



## OPEN STANDARDS CASE STUDY TEMPLATE

By sharing real-life case studies of how the Open Standards conservation approach is used at different scales and for different types of projects, conservation practitioners around the World can learn from each others' successes, innovations and blunders. This template has been developed so that we can collect and share lessons learned from the field in a standardized way. If you would like to submit a case study, please fill out this template, save it with a name that refers to your project and send it to Cristina Lasch at [clasch@tnc.org](mailto:clasch@tnc.org).


This template consists of two sections. The first asks for general information that colleagues will be able to read quickly to determine if your case study interests them. The second section requests more in-depth information for people who want to know the specifics of your management approach and lessons, but you can chose which sections to fill out in more detail.

Please use the shaded fields to type, the field will adjust as you enter your information. To select a checkbox, please double click on it and chose the "checked" option.

The members of the Conservation Coaches Network thank you for your willingness to give something back to our community!

## Section One: Case study at-a-glance

This section asks you to provide the basics of your project, so we can set it up in a searchable database on the internet. Required fields are marked with an \*.

<b>Project name *</b> : Measuring Success of Marine Conservation in the Asia Pacific Region: Coral Triangle and Micronesia Challenge	
<b>Project URL on ConPro<sup>1</sup> *</b> : <a href="http://conpro.tnc.org/1638/">http://conpro.tnc.org/1638/</a> <i>Note: if your project is not already on ConPro, please share it by accessing this link: <a href="http://conpro.tnc.org/">http://conpro.tnc.org/</a></i>	
<b>Contact Name *</b> : Annick Cros	
<b>Organization *</b> : The Nature Conservancy	
<b>E-mail address *</b> : <a href="mailto:acros@tnc.org">acros@tnc.org</a>	
<b>Other links to web-based project information:</b>	
Attach a photo to illustrate your project (please indicate how it should be cited)	
	
Happy Fisherman in the Asia Pacific Conservation Region. Courtesy of Bridget Besaw.	
<b>Date this form was completed *</b> : Oct 08 2010	
<b>Project start date *</b> : First attempts at using Open Standards to capture the program were in 2008. The program is over 20 years old.	
<b>What main actions does your project focus on? *</b> Please check all that apply	
IUCN-CMP classification of conservation actions (version 1.1)	Definition
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Land/water protection	actions to identify, establish or expand parks and other

<sup>1</sup> ConPro is a searchable project repository where members of the Coaches Conservation Network have agreed to share their projects. You can access it at the following link: <http://conpro.tnc.org/>

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Land/water management	legally protected areas, and to protect resource rights  actions directed at conserving or restoring sites, habitats and the wider environment
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Species management	actions directed at managing or restoring species, focused on the species of concern itself
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Education and awareness	actions directed at people to improve understanding and skills, and influence behavior
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Law and policy	actions to develop, change, influence, and help implement formal legislation, regulations, and voluntary standards
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Livelihood, economic and other incentives	actions to use economic and other incentives to influence behavior
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> External capacity building	actions to build the infrastructure to do better conservation
<input type="checkbox"/> Other	please specify here:

**What is the scope or boundary type of your project?** Please check all that apply

**Ecological boundaries:**

- Large land- or sea-scape
- Multiple sites / network of sites
- Species-level crossing landscapes
- Threat-oriented crossing landscapes
- Site-based
- Other:** please specify here

**Political boundaries:**

- Global
- Multi-national
- Country-based
- State, province, municipality
- Village or community

**Resource ownership:**

- Indigenous or communal
- Private
- Government (federal, state, municipal)

**Who designed the project? The Nature Conservancy**

**Who implements the project? The Nature Conservancy Asia Pacific Conservation Region's Marine program**

**Does this case study represent the full cycle of the Open Standards?**

- Yes (if you selected this option, you can skip to the next field/box)
- No (if you selected this option, please specify the steps below)

**Which specific steps of the Open Standards does your case study deal with?**

**1. Conceptualize:**

- 1A Define initial project team
- 1B Define scope, vision, and targets
- 1C Identify critical threats
- 1D Complete situation analysis

**2. Plan your actions and monitoring:**

- 2A Develop a formal action plan: Goals, strategies, assumptions, and objectives
- 2B Develop a formal monitoring plan
- 2C Develop an operational plan

**3. Implement actions and monitoring:**

- 3A Develop a detailed short-term work plan and timeline
- 3B Develop and refine your project budget
- 3C Implement your plans

**4. Analyze, use, adapt:**

- 4A Prepare your data for analysis
- 4B Analyze results
- 4C Adapt your strategic plan

**5. Capture and share learning:**

- 5A Document what you learn
- 5B Share what you learn
- 5C Create a learning environment

**What adaptations/innovations, if any, did you make when applying the OS (full cycle or specific steps) to this case study?**

The OS was applied to a program as opposed to a project. This means that we had to change the scale at which we normally operate. We had to lose some of the details to be able to think at the regional level and focus on common strategies that would make sense over eleven countries/jurisdictions and four operating units.

**What key lessons did you learn in applying the OS (full cycle or specific steps) to this case study? Later on you will be able to explain these or other more minor lessons in more detail. The first time we tried to apply the full cycle of the OS, the program failed at the implementation of the monitoring plan to track indicators. The strategy was flawed at the core level: the selection of team members. We were missing several levels of management to be able to apply the monitoring program to track success. By revising the team and making sure that we had a bottom up approach (site managers were working with regional and program directors) we were able to get the endorsement needed to successfully apply the OS.**

**Based on these key lessons, what one or two things would you recommend other teams do that you found really helped your team to “keep the adaptive management wheel moving?” Finding indicators that can and will be used to provide a clear understanding to partners and donors on progress is key to making sure you are staying on track. If these indicators are lacking, program managers and directors should be made aware that there is a flaw in the strategy.**

**Describe how your team’s good practice of the Open Standards contributed to important conservation results so far?**

The good practice of OS has helped identify gaps in the structure of the program. It has led to the creation of two new strategic teams: Communications and Capacity Building, which are now linked in with the rest of the program. The practice also helped each team (Marine Protected Areas, Fisheries Management, Ecosystem Based Adaptation, External Affairs, Communications and Capacity Building) work more closely towards a common goal. It has helped redefine our targets and a new direction, decreasing our focus on sites and increasing our focus on building the enabling environment for conservation, connecting policy and practice on the ground, and leveraging conservation action beyond our sites.

## Section Two: Case study – detailed description

This section provides space where you can share more detailed information about best practices and lessons learned. Our intention is to focus on information that complements project data already available on [ConPro](#), so there is no need to share basic project information here.

The structure follows the steps of the Open Standards, so we have provided reference information on what each step and associated outputs.

In the “Lessons learned” section, you only need to fill out the areas where you have something to tell, so if you feel you have nothing to share about an entire step, it’s OK. Feel free to tell your story in your own style, share images or hyperlinks to video clips and other support materials that illustrate your approach and recommendations.

### Lessons learned - Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation

#### Lessons learned from Step 1: Conceptualize

Please share any innovations or positive findings you may have for this step.

**Getting the right team involved in the project is critical. The first attempt at applying good practice of OS to the Coral Triangle Program failed because we did not have the endorsement from senior management. This led to a lack of coordination and time allocation to put in place the monitoring plan to measure success.**

**Involving senior management gave the necessary support for the team to change the direction and approach of the Asia Pacific Marine Program and focus the vision at the right scale (integrating the Coral Triangle Program and the Micronesia Challenge) which could not have happened with the initial team structure.**

**The approach to addressing the complexity of applying this first step to a program that deals with 11 countries and four Operational Units (Micronesia, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands) was to divide it into smaller "projects" or sub-strategies: Marine Protected Areas, Fisheries Management, Ecosystem Based Adaptation, External Affairs, Sustainable Finance and Communication. Three measures coaches coordinated the approach to targets, threats and viability over these sub-strategies. This helped piecing an overall strategy from the sub-strategies, where targets and threats had been approached at the same scale and could be matched.**

**We then repeated this step for the overall strategy. The targets for the three "enabling" sub-strategies were transformed into intermediate results which linked them to the three "conservation" sub-strategies.**

**What, if any, opportunities are there for improving the way you implemented this step?**

**It was the first time we applied OS to sub-strategies such as Communication and Policy and we were unsure if their targets should match the conservation targets or not. In the end we found it easier to create "Communication targets", for example, different audiences, and recognize that the sub-strategy was too far removed from the conservation target to require mapping of the "if - then" logic.**

**We haven't been completely successful in carrying out the threat analysis as the OS tools were not adequate for the types of threats described in the Communication sub-strategy.**

**What, if any, recommendations do you have for others implementing this step?**

This step is really critical and lays the basis for the rest of your project. So it is important to take the time to do it well. We found that it brings teams together and aligns their vision of where their projects should be headed. The threat and viability analysis can be tricky when you are not dealing with traditional conservation projects; while it may be used as a guideline to focus on the most important threats, it doesn't necessarily have to be complete.

**Reference information about Step 1, which can help you think about ideas you want to share:**

This first step involves the following:	Outputs for each standard practice within this step include:
1A. Define initial project team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Selection of initial project team, including project leader, core members, and advisory members.</li> <li>• Identification of key skills each team member brings.</li> <li>• Designation of roles and responsibilities.</li> </ul>
1B. Define scope, vision, and targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A brief description of the project scope.</li> <li>• If appropriate, a map of the project area (GIS file or hand sketch).</li> <li>• A vision statement for the project.</li> <li>• Selection of conservation targets, including a brief explanation of why they were chosen.</li> <li>• A description of the status of each priority conservation target.</li> </ul>
1C. Identify critical threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification of critical threats.</li> <li>• Rating or ranking of direct threats to identify critical threats.</li> </ul>
1D. Complete situation analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification and analysis of indirect threats and opportunities.</li> <li>• Assessment of stakeholders.</li> <li>• Initial conceptual model that illustrates cause and effect relationships among factors operating at your site.</li> <li>• Ground-truthing and revision of your model.</li> </ul>

**Lessons learned from Step 2: Plan your actions and monitoring**

**Please share any innovations or positive findings you may have for this step.**

**We divided and applied this step to each of the 6 sub-strategies. One of the criteria we chose for selecting key intermediate results ("key factors") were results where more than one sub-strategy merged, identifying links throughout the situation analysis (Result chain). Developing objectives for those key intermediate result then became a collaborative process between teams building yet a stronger framework for the overall strategy.**

**A useful exercise to help the group divide their goal into smaller objectives was to create a calendar for the time frame defined for the program and have each sub-strategy team present to the rest of the group. This helped focus on different objectives for different steps with different time line.**

**Another very positive outcome of going through this step as one team**

was that it was easy to communicate between different sub-strategies which allowed for a more realistic distribution of responsibilities in the monitoring plan.

**What, if any, opportunities are there for improving the way you implemented this step?**

It is important to have measures coaches that can help sub-strategy teams understand the difference between "conservation" monitoring plans and measuring for success. This is always a difficult exercise as it is a new way of thinking about indicators for most of the team. It is also a challenge because they may be forced to step out of their expertise to define some of the indicators, such as socio-economic indicators which always seem to be a weak area for most of our conservationists. For example, indicators to monitor the success of Ecosystem Based Adaptation involves measuring the benefits conservation brings to people.

A case study with examples of the most used or best indicators for various scenarios would be useful to inspire teams in the future.

**What, if any, recommendations do you have for others implementing this step?**

If objectives are SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Timely) to start with, it is much easier to define measurable indicators. It is worth spending more time on objectives and thinking ahead of indicators that will allow to measure these objectives rather than do it in a two step process: define objectives and then define indicators.

**Reference information about Step 2, which can help you think about ideas you want to share:**

This first step involves the following:	Outputs for each standard practice within this step include:
2A. Develop a formal action plan: Goals, strategies, assumptions, and objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Goals for each target.</li> <li>• Identification of "key factors" and draft strategies.</li> <li>• Ranking of draft strategies.</li> <li>• Results chains that specify assumptions for key strategies.</li> <li>• Objectives for key factors.</li> </ul>
2B. Develop a formal monitoring plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Audiences and their associated information needs clearly defined.</li> <li>• Indicators defined.</li> <li>• Finalized Monitoring Plan.</li> </ul>
2C. Develop an operational plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment of human, financial, and other resources.</li> <li>• Risk assessment and mitigation.</li> <li>• Estimate of lifespan and exit strategy.</li> </ul>



## Lessons learned from Step 3: Implement actions and monitoring

Please share any innovations or positive findings you may have for this step.

What, if any, opportunities are there for improving the way you implemented this step?

What, if any, recommendations do you have for others implementing this step?

This is the step where the first try at applying OS failed. The indicators of success did not match the information requested by senior management and there was a lack of accountability. On the second try we received endorsement from the Managing Director of the Asia Pacific Conservation Region and accountability from the bottom to the top of the managerial chain. This provided important momentum in the implementation of the monitoring plan.

Reference information about Step 3, which can help you think about ideas you want to share:

This first step involves the following:	Outputs for each standard practice within this step include:
3A. Develop a detailed short-term work plan and timeline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Work plan detailing the tasks, activities, and responsibilities associated with your Action Plan, Monitoring Plan, and Operational Plan.</li><li>• Project timeline or calendar.</li></ul>
3B. Develop and refine your project budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Project budget.</li><li>• Potential funding sources identified.</li><li>• Funding proposals developed and submitted.</li><li>• Financial resources obtained.</li></ul>
3C. Implement your plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Generally, implementation of strategic plan (action, monitoring, and operational plans).</li><li>• More specifically, implementation of your work plan, keeping in mind your project budget and schedule.</li></ul>

## Lessons learned from Step 4: Analyze, use, adapt

Please share any innovations or positive findings you may have for this step.

Choosing the person responsible to report progress against the goals has, in some teams, resulted in a shift in the team's composition which reflects the shift in the program's priorities. For example while developing the monitoring plan for the Ecosystem Based Adaptation strategy it became clear that the success of the strategy was going to be centered on people and people adopting ecosystem based solutions to climate change. The team shifted from a strategy leader with a scientific background to a leader with a policy background.

What, if any, opportunities are there for improving the way you implemented this step?

What, if any, recommendations do you have for others implementing this step?

**Reference information about Step 4, which can help you think about ideas you want to share:**

<b>This first step involves the following:</b>	<b>Outputs for each standard practice within this step include:</b>
4A. Prepare your data for analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development and regular use of systems for recording, storing, processing and backing up project data.</li> </ul>
4B. Analyze results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyses of project results and assumptions.</li> <li>• Analyses of operational and financial data.</li> <li>• Documentation of discussions and decisions.</li> </ul>
4C. Adapt your strategic plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revised project documents (including action plan, operational plan, work plan, and budget).</li> </ul>

**Lessons learned from Step 5: Capture and share learning**

Please share any innovations or positive findings you may have for this step.

The Communication team has been identified as the main team responsible to ensure that lessons learned, progress and success of the strategy are reported to the right audiences, including senior management and donors. However links to this team have been identified in each of the other sub-strategies and workplans allocate time and resource for this exchange.

What, if any, opportunities are there for improving the way you implemented this step?

What, if any, recommendations do you have for others implementing this step?

Accountability to measure progress needs to exist at all levels, from the overarching strategy to individual sub-strategies to site projects.

**Reference information about Step 4, which can help you think about ideas you want to share:**

<b>This first step involves the following:</b>	<b>Outputs for each standard practice within this step include:</b>
5A. Document what you learn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Documentation of key results</li> </ul>
5B. Share what you learn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification of key audiences.</li> <li>• Development of a communications strategy.</li> <li>• Regular reports of other types of communication to project team members and key stakeholders.</li> <li>• Development and distribution of appropriate communication products.</li> <li>• Use of other people's communication products.</li> </ul>
5C. Create a learning environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular feedback shared formally or informally.</li> <li>• Evaluations and/or audits at appropriate times during the project cycle.</li> <li>• Demonstrated commitment from leaders to learning and innovation.</li> <li>• A safe environment for encouraging experimentation and questioning the status quo.</li> <li>• A commitment to share success and failures with practitioners around the world.</li> </ul>

## **Lessons learned from applying the full cycle of the Open Standards:**

Your comments here can focus on the project itself, and/or the way the full cycle was applied.

**What, if anything else, would you like to share, on innovations or positive findings about closing the loop, or your application of the full cycle?**

**Reviewing the strategy after the first attempt at closing the loop and identifying where it was failing really helped to strengthen the team and the strategy. It clearly underlined the need to align the two marine Asia Pacific Program: The Coral Triangle and the Micronesia Challenge.**

**It gave us an opportunity to revise our strategic direction and approach: less focus on sites and more focus on building the enabling environment for conservation, connecting policy and practice on the ground and leveraging conservation action beyond our sites. We were able to represent for the first time a major change in our program: from our previous focus on biodiversity as the primary conservation target, we've taken an important step in evolving towards a more holistic approach that will ensure benefits to biodiversity, ecosystem services and people.**

**Learning from our failures in our first attempt helped us to build a strong team that saw for the first time TNC strategy effectiveness measures applied at the regional scale and OS applied to External Affairs and Communication strategies.**

**Finally, the best lesson learned is that this strategy could not be successful without a complete integration of all of the different sub-strategies. This process required that our regional team work closely together in a way that had never been done before, and as a result we have, for the first time, become a fully integrated team that shares clarity of purpose, a means of achieving it and a clearly articulated method for measuring our success.**

**Please share any opportunities for improvement, based on your application of the full cycle.**

**Please provide recommendations for others, if relevant, based on your application of the full cycle.**

It is important to take the time to build strong basis (step 1 and 2) in order to have a chance to apply the full cycle. It is very difficult to back track once the team has gone through a step and validated it. It's the job of the coaches to make sure that these steps are complete.

**Thanks for sharing your work!**