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# NC Project Learning Tree Guidelines

## PREFACE

Project Learning Tree® (PLT) is an environmental education program for educators and youth leaders working with students from pre-kindergarten through grade 12. Within the curriculum, the forest is used as a window into natural and built environments. PLT consists of interdisciplinary instructional activities provided through professional development workshops and in-service programs for teachers, environmental educators, youth group leaders, and others.

PLT prepares students to make wise decisions about natural resources in urban and rural areas. PLT emphasizes teaching youth how to think, not what to think, about our natural resources. PLT also develops sound, comprehensive decision-making and problem-solving skills. Using PLT makes integrated study more efficient, effective, and fun. The program contributes to the development of awareness, knowledge, attitudes, and skills concerning natural resources, and is recommended as a supplement to North Carolina's Standard Course of Study and Essential Standards.

PLT was developed in 1976 by the Western Regional Environmental Education Council and the American Forest Institute. Materials were developed, written, and field-tested by educators, conservationists and foresters. PLT materials are available through coordinators in all states and



several other countries. North Carolina implemented the program in 1986.

## NATIONAL ORGANIZATION

PLT is the environmental education program of the American Forest Foundation (AFF). AFF is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization that is supported by individual donors, foundations, corporations, and government agencies. The Education Operating Committee of AFF provides governance and leadership to PLT. The committee develops opportunities for young people and their families to better understand environmental issues by cooperating on projects with educators, resource management professionals, youth leaders, and citizen conservationists.

## MISSION

The North Carolina PLT program will follow the national program's mission by advancing environmental literacy and promoting stewardship through excellence in environmental education, professional development, and curriculum resources that use trees and forests as windows on the world.

## **PROGRAM GOALS**

PLT in North Carolina will be guided by the program's national goals:

- To develop students' awareness, appreciation, skills, and commitment to address environmental issues.
- To provide a framework for students to apply scientific processes and higher order thinking skills to resolve environmental problems.
- To help students acquire an appreciation and tolerance of diverse viewpoints on environmental issues and develop attitudes and actions based on analysis and evaluation of the available information.  
To encourage creativity, originality, and flexibility to resolve environmental problems and issues.
- To inspire and empower students to become responsible, productive, and participatory members of society.

## **STATE SPONSORS**

Sponsors of PLT in North Carolina are the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service, NC State University College of Natural Resources, the North Carolina Forestry Association, and the North Carolina Forest Service.

## **SPONSOR ROLLS**

### **North Carolina Cooperative Extension (NCCES) & NC State University College of Natural Resources (CNR)**

1. Provide the State Coordinator for the program's daily activities statewide. The State

Coordinator's primary responsibilities include:

- Being the lead facilitator for the NC PLT Program
- Recruit, train, assist, and evaluate workshop facilitators
- Recruit, review, and authorize workshop proposals
- Provide workshop materials to NC PLT facilitators
- Administer proper forms for Continuing Education credits for formal and non-formal educators
- Administer proper forms for the NC Environmental Education Certification Program
- Establish an Advisory Committee to develop and implement NC specific PLT materials, programs, and publicity
- Prepare and submit a progress report for NCEA Education Committee Meetings upon request
- Develop and maintain all program records
- Submit necessary paperwork and reports to the national office
- Prepare an annual report to be shared with state sponsors
- Develop and administer program evaluation
- Maintain communication with facilitator network, program partners, and national office
- Market PLT through facilitator network, PLT Outposts, NC Office of Environmental Education and Public Affairs (OEEPA) web site calendar and list-serve, national PLT workshop calendar, NC Department of Public

- Instruction's calendar, and other web-based calendars and networks as appropriate.
  - Distribute a program update to facilitators on a biennial basis (spring and fall)
  - Maintain NC PLT web page and workshop and facilitator databases
  - Other duties as outlined in Advisory Committee and Facilitator descriptions
2. Provide web site.
  3. Provide office for State Coordinator and PLT Program.
  4. Provide financial support for the State Coordinator.

### **North Carolina Forestry Association (NCFA)**

1. Provide financial support for:
  - Annual purchase of PLT Activity Guides for the NC PLT program
  - Registration and travel for the NC PLT Coordinator and one NC PLT Advisory Committee Member and/or NCFA Education Committee member to attend the annual International PLT Coordinators' Conference
  - Advisory Committee activities and meetings
  - Additional materials to lead NC PLT workshops
2. Publicize the program in various media throughout the state.
3. Actively promote PLT to its membership.

### **North Carolina Forest Service (NCFS)**

1. Provide a State Co-coordinator to oversee implementation of PLT training and operations within

- NCFS and assist State Coordinator in coordination of NC PLT program.
2. Provide a representative on the Advisory Committee in addition to the Co-coordinator.
  3. Enhance program use through NCFS's districts statewide.
  4. Assist in training NCFS staff to be facilitators.
  5. Market PLT through Educational State Forests (ESFs) and county rangers.
  6. Encourage attendance of NCFS county rangers at PLT workshops to prepare for public and classroom programs.
  7. Provide lead facilitator for facilitator training workshops.

### **NC PLT Advisory Committee**

The NC PLT Advisory Committee will:

1. Be composed of up to 20 voting members representing industry, education, and public agencies.
2. Form an Executive Subcommittee composed of the Chair(s), the State Coordinator, and Co-Coordinator.
3. Attend scheduled Advisory Committee meetings.
4. Review and make recommendations about program goals, operations, budgets, and program implementation.
5. Support the State Coordinator and promote program participation locally.
6. Assist in securing public and private sector funding.
7. Assist in program evaluation.
8. Develop an annual budget request to be submitted to the NCFA Education Committee and Board of Directors.

9. Vote when issues arise that require a vote, but only one vote will be allowed for each of the sponsoring agencies; NCCES, NCFA, NCFS.
10. Each member of the advisory committee will have previously attended a PLT workshop, or will within a year of joining the committee.
11. Committee members will attend a minimum of one face-to-face meeting per year.
12. The Advisory Committee Chair will have served on the Committee for at least one year and will be a trained PLT Facilitator.
  - The Chair will serve a two-year term, and additional terms can be granted by vote of the Advisory Committee.
13. Select a technical advisor from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (DPI), or other formal educational organization, to advise the committee on the following:
  - Communication with DPI
  - Recommended teaching methods
  - Curriculum changes
  - Partnerships between PLT and DPI, including professional development opportunities
14. Select an *Outstanding Facilitator of the Year* during the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of the calendar year. Presentation of the award will be made during a conference or meeting of the award winner's organization.
15. Assist the State Coordinator in reviewing/nominating an Outstanding Educator of the Year for North Carolina in the 3<sup>rd</sup>

quarter of the calendar year, to be submitted to the national PLT office during the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of the calendar year.

16. Review nominations and select a PLT Outpost of the Year.

## **FACILITATORS**

The facilitator's responsibilities are to offer quality PLT educator workshops.

Facilitators will:

1. Market PLT at the local level.
2. Initiate workshops, secure co-facilitators and workshop site.
3. Submit workshop proposal form and agenda to State Coordinator for approval a minimum of four weeks before proposed workshop.
4. Submit participant and facilitator evaluation forms to State Coordinator in a timely manner.
5. Be able to explain Continuing Education Unit (CEU) credits and the role of PLT in the NC EE Certification program.
6. Understand how PLT complements current formal education goals and trends.
7. Assist the State Coordinator with PLT workshops or events if available.
8. Inform State Coordinator of changes to contact information.
9. Conduct at least one workshop per year.

## PLT OUTPOSTS

PLT Outposts are a partnership between the network of state PLT Facilitators and existing Environmental Education (EE) Centers. The strengths of EE Centers are coupled with the ability to host PLT workshops in-house.

PLT Outposts are expected to:

1. Host and facilitate at least one PLT workshop at their PLT Outpost site each year.
2. Contact NC PLT State Coordinator by March 1<sup>st</sup> of each year to set the date of their PLT Educator Workshop for that year.
3. Keep PLT brochures on hand for placement at their Outpost site.
4. Refer additional questions and workshop requests to the State Coordinator.
5. Maintain a NC PLT Tree Trunk for use at the PLT Outpost site and for loan to educators.

## PROGRAM OPERATIONS

Guidelines for program continuity and consistency are:

1. Activity guides will be distributed only within the context of a PLT workshop, as outlined in the NC PLT Facilitator Handbook.
2. Activity guides will not be sold, but will be given free of charge to workshop participants.
  - Secondary modules may be ordered by secondary module workshop participants as outlined in the NC PLT Facilitator Handbook.
3. Facilitators may charge workshop participants for incidental costs associated with workshop facility rental, food, or lodging. The cost must be included on the

- workshop proposal form, and the facilitator(s) will collect the fees.
4. A general workshop fee can be voted upon by the Advisory Committee, to be applied to all NC PLT workshops. This general workshop fee would be collected by one of the sponsoring agencies.
  5. Facilitator workshops will consist of a minimum of 12 hours of program orientation and leadership skills training. The Advisory Committee must approve all facilitator workshops.
  6. Educator workshops will be offered consistent with the time frames as outlined in the NC PLT Facilitator Handbook. If possible, a team of facilitators should conduct the workshop.
  7. All educator workshops will include:
    - An overview of PLT mission and goals
    - Information about the national and local sponsors
    - Follow the workshop guidelines outlined in the NC PLT Facilitator Handbook
    - A variety of learning styles, media, and activities
    - A variety of activities for different age groups
  8. Workshop reports, including facilitator and participant surveys, will be forwarded to the National PLT Office by the State Coordinator.

In addition to the policies and guidelines required by the national program, the NC PLT Advisory Committee may develop policies and guidelines for state implementations. Changes in state policies and guidelines will be recorded

and attached as an appendix to these guidelines.

### **PROGRAM EVALUATION AND REVIEW**

NC PLT will use questionnaires and survey formats provided by the National PLT Office to measure the success and quality of the state program. The State Coordinator will retain participant and facilitator surveys for five years.

Funds permitting, the state program will participate in any follow-up surveys or questionnaires that may be developed by the national or state program.

The Advisory Committee shall review the program annually and make recommendations concerning program goals and management.

### **PROGRAM FUNDING, FINANCIAL OPERATION, AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

Funding, financial operations, and accountability of the NC PLT Program are under the auspices of the NC Forestry Association, The North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service, and the NC State University College of Natural Resources.