

Responsive Management



PARTNERS' AND POTENTIAL PARTNERS' OPINIONS OF AND SUGGESTIONS FOR *STEP OUTSIDE*[®]

January 2007

**Conducted for the National Shooting Sports Foundation
by Responsive Management**

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A Representative Sample of Comments on STEP OUTSIDE

I think it's [happened here internally] but we don't do STEP OUTSIDE formally in the way that I think it was designed and that is to figure out how we can energize that relationship between a mentor and a mentoree. (former partner)

The weakness of STEP OUTSIDE is that it doesn't make people feel that it's easier to get into, it feels like it's another layer to add on. (former partner)

[With RBFF's Water Works Wonder] I don't think they see Water Works Wonders as a new program, they see it as a marketing thing, which I know RBFF was strictly developed for marketing, so maybe that's the ticket. It needs to have more of a marketing lead-in or something. (current partner)

This is going to be both a strength or a weakness. It really is a slogan or a process rather than a program. You are not doing the STEP OUTSIDE program, which is step 1, 2, and 3 and you get this particular thing.... On the other hand, that can be a strength as well—meaning anything that you do, you can incorporate the STEP OUTSIDE ideas which may then help you kind of focus your event. (current NGO partner)

[The program's weakest link is] may be just that—it's called a program and it's a tool. (current partner)

I think nobody really understands that it doesn't necessarily require you to create a whole new program. It is a means of doing something a little different that you are already doing.... Somehow alleviate their fears that it's not requiring new staff and it's not requiring a lot more money—that you'll even help them with some startup money. (current partner)

They're [conservation organizations and local conservation groups] all doing youth events, and what we found was they were all doing the same event—a one-day splash with no follow-up. We saw that as a problem and we saw the Step Outside model as a way to solve that, so that's the big way that we've been involved. (former partner)

I think we need to build a big tent. I think that is part of this children's and nature network that is getting attention out there now, and I think it is an opportunity for STEP OUTSIDE to play a role in that movement. (current NGO partner)

[STEP OUTSIDE's major focus should be] helping [the agencies] build a good marketing program statewide...nationwide probably. It's not a huge burden. In fact, it's a huge help. (current partner)

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INTRODUCTION

This report presents the results of a series of personal interviews that were conducted of current STEP OUTSIDE® implementers, former implementers and non-implementers to assist in understanding partners' and potential partners' participation in and opinions of STEP OUTSIDE. Personal interviews were conducted by telephone conferencing during December of 2006 and January of 2007. Specifically, the major objectives of this study were to gain an increased understanding of the following:

- 1) Costs and benefits to agencies/organizations/partners implementing STEP OUTSIDE,
- 2) Motivations for agency/organization/partner participation in STEP OUTSIDE,
- 3) Constraints and barriers to potential agency/organization/partner participation in STEP OUTSIDE,
- 4) Reasons agencies/organizations/partners have not used or no longer participate in STEP OUTSIDE, and
- 5) Suggestions for improving STEP OUTSIDE.

METHODOLOGY

Personal interviews are an excellent research method when there are highly knowledgeable individuals whose expertise is needed for the understanding of an issue. Personal interviews allow for open conversation between Responsive Management researchers and individuals in a one-on-one setting. The use of personal interviews provides researchers with insights, new hypotheses, and understanding through the process of interaction. They allow for extensive probing, follow-up questions, discussion, and observation of emotional reaction not possible in a quantitative study such as a telephone or mail survey. Personal interviews allow analyses of thoughts, attitudes, behaviors, and opinions that have a high level of content validity. Personal interviews are an appropriate qualitative data collection methodology in a variety of settings including exploration of issues in sensitive areas such as program evaluations and satisfaction studies. Personal interviews allow participants to share qualitative information in a confidential manner that allows freer expression of ideas and opinions.

PERSONAL INTERVIEW DISCUSSION GUIDE

The personal interviews were conducted using a discussion guide that allowed for consistency in data collection. Responsive Management researchers developed the discussion guide based on their knowledge of programmatic evaluations, agency/organizational structures and functions, outdoor recreation programs, program participation, hunter/shooter/angler recruitment and retention programs, and input provided by the National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF). The final discussion guide was approved by the NSSF.

INTERVIEWEE SELECTION

NSSF was consulted during the selection process of all of the interviewees. Responsive Management contacted potential respondents by telephone Monday – Friday, during regular business hours or as appropriate for each individual selected. The project manager first attempted to contact selected individuals in writing (either by e-mail, fax, or mail) to inform them of the study, legitimize the study, provide assurance of confidentiality, and facilitate future contact. Initial correspondence included a brief summary of the project and its goals and notified them that a researcher/project manager would be calling them in the near future to make an appointment for a personal interview with them. Once the appointments were scheduled, the project manager reserved a conference line with Intercall (Sprint Conferencing Services). The conference telephone number and identification number were sent in hard copy to scheduled participants. All appointments were reconfirmed a third time prior to the interview date, either by e-mail, telephone, or other method that the project manager deemed most appropriate to the situation.

An experienced, trained researcher conducted a 30 to 60 minute personal interview with each selected participant. The role of the researcher was to keep the interview within design parameters using the discussion guide, without exerting a strong influence on the discussion content. New insights were sought through discussions to determine the costs and benefits of implementing STEP OUTSIDE within an agency/organization, motivations for participating, barriers to potential participation, and suggestions for improvement. The project manager ensured that the Intercall conferencing services were secured before each interview took place and that calls were recorded for analysis.

In the section, “Personal Interview Results,” the personal interviews findings are summarized. The “Conclusions and Recommendations” section summarizes the most important findings and offers recommendations for STEP OUTSIDE’s future market positioning, promotion, and partnership success based on the findings of the personal interviews.

PERSONAL INTERVIEW RESULTS

PERCEIVED STRENGTHS

The Step Outside Model

Both agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGO's) were on board with the STEP OUTSIDE model and agreed that the most effective way to recruit newcomers to the traditional outdoor sports is for those with outdoor experience to invite them to go hunting, shooting, or fishing. STEP OUTSIDE stakeholders agreed that having sportsmen with experience invite others to participate is necessary not only to create new hunters, shooters, archers and anglers but also to create conservationists and increased understanding of wildlife management. There was great buy-in to the STEP OUTSIDE model, and the model's being based on scientific research was identified as a strength.

...it became clear to me that what I'm doing is exactly what STEP OUTSIDE is geared towards. It's just a perfect blend of a partnership. (current NGO partner)

Management and Administration

Almost all stakeholders reported favorable reviews of STEP OUTSIDE management and administration, most often rating them as excellent or good on a five-point scale. Agencies as well as NGO's seemed to have great confidence in NSSF's ability to bring partners together to work towards common goals, and they continue to view NSSF as a leader.

I'm very impressed with it. I've had the opportunity to sit in on some of their planning meetings that they've held at the SHOT SHOW, and they have a dedicated staff that is very enthused about expanding the opportunities for folks to get outdoors and enjoy the shooting sports; and not just the shooting sports, but fishing and hunting and all those kind of things. It's been my impression that they are making a tremendous impact. (current NGO partner)

I would like to see some more concerted effort to bringing more partners to the table to work together. I've seen them making strides in that direction. It's a tall order to fill. Of the organizations that are out there, the STEP OUTSIDE and the NSSF probably stands, at this point, the best chance of bringing them all to the same table and getting them to work together. (current NGO partner)

Promotions and Marketing

Everyone who had seen STEP OUTSIDE promotional materials (most often they had seen STEP OUTSIDE newsletters and many had been to the Website) indicated that they were very pleased with the quality of the materials. Many had seen the printed materials and were impressed by those in particular. The STEP OUTSIDE newsletter was clearly viewed as a quality-piece; however, not all of the key implementers within an agency may be receiving the newsletter.

I'm still holding onto a sheet of PSA's and print advertisements, and I admire those. (non-partner)

That's the value of STEP OUTSIDE—from a marketing standpoint you guys have done the heavy hitting in terms of developing a marketing approach and even the mentor approach. In other words, it's simple to just ask people to take other people outdoors and do these kinds of things and then get credit for it. That's a very simple approach. From an organized standpoint, I don't know that we're reporting to the members. I think it's [happened here internally] but we don't do STEP OUTSIDE formally in the way that I think it was designed and that is to figure out how we can energize that relationship between a mentor and a mentoree. (former partner)

Materials are professional and useable. Staff is cooperative and helpful. National presence is appreciated. Excellent Website. (current NGO partner)

The quality [of the educational material's content and graphics] is very good. I really like the additional graphics added to the newer ones. From a 12- or 13-old kid perspective I think it has really improved as an eye-catcher for them. (current NGO partner)

Encompassing Multiple Outdoor Sports

Many respondents agreed that STEP OUTSIDE's structure of encompassing many different outdoor recreation sports was a strength (however, others believed the very same quality was a weakness). Those who believed it was a strength stated that it was of benefit that the STEP OUTSIDE resources could be applied to many different activities and events, making it available to a larger audience.

I think that it's really hard to recruit somebody that's never had any experience with the outdoors at all directly into a consumptive sport like hunting, but if you can get them outside and take them fishing for a little bit, and then maybe next time you take them target shooting, and then you might work your way up to a rabbit hunt or something. That's a little more likely, so I think that the fact you would allow all of those types of activities [current STEP OUTSIDE activities] probably is a strength because it really is hard to jump from the "outside person" to a consumptive hunter. (current partner)

Availability of Grant Money

Grant amounts were not as important as knowing that that some sort of assistance was available, that grants were available. Many reported that every bit, no matter what size of financial assistance would help. Agencies stated that they were always looking for additional funding. One agency said that their local sportsmen's groups had asked them how they could help with outdoor events and how they could be involved. They had also asked if small amounts of funding were available to assist. NGO's also appreciated small-sized grants (defined as \$2,000 or less at a national level) to spread across to chapters and believed it was a nice incentive and in some cases a critical launch to host an event and become involved with STEP OUTSIDE.

We are also always interested in raising money to help our chapter volunteers be able to do more and better programs. (current NGO partner)

We use ALL of the grant money to offer scholarships to our chapters that conduct youth programs involving hunting, shooting, fishing and archery. We advertise and award them \$100 grants for their events and supply them with the STEP OUTSIDE materials. While it is not a lot of money, the chapters greatly appreciate the contribution and readily advertise the [STEP OUTSIDE] program as a sponsor. We have also credited STEP OUTSIDE and NSSF in magazine articles and in our new (name redacted) that was sent on CD to all of our (name redacted) and (name redacted) chapters (about 700 total). (current NGO partner)

Our agency is really tight on money, and anything new is next to impossible, but whenever you can get some startup money... (current partner)

We wouldn't be anywhere without STEP OUTSIDE having stepped up and been a major supporter of our program from day one. This program is where it is today because of the commitment STEP OUTSIDE made. (current NGO partner)

PERCEIVED WEAKNESSES

Understanding STEP OUTSIDE

Many respondents believed that STEP OUTSIDE was generally misunderstood within the agencies and NGO's, and many thought it competed for their time and resources or were not sure how to incorporate STEP OUTSIDE into their current efforts.

The weakness of STEP OUTSIDE is that it doesn't make people feel that it's easier to get into; it feels like it's another layer to add on. (former partner)

[With RBFF's Water Works Wonder] I don't think they see Water Works Wonders as a new program, they see it as a marketing thing, which I know RBFF was strictly developed for marketing, so maybe that's the ticket. It needs to have more of a marketing lead-in or something. (current partner)

This is going to be both a strength or a weakness. It really is a slogan or a process rather than a program. You are not doing the STEP OUTSIDE program which is step 1, 2, and 3 and you get this particular thing.... On the other hand, that can be a strength as well; meaning anything that you do, you can incorporate the STEP OUTSIDE ideas which may then help you kind of focus your event. (current NGO partner)

[The program's weakest link is] may be just that—it's called a program and it's a tool. (current partner)

(Moderator: What do you like the least about STEP OUTSIDE? What are its weaknesses?) So far [I] have not received an evaluation of how well the program is working. (current NGO partner)

Perception of Competition

There is a perception that STEP OUTSIDE competes with other state-branded programs, advertising campaigns, and NGO identities. Some state agencies had already branded and marketed their own statewide slogan to increase awareness of outdoor events and increase agency identity among the public. There were territorial issues, and concerns that STEP OUTSIDE competed with, instead of adding to, currently existing marketing campaigns and programs. This could have been related to the fact that some stakeholders did not understand that STEP OUTSIDE does not have to be implemented as a separate and stand-alone program and brand. Within an agency, those who did not fully comprehend what STEP OUTSIDE was or how it could be utilized viewed STEP OUTSIDE as a threat to their own programs, efforts, and division, as well as a threat to their program funding. Some personnel may have become defensive of their own programs and budgets when STEP OUTSIDE was introduced to their agency.

Yes, and obviously people need to see what they're getting out of it. If people feel like they're just building a brand, the STEP OUTSIDE brand...they're gonna want to have the NWTJ JAKE's brand out there if they're an NWTJ chapter, and...the STEP OUTSIDE brand is just seen as a competitor from the local aspect. If there is one thing

about the hunting, shooting, fishing and outdoor sports world [it] is [that if anyone doesn't do it the exact way I do it...they're a competitor.] (former partner)

The great thing is there is a way to brand a mentoring relationship.... It's just an easy way to brand existing efforts. The downside is that too many states... [have] already branded so many different programs that there is a competition for those brands.... When we met at the STEP OUTSIDE meeting everyone was for that, but when we left no one really wanted to do that. How do you foster mentor relationships? You can do it many ways, but no matter which way you do it, it's going to involve a lot of hard work by somebody. (former partner)

Lack of Awareness of STEP OUTSIDE and Available Resources

Partners, former partners, and potential partners were not always aware of STEP OUTSIDE's involvement in conferences, as many suggested as an improvement that STEP OUTSIDE be present at regional or national conferences. Some respondents interviewed had not seen any STEP OUTSIDE printed materials at all, while others had seen the materials but did not have the authority or the manpower to implement STEP OUTSIDE. One agency that was currently utilizing STEP OUTSIDE grant money to reach minority groups by holding a fishing event had only heard of STEP OUTSIDE through word-of-mouth. A few partners who currently use or had used some of the STEP OUTSIDE resources had notable trouble locating material on the Website. Respondents mentioned that they continue to discover new materials on the STEP OUTSIDE Website with each new visit.

(Moderator: Why do you think some organizations choose not to participate in STEP OUTSIDE?) Awareness. I don't know that there is a great awareness of what is STEP OUTSIDE and the NSSF. It took me a little bit of digging. (current NGO partner)

I wonder if they could utilize the regional meetings, get themselves a couple of hours on the program...maybe provide examples of how to use this program using a case study approach. (non-partner)

No, I think there were more [materials] we could have utilized. They're a little hard to find. I've had times I had events [and] had a tough time getting to the Website. (former partner)

I think the awareness isn't even there. A lot of times the people who have the ideas to be implemented don't ever receive the STEP OUTSIDE information because it doesn't trickle down. It stays at that top agency head, and then they think it's some new program that's going to cost them a lot of money. They don't understand marketing in general. (current partner)

To be honest, if it wasn't for my direct connection with (name redacted), I would've never seen it. I don't know who within our agency gets it, but it definitely doesn't get to the programming staff, and so I don't know what our agency head thinks of it...[but within our division the wildlife educators, fishing educators, and law enforcement folks—] anybody that's actually out doing hands-on, recruitment and retention—the ones that would actually be asked to implement any of this—none of us had ever seen it. I had seen it years ago so I had always been aware of it...but it's never been from top down that we've seen it. I don't think that's your problem, I think that's ours. Maybe our wildlife people are getting it and they don't communicate. Because I get all of the RBFF stuff. I get that.... We have a conservation and education supervisor...if they can be on the mailing list. And eventually (name redacted) is looking to hire a hunting heritage outreach recruitment/retention—if there is a way that that person can get on the list as well. (current partner)

Difficulty with Implementation

Lack of time, money, and personnel were commonly cited as major drawbacks to implementing STEP OUTSIDE because most viewed STEP OUTSIDE as requiring new or more of these resources or believed it was an entirely new program. There were some within the ranks of an agency who understood differently, but some at the top of the decision-making chain believed that STEP OUTSIDE constituted an entirely new program and, therefore, a budgetary constraint. When agency personnel believed STEP OUTSIDE required additional money, they became protective of their existing programs.

It was observed that agency personnel within the ranks could also become disgruntled if the top decision-makers endorsed STEP OUTSIDE but did not properly budget resources required to successfully implement it (or any other program as well). As one agency leader responded, from a management perspective they had gained the understanding that true success was only possible if managers first and fully gained their personnel's support for a decision to implement something new; or otherwise, they must suffer the consequences of ineffective implementation.

While it seemed that some of the agencies had trouble implementing STEP OUTSIDE as an external program involving its constituents and stakeholders, a couple of agencies had effectively implemented STEP OUTSIDE internally by providing outdoor activities for all agency personnel and/or by specific agency departments. One of the agencies that had effectively implemented STEP OUTSIDE internally had given up external implementation of STEP OUTSIDE after personnel turnover and department reorganization had occurred. This particular state had

dropped the use of STEP OUTSIDE as an externally implemented program as a direct result of turnover and a loss of contact with STEP OUTSIDE's management.

I think we, the agency, are the sticking point. (Moderator: as far as implementation?) Pretty much the whole thing top down, from implementation, from convincing the decision makers that this is useful and no, it's not a very new program, and no it's not all of these things, it's just a tool that we can use to better what we are doing; and I think that is where our stumbling block has been. I think nobody really understands that it doesn't necessarily require you to create a whole new program. It is a means of doing something a little different that you are already doing... Somehow alleviate their fears that it's not requiring new staff and it's not requiring a lot more money—that you'll even help them with some startup money. (current partner)

We are our own worst enemies. We are the ones who have these divisional barriers; we have fishing in one end and hunting and archery at the other end. You are attempting to unite our own divisions, and from a non-profit or sportsmen's organization or sorts, and that's even tougher. The three that have done it well is STEP OUTSIDE, NWTF, and DU—and do a pretty bang-up job in helping us help ourselves... All do grassroots efforts that are pretty exciting to the states. Couple that with your industry relations and their conservation work on the ground, habitat work, and those are just a formula for success. NSSF's credibility, their track record, their industry relations, and their efforts to help us help ourselves are all stalwart. (former partner)

Related to the issue of a perceived competition with STEP OUTSIDE among state branded slogans, those within agencies who liked STEP OUTSIDE and believed it was a good model were sometimes not sure how to incorporate STEP OUTSIDE into their current programs and/or marketing efforts. Other agencies were struggling to define what the agency's programming focus should be, and if the focus should be strictly hunting and fishing or encompass other outdoor activities and programs designed more for the general public.

Partners and former partners expressed a need for increased training from STEP OUTSIDE to increase the understanding of how to implement STEP OUTSIDE and to create longevity. A former partner said that implementation of STEP OUTSIDE should not end simply because of agency personnel turnover.

We would most appreciate... some training or marketing—that would be dynamite. Obviously money is a big deal but... mostly how to utilize the whole process. I think we can get confused. (current partner)

Because we work with volunteers, it is always a challenge to get the word out and for them to understand what is available and how to use the materials. (current NGO partner)

Most agencies seemed to count heavily on NGO's to be active partners in reaching the statewide population by utilizing their volunteer base to host events. Some states may struggle more than others with building working partnerships with the NGO's. One-splash events were all too common among agencies struggling to build NGO partnerships and institute the longevity of STEP OUTSIDE (or generally any event). Agencies and organizations struggled to conduct follow-up evaluations to determine their event's success.

Everyone seemed to fully recognize the importance of follow-up and evaluation; however, most also acknowledged that they did not have any more time to invest in follow-up activity. Those who had conducted evaluations had learned valuable information, such as participation rates and who had attended events. In Arizona, the agency determined that 75% of its event attendees were newcomers. One NGO had a good plan for not only follow-up with event participants but also to provide an incentive for past participants to sign-up for future events and to bring a friend. In one state, if it were not for the agency implementer's own personal efforts to evaluate his youth camps, the agency would have eliminated the camps in a time of tight funding.

Part of the reason we haven't used it is not enough staff. The other reason is more from a marketing or name recognition point of view. Seems like every program we do has a name, and unless we choose to take STEP OUTSIDE and use it as an umbrella it just...maybe fragments our efforts in terms of audience and name recognition...so it's just a question of do we abandon those names and try to get people to understand STEP OUTSIDE as a representative title for all of the public interaction stuff we do here, and we haven't made that choice here. (non-partner)

They're [conservation organizations and local conservation groups] all doing youth events, and what we found was they were all doing the same event—a one-day splash with no follow-up. We saw that as a problem and we saw the STEP OUTSIDE model as a way to solve that, so that's the big way that we've been involved. (former partner)

We were trying to get the stakeholders to utilize the STEP OUTSIDE framework, and we have not had a lot of success in getting them [sportsmen's groups, hunting organizations, hunting clubs] to embrace that. We've branded this, we've had Sharon Rushton organize some meetings, and for whatever reason we cannot get our sportsmen's groups to change their focus from what they've done for the last 30 years. (former partner)

Lack of Recognition—Incentives and Promotions for Partners

Increased information exchange among implementers was suggested, by use of the STEP OUTSIDE newsletter, Website, a listserv, conferences, and meetings, and by providing information on how agencies and organizations were utilizing STEP OUTSIDE. It was helpful for implementers to hear from other implementers what strategies were successful and what were not successful.

The event happened. Our agency got credit with our stakeholders. I got what I needed. I don't gain a lot much more reporting after the fact to STEP OUTSIDE. I know in the big picture you want to know what's going on throughout the country. (Moderator mentions the STEP OUTSIDE newsletter.) What would motivate (state name redacted)—if your newsletter was going to all of our state conservation groups, hunting groups...[There are several hundreds] That's what's going to motivate me in the state agency. Because my stakeholders who buy licenses here in (state name redacted), they are the key ones I want to make happy. (former partner)

Encompassing Multiple Outdoor Sports

Early during the interviewing process, a respondent commented that it could be considered a weakness that STEP OUTSIDE was designed to cover several different outdoor sports and was not specifically tailored for a single sport. However, among respondents there was wide disagreement with this idea. The logic stemmed from the fact that within a particular agency's unique divisions, personnel did not understand that STEP OUTSIDE could be applied across divisions. This issue is closely related to the perceived weakness that many people misunderstand what STEP OUTSIDE is, that it is not necessarily an additional program but is a resource to be used as needed to *assist* in developing unique programs, plans, and events.

So when you're trying to encompass everything, you tend to alienate the people who like to be specialists; and the people who are specialists tend to be your instructors, your teachers. Your die-hard archers want to teach archery. (former partner)

Lack of Longevity

Respondents commented that STEP OUTSIDE was not self-sustaining in funding, training, or a volunteer base. Though all appreciated any financial support they received from NSSF and/or STEP OUTSIDE, they also knew that it was difficult to obtain funding on a regular basis. When personnel turnover occurred, knowledge of STEP OUTSIDE and how to implement its resources were lost. Additionally, maintaining and establishing a volunteer base was a continual process and required continual resources.

Grants can help it get going. For STEP OUTSIDE, there is no sustaining funding mechanism for it. (former partner)

(Moderator: Why do some organizations use STEP OUTSIDE and then discontinue use?) Because they didn't understand what they were really supposed to do; they didn't figure out a way to maintain it once they got it started. (current partner)

POSITIONING STEP OUTSIDE WITH BARRIERS IN MIND

The Agency Culture to Consider

The agency culture to consider in STEP OUTSIDE's market positioning seemed to be a result of state demographics, and agency priorities and organizational structure, as well as agency marketing plans and its knowledge of and attitudes toward marketing. Agencies have differing levels of commitment to hunter and angler recruitment strategies. Although there may be a trend towards increasing attention on recruitment and retention, some states are placing more focus on education, particularly with children. Though there was no direct evidence through the personal interview process, it could be that some agencies in more urbanized states may be more focused on educating children and the general population about the outdoors.

Many respondents across the nation mentioned Richard Louv's work and his recent book *Last Child in the Woods* and agreed with the observations regarding the need to address children's (and their parents') discomfort in the natural world and the need for children to be reacquainted with the natural world. Respondents often described Richard Louv's work as taking on a kind of movement as far as wildlife professionals adopting Louv's observations as their own beliefs and incorporating related organizational goals to improve children's understanding and experience of the natural world.

Several interviewees thought that it might be a good idea for STEP OUTSIDE to incorporate Richard Louv's observation into their model and to adopt a priority of educating children. One participant in particular who had worked for both an agency and also an NGO with a mentor program stated that he would like to see STEP OUTSIDE be a leader in what interviewees termed "the Richard Louv movement."

Some agencies may be dealing with criticism from the public or even their own constituent groups because of their implementation of hunter and angler recruitment programs. Hunters may criticize the agency because of their perceptions that hunter recruitment programs result in overcrowding on hunting lands. However, hunters concerned with hunter recruitment efforts resulting in overly crowded hunting areas may not view *children* as a threat of overcrowding nor as competitors.

We just had a [lead] letter to the editor, that [we] should quit wasting money on recruitment and retention—‘We got too many hunters as it is.’ I think working with the big organizations, the ones that see the big picture—they’ve got good old boys as members, but [the leadership] see the big picture. Increasing our efforts is only to maintain the status quo [with the number of hunters]. Our long-term goal is to maintain. ‘I’m not trying to crowd your spots, I’m just trying to make sure that they don’t go empty in 20 years.’ It is something that the good old boys don’t understand yet. (former partner)

One agency successfully implementing STEP OUTSIDE, Trailblazers, and successfully utilizing local conservation organizations stated that their agency’s goals had been broadened to reach out to non-consumptive audiences to gain the public’s awareness and understanding of the agency, their responsibilities, and their management tools. Reaching out to the non-hunters and non-anglers in the state was seen as a necessity because most of the population does not hunt and does not fish. Also, respondents commonly understood that a person is not typically recruited into hunting or fishing until that person first has a general outdoor experience of some kind. In an effort to both gain agency support and/or potentially recruit new hunters and anglers, the state decided to focus on the general public at large, especially those with no outdoor experience.

Other agencies had simply already branded their own “get outdoors” type of slogan. Some agencies that are already marketing their own brand and slogan may not know that they can incorporate STEP OUTSIDE into their existing brands without diluting the effectiveness of their current marketing plans. Nonetheless, Alabama had their own heavily marketed brand and yet still co-branded some of their events as STEP OUTSIDE events. Alabama was also one of the first states to incorporate STEP OUTSIDE into its agency’s planning strategies when STEP OUTSIDE first began.

We’re looking to get on board with that [Richard Louv movement] in some way here. [Respondent sees it as an opportunity.] We’re going to get the healthy children initiative

wrapped into this as well as all of the environmental organizations...anyone who has an interest or ability to influence young people connect to the outdoors...to see what develops. (non-partner)

We've lost a generation or two that feel comfortable in the outdoors. To give teachers in particular comfort with the content of the outdoors academically and the skills to feel like they could take a class for a walk on the school ground—the outdoor classroom. [However,] the short-term need is to keep the license dollars rolling in. (non-partner)

If...I could recommend that STEP OUTSIDE move in a direction, [it would be] to help boost mentoring programs...I know they are involved with PassItOn... We are working on funding [for mentoring programs], because without funding we're not going to bring Big Brothers Big Sisters to the table. They're just not interested in dealing with guns...(Moderator: Is STEP OUTSIDE'S role to develop a turnkey mentoring program plan?) Yes, it's definitely the direction that I see in the future. It is the one thing that the agency has no experience or expertise in. I think [STEP OUTSIDE has] shown successes in places like Kansas...One of the things that we've noticed is if it is a guy taking a kid with him, he doesn't feel like that is crowding, because they're hunting together, they're not competing with each other. (former partner)

Our emphasis is youth, and the program is geared to all users. Would be nice to have something specific geared to young people—our next generation. Maybe something age-appropriate that we could give to youth who participate in our youth events—stickers, badges, etc. That is very inexpensive. (current partner)

I'm pretty comfortable at this point, feeling good about [our] partnerships. I think that there is certain flare-ups more in the political arena...how to approach this or that; but from a kid's standpoint, a youth standpoint, we're all pretty much in the same boat there, and all recognizing that working together is the best way to accomplish it. (current NGO partner).

I think we need to build a big tent. I think that is part of this children's and nature network that is getting attention out there now, and I think it is an opportunity for STEP OUTSIDE to play a role in that movement. (current NGO partner)

[There is] a growing ground swell of interest in getting kids outdoors, [and there are] opportunities for leadership in bringing all of these efforts together, and I'd like to see the NSSF play a big role in this, especially with their STEP OUTSIDE program. (current NGO partner)

I personally like the whole one-on-one mentoring part of it. That is definitely, to me, the only way we are ever going to get new people in the field—is for somebody personally to share an experience. So I really like that part of it. That is a really hard sell to agency heads because they see that as a lot of effort to get the big numbers. (current partner)

So I'm looking for the silver bullet, and Boy Scouts to me seems to be a real opportunity. (current NGO partner)

[STEP OUTSIDE's major focus should be] helping [the agencies] build a good marketing program statewide, nationwide probably. It's not a huge burden. In fact, it's a huge help. (current partner)

We do know that we need to be reaching out very strongly to the traditional and the nontraditional audiences. There could be a role there. (non-partner)

The Non-Governmental Organization Culture to Consider

Other NGO's may see STEP OUTSIDE as a competition to their own events and especially their own identities and branding. NGO's, like all partner types, were also concerned that they would not be properly recognized by STEP OUTSIDE for their partnership efforts.

[It] would also be nice if we could have banners printed with both the [STEP OUTSIDE] logo and (name redacted) logos to make it a true partnership. Our chapters would use more if it had a (name redacted) logo. (current NGO partner)

I think the bottom line is to really, really highlight the mentoring and taking someone new out to do these activities, which NSSF has done well before the slogan or the process. I think that that is by far the best selling point. (current NGO partner)

(Moderator: What should be the most important focus for STEP OUTSIDE, in terms of support for your event planning?) Wow. The hunter as conservationist. That message to me is really strong and really not very well understood. Gun safety and responsible gun ownership. (current NGO partner)

The Industry Culture to Consider

Agencies do not criticize industry and retailers but see them as mostly profit and short-term oriented. Most respondents did not have an opinion as to how STEP OUTSIDE could work within the culture of a profit-oriented industry.

A Summary of Considerations for Market Positioning

State agencies may have very different short-term objectives depending on their constituency base, their funding sources and levels, and the public's awareness of their efforts. Some states are recognizing the importance of non-consumptive users and the need to extend their reach to the general public. Though this research cannot confirm it, an increased emphasis of educating children and the public about nature and the outdoors may be more prevalent in more urbanized states and even more of a priority than hunter and angler recruitment efforts; and while it could

be that some states are increasing their interest in educating children and the public about the natural world, others may be more dedicated to developing mentorship-type programs.

It seemed that most states were often working to both develop new partnerships and maintain existing partnerships with NGO's and other local organizations to enable statewide reach. Partnership development was important for all agencies in creating and maintaining a volunteer base for outdoor events and programs. States that were interviewed that seemed to be quite successful at developing and/or maintaining these valuable partnerships were California, Ohio, and Alabama. Other states appeared to not necessarily struggle with building good relationships and communications with NGO's but appeared to struggle with developing partnerships for joint projects with NGO's.

COMPARISON TO OTHER PROGRAMS

STEP OUTSIDE was frequently compared to Archery in the Schools, particularly that Archery in the Schools was easily replicated and easy to follow. There was a comment made suggesting that STEP OUTSIDE, along with other nationally based programs such as Trailblazers, may have a harder time taking root on the state level for two reasons: partly because it is more difficult to create a package of materials to be used effectively on a local and activity-specific level and partly because of a lack of endorsement at the state level. Compared to Archery in the Schools, Archery in the Schools was believed to inherently have a competitive advantage because it was originally created at a state level and endorsed by a state director, is activity-specific, has a captive audience, and has a readily available volunteer base. A couple of states seemed to be in the process of realizing a benefit with involvement with the Trailblazers program and its focus on inviting Boy Scouts to participate in events.

It's hard for a national program to meet regional needs sometimes...They [other programs] probably target more specifically the audiences served and provide them with more regional or local information. This is where a more flexible program within [STEP OUTSIDE] or NSSF could work on a more regional basis. (current NGO partner)

Some states are also working on refining their own unique marketing campaigns and programs. Though these state agencies did not know how to incorporate STEP OUTSIDE into their own

efforts, they were not against implementing the model in some fashion if it could be demonstrated to them how it could benefit them and how they could utilize it.

And sometimes that's their perception, 'You mean, I've got to fill out paperwork and mail it in?' So that's something that I hear a lot. They want a turnkey operation, and I think that a model that has been extremely successful [here] and in other places is the Archery in the Schools program because it is a tightly wound package. How do you implement it? Well, we need three things: equipment, and here's where you buy it...training, we'll train the people, here's the training regimen—and that's a huge step getting teachers to come and do the training. And [thirdly] there's a benefit there for the people who are doing the training because they get continuing Ed. credits. Why it [has] been easy to implement? It is because it really is turnkey. It doesn't take me any more than two minutes to explain what the program consists of to anybody and how to implement it. How do we re-create that turnkey nature where it feels like a prepackaged deal that's easy to implement and that isn't creating more work for us, it's actually making it easier? (former partner)

We just got an Archery in the Schools coordinator, and it went the same way as STEP OUTSIDE. Someone conceived it at the state level, they did it successfully at the grassroots in their state and then grew it nationally and so, that's a good formula. The ones that begin nationally and then try to come to the states meet with some resistance...the two examples are Trailblazers and STEP OUTSIDE. They don't meet with resistance in terms of philosophy. What they meet with is 'Oh great, another thing on my plate.' With Archery in the Schools, as with STEP OUTSIDE, they addressed the need—[and] boy, everyone kind of jumped on that bandwagon. Roy Grimes was the deputy director at the time and that kind of spoke volumes to the rest of the states in terms of peer pressure. Their executive management is involved. And then the number two thing, they had your great evaluations and data and so the formula for success was laid out for the rest of us. And now with that success and the training we are hiring day-to-day coordinators; in fact, we are hiring ours next week. I think [STEP OUTSIDE is] going to need to take the same step. It's a great idea and really the right idea. I think Arizona is hiring a hunter recruitment and retention coordinator. That's the way to go, because that is more of the STEP OUTSIDE piece. It's more than just hunting. (former partner)

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Agencies and NGO's are on board with the STEP OUTSIDE model and agree that the most effective way to recruit newcomers to the outdoor sports is for those with outdoor experience to invite someone to go hunting, target shooting, shooting with a bow, or fishing. Constituents agree that inviting others to participate is not only the way to create new participants but to create conservationists and increase understanding of wildlife management. Partners and potential partners agree with and believe that STEP OUTSIDE's model of inviting someone to participate in an outdoor sport is on track with recruitment and retention efforts to build mentoring relationships and programs.

STEP OUTSIDE began as a program designed to be utilized as a marketing tool, and as a research-based model for encouraging hunters, shooters, archers, and anglers to take non-participants with them into the field for a one-on-one experience. After several years of implementation, however, STEP OUTSIDE is challenged by an evolution in its implementation, its communications regarding what it is and is not, changes in partnering organization and agency personnel, and competing programs on both the national and state level.

Although STEP OUTSIDE was originally designed to be implemented as a marketing tool or resource to help strengthen recruitment and retention efforts, this evaluation suggests that much of the implementation of STEP OUTSIDE has become *event-oriented* rather than *marketing-oriented* and has become viewed more as a *program* that competes with other programs than as a *resource*. This is a subtle yet distinct difference, and it is important to evaluate whether this change was conscious or a shift that happened as a result of on-the-ground implementation.

One of the reasons this directional change in implementation could have occurred is because planning for and conducting an event may have appeared to be a more tangible, and a more easily measured goal than creating and measuring a marketing strategy and its success. Also divisional structures differ among the state agencies, and while information and education divisions can exist as a separate division within an agency, the information and education functions can be shared throughout an agency across divisions. These structural differences have perhaps contributed to the difficulty in implementing the marketing aspect of STEP OUTSIDE

versus planning an event with a clear beginning and a clear end. Furthermore, for those states that have utilized STEP OUTSIDE resources to create their own state level programs and campaigns, some may now believe that their state level programs and campaigns compete with STEP OUTSIDE.

STEP OUTSIDE can encourage new partnerships and continue existing partnerships with these state level programs by stressing its benefits, that it can bring to the table what the agency needs and what the state level program does not have: *expertise* in recruitment and retention as well as substantial *research* that can be utilized to help gain support for the agency's efforts. Positioning itself as the national expert and national information base creates a strong incentive for states to be involved with STEP OUTSIDE. Secondly, STEP OUTSIDE should track how STEP OUTSIDE is implemented across the nation, demonstrate how STEP OUTSIDE can be partnered with state level programs, and share stories of implementation. Lastly, STEP OUTSIDE should offer use of its brand and logo together with other brands and logos to reinforce that STEP OUTSIDE is a partnership.

Since STEP OUTSIDE's inception, other programs have also been initiated on a national level that to the audience, are quite similar or not easily distinguishable from STEP OUTSIDE. The most notable of these is the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation's Angler Legacy program that seems to have successfully positioned itself as a marketing tool. However, none of these other programs share the core concept of STEP OUTSIDE, to assist with strengthening retention and recruitment programs by simply communicating to hunters, shooters, archers, and anglers the importance of taking non-participants into the field for one-on-one experiences. This core concept of STEP OUTSIDE is an important and unifying concept among partners and potential partners and is STEP OUTSIDE's foundation. The STEP OUTSIDE concept that defined the original model and that contributed to its original success still holds true today, and by refocusing STEP OUTSIDE back to its original concept and clearly communicating its core purpose to its audience, it will rediscover its niche and role today.

STEP OUTSIDE EFFECTIVENESS

- **Constituents agree with and believe that STEP OUTSIDE's model of inviting someone to participate in an outdoor sport is the best way to recruit newcomers.**
- **State agencies identified with the STEP OUTSIDE model as a mentoring -type model and viewed this as very positive for STEP OUTSIDE.**
- **An important and unifying concept for STEP OUTSIDE to regain momentum is the nationally shared belief that sportsmen at the grassroots level are the key to preserving the traditional outdoor sports for the future.**

Almost all of the respondents interviewed reported favorable reviews of STEP OUTSIDE management and administration. Agencies as well as NGO's seemed to have great confidence in NSSF's ability to bring partners together, and they continue to view NSSF as a leader. Partners and potential partners fully support STEP OUTSIDE's original model and agree that it is especially on track with many current recruitment and retention efforts aimed at building mentoring relationships and programs.

STEP OUTSIDE should emphasize that it is the national expert and information resource on recruitment and retention and the application of market research that will encourage sportsmen and non-participants to plan time together outdoors participating in the traditional outdoor sports. Constituents understand that to create a sportsman the most effective model to follow involves mentorship that begins when a participant and a non-participant take to the field. State agencies identified with the STEP OUTSIDE model as a mentoring-type model and viewed this as very positive for STEP OUTSIDE.

I personally like the whole one-on-one mentoring part of it. That is definitely, to me, the only way we are ever going to get new people in the field—is for somebody personally to share an experience. So I really like that part of it. That is a really hard sell to agency heads because they see that as a lot of effort to get the big numbers. (current partner)

MARKET POSITIONING

- **STEP OUTSIDE is a *continuing reminder* to sportsmen to invite others to participate and a *continuing reminder* to encourage partners and potential partners to spread this concept to constituents and sportsmen.**

- **Focus STEP OUTSIDE's role as *the* national expert and *the* information source for encouraging sportsmen at the grassroots level to ask someone to participate in hunting, shooting, archery, and fishing.**
- **Move away from referring to STEP OUTSIDE as a program. Effectively communicate what STEP OUTSIDE is and how an agency or organization can benefit by being involved**
- **Focus STEP OUTSIDE's goal to be a *partner* to the agency's or organization's efforts.**
- **Focus and market to any given STEP OUTSIDE audience (agencies, NGO's, and industry/retailers) *why* it is important to encourage and introduce newcomers to hunting, shooting, archery, and fishing, using the motivational messages tested.**
- **Consider streamlining STEP OUTSIDE by developing sample materials and applications of marketing designed for a single activity, specifically for hunting, shooting, archery, and fishing.**
- **STEP OUTSIDE can take advantage of the current high interest in getting kids into the outdoors (e.g., develop and brand a STEP OUTSIDE KIDS type of marketing effort with materials and logos designed specifically for kids' events).**
- **Consider the feasibility of encouraging non-participants to ask participants to take them hunting, target shooting, shooting with a bow, and fishing (e.g., this is the other half of the STEP OUTSIDE equation).**
- **Consider marketing directly to hunters, etc. (i.e. Place tear-out information cards and advertisements in hunting and fishing regulations books nationwide showing STEP OUTSIDE research concerning inviting participants.)**

The core concept of STEP OUTSIDE, to communicate to hunters, shooters, archers, and anglers the importance of taking non-participants into the field for one-on-one experiences is an important and unifying concept among partners and potential partners. STEP OUTSIDE should emphasize that it is not a new program and how it can benefit partners and be utilized to strengthen current programs and efforts, whatever their specific focus may be. Currently, STEP OUTSIDE focuses on those with outdoor experience inviting non-participants to try traditional outdoor sports. However, STEP OUTSIDE should also consider the reverse, the feasibility of

also targeting non-participants to ask sportsmen to take them to the field, as this is the other half of the STEP OUTSIDE equation.

Additionally, Richard Louv, author of *Last Child in the Woods*, struck a chord in many agencies regarding the need for increased outdoor experiences and outdoor education for children due to a shared belief that many children (and their parents) are uncomfortable in an outdoor setting. STEP OUTSIDE could stand to gain a great deal of coverage by capitalizing on this possible movement within agencies to focus on educating children and the general public about the natural world and a parallel national effort for increasing physical fitness in children.

PROMOTIONAL AND MARKETING MATERIALS

Material Content and Organization

- **Make sure that STEP OUTSIDE informational pieces consistently tie together the one core concept and theme of STEP OUTSIDE.**
- **Remember that many of those who are on-the-ground implementers do not understand marketing or its importance.**
- **Communicate how STEP OUTSIDE resources and partnership can boost mentoring or other programs and how the application of market research will encourage sportsmen and/or non-participants to plan time together outdoors participating in the traditional outdoor sports.**
- **STEP OUTSIDE should develop a new product line to refocus and add freshness and excitement to the program and keep it up-to-date, including a simplified version of the guide for partners that is organized by activity type (hunting, shooting, archery, fishing) versus by strategy type.**
- **Develop all materials keeping in mind that it is easier for partners and potential partners to find and utilize resources if organized by activity type.**
- **The Website should be reorganized so that it is easier to locate the available resources.**
- **Materials should be updated and reflect current dates (e.g., the host registration form in the one-on-one booklet says “You’ll receive a free token of appreciation if you register by Dec. 31, 1999”).**

- **Newsletter content should include case studies on recruitment and retention efforts, STEP OUTSIDE benefits and implementation, examples of any evaluation efforts, and national research on recruiting and retention strategies.**

Messages and Branding

- **STEP OUTSIDE should offer use of its brand and logo together with other brands and logos to reinforce that STEP OUTSIDE is a partnership and is not impeding use of other brands and logos.**
- **Tailor promotional materials to NGO's using keywords such as "increased membership base" and the motivational messages already researched to which hunters, shooters, archers, and anglers respond, depending on the organization's primary focus.**
- **Tailor promotional materials to agencies using keywords such as "recruitment and retention" or "mentoring."**
- **Stress messages that show the benefits of introducing someone to the outdoor sports. Specific messages that resonate with various audiences have already been tested and developed for STEP OUTSIDE by Responsive Management.**
- **Utilize the marketing messages that resonate with partners: that STEP OUTSIDE is a resource to assist with increasing an agency's constituent base, to assist with increasing an organization's membership, and to assist with potentially increasing the number of new volunteers to help with future activities.**
- **Utilize the messages that resonate with sportsmen: that hunters carry on the tradition and heritage, that making time to be with family and friends is important to hunters and shooters, that anglers spend quality time outdoors with family and friends, etc.**
- **Utilize and market the research on kids' participation in outdoor sports to encourage cooperation and partnerships for youth events.**
- **Develop and brand a STEP OUTSIDE KIDS type of marketing effort with materials and logos designed specifically for kids.**

Distribution

- **Increase information exchange to help states understand how to benefit from STEP OUTSIDE resources and partnerships.**
- **Increase coverage of who is implementing STEP OUTSIDE and its success and failures so others can learn from experience. (The coverage would further encourage partnerships and involvement with STEP OUTSIDE.)**
- **Create and designate a listserv (similar to AREAtalk) for all those involved with education and outreach efforts and outdoor skill coordinators that also highlights STEP OUTSIDE usage nationwide. (Use of listserv membership can bolster interest in STEP OUTSIDE.)**
- **In addition to capturing hardcopy and electronic mail list information through host and group registrations, identify and add all information and education and outdoor skill leaders in each state by using directories and also capture mail list information through sign-ups at conferences and meetings.**
- **Increase awareness of STEP OUTSIDE by paying special attention to the newsletter distribution to ensure that it covers the “top-down” of agencies and organizations and considers personnel turnover. (Sometimes people who make decisions about program implementation are in the field.)**
- **Increase awareness and advertising regarding STEP OUTSIDE’s participation in national and regional conferences.**
- **Increase awareness of the Website and the utility of tools available on the Website (by using hardcopy and electronic mailings).**
- **Consider the use of electronic mail in reaching the hundreds of NGO’s, NGO chapters and smaller stakeholder groups *throughout* the states to promote needed partnerships with state agencies.**

Every piece of promotional material produced and distributed should clearly communicate in layman’s terms STEP OUTSIDE’s original concept of encouraging participation in the traditional outdoor sports through personal invitations. STEP OUTSIDE should consider reworking its promotional materials to communicate that: 1) it has the national expertise, informational resources, and research to assist with the agency’s or organization’s efforts, 2) it

can demonstrate to the agency or organization how to incorporate market research for successfully encouraging sportsmen to invite non-participants out into the field, and 3) there are benefits to the sportsmen's community as a whole for being involved with and/or partnering with STEP OUTSIDE.

STEP OUTSIDE should consider giving a fresh look to the research that it has to support its original model, "31 million men and 17 million women who have never been target shooting would accept an invitation to go," and any other supporting research on record, and the messages that motivate hunters, anglers, archers, and sport shooters to invite a newcomer (e.g., "making time to be with family and friends" is an important message to encourage hunters to ask someone to go hunting; "being outdoors with family and friends is a great way to spend quality time with them" is a message that motivates anglers to invite someone fishing; and "making time to be with family and friends is important to you" is a message that encourages archers to invite someone to target shoot with a bow).

After reworking promotional materials, STEP OUTSIDE should consider focus on increasing the overall awareness of STEP OUTSIDE and what it is. Many suggested that STEP OUTSIDE be present at regional or national conferences, indicating that perhaps a mailing prior to the conferences to the key individuals would increase awareness of STEP OUTSIDE's involvement with the conferences. The STEP OUTSIDE newsletter and printed materials were clearly viewed as quality work; however, not all of the key implementers within an agency may be receiving the newsletter. Some respondents interviewed had not seen any STEP OUTSIDE printed materials at all, while others had seen the materials but did not have authority or the manpower to implement STEP OUTSIDE. One agency that was currently utilizing STEP OUTSIDE grant money to reach minority groups by holding a fishing event had heard of STEP OUTSIDE through word-of-mouth.

Finally, agency personnel indicated that they would like to see how other states have benefited from STEP OUTSIDE and case studies on how agencies and organizations are utilizing recruitment and retention strategies; they want to know both what has worked and what has not worked. Increasing exposure of state activities in the STEP OUTSIDE newsletter, Website, a

“STEP OUTSIDE AMERICA” type listserv, and at conferences and meetings will provide recognition to those on the ground implementing recruitment and retention techniques. This exposure not only outlines the benefits of being involved with STEP OUTSIDE but also encourages others to become involved.

EVALUATION AND FOLLOW-UP SUPPORT FOR PARTNERS

- **Having partners evaluate their own efforts will provide STEP OUTSIDE with an evaluation of itself (however, shorter-term impacts can be measured after STEP OUTSIDE distributes its revamped materials by watching its Website counts and monitoring phone call quantity, etc.)**
- **Within STEP OUTSIDE training materials, event evaluation forms should be highlighted as an important element to success and for avoidance of one-splash events. STEP OUTSIDE is a solution to one-day splashes.**
- **Provide the incentives for why partners should evaluate, what they will get out of the evaluation, how important it is to their future, and how, if organized properly, it can take little of their time—the cost is less than the benefit.)**
- **The newsletter could feature examples of how implementers used evaluation and/or follow-up. (This also provides valuable recognition for implementers.)**

One-splash events were all too common among agencies struggling to build NGO partnerships and/or struggling to conduct follow-up evaluations to determine event success. Those who had conducted evaluations of their STEP OUTSIDE and/or outdoor activity events had gathered and learned valuable information, such as the names and contact information of who attended the event (including demographics), the effects the event had on continued participation, and the demand for future events. These evaluation results could provide powerful examples and incentives to other implementers if STEP OUTSIDE incorporated them into a newsletter and shared the information with other implementers.

TRAINING ON HOW TO USE STEP OUTSIDE

- **Develop “train the trainer” materials that are well-focused and user-friendly.**
- **Some on-site training may be necessary for some time, once the STEP OUTSIDE model is refocused and streamlined, to train agency personnel how to utilize the new and simplified resources; however, the long-term goal should be to move away from conducting one-on-one trainings on-site to focus on efforts with national reach, such as the creation of STEP OUTSIDE promotional and informational materials.**
- **Considering the importance of NGO involvement, it may be beneficial for STEP OUTSIDE to work more heavily on promoting and training national NGO’s on how to institute chapter-level models that demonstrate how to conduct an event with a state agency and how to use available STEP OUTSIDE resources.**

Training materials should be organized in a fashion to be easily located and interpreted. Partners and former partners expressed a need for increased training from STEP OUTSIDE to increase its longevity. Increasing the understanding of how to benefit from STEP OUTSIDE by providing new materials will greatly assist in meeting the partners’ and potential partners’ need for training. Reorganizing the partner’s guide to be increasingly user-friendly may in itself provide the “train the trainer” material.

Consider giving NGO national headquarters focused attention when creating promotional materials and/or training materials to enable a replication process that can be endorsed and started at the national level and implemented down to the chapter level. Training both NGO key leadership as well as agencies reinforces partnerships and partnership potentials between local NGO chapters and state agencies.

...training and assistance with marketing. If there is some training for me that can help make the training stronger and we’ve done a little bit of that informally, but financial support is a big one, for (name redacted) to make this long-term viable and grow the program, that was a big thing for us. (current NGO partner)

STEP OUTSIDE AS TURNKEY

- **Promote that STEP OUTSIDE is not a *program* but is a nationwide informational set of *resources* for encouraging agencies, organizations, and sportsmen to invite a non-participant to try a traditional outdoor sport.**

- **Provide easy step-by-step instructions for incorporating the various resources available from STEP OUTSIDE and make them easy to follow and demonstrate how to maintain involvement, (e.g., conduct evaluations).**
- **Provide easy step-by-step instructions for growing the concept among constituents through agencies and organizations.**
- **Make the requirements for reporting a STEP OUTSIDE event simplified and easier.**

Agencies and even industry representatives were looking for a solution to take them beyond the one-day splash events or to create cohesion among their efforts. STEP OUTSIDE can offer a solution and a benefit by reinventing itself as a model or design to perpetuate a partner's plan to increase participation in the traditional outdoor sports. Having the STEP OUTSIDE audience rediscover STEP OUTSIDE is the first step. The second step is to show clear examples of low-maintenance implementation of STEP OUTSIDE resources and research into existing efforts, programs and campaigns. Training materials should be available as self-explanatory and widely applicable documents that can be easily replicated throughout an agency, NGO, or other sportsmen's group that is a partner or a potential partner.

Many who were using the STEP OUTSIDE model were not necessarily trained or knowledgeable about marketing or recruitment and retention research. The original STEP OUTSIDE partnership guide has many different components and applications of the model. Reorganizing and bookmarking the partners' guide content by activity type, will more easily gain a potential partner's attention to the tools available for introducing newcomers to each activity type. A streamlined partnership guide divided by each constituent group (hunters, shooters, archers, and anglers) will probably be easier for partners and potential partners to use and to understand.

All printed materials (including the Website) and particularly the partners' guide need to be organized in a fashion enabling on-the-ground implementers to copy and paste the sections that will assist them the most. (An example would be to have sections divided by activity type and repeat information in each section to keep it tailored: repeat information such as, for example: an event checklist, sample advertisements, sample market messages used and common methods

of use, how to make an event a STEP OUTSIDE partnership, incentives for participants, examples of sample evaluations conducted, and case stories.) Keep the partner's guide as simple as possible and show examples of how to use it and easily replicate a particular application or process.

RECOGNITION AND INCENTIVES FOR PARTNERS

- **Incentives for an agency's or an organization's partnership come in the form of recognition of their efforts (i.e. public name recognition is a significant motivator).**
- **Make it easier to report events so that STEP OUTSIDE can share experiences, share ideas, and thereby increase motivations (e.g., listserv, hardcopy or electronic newsletter, or Website).**
- **Grant amounts are not as important as the knowledge that assistance is available, that grants are available.**
- **Promote that there are incentives (e.g., grants) for incorporating STEP OUTSIDE and increase awareness of an easy application process using promotional materials.**
- **Include write-ups in the newsletter, listserv, or Website on how agencies and organizations are using grant funds that will encourage others to apply and also give media coverage for the partners/implementers.**
- **Increase the incentives for reporting STEP OUTSIDE events and resource usage (recognition, etc.).**
- **Special rewards could be given for successful use of funds (e.g., a matching small grant if certain criteria are met).**
- **Refocusing and promoting what STEP OUTSIDE is and that it is based on scientific research and is easy to implement and maintain, will encourage others to become partners.**

NGO's, like all partner types, were also concerned that they would not be properly recognized by STEP OUTSIDE for their partnership efforts. Financial assistance in the form of small grants (defined as \$2,000 or less at a national level) to be used for equipment, etc., can help with this because grants can launch a new program or event and, therefore, encourage stakeholder/partner participation. There is a great opportunity for NSSF, with small grants, to motivate NGO's to

host events, as well as to work with agencies to host events and to assist with bridging the gap between agencies and NGO's. An increased understanding of STEP OUTSIDE within agencies themselves will also assist with reaching NGO's because agencies often coordinate events and work to partner with local NGO's.

Emphasize shared missions where possible. Some organizations do not have the quality materials that [STEP OUTSIDE] can provide. Also stress shared Website links and potential of grant funding. (current NGO partner)

Incentives and financial support are most helpful because we pass them on to our chapters. (current NGO partner)

Reporting requirements for registering a STEP OUTSIDE event should be simplified and/or the incentives for reporting should be made greater (e.g., increase exposure of the event in the newsletter, on the Website, and through electronic mailings to target audiences; a matching grant for completing an event that was filled to capacity—e.g., if \$1,000 was granted for equipment purchases, after the event is registered and reporting requirements are fulfilled, an additional \$1,000 could be awarded). Reporting guidelines might include completing the event registration form, sending in photos of the event in exchange for publicity via the newsletter, and stories and/or quotes from event participants. Though evaluating STEP OUTSIDE's success by tracking hunting and fishing license sales or tracking firearm purchases may be difficult, a key part of STEP OUTSIDE's evaluation may be conducted by measuring the number of STEP OUTSIDE events registered and reported.

Be more flexible if possible—there are opportunities throughout the year to fund some significant events and provide more sponsorship if the program guidelines and administration were more flexible. (current NGO partner)

I think the way to improve...is to make it feel less bureaucratic. Make reporting easy, make the tool kit—dumb it down to the lowest common denominator. Not everyone has read all of the journals on recruitment and retention data. Agency people can implement it well but were not the ones implementing it generally—it's our stakeholder groups. (former partner)

PARTNERSHIPS WITH THE OUTDOOR INDUSTRY

- **Position STEP OUTSIDE as the national expert and research information clearinghouse on introducing newcomers to the outdoor sports and marketing related events.**

- **The outdoor industry will be more motivated to utilize STEP OUTSIDE’s philosophy of introducing newcomers if STEP OUTSIDE is delivered as a turnkey operation that is very easy to utilize.**
- **The effects of STEP OUTSIDE on sales must be promoted heavily and understood by the outdoor industry in terms of how much each additional hunter, shooter, archer, or angler spends on equipment each year (i.e. each additional hunter recruited to the sport is worth \$XXX dollars in equipment expenditures annually).**
- **Another incentive for the outdoor industry to become a partner is that STEP OUTSIDE can provide the retailer/wholesaler broad name recognition on a national level (e.g., through use of the hardcopy and electronic newsletter, listserv, Website, etc.).**
- **Perhaps experiment with getting involved with Outdoor Expos in states participating in such events.**

Again, positioning STEP OUTSIDE as *the* national expert and information clearinghouse on introducing newcomers to the outdoor sports would be a key marketing point for the outdoor industry. STEP OUTSIDE could gain a great deal of coverage by creating a partnership with the Weatherby Foundation and Outdoor Expos that are geared towards reaching a broad market segment that includes hunting, shooting, archery, and fishing, and have many different outdoor activities for the entire family. Partnerships with the Outdoor Expos and vendors could be a very good place to reach newcomers. Promotional materials to the outdoor industry should be brief and highlight STEP OUTSIDE’s national expertise and research findings such as those from the brochure “A Recruitment Program Designed to Benefit Your Business.”

ABOUT RESPONSIVE MANAGEMENT

Responsive Management is a nationally recognized public opinion and attitude survey research firm specializing in natural resource and outdoor recreation issues. Its mission is to help natural resource and outdoor recreation agencies and organizations better understand and work with their constituents, customers, and the public.

Utilizing its in-house, full-service, computer-assisted telephone and mail survey center with 45 professional interviewers, Responsive Management has conducted more than 1,000 telephone surveys, mail surveys, personal interviews, and focus groups, as well as numerous marketing and communications plans, need assessments, and program evaluations on natural resource and outdoor recreation issues.

Clients include most of the federal and state natural resource, outdoor recreation, and environmental agencies, and most of the top conservation organizations. Responsive Management also collects attitude and opinion data for many of the nation's top universities, including the University of Southern California, Virginia Tech, Colorado State University, Auburn, Texas Tech, the University of California—Davis, Michigan State University, the University of Florida, North Carolina State University, Penn State, West Virginia University, and others.

Among the wide range of work Responsive Management has completed during the past 20 years are studies on how the general population values natural resources and outdoor recreation, and their opinions on and attitudes toward an array of natural resource-related issues. Responsive Management has conducted dozens of studies of selected groups of outdoor recreationists, including anglers, boaters, hunters, wildlife watchers, birdwatchers, park visitors, historic site visitors, hikers, and campers, as well as selected groups within the general population, such as landowners, farmers, urban and rural residents, women, senior citizens, children, Hispanics, Asians, and African-Americans. Responsive Management has conducted studies on environmental education, endangered species, waterfowl, wetlands, water quality, and the reintroduction of numerous species such as wolves, grizzly bears, the California condor, and the Florida panther.

Responsive Management has conducted research on numerous natural resource ballot initiatives and referenda and helped agencies and organizations find alternative funding and increase their memberships and donations. Responsive Management has conducted major agency and organizational program needs assessments and helped develop more effective programs based upon a solid foundation of fact. Responsive Management has developed Web sites for natural resource organizations, conducted training workshops on the human dimensions of natural resources, and presented numerous studies each year in presentations and as keynote speakers at major natural resource, outdoor recreation, conservation, and environmental conferences and meetings.

Responsive Management has conducted research on public attitudes toward natural resources and outdoor recreation in almost every state in the United States, as well as in Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and Japan. Responsive Management routinely conducts surveys in Spanish and has also conducted surveys and focus groups in Chinese, Korean, Japanese, and Vietnamese.

Responsive Management's research has been featured in most of the nation's major media, including CNN's *Crossfire*, ESPN, *The Washington Post*, *The Washington Times*, *The New York Times*, *Newsweek*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and on the front page of *USA Today*.

Visit the Responsive Management Website at:
www.responsivemanagement.com