

## **ISTS Board Retreat Condensed Minutes**

**14-18 August 2023, National Conservation Training Center (NCTC), Shepherdstown, WV, USA**

### **ISTS Strategic Planning (14-15 August)**

The Board worked with a hired Consultant, Katherine Turner from Global Citizen, to undertake nonprofit board governance training and develop an ISTS Business Strategy. Outcomes of that strategic planning session will be relayed to the ISTS membership at a later date.

### **Secretary's Minutes**

Secretary's minutes from the 2022 Board Retreat held at NCTC in August 2022 and the Board Meeting held during the Sea Turtle Symposium in Cartagena, Colombia were discussed and approved.

### **Finances**

The Treasurer reported that the Cartagena Symposium spent more money than was budgeted for, but also brought in more money than budgeted, leading to a forecasted surplus.

The Board discussed the issue of unclaimed deferrals of registration from the 2020 Symposium (that was canceled) and voted that ISTS will not defer registration or membership fees at any time in the future. The Board is seeking legal opinion on how best to handle money associated with outstanding unclaimed deferrals, while a Board Task Force was formed to support the Bookkeeper in trying to contact people with unclaimed deferrals.

The Treasurer proposed options for investments for surplus Society funds. The Board discussed the options and the Investment Policy statement and assessed trends in money moving in and out of the ISTS budget. The Board accepted the recommendations for the Treasurer to invest a portion of the surplus Society funds. The assessment of in/out trends and trends in revenue from membership vs. donations/grants indicated that further evaluation of membership patterns and registration rates, and the associated impacts on revenue streams is needed.

The Board discussed the financial and logistical implications of overlapping the ISTS Symposium and the SERSTM and concluded that an open line of communication with SERTM organizers was the best way to ensure the success of both meetings.

### **Registrar's Report**

The Symposium Registrar's report was presented and recommendations for improvement were discussed. The Board supported key additions to the upcoming Symposium Organizing Committee and agreed that in order to avoid potential immigration issues, the Symposium invitation letters should; not be made available to everyone, and be prepared by Travel Chairs using a letter composed by the current President.

### **Small Grants Program**

The Program committee presented their report and the Board discussed the idea of adding another small grant award: Innovations Award. This award would provide support for developing and implementing innovative tools that directly address threats to sea turtles and their habitats. The Board decided that the science and community grants will be separate initiatives and authorized the initiation of the Innovations Grants Program. Pendoley Environmental offered to sponsor the Innovation Awards (USD\$6K) for the first year; therefore, ISTS funds will not be used until the next round of Innovation

Awards are offered in 2024. Pendoley also asked that one of their technical staff be on the application review committee for the Innovations Awards.

The Board supported that the Small Grants Program should now be separated into (1) Community-based Conservation Grants Program and (2) the Innovations Grant Program.

### **Awards Committee**

The Board rekindled a discussion about what qualifies someone for a Lifetime Achievement Award (LAA). The Board agreed that LAAs should be awarded to all deserving nominees who fulfill the criteria and the number of LAAs should not be limited in any one year.

### **Social Media Coordinator**

The Treasurer proposed appointing a Social Media Coordinator. The Board discussed the need to develop social media guidelines and find someone who can be dynamic, consistent, and equitable across all regions. A Board Committee was formed to advertise/circulate this need to the membership and evaluate those interested.

### **Professional Membership**

The Board discussed the pros/cons of developing a professional membership. There was hesitation among some Board members as to how to differentiate between professional and non-professional members and how this would be designated. It was recommended that the Membership Offerings Committee review professional memberships.

### **Fundraising Officer's Report**

The Board discussed registration waivers and whether there should or should not be a blanket ban by the Board on registration waivers. The Treasurer and bookkeeper agreed to develop a Policy Resolution document on this topic and the Board agreed that:

- no registration waivers should be given to Symposium attendees, and
- complimentary Symposium registrations may be given to invited guests (within reason) and selected gold/platinum-tier sponsors at the discretion of the President and Treasurer.

The Board also approved:

- the Fundraising Officer's report as presented with the request that all past, present, and future sponsors' email addresses be provided to the Director of Information Technology, and
- the current Fundraising Officer's position and compensation should be renewed for one year (ISTS fundraising strategies are being evaluated).

### **Auctions**

The Board approved the silent and live auction report.

### **Nominations Committee Report**

The Board discussed the need to increase participation from the membership in the Society nomination process, the need for criteria on nominee representation, skills, etc., and the need to ensure balanced representation from underrepresented Regions and to actively seek out nominees with the skills needed for a strong and effective board and committee representation. The Board approved the report.

### **Director of IT's Report**

The Board is impressed with the current DIT's work and agreed to renew the current position. The Board discussed the need to increase membership (task for Offerings Committee), differentiate between ISTSociety and ISTSymposium, and handle membership fees for those without means/credit cards (Travel Chairs and Finance Committee will work together on this). The Board agreed to work with DIT to streamline the production of the Symposium Proceedings.

### **Travel Committee**

The Board reviewed the Travel Committee's report and discussed how to increase volunteerism and engagement from travel grantees and what types/levels of support are most beneficial to students. Beds and/or cash were discussed.

### **Symposium 2025**

Possible dates, locations/hotels, transportations, flights, and tourism offerings were presented and discussed for the Symposium in Ghana.

### **Student Awards**

The Board discussed whether high school and undergraduate student presenters should be eligible for a separate award and decided that, given how infrequent these are, there will not be a separate award category. However, the Board agreed that high school and undergraduate presenters could receive a letter of participation.

### **Inactive Board members**

The Board discussed whether a Board member's inability to participate actively and meet commitment criteria were sufficient to request resignation.

### **ISTS 2024 Budget and Symposium Planning**

The President provided an update on Symposium planning. The Board agreed to transfer an income line of \$20K from ISTS cash reserves and \$24K from the 2023 Symposium Auction to the 2024 Symposium budget for a total of \$44K allocated to travel grants (minimum of 108 bed grants (6 nights/grantee) with the balance to be distributed as cash grants to travel grant recipients from Southeast Asia). The Board agreed to pay two Registrars \$1K each plus a shared room grant and that the registration team will not pay registration fees, even if they have a poster or oral presentation, because they will not be able to attend the Symposium (they will pay Membership fee).

The President proposed registration fees, and the Board approved the following fees for the 2024 Symposium:

- early registration fees of \$450 USD for members earning more than \$50,000 USD/year,
- \$250 USD for members earning less than \$50,000 USD/year,
- \$110 USD for Thai students and Thai community members,
- late registration fees of \$500 USD for members earning more than \$50,000 USD/year,
- \$300 USD for members earning less than \$50,000 USD/year,
- \$160 USD for Thai students and Thai community members,
- a daily registration fee of \$175 USD/day
- \$550 registration fee for non-members.

Additionally, the President proposed membership fees, and the Board approved the following: \$50 for members from the World Bank list of high-income economies and \$30 for others.

The Board approved the renewal of the position and compensation for bookkeeper and Secretary. This includes an increase to \$7.5K to the Secretary, given this person's increasingly demanding responsibilities. The Board approved the President's budget of 18 August 2023, including and \$1K for ISTS t-shirts, and will review an updated budget 10 days after the end of early registration.

The Board discussed the selection of Pattaya for the 2024 Symposium, given its reputation for sex trafficking and as a "sin city", and the process by which Presidents select host cities. The Board suggested that we find a reputable NGO/organization in Pattaya that works against sex trafficking and find ways to contribute to and support the org. Concerns about Elephant "sanctuaries" in the area were discussed as well, and the Board recommends that the Society and Symposia organizers avoid promoting such activities and make people aware of the issues before arranging activities away from the Symposium.

### **Symposium sessions/workshops**

Following the concerns that some Symposium abstracts were not adequately reviewed/filtered for quality control, leading to the inclusion of sub-standard/incorrect information being presented at the last Symposium, the Board agreed to make changes to:

- require standardized method of review,
- longer review times, and
- secondary review of abstracts that need revision.

The Board discussed concerns raised regarding a geographic difference between early workshop registrants and later workshop registrants. The earlier registrants filling up the workshop slots appear to be primarily from the US (i.e., those with greater predictability of financial support to attend the meeting tend to register earlier for the Symposium as well as the Workshops). The Board discussed options to address this inequity and determined a likely solution: open registration for the Workshops sometime after registration, travel grant award notifications, Workshop/Regional Meeting scheduling (~one month before the Symposium).

### **Official Gifts by/to President**

The Board discussed the concern about official gifts by/to the President. Some cultures expect gifts, others see them as bribes. The Board decided that the President will produce ISTSociety eco-friendly, sustainably produced (to the maximum extent possible) merchandise within a reasonable budget, i.e. approximately \$1,000. The Board will also draft a Gift Policy.

### **Satellite telemetry database**

The Secretary reminded the Board that a member requested that ISTS host a satellite telemetry database on the ISTS website. The Board determined that the Offerings Committee should consider this and assess overlap with other entities.