

2015  
2020  
STRATEGIC  
PLAN





# 2015 2020 STRATEGIC PLAN

## MISSION

Conservation Strategy Fund's mission is to sustain natural ecosystems and human communities through strategies powered by conservation economics. CSF's trainings, analyses, and timely expertise make development smarter, quantify the benefits of nature, and create enduring incentives for conservation.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



2015  
2020  
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PLAN

For over 15 years, Conservation Strategy Fund (CSF) has been making a unique contribution to global conservation. Through intensive economic trainings and targeted analyses, we have accomplished dramatic environmental victories and have helped to achieve widespread acceptance of economics' role in conservation. CSF analyses have reduced impacts of big infrastructure projects, strengthened protected areas, and helped sustainable businesses succeed. Our courses have equipped over 2,000 people with an ability to better understand and articulate the economic benefits of conservation and sustainable development. CSF's accomplishments were recognized in 2012 with the MacArthur Award for Creative and Effective Institutions.

CSF is still a small organization pursuing a strategy that is applicable on a large scale – to conservation challenges worldwide. This five-year strategic plan establishes conservation targets for CSF and charts a path for organizational growth, taking into account the changing landscape of conservation, the areas where our approach can yield the greatest results and the generic challenges of institutional development.

# CONSERVATION TARGETS

CSF will concentrate our work in four program areas. In choosing these target issues we focus on conservation challenges where an economics-based approach has the potential to have significant impact. That means focusing on industries that are both destructive and economically inefficient, where there is significant demand for ecosystem services, and where well-presented data has the power to change minds. While climate stability is not one of the explicit targets, it's a product of, and enabling condition for, all four of them. Therefore, specific climate benefits will guide our choices in all four target areas.



## SMART ENERGY + TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Provide economic analyses and trainings for advocates and key decision-makers to ensure that large-scale energy and transportation infrastructure projects provide net benefits for nature and society



## PROTECTED AREAS

Provide economic analyses to support the effective design and management of protected areas, prove their value, support their expansion and increase their funding



## INCENTIVES FOR THRIVING LANDSCAPES

Provide incentives for conservation through training and analysis on land-use economics, land-use policies, and sustainable business plans



## OCEANS + FISH

Protect and recover fish stocks by building the economics capacity of resource managers and decision-makers and to design fisheries management strategies and marine protected areas

# GEOGRAPHIES

Priorities for geographic expansion will be based on potential for impact, a favorable institutional landscape, operational logistics and availability of funding. CSF will prioritize expansion into Indonesia, Mexico, the United States, and the Northern Andes in the near term. Additional areas will be explored, including Southern and Eastern Africa, China, and the Himalayas.

## TRAINING

We plan to roughly triple our number of annual course graduates to around 750 by expanding our network of training partners and implementing online learning. Successful 2014 courses run by training partners in Mexico and Bhutan demonstrated the potential for partners to help scale the CSF model. We are working with Duke University to develop online curriculum that will reach a broader audience and complement in-person courses. A series of CSF-produced video lessons has launched to an enthusiastic reception and will be expanded and deployed through the period. Additionally, CSF will continue to train influential financial and governmental institutions through custom in-house courses, which were first piloted in 2013. CSF will expand our successful Conservation Economics Fellows Program to two additional regions to build the corps of young economic analysts involved in conservation. Finally, we will streamline our course delivery process and require partial tuition contributions from most students to reduce CSF's net cost per participant by 25 percent.

## ANALYSIS

CSF will expand our economics toolkit and strive for more impact from each study. Over the next five years, we will invest in the skills of our existing staff so that our cost-benefit analyses, valuations, business plans, experimental economics and policy analyses remain robust. We will expand our skillset to include energy economics, geographic information systems (GIS), and economic impact analysis. To improve the studies' impact and timeliness we will shorten project timelines to six months wherever possible, and will focus more attention on providing results directly to decision-makers. To reach the broader public we will increase our use of both new (video) and traditional (academic journals) channels. In the coming years we will also begin to allocate staff time to policy and management advisory work, serving CSF graduates who hold important decision-making positions.

## INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

To lay the foundation for growth and improved management, we will make strategic additions to our leadership, staff, board, as well as to project management, communications and fundraising capacity:

- Segment the executive role into managerial, technical, and fundraising positions
- Add junior and mid-level analysts to respond quickly to opportunities for impact.
- Build a staff of 30 by 2016 and 50 by 2020, supported by a budget of \$6 million.
- Expand the Board of Directors, adding fundraising, regional and technical expertise.
- Install an effective project management system.
- Sharpen communications of policy-relevant findings and program impacts.
- Focus fundraising on institutions best aligned with CSF's approach and conservation goals.



# INTRODUCTION



**Conservation Strategy Fund** delivers a uniquely linked program of training and applied economic analysis to help environmental advocates, natural resource managers, and policy-makers identify and pursue conservation strategies that make economic sense. Our trainings have helped over 2,000 people from more than 700 organizations and nearly 90 countries to protect wild places and vital natural resources. CSF alumni include senior leaders of conservation organizations, directors of national parks, officials from environmental ministries, and representatives from international donor agencies. Our courses change the way these leaders approach their work and provide them with tools to achieve conservation success.

CSF's analyses have likewise had remarkable impacts over the years, leading to the conservation of over 20 million acres worldwide and influencing more than \$20 billion of development investment. Our accomplishments were recognized in 2012 with the MacArthur Award for Creative and Effective Institutions.

**CSF is one of the only organizations that I know of that has an integrated mission between economics and conservation.**

- Hannah Fairbank, USAID

Since our creation in 1998, CSF has grown from a one-person operation to a staff of 25, offices in four countries and myriad projects in Latin America, Africa and the Pacific. During this time we have seen dramatic changes in the global economic landscape and in the conservation community's use of economics. We are poised to build on our successes with a sharp awareness of the changes around us and the challenges of smart institutional development.

## VISION

Environmentalism requires a 100-year vision to account for of the inevitable change that our planet will see in the coming decades. Already, greenhouse gas concentrations are roughly 400 parts-per-million in the atmosphere, threatening coral reefs with bleaching and forests with disease.<sup>1</sup> Pressure on ecosystems continues to grow as population climbs towards nine or ten billion by 2050 and per capita wealth and standards of living rise.<sup>2</sup>

Amid these worrying trends, there are reasons to be optimistic. Human population may peak within the next few decades, renewable power may soon be cheaper than fossil fuels, and intact ecosystems are still vast, various, and in some cases becoming more robust, not less so. At some point in the next century or so, a situation of stabilized, even diminishing pressure on nature and natural resources is possible, even realistic. In the meantime, humanity will navigate climate change, species loss, food and water shortages, and human conflict over scarce resources. The great question of our times is whether the planet will be in a state to recover ecologically when the pressure on our natural resources is finally relieved. Conservationists must play a leading role in deciding the outcome.

Our vision is of a 22nd Century marked by resurgence of the Earth's biota, enabled by the resilience that smart, committed people create in the next few decades. Many different skills are needed to shift humanity onto a better trajectory. These include political, persuasive, artistic, scientific, engineering, and, yes, economic know-how. People don't destroy nature because they don't like it. There are real tradeoffs between wild nature and the provision of immediate human needs. There are also failures of our market system, such as open-access and externalities, which put individual decisions at odds with total social wellbeing, even in the short-term. It takes economic skills to diagnose these problems and advocate for workable solutions.

## THEORY OF CHANGE

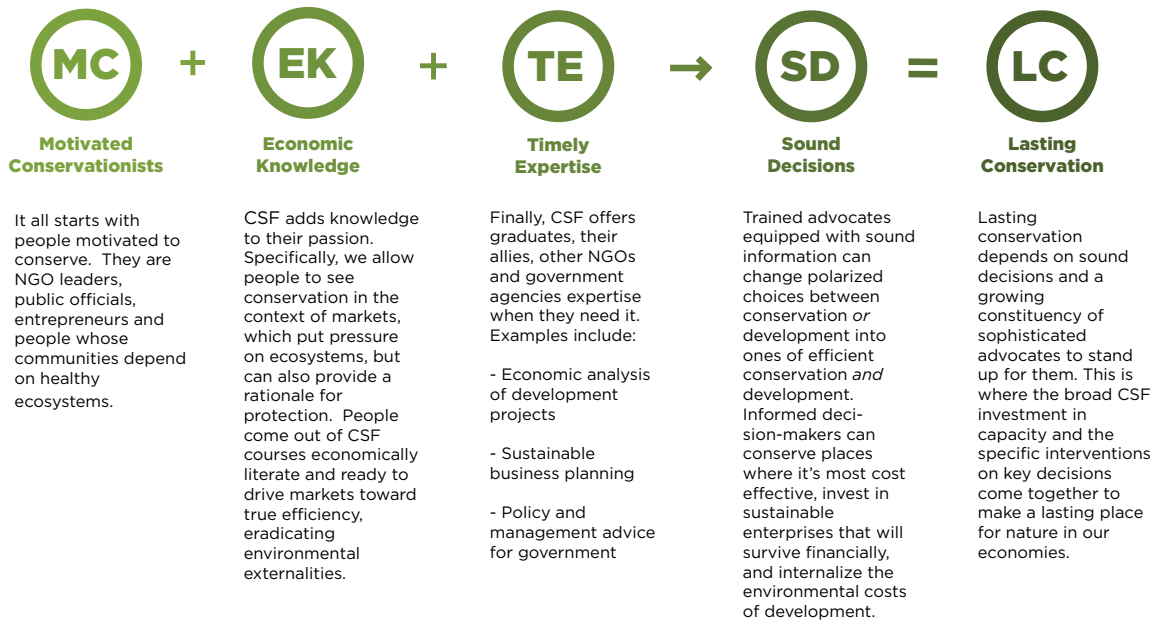
Our theory of change starts with leveraging people's existing commitment to the environment. Passion for nature, or at least concern for it, is often the underlying driver for change, the spark that gets society to a tipping point of support for nature. Passion is difficult to teach in the classroom, so CSF primarily aims our programs at the already-passionate and concerned, providing them the tools to make good decisions and strategies. We give them economics knowledge through our trainings, and timely expertise through our analysis, advisory, and Fellows programs. At the same time, we know that well-informed decision-makers, even if they are not environmentalists, will make better environmental decisions with better information, so our strategy embraces this broader community as well.

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<sup>1</sup>Stocker, T.F., Qin, D., Plattner, G.-K., Tignor, M., Allen, S.K., Boschung, J., Nauels, A., Xia, Y., Bex, V., and Midgley, P.M. (2013). Summary for Policymakers. In: *Climate Change 2013: The Physical Science Basis. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Working Group I Contribution to the IPCC Fifth Assessment Report (AR5)* (Cambridge University Press, New York.)

<sup>2</sup>United Nations (2014). Probabilistic Population Projections based on the World Population Prospects: The 2012 Revision. Population Division, DESA. ST/ESA/SER.A/353. <http://esa.un.org/unpd/ppp/>

**Figure 1: Conservation Strategy Fund's Theory of Change**



## WHY CSF?

Conservation Strategy Fund occupies a space between conservation practice and academic economics, precisely because the two rarely overlap. Like a university, we teach and do research, but focus exclusively on real-world conservation opportunities. The competitive environment CSF faces has become more active since we first opened our doors, thanks in part to the broad acceptance of economics' role in conservation. Now universities do research on deforestation, consulting firms provide analyses to conservation NGOs and foundations, various institutions offer environmental economics courses, many NGOs have built economic expertise, and the advent of online education presents new challenges and big opportunities for any organization in the teaching business.

Amid these competitive forces, demand for CSF's courses, Fellows program, and analyses continues to surge. We combine strong analytics, with a constant focus on real problems. Further, the unique combination of our trainings and analyses allows us to have immediate impact, channeling high-quality research through authentic personal connections with local organizations.



# CONSERVATION TARGETS

To focus on the most productive conservation opportunities, CSF is concentrating our work around four program areas with explicit targets. In choosing these areas CSF has evaluated our potential for positive impact on forests, reefs, rivers and other biologically rich ecosystems, and reflected on years of first-hand experience with the issues. We have identified issues where there are economic inefficiencies that can be remedied, where there is demand for environmental benefits, and where well-presented data has the power to change minds. Climate stability is not one of the explicit targets, but a product of, and enabling condition for, all four of them. For example, conservation of forests and coastal habitats such as mangroves is necessary to sustaining a livable climate, and climatic conditions will determine the fate of these ecosystems over the next century. Therefore, specific climate benefits will guide our priorities on the ground in all four target areas.

- o **Smart Energy and Transportation Infrastructure** – Provide cost-benefit analyses and trainings for advocates and key decision-makers to ensure that large-scale energy and transportation infrastructure projects provide net benefits to nature and society
- o **Protected Areas** – Provide economic analyses to support the effective design and management of protected areas, prove their value, support their expansion, and increase their funding
- o **Incentives for Thriving Landscapes** – Provide incentives for private and community conservation through training and analysis on land-use economics, land-use policies, and sustainable business plans
- o **Oceans and Fish** – Protect and recover fish stocks by building the economics capacity of resource managers and decision-makers to design fisheries management strategies and marine protected areas



## SMART ENERGY + TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

**Rationale** - Infrastructure investments in remote areas can transform landscapes and watersheds, unleashing irreversible, destructive change. Projects' impacts vary considerably and their approval is dependent on small groups of public decision-makers. Investments, especially remote roads, are often economically inefficient and usually have unnecessarily large environmental and social impacts. These characteristics – variable quality, concentrated decision-making, economic flaws and design shortcomings – add up to a big conservation opportunity, one in which good economic analyses can

be influential. CSF's Smart Energy and Transportation Infrastructure program provides training to conservationists and decision-makers, as well as comprehensive cost-benefit analyses of infrastructure projects, such as dams and roads. Keen understanding of these projects at multiple levels of society will result in better decisions and large-scale conservation gains.

### 2020 Program Goals

- Ten energy and transportation infrastructure projects that threaten globally or nationally important ecosystems are stopped or changed.
- Four institutions that approve and finance large-scale infrastructure projects adopt standard practices that reflect a more comprehensive understanding of the impacts of these projects. Further, these standards are being used to change the nature of the infrastructure projects being proposed and financed.

### Project example

CSF's 2009 study of the proposed BR-319 road through the Brazilian Amazon showed that the project would return only 6.5 cents for each dollar invested. Written by course graduate and staff member Leo Fleck, CSF's report was widely circulated and instrumental in bringing BR-319 to a halt and keeping millions of acres of forest intact.



## PROTECTED AREAS

**Rationale** - Protected areas are the cornerstones of conservation; they are the places where the full functioning of ecological processes is allowed to occur, with benefits that spill out into the surrounding seascapes, landscapes and communities. But protected areas are under constant pressure to demonstrate their economic value and have thus suffered reductions in area and levels of protection. Conservation can be accomplished by showing the affordability and substantial benefits of protected areas. CSF's Protected Areas program provides training for park managers, advocates and inhabitants, as well as economic analyses including revenue strategies, financing plans, economic valuation, and economic impact analyses to support the effective design and use of parks and reserves. CSF envisions a world where policy-makers understand the value of protecting the planet's most biodiverse marine and terrestrial ecosystems, a world in which protected areas are well-funded, well-managed, used by the public, and expanding.

### 2020 Program Goals

- 1 million additional hectares of protected areas have been established, in either marine or terrestrial environments.
- The trends of park degazettement and degradation have reversed in at least one major

country or region.

- 20 protected areas have secured substantially higher levels of funding
- 20 protected areas have successfully implemented management plans that allow for the responsible use of these areas by businesses and people. As a result, unregulated use has diminished, ecological value has improved, and sustainable revenues to the parks or protected areas have increased.

### **Project example**

A 2001 CSF tourism study with course graduates Ezekiel Dembe and Joseph Kessey in Tanzania's national parks agency showed that changes in pricing could increase revenues without reducing visitors or aggravating crowding at the most popular sites. Increased revenues allowed for the creation of three additional protected areas in the country.



## **INCENTIVES FOR THRIVING LANDSCAPES**

**Rationale** - The Incentives for Thriving Landscapes program helps design, test, and evaluate land use policies, subsidies, compensation schemes and sustainable business plans that can support the adoption of conservation practices in economic sectors that depend on healthy terrestrial ecosystems. Forests, grasslands, farms and river systems support a wide range of economic activity and human communities around the world. When landowners face the right incentives, conversion and degradation of natural landscapes can be dramatically reduced. In order to accomplish these goals, the underlying economics must be understood and harnessed, whether through policy-driven incentives or unlocked business opportunities.

### **2020 Program Goals**

- Three countries have adopted policies that create incentives for conservation, such as payments for ecosystem services or the internalization of environmental costs (e.g., compensation or mitigation policy).
- Three countries have adopted policies that remove perverse incentives for overexploitation or have made notable investments in the enforcement of existing policies.
- Five businesses designed around the sustainable use of natural resources have significantly expanded their operations, improved profitability, and/or increased their conservation impact.



### Project example(s)

On Manus Island in Papua New Guinea, CSF course graduate Theresa Kas worked with a local community to conduct a cost-benefit analysis comparing clearing the forest for farmland and preserving it for traditional subsistence use. The findings were clear; traditional uses made more economic sense for the community. This assessment led to the protection of 250,000 acres of forest reserves across several communities.



## OCEANS + FISH

**Rationale** - Oceans and coastal environments are home to tremendous biodiversity, provide food to over a billion people, and livelihoods for hundreds of millions more. But fisheries are common-pool resources and therefore subject to systematic overexploitation. Economic analysis, in combination with sound biological assessments, can help create the political will and technical knowledge to implement strong fisheries management (or co-management) systems, marine protected areas, and ocean infrastructure that maintain the economic value of fisheries and oceans over the long term. CSF's Oceans and Fish program provides training for local resource managers and targeted economic analyses to guide public investments and policy decisions.

### 2020 Program Goals

- Key decision-makers in three priority fisheries and/or marine regions have changed their approach to fisheries management
- Sustainable fisheries management plans are in place in 10 priority fisheries, with stocks recovering and local communities reaping a larger percentage of the economic benefit.
- Sustainable tourism activity is thriving in three priority coastal regions thanks to the adoption of resource management plans driven by sound economic analysis.

### Project example

CSF is currently working in partnership with course graduate Tiare Holm and the government of Ngardmau State in Palau to conduct a value-chain analysis of the sea cucumber. Sea cucumber is the second-highest-valued export from Pacific waters, but is in steep decline due to over-fishing. CSF's analysis will show the potential revenue generation of a sustainably managed sea cucumber fishery, which should help Ngardmau State develop an effective management plan for this fishery.

# GEOGRAPHIES

CSF has done trainings or research in nearly twenty countries, with a strong focus in Latin America, especially tropical South America. Our offices are in Brazil, Peru, Bolivia and the US and most of our recent work has been in those countries, as well as Ecuador, Mexico, Micronesia, Uganda, DRC, Nepal and Bhutan. We plan to continue our engagement in the Amazon, while expanding geographically to other priority regions. Our criteria for expansion consider governance, CSF's graduate network, the importance of ecosystems, availability of funding, and operational logistics.

Through 2020, we will prioritize expansion to Indonesia, Mexico and the US and will formalize our incipient presence in Colombia or Ecuador. We will also explore Central America, Southern and Eastern Africa, Nepal and Bhutan, other Pacific Island states, and China as potential areas for expansion in the coming years.

# HOW WE DO IT: INTERVENTIONS

Drawing lessons from dozens of courses, analyses, and years of trial and error, CSF will make key moves to improve the quality, strengthen the impact, and increase the scale of our work. In addition we plan to shift greater focus to a third category of intervention: economics and policy advisory work.

## TRAINING: ECONOMICS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERSHIP

CSF's training program equips people with a solid understanding of economic tools and an ability to identify opportunities to apply them. CSF's courses involve intensive immersion and are taught by experts who understand real-world conservation challenges. Our trainings have enabled professionals from more than 700 organizations and nearly 90 countries to protect ecosystems more effectively.

**The CSF course  
changed my world.**

- Laura Rodriguez,  
Environmental Defense Fund Mexico

In 2013, CSF launched the Conservation Economics Initiative (CEI) to improve the efficacy of our trainings and make them more broadly available. We are working to scale up by equipping partner organizations to deliver courses, launching online courses and materials, and reducing our net training cost per student. At the same time, we will expand our successful Fellows program and our in-house trainings, and increase our engagement with our alumni network.

- **Training partners network** – A core element of our CEI initiative is to develop a set of regional training partners who are equipped to deliver CSF's curriculum. In 2014, CSF piloted this strategy with courses run in partnership with the National Autonomous University of Mexico and the Ugyen Wangchuck Institute for Conservation and Environment in Bhutan. We are targeting a total of five accredited training partners by 2020.

- **Online courses and lessons** – CSF will experiment with both online and hybrid in-person/online certificate courses with Duke University as part of the CEI. A successful online curriculum will provide valuable reinforcement for students as well as a cost-effective alternative to in-person courses for a segment of our market. In parallel, CSF is producing short video lessons modeled on the Khan Academy approach as on-demand refreshers for graduates, curriculum for current students and resources for the broader public.

- **Expand our in-house trainings** – CSF will scale up our in-house trainings for conservation and development institutions. In-house trainings involve partnerships with critical decision-making institutions and offer us of the opportunity to tailor conservation economics training for entire professional teams. We aim to run at least six in-house courses for at least three institutions annually by 2020.

- **Expand the Fellows program** – CSF’s Conservation Economics Fellows program selects 10 to 15 young economists per year from the tropical Andes and mentors them on conservation-focused research projects. The program delivers policy-relevant, technically rigorous research and enlarges the economics talent pool for key regions. Our current Fellows have presented their papers at international conferences. We will expand the program into two new regions over the next few years.

**The Bank’s transport specialists and economists were really excited after the course and, as a result, asked about developing conservation guidelines for our loan programs in the sector. This is just the kind of outcome we were hoping for.**

- Michele Lemay,  
Inter-American Development Bank

## TARGETED ECONOMIC ANALYSIS

While building the conservation movement through training is a critical long-term strategy for achieving sustainable management of the planet’s natural resources, there are many short-term issues that require targeted, high-quality economic analysis. We apply the following criteria in deciding which projects to undertake:

- Analysis has the potential to impact decisions relevant to ecosystems
- Local communities can use the information to inform conservation policy
- Strong partnerships are in place or possible to develop
- Open discussion and debate is possible within the prevailing political environment
- CSF technical staff is available to conduct or support the analysis
- Data is available or possible to gather within a reasonable budget and timeframe
- There are opportunities for innovation
- Overall, CSF can add value to the issue at hand



Over the next five years, CSF will invest in our own capacity to conduct a wider range of analyses, refine our ability to select work that will contribute to our conservation priorities, and expand our ability to reach key decision-makers at the right time.

- **Investment in analytical capacity** – CSF will continue to invest in staff capacity in analysis tools we already use: cost-benefit analysis, opportunity cost analysis, ecosystem valuation, sustainable business plans, experimental economics and econometrics. We will also add staff capacity in GIS and strengthen our access to sector (i.e., energy) expertise through strong relationships with external specialists.

**CSF's ability to apply the power of economics to conservation challenges and to bring that toolkit to practitioners around the world is unique. No one else is bringing those tools to the fight.**

- Jason Cole,  
Margaret A. Cargill Foundation

- **Screening projects for success** – CSF's Technical Committee will convene monthly to review all prospective engagements to evaluate their likelihood of conservation impact based on our past experience and the criteria listed above.

- **Improving timeliness and communications** – Most of CSF's historic successes were the result of getting CSF's analyses into the right hands at the right time. Our project management protocol will require a communications plan and we will target project completion within six months unless seasonal data are required.

## ECONOMICS AND POLICY ADVISORY WORK

CSF staff members have been asked by government officials, often course graduates, for advice on conservation policy in countries including Peru, Bolivia, Uganda, and Brazil. Currently, we field these requests in an ad hoc way and do not actively promote our ability to provide policy guidance. However, policy design is one of the most direct ways to contribute to conservation, and CSF plans to actively pursue this area of work in the coming years.

# OPERATIONS

## STAFFING

CSF currently has a staff of 25 spread across six offices in four countries, with a chief executive who oversees all aspects of the organization. To lay the foundation for growth and improve management, we will segment the executive role into managerial, technical, and fundraising positions, held by a Program Director, Technical Director and Executive Director, respectively. Spreading leadership responsibility is also intended to create options for succession from the leadership by the Founder.

To support the anticipated workload cost-effectively, CSF will recruit early-career analysts and training coordinators, distributed throughout our geographic focus areas and overseen by seasoned analysts and training managers. The technical and leadership teams will be matched by a superb, though lean, accounting and administrative staff. CSF plans to grow our full-time staff to 30 in 2015 and 50 by the end of 2020.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

CSF has a robust governance board that has successfully guided the organization for 15 years. For the next phase of growth, an expanded board will add depth primarily in fundraising while increasing regional and technical expertise. We plan to expand the board from five members to between seven and 10, with new member selection prioritizing respected leaders from the fields of conservation, philanthropy, and economics who are enthusiastic about CSF's growth trajectory. Priority will also be placed on new representation from the regions where we work.

**CSF punches  
above its weight.**

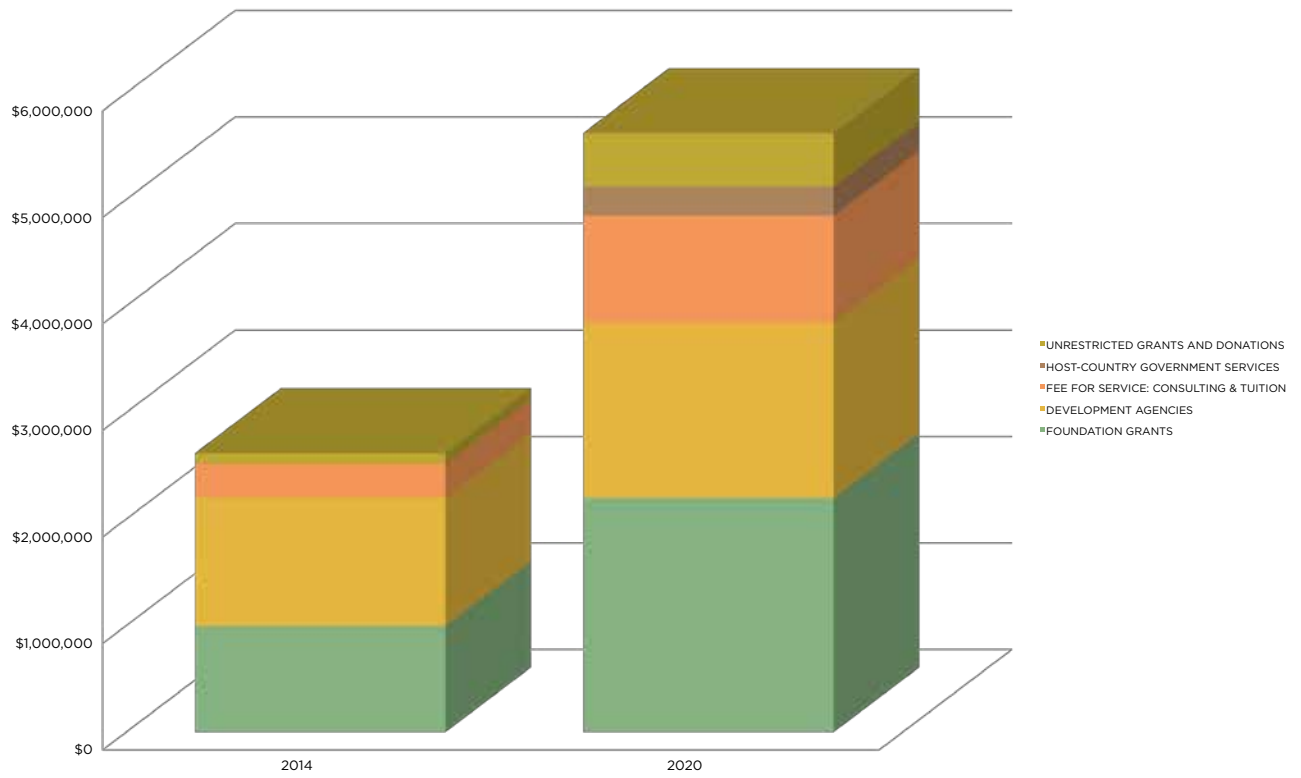
- Jennifer Morris,  
Conservation International

## FUNDING

To achieve the goals outlined in this strategic plan, CSF will require revenue of \$5-6 million by 2020, up from \$2.7 million in 2014. We will focus on the institutions best aligned with the technical nature of our work and our profile as funding recipient. Leading among these are foundations and development agencies. Within these categories there is ample room for diversification; to date CSF has worked largely with one development agency, USAID, and with a small group of US foundations. There is also room to bolster our financial resilience with consulting and tuition revenues once we have become established in a region and built relationships with important conservation and development institutions. Host government revenue will also be explored via our local offices. Finally, a crucial infusion of unrestricted private donor support on the order of 10 percent of total revenue will round out the funding picture.



## REVENUE PROJECTIONS







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