

WIO COMPAS

Western Indian Ocean • Certification of Marine Protected Area Professionals



Policy Brief: Achieving MPA Management Effectiveness Through Competence-based Professional Development

Summary: This brief aims to engage Directors of Marine Protected Areas (MPA) in East Africa in ensuring their staff have the right skills, right level of competence in those skills, and the know-how to apply these skills to more effectively manage MPAs. This requires recognized standards in key competency areas against which staff capacity should be assessed to ensure they have the right tools for the job. Such a program exists—Western Indian Ocean Certification of Marine Protected Area Professionals (WIO-COMPAS). Tested and proven, WIO-COMPAS can help MPA leadership ensure the right people are being hired for the job and stay on the job. Staffs who meet the rigorous standards are “certified” as MPA professionals; staffs that need to improve their skills are provided with training, education, and/or on-the-job experience to help them earn certification. Unlike one-off training programs, WIO-COMPAS provides organizations with a complete professional development system that easily integrates with existing organizational processes. Embedding the WIO-COMPAS certification program into an institution’s human resource administration system offers a wise return-on-investment—one that translates into more confident, skilled, and committed staff and a more effectively managed MPA over the longer term.

Certifying bodies:



Endorsed by:



10% EFFECTIVELY MANAGED – ARE YOU ON COURSE?

MPAs are versatile management tools that play a key role in helping conserve marine resources and are an integral part of an ecosystem approach to management. Recognizing the value of MPAs, the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity has set a target that 10% of coastal and marine areas be effectively managed by 2020. This is not a quantity challenge of adding MPAs. Instead, the focus is on effectively managing existing MPAs, which requires organizations to have systems and processes in place to get the job done. Professional Development Systems, such as a Competence-based program, contribute to both organizational processes as well as competent staff.

WELL-MANAGED MPAs REQUIRE COMPETENT STAFF

Investing wisely in MPAs includes investing in those hired to manage these areas

In spite of the physical, social and economic value of MPAs, management effectiveness of far too many MPAs is poor or lacking. The root of this ineffectiveness consistently points to staff that lack the right skills and/or the right *level* of skills to do the jobs they are entrusted to carry out. On their own, training, educational degrees, and even experience on-the-job may not be able to assure MPA leadership that they are hiring or have hired staff with the needed level of competency in the right skill areas. What can provide this assurance is the WIO-COMPAS system of professional development. It builds from a set of internationally recognized standards in a suite of competency areas that experts in marine and MPA disciplines acknowledge are key to ensuring MPA staff members at various levels are equipped to effectively do their jobs.

Core competency areas & sample standards

New staff is hired and existing staff is assessed using these competency standards as a benchmark to identify if the individual is fully competent in the areas needed for the specific job or if additional capacity development is needed in certain areas. This helps build the most competent staff possible and when individuals earn the **MPA PRO title**, they have the “recognition” that they are a certified professional.

Those having earned the MPA PRO designation see it as an endeavor that is highly rewarding for the individual professional, links them to a global professional network of other MPA PROs and is not overly costly to the organization.

As part of being certified, MPA PROs also commit to a **code of ethics** that indicates that the individual has more than just the technical wherewithal to perform to standard. It signals that he/she agrees to perform his/her professional duties with honesty and with respect for the rights and needs of the people of the place that have a stake in the MPA ecosystem.



Competency Areas & Standards

Policy, legislation, and compliance

Standard: Ability to pursue correct legal processes associated with enforcement actions

MPA concepts and establishment

Standard: Sound understanding of different institutional models for MPA management

Communications and stakeholder engagement

Standard: Sound understanding of importance of effective and positive engagement with stakeholders to build a support base

Financial management and fundraising

Standard: Ability to develop and manage budgets associated with MPA management operations

Management operations

Standard: Ability to identify appropriate infrastructure, equipment, and materials for effective management of the MPA

Biophysical and social environments

Standard: Thorough understanding of the key threats to the ecological processes and species in the MPA and the implications for management

Leadership and Ethics

Standard: Ability to identify real issues and opportunities, then select and apply appropriate approaches, tools, and interventions to achieve positive results through exhibiting personal leadership qualities of self-motivation, pro-activeness, innovation, adaptability, and ethical conduct; plus the ability to encourage these qualities in others.

THREE LEVELS OF CERTIFICATION

Level 1 - Marine Field Operations

Level 1 is designed for the professional who is performing practical functions and responsibilities for the day-to-day management of an MPA and who has basic administrative responsibilities. Ideal candidate: equivalent of an MPA Ranger, Officer, or Marine Field Operator.

Level 2 - Site Management

Level 2 is designed for the professional who is performing management, supervisory, and administrative functions and responsibilities. Ideal candidate: someone working as an MPA Manager, Assistant Manager, Site Manager, Warden, or Section Ranger.

Level 3 - Policy and Planning

Level 3 is designed for a professional performing high-level management, strategy, and policy development as well as administrative functions and responsibilities. Ideal candidate: MPA Manager, Conservation Director, Head of Division, or Director.

INSTITUTIONALIZING WIO-COMPAS

Mainstreaming WIO-COMPAS into an organization's larger human resources system makes a difference — to the individuals and to the organization

When an agency/organization makes WIO-COMPAS an integral part of its human resource system, it makes a statement about its commitment to supporting a highly competent staff and to ensuring staff has the tools needed to do the job right. It helps build a professional cadre of individuals who understand the competency standards and recognize the agency/ organization's commitment to helping each staff member meet those standards. What benefits does an agency/organization reap when it mainstreams the WIO-COMPAS approach into its human resource system?



- **Provides a pre-tested and proven set of standards in a range of competency areas for a range of job types within an MPA.** These standards help in recruiting individuals with the right skills set, in training existing staff to strengthen certain competencies, and in making decisions on staff promotions as members gain competencies and improve their performances and/or increase their responsibilities.
- **Attracts the best candidates for job opportunities at your MPA.** You attract the “best and the brightest” when you let it be known that your agency/organization has clear expectations of its staff , invests in staff members by ensuring they either possess the needed skills or get the training to gain them, and you reward good performance with advancement along a professional career path.
- **Helps you pick the right people for the job.** In countries where labor laws and other factors make job accountability difficult, and where dismissal of non-performing employees is sometimes impossible, it is helpful to have this “yardstick” of standards to use in the recruitment process to assess an individual's likelihood to succeed on the job and to avoid hiring individuals likely to fail.
- **Helps to align organizational training courses** and methods based on individual needs



INDIVIDUAL BENEFITS

Over 60 MPA staffs from Kenya, Madagascar, Mozambique, Seychelles, South Africa, and Tanzania have been certified. Most of them are the best staff members for each agency. **Testimonials of certified MPA PROs attest to the career benefits.**

In the words of MPA PROs themselves:

- “There is important value in being clear on professional standards – learning how my skills match up, what skills need to be strengthened, and what is expected of me and other certified professionals.”
- “This program has built my confidence in carrying out my job duties.”
- “MPA PRO helps in setting professional goals and laying out a career path within the field of MPA management.”
- “It provides a venue for networking with other MPA professionals and sharing experiences and different approaches to common challenges.”
- “The program energizes and gives me new enthusiasm for working in the field of MPA management”.



WHO IS USING WIO-COMPAS & WHAT ARE THEY FINDING?

WIO-COMPAS is working with some of the MPA management authorities to adopt the WIO-COMPAS program and making it an integral part of their human resource systems. Recently, the program signed agreements with the Kenya Wildlife Services, CapeNature of South Africa, and the Madagascar National Parks, providing a framework for institutionalizing the WIO-COMPAS program in their human resources systems, processes, and policies. This is taking the WIO-COMPAS program beyond individuals, which has been the focus since the program was established in 2008, to a new level of working with the institutions. New experience and lessons are learned from these interactions with the institutions.

Kenya Wildlife Service is linking its strategic goals to individual staff through integrating competences into hiring, training, and performance review processes. CapeNature has assessed its staff to benchmark competence and then tailored a training and certification process to help the full MPA staff. Not only is this experience supporting the value of the program for both the individual and the organization, but CapeNature has found that the assessment tools for certification are simple and effective for site managers to implement in supervising staff members and getting the best out of them.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Learn more about the WIO-COMPAS approach and how you can join the growing number of agencies/organizations using it to build, strengthen, and retain the most effective staff to help manage your MPA (see contact information below).
- Work with us and with your human resources department to make a cost comparison and to assess the potential return on investment by transforming your “training” budget into a more powerful and effective competency certification program/budget.
- Network directly with agencies/organizations already incorporating the MPA PRO model into their human resource systems and are changing “how they do business” in terms of professional staff development.

Are your best staff certified and leaders in our MPA community?



For more information on WIO-COMPAS:

Julius Francis
Email: secretary@wiomsa.org
Tel: +255-24-2233472
www.wio-compas.org

WIO COMPAS
Western Indian Ocean • Certification of Marine Protected Area Professionals