Guidance for Breakout Sessions – Summarizing and Prioritizing Science Needs

**Goals**

The purpose of the breakout sessions is to complete the process to review and refine the shared science needs of the North Atlantic LCC. The primary goal is for each subgroup to identify and document a small set of the highest priority science needs, in the range of two to four topics per group, that are candidate science needs to recommend for support by the Steering Committee of the North Atlantic LCC.

**How the Breakout Session Set of Science Needs will be Used**

On Wednesday, the full group will review and discuss each subgroup’s set of high priority science needs to develop a single set of science needs that are the highest priority for the North Atlantic LCC this year. We anticipate that this set will be in the range of four to eight topics. The final budget to be allocated to address combined science needs and science delivery needs is in the range of $600,000. The set of recommended science needs will be presented to the Steering Committee during their April meeting.

**Criteria for High Priority Science Needs**

* Reflect high priorities of the North Atlantic LCC Conservation Science Strategic Plan and the specific criteria for prioritizing science needs described in the plan.
* Sufficiently specific to be used to develop effective, targeted projects (e.g., through an RFP process) within the range of available funding.
* Either directly contribute to existing science projects or address topics *not* the subject of on-going projects.
* Aligned with needs of partners and partnerships within the region and with neighboring LCCs.
* Applicable at a regional (North Atlantic) scale, not just at a local scale.

**Process for Identifying High Priority Science Needs**

As breakout groups discuss priority needs for their areas of focus (freshwater aquatic, coastal/marine, or terrestrial/wetland), groups are encouraged to arrive at a consensus as to which needs are of highest priority. If groups are having difficulty narrowing down the list of projects, they may wish to implement a more formal ranking process. Examples could include voting on needs or ranking them based on criteria in the Strategic Plan and compiling the results.

**Documenting the Highest Priority Science Needs**

For the science needs that breakout groups consider to be of highest priority, it is important for the groups to assemble a consistent set of information about them so the full committee can consider them collectively on Wednesday. The following areas should be addressed:

1. Summary of science need
2. Key expected outcomes to address science need
3. Justification (criteria considered, state of current scientific understanding)
4. Relationship or contribution to existing science projects
5. Primary clients and partners who will benefit if the need is addresses
6. Strategic plan topic(s) addressed. For example, “Ecological planning: conduct climate change vulnerability assessments” or “Conservation design: develop decision-support tools”
7. Anticipated level of effort (cost, time) necessary to address the science need
8. Needed expertise
9. Remaining questions of the team or other comments, as necessary (e.g., is the work already underway, is the project feasible, uncertainties about project cost)

**Other Science Needs**

Clearly, many more science needs have been identified than can be supported this year by the funds overseen by the North Atlantic LCC Steering Committee. The work of the subgroups to identify and compile these science needs is important even for those that are not selected as being highest priority this year. Such needs serve as a foundation for the science agenda of future years and are candidates for other support by North Atlantic LCC partners as opportunities arise. Therefore, breakout groups should retain their compilations of all priority science needs that meet the criteria of the Conservation Science Strategic Plan.