



Case Study:

Sustain Our Great Lakes, A Public-Private Partnership

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Organizational Profile: Foundation and Corporate Giving Program

How this program connects to the five-point leadership agenda of *Increasing Impact, Enhancing Value*:

- 1. Create a new narrative for corporate philanthropy as an investment in society.**
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- 4. Improve collaboration, communication, and knowledge sharing.**

What problem or issue were you trying to overcome? What was the ultimate objective?

The Great Lakes are among the most important natural resources in the world. Providing drinking water for 35 million people, the basin also serves as habitat for more than 200 globally rare species. The Great Lakes hold more than 20 percent of the planet's fresh water and, in addition to providing critical ecological services, supports significant economic value for shipping, manufacturing, tourism, and outdoor recreation.

Because water is so critical to shipping raw materials and finished product and to the steel manufacturing process, ArcelorMittal recognizes the value of the Great Lakes to its operations and to the communities in which its employees reside. Thus, ArcelorMittal sought to play a proactive role in restoring and sustaining this valuable natural resource.

What strategies, tools, and resources were used to address this issue and achieve the goals?

While the Mittal and Arcelor corporations were merging to form the world's largest steel manufacturer, a program had been established in 2006 to support the habitat and ecosystem-restoration goals developed through the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration (GLRC). The GLRC encouraged federal, state, and local governments, tribes, and other stakeholders to work together to develop a strategic plan to restore and protect the Great Lakes ecosystem. Five federal agencies teamed with the nonprofit National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and in 2007, ArcelorMittal joined the collaborative as the sole private funder, with an initial

financial commitment of \$2.1 million, to form the Sustain Our Great Lakes program. The mission of Sustain Our Great Lakes is to sustain, restore, and protect the fish, wildlife, and habitat in the Great Lakes Basin.

Five primary reasons drove the decision for ArcelorMittal to partner: (1) funding would be leveraged 3 to 1 through the program; (2) the corporation would continue to maintain hands-on participation, while learning from the federal agencies' ecological expertise; (3) the corporation would have an opportunity to benefit from National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's administrative capabilities; (4) the corporation would gain visibility to environmental NGOs and other stakeholders that ordinarily would be minimally accessible; and (5) corporate involvement legitimized the program's efforts, and the federal involvement legitimized the corporation's efforts. This helped build the new ArcelorMittal brand and reputation while establishing and strengthening local stakeholder relationships.

Identification of solution

- Restore Great Lakes—maintain as valuable resource
- Practice good environmental stewardship
- Address reputational issues from legacy companies

Implementation of solution

- Identify right partner(s) to legitimize efforts
- Leverage minimal financial resources for greater impact
- Ensure focus and strong communications
- Drive toward results and continual assessment (self and of partners/grantees)

What were the outcomes for the business and society, and how were they measured?

The program has achieved significant on-the-ground results and strengthened conservation capacity and directly supports public administration goals of the United States and Canada. The positive reputation of the program has led to additional government funding through federal appropriations, even as other government funding has decreased. Involvement with the Canadian government and environmental NGO community has been strengthened. In addition, the program supports economic and housing stability, reduces health and safety risks, and creates jobs across the basin.

From 2006 to 2011, Sustain Our Great Lakes awarded 103 grants worth \$20.6 million. Grantees matched this funding with an additional \$21.8 million for a total conservation investment of \$42.4 million. Sustain our Great Lakes has demonstrated that a public-private task force of this size and composition is optimum for accomplishing our objectives.

Describe the business investment.

ArcelorMittal initially committed \$2.1 million over three years. That figure now totals \$4.2 million. Individual participants include soil experts, biologists, environmental experts, grantmakers, and communication and strategy experts. Each person brings something unique to the table that adds significant value.

What advice would you give a grantmaker faced with a similar opportunity?

- We were concerned we didn't have enough environmental technical education to evaluate grants as a peer with our federal partners, but we quickly discovered that we knew what questions to ask, and we have learned a tremendous amount from the environmental professionals that partner with us.
- Getting started was much easier than we expected. National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, as an unbiased third-party nonprofit, negotiated the partnership and continues to manage the complexities of funding sources and ensure we address multiple objectives. We quickly learned that, despite our differences, everyone shares many common goals and works very well together.
- Look for unlikely partners. In our partnership, for example, one arm of the Environmental Protection Agency is our regulator. But being open to new and different partners enabled us to build significant capacity internally and for Great Lakes beneficiaries. Many thought this was simply a "pass through" program for funding, but it is so much more and is recognized by Congress and local NGOs and constituents for its effectiveness in having public and private organizations work collaboratively to drive results and measure impact.