TREX Guidebook

Considerations for Planning a Prescribed Fire Training Exchange

Selkirk TREX ©Kara Karboski/Washington RCD


Niobara Valley Preserve TREX ©Matthew Todd

TREX Guidebook: Considerations for Planning a Prescribed Fire Training Exchange

Emily Hohman, Fire Learning Network Director, The Nature Conservancy
Laurel Kays, Fire Learning Network Assistant Director, The Nature Conservancy

With immense gratitude for the many practitioners who have nurtured the TREX model and ideals along the way, and for those carrying it across the globe and into the future.

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P Preface

Since their origin in 2008, Prescribed Fire Training Exchanges (TREX) have come to be one of the most influential mechanisms for expanding prescribed fire capacity not only in the United States but internationally. The first TREX took place as federal firefighters were looking for prescribed fire experience, practitioners with The Nature Conservancy (TNC) needed wildfire experience, and land managers in **Fire Learning Network** (FLN) landscapes needed extra capacity to get burning done. The concept rapidly spread, and over the next few years TREX settled into a standard format of a two-week event modeled on the **Incident Command System** (ICS). Over time, some events formalized this further, staffing a full Incident Command Team for a two-week incident, while others adapted the model—for example, by holding shorter events, or serving local participants who are on call during a set timeframe. TREX quickly became a popular model of experiential training, growing into a standalone program that now operates as part of the **Fire Networks**, with many different formats organized by a wide array of partners.

As of 2025, more than 5,400 people have built skills at more than 180 TREX events while treating over 225,000 acres with fire. TREX has become a way to provide entry into prescribed fire careers, accelerate the attainment of qualifications, and build long-term prescribed fire capacity by helping to create local cultures of cooperative burning and bolstering prescribed burn associations (PBAs).

Part of the evolution of TREX has included the development of international TREX events, multilingual or non-English speaking TREX, and the **WTREX program**. Considerations for hosting a non-English or multilingual TREX are addressed in **Section 3.7.3**. WTREX is a separate program and while the guidance provided in this document is broadly applicable, hosting WTREX involves additional specific considerations. Those interested in hosting a WTREX must contact program lead Lenya Quinn-Davidson (**lquinndavidson@ucanr.edu**).

For two decades, the Fire Networks partnership has **invested in people and place-based efforts** to change relationships with fire, helping us foster shared responsibility for fire management and viable fire cultures in landscapes and communities across the United States and beyond. The Fire Networks are staffed by employees of The Nature Conservancy, The Watershed Research and Training Center, University of California Extension, and our USDA Forest Service and Department of the Interior agency partners. Financial support comes from those federal agencies and additional public and private funding. Network members and partners have a range of affiliations, including tribal governments and members, non-profit organizations, universities, government agencies, fire departments, businesses, private landowners and engaged residents.

P.1 Using the TREX Name or Logo

The Fire Networks, through the Fire Learning Network, support many TREX events throughout the world through coaching, facilitating connections to other TREX leaders and organizers, and occasional financial support. While the Fire Networks do not “own” TREX nor hold a trademark on the name or logo, we ask that you let us know if you are planning to host one, especially if you are using the TREX name or logo. Similarly, while staff from TNC originated the TREX model in 2008 and continue to lead or co-host many events in the United States, the organization does not “own” the TREX name or concept. The TNC name and logo should not be used in connection with a TREX event without prior approval and no assumption should be made regarding TNC involvement in any event.

The TREX name brings with it expectations from participants regarding the experience they are seeking. The TREX program can help you ensure you understand those expectations to communicate clearly with your participants and deliver training that meets the needs of all involved. Connecting with us allows you to promote your event on the Fire Networks website and in the Networker newsletter, and it helps us track the evolution and impact of TREX over time. Make sure to contact our team early about your upcoming TREX!

Employees of The Nature Conservancy are strongly encouraged to read the organization-specific supplement to this guide "TREX Guidebook: Supplement for TNC Staff" to understand the considerations and requirements for hosting or attending a TREX as a TNC employee or volunteer. TNC employees should consult their Business Unit fire manager regarding TREX participation or plans to host an event. Fire managers may wish to consult the director or assistant director of Fire Management regarding safety and compliance considerations. TREX Program staff are also members of TNC's North America Fire program and are available to assist.

Loess Hills Collaborative Burn Week 2026 ©Chad Bladow/TNC

1 Who Is This Guide for and How Do I Use It?

This guide is intended for anyone interested in hosting a TREX, especially those with limited or no experience planning one. Planning a TREX is a complex undertaking, and local objectives and context matter a great deal. Consequently, this is not a step-by-step manual.

This guide provides an overview of common formats, planning considerations, and questions to ask as you plan an event that is tailored to your situation and needs. Because you are working within your own context, geography and fire culture, you may also choose to organize your planning and event teams very differently, use different terminology to describe team roles and how you apply fire to the land, and craft an event that delivers learning in a way that reflects your place and values. For instance, this guidebook often uses National Widlfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) and ICS terminology for the sake of consistency and because these systems are commonly used where TREX originated in the U.S., but this terminology may not be appropriate for the event you envision.

While a TREX should deliver the three fundamental elements—training, treatment and outreach—how you achieve that is not predetermined or constrained by the language or suggestions presented in this guide nor by what previous TREX organizers have done.

If you are considering hosting a TREX, we strongly urge you to consider first attending one that follows a format similar to the one you want to use, perhaps even serving on their planning team or incident management team (IMT). It is also useful to reach out to experienced TREX organizers before and during your TREX planning process to learn from their experiences. As mentioned previously, contacting Fire Networks staff is the best way to connect with other organizers and learn about existing TREX events.

2 The Basics of TREX

While the word “TREX” is now sometimes used to mean “hands-on fire training,” we use the term to refer to specific types of prescribed fire trainings.

2.1 What Is a TREX?

Fundamentally, a TREX is a locally organized and hosted experiential training event focused on learning, primarily through the application of live fire. While each event is unique, we expect that every TREX include three program delivery components—training, treatment and outreach. Training includes experiential opportunities to build skills in prescribed fire implementation, equipment use, monitoring and adjacent skills; this may include progressing qualifications and task books within the NWCG framework or another formal qualification system. Treatment results from the hands-on work that is implemented, whether broadcast or pile burning, hazardous fuels reduction, fire line created or something else. Outreach involves engaging with the media and neighboring communities to share key messages, such as the importance of fire to local ecosystems and people, details of training that fire practitioners receive in order to implement fire safely and effectively, or why burning collaboratively across boundaries and organizations is important.

A TREX event may be organized in many ways. A two-week format similar to wildfire assignments is often used, but over time organizers have expanded and adapted the program to fit local needs. Some of the most common TREX formats are outlined in Section 3.1.2. While a variety of formats exist, there are common elements that differentiate a TREX from other events such as conferences, workshops, NWCG courses, prescribed burn associations, learn-and-burn events, or ordinary cooperative burning.

2.1.1 What Makes It a TREX?

- **Locally organized and hosted**: TREX are organized and hosted by local or regionally based entities working in a specific geography, usually in partnership with one or more other local or regional entities, such as non-profits, tribes or government agencies.
- **Extended but discrete period of time**: TREX events should occur over a longer timeframe than a one- or two-day workshop but be planned for a set period, which differentiates them from learn-and-burns or workshops on one hand, or PBAs or routine cooperative burning on the other
- **Live fire**: While weather, fuel conditions and other constraints do not always allow for burning during a TREX event, the purpose of planning and hosting these events should primarily center on training during the implementation of fire.
- **Experiential training**: Hands-on training during both burn and on non-burn days should be a primary focus. See Section IV for more information on non-burn day topics and activities. Participants should come to a TREX with training goals, such as receiving an NWCG task book evaluation or gaining experience in a particular skill or subject.
- **Everybody learns, everybody teaches**: TREX events should foster environments that stress the importance of mutual learning and allow for open dialogue. Even within an NWCG framework, it is important to avoid rigid, hierarchical ways of working together. The most inexperienced burner can ask questions that spark important conversations, and a deliberate mixing of participants from federal, state, nonprofit, tribal and other backgrounds can facilitate mutual learning and relationship building.
- **Leveraged for communication**: TREX events should be used as an opportunity to communicate with important audiences such as local communities and decision makers in order to build support for your work.

Cultural Burning and TREX

TREX was originally created to train for, implement and communicate about prescribed fire, particularly fire implemented under NWCG requirements. Some events hosted by tribes or incorporating tribal partners may include or focus specifically on cultural burning, which is considered to be distinct from prescribed fire or controlled burning. While some considerations related to tribal partners and cultural burning are mentioned in this document, the authors are not Indigenous and cannot fully speak to those topics. If you are interested in connecting with organizers who have hosted TREX events that include or focus on cultural burning, contact staff who support the Indigenous Peoples Burning Network (IPBN).

2.2 Is TREX Right for My Place and Partners?

Before you begin planning a TREX, know why you want to host one. What are the goals—yours and your partners'—that you are trying to achieve? While the impact of the training, treatments and outreach delivered during a TREX are meaningful and may contribute to positive long-term impacts for participants and their home landscapes, you also have an opportunity to craft an event that influences the long-term culture and trajectory of fire management in your local area.

While the minimum outcomes of a TREX should reflect the program delivery components (training, treatment and outreach), a TREX should be conceptualized and implemented as part of a strategy to achieve a larger goal. These will be specific to your place and context, but goals for some TREX events have included:

- Creating a local culture of cooperative burning, including involving reluctant partners
- Introducing prescribed fire as an acceptable practice on private lands
- Introducing new practices or tactics to an area

For some places and times, TREX is not the answer. More work may be required to build the enabling conditions for a TREX, or it may never be the best strategy. Some enabling conditions that might be missing include:

- Local partnerships are not yet strong enough to collaboratively plan and host a complex event together
- There are not enough available burn units, host locations or willing and qualified personnel to support the event
- Goals are uncertain or lack consensus
- Other priorities are more important to local partners (for example, if accomplishing acres is the most important goal, TREX with its focus on training may not be the best strategy)
- Other strategies or ways to organize cooperative burning are more effective

There are also situations where it makes sense to host what is functionally a TREX without using the TREX name or branding. For example, if local partners associate TREX with a two-week, NWCG-style incident, and those partners have a negative perception of NWCG or ICS, using the TREX name could inhibit participation. In these circumstances, organizers may choose to use a name like "Cooperative Burn Week" for the event. This decision is up to local organizers and is one way in which the TREX concept can be tailored to local contexts.

Southern Blue Ridge TREX ©James Miller/TNC

If Not TREX, Then What?

If TREX is not the right fit for your place and partners, you may want to consider other forms of prescribed fire training and organizing. This list is not exhaustive but provides some options that you may wish to explore.

- **Learn and burn workshops** allow participants to gain hands-on experience under the supervision of experienced mentors, typically with live fire. These are often, though not always, targeted at private landowners. Considerations for planning these programs, as well as other forms of workshops and events like prescribed fire demonstrations, can be found in the publication Wildland Fire Programming for Extension and Outreach Professionals from NC State Extension.
- **NWCG courses** or other formal learning opportunities may help address a bottleneck for partner skills or qualifications.
- **Prescribed burn associations** are groups of people, often private landowners, who pool their resources, knowledge and equipment to help each other burn. PBAs are found in at least 21 states as of 2026; they take many different forms depending on local needs and circumstances.
- **Cooperative burning** is simply that—burning together across organizational or geographic boundaries. TREX is often, though not always, a helpful tool when working towards an ongoing culture of cooperative burning.

2.3 Can We Get Agreements in Place?

→ **Addressing liability and the agreements that allow organizations to work together is perhaps the most important aspect of TREX planning to address early in your exploration of the TREX model.**

The agreements you and your partners currently have in place may or may not enable the cross-organizational work inherent in putting on a TREX. Crafting the necessary agreements or contracts with partners and landowners can take months. Do not avoid or delay addressing this issue. Liability and agreements are discussed in more detail in Section 3.6.

3 Laying the Foundation

Planning a TREX is a significant undertaking. Sections III through VII cover common planning considerations and questions organizers should consider. As mentioned previously, this is not a step-by-step planning checklist, but lays out some of the most important considerations to address based on the experiences of past organizers.

While each of these sections contain important issues to tackle, we urge you to address liability and agreements as early as possible in your planning process. Creating an agreement structure that allows partners to burn together during a TREX can be a time intensive process. Questions to consider about liability and agreements can be found in **Section 3.6**.

> **Connecting with Experienced Organizers**
>
> Those interested in organizing a TREX should strongly consider connecting with other organizers, attending planning meetings for other TREX (particularly when virtual attendance options are available) and attending a TREX prior to initiating their own planning. This document can only provide generalized information, as every TREX is unique to its local context. Talking through how an experienced TREX planner has approached their work can be enlightening. **Contact staff** who support the TREX program to help connect you with these organizers.

3.1 TREX Structure

There are two main areas to address about the fundamental organization of your TREX—qualification standards and event format—that will drive next steps in planning and implementation. These should be considered with the partners and goals of your TREX in mind.

3.1.1 Qualification Standards

Will you be following **NWCG standards**, another qualification standard, no formal standard, or a hybrid approach?

The qualification standards used during TREX are ultimately up to the organizers—there is no requirement to use NWCG. What your event uses will depend most on where you are hosting your TREX and what partners will be involved. Some organizations are unable to participate in burns that do not follow NWCG standards, while some others are unable to attend those that do. If land in your area is largely privately owned or your goals include working with landowners, or other private or tribal people, then using NWCG standards—or any formal qualification standard—may exclude important partners or participants. Some TREX events have used a hybrid approach—for example, one where not all participants must meet NWCG standards, but only those that do can attend burns led by partners who require that standard.

3.1.2 Event Format

What format will you be using for your TREX?

The options below include some of the most common TREX formats. You should plan your TREX according to your needs, and that may look different than any of these options. All approaches can accommodate NWCG standards, other qualification standards, or no standard and be organized explicitly using ICS or using general ICS principles.

- **Two-week event**: The TREX occurs over a 10- to 14-day period, spanning one or more weekends as a continuous event. Participants typically stay at one or more base locations that provide lodging and food. The event begins with one or more days of orientation and cohesion building. Participants generally remain at the event and days when weather is not conducive to burning are used to cover other skills, training or learning objectives relevant to the goals of the TREX. This format usually recruits participants from local, national and even international locations via a widely advertised recruitment effort.
- **Cooperative burn week**: Participants come together during a single week, usually a 5-day period during the Monday through Friday workweek. This approach tends to focus on local participants who live near burn opportunities or are from the same region, state or areas within a day's drive. Participants may or may not remain at the event on non-burn days, but non-burn day training opportunities and operational needs (such as securing the unit and patrol) are often planned for, offered or requested of participants. Food and lodging may or may not be offered, depending on how far participants are from their homes. These events are often only advertised locally to focus recruitment on this audience.
- **On call**: Participants agree to be available during a specific time period, often one or a few weeks (although some events may span a month or more). During this time period, organizers notify participants when burning is possible and request mobilization to burn locations. This approach relies on participants being local or able to travel on short notice, typically 72 hours or less. Non-burn day training opportunities may be offered but burn days are usually the priority. This approach can naturally gravitate towards prioritizing implementation. If you are using an on-call model, it is important to ensure training is appropriately emphasized and offered.
- **Mix of scheduled and on-call events**: Some on-call events will also include scheduled non-burn training or learning opportunities over one or more days leading up to the on-call portion of the event, to build team cohesion and provide focused training opportunities. These events may recruit both local participants and participants from a wider geography and plan for logistical needs accordingly.

3.2 Planning Timeline

This timeline was developed with input from experienced TREX organizers and is intended to be used as a general guide for planning a TREX. However, every TREX is unique, and organizers must pay attention to local circumstances that may require a different timeline.

Time Before Event	Actions to Take
6 months (for recurring TREX) to 12+ months (new TREX)	• Assemble core planning team and discuss roles, meeting frequency (1-2 times per month is recommended) and event design (format, qualification standard, location, target audience(s) etc.) • Identify goals and the target audience from which to draw participants • Identify geographic focus area and begin exploring options for lodging, food, burns, etc. • Set tentative dates • Begin to assess needed and available resources and identify potential sources of funding • Identify needed agreements to facilitate training and burning together and begin process of developing those
4 to 6 months	• Begin contracts for needs including lodging, food, burn plans, etc. as needed • Fill all planning team roles and make significant progress on filling out IMT; you may wish to involve mentors, trainers or additional cadre who may not be part of the formal IMT • Finalize dates, and send save-the-date announcements to relevant organizations and information outlets • Coordinate with partners on considerations including burn unit selection and preparation, MOUs, agreements and other liability considerations, and resource contributions
2 months (local event) to 4 months	• Send event announcement and application form; the application form should be open for 14-60 days, depending on desired applicant pool • Continue to coordinate with partners on considerations including burn unit selection and preparation, agreements, and other liability considerations, and resource contributions • Continue to fill out IMT and get as close to finalizing roles as possible (continued)

2 months (local event) to 4 months	(continued) • Begin planning for outreach or communication you intend to do in conjunction with TREX • Start developing the agenda, including thinking through non-burn day activities • Go through the participant selection process, using agreed upon criteria to prioritize applicants based on objectives and needs • If applicable, assign participants to burn modules, attempting to create modules that have a variety of experience levels, backgrounds and training needs • Start developing an Incident Action Plan (IAP) for the event, if desired • Optional: create a logo for event, order t-shirts or other items for participants
1 month (local) to 2 months	• Notify applicants about participant selection, and collect participant fees if applicable • Ensure IMT roles are filled and that members are meeting and preparing for operations as needed • Depending on jurisdiction, obtain necessary permits
3 to 4 weeks	• Send out participant information packet, including packing list, travel details, info pertinent to specific positions • Optional: host call or webinar to meet with participants and answer questions • Purchase supplies and gather equipment that has been contributed by partners • Finalize preparations, including burn unit selection and preparation, agreements and other liability considerations, and resource contributions • Send out press releases, develop social media plan
post-event	• Ensure all burn units are declared out, or have a plan for securing the unit and extended patrol • Ensure borrowed or rented equipment is returned • Pay remaining invoices • Conduct AAR/evaluation • Make any needed decisions on future events

3.3 Assembling the Planning Team

TREX are often run as "incidents" led by an Incident Management Team (IMT) that follows the **Incident Command System** (ICS), mimicking how wildfires and other complex events are managed in the U.S. It is important to note that even TREX events managed under ICS and following the NWCG qualification standards are *not* the wildfire incidents that those systems were designed to manage. Nonetheless, ICS can be a helpful organizing structure and is familiar to many fire practitioners in the U.S. and many other countries. However, you can and should make the necessary adjustments to the team, roles and language to support a prescribed fire focus and your specific TREX goals. You will find suggestions for how and when to do this throughout this document.

Even if your TREX does not use ICS, you will need a team of people to take responsibility for different aspects of the TREX both during event planning and the event itself. You do not need to have NWCG qualified IMT members for your TREX planning team—partners can learn the roles and responsibilities of a given position, and skills and experiences drawn from life and other professional roles mean people can be well suited to certain positions (Plans, Logistics, etc.), regardless of previous fire or ICS experience.

The Incident Command System and TREX

Many TREX events do not use the NWCG and ICS framework. For brevity and consistency, we often refer to an Incident Management Team to denote the team of people managing the TREX event during its operation. If you are not using NWCG or ICS, this team may go by a different title.

Also, as noted in this section, the people who make up your IMT or team that oversees the event operations may or may not be significantly different from the team planning the TREX.

Typically, one person or a small group of people will have the initial vision for a TREX and form the planning team. This group should carefully consider the questions posed in **Section 2** of this document to determine what the goals of hosting a TREX are, whether TREX is the right approach, and if so, what format of TREX is best for their area and goals.

Planning and IMT roles often differ, and you will want to consider what skills you need on each team and who is available to fill those roles. We recommend doing this thinking early so that you can recruit the people you need before they become committed to other work. This also has the benefit of building team cohesion, clear understanding of roles, and a common vision for the event. Some team members may serve on both the planning team and IMT, while others may be best suited to serving only on one.

The table below outlines considerations for building your team and how responsibilities differ between the planning and the event management stages. Depending on how you organize your TREX, there may be times when your IMT and planning team are operating together, particularly directly before and after your event. See **Section 3.4.1** and **Appendix A.1** for more on IMT roles and responsibilities.

Planning Team Considerations and Responsibilities	Incident Management Team (IMT) Considerations and Responsibilities
Recruit key partners, including representatives from entities who own land on which the TREX may be able to burn, can contribute people or resources to the TREX, and have important ties to the local community or media. Engage those with operational fire experience early to account for needed burn planning, prep and equipment needs. Include at least one person who has familiarity with TREX, preferably someone who has attended a TREX in a planning, IMT or other leadership role. Determine team member roles and responsibilities, including designating a team leader if needed. Establish communication norms—meeting schedule, file sharing, communication channels or apps. Meet regularly prior to the event and contribute time to TREX planning. Develop shared TREX goals, decide on TREX format, set event dates and host locations, develop list of potential burn units, and develop plans for non-burn days (if applicable). Address risk and liability considerations. Find and manage funding, solicit bids and manage contracts for services (if applicable). Create TREX advertisements, create and distribute participant application forms, select participants, communicate with participants, and collect registration fees (if applicable). Conduct outreach to media prior to the event: communicate with nearby communities, partners and collaborative groups. Complete post-event tasks such as soliciting participant feedback, media follow-up, compiling event statistics.	Members should be skilled and experienced in the roles needed for the IMT (but may or may not need to be formally qualified). Members should be able to fully devote their time during the TREX, with no other duties. Members should represent a mix of affiliations that match the goals of the TREX (for example, if your TREX is focusing on building local capacity, you may want most or all of your IMT to be local partners). Attend planning meetings prior to the TREX to ensure common vision. Communicate with partners who may integrate TREX into their burn operations; ensure shared understanding of roles and needs. Communicate with participants, the media, local communities, and collaborative groups regarding TREX goals and activities. Ensure participant safety and adherence to best practices, policies, and regulations for prescribed fire operations in host landscape. Create an event environment that allows for all participants to learn and participate fully, and is free from discrimination, harassment or unsafe practices. Deliver the TREX program priorities of training, treatment and outreach and goals specific to the event.

3.4 Incident Management Team Structure

We have briefly covered the roles and responsibilities of the IMT as opposed to the planning team. As noted, there may be overlap in the people serving on these two teams, but you are also likely to add people filling specific roles during the event. It is important to note that IMT roles can be filled by people who are not specifically qualified in that position under NWCG or any other qualification system, depending on the needs of your event. While you may choose to require IMT members to be NWCG qualified in their roles, you may also be well served by recruiting someone who has the skills and knowledge, but not the formal qualification under a recognized standard. You and the planning team should discuss this in the context of your TREX including considering the following:

- Is it necessary for all IMT roles to be filled by people qualified under NWCG (or another system) to accommodate partners, meet terms of agreements, or further TREX goals or your larger strategy? Why?
- Will you be able to recruit qualified people to fill all the roles you need?
- Are there skilled, but not officially qualified, people who could fill these roles who would be excluded by requiring specific formal qualifications? Would including them further your TREX goals or strategy and fill needed roles on the team?

A small event with mostly local participants may need fewer IMT positions. You may need a larger, more robust team if you are planning a large event with a group of participants from multiple organizations, from outside the region, or with a large number of beginners, or an event that relocates base locations frequently, burns on many different ownerships or with many different partners, or an event that anticipates a particularly ambitious schedule.

3.4.1 Defining Roles

When deciding what roles you will need to fill and who to recruit consider the following:

- **Span of control—how many participants can you safely accommodate?** You will need the appropriate number of IMT members, particularly Module Leaders (more on that position in Section 5.3.1), to support the number of participants you intend to welcome.
- **How will you manage training?** Matching trainees and evaluators and tracking trainee assignments and task book evaluations are significant tasks. Will you have a dedicated Training Specialist to do this work? See Section 5.4 for more on this role.
- **Are you working with multiple organizations to implement burns?** Are representatives of all those organizations already part of the TREX team? Are those people serving as burn bosses or able to speak to operational needs? Considering having a dedicated Operations Section Chief to focus on operational needs, TREX resource readiness, and liaising with partner organizations. Including representatives of all organizations that plan to implement burns on the IMT leverages these individuals' operational skills, relationships and connections to their entities' fire management systems.
- **How will you manage external communications?** You may want a dedicated Public Information Officer or team. Many TREX events use a PIO team made up of representatives from partner organizations, who may or may not be formally qualified PIOs. Outreach or communications staff are often good fits for this purpose. See Section 3.7 for more on communications.

- **Who will be responsible for coordinating creation of, and then communicating, the daily plan of activities?** A Planning Section Chief can bring focus to this critical activity. Make sure the people or person responsible have sufficient time to coordinate with the IMT and communicate the daily plan to participants.
- **How will you feed, house, and move participants? Do you expect to loan equipment and PPE?** If so, consider having someone assigned to manage these needs, such as the Logistics role or, at a minimum, assign someone to a supply manager role, at least on the first day during check-in and the last day during check-out
- **Who is going to provide big-picture leadership?** An Incident Commander is an important role that provides overall guidance and decision-making during the event. For those preferring not to use that title, some TREX teams have used other terms such as "chief of party" or "incident coordinator" instead.

IMT Role Expectations

See the Incident Management (IMT) role expectations document in Appendix A.1 as a resource to help you better understand the general expectations of the IMT and the roles and responsibilities of specific team members.

3.4.2 IMT and Operational Duties

The IMT members of a TREX are usually also engaged in fire line operations either because their skills are needed or simply because they want to participate in burns. While the need or desire of the IMT to be operational is understandable and sometimes unavoidable, it must be balanced with the need to provide for a safe and efficiently run event. For example, if all IMT members are committed to a burn that stretches into the late evening hours, there will likely be little time or energy remaining to plan for the following day's activities.

We recommend that someone be designated as a Planning Section Chief (or fulfilling those responsibilities) who can either abstain from being operationally engaged, or at a minimum be able to step away from the fire line to begin the planning process for the next day. Similarly, whenever possible it is helpful for those filling the IC and Operations roles to be able to disengage, at least temporarily, from live fire to assist with plans; at a minimum, this means an Operational Meeting in the early to midafternoon on the fire line that can help come up with the plan for the next day. We recommend not asking the Operations Section Chief to serve as a burn boss whenever possible as giving full attention to both roles is challenging.

For a TREX using NWCG standards, it can be difficult to have sufficient RXB2- or SRB-qualified trainers to support trainees, as these are in-demand qualifications that take years to achieve. While ideally there are participants who can fill these roles, it is common that RXB2 trainees may be the only qualified SRB participants. This sets up a challenge in balancing their training opportunities with assigning them to support the training of others. Building an IMT with the flexibility and qualifications to step in and support training needs has been highly beneficial to many events.

Finally, remember that you may be able to tap into TREX participants to fill some IMT roles, especially if you gather information about qualifications and skills in the event application. Be sure to ask participants well in advance of the event and ensure that serving on the team does not compromise their primary training goals.

3.4.3 Daily Planning Cycle

Many TREX teams follow a planning cycle that addresses needs and activities for the next 72 hours, with greatest attention paid to the next 24 hours, then the next 48 hours, etc. Weather and other factors will inevitably change plans but working to forecast this far in advance allows the IMT to more easily adapt to those changes. This also gives TREX participants the information they need in advance to feel informed, understand expectations, and plan their work and rest time. Most teams meet twice per day, in the morning and evening. The evening meeting is when the bulk of the planning occurs, with the morning meeting time dedicated to overnight updates and last-minute changes before the IMT briefs TREX participants on the day's plans.

The evening IMT planning meeting is generally run by the Planning Section Chief and includes:

- Round robin updates from all IMT members or by functional areas covering the day's activities, their needs or concerns
- Discussing the proposed plan for the next 24/48/72 hours
- Making or adjusting participant assignments
- Creating briefings and updates to the IAP such as a new daily ICS 205

Some TREX open their planning meetings to all participants to provide a learning opportunity by listening in on the IMT's conversations and planning process. This promotes also transparency in decision-making and is often appreciated by participants but should be balanced against the IMT's need for private discussion time if difficult relationships or circumstances need to be addressed by the team.

Spreading the TREX Model: Learning Through Planning

If you're new to TREX but interested in planning one, consider applying to serve on the IMT for another TREX. This can be a great way to directly observe what event planning and implementation entails.

3.5 Funding and Resources

Event costs can vary widely depending on the TREX format, resource availability, costs in your area, and what partners are able to contribute. These costs are generally covered by a combination of in-kind contributions (e.g. equipment, use of facilities, labor); cash contributions from partners; grants, donations or discounts; and participant fees.

As you begin budgeting, ask your team:

- What funding do you already have and what kind of expenses can it cover?
- What are partners willing to contribute either as cash or in-kind?
- How will you fill any gaps?

3.5.1 Resource Needs

The table below outlines some common expenses and resource needs associated with hosting TREX events. This is not an exhaustive list, and depending on your local situation you may not need all these resources, or you may need some not addressed here.

A significant benefit of hosting a TREX can be the additional equipment participants bring to boost overall operational capacity. It is important to check with participants who plan to bring equipment to ensure a shared understanding and that signed agreements, if required, are in place. These should cover who may (or may not) use the equipment and how any damage will be handled, including whether repair or replacement costs will be covered by the TREX.

Collaboration with local or regional fire departments can be particularly helpful, as many departments have water tenders, engines, PPE and radio caches that may be available for loan or rent. In addition, fire department personnel may be interested in attending TREX to gain prescribed fire experience, practice skills applicable to suppression, and learn new tactics. Engaging fire departments may also be important to your TREX goals regardless of the resources they can contribute.

Item(s) Needed	Considerations
Food	**Do you need to provide food for participants?** If your participants are not local residents who will sleep at home, we suggest that you consider providing meals in some fashion, as this may be cost effective, is supportive of participants who are attending as volunteers or work for less well-resourced organizations, and eating together helps create cohesion among participants. Providing meals on-site at or near where participants are lodged is also time efficient and reduces travel logistics. If participants are able to commute from home, providing food may not be necessary, although doing so may help build a sense of community. It is important to note that some grants will not pay for food. **What options are available?** Some caterers are unable or unwilling to cater TREX events due to the workload of providing all meals for many people at often odd hours and with last-minute schedule changes. Carefully vet caterers to ensure they understand your needs and clearly communicate with participants about what kind of dietary restrictions can be accommodated. It may be necessary to look beyond your local area to find a caterer. Connecting with the TREX program staff (see Appendix A.3) can help you find caterers that have worked other events and are willing to travel.

Food (continued)

In areas where it is possible, some events use meal vouchers redeemable at local businesses. This can provide greater flexibility for participants to choose their meals, and can spread the economic benefits of a TREX to multiple local businesses. Downsides may include a reduced ability to meet unusual dietary needs, limited local business hours, and having participants disperse for meals rather than having meals as a group.

Per diem and participant self-support: Relying on participants to provide their own food using their own funds or per diem provided by employers may be an option if your location is within easy travel distance to restaurants and/or grocery stores, if businesses are open when participants need them, and if kitchen facilities are available if participants need to cook their own meals. This may be a good option for some events, but we do not recommend requiring participants to self-support if cooking for themselves is required. Cooking requires time, planning and coordination that can easily distract from the primary training goals of the TREX and add to participant fatigue. In addition, not all participants may be adequately supported by an employer per diem or able to cover their own expenses.

Lodging

Do you need to provide housing? Consider the format of your TREX, where participants are coming from, and your goals when deciding whether you need to provide housing. We strongly suggest you do so if your burn units, meeting space, or other facilities are a significant drive from participants' homes or duty areas to reduce time spent traveling, manage fatigue, and reduce exposure to driving hazards. Consider two or more lodging facilities if your destinations are spread over a larger geographic area.

How many beds do you need? If your event includes both local and out-of-area participants, will local participants also stay in provided lodging? Will all participants stay for the duration of the event?

What accommodations will participants need or expect? TREX have used a variety of lodging options including hotels, cabins, university dorms, short-term rentals, scout and church camps, and tent camping in developed and rustic campgrounds or the backcountry.

While providing areas for tent camping may sometimes be sufficient, more substantial housing such as cabins or bunkhouses may be necessary, expected or helpful for managing participant workload and fatigue. This will also depend on the location and time of year: consider the potential weather in that geography. Also consider how to provide for hygiene and sanitation for participants.

Where does your base camp need to be? Consider how close your lodging is to burn units, meeting space, other training areas, and amenities such as medical care and grocery stores.

Meeting & organizing space, maintenance facilities	**What space and amenities do you need for orientation, staging and non-burn-day training?** Organizers often choose facilities that can offer lodging, meeting and organizing space together or in close proximity. However, if this is not possible, do your best to select sites that minimize travel time. **You should also consider what kind of maintenance facilities you may need.** Participants with equipment, such as engines and UTVs, may need access to tools, electricity or shop space. Access to a facility with heated parking for water-handling equipment is a luxury that some find indispensable if you plan to host a TREX when freezing weather is possible.
Meeting & organizing space, maintenance facilities	**What space and amenities do you need for orientation, staging and non-burn-day training?** Organizers often choose facilities that can offer lodging, meeting and organizing space together or in close proximity. However, if this is not possible, do your best to select sites that minimize travel time. **You should also consider what kind of maintenance facilities you may need.** Participants with equipment, such as engines and UTVs, may need access to tools, electricity or shop space. Access to a facility with heated parking for water-handling equipment is a luxury that some find indispensable if you plan to host a TREX when freezing weather is possible.
Transportation	**How will participants arrive at and travel during the event?** Generally, vehicles are obtained through one or a combination of the following: • Rental • Event host and partner contribution • Participants' work and/or personal vehicles Each of these require different considerations, including cost, possible compensation for use (including fuel and insurance), and who is permitted to drive (consider needed permission forms). Some organizations who send vehicles may have specific stipulations about who can operate, or even ride in, them. **If participants are flying to and from your TREX, consider providing airport pickups and drop-offs or vehicle-pooling**. Ensure you have both enough seatbelts for passengers and enough space in vehicles to accommodate luggage, which may be significant if people bring their own PPE.

table continued on next page

Personal protective equipment (PPE)	**Will participants be required to provide their own PPE?** Make PPE expectations clear in registration and pre-event communications, including any agency-specific requirements (for example, consider that not all organizations require the use of fire shelters). If Nomex is not required, clearly communicate what you consider appropriate attire. **If you plan to supply PPE for participants, who will provide it, and will you charge to use it?** Local caches may be available to loan or rent complete sets of PPE. Will you pass on rental costs to the participant or cover it from the event budget? (This is often a resource that partners provide in-kind.) **Other considerations**: • Are radios considered required PPE for all participants? Can all participants bring field programmable radios that can accept all frequencies that you anticipate using? Do you have access to a radio cache you can rent or borrow? • Boots are not usually available from a cache. • If a borrowed item is lost or damaged, will the TREX cover the expense?
Fire equipment: radios, hand tools, UTVs, ATVs, engines, drip torches, torch fuel etc.	**Where will these resources come from, and how will you satisfy relevant legal and financial considerations?** • See note on radios in the PPE section above. • How will you supply hand tools to participants unable to bring their own? • What can you ask or expect TREX participants to provide for TREX use? Many people are willing to bring a few extra hand tools, radios or drip torches. You may want to encourage or prioritize selection of engine boss trainees who can bring an appropriate engine with them to the event. • Will TREX provide drip torch mix during the event, or will participants be expected to cover the cost of resupply? • If a borrowed item is lost or damaged and must be replaced, will the TREX cover the expense? If a vehicle is damaged, will the TREX cover the repair? • Who is authorized to operate UTVs and ATVs? Many organizations have training requirements (such as the NWCG ATVO qualification) or limit operators to their own employees. Understand the requirements and limitations attached to each apparatus prior to the event, so that you may plan for collecting permission forms and either provide the necessary training or avoid assigning participants to equipment they may not be authorized to operate. • Do you need to contract for equipment support, and do you have sufficient funding to cover these expenses? Do you need to solicit competitive bids, have a written contract, or require the contractor to carry liability insurance?

Other supplies	**What can you purchase or procure before the event? How will you pay for needs that arise during the event?** Small items are sometimes overlooked during planning but become important to have on hand during the event. If you will be in a remote location, secure enough supplies for the duration. Items to consider: • First Aid kit/AED • Printed materials (maps, handouts, Incident Action Plans, etc.) • Printer, paper and ink • Whiteboards or large pads of paper for IMT meetings • Batteries • Pens • Spare headlamps, eye and ear protection, gloves • Extra toiletries for participants (sunscreen, feminine products, hand sanitizer, etc.) You may also wish to provide printed ICS 214 unit logs or booklets for all participants (ICS 214 is a note taking format) and/or event logo swag (for example stickers, t-shirts, etc.).
Personnel	**Is this a financial need?** Some events contract for key positions they cannot fill with local partners or participants; this may include roles such as burn boss, experienced mentor/trainer, specialized trainer for non-burn day activities, cultural practitioner, or photographer. If you need to do this, plan far enough ahead to secure funding, find a suitable candidate, and work with them to ensure they are prepared to fill the role. **Consider whether you need to solicit competitive bids, draft a contract for services, and whether you will require a contractor to carry liability insurance**. If they need insurance, is a general professional liability policy sufficient or must coverage be specific to prescribed fire and smoke?

3.5.2 Finding and Managing Funding

Once you determine what resources you need that cannot be accounted for by current funding and partner contributions, it is time to begin closing that gap. Funding sources can be quite variable in terms of availability, allowable use of funds, priorities and geographic focus. This is not intended to be an exhaustive list of funding options, but rather a starting point to begin brainstorming for your event and how to work with partners to manage the money you receive.

3.5.3 Where will your funding come from?

3.5.3.1 Grants & Awards

There are grant programs from both public and private sources that can support different aspects of TREX events. When applying for grants to cover expenses, keep in mind that TREX events can generate significant in-kind match from participants' salaries, volunteer hours or equipment rates.

The Fire Learning Network may be able to provide limited financial assistance to TREX events located in FLN landscapes or other priority locations in the U.S. Funding from the FLN for events hosted outside the U.S. may be more limited. If you are interested in exploring this possibility, reach out to **TREX program contacts**.

3.5.3.2 Registration Fees & Charging Participants

Registration fees charged to participants (aka tuition or participant fees) can help close funding gaps and encourage only serious applications to TREX. Many past TREX events have charged a registration fee of $300; however, you have latitude to consider whether to charge a fee at all, waive fees for some participants, or reduce or increase the fee depending on your needs. Consider the needs and resources of the participants you intend to reach with your TREX and whether charging a fee is realistic or equitable. Many events have waived fees for locals (you must define who is "local"), participants who commit to bringing equipment or serving on the planning or incident management team, students and volunteers, and employees of small, less-resourced organizations (again, you will need to define this).

Participant fees may be used as match to federal or state grants. Make sure to understand what limitations will be imposed on the use of these funds if they are used as match, and what reporting requirements you will need to meet.

Some events do not require a registration fee but do ask participants to pay for items such as housing and food. While this is a way to save money from an organizer's perspective, think carefully about your target audience for participation and whether this will be a disincentive for them to attend.

3.5.4 Who Will Apply for and Manage Funding?

Organizations and agencies have different guidelines and restrictions on applying for, collecting and disbursing funding. Discuss with organizing partners who will take the lead in addressing funding gaps either by applying for funding or collecting registration fees. Be sure to communicate clearly throughout the planning and implementation of the event to ensure all partners understand what funding is available, how it can be spent, and what reporting requirements must be met.

3.6 Managing Liability and Agreements

Addressing liability and agreements is perhaps the most important aspect of TREX planning and may take many months. It is important to start as early as possible to ensure that necessary agreements are in place well ahead of the event.

How to manage liability will depend on the partners involved in your TREX, on whose land you plan to burn, and any differences between what existing agreements enable and what will be needed to support the event. Consider also how any agreements specifically drafted to support TREX could enable future collaboration, thus supporting your larger goals. Remember, TREX is most powerful when deployed as part of a larger strategy. TREX can also be an effective way to address existing agreement gaps—because it is often a time-bound event, it imposes a deadline for completing agreements that can motivate partners who might otherwise move only slowly toward consensus. TREX being time-bound and short-duration can also seem like a low-risk, less intensive way of "dipping toes" in the water of collaborative burning, helping less enthusiastic partners move slowly but deliberately into a new way of working together.

Prescribed fire liability can be complex and will vary by state. As with the rest of this guide these questions are intended only as considerations for how to address liability for your TREX. Nothing in this section should be construed as legal advice. Your circumstances may vary, and you must understand the applicable laws and policies governing prescribed fire practice in your area, by your organization, and by your partners. Consult in-house legal counsel and risk management staff, if available to you, for help with your organization's policies. Note that these internal resources are often unable to provide advice to other partners.

3.6.1 Legal Entities

Are your partners legal entities and does legal status affect their ability to enter into agreements? It is important to understand what partners are likely to be involved in the TREX as a host or collaborator and how they are organized as an entity. Agreements that carry legal weight, such as those that address liability, must be conducted between legal entities—such as IRS-determined nonprofits; units of local, state, or federal government; tribes; for-profit corporations, etc.

Consider too the kind of work you want to do together—fire line, classroom, field trip, etc. Live fire collaboration creates specific considerations that may require legally binding agreements while other activities may not. For example, some prescribed fire councils that wish to support collaborative burning are not organized as legal entities and therefore could be unable to enter into the type of agreement required for fire line activities. Prescribed burn associations (PBAs), watershed collaboratives, and other collaborative groups similarly may not be organized as legal entities.

3.6.2 Land Ownership and Burn Leadership

Who owns the land and who will lead the burn? What land ownerships is the TREX likely to burn on? What organization(s) is/are likely to provide the burn boss(es) for those operations? These are the most fundamental questions pertinent to liability, and the answers will determine which TREX hosting or collaborating entities are likely to require agreements covering risk and liability considerations or requirements in order to host or participate in prescribed burn operations. Prescribed fire liability is usually assigned primarily to the burn leader (or the organization that employs the burn leader) and the landowner on whose land the burn is conducted. Note, however, that this does not necessarily preclude the possibility of other parties present during a burn being allocated some amount of suppression, criminal, or civil liability. Organizations providing the land, burn leader, or both may have specific requirements (insurance, indemnification, qualifications, etc.) that partners must meet or agree to in order to participate.

3.6.3 Organizational Policy

How does your organization manage liability? How do your partnering organizations manage liability? Government entities, for-profit companies, and nonprofits may be subject to different federal and state laws governing their liability or may choose to manage their liability in widely different ways. You may find these differences to be a significant barrier if they are not compatible with other entity's policies, or if one entity determines that they are too exposed to liability in the proposed partnership or burn projects.

You should also understand whether there are specific laws or regulations (civil or criminal) that may make your jurisdiction unusual or require special consideration and whether there are any requirements that your state or local suppression agency imposes on prescribed burn practitioners.

3.6.3.1 Federal and State Tort Laws

The U.S. federal government operates under the doctrine of "sovereign immunity." This is a legal doctrine that typically bars individuals from suing a government entity without that entity's consent. To provide private individuals a way to obtain compensation from the government for injury or loss resulting from the acts of federal employees, Congress established the Federal Tort Claims Act. The Act still limits the circumstances under which a suit may be filed, and the types and amount of damages that a plaintiff may recover. Because of the principle of sovereign immunity and the Federal Tort Claims Act, the U.S. federal government does not carry insurance coverage and will not indemnify partner organizations in agreements. Essentially the federal government self-insures.

State tort laws vary and are different in some respects from the federal law, including the upper limit set on recoverable damages, but function in a similar way to limit the state government's exposure to civil suits.

3.6.3.2 Private Insurance

Many for-profit and nonprofit entities will carry insurance to cover legal actions arising from the actions or omissions of their employees, volunteers or representatives. For instance, most nonprofits will have a general and professional liability policy and a directors and officers (D&O) policy that covers the members of their governing board, leadership and employees when those individuals are acting within the scope of their employment. Sometimes, a general liability policy will cover prescribed fire and smoke; often, however, prescribed fire and smoke are covered under separate policies. Not all organizations engaging in prescribed fire choose to carry insurance specifically covering this work, and the limitations and terms of coverage vary.

Homeowner insurance, especially farm and ranch policies, sometimes also cover prescribed fire practice. Private landowners, nonprofits, and for-profit companies sometimes purchase policies that cover individual burns, as opposed to policies that cover a defined time period. Again, coverage limits and terms vary between policies.

3.6.3.3 State Claims Funds & State Liability Standards

In recent years, some U.S. states have enacted legislation establishing state backed "claims funds" for prescribed fire (sometimes called indemnity funds or self-insurance pools). These programs are typically linked to reduced liability under state law and require training and certification in order to be eligible for coverage. We recommend understanding your state's liability standard for prescribed fire, whether obtaining state-specific or NWCG qualifications reduces a practitioner's liability, and the specifics of eligibility and limitations of a claims fund, if your state has one. You should also understand how state laws and the eligibility for a claims fund (if available) interact with the way you and your partner organizations manage liability. Some organizations have chosen to rely on their state's claims fund in lieu of private insurance coverage.

3.6.3.4 Other

Sometimes a person or entity will choose to manage their liability in other ways. This is common when working with private landowners who conduct burns independently on their property or with a prescribed burn association. Some PBAs are organized as a nonprofit and carry insurance or use their state's claims fund; in other cases, their members operate under their own farm and ranch policies that include prescribed fire coverage. Other groups do not carry insurance and consider themselves to be "self-insured" because neighbors are working together to implement fire cooperatively.

3.6.4 Existing Agreements

Do your existing agreements adequately enable the type of work you want to do, including addressing legal questions for each organization? Be clear regarding the type of agreement that will enable the work you want to do and carry the required legal weight for involved entities. The term "memorandum of understanding" or MOU is often used in conversation, but an MOU is generally considered to be a non-binding agreement in principle, not a legal document, and therefore may be insufficient to address the considerations inherent to fire line collaboration.

When reviewing your existing agreements, or crafting new ones, look for language that lays out the legal responsibility of each partner subject to the agreement. This statement could include language like "On behalf of itself, its officers, directors, members, employees, volunteers, agents, and representatives, each party agrees that it shall be responsible for its own acts and omissions and the results thereof and that it shall not be responsible for the acts or omissions of the other party, nor the results thereof." The language may also include a statement of the governing laws and regulations to which each entity is subject; for instance, an agreement with a U.S. federal agency will reference the U.S. Tort Claims Act. In your context, does the agreement language adequately address who is responsible for the actions or omissions of its representatives? Agreements may also need to address whether each party to the agreement will need insurance coverage, such as workers comp, general and professional liability, coverage specific to prescribed fire and smoke, motor vehicle, as well as the limits of required coverages, and who is responsible for damage incurred to equipment and other property.

What actions are allowed under existing agreements? Fire management agreements typically include statements describing the purpose of the agreement and the scope of work covered by the agreement. When reviewing or crafting agreements, ensure that the purpose and scope adequately cover the types of work you might do with your partners. Some agreements have come up short when applied to TREX by not anticipating the full scope of activities involved—which may include burning on each other's land, burning on the land of partners, welcoming participants including trainees from other entities not party to the agreement, and setting requirements or limitations on sharing equipment.

Do agreements adequately address differences in qualification requirements and other considerations? Agreements may also need to bridge different qualification standards between partner entities. Even when two organizations both follow NWCG standards, agreements may need to acknowledge and allow for agency-specific requirements. Agreements may also need to address designation of leadership roles, how requests for resources will be coordinated, processes for declining assignments, pertinent geographical limitations for each partner's participation, expiration dates, and the exchange of funds between the partners, if desired.

3.6.5 Waivers

Will landowners or TREX participants need to sign waivers to participate? Organizations sometimes require that third-party landowners on whose land burns will take place sign waivers providing the entity leading the burn legal indemnification or, at a minimum, written permission to enter the property and conduct the work. Sometimes partnering organizations will require this kind of permission to be in place in order to participate, even if that entity is not leading the burn.

Some TREX organizers have also required all TREX participants to sign waivers or agreements acknowledging the risks of their participation in live fire activities, acknowledging requirements to carry employer provided or their own health insurance, and other liability and risk considerations. These waivers or agreements often also cover image use releases and releases pertinent to housing or facilities use. It may be important to provide those documents to participants ahead of time and to make clear that signing them is required for participation (if applicable), especially if you anticipate that some participants may be unable to sign due to their organization's policies or that negotiation and modification of terms may be required in order for that person to participate.

As mentioned previously, **agreements should be one of the first things** you begin addressing when you plan your TREX. While not all organizations are able to share their agreements or templates, some can and it may be worth reaching out to other TREX organizers for examples.

3.7 Communication and Messaging

Having a person or team dedicated to communications can help leverage your TREX event to build social license for your work, as well as streamline communication among TREX participants and organizers. Some events, particularly those using NWCG standards, may use one or more Public Information Officers (PIO) or PIO trainees to fill this role. Other events rely on communications staff from partner organizations, participants who do not have PIO qualifications, IMT members, or some combination.

As with all aspects of your TREX, consider how you will address communication in your planning, and recruit needed personnel, for both the planning and event leadership teams, well ahead of your event. This will give them time to develop a communications plan and coordinate with partners.

You may need to take some actions, such as creating and disseminating announcements or other materials for your event, before you have fully fleshed out your communications team. If this is the case, ensure the planning team still addresses important considerations and messages in event communications.

3.7.1 External Communication: Outreach and Media Coordination

For some TREX, media coverage and communication around the event is a key goal. Even if this is not true for your event, outreach is a critical and expected part of TREX as they provide an opportunity to share the importance of prescribed fire, help surrounding communities understand the amount of training required of practitioners, and spread any other important messages that will help support your work.

Whether you are working with PIOs or other communication professionals, it is useful to have at least one member of your communications team have experience managing communications for a TREX event.

When planning for external communications, the following is a non-exhaustive list of topics to consider:

- **Communication plan**: Creating a communications plan before your TREX can help flesh out the topics below and provide a single place to reference information such as key messages, plans for media engagement, and organizational contacts.
- **Communication structure**: How are partners, the IMT and other relevant parties connected to the communications effort? Ensure you have the correct contacts for each organization, and that you know the level of involvement they each wish to have in creating and disseminating messaging.
- **Key messages**: What are you trying to communicate, to what audience, and why? Creating and sharing talking points ahead of time is particularly helpful if you plan to have media or important leaders attend your TREX.
- **Crisis communication**: What is your communications plan in the event of an incident such as a prescribed fire escape or a serious injury? How will you get your message out if the TREX is unable to burn at all? Are there other issues that are locally sensitive that you need to plan for? It is impossible to plan for every specific scenario, but having a general plan in place for an incident within an incident can reduce stress and improve response should it be necessary.

- **Media presence**: Will media be invited or allowed to cover the TREX? If so, where and when will they be allowed to attend? Policies vary widely across organizations, particularly with response to media presence on an active fire line.

What to Do When Things Go Sideways

When planning for communication around your TREX, it is important to plan for how you will handle potential incidents such as a prescribed fire escape, serious injury to a participant, or high-profile public relations issue faced by an organizing partner. It is impossible to plan detailed response plans for all possible scenarios, however you should at minimum discuss what the process of response will entail. Who in each partner organization should be the communications contact in the event of an incident? How will the IMT be involved in response? If you do not have an assigned PIO who will be the point person?

Addressing these questions during planning can make a quickly evolving, stressful incident easier to manage if it occurs during your TREX.

3.7.2 Internal Communication with Participants

Some events task their communications personnel with managing internal communication with TREX participants. For those using the NWCG framework, this is a task that trainee PIOs will need to complete in their task book. Regardless of who is managing this task, consider the following in planning for how you will provide necessary documents and information to your participants throughout the event:

- **What communication will you provide to participants before, during and after the event?** This might include emails, an online folder of materials using applications like Box or Google Drive, contact information for all participants, and a welcome webinar.
- **Will you provide maps, copies of burn plans, or other operational documents as printed material, digitally or both?** Digital options for distribution can include via Box or Google Drive or through mapping apps such as Avenza or ESRI products. Ensure that participants will be able to access digital materials when needed (if connectivity will be limited onsite, let participants know they should download materials). Consider providing copies of burn plans and other pertinent operational information early to burn boss trainees or those in other trainee roles that may benefit from familiarizing themselves with the material ahead of the event.
- **What information do you need to collect to communicate during the event?** While communication is often provided primarily through briefings, or by the IMT or module leads, it is important to at minimum have a means by which to contact participants in the event of an emergency. This could be a cell phone number, email address or via a messaging app such as WhatsApp or Signal. Keep in mind whether cell service and Wi-Fi will be available. If you are planning to communicate through cell phone numbers, consider what method you will use to efficiently text a large group of people, as some messaging apps have limits on size for group chats.

- **How will communication be handled across IMT briefings, module leads, the PIO team, and anyone else involved?** Plan for how to handle communication during your TREX that is clear for participants not only in terms of the information to be shared, but also from whom they should expect to hear it. Some TREX events develop an Incident Action Plan (IAP) similar to what personnel on an incident managed under ICS in the U.S. would receive.
- **Do you have any participants who may have language barriers and how will that be addressed?** Clearly communicate what participants can expect, particularly if you are accepting international participants or are targeting an audience that may include some for whom English is spoken as a second language or not at all. If you are considering hosting a partially or fully multi-lingual TREX event, we strongly urge you to contact the TREX program to connect with organizers who have put on such events as they have particular challenges and considerations.

Save Paper!

Many TREX organizers have chosen to create a single information packet, usually presented as an Incident Action Plan (IAP), that is good for the duration of the event and is provided to each participant in both a printed and digital form. Daily updates with information pertinent to each day's activity and operational assignments are provided as supplements (often using the ICS 205 form or a modified version).

3.7.3 Multilingual and Non-English TREX Events

As the TREX model has spread within the U.S. and internationally, organizers have responded to the need to host events that are multi-lingual or require fluency in Spanish or other languages besides English. These events require organizers to address particular considerations, and connecting with others who have planned these events may be even more useful. Some planning considerations related to planning multilingual or non-English TREX events include the following:

- **Remember your goals**. Why are you hosting this TREX, who is your target audience, and what do those things mean in terms of the language you want to use or require of participants?
- **Be clear in your marketing**. Make sure that applicants understand what will be expected of them in terms of language skills—and that you fully understand what skills participants do or do not have so you can plan accordingly.
- **Adapt resources you need**. TREX originated in the U.S. for English-speaking audiences, and thus many of the resources are in English, including those in the TREX Guidebook Resources folder. Ensure you make time to adapt or translate any resources you plan to use.

- **Address safety on and off the fire line**. This is especially critical for multilingual events where participants do not all share a common fluency. Safety issues to address will vary depending on factors such as the host country and whether the event is multilingual but may include the following considerations:
  - Plan for communication, particularly during burns, in a way that ensures information can be transmitted clearly and quickly to everyone.
  - Ensure participants have a means by which to navigate local systems they may interact with, such as street signs or medical facilities.

4 Burn Unit Planning and Preparation

4.1 Plan for Flexibility

Weather and other factors largely outside your control will determine how much burning can occur during your TREX. More than one TREX has not been able to burn at all due to factors outside the team's control. However, selecting and preparing a diversity of burn units can increase the likelihood of having enough opportunities to burn during your event. When thinking through burn unit diversity, consider attributes including:

- Ownership and associated policy or regulatory constraints
- Resource needs
- Fuel loading
- Fuel type
- Elevation
- Aspect
- Slope
- Complexity
- Size (including whether you can combine or divide adjacent units)
- Securing the unit /patrol needs
- Smoke management
- Potential for burning at different times of the day, including night burning

Having burn units spread over a reasonably large geography can offer options in case of localized weather impacts, although this can introduce variables like long drive times or the need to provide lodging in a new location.

Having more burn unit options with a wide variety of attributes will increase the likelihood that you can do significant burning during the TREX. It may be useful to also consider different ways that TREX could engage with different burn units. Opportunities to join a robust fire management team on a fully prepped and planned unit provide excellent opportunities for task book evaluations and experiential learning with potentially less time invested in pre- and post-burn activities. On the other hand, burns where TREX participants take on the full range of activities including planning, prep, implementation, and patrol have provided some of the most valuable training for participants.

Work with partners early in the planning process to ensure sufficient burn opportunities are available. This is especially true if this is the first TREX event you are planning in the area. Take time to talk through the objectives of the TREX with partners. Talk early and explicitly about what they are or are not willing to allow TREX participants to do on their lands and what trainee roles they are willing to accommodate. Ensure you have the necessary agreements or waivers in place to make that work possible.

4.2 Burn Unit Preparation

Understand burn unit prep needs and ensure that prep is accomplished prior to the event start. If you need to contract for burn plan writing or unit prep include this in your TREX budget and initiate work well in advance of the event. Inevitably some prep will still need to be done immediately before or during the event, such as refreshing fire lines after autumn leaf drop. Although TREX are not geared toward participants doing all the work, some unit prep can serve as skills practice, team cohesion building, and equipment skills building opportunities. These can be excellent opportunities for first-time leadership training, such as for FFT1 trainees.

If you will be burning near communities and smoke or other activity will be visible, work with your planning team and IMT on how to message and connect with those communities (See Section 3.7.1 for additional information about managing communications during your event).



From left: ©Kara Karboski/Washington RCD; ©Sydney Bezanson/TNC; ©Kody Wohlers/Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation

5 Recruiting and Organizing Participants

5.1 TREX Announcements and Applications

Once the framework of the TREX is in place—with location, dates and hosting partners confirmed—it is time to send out announcement and application forms. If some details are still pending and time is getting short, or if potential participants will need a long lead time, you can circulate a save-the-date flyer instead. If you use a save-the-date, it is a good idea to note when further information will be available.

Announcements can be produced in a variety of formats, including a Word or pdf flyer or as the text at the top of an online survey or event form. Particularly for applications using an online survey to collect information, consider which platforms will work best both for partners and applicants. We recommend consulting sample documents from other TREX to ensure that you provide all the information a potential participant may need. See **Appendix A.2** for examples.

5.1.1 Point of Contact

It is best to have one person be the point of contact for submitting application forms and answering questions. Select someone who is likely to have good availability during the application period to ensure timely responses.

Check Your Work

Announcements and applications should be vetted with your planning team and the event partners/hosts, as well as with the **Fire Networks team** in some cases. In addition to catching typos and similar errors, this vetting will ensure that all logo use, language and intent are consistent and agreed upon by the hosts and event partners, including funders.

5.1.2 Timeline

Ideally the announcement and application forms will be sent out two to four months before the event. You may use a shorter timeframe for events that are regularly offered (so participants already expect it) or very local in nature. But large or new events, or those hoping to include international participants, should be announced within that two-to-four-month timeframe.

Give your planning team sufficient time to review applications and make participant selections so that you can notify participants of acceptance one to two months before the event. Again, a longer time frame is better when participants will have to travel, especially internationally as some visa processes can take several months or longer.

See also the Planning Timeline in **Section 3.2**.

5.1.3 Distribution

All TREX that our team are aware of are listed in the Networker, the Fire Networks newsletter (**subscribe**), and are posted to the Fire Networks website TREX events page and to the TREX Facebook page to provide awareness of where TREX are occurring. If you are aiming for only, or primarily, local participants, this can be noted in the posting.

Depending on your intended audience and TREX goals, you may wish to announce your TREX in different ways to reach either local, national or international prospective participants. If you wish to recruit a large and diverse pool of applicants, distribute the announcement widely. Consider the distribution methods below when deciding where to advertise your TREX.

For locally focused events and participants:

- Local email lists and newsletters
- Facebook groups
- Targeted emails to organizations or individuals
- Prescribed burn associations
- Prescribed fire councils
- Local fire department or fire safe council meetings

For events targeting regional, national or international participants, in addition to the venues above, these events may also wish to share information through prescribed fire councils, and broadly circulated newsletters such as:

- Fire Science Exchange Network newsletters
- Driptorch Digest
- Association for Fire Ecology news and updates
- National Association of State Foresters weekly newsletter

5.2 Participant Selection

5.2.1 Receiving and Managing Incoming Applications

Information about applicants is easiest to manage if collected in a single spreadsheet. Exporting data from an online survey or event management software can form the core of this document. Putting application information in a single document will let you easily sort and view applicants by various attributes (e.g. agency or organizational affiliation, training roles desired, etc.). Archive the original forms until the end of the TREX, in case you need to confirm any data.

Some event organizers prefer to use separate application and registration forms, with only selected applicants completing the registration step that collects more personal information. Other organizers prefer to use a single form that gathers all required information during the initial application step. See **Appendix A.2** for sample application forms.

Be sure to address privacy and data security when requesting and storing participant information and follow any relevant policies required by your organization, as well as partner organizations.

Application Data Best Practices

Keep the master version of this spreadsheet or form in your shared files. If you want to explore the data by manipulating it (for example by sorting, or adding or deleting fields), it's a good idea to download a temporary copy to your computer, to avoid corrupting the master copy.

Use an online survey or event software to collect applications rather than distributing Word or PDF forms which then require manual data entry into a spreadsheet.

Protect potentially sensitive or personal data, such as medical conditions, allergies and emergency contact information. Some TREX events choose to collect this data only from accepted participants to minimize privacy concerns. Only collect the data you need – collecting unnecessary information only increases the possibility of privacy concerns.

5.2.2 Selection Criteria

Applicant numbers often exceed the capacity of a TREX. To maximize learning and the effectiveness of the TREX, look at the group of participants as a unit, rather than focusing on gathering the "best" individual applicants. Also take into consideration your TREX goals and the participant audience you are trying to reach.

TREX organizers take different approaches to applicant selection. Some TREX planning teams make decisions as a group, while others designate a single person or a subset of the planning team make the decisions. Working as a team has advantages, including a larger range of perspectives and tapping into the whole group's knowledge of applicants, especially if the TREX is locally focused and most applicants are known to the planning team. However, working as a group can also be inefficient and increase the time needed to reach decisions. We recommend having a conversation with the planning team about these pros and cons to ensure buy-in on the chosen approach, including whether and how the full planning team provides input if a single person or subset of the team makes the selections.

5.2.2.1 Variety

TREX events aim to build a group of participants that bring a variety of strengths and experiences to the event. When possible, include participants from various geographies (unless your event is explicitly intended for locals), areas of expertise, career stage, affiliation (agency, organization, ownership, volunteer, paid) and any other variable that might be relevant to promote cross-organizational collaboration. Achieving the right balance of experience and trainee vs. qualified positions is especially important (see below). In short, encourage participation from individuals who will bring different perspectives, experience and skills, enhancing the learning environment of TREX.

That said, be aware of differences in physical ability and physical fitness standards, even between individuals who technically follow the same qualification standard. For instance, not all organizations that follow NWCG standards require the same physical fitness test. Set clear expectations—with both participants and partners hosting TREX on their burns—regarding the physical ability required for participation. This can become a safety issue and hamper the good experience of participants if not adequately considered. You can turn down TREX participation on burn operations that may not be good fits or to thoughtfully make crew assignments to ensure a good match between operational needs and participant physical ability.

Non-Agency Fire Practitioners to Incorporate When Possible

- Ranchers and landowners
- Nonprofit land managers
- Prescribed burn association (PBA) members
- Volunteer and rural fire department staff
- Local emergency management agency staff
- Volunteer organizations involving land stewardship
- International fire practitioners
- College/university students
- Tribal members

5.2.2.2 **Experience and Trainee Roles**

Participant qualifications and experience are relevant considerations when deciding which applicants to accept. To inform selection, participants should be asked to list their training needs as well as their current qualifications and/or experience in the application. The goal of your selection process should be to build a diverse burn team, who can learn from one another and support each other's training needs, while also meeting the span-of-control and qualification requirements necessary to accomplish the planned training, treatments and outreach.

How many trainees you can accommodate in each role will depend on the qualification system, if any, you are working under, how many total participants you are able to logistically support, how you organize your TREX, and considerations for supporting operations such as burn staffing requirements. Keep in mind that most agencies and organizations do not count trainees toward minimum staffing for a burn operation. Ensure that you have a reasonable number of trainees in each position and the appropriate qualified personnel to provide oversight, coaching and evaluations that will be accepted by the trainee's home unit.

In general, we recommend accepting fewer advanced position trainees (like Burn Boss), and more beginner participants, since opportunities for training in advanced roles are more limited. Intermediate positions, such as NWCG Single Resources Boss, fall in the middle of this spectrum, while specialized roles (like taskforce leader, public information officer, incident commander) are also often limited or depend heavily on the specifics of your TREX.

5.2.2.3 Guiding Questions

As you think about and enter into your selection process, it is a good idea to consider the following questions:

Will your TREX provide the full staffing required for prescribed burn operations or integrate TREX participants into existing burn organizations?
This will depend on the format and goals of your TREX. If you are integrating TREX participants into partner burn organizations, remember that may come with constraints on trainee opportunities. You may also be able to both staff a burn entirely with TREX participants and integrate some participants into a partner burn on the same day. Communicate clearly with hosting partners regarding what training opportunities they can provide and avoid accepting participants whose needs cannot be met.

If there are more applicants for specific roles than you can accommodate, what will you prioritize in making your selections?
Are there particular perspectives, skills or other attributes you want represented among your TREX participants? Will accepting participants from specific entities further your long-term goals? Will you prioritize participants who can bring a certain type of equipment, such as an engine? Remember to look beyond the formal qualifications an applicant holds (NWCG, state certifications, or other) and consider their experience on and off the fire line. Many skilled fire practitioners work under other systems than NWCG, for instance, and while they may have hundreds of burn experiences in their history, their qualifications may not reflect that experience. Including tailored questions on your application form can help you understand the full picture of what applicants bring to the table and select your participants accordingly.

How will you ensure that everyone selected has an appropriate opportunity to practice, train, share, learn and receive evaluations?
A participant who is not working on a position task book should be given equal opportunity to train and practice in a position commensurate with their skills, background and interests as someone with an open task book. While participants will need to be flexible and understand that fire line training opportunities will depend on weather and other considerations, do your best to select a group of participants whose needs you feel you can realistically meet within anticipated opportunities.

5.2.3 Notifying Selected Participants

Notify those who have been selected as soon as possible. Include a request for a response confirming attendance by an early date, so you can backfill if the selected applicant can no longer attend. You may wish to consider creating a waitlist or delay notifying those not selected until you have confirmed that your selected participants will attend. But do reply to all applicants regardless of acceptance—successful TREX are about relationships, so don’t burn bridges by neglecting to provide a timely reply to everyone.

Remember to update your spreadsheet as you receive new information from participants. If your application did not ask for all the information you will need (such as dietary restrictions, PPE needs, or other information not necessary for making participant selections), send a follow-up form or request for information when participants are accepted.

If you are not ready to provide detailed logistics and travel information, let selected participants know when this will be provided, and make sure you do so within a reasonable timeframe to allow participants to make travel arrangements (typically no less than one month in advance for those flying domestically within the U.S.).

Some waivers or agreements you or your partners require may need a signature from an authorized individual in the participant's organization and therefore cannot be signed by the participant at event check-in. If so, send these documents with a reasonable timeframe for review and signature ahead of the event; if you also send any documents that need only the participant's signature, it can smooth the check-in process.

Some TREX events find it useful to schedule a pre-event webinar with participants to answer questions and begin setting expectations. This can be done any time after selections are made but typically is most effective roughly one month before the event.

Keeping Track

Over the years, TREX organizers have created forms, templates and other resources to help manage the application, selection and participant management process. The Resources folder in Appendix A.2 includes examples of some of these that may be adapted for your event.

5.3 Organizing Participants for Burn Operations

Organizing participants into a structure that supports training, provides the necessary supervision and support to trainees, and efficiently and effectively implements burns can be challenging. Fortunately, models developed and lessons learned from previous TREX events can make this process much easier to navigate.

5.3.1 Module Leaders

Arguably the most critical position on a TREX IMT is "module leader." This term can cause confusion for those familiar with ICS as it isn't an official ICS position. The position in the TREX context is most comparable to the NWCG Crew Boss position and is often a suitable role for a qualified or trainee Single Resource Boss or Task Force Leader.

Module leaders are individuals assigned to a "module" (a group of 5-10 participants) who provide mid-level leadership during the TREX. The module leader role is critical, with a participant's TREX experience often most directly impacted by their module leader. Being a module leader is demanding, requiring someone who can balance multiple requests for their time and attention, is committed to participants' training opportunities and experience, and can maintain a positive attitude while flexibly adapting to inevitable changes of plan.

The IMT should set clear expectations for module leaders, and it is common to invite module leaders to planning or IMT meetings before the event to establish a shared vision and understanding of both the TREX and their position in it. Unless a person is familiar with this role from attending prior TREX, it may feel confusing or overwhelming to meet all expectations. That said, many people who have served in this role feel it is the most exciting and rewarding role on the IMT. See the **TREX IMT Role Expectations** document for more on what this role requires.

When possible, some TREX have found assigning two people as co-leaders to one module to be a good model as this allows greater leadership, communications and capacity to support module members as well as the larger TREX. Participants who are FFT1 Squad Boss qualified or trainees (or equivalent) are usually assigned roles to support the module Leader or may take on module leadership for an activity or a day as part of their training assignment.

5.3.2 Modules

In addition to the benefit of managing span of control, organizing a TREX into modules makes it possible to split TREX resources into pre-established teams to support more than one burn in a day or to rotate through skill-building scenarios or stations during non-fire training exercises. When organizing participants into modules pay particular attention to the following:

- How many modules will you need to organize all participants into groups while maintaining span of control (usually a ratio of 1 leader to 5-10 individuals)?
- How will you balance existing participant skills and experience and trainer/trainee assignments within modules?
- How many participants assigned to the module are serving in each qualified and trainee role (FFT2, FFT1, SRB, etc.)?
- Are there specific skillsets (such as drone operators, FEMOs) that may be best organized as their own module or group?

Ensure that each module has more FFT2s or beginning fire practitioners, a smaller number of FFT1 trainees or beginning leaders, and only one or two SRB trainees, etc.; this will help achieve a good balance of experience and ensure quality training opportunities for those FFT1 and SRB trainee leaders. Good training opportunities for FFT1 trainees are easier to find than for more advanced positions. Again, within modules ensure you have appropriate evaluators for each trainee role on the module or otherwise have a plan for ensuring mentoring and evaluations for trainees from among TREX participants at large.

If a designed module leader is also a trainee, ensure that an alternate, co-leader or mentor is assigned to, and familiar with, the module to preserve leadership when the module leader is focused on their training assignment. Be especially cautious in assigning a Burn Boss trainee (RXB2t) to be a sole module leader; it is very challenging to balance the demands of the two roles.

Aim for diversity in employer, geographic origin, career focus, years of experience and any other factor you can think of within modules. We recommend splitting crews or teams of people who work together in their home units into different modules. Doing so encourages building new relationships and maximizes participants' opportunities to learn from new people.

The next two sections touch on practical considerations.

5.3.2.1 Deployment Plan

How will you deploy modules during burns, and will they ever be broken up? You may want to assign modules to fire line assignments as a squad. This has advantages in terms of crew cohesion and keeping assigned trainees and evaluators together. But it can also be challenging to do consistently depending on the training roles available and needs of the burn organization. This is especially hard to guarantee if you are embedding TREX resources into a partner's burn organization.

If module members may be broken up and assigned to work with different people during burn operations, make that expectation clear to everyone and to the extent possible build cohesion across the whole TREX and not just within modules. You will also need to ensure that all task book evaluators or coaches have adequate opportunity to work with their trainee, and either complete their evaluation or contribute their observations to the trainee's designated evaluator within the module.

5.3.2.2 **Equipment**

How will you distribute equipment so that each module has what it needs? You will need to ensure that needed equipment is assigned to each module for their training needs and assigned tasks and that module members are qualified and approved to operate the equipment. For instance, if you have an Engine Boss trainee on the module they will need an engine to train with. Will they be approved to operate the assigned engine according to the owner's policies? As noted previously, it is appropriate to ask an ENGB trainee to bring an engine to TREX, and you may choose to prioritize selecting participants who can do so.

Remember to consider equipment needs that go beyond fire line assignments. For example, be sure there are enough seatbelts in vehicles to safely accommodate all module members. We also recommend that vehicles be kept with owners unless it is absolutely necessary to separate them.

5.4 Managing Training Opportunities and Expectations

Since most TREX participants will attend expecting to learn specific skills and/or obtain signatures in their NWCG task book or other skills evaluation documentation, it is important to manage both the opportunities provided and trainee expectations regarding what they will be able and expected to accomplish. It is important for everyone to understand that all participants will be expected to serve as both a trainee in one or more roles and a coach or evaluator in others. A common example of this is an Engine Boss trainee also serving as an FFT1 evaluator.

The IMT, and specifically the Training Specialist if there is one, will assign trainee and evaluator pairings with both requested trainee roles and existing qualifications in mind. See **TREX IMT Role Expectations** in **Appendix A.1** for more information on this IMT role. As mentioned above, it is best to maintain these pairings for the duration of TREX, although this is not always possible on every day. The evaluator should, however, have adequate opportunities to observe the trainee performing in the position to provide a meaningful task book evaluation.

Providing participants with written expectations for trainees and evaluators prior to the event can be helpful. An **example** can be found in the Announcements and Participant Information folder in **Appendix A.2**.

5.4.1 Details Under the NWCG System

If your TREX will use another qualification system, you'll need to understand and adjust your management of training opportunities as appropriate.

During a TREX operating within NWCG standards, each participant should expect to receive one high-quality evaluation in one Position Task Book (PTB). All participants, regardless of role or whether they have an open task book should also receive an Individual Performance Evaluation (**ICS 225** or modified version; an **example** modified for prescribed fire is in the

ICS and Other Forms folder in **Appendix A.2**). Additional coaches and mentors may be used to enhance the training opportunities and diversify the experience for the trainee and may each provide an ICS 225 evaluation. However, there will be only one task book evaluator. The evaluator must either be qualified in the position being evaluated or supervise the trainee while they perform in the role. The evaluator also cannot be serving in a trainee role themselves on the day of the evaluation. If not qualified in the position, the evaluator can sign off tasks but cannot serve as the Final Evaluator.

It is not the intent of a TREX to provide individuals multiple single-day evaluations from different evaluators. In some cases, such as when imbedded with a partner's burn organization, a participant may receive an additional evaluation from another individual for the same trainee position, but this is the exception and not the rule. If a participant has the opportunity to complete tasks in different position task books, it is appropriate that they receive one evaluation in both.

While Final Evaluator's Verification (aka a "final evaluation" or simply "Verification" in the Next Gen PTBs) may be provided, agency certification is the responsibility of the home unit/agency and will not be provided during a TREX unless the appropriate verifying individual happens to be present to perform this task. Participants should arrive at TREX with their PTBs initiated by their home unit; unless an appropriate person from the participant's home agency happens to be present, TREX organizers are unable to initiate task books for participants.

We strongly recommend that TREX organizers, and particularly the Training Specialist (if assigned), be familiar with the current version of NWCG Standards for Wildland Fire Position Qualifications (**PMS 310-1**) if following NWCG. This document "establishes minimum NWCG position qualification standards for training, experience, physical fitness and currency for national mobilization to wildland fire incidents" and maintaining a solid understanding of these requirements will ensure that your TREX participants receive valid, consistent and well documented training evaluations for their performance.

Note that with the introduction of the Next Generation Position Task Books for a growing number of positions, you are likely to encounter trainees utilizing both the new versions and the "classic" PTBs. We recommend your team be familiar with pertinent guidance for both versions. PMS 310-1 also outlines the responsibilities of the Trainee and the Evaluator, as well as the home unit/agency.

Previous TREX organizers have developed guidance and tools to assist in tracking participant training opportunities, matching trainees and evaluators, and documenting the number of PTB evaluations, including final evaluations, achieved during TREX, which can be a useful reporting metric. Know that tracking all of this information is a lot! Whatever system you use, be organized and assertive in tracking these details. It's an unfortunate outcome for a participant to not receive the training opportunities they were seeking simply by being overlooked for an opportunity. See the **Training and Task Books** folder in **Appendix A.2** for resources.

6 Event Management and Operational Considerations

The following sections cover what happens during a TREX, with suggestions for how to incorporate the training, treatment and outreach program components. We also address operational considerations for the TREX IMT, especially the IC, Operations and Burn Bosses to review.

Again, language here is primarily from an ICS and NWCG perspective, but you can and should modify as needed to fit your context, culture and goals. Remember, too, that TREX events managed under ICS and following the NWCG qualification standard are not the wildfire incidents that those systems were designed to manage. While ICS can be a helpful organizing structure and is familiar to many fire practitioners in the U.S., expecting that a TREX will function exactly like a wildfire incident is trying to put a square peg in a round hole.

We strongly encourage your planning and event management teams to review and thoroughly understand what rules and policies are required by the standard(s) the TREX will follow, and what practices may be commonly followed but not grounded in an accurate reading of agency, organization, NWCG or other applicable policy.

TREX and Incident Qualification Cards (aka "Red Cards")

Whether or not Incident Qualification Cards are required for participation in a TREX is a question frequently asked by participants and cooperating partners. The answer is NO, a "red card" is not required. However, if the TREX (or other cooperative burn effort) is being managed under NWCG standards, all participants must be qualified under that standard, or the participating organizations must agree to accept the qualification standards of the other participating entities.

Policies governing qualification requirements must be understood, and a written agreement may be required to document this agreement. More on this subject may be found in the TREX and Incident Qualification Cards document in the Training and Task Books folder in Appendix A.2.

6.1 Welcoming Participants and Getting Ready to Burn

Bringing together TREX participants from a variety of locations and experiences can provide robust exposure to different cultural backgrounds, knowledge bases, and approaches to fire. It is important to consider how to foster an open, effective learning environment where everyone can both teach and learn within a group of people who may not know each other at the start and who may come from widely different fire and work cultures

6.1.1 Working Together

One way to set this expectation is to discuss group working agreements at the beginning of the event—an agreed-upon set of principles for all participants to follow throughout the event. Some TREX also choose to offer training on interpersonal skills such as active bystander or understanding the ways your own background impacts how you communicate and perceive others. Cultivating a constructive learning environment by building communication skills will improve participants' experience during the TREX and may be beneficial professional development they can take home.

Many TREX, particularly those not primarily focused on local participants, set aside the first day as an orientation day regardless of whether conditions are right to burn. Participants then have an opportunity to learn about the ecology, fire history and partnerships of the host landscape; meet each other and start building crew cohesion; orient themselves to their assigned equipment; and complete skill drills. Participants also greatly benefit from the opportunity to practice or refresh skills in hands-on scenarios without live fire, especially any tactics that are unique or unusual to the host landscape, such as blacklining, constructing hose lays, or practicing pump and roll with engines. This practice helps to build crew cohesion in a low-stakes scenario, builds the skills of those new to fire, and reinforces the use of effective tactics prior to the first burn day. This is also a good time for trainees and their assigned evaluators, along with module leaders and the Training Specialist (if you have one) to meet and discuss needs and expectations.

However, you choose to plan your schedule, consider how your first few days can enhance later operational readiness.

Participant Check-In and Check-Out

While sometimes overlooked in planning, having a dedicated and staffed check-in process that greets each participant sets everyone up for success. During check-in consider these possible to-do's:

- Have participants turn in or sign any waivers or participant agreements, including photo releases
- Ensure registration has been paid (if applicable)
- Get TREX swag (if applicable)
- Receive lodging assignment and an orientation to facilities
- Check in any equipment brought by participant
- Check out any equipment/PPE the participant will borrow for use during TREX
- Provide copies of IAP, agenda or other printed materials
- Verify qualifications, such as Incident Qualification Cards (red cards) or certificates
- Verify training needs and requests, and receive assignments
- Short one-on-one interview with the Training Officer to set expectations

Remember also to plan for a check-out/demobilization day—you will need to collect loaned equipment and PPE, ensure that task books and incident personnel evaluations have been completed, request feedback and conduct an AAR with participants, etc.

6.2 Agenda and Planning Non-Burn Days

Weather rarely allows for burning on every day of a TREX. Even during ideal weather windows, it is sometimes appropriate to plan days that provide for rest or other learning opportunities. Non-burn days also provide important opportunities to allow participants dive deeper into the local geography, ecology and culture, strengthen group cohesion, receive other training, and appropriately close the event.

What you do on non-burn days will depend on your TREX format, and plans will need to be flexible to accommodate burn windows. In general, allowing the first 24 hours for crew cohesion, introductions, equipment familiarization, skill drills, local ecology and TREX expectations will provide a smoother transition into burn implementation. Allowing time to work through knowledge gaps, training fundamentals, and build crew cohesion can help buffer the discomfort of adapting to a new place, new people, and new ways of doing things. Similarly, you may want to plan a closing session for a participant AAR, time for completing task books and demobilization, turning in gear, etc.

NWCG Courses and TREX

Some TREX events choose to incorporate NWCG courses into their events. If you plan to offer an NWCG course, the lead instructor, at minimum should, be familiar with and meet the standards of the NWCG Standards for Course Delivery (PMS 901-1). This document, along with PMS 310-1 and course-specific guidance on the Wildland Fire Learning Portal should be used together to:

- "Promote consistent, professional, and standardized training in support of national interagency wildland fire management objectives.
- Define course management and delivery procedures for agencies, instructors, and Course Coordinators.
- Describe the course organization system.
- Provide direction that enables users to augment course content based on local needs.
- Provide direction on establishing agency-specific course equivalency.
- Establish minimum requirements for course completion certification."

As you develop your plan for non-burn days, consider the following:

- **TREX goals**: How can the activities and topics you cover on non-burn days help meet those goals?
- **Formal training**: Are you planning to incorporate any formal training into your TREX, such as an NWCG course? If so, are you planning to offer that training using cadre attending the TREX, or do you plan to contract with another person or organization?
- **Format**: What format will you use for non-burn day activities? Some options include presentations, workshops, field tours and role-play scenarios.

- **Prepare for all situations**: How will you provide meaningful training if you are unable to burn at all? If you have ideal weather windows, what non-burn training will you prioritize, if any?
- **Partners**: Who do you need to work with to deliver your non-burn day training? At what point in the event planning process do you need to involve them?
- **Some ideas**: Refer to the TREX Activity Workbook for a variety of options developed by experienced TREX organizers or the NWCG Tactical Decision Games.

Common Topics for Non-Burn Days

- **Opening session**
  - Icebreakers
  - Introductions
  - Forming crews, teams or modules
  - Setting expectations, learning objectives and group agreements
- **Local ecology and fire regimes**
- **Participant sharing about their home units and work**
- **Burn planning and preparation, including scouting burn units**
- **Skills training**
  - Equipment familiarization—engines, UTVs, firing devices, hose lays,
  - Black lining, pump and roll, ignition patterns, patrol and securing the burn unit
  - Chainsaw use and maintenance
  - Fire effects and the Fire Effects Monitor (FEMO) role and required skills
  - Weather observations, submitting spot weather forecasts
  - Map and compass skills
  - Radio use, programming and communications
  - First aid and medical response
- **Role-playing scenarios such as medical incidents or media interviews**
- **Trainee/trainer breakout groups**
  - What is a task book, and how to ensure it is filled out correctly
  - IQCS, red cards and how wildland resources operate nationally
  - FFT2 to RXB2 career progression
  - Review of Wildland Fire Lessons Learned resources
- **Closing session**
  - After action review
  - Reflections and takeaways
  - Completing task books and performance evaluations
  - Instructions for demobilization
  - Participant evaluations of TREX program and IMT

6.3 Operational Considerations

The experiential training and cooperative burning environments are inherently complex. During TREX we are inviting and combining sources of complexity such as:

- Interacting with new people, who will have unfamiliar communication and working styles
- Working in unfamiliar terrain, fuels and weather
- Learning new skills and stretching into new and uncomfortable trainee roles
- Being away from home and familiar work expectations
- Adjusting to new ways of organizing, communicating and being

6.3.1 Planning for Complexity

Most TREX experience one or more new sources of complexity along with the usual complexities of implementing prescribed fire, providing ample opportunity for oversights, missed communication, and unintended outcomes. From initial planning through event close-out, you can take actions to mitigate these complexities, build “margin” into your event, and decrease risk of unintended outcomes. In this context, margin simply means the fail safes, backstops or redundancies that can stop an unintended outcome from developing or reduce its impact if it occurs. Ways to build margin before and during the event can include:

- Adding enough people to the planning team and TREX organization with redundant skill sets to ensure your ability to fill gaps should someone depart the event unexpectedly.
- Scaling your event to the size you can manage. You may *want* to invite 100 people, but how many can you really manage well?
- Openly acknowledging complexity with all TREX participants, setting expectations, and assigning responsibility for how that complexity will be managed through organizing, communication, planning, etc.
- Setting realistic time frames and schedules that consider the training nature of the event. Don’t expect trainees to accomplish tasks as quickly as someone with years of experience. Multiple trainees working together may need even more time.
- Completing extra prep on burn units—this might be wider fire lines than normal or blacklining fire lines ahead of time, removing heavy fuels close to the line, prepping interior unit breaks and contingency lines you may not normally prep.
- Building burn organizations for implementation that include more people and equipment than required by the burn plan and/or having contingency resources present on site during the burn.
- Developing robust external and internal communications plans, including a crisis communication plan.
- Slowing down the operational tempo by deliberately building in time for reflection and synthesizing learning - AARs, non-burn days, module discussions, and mealtimes may offer opportunities.
- Leaders demonstrating humility and a learning mindset in welcoming constant feedback, discussion and input from all TREX participants. Use the team, at all levels of the organization, to highlight concerns, missed information or misunderstandings, and developing problems before those problems become serious.

Finally, be willing to say “no” and be prepared to do so in a respectful and constructive manner. There can be significant pressure to achieve acres burned or deliver training opportunities during TREX, but you must balance those pressures against the other complexities you are managing, your long-term goals for TREX and prescribed fire practice in your area, the wellbeing of the involved entities, people, and participants, and the ultimate objective of safety. It is often said that “slow is smooth, and smooth is fast.” There’s little need to rush when we are focused on durable, long-term progress toward our goals.

6.3.2 Pre-Burn Requirements

Requirements for implementing prescribed fire will vary depending on partnering organization SOPs and guidance, local laws, and permitting requirements. Different organizations operating within the same geography may be subject to different requirements. For instance, a federal agency may not be required to obtain an ignition permit from the fire department or state agency but may still be required to secure a smoke permit; a nonprofit partner may be required to obtain both permits.

The way burns are planned and executed also differs depending on organization standards and adherence to NWCG or other qualification standards. Generally, representatives of the hosting organization (such as the landowner, burn boss or both) should be responsible for ensuring that all requirements are met; these representatives may be part of the TREX team or may be external partners. However, the TREX team—primarily the person filling the Operations role, should be in close communication with those representatives and is responsible for ensuring that resource requests from partners can be safely and appropriately met by the TREX. Operations and the TREX management team (especially the IC) also have responsibility for declining assignments or requests that cannot be safely or appropriately accommodated.

The following is a non-exhaustive list of operational considerations but should serve to prompt thinking about the important elements of cooperatively conducting prescribed fire with TREX resources. As always, attending a TREX and connecting with other organizers can help prepare you to address these issues during your own event. Many organizations include a “pre-burn checklist” as a required element of their burn plans; this list can be very helpful in evaluating specific operational requirements and making collaborative go/no-go decisions.

- Are agreement requirements met?
- Are burn plans written to a standard that allows for cooperative burning by TREX resources or are agreements in place to bridge differences? Are the provided maps adequate?
- Are all regulatory requirements met by the TREX team directly or by the hosting partner?
- Are weather and other burn plan prescription parameters met?
- Are available resources sufficient to meet burn objectives?
- Are expectations for TREX resources clear regarding equipment use, communication, leadership and work assignments? Do individuals assigned to work in qualified and trainee roles understand their assignment, expectations for their role, and who they will be working for on the fire line?
- Are TREX resources adequately briefed for the situation regarding contingencies, emergency procedures including medical response, how to decline participation, or other safety considerations?

- What patrol and other needs to secure the unit will you be responsible for? Consider how accumulating patrol responsibilities could stretch resources thin over subsequent days and limit your ability to complete new burns, particularly if there are significant drive times to reach burn units. Consider how you will provide for patrol and other needs to secure burn unit(s)s after the end of TREX.

6.4 Participant Well-Being and Medical Response Planning

TREX can be both exhilarating and exhausting. Anticipating and managing for cumulative fatigue and behavioral stress responses from participants and even the IMT is a critical leadership challenge to address.

The TREX environment can be uniquely stressful even for experienced fire practitioners accustomed to the hectic pace and uncertainty of wildland fire assignments. In fact, it is sometimes the experienced fire practitioners who struggle most with the unexpected differences of the TREX model. On the surface, TREX – especially those formatted like a 14-day wildfire assignment—seem normal and familiar to the experienced. In reality, being placed into an environment where the fuels, fire behavior, people around us, expectations of us in a trainee role, and so much else is all new, all at once, can be overwhelming.

Participants and the IMT may need the most support during certain periods of the event, for example the first few days, during multiple days of burning in a row, or following a serious medical or other incident.

As a TREX planner and leader you can provide this support by:

- Setting, clearly communicating, and modeling expectations for performance and behavior
- Encouraging feedback and questions; creating a respectful environment that encourages dialogue
- Openly acknowledging the likelihood of experiencing stress and stress reactions, normalizing the expectation of appropriate and managed discomfort
- Providing resources for participants to manage their own wellbeing
- Being aware and responsive to the need for rest, down time, the additional time to accomplish unfamiliar assigned duties, and time to attend to personal needs
- Being capable of adjusting on the fly to meet participant needs and respond to unforeseen situations
- Ensuring that the IC and IMT touch base with module leads and other participants throughout the event for insight into morale and wellbeing

TREX organizers have provided resources during and after TREX to support wellbeing, including inviting guest speakers to present on mental health and related subjects. Some TREX have also embedded a mental health professional as an IMT member, making their expertise available to participants and the IMT for the duration of the TREX.

Medical response is an important consideration to address in planning. Many TREX assign a Medical Unit Leader to coordinate on-site care appropriate to the qualifications of medically trained personnel present, as well as plan for medical emergencies requiring off-site care. The Medical Unit Leader is responsible for creating the medical plan (ICS 206), coordinating with medically qualified TREX participants and external partners (if applicable), and briefing the IC and IMT regarding minor injuries, required resources, or medical emergencies.

Resources for Supporting Participant Wellbeing

- TREX Medical Risk Management Guide
- TREX Medical Risk Management Pocket Guide
- Federal Wildland Firefighter Health and Wellbeing Program

Southern Blue Ridge TREX ©James Miller/TNC

7 Follow-up and Next Steps

Once your TREX is over there are still a few important tasks to consider. But first, congratulate yourself, your planning team, and your IMT. Hosting a TREX is an achievement that deserves to be celebrated!

7.1 After Action Review and Evaluation

As with individual burns, an after action review is a key part of evaluating and improving future TREX events. How you structure your AAR and other opportunities for feedback will depend on factors including what kind of TREX event you host, what happened during the event, and the partners involved. You may wish to consult the NWCG After Action Reviews page, particularly the section that covers commonly used formats. It may be most useful to hold an AAR and gather feedback from organizers and participants separately.

When you do host your AAR(s), remember that, as highlighted in NWCG's 6 Minutes for Safety, an AAR is not a critique and not a forum to assign blame. It is an open, honest and professional discussion for purposes of improvement."

7.1.1 Participants

Some TREX choose to host an AAR conversation before participants return home, and then follow up with an emailed evaluation form after the event. This provides the opportunity for both in-the-moment, in-person, and conversation-based feedback as well as reflections after participants have returned home and processed their experience. A written form, particularly an anonymous one, may also provide an opportunity for feedback that participants were uncomfortable sharing in person.

7.1.2 IMT and Planning Team

Whether you hold an AAR with your planning team and IMT together or separately will depend on the makeup of those groups and the degree of overlap within them. It may be useful to hold a brief conversation at the event prior to IMT and planning team members' travel home, but consider hosting your full AAR conversation(s) after the event is over, when members have had a chance to return home, catch their breath, decompress, rest and reflect.

It may be important for your planning team and/or IMT AAR to include discussion of feedback from participants. If this is the case, sequence those conversations appropriately, particularly if planning team/IMT members will need to review responses submitted by participants provided well after the end of the TREX, as opposed to relying on an in-person AAR for participants.

7.1.3 Planning for the Future

Remember, TREX is best deployed as part of a strategy to achieve long-term goals. Use what you gathered during your AAR(s), as well as other relevant information, to evaluate progress and adjust. This may include talking with your partners about whether to host another TREX, and what adjustments to format, team composition, burn units, communications, or other factors should be made. It may be useful to create resources such as a written summary of your event AAR or a final evaluation of real costs to inform next steps, as well as any required reporting.

7.2 Post-Event Communication

Consider what messages or information you wish to send to various audiences after the event. This could include:

- Information to participants such as resources shared during the event, a means by which to share photos, and participant contact information;
- Event summaries, follow-ups, or thank you notes to partners, funders, media outlets and team members; and
- Ways for participants to stay connected to the event or each other, such as messaging groups, websites or social media pages.

7.2.1 Share Your Story

Stories from TREX events can be incredibly powerful. Think about how to leverage your TREX story to support your strategy and overall goals for fire in your area—who might be interested in your story, whose ideas or beliefs about fire could be changed by your story, who could be inspired to join your work?

The Fire Networks team would appreciate hearing about your TREX. Please consider writing about your TREX for the Fire Networks Blog. Peer learning is at the core of the Fire Learning Network, and all the Fire Networks. The larger prescribed fire community will benefit from hearing about your event, your goals, your hurdles, and your accomplishments.

7.2.2 Help Us Tell the TREX Story

Report data about your event to us; please include participant roster, burn information, photos, and any links to media coverage. And if you don't plan to tell a longer story elsewhere, please send a short 2-5 sentence blurb about your TREX for inclusion in the next edition of the Networker.

Virginia WTREX
©Daniel White/TNC

8 Conclusion

TREX events can be impactful both to individual development and to relationship-building among partners. They are also not the right choice for every geography or situation. Some organizers begin planning a TREX event only to realize that another approach to training or implementation is a better fit. As you are planning, remain open to the best solution for your place. TREX should be deployed as part of a strategy leading toward a larger goal, whether that be routine collaborative burning, developing key qualified positions locally, socializing prescribed fire as an accepted practice, or something else entirely.

Start by clearly understanding your why for hosting a TREX and keep that goal centered as you move through your planning process. Address liability and agreements early, cultivate as many diverse burn opportunities as possible, and assemble a planning and event leadership team that can manage the logistics and deliver on the goals of the TREX.

Because you are working within your own context, geography and fire culture, you may also choose to organize your planning and event teams very differently, use different terminology to describe team roles and how you apply fire to the land, and craft an event that delivers learning in a way that reflects your place and values. While a TREX should deliver the three fundamental elements—training, treatment and outreach—how you achieve that is not predetermined or constrained by the language or suggestions presented in this guide nor by what previous TREX organizers have done.

A successful TREX depends on a flexible and creative attitude. Good planning and strong partnerships can alleviate stress and result in a resilient and successful program. As you consider starting your TREX journey, remember there are many resources and experienced peers available to help you navigate the matters presented in this guide. The success of the TREX model is largely due to the focus on learning and connection, and this extends to organizers. Connect with other organizers, attend a TREX, and then embark on your own unique journey.

Persevere

Experience tells us that if you cancel a TREX, it definitely won't achieve your objectives. Despite significant challenges—weather, funding or political—being adaptive, goal-oriented and persistent will help you overcome most hurdles. TREX organizers have persevered in the face of red flag warnings, burn bans, blizzards, government shutdowns, loss of funding, and challenging political or social acceptance environments to deliver impactful events with impressive success. You can, too.

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A Appendixes

A.1 Resources for Planning a TREX

Activity Guides

- TREX Activity Workbook https://firenetworks.org/resource/trex-activity-workbook/
- NWCG Tactical Decision Games, scenario training ideas for non-burn days https://www.nwcg.gov/wfldp/toolbox/tactical-decision-games

Personnel

- TREX IMT Role Expectations (TNC-Oregon; rev. TREX program team) https://tnc.box.com/s/7evfsp6k9tv4mnperk4il1qwzihhv9ey
- TREX IMT Roles and Responsibilities (Watershed Research and Training Center) https://tnc.box.com/s/8reqfbqo55sx60f4v9m34kogz0g2w0pl
- TREX NWCG Position Task Book Expectations https://tnc.box.com/s/mhozw9w956ukhyngqjtxkbuyzhg7mnt9

TREX Medical Pathways documents

- Medical Risk Management Guide https://firenetworks.org/resource/trex-medical-risk-management-guide/
- Medical Risk Management Pocket Guide https://firenetworks.org/resource/trex-medical-risk-management-pocket-guide/

Fire Networks website

- TREX program information https://firenetworks.org/trex/
- TREX resources https://firenetworks.org/fire-networks-resources-trex/
- TREX events https://firenetworks.org/fire-networks-news-events-trex/

More About TREX

- Fire Networks Blog entries about TREX https://fireadaptednetwork.org/?s=TREX
- Notes from the Field about TREX https://tnc.box.com/s/qtdiujkuz5g383yiw4qk9tv2xx5t1zwf
- TREX Facebook https://www.facebook.com/TREXprescribedfiretrainingexchange

A.2 Sample Documents

Browse the Resources folder on Box, which includes a variety of documents related to TREX. These include examples of TREX agenda, announcements, and applications as well as ICS forms and documents developed by experienced organizers on topics including IMT roles, event management, and module readiness.

Skip directly to:

- Agendas folder
- Agreements folder
- Announcements and Participant Information folder
- Application and Registration Forms folder
- ICS and Other Forms folder
- Training and Task Books folder

General documents:

Planning and Event Management Spreadsheet (Cooperative Burn Week 2023)

TREX IMT Role Expectations (TNC-Oregon; rev. TREX program team)

TREX IMT Roles and Responsibilities (Watershed Research and Training Center)

TREX Planning Manual (Canadian Praries Prescribed Fire Exchange)

A.3 Contacts

TREX program team

- Emily Hohman emily.hohman@tnc.org
- Laurel Kays laurel.kays@tnc.org

WTREX

- Lenya Quinn-Davidson lquinndavidson@ucanr.edu

TREX data

- Liz Rank lrank@tnc.org

Networker newsletter (subscribe or submit stories)

- Liz Rank lrank@tnc.org

All Fire Networks staff https://firenetworks.org/contact/

Chama TREX ©Caitlin Barbour/AmeriCorps VISTA