



# Save Pangolins' Pangolin Champions Program

## STAFF HANDBOOK

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# Background

In 2020, Save Pangolins launched the Pangolin Champions Program to support emerging leaders in the pangolin conservation landscape. As of 2023, the program has accepted 12 pangolin conservationists, each who have proven dedication to pangolins, have carved their own path in uncharted terrain and have unique and impactful contributions to these endangered species.

The program selects committed conservationists who have carved their own path through uncharted terrain to protect the eight species of pangolin from the threat of extinction. While the program is designed to be flexible and evolve to best meet program participant needs over time, selected Champions each receive personal project funding as well as mentorship, training, and opportunities for camaraderie and information sharing among a global network.

Save Pangolins seeks to grow the Champions network with new members who meet the candidate criteria below and ultimately aims to achieve representation across pangolin range states in Africa and Asia.

**This document is intended as a handbook for Save Pangolins staff to manage the Champions program consistently and transparently, integrating research results and recommendations from the 2022-2024 class of Emerging Wildlife Conservation Leaders that supported an evaluation of the program.**

The EWCL team also created an external Applicant Handbook ([link](#)) to be shared on Save Pangolins' website and/or with prospective Pangolin Champion program applicants. The EWCL team recommends updating the Applicant Handbook to reflect any changes resulting from recommendations that follow.

# Mission & Goals

## Save Pangolins Vision

Save Pangolins envisions a world where all eight pangolin species are safe from extinction.

## Mission

The Pangolin Champions program supports individual conservationists who are emerging leaders in pangolin conservation. These conservationists are chosen because of their dedication to pangolins, and their projects are in support of Save Pangolins' mission: to stop the killing, stop the trafficking, and stop the demand (of pangolins). Save Pangolins aims to inspire people to conserve pangolins, change behavior that drives the illegal trade, and increase the capacity of conservation on the ground where pangolins live. They provide expertise and leadership in coordinating global pangolin conservation efforts and run campaigns that engage the public and generate funds for conservation.

## Expectations: Save Pangolins Staff

Save Pangolins Staff will fill the following roles annually in support of the Pangolin Champions program:

- **Organization management: strategically, transparently manage Pangolin Champions Program and support Champion projects**
  - Annually review strategy for growth/evolution of the program and set goals for the year.
  - **(Recommendation)** Coordinate a facilitated work session with Save Pangolins staff and key stakeholders to develop an updated Theory of Change to clarify the purpose of the organization, programs, and staff roles.
    - Clarify Pangolin Champion program goals within this framework, including clarifying criteria for the selection process of future Pangolins Champions and SP intention to commit to representation of range country conservationists and diversity, equity and inclusion.
  - Launch request for proposals to consider new Champions as possible.
    - **(Recommendation)** Review Applicant Handbook to ensure content accurately reflects program intent annually. EWCL team recommends adding a section to that handbook called "Role of Save Pangolins Staff" to transparently share staff commitments to supporting the program.
  - Review applications and select Pangolin Champions.
  - **(Recommendation)** Periodically evaluate program success through distributing EWCL-developed [evaluation survey](#) and other methods, and make necessary improvements to ensure and increase impact.
  - **(Recommendation)** Schedule annual and biennial progress discussion meetings between each Champion and Save Pangolins Staff.
  - Provide timely responses to support Champion project advancement as necessary.

- **(Recommendation)** Review submitted project reports and provide feedback; acknowledge program completion at the end of Champion project timeline.
- **(Recommendation)** To increase capacity to deeply support Champions, develop and hire for a Save Pangolins volunteer/internship opportunity.
- **Build Champion capacity and resources**
  - Coordinate relevant trainings based on topics requested by Champions (follow-up workshop/ training on fundraising for small organizations, grant writing and donor engagement, Networking and relationship building; Communications and marketing; Project management; outreach material development; and monitoring and evaluation .)
    - **(Recommendation)** As a best practice learned from the first two sessions offered, ensure these trainings consider language and time zone differences; offer opportunities for interaction with facilitators and fellow Champions; and share out relevant resources before and following trainings.
  - **(Recommendation)** Encourage contribution and utilization of a shared online resource bank with resources relevant to Champions with the intent that Champions and/or partners continue to add content and maintain the growing library. This resource could include articles, training/learning opportunities, conferences, recorded webinars, volunteer resources (like Taproot+ or others), and the developed summary of EWCL benchmarking research around grant programs/opportunities. The resources can be organized by theme/skill area so they are easily searchable by those seeking specific skills or content. This could exist as a subpage on Save Pangolins' website, with updates shared via email quarterly to keep content top-of-mind for Champions.
  - **(Recommendation)** Match Pangolin Champions with mentors; see additional detail within "Foster network and communication" below.
  - **(Recommendation)** To support Champions' longer-term success and address lack of resources, and pending support capacity by Save Pangolins staff: Develop a second-tier grant opportunity for the Pangolin Champions program to support continued growth and development. Grants could be available to Champions who have successfully completed their first project and would allow them to pursue additional training/site visits/etc. that are most useful to advancing their work. Grant recipients could be required to report out to the rest of the Champions network summarizing the training they received and help build a catalog of learning opportunities (existing resources) for others.
  - **(Recommendation)** If Save Pangolins' goal is still to focus on "pre-Pangolin Conservation Fund grantees" as identified in initial Pangolin Champions program overview, the team recommends more transparently formalizing the relationship between Save Pangolins and the PCF.
- **Foster network and communication**
  - **(Recommendation)** Designate a Save Pangolin staff person to foster ongoing communication between Save Pangolins Staff and Champions, as well as among the Champions, themselves via the following:
    - Connect Champions with Save Pangolins staff through a scheduled, bi-annual call between Save Pangolins staff and each Champion to understand project progress;

- Connect Champions with each other on a planned, consistent basis through facilitation of three to four yearly virtual meetings, following the proposed year-long content calendar ([Link](#)).
  - Individual meetings could include: presentations by Champions to share real-time updates on their own projects, discuss best practices and learnings, support each other through challenges and identify upcoming meetings/conferences to maximize opportunities where multiple Champions may attend. In advance of meetings, Champions can update the project update template file below; this Google slideshare file can be maintained as a working, frequently-updated document for reference by all the Pangolin Champions and also among save pangolin staff members. ([Link](#))
  - Guest speakers, including Champion program graduates, could provide education in noted areas of interest/need as identified by EWCL needs assessment.
  - Connect Champions with each other and resources through a quarterly newsletter/email to Champions to share updates, Champion highlights, upcoming deadlines for funding opportunities, international conferences, meetings and encourage Pangolin Champions to network during any meetings where multiple representatives may be attending. The newsletter or email can be led by a rotating volunteer Pangolin Champion who is willing to gather information, deadlines for programs and share among Pangolin Champion alumni and current Champions. ([Link](#))
- Encourage communications among Champion group, including program graduates, through platforms like WhatsApp (quizzes, polls, weekly photo challenges, etc).
- Coordinate an in-person meeting to help Champions strengthen relationships within the program. If this type of meeting cannot be planned in the near-term, schedule a meeting/symposium as a part of another conference already being planned and offer monetary support for Pangolin Champions to attend.
- Strategically plan local field site visits as a part of planned conferences/meetings so Pangolin Champions can personally and professionally connect with other Champions and learn from each other's work. Site visits could target a particular skill in which the host has expertise, if applicable. Provide second tier grants for travel funds/support for Champions to organize their own site visits; leverage an existing field exchange program to incorporate pangolin conservationists.
- Foster the network longterm by continuing to facilitate connections, meetings, support new Champions as possible, and share resources among past Champions.
- **Additional Recommendations**

- Grow networking opportunities beyond the Champions program by creating a more formal network of alumni who remain connected to Save Pangolins and current Champions after project completion. For example, Save Pangolins could develop a more formal mentorship program that pairs PC alumni with current program participants or more established conservationists for one-on-one support that does not directly require SP staff/resources.
- **(Recommendation) Raise awareness of the need for pangolin conservation, Champion’s work, and amplify Champion stories in the media whenever possible, which could include:**
  - Provide a year-round platform for Champions to tell their stories (via podcasts shared on social media, “from the field” updates, etc).
  - Develop and promote a Save Pangolins annual fundraiser to specifically support Champions.
  - Leverage World Pangolin Day for a more impactful annual awareness-raising campaign. High-level recommendations following the EWCL-led 2023 World Pangolin Day include: begin campaign planning in November/December annually to ensure strategy and coordination; align with other stakeholders; agree upon a campaign calendar, milestones and expectations early in the planning process; research Champion needs to ensure most impactful campaign. For additional detail on the 2023 World Pangolin Day campaign and these recommendations, see [Link](#).

## Eligibility

- Successful candidates will be:
  - From, or currently living and working in, a pangolin range state.
  - An up-and-coming conservation leader who can demonstrate how they would benefit from capacity-building and leadership development opportunities (rather than a seasoned, experienced conservationist).
  - Actively working in wildlife conservation and either already working on pangolin issues, or wanting to start working on pangolin issues.
  - Intending to continue contributing to pangolin conservation for the next five years or more.
  - Willing to help strengthen and grow the pangolin conservation community, particularly of on-the-ground, in-country practitioners.
  - Note: applicants can be a previous Pangolin Crisis Fund grant recipient, but this is not a prerequisite requirement.

## Timeline

- **(Recommendation)** Transparently share when applications will be accepted and selections made each year. Add to the applicant handbook.

- **(Recommendation)** Clearly outline what Champions will be expected to do during project term, and in order to “graduate” successfully:
  - Participate in quarterly meetings?
  - Participate in occasional training sessions and workshops?
  - Submit a final report due (within one month of?) project term end date.

## Applications

- **(Recommendation)** Submission of an application by the deadline is required to be considered as a Pangolin Champion. EWCL team recommends use of a formal [template application \(draft\)](#). This could be designed within Google Forms or another platform of choice.
- Applications should include:
  - Basic information on applicant location, background, and eligibility, etc.
  - A thoughtful **project idea** that outlines a path to **direct threat reduction and impact** for pangolin conservation OR
  - A thoughtful **proposal for personal professional development** with a justification for how the training will lead to advancements in pangolin conservation
  - Outline of expected achievements through participation in the program
  - A letter of recommendation is requested, but exemption is possible if the applicant does not yet have professional contacts. Save Pangolins team will seek referrals when possible.

## Funding Guidelines

- Financial support from Save Pangolins may be used to support field conservation activities, training opportunities, graduate studies, personal salary or travel (to facilitate on-site conservation learning, etc.), or other costs upon approval from Save Pangolins. Champions should be able to justify expenditures and how they directly reduce threats to pangolins or support advancement of their ability to conserve pangolins.
- **(Recommendation)** Add to the list of approved funding uses and clarify in Applicant Handbook: staff support salaries, access to counseling services to address burnout.
- **(Recommendation)** Define restrictions on use of funding, if any.

## Expectations: Champions

- Submission of required annual report
- **(Recommendation)** Further define matriculation requirements for Champions. These could include:
  - Quarterly submission of high-resolution photos/videos and stories to Save Pangolins in order to amplify the work being done across social media and other

communications platforms. Photos/videos should be approved for Save Pangolins' use in communications materials, depict the work being completed with Save Pangolins' support and help demonstrate the benefit to pangolins and their habitats.

- Participation in (specific number of) trainings (virtual or in-person)
- Attendance of (specific number of) Pangolin Champions network meetings (virtual or in-person)
- Connection with assigned mentor and prolonged engagement where possible
- Matriculate from program by:
  - Submitting final report by agreed upon deadline
  - Submitting documentation of training hours completed
  - Completing post-program survey ([HERE](#))
  - Confirming preferences on continued engagement in the Champions network (through ongoing connection opportunities as a mentor, at conferences/events, guest speaking at future Champion training events, etc.)
  - “Give back” to the network by recommending promising future Champions and resources for consideration to Save Pangolins.



# Recommendations from Emerging Wildlife Conservation Leaders

*The following research findings were previously shared with Save Pangolins staff during the EWCL 2022-2024 program; summary content pasted here for easy reference.*

*Recommendations already completed by the EWCL team are marked with a blue (✓).*

## Key Research Findings

The EWCL Save Pangolins team conducted a review of Save Pangolins' Pangolin Champions program goals, structure and materials; as well as a needs assessment and verbal interviews among current Pangolin Champions to identify gaps and opportunities in the Pangolin Champions program. Results highlighted the following **key insights**:

- **Pangolin Champions seek clarity around program structure, expectations, and frequency of communication with Save Pangolins staff.** This is due to Champions' lack of understanding about grant terms, expectations around project completion, and what happens at the end of the program. In general, communication with Save Pangolins staff was cited as positive and helpful, but infrequent and unplanned.
- **Champions are under-resourced.** They struggle to find funding that is unrestricted, to support their small-scale/startup projects, to support overhead costs such as publishing research, to pay staff consistently, and (though often unstated) to pay themselves. This leads to frequent staff turnover and Champions' investing significant amounts of personal time, resources, and energy to train new staff and manage their programs. Multiple Champions reported using personal financial resources to support staff or other aspects of their programs. Lack of training in grant writing, donor management and communications, combined with cultural differences in philanthropy make it challenging for many Champions to secure sufficient, sustainable funding.
- **Champions desire a very diverse list of requested training/courses to increase their impact.** Their requests range from training in leadership and project management, grant writing, and public speaking, to capacity building opportunities for team members, to physical needs including camera traps, radio tags, and on-site learning opportunities through field visits.
- **The need for pangolin conservation and the work of Pangolin Champions is not well known.** Champions seek support in communication and storytelling about their work and the importance of pangolin conservation. They also require platforms to reach their audiences, ranging from the communities in which they work, to partners, government agencies and officials, to global audiences and potential donors.
- **Champions lack interaction within the program, knowledge of each others' projects, a sense of community, and a strong network.** Champions cited that although some previously knew each other before becoming Pangolin Champions, they have never met in person as a Champion group. All Champions mentioned this lack of

personal connection as a barrier to open communication and forming a sense of community and productive network among Champions.

### **Research Goals and Approach**

The EWCL Class 9 Save Pangolins team project aims to develop and implement a refreshed strategy for the Save Pangolins' Pangolin Champions program to better support emerging leaders in the pangolin conservation landscape, including tools and resources to address identified gaps in the areas of networking and mentorship, skills and capacity building, and overall program impact.

As a first step, the team designed a research plan to gather information from Pangolin Champions directly to (1) identify Pangolin Champions program strengths and areas of opportunity and (2) make recommendations for short- and long-term strategies to address identified areas of opportunity.

The team designed a needs assessment survey in Google Forms for distribution to Pangolin Champions and sought input and review by Save Pangolins staff and Impact by Design to ensure effective design prior to distribution. The survey was distributed to all 12 Pangolin Champions via email, with follow-up emails to encourage responses within a two-week timeframe. All 12 Champions responded to the survey.

Each member of the Save Pangolins EWCL team conducted a follow up verbal interview with two Champions to gain deeper insight into survey responses, their perspective on the Pangolin Champions program and needed capacities to advance pangolin conservation. For consistency, EWCL team members developed a written script to guide interviews. The script was reviewed by Save Pangolins staff and Impact by Design prior to implementation, and included an introductory statement, eight key questions, and a closing statement. Responses were gathered from 11 out of the 12 Champions. One Champion faced personal challenges during the time of the interviews and was unable to participate.

**Analysis:** The EWCL team compiled responses from the needs assessment and verbal interviews and reviewed to identify common themes across reported strengths, challenges, and needs, as well as analyze gaps between desired capacities and the current or actual situation of the Champions.

The EWCL team additionally reviewed existing Pangolin Champion program details provided by Save Pangolins to identify opportunities for program clarification, alternative structuring, or evolution. Analysis of findings is incorporated in the recommendations below.

As planned, the EWCL team also began initial benchmarking research to assess how the Pangolin Champions program compares to similar conservation leader recognition and capacity building programs. Rather than reporting findings in this report, the team recommends continuing this portion of research throughout the length of the EWCL project to build a catalog of similar programs for comparison and as a resource for current and future Pangolin Champions seeking additional opportunities or support.

## **Recommendations and Progress as of Fall 2023**

The EWCL team summarized challenges into four key theme areas of:

- **Organizational Needs**
- **Capacity-building** for Champions
- **General Awareness** of Pangolin Conservation
- **Network Building** among Champions

Within each theme area, the team offers a series of recommendations to address the challenges. Recommendations are categorized as short- or long-term potential solutions. While the team seeks to offer a comprehensive suite of recommendations for Save Pangolins' consideration, the team recognizes its limited capacity to implement all ideas given the length of the EWCL Class 9 program. In the final section, the team identifies which of the short-term solutions it could feasibly complete within the project timeframe. The team will take action on next steps following discussion with and approval by Save Pangolins staff and EWCL leadership.

### **Organizational Needs:**

**CHALLENGE: Lack of clarity around program expectations, and inconsistent communication with Pangolin Champions throughout the program.**

#### **Short-term Recommendations**

- Coordinate a facilitated work session with Save Pangolin staff and key stakeholders to develop an updated Theory of Change to clarify the purpose of the organization, programs, and staff roles.
  - Clarify Pangolin Champion program goals within this framework, including clarifying criteria for the selection process of future Pangolins Champions and SP intention to commit to representation of range country conservationists and diversity, equity and inclusion.
- ✓ Review and revise program criteria, guidelines, expectations, and timelines. Ensure that clear communication strategies and expectations are shared with grantees upon grant receipt and recognition as a Champion. Provide current champions with clear goals and expectations for project completion. (Completed by EWCL team)
- ✓ Develop a tool for ongoing Pangolin Champion program evaluation to measure participant satisfaction and project impact/success. Potentially modify needs assessment survey to be used as this formal evaluation tool. (Completed by EWCL team)
- ✓ Create strategy document for future of Pangolin Champions program (inclusive of documents above). (In lieu of this - EWCL team created staff and applicant handbooks to reflect current program status.)

#### **Long-term Recommendations**

- ✓ Develop a communications plan for Save Pangolins staff to improve consistent, regular communication between Save Pangolins staff and Champions. This could include: Launching a periodical email from Save Pangolins staff with updates and Champion highlights; a bi-annual call with each Champion to understand project progress. Consider what elements could be hosted by a rotating leader role shared by Save Pangolins staff and Champions.
- Develop and hire for a Save Pangolins volunteer/internship opportunity to increase organization's capacity to deeply support Champions.

### **Capacity-building for Champions:**

**CHALLENGE: Champions are under-resourced.**

#### **Short-term Recommendations**

- (none)

#### **Long-term Recommendations**

- Develop a second-tier grant opportunity for the Pangolin Champions program to support their continued growth and development. Grants could be available to Champions who have successfully completed their first project and would allow them to pursue additional training/site visits/etc. that are most useful to advancing their work. Grant recipients could be required to report out to the rest of the Champions network summarizing the training they received and help build a catalog of learning opportunities (existing resources) for others.
  - If SP's goal is still to focus on "pre-Pangolin Crisis Fund grantees" as identified in initial Pangolin Champions program overview, the team recommends more transparently formalizing the relationship between SP and PCF.
  - EWCL team recommends review of strategic plan/theory of change first to ensure second-tier grant opportunity aligns with strategies and objectives.

**CHALLENGE: Champions desire a very diverse list of requested training/courses to increase their impact.**

#### **Short-term Recommendations**

- ✓ Compile a shared online resource bank with resources relevant to Champions with the intent that Champions and/or partners continue to add content and maintain the growing library. This resource could include articles, training/learning opportunities, conferences, recorded webinars, volunteer resources (like Taproot+), and a summary of EWCL benchmarking research around grant programs/opportunities. The resources can be organized by theme/skill area so they are easily searchable by those seeking specific skills or content. Could exist as a subpage on Save Pangolins' website, with updates shared via email quarterly to keep content top-of-mind for Champions. (Started by EWCL team, shared with Save Pangolins to share in an appropriate place.)



## Long-term Recommendations

- ✓ Create/facilitate webinars to advance needed capacity/skills as identified by Champions. (Two training sessions already hosted by EWCL team; ongoing/additional training opportunities recommended per Champion feedback.)
  - Additional topics requested include: fundraising for small organizations in developing areas, project management, grant writing (specifically for emerging conservationists), outreach material development, website development, science communication/engagement with policymakers/stakeholders/local communities, technical trainings for camera traps, radio tags, etc., filmmaking, monitoring and evaluation, pangolin behavior/ecology, staff training and management.

## General Awareness of Pangolin Conservation:

**CHALLENGE: The need for pangolin conservation and the work of Pangolin Champions is not well-known.**

## Short-term Recommendations

- ✓ Leverage World Pangolin Day (February 18, 2023) to raise awareness of pangolin conservation and the work of Pangolin Champions among relevant audiences, specifically:
  - ✓ Write blog post/article highlighting work of Champions to be shared on Save Pangolins site
  - ✓ Create communications toolkit for use leading up to World Pangolin Day to support Pangolin Champions in their local storytelling efforts, as well as help partners like Save Pangolins amplify storytelling on their platforms.
  - ✓ Facilitate podcast episode featuring the work of a (few) Champion(s)
  - (Completed by EWCL team)

## Long-term Recommendations

- Facilitate a communications workshop for Champions to develop a communication plan for their local areas and audiences.
  - Workshop should help them (1) create and establish communication goals; (2) define key audiences; (3) identify key messages; (4) create a tactical outreach plan; and (5) specify a timeline for moving forward.
- Develop pangolin conservation communications toolkit/outreach materials in local languages based on learnings from communications plans, for use and distribution by Pangolin Champions.
- Provide a year-round platform for Champions to tell their stories (via podcasts shared on social media, “from the field” updates, etc).
- Develop and promote a Save Pangolins annual fundraiser to specifically support Champions (i.e. virtual race, online art contest, etc).



## Network-Building Among Champions

**CHALLENGE:** Champions lack opportunities for facilitated interaction with one another resulting in an opportunity for SP to build a sense of community and a space for shared learning.

### Short-term Recommendations

- Launch a series of recurring virtual meetings for the Champions to connect on a planned, consistent basis. Meetings could include:
  - Presentations by Champions to present real-time updates on their own projects, discuss best practices and learnings, and support each other through challenges.
  - Guest speakers to provide education in noted areas of interest/need as identified.
  - Discuss attendance at upcoming meetings/conferences to strategically maximize participation at events.
  - ✓ (Template meeting agenda drafted by EWCL team; team hosted two capacity building training sessions in lieu of launching this recurring meeting series during the 2022-2023 timeframe.)

### Long-term Recommendations

- Support improved ongoing communication among Champions.
  - Encourage WhatsApp use through periodic posing of questions/discussion topics to increase participation.
  - Consider the challenge of language barrier(s) in comfort of communication. Discuss best practices to promote inclusiveness and accessibility.
    - Could include: Use of translation/closed captioning service during meetings; saving presentations and meeting notes in a common location for the group's reference; creating a working document where each member "owns" a space and maintains up-to-date details on their project; recording meetings and sharing links with those unable to attend, etc.
- Coordinate an in-person meeting to help Champions strengthen relationships within the program. Interim recommendation: If this type of meeting cannot be planned in the near-term, schedule a meeting/symposium as a part of another conference already being planned and offer monetary support for Pangolin Champions to attend.
  - For reference - in-person meetings planned for 2023 where Champions may be in attendance and could connect:
    - Pangolin Workshop, South Africa (Feb 2023)
    - Pangolin conservation working group conference, Cameroon (March 2023)
    - International Congress of Conservation Biology, Kigali, Rwanda (July 2023)
    - Association for Tropical Biology and Conservation, India (July 2023)
    - CITES Convention, Panama (Nov 2023)
    - Fishing Cat Conservation Alliance meeting, Cambodia, 2023 (TBD)



- Strategically plan local field site visits as a part of planned conferences/meetings so Pangolin Champions can personally and professionally connect with other Champions and learn from each other's work. Site visits could target a particular skill in which the host has expertise, if applicable. Provide second tier grants for travel funds/support for Champions to organize their own site visits; leverage an existing field exchange program to incorporate pangolin conservationists.
- Grow networking opportunities beyond the Champions program by creating a more formal network of alumni who remain connected to Save Pangolins and current Champions after project completion. For example, SP could develop a mentorship program that pairs PC alumni with current program participants or more established conservationists for one-on-one support that does not directly require SP resources