



2011 Transforming Local Government/FCCMA Conference



Case Study Application

Case Study Title: *"Gemino!" Multiplying your local effort.**
(How Alachua County (FL) turned \$32 million into \$90 million worth of land and \$180,000 cash into \$1 million worth of land stewardship)

* This was the spell used in the Harry Potter series of books to multiply objects.

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SYNOPSIS

Alachua County's Land Conservation Program (Alachua County Forever) is well-known for its ability to leverage OPM... **Other People's Money**. Most people are only aware of the acquisition successes; and justifiably so. To date, the County has leveraged two dollars of OPM for each dollar of local tax spent on the acquisitions. Less well-known is its success leveraging land stewardship dollars. For the last few fiscal years, the County, using its resource-management budget as seed money for grants and its staff for coordination, was able to leverage \$1 million in stewardship costs (Table 1). Almost five dollars returned in OPM for every General Fund dollar invested.

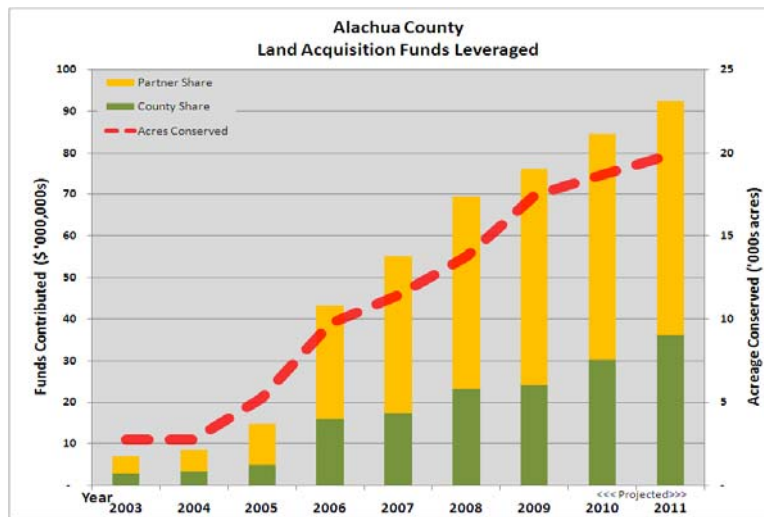


TABLE 1	Offsets	Partners' Expenditures	Total
FY2008	\$71,690	\$412,917	\$484,607
FY2009	\$142,053	\$52,088	\$194,941
FY2010	\$166,306	\$144,843	\$311,149

Note: **Offsets** are avoided costs to the County by using volunteers etc. **Partners' Expenditures** means these are real expenditures by our management partners on jointly owned lands thus minimizing the County's expenditures.

With acquisition partnerships, it's simple; you just take advantage of the many available grants and work with federal, state and regional partners on mutual acquisition opportunities. In some cases we lobby the Legislature, partner agency governing boards and staffs to create those mutual opportunities. There is however, much less stewardship funding available. You have to be more creative, more innovative and more courageous to leverage your stewardship effort. We have negotiated agreements with the St. Johns River Water Management District, Suwannee River Water Management District, Florida State Park Service and the City of Gainesville to manage sites where they have only marginal increases in their stewardship costs. This is because either they own and manage adjacent lands or have the capacity to manage the site because of its location.

Innovative too are the County's use of License Agreements -- special grants of authority -- with neighbors, hunters, previous lease-holders and tenants to continue their care and stewardship of the property on the taxpayers' behalf. The current caretakers for the County's Barr Hammock Preserve have served in that capacity since the 1970s when it was owned by Rayonier Timber Corporation as a silviculture property. In exchange for continuing certain hunting privileges, they maintain the trails, remove feral hogs, clear downed trees, and act as site rangers advising County staff of any potential issue that needs more formal action. They act as independent contractors, with their own liability insurance and the County is not liable for any Worker's Compensation claims. Their benefits are obvious: they continue to use and care for a property in which they have had a personal stake for 40 years. The risks to the County to adopt this tool took





some courage on the part of the Commission and staff. The Commission had to accept the independence of the licensee on County property; un-supervised and free-lancing, with the potential for damage and injury. The staff had to accept the same risks although they are more concerned about licensees damaging sensitive areas.

Since 2008, the Program hosted almost 1,500 hours of Community Service Worker effort and 2,600 hours of volunteer group efforts at special events – often on weekends – to pull weeds and exotic plants, clear trash, blaze trails and re-plant native vegetation. It is especially gratifying to see the diversity of groups that approaches us to volunteer their time and become stakeholders in preserving our natural heritage. We have worked alongside the Trinity United Methodist Church, the University Of Florida Warrington School Of Business and the University of Florida Society for Hispanic Professional Engineers. Each has “adopted” a site and we call on them as the need arises to assist us take care of these community assets.



The Program is building a Volunteer Conservation Corps allowing staff to match interested groups and individuals to tasks and sites. As a University town, there is no shortage of volunteers willing to work in the woods and we have been lucky to find skilled workers who can work on recreational infrastructure. This bridge was designed and built by staff and a local craftsman. The combination of donated time and salvaged materials saved 50% of the cost of the bridge.



We also strive to salvage and make use of materials that may otherwise be disposed of. The bench at the left was constructed from the invasive exotic Camphor Tree. Staff utilizes this abundant invasive into all types of preserve infrastructure that provides ecological and fiscal savings. It makes use of a nuisance species, avoids the extraction of virgin resources required for the fabrication of a traditional park bench, it saves us the cost of buying new benches, and it provides us an opportunity to communicate to the public about resource efficiency and non-native invasive species.

One of the technological innovations that assist the County in finding opportunities was the [purchase of a site license for ECivis, a powerful grant-searching tool](#) that a user can customize and receive alerts on applicable grants. The County allows community groups and non-profit partners to create accounts and search for grants thereby attracting additional funds using non-County resources to search for and apply for the grants. There are other grant-

eCivis changing the way you view grants
GRANTS NETWORK - NEW AND UPDATED GRANTS
Hello!
Your email includes:
01 News Headlines
08 New Grants
00 Updated Grants

News Headlines 1 headlines (For full details on a particular headline, click on its Title and log in.)
[The Ferguson Group Releases June 2010 Report](#)

Featured KnowledgeBase Content (Featured publications from GRI KnowledgeBase are provided as a courtesy to all Grants Network subscribers. The featured item is available for a limited time and rotated regularly. Click the title to log in and view the publication.)
[Green Initiatives: How to Turn Your City Green With Pride in 2 Years](#)
In 2005, the Conference of Mayors unanimously endorsed the U.S. Mayors' Climate Protection Agreement, an initiative in which participating cities committed to cleaner living and strived to influence state and federal governments to pass "Green" programs and policies. This publication identifies the many changes and Green accomplishments that those cities have achieved since that conference, while providing examples of projects that interested cities can pursue.

New Grants 8 grants posted on 08/04/2010 (For full details on a particular grant, click on its Title and log in.)

GN Code	Grant Title	Agency	Actual Funds	App Due	Added
FD3141	Borjlik-Stanton Foundation (Colorado) - FY 2010	FD Foundation	Unspecified	10/29/2010	08/04/2010 (Multiple)

The purpose of this program is to strengthen the effectiveness, sustainability, and impact of organizations who seek to advance excellence in the law.



searching packages available that may better serve the same function depending on the needs of the local government.

Ultimately to be successful, an organization has to demonstrate Five Leveraging Competencies: a sound knowledge of many legislative mandates to identify opportunities; familiarity with their particular organizational processes and values; forging and maintaining viable relationships with key people at the partner agencies or in the community; persistence when dealing with outside bureaucracies; courage to adopt or adapt local processes and procedures to take advantage of new opportunities.

If selected, Alachua County proposes to bring a panel of experts and practitioners to the conference that will provide participants with a 360-degree perspective on land conservation leveraging. It will be made up of two County employees; the Program Manager and the County staff person most involved with organizing volunteer help. They will discuss marshalling the talents of unskilled and semi-skilled volunteers from the perspectives of setting up the mechanisms and navigating the Risk Management, Legal and Contractual mazes, as well as dealing with the talent on Work Days. The panel also features the Directors of two of the County's most important acquisition partners; the St. Johns River Water Management District and Florida Communities Trust. The SJRWMD is also our most important governmental stewardship partner and has shouldered over \$500,000 of stewardship costs on jointly-owned lands. Their perspective as to what makes a successful partnership with local government will make for an insightful conversation. The fifth panelist, Mr. Hutchinson, is the Director of a local land trust. He brings several perspectives; an ex-County Commissioner, architect of the land conservation program, vision-keeper, community advocate and volunteer. He has also recruited thousands of volunteer hours for his Trust's projects and his Trust has served as a resource for the County's acquisition and stewardship efforts.

In summary, we feel that to do this work on our own would be cost-prohibitive, inefficient and even a little selfish. Each of these relationships benefits the County not only in that it avoids a direct cost but also it builds a sense of place and strengthens our shared commitment to that investment. We look forward to sharing with the audience our tradition of rooting people in the ground.





PRESENTATION COMPONENTS

Innovation/Creativity

Small budgets are the mother of innovation. Over sixty percent of Alachua County's tax base is off the tax rolls. The majority is either owned by the State for the University of Florida, other state offices, for conservation, or is exempt under State Law for various other reasons. With so much value unavailable and a statutorily mandated property millage cap of 10 mills, the County is constantly squeezed to fund both core services and quality-of-life enhancements demanded by residents. One of these is funding a meaningful land conservation program. The small tax base results in a relatively small fund with which to buy and manage lands. This drove the search for innovative ways to create awareness and leverage funds. Other contributors to the leveraging effort:

- The public expectation was that a lot of land was going to be protected. In the first year alone, 47 separate applications were made by the public nominated over 156,000 acres was nominated. To date, over 239,000 acres – almost 40% of the County – has been nominated.
- The County Commission wrote into the enabling legislation that staff was expected to apply for grants and develop partnerships that maximized the effect of the local dollars.
- Internet grant searching tools such as eCivis provide access to thousands of grants nationwide to County staff and local non-profits. Easy access to this tool also created the expectation that grants were to be sought to offset and enhance the service-delivery. Sharing this tool with the community has multiplied the County's own efforts by adding many more eyes, applicants for grants, and advocates, all focused on bringing outside funding into the County.
- To streamline the leveraging process, the County Commission granted staff blanket authority to initiate grant applications and develop partnerships. Several key factors led to this innovation.
 1. The Commission had made leveraging acquisition funds a legislative priority
 2. The Commission had the assurance that staff would return to get approval before any commitments were made
 3. Staff was understood with the comfort levels of the County Management and the Commission and was familiar with their limits of authority as well as their own.

The net result was a predictable and sustainable effort of grant making that was responsive to the external timelines and pressures, and not tripped up by the internal bureaucracy.

- Our preserves, intra-County partnerships and the community provide a wealth of reusable commodities. We have salvaged I-beams for us to use as the supporting structure for hiking bridges. We have re-used 4'x4' fence posts into preserve sign posts. In addition, we have turned tree trunks from invasive exotic species into unique resting benches along trails, group seating / lecture areas, built-in kiosk seats and a hiking bridge for a stream crossing.
- Last March, we partnered with the Visit Gainesville tourism bureau, the University of Florida and a local non-profit to market Alachua County as a low-carbon footprint destination. Unavoidable carbon emissions from conference attendees were calculated, converted to dollars per ton based on current carbon markets. Each attendee was asked for a cash donation to offset their individual footprint. The dollars were used on restoration efforts at County Preserves avoiding the cost to pay for it ourselves. With the success of this pilot project we expect this to be a model for future conferences as the Gainesville/Alachua County area markets itself as a low-carbon destination.



- We have worked with developers and regulators to create mitigation projects on County Preserves that also fund the acquisition or restoration of habitat that would otherwise not happen or whose cost would be borne entirely locally.
- The Land Conservation Program was empowered to develop and maintain its website and create a “dashboard” on which the results of the leveraging effort were published. Publicizing partnerships rewards the efforts of partners and staff and encourages further leveraging. A snapshot of the Program main page is provided below with the Dashboard at right.

ALACHUA COUNTY Florida

Home | Employment | Contact the County

Home Citizen Services Residents Businesses Visitors Emergency Services County Offices Employment Contact Us

Environmental Protection Department

Home > County Offices > Environmental Protection > Land Conservation

Land Conservation

Mission Statement:
To acquire, manage and improve environmentally significant lands to protect water resources, wildlife habitat, and to provide natural areas suitable for resource-based recreation.

Vision And Values:
Alachua County Forever will be a conscientious, innovative, progressive leader in land conservation and use acquisition, stewardship and funding development practices to preserve the environmental integrity of Alachua County and improve the quality of life for current and future generations.

Objectives:
1. To be accountable to the taxpayers.
2. To acquire the most environmentally significant habitats.

Quick Links
[Program Summary](#)
[Commission Files](#)
[Land Conservation Board](#)
[Nominate Land](#)
[Wild Spaces & Public Places Committee](#)
[News](#)
[Contact us](#)

ACF Dashboard

Acquisition List protected:	18,682
With Direct ACF funding:	15,748
Remaining on List:	30,132
Under contract:	284
Value of land protected:	\$84,425,497
County share:	\$30,189,143
Partner share:	\$54,236,354
Managed by County:	9,443
Managed by Partners:	9,239
Open to the public:	13,383
As of August 4, 2010	

Thought-provoking Quote
"What's the use of a house if you haven't got a tolerable planet to

- The County contracted with The Nature Conservancy (TNC), an international non-profit land trust, to handle the daily negotiations when the list became too large for the program staff. One of the benefits was the ability of TNC to work within their network of contacts and generate interest in partnering with the County. An example was the \$10 million Barry's Ranch acquisition by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC). TNC knew the FWC had a need to purchase land to provide Gopher Tortoise mitigation habitat. TNC and the County were able to arrange a transfer of the acquisition to FWC saving the County significant expense. (TNC's Florida Office is at (407) 682-3664, and their State Acquisition Director is Mr. Keith Fountain).

2. Outcomes Achieved

Leveraging Real Dollars. The public expectation is that a lot of land is going to be protected. To date, over 239,000 acres – almost 40% of the County – has been nominated. The County Commission made leveraging a priority by including it in the Program's enabling legislation. The County has participated directly in the purchase 15,532 acres of land worth \$74 million. Of that total, the County contributed \$30 million or about 40%. An additional 2,977 acres of land on the County's Acquisition List, worth \$10 million, was leveraged using a continuum of mechanisms including bringing in another public buyer, supporting partners' grant applications, committing to be the back-up stewards in case the primary manager failed, or simply supporting and advocating for the purchase of lands by another entity entirely. The number of partners and partnerships is staggering. Twenty-



three separate partners have been used, some more than once so that 33 of 45 acquisition projects had a partner and 12 of 45 did not require any County funding at all. The mitigation projects referenced earlier have resulted in over \$300,000 in acquisition funding and offset restoration costs.

Leveraging a Land Ethic. Part of the Land Conservation Program's core mission is to encourage an appreciation of the County's natural heritage. Since FY2005 when this measure began to be monitored, staff has held 81 purely educational outreach events. By using the community to assist us in the stewardship effort and asking them to influence decision makers at our partner organizations, we engender that ethic and root it firmly in the population. We have several groups that have adopted sites and can be counted on for work days. A connection to the site arises when they invest their time and energy and creates a desire to see the positive results of their investment.

Leveraging Economic Value. The literature shows that properties proximate to open spaces increase in value faster than other similar property. Alachua County was the subject of a study in 2004 and the results showed an \$8,000 - \$10,000 per property increase in value. The total impact was \$150 million in property value. Buyers value proximity to open space and this effect is reflected in their willingness to pay. This is only true for well-managed, non-threatening open spaces. Thus the investment made to manage these spaces properly is necessary and its value is reflected in proximate private property values.

Leveraging Human Effort. County staff has nurtured a network of craftsmen and volunteers to be able to respond and assist as needed in the work days, building and maintenance of infrastructure, initial site clearing, weed-pulling and planting. Several of the County's Preserves have been "adopted". We have made use of the County's Community Service Workers – residents convicted of minor crimes and sentenced to hours of community service. The value of those hours, if they had to be contracted or paid for by the County, exceeds \$35,000 over the past three years.

3. Applicable Results and Real World Practicality

There are steps Alachua County took to make it easier to leverage acquisition and stewardship effort. Each required some assumption of risk by the elected officials and management and required mutual trust between them and the staff thus empowered. Several of these are highlighted below.

- The County Commission made leveraging a priority for staff and memorialized it in the enabling legislation.
- The County's purchase of a grant-searching tool provided access for staff and the community to thousands of grant opportunities nationwide from the office or remote desktop over the internet.
- The County Commission granted staff blanket authority to initiate grant applications and develop partnerships streamlining the grant application process without compromising accountability and legal responsibility.
- Using the web and publicizing partnerships rewards the partners and the efforts of staff and encourages further leveraging.
- Contracting with experienced and knowledgeable consultants to work within their network of contacts and generate interest in partnering with the County.
- Risk Management and Legal accepted the slightly increased risk and effort when working with License Agreements, unpaid interns, volunteers and Community Service Workers and assisted Program staff with documents that protected the County and still allowed these resources to be utilized.



- The County tracks the performance of the program using several self-developed measures in addition to the usual activity and output measures of acres acquired and dollars spent. For example, quarterly, the Program reports:
 - o The ratio of local funds to OPM in its acquisition
 - o The rate of return on the general fund investment in terms of program productivity
 - o The ratio of stewardship effort leveraged to local investment

4. Case Study Presentation

If selected, Alachua County will bring a panel of its partners and practitioners to the Conference to provide participants with a 360-degree perspective on the art and practice of land conservation leveraging. The panel features the Directors of two of the County's most important acquisition partners. Robert Christianson is the Operations and Land Resources Director for the St. Johns River Water Management District whose agency has contributed \$5.4 million to joint acquisitions in the County. In addition, the SJRWMD is also our most important governmental stewardship partner and has shouldered over \$500,000 of stewardship costs on jointly-owned lands over the past three years. Mr. Ken Reecy is the Executive Director of the State of Florida, Florida Communities Trust Program (FCT). FCT has awarded over \$23.8 million in land acquisition grants to Alachua County and our partners for lands on the County's Acquisition List over the past eight years. How to effectively secure funds from State and federal agencies from their perspective will be insightful for local communities. In addition, Mr. Christianson will provide perspective on why the SJRWMD agrees to undertake the stewardship obligations it did for Alachua County and when kinds of deals make sense for them in that regard.

Ex-County Commissioner Mr. Robert "Hutch" Hutchinson is the Director of Alachua Conservation Trust, a local private land trust. His perspective is one of the community volunteer, land conservation advocate, and architect of Alachua County's land conservation program during his commission term. He has worked to leverage state and local funds for State, County, municipal and private conservation projects during his 30 years in this field. He has also recruited thousands of volunteer hours for State and Trust projects.

Mr. Kevin Ratkus is the County staff person most involved in wrangling the volunteer help. He will discuss the pros and cons of marshalling the talents of unskilled and semi-skilled private sector both on work days and also on one-of-a-kind projects like the bridge. He is also a talented re-user of materials and is most responsible for the innovative use of salvaged commodities.

The facilitator will be the Land Conservation Program Manager Mr. Ramesh Buch. Mr. Buch was hired 10 years ago as the Program's first manager and who has overseen the successes highlighted here. As a panelist he will discuss the complexities and challenges of establishing new leveraging mechanisms while navigating the Risk Management, Legal and Contractual mazes. He will also introduce each panelist and set the context of their partnership with Alachua County and provide participants with insights learned in working with each. He will ask each to provide the audience with not only their agency objectives when it comes to partnerships, but also share their personal and professional values and goals when it comes to working with local communities.

Learning Moments:

The learning concepts are underlined above where they are sprinkled throughout this application. In summary, the following points form the take-home message for the participants:

- Leveraging takes risk and required courage
- Leveraging is more than counting dollars awarded as grants. It should be re-defined to include offsets, savings and cost-avoidances and should be publicized



- License Agreements are a powerful tool to build a relationship with a traditional user of the property, offset or avoid a cost
- Volunteers, Community Service Workers, inmate crews' efforts can be translated into dollars and cost avoided
- There are Five Leveraging Competencies:
 - knowledge of many legislative mandates to identify opportunities
 - familiarity with their particular organizational processes and values
 - skill in forging and maintaining viable relationships with key people
 - persistence when dealing with outside bureaucracies
 - courage to adapt and adopt local processes and procedures to take advantage of new opportunities
- Leveraging is more than economic good sense and a requirement in current local governance. It develops a shared vision; affirms a community's identity and sense of place; strengthens its bond with government; and creates the foundation for sustainable governance.
- Sustainable and effective leveraging must become a competency for local governments

PowerPoint slides will be used where illustrative and appropriate to assist the panelists make a point or provide a learning moment. A handout of the Alachua County Land Conservation Program's leveraging principles and performance measures will be available as a take-away resource that participants can use to replicate and build on Alachua County's success.