



BEST PRACTICES WORKBOOK

for Hunting and Shooting

Recruitment and Retention

This report was funded by the Multistate Conservation Grant, a program supported with funds from the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration programs and jointly managed by the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2007.

For additional copies visit www.nssf.org/bestpractices.

IV. CONTINUATION WITH SUPPORT

APPRENTICE STAGE

Definition

People who have had enough trial experiences to decide they like hunting/shooting and to perceive themselves as hunters/shooters.

Facilitating Factors

- Development of multiple motivations for being a hunter/shooter (not just for going hunting/shooting).
- Development of a sense of belonging to a broader hunting and shooting culture.
- Development of interest in taking on an initiator/companion/mentor role within the hunting and shooting culture. No longer being treated as, or feeling like, an apprentice.
- Learn new skills
- Companionship
- Challenge
- Achievement

Recommended Strategies

1. Provide quality opportunities for participation, such as youth hunts (especially targeted to urban youth and children of non-hunters who already are in the trial stage and indicate readiness to move into the continuation stage).
2. Develop and provide advanced, voluntary, species-specific hunter education programs.
3. Develop and promote opportunities to network with other hunters and shooters (to develop social competence).
4. Develop and provide “refresher” activities prior to hunting seasons to engage last year’s license buyers.
5. Develop “Adopt-A-Hunter” programs (apprentice, mentoring).

6. Develop ways to immerse hunter education course graduates in a system of influences and support very soon after they complete the course.
7. Provide hunters/shooters opportunities to be mentors.

Research & Evaluation Needs

1. Evaluate the effectiveness of strategies designed to increase participation.
2. Measure geographic mobility of this group – how to reach people who are “transplanted” and partner them with appropriate mentors?

NOTE: In some states hunter education is not required until a youth reaches this stage.

Adoption/continuation choices are made based on participant satisfactions and benefits as well as the elimination of barriers. Participants begin to identify themselves as hunters and shooters. Intervention strategies focus on retention.

This is the phase in which social factors clearly play the most important role. Program strategies designed to build and reinforce this social support take time and are difficult to evaluate.

Effective programs emphasize building a long-term apprentice-mentor relationship. Although one-on-one relationships provide individual attention, apprentice-mentor relationships also can be achieved through group settings with leaders and/or teachers focusing on hunting (e.g., teachers with after-school programs with schools, 4-H leaders, scout leaders, etc.).

Social support also includes peers. When someone has a friend or relative to participate

with, the potential for continuation is much greater. Encourage participants to invite friends to attend the program with them. Having friends attend together provides the first phase of social support for the activity and someone to go hunting or shooting with.

Peer social support also can be accomplished through a club setting. An after-school hunting or shooting club not only provides opportunities to learn more and improve skills, it provides a tremendous amount of social support. Adults can join a local hunting club or groups such as Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, National Wild Turkey Federation, Ducks Unlimited, Pheasants Forever or a similar group.



If a participant's immediate family and/or social peer group does not support hunting or shooting, it creates a much more complex set of circumstances to address, and may be outside the scope of your efforts. However, the more social support you can provide a participant, the greater chance that individual has of seeing him/herself as a hunter or shooter. As you review the partner benefits section of this chapter, consider the opportunity to bring in partners such as schools, community groups, churches, and other organizations that can provide social support.

Another part of retention is providing advanced training. Once someone has learned the basics, they may want to try their hand at hunting with a muzzleloader or archery equipment, turkey hunting, waterfowl hunting, etc.

Programs that either offer a smorgasbord of activities and/or help lead hunters and shooters to new activities can go a long way in keeping their interest year after year and motivating them to participate.



The lines drawn between these phases frequently are quite blurred.

For example, a hunter education course may bring a person to the interest stage as well as play a role in the trial stage.

The Becoming An Outdoors Woman and Women In the Outdoors programs may provide an initial experience, provide a trial, or both. Connections built by participants may contribute to the adoption/continuation process. Mentoring is likely an extremely important factor during both the trial and adoption phases.

Different audiences require different combinations of R&R strategies. Effective programs that target women are not based on assumptions that hold true for traditional, white, male constituent groups. Women have different motivations and are constrained differently from participating in outdoor activities. African, Asian, and Hispanic Americans may each require different strategies to move through the eight-stage process. Just getting these audiences to try hunting or shooting may require a look at why they have not participated in the past and addressing the personal barriers or constraints they face.

Individuals with disabilities face different sets of constraints. Refer to Chapters 6 and 7 for more information on working with diverse audiences and persons with disabilities.



V. CONTINUATION WITHOUT FOCUSED SUPPORT

NO LONGER APPRENTICE STAGE

Definition

At this stage a person has developed an identity as a hunter or shooter, along with the requisite social and technical skills needed to have satisfying experiences without outside assistance.

Facilitating Factors

- Legally allowed to hunt or shoot alone and to supervise others while they are hunting/shooting.
- Developing multiple motivations (achievement, affiliative, appreciative).
- Confident in social support from family and friends.
- Feel technically competent to hunt or shoot on their own.
- Feel comfortable with the amount of game available, hunting/shooting opportunities, complexity of hunting regulations, etc.

Recommended Strategies

1. Provide opportunities to communicate with other hunters/shooters, particularly in non-traditional settings.
2. Encourage membership in sportsmen's groups.
3. Recruit as hunter education instructors.
4. Recruit as mentors (promote the rewards of being a mentor).
5. Maintain or increase availability of game, hunting/shooting opportunities, etc.
6. Promote alternative hunting/shooting opportunities (e.g., dove hunters may also try duck hunting if they hear that waterfowl numbers are up in a given year).

Research & Evaluation Needs

The following types of information would be useful to track for all stages of hunting/shooting adoption, but it is especially important to discover what happens to “newly formed” hunters and shooters. This information can then be used to help ensure that the hunting/shooting community does not “lose track” of these people over time.

1. Track participation over time.
2. Track license buying activity.
3. Track number of days spent hunting/shooting.
4. Track amount of gear purchased.
5. Track memberships in sporting organizations.
6. Track subscriptions to sporting magazines.
7. Measure geographic mobility of this group – how to reach people who are “transplanted” and provide social support for hunting/shooting.
8. Correlate these behaviors with different hunter/shooter identity types because different self-perceptions probably require different kinds of behaviors as initiating rites of passage and reinforcing activities.



VI. CONTINUATION AS A HUNTING/SHOOTING PROPONENT STAGE

Definition

People who provide strong social and political support for the hunting and shooting sports at local, state/provincial, and/or regional and national levels.

NOTE: A small proportion of hunters and shooters are in this stage, although for those who take it on or seek it out, it is a major part of their identity as a hunter or shooter.

Facilitating Factors

- They have multiple motivations (Affiliative; Affective; Appreciation)
- Tradition, heritage
- “Individualist,” Second Amendment rights

Recommended Strategies

1. Provide opportunities to communicate with other hunters/shooters.
2. Develop rewards programs.
3. Develop recognition programs.
4. Recruit as mentors (promote the rewards of being a mentor).
5. Increase acceptance of this group’s vital role by agency personnel.

Research & Evaluation Needs

Hunting/shooting proponents make up a small but vitally important segment of the hunting/shooting culture – a segment that has not been studied much.

1. Study the factors that lead people to this stage. Can we recruit more of these?
2. Evaluate agency effectiveness at nurturing this group to retain them in this stage.
3. Evaluate the impact of these people on other hunters/shooters and on other segments of society.



VII. TEMPORARY CESSATION STAGE

Definition

People who temporarily drop out of the hunting or shooting ranks because of various factors. These people may experience a temporary loss of connection with the hunting and shooting culture; or they may remain connected with the culture, but cease their hunting or shooting activities.

Facilitating Factors

- Physical (illness, hospitalization, etc.).
- Economic (cannot afford to hunt/shoot, work obligations, etc.).
- Family obligations.
- Reduced prospects for success (reduced game populations, bag limits, etc.).
- Limited access to hunting land or shooting ranges.
- Displacement (moved to new, unfamiliar area of the country).
- Loss of social support (long-time partner moves away, dies, or quits hunting/shooting).
- Loss of free time.

Recommended Strategies

1. Maintain contact.
2. Promote opportunities to rejoin active participation.
3. Promote opportunities to take on other roles in the hunting and shooting culture (mentor, initiator, companion).
4. Promote alternative hunting opportunities (e.g., displaced dove hunters may take up duck hunting if they hear that waterfowl hunting is good in their new location).



Research & Evaluation Needs

1. Measure rates of temporary cessation.
2. Monitor trends in license buying habits.
3. Determine reasons for temporary cessation.



VIII. PERMANENT DESERTION STAGE

Definition

People who permanently stop hunting/shooting and no longer consider themselves hunters or shooters.

Note: Although a hunter/shooter may him or herself permanently desert the ranks of hunters/shooters, that doesn't mean that he or she is opposed to hunting/shooting or will not support hunting and shooting in other ways.

Facilitating Factors

- Physical (death, or can no longer walk, shoot, hear, etc.).
- Economic (cannot afford to hunt or shoot).
- Family obligations.
- “Bad experience” with hunting or other hunters (including legal violation/citation).
- Reduced prospects for success (reduced game populations, bag limits, etc.).
- Limited access to hunting land or shooting ranges.
- Displacement (moved to new, unfamiliar area of the country).

Recommended Strategies

1. Maintain contact where possible.
2. Promote opportunities to take on other roles in the hunting and shooting culture (mentor, initiator, companion).

Research & Evaluation Needs

1. Measure rates of desertion (loss of interest).
2. Determine reasons for permanent desertion.

Social Support is Critical!

Arguably the biggest obstacle facing hunter/shooter participation today is the lack of social infrastructure and social support mechanisms for hunters and shooters. This lack of social support has impacts at every stage of hunter/shooter involvement.

The issue of social support for hunters and shooters is complex and pervasive. It is far beyond the scope of any single program, agency, or organization to solve by itself. However, there are many actions that individual programs, agencies, and organizations can take to move in the right direction – to help introduce more people to hunting and shooting activities and to increase their participation at every stage in their hunting/shooting “careers.”

Hunter Motivations

All hunters have one or more motivations for hunting – primary reasons why they become involved and stay involved. These motivations have been described as Achievement, Affiliation, and Appreciation (see descriptions below). People in every stage of hunting involvement may have one, two, or all three of these motivations, but in general, research suggests that people in earlier stages of involvement tend to have single motivations, and that motivation is often achievement-oriented.

Agencies should provide opportunities for hunters to develop and satisfy multiple motivations to encourage their long-term participation. Satisfaction of multiple motivations not only makes “hunting” a more integral part of the person's life, but also is reflective of the person starting to recognize that being a hunter is more than just going out to shoot something. A person begins the recruitment process when he or she has the desire to develop the characteristics that are unique to hunters and shooters.

Achievement

Achievement-oriented hunters are motivated by numbers of animals harvested, trophy animals, methodology, recognition, and demonstration of skill. Achievement-oriented hunters may exhibit what others may describe as negative behavior patterns in an attempt to satisfy their desire to excel and be recognized. These hunters may also be motivated by higher ideals.

Affiliative

Affiliative hunters are motivated by relationships and interactions with family, friends, and organizations. Those relationships are important for fueling their identity development – they use those relationships to ensure they have opportunities to engage in the activities and behaviors that make them think of themselves as hunters. Hunters may also develop affiliative relationships with dogs, whereby the desire to share time with the animal companion becomes a motivation to hunt. Affiliative hunters may be good candidates for mentoring people or for becoming hunter education instructors.

Appreciative

Hunters with an appreciative orientation are motivated to seek solitude and “wilderness” experiences. The motivation is to get away, renew energy, and enjoy or appreciate nature – whether or not an animal is harvested. Hunters driven solely by appreciative motivations may not be good candidates for mentoring unless they see hunters as essential supporters of “wilderness” and open-space.

Don't Miss the Point

While this Hunting/Shooting Participation Classification System may seem to be academic, it is critical to understand the complex process that becoming a hunter or shooter entails. Adopting these activities does not come about in isolation. It is a multi-faceted process that involves considerable social support.

Different kinds of social support are needed for the different stages of adoption.

Developing programs without a complete understanding of this process is a serious mistake!



More About Motivations

Motivations reflect personal goals that people have (whether articulated or not). When you measure important satisfaction/dissatisfaction components of hunting and shooting, you are measuring, in a sense, the degree to which people's personal motivations have been fulfilled or not. So, it makes sense to try to meet multiple motivations by providing satisfying experiences of the various types that are important to them.

Another way to look at it is that people are satisfied when they can exhibit or accomplish characteristics they use to think of or describe themselves as hunters or shooters. They are dissatisfied when they fail to exhibit or accomplish those characteristics.

If a person thinks of herself as a hunter who is competent, responsible, and respectful of the game she pursues, but then wounds and can't find a deer, it is dissatisfying in large part because she has failed to achieve the attributes she associates with being a hunter. If she fails enough times or in enough ways, maybe she ceases hunting temporarily or permanently. Similarly, if a person can no longer connect to nature through hunting or shooting by doing the activity out his back door because of a new housing development, he cannot achieve whatever characteristics he typically could have achieved by connecting to nature out his back door.

CHAPTER 2: Plan Ahead for Success

If you are planning to implement a hunting or shooting recruitment or retention program, or if you are expanding or enhancing an existing program, this chapter will provide ideas for making the most of this opportunity. The things you do before you contact a single participant literally can be the difference between a program that is effective, engaging, and exciting, and a program that perhaps makes you feel good, but does not achieve its objectives. The time you spend planning will greatly increase your success.

This chapter focuses on initial planning efforts, but the entire Workbook is essentially about planning.

Programs—even longstanding ones—that follow Best Practices continually plan ahead—for the next year, the next cycle, the next participant.



Below is a list of Best Practices for program planning. Following the list, each Best Practice from the list is explained, and worksheets throughout the chapter help you apply each practice to your own particular situation. Under ideal circumstances, many of these practices would be implemented simultane-

ously. However, it is critical that the first two precede the others. There have been cases where practitioners have selected program tools (curricula, materials, instructors, etc.) before determining program purposes (mission, goals, and objectives).

A hallmark of effective programs is that they determine the program's purpose before doing anything else.

BEST PRACTICE FOR PROGRAM PLANNING

Effective Programs...

- Are relevant to the mission of the sponsoring agency or organization.
- Clearly define the program's purpose, which includes mission, goals, and objectives, and assures that all are aligned with each other.
- Plan for program evaluation in the initial stages of planning.
- Are based on and shaped by some form of needs assessment and/or logic model.
- Receive adequate support, resources, and staffing to become sustainable over time.
- Rely on experienced, well informed, prepared, and ethical staff to develop, implement, and evaluate programs.
- Provide recruitment and retention opportunities that are frequent and sustained over time.
- Involve stakeholders and partnerships at all levels of program development.
- Are inclusive of all audiences (accessible/available to anyone with an interest in participating).



BEST PRACTICE

Effective programs are relevant to the mission of the agency or organization sponsoring the program.

Relevance helps justify your program and your funding, prevents the establishment of ineffective programs, and helps make your program more efficient and sustainable. In addition, it helps keep you on track and reminds you and your staff that what you are doing is important to the entire agency and its future. How do you know if you've hit the mark? For starters, use your agency or organization mission statement. Then look at your agency or organization strategic plan. Programs that follow Best Practices can show clearly how their educational programs contribute to the mission and how they help achieve the goals and objectives in the strategic plan.

A fish and wildlife agency may have a broad, general mission such as “conserve the state’s natural resources and provide recreational opportunities for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.” In such a case, an R&R program may be appropriate, although more specific objectives to help you focus your efforts are beneficial. When a broad goal, such as “provide hunting and shooting opportunities” is supported by more specific objectives, such as “provide hunter education courses to 10,000 new hunters” or “build 5 new shooting ranges,” you get a much clearer picture as to whether your program is helping the cause. The objectives are the measurable steps that get you to your goal.

Agency/organization administrators can help define program goals and objectives. Involve them in development of the mission, goals, and objectives of your program. They probably do not have expertise in R&R issues, but getting their input early in the process provides them

ownership in your efforts and helps them understand the value of the programs that result.

If you have existing R&R programs, look at your goals and objectives and consider how well they match up with the mission of your agency/organization and its strategic plan. Also, consider whether other agency/organization objectives or issues could be addressed through your program. If you have not clearly communicated the relevance of your programs to your agency, plan to do so as soon as possible. See the following section for more information on setting effective goals and objectives.



BEST PRACTICE

Effective programs have a clearly stated purpose, which includes mission, goals, and objectives, and assures that all are aligned with each other.

Defining the purpose of your program may be the most important step you can take in program planning, yet it is overlooked or not closely considered surprisingly often. Basically, the purpose defines what you are trying to accomplish with your program.

What Do You Call It?

There are myriad different terms used to describe the elements that make up a program’s purpose. Some of the more common ones include: mission, vision, goals, aims, guidelines, strategies, principles, purposes, objectives, and actions. Your agency or organization may have specific terms for these elements that it expects you to use. It is not so important what you call these elements as it is that you consider what they represent, and clearly communicate that with your audience. Picture these terms as layers of a pyramid, and think of them in terms of the questions they answer.

First level (i.e., the mission)

Why is this program in existence? What is it trying to do? This usually is called the mission statement. It is a broad, philosophical statement about what the program hopes to contribute. It provides overall guidance for program goals and objectives.

Second level (i.e., the goals)

Why are we doing this program? The answers to this question provide the goals of the program. They help define how the program will help achieve the mission.

Third level (i.e., the objectives)

What, specifically, do we want to accomplish? These elements are commonly called objectives. Another way to identify objectives is to fill in the blank on the following phrase: “As a result of this program, participants will be able to _____.” Objectives should be measurable, and generally – though not always – are set up on a relatively short timeframe.

Sometimes, the differences between missions, goals, and objectives can get fuzzy, especially when you’re working in partnership with other organizations. Also, goals and objectives may overlap, which can add to the complexity. At times, you may be tempted to throw up your hands and forget the whole thing.

Don’t do it!

The thing to remember is this: Regardless of what you call the various levels, it is critical to ask the questions “Why are we doing this program?” and “What do we want to accomplish with this program?” You can create missions, goals, objectives,



and whatever other levels you want or need to clarify your answers or meet organizational requirements, but be sure to answer the basic questions.



BEST PRACTICE

Effective programs plan for program evaluation in the initial stages of planning.

Most people recognize that evaluation is a critical part of R&R programs, but many are not aware that, to be most effective, evaluation must begin before a program is implemented. Effective programs build evaluation into the program plan and budget. It is a core part of the program, not something extra funded only in years of plenty.

Far too often, managers think about evaluation only in terms of an after-the-fact judgment as to whether desired outcomes were achieved. This kind of evaluation is critical, but incomplete. Building evaluation into your program from the beginning can help you better develop your program, adjust it over time with stakeholder input, and achieve the end results you are looking for more effectively and efficiently. If you are trying to demonstrate positive outcomes, you have to have a “before picture” to compare with your “after picture.”

Chapter 5 is devoted to program evaluation and provides more information.

There is an old saying that goes: “If you don’t know where you’re going, any (and every!) road will get you there.” This is certainly true of R&R programs. If you don’t care where you’re going, then just start walking! But if you have a destination in mind (goals and objectives for your program), a program logic model is the road map to success.