

WILDLABS Group Leader Programme Handbook

Updated May 2025 by the WILDLABS Community Team
Note: This is a living document that will be continually updated

Welcome	1
Handbook Overview	2
Purpose.....	2
How it Works.....	2
What is WILDLABS?	2
WILDLABS Organizational Structure.....	2
Vision.....	3
Mission.....	3
Values.....	3
The Future of Conservation Technology.....	3
WILDLABS Group Leader Programme Framework	4
Overview.....	4
The Attributes of A Group Leader.....	4
Group Leader Oversight.....	6
Group Leader Expectations.....	6
Risk Management.....	7
WILDLABS Community Events Templates and Training	7
WILDLABS vs. WILDLABS Community Events.....	7
Template and training for virtual events: Coming soon!.....	8
Template and training for in-person events: Coming soon!.....	8
Final Thoughts	8
Appendix:	8
Virtual Event Best Practices.....	8
Community Management Theory.....	12

Welcome

Thank you for reading the WILDLABS Group Leader Programme Handbook. This document is designed to describe how WILDLABS Group Leaders can and should be successful in their role and when representing WILDLABS.

Handbook Overview

Purpose

This document will help ensure that all Group Leaders have the same understanding of the Group Leader Programme and WILDLABS mission and vision.

How it Works

The Handbook includes information on how to become a Group Leader, information on the WILDLABS mission and vision, and a breakdown of the WILDLABS team structure. Other information includes examples of community engagement tactics that Group Leaders can use and draw inspiration from during their term.

What is WILDLABS?

WILDLABS is leading the charge in revolutionizing conservation technology. We formed in 2015 to unite the largest community of conservation tech users and makers in the world, enabling them to collaborate, learn, and innovate solutions to the challenges facing the sector and the natural world. Since then, we've connected over 12,000 global members across 130 countries—including field biologists, NGO employees, tech developers, start-up owners, policy makers, and more—to spark collaboration and innovation through community-led programmes, events, initiatives, and research. We recognize that unlocking the full potential of conservation technology goes beyond gadgets—it's about fostering a functional ecosystem where tool innovators, adopters, and enablers collaborate effectively.

WILDLABS Organizational Structure

We catalyze the conservation technology sector by bringing people together, understanding their needs, and directing resources from across sectors to address shared challenges and realize collective opportunities. WILDLABS advances nature innovation not by building or scaling the latest technical solution, but by bolstering the human connections and collaborative infrastructure required to advance our entire sector.

Community Division

Goal: Bring the global conservation technology community together and make information discoverable.

How we do it: We connect the community on our platform and make information discoverable through products like The Inventory. We host community-building events such as Variety Hour and in-person events to better connect individuals in the sector.

Insights Division

Goal: Identify the community's most pressing needs.

How we do it: We conduct research in the conservation tech sector, like the State of Conservation Technology survey or movement ecology horizon scans, to identify where the sector is going and what resources are needed to bring it to fruition.

Programmes Division

Goal: Answer the sector's collective needs identified from the Insights Division.

How we do it: We form strategic partnerships that unlock cross-sector resources, including funding opportunities like the WILDLABS Awards, as well as capacity-building initiatives like Women in Conservation Technology.

Vision

A world in which the conservation sector benefits fully from modern tech innovations that are accessible, affordable and effective.

Mission

To unite the conservation technology community to maximize the benefits of cross-sector innovation for conservation impact.

Values

- Community-minded: Everything we do is grounded in what our community tells us it needs.
- Generosity: Our community shines when we take the time and energy to help each other out.
- Fun and human: Conservation doesn't have to be so serious. Knowledge sharing, collaboration, and connection happen best when everyone has the space to act as real people.

The Future of Conservation Technology

Technology is playing an ever-increasing role in the fight towards wildlife conservation. The connectivity of all major stakeholders in the sector is of the utmost importance as this new sector continues to mature. WILDLABS aims to keep connecting the conservation tech community in the future. By bolstering the connective tissue of the sector, we can expect to see benefits such as:

- Increased involvement by marginalized groups
- Strengthened capacity building, technology transfer, and scientific/technical cooperation
- More robust global and regional communities outside of the Global North

WILDLABS Group Leader Programme Framework

Overview

This document provides an overview of the WILDLABS Group Leader Programme, created by the WILDLABS Community Team in June 2024. This framework is the minimum viable structure necessary for a successful Group Leader Programme. This is a living document that will evolve as the programme matures and changes.

Becoming a WILDLABS Group Leader requires a specific kind of person who understands conservation technology, believes in the WILDLABS mission, and has a desire to make impacts in the sector. This section of the handbook will cover what a Group Leader is, why someone would volunteer, and how you can join the cohort.

The Attributes of A Group Leader

The number one role of a WILDLABS Group Leader is to be community-minded, fostering a sense of connection within a WILDLABS subgroup. What does it mean to be community-minded?

Being community-minded means offering support that results in deeper connections, high-quality engagement, and increased exchange of knowledge and information. Someone who is community minded should:

- **Value quality over quantity:** A thousand weak connections is not necessarily better than 10 strong ones. A virtual event with 30 inactive participants is not better than a 5-person community call with high engagement. Communities are built slowly and steadily!
- **Aspire for connectedness:** Form contacts and connections through meetings, events, and interactions. Introduce like-minded groups and individuals to each other.

- **Listen for needs:** Understand the needs of your community and advocate for solutions that would solve their problems.
- **Live by the organization's mission, vision, and values:** Work from the perspective that everything you're doing as a community Leader is helping to strengthen the conservation technology community, allowing wildlife conservation efforts to become more efficient and impactful.

Group Leader Programme Oversight

The WILDLABS Community Team oversees the Group Leader Programme. As of May 2025, the Community Team is composed of Alex Rood (Communications and Community Associate Specialist) with support from Talia Speaker (Executive Manager).

Group Leader Recruitment

Application and review process for selecting Group Leaders

The WILDLABS Community Team is responsible for recruiting Group Leaders. Currently, the recruitment process consists of an application, followed by an application review from the Community Team. Applicants will be asked about their involvement in WILDLABS, the group(s) they are interested in managing, and any ideas for community building.

Applications will open annually, with Group Leaders fulfilling their positions for one year.

As the Group Leader programme continues to grow and evolve, the application and review process is likely to change.

Group Leader role and criteria

Being a Group Leader is a formal position within the WILDLABS community that serves to strengthen the subgroups on WILDLABS through event planning and increased platform engagement.

The ideal WILDLABS Group Leader has been involved in WILDLABS for 6+ months and has experience in their group's field of study/interest.

All Group Leaders must adhere to the WILDLABS [Community Guidelines](#).

Number of Group Leaders and term duration

Groups on WILDLABS are to have at least 1 but no more than 4 Group Leaders. A Group Leader's term is 1 year, and, if interested, Group Leaders who wish to continue for another term must re-apply.

Group Leader Oversight

Onboarding Group Leaders

The WILDLABS Community Team will work to give Group Leaders as much support and information as possible. We've created this Group Leader Handbook to provide Group Leaders with more details of their roles, responsibilities, and available resources.

For the first cohort of Group Leaders, the Community Team will host a mandatory orientation with new Group Leaders to onboard them to the programme. As the programme develops, it is possible that previous Group Leaders will be asked to onboard new members.

Keeping Track of Group Leaders

The Community Team will check in regularly with Group Leaders to check in on progress and provide support.

Additionally, the Community Team will be keeping track of activity in the subgroups, including monitoring new conversations and assessing engagement, to ensure that Group Leaders are acting within the responsibilities of the programme.

Communication platforms

Communication between Group Leaders and the Community Team should happen over email, directly to Alex Rood, or in the #wildlabs-groups Slack channel. If all Group Leaders in a specific group prefer to start a group-specific Slack channel for simpler communication, please let the Community Team know.

Group Leader Expectations

There are many different ways of being a successful WILDLABS Group Leader. However, there are a few activities that Group Leaders are expected to take part in as part of the programme.

These include:

- All WILDLABS Community Event materials will be approved by the Community Team
- Writing and/or reviewing a charter for the group, which includes:
 - Group purpose
 - Defining a long-term project goal for the Group Leader term. (*Examples of a project goal include: WILDLABS Community Event speaker sessions with industry experts, hosting a tutor series for members to learn relevant skills, workshop sessions dedicated to evaluating the future of the field and defining investment needs*)
 - List of engagement activities

- Engagement activity schedule and high-level 12 month action plan that includes engagement strategies, milestones, and timelines for events.
- Attend quarterly check-ins with the WILDLABS Community Team and 2025-2026 cohort to discuss the programme, pain points, areas of support, platform development needs, and general feedback.
- Writing a reflection article at the end of their term to be published on WILDLABS.
- Support the transition of the next Group Leader Programme cohort.

Risk Management

In an effort to identify, assess, and mitigate potential threats to the WILDLABS Group Leader Programme's reputation, security, and operational effectiveness, we propose the following actions to ensure its success and sustainability:

- The WILDLABS team will review and participate in the selection of Group Leaders.
- Group Leaders will use approved and official WILDLABS communication protocols and channels.
- Group Leaders must clearly state their goals and objectives during their term in a work plan that the Community Team will approve.
- The Community Team will ensure that a clear process is defined for monitoring and evaluation of Group Leaders.
- Group Leaders must agree to the WILDLABS Community Guidelines.
- Group Leaders will be expected to read the WILDLABS Group Leader Handbook, which provides detailed guidelines on representing WILDLABS.
- Group Leaders cannot make commitments to other communities on behalf of WILDLABS or sign on behalf of WILDLABS on any documents. Any commitments a Group Leader makes would be on their own behalf.

WILDLABS Community Events Templates and Training

WILDLABS vs. WILDLABS Community Events

Similar to the [TED/TEDx model](#), the distinction between a WILDLABS event (whether in-person or virtual) and a WILDLABS Community Event is that WILDLABS events are run directly by WILDLABS, and WILDLABS Community Events events are organized by our passionate volunteers: you!

All WILDLABS Community Events should adhere to the same format and feel of WILDLABS events, but there is room for creativity to shape the contents of an event. Materials such as

posters or social media designs that include the WILDLABS Community Event logo or name must be approved by the community team.

The goal of the WILDLABS Community Event model is to allow Group Leaders and others to spark connection and conversation in the community while using the power of the WILDLABS brand name.

An example event may be the Funding and Finance group hosting a workshop session with a philanthropy advisor that reviews funding proposals by the community.

Training for virtual events

- [Resource folder](#)
 - [WILDLABS virtual event best practices](#)
 - [CSCCE guide to virtual events](#)
 - [Virtual event presentation deck](#)
 - [September 2024 virtual event presentation call recording](#)
 - [Virtual event checklist](#)

Template and training for in-person events: Coming soon!

Final Thoughts

The WILDLABS team is thrilled to have Group Leaders helping strengthen the conservation tech community. We especially encourage people from the Global South, as well as marginalised communities such as women and people of color, to join our programme and make their impact on the sector.

Appendix:

Virtual Event Best Practices

Over the last 10 years, WILDLABS has spent a lot of time and energy finessing the way we run our events, both virtual and in person. Our events are energetic, engaging, fun to attend, and rooted in community—that's what keeps people coming back for more! This is a guide to making sure that your WILDLABS Community Event is successful and adheres to the tone and standards we've worked so hard to create.

Tone

Our events are always engaging and informative, but most of all, they're FUN! Our community is at the heart of what we do, and our community loves to know that we see them (and ourselves)

as unique, real, human beings. We're serious about our work, but we don't take ourselves seriously.

WILDLABS Community Events should always be community-focused while staying fun and lighthearted. It's all about coming in with the right attitude and tone, but there are a few facilitation tips and tricks to help develop the right atmosphere, including:

- Prompting participants to introduce themselves in the chat
- Encouraging participants to keep their cameras on
- Engaging in lively (and sometimes not work related) discussions in the chat
- After an event concludes, we invite people to stay on the Zoom to chat in a more casual environment After hours??

Diversity and Speakers (If Applicable)

We value giving a platform to a diverse range of conservation technologists. If your event has a panel or speakers, aim for 50% of the speakers to be from historically underrepresented groups (women, people of color, global south inhabitants, etc.). To do this, reach out to women, people of color, global south inhabitants first and work around their availability. Then, fill in your other speaker slots. If someone isn't available, ask them to recommend a woman, person of color, or global south inhabitant. WILDLABS events should not have an all white and male speaker panel.

Promotion

As a Group Leader, it's your responsibility to plan and promote your events with adequate time for the community to become aware of it.

All events should be promoted by completing the following:

- Creating an event page on WILDLABS
- Sharing the event details (including a link to the WILDLABS event page) on social media, tagging WILDLABS, speakers, facilitators, and co-organizers

If your event has speakers, encourage them to share the event themselves. Use your speakers' networks! Make it easy for speakers to share events they're involved in by sending them a briefing email with a graphic and a link to the WILDLABS event page. This makes it easy for them to get the word out. If you're posting on social media, tag them in the post so they can quickly reshare it. People are eager to promote their speaking engagements!

Creating a graphic

We recommend using Canva, a free design website, to create visually appealing graphics for your events. To get you started, we created a few free templates for you to use here. Please make a copy of [this page](#) and design your graphic, including the following information:

- Title (WILDLABS Funding & Finance Community Event)
- Date

- Time (and time zone)
- Topic of discussion, if necessary
- Speaker names, titles, and organizations, if necessary

Timing

If organizing an event with multiple speakers, we recommend beginning to find a date at least 2 months in advance in order to find a suitable time.

Events should be socialized **at least 2 weeks** in advance of the event. This requires that at least 2 weeks before the event, you:

- Confirm speakers (if applicable)
- Know what the event is going to focus on
- Create an event page on WILDLABS
- Create a Zoom link for the meeting (if you need assistance with this, ask the WILDLABS Community Team)
- Share the event details on social media

The WILDLABS Community Team will promote your events in our fortnightly Digest and direct people to your event who we know would be interested. We'll select a few events to feature on socials, but may not be able to promote every event on our external social media. (Between regular WILDLABS-run events and the multitude of WILDLABS Community Events, there'd be a new event to promote every week!)

Roles and Responsibilities

One reason why WILDLABS events run smoothly is because we assign facilitator and support roles for our virtual events ahead of time.

The **facilitator** is the public face of the event who is steering the conversation and tuning into the general threads of the talk and discussion. The facilitator welcomes everyone and sets a warm tone for the event. They introduce the event, set up some housekeeping (e.g. how to use the chat—read more about this in the “Event Logistics” section), keep an eye on questions that are coming through, and are familiar with the details of the event and topic (such as who the speakers are and key questions the audience might want to be answered). They are prepared to interject with questions and comments if the event warrants it.

The **supporting roles** are there for backend support. They are the point of contact if attendees are having trouble with joining (for this reason, they should be listed as a POC for troubleshooting on the event page/invitation). The supporting individuals monitor the chat for questions, drop in links or resources when relevant, alert the facilitator if there are questions that need to be answered, keep track of timing, etc.

Event Logistics

Before the event

- If you have guests coming to speak, confirm that they've registered for the event ahead of time
- You may find it useful to have a quick call with any speakers before the event, so you can discuss and direct what the speaker is going to cover in their event
- Have speakers join the Zoom link a few minutes before the event starts, so you are certain they are present, and so that you have time to work through any technical issues

At the start of the event:

- Kick it off with a warm welcome! You're the party host and people should know you're excited about the event! Introduce yourself and the overview of the event, including what you'll be talking about or who you'll be hearing from
- Run through your housekeeping:
 - Let people know who to contact with any technical issues (supporting role) and how to get in contact with them
 - Encourage people to keep their video on and mute their microphones
 - Instruct people to use the chat or raise their hand (via Zoom) if they want to ask a question or make a comment – the facilitator will call on you
 - Let them know how to follow up after the event (email or a link to your group)

During the event:

- Monitor the chat for questions and comments, drop in useful links and comments you might have that would be useful for participants

After the event:

- Update your event page on WILDLABS with the recording (if there is one)
- Depending on the type of event you ran, it may warrant writing up a brief follow-up article that speaks to some of the discussion topics from the meeting, any outputs, or interesting stories/perspectives shared. You could also take any key discussions that emerged and start a new conversation in your group to further

Post-Event Protocol

Stay online for a few minutes (or discuss via Slack, email, or Google Doc) what went well during the event, what could have gone better, and if there's anything that should not happen again.

Follow up on connecting individuals that asked for introductions to be made.

Community Management Theory

4 Stages of Community Development

The following sections are credited to Half Buzzing Communities. To read the full book, [click here](#).

“Online communities (and offline communities too) develop along a relatively fixed path. They start small and steadily grow larger. They have different needs at different stages. The community lifecycle explains this development; it also acts as a map. This map tells you where your community is now and where it needs to go next. The lifecycle directly dictates your actions. You respond to the unique needs of the community at each stage.”

The community lifecycle is Inception, Establishment, Maturity, and Mitosis.

Phase 1: Inception

Characteristics

0-50% of activity is initiated by members. 50-100% of direct growth comes from the community Leaders

Goal

The inception phase ends when the group reaches critical mass (when the level of growth and activity continues to increase without a community Leader's direct involvement)

Activities

Microtasks that solicit high engagement from a small number of individuals. Establish momentum and a regular amount of activity from members. The goal is to perform a small number of tasks many times.

- Direct growth: Inviting people to join and participate
- Stimulated activity: Initiating discussions. Prompting member participation (backchanneling). Frequently reminding members to participate.
- Building relationships with members: Coffee chats. Email threads learning about their work. Connecting members to other members.

Signs of development

- Members begin initiating their own discussions
- Members reply to discussions without prompting
- Visiting the community becomes a habit

Phase 2: Establishment

The establishment phase of the online community lifecycle begins when the community has reached critical mass: the community itself generates more than 50% of growth and activity. The establishment phase ends when members are generating over 90% of growth and activity in the community

Characteristics

The community itself generates more than 50% of growth and activity

Goal

The Establishment phase ends when members are generating over 90% of growth and activity in the community

Activities

Once the establishment phase has been reached, your role gradually shifts from the micro-level tasks that focus on individual members at a time to more macro-level activities (tasks that affect several members at a time). These activities include those that sustain growth, activity, and develop a sense of community

- Referral and promotional growth: Activities that encourage members to invite their friends (events that members participate in). Share content/discussions within the community and with your private network.
- Scaling activity: Make note of what you need for the group to grow. What features would help you do your job better as the community grows? Highlight the most popular discussions/activities.
- Sense of community: Introduce elements that increase sense of community. Initiate events or activities that are shared experiences. Introduce a community constitution.

Signs of development

- Growing levels of growth and activity and correlated
- Growth comes from referrals and word of mouth
- Community continues to generate its own activity

Phase 3: Maturity

Characteristics

Members of the community are generating 90% or more of activity/growth. At the beginning of the phase, there is a limited sense of community

Goal

The Maturity phase ends when the community has a highly developed sense of community, but the level of activity or sense of community among members has plateaued.

Activities

By this stage, you should rarely be initiating discussions, prompting people to participate, or engaging in any micro-tasks besides those that facilitate relationships with members/volunteers. You should only do this to fill in the gaps (i.e. when there is a lull in activity, it makes sense for you to prompt a few discussions). Now you should be focused solely upon macro-level activities that have the biggest long-term impact upon the majority of members in the community.

- Establish goals and vision for the community
- Steer the direction of the community
- Ensure the community is influential within its sector
- Optimize social density of the community platform

Signs of development

- Growth and engagement plateaus
- Everyone in the sector knows of you, your members are highly active, and there is a deep sense of community among members.

Phase 4: Mitosis

Characteristics

- The community is almost entirely self-sustaining
- Not all communities progress to this phase

Goal

The Mitosis phase ends when it begins to break up into smaller, more focused, online communities.

Activities

- Identify and create subgroups
- Train and manage leaders of sub-groups
- Promote and support sub-groups

Signs of development

As the community advances into the mitosis phase of the community lifecycle, an increasing number of successful niche groups/topics should be visible within the community. These should be independently run with only small assistance from you. Over time, these sub-groups should be organizing regular events, maintaining a regular content schedule, and become relatively self-sustaining, close-knit, entities within the community