

Summary Report on
Organizational Capacity Building Programs for Collaborative Conservation
Groups

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Background:

This report summarizes the findings of an inventory of organizational capacity building programs. The Western Collaborative Conservation Network (WCCN) supports building the organizational capacity and effectiveness of collaborative conservation groups. The WCCN believes that strengthening the structure, function and operations of collaborative groups directly affects the ability of these groups (whether informal volunteer organizations or formal nonprofits) to fulfill their conservation mission. The WCCN worked with a Nature Conservancy (TNC) intern to inventory existing programs in order to: a) promote these opportunities to collaboratives, and b) to assess if and where gaps exist, that might be addressed in partnership with others across the region. Highlights of the inventory are explained below and are detailed in the WCCN Organizational Capacity Building Excel spreadsheet.

Methods:

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, The Nature Conservancy's Colorado Chapter, changed its field-based internship to a virtual research-based program. The Center for Collaborative Conservation (CCC) was approached and asked to provide projects for the intern. Two projects were selected; one of which was this inventory. The intern spent approximately 8-10 hours per week for 8 weeks on this inventory during Summer 2020.

To guide the inventory, the WCCN created a spreadsheet organized by state and with sections for regional and larger scale programs. The WCCN pre-populated the spreadsheet with examples of existing programs and trained the TNC intern prior to data collection. In addition, members of the WCCN were asked to provide examples of existing programs in their state or sub-region within the Western US. The Collaborative Resource Finder Tool (CRAFT), a searchable database of collaboration learning opportunities and resources, was the main tool used for identifying existing organizational capacity building programs. Research associated with CRAFT records, snowballed identification of other programs. Web-based research was used to find additional information about each program and also uncovered more opportunities. Host organizations were contacted as needed via email throughout the project to fill in information gaps and some interviews were conducted virtually.

States inventoried included Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, New Mexico, Nevada, Montana, Texas, Utah and Wyoming. Programs offered across multiple western states were categorized as regional. Programs operating across multiple regions or beyond the regional were listed under a national category.

The spreadsheet can be found at [\(insert Google drive or wccn webpage link\)](#). Inventory categories included; host organization and website, program name and contact information, and year program started, number of participant groups, program partners, capacity building topics (skills and topics), timing of program, program length and format (in person, online, or mixture), participating organizations, program cost and availability of support funding, program funding sources, how conservation impact is measured and how the organization evaluates the program.

Findings:

Overall, 65 organizations offer 128 programs and tools; 29 were provided national organizations, 13 were regional in scale and 86 were offered at the state level. Of the 65 organizations, 28 provide services to any nonprofit, 26 have a conservation or natural resource focus and the remaining 11 are academic institutions most of which with a natural resource emphasis. Seventy-six of the programs and tools support any kind of nonprofit organization, while 31 programs were specific to conservation or environmental organizations, and 21 programs were provided by academic institutions most of which were housed within natural resources. The following states had between 3 and 6 programs: Idaho, Nevada, Texas, Utah and Wyoming. Arizona, New Mexico and Montana host between 9 and 12 programs each. Twenty-three programs were recorded in Colorado. Basic information was readily available including the name, format, and capacity building skills covered for each program. Information pertaining to how programs were funded and whether programs included evaluations were more difficult to determine and often not able to be determined within the timeframe of this inventory.

Capacity building skills focused on communication, leadership development, board governance and development, partnership and relationship building, strategic planning, conflict resolution, facilitation, organizational and operational management, and fundraising and financial management. Other skills less frequently offered included collaborative planning, adaptive management, human resource management, grant making/writing & seeking, mediation, negotiation, program management and volunteer management, event planning, marketing, mentoring, peer learning, youth engagement/programming and education including tribes, DEI, technology, and knowledge management.

Tools most frequently offered included COVID-19 recovery, nonprofit development, organizational evaluation and assessment, fundraising and financial management and facilitation. Additional collaboration tools included human resource management, communications, strategic planning, partnership development, financial recovery, conflict resolution, marketing, working remotely, and meetings and events management. Some programs offer certification in certain topic areas.

Below is a detailed summary of the findings reported by state and region.

Arizona

Three organizations (1 nonprofit, 1 conservation focused organization and 1 academic institution), offer 12 capacity building programs. One of these organizations hosts programs for any nonprofit organization, while the other two have a conservation focus. Southwest Decision Resources was also included under the regional programs since the organization supports capacity building in other states beyond Arizona.

More capacity building skills are offered in the following areas; leadership, board governance, strategic planning, financial planning, grant seeking, funding, partnership and network building, and organizational management. Inventory results suggest Arizona could build on their programs in communication, collaborative planning and adaptive management, HR development and management, facilitation, negotiation, conflict resolution, program and project planning and management, event planning, mentoring, peer learning, knowledge management, youth education and tribal program planning, DEI, technology and marketing. Little information was available on tools associated with these capacity building programs. This likely represents an information gap.

Three of the programs are considered very accessible; available anytime or on an ongoing basis and requiring short time investments. Four programs are moderately available because they are seasonally available and or require a longer time commitment. The remaining five programs are somewhat restricted, meaning they are only available for specific time periods and or require longer time investment. Four programs are offered all in-person, three offered currently all online, and the remaining five are offered as a mixture of in-person or online. Six of the programs are open to any applicants while two are have specific applicant requirements. Seven programs have low to moderate cost and five offer funding support. Three programs are considered high cost.

Colorado

Eleven organizations provide 23 capacity building programs. Seven programs are tailored to natural resource nonprofits.

Programs cover communications, leadership development, board governance, human resource management, strategic planning, financial management project management, organizational management, conflict resolution, partnership and relationship building, and program management and planning. Areas for strengthening in Colorado include collaborative planning and adapting management, grant making/writing/seeking, facilitation/mediation/negotiation, volunteer management, organizational performance/evaluation, event planning, mentoring, peer learning, knowledge management, youth and tribal programming, DEI, technology, and marketing. Little information was available on tools associated with these capacity building programs. This likely represents an information gap.

Six programs are very accessible, given they are available on an ongoing basis or require short or flexible time investment. Seven of the programs are moderately accessible, requiring short or flexible time investments but available during limited periods or only seasonally available. Only three programs are considered restricted because of availability. Eleven of the programs are all offered in-person, three are known to be offered all online and five are offered as a mix of in-person and online. Ten programs are open to any applicants, while fourteen are open to applicants with some

limitations. In terms of cost, six are low cost, four medium cost and five high cost. In all six are known to offer funding support.

Idaho

Six capacity building programs are offered by two nonprofits organizations.

Idaho offers capacity building programs and tools that are accessible to any nonprofit organization large or small. Programs offered are through the Idaho Nonprofit Center and the Community Foundation of Teton Valley range from \$0-\$500 and have a mix of in person and online learning. No academic organizations offering capacity building programs were identified for the state, this is an area for further research.

Focus areas of capacity building programs include board governance and development, strategic planning, human resource management, financial management and planning, funding development/fundraising, and partnership/relationship development. Areas for increased offerings include communications, leadership development, collaborative planning and adaptive management, grant making and writing, organizational development, conflict resolution, facilitation, mediation, negotiation and project/program management. In addition, other topics for increased availability include volunteer management, organizational performance/evaluation, event planning, mentoring and peer learning, knowledge management, youth and tribal education and programming and planning, DEI, technology, and marketing. Little information was available on tools associated with these capacity building programs. This likely represents an information gap.

Four of the programs are highly accessible, being available anytime or on an ongoing basis and requiring small time investment or requiring short time investments. The other two programs are moderately accessible with slightly longer time investments or being available seasonally. Most of the programs are available online, while one is offered in person and one a mixture of formats. All programs, except one are open to all applicants and all have low or moderate costs and all but one provide funding support.

Nevada

Three organizations, (Nevada Collaborative Conservation Network, the University of Nevada, and the Alliance for Nevada Nonprofits), two nonprofit and one academic, offer three capacity building programs.

Capacity building topics include board governance, strategic planning, facilitation (including a facilitation toolbox) partnership development and to a lesser extent, communication, financial management, fundraising, and organizational management. Nevada has opportunities to expand programming in the following areas leadership development, collaborative planning and adaptive management, grant making/writing/seeking, conflict resolution, mediation and negotiation, program and project management, volunteer management, organizational performance/evaluation, event planning, mentoring and peer learning, knowledge management, youth and tribal education and programming, DEI, technology, and marketing. Little information was available on tools associated with these capacity building programs. This likely represents an information gap.

Accessibility of capacity building programs in Nevada were not limited by availability, being all available online and anytime, nor by price of the programs or by the type of nonprofits who can enroll in them. The trainings offered through the Alliance for Nevada Nonprofits (ANN), however, were found only available to members of the alliance.

New Mexico

Five organizations, two nonprofit, two state agency, and one academic, offering 9 capacity building programs. None of these organizations have a conservation or natural resources focus. They all provide general assistance to nonprofits.

Capacity building topics and tools include communication, leadership development, facilitation, conflict resolution, financial management, and human resource management. Areas for strengthening include board governance, strategic planning, grant writing and fundraising, mediation and negotiation. No programs or tools were found for partnership development, nonprofit development or program/project management. Other gaps for potential program development include collaborative planning and adaptive management, mentoring and peer learning, knowledge management, youth and tribal education and programming, DEI, technology, and marketing.

Three of the programs are very accessible, meaning they are open to any applicants at no or very low cost and available on an ongoing basis and are online. Three programs are considered moderately accessible because they are limited in terms of the timing or are offered at a moderate cost but with some funding support. Two programs are considered more restricted based on cost.

Montana

Six organizations, three conservation, two nonprofit, and one academic institution, offer nine capacity building programs.

Programs included communication, board governance and development, leadership development, collaborative planning, financial management, fundraising, conflict resolution, facilitation, human resource management, partnership development, and organizational management. Areas for expanding include grant making/writing/seeking, negotiation, program/project management, volunteer management, organizational performance/evaluation, event planning, mentoring and peer learning, knowledge management, youth and tribal education and programming and programming, DEI, technology and marketing.

Two thirds of programs are offered as a mixture of in-person and online, while one third are offered all in-person. Four programs are considered moderately accessible based on the amount of time investment required or being limited to member organizations and or moderate cost. Two of these programs do offer funding support. Four programs are restricted because of cost or applicant criteria. One program is very accessible; offered monthly and online during COVID 19. It may be worth investigating if some access to programming can be increased beyond membership.

Private foundations provide key financial support for about 50% of these programs and one third of the programs are known to have evaluation processes.

Texas

Five organizations, three nonprofit, one conservation and one academic institution, provide five capacity building programs.

Topics include communication, leadership development, strategic planning, partnership development and management, program/project management, mediation, facilitation, conflict resolution, negotiation and marketing. Areas to be considered for increased programming include board management and development, collaborative planning and adaptive management, human resource management, financial management, grant making/writing/seeking, fundraising, organizational management, volunteer management, organizational performance/evaluation, event planning, mentoring and peer learning, knowledge management, youth and tribal education and programming, DEI, and technology. Tools are offered in the areas of leadership, nonprofit development, board management and financial management. Overall, there could be more variety in available programs in Texas, places for improvement include programs in nonprofit and partnership development.

Two of the programs offered by nonprofit support organizations are online and open to anyone, making them very accessible. One program offered by the university is moderately available, requiring more of a time investment with a high costs but supported by funding. The two remaining programs are more restricted because of time required and applicant criteria.

Utah

Three organizations, two nonprofit and one academic, offer five capacity building programs.

These programs covered communications, Human resource management, financial management, partnership management, conflict resolution, facilitation, mediation, negotiation, nonprofit development, volunteer management, and strategic planning capacity building topics. Lacking are leadership and board development, grant making and writing, event planning, mentoring and peer learning, knowledge management, youth and tribal education and programming, DEI, and technology. An array of tools support these programs. Although Utah has few programs, a diversity of skills and tools are covered in these programs.

Fifty percent of Utah's programs are very accessible; they are available on an ongoing basis, online and open to all applicants, and available at no cost. One program is moderately accessible because applicants are limited by certain criteria (however funding support is available) and one is restricted because it requires a full year's commitment.

Wyoming

Three organizations, two nonprofit and one academic, provide five capacity building programs.

Four of the five programs identified in Wyoming are designed as general capacity building programs for nonprofit organizations and topics include communication, leadership development, board governance, human resource management, financial management, grant writing/seeking, fundraising, and organizational management. The one natural resource specific capacity building program at the University of Wyoming covers collaborative leadership, strategic planning, financial management, organizational management, mediation, communication, facilitation and conflict resolution. Overall, there are no programs in grant making, mediation, or relationship/partnership development, program/project management offered through Wyoming's programs. Areas that might be considered as additions include volunteer management, organizational performance/evaluation, event planning, mentoring and peer learning, knowledge management,

youth and tribal education and programming, DEI, technology and marketing. Given Wyoming is a small state, it may be that current programming meets the level of need.

Two of the programs are restricted in availability because the time commitment is high and the cost is also high, although the latter is somewhat offset by available funding support. One program is readily available in-person, anytime, at low cost. The other two programs are moderately available at any time at a moderate cost and offered either online or as a mix of in-person and online programming

Regional

Nine organizations, six collaborative conservation support organizations (three of which are foundations), two nonprofit organizations, and one academic institution, offering thirteen capacity building programs.

Of the nine organizations found across the region, six of them offered general capacity building support for nonprofits. Programs offered covered the majority of capacity building skills. These included but weren't limited to partnership development, board governance, financial management and fundraising, facilitation, leadership development, communication, DEI, and strategic planning. A few topics where more programming might be expanded and offered regionally include: collaborative planning and adaptive management, grant making, mediation and negotiation, program and project planning and management, volunteer management, event planning, marketing, mentoring, peer learning, youth engagement and education including tribes, technology, and knowledge management. Collaboration tools are offered in association with these programs are mostly focused on nonprofit management, board development, leadership development, fundraising, human resource management, communications and strategic planning. More tools might be offered in the following areas: partnership development, financial recovery, evaluation and assessment, conflict resolution, marketing, fundraising and financial management, working remotely, and meetings and events management.

In terms of accessibility, about half of the programs offered are very accessible; they are offered either mostly online, some are in-person, and most are low in cost or financial support is offered and they are open to almost any practitioners. Only one program is very limited by its cost and less than one third of the programs require a moderate time and cost investment. A couple of programs are limited to grantees only.

Little is yet known about the funding sources of these programs. Four of the programs are known to have a program evaluation process.

National:

Fifteen organizations, 7 collaborative conservation support organizations (one of which is a foundation), 7 nonprofit training organizations, 1 academic institution), offering 29 capacity building programs.

Nationally, a wide range of capacity building programs were identified. Of the 15 organizations, 9 offered general support to nonprofit organizations. Like the regional resources, these programs offer a large variety of skills and tools to build collaborative capacity. Areas for more capacity building

skills include: collaborative planning and adaptive management, human resource management and team building, grant making/writing/seeking, mediation and negotiation, program and project planning and management, volunteer management, evaluation, event planning, marketing, mentoring, peer learning, youth engagement and education including tribes, DEI, technology, and knowledge management. Collaboration tools are offered in association with these programs are similar to the regional situation, they are mostly focused on nonprofit management, board development, financial management and fundraising, evaluation and assessment, and strategic planning. More tools might be offered in the following areas: leadership development, human resource management, partnership development, financial recovery, facilitation, volunteer management, conflict resolution, communications, marketing, working remotely, and meetings and events management.

Many of the programs offered by nonprofit training organizations are very accessible, that is offered at low cost or no cost and open to everyone and about 50% or more are offered online. Other programs are either very limited or moderately limited because of cost, lack of financial support, or criteria restrict who can participate. About one third of the programs have been historically offered in-person and about 50% are offered as a mixture of in-person and online.

Currently little is yet known about the funding sources for most of these programs. Two programs are understood to use criteria for measuring the impact of groups in their programs. Three of the programs are known to have a program evaluation process.

Conclusion

Given the scope and duration of the Nature Conservancy's Internship was limited to eight weeks, many more programs could likely be discovered through additional inquiry. Completeness of each program in the inventory was largely limited by publicly available online data (including contact information) and responsiveness to email inquiries. As a result, many programs in the inventory lack information on program funding, criteria for measuring capacity-building conservation impact, and program evaluation information. Additionally, some programs, mainly webinars and tools, listed in the inventory do not have contact information.

Beyond the findings of this inventory, further research on programs in Arizona, Idaho, Utah and Wyoming is needed to understand the full scope of capacity in those states. Increasing accessibility in terms of cost, format and applicant restrictions, might make more programming available to collaboratives. A next step will be to compare what collaboratives need with what is available.