

EASTERN DIVISION WHOLE SYSTEMS FORMAT FOR PEER REVIEW 2

"None of us is as smart as all of us."

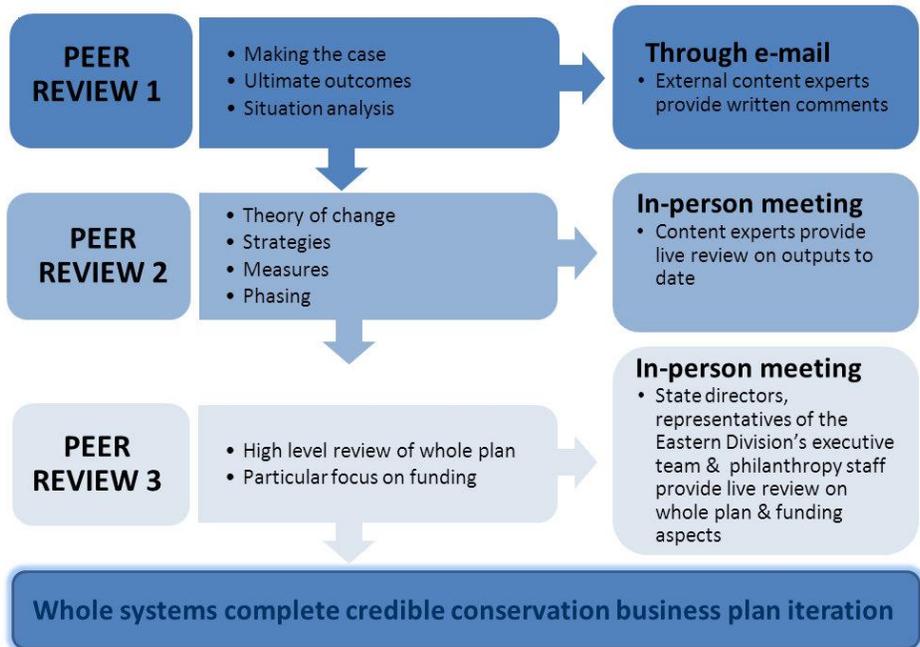
~ Japanese Proverb

We write to you because you have kindly agreed to serve as a reviewer for one of the Eastern Division's Whole Systems that is currently completing its conservation business plan.

A total of twelve whole systems are developing their conservation business plans this year, and external review is an important part in this process. The Conservancy sees peer review as a highly important vehicle for sharing knowledge and increasing our conservation impact. While your active and constructive participation as a peer reviewer will provide the **XX** Whole System with enriched perspectives and suggestions to improve their plan, we also hope that by probing and exchanging ideas, you gain something that is useful to advance your own practice.

The overall review process looks like this:

- **Peer review 1:** 3 external reviewers provide written feedback – takes place after completing the situation analysis (covering context, outcomes, situation analysis).
- **Peer review 2:** 6-8 reviewers (content experts) provide feedback in an in-person meeting – takes place after phasing and major activities (covering theory of change, strategy progress & effectiveness, phasing & major activities).
- **Peer review 3:** 6-8 reviewers (state directors & members of Division's executive team) provide high-level feedback on plan & focus on funding – takes place after capacity & funding portions are completed.



Your feedback will be contributing to PEER REVIEW 2.

To facilitate things for the project teams, I am coordinating the reception of feedback, and to be able to get your comments to the **XX** Whole System team in time, we ask that you please use this form to send your findings and recommendations in bullet form to me, [Lise Hanners](#), by **COB on **XXX, 2012****. If in

addition to this format you'd like to make notes directly in the project's document, feel free to do so, simply use the *track changes* option. then you can make reference to more detailed notes in the format we

So, what is your role as a peer reviewer? As an external reviewer and/or content expert you can reflect on and provide input to a conservation business plan with an objective perspective. While you are not necessarily expected to provide detailed technical feedback on a given strategy (unless that happens to be your area of expertise, of course), your critical eye should help identify strengths and weaknesses in the way a project is being presented. On one hand you are expected to step back and provide feedback on the team's overall conservation business plan design (how things look as a whole), and on the other hand we expect you to make recommendations on specific parts of the plan that could be strengthened. In a nutshell, we need your help to identify three things: **issues you have identified** and **recommendations for their improvement**, and **good practices** that you've identified in the plan. In this phase of the review process, we will ask you to focus on the initial steps of the conservation business plan: the portions that relate to the overall context, the outcomes, and the situation analysis.

The review format follows the structure of the Interim Conservation Planning Guidance v.1.2. To get you started, below each section we provide some ideas for things you may want to probe for (for more detailed suggestions on what constitutes a good answer you can also refer to the original guidance - <https://connect.tnc.org/teamsites/conservation/conservationplanning>). These ideas are just to get you going; skim them and take what is helpful as you review each section. They should by no means constrain you, and we encourage you to use your own critical thinking criteria.

We see the whole system teams as pioneers in the Conservancy, since they are the first ones to use the Interim Conservation Planning Guidance to develop conservation business plans for complex large systems. We hope to learn important lessons from this process, and look forward to sharing them so we can improve our practice across the Conservancy. We highly value your role as a peer reviewer in this process.

Thank you! We look forward to your recommendations!

Lise Hanners and Cristina Lasch

Name of project that is being reviewed:	
Peer reviewer:	Name: Program:

E. THEORY OF CHANGE

What suite of strategies has the best chance of achieving ultimate outcomes?

Things you may want to probe for:

- *Did the project team consider and compare alternative strategies? Any thoughts on the criteria they used?*
- *Can you tell if the team used a rigorous and transparent process to select strategies?*
- *Are chosen strategies aligned to ultimate outcomes?*

Issues you have identified	Recommendations to address issues

Is there something in this section of the plan that you really liked? A good practice?

F. How do we expect our strategies to achieve ultimate outcomes and essential intermediate results?

Things you may want to probe for:

- *Do you get a clear sense of the logic of how the team and its partners expect they can drive change in the direction of their desired ultimate outcomes? Does it identify major intermediate results (milestones)?*
- *If leverage or accelerated replication is part of the strategy or project – do you get a sense of how the team believes strategies will produce leverage or accelerate replication?*
- *Is the project team using demonstration sites or proof of concept projects as a part of their strategy? Are there any intermediate results linked to it (how will we know that we are making any progress in demonstrating what we said we would do)? Do you see a clear link with the theory of change (and how the proof of concept or demonstration sites relate to leverage or accelerated replication)?*
- *Considering the theory of change as a whole – are you convinced that it is realistic and feasible? Any major leaps of faith?*

Issues you have identified	Recommendations to address issues

Is there something in this section of the plan that you really liked? A good practice?

G. What are the major risks to our strategies?

Things you may want to probe for:

- *Have major risks for the strategy been identified?*
- *Do you get a sense of which risks are more likely to occur and how the team intends to mitigate them?*
- *Did the team consider the risk of not moving forward with this strategy?*

Issues you have identified	Recommendations to address issues

Is there something in this section of the plan that you really liked? A good practice?

H. STRATEGY PROGRESS & EFFECTIVENESS

How will we evaluate whether our strategies are working?

Things you may want to probe for:

- *Did the team define a limited set of strategy effectiveness indicators required to assess progress and support decision-making?*
- *Are measures provided for relevant risks and major “go” “no go” junction points?*
- *Considering the stated audiences – is there any feedback you have regarding the proposed indicators for ultimate outcomes, intermediate results and major risks?*
- *Did the team establish monitoring methods - including when and where monitoring should take place, who will do the monitoring, and estimated costs?*
- *Are periodic project team meetings mentioned to analyze and use monitoring & evaluation information to inform management decisions?*

Issues you have identified	Recommendations to address issues

Is there something in this section of the plan that you really liked? A good practice?

I. PHASING AND MAJOR ACTIVITIES

What are the major implementation phases and activities?

Things you may want to probe for:

- *Has the team articulated the major phases and activities?*
- *Does the phasing and timing seem appropriate?*
- *Do the associated activities seem logical? Can you tell who is responsible for their implementation?*

Issues you have identified	Recommendations to address issues

Is there something in this section of the plan that you really liked? A good practice?