**CONTENTS AND STANDARDS OF A CONSERVATION BUSINESS PLAN**

**Compiled by David Younkman, David Gordon, Mike Carter and Scott Johnston**

**December 2014**

Partners in Flight has begun the development of at least eight “Conservation Business Plans” focused on protecting the most imperiled migratory birds in the Western hemisphere through a full-life cycle approach. This document is intended to provide a general overview of the contents of a Conservation Business Plan as well as a list of “standards” that good Conservation Business Plans must meet or exceed.

Some general characteristics of a PIF/NABCI Conservation Business Plan (CBP) include:

1. They should be brief, summary documents that provide a framework for discussion and action.
2. As brief documents, they should “point” to more detailed work of other plans and studies rather than repeating all the details.
3. They are generally targeted at donors, scientists and conservation practitioners.
4. As such, they should be designed to
   1. Make it easier to secure funding and support,
   2. Identify the next most important actions to take – both research and conservation,
   3. Establish measurable goals, benchmarks and objectives, and
   4. Provide active monitoring and evaluation efforts to measure progress and make adaptations to the plan.
5. CBPs differ in some respects from other planning formats in that they have a strong emphasis on the "business elements” of a plan, and thus stress costs and funding sources as most plans do, but also the quantification and measurability of results, identifying the return on investment, and assessing potential risks – hence they stress a “business like” approach.
6. CBPs must have an active “human infrastructure” that meets or communicates regularly to
   1. Create and update the plan,
   2. Identify the most important next steps,
   3. Share lessons learned, and
   4. Evaluate progress toward goals and make modifications to the plan.

The detailed list of the contents and standards for a successful Conservation Business Plan follow.

***PIF/NABCI Conservation Business Plan***

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ***Plan Contents*** |  | ***Brief Description*** | ***Possible Standard*** |
| Introduction |  |  |  |
|  | Executive Summary | *Makes a convincing case for adopting the plan and taking action.*   * *Clearly articulates the conservation need and the reason and importance of this plan.* * *Clearly articulates the overall conservation strategy that will address the major threats.* * *Provides an overview of the logic of the plan so that one can follow the links between the targets and their goals, the threats and strategies and actions to address them, and the projects that will be required to advance toward success.* * *Provide a summary statement on the near and longer-term results of the successful realization of the plan* |  |
|  | Group Leaders and Participants | *Identifies the Group Leader(s) – both north and south*   * *Describes any subgroups* * *Provides contact information to all key people* * *Provides contact information to any general workspace (i.e. Griffin Groups, etc.)* * *Appendix lists participants and contributors* | □ Does the CBP have a well-identified set of leaders, both in the north and the south?  (See Human Infrastructure below) |
|  | Geographic Scope of the Plan | *Describes the geographic area considered by this plan (breeding grounds, migratory areas and the non-breeding grounds).*   * *Provides an overview map* | □ Is the geographic area of the plan well-defined and mapped, both in the north and south? |
|  | Situation Overview | *Brief description of the landscape, land uses, threats and bird situation (population trends, etc.) for the geographic areas of this plan. Gives the reader an overview of what is going on “on-the-ground” (may set up the Threats section below).* |  |
|  | Prior and Ongoing Work | *Provide an annotated list of the major conservation plans, species plans, working groups, etc. that this plan “points to” with contact names of leaders if appropriate.*  *e.g. GWWA Conservation Plan (hyperlink), etc.*  *e.g. JV Implementation Plan (hyperlink), etc.* | □ Is the Plan built on previous work, and does it recognize and incorporate other, more specific working group plans and actions going on outside the CBP process? |
| Conservation Need |  |  |  |
|  | Conservation Targets: Identification and justification | *Identify Conservation Targets: Species, habitats or ecological functions.*   * *Provide a clear justification for why Targets were selected*   (see definitions of terms below) | □ Does the Plan clearly identify  and justify its Conservation Targets?  □ Are they limited enough in number to work with? |
|  | Conservation Targets:  Goals, outcomes and objectives | *Identify the measurable goals, outcomes and objectives for the Conservation Targets and provide a justification for achieving them.*   * *e.g. “Increase population of species X by 50% by 2030 as called for in PIF Land Bird Plan”; or* * *“halt rate of population decline of species Y increase the rate to a 1% positive increase per year for the next y years”.* | □ Does the Plan have clear and measurable Goals and Objectives for each of its Conservation Targets? |
|  | Core Habitats – breeding, migratory and non-breeding:  Identified, with Goals and Objectives established | *Identify the Core Habitat focal areas for a Conservation Target species’ breeding, migratory or non-breeding grounds (Note: not needed if habitat protection is not a high priority).*   * *Define the size of the Core Habitat so that it* *so that conservation actions can be defined and carried out through the implementation of projects or initiatives.* * *Make connectivity connections to other habitat sites, if possible, during other parts of the species’ live cycle.* * *Establish measureable Habitat Goals and Objectives for protecting/managing sufficient habitat to achieve the Conservation Target Goals and Objectives established above.* | □ Does the Plan have measurable Habitat Goals and Objectives for the Conservation Targets throughout the full life cycle?  □ Does the Plan identify and map priority Core Habitats for the Conservation Targets on the breeding, non-breeding and migratory grounds? |
| Threats Assessment |  |  |  |
|  | Overview of Threats | *Provide a brief overview of the threats that are affecting the Conservation Targets throughout the full life cycle.* |  |
|  | Priority threats identified | *Develop a summary assessment and explanation regarding which threats, or combination of threats, are the most important to address.* | □ Does the Plan identify the most important threats to address with a compelling argument for doing so? |
|  | Identification of Strategies and the development of a Conceptual Model (e.g. a Miradi overview diagram). | *The Plan should lay out a conceptual model and an argument/explanation regarding how it will address the priority threats. The creation of a Conceptual Model or an Open Standards Miradi diagram can be helpful at this step. Conservation Business Plan should ensure that it identifies general strategies throughout the full life cycle that will meet three overriding Strategic Needs that are important to conservation success:*   1. *Ensure Adequate Habitat* 2. *Address Key Anthropogenic Threats, and* 3. *Create Needed Enabling Conditions*   *Some Plans may also wish to develop simplified a ”problem statement” to drive their planning forward.*   * *e. g. “Focus on the non-breeding grounds to a) stop the loss of all primary forest and b) increase the amount of secondary working landscapes”.* | □ Does the Plan provide a clear conceptual overview of the Threats that are affecting the Conservation Targets and the Strategies that will be used to address those Threats?  □ Does the Plan have Strategies that will ensure that the three Strategic Needs will be met for the most critical parts of the full life cycle of the Targets?   1. *Ensure Adequate Habitat* 2. *Address Key Anthropogenic Threats, and* 3. *Create Needed Enabling Conditions* |
| Conservation Actions |  |  |  |
|  | Development of Strategies into Actions and Projects | *The Plan should briefly develop specific Strategies that address Priority threats: discussions that move from a Strategy into defining Actions and Projects that reduce or eliminate priority threats. The Plan may refer briefly to the projects in the Appendix. The use of Working subgroups and Miradi results chain diagrams may be helpful. The result of the discussion should be a set of Actions that can be further developed and Projects that can be implemented in the near-term.* | □ Does the Plan describe well-developed strategies with actions and projects to address the priority threats?  □ Are the results of the projects and actions measureable? |
|  | Identification of a Project Portfolio– priority projects and key next steps | *Review and establish a Project Portfolio – a collection of projects that can be implemented over the next few years (1-5?) to measurably advance toward the Plan’s Goals and Objectives. The Plan should describe how it reviewed the Strategies, Actions and Projects and tiered them in terms of importance and sequencing. The Plan should also identify key next steps that need to be taken and who, how, and when these steps will be accomplished.* | □ Does the Plan present a portfolio of projects recommended for immediate/next step implementation?  □ Are the results of the project portfolio measureable? |
|  | Funding needs | *Develop a brief summary of the costs and timeline for the top-tier projects and actions. Provide a brief summary of potential funding sources or types of funding that could be pursued. A set of scenarios for various funding levels could be helpful, along with recommended next steps for securing funding.* | □ Does the Plan define immediate funding needs and provide guidance for securing funds? |
| Implementation and Ongoing Steps |  |  |  |
|  | Implementation | *(May be included as part of Funding above). Provide a brief description of how projects and actions will move forward and identify the major responsible actors* | □ Does the Plan provide a brief implementation calendar? |
|  | Evaluation and Monitoring | *Develop a brief description on how the Plan and its actions will be monitored, and describe how the Plan will be evaluated and revised in the future.* | □ Does the Plan define how its actions and their impacts will be monitored?  □ Does the Plan define who and how and when it will be evaluated and updated in the future? |
|  | Next steps | *Briefly list the key Next Steps that are needed to ensure that the momentum and success of both the planning process and the implementation of the Plan will occur.* | □ Does the Plan list key next steps with a defined procedure for follow-up? |
| Appendices |  |  |  |
|  | List of contributors and participants |  |  |
|  | Listing of Projects: Brief description, tier level and lead authors of each proposed project |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| ***HUMAN INFRASTRUCTURE*** |  | *Developing a Conservation Business Plan must be a living and iterative effort. As such, it is essential that the Plan is not defined merely as the written document, but also in terms of the “human infrastructure” that surrounds and propels the planning process: an active group of experts who meet at appropriate intervals and continue to develop, refine and establish project priorities, define next steps, and make corrections and refinements as the Plan moves forward. Here is a short checklist of some of the critical human components of a success Conservation Business Plan.* |  |
|  | Group Leaders |  | Working group established with active leaders – both north and south groups |
|  | Lead Authors or Editorial Committee |  | Lead Author of Editorial Committee established |
|  | Working Subgroups and Committees |  | Working subgroups to develop strategies that address key threats, and develop and flesh-out actions and projects |
|  | Meetings and Communications |  | Regular communication and meetings are taking place – virtual and in-person.  Regular review of implementation progress, evaluation of results and adaptation of the plan. |
|  | Group work space and tools |  | The Working group has established public working areas (e.g. Griffin Groups, etc.) to encourage easy participation and contributions by all to the development and tracking of the Plan. |
|  | North-South Communications |  | Active groups exist in both the north and the south with active leaders. Groups provide regular minutes and updates to all interested parties – both north and south.  N-S exchanges are encouraged. |
|  | Output: Updated Project Portfolios |  | Output: Portfolio of Projects with active fundraising  Regular project reviews and identification of top projects, gaps and next steps |