red tape on the projects. People would much rather donate to a project like this than anything related to a municipality.
- The main benefit it will bring is the long-term generational value this will bring to the community. I don't always jump on projects that are in the "margin" but felt this was different as it would provide impact on generations to come and around for the long term for the community to enjoy.
- Getting their name out there even more. Like the area, because it takes it a little further out, trying to reach everyone with the ideas they have for using the land, for both recreation and education. Many people have no idea what it is like to be near crops, open

avenues of learning. It was used by farmers, bringing in FFA partners, maybe working with hydroponics, this will get people excited when they see the possibilities beyond trails and biking. Idea of a sledding hill would be great. So much history there to try to save. Cross country ski trails. Old horse track. A Lot of history.

- Connections along the bluffland corridor. Connections to other public lands, neighborhoods, proximity to population to the nearby trailer court. Diversity of the landscape and physical attributes. You've got fields, creeks, etc. Everything we can offer is there. A lot of historic and cultural value. Acknowledging prehistoric events and activities.
- Community partners are great. Most of the things that ORA has is on the bluffs which most kids cannot access until they are older. Either you have to drive, or if you walk or bike it takes a lot of time and ability. If you are going to the bluff to bike and don't have a bike rack you cannot go. People need to know that ORA is about conservation and not just enjoying the outdoors. This land will stay the way it is and will not be developed.
- Increased access to natural amenities of the area for ORA. This type of a project has potential to make a splash/statement to say this is important to this community. If these are important to you, this is a great community-fit for you. Provides great amenities.
- A Lot of people in the area who might be interested in giving for something like this. Trying to connect all the trails here in La Crescent to Lanesboro. There are so many people using that bridge. If you build it, people will come and enjoy it.
- So many opportunities for economic impact.

Comments on the benefits and importance of ORA as indicated by online survey responses were as follows.

Online surveys - 77 responses

Comments:

- Securing and realizing the dream of the Farm.
- The possibility of a cross-country ski center would be an important addition to La Crosse.
- Expanding ORA.
- Securing a great piece of property right outside of town and ensuring that it remains undeveloped.
- It would provide more outdoor activity space.
- More trails!
- Getting people outside! By creating this new trail system, more people will have access to explore and better appreciate our beautiful landscape. Not only this, but the trails will provide families with young children living in the trailer park a safe (and green!) commute to the area school.
- Education, first and foremost. As a kid who grew up in the suburbs of Denver and didn't go near a forest until my early 20s, I would have loved to experience something like this with any of my schools. My children have had the good fortune to be a part of what the ORA does and the community that has grown from it. Tourism would also be benefitted;

La Crosse is set to become THE best place to play outside in the Midwest, and this would bring folks from far and wide to check this out.

- Enjoyment and appreciation of the great outdoors. Tourism.
- Increased access for all to hang out in nature. Beginner wide trails that are appealing to all. Being outside is beneficial to health in a preventative and curative fashion.
- Additional recreational outlets for singletrack trail users in a prime area for exploring and enjoying nature in a healthy, active way.
- A different style of bike trails and the possibility of hosting NICA races in the future.
- Health, wellness & growing our network of trails & outdoor activity.
- It would offer more space, and possibly different features, for activities/programs and could increase ORA's visibility in the community- hopefully making more land available for public recreation would help people have a favorable opinion of ORA, but it's hard to say for sure!
- Land conservation and shared enjoyment for the future.
- The benefits from such a project would get so many people outside, and active. It would make for a more physically active population, keep the youth out of trouble, provide spaces for all ages, and user groups.
- The land being available.
- I could not tell where the land was located...but it looks like another series of trails in a secluded area. An old farm would be really cool.
- Public land that multi-use trails can be built on! Additionally protecting land from becoming another housing development. Wildlife needs a home too.
- More recreationally opportunities are good for the community. For ORA specifically, it shows that you can achieve some of the goals that you have.
- Fundraising, increasing success of the Trail Farm, increasing community involvement.
- I think ORA will benefit by getting more land that may have a wider range of recreational opportunities than existing areas.
- More trails!
- Increased volunteer opportunities.
- Further preserve the land, provide extended opportunities for community engagement and enjoyment, grow the ORA and its mission.
- Mental and physical health, conservation, and recreation.
- It seems to be highly aligned with ORA's mission.
- Outdoors.
- Outdoor fitness recreation and health benefits.
- This seems like a wonderful opportunity to make more space available for a variety of outdoor activities. I believe our community values and will utilize this. ORA is essential to La Crosse!
- Hixon is great, but this would be a blank slate and not have the restrictions and red tape that the city makes.
- I believe more people will get into hiking, biking, and enjoying nature if there are more trails and access points. If there are more diverse biking trails, I think our area would attract more mountain bike riders from out of town.

- Expand vision of ORA to more community members. Preserve land for future generations vs. another housing development. Attract people to La Crosse to work, live and raise families.
- We need outdoor social media influencers to promote and help raise money.
- Securing land that can be developed and used in a well thought out manner.
- This will help ensure the current and future health of our region, it's people and resources.
- Leaving behind a park of this magnitude will be a lasting legacy to how much our community cares about the natural beauty of La Crosse.
- Bring/keep people living in the city of La Crosse.
- More outdoor recreation access close to where people live.
- It is an amazing piece of land. It will be a lasting gift to our community for hundreds of years to come.
- Increased awareness of the land and ecosystems considered for the campaign, opportunity to re-wild those spaces to foster thriving native species, opportunity for community members to invest their perspectives and resources into something that stands to benefit the full community.
- Personally, as a mountain bike and outdoors enthusiast, the more trails the better. Additionally, my thoughts are that Hixon Forest is great but is less accessible from the south side. This addition and a trail connecting to Hixon will be a great benefit to novice and experienced riders. Also, I think this puts La Crosse on the map for not only people wanting to move here, but vacation here as well. We all know of Bentonville being a destination for mountain bikers. This will bring money into La Crosse and help everyone, not just those that use the trails.
- Access to free physical activity, educating community members on benefits of nature-based leisure, providing easy access to community members, opportunities for increased visitors to the area.
- Connecting the existing trail systems to this Trail Farm and making it accessible to other neighborhoods without getting in a car is going to be a key feature. One of the reasons I love living in Weigent-Hogan is the proximity to a few different trail systems.
- Access to more trails within the community but also a better space for hosting events. Currently the trails are not in an area that has a great gathering place for large groups meeting for specific events. Having this outdoor recreation "meeting" place would be a great addition for the community.
- Expansion of the available outdoor offerings in the La Crosse area.
- Gives it a space to train and showcase its work.
- Connecting neighborhoods and trails. I am really excited to see what happens to that land. Especially for it to be community used and not developed.
- A variety of trail opportunities near another part of the community.
- Creating new trails will be amazing for the area and if you own the land you won't have to deal with others.
- A large project will bring attention to ORA and the amazing work it has done already in our community.

- Solid campaign. I love the idea that we will be able to save a farm from turning into another subdivision or grass field.
- More trails will keep people coming to moving to our area that care about conservation.
- Connecting trails, allowing the people in neighboring areas to simply walk out their door to access nature.
- More trails of high quality.
- Stronger community and connection to the outdoors.
- A hub of activity for outdoor recreation and a connection point of trail systems for the region.
- Amazing new hub for outdoor recreation, snowshoeing, community development.
- Given the location, this will be a great access point for neighborhoods, allowing people to access without use of a car.
- Increase the miles of trails for La Crosse resulting in more users locally, more visitors being drawn to the area and access to another portion of la crosse to local trails.
- Get people out and moving! Improve mental health and physical health... more areas for us to bring our families to explore.
- Another large area of land for trails. Closer to south side residents, but accessible to all. Total ability of ORA to create a large vision for the land and execute this. Continue to build La Crosse as an outdoor recreation destination.
- It represents truly following through and delivering on the core mission and vision. It will offer the community a depth of possible uses for that space - hiking and biking trails, nature walks, educational opportunities for kids and adults, habitat improvement for wildlife (prairie, oak savanna, creek, and woodland), venue for outdoor events, etc. It raises the impact and contribution by ORA to our region - which strengthens the community by adding allure to businesses trying to recruit talent to the La Crosse area.
- The benefits of this campaign are to achieve something totally different than we have access to right now. Throughout this campaign we will uncover resources and people who are ready to help. We will also allow folks to have something to be excited about and believe in.

Comments on the benefits and importance of ORA as indicated by focus group survey responses were as follows:

Focus Group surveys - 21 responses

Comments:

- ORA owning the land will be a huge benefit for opening doors to new programs and projects as well as potential revenue to be retained by ORA.
- Influx of tourists, more readily accessible outdoor activity spaces, increased inclusion of local neighborhoods.
- It's important to secure land for future generations.
- There are many economic impacts for tourism, work force development, corporate recruitment.

- Many health benefits associated with increased activity.
- Increasing progress of area trail growth and development/trail-based infrastructure.
- Centralized indoor storage space opportunities.
- Could allow for being able to challenge/reach different users in different ways on one site (kids/adults, boys/girls, novice/experiences, activity-based (hiking, biking, skiing, fishing, naturalist, etc.))
- Novices/experienced, activity-based (hiking/biking/skiing/fishing/naturalist/etc.).
- Inter-generational experiences (kids helping introduce parents/grandparents to activities and vice versa).
- Non-competitive "athletic" opportunities.
- Investing in preserving/developing farm as an outdoor rec facility "shows our values".
- Connecting kids to their "place" (geographically) might keep them from leaving.
- Future workforce development.

Benefits of the Project: Conclusions

It is clear that the Trail Farm project is a project that wholly aligns with the mission of ORA, "Building happy, healthy, and resilient communities by providing access to equitable and sustainable outdoor recreation experiences," and it is unlike any other project in the area.

From the economic benefits for tourism to strengthened workforce recruitment and retention, the Trail Farm will have a generational impact. The proverbial gate of the Trail Farm will always be open, providing expanded access to all and filling a need of expanded trail options from novice through advanced bikers, hikers, and more.

Confidence continues to build in ORA based on the "exceptional improvements" made on trails to date by the organization. With a centralized location, ORA will expand its opportunities, allowing it to better harness its strengths.

Questions of the Campaign Readiness Study: Findings

Respondents in the twenty-eight personal interviews, as well as online respondents, were given the opportunity to ask any questions they might have about the project. Insightful conversations were also held with focus group participants.

Two of the most asked questions were: Is the land purchased? and what is specifically planned for the project? Questions around timing and the expectations from the sellers of the land were discussed. In addition, a master plan was requested in order to help the community understand the scope of the project better and learn more about the intended features.

Questions around the timing and how the money will be raised and whether property taxes would be affected were frequently asked. Questions regarding what is needed and when were raised as well.

Below are the main groups of the questions about the project as proposed, and the list lays out some representative quotes. A full list of quotes from respondents follows.

1. Is the land purchased? What is planned for the land? (19 out of 128 responses):
 - a. What exactly will it look like in the end? What is the end goal? What is the trailhead going to look like? We need to make some decisions. How are we going to raise 6M? It is feasible but can we do it?
 - b. Who and what recreational groups are involved in the play? Who decides what trails and types of trails are built?
 - c. Upkeep of trails in different locations will make things more difficult. Tools and equipment will need to be transported or duplicated for the 2 areas.
 - d. Yes, what is the vision for the space? Access to all abilities; wheelchairs, strollers, new riders, dogs?
2. How will the money be raised and are taxpayers affected? (13 out of 128 responses):
 - a. Will this cost taxpayers anything?
 - b. Where is the money going to come from? A fear I have is that we will raise the money to buy the property but not enough to develop the property. It is a lot of money.
3. What is the timing of the project? (12 out of 128 responses):
 - a. When will ORA acquire the land? Will the Trail Farm connect to Hixon and or Gateway?
 - b. What's the proposed timeline?
 - c. What's the length of time needed to raise the funds? Assume you have to get certain things raised before others (land, etc.) Has more concern the longer the fundraising time given the economic environment.

Questions regarding the proposed campaign of Outdoor Recreation Alliance as indicated by private interview responses were as follows:

Private interviews - 28

- Have questions about the systems in general.
- How are they working this with the jurisdictions? Making sure neighbors are all on board with the plan - Town of Shelby. When is the right time to be making outreach to the various parties?
- What is the plan for ongoing revenue? i.e., an endowment or similar that keeps it sustainable.
- The funding is hard to understand what we need and when. It's expensive to purchase it at the outset. It is a significant hurdle to overcome. Getting property ownership and the township of Shelby on board. Property owners on the edge may get pushback.

- Something that this area doesn't provide is a ski lift for a bike. Something that would get people up to the top of the trails unless there's a parking spot up top. (Could charge for it.) Then you could host mountain biking competitions. This would be different from what we already have. Brings new revenue streams into the community. Duluth has a ski hill with this lift - Spirit hill. Or other transportation systems like a van with a trailer to bring the bikes up = get more use out of the trails.
- Not convinced this project is needed.
- Why does ORA want to own the property instead of working with the city or work with MVC?
- Did notice that it went up a million. Endowment is now not included.
- No questions about the campaign itself. Wants to know why this is different. Why would we need this when we have Hixon and Perrot State Park? How will this be more accessible to people - to be of Shelby?
- Is this on a bus route?
- Will there be rental equipment? Pettibone Park has this. We can get people there to hike but we might not be able to get others there.
- Can we borrow a bike or sled?
- What is the timeline and the cost?
- Sustainability whether it is a foundation or continuing donations. Are there plans for facilities? Is this the original site of the downhill ski site? Has been told it is. Need to confirm.
- Securing the site and purchasing the land seem to be a big chunk of the funds. More so interested to see the site plan (15 miles of trails) and how it will be designed.
- How does this plan phase in? The property acquisition becomes the number one priority. We're also going to look at 2-3 phases to determine when the money comes in.
- How can we show it's more than just trails to get more interest. Especially in farming - seed company in town, would they want to be a donor?
- Think the overall number is achievable. The timing to secure it is the concern. Figuring out if this project is big enough.
- No.
- It's a big ask that's on the table. Is there work that's already been done to secure that level of investment? The development of the overall vision of the property (construction, restorations) What does amenity development mean?
- What types of amenities, and how will they provide access and value to people in the community?
- How long is the purchase agreement before it closes?
- Will the owner finance, be willing to take payment over time?
- Is there any advantage from a tax standpoint to do this over time - understand the owner's motivation and maybe help with their capital gains tax and/or some conservation easement strategy.
- How many miles of trails are they proposing If Hixon wasn't available when we had COVID, what would we have done? Makes it very worthwhile.
- Is the land under contract?

- Is the land connected to other trails in the community so that it's not an island of trails? Market La Crosse as an outdoors destination. Leveraging that - races, etc. to draw people in.

Questions regarding the proposed campaign of Outdoor Recreation Alliance as indicated by online survey responses were as follows:

Online respondents - 77

Comments:

- What is the annual budget?
- What is the full list of approved activities for this property? And other ORA properties?
- What's the proposed timeline?
- Still unsure what exactly this will be. What is a Trail Farm?
- It always comes down to dollars, doesn't it? I want this to happen, and I believe it will—and the project will be supported once folks are interested, and potential community partners get on board.
- Where is the property?
- None. Keep up the good work!
- What can I do to raise awareness in my community?
- Only wondering if this can happen asap.
- A master plan with a list of the intended features would be nice to see, I think it would help us understand the planned scope of the project
- Even though I live up north, how can I help! This project has me stoked to see what the trail club I grew up with is accomplishing.
- Where exactly is this? Can it be connected via trail to other parks or to the Bluffland Traverse trail? Having to drive to ride my bike or hike is a bummer.
- When do I get to suggest things for the space?
- How do you plan to engage the community in determining the sequencing of projects (i.e.: which projects come first)?
- Will this negatively impact wildlife?
- No. When can I go hiking? (Kidding, mostly)
- It's north facing! Will there be cross country ski trails here? Can we fundraise for snow making equipment?
- Where can I locate your Mission and Vision statements? You reference these things in the Mini Case Executive Summary, but I can't locate them on your FB page or Website.
- One friend I just talked to was wondering how this would affect property taxes.
- Describe in more detail where the location is; access from above or just highway 33?
- Who would be responsible for stewarding the land and trails upon the completion of the campaign and renovation?
- What are some ways people can help? Why does the Mississippi Valley Conservancy refuse to allow biking? That would provide another great opportunity for recreation.
- Keep releasing updates as more information is available, the newsletters you send out have been doing a good job of this. Thank you!

- Is there room in the plan for a designated dog hiking area?
- Will it include reopening the old downhill ski area?
- Where do I donate?
- Can this model be replicated at different points to the north and south? (Ala mountain top checkpoints in the Alps)?
- How are we going to get the money?
- Private and corporate sponsors?

Questions regarding the proposed campaign of the Outdoor Recreation Alliance as indicated by focus group responses were as follows:

Focus Group - 21

Comments:

- Trail ease. It's important to have trails that are appealing and accessible to beginning/novice users
- Are the plans comprehensive when it comes to trail design?
- Will there be development opportunities for revenue generation?
- Will there be more than just trails? What about areas for passive enjoyment?
- Will the trail farm be for all abilities?
- Will the historical context of the site be maintained/promoted?
- What are the specifics?
- What are the restoration plans? Pammel Creak? Forests? Grasslands?
- Are educational programming and outdoor classrooms part of the plan/budget?
- Will there be an emphasis on entry level trails?
- Are there concerns from the neighbors?
- Is there a conservation plan?

Questions from the Campaign Readiness Study: Conclusions

Questions are common at this early stage of a potential campaign. A well-managed campaign will be charged with answering these questions through a compelling case statement and campaign materials that are well-written, visually appealing, and clear. Interviewees' comments confirm that these issues must be addressed in order to engage the support of the community and build on the groundswell of support already present from those who are most closely involved and aware of the vision.

As the project moves forward to raise capital funds, the comprehensive and compelling case for support, frequently asked questions (FAQ) document, and brochure including operating, ongoing maintenance, and design plans must be prepared citing why people who have questions should support the campaign.

Concerns Addressed During the Campaign Readiness Study: Findings

The following lists the top three groups of comments regarding the concerns of the project as proposed and shared some representative quotes. A full list of quotes from respondents follows.

1. Maintenance and overall preservation and conservation of this large piece of land (11 of 128 responses).
 - a. Can we raise enough money in a decent amount of time? Can we make people happy with the space to have trust for future projects?
 - b. Is ORA ready to GET BIG as an organization? Or will this be an over-reach institutionally that might endanger it as a successful organization?
 - c. Does ORA have the institutional structure and expertise to pull this off? Will donors trust the organization?
2. Concerns about raising adequate funds for the project (8 out of 128 responses).
 - a. It is a lot of money to raise. We have never owned property before so this would be a big change.
 - b. It's a lot of money. It feels like it's good stewardship of the land. Will remain pristine and protected. With the momentum that we have, we have so many entities and people that support it. Concerns aren't necessarily about the project and the end game. Perhaps there may be animosity with which this could be spent elsewhere? Is this adjacent to my land concerns? Think some will just be semantic arguments. Little/stagnant population growth in La Crosse. Onalaska/Holmen is projected to grow more. Region itself is growing though. Limitation is topography with the river and bluffs, La Crosse. North & East La Crosse proper is more of a working-class town. Wealth is in the Northern suburbs.
 - c. ORA has produced so much, but this is a big ask. Ambitious, but if anyone can do it this group can, but competing with school referendums.
3. Cost and sustainability of the project (5 out of 128 responses).
 - a. I always have concerns with longevity. How is this going to be sustainable? When it comes to the volunteer organization, can they support this project? The turnover has been high inside the organization.
 - b. As is often the case with these types of things...it is a lot of money, building some infrastructure that is not trails...creates an ongoing expense to maintain.
 - c. What is the plan for generating future revenue? What is the long-term economic sustainability plan?

Concerns regarding the proposed campaign of the Outdoor Recreation Alliance as indicated by private interview responses were as follows:

Comments

- Some concern/frustration as someone who talks to a lot of donors, there's an opportunity to speak more directly and with specific information to each of our audiences.
- It's a lot of money. It feels like it's good stewardship of the land. Will remain pristine and protected. With the momentum that we have, we have so many entities and people that support it. Concerns aren't necessarily about the project and the end game. Perhaps there may be animosity with which this could be spent elsewhere? Is this adjacent to my land concerns? Think some will just be semantic arguments. Little/stagnant population growth in La Crosse. Onalaska/Holmen is projected to grow more. Region itself is growing though. Limitation is topography with the river and bluffs, La Crosse. North and East La Crosse proper is more of a working-class town. Wealth is in the Northern suburbs.
- Financial aspect of the 6M. The unknown for ORA to own land. If there is vandalism, we would be responsible for cleaning it up. What if someone gets injured? Volunteering and maintaining trails. We are already spread thin. If we are adding this huge project, there are only so many human resources. Are we biting off more than we can chew? Not having enough volunteers to do it well.
- We are a very philanthropic community, but I always wonder if the community can step up. Are there enough resources to help?
- Economy is well-rounded in the La Crosse area. Growth and expansion are only possible if there are people and it's lacking.
- No concerns but realizes there's costs associated with this. Feels that investing in the community reaps more benefits than a negative (health, wellness, new revenue streams, etc.) General economic condition - we have 3 universities, 2 hospitals and lots of wealth that people would be willing to invest. Especially if there's more than just mountain biking - something for everyone in the community.
- I need to be better convinced that it is a community need. I feel like there are a lot of trails, I don't think access to trails is an issue. Return On Investment is unclear. Seems ambitious and expensive without a matching return. Stretch project for increasing annual budget.
- Only concern is with MVC/city. MVC has a great deal of expertise in managing habitat. So why not combine this? Recreation development paired with habitat management.
- Knows that Pamel Creek floods. Stretch of the stream is viable, what's being planned to support that. Making sure that's addressed. The trailer home park is a positive in his view.
- Concerned about the amount of money and community buy-in. There are a lot of people who value being outside and there are a lot of people who don't see the benefits. Is there enough community support?
- The highway can be busy. Can we do a crossing island for the trailhead for safety?
- Not really - it seems like it's in a location within great access for the community (if it were remote, it would be difficult to access/limited use). It is 10 minutes from anywhere in La Crosse to get there. No land deterioration or degradation. Finding employees/attracting students to the area - this could be an asset to stay here, work here, live here. Especially

in La Crosse. Newer developments are happening in Holman and Onalaska (further North) so this would be an asset to this area.

- The length of timing it would require raising the funds (economic environment – interest rates, etc.) Longer it takes, the more risk will be associated with the purchase. But also realize when an opportunity arises, you can't necessarily schedule around it.
- It's a lot of money, and there are other capital campaigns right now. I think they have the right players. The property may be tough in terms of getting something across the water Jed knows how to make this happen with the access. Traffic could be an issue.
- Is it not a big enough swing? We want to use this in a bigger \$20-30M effort to connect the bluffs. Leverage municipal partners. Can the city and counties commit other funds? DNR; making sure we have the vision across the area.
- People think we're just out to make a recreation place and not care about the land. We need to talk about the land and sustainability. This isn't just about mountain biking as there are multi-use purposes. People might be worried that we cannot pull it off. Everything in the past has to get approval since it is all city owned.
- Inclusivity - From Gundersen Health Services standpoint there needs to be ties to reaching underserved populations of the community that don't have the means to get out and get to this site or have the equipment to experience the facility/trail. Strategies to be used: that's it's not a playground for the wealthy people. Needs to be truly for everyone. Would love to see those aspects of the campaign. Capacity in the community and interest, but economic headwinds (overall state of investment markets, more cautious attitudes in general - inflation uncertainty) Health care has had recent challenges (COVID, workforce - nursing home staffing issue) are having a difficult revenue. If this campaign could be positioned to help with that, it could help attract more staff to this area for nursing home staffing. There would be greater economic interest. Feels this would be a strong application for funding this campaign on behalf of the healthcare org but has had difficult revenue losses. Personally, I believe in mission, but economic uncertainty factors in.
- Other than the price tag, no concerns.
- Fundraising for an endowment or similar beyond initial campaign. Need to have the heavy hitters in order to lead. Tell the story of why it's needed. You only have one chance. Tell the story about the impact on kids and families. Example - tying to topics of the day such as positive impact on mental illness.

Concerns regarding the proposed campaign of the Outdoor Recreation Alliance as indicated by online survey responses were as follows:

Online Responses - 77

Comments

- Please have separate hiking trails.
- Snow making? Buildings and structures?

- Transportation. How do we make this accessible for all? Can we get the city to extend a bus route or weekend shuttle or similar? I would love it if all could find their way to the wild with a little help from mass transit.
- Wheelchair accessible trails. Pet friendly areas.
- I don't believe it should be a campground. Maybe allow some small businesses to use some of the property: horse riding, paintball are two examples I can think of.
- Funding to buy the land and landscaping, and regular upkeep.
- Access from La Crosse, on 33 to the location of the Trail Farm may be insufficient for the new traffic to the area for pedestrians? It has been a while since I've been to that area.
- You will have 'volunteer parties' (teen drinking, drug use) in an area such as this. Yes. Community support? Continued education, awareness, and by in.
- The name "Trail Farm" is not an existing commonly used term and people that I've spoken to find it very confusing. Please consider changing it.
- Raising enough money.
- No concerns from me.
- My only concern is that this is not enough. More please and keep up the good work.
- Nope! I love ORA and am happy with all the projects it has undertaken recently.
- Too many signs.
- Wildlife impacts.
- Is this pie in the sky? Will this take away from other projects?
- Several large capital campaigns occur in the philanthropic community right now.
- People trying to stop us from building more trails.
- This sounds like an awesome project, no concerns.
- I believe ORA has learned a lot over the years about how to communicate these projects to the public. There was a lot of pushback from vocal residents of 29th St. s and Ebner Coulee Rd and I would hate to see a similar sentiment hold this project up in any way. This may be different because the last would not be publicly owned? Anyways, keep up the good work these projects are important in developing our area into a destination people want to visit!
- Overall cost. Could the \$6 million needed for this project fund another project in the area for less money that would meet many of ORA's goals in a similar way?
- Would advocate for designating an area in the plan for off leash dogs, other areas in the state have awesome fences in areas where you can actually hike with your dog off leash but there is nothing like this in our area, though I think the need and demand are there.
- 6 mil is a lot. Main concern is just the ability to raise all the money.
- It may take too long. Perhaps breaking up the project into smaller chunks will help show progress.
- I'm concerned that someone may see the 6M number and be a bit shy, but if it were broken up into a couple of 1/3/5-year plans... Quick example: yr1 purchase property & plan management. yr3 trails and restoration yr5 amenities.
- None! Let's get outside.
- No. Excited for this project to come to life!
- Access and opportunity for historically marginalized populations.

- Falling short of required funds. Plan B?
- One concern, equal representation for types of trails, preferably more mountain bike trails than hiking or dual usage, in fact maybe there isn't as much room over here that everything should be biking and hiking together.
- No concerns other than how can we make this happen? What roadblocks do we need to hurdle and what strategies can we employ? How do we get to yes?

Concerns regarding the proposed campaign for the Outdoor Recreation Alliance as indicated by focus group responses were as follows:

Focus Group - 21

Comments

- Is ORA in danger of getting over-extended, spreading its volunteer and paid staff too thin?
- Is ORA ready to GET BIG as an organization? Or will this be an over-reach institutionally that might endanger it as a successful organization?
- Hard to communicate the budget accurately and transparently.
- Does ORA have the institutional structure and expertise to pull this off? Will donors trust the organization?
- Local community buy-in.
- What "value" do donors receive for their donation?
- What pledging options are there? One-time/annual/others?
- Organizational trust.
- ORA as "just a bunch of mountain bikers".
- General financial concerns -- "that's a lot of money!"
- Physical access concerns (e.g., crossing Pammel Creek).
- How will ORA actually deal with ongoing management and maintenance (both budgetarily and as an organization).
- "Not In My Backyard" (NIMBY) issues (although with original NIMBY response to Gateway trails that has turned into YIMBY over time, that is an opportunity to show that trail development can benefit current neighbors).
- Multi-/shared-use trails (vs. "mountain bike trails").
- Term "Trail Farm" is opaque, confusing, and potentially off-putting.
- Cost barriers to mountain biking (elitism and wealth inequality of users).
- Scale/size of property.
- Importance of having a diverse user group on board as strong supporters from the very beginning.
- Importance of having buy-in from neighbors from the very beginning.
- Ongoing funding sources to support programming and annual maintenance/ownership costs.
- Communicating that there will be a "balance of uses".
- Resistance to the modification of "natural spaces" in any way.
- Existing Hwy 33/State Rd bike-ped infrastructure (not an easy place to walk or bike to).

Concerns Addressed During the Campaign Readiness Study: Conclusions

A number of concerns were identified in the research, especially centered around the total \$6M campaign goal, maintenance costs, and sustainable revenue sources. This is quite typical at this early stage of a campaign, the concerns will be addressed through careful public education and the roll out of an eventual fundraising strategy that can lead to a high level of success.

Concerns about funding have been heard. However, the enthusiasm of the donors could help transform those concerns about funding into support, benefiting the area's economic development and community health.

These concerns voiced by the community demonstrate that time and care must go into a campaign effort. Before solicitation begins, a case for support must be developed by outlining project details and answering pertinent questions. The case for support must point to the benefits, any necessary changes in the plan, and what will be the result upon completion of the Trail Farm. The above comments can all be addressed through a comprehensive well-managed capital campaign as the project moves forward and is communicated to area residents, potential donors, and the philanthropic community.

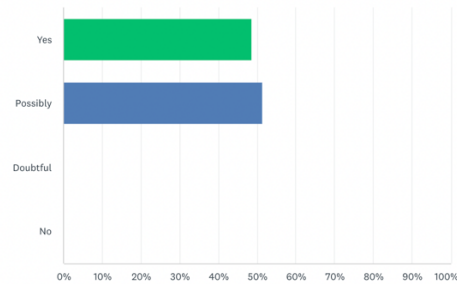
Economic Condition, Fundraising Environment, Capital Campaigns: Findings

Respondents in the personal, confidential interviews and in the online survey were asked to rate the area's economic ability to support a major capital campaign. Respondents rated the community from a "1", indicating a poor current economic condition, to a "5", indicating an excellent condition. The combined responses the interviews and the public surveys ranked the capacity to support the campaign a "3." These impressions are important to the study to determine the public's potential for meeting a \$6M campaign for the project.

General Acceptance Indicated at Time of Study

Please answer if you believe the proposed \$6M fundraising campaign will be accepted and supported by area philanthropic leaders?

Answered: 78 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	48.72% 38
Possibly	51.28% 40
Doubtful	0.00% 0
No	0.00% 0
TOTAL	78

Respondents listed the current or near-term capital campaigns as follows:

Campaigns underway or proposed:

- Gundersen Health Systems
- LaCrosse County Historical Society: \$20M
- Wafer: \$3M
- YMCA: TBD
- Curling Club: \$4M

Respondents listed the following issues and opportunities with initiating a capital campaign given the current giving climate:

- The La Crosse area has a dedicated and generous philanthropic community.
- The stock market has decreased in the past two years, which may affect low to middle range donors.
- Fewer major capital campaigns are underway at this time and proposed for 2023.
- The current and past Board of Directors members have strong philanthropic ties to assist in relationship building for capital campaign funds.

Economic Condition, Fundraising Environment, Capital Campaigns: Conclusions

La Crosse has experienced decades of robust philanthropic support from its health care and educational institutions, non-profits, and other organizations and groups. The La Crosse area also has an excellent manufacturing base, which can provide a strong economic footing for a capital campaign. La Crosse invests heavily in its community organizations and municipal facilities

with major fundraising campaigns. The philanthropic community and community at large have responded with unprecedented giving over many, many years.

La Crosse is a community which values philanthropy and supports community organizations to improve quality of life. ORA has not initiated a high-level capital campaign and the timing could be crucial given awareness to support important recreational and natural opportunities. La Crosse area fundraising campaigns are often ongoing and overlap. Yet, interviewees indicated campaigns with extremely high goals are not ongoing at this time.

Today, inflation is affecting many Americans. However, many in the La Crosse business and philanthropic community have managed to navigate the past few years. The current economic climate still bodes well for these leaders to make significant gifts if so inclined.

Generous area donors have stepped up and supported campaigns that invest in infrastructure, community projects, and revitalization. Community members who were interviewed for this study believe that the La Crosse area economy would be able to absorb the cost of this campaign with top-level donors leading the effort with the general support to follow.

Taking the time necessary to fully develop the campaign rationale will be necessary to help bestow understanding credibility within the philanthropic and business community.

The key donors who intend to support this project strongly believe in the eventual success of the campaign. Top donors must be involved and the rationale for the project must also be thoroughly communicated throughout the campaign. The general public and the philanthropic community must be made aware of the benefits of investing in outdoor recreation. And this project goes above and beyond in providing innumerable benefits for recreational enthusiasts. This project is deemed an essential component of providing the region with a stronger, more robust recreational, quality of life and environmental opportunities.

Potential for Lead Gifts and Indications to Give: Findings

The financial support and credibility of the most respected entities, either individuals, foundations, municipalities, or major institutions, are also important to capital campaign success. It is clear that at this time, high levels of financial support are present although a million-dollar donor did not step forward with fifteen to twenty percent of the goal during the study. Collectively, community leaders and donors are highly supportive of ORA and the vision and goals of the initiative.

The involvement of high-profile prospective contributors is always essential to reaching a campaign goal. They must be involved as significant donors and solicitors. Moreover, they must be asked to consider giving amounts over multi-year pledges that are in line with reaching the goal.

Significant lead gifts, with many supporting gifts at lesser levels, would be necessary to reach the total \$6M goal needed to fund the project. In any capital campaign, 12 to 16 donors typically comprise 60 to 70 percent of the total goal to realize success.

Preferably in a \$6M campaign, a lead gift of approximately \$900,000 to \$1.2M is necessary to secure fifteen to twenty percent of the goal followed by at least one \$500,000 gift, seven \$250,000 gifts and seven \$100,000 gifts.

According to the findings of this study, necessary levels of support were indicated at key levels except the lead gift of fifteen to twenty percent of the goal. Seven major benefactors indicated the substantial gifts.

From the interviews and community surveys, seventy individuals mentioned possible pledges or gifts totaling \$995,000. If a compelling case statement is prepared and there are committed, and energetic volunteers involved in key areas of the campaign to engage and solicit donors, this amount typically increases substantially, sometimes by three to five times as the cultivation process ensues for the final solicitation stage.

Still other influential La Crosse area donors who have given generously over the years (and are high level leaders) also indicated they would consider personal and business contributions at top levels needed to reach the goal.

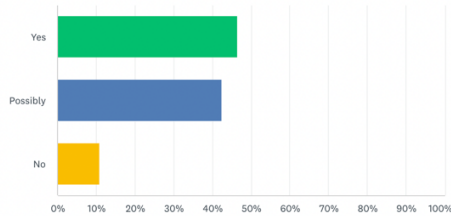
One respondent identified a pledge in the \$25,000 to \$30,000 range. Four individuals indicated they would consider pledges of \$10,000 to \$15,000. Five possible gifts were identified at \$5,000 to \$7,000 range, nineteen were mentioned in the \$1,000 to \$5,000 range, and thirty-four individuals would be interested in giving \$1,000 or less. Approximately half of respondents indicated they do not know what they would give at this time, which is typical at this early stage of a campaign.

The findings for future financial support are very positive given this early stage in that seventy total respondents would consider a multi-year gift to a future campaign. Only one individual or businesses from the private, confidential interviews replied they would not give to a potential campaign. One individual from online survey respondents indicated they would not give to a campaign.

Early Gifts/Pledges Indicate Positive Support

This is at a very initial stage of a potential capital campaign, but do you believe you (or your company/foundation) would consider making a personal gift to the campaign, if you are asked?

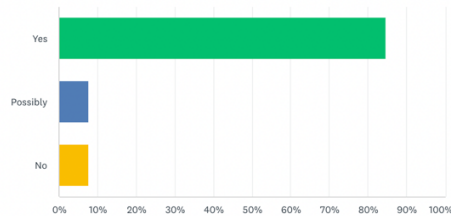
Answered: 73 Skipped: 5



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	46.58%	34
Possibly	42.47%	31
No	10.96%	8
TOTAL		73

This is at a very initial stage of a potential capital campaign, but do you believe you (or your company/foundation) would consider making a personal gift to the campaign, if asked?

Answered: 26 Skipped: 2



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	84.62%	22
Possibly	7.69%	2
No	7.69%	2
TOTAL		26

Online Survey Amount Pledge Considerations (of 51 respondents)	Number of Gifts	Approximate Pledge Ranges
\$250,000 and above	-	-
\$100,000 to \$249,999	1	\$100,000
\$50,000 to \$99,999	1	\$60,000
\$25,000 to \$49,999	-	-
\$10,000 to \$24,999	2	\$35,000
\$5,000 to \$9,999	3	\$15,000
\$1,000 to \$4,999	18	\$49,000
\$1,000 and under	26	\$14,505
In kind gift options	-	-
Total Range Survey		\$273,505

Personal Confidential Interview Amount Pledge Considerations (of 19 respondents)	Number of Gifts	Approximate Pledge Ranges
\$250,000 and above	1	\$250,000
\$100,000 to \$249,999	3	\$350,000
\$50,000 to \$99,999	1	\$50,000
\$25,000 to \$49,999	1	\$25,000
\$10,000 to \$24,999	2	\$25,000
\$5,000 to \$9,999	2	\$13,000
\$1,000 to \$4,999	1	\$1,500
\$1,000 and under	8	\$8,000
In kind gift options	-	-
Total Range Survey		\$722,500

Potential for Lead Gifts and Inclination to Give: Conclusions

La Crosse is undeniably an extremely giving community, not only with philanthropic dollars, but also in terms of volunteerism. La Crosse has a can-do attitude and strives to care for its own by improving the quality of life of all its residents. This project has a unique goal and is unlike anything proposed in the region. While this poses some challenges in communicating benefits to the business and/or residents, it also means that the campaign can tap into funding sources that other organizations and campaigns cannot, particularly due to its unique characteristics.

Strong potential gifts are available from individuals, corporations, and foundations, which is a positive sign at this early stage. Naming opportunities through major gifts would provide motivation for those looking for community recognition. Donor recognition would also encourage donors to consider larger gifts which may be paid over time. Naming opportunities for major corporations and other considerations include corporate guidepost sign sponsorships, program sponsorships, and naming key elements. Opportunities to honor long-time community leaders or memorialize loved ones should also be considered during a campaign.

The dozens of possible smaller gifts also indicate a positive view of the campaign even at this early stage. It is clear a grassroots surge of interest in this project has the potential to be cultivated further. Many times, gift suggestions in the \$1,000 range can actually lead to gifts in the \$5,000 to \$10,000 range and far higher. This occurs when donors are cultivated, the case for support is well articulated, questions are answered, and residents are drawn into the project benefits. The same rationale exists for gifts of \$10,000 to \$25,000 increasing after project benefits are fully understood and key questions or concerns are answered to donors' satisfaction. This will prove possible with a campaign with a solid marketing plan, well-communicated benefits

and needs, and the continued development and engagement of donors in a community-wide fundraising plan.

Capital campaigns are never easy. They require a solid and proven process, committed and effective leaders, and generous donors. However, with the philanthropic spirit that is evident in the La Crosse area, and the compelling and exciting project that is proposed through the Trail Farm project, Crescendo Fundraising Professionals believes the project goal will be reached.

Campaign Volunteer Leadership: Findings

Through a confidential process, interviewees were asked to recommend potential top leaders and other key volunteers who could be recruited to provide the volunteerism necessary to bring the campaign to fruition. They were asked to identify persons who were knowledgeable about the greater community and the relationships that exist within the area.

Many of the respondents have volunteered or served with fundraising initiatives in the past, but several voiced uncertainties about assisting in a campaign since other area fundraising projects have just been completed or are still in progress.

Interviewees identified more than a dozen individuals who would be vital to lead or co-chair the campaign. Several individuals were consistently named. Others suggested area organizations, corporations, and other entities that might provide insight and guidance into the project. Respondents also suggested more than two dozen individuals who they believed may be willing to serve or who would be instrumental in the success of a capital campaign. Strong leaders who have been involved in the project in some capacity or have served on other fundraising campaigns were identified consistently.

Area volunteer leaders have had a high level of experience leading or participating in large fundraising capital campaigns.

Crescendo Fundraising Professional LLC's experience in capital campaign management has proven that no single element is more determinative of the ultimate success of a campaign than enthusiastic, committed leadership. This high level of support starts at the top and works its way through volunteers and donors. As Crescendo manages a fundraising campaign, our advisors can communicate this enthusiasm and amplify its effects; however, advisors cannot generate such excitement and passion on our own. If the campaign leaders are excited about the project, volunteers and donors will be excited as well. This enthusiasm will be translated into dollars raised for the project.

Successful campaigns require eager, involved, and passionate volunteers to work on campaign committees. Fifty-eight volunteers identified themselves or others who would help serve on the

proposed campaign in the confidential interviews, confidential telephone calls, and online surveys.

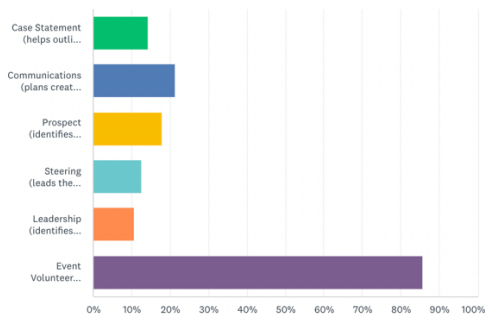
A total of six individuals were identified consistently as possible co-chairs for the campaign due to their influence in the project and involvement in the La Crosse region. Four of those individuals were identified repeatedly regarding their importance to lead or serve on the campaign. Many individuals identified others or identified themselves as having skills and relationships to work on campaign committees. Forty-three respondents said they would work on committees, with forty-one indicating they would serve as volunteers for special events.

Overall, La Crosse area leaders and community volunteers are supportive of the project. It was unclear which leaders might step up to volunteer leadership positions. However, several individuals with business, environmental, and conservation ties were mentioned consistently.

Volunteer Interest

Would you consider serving on one of the short-term committees? Please list which committee(s) you may be interested in serving.

Answered: 56 Skipped: 22



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Case Statement (helps outline written rationale for project)	14.29% 8
Communications (plans creative and promotional elements of the campaign)	21.43% 12
Prospect (identifies possible peer groups who may be interested in the project)	17.86% 10
Steering (leads the other committees in planning the process with consultant involvement)	12.50% 7
Leadership (identifies important stakeholders who may be interested in becoming involved)	10.71% 6
Event Volunteer (short term as need)	85.71% 48
Total Respondents: 56	

Campaign Volunteer Leadership: Conclusions

Interviewees identified more than a dozen individuals who would be vital to lead or co-chair the proposed campaign.

Recruitment of key, high profile leaders is crucial to the success of a capital campaign. Key leaders in the La Crosse area's philanthropic community are generally supportive of this project. There is a strong interest in the project goals and considerable excitement within area leaders and in citizens to see it to fruition.

Volunteers at all levels are needed and fifty-six business and philanthropic leaders shared they would be interested in serving on the Steering, Case Statement, Communications, Leadership or Prospect Committees. Recognized leaders will need to be involved to find success in the campaign, and this result is promising. New, younger leaders are also available to help carry the weight of time and talent in this campaign.

Those who were not interested in volunteering were not necessarily against the campaign but were unable to serve due to busy schedules or they were unwilling at this time because they have some volunteer burnout.

Leadership from the pool of committed and talented volunteers is necessary to set the campaign foundation. It would be important to recruit co-chairs of different spheres of influence to ensure active representation in the area and to better foster a team cohort to reach the campaign goal. Interest exists to tap into this pool of effective leaders and to fill all necessary roles. Names of those who indicated a willingness to become involved are not listed in the report for confidentiality reasons; however, the list will be used to recruit leadership and volunteers

Final Analysis: Favorable and Challenging Factors

In summary, a number of factors exist that would affect the outcome of a fundraising campaign.

Favorable Factors

1. The La Crosse area boasts incredible wildlife, natural and scenic beauty, and bountiful outdoor recreational opportunities which can be tapped to improve the quality of life and economic potential of the region.
2. A purchase agreement is secured for the land through April 2023.
3. With implementation of a strong capital campaign solicitation and communications process, gifts were indicated in key categories necessary to reach the campaign goal.
4. There is excellent financial capacity and philanthropic propensity in the La Crosse area to support the \$6M capital campaign goal to attain the organization's vision.
5. As indicated by its completed projects, although Outdoor Recreation Alliance is a relatively new area organization, its mission has been highly promoted, the engagement level has been strong, and the organization is well-received.
6. The La Crosse area has an excellent economic standing, experiencing strong underpinnings due to the educational systems of the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, Viterbo University and Western Technical College and the significant health care

institutions of Gundersen Health System and Mayo Clinic Health Systems Inc. with a robust manufacturing base, to name a few of the region's numerous strengths.

7. The unique characteristics for the ORA project create a powerful attraction to engage recreational, conservation, economic and environmental enthusiasts alike.
8. The Executive Director is well-respected and deemed committed and capable of managing the organization.
9. Past and current Board of Directors members are well connected, generous, and dedicated to the mission.
10. There is a significant and stellar leadership pool within La Crosse and on the Board of Directors. The community embraces capital campaigns that focus on quality-of-life improvements.
11. Other capital campaigns that are in the planning stages or are ongoing at this time are not seen as a deterrent to initiate a capital campaign at this time.

Challenging Factors

1. Majority of donors will not be inclined to make commitments to the campaign without ownership of the land.
2. ORA does not currently own assets serving as collateral to purchase the land for the proposed Trail Farm project.
3. Some concerns exist related to the timing of the campaign in the current economic climate. As long as high-level philanthropic support is available to garner the necessary 12 to 16 top gifts to reach the \$6M campaign goal, consultants do not see this as complicating a successful campaign.
4. Since ORA is still a relatively new non-profit in the region, a high-level communications program should be implemented to garner the increased awareness necessary to reach the goal.
5. The Board must be committed to due diligence in regard to vetting project costs to demonstrate transparency and cost efficiency for the project.

6. Ability of the organization to continue managing all existing trails and projects in addition to this project must be clearly outlined.

Final Analysis: Recommendations

On the basis of the foregoing findings, conclusions, and favorable and challenging factors, Crescendo Fundraising Professionals, LLC, offers the following recommendations to Outdoor Recreation Alliance Trails Board of Directors:

1. Accept this report, adopt it, and approve it as a basis for initiating a capital campaign to fundraise \$6M.
2. Coordinate and develop a solution with the land owners, a bank(s) and/or donors' seed funding/bridge loan to complete the purchase of the land.
3. Direct fundraising consultants to engage in a comprehensive fundraising campaign plan. Develop detailed, strong, and compelling campaign materials. The Case for Support must answer current and additional questions addressed from the philanthropic community. Develop a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document, which answers the top questions addressed during the Campaign Readiness Study.
4. Develop a strong donor recognition plan to provide naming and sponsorship opportunities.
5. Continue public outreach and engagement activities.
6. Recruit interested volunteers from the interviews, online survey, groups, and organizations with whom consultants interviewed. Recruit interested leaders. Train these volunteers and solicit pledge range amounts needed to reach the campaign goal.
7. Initiate a strong communications plan to effectively present the rationale with collateral marketing material outlining the importance to stimulate recreational economic benefits for the La Crosse area.
8. Once a pre-campaign is started, Crescendo recommends adherence to proven methods of successful fundraising:
 - a. Employ a foundational pre-campaign effort which serves to cultivate donors and provide confidence in the campaign
 - b. Create and validate a thorough case for support and FAQ
 - c. When all systems are prepared, approach the strongest supporters first
 - d. Conduct solicitations through personal, face-to-face visits

- e. Request donors to consider three-year commitments
 - f. Make solicitations, which are personalized to the individual or businesses' capacity
9. Widely promote a strong business plan showing the financial sustainability of the project.
 10. Develop a strong and compelling case statement that answers the key questions the philanthropic community has addressed during the study.

Addendum

Importance of a Strong Case Statement

To raise capital funds, a comprehensive and compelling case statement must be prepared citing the components and rationale for the project to inspire those able to consider a major contribution. The case statement must point to the opportunities presented to positively impact quality of life and the benefits of the project. The case statement serves as a vehicle to convince people that their support of the project and the organization is worthwhile and needed.

A strong capital campaign case statement must contain the following information:

- A summary and a clear statement of the organization's mission
- A convincing description of the purposes to which the capital funds will be used
- Plans about ways give-pledges, gifts of securities, gifts of real property, stocks, etc., can be given
- Financial information on how the organization will be operated
- Recognition opportunities, such as buildings, site elements, or exhibits to be named for donors
- List of key people involved in the campaign

Campaign Readiness Study Methodology Details

List of All Study Questions

Online Survey:

1. Thank you for taking our survey. Please review this brief description of the project before taking the survey. You can find the overview [here](#).
2. Name
3. Do you feel the mission and vision of Outdoor Recreation Alliance (ORA) is important to the area?
4. If yes, please list in what ways?
5. Based on the brief summary of the project, what do you believe to be the benefits of the potential campaign for ORA?
6. Do you have any questions? Please elaborate if so.
7. Do you have any concerns? Please elaborate if so.
8. How much does the current economic environment affect your gift?

9. Please answer if you believe the proposed \$6M fundraising campaign will be accepted and supported by area philanthropic leaders?
10. Whom would you recommend has the credibility within the philanthropic community to serve as general chair or co-chairs of the campaign?
11. Campaigns also require strong committees that work together to solicit and provide awareness for a campaign. Who are some possible community volunteers who would make good volunteers for this campaign? Please list 3 to 5 names.
12. Would you consider serving on one of the short-term committees? Please list which committee(s) you may be interested in serving.
13. Would you consider accepting a leadership position in a campaign if you are asked?
14. If you answered yes, please list which committee you may be interested in serving.
15. Years of experience in capital campaigns teach us that most successful campaigns have similar patterns of giving. Please review the \$6M gift table that represents the giving patterns for typical successful campaign. You can view the gift table [here](#). Who do you feel would be able to contribute 15-20% of a campaign goal for the project if a campaign is to move forward?
16. Whom would you suspect may be the largest contributors to this campaign?
17. This is at a very initial stage of a potential capital campaign, but do you believe you (or your company/foundation) would consider making a personal gift to the campaign, if you are asked?
18. If you answered yes, what possible amount could you see giving over three years, even if it is a minimal amount to help the ORA board consider if they are able to move forward?

Private Interviews:

1. Name
2. Can you please tell me a bit about yourself and your involvement in the La Crosse area?
3. Do you feel the mission and vision of Outdoor Recreation Alliance (ORA) is important to the area?
4. If yes, please list in what ways?
5. Based on the brief summary of the project, what do you believe to be the benefits of a potential campaign for ORA?
6. Do you have any questions? Please elaborate if so.
7. Do you have any concerns? Please elaborate if so.
8. On a scale of 1-5, how do you regard this area's present, general economic condition for this campaign which would begin in 2023?
9. How much does the current economic environment affect your gift?
10. Please answer if you believe the proposed \$6M fundraising campaign will be accepted and supported by area philanthropic leaders.
11. What do you think about ORA's desire for land ownership and management?
12. Please list the major fundraising campaigns currently under way or being planned in the area of which you are aware.

13. (Please refer to the potential job descriptions in a campaign.) What names of individuals would you expect to see in leadership positions in a campaign for this project?
14. Whom would you recommend has the credibility within the philanthropic community to serve as general chair or co-chairs of the campaign?
15. Campaigns have many different committees that work together to prepare the campaign for solicitation. From the list of committees, who are some other possible volunteers who you think would be important to become involved in the campaign?
16. Years of experience in capital campaigns teach us that most successful campaigns have similar patterns of giving. Who do you feel would be able to contribute 15-20% of a campaign goal for the project if a campaign is to move forward?
17. Whom would you suspect may be the largest contributors to this campaign?
18. This is at a very initial stage of a potential capital campaign, but do you believe you (or your company/foundation) would consider making a personal gift to the campaign, if asked?
19. If you answered yes, what possible amount could you see giving over three years, even if it is a minimal amount to help the ORA board consider if they are able to move forward?
20. Would you consider accepting a leadership position in a campaign?
21. If you answered yes, please list which committee you may be interested in serving.
22. Would you volunteer your efforts in some way if it were small, such as providing input on the case statement?

Focus Group:

1. Name
2. Do you feel the mission and vision of Outdoor Recreation Alliance (ORA) is important to the area?
3. If yes, please list in what ways.
4. Based on the brief summary of the project, what do you believe to be the benefits of a potential campaign for ORA?
5. Do you have any questions? Please elaborate if so.
6. Do you have any comments or concerns? Please elaborate if so.
7. How much does the current economic environment affect your gift?
8. Please answer if you believe the proposed \$6M fundraising campaign will be accepted and supported by area philanthropic leaders.
9. Whom would you recommend has the credibility within the philanthropic community to serve as general chair or co-chairs of the campaign?
10. Campaigns also require strong committees that work together to solicit and provide awareness for a campaign. Who are some possible community volunteers who would make good volunteers? Please list 3 to 5 names.

11. Would you consider serving on one of the short-term committees? Please list which committee(s) you may be interested in serving. Please see the job descriptions here.
12. Years of experience in capital campaigns teach us that most successful campaigns have similar patterns of giving. Please review the \$6M gift table that represents the giving patterns for typical successful campaign. Who do you feel would be able to contribute 15-20 percent of a campaign goal for the project if a campaign is to move forward?
13. Whom would you suspect may be the largest contributors to this campaign?
14. This is at a very initial stage of a potential capital campaign, but do you believe you (or your company/foundation) would consider making a personal gift to the campaign?
15. If you answered yes, what possible amount could you see giving over three years, even if it is a minimal amount to help the ORA board consider if they are able to move forward?
16. Would you consider accepting a leadership position in a campaign if you are asked?
17. If you answered yes, please list which committee you may be interested in serving.

List of Job Descriptions

Steering Committee

This committee directs all activities of the campaign. The committee is composed of ten to twelve area leaders who will be instrumental in providing input on the foundation for a successful capital campaign. The committee helps assure the success of the campaign by overseeing all committees. Monthly meetings are held over approximately twelve to eighteen months or until the goal is met. Steering Committee members will eventually solicit three to five potential donors with another team member. Meetings would tentatively begin in early 2023 in La Crosse via Zoom or in person.

Building/Master Plan Committee

This committee is typically composed of six to eight key stakeholders who have had experience in design, construction, and management of large facilities. They will assess the current designs and provide input on the final design. This committee begins in early 2023, with meetings as necessary, and would operate through spring to provide a finalized plan to use in campaign solicitation materials. Meetings will be held as needed but once a month at a minimum, via Zoom or in person.

Leadership Development Committee

The Leadership Development Committee is composed of eight to ten individuals who have a commitment to ORA/La Crosse area and who are interested in the benefits of the mission and project. These individuals will be knowledgeable about the business, philanthropic, and social relationships that exist within the area. The committee ensures the success of the campaign by identifying and recruiting the top echelon of campaign volunteer leadership for the campaign co-chairs. This committee meets three times to help identify and recruit the general campaign co-chairs and would meet in January to February 2023.

Case Statement Committee

The Case Statement Committee requires the assistance of individuals who are knowledgeable about the scope and mission of the campaign. This group ensures the success of the campaign by providing input for consultants to develop a strong and compelling campaign rationale and FAQ, as well as answering key questions regarding the campaign and fundraising plan. This committee also tests or validates the case statement. This group of approximately twelve to fourteen people who will meet approximately four to six times to help provide feedback on the case statement development and validate the case statement with key donors; meetings will last one hour and would begin in early 2023.

Communications Committee

The Communications Committee enlists eight to twelve people who are knowledgeable about branding, communications, marketing, and media. They enhance the effectiveness of the campaign by helping provide input for the promotional elements, assisting in raising awareness of the project, providing information to the area about the project and help provide input on coordinating a large campaign Launch event. This committee will meet every month for eight to twelve months to provide input on materials, provide feedback on materials, and plan the event. Meetings will last one hour and would be held in person or via Zoom beginning early 2023.

Prospect Development Committee

The Prospect Committee enlists six to ten area donors and volunteers who are knowledgeable about the La Crosse area and philanthropic endeavors. The group makes suggestions on potential area donors who may be interested in supporting the campaign and will help match potential solicitors to donors where able. This committee meets for four to five meetings over the course of the campaign. Meetings will last one hour and will be held early in 2023 via Zoom or in person.

Study Gift Calculator for Proposed \$6M Gift Pyramid

Trail Farm Capital Campaign \$6M						
Range of Gifts		Number Required	\$ at this Level	Total Donors	Total Dollars	Percent of Goal
1,000,000	1,200,000	1	1,100,000	1	1,100,000	18%
500,000	999,999	1	750,000	2	1,850,000	31%
250,000	499,999	3	1,124,999	5	2,974,998	50%
100,000	249,999	7	1,224,997	12	4,199,995	70%
50,000	99,999	7	524,997	28	4,724,991	79%
25,000	49,999	8	299,996	36	5,024,987	84%
10,000	24,999	28	489,986	40	5,514,973	92%
5,000	9,999	65	487,468	105	6,002,441	100%
	<5,000	many	>2,441	many	>6,050,000	

Gift Calculator for Proposed Future Campaign

The following calculator provides an updated approach based on study results.

Trail Farm Capital Campaign \$6M						
Range of Gifts		Number Required	\$ at this Level	Total Donors	Total Dollars	Percent of Goal
500,000	750,000	2	1,250,000	2	1,250,000	21%
250,000	499,999	3	1,124,999	5	2,374,999	40%
150,000	249,999	4	799,998	9	3,174,997	53%
100,000	249,999	6	1,049,997	15	4,224,994	70%
50,000	99,999	11	824,995	28	5,049,988	84%
15,000	24,999	20	399,990	48	5,449,978	91%
5,000	9,999	48	359,976	40	5,809,954	97%
1,000	4,999	65	194,968	105	6,004,922	100%
	<1,000	many	>4,922	many	>6,000,000	