**Prescribed Fire Training Exchange (TREX)**

**Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

**General FAQs (all audiences)**

**What is a TREX?**  
*A prescribed fire training exchange, or TREX, is a novel training event that brings together fire practitioners from diverse backgrounds to obtain hands-on fire experience, share knowledge and expertise, and better understand the art and science of fire management and ecology.*

**What is the Fire Learning Network?**  
*The Fire Learning Network (FLN) engages dozens of multi-agency, community-based projects to accelerate the restoration of landscapes that depend on fire to sustain native plant and animal communities. By restoring this balance, the ecological, economic and social values of the landscapes can be maintained, and the threat of catastrophic wildfire can be reduced. Collaborative planning, implementation, adaptive management and the sharing of lessons learned are at the core of the FLN. Workshops, peer learning and innovative fire training are just a few of the mechanisms the network uses.*

**What is the difference between TREX and other available training?***The TREX model is rooted in a hands-on approach, so participants walk away with experiences that it could take years to accrue in other settings. Further, the TREX model relies on diverse participation, which enables a uniquely rich learning environment, and it offers a blend of fireline, ecology, and media and communications training that is unprecedented in typical training events.*

**Why not just burn? Why all the extra training?***Fire management is inherently complex, involving not only fire behavior experience and situational awareness, but also an understanding of local ecology and natural resource issues, incident management and media communications, regulations and permitting, and more. The TREX model engages all of these pieces, and participants finish the training with a well-rounded perspective on fire, in addition to new networks of colleagues from science, management, and other backgrounds.*

**Who should attend a TREX?***TREX events are intended for anyone interested in building their fire experience and engaging with fire practitioners from other organizations and agencies. TREX events are designed to include and meet the needs of a broad spectrum of fire practitioners, from new firefighters who have never held a drip torch to seasoned fire professionals working on burn boss qualifications, and everything in between.*

**Is this training compliant with NWCG standards?***Yes, all TREX trainees must meet NWCG standards in order to participate. Required coursework is provided to those who need it.*

**Who funds this?***TREX funding varies by location, and typically involves support and services from a wide range of sponsors. The FLN provides base support for TREX events in some FLN landscapes, but the trainings are ultimately made possible through the capacity of local partners and the contributions and support of participants, local contractors, burn hosts, and other interested parties.*

**Where can I learn more?***More information is available on the Conservation Gateway at* [*https://www.conservationgateway.org/ConservationPractices/FireLandscapes/HabitatProtectionandRestoration/Training/TrainingExchanges/Pages/fire-training-exchanges.aspx*](https://www.conservationgateway.org/ConservationPractices/FireLandscapes/HabitatProtectionandRestoration/Training/TrainingExchanges/Pages/fire-training-exchanges.aspx)*. You can also contact Jeremy Bailey with the FLN at* [*jeremy\_bailey@tnc.org*](mailto:jeremy_bailey@tnc.org)*.*

**FAQs for prospective organizers**

**How much time is this going to take to organize?***If this is your first time planning a TREX, it’s important to give yourself plenty of time to build the necessary relationships and understanding to host the event. If the TREX concept is new to you and/or your collaborators, you’ll need at least a year and probably more to establish a solid foundation of understanding, build trust, and coordinate the necessary agreements to hold a successful event.*

**When should I start organizing?***It’s never too soon to start learning the ins and outs of TREX planning and to start getting potential collaborators and burn hosts on board with the idea.*

**What about liability?***Every TREX participant has basic NWCG qualifications, so burn hosts can rest assured that TREX crews conform to national standards for training and safety. Liability for non-agency trainees is covered by The Nature Conservancy. In most cases, liability for the individual burns is covered by the burn hosts.*

**My burn host partners don’t want to work with private individuals—help!?***Every TREX participant has basic NWCG qualifications, including non-agency trainees, so burn hosts can rest assured that TREX crews conform to national standards for training and safety.*

**Who should I collaborate with? Who should I plan this training with?***In order to plan a TREX, you will need buy-in from other leaders who can serve on both the planning committee and incident management team, as well as land managers who can provide burn units for the training. It’s important to engage these collaborators early in the planning process, so they can help define the goals, scope, and timing of the event.*

**Who can I talk to that has done this before?***Jeremy Bailey,* [*jeremy\_bailey@tnc.org*](mailto:jeremy_bailey@tnc.org)*, can connect you with other TREX leaders.*

**Our weather is unpredictable—how can I plan a TREX?***TREXs can be planned in areas with narrow burn windows and unpredictable weather. It is important in these areas to engage a diversity of partners and fuels types, and build a list of burn units that has much more than you could accomplish in two weeks of burning. The broader the spectrum of ecosystems and fuel types, the more flexibility you’ll have for weather and other unexpected changes. In fact, this approach is a good idea even in places with predictable weather.*

**How and where do I advertise for participants?***TREX activities will be advertised through FLN networks, but it is a good idea to consider your target audience and think of ways to engage those specific groups of people. For example, if your goal is to increase the capacity of local residents or fire practitioners, make sure to advertise through local networks and through media that suit your audience (do prospective participants have internet, or are they better reached by phone or mail? Are there other venues where you can share this opportunity, or other groups like prescribed fire councils or fire safe councils who could share it with their networks?).*

**How can I pay for this?***The FLN provides support to TREX activities in some of their priority landscapes, but there are other funding sources that you should consider. Think about your target audience and whether there are grants or other funding opportunities associated with those groups. The registration fee can also be a source of supplemental funding to cover food and lodging.*

**Should I manage this training as an incident?***TREX events should be managed as incidents to ensure optimal leadership structure, communications, and accountability.*

**How do you know when to cancel a TREX?***Experiences tells us that if you cancel a TREX, you’re sure not to achieve your objectives; if you design your TREX to be flexible and maintain a creative spirit, you should be able to overcome most hurdles. TREX organizers have persevered in the face of red flag warnings, blizzards, government shutdowns, freezing rain, escapes, and burnovers—all with impressive success. We have yet to see a TREX organizer regret moving forward with an event, even in the most daunting scenarios.*

**How do you navigate all this uncertainty?***If you are organizing a TREX, you are a prescribed fire practitioner—this means that you are accustomed to uncertainty, and you know that success depends on a flexible and creative attitude. TREXs are no different; good planning and strong partnerships should alleviate the stress of uncertainty and result in a resilient and successful program.*

**How big should the event be? How many participants should we plan for?***This is a question for your burn hosts and your planning team. How complex are the burns? How many participants can you accommodate and still ensure a quality training experience for every person? How many burns do you realistically think you will accomplish, and how will this affect the number of trainee positions you can offer? How many people can you accommodate with the lodging and catering services available in your area?*