**Detailed Competencies for Coaching Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation**

**A Companion to the Coach Designation & Self Assessment**

**March 2012**

This checklist is intended to list the knowledge, skills, experience and attitudes a coach should have to competently coach Open Standards planning and implementation of conservation projects. We have endeavored to describe each competency in specific, observable terms, to create a useful tool that can be used by coaches to assess their current level of skills, guide their self-directed learning efforts and identify areas for professional development, as well as for use in developing training programs. This detailed checklist is in addition to the very basic skills listed in the CCNet Coach Designation & Self Assessment document.

*Categories of Coaching Competencies*

We divided the competencies are divided into six categories of skills and abilities. We focused principally on technical skills; strong interpersonal and management skills are also important ingredients in effective coaching.

1. [Facilitation](#_Facilitation_Skills)
2. [Conservation Knowledge](#_2._Conservation_Knowledge)
3. [Open Standards](#_Open_Standards_Knowledge)
4. [Theory of Change](#_Theory_of_Change)
5. [Monitoring and Adaptive Management](#_Monitoring_and_Adaptive)
6. Operational Planning
7. Meeting Planning

Each category is defined in greater detail on the following pages.

*Development Ladder: Basic to Advanced Skills*

Each category is further divided into two levels of skills, basic and advanced, thereby laying out a professional development ladder for coaches. The basic level represents those competencies that we think all measures coaches should have. The advanced skills are those that one may aspire toward and that can be found in a measures expert whom other coaches might call upon for specialized assistance and/or particularly difficult measures problems.

*How This Checklist Was Developed*

The idea for this checklist, the categories and an initial brainstormed list of measures-related knowledge, skills, experience and attitudes stemmed from a session held at the 2010 CCNet Coaches Rally in Santa Cruz, CA. The session facilitators, John Morrison (WWF), Rob Sutter (Enduring Conservation Outcomes) and Kirsten Evans (TNC) refined and revised the materials, also integrating ideas from other fields, including:

* Program evaluation competencies for professional evaluators (e.g., [Canadian Evaluation Society](http://evaluationcanada.ca/txt/2_competencies_cdn_evaluation_practice.pdf), [published literature on evaluation competencies](http://aje.sagepub.com/content/26/1/43.abstract))
* [Donald L Kirkpatrick’s four levels of training evaluation](http://www.amazon.com/Evaluating-Training-Programs-Four-Levels/dp/1576753484/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1299641339&sr=8-1)
* Skills checklists used in other fields (e.g., [lacrosse referees](http://www.uslacrosse.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=WiOw_qIorAQ%3d&tabid=1851))

Richard Margoluis (Foundations of Success) contributed the Operational Planning competency table and Jora Young (TNC) did likewise for the Meeting Planning competency.

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# 1. Facilitation

These are skills and abilities that a coach uses to make the group process more effective, focused and successful at meeting the objectives of developing strategy effectiveness measures

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| **Basic Skills** | **Advanced Skills** |
| ***Facilitation Leadership*** |  |
| Demonstrates respect of different ideas, personalities and cultural and gender perspectives | Influences whole group to be respectful of different ideas, personalities and cultural and gender perspectives |
| Describes the sensitivity and perceptions needed to understand and work with the group culture | Demonstrates well developed sensitivity and perception to group culture and needs |
| Communicates and clarifies goals and objectives | Obtains group commitment to goals and objectives |
| Establishes and maintains ground rules |  |
| Maintains role as facilitator (as servant leader) | Maintains role as facilitator but can effectively moves between facilitator and other roles |
| Projects confidence and control |  |
| Demonstrates ability to facilitate relatively simple to moderately complex planning efforts | Demonstrates ability to facilitate complex planning efforts |
| Demonstrates ability to facilitate planning efforts with supportive and like-minded audiences | Demonstrates ability to facilitate planning efforts with diverse and unsupportive audiences |
|  | Develop and sustain a productive team environment |
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| ***Process: Communication and Participation*** |  |
| Provides opportunities for all participants to be involved using facilitation techniques | Generates broad participation from all participants |
| Controls individuals that may dominate discussions | Establishes atmosphere that insures broad and equal input into discussions |
| Asks probing questions, addresses critical issues | Proactive in asking critical questions and addressing critical issues |
| Quickly summarizes discussions and information | Quickly synthesizes and distills information |
| Provides positive criticism | Provides positive and strong criticism while maintaining collegial environment |
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| ***Outcomes*** |  |
| Recognizes when planning efforts are not focused on outcomes, does course correction | Proactively recognizing and redirecting when planning efforts are not focused |
| Recognizes conflict and tough issues | Resolves conflict and tough issues |
| Identifies recurrent themes and connections | Identifies and communicates overarching patterns, emerging themes and critical connections amid complex information and relationships |

# 2. Conservation Knowledge

To be effective, a conservation coach should have an adequate understanding of conservation principles, systems, strategies and practices, from both a theoretical standpoint and practice.

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| **Basic Skills** | **Advanced Skills** |
| Gives appropriate examples of other sites and conservation projects, including first-hand knowledge examples, that have implemented measures | Able to give a range of examples from different habitat types and conservation projects at multiple scales, and easily apply them to new situations |
| Able to explain fundamental conservation biology principles such as population viability analysis, connectivity, conservation genetics, and their implications for measures in conservation planning | Determines when team has an incomplete understanding of fundamental conservation biology principles, builds understanding and helps them apply the concept in the planning process |
| Able to describe the basic ecology of the major habitat types relevant in their region, including key components of habitat structure, function and processes | Easily able to move between freshwater, marine and terrestrial biomes Determines when the team’s thinking illustrates an incomplete understanding of the relevant habitat types and intervenes |
| Able to describe the major threats likely to affect a certain habitat type and the common drivers of those threats at multiple scales | Coaches teams to identify all relevant drivers of threats; diagnoses when team is focused on certain types of drivers that lead to preferred strategies (e.g. regulation) and intervenes. |
| Identifies and is able to tease apart specific aspects of climate change | Is able to help a team dissect the components of climate change, integrate them into strategy selection and monitoring, and guides team to identify adaptation strategies. |
| Helps team understand the types and range of stakeholders important to their site. Identifies gaps in stakeholders identified by the team. | Coach team in how they will work with different stakeholders and/or develop appropriate strategies for stakeholder engagement |
| Develops and communicates an understanding of basic socioeconomics and history of the site |  |
| Cites examples of major conservation strategy types available (strategy toolbox) | Describes components of major strategy types in detail; shares knowledge of implementation challenges and hurdles |
| Guides teams to develop workplan, budgets, financing strategy and staffing plan for implementing common conservation strategies | Tailors implementation plan to fit the realities and constraints of common partners’ resources and culture (from agencies to smaller NGOs); accurately judges how realistic costs, financial needs and resource assessments are |
| Describes the purposes and limitations in general terms of common conservation tools, e.g., GIS, remote sensing, modeling, Miradi | Describes and explains a range of specific analyses and tools that teams can use to obtain needed information and when they are appropriate to use |

# 3. Open Standards

Skills and knowledge related to the broader adaptive management framework outlined in the Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation (Open Standards, or OS).

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| **Basic Skills** | **Advanced Skills** |
| Clearly explains the steps and rationale of the Open Standards (OS) process and their relationship to measures | Effectively persuades a range of audiences (internal and partners) of the value of following the OS process |
| Knows which components of the OS steps are essential (for developing measures) and why | Diagnoses when OS steps are missing and persuasively articulates the pros and cons of revisiting these steps |
| Tailors OS process to meet the needs of relatively straightforward projects | Tailors OS process and terminology to meet the needs of a wide variety of projects in terms of size, complexity, and scope |
| Ensures projects have a well-defined scope and vision | Identifies when project scope and vision require revisiting and pushes team to adjust |
| Identifies requisite project team skills and ensures team members have clearly defined roles and responsibilities | Recognizes need for and advocates for necessary changes in composition and stakeholder involvement throughout OS process |
| Ensures the project team has defined measureable goals for ecosystem health, based on viability criteria | Uses a variety of approaches to ensure that the project team has defined measureable goals for less traditional social, economic and cultural targets |
| Ensures the project team has developed a prioritized ranking of direct threats | Innovates as needed to address challenging threats |
| Critically evaluates conceptual models to ensure that the relevant social, cultural, political, economic drivers have been considered | Pushes teams to develop accurate and insightful situation analyses that incorporate local and external information sources and experts beyond the people in room |
| Coaches teams to develop SMART viability and threat-reduction objectives prior to strategy development |  |
| Leads project team to develop a set of prioritized strategies that meet the criteria for good strategies and have clear linkages to the highest priority threats and restoration needs | Consistently coaches the formulation of innovative but realistic strategies |
| Describes and provides examples of the principal categories of conservation strategies | Draws on a variety of examples (including failures) to explore the pros, cons and ramifications of different strategy options |
| Coaches teams to develop work plans with explicit timelines and clear responsibilities – allowing evaluation of resource needs |  |
| Articulates links between threats to strategies to work plan to measures and key points for adaption based on measures data | Facilitates teams themselves to articulate the link between threats to strategies to work plans to measures |
| Manages project information using Miradi or CAP workbook | Instructs project teams in the advanced use of Miradi and CAP workbook |

# 4. Theory of Change

This category includes a range of skills, knowledge and abilities that a coach draws upon in helping a project team to articulate and document the logic of how a strategy or set of strategies will lead to the desired outcome. A theory of change can technically be verbal, written or in a diagram. However, an open standards coach should be proficient at diagramming results chains – if there is another tool that is more appropriate for your audience that accomplishes the same objective of documenting the full logic of the strategies, please feel free to use it.

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| **Basic Skills** | **Advanced Skills** |
| 1. Clearly explains the rationale for using results chains and the components of a good results chain |  |
| 1. Distinguishes results chain from flow chart/implementation diagram | Quickly recognizes and distinguishes between activities vs. results, yet keeps group moving while capturing both |
| 1. Can assist a team to develop simple, 6 to 8-step results chains with one or two related strategies | Improvises easily to develop complex results chains with multiple interconnected strategies, contingencies, etc. |
| 1. Identifies weaknesses in result chain components | Helps project team learn to identify and correct weaknesses in results chain components. |
| 1. Identifies key intermediate results | Can review others’ results chains and recognize key intermediate results |
| 1. Identifies key unspoken assumptions in strategies and helps bridge gaps | Recognizes key uncertainties and how they affect the assumptions in results chain - and responds with appropriate monitoring to minimize risks |
| 1. Asks questions to test assumptions | Asks progressively more insightful questions |
| 1. Participants actively build results chain instead of coach (leads to ownership) | Applies own experience and gently redirects result chains without reducing ownership |
| 1. Recognizes skill limits - knows to bring someone in and how good they need to be | Experience and confidence with large complex programs involving multiple interlinked results chains |
| 1. Experience building results chains with a diversity of conservation strategies (maybe as a participant) | Experience leading results chains with a wide diversity of strategies – able to articulate a basic results chain for a diversity of strategies if needed. |
|  | Ability to elicit a clear and understandable theory of change using alternative approaches that yield identify key activities, intermediate results/outcomes and long-term outcomes |

# 5. Monitoring and Adaptive Management

Skills that improve the outcomes of coaching the measures, monitoring and adaptive management component of conservation planning.

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| **Basic Skills** | **Advanced Skills** |
| Describes the value of monitoring and measures to strategy effectiveness and return on investment | Persuasively articulates and provides examples of the value of monitoring and measures to strategy effectiveness, return on investment and conservation |
| Describes the purpose and the key components of a monitoring protocol | Demonstrates a detailed understanding of all the key components of a monitoring protocol and convinces the team of the importance of good monitoring protocols |
| Defines indicators and describes process of developing a concise list of indicators that can assess specific objectives for a target | Able to demonstrate how to develop a concise, effective and integrated list of indicators for a range of different targets in a single project |
| Articulates the purpose and primary components of a monitoring and sampling design | Demonstrates a detailed understanding of developing a monitoring or sampling design and can provide examples for all the design components |
| Describes common monitoring methods for a broad range of targets | Demonstrates a detailed understanding of a range of common monitoring methods and can provide examples of monitoring methods for the appropriate targets |
| Describes the key components of good data management | Provides detailed understanding of the key components of good data management |
| Describes and can compare general approaches to statistically analyzing monitoring data | Able to apply a range of common approaches to statistically analyze monitoring data and interpret analyzed data |
| Describes the components of strategic monitoring | Able to lead a group to develop strategic monitoring |
| Estimates and discusses the costs of different levels of monitoring effort | Ability to integrate monitoring and resource availability |

# 6. Operational Planning

The skills and knowledge to assist in developing a workplan and budget that bridges between a strategic plan and action.

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| **Basic Skills** | **Advanced Skills** |
| Describes the purpose and the key components of the work plan including what actions to be taken, who will be responsible, when will tasks be undertaken. |  |
| Articulates the relationship between the development of a detailed short-term work plan and the previous steps in the cycle (action plan, monitoring plan, operational plan) | Demonstrates a deep understanding of the linkages among work plan and other components and provide real-life examples. |
| Clearly articulates and defines key terms and concepts related to the work plan, giving examples for each. |  |
| Describes the units that can be used in developing a work plan (e.g., $, person-hours, person-days, person-weeks) | Provides clear examples of how units may vary depending on need (e.g., the use of person-hours or $, assuming you know how much a person-hour is worth for a particular individual) |
| Describes and gives examples of approaches to developing a timeline or work calendar, including Gantt chars. |  |
| Describes basic structure and framework of a budget | 1. Demonstrates a clear understanding of general costs for key units including staff time and travel costs  2. Demonstrates clear understanding of definition of resources, how they are monetized, and how they fit into the work plan  3. Demonstrates clear understand of use of accounting codes |
| Describes possible sources of funding/revenue | Facilitates a discussion among project team that helps them identify “income” – i.e., sources of funding in near future. |
| Describes how all action, monitoring, operational, and work plans and budget can be used to develop an effective funding proposal. |  |
| Shows how components of a work plan are captured in Miradi | Use Miradi to show how team can develop a work plan, and options of manipulating data once entered. |

# 7. Meeting Planning

Sometimes, a large workshop is the best format for assisting multiple teams and training coaches simultaneously. These responsibilities are in addition to basic facilitation skills.

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| **Basic Skills** | **Advanced Skills** |
| Reviews purpose of the meeting, ensures appropriate participation, sufficient funding, and that meeting sponsor, coordinator, facilitators, logistical support have all necessary information and understand their roles and responsibilities | Can do the same for a series of connected meetings. |
| With “client” prepares and coordinates meeting agenda, ensuring that the meeting objectives will be met in the given timeframe (or renegotiated) and that participants also have adequate time for thinking, relaxation, and good health |  |
| Ensures that the venue is appropriate, encouraging access to outdoor space and sufficient space and privacy for breakouts, with functioning audiovisual equipment and flipcharts, and access to adequate, healthy food for participants | Can coordinate this across multiple venues in a series of meetings. |
| Ensures that the meeting is on track to achieving its objectives and that adjustments are made as necessary. |  |
|  | Coordinates relevant field trips. |