

Framing the Gap: An Examination of the Self-Efficacy, Public Outreach, and the Professional Development Needs of Wildlife Professionals

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Wildlife Professionals from Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, and Utah completed a questionnaire developed from the Borich needs assessment model to assess both perceived ability in and perceived importance of designated items relating to non-formal education and community outreach in the context of human-wildlife conflict. Self-efficacy, which describes how perceived abilities relate to behavior, was the theoretical framework from which patterns were identified and informed recommendations for professional development (PD).

Key Findings

A comprehensive analysis revealed that all constructs addressed within the data collection instrument were perceived as PD needs by participants. However, the magnitude of need associated with each construct varied. Constructs assessed were as follows: Assessment, incorporation, framing technique, evaluation, public relations, curriculum development, and media engagement.

Evaluation, Media Engagement, and Curriculum Development

Participants indicated that items within the constructs of evaluation, media engagement, and curriculum development were areas in the most need of PD efforts. When results were disaggregated by state, the importance of the constructs was emphasized through reoccurrence. Items within the constructs included competencies such as evaluating education program and communication campaigns and incorporation of evaluations into the proceeding versions of programs. Within the media engagement construct, items consisted of using varying outlets for non-formal education and community outreach, such as social media, paper news, and televised news.

Recommendations for Practice

Professional Development Sequence *Development, Delivery, Assessment*

1. Curriculum Development

PD aimed at increasing both the self-efficacy and skills of professionals in crafting and facilitating effective non-formal education and community outreach initiatives. Curriculum development was ranked as a tier 2, a secondary need, by participants.

2. Media engagement

PD recommendations in the area of media engagement focus on the dissemination of human-wildlife conflict information over social media, televised news, and paper news outlets. This is increasingly important given the prominence of social media. Media engagement was ranked as a tier 2, a secondary need, by participants.

3. Evaluation

The third and final construct in the PD sequence, evaluation was ranked as the single primary need by participants. PD recommendations include advancing skills related to evaluation of programs and campaigns.

Conclusion

In conclusion, tailoring PD to the self-efficacy of participants has the potential to increase their confidence and therefore, expand their skill set to include research and expert informed constructs.



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