WILDERNESS EDUCATION TOOLBOX

EDUCATION EFFECTIVENESS MONITORING CHECKLIST

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide managers with a checklist of information that will be useful in developing a successful wilderness education, monitoring program.

For more information, refer to the Wilderness Education Plan Toolbox Section, and, the Wilderness Education Plan Effectiveness Monitoring TEMPLATE, Section II.A.2.a. for more detailed information on plan formatting and content.

Organization

This toolbox document is broken into three sections. **Part I** provides definitions of wilderness education monitoring and evaluation, and the differences between the two. **Part II** offers an easy-to-follow checklist of essential items that should be considered before and during the development of a wilderness education, monitoring program. **Part III** conveys guidance on how to organize and fund monitoring. **Part IV** presents field-tested concepts that demonstrate why education monitoring is essential to wilderness educational success and how managers can utilize monitoring results to justify wilderness education to superiors. And **Part V** briefly outlines some of the constraints that must be anticipated when entering into any type of wilderness education monitoring endeavor.

PART I- Definition of Monitoring

What- is wilderness education program monitoring and evaluation?
Monitoring- is documenting and keeping track of information such as number of programs implemented or number of program participants. Monitoring is the overall tracking of how an education program is running in a general sense.

Evaluation- is systematically measuring the effectiveness of educational programming and/or program delivery.

These two components obviously compliment one-another and both can be conducted independently or simultaneously, when assessing wilderness educational programming.

NOTE: Although monitoring and evaluation are separate processes, the term monitoring will be used throughout this toolbox section to refer to both program topics, unless otherwise noted.

PART II- Things to Consider

The following questions should be studied, pondered, and then answered before wilderness education monitoring begins, and, throughout the implementation process:

1. Has a wilderness education plan been completed?

2. If a wilderness education plan exists, does it closely coincide with larger Forest or Park Plans, and do both carry consistent management goals and objectives?

3. Is education effectiveness monitoring included in the wilderness education plan?

4. Why does education programming or educational delivery need to be monitored?

5. What aspect(s) of the wilderness education program needs to be monitored?

6. What monitoring method(s) will be used?

7. Are there prospective partnering opportunities to assist in the development, implementation, and funding of education monitoring?

8. Is there a need to secure external-agency technical assistance due to the complexity of the monitoring?

9. Who will accomplish the monitoring?

10. What is a realistic timeline for completing the monitoring?

11. How much will it cost to conduct monitoring?

12. How will monitoring results be recorded and reported?

Part III- Developing a Monitoring Program

Who- will monitor wilderness education and how will it be funded?
The following information will provide insight on who can conduct wilderness education monitoring, as well as some strategies for funding monitoring:

- Integrate wilderness education into on-going education programs for other resources (fish, wildlife, heritage, fire, etc.) and incorporate other resource education into wilderness programs.
- Identify monitoring duties that can be done by existing staff whom already have their salaries covered, thus lending them the opportunity to gain monitoring skills, and saving educational funding for more on-the-ground program implementation.
- Make a strong effort to match personnel skills, interests, and availability with monitoring needs as this will provide higher quality more consistent results.
- Assign individuals responsible for monitoring- specific monitoring programs and tasks, as this will keep folks engaged and motivated, and will ultimately produce more consistent accomplishments.
- Empower people involved with monitoring to be creative, just as creativity is expected in program development or implementation.
- Identify outside sources such as Agency Research Stations or Universities that are looking for projects relating to education monitoring.
- Seek outside expertise if monitoring cannot be technically- accomplished by existing staff and/or other agency personnel.
- Funding for monitoring personnel must obviously be secured prior to any actual education program monitoring.
- Integrate funding into each of the program action items that will need to be monitored.
- Incorporate future needs and long-term monitoring into education budgets, so when there is the opportunity to expand educational programming, the critical element of monitoring is not left behind or under-funded.

How- is a monitoring program organized?
Short and long-term monitoring goals, measurable objectives, and detailed implementation actions should all be included as a part of any Wilderness Education Plan. The planning process of designing goals, objectives, and actions should be followed when developing a monitoring program. These will then parallel the larger Wilderness Education Plan format as shown below:

(1) Goals:
Goals describe general outcomes that are not easily measured and do not include methods or techniques.

(2) Objectives:
Objectives define what will actually be measured and carry definable outcomes. Solid objectives consist of conditions, criteria, persons and measurable behavior.

(3) Actions:
Actions drive the achievement of objectives and include details such as who will do the monitoring, how long it will take, and how much monitoring will cost. Action items should directly coincide with monitoring goals and objectives and describe in detail, exactly how monitoring will be carried out. They should be comprised of- personnel conducting the action, a timeline for accomplishment, and a total cost.

Monitoring Complexity:
Not all wilderness education monitoring systems have an obvious and/or easy to monitor effect. The length and complexity of monitoring should fit each specific monitoring job. Simple and effective is the best, as monitoring does not have to be lengthy and complex. Using a straightforward monitoring process will not only make monitoring easier, but will also serve to keep overall monitoring cost's down.

Therefore, it is essential to take the time to identify the best monitoring method for each monitoring task, realizing that some techniques will show immediate results while others will be more long-term in nature.

PART IV- Benefits of Monitoring

Why- is wilderness education monitoring important and how will it help?
The results of an effective monitoring program will:

- Help to plot a course towards achieving education program goals.
- Provide tangible feedback, which can be invaluable in improving and revising an education program over time.
- Offer an objective gauge on how effective education has been in helping to solve management challenges.
- Help to defend an education program that often is dismissed as intangible.
- Produce a solid record of education efforts.
- Provide a foundation for securing educational funding and justifying personnel and materials.
- Help track and measure how well wilderness education is meeting Forest and Wilderness Management Plan goals and objectives.

PART V- Constraints

Recognize the limitations of people and the limitations of the program itself. Make a solid attempt not to over-plan. It is much better to set attainable goals and over-achieve, then to over-estimate and underachieve.

Divide monitoring tasks by identifying those that carry easy measurable steps, and those that will take more time, effort, and financial support. Envision unplanned situations and conditions, as they will most certainly occur. Good luck with the challenge of developing a successful education monitoring program and remember… the rewards are well worth the effort!

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