

Hello Development Committee:

As you probably know, the TREE Fund is about to embark on an ambitious drive to increase our endowment rather substantially.

The quiet phase of this program has begun already with very promising results.

Some key points for us committee members are the following (as taken mostly verbatim from an e-mail to the Trustees from our CEO, Eric Smith):

1. At our last board meeting, the TREE Fund implemented a procurement action to engage a strong independent contractor to guide us through a Feasibility Study -- a crucial step before we "go public" with our plans to build our endowment between now and 2020. (This feasibility study also includes a "wealth" study.) Before we announce any grand program we want to have some idea of the likelihood of success.

Following a competitive process, we selected and have engaged CCS Fundraising, a national leader in nonprofit development work, see: <http://www.ccsfundraising.com/>. They are an international fundraising consulting firm with marked experience in environmental protection and conservation.

2. A core value of CCS's model of engagement is to begin by soliciting perspective from our inner-most circle of supporters, advocates, friends and stewards. We (and they) believe that the more interviews conducted during the feasibility study process, the higher the likelihood that we will emerge with actionable, accurate information. We have provided CCS with a list of 85 TREE Fund constituents, with a goal of interviewing at least 60 of them before mid-November.
3. CCS's model of engagement is based on providing "embedded" staff support through the study process. Accordingly, one of their experienced operatives, Paige Azuma, will be our CCS Liaison between now and our December board meeting. She will be conducting these interviews. Be prepared to hear from her.
4. Eric has expressly urged all interviewees to be as candid and blunt as they can. cf. "So please be honest, complete, and blunt in your assessments of what we seek to achieve, and whether we have the resources and team required to deliver it. If I need to make management changes to get this work done and achieve the strategic goals you have set before me, I need to know that up front . . . and this feasibility study is a core element of that evaluation for me."
5. **Eric has also asked CCS to join one of our Development and Communications Committee calls in October/November, so several of you will also chat with Paige at that time. That conference call is scheduled to occur on Tuesday Oct. 18<sup>th</sup>, between 12:00 and 1:00 pm central time. Stay tuned for call information.**
6. Further down the road .... Sometime after the December board meeting, the Trustees will establish a steering committee which will take on a number of duties implementing the recommendations from CCS that are approved by the Trustees. Some members of the Development Committee will be on that steering committee. **This is when our work will begin.**

That might be enough of a heads up for now. If you have any questions or thoughts, please get back to me. Brian Sayers [bwsayers@roadrunner.com](mailto:bwsayers@roadrunner.com) 716-570-3966

Brian