

Conservation Action Planning

Conservation Action Planning (CAP) is a powerful process to guide conservation teams to develop focused strategies and measures of success. CAP is The Nature Conservancy’s version of the “Open Standards for Conservation”. It has been utilized with hundreds of diverse projects at multiple scales from different parts of the world and is supported by a network of trained professionals that make up the Conservation Coaches Network.

The CAP process guides project teams to identify effective conservation strategies. It provides an objective, consistent and transparent accounting of conservation actions and the intended and actual outcomes of conservation projects. It enables project staff to responsively adapt their actions to improve strategy effectiveness and achieve greater conservation impact.

A brief summary of the CAP Process is provided below. For a full set of CAP and Open Standards information, visit http://conserveonline.org/workspaces/cbdgateway/cap/index_html.

THE 10 STEPS OF THE CAP PROCESS

1. Identify People Involved In Your Project

This step asks you to identify your most valuable resource – the people who will be involved in designing and implementing your project. Addresses questions like: ♦ “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?”

2. Define Project Scope & Focal Conservation Targets

With this step you define the extent of your project and select the specific species and natural systems that your project will focus on as being representative of the overall biodiversity of the project area. This step helps your project team come to consensus on the overall goal and scale of the project and your ultimate measures of success. Addresses questions like: ♦ “Where is our project?” ♦ “What are we trying to conserve or restore?”

3. Assess Viability of Focal Conservation Targets

This step asks you to look at each of your focal targets carefully to determine how to measure its “health” over time. And then to identify how the target is doing today and what a “healthy state” might look like. This step is the key to knowing which of your targets are most in need of immediate attention, and to measuring success over time. Addresses questions like: ♦ “How do we define ‘health’ (viability) for each of our targets?” ♦ “What is the current status of each of our targets?” ♦ “What is our desired status for each of our targets?”



4. Identify Critical Threats

This step helps you to identify the various factors that immediately affect your project's focal targets and then rank them so that you can concentrate your conservation actions where they are most needed. Addresses questions like: ♦ *“What threats are affecting our targets?”* ♦ *“Which threats are more of a problem?”*

5. Conduct Situation Analysis

This step asks you to describe your current understanding of your project situation – both the biological issues and the human context in which your project occurs. This step is not meant to be an unbounded analysis, but instead probes more deeply into the conditions surrounding your critical threats and degraded targets to bring explicit attention/consideration to causal factors, key actors, and opportunities for successful action. Addresses questions like: ♦ *“What factors positively & negatively affect our targets?”* ♦ *“Who are the key stakeholders linked to each of these factors?”*

6. Develop Strategies: Objectives and Actions

This step asks you to specifically and measurably describe what success looks like and to develop practical and *strategic* actions you and your partners will undertake to achieve it. In particular, you want to try to find the actions that will enable you to get the most impact for the resources you have. Addresses questions like: ♦ *“What do we need to accomplish?”* ♦ *“What is the most effective way to achieve these results?”*

7. Establish Measures

This step involves deciding how your project team will measure your results. This step is needed to help your team see whether its strategies are working as planned and thus whether adjustments will be needed. It is also needed to keep an eye on those targets and threats that you are not acting on at the moment, but may need to consider in the future. Addresses questions like: ♦ *“What do we need to measure to see if we are making progress towards our objectives and whether our actions are making a difference?”* ♦ *“Are there other targets or threats that we need to pay attention to?”*

8. Develop Work Plans

This step asks you to take your strategic actions and measures and develop specific plans for doing this work as your project goes forward. Addresses questions like: ♦ *“What do we specifically need to do?”* ♦ *“Who will be responsible for each task?”* ♦ *“What resources do we need?”*

9. Implement

Action and monitoring plans won't do any good sitting on the shelf – your challenge here is to trust the hard work you have done and implement your plans to the best of your ability. Implementation is the most important step in this entire process; however, given the diversity of project needs and situations, the only requirement is: ♦ *Put your plans into action*

10. Analyze, Learn, Adapt, & Share

This step first asks you to systematically take the time to evaluate the actions you have implemented, to update and refine your knowledge of your targets, and to review the results available from your monitoring data. This reflection provides insight on how your actions are working, what may need to change, and what to emphasize next. This step then asks you to document what you have learned and to share it with other people so they can benefit from your successes and failures. Addresses questions like: ♦ *“What are our monitoring data telling us about our project?”* ♦ *“What should we be doing differently?”* ♦ *“How will we capture what we have learned?”* ♦ *“How can we make sure other people benefit from what we have learned?”*