



## WHAT IS THE EARTH SKILLS NETWORK AND WHY IS IT NEEDED?

**1** Protected areas are the cornerstone of international efforts to meet ambitious global conservation targets, such as preventing species extinctions and safeguarding valuable ecosystem services. They play a critical role in the preservation of biodiversity and deliver a range of other environmental, social and economic benefits. Despite recognition of their outstanding value many protected areas face challenges, which can limit their capacity for effective management and lead to ineffective conservation. Lack of staff training in operational effectiveness, business planning and other key management skills can be a significant contributing factor to this.

**2** Companies have a wealth of experienced staff and spend a lot of resources on training for effective business management. The Earth Skills Network brings together experienced business mentors, recruited from the corporate world, with managers from protected areas, in a mentor-mentee relationship to transfer key business skills. This training supports effective conservation by helping to ensure that sites have a strong organisational foundation and a strategic approach to management.

**3** Through dialogue and collaboration with their mentor, protected areas engage with businesses, which may be operating in their region. This helps companies to understand their dependencies on biodiversity and ecosystem services, gives them a broader understanding of the landscape within which they operate and the potential impact of business decisions on protected areas.



## WHY IS THE EARTH SKILLS NETWORK RELEVANT TO ME AND MY ORGANISATION?

1. Most protected area site managers are trained biologists with several years of field experience, giving them solid grounding to respond to the wide range of challenges they face, from managing forest fires to counteracting poaching. However, effectively managing protected areas requires additional skill sets, which that are not always part of traditional staff training. Management challenges go beyond ecosystem health and include those related to running a site's organisational systems and processes. If a protected area lacks organisational effectiveness then it will be compromised in its ability to deliver on management objectives.

2. The ESN can help your organisation to put processes in place that will assure effective operations, through the training of staff in essential business management skills. By applying these skills, your organisation will be able to make better use of available resources, identify and prepare responses to potential risks, develop the foundations for sustainable financing of activities, and more.

3. By joining the Earth Skills Network you can:

- Access a fully-funded, in-depth training programme in business planning and effective management.
- Receive mentoring from an expert with significant business experience in an international organisation, helping your site to take a strategic approach to tackling specific issues.
- Support the professional development of staff, helping them to develop the leadership competencies required to put the skills they have developed into practise.
- Network, connect with and support staff from other African protected areas.
- Have an opportunity for constructive dialogue with members of the business community, potentially with companies that are operating in your region.

4. Specific areas of business planning training include:

- Organisational vision and objectives.
- Creating an effective organisational structure.
- Stakeholder analysis.
- Identifying customers and competitors.
- Marketing your organisation's 'products' and services.
- Identifying risks and planning mitigation measures.
- Constructing budgets and analysing finances.
- Creating an activity plan and effective operational processes.



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## HOW IS THE PROGRAMME STRUCTURED?

1. Three members of staff join a 10 day intensive residential training programme co-delivered by a team of learning and business professionals.
2. During the residential training your staff work with an allocated business mentor to review your site's needs and plan how to best apply the skills developed during the training.
3. After the residential training your staff will have access to the business mentor for support in achieving their objectives, for at least 12 months.
4. Support, guidance and encouragement from the business mentor, combined with senior management support on the ground will ensure the most effective outcomes.



“Every success story starts with a dream. Do you dream of a better future for your protected area? Joining this course was the best decision in my professional life. The content and experience was rich and more importantly the networking has been amazing.”

Manager, Keta Lagoon Ramsar Site, Ghana

*After joining the Earth Skills Network in 2014, Keta Lagoon focused on developing a new marketing plan that will generate new ecotourism opportunities at the site. They also secured funding to focus on turtle conservation and improving community livelihoods through ecotourism opportunities.*

### WHAT IS INCLUDED IN THE FUNDING?

1. Travel for three members of staff from their home to South Africa for the 10 day Residential Training Programme (direct flight, economy class).
2. Nine nights of accommodation at the Residential Training Programme in the Lajuma Research Centre, South Africa.
3. Meals and drinks for the duration of your stay at the 10 day Residential Training Programme.
4. Comprehensive medical evacuation insurance for the duration of the 10 day Residential Training Programme.
5. All facilitation costs and training materials.
6. 12 months of expert business mentoring.

### WHAT IS NOT INCLUDED IN THE FUNDING?

1. Staff salaries – it is expected that the staff members attending this training will continue to have their salary fully funded by your organisation.
2. Any miscellaneous expenses (e.g. visa fees, airport transfers, clothing).





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## WHAT ARE THE CRITERIA FOR ENTRY?

### 1. ABOUT YOUR STAFF:

- Three staff from the site must be available to participate in the programme on the same training team.
- All three staff must have sign off from Senior Management.
- Staff must be fluent in English, as English is the main training language and application materials must be completed in English.
- No business planning knowledge is required but staff must be in a position to benefit from the training e.g. through involvement in management or business planning.
- Previous training recipients are not eligible to apply again, but we welcome repeat applications from different individuals within the same site.

### 2. ABOUT YOUR ORGANISATION:

- A marine or terrestrial natural protected area in Africa.
- Must have an IUCN Protected Area classification, be a UNESCO World Heritage Site, or be working towards WHS status.  
Or,  
Be a protected area agency or management authority, working across a number of sites.
- The site must have clear (gazetted) boundaries.
- Management Authority and Approvals Authority must be known.
- All governance types are eligible for the programme.
- Depending on governance type, the site must have relevant approvals to participate in the programme.

## HOW MANY PEOPLE HAVE BEEN INVOLVED SO FAR?

1. The programme has been running for seven years.
2. To date 40 business mentors have partnered with 114 staff representing 39 protected area organisations.
3. Mentors have been recruited from a wide range of geographies and have mentored protected area staff from 16 African and 6 Asian countries.

## MENTEE CASE STUDY

### Siyabonga Dlulisa, Department of Environmental Affairs, South Africa



Siyabonga is the Manager for Marine Protected Areas (MPA) and Marine Protected Species for the Department of Environmental Affairs in South Africa. The creation of new MPAs and the expansion of existing MPAs is a key priority for the Department. Following his participation on the programme, Siyabonga has been developing a new network of Marine Protected Areas.

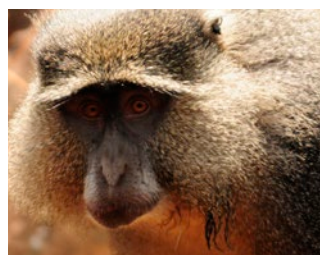
The ESN programme has been instrumental in Siyabonga's professional development. Prior to attending the ESN programme important stakeholder engagements were handled by external providers. The ESN equipped Siyabonga with the skills to manage stakeholders, and since returning to his role he has been leading these complex engagements. This includes working to secure buy in from communities and companies operating in the areas, to ensure the successful creation or expansion of the MPA network. Siyabonga was able to utilise the expertise gained through ESN to achieve positive outcomes for the Department and for the protected area estate of South Africa.



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## WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF THE TRAINING?

1. 98% of protected area staff agreed or strongly agreed that their business mentor helped them to better understand the business planning process, and that their performance in their work would be improved as a result of what they had learned. For example, with the support of their mentor, the staff from one WHS were able to lead on the development of a business plan for the first time; whereas previously they had to hire a consultant.
2. Following the residential training 98% of mentees felt that the protected area they worked for would be better managed as an impact of this programme. The mentees have reported various outcomes following the mentoring programme. For example, at one site over \$25,000 per year of cost savings were identified, community forums were run to address the issues surrounding illegal logging, an improved marketing plan for tourists was put in place and collaboration with local hotels was agreed.

### MENTEE CASE STUDY

#### Dubiure Umaru Farouk, Mole National Park, Ghana



As the manager of Mole National Park, Farouk's responsibilities include income generation through fundraising and ecotourism. Despite this being a priority, staff at the site, along with the Wildlife Division of Ghana, felt that they lacked some of the tools to take advantage of the opportunities for revenue generation at Mole. Training on market analysis and planning was of particular interest to Farouk, and since the training he has continued to focus on this with support from his business mentor Andrew (pictured).

Over the past year, Farouk has used new marketing tools and knowledge to establish partnerships that will support income generation, for example through the creation of a website to promote the site, funding for management of the elephant population and a proposal for development of the road and bridge infrastructure. Farouk and his team will continue to build on these successes, attracting new investment and tourism to Mole National Park.

"This program has not only empowered me by improving my capacity as a manager, it has motivated me to take a proactive approach as a key stakeholder in the development and implementation of a business plan as well as an improved network to share ideas, challenges and solutions"

"The insights gained from the training will improve my approach to protected area management. I will be able to more holistically address the challenges facing the site where I work through improved stakeholder engagement and financial planning. The experiences shared with other protected area managers from different participating countries improved my understanding of the big picture."

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Mentee, Zambia



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