



**WILDLIFE
HABITAT
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EDUCATION & AWARENESS



Training Project Guidance

Stakeholder Informed



Introduction

Conservation training projects help learners acquire knowledge and skills that can be applied to a conservation project or conservation education effort.

Training experiences build capacity for long-term change in the local community and the region by strengthening the pool of capable individuals willing to assist in conservation endeavors. Training may be offered for both amateurs and professionals and for a wide range of ages. Youth participating in training benefit from exposure to new topics and skills, as well as an increase in confidence; mature individuals benefit by adding to their knowledge in a topic of interest on a professional or personal level.

Building Your Program

Projects are divided into four categories: **Habitat**, **Species Management**, **Education and Awareness** and **Other Options**. You can build a program with more than one of each category but you must associate your program with at least one habitat. This Training Project Guidance is in the **Education and Awareness** category. You must associate your training project with your habitat, and you may also associate it with a **Species Management** project.



Habitat – Projects that focus on conservation actions to protect, restore and manage different habitats.



Species Management – Projects addressing the conservation needs of targeted wildlife species or groups of species.



Education and Awareness – Projects to improve awareness, understanding and skills relating to conservation and the environment.



Other Options – Specialized projects that add value to your conservation efforts.

Browse the Project Guidance library at wildlifehc.org/pg.

What Do Training Projects Look Like?

Training projects are firmly rooted in using the outdoor environment as the vehicle for teaching, and should feature a way for learners to have contact with the natural world to allow for hands-on study, close observation, and application of their newly-learned skills and knowledge. Employees learning to care for their habitat, teachers at an in-service program, nature enthusiasts honing their plant identification skills, youth installing a trail as part of a service project, or professionals learning to conduct a controlled burn can all use a corporate habitat as part of a learning experience

Trainees may be part of an organized system with defined training needs outlined by their respective organizations. Many of these organizations offer badges, patches, certifications or other recognitions for tasks completed or hours of community service accomplished. Trainee groups may also consist of employees, community members, or individual conservation volunteers or professionals.

Training projects that are not part of an organized system, such as “lunch-and-learn” sessions to teach nest box monitoring techniques, may be more relaxed in implementation, yet still have a clear learning goal in mind.

Considerations for Corporate Lands

Projects implemented on corporate-owned lands have different circumstances and challenges to those on public lands, protected lands or wild lands.

Which types of corporate lands are best suited for training projects?

Training projects can be conducted on corporate habitats of all sizes and scopes. Training projects can be mutually beneficial to the corporate host site and the surrounding community for these primary reasons:

- Training projects allow companies to share their knowledge of conservation topics in order to **encourage community members to participate** in local, regional and national conservation initiatives
- Training projects allow companies to **build relationships with their employees or the local community** by inviting these individuals to share experiences in the corporate habitat or with conservation partners
- Training projects can have **environmental justice and socioeconomic benefits** by providing recreational and outdoor education opportunities to communities without easy access to open space

Addressing challenges

The corporate context presents certain challenges for implementing training projects. Understanding these concerns and potential ways to overcome them can help your project succeed in the long term.

Concern	Response
Companies may be reluctant to allow non-employees access to corporate habitats over concerns about liability.	<p><i>Visitors can be asked to sign waivers, and projects can be restricted to areas outside of the site's fence line, or can be conducted on public land.</i></p> <p><i>The company's insurance may protect them from liability if someone injures themselves on-site.</i></p>
The company may require a formal understanding to work with an outside group.	<p><i>Many companies and service learning/training groups are already familiar with this process. A formal understanding sets expectations for each party involved.</i></p>
Employees may be reluctant to volunteer for a site-based initiative outside of their work hours.	<p><i>Site managers could set aside one or more days each year for volunteer work. Outside volunteers and conservation partners could also provide project assistance.</i></p>

Concern	Response
<p>Many corporate properties have little to no land upon which training projects can be implemented.</p>	<p><i>Companies can develop partnerships to implement training projects at off-site locations, such as nearby public lands or schools.</i></p> <p><i>Smaller habitats can be created, such as a pollinator garden.</i></p>
<p>There may be reluctance to hand over conservation projects to newly-trained individuals.</p>	<p><i>Teams can continue to work with trained individuals to help them further develop skills and knowledge.</i></p> <p><i>Teams can also require approval of all plans developed by trained individuals.</i></p>
<p>There may be safety concerns about the use of tools and other equipment necessary for training exercises.</p>	<p><i>Training leaders can go through company safety training, and a company safety officer can be on-site when tools are in use.</i></p>
<p>There may be concerns that once employees or community members have been trained, they will not follow through with project activities.</p>	<p><i>A letter of agreement can be signed as part of each training session; although not legally binding, it sets clear expectations.</i></p> <p><i>Some groups may have mandatory hours of service learning.</i></p>

Getting Started with Training Projects

For a project to qualify toward Conservation Certification, you must be able to answer “yes” to five questions.

1. Is the project locally appropriate?
2. Does it have a stated conservation or education objective?
3. Does it provide value or benefit to the natural community?
4. Have outcomes been measured and is there supporting documentation?
5. Does it exceed any pertinent regulatory requirements?

Conservation and education objectives

It is a requirement of Conservation Certification training projects be designed to meet one or more conservation objectives. Objectives can guide the direction of the project, help motivate others to participate and provide a basis for evaluation.

The following are suggested objectives for training projects. Your team may choose one or more of these objectives, or develop your own relevant objectives.

- Increasing employee engagement in conservation and conservation education projects in the habitat
- Providing support for habitat or species management projects
- Developing or enhancing skills and knowledge that can be applied to a conservation or education project
- Meeting the experiential learning or service goals of partner organizations by using the habitat as the integrating context
- Familiarizing educators with curricula appropriate for use in the habitat and with techniques for teaching outdoors
- Creating a creating a positive relationship with community members
- Contributing to a citizen science or other research project

The following strategies are recommended to strengthen the conservation impact of your project:

- Incorporate input from employees or volunteers who know the habitat, educators or trainers who understand needs, and conservation experts who know local conservation concerns
 - Provide the community with resources such as scientific equipment, teacher training or access to expertise on a specific subject matter
 - Integrate several conservation subjects to encourage deep thought and problem solving
 - Instill a greater depth of knowledge and skills for trainees through multiple, linked lessons
 - Provide opportunities for supplemental training, or for advanced certification for service learning organizations
 - Incorporate outreach to employees and community members to increase awareness and support for the training project
 - Meet both an identified, existing need in the community as well as the stated learning goals of the trainees
- Engage credible local experts or other partners who are well-suited to the project, with a continuity of partnership documented over time
 - Share knowledge resulting from the project, such as data and best practices, through publications or conferences
 - Submit data collected by trained volunteers to a citizen science program
 - Connect to larger local, regional and landscape-scale initiatives for training or conservation
 - Be implemented as part of multi-site training initiative that creates connectivity between learners in a landscape-scale context
 - Evaluate the trainee's understanding, skills or conservation actions taken outside of the project
 - Evaluate the training process to help improve effectiveness of training over the long term

Partnerships

As some trainees may be part of an organized system with training needs defined by their organizations, it may be necessary to partner with these local groups to develop and facilitate learning experiences. These organizations include youth service organizations, schools, community service learning associations, and professional conservation training associations.

Outside experts are critical in coaching trainees on using best management practices in conservation, handling equipment, implementing and maintaining a project, and creating change in their own communities.

Partners can also assist with leveraging funds for implementing and maintaining the project, and can help create links between the on-site project and other training projects or conservation priorities in the region.

Resources

Your project may benefit from online or printed resources available for your region to support the design, delivery, maintenance, and monitoring of training projects.

A search for “training” in the Conservation Registry returns a list of 77 projects implemented through WHC’s certification program. This is a great place to find inspiration for your project and see what others are doing in and around your location.

The following terms, in any combination, may be useful when searching online for items related to this theme:

service learning	bird counts	workshops
citizen science	conservation corps	environmental education
teacher training	bio blitz	outdoor education
Project Learning Tree	in-service	volunteer orientation
stewardship	experiential education	interpretive trails
monitoring	docent training	

Understanding the Application Process

Documentation

When applying for Conservation Certification, you will provide documentation of the planning, implementation, maintenance, and monitoring of your training project. The following are required forms of documentation for training projects; however, you may submit additional supporting materials.

Photographs or videos that depict the progress of the project implementation and management.

Project Management Plan/Project Design, which should describe the following:

- How the project aligns with the appropriate learning goals or objectives of the conservation or education organization
- How the project was developed
- How the project was implemented
- Resources provided for the project
- How the project was evaluated

Samples of training materials used as part of the training activity, including curricula or other materials. If specific activities were implemented by partners, copies of those presentations or lessons should be included. Teams should provide information about how the training materials were developed and assessments that demonstrate the proven impact of the materials.

Evaluation materials that measure the impact of the activities or the education process. Evaluation materials may include pre- and post-testing results, post-project interviews, trainee testimonials or letters from trainees discussing how the knowledge or skills helped them engage in conservation actions or conservation education projects, annual reviews of the team or project, and a summary of the project's progress in achieving desired outcomes over time.

Application questions

As you complete the application online, you will be asked the following questions about your training project. These questions will help us understand and evaluate your project.

	Question	Why this question is important
Overview	Is your project associated with a habitat or species project?	<i>Projects must be related to an outdoor habitat or species project to be considered for WHC Conservation Certification.</i>
	How does the project relate to the chosen habitat or species project?	
	What is the target audience for this project?	
	How many people are reached through this project?	
	How many hours are audience members engaged in this project annually?	
	Briefly describe activities taking place as part of the project.	
	Provide photos showing the project.	
Objective	What is the source of your learning goals?	<i>Training projects based on identified community needs have a greater value for community members.</i>
	List the lessons/experiences along with the learning goals/requirements that they meet.	
	Does the project address a specific need in the community?	
	Please describe the community need and how it was identified.	
	Upload any documentation showing the community need.	

	Question	Why this question is important
Planning	Is there a plan guiding the activities?	<i>We would like to know how long the project has been underway and the steps taken to implement it.</i>
	Upload the plan.	
	When did the first activity for your target audience take place?	
	Provide a timeline describing your cycle of completed activities, including project planning, implementation, maintenance, and evaluation.	
Materials	Does the project use materials that are both age- and topic-appropriate?	<i>This question helps us assess the design of the project.</i>
	Upload samples of the materials used.	
	Does the project incorporate equipment to facilitate engagement of the learning audience?	
	Describe how these tools or equipment are used.	
Conservation Impact	Does the project support a conservation project?	<i>Engaging employees and community members in an existing conservation project strengthens both the education and conservation outcomes.</i>
	How does this project support a conservation project?	

	Question	Why this question is important
Evaluation	Do you evaluate the project?	<i>We are looking for two types of evaluation. We want to know if the audience learned something. We also want to know if you assessed the overall event – how it was planned, carried out, etc., and if you used your evaluation to improve your program.</i>
	Do you evaluate changes in the learners' knowledge and behavior?	
	Describe the evaluation process.	
	Upload documentation of the evaluation.	
	Summarize the results of the evaluation.	
	Do you evaluate the overall learning experience?	
	Describe the evaluation.	
	Summarize the results of the evaluation.	
	Describe how you use the evaluation to improve your project.	
Employee Participation	Do any employees lead or facilitate the project?	<i>Employees can bring different skills and knowledge to strengthen a program.</i>
	How many employees lead or facilitate this education project?	
	Describe how employees are involved in this project.	
	How many employee hours were spent on the following activities each year? Implementation and Planning	

	Question	Why this question is important
Other Participants	Do any groups or individuals outside of your company actively contribute to the project on a regular basis?	<i>We recognize that it is not always possible to recruit outside groups to your project but we value conservation and education partners as well as community volunteers.</i>
	Select the types of groups - community members, consultants and contractors, government agencies, NGO partners, schools and universities, youth organizations, other companies.	
	List the names of the groups you work with.	
	Describe their involvement in this project.	
	How many hours were spent by the groups on the following activities each year?	
	If you work with a specialist for your project and have a current letter of support from them, upload it here.	
	List additional sources of technical advice (e.g. website, guidebook, etc.) and describe how they were used.	
Regulatory Requirements	Are any aspects of the project done in relation to regulatory requirements?	<i>We recognize this is highly unlikely for a training project, but this is a required question for all our applicants.</i>
	Explain how the project exceeds requirements.	

	Question	Why this question is important
Alignments	Does the project align with any larger scale initiatives? (e.g. STEM, regional/local initiatives, corporate strategy, etc.)	<i>We believe alignments with large-scale initiatives and appropriately-scaled regional conservation or education plans make projects stronger and more meaningful</i>
	Is the project part of a corporate level commitment to commitment to education or community?	
	Upload documentation of your corporate commitment to education or community.	
	Does the project align with an existing conservation or education plan or other large scale initiative?	
	List the plans or other large scale initiative the project aligns with and provide website links if available.	
	Briefly describe the alignments.	

Content development for Conservation Certification

To inform the development of Conservation Certification, WHC analyzed the projects it was recognizing through its certification program to assess whether they were aligned with contemporary conservation and education priorities.

Following this assessment and using information from it, WHC convened Advisory Committees around conservation and education themes to develop the content that would guide practitioners and applicants in the future. This content is the basis for the Project Guidance and the online application process.

The following provided feedback on the initial draft of the Training Project Guidance.

Kimberly Bloch-Rincan, Montgomery County Public Schools

Rhonda Ferree, University of Illinois Extension

Laura Herrin, The Student Conservation Association

Hillary Johnson, Oldcastle Materials

Dennis Johnson, Boy Scouts of America

Nancy Knauss, Penn State Extension

Thomas Nagle, Missouri Master Naturalist, Confluence Chapter

Bill Schillinger, PPG Industries, Inc.

Francis Zell, Sandy Spring Friends School

Marguerite (Peggy) Vavalla, DuPont Center for Collaborative Research and Education

Bill Jones, Consultant to Smithsonian Science Education Center and to the Carolina Biological Supply Company

More information can be found about this process in the “Our Impact” section of wildlifehc.org under “Commitment to Transparency.”



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The WHC Strategy and Planning team can help you build a successful project by identifying needs, making connections with partners and resources, and providing strategies that meet business and conservation goals. Contact us today.

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Every act of conservation matters.

