

1. Identify People Involved



Basic Practice One

This document is a chapter from the Conservation Action Planning Handbook. The complete Handbook is available online at <http://conserveonline.org/workspaces/cbdgateway/cap/practices>.

The CAP Handbook is intended as a guidance resource to support the implementation of The Nature Conservancy's Conservation Action Planning (CAP) Process - a powerful instrument for helping practitioners get to effective conservation results. The CAP process is a key analytical method that supports Conservation by Design, the Conservancy's strategic framework for mission success.

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For more information on Conservation Action Planning visit www.conservationgateway.org/cap.

CONSERVATION ACTION PLANNING

Step 1: Identify People Involved in Your Project

As summarized in TNC's [CAP Overview of Basic Practices](#):

This step asks you to identify your most valuable resource -the people who will be involved in designing and implementing your project. Specific questions that this step answers include:

“Who will design our project?”

“Who will be responsible for ensuring the plan goes forward?”

“Who can give us advice?”

“Who will help us through this process?”

Expected Outputs

- Selection of core project team members and assignment of roles.
- Identification of other planning team members and advisors as needed.
- Identification of a process leader.

The Importance of Identifying People in Your Project

Although conservation typically focuses on biodiversity, it is fundamentally a human endeavor. To this end, the most important resources for any conservation project are the people who will be involved in designing and implementing it. It is the commitment and skills that these people bring that will ultimately determine if your conservation planning process will result in the development of effective strategies that will truly be implemented and evaluated over time.

One of the key principles of adaptive management is that the *people who will ultimately be responsible for implementing a project must also be involved in designing and monitoring it*. If project managers don't intimately understand the assumptions that have gone into a project plan, chances are they will not be able to effectively implement the plan -or to successfully adapt it and change it over time. Another key principle is that *having project team members with different skills, knowledge, and experience will generally lead to a more creative and resilient project*. Project team members collectively need to have knowledge of the area (both its ecology and human context), ample conservation experience, and an ability to think strategically. A final principle is that although it is important to have continuity, *project teams also need to grow and change over time as conditions change*, the project matures, new or different expertise is needed, and as people's careers evolve.

Types of People Involved in Your Project

There are many ways to categorize the type of people that will be involved in your project by their role; the partners and perspectives they represent; and the knowledge, skills and characteristics that they have. The specific types of people that any given project will require are also influenced by the type of project you are undertaking and where the project is in its life cycle. If you are starting a small new project in a new place, you need one set of people to help you use the CAP process to get a quick sense of what your organization might undertake. If you are developing strategies in a large multi-stakeholder project, you may need another set of people. And if you are working to hand a project over to new partners, you may require still another group.

Roles

Whether they are formally or informally defined, basic project roles include:

- **Initiating Project Team** - The specific people who initially conceive of and launch the project. They may or may not go on to form the core project team, but if not, then the project should probably not go through a detailed CAP process until the Core Project Team has been identified. The initiating project team often includes a “sponsor” who is a person in a leadership or decision making position within the organization who validates the process, ensures that there are resources to implement it, and provides overall leadership for the project.
- **Core Project Team** - A small group of people (typically 3-8 people) who are ultimately responsible for designing and managing the project. This group includes the project leader(s).
- **Full Project Team** - The complete group of people collectively involved in designing, implementing, monitoring and learning from the project. This group can include managers, stakeholders, researchers, consultants, volunteers, and other key implementers. The composition of this group will typically change over time as the project goes through different stages and requires different skills and abilities.
- **Project Advisors** - People who are not on the project team, but to whom the team members can turn for advice and counsel.
- **Project Stakeholders** - Individuals, groups or institutions who have a vested interest in the natural resources of the project area and/or who potentially will be affected by project activities and have something to gain or lose if conditions change or stay the same. Just because someone is a stakeholder does not mean that you will want them on your project team. You cannot ignore key stakeholders in your analysis of the situation. Cultivation of key stakeholders can be a long process itself that may have to begin well before your CAP process gets under way.
- **Process Leader and Support Members** - A process leader is a person who can lead the project team through the CAP process. A process leader is typically part of the core team. A good leader understands the key elements of the process, has good facilitation skills and can keep your team from getting too bogged down in any one part of the process. This leader does not need to be a “professional” facilitator, but should be someone who is intimately familiar with applying the CAP process to “real-world” conservation problems. It is also often helpful to have one person serve as the workshop coordinator to arrange the logistics for the workshops in your CAP process.

Terms at a Glance

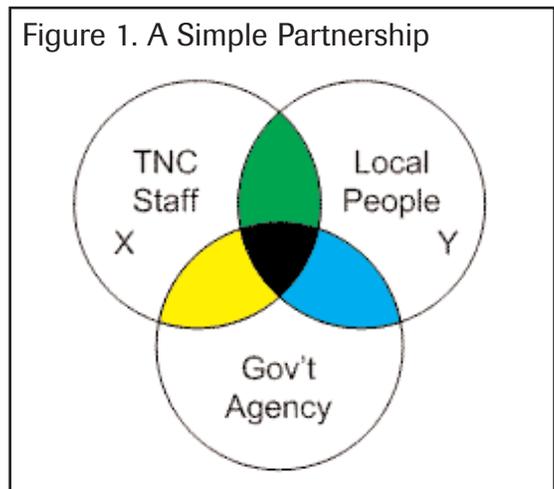
Project Team - A specific group of practitioners who are responsible for designing, implementing and monitoring a project. This group can include managers, stakeholders, researchers, and other key implementers.

Stakeholders - Individuals, groups, or institutions who have a vested interest in the natural resources of the project area and/or who potentially will be affected by project activities and have something to gain or lose if conditions change or stay the same.

Representation of Partners and Perspectives

In addition to the roles that they play, project team members and advisors also often represent different partners and perspectives. Most conservation projects are partnerships between people representing different organizations and groups. As such, it is usually important to have individuals from each of the major partners involved in the project team. Partnership development is an entire process in and of itself that often requires substantial advance planning and hard work to carry out.

For example, Figure 1 shows a relatively simple partnership. In this case, although the three groups have slightly different missions, they still can agree to come together and work on areas of joint interest shown by the shaded overlap areas. (Actually, they can even take on work related to the unshaded areas, as long as it is a negotiated trade - “We will help you do X, if you help us do Y”). Here, it would be useful to have at least one key representative from each partner group on the core project team.



In more complex projects there are more potential stakeholders, such as a development Non-Government Organization (NGO) or a logging company. In this case, it may or may not make sense to include representatives of the logging company and the development NGO on the project -it depends in large part on how their mission relates to the goals of the proposed project. Note, however, that even if they are not on the core project team, they are still key stakeholders who need to be considered and consulted during the project process. Also, in some cases you may choose to include a “difficult” organization in your team as a way of trying to draw them into your project.

Box 1. Characteristics of Good Conservation Project Team Members

Greg Low (2003) lists the following characteristics for a good project leader - although most if not all probably apply to all project team members, or at least should be present across the team.

- **Alignment With Core Values.** Integrity beyond reproach; innovation and excellence; commitment to people; commitment to the future.
- **Composure.** Cool under pressure; can handle stress; is not knocked off balance by the unexpected; doesn't show frustration when resisted or blocked.
- **Dealing With Ambiguity.** Can effectively cope with change; shifts gears; can decide and act without having the total picture; can comfortably handle risk and uncertainty.
- **Drive for Results.** Bottom-line oriented; steadfastly pushes self and others for results; takes initiative to make concrete results happen - a dealmaker.
- **Interpersonal Savvy.** Relates well to all kinds of people; builds constructive and effective relationships; uses diplomacy and tact.
- **Learning on the Fly.** Learns quickly when facing new problems; open to change; analyzes successes and failures for clues to improvement; tries to find solutions.
- **Partnering.** Understands how to build a partnership for clearly defined results; active listener; collaborative; recognizes value of distinct strengths; shares credit.
- **Patience.** Tolerant with people; tries to understand the people and the data before making judgments and acting; sensitive to due process and proper pacing.
- **Perseverance.** Pursues everything with energy, drive, and a need to finish; seldom gives up before finishing, especially in the face of resistance or setbacks.
- **Political Savvy.** Can maneuver through complex political situations; anticipates where the land mines are and plans approach accordingly; is a “maze-bright” person.
- **Sizing up People.** Good judge of talent; can articulate people's strengths and limitations and project what they're likely to do in various situations.
- **Strategic Thinking.** Can craft competitive and breakthrough strategies; can hold on to a vision; puts the trivial aside and focuses on the critical.

Knowledge, Skills, and Characteristics

Since conservation is an interdisciplinary endeavor, it is important to have people with different knowledge and skills on your team or as your key advisors. For example, depending on your ecosystem and species of concern, you might need to have a marine biologist, a botanist or a hydrologist. Likewise, depending on your threats and likely strategies, it may also be useful to have an anthropologist, a lawyer or an enterprise development specialist. As a general rule, most people tend to gravitate towards strategies that they are familiar with. To this end, it can be helpful to have multiple perspectives to ensure that you consider a diversity of options. In addition to disciplinary knowledge, it is also helpful to have people who know the local natural history and the project's socio-economic setting. Finally, it is also important to have a range of different types of people on your project team who bring different types of energy and characteristics (Box 1).

Commonly Used Methods

There is no hard and fast method for identifying the people involved in your project. Some basic steps that you may wish to consider include:

1. Bring together your initiating project team

To get a sense of the kinds of skills and partner organizations that you might want to involve in the planning process, it is useful to take a little time at the beginning to sketch out in very broad terms your current understanding of the project. To do this, just very quickly (in an hour or two at most) ask yourself the following questions: What is the general area you are planning for? What are the things that attracted you to this area in the first place? What do you suspect are the big issues that you will likely need to address in your plan? And who are the key partners or stakeholders in the area? As you go along in the process you will address all of these things with more precision. At this point you are using this broad brush discussion to help you to pinpoint the people you want to invite to join and/advise the process.

2. Consider broader team

Based on this initial analysis, think about who would be good to have on your core project team and involved in the CAP process, who might be good as an advisor, and who you should avoid having directly involved in your project. You may wish to develop a table to help you through this step (Table 1). Or if you want to be formal about your analysis, you could even rank different candidates on different criteria.

Table 1. Example of breakdown of potential team members.

Person	Organization	Skills/Knowledge	Roles	Comment
Core Team				
Ingrid	TNC	Business development	Team leader	Good leader
Jose	TNC	Marine biologist	Assembles info. on targets, works with science advisors	Good team player; may be leaving in 6 months
Martha	Green Island (local NGO)	Local politics	Building local consensus	
Raj	National Fisheries Agency	Fishing policy		Useful link to senior agency officials
Advisors				
Hubert	TNC	CAP process Coach	Process leader	
Mei-Lee	World Bank	Economics	Economic analysis	Good links to donor community

3. If appropriate, draw up a team charter and/or rough “terms of reference”

Team charters are useful for defining the responsibilities of the team, sub-teams and individuals. Charters typically articulate the purpose, organization, constraints and interdependences of the team. Terms of reference can be developed for each person that spells out what they are expected to contribute to the team and what they can expect to get in return. For example, will it be a paid position? Will they get credit in any scientific publications? If multiple organizations are involved in the project, it may also be useful to develop an informal or even formal memorandum of understanding among the partners. View examples of a team charter in the *Resources and Tools* section.

4. Gauge interest among possible team members

Approach your initial round of candidates and see if they are interested in joining the project, either as a core team member or advisor. You will also want to make sure you have a good process leader.

5. Re-evaluate your list

Once you receive responses to your invitation you can evaluate the list of accepted invitations for potential gaps in expertise or skills and fill additional spots accordingly.

 [The CAP Workbook allows you to enter information about your project team using the Project Identification Wizard.](#)

6. Regularly revisit your project team composition

As you continue through the CAP process it is a good idea to revisit your team composition to see if you have the right people on your core team and as advisors, especially as you go through different stages of your project and require different skills and linkages with different partners.

7. Consider key stakeholders

Make sure you carefully consider the key stakeholders who are not part of your project team when you get to *Step 5. Complete Situation Analysis* and *Step 6. Develop Strategies*.

Opportunities for Innovation

- **Developing Good Terms of Reference, Charters and Partnership Agreements** - Traditionally, most Nature Conservancy projects have not developed formal terms of reference for their members, team charters, or partnership agreements. It might be good to experiment with this and see if they are helpful, and if so, provide templates and models that can be adapted by new projects. As noted above, this work may have to take place well before the CAP process itself.
- **Dealing With Difficult Team Members** - Many project teams have to deal with members who are polarized in their positions and/or have a negative history with other team members. Suggestions of how to manage these situations would be most useful such as bringing team members onboard for a trial basis or by setting term limits.
- **Figuring Out Who to Include in Your Team as Project Grows and Matures** - A common challenge in many project teams is that the person or people who start the project are not always the people who are best suited to manage the project over the long-term. It is thus

important to change and adapt team composition over time. Suggestions of how to manage this issue of growth and change would be welcome—as would a discussion of the more general “life-history” of a conservation project, particularly in respect to team composition at different stages.

Resources and Tools

Basic guidance and examples for selecting a project team can be found in the following sources:

Caldwell, R. 2002. Project Design Handbook. CARE.
www.aprscp.org/new%20materials/CARE%20Project%20Design%20Handbook.pdf

Margoluis, R. and N. Salafsky. 1998. Measures of Success: Designing, Managing, and Monitoring Conservation and Development Projects.
www.IslandPress.org (English in hardcopy only)
www.FOSonline.org (Spanish online)

Examples of team charters:

Great Lakes Basin for alignment of strategic actions.
<http://conserveonline.org/workspaces/cbdgateway/cap/practices/supportmaterials/bp1sm/GLteamcharter>

Chico Basin Charter for developing Measures of Success.
<http://conserveonline.org/workspaces/cbdgateway/cap/practices/supportmaterials/bp1sm/chicoteamcharter>

Turner L. and R. Turner, 1998. Creating a Team Charter in How to Grow Effective Teams. The Ends of the Earth Learning Group.
www.endsoftheearth.com/HTMLTeams/Chap2.htm