Operational Guidance for the State Interagency Training Committee (SITCOM)

Updated November 2022

This document was originally developed in November 2020 to serve as operational guidance for the State Interagency Training Committee (SITCOM). This document continues to be a living document; the committee will edit it as necessary to reflect current committee operations and capacity. It is anticipated that this document will be reviewed at least once per year, and prior to November 2022, it was last revised in September 2021.

Why We're Here

SITCOM's Mission

To maintain and strengthen a statewide team of well-trained conservation professionals that carry on Wisconsin's rich history of conserving soil and water resources through a coordinated and efficient partnership.

SITCOM's Audience

The primary audience for SITCOM activities, projects, and training programs are local, state and federal conservation professionals.

At times, additional audiences for activities, projects, and training programs may require inclusion of private sector practitioners, including crop consultants, agronomists and engineers. These audiences may participate in training and activities as needed and space is available.

SITCOM's Initiatives

In order to consistently carry out the mission and best serve the intended audience of conservation professionals, all of SITCOM's efforts will be aligned with one or more of the following initiatives:

1. Enhance the quality of professional conservation training programs
2. Support new and experienced conservationists in growing as professionals
3. Coordinate partner agency and organization training programs and support their collaboration
4. Consistently measure and evaluate the training landscape and actively address areas of need

What We Do

SITCOM Activities

All SITCOM activities and projects are dependent upon the availability of staffing and financial resources. In order to support the training landscape and address its areas of need, at a minimum, SITCOM members will collaborate to carry out the following activities:

1. **Identify statewide and area training needs (See Appendix A)**
   - Develop and administer training needs assessment every two years
   - Develop annual SITCOM and AITCOM training workplans and associated budget as applicable, based on training needs assessment results and other measurements
   - Identify opportunities for coordination and collaboration for training needs that are shared between multiple conservation agencies and organizations
   - Publish and review a quarterly snapshot report that identifies training topics that have and have not been addressed within current SITCOM and AITCOM workplans

2. **Provide training program support**
   - Connect, coordinate, and advocate for collaboration amongst the network of conservation agencies, organizations, and professionals to meet training needs
   - Identify and coordinate resources, including instructor access to training materials, to facilitate the development and delivery of training
   - Facilitate and/or support trainings (in-person and online), as appropriate and relevant
   - Provide assistance to evaluate training
   - Provide access to a searchable library of recorded trainings
   - When capacity allows, seek additional funding to support training activities

3. **Promote training opportunities**
   - Compile and share the SITCOM training E-newsletter
   - Develop annual training catalog
   - Create and maintain a central location to store recorded trainings and webinars

4. **Raise the profile of SITCOM and training**
   - Acknowledge SITCOM as a partner on trainings listed on the workplan
   - Prepare end-of-year report of training and activities and send to stakeholder

5. **Advance the efforts of SITCOM's mission and initiatives**
   - Maintain and regularly update (once per year) an operational guidance document
   - Participate in at least one Ad Hoc Subcommittee (project team) in at least an advisory position, working to address an identified training landscape gap

As SITCOM capacity allows consideration should be given to the following activities:

- Maintain training data
- Develop a statewide staff development tracking system
  - Trainings completed, credentials, job approvals, etc.

Ad Hoc Subcommittees (Project Teams)

To carry out the mission of SITCOM, ad hoc subcommittees will be established to address important areas of need that deepen the quality of professional conservation training across the state. These subcommittees will not be limited to SITCOM members. Instead, these subcommittees will include others with the necessary experience to work on the topic for which the subcommittee is formed. The activities of the ad hoc subcommittees will be decided by the members of that committee.

## Current Ad Hoc Subcommittees (Project Teams)

- Operational Guidance Review Team: *Tasked with reviewing the operational guidance document each year and proposes new developments or changes to the committee procedures.*

Proposed Ad Hoc Subcommittees for 2023 (Project Teams)

- Online Resources Team: *Tasked with identifying needs of conservationists to access training materials, shared documents, onboarding information, and other necessary information.*

- Mentorship Program Exploration Team: *Tasked with exploring the idea of a mentorship program for professional conservationists, identifying challenges, and determining the program's viability.*

- AITCOM Development Team: *Tasked with assisting AITCOMs in their outreach, coordination, and collaboration efforts, looking for ways to spark and encourage more engagement by partners.*

- Training Needs Assessment Team: *Tasked with developing the two-year needs assessment survey and identifying ways to identify and address training needs formally and informally.*

Who We Are

SITCOM's Organization
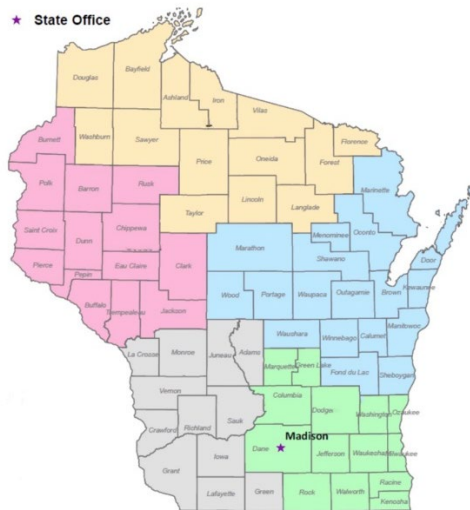
SITCOM is a statewide committee with members from the various professional conservation partner agencies, departments, and groups. Because SITCOM's purview is training at the statewide level, the Area Interagency Training Committees (AITCOMs) were established to represent the area-based training needs. These five AITCOMs are led by sitting SITCOM members, and their workplans are coordinated.

SITCOM Membership

At a minimum, SITCOM members will:

- Serve as liaisons between their organization and the committee (with particular attention to the groups identified in the table below)
  - o   Identify and share training needs for their organization
  - o   Update their organization on statewide training activities
- Attend and actively participate in SITCOM meetings (4 meetings)
- Actively collaborate to accomplish SITCOM activities (described above)
- Promote available training opportunities, as appropriate
- Participate in at least one of SITCOM's ad hoc subcommittee teams

The following table identifies partner organizations and committees who are invited for possible membership on SITCOM. Individuals who serve on SITCOM may represent multiple membership groups (e.g. represent an Area Interagency Training Committee (AITCOM) and the Professional Improvement Committee). Limits on member term are not defined at this time.

Representative Organization	Groups Represented	Seats
North AITCOM (Park Falls)	Area conservation professionals (public and private)	1
Northwest AITCOM (Altoona)	Area conservation professionals (public and private)	1
Northeast AITCOM (Appleton)	Area conservation professionals (public and private)	1
Southwest AITCOM (Richland Center)	Area conservation professionals (public and private)	1
Southeast AITCOM (Juneau)	Area conservation professionals (public and private)	1
Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection (DATCP)	Bureau of Land and Water Resources and other department programs	2
Department of Natural Resources (DNR)	Watershed Management Bureau, Water Quality Section, Groundwater/Drinking Water Bureau, AIS, Forestry, Wetlands	2
Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)	Engineering, Resource Conservationists, Agronomists	2
Professional Improvement Committee (PIC)	PIC and Land Conservation Departments (LCDs)	1
Technical Committee (TC)	TC and Land Conservation Departments (LCDs)	1
UW-Madison College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (UW-CALS)	Nutrient & Pest Management, Soil Science	1
UW-Madison Division of Extension (UW-Ext.)	Conservation Professionals Training Program (CPTP), Natural Resource Educators, North Central Regional Water Partnership	2
WI Land+Water	Land Conservation Departments (LCDs) and Land Conservation Committees (LCCs)	2
Member at large, professional engineering practitioner	Professional engineers, public and private	1

Any decision-making responsibilities will be carried about by members of SITCOM. Other interested parties, including county conservation professionals, education specialists, and private sector practitioners, are welcome to attend meetings and participate in ad hoc committees.

AITCOM Membership

Operational guidance, membership and activities, is found in Appendix C at the end of this document.

Operational Notes

SITCOM Operation

Leadership

SITCOM meetings will be coordinated and led by WI Land+Water's Statewide Training Coordinator position. This person will work with membership and other partners to develop meeting agendas.

Meeting Frequency and Timing

SITCOM will meet at least four times a year. The timing of the meetings will follow the timeline in Appendix B to allow for effective coordination with the needs and activities of other committees.

Coordination with Other Committees

Area Interagency Training Committees (AITCOMs): AITCOMs are critical for meeting training needs across the state. SITCOM will coordinate with AITCOMs to compile an annual statewide training catalog and to develop the annual statewide training workplan. Recommended operational guidance for AITCOMs is found in Appendix C.

WI Land+Water's Professional Improvement Committee (PIC) and Technical Committee (TC): The PIC and TC also provide training to conservation professional in the state. The PIC plans an annual conference each year with the goal of providing access to necessary training. The TC helps plan technically focused sessions at the conference and also plans an annual field day. SITCOM will share the training needs assessment and other training needs metrics with these committees and coordinate with the PIC and TC as needed.

Meeting Agendas

WI Land+Water will work with SITCOM membership and other partners to develop meeting agendas. Meeting agendas will be posted on the internet in advance of the meeting to enable interested parties to attend. Meeting notes (minutes) will record main points of discussion and action items. Meeting notes will be taken by WI Land+Water and be made available on the internet.

Committee members may be asked to submit written updates in advance of the meetings. Meeting agendas for the entire committee may include the following:

- Welcome and Roll Call
- Looking Back
    - Unresolved agenda items from last meeting
    - Decisions or initiatives established last meeting
- Looking Forward
    - SITCOM Membership updates
    - Current or upcoming issues (e.g. new COVID restrictions)
    - Other challenges and opportunities
- SITCOM Development
    - Ad Hoc Committee (team) updates
    - Statewide training challenges or issues
- Member Updates
    - AITCOM updates or challenges

- o Partner Agency or Program updates or challenges
- o Other training updates
- Closing
  - o Action items for next meeting
  - o Future meetings

Other items, such as the training needs assessment, operational guidance review, and ad hoc committee reports will be added as relevant.

Decision-Making

The committee members present will attempt to make decisions by consensus.

Committee members are expected to share thoughts and concerns about a recommendation prior to decision-making. Recommendations with consensus move forward.

Committee members will express support for the recommendation using strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. If a member strongly disagrees, then consensus cannot be reached and a recommendation cannot move forward without amendment.

Where consensus cannot be achieved, even with amendment, the committee may choose to take a vote. Decisions that receive positive votes by a majority (half plus one) move forward; however, objections will be noted.

SITCOM Financial Support

When funding is available, small grants will be provided to AITCOMs to help with training-related expenses. This funding is available through a contract between DATCP and WI Land+Water and will be managed for SITCOM by WI Land+Water. Funding for additional SITCOM projects and initiatives may be pursued through other means such as applying for grants.

Appendix A: Guidance on Use of Wisconsin's Training Needs Assessment

At least every two years, SITCOM will initiate a needs assessment to identify the training needs of conservation professionals in Wisconsin. The needs assessment will be sent to all conservation department staff and state agency staff. The needs assessment may also be sent to conservation professionals at the federal level.

The needs assessment will identify professional training needs at the state and area levels and inform training efforts to ensure a more coordinated and consistent statewide training effort. The responses to the training needs assessment will be used by SITCOM to identify statewide training needs and by AITCOMs to identify training needs at the area level. It is recommended that the Professional Improvement Committee (PIC) and the Technical Committee (TC) use the responses to the training needs assessment to identify sessions for the annual conference.

The following procedure outlines the facilitation and application of the needs assessment survey:

1. SITCOM will:
    - Develop a training needs assessment survey
    - Send the needs assessment survey to conservation professionals statewide at least every two years
    - Collect and aggregate responses to the survey
    - Organize survey responses by area and statewide
    - Review the survey responses to identify statewide training needs
    - Share the responses to the needs assessment, organized by area, with AITCOMs, the PIC, the TC, and other partners

2. AITCOMs will:
    - Review responses to the needs assessment for their area
    - Identify and prioritize area training needs
    - Develop a training plan to address priority training needs
    - Submit training plan to WI Land+Water

3. PIC and the TC will:
    - Review the survey responses to identify needs that can be addressed at the annual conference

4. SITCOM will:
    - Upon receipt of area work plans, identify if there are additional needs that SITCOM can help meet
    - Develop a training plan for statewide training for the next year

Appendix B: Training Timeline (DRAFT)

Below is a timeline for the state training needs assessment, prioritization of training needs, and development of training plans and workplans.

Continual	Month	Activity	Notes
Trainings and training development continue throughout the year. *Ad Hoc Subcommittees meet as needed.	January	Training development Prepare annual report for prior year and send to stakeholders Review and revise needs assessment survey as needed. Committee members may need to review updated survey before distribution to the organization they represent. (Every other year)	Identify which trainings already have materials and just need logistics help vs trainings that need curriculum development.
	February	SITCOM sends out needs assessment survey to conservation professionals. Work with partners/committee members on how to distribute to their staff. (Every other year)	
	March	WI L+W conference – sessions determined through: • PIC and TC meeting from prior August • Evaluations from past sessions • Most recent needs assessment survey responses Deadline for completion of needs assessment (Every other year)	The conference is one opportunity to offer trainings that work with the conference format: • Breakout session length • In-class learning Can be technical in nature or related to program information of professional development.
	April	Review and revise needs assessment survey as needed. Committee members may need to review updated survey before distribution to the organization they represent.	Every other year
	May	SITCOM will: • Organize responses to the needs assessment by area • Identify the needs that are statewide Share the responses to the needs assessment with AITCOMs, PIC, TC, other partners. The needs assessment will be organized by area and identify topics of statewide need	Every year. In a year where a new assessment is not completed, SITCOM will review the past assessment and factor in any trainings needs addressed over the past year.
	June	Training development and AITCOM engagement	
	July	Training development and AITCOM engagement	
	August	PIC and TC planning meeting for next conference will consider: • Responses to the most recent needs assessment • Results from prior conference evaluation • Input from committee and partners at August meeting	
	September	Update SITCOM Operational Guidance (if needed)	
	October	AITCOMs meet to: • review responses to the needs assessment for their area. • identify and prioritize training needs • develop area training plan	
	November	AITCOMs send training plans and associated budget to WI L+W	WI L+W will consolidate the training plans and provide SITCOM will the comprehensive list of trainings planned by the AITCOMS
	December	SITCOM reviews annual training plan - based upon: • Most recent training needs assessment • AITCOM training plans, consolidated by WI L+W • Other training needs identified from prior year SITCOM will determine whether an ad-hoc committee* is needed to help guide training development	Training plan development must be accompanied with strategies to meet the identified training needs.

*Ad-hoc committees should be convened by SITCOM as needed to draw on expertise to further develop training on specific needs. Ad-hoc committees may also be used to develop recommendations for consideration by the full committee.

Appendix C: Recommended Operational Guidance for AITCOMs

Area Interagency Training Committees (AITCOMs), are a critical component to a successful statewide training strategy. The following are recommended guidelines to strengthen AITCOMS, including through improved communication and coordination between AITCOMS and SITCOM. This guidance was developed by subcommittee and last updated September 21, 2021.

To ensure functional AITCOMs, it is recommended that AITCOMs:

- Develop a process to identify local resource concerns and training needs
- Develop and/or facilitate local training opportunities to meet these needs
- Connect to other AITCOMs and SITCOM to ensure statewide consistency

Recommended Guidelines for AITCOMs

The following are recommendations for the formation and operation of the AITCOMs.

- Area boundaries for an AITCOM should follow DATCP area boundaries
- DATCP area engineering staff should convene the AITCOMs
- AITCOMs should meet at least once per year, with a goal of meeting throughout the year as needed to keep the training efforts moving
- AITCOM membership should include a diverse mix of core partners
    - Required members include:
        - LCD representatives
            - Could be one from each county (AITCOM decision)
        - NRCS area staff
        - DATCP area staff
    - Optional members should be selected based upon local needs. These members can be part-time or as needed. Consideration should be given to:
        - UW - Division of Extension
        - DNR
        - Regional expertise (groundwater, wildlife, forestry, AIS)
- One representative should be selected from each AITCOM to serve as a representative on SITCOM
- Each AITCOMs should develop an annual training plan that identifies planned trainings and rough timeline for the training (training catalog)
    - Plan development should be informed by the results of the most recent needs assessment (see more information about needs assessment below)
    - Training plans should identify any funding needs from WI Land+Water
- Trainings should be made available to any conservation professional, even if outside of the area if capacity for training will allow attendance
- Training materials developed by an AITCOM should be shared with other area committees and SITCOM

Using the Needs Assessment

Each year, the AITCOMs should use the responses to the most recent training needs assessment administered by SITCOM to identify training needs at the area level and inform the development of a training plan for the next year. To develop this training plan, it is recommended that AITCOMs take the steps below during the months indicated.

- Receive a summary of responses to the needs assessment from SITCOM (July)
- Review the responses and identify area needs (August-October)
- Prioritize area training needs (August-October)
- Develop a training plan for the area for the following year to address priority training needs (August-October)
- Submit training plan to WI L+W (no later than November 1)

Appendix D: Background on SITCOM and Statewide Training Efforts

The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) is tasked with establishing a certification program and ensuring adequate training for county land conservation staff to successfully administer statewide conservation programs (s. 92.18, Wis. Stats and ATCP 50.52). As a part of this, the Department is required to appoint a training advisory committee to guide training efforts. The Department meets this requirement through collaboration with other conservation partners.

The State Interagency Training Committee (SITCOM) was formed back in the 1990s. At that time, conservationists were implementing Wisconsin's priority watershed program. The committee consisted of members from WI Land+Water, DATCP, DNR, NRCS, UW-Madison and UW-Extension. During the 1990s and early 2000s, training needs were met through efforts of SITCOM and four area inter-agency training committees (AITCOMs). AITCOMs met quarterly and membership consisted of conservation professionals from multiple disciplines including, but not limited to engineering, conservation planning, support staff and administrative staff. AITCOMs regularly surveyed conservation professionals in the area to determine training needs. Based upon those surveys, AITCOMs would make decisions about how to meet needs through one-on-one training, training at the area level, or by passing the information on to SITCOM.

Over time, emphasis on training and the capacity to deliver training at the state and area levels changed. By 2012, there was an interest in revisiting statewide training efforts to find efficiencies and improve coordination to enhance training opportunities across the state. In 2013, WI Land+Water convened a "Training Summit" and invited conservation partners to identify training needs, gaps in training availability and recommendations to address these needs. Following that effort, DATCP began to provide funding to WI Land+Water to work with SITCOM and improve training.

In 2020, SITCOM members initiated a series of facilitated discussions to further strengthen statewide training efforts and to build a strategy to ensure lasting capacity across the state to identify and meet the diverse training needs of all conservation professionals. These discussions led to the development of operational guidance for SITCOM as a way to ensure continued collaboration to increase the availability of efficient and effective training, and to improve consistency in training across the state.

[Will need to add developments for 2020-22 and onward.]

Appendix E: SITCOM Membership Responsibilities

Being a member of SITCOM comes with the following responsibilities:

- Attend and actively participate in meetings.
    - Review all relevant material before committee meetings.
    - Participate in discussion.
    - Participate in committee decision-making.
- Find an alternate to attend the meeting to represent your agency or organization when you cannot attend.
- Serve as a liaison between your organization and SITCOM including updating your organization on statewide training activities.
- Work as part of the committee to ensure that the committee's work and recommendations are in keeping with the committee's mission.
- Support the efforts of the committee.
- Carry out individual assignments.
- Promote available training opportunities, as appropriate.

SITCOM meets four times a year. SITCOM meetings are typically two hours long. Time spent on committee related work in-between meetings varies based upon need and the individual interest of the members.

SITCOM may create ad-hoc committees and/or subcommittees as deemed necessary. Depending on the topic, you may choose to be involved on these committees. These committees will cease when their service/responsibilities/outcomes are finished/accomplished.

Other interested individuals are welcome to join SITCOM meetings, or participate on ad-hoc committees or sub-committees, but they will not be able to vote.

Appendix F: SITCOM Satellite Outreach Committee

SITCOM membership represents only part of the professional, public, and private conservation training efforts across the state of Wisconsin. Therefore, the SITCOM leader will coordinate a satellite committee that works to communicate and share needs and efforts amongst groups not represented by sitting SITCOM members. The table below represents the initial outreach for this satellite committee in 2023.

Representative Organization	Description of Work	Seats
Savanna Institute	Agroforestry education and adoption for farmers and scientists	1
Glacierland RC&D	Environmental, social, and economic sustainability through agency and organization coordination	1
Golden Sands RC&D	Acts as a community resource working across county lines to address large-scale environmental issues	1
Lumberjack RC&D	Rural development program focusing on conservation work to improve social, economic and environmental conditions	1
River Country RC&D	Brings people and resources together to address opportunities to conserve natural resources	1
North Central Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE)	Agriculture education grant program supporting sustainable practices and programs	1
GrassWorks	Grazing leadership and education to farmers and consumers	1
Wisconsin Forestry Center (WFC)	Partner-driven professional forestry workforce development through applied research and community outreach	1
The Nature Conservancy	Guided by science and equity, identifies paths to solve climate change and biodiversity loss	1
Sand County Foundation	Partners with private landowners, organizations and communities to address environmental challenges	1
Discovery Farms	Farmer-led research and outreach program focused on the relationship between agriculture and water quality	1
Wisconsin Wetlands Association	Dedicated to wetlands protection and restoration through science-based programs, education, and advocacy	1
Wisconsin Lake Leaders Institute	Educational program focused on enhancing lake resources through leadership, training, and civic engagement	1
Pheasants Forever	Nonprofit organization dedicated to upland habitat conservation, empowering volunteers to fund local projects	1
Ducks Unlimited	Works with partners and landowners to protect and restore waterfowl habitats through science and conservation	1
Trout Unlimited	Conserving, protecting, and restoring cold water fisheries and their watersheds throughout Wisconsin	1
Wisconsin Technical Colleges	Offers degree and certificate programs and conservation education programs for students around the state	?